

# MARIST spirituality

JÉSUS TOUT MON  
AMOUR, JÉSUS TOUT  
MON BONHEUR

DE VOTRE FEU  
CÉLESTE EMBRASEZ  
TOUT MON CŒUR



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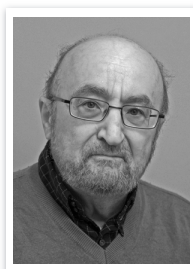
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**Br. André Lanfrey**

## EDITORIAL

In this issue of the *Marist Notebooks* we have attempted to give priority to a central subject: spirituality. It is an opportunity for me to recall that this word is relatively new for us but that its now common usage is not a passing fashion.

The noun “spiritualitas” has existed since antiquity to designate spiritual realities but it is rather rare. It is found in French from the end of the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. It is not unknown in the 17th and 18th centuries, even if the adjective “spiritual” is much more common. Moreover, the word “spirituality” became somewhat suspect because it became linked to Quietism and to Jansenism. Even if it was not completely forgotten in the nineteenth century, in religious circles – and the Marist Brothers in particular – there was a preference for the adjective “ascetic” to “spiritual”. Our documents, rather, make abundant use of the expression “spirit of the Institute” or “spirit of faith”, more

or less equivalent to the present notion of spirituality.

In French-language religious academic discourse, the term “spirituality” did not begin to make a return until the last years of the nineteenth century and it became common towards the end of the First World War. Among those who promoted its use was the Sulpician Pierre Pourrat who published in 1918 the first volume of his *Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne*. And in 1932 Volume 1 of the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* appeared and helped to establish the concept quite firmly through the regular publication of its 17 volumes right up to 1995.

Among us, and probably in many other international religious bodies, the word came into currency relatively late. In *Nos Supérieurs*, published in 1953, Brother Jean-Emile wrote of the “spirituality” of Br Jean-Baptiste. But it was the Circular of

<sup>1</sup> These words are inspired by the article « Spirituality » in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, t. 14, col. 1142-1160, Beauchesne, 1990.

Brother Charles-Raphaël of 8 December 1960 (T. XXII, p. 501-502), introducing the new edition of the Common Rule, which presented “the spirituality which he (Fr Champagnat) proposes to his Brothers” as Marial, apostolic in the spirit of Nazareth, and communitarian. The circular of 8 December 1961 used this concept again in evoking the creation of “the year of spirituality”, defined as a time for the deepening of religious and apostolic life under the direction of chosen teachers.

The concept still appears to have limited usage since the Chapter Documents of 1967-68 always employ the old expression “Spirit of the Institute” to define our identity. The *ad experimentum* Constitutions of 1968 do not include the term “spirituality” either, but we find it five times in the definitive Constitutions of 1987.

It was during the drawing up of the Constitutions and in the Generalate of Brother Basilio that the use of the word “spirituality” became normative, notably through the circular of 25 December 1975 on “The Spirit of the Institute” clearly distinguishing spirit, charism and spirituality, scarcely differentiated up to then. Spirit “is rather a way of being, a family likeness, an atmosphere creating a kinship of soul between men. As for the charism, it applies at the same time to being and acting”. And spirituality is the systematisation of our spirit in a way that one can “constitute in a certain body of doctrine”, make it explicit and, indeed, teach it.

In the Generalate of Brother Charles Howard there seems to have been some tension between two different expressions: “Marist apostolic spirituality” and “apostolic Marist spirituality”. Even if, in the Circular of 25 March 1992 Br Charles Howard makes the former term official, the supplement of 10 July 1993, drafted by the General Councillors, seems more in the spirit of the latter expression which accords first place to the apostolate. Again in 1997, convoking the General Conference in Rome, FMS/Message No. 24 speaks of Marist Apostolic Spirituality (M.A.S.). But the fundamental formula is the one in our Constitutions article 7: “The spirituality bequeathed to us by Marcellin Champagnat is Marial and apostolic”. The old and insufficiently precise notion of “Spirit of the Institute” had become obsolete.

It is true that at the time when the concept of spirituality is gaining a central place among us, its use has become secularised to the point that everyone now claims to have a spirituality, that is to say, a vague religiosity. However, even if this concept has become tricky to handle, it is important to note that its renaissance around 1920, its expanded use about 1960, and its present ambiguous ubiquity are not coincidental. They mark times of rupture in religious sensibility, rendering inadequate the former vocabulary founded on asceticism, piety, or devotion, as too restricted and superficial in times when Christianity is losing its obvious character to become a faith that can be

defined as the individual and collective confrontation with the Divine mystery.

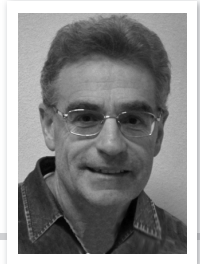
The articles in this issue have the advantage of treating Marist spirituality from different and complementary angles: mystical, institutional, historical, patrimonial, educational. For

“spirituality” is not a static concept, even if our Constitutions have defined the main axes. They will contribute, I hope, to make us used to the idea that the Institute has become, more truly than before, a school of spirituality, each of its members being called not only to live this but also to share it.



# FROM ASCETICISM TO MYSTICISM

## The Life of Marcellin Champagnat



Br. Manuel Mesonero

This article aims to show the stages through which Marcellin proceeded in his experience of God. The three classical stages of the spiritual life (the purgative state or that of beginners, the illuminative, and then the unitive or mystical state) serve us very well for developing a narrative of a saint who made continual progress in following Christ.

One of the shortcomings in the way we have been viewing the life of Marcellin is to see it progressing along a path that is too flat. We know the enthusiastic young priest who conquered the hearts of his parishioners in La Valla and went on to build the Hermitage. We are less familiar with the Marcellin who passed through the dark night of faith and the mature founder who gave himself over to God in total abandonment, something characteristic of the mystical life.

I invite you, dear reader, to join me on this journey to meet a saint who steadfastly progressed until he reached perfect union with God.

### 1. THE MISSION IDEAL: THE STAGE OF SACRIFICE, A THIRST TO BE DOING SOMETHING (THE PURGATIVE STATE)

Marcellin's "great mission" began in the Chapel of Fourvière. There he made his promise to our Blessed Mother to consecrate his life to bring about a work "for the greater glory of God and Mary." The text sums up the theme his entire life and work:

We, the undersigned . . . have the sincere goal and firm will to consecrate ourselves to the institution of the very pious Congregation of Marists . . . aiming only to attain the greater glory of God and greater honour of Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . in order to save souls.<sup>1</sup>

We can look upon this promise as a call that the Lord made to him to start a congregation in the Church. Marcellin responded to this call in

<sup>1</sup> OM I, 50 J. Coste, G. Lessard, *Origines Maristes (1786-1836). Extraits concernant les Frères Maristes*, Rome 1985

short order and within six months founded the Marist Brothers in La Valla. This call was inspired by the motto, the first part of which is taken from Ignatian spirituality: “*Everything for the greater glory of God,*” while the second came from the heart of those who signed the pledge at Fourvière.

We associate Marcellin’s apostolic life in La Valla (1816-1824) with the purgative state, the way of beginners. We can describe its characteristics by looking at how the Founder personally experienced that motto. The “magis” (for the *greater* glory) distanced him from mediocrity. He achieved this result through a life of self-sacrifice in line with what he professed as curate serving his parishioners:

Don't spare me any sacrifice; don't be afraid  
to call on me no matter the time of day,  
I'll always be more than happy to come.  
Far from being upset to see you,  
I'll bless the Lord for the opportunity to serve you.<sup>2</sup>

Marcellin insisted on living a life of dedication and self-sacrifice, very characteristic of this stage. The reality of his altruistic offering can be seen in testimonies. His ministerial work on Sunday afternoons, for example, went above and beyond his duties as a curate:

I remember how every Sunday  
quite a number of men used to gather  
at the presbytery to spend the afternoon  
with him. He did this to keep them  
away from the taverns.<sup>3</sup>

Another characteristic of this stage is revealed in memories from children who used to attend his early-morning Catechism classes:

We loved going to his catechism classes,  
in spite of the distance and cold weather.  
It used to take us an hour to get there  
but we were always the first to arrive.<sup>4</sup>

“Eagerness” and a yearning to “withhold no sacrifice” provoke a “thirst to get things done” in the person who goes through this stage. Thérèse of Lisieux described this very experience when telling the story of her conversion:

“I thirst!” These words inflamed in me  
an intense and unrecognizable fervour...  
And I couldn't help but feel consumed  
by a thirst for souls ...<sup>5</sup>

The most complete and intimate testimony that has come down to us about Marcellin, from Brother Laurent, perfectly captures this thirst to make a difference that our holy Founder was experiencing during this stage in his life:

<sup>2</sup> AFM 134.26.00

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Michel, FMS, January 1974

<sup>4</sup> SUMM. Session No. XVII (12-enero-1892),140-142

<sup>5</sup> Saint Therese de Lisieux, *Historia de un alma*, Bogotá 2004

He got up very early.  
 After Mass he didn't waste time on useless things.  
 He liked manual work a lot.  
 He didn't hold back but always threw himself  
 wholeheartedly into the most challenging  
 and dangerous jobs. He built our house in La Valla  
 ... When there were boulders to be moved,  
 he was always the one who did it ...  
 When he returned home at nightfall,  
 often his dust-covered clothes were tattered  
 and soaked with sweat. You never saw him so happy  
 as when he did backbreaking work.  
 Several times I happened to be with him working i  
 n the rain and snow. We used to leave,  
 but he stayed on the job ..."

The whole text exudes this spirit of sacrifice and thirst for doing things, using expressions like: "very early", "he doesn't waste time", "he takes on himself the most difficult jobs." And especially the main sentence in the text: "*You never saw him so happy as when he was engaged in backbreaking work.*"

Marcellin was immersed in a purgative stage in which self-sacrifice was a way to enjoy God's presence and surrender himself to Him. Is this the pinnacle of holiness? Certainly not. This is the kind of self-surrender that characterizes a beginner. Holiness consists of feeling that you're chosen, sent and guided. Even so, here a person's faith and hard work are prominent.

This interpretation is confirmed by the temptation that these souls feel: to do great things for God. Many saints have suffered from this impulse. The ego wants to assure God that it loves Him. In his autobiography, for example, St. Ignatius relates how at first he thought being holy meant "*performing these illustrious public deeds.*"<sup>6</sup> This was also the thinking of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Despite referring to herself as Little in the eyes of the Lord, she too experienced this allure:

So when I read the tales of  
 the patriotic feats of French heroines...  
 I was struck with a great desire  
 to imitate what they did.<sup>7</sup>

The greater glory of God seems to whisper in their ear, "Do great things!" In the beginning it is difficult to discern this seductive voice. Neither did Marcellin, with his heart in love with Christ, escape from this. It is not typical for a founder to build a huge house like the one at the Hermitage. It is more customary to purchase one ready to use. We see the reasoning behind this building when we observe the Founder's role during its construction.

Etienne Roussier, the foreman of the masons, used to say:

<sup>6</sup> St. Ignatius of Loyola, *El peregrino: autobiografía (Introduction, notes and commentary by Josep M<sup>a</sup> Rambla Blanch SJ)*, Bilbao-Santander 1998<sup>3</sup>, n°14)

<sup>7</sup> St. Therese of Lisieux, *Historia...*,79



"No labourer worked harder or with greater skill and results than Champagnat."<sup>8</sup>

For their part the Brothers observed that he was the first on the job and the last to leave and attributed this to his burning zeal for the glory of God. Thinking back on those times Brother François wrote:

"The walls, partitions and flooring tell us that he was a bricklayer, plasterer and carpenter all in one; he was a jack-of-all-trades and showed the way in everything... his pick-axe and shovel did away with the rock..."<sup>9</sup>

Of course this "*great project*" was necessary and constructing it helped bring people together as a family. But Marcellin outdid himself in his planning and God took advantage of this situation to bring about his total purification, leading him into a dark night and the beginning of a new stage in his following of Christ.

## 2. MARCELLIN'S DARK NIGHT

Saint John of the Cross defines the dark night as God's guiding the soul, purging it of its inattentiveness and innate tendency to gravitate toward imperfections in the spiritual life."<sup>10</sup> This is about a key moment in

time for one's life of faith to mature, when patience and perseverance are necessary for the soul to emerge victorious. The apparent absence of God during this period in Marcellin's life brought about a wondrous transformation in this saint. We could go so far as to say that Marcellin's night was total, profound and passionate. The period we are referring to is the "*annus horribilis*" of 1826, when every writer, beginning with his biographer, tells us about the daunting challenges that he and his life's work had to experience to go forward.

**The first purification** that the Founder had to face was his physical limitations. In carrying out his apostolate, Marcellin had prided himself on his above-average physical fitness. Notwithstanding, at the beginning of 1826 stories of his physical prowess suddenly came to an end. It all began at Christmas in 1825. Marcellin had begun construction of the Hermitage in the summer of 1824. That was when the Brothers mixed the concrete, put up the walls and enclosed the building with a roof, but much of the work remained unfinished. It took them the entire school year to complete the interior of the house. Years later Marcellin would recount how that was the period when *he exhausted his strength*,

<sup>8</sup> Brother Avit, *Annales de l'Institut (1880-1894)*, Rome 1993, 37

<sup>9</sup> AFM 306 Lesson Plans. Workbook of Brother François (December 2, 1860)

<sup>10</sup> St. John of the Cross, *Poesías completas y comentarios en prosa a los poemas mayores*, Madrid 1983, 280

*draining his health.*<sup>11</sup> Alarm bells sounded on December 26, 1825. Marcellin fell ill and was confined to bed. Within a week his condition was classified as grave and people feared he might die. Those around Marcellin imagined that his passing would mean the demise of his work, plans and dreams.<sup>12</sup> Marcellin never recovered from this physical burnout, and health problems would afflict him for the rest of his life.

**The second purification** that Marcellin came to grips with during his dark night was an unprecedented awareness of himself as a Founder. On the subject of founders, Chiara Lubich says that *“while the hands of God activate the instrument, He fashions it through untold joyful and sorrowful experiences ... until the person acquires profound self-knowledge...”*<sup>13</sup> Marcellin acquired this new awareness when he realized and accepted how useless his previous labours had been, referring to himself as “a rough stone,” one unfit to be used on the façade of a building:

Because we who were there in the early days are the rough stones that are cast into a building's foundation; people don't use polished stones for that.”<sup>14</sup>

He also came to realize how individuals, with their limitations, can destroy the designs of God. He learned this from seeing the behaviour of Father Courveille, the man whom everyone considered the inspirer and leader of the Society of Mary. During Marcellin's lingering illness the community of Brothers lost its vision for the future. Courveille caused the Brothers to feel uneasy, rigidly adhering to the Rule and dispensing unreasonable punishments, exchanging optimism for utter discouragement, in turn provoking despair and a loss of vocations.

Sadly, Courveille's presence among the Brothers and in the Society of Mary ended disastrously when he sexually abused one of the students in formation. The matter was dealt with judiciously and he had to be banished from the Hermitage.<sup>15</sup> The dark night that Marcellin endured helped him to fathom how far removed our plans can be from those of God.<sup>16</sup> Only several years later could he clearly evaluate what had taken place:

The contemptible affair that took place with the one who seemed to be his leader is a horror right out of hell.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Letter 30

<sup>12</sup> *“In fact, if Father Champagnat had died, everything would have been lost...”* (Life, Vol. 1, Chapter XIII)

<sup>13</sup> Lubich, Chiara. XIX National Eucharistic Congress at Pescara, en 1977.

<sup>14</sup> OM 438, P. Mayet

<sup>15</sup> SUMM, BEDUEN. Testimony

<sup>16</sup> *“I'm forever convinced that God wants this work...”* Letter 6

<sup>17</sup> Letter 6

**The third purification** has to do with detachment from people and works. Marcellin exercised indisputable leadership among the Brothers. During the dark night, however, he “felt alone.”

I am alone. Be that as it may, I'm not giving in to discouragement, knowing how powerful God is and how inscrutable His ways...<sup>18</sup>

His priest companions at the Hermitage deserted him: first Courveille, then Terraillon. In addition he was the target of criticism from people in the Diocese, his fellow priests being the ones most culpable: “*People in the Diocese were ridiculing Father Champagnat.*”<sup>19</sup> Then too he was less and less able to provide leadership for the Brothers. Some grew discouraged and abandoned him, even Brothers who had been with him the longest, (e.g. Jean-Marie Granjon, Jean-François Roumesy, Dominique), which only added to his grief. Taking a look back at these trials we can see how they enlightened his understanding:

Father Champagnat used to say that when you're abandoned by most of your friends, those who do come to visit bring great joy and in this way prove their sincere affection for you.<sup>20</sup>

Marcellin even experienced a lack of understanding on the part of his

lawful superiors. When members of the Archdiocesan Council learned of his grave illness, they sent Father Cattet to visit the Hermitage. He formed a very poor impression, in economic terms (the place was deeply in debt) as well as in the educational programme (a watered-down intellectual formation due to too much manual work). Reporting back to Archdiocesan officials, he showed a lack of confidence in Marcellin's project and proposed uniting the Marist work with that of the Sacred Heart congregation.<sup>21</sup> Marcellin endured several days living under a cloud of uncertainty. Father Coindre, its founder, resisted the idea, and on 1<sup>st</sup> March the Archdiocese rejected the plan. It then took many years for the officials there to regain confidence in Marcellin.

### 3. ENLIGHTENMENT FROM THE NISI DOMINUS (THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY)

When the lover has done great things for his Beloved he is tempted to proclaim: “See how much I love God.” For a beginner it is a monumental task to realize that he himself may be the primary obstacle. Marcellin, in the midst of his dark night, recognized this temptation:

<sup>18</sup> Letter 4

<sup>19</sup> OM 625. Fr. E. Seon

<sup>20</sup> AFM 306: Lesson Plans, Brother François' notebook (February 10, 1867)

<sup>21</sup> Fr André Coindre founded this Institute in 1817

When I think I amount to nothing  
in God's presence, I begin to be someone;  
and when I think I'm someone,  
then I am nothing and I spoil everything,  
for God stands against the arrogant.<sup>22</sup>

We are tempted to immerse ourselves in God's creation while leaving Him out of the picture, viewing actions, even noble ones, as means rather than ends. Marcellin spoke of this in terms of the attitude that a person needs to have when finishing his chores on a farm: "*When work is over, I must attribute to God all the glory that I might feel is mine, the fruit of my own labour.*"<sup>23</sup>

Marcellin described this brilliant insight using Psalm 127, the *Nisi Dominus*, which appears in his writings for the first time in 1827, as he was emerging from his dark night.

More than ever I see the truth of this prophecy,  
'Unless the Lord builds...'<sup>24</sup>

The expression "I see more than ever" implies a deep insight into the meaning of the Psalm that he hadn't grasped earlier. If a person doesn't rely on Him, every bit of exhausting work and anxiety is "in vain," while with God's help, everything will go well. Given people's unavailing weariness,

God's grace makes everything fruitful. Priority is placed on grace rather than effort. Let's take a look at some feats that Marcellin performed in light of the *Nisi Dominus*.

We find **the first one** in the similar letters of 1827, in which, wanting to move on from his loneliness Marcellin tells of his need for a certain priest to assist him at the Hermitage. His willingness to conform to what his superiors might decide makes evident the presence of the *Nisi Dominus* in his thinking:

I'd simply like to share my thinking with you  
and let you decide as you see fit for God's glory.<sup>25</sup>

Marcellin, as we see, concludes not by asking for priests but contenting himself with presenting his need to different Archdiocesan officials. That's how the mother of Jesus acted at *the Wedding Feast in Cana*.<sup>26</sup> She didn't ask for anything from her Son, either: "*They don't have wine,*" she said. So with Marcellin, the peace he shows after informing his superiors comes from his experience of the *Nisi Dominus*:

I am not afraid of anything... having taken stock  
of my current situation, whatever the outcome,  
I will rest in the Lord and his most holy Mother.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Retreat given by Father Champagnat in 1826, P. Sester, "Br. François..."

<sup>23</sup> *Marist Notebooks* 8 (1996) 81

<sup>24</sup> Letter 7

<sup>25</sup> Letter 4

<sup>26</sup> Jn 2, 2

<sup>27</sup> Letter 4

The expression “*I’m not afraid of anything*” stems from his actual awareness of the active presence of God. The affirmation “*I will rest*” refers to the type of abandonment reminiscent of the corresponding thought in Psalm 127: “*All this God gives to his beloved in sleep!*” The expression that the Founder used could not have been a purely coincidental one but rather the result of his living out the substance of the *Nisi Dominus*.

**Another reality** giving evidence that Marcellin was experiencing the illuminative stage is the “Letter of Tears.”<sup>28</sup> He wrote it to help the Vicar General better understand how the process for annexing<sup>29</sup> the Marist Institute to the Clercs of Querbes<sup>30</sup> was proceeding, in order to meet the need for *legal recognition*.<sup>31</sup> Although no one in the Diocese doubted Marcellin’s talents and skills when it came to manual labour, there were concerns about his ability to provide for the doctrinal formation of the Brothers. The fact is, “*in terms of intellect they considered him to be a lightweight.*”<sup>32</sup>

The “Letter of Tears” did not contain arguments against the Archdiocese’s planned annexation. The

Founder wasn’t interested in trying to reason with his superiors. Marcellin concentrated on discerning the basic meaning of the *Nisi Dominus*, expressing an attitude of readiness to do God’s will. This led him to simply share his faith experience with his superiors.

He began by relating something crystal clear to him: this work belongs to Mary. She has sustained it; without her blessing it would have disappeared:

In spite of Satan’s efforts to tear it down...  
Mary keeps it going with all her might.<sup>33</sup>

To further enlighten the recipient of his letter, another thing he referred to was how difficult it had been for the Brothers to overcome adversity from the earliest days until the present. Keeping in mind that the cross is an essential feature of all God’s work, we would expect that his life’s story included problems and difficulties. Those trials clouded his superiors’ judgments concerning the work of the brothers. Notwithstanding he recognized that the standard of discernment for distinguishing between a work inspired by God and one that is not, consists of looking at the entire process: its beginning, develop-

<sup>28</sup> Letter 30

<sup>29</sup> Council resolution: 7. “So that the Little Brothers of Mary can benefit from achieving lawful status, it is the opinion of this Council that they join with the work of the Clerics of St. Viator as a legally recognized entity. At least this can be tried.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>31</sup> M. QUERBES, Louis (1793-1859), founder of the Clercs of St Viator

<sup>32</sup> For Congregations that secured it, legal authorization provided an exemption from military service lasting anywhere from six to eight years.

<sup>33</sup> Furet, J.B., Biographies. Crónicas maristas II, Zaragoza 1979, 36

ment and final outcome. Saint Ignatius insisted: *“We need to observe closely how thoughts flow. If the beginning, middle and end are all good, inclined toward complete well-being, that’s the sign a good angel is present.”*<sup>34</sup> Although not citing these words, Marcellin was in tune with this standard for encountering the designs of God when he wrote:

Mary isn't letting us down. Little by little,  
we are paying our bills and new brothers are  
joining us to replace those of bygone days.  
All I do is keep up to date with the operating  
expenses. Mary is helping us. That is all we need.

Marcellin appears to be telling us that what matters most is how things are when all is said and done! At times life’s trials and setbacks clouded the path that the Institute pursued because the cross is an indispensable factor in purifying the designs of God. So we need to see the end result. Ours has been positive.

Another experience the Founder mentioned was seeing himself as the brothers’ pastor and father:

I tell them not to fear, that I will be with them  
in all their misfortunes,  
give them the shirt off my back...

While other priests abandoned the brothers, much like the good

shepherd who never abandons his flock the Founder did not. His authentic charism alone made him ready to share even *the last morsel of bread* with those dearest to him.

Marcellin’s discernment about the spirituality of the *Nisi Dominus* was characterized by *indifference*.<sup>35</sup> This word cannot mean a *state of mind*<sup>36</sup> in which every aspect of something is viewed as being equally important. Rather it refers to a degree of love for God who leads us to readily welcome any of the alternatives being discerned. And so the text shows the Founder *putting all judgment aside*,<sup>37</sup> ready to be obedient.

Experiencing the reality behind the *Nisi Dominus* unlocks our interpretation of the letter of tears: the Founder didn’t allow himself to be guided solely by human reasoning but by the movements of the Spirit. The only thing he was interested in was the glory of God; nothing else.

In conclusion, when Marcellin incorporated the *Nisi Dominus* into his religious experience it aroused him to live his motto, *“All for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary,”* in a new way.

While for beginners the glory of God is realized by means of dedi-

<sup>34</sup> Cfr. Letters 6 and 30

<sup>35</sup> EE 333

<sup>36</sup> The key theme is INDIFFERENCE. EE 23

<sup>37</sup> A *“STATE OF MIND in which A PERSON NEITHER FEELS drawn to nor put off by a particular individual, object or transaction”* (Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, Madrid 2001).

cated efforts, it is later brought about when we bring our actions into line with His desires. Marcellin needed to continue performing fruitful works, yes, but in ways that he no longer chose. This detachment from accomplishing his own will corresponded with that of Christ, “who only sought the will of the Father.”<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. MARCELLIN’S MYSTICAL WAY OR UNION WITH GOD

Writing about the mystical life of the saints does not mean certifying *whether or not they were gifted with supernatural phenomena.*<sup>39</sup>

It would be a big mistake to think that mystical contemplation necessarily brings about a series of supernatural phenomena, ecstasy, raptures, the stigmata and other such things.<sup>40</sup>

Let us analyze some events in Marcellin’s life that enable us to appreciate his mystical life and union with God.

##### 4.1. Elements of his mystical prayer

Mystical prayer is something we cannot achieve through our own ef-

forts. There are times when a mystic experiences God in the midst of his everyday work. In Marcellin’s life we see him encountering the presence of God *suddenly and unexpectedly,*<sup>41</sup> without his needing to become recollecting, in his custom of scribbling words in the margins of all kinds of manuscripts that have been conserved: notebooks, notices, letters, drafts of documents, etc. These jottings show us a person who encountered God immediately, through spontaneous activity: “Vous savez, mon Dieu” (You know, my God).

Marcellin’s body language during prayer is another way that helps us understand his life of mystical prayer. Those who watched him pray tell us how impressed they were: “*When I arrived at the novitiate I was greatly impressed by the way he prayed during community prayer.*”<sup>42</sup>

The recurring statements of witnesses that *it was unforgettable*<sup>43</sup> to see him at prayer lead us to want to know his physical appearance whenever he was at prayer. The earliest description comes from his biographer. His account is outside of the ascetic approach that characterizes his book:

<sup>38</sup> In rules for being in tune with the Church: “*First, PUTTING ASIDE ALL JUDGMENT, we need a soul ready and willing to obey the true bride of Christ.*” (EE 353)

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Jn 6, 38

<sup>40</sup> Jorge Enrique Mújica refers to the following: the stigmata, bi-location, ecstasy, levitations, supernatural perfume, visions, locutions, revelations, discernment of spirits... (J.E. Mújica – Gama-Virtudes y Valores, at: [www.churchforum.org/fenomenos-sobrenaturales.htm](http://www.churchforum.org/fenomenos-sobrenaturales.htm))

<sup>41</sup> Merton, T., Dirección y contemplación, Madrid 1986. p.112

<sup>42</sup> Santa Teresa de Jesús, *Obras Completas. Libro de la Vida*, Burgos 2004, c. 10. n° 1

<sup>43</sup> SUMM Brother Aidan



So lively was his faith in the real presence that people used to say that he was seeing our Lord face to face in this inexpressible mystery.<sup>44</sup>

Brother Callinique, who met Marcellin at the Novitiate in 1838, observed that his countenance *radiated joy and confidence*. *His intense expression in prayer revealed that his entire person was caught up in the moment*. We can easily recognize how similar this description is to the account given by his biographer.<sup>45</sup> Ordinary people who observed him at prayer confirm these testimonies for us:

People living near the Hermitage have told me that whenever possible they would attend his visit to the Blessed Sacrament at 11:30 in the morning to hear him recite the prayer.<sup>46</sup>

When it came to the practice of the presence of God, so significant in Marist spirituality, we see how Marcellin lived in union with God all the time. For him “the exercise of the presence of God” was not like an act of asceticism, an exercise of the will to be with God. In fact, he couldn’t enter into the presence of God, he never left it! Let’s examine this text:

I invite you all, come to rest and restore your strength in a place of recollection, peace and quiet...<sup>47</sup>

Normally we wouldn’t call the place where we live a retreat for recollection, peace and quiet unless we really experienced these conditions in our everyday lives. Marcellin *did* experience *the continuous presence of God*. During his time in Paris the Founder, feeling lonely from being far away from the Brothers, wrote to Brother François and conveyed this very thought:

M. Chanut has left; I’m here by myself daydreaming. Oh my goodness, what am I saying – we’re never alone when we’re with God.<sup>48</sup>

Marcellin never felt alone, because he was continuously in God’s presence, which is why he immediately corrected himself in this letter to Brother François: *What am I saying! I’m never alone since I’m always with God*.

## 4.2. Abandonment in God: mystics allow themselves to be led

Abandonment introduces a well-known reality in the lives of mystics. This involves the use of a bipolar vocabulary, with two contrary ideas seeming to vie for recognition. The tension between engaging in dedicated work and abandoning one’s life to the will of God appears frequently in Marcellin’s letters and

<sup>44</sup> SUMM Brother Aidan

<sup>45</sup> Vida 2<sup>a</sup>, c. VI

<sup>46</sup> SUMM 256 Brother Callinique

<sup>47</sup> SUMM Brother Romain

<sup>48</sup> Letter 62

gives evidence of his life as a mystic. His failed attempt to obtain approval of the Institute while in Paris presents us with a golden opportunity to explore texts illustrating this phenomenon.

Marcellin had first tried to obtain authorization for the Institute in 1836. That attempt failed because a new man took over at the Ministry of Public Instruction.<sup>49</sup> A year later, with almost two hundred Brothers and thirty schools, legal authorization became “an absolute necessity.”<sup>50</sup> In a letter to Brother Sylvestre we see what the Founder was thinking concerning the paperwork he was about to begin:

We are making preparations for our trip to Paris. Fervently entrust this matter to God, so that we will accomplish nothing except what He alone desires. His holy will – that’s all that matters. Were we to attempt anything but that, it would be to no avail: our painstaking efforts would amount to nothing. The will of God, that’s the only thing we desire.<sup>51</sup>

The key expression is “to no avail,” one that is repeated three times in Psalm 127.<sup>52</sup> The Founder’s work in Paris would have amounted to nothing if in addition there had not

been an unconditional love for the will of God. The text makes clear his initial disposition of perfect indifference. Marcellin sought to do the will of the Father, not for God “to come around to” to granting his desire to obtain authorization.<sup>53</sup>

Marcellin arrived in Paris on January 17, 1838. A few days later Minister Salvandy welcomed the Founder to an interview, leading him to hope that at last he would achieve his goal. But the Minister asked him to wait until he could consult the Council of State. Marcellin then devoted his time to visiting Deputies, enlisting their support and receiving positive feedback. After all that, the Minister insisted on submitting the decision to the Royal Council of Public Instruction. Biding his time for three more months, Marcellin then wrote to Brother Antoine to let him know how things were going:

As you can see, my dear friend, I’m still in Paris, making the rounds, visiting one official after another... I now know that God wants us to make use of people to help us in times like these. You see then what I need most these days are prayers... Pray for this intention and have your children pray.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Letter 175

<sup>50</sup> “Champagnat arrived in Paris on August 28th, coinciding with a change of administration. Guizot did not take over until September 5th. It was dubious at best that this man would attend to the matter anytime soon.” (Cf. G. Michel, *Marcelino Champagnat y el reconocimiento legal de los Hermanos Maristas*. Marist Notebooks 14, Rome, 1997. Marist Notebooks 14)

<sup>51</sup> “Those details indicate that it was absolutely necessary to obtain legal recognition.” (G. Michel. *The Recognition...*, Marist Notebooks 14)

<sup>52</sup> Letter 158: November 21, 1837

<sup>53</sup> “In vain do the laborers build,” “In vain does the guard keep watch,” “In vain do you rise early.” (Psalm 127)

<sup>54</sup> “Likewise there are others who first want to possess benefits and then serve God using them. Meaning that such people are more interested in wanting God to satisfy their disordered affections than in seeing what He Himself desires, thus reversing the meaning of means and ends... We must first make it our aim to serve God, who is our be-all and end-all...”

These lines focus on the relationship that exists between human resourcefulness and the help of grace.<sup>55</sup> The two affirmations to Brother Antoine reflect the priest's deepest convictions during his stay in Paris. On the one hand he insisted on the importance of the work he was doing and on the other, the role of grace. His personal experience is very similar to that described by one of the biographers of St Ignatius:

God led him to understand that he should make use of every honest means available to him yet from the outset place his confidence in God alone and not in his own means.<sup>56</sup>

There is maximum tension between these two expressions: man's work and God's gratuitous action. Should prayer or dedicated human effort prevail? The idea is that we must give human resources their due while giving those that are Divine priority. A saint admires people but bears in mind their human limitations.

In the end, Minister Salvandy asked for a new report from the Councillors General of Rhône and Loire. The Rhône response came

back negative and that provided an excuse for denying the requested authorization. Before he set out to return to the Hermitage, Marcellin informed Brother François of his failure. His letter clearly reveals how the Founder lived this entire time of deep disappointment with the heart of a mystic and praiseworthy peace:

My very dear brother, I've run into opposition but I don't feel frustrated. I always have the utmost confidence in Jesus and Mary. There's no doubt that we will obtain what we desire, I just don't know when. What is important for us beyond measure is to refrain from doing more than God wants us to do, i.e., to do whatever is in our power and then let Providence take care of the rest. God knows what's in our best interests better than we do. I'm quite sure that a bit of waiting won't do us any harm.<sup>57</sup>

People who live in perfect abandonment to God interpret everything "with an upbeat outlook:"<sup>58</sup> *"I'm sure that a bit of waiting will do us no harm."*<sup>59</sup> The priest knew that God organizes creation by means of a system of laws we call "secondary causes."<sup>60</sup> God respects these laws that order "human tasks."<sup>61</sup> What a mystic sees is not what "is seen" (bi-

<sup>55</sup> Letter to Brother Antoine, 183, March 24, 1838

<sup>56</sup> The letter to Brother Hilarion contains an almost identical statement: *"I rely greatly on the prayers of those good people; they will do more than anything we do on our own. Even so, I don't neglect the latter, for God wants us to use human ingenuity."* (Letter 181)

<sup>57</sup> Virgilio Carnoli, *Vita del Patriarca Sant' Ignazio*, Venezia, 1680

<sup>58</sup> Letter 197, June 23, 1838

<sup>59</sup> *"Accordingly, once souls have submitted themselves totally to su action, then they should interpret everything filled with hope."* (CAUSSADE, J.P. de, *L'Abandon à la Providence divine*, Paris 1962 cap. V)

<sup>60</sup> Letter 197

<sup>61</sup> Typical examples of these secondary causes are the laws gravity and the law of human freedom

ological laws, phenomena) but “what is unseen,”<sup>62</sup> i.e., the action of God as the underlying reality behind every event. When things don’t go according to our plans, it is simply to animate and strengthen our life of faith.<sup>63</sup> Once we have employed every means at our disposal, the next step is to “allow Providence to act,<sup>64</sup>” for “She will do everything by Herself.”<sup>65</sup> What is important is “to do nothing contrary to Her will,” i.e., remain steadfast in our abandonment to God.

Marcellin embraced suffering, and in doing so emptied himself, allowing God to occupy every corner of his heart. When is it time for us to do nothing? After we have done everything humanly possible.

## 5. CONCLUSION

We are all familiar with Marcellin’s focus on mission at La Valla and the early years at the Hermitage. And so here we have sought to highlight other information that may be less well known, such as the profound effect that God’s absence had on him during his dark night. After emerging from this experience, his way of understanding life was never again the

same. In light of the *Nisi Dominus* he came to see the need to put God at the centre. That is, he allowed the initiative of God to take on much greater importance in his life, becoming much more interested in listening to God than rather than in devoting himself totally to accomplishing things for Him. That changed everything! He entered into a more serene and contemplative dynamic of life and acquired a confidence in God that can be summed up in the last verse of Psalm 127: “*God gives to his beloved in sleep.*”

When we understand Marcellin’s actions in this light, we verify that we are walking beside someone who was called to be a mystic. Coming to fully understand the *Nisi Dominus* could only lead to his abandoning his life to God and enjoying total union with Him. And that’s what came about! We have the documentation, especially the letters that he wrote during his stay in Paris that confirm for us this abandonment and total union with Christ. We have always had these texts; it’s just that we haven’t known how to plumb the depths their meaning! Now we are in a position to do this and address the Founder with a new and telling designation: Marcellin Champagnat, a mystic for our times.

<sup>62</sup> God, although able to prevent disasters (re: laws of nature) and injustices (re: human freedom) does not do so, respecting His creation and allowing these kinds of events to take place. (Cf. I., 240)

<sup>63</sup> I. Larrañaga, *On Suffering...*, 240

<sup>64</sup> Caussade, a specialist concerning abandonment, insists on this way of seeing things when we face difficulties

<sup>65</sup> This is the text that we are commenting on in Letter 179

<sup>66</sup> “When people are powerless, that is when God does everything by Himself.” (La Salle, J.B., *Meditaciones*, Edwin Arteaga, FSC. and Bernardo Montes, FSC. Bogotá: 2010. MD 20,2,29

## ABBREVIATIONS

- SUMM** A. Carazo, *Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat. Enquête diocésaine de Lyon pour l'introduction de la cause de béatification et de canonisation de Marcellin-Joseph-Benoit Champagnat (1888-1890)*, Rome 1991
- AFM** ARCHIVE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS
- LETTER** Champagnat, M., *The Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*, Rome 1991
- EE** The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola
- OM** J. Coste, G. Lessard, *Origines Maristes (1786-1836). Extraits concernant les Frères Maristes*, Rome 1985

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Virgilio Carnoli, Vita del Patriarca Sant' Ignacio, Venezia 1680

# A 200 YEARS-OLD CHAMPAGNAT DOCUMENT

## Marcellin's first resolutions



Br. Juan Moral

In celebrating two hundred years since the earliest preserved documents of Saint Marcellin, it seems interesting to reflect once again on their value and presence in our General Archives.

If we want adequately to situate the writing in its time and processes, we must research its context: the where,

when, how and why of this writing. It is an eight-page brochure, in a 13.5. +10 format; bluish-grey colour, with writing on only four of its pages. There is no title whatsoever. The autograph is filed in AFM 131.1. It had been referred in OM1, doc. 17, p. 155. It is dated January 9, 1812.

Let us consider the documents:

O mon Seigneur et mon Dieu,  
je vous promets ne plus vous offenser, de faire des actes de foi, d'espérance et autres semblables toutes les fois que je penserai; de ne jamais retourner au cabaret sans nécessité; de fuir les mauvaises companies et, en un mot, de ne rien faire qui soit contre votre service; mais, au contraire, de donner de bons exemples, de porter les autres à pratiquer la vertu autant qu'il sera en moi; d'instruire les autres, de vos divins préceptes; d'apprendre le cathéchisme aux povres aussi bien qu'aux riches.  
Faites, mon divin Sauveur, que j'accomplisse fidellement toutes ces résolutions que je prends.

My Lord and my God  
I promise to never offend you again,  
to make acts of faith, hope and similar others every time I think of it; not to return to the tavern without necessity; to avoid bad company, and in a word, not to do anything which is against your service; on the contrary, to give good example, lead others to practice virtue if it depends on me; instruct others as to your divine precepts; to teach catechism to the poor<sup>1</sup> as well as the rich.  
Ensure, Divine Saviour that I faithfully fulfil all these resolutions I am taking<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In the original text, there is somewhat of a doubt; it repeats and crosses out; to finally maintain the two concept.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of this first page there are a couple of deletions. The first one is on "fidellement", as if he would have preferred to say with fidelity and the other one suggests that there is a final line where we can guess: *tous les engagements que je viens de faire*.



*J'avoue Seigneur que je ne me connoissois pas encore; que j'ai encore bien grands défauts, mais j'espère que m'ayant fait la grâce de les connoître, vous me ferez aussi celle de les vaincre en les combattant avec courage, c'est ce que je vous demande du plus profond anéantissement de mon cœur.*

*Divin Cœur de Jésus, c'est principalement à vous que j'adresse ma prière, vous qui, par votre profonde humilité avec combatu et vaincu l'orgueil humain, donnez-moi, je vous en conjure, cette vertu et renversez en moi le trône de l'orgueil, non seulement par ce qu'il est insupportable aux hommes, mais par ce qu'il déplaît à votre sainteté. Ste. Vierge, St. Louis de Gonzague, c'est à vous principalement que je m'adresse; demandez pour moi, quoique je sois votre indigne serviteur, à cet adorable Cœur de Jésus, la grâce de me connoître et que, me connaissant, je combatte et vainque mon amour propre et mon orgueil.*

*Je prends aujourd'hui, ce 9 janvier 1812, la résolution de le combattre et toute les fois qu'il aura l'avantage sur moi, je ferai la pénitence que je m'impose. Je parlerai sans distinction tous mes condisciples quelque répugnance que je puisse éprouver; puisque, dès ce moment, je éprouver; puisque, dès ce moment, je reconnois que se n'est que l'orgueil qui si oppose. Pourquoi les méprisé-je?*

*Est-ce cause de mes talents? Je suis le dernier de ma classe; est-ce cause de mes vertus? Je suis un orgueilleux; est-ce à cause de la beauté de mon corps? C'est Dieu qui l'a fait, encore est-il assez mal construit, enfin je ne suis rien qu'un peu de poussière.*

O Lord, I admit that I did not know myself well enough and that I am full of sin and imperfection.

Help me to know my faults and above all give me the grace to struggle against them, fighting on till

I correct them. This is a favour that I ask for with the deepest humility of heart.

Divine Heart of Jesus, my prayer is especially to you who with your deep humility have fought and conquered human pride. I beg you to make me humble, to destroy the pride that I have built up; and I ask this, not because people are repelled by pride, but because it displeases you and spurns your holiness. Holy Virgin, St Aloysius of Gonzaga,

I am addressing you especially:

ask the adorable Heart of Jesus to grant me, your unworthy servant, this grace – to know myself, thus fight and overcome pride and self-love. Today, on this 9<sup>th</sup> January 1812, I resolve to fight it and anytime it has an advantage over me, I will observe the penance I impose on myself. I will speak without distinguishing to all my classmates, regardless of the reluctance I may experience since as of this day I recognize that it is only pride

that prevents me. Why do I despise them? Is it because of my talents? I am the last in the class. Could it be due to my virtues?

I am proud.

Could it be due to the beauty of my body? God has made it and it is rather badly put together. Indeed, I am just but a bit of dust.

## 1. NOTES ABOUT CONTENT

### 1.1. Jean-Baptiste Furet's purpose<sup>3</sup>

As is clearly evident from a reading of his book, Brother Jean-Baptiste's sole concern is to convey to all future Brothers the fundamental thinking that led Marcellin Champagnat to found the Institute. He did this not just out of an ordinary sense of duty, but as a "mission" in the noblest sense of the word, to keep the Founder alive among the Brothers.

It was for him a sacred mission in that he was deeply convinced, on the one hand, that the work was the accomplishment of God's will for the Church and, on the other, that it was essential for this reason. If the Institute was to survive with integrity, therefore, its origins had to be known well since a tree cannot survive if it has been separated from its roots. The expressions "sacred duty" and "formal order" which he uses to qualify his task, somewhat exaggerated in their meaning, show the spirit and devotion he believed had to be applied to this "mission".

His ultimate objective takes us even further if we give credence to his statement at the beginning of the preface to *The Life*: "To write about the life of a saint, to reveal his struggles, his triumphs, his virtues, and all

that he has done for God and for neighbour, is to proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ, the divine Redeemer of the world, the model and author of all holiness ..." since, he adds quoting Saint Paul, "I live now, no not I but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2, 20). To make a saint known, one whose message is of particular importance for us is the "mission" with which Brother Jean-Baptiste feels vested. Therefore, he is interested in history since it can trace the background and environment of this achievement. He confirms this at the end of his preface when he writes:

"No matter how edifying the Life of Father Champagnat may be, the knowledge gained of him would be very inadequate if we confined ourselves simply to telling his story."

"Imposing actions, grand undertakings, protracted and painful words, don't add up to much; what constitutes their value and merit, what represents their true excellence, is the spirit which animates them.

Now, it is that spirit, comprising the attitudes and dispositions of the holy Founder, which is the object of the Second Part of this work, one which we believe more edifying and beneficial to the Brothers." (pp. XVII-XVIII).

The insistence with which he provides all these explanations is a sufficient testimony of his intention in achieving this work and of how it must be understood. Consequently, the reader must never forget that it is first a work of a hagiographic kind rather than dispassionately historical.

<sup>3</sup> The presence of this text in the *Life of Saint Marcellin* underlines the digressions about the references and uses of the text by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet.

This obviously does not mean that it has no historical value. It does. The same author affirms it in the preface: “Father Champagnat began by doing before teaching”, which means that his actions in themselves were his teaching; hence the need to report them faithfully.

## 1.2. Spiritual value

Yet, Brother Jean-Baptiste is more interested in the spiritual meaning of a fact since he is compelled to describe it rigorously in light of the above regarding his way of conceiving his task. Without doubt Brother Jean-Baptiste’s training as an historian was limited to what he acquired by reading lives of Saints more than actual history books. It is therefore necessary to consider the way the writing of the life of a Saint was undertaken during his time. More than

relating facts and actions about a person as such, they strove to describe an image of holiness. Personal peculiarities were certainly included, but in their ideal form. Thus, they recalled only those aspects that could, without misstating the truth, could be described as perfect. The small weaknesses from which no human being is exempt were hardly mentioned even or if so, they were submerged in the total content, never disturbing the beauty of the whole picture.

The first text is a prayer at the beginning of the resolutions. Brother Jean-Baptist introduces it with this sentence: “I present it as we found it in his writings”. If our sources are the same, we must consider that, as we will see, the expression “such as” must be understood in a very particular manner.

First version	Transcribed text
<p>I admit, Lord, that I do not yet know myself ; that I still have many great faults, but I hope that, having had the grace of knowing them, you will also give me the grace of overcoming them by fighting them with courage. This is what I ask of you in the deepest self-abasement of my heart.</p> <p>Divine Heart of Jesus, it is mainly to you that I address my prayer, you who by your deep humility fought and vanquished human pride, grant me, I beg you, this virtue and overthrow in me the throne of pride, not only because it is unbearable for men, but because it displeases your holiness . . .</p>	<p>Oh Lord, I admit that I did not know myself well enough and that I am full of sin and imperfection. Help me to know my faults and above all give me the grace to struggle against them, fighting on till I correct them. This is a favour that I ask for with the deepest humility of heart.</p> <p>Divine Heart of Jesus, my prayer goes up especially to you who through your deep humbleness have fought and won over human pride, grant me I beg you, this virtue and destroy in me this throne of pride, not only because it is repellent to people, but because it offends your holiness</p>

### 1.3. Tentative conclusions

Clearly, the ideas are the same in both versions. In transcribing the original, Brother Jean-Baptiste does not add any substantial element but he does introduce, probably unintentionally, different nuances. He improves the text from a literary perspective, true; but does it remain accurate? In fact, the text is no longer that of a seminarian, still a novice in spirituality even though he was already 22 years old.

At the start, the knowledge of himself changes knowledge of God: certainly two reasons for conversion; however, the second text is more that of Saint Augustine than a young seminarian from Le Rosey. Further down, from the enthusiastic hope of the young seminarian who to correct himself asks for the assistance of God after discovering his defects with his intercession, we go to the experience of the mature man who makes him guess that he greatly risks dragging his weaknesses throughout his life: “grant me the grace... of never ceasing to... make war on” my defects.

Let me point out that the word “war” used in this sense is not part of Champagnat’s usual vocabulary, but it frequently appears in the letters by

Brother Jean-Baptiste. In conclusion I would say that the latter shows once more, under the colours of perfection, one who is only at his beginning<sup>4</sup>.

### 1.4. Situating this document in the life of Marcellin

Marcellin Champagnat, a seminarian in Verrières from 1<sup>st</sup> November 1805, began his Rhetoric level in the same seminary on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1811, when he was over 22 years of age. What interests us is how Marcellin felt in Verrières during those six years between his entrance on November 1<sup>st</sup> of 1805, and the date of January 9<sup>th</sup> of 1812.

We can affirm that Marcellin literally grew, so to speak, with this minor seminary. When he walked through the door for the first time, the building, an old house, had been a seminary for just one year. Its dilapidated state had hardly changed. Moreover, an atmosphere of carelessness reigned throughout the building, at least according to the students. The priest, M. Périer, its founder, “was not an organizer and despite his good will, he lacked the necessary authority to establish the order and discipline necessary in a place of this kind.”<sup>5</sup> We should not be surprised that in these conditions the students sometimes

<sup>4</sup> The second example is the transcription of a letter to Msgr. De Pins, in the month of May of 1827. The original we have is but a draft, thus the final letter could be different. However, did that final letter ever exist? And if so, did it come into the possession of Brother Jean-Baptiste? It is most likely that he only had that same draft copy.

<sup>5</sup> Testimony of J.L. Duplay, J.M. Chausse, *Life*, p. 91.

wandered around town in “happy gangs” and that Marcellin, a naturally animated young man, would find in these a ready outlet from the demands of his studies?

However, in 1807, another priest M. Linossier arrived to help the Superior. He established discipline and gave a serious push to the studies. Two years later, in 1809, M. Barou succeeded M. Périer and continued on the same line, helping to establish a religious spirit to reign through the seminary, as it should have. Marcellin Champagnat, moved by grace, paralleled this development.

Certainly it doesn't seem he ever doubted his priestly vocation. It is one thing, however, to let oneself be carried away by life day after day but something else to be focussed seriously on one's future and to bloom. With his six years of seniority in the house, given the trust he had earned from his superiors and his natural influence on his companions, he could have been tempted to take advantage of the situation to act as he pleased. But his teachers did not cease to make him understand that becoming a good priest required more than just knowing Latin. It was instead necessary to be a man of God since a priest exercises his role through example rather than words. The anchoring of this conviction in his spirit led to these resolutions, perhaps taken following a monthly retreat.

This summary is interesting since it allows us to confirm a series of other

small and concrete circumstances which certainly influenced the formation of the resolutions. We anticipate that in between there were people and places that explain other circumstances, etc. It is therefore appropriate to consider the Verrières seminary, Marcellin's professors there, his personal situations and his companions, and the information we possess directly and which has been passed to us.

### 1.5. Parallel circumstances

While Marcellin strove to acquire the basics of knowledge at the school of Saint-Sauveur, Pope Pius VII engaged in a five-month journey through France (November 1804 to April 1805). An unprecedented event: the Sovereign Pontiff was going to Paris in person to consecrate Napoleon the 1<sup>st</sup> on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1804.

First, the Emperor had to be religiously married. Then, the coronation ceremony was organized in detail: for example, it was agreed that the Emperor would crown himself and then he would crown the Empress. Despite the cold temperatures and the overwhelming etiquette, the witnesses would never again attend such a grand ceremony. However, all these actions did not merit such value because of Napoleon, but rather because of the presence of the frail, elderly Vicar of Christ.

Pius VII was more touched by the devotion of the clergy toward him, by the enthusiasm of the ordinary

people, by the thousand proofs of veneration of the people. He therefore questioned how much they had been affected by the dechristianisation. On his way back, as he stopped for three days in Lyon, Pius VII went up to Fourvière on 19<sup>th</sup> April 19 1805, to “reconcile” the sanctuary of Notre Dame. The Papal entourage had to confess that “the devotion of the people of Lyon was beyond description!<sup>6</sup>”.

## 1.6. Foundation of Verrières

One year after the treaty of Amiens – in March of 1802 – the Emperor violated the Treaty of Basel and militarily occupied Hanover, the personal property of the King of England. Then in Boulogne, he prepared to invade “the perfidious Albion”.

“If we manage to dominate the Channel for six hours,” he said, “we will rule the world”. However those six hours were never reached since Pitt was already moving the threads of the third coalition against the “Corsican”: England, Russia, Sweden, Austria and Naples. The great army was compelled to leave the passage of Calais and withdraw toward Central Europe. Although the Austrians were forced to capitulate in Ulm on October 17 of 1805, four days later the Franco-Spanish fleet was destroyed by Nelson in Trafalgar. From then on, the Empire of Napoleon I would gradually decline.

One week after Trafalgar, Marcellin entered the minor seminary of Verrières. The archdiocese of Lyon, under the supervision of Cardinal Joseph Fesch, had six minor seminaries. In the Department of Ain, there was one in Meximieux, founded in 1788 in the small town of Beny. In the the Department of Rhône there were two in operation: Saint-Martin-en-Haut from 1800, and Largentière which opened in 1804. In the Loire there were three: Saint-Jodard, inaugurated in 1796, La Roche in 1799 and the last one of all, Verrières, from 1804. It was the last one to begin operating, but it was not the most modern!

The existence of this latest one was a result of the zeal of Pierre Périer, born in the year 1765 in Saint-Marcellin-en-Forez. He was man who was apparently lanky, dry and austere, but fundamentally good and generous according to the testimonies of those who came in contact with him. At the beginning of the Revolution he took the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; but he soon retracted and became a “missionnaire”. Arrested and detained in Montbrison, the clever intervention of Mlle Antoinette Montet freed him from the dungeon and death. When he was appointed curate at Firminy (Loire) by the Concordat, he gathered in 1803 a small group of students whom, little by little, he prepared for priesthood. Shortly thereafter, he was assigned to Verrières and he trans-

<sup>6</sup> Voyages et Missions, n° 118, July 1973.

ferred there with his students in the course of 1804. The young men occupied the old presbytery which had been returned to the Diocese by the Arthaud family.

It was a vast, old and somewhat crumbling house, including a shed exposed to wind and rain. They also occupied some premises belonging to the Chevalard family, which were rented. It was in no better conditions than the previously mentioned buildings. In 1804 the windows, some missing glass, others badly mounted, did not prevent the rooms from flooding when there were storms. When Marcellin arrived at Verrières accompanied by his mother in November of 1805, he found about a hundred students there.

### 1.7. Very hard life

J.L. Duplay, one of the students, describes it as follows: "Our dormitory was an attic which we reached with a ladder; the windows were in such bad shape that in the winter we froze and during the summer the atmosphere became suffocating". Since the premises were not sufficient to guarantee a corner for everyone, some students were accommodated with neighbouring families. There was no common refectory; each went to the kitchen to receive his modest serving: a bit of broth, a slice of bacon and potatoes. The bread was dark and scarce. Really the board could not allow for much more. The price for the ten-month course was 120 Francs, 12 Francs per month!

By way of recreation or outing our seminarians explored the forests to gather dry wood which was used in the kitchen. Sometimes they asked the farmers for some hay to cover the holes caused by rain and wind to the roof worn out by time. On Tuesdays and Thursdays afternoon, the strongest students helped the farmers to work the pastures or grains, depending on the time of year. That is to say that our young students were far ahead of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, joining manual work to the intellectual.

## 2. PEOPLE AND NAMES

A few names appeared on the stage of Marcellin's life in these first accounts, people around whom his life as a student, as a priest, and especially as a person unfolded. These are related to the minor seminary of Verrières and, since they were the first to enter his life, they made the strongest imprint. It is interesting to hear about their lives and personalities.

### 2.1. Pierre Périer and Antoine Linossier

Marcellin Champagnat had two teachers who initiated him to his spirituality: the priests Pierre Périer and Antoine Linossier.

The first one, the founder and director of the seminary, attempted to give the place stability by according much importance to religious feasts and ceremonies. A romantic in the



style of that time, he shed many tears when during his frequent lessons he pronounced the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Following the advice of Vicar General Bochard, he urged seminarians to receive Communion at least every three weeks. And he frequently repeated to them: “The best way to make progress in perfection is to love God with all your heart and do everything for his love”.

Between 1809 and 1811, although the head superior was Jean-Joseph Barou, the great spiritual animator was Antoine Linossier. Every Sunday, the former Constitutional priest from Jonzieux commented the Epistle and the Gospel in an informal homily. Although he held a law degree, he spoke simply and clearly, concerned about impressing solid and precise concepts upon the minds of his young audience. The sharpness of his ideas were the fruit of his superior intelligence. Every afternoon he presided over a spiritual reading, usually taken from the life of some Saint: Saint Jean-François Regis, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, etc., who were very much in vogue at the time. Sometimes readings were taken from *Christian thoughts about the most important religious truths and duties of the faithful* by M. Humbert. Through questions that followed, he taught the way to directly evaluate inaccuracies and exaggerations from an audience. Linossier had the sufficient ability to add something of interest while he made his comment, or to extract moral applications and enliven them, even including some

pleasant anecdotes. Later, Father Champagnat would use the same methods when addressing the first Brothers in the Institute.

## 2.2. Projection that can be concluded about Father Marcellin Champagnat

Marcellin took very seriously the teaching and examples, conforming to them with all his energy. He loved the religious exercises, participating with such enthusiasm and modesty that he was soon noticed by both the staff and his peers. Since he was an average student, his piety was what moved his teachers to encourage him to continue at the seminary. Unsatisfied with community exercises, he asked for permission to pray in private and, especially, he made some visits to the Blessed Sacrament during recess.

He was considerably devoted to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga and Saint Jean-François Regis. We know that this Saint left his stick at the home of some relatives of Marcellin, who as many other companions, made pilgrimages to La Louvesc every year, where the Saint was buried. With respect to the rosary in honour of the Virgin Mary, it was part of the general rule that applied to all in the afternoon hours. The liturgical ceremonies, so highly praised by Chateaubriand and which in Verrières were done with special splendour, filled the sentimental heart of our young man whose feelings were difficult to con-

ceal. Religious songs moved him to tears, especially one of Saint Teresa of Avila regarding Communion and the desire to die. When he entered the seminary, he received communion every month, then every three weeks and very soon every fortnight. He finally got permission to receive communion every Sunday.

### 2.3. Jean-Louis Duplay (1788-1877)

He was born on January 21st, 1788 in Rebaudes, in the town of Jonzieux, the third in a family with nine children. On 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1804, he entered the minor seminary of Verrières. At the beginning of November of 1809, he joined the minor seminary of Argentière to begin Philosophy and on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1811 he came to the seminary of St. Irenée in Lyon.

Two years later, on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1813, he was ordained deacon by Cardinal Fesch in the church of Saint-Bruno of the Carthusians, and the following year on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1814, Mons. Claude Simon granted him the priesthood at the primate church. That same year the new priest was appointed dogma professor at the minor seminary of Argentière. He taught there for two academic years, and between 1816 and 1818 he taught the same subject at the seminary of Saint-Irenée. He spent the rest of his life in the same in different roles.

While he was a professor of moral theology from 1817 to 1822, his exhaustion compelled him to leave teaching and he limited himself to working in the bursar's office until 1830. During those years the Society of Saint-Sulpice was re-established to administer seminaries. M. Duplay, along with M. Gardette, did not hesitate to join this Society in 1824.

In 1830 he became seriously ill and did not recover until after two years of rest which he spent with his family in Rebaudes or in Marlies with his brother Claude, the parish priest in that town. In 1832, he returned to St. Irenée to resume his work but not for long since in 1834 he succeeded to M. de Charbonnel as Bursar and Procurator of the seminary.

In 1841, following the resignation of M. Philibert Gardette as the superior of the seminary, M. Jean-Louis Duplay was appointed to succeed him. On 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1849, he was appointed canon and *Grande-Vicaire* but without leaving his role as superior of the seminary until 1870, when the wisdom of his 82 years of age led him to resign from his important roles. To replace him, the Society of St. Sulpice appointed M. Meritiaux, who was in turn replaced by M. Lebas on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1875. Under these two superiors, M. Duplay performed tasks appropriate to his age until the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1877, when without pain he fell asleep in the Lord<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat Vol II (References)* by R. Borne/ P. Sester.

## 2.4. Antoine Linossier

He was born in St-Genest-Malifaux. He had degrees in both civil and canon law. He was a Constitutional priest in Jonzieux from 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1791, thus a friend of the Jacobin Jean-Baptiste Champagnat. After retracting and being admitted to the post-Concordat Church he was a providential instrument in awakening the ecclesiastic vocation of Marcellin Champagnat. A gentleman of 46 years, Linossier was not fully trusted among the bishops since Vicar General Bochard suggested “his piety and apostolic zeal” be examined. This mistrust was not really justified.

Since the Superior at Verrières was not a capable organizer, nor had much authority, discipline was poor. Linossier took on the thankless task of general supervisor and despite the semi-paralysis in his legs, with his cane he resiliently paced up and down the study hall. To facilitate his difficult task, he relied on some selected monitors among the older and more serious students. Marcellin was appointed prefect of the dormitory.

In November of 1808, our young student entered the largest class. Forty three students gathered in the same room as the fourth and fifth classes. This arrangement allowed diligent students to move ahead one year as they simultaneously followed both courses.

## 2.5. Jean-Joseph Barou (1772-1855), Vicar General of Lyon

He was born on 25<sup>th</sup> October in Chalmazel, Loire. He was the eldest in “an honourable family where faith and Christian virtues were hereditary<sup>8</sup>”. His priest uncle, M. Barou, called him to his side in the town of St-Bonnet-le-Courreau to teach him Latin. The young Jean-Joseph was then enrolled in the school in Montbrison directed by the Oratorians. He was studying Humanities when the Revolution caused the closing of the school and therefore interrupted his studies. The student returned to Chalmazel. Persecutions broke out against religion and the clergy who remained faithful. Jean-Joseph saw his possibility of becoming a priest begin to fade but he did not definitely give up his vocation entirely. In his hometown, he used his free time to teach catechism to children whom he gathered under an old oak tree.

In 1794, Jean-Joseph was conscripted into the Republican Army with other young men from Chalmazel. They were sent to the Army of the West to fight against the uprising in the region of Vendée. However, he soon deserted with other eleven young men; he crossed the River Vienne, hiding during the day and travelling at night. Once in Chalmazel, he hid in farms for several days until he deemed it more prudent to leave for St-Aignan, in Berry, where one of his

<sup>8</sup> Cattet, *Nécrologie de M. l'abbé Barou*, Journal de Montbrison, April 20 and May 3, 1855.

uncles lived. He spent several winters there, returning to the family farm during good seasons to help with the work in fields. Jean-Joseph gave up on the idea of priesthood. He even went to the extent of preparing a marriage arranged by his family. However, eight days prior to the ceremony he unexpectedly changed his mind and broke the engagement.

Shortly thereafter, his uncle, a missionary at that time in the canton of Tarare, wrote to him and invited him to join him to study Philosophy. Jean-Joseph thus resumed his studies with his uncle and then in Lyon, where M. Linsolas had organized secret courses during the period of Terror. These were directed by M. Mermet, a Sulpician. The seminarians were accommodated wherever they could, including private homes.

In October of 1808 (at the beginning of 1809 according to J. Barou), he became a Philosophy professor at the seminary of Argentière, at the request of his superior, M. Recorbet. His stay in Argentière was brief. On August 9th, 1809, he was appointed parish priest of Verrières, to replace M. Périer who had opened a school in the presbytery. That same school probably became the minor seminary since in September of that same year he was reportedly the head of this seminary. The four higher classes of the seminary of Roche gathered in Verrières in 1811. In November of 1812, under the direction of M. Barou, Verrières received all the Philosophy

students of the Diocese. Among them were Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Marie Vianney. We may add that at that time, M. Barou was the superior of almost all the Marist aspirants. In 1812-1813, Messrs Pousset and Verrier came as professors and M. Courveille as assistant.

In June of 1819, M. Chevalard, the parish priest of St-Pierre in Montbrison, died. According to a prefecture report, this parish was “the focal point of the Department, a centre of religious and Loyalist figures”. The choice of its parish priest required care. The Prefect, M. de Meaux, and other individuals obtained in June of 1819 the appointment of the Superior of Verrières, a man of tradition, however moderate. M. Barou marked his passage through the parish of St-Pierre with the creation of two schools: one for Brothers of Christian Doctrine, and one for the Sisters of St-Charles.

The Archdiocese of Lyon was living a difficult time following the fall of the Empire and the exile Cardinal Fesch. Archbishop de Pins, Archbishop of Amasie, arrived in Lyon in the capacity of Apostolic Administrator at the end of 1823. M. Barou, who had just turned down the role of first Vicar General in Chalons-sur-Marne, was called to the Council of the Archbishop, to be appointed as a Vicar General in Lyon. This was confirmed by a royal ordinance of 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1824. At the time of the death of M. Recorbet on December 17, 1825, he became first Vicar General. It was

especially in this position that he had the opportunity to help the Marist aspirants for whom he seemed to display a special sympathy.

Father Champagnat never hesitated to turn to him during difficult times. In him he always found the assistance of an understanding superior. He stepped in firmly at the time of M. Courveille's withdrawal in 1826; he granted Father Champagnat the help of M. Seon; then he opposed the merger of the Clercs of Saint-Viator with the Little Brothers of Mary.

The government denied him the confirmation to the role of auxiliary Bishop of Lyon suggested by Msgr. de Pins. In 1834, and thanks to his ability, he saved the abbey of the Carthusians that the government had wanted to convert into a fortress. In 1840, Msgr. de Bonald confirmed him in his role, which he exercised until his death. For seventeen years he had been the right hand of Msgr. de Pins. He had enjoyed his full trust, he had displayed overt qualities as an administrator and he had handled almost all the correspondence of the Archbishops.

M. Barou was a humble and selfless man all his life. Upon turning down the position of bishop he had been offered, he dreamed about becoming a rural parish priest. Although he was lodged at the archbishop's residence and took on important re-

sponsibilities, poverty was always his life companion to the extent that, at the time of his death he had hardly enough money to cover for his burial expenses.

Jean Joseph Barou remained able and active until the time of his death following a brief illness, on Holy Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1855, at 83 years of age. Two days before he received last rites in the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop. On the same day of his death, the Cardinal de Bonald addressed the clergy of his diocese a letter filled with affection and admiration for the deceased. We may add that in 1820, his younger brother and godson Jean-Joseph Barou, was appointed parish priest of Montbrison and he remained there until his death in 1862. Justin Barou, his nephew, born in Chalmazel in 1815, was also curate in St-Pierre<sup>9</sup>.

## 2.6. Two fellow students

Jean-Claude Courveille, (1787-1866), promoter of the project of the Society of Mary and Benedictine monk. Born on March 15, 1787 in Usson-en-Forez (Loire), of Claude senior, a merchant, and Margaret Beynieux. During the Revolution his parents hid at home the miraculous statues of Notre Dame de Chambriac, to which Jean-Claude prayed.

When he was ten years old, he caught smallpox which left him with

<sup>9</sup> *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat Vol II (References)* by R. Borne/ P. Sester.

corneal damage and prevented him from studying normally. When he was 18 years old, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1805, he lost his father. In 1809 he was cured of his blindness in the Cathedral of Le Puy and the following year he decided to consecrate himself to the service of Mary. It appears that he enrolled at the minor seminary of Verrières during academic year 1810-1811 and he then continued his studies with his uncle Mathieu Beynieux, the parish priest of Apinac. On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1812, at the same cathedral of Le Puy, he was marked by the idea that Virgin Mary desired a Society bearing her name. This "Revelation of Le Puy" marked the starting point of the Society of Mary.

At All Saints in 1812, he entered the major seminary of Velay to study Philosophy and he began Theology there the following year. However, in the spring of 1814 he was claimed by the diocese of Lyon, to which his parish belonged following the Concordat, through the dimissorial letters for tonsure. He joined St. Irenée by All Saints 1814, and he attended the second and third year of Philosophy, receiving tonsure and minor orders on April 6, 1816, sub-diaconate on the following day, diaconate on July 21<sup>st</sup>, and priesthood on the following day, the 22<sup>nd</sup>. During academic year 1814-1815, he spoke twice with Etienne Déclat of his idea about the Society and won his support.

The following year more followers became associated. Courveille maintained their fervour through frequent

meetings, combining to the idea of the Society a certain number of mysterious statements unrelated to the revelation of Le Puy. Before the end of academic year 1815-1816, he asked for a pledge to be signed and on July 23, 1816, during his first Mass in Fourvière, he distributed Communion to his companions.

He was appointed curate in Verrières in the fall of 1816, and he moved his mother there, but she died shortly afterwards. He seemed already to be making plans for a Marist Third Order. When M. Bochart gave up on having him as part of his projects, Courveille was transferred to Rive-de-Gier on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1817, following an appointment to Bourg-Argental which never came into force. Courveille stayed for two years in Rive-de-Gier and there he showed his concern for the different branches of the Marist project; he remained in contact with the brothers Colin in Cerdon as he purchased in joint ownership with M. Champagnat the first home of the Brothers in La Valla. Several women teachers gathered by M. Lancelot, the parish priest of Rive-de-Gier, decided to become Sisters of Mary. Meanwhile, in Saint-Clair, another group of teachers joined him. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1819, he was appointed parish priest of Épercieux, near Feurs, where he stayed for almost five years. From there, he continued guiding his religious women.

To the clergy of the surrounding area, he introduced himself as the Superior General of the so-called

Brothers of La-Valla, with representatives in Cerdon, Dauphine, and other places. His participation in the arrangements for developing the Society is poorly known and rather controversial, especially with respect to the letters sent to Rome. What is certain is that at least the one dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1822 was signed by him and both the Colins. Consequently, the Pontifical response was addressed to him; he kept the original for some time and made copies before the Colins took it away due to the unwise use he made of it.

Following the arrival of Mgr de Pins in Lyon on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1824, he was authorized to join M. Champagnat, at the request of the latter, to help him with the work of the Brothers. On the following day he jointly purchased with him the land on which the Hermitage would be built. After that, he was introduced as the Superior General of the Brothers; however, the Archbishop who always considered M. Champagnat as the “main founder” of the Brothers, attempted to dampen his zeal.

In the summer of 1825, he manoeuvred in vain in trying to get elected by the Brothers as the official Superior. Shortly thereafter, between 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 1826, he had to retire to Aiguebelle as a result of a moral offence, from where he tried to be recalled to the Hermitage under the title of Superior. Having failed in this attempt and since the Archbishop considered him *persona non grata*, he was compelled to leave the

diocese of Lyon. He thus became a wanderer through several dioceses of France.

He remained for some time in Saint-Clair, from where he called on Chavanay to resolve his financial issues with M. Champagnat. He then settled in the Abbey of Saint-Antoine. One part of this Abbey was purchased the following year by his religious sisters who moved in and remained until their expulsion in 1903. Courveille failed at his attempt of a foundation of Brothers in that same Abbey. Some Brothers from the Hermitage who came to support him did not stay. The attempt to establish a novitiate or teacher training college financed by the Department failed after two years. Courveille settled in Apinac, where he had property and where the Archbishop tolerated him as a regular priest.

On 9<sup>th</sup> July, Msgr. Bouvier, Bishop of Mans, gave him faculties and a letter of introduction for Solesmes, where, as of 27<sup>th</sup> August 1836, he was authorized to take the Benedictine habit. Professed on March 21<sup>st</sup> of 1838, he remained in this Abbey until his death, exercising different tasks such as itinerant preacher between 1847 and 1852 (further details in OM 2, pp. 954-955).

In the Society of Mary, Father Colin kept silent about him and his prior companions believed he was dead or vanished; however, in 1846 a missionary, probably M. Touche, notified F. Mayet that he was in fact still



alive and provided his place of residence. In July of 1851 and in February and May of 1852, Father Mayet obtained from him information about the origins of the Society of Mary (OM 2, pp. 557-558) and later, in 1860, he wrote to him to clarify some information. Courveille died in Solesmes on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1866<sup>10</sup>.

## 2.7. J.M. Vianney, the holy Curé of Ars

He was born on May 8th, 1786, in Dardilly, at the north-west of Lyon. He was the fourth of six brothers in a family of farmers. He briefly attended the town school since he had begun his studies early with the parish priest of Écully, M. Balley. Unfortunately, he made no progress. Ashamed, he made a pilgrimage to La Louvesc in 1806; many other seminarians in distress used to do so. At the same time, two years prior to Marcellin, he filed for exemption from military service as a candidate to the seminary.

In 1809, a bombshell! Jean-Marie and three other seminarians received the mobilization order to join ranks. His parents searched in vain for a substitute and on 26<sup>th</sup> October, he entered the barracks in Lyon from where he left for Spain, through Roanne. Taking advantage of a providential opportunity, he deserted on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1810, and under the fake name of Jérôme Vincent, he returned to France and hid in the woods of Forez

near Les Noës. His younger brother presented himself as a volunteer in his place. The deserter was therefore released from military service and could resume his studies with the same priest, Balley. He was tonsured on the following May 28<sup>th</sup>. After so much back and forth, he finally succeeded in beginning his philosophy studies in Verrières. He was 26 years old and he had to do so in French since he was extremely behind.

Like Champagnat and Colin, he was rated “very good” on “character” but unlike them only rated a “good” on “behaviour”. The future Curé of Ars earned a “very good” for “effort” but his results were “very poor”. The strictest individuals are often poor students. What a beautiful teaching example!

## 2.8. Marcellin, once he entered Verrières, had to study laboriously

### *The faculty*

When Marcellin entered Verrières, the teaching faculty was limited to Pierre Perier, parish priest and director of the seminary. He was assisted by M. Raynaud, lay professor, who arrived the year before from Millery (Rhône). That same month of November of the year 1805 he was joined by Jean-Baptiste Nobis, a tonsured cleric of 26 years of age, born in Charlieu (Loire) who had completed three years of Theology.

<sup>10</sup> See also: Br. Louis Laurent (Pierre Zind), in *Bulletin de l'Institut*, n° 163, July 1956, pp. 215-230.



### **Initial trials**

Our young Champagnat was already 16 and a half years old and already quite tall. He spoke his mother-tongue, Franco-Provençal, which was a variation of the Occitan. The director of the seminary judged he was behind in the language of the school, namely French, which was an indispensable discipline to write and read. He placed him in a beginners' class assisted by M. Reynaud. Thus, he repeated the year of Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue.

Physically, he stood out among his companions. Intellectually, he was quite behind in the midst of a large number of much smarter young boys. His concerned look and his rough ways of a "Danube peasant" soon provoked from his classmates many bad jokes about him. At meal-time, he did not dare to present his plate to be served or to ask for what he needed. Life was not good to him!

The pious teenager took pains to study and, filled with good will, he asked the director to be authorized to begin Latin with the Bistac grammar. In second quarter he went into the eighth class and since he had studied Latin with his brother-in-law Arnaud, he soon was in the top positions, thereby salvaging some honour for his 17 years of age. In parallel to his school success, his openness, his dedication in his studies and his good conduct earned him the appreciation of his classmates. He therefore successfully completed his first year in the seminary with a positive result.

In November of 1806, Marcellin entered the seventh class. There were 150 seminarians. The material conditions did not change, aside from the few repairs which the students arranged for themselves. A new lay teacher who had studied at Le Puy came to strengthen the diminished teaching faculty. Besides grammar, he knew little else. However, he had to his advantage adopted the popular grammar of Lhomond. His name was Benoît Chomaraz. With him, the discipline in classrooms improved significantly; until then had left much to be desired.

We have much information about Verrières in the years 1807 and 1808. In addition to the director, who was still in charge of the parish, the staff included seven teachers and five employees. Antoine Chapuy, originally from Usson (Loire), of only 21 years of age, took the beginners; he knew no Latin. J.B. Bachelard, from the same town and of 37 years of age, was responsible for the eighth class. He had studied in Le Puy and served as a teacher in Monistrol. He was a hard-working and intelligent person who himself aimed at entering the major seminary. The seventh class was entrusted to Claude Crepet, from Chazelles-sur-l'Avieue (Loire). He was 27 years old, with two years of Theology, a good and pious nature and he could teach grammar.

Lastly, the sixth class was made up of 28 students. That was the class of Marcellin Champagnat. The teacher, Simon Breuil, originally from La Roche

(Loire) was 20 years old, only one year older than Marcellin. It was his first time as a teacher and although he had completed two years of Theology, he had not been tonsured. The diocesan administration had classified the young beginner as “average”. Naturally, all these shortcomings affected students. The capabilities and work of Champagnat were sufficient, but his conduct was average. In 1808 Marcellin Champagnat was not yet a candidate for canonisation.

Vicar General Bochart was very straightforward when referring to the teaching faculty. He stated:

“The teachers, with the exception of M. Crepet, do not display the attitude or specific forms of piety and zeal. Apparently several of them seldom receive communion and as to the others, it seems the relations with the Superior are not entirely cordial<sup>11</sup>.”

### 3. SOME CRUCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

#### 3.1. He avoided military service

Among those called to the ranks in 1808, there was Marcellin Champagnat, 19 years old, a student in the sixth class. On 10<sup>th</sup> February, Cardinal Fesch registered him as a student at the seminary, releasing him from military service. Thus, he did not have to kill or burn for the glory

of the Empire, nor did he have to defect as the Curé of Ars did in 1810.

#### 3.2. He found an excellent guide

On June 11 of 1806, the minor seminary received an excellent teacher, namely Antoine Linossier, who had renounced his classes of Rhetoric at the Lycée of Lyon and the 3000 Francs that the University had granted to this position.

#### 3.3. Marcellin Champagnat as prefect

In his capacity of *surveillant* (supervisor or prefect), Marcellin had his own bedroom in the alcove; so, after making his rounds through the dormitory to close doors and windows, and after checking that all were in bed, he waited for the deep breaths to indicate all were asleep. He took advantage of this moment to light his small lamp and devote himself to his studies for long periods. He carefully examined the *Selectae e Veteri Testamento Historiae* of Lhomond, or reviewed Cicero, Virgil, etc. Sometimes, he feverishly turned the pages of his dictionary to translate a version or some subject addressed by the teacher.

This dedication to his studies and extra work weakened his health somewhat. However, it accelerated

<sup>11</sup> *Voyages et Missions*, n° 119, October 1973.

his progress, in light of his age. The following year (1809-1810), when the future St. Marcellin began third class, Antoinette Montet gave the Chateau of Soleillant to the minor seminary. Life continued being hard but the 313 students were no longer cramped. The boarding tariff was increased from 12F to 15F per month. In August of 1809, the founder of Verrières was transferred to the parish of Millery (Rhône). The future Vicar General, Jean-Joseph Barou, was appointed to replace him.

In November of 1810, Marcellin began Humanities, that is the second class, along with 24 classmates. At the same time, a singular 23-year old student was in the fifth class. A few years later he would be connected closely to Marcellin; his name was Jean-Claude Courveille.

#### 4. THE CONTENTS OF THE RESOLUTIONS OF 1812

“My Lord and my God I promise to never offend you again, to perform acts of faith, hope and others anytime I think of it; not to return to the tavern without necessity; to avoid bad company<sup>12</sup>”.

“In a word, to not do anything against your service; on the contrary, to set a good example, induce others to practice virtue as much as I can. I also promise to instruct others as to your divine precepts; teach catechism to the poor as well as the rich.

O Divine Saviour, ensure that I faithfully comply with all the resolutions I have just made.”  
From then on, Marcellin never set foot in the tavern, not even in Marlihes. The process for the proclamation of his heroic virtues [the first step towards canonisation] reads: “A nun originally from Marlihes who died in Vernaison said she had seen many times the Servant of God meeting with other seminarians after leaving Mass. When invited by his fellows to have a drink, he never accepted, always making up some excuse to return home<sup>13</sup>.”

The resolutions reveal him to be: *Marcellin Champagnat, a self-possessed man*. These expressions clearly manifest it: “I will no longer commit the sin...,” “I will not enter a tavern without necessity...,” “I will avoid bad company”<sup>14</sup>. He possessed great power of sublimation. That is to say, he was capable of guiding and holding the strength of his tendencies onto a higher level. His guiding values made sublimation possible. If a consecrated man renounces values such as the formation of a family, the affection and love for a woman, it is because he aims at values which are better for him than the ones he leaves behind.

##### 4.1. Some final comments

As stated by Cicero two thousand years ago, great things are usually not achieved through muscle strength and physical abilities, rather

<sup>12</sup> IGM. op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> *Voyages et Missions*, n° 121, April 1974.

<sup>14</sup> AFM, 131.

through reflection, discernment and perseverance.

Let us take a retrospective look at La Valla; let us go back one hundred and ninety six years and we will see Marcellin Champagnat walking through the parish with an attitude of self-confidence and also the confidence of his parishioners: Certain of their affection, certain of what he must achieve, we see a joyful man, who feels happy, and a parish that admires him, loves him and considers him a saint. We see him overflowing with attention and concern for the elderly, indulgence and understanding for the young, charity and compassion for the poor, kindness and amiability for everyone<sup>15</sup>. He placed himself at the disposal of all.<sup>16</sup>

A parishioner, Jean-François Badard, says: “He was the father of the entire town of La Valla. The good he did is inestimable<sup>17</sup>.”

The example and the words he has left are clear, concise all imperative. A simple and humble man, he was accepted by all, loved, and called “FATHER”! His profile began to be sketched through these simple and brief lines of his first resolutions, two hundred years ago. Little by little, they were strengthened and in subsequent commitments they were defined until they outlined a man of God for the Kingdom.

Marcellin kept this small notebook for years as a treasure that nursed God’s goodness and grace.

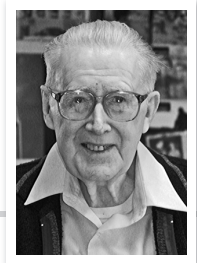
<sup>15</sup> *Marist Notebooks*, 1, pp. 84-85.

<sup>16</sup> B.Silvestre, *Mémoires*- Rome p.1-12

<sup>17</sup> Doc. on the life of F. Champagnat, *Enquête diocésaine*, Appendice 1,p.18.

## Champagnat et Colin

# MARISTS IN THE MAKING



**Br. Frederick  
McMahon**

A study in three parts of the personal and spiritual development of Jean-Claude Colin S.M. and Marcellin Champagnat S.M. and the relationship between these Marists in their respective apostolates. Letters are also examined for their bearing on events and characters

### ***PART I***

A study of the personal and spiritual development of Jean-Claude Colin and Marcellin Champagnat.

### ***PART II***

Revelations from their correspondence: 1828-1835.

### ***PART III***

Revelations from their correspondence: 1835-1840.

A conclusion is then drawn about the Colin-Champagnat relationship.

- This is followed by three Appendices
- The Marist Brothers as part of the Society of Mary,
- The Coadjutor Brothers,
- The Twelve of Fourvière.

This study because of its length, will appear in three successive Marist Notobooks No. 32, No. 33 and No. 34.

## PART I

The period from birth to seminary training of both Colin and Champagnat is outlined separately. There then follows an account of the seminary influences on the two men. Subsequently, their respective attempts to fulfil the pledge of Fourvière are considered up to the year 1824 – Colin at Cerdon; Champagnat at La Valla.

The effects of the breaking into two of the formerly huge archdiocese of Lyon are then considered, with Colin moving into the apostolate of country spiritual renewal missions in the diocese of Belley, and Champagnat setting up his Notre Dame de l'Hermitage as a house of formation in the archdiocese of Lyon.

Colin's problems in starting a new apostolate as head of the minor seminary in Belley and Champagnat's problems with Courveille are both given. The collapse of the Marist priests' movement in Lyon, Colin's support for Champagnat in this crisis, and the renewal of the Marist priests in Lyon with the arrival of Séon are then detailed. Correspondingly, the Belley scene and Colin's activities there from 1824-1828 are outlined.

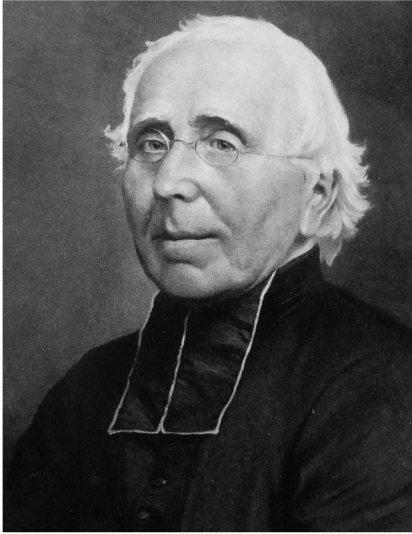
This first Part concludes with an outline of the personality and character of, first, Colin, and then Champagnat. This is followed by an attempt to outline the spirituality and the devotion to Mary of the respective leaders.

## Jean-Claude Colin — from birth to seminarian

Jean-Claude Colin was born into the French Revolution. His parents were of the Catholic party, which refused to compromise with the new order of things. They died within a fortnight of each other in the spring of 1795, leaving eight children, among them Jean-Claude, not yet five years old.

An uncle and an old servant-maid took care of the children. Their devotedness was genuine, but they did not succeed in maintaining a milieu where the orphan boy, weak since birth, could develop at ease. The same orphan boy, having seen seals affixed to buildings and visits by the police, had early experience of the hostility of the world around him. It is not surprising that he quickly turned in on himself, thus developing timidity and a shyness that caused him to shun social relationships, a condition which stayed with him all his life. He was the retiring type, loath to put himself forward and loving to be alone. He thus grew up to be a timid boy, ill at ease in social contacts, happy in a solitude which he filled with readings and spiritual presences.

"Alone with God only" such was the dream he carried with him when he went to the minor seminary, which he was invited to enter in at the age of fourteen, the time of his First Communion. In the fervent ambience of the seminary, under ex-



Jean-Claude Colin

cellent educators, he matured a decision to live for God, cultivating an awareness of hidden virtues that God sees in secret and developing a love for the Blessed Virgin, who had taken the place of the mother he had lost. “Something little, interior, entirely devoted to Mary” is how he glimpsed the milieu in which he wanted to live and work.

Sickness dogged Jean-Claude during priestly training, especially during his minor seminary years, but he seemed to have had no trouble in maintaining a good study record. A year of Logic at Verrières (1812-1813) brought him into first contact with Marcellin Champagnat, who had been there since 1805.

In the major seminary of St Irénée at Lyon, which Colin entered on All Saints 1813, his aims began to take shape. From the beginning of his major seminary studies he asked Fr Cholleton to be his spiritual director. The latter convinced him that he should take ordination to Minor Orders and the Sub-Diaconate. This he did on 6 January 1814.

Tension between the prospect of a pastoral ministry and the desire for the hidden life developed; it began to find relief when a seminarian, Jean-Claude Courveille, launched in fervent words the idea of a Society of Mary; one could be a priest sheltered by obedience and under the protection of Mary. “That’s what suits you,” thought Colin, when, with Marcellin Champagnat and about a dozen others, he gave his name to the project.

### **Marcellin Champagnat — from birth to seminarian**

Marcellin Champagnat was born in 1789, just before the outbreak of the French Revolution. During his boyhood he received mixed impressions of that memorable event. Apart from his mother, who was religiously minded, as was instanced by her successful endeavours to have Marcellin re-admitted to the minor seminary, there was another woman who influenced Marcellin in his early years, a refugee from the Revolution who was living with the Champagnats. This was Marcellin’s

paternal aunt Louise, a Sister of St Joseph who had been excluded from her convent by the Revolution; she was no devotee of that great event. On the other hand, his own father had cautiously welcomed the Revolution and had become a leading town official, implementing the laws of the new Regime. Indeed, it must have been thrilling for young Marcellin to see his father, ceremoniously dressed in the uniform of a Colonel of the National Guard, officiating at pomp and circumstance occasions in the town square.

Marcellin Champagnat was no scholar. He came rather late to seminary life after having well-nigh established himself as an enthusiastic young farmer before the arrival of the clerical recruiter in 1803; Marcellin was then fourteen. Once he had settled to seminary life and to a more determined approach to his studies, he performed adequately but was never among the high achievers. In this he had much in common with Jean-Marie Vianney, the future Curé of Ars, at one stage a fellow-seminarian. Indeed this duo of non-intellectuals led one commentator to observe wryly: "It seems that sanctity is inversely proportional to brain-power."

We have some record of the academic achievements of the two future Marists. It comes from the exam-

ination results of the Logic Class at Verrières 1812-1813. For "Conduct" ("Very good"), and "Character" ("Good"), Jean-Claude and Marcellin received similar results. For "Study" Jean-Claude was awarded "Well", while Marcellin scored "Very much" (which really meant he tried hard). It was under the heading "Knowledge" that the difference really showed; Colin's award was "Good"; Champagnat's was "Weak, mediocre". Poor Jean-Marie Vianney brought up the rear; his "Knowledge" was "Very Weak<sup>1</sup>." You have to be humble to be a saint.

Champagnat came to the St Irénée major seminary with Colin; they were together from 1813 to priestly ordination in 1816. Together they experienced the formative processes of Sulpician education; together with others, they were influenced by the charismatic Jean-Claude Courveille and his concept of a Society of Mary; together they listened to talk of the "wars and rumours of wars" that prevailed in seminary conversation during the period of the decline of Napoléon's power. Cardinal Fesch, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyon and uncle of Napoleon, was not at the top of the popularity chart at the seminary, which became the scene of seething political talk.

Because of the political situation, the scholastic year 1814-1815 was a

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<sup>1</sup> Origines Maristes, Vol. 1, Doc. 22.

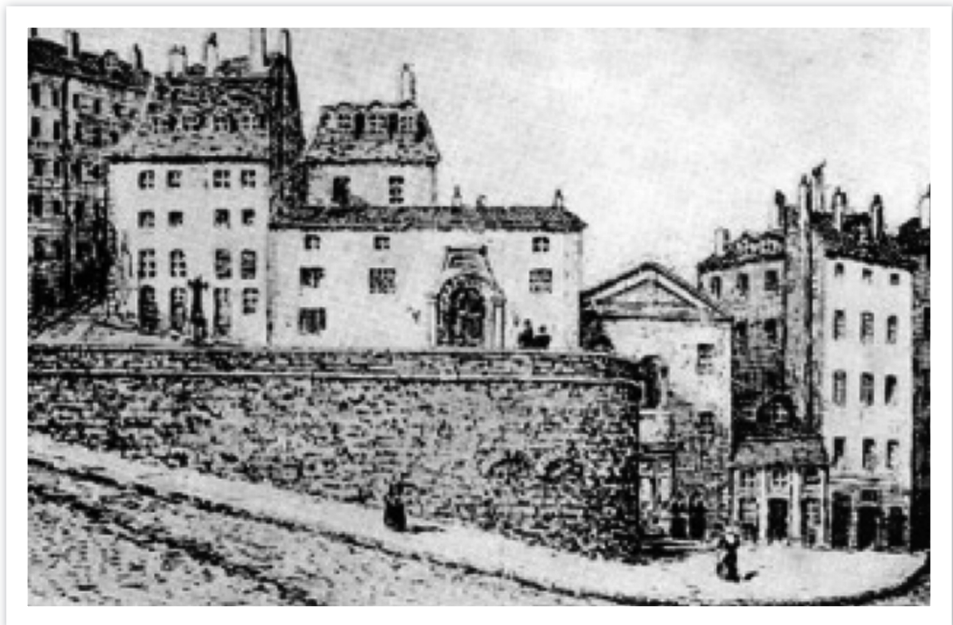


wretched one at St Irénée. Recollection was impossible; there were more discussions on politics than on theology. Jean-Marie Vianney spent the year with his parish priest at Ecully, except for some time in the months immediately preceding ordination. Marcellin Champagnat fell sick and had to return to his people for some months to regain his strength. To have some idea of the turmoil the seminarians endured during these turbulent times, we should bear in mind that, on 23 June 1815, just five days after the bloodbath of Waterloo, Colin and Champagnat were ordained deacons. Shortly after Waterloo, Austrian troops entered Lyon.

## Influences on Colin and Champagnat at the major seminary

Let us now examine the features of life at the major seminary which were so influential in fashioning the characters of Colin and Champagnat. Not only did the rules and regulations of the seminary affect the character formation of these two founders, but they also had a bearing on the formulation of the Constitutions and Rules that emerged for the Institutes founded by these men.

Father Gardette, a Sulpician at heart, was in charge of the seminary of St Irénée. He infused into the



Major Seminary of Saint Irénée, Lyon

seminarians the Sulpician spirit and a zeal that nothing could stop. Looking at the men coming out of the seminary of St Irénée, we find that they possessed the main facets of Sulpician formations: the concept of God was very highly developed—trainees were to have a very lively reverence for God and a hatred of sin as an offence against God. Self-denial was carried to the limit with the purpose of sharing in the mysteries of Christ, especially in His annihilation in the mystery of the Incarnation. A love for the first three places was recommended to the young seminarians— the crib, the cross and the altar. They were also exhorted to have a deep devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to practise total consecration to Jesus and Mary and to cultivate devotion to the angels and the saints. Zeal for the apostolate, by means of catechism and charitable works, was also part of their formation. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin as Mediatrix was emphasised, as was also the practice of the virtue of humility. All these aspects of Sulpician formation influenced both Colin and Champagnat.

Other features of the formation accorded Colin and Champagnat may be seen in Regulations and directions at the major seminary, which were contained in a small book, *The Seminarian's Guide*, a copy of which

was in the hands of each student. Some sections are significant for the formation of these two Marists. For example, devotion to the Blessed Virgin occupied a special place:

Unlimited confidence in her goodness; recourse to her in all needs; attention to honour her in all their actions— but leaving her to dispose of them entirely; doing everything in union with her; remaining faithful to holy practices— saying the Rosary each day, thinking of some mystery of Our Lord or of the Holy Virgin, and asking for some virtue<sup>2</sup>.

At St Irénée behavioural formation was also attended to in the regulations, as, for example, the matter of fraternal charity. All relations with the neighbour were based on the principle: “To bear suffering of any kind that comes from others, while never giving the neighbour anything to suffer.” Some extracts from the “Rule” follow:

The seminarian should not speak of his fellow students at all, or only in a favourable manner . . . To support their faults as we wish them to support ours. No humiliating retorts, no finding fault with others unless it is a duty to do so. Also, no particular friendships, but edification, kind attention, mildness, untiring patience and charity towards all; to seize every occasion to render a service, provided there is in it nothing against the Rule<sup>3</sup>.

The regulations also prescribed that the seminarian must strive to acquire a good spirit —

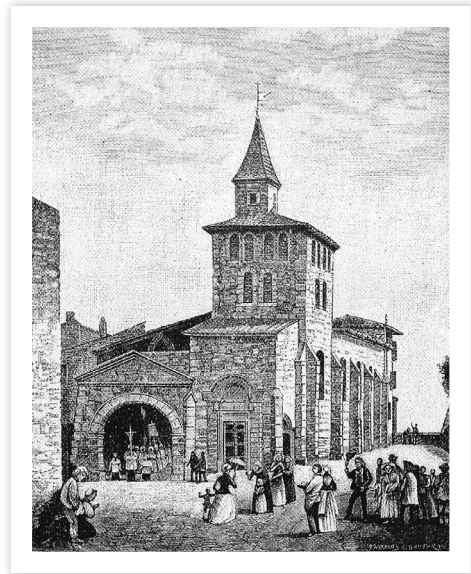
<sup>2</sup> “The Seminarian's Guide”, quoted in “Voyages et Missions”, no. 126 (Br Louis Laurent).

<sup>3</sup> “The Seminarian' Guide”, quoted in “Voyages et Missions”, No. 127. (Br Louis Laurent).

the spirit of simplicity or of holy childhood, the spirit of blind obedience, of a humble and hidden life, the spirit of charity and openness of heart, the spirit of dying to oneself and to the world, the spirit of holy indifference in the hands of God and superiors<sup>4</sup>.

This sampling of the rules of seminary life is sufficient to show that those observing them faithfully could be well advanced on the pathway to sanctity when they passed through the portals of St Irénée for the last time. The contents of “The Seminarian’s Guide” would be an influence on Colin and Champagnat when they set about the fashioning of Constitutions and Rules for their respective Institutes.

For the main features of priestly formal studies at St Irénée we find that courses in dogma, morality, scripture and liturgy took up a good part of the day. It is interesting to note that Louis Bailly’s book “Dogmatic and Moral Theology for the Use of Seminarists” was the seminary text. The first edition was dated 1789, a reprint being commissioned in Lyon in 1804. Rigoristic in morality and Gallican in its treatise on the Church, this Manual was eventually put on the Index (in 1852) because of its Gallicanism. It was from this work that the Marist aspirants studied their Theology during their first two years at the major seminary.



Chapel of ND de Fourvière, Lyon, in 1805

The Rule for students at St Irénée required that they “spend in study the time which is not employed in any other exercise of the timetable<sup>5</sup>.” Seminarists should carefully prepare the set matter “by studying first of all the author being followed, then reading something from other authors who treat the same matter, but never reading these latter without having studied the author prescribed and without having consulted beforehand the professors in order to learn from them if it is useful to read these other authors<sup>6</sup>.”

Fr Cholleton, spiritual director of most of the seminarists of the Colin-

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. No. 126.

Champagnat group, was also their Professor of Moral Theology. He had received little preparation (he was only 26 at the time), yet he won the confidence of all as a spiritual director. In moral theology rigorism followed the strictest opinion, or the most probable. At Rome this rigorism was being relaxed. St Alphonsus Liguori, who was Beatified in Rome in 1816, favoured a less strict attitude in Moral Law. Nevertheless, at Lyon rigorism remained intact until 1832 when Gousset brought in the teaching of St Alphonsus. The French Church of the time of Colin and Champagnat was rigorist and Gallican. The teaching of Cholleton was rigid, but perhaps a little easier than that of others. Priests in France, in general, followed the rigorist rules.

Fr Jean Cholleton, like his friend Fr Cattet, had studied at St Sulpice in Paris and was only 25 when appointed to Lyon. Enemy of novelty in morality, he taught a legal moral rigorism, as much opposed to the probabilism of the Jesuits as to the equi-probabilism of St Alphonsus Liguori. His favourite maxim was taken from Proverbs 22:28. "Do not exceed the old limits set by your fathers." Director of conscience of Marcellin Champagnat, he succeeded him (in theory) from 1840-1845 in regard to the spiritual direc-

tion of the Little Brother of Mary<sup>7</sup>. His appointment to this position was made by Fr Colin.

Champagnat came from the seminary with this rather rigorist formation, but as a curate he knew how to be sympathetic in the confessional. Br Theodose stated: "Fr Champagnat disapproved of rigorism, which destroys charity in the communities<sup>8</sup>." In the Informative Process of his Beatification, we find evidence like this: "Fr Champagnat heard very many Confessions at La Valla; people sought him by preference. ... In his direction he was very paternal<sup>9</sup>."

Champagnat was already dead when Colin's directive to his Marists was sent out: "St Thomas for dogma, St Liguori for morality, St Francis de Sales for asceticism." These were the three masters Colin wished his priests to follow. It is interesting to note that, in his early days at Cerdon, Colin was very scrupulous in matters pertaining to the confessional: "When I left the seminary, I was writing to Fr Cholleton, my director, at every moment. I did not dare as much as to take a step without consulting him<sup>10</sup>." Encouraged by Cholleton, Colin moved away from the rigorism inculcated in the seminary and eventually chose to accept St Liguori as moral master and to recommend him to

<sup>7</sup> "The Seminarian's Guide", quoted in "Voyages et Missions", no. 125 (Br Louis Laurent).

<sup>8</sup> "Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat" p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.15.

<sup>10</sup> "Origines Maristes", 2, Doc. 480, Lines 2-3.

others; this was a far cry from the Colin who was raised on rigorism. The missions in Le Bugey taught Colin a lot; indeed, the pastoral situation was a real learning situation for both these young priests.

Both Colin and Champagnat, as, indeed, all the early Marists, were submissive to, and devoted to, the Holy Father. Not for them the nationalistic Gallicanism of some members of the French clergy, e.g., Vicar-General Bochard. They were “Ultramontagnards”; they looked beyond the mountains of the French Alps to find their religious leader in Rome – the Pope.

Thus, formation along the lines of Sulpician spirituality at St Irénée was strongly influential on both Colin and Champagnat. The personality and character of each of these men would be partly fashioned, to different degrees and in different ways, by the particular type of spiritual formation they absorbed at St Irénée.

But the time now approached for the termination of their priestly training. By 1816 the political scene had become settled and most of the group of would-be Marists proceeded to ordination. They also progressed toward a commitment to the future Society of Mary, for throughout his major seminary years Courveille had continued his proselytising efforts in this matter. Thus, for Courveille’s young followers, ordination was immediately followed by the “Pledge of Fourvière”, a commitment

to form a Society dedicated to Mary, a consecration that was taken to heart in different degrees by those who thus laid their future lives on the line.

### **Early stages of fulfilling the “Pledge of Fourvière” — Colin**

In the vast archdiocese of Lyon, Fr Courveille, the one who initiated the idea of a Society of Mary, worked very vigorously after ordination in 1816. Unfortunately, he did not work prudently and thus lost favour with the archdiocesan authorities. True, he attempted (unsuccessfully) the formation of a Third Order of Mary at Verrières, he achieved some success with his Sisters of Mary, originally situated at Rive-de-Gier, and then in a different diocese (Grenoble), but the few Brothers whom he formed at Feurs quickly dispersed.

Courveille had the unhappy knack of “treading on toes”. His frequent changes of appointment in the archdiocese were not only a sign of the disfavour of the authorities, but they also constituted an impediment to his efforts to establish the Society of Mary on a solid basis.

Fr Jean-Claude Colin, another of the twelve “apostles” who signed the Fourvière pledge, was doing good work for the Society of Mary in Cerdon, in the northern region of the immense archdiocese. As his brother’s curate in this small, backwater parish of Cerdon, he had time on his hands





General view of Cerdon

to express his ideas about the future Society of Mary; he began to write. The Rule for the new Society began to take shape, no doubt incorporating some of the principles the St Irénée group had forged during their discussions. During a long period of assured confidence and serene spiritual consolations Colin fashioned a manuscript Rule and its practices, later described Fr Boyer, the examiner, as “more for angels than for men<sup>11</sup>.” Nevertheless, it was the basis for future discussion with Church authorities in regard to a definitive Rule and it was a document which could be put into the hands of higher

Church officials with a view to the approval of a new religious Institute.

Letters went back and forth between Cerdon and Rome and, when an invitation came from the Roman authorities, it was decided to send Jean-Claude to discuss matters with the Nuncio in Paris, to whom they were asked to address themselves. Fr Pierre Colin and Courville were also involved in these arrangements, but Courville, being charged with a parish, reluctantly gave way to Colin the younger, who was not only free from parish responsibilities but also had a Rule in hand for discussion with

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in “Lectures on Society of Mary History, J. Coste, S.M., Page 56.

Church authorities. Besides, the same Colin, who at the beginning had been so shy and timorous in parish work, had blossomed into a fiery and effective exponent of the pulpit. Despite his natural shyness and desire for obscurity, he could “stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood<sup>12</sup>” when it came to arguing for something in which he believed – and he believed passionately in a Society of Mary.

Jean-Claude Colin was active in other ways. He had won over his parish-priest brother to membership of the infant Society and, together, they were in the process of forming the nucleus of a group of religious Sisters.

The appointment of a new bishop and the establishment of a new diocese carved out of the huge archdiocese of Lyon came out of the blue in 1823; to the would-be Marists it was both a shock and a blow. The seven years since 1816 had been lean enough – biblically lean – but this event seemed to indicate that there would no years of plenty for them in the immediate future.

Apart from Jean-Claude Colin and his priest-brother Pierre, there was no evidence of Marist priests living in community, and, even in their case, the Colins were together only because one (Pierre) was a parish priest and the other (Jean-Claude) was his curate.

Priests in community, lay Brothers, Third Order of Mary — all three being envisaged for the forthcoming Society of Mary — were not much in evidence in 1823. A fourth branch, reluctantly agreed to by the twelve “apostles” in the time leading up to the pledge, was showing signs of life under the leadership of the “montagnard”, Fr Marcellin Champagnat. His little group of teaching Brothers in the southeast of the archdiocese, although unauthorised by both Church and State, was becoming entrenched after passing through the crisis of a dearth of vocations in 1822. This group was, however, threatened by Vicar General Bochard, who wanted to absorb Champagnat’s Brothers into his own congregation.

So this was the scene for the Society of Mary when, as mentioned above, the great shock of 1823 occurred: Church authorities in Rome decided to divide the immense archdiocese of Lyon into two parts. The second, and smaller, region of the former grand archdiocese was to be known as the diocese of Belley; the larger region retained the name of Archdiocese of Lyon.

The blow for the would-be Marists was that they were now separated — the two Colins being in the new diocese of Belley, while Courveille and Champagnat remained in the archdiocese of Lyon. Furthermore, there was an authority change for both

<sup>12</sup> W.Shakespeare, “Henry V”, Act III, Sc. I, Line 7.

groups, Bishop Devie being the nominee as the first bishop of Belley and Archbishop de Pins as the Apostolic Administrator for Lyon. De Pins was not accorded the title of Archbishop, however, since the former leader of the archdiocese, Cardinal Fesch, refused to resign, electing to reside in Rome. Part of the blow to the Marists was that they were separated; the other part was that they had to deal with unknown diocesan leaders — no easy situation for those endeavouring to establish a new religious group.

### **The division of the archdiocese — Colin in Belley**

Aware of the difficulties that would arise for the Marists as a consequence of the separation of dio-

ceses, the Colin brothers wrote to the Papal Nuncio in Paris, Monseigneur Macchi, begging him to take their part in establishing a community of Marist priests before the official date of the breaking-up of the archdiocese of Lyon. The letter was followed by a second, unsuccessful visit to Paris by Fr Jean-Claude (May 1823). Since the bishop designate of Le Puy was residing in Paris at the time, Jean-Claude approached him in a final attempt to set up the Marist priests in the place of origin of Courveille's Marist dream — Le Puy. All this manoeuvring came to nothing. The Papal Nuncio placed the whole Marist dossier in the hands of the new bishop of Belley; Jean-Claude Colin and his companions would have to come to terms with this new, unknown prelate.



**View of Belley**



Jean-Claude's next step was to try to induce the archdiocesan authorities of Lyon to release Marists to the neighbouring diocese of Belley. Before Archbishop de Pins took possession of his See, Jean-Claude approached all three Vicars General; they were sympathetic but unhelpful. A second application to the Vicars General was, however, more promising on the subject of releasing Marist aspirants to the diocese of Belley. We read about these interviews in letters written by the younger Colin to Bishop Devie in May and in July 1824. Finally, in November 1824, the Colin brothers, having failed to meet up with Archbishop de Pins when they made a journey to Lyon, wrote to him, requesting a formal interview. Jean-Claude alone made the journey in high hope, but the meeting did not turn out well. Of course, Colin should have expected a rebuttal because, in the previous month, Fr Terrailon, one of those who made the Pledge in 1816, had attempted to have himself transferred from the archdiocese to Cerdon to join the Colin brothers; he was refused. Here, then, is Jean-Claude's account of his interview with the archbishop in a letter to Bishop Devie, 27 November 1824: "Finally, his Lordship the Administrator repeated several times that he would not allow a single priest to leave his diocese. All of that neither troubles us nor discourages us; we seek and we ask for only the will

of God. And, if your Lordship wishes to continue his benevolence and his protection towards us, we remain even more full of confidence that the Society will remain where it has already taken root<sup>13</sup>."

Jean-Claude, therefore, was going to make the diocese of Belley the scene of his operations, but he did not intend to lose contact with those active in neighbouring Lyon, Champagnat and Courveille being the proactive duo there.

### **The division of the archdiocese — Champagnat in Lyon**

Champagnat, but not Courveille, found immediate favour with the new archdiocesan leader, for his Brothers were performing a work dear to the heart of de Pins — the apostolate of the schools. It was in 1824 that the bishops of France were entrusted by the government with seeing to the education of children in primary schools. In Champagnat de Pins found a man already well under way with carrying out that vital work.

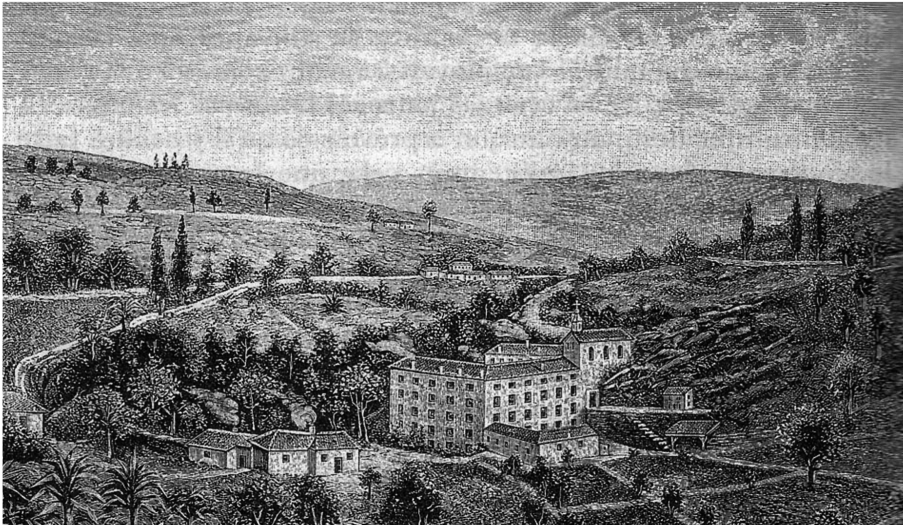
On the advice of his former Superior at the major seminary, Champagnat asked the archdiocesan authorities for Courveille to be placed at La Valla to help him in the work with the Brothers. The archdiocesan Council's record is brief:

<sup>13</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 121.

“Seeing that Epercieux is a small parish and within easy reach of neighbouring churches, Fr Courville, who is priest-in-charge, is authorised to go to help Fr Champagnat in his Institute of School Brothers<sup>14</sup>.”

The date is 12 May 1824.

In appointing Courville to La Vallée, the archbishop’s Council recognised the importance of Champagnat’s work, supported it financially, and gave Champagnat partial release from parish duties to carry out his project<sup>15</sup>.



L'Hermitage – 1836

It was in May 1825 that the community from La Vallée took up residence in the newly built Mother House of Champagnat’s Brothers, which was given the name Notre Dame de l’Hermitage. Shortly afterwards, the archdiocese gave Champagnat an additional priest-helper,

Terrailon, the one who had made a vain attempt to transfer to the diocese of Belley. Terrailon, however, was a reluctant recruit to the Hermitage; his heart was set on Cerdon, as is shown in his letter to Jean-Claude Colin of 31 October, 1824:

<sup>14</sup> Decision of Council of Mgr de Pins, O.M. 1, Doc.101.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. O.M. 1, Doc. 98.

*It is true that my special feeling remains the same and that, if it were within my power, you would see me arrive at the first opportunity in your little valley, for which I still preserve an affection beyond words. Nevertheless, I do not see that I can do anything more on my part, at least for the moment, without departing from the ordinary course of Divine Providence<sup>16</sup>.*

Denied permission to quit the archdiocese, Terraillon, as a consequence of the following Minute of the Archdiocesan Council, joined the Hermitage group after 25 August 1825:

“Fr Terraillon, chaplain at the Charity of Montbrison, will be invited to go to the Hermitage near St Chamond for the instruction of the Little Brothers of Mary<sup>17</sup>.”

It was more than an invitation; Terraillon had no option but to go. At the same meeting Courveille’s soaring ambition was curtailed:

“Fr Courveille will be warned to confine himself for the moment to the work of his Brothers of Mary, all other projects being misplaced<sup>18</sup>.”

The expression “his Brothers” is significant. Even the archdiocesan scribe was unaware of the true leader of the Marist Brothers. It is true that Courveille had attempted to set up some school Brothers in his earlier appointments, but the effort had come to nothing. At the Her-

mitage he was with Champagnat’s Brothers. This second group of Marist priests, situated in the archdiocese of Lyon, was not destined to be noted for its stability: Terraillon wanted “out” and the unpredictable Courveille was full of grand schemes, most of which proved to be ephemeral.

Champagnat at this stage was not much involved in the recruitment of Marist priests. His aim from the Pledge days had principally been to establish a band of religious teaching Brothers. The division of the archdiocese had brought immense consequences for him and his Brothers: the full favour of the archdiocesan leader, de Pins; the building of the “skyscraper” Hermitage; the transfer from La Valla; the commitment to more school openings – and more vocations. The coming of Courveille and Terraillon, both decisions coming ultimately from the archdiocesan Council, was for the purpose of assisting Champagnat in the formation and education of his Brothers.

<sup>16</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 115, lines 36 – 42.

<sup>17</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 141.

<sup>18</sup> O.M. 1, Doc. 141.

## Developments in Diocese of Belley

Two days after penning his letter to Bishop Devie, a letter in which he told of the blank refusal he had received

from Archbishop de Pins concerning the transfer of aspiring Marist priests from Lyon to Belley, Fr Jean-Claude Colin wrote to Fr Courveille, now established at the Hermitage. The letter is dated 29 November 1824:

*I have just made a journey to Lyon, where I had the honour of seeing His Grace the Administrator. I spoke to him of the steps which have been taken for the work – about the Rules, about the letters you signed to the Sovereign Pontiff and to his Grace the Nuncio, letters in which we spoke of the setting up of the Society of Mary. I told him that these letters were in the hands of His Lordship the bishop of Belley, as well as all the other documents and Rules concerning the Society. I told him that it was His Grace the Nuncio who put everything into the hands of the bishop of Belley. His Grace the Administrator was a little surprised and astonished, for he told me that he knew nothing at all about it.*

*You know that we are now three, that Fr Déclas has been with us since All Saints. We believe that our numbers will soon increase. We shall begin to undertake some apostolic incursions during the course of the month of January.*

*Finally, we are going to have a splendid ceremony on the 8 December next, Feast of the Immaculate Conception. We are hoping to give the holy habit and veil to eight or nine Sisters of the Congregation of Mary. It will be the first ceremony of the Society. We hope that you will give us the pleasure of your company for it. We expect all three of you, and, while awaiting your company, we embrace you with all our heart. Our expressions of friendship go to Fr Champagnat.*

*I am, with the greatest respect, Father,  
Your very humble and obedient servant,*

*Colin (priest)<sup>19</sup>.*

In the above letter Colin lets Courveille know about the failed attempt with de Pins. He does so very briefly, enumerating the principal points of the interview and confining himself

to evoking the astonished surprise of the Administrator about the Marist project. In effect, this is a rebuke to Courveille for failing to inform the new archbishop about matters pertaining

<sup>19</sup> Letter of Fr J-C Colin to Fr J-C Courveille, O.M. 1, Doc. 122, lines 5–30.



**La Capucinière**

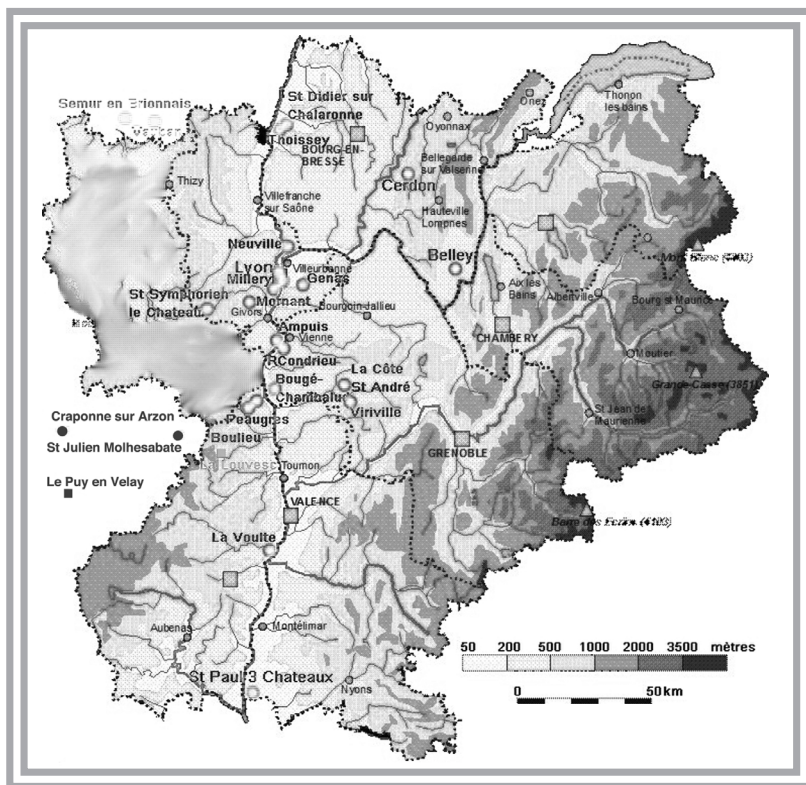
to the newly-born Society of Mary. After all, Courveille was within the archdiocese; Colin was not. The coldness and dryness of this letter contrasts with the warmth with which Colin writes to Bishop Devie. Even the final invitation, announcing a ceremony already decided without Courveille's knowledge and simply asking him only to be present, not to officiate, goes to show the distance which then separated the Colin brothers from the one who still passed exteriorly as the Superior General of the hoped-for Society of Mary.

Jean-Claude Colin's priest-brother Pierre later on gives us some idea of the exasperation of the Colin Brothers concerning Courveille at this period:

"Ah, what great harm he caused the Society in the beginning! He was a preposterous fellow. How he made us suffer! Having this precious Brief" (the Pope's letter of reply to the would-be Marists) "in his possession for some time, he showed it everywhere, even in the public carriage. He had quite soiled it with his fingers. We managed to retrieve it from him skilfully<sup>20</sup>."

<sup>20</sup> Fr Pierre Colin to Fr Mayet, O.M. 2, Doc. 689, Lines 25-27.





Marist map of the Rhône-Alpes region

Later on, one of the early Marists, Fr Séon, who, as a seminarian venerated Courveille, gives us the key to Courveille's loss of popularity among men striving to establish a religious society:

"He was good for starting something, but he was not one to continue it, to sustain it, to conduct it...

His manner of acting brought ridicule on the newborn Society<sup>21</sup>."

## First apostolate for Marist priests in Belley

The new power-man at Belley, Bishop Devie, seemed well inclined towards the Marists of his diocese. The Sisters of Cerdon grew in number and were set up as a diocesan congregation, reception of the habit occurring on 8 December 1824. When they moved to Belley in the summer of the following year, there were ten novices and four postulants in their ranks.

<sup>21</sup> Fr Séon's account of Origins, O.M. 2, Doc. 625, Lines 21-32.

As for the aspiring Marist priests, Devie permitted Fr Etienne Déclas to join the Colin brothers at Cerdon in October 1824 – the first community of Marist priests. They were there, however, for a specific purpose – a purpose devised by Devie. The bishop was aware that Jean-Claude Colin had made his mark in the parish and he caught the new bishop’s eye as a preacher of punch and power; the new bishop had need of such men.

The next five years would find Jean-Claude Colin engaged in spiritual-renewal work — preaching parish missions in the back blocks of the new diocese —the mountainous Bugey region.

This activity would have constituted an extra source of delight for them, for they were following the example of a seminary hero, St Jean-François Regis, who pursued similar apostolic work two centuries earlier.

Pierre Colin, as parish priest and spiritual-director of the first Sisters, remained in the town, while the other two, Jean-Claude Colin and Etienne Déclas, started out on their very first parish mission – at La Balme.

Years of strenuous exertion but spiritual exultation followed for these simple missionaries. They were soon joined by Fr Jallon (October 1825) after the Marists of Cerdon had moved (it was Devie’s idea) to Belley. Devie wanted to have the priest-missioners under his eye and he also wanted to

supervise the formation and activities of the fourteen members of the “Congregation of the Daughters of Mary”, who, as a diocesan group of religious Sisters, came under his responsibility.

They, too, moved from Cerdon to Belley in 1825. Until 1829 Colin was very much engaged in this apostolic work — parish missions in the country districts. St Jean-François Regis would have been proud of him and his fellow labourers in the vineyard.

## Trouble in the Archdiocese of Lyon

Not long after the break-up of the archdiocese there came about an event which could well have shattered the Marist project. At Notre Dame de l’Hermitage Courveille compromised himself in a serious sexual way with one of the postulants. Since his arrival there he had suffered a series of humiliating reverses: he had unsuccessfully tried to have himself elected as Superior of the Brothers; he had been deflected in his suggestion to have a leader chosen among the three priests; and an endeavour on his part to set up a grand Marist centre at Charlieu had failed. Moreover, he was not liked by the young Brothers in training at the Hermitage. After ten years of almost fruitless endeavour to establish the Society which he was convinced the Blessed Virgin wanted him to found, he “cracked”. Besides, his temperament was such that he was likely to do something desperate.



**La Neylière-Pomeys**

This lapse into sexual fault by Courveille was a stunning blow to his Marist companions. To some it might have appeared as the end of the Marist movement, for here was the collapse of the man who inspired it. Having gone off to the Abbey of Aiguebelle for a special “pilgrimage”, as he called it, Courveille then wrote back to his Hermitage companions offering to resign or to return, should they agree to receive him.

The affair was so serious that Jean-Claude Colin was soon at the Hermitage to join in discussions with Champagnat and Terraillon. We do not know whether he was specially summoned or whether he was there by chance. Given the “tyranny of distance” that kept people apart in those times, it would appear that Colin received a special call. It was Terraillon who knew all about the incident and pushed hard that Courveille’s offer of resignation be accepted.

The other two demurred. Champagnat, who regarded Courveille as both the instigator and leader of the Marist movement, also felt bound to Courveille for certain financial arrangements. On the other hand, Colin, who, with his brother, had suffered much from Courveille’s follies, may have been tempted to see this occurrence as an opportunity to be quit of Courveille as being an impediment to the progress of Marist affairs. There would, however, have been pausers for him in such a consideration. First of all, it would have been dangerous for the cause to lose the inspirer of the Marist movement. Then there was the question of a replacement leader. At the very beginning, in seminary days, Colin simply had the idea of helping out, not of leading: “I should never have had the courage to make this idea known. I could busy myself with the movement without appearing to be the originator. From the very moment



when Fr Courveille explained his project of a Society of Mary, I said to myself: 'That is for you, Colin', and I joined the group<sup>22</sup>." It is clear that Colin was without personal ambition; he did not see this Courveille crisis as his opportunity to replace the one who was assumed by many (not all) to be the leader. At the splitting-up of the archdiocese Colin was advocating that Vicar General Cholleton, their guide in the major seminary, be given to the Marists as their leader. Then there was also the fact that Courveille was a priest in Lyon archdiocese, while Colin, now organising Marist matters in neighbouring Belley, was not under the same jurisdiction. Should he take part in intervening in a diocese not his own?

Despite the misgivings of the other two, Terrailon prevailed. "As for me," he related, "I did not change. I kept to my first opinion. 'You will miss out', I told them, 'a fine opportunity which perhaps will never come again.' They were struck with my words and decided to sign the letter of acceptance which I had taken care to prepare in advance<sup>23</sup>." It would appear that all three — Terrailon, Champagnat and Colin — signed the letter accepting Courveille's proffered resignation.

## Marist priests in the Archdiocese of Lyon to 1828

With the departure of Courveille in June 1826 there remained only Champagnat and Terrailon at the Hermitage. The latter did not stay long. He had never been happy about his appointment to help prepare the Brothers for their apostolic work, so he seized on the opportunity to be a preacher of the Jubilee Indulgence in the archdiocese. From October 1826 Champagnat was alone.

Up to 1826, then, there had been three men engaged in trying to give substance to different aspects of the Marist Dream — Courveille and Champagnat in the archdiocese of Lyon and Jean-Claude Colin in the diocese of Belley. Their extreme busyness with their own concerns precluded much contact, except by letter, but, from time to time, they had opportunity to discuss matters at the Clergy Retreat, at least until 1823, the year of the division of the archdiocese. An invaluable Account Book of the major seminary attests to the fact that the would-be Marists met there at the pastoral Retreats and at other times during the year<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> O.M. 3, Doc. 819, Lines 54 – 61.

<sup>23</sup> Fr Terrailon's account of Marist origins, O.M. 2, Doc. 750, Lines 128-130.

<sup>24</sup> O.M.1, Doc. 51.

It is in 1826 that we have the beginning of recorded correspondence between the Marist leaders, Colin and Champagnat. In October of that year Champagnat came to a settlement with Courveille concern-

ing their financial arrangements. Mention was made of this transaction in a letter, the first that has come down to us from Colin to Champagnat; it is dated 5 December 1826:

*Father and very dear friend,*

*On my return from a mission I found your letter at the College; [the minor seminary at Belley] it gave me very great pleasure. Yes, let us all draw closer the bonds of a holy union in Christ. We have all the same end, which is the glory of God and our own sanctification. God wants us united in ideas and sentiments for the one same object, which should turn to His glory, but God's designs are above human thoughts; He wishes for the time being that we be united in spirit but not in body. He wants us to work, on the one hand, at a task which we regard as most important, while, on the other hand, we will do what we can for His glory. Nothing resists His will. When the time comes, He will bring together all the children of the tender Mary and make but one fold under one same head and rule. Let not delays and contradictions make us lose confidence; God's works go along slowly.*

*We applaud the progress your dear community is making; I confess that your dear Brothers are often present to my mind. I cannot sufficiently admire the blessing God bestows on this so important and so necessary work of forming youth. I embrace them all, as also your novices. What happiness for them to be children of Mary, Brothers of Mary, of a mother so tender, so powerful! As for us, dear friend, we are happy. The College is in the Society's hands; we make but one with Fr Pichat, who is more than ever devoted to the work. We have just given two missions at the same time and tomorrow we set out to begin the fourth since the month of October. The good Lord sustains us; our health is not bad. Our Sisters are increasing in number; their house is going well. You know that they have made profession.*

*As you promised, we expect you after the Jubilee; don't fail to keep your word. We rejoice exceedingly to learn that you have concluded affairs with Fr Courveille; that matter was very disturbing to us for your sake. It is suppertime. We embrace you all in Jesus and Mary.*

*I am, with the greatest esteem and special affection, entirely yours.*

*Colin junior, missionary.*

*P.S. My love to Fr Terraillon; I think he is still in Lyon<sup>25</sup>.*

<sup>25</sup> Letter of Fr Colin to Fr Champagnat, O.M. 1, Doc. 169.

This letter, while it shows the desire for union existing among the Marist aspirants of Lyon and Belley, also indicates the absence of any immediate prospect of achieving it. From its general tone we glean that Colin, although not as yet elected leader by his confreres, already has a certain ascendancy over them. This is understandable when we recall that it was Colin who conducted affairs with the Papal Nuncio and was foremost in dealings with Rome and with the bishops of Belley and Lyon.

It was also Colin who set about writing a Rule for the priests of the Society of Mary. It is clear, too, that he has not lost hope for Terrailon to become a member of the future Society of Mary. But, to ask Champagnat to “give my” (Colin’s) “love” to the priest whom Champagnat regarded as a deserter is obviously an expectation of heroic charity on the part of the future saint!

We can detect more that a touch of hyperbole in Colin’s words: “The College is in the Society’s hands.” The minor seminary at Belley did indeed house the Marist missionaries, who, however, were not staff members, only boarders. Some of the teachers there may indeed have been favourably influenced by the Marists, but Colin and his followers had not yet been called upon to manage the seminary, which, under the direction of Fr Pichat, was certainly led by a fine priest who intended to become a Marist.

Terrailon’s departure from the Hermitage left Champagnat at a very low ebb in morale. He was still not fully recovered from the life-threatening illness that struck him at the end of 1825 and he now had to attend to all aspects of Hermitage life alone. In May 1827 he wrote most feelingly to archdiocesan authorities, petitioning for priestly help at the Hermitage. The authorities at last decided to send him the young Fr Séon; he was a Godsend.

As a deacon, Séon had spent some time at the Hermitage and liked what he saw there. He flung himself whole-heartedly into the sundry works he found to do. He was caught up with the idea of the Marist project and enthused about its eventual implementation. Then there came a sudden shock for, according to Séon’s account of Marist origins, Champagnat cast doubts on the emergence of the priestly branch of the Society. No doubt Champagnat was thinking back to the disintegration of the group of three priests in 1826 (the departure of Courveille and the desertion by Terrailon) and was in a mood of uncertainty about the Society’s priestly component. It was, however, only a transient phase with Champagnat, but the words so shocked Séon that, having failed to obtain permission to transfer to Belley to join the Marist group there, he took steps to advertise the Marists at the major seminary so that other deacons and priests would become members of the Marist group in Lyon.



Panoramic view of Valfleury

Séon's enthusiasm and Champagnat's renewed zest for the priestly branch led to the re-establishment of a community of priests at the Hermitage, and, a few years later, to the emergence of a second Marist priest group in the archdiocese at Valbenoîte, near St Etienne. Some commentators regard the pilgrimage that Champagnat made to the shrine of Our Lady of Valfleury on 25 July 1828 as an act of thanksgiving for his having regained confidence in the priests' branch of the Society of Mary.

So, about one and a half years after the steps which ended with the coming of Séon to the Hermitage, we again find this community of Marists in

a process of growth. An additional confrère arrived (Bourdin, still a deacon) and Champagnat then wrote for a further companion. Before putting forward the needs of the Brothers and their work—needs which motivated this request—the superior of the Hermitage let it be clearly known that he had a still wider aim, that is, making known the work of the Society of Mary in its entirety, and especially the part to be played by the priests who aspired to belong to it.

The letter is from Champagnat to Vicar General Cattet and is written on 18 December 1828; it shows Champagnat's renewed fervour concerning the Marist priests:

*Tell me, I beg you, that this work is not of God, or else facilitate its further success. The Society of the Brothers cannot positively be regarded as the work of Mary, but only as a branch subsequent to the Society itself<sup>26</sup>.*

In an account of Marist origins, a noted Marist historian asserts:

*At this early stage Fr Champagnat succeeded by his tenacity in restoring life to the branch of priests in the archdiocese of Lyon. Insisting on the very real needs of the work at the Hermitage, he obtained in succession Fr Séon and Fr Bourdin, thus reconstituting a group of Marist priests and preserving for the main body of the Society its supra-diocesan character. It was a master card which the Founder of the Brothers then played in the complex game of the Society. It alone would render possible the subsequent success<sup>27</sup>.*

## **Marist priests in the Belley Diocese to 1828**

We have seen how, when in 1824 he saw that an arrangement with the archbishop of Lyon was impossible, Jean-Claude Colin loyally joined forces with the bishop of Belley. Under Bishop Devie's direction, and with two others (his brother Pierre and Déclas, the latter having arrived at Cerdon in October 1824), he formed a small missionary team which, from 1825 to 1829, starting

from Cerdon, then from Belley, worked in the mountains of the Bugey, preaching simple parish missions without display or controversy — missions which led to pardon and, in some cases, to conversion.

## **Colin's letters to Champagnat**

Just towards the middle of his period as diocesan missionary, writing from Belley, Colin replied to Champagnat's letter. We may note here that we have on record only one of

<sup>26</sup> Letter of Fr Champagnat to Fr Cattet, O.M. 1, Doc. 185, Lines 9-13.

<sup>27</sup> "Origines Maristes", Introduction to the Third Part, Vol. 1, Page 425, Lines 30-36.

Champagnat's letters to Colin, for the latter deliberately burnt his papers, on no fewer than three occasions making a bonfire of letters and other documents he had received. It is supposed that Champagnat's letters to Colin were consumed in the blaze. A great pity.

In the early stages of this account we examined the influences of childhood and boyhood experiences and the impact of Sulpician training on Colin and Champagnat as young men. Before turning our thoughts to the correspondence between them, let us now reflect on aspects of personality, character, spirituality and Marial devotion which these men displayed in their mature years and which are to be seen in their letters.

### **Colin's personality and character**

In outlining the character of Jean-Claude Colin, Fr Jean Coste S.M. tried to avoid a too subjective view of this Marist Founder by applying a method of character-analysis in vogue in recent times. This method distinguishes three basic properties which define a character: emotionality, activity and retentiveness.

A marked emotionality was evident in the mature Colin, manifesting itself in an explosive impulsiveness – e.g. in letters on the spur of the moment to Mother St Joseph. Colin was also a man who was easily moved – shedding tears and being emotionally overwhelmed when farewells were

given to his men sailing to Oceania and also when news of the death of a confrère was received. Added to this, he could be fiery in speech, as instanced in some of his confrontations with Bishop Devie.

Susceptibility was another strong facet of Colin's personality, to be seen in his dealings with Bishop Devie and Mother St Joseph. His sensitivity to affronts, real or imaginary, is also displayed in the matter of Fr Favre's drafting of Marist Constitutions and in the later dispute concerning the origins of the Society. In Church affairs, his highly-tuned sensitivity made him aware of the harm which could be done by seeking attention, prestige, publicity, etc. — hence his emphasis on "being hidden and unknown". In lighter vein concerning his susceptibility, it has been said that one could easily tell from his face what he thought of the quality of the reading in the refectory.

With Colin we find a deep-seated need for action, as is evidenced when we note the following: the stimulus he found in facing difficulties and obstacles; the tenacity he displayed in pursuit of an aim; the skilful method which he employed as a means of achieving these aims. With any goal to be pursued, he showed himself to be completely independent of other people's judgement. Likewise, his gaiety and vivacity on special occasions showed an unabashed simplicity of outlook.

Colin had a mind that was very retentive. Planning, making prepara-



tions well in advance and seeing the remote consequences of an act were all characteristic of him. The way he recalled past injuries — very noticeable in his correspondence with Mother St Joseph — was another aspect of this retentiveness, as was his fondness for old memories — nostalgia for the first missions and anecdotes repeatedly told about the first journey to Rome. His prudence and economy in financial matters — he never tolerated debts — were suggestive of a tidy and retentive mind. And, especially in later years, there was with him a general tendency to return to the past, to re-live well-remembered events and to enjoy the humour of them.

Colin was a passionate type of person. As such, he was a man who identified himself with his work and concentrated exclusively on the aim he had set himself. He certainly had the ambition to succeed — not for himself, but for the cause he espoused. Thus there was fashioned in him that authority which commands respect and obedience. This commitment to a life-long ambition — the Society of Mary — led to a permanent state of tension in Colin and engendered in him both a capacity for work and an indifference to sensible pleasures. It also led to an absence of vanity and ostentation, but also — not a happy outcome — to a tendency to make use of other people.

“But screw your courage to the sticking place and we’ll not fail”<sup>28</sup> is a quotation that is appropriate for Colin. Stimulated by the demands of the work to which he had dedicated himself, Colin began to manifest the above-mentioned aspects of his mature character. After overcoming initial shyness and scrupulosity at Cerdon after 1816, Colin committed himself to activity for the Society of Mary. This habitually drew upon his resources and stirred the powers of his emotionality right up to the time of his retirement as Superior General in 1854. The social shyness, fear of action, nostalgia for a retiring, secluded life were still there. These qualities persisted but remained subjugated to the demands of his activity in pursuing the Marist cause. After 1854 the demand upon his active efforts was no longer imperative and those qualities opposed to extreme activity started to assert themselves in him.

For Colin, as for others of his type, his highly developed retentiveness of mind, when not engaged in pressing tasks to be accomplished, brought about paralysis in the minor activities available to him after ceasing to be Superior General of the Marists. In a way, he was then prone to suffer from Hamlet’s dilemma of “thinking too precisely on the event<sup>29</sup>.” By dint of foreseeing too clearly the various possibilities of a course of action, Colin started to hesitate and could no

<sup>28</sup> W. Shakespeare, “Macbeth”, I, vii, 59.

<sup>29</sup> W. Shakespeare, “Hamlet”, IV, iv, 40.

longer come to a decision, e.g., finishing the Constitutions for the Marist Sisters and also those for the Marist priests and the Joseph Brothers.

The contradictions in his character manifest the complexity of Colin's personality. For him, a harmonious synthesis of basic characteristics was achieved only in maturity when, from the age of twenty-five to sixty, ambition for the Society of Mary drove him like a goad and brought out the best in him.

### **Champagnat's personality and character**

Quite different from Jean-Claude Colin in character was Marcellin Champagnat. His father was a miller; the man most needed in a village, the man to whom people came either for business or for the affairs of the town of Marlihes. Marcellin was in contact with people; his father was available to all and sundry and his son Marcellin was accustomed to meeting with others. As a farm hand, young Marcellin developed all sorts of practical skills; for him the world was the place in which to operate. This is reflected in later life in a letter which he wrote to a bishop: "All the dioceses in the world come within our compass..."<sup>30</sup>

Champagnat, then, was deeply involved in the real, he was in the

here and now – in manual work and temporal interests. Full of ardour and dynamic by nature, down-to-earth and immersed in life, he was sustained by an unwavering faith, a dynamism, and an enthusiasm which led him on to pursue the end he had in view with great tenacity and without weakening.

Although limited on the strictly intellectual level, Champagnat had no limitation as a man of heart and action. With him there was both strength of will and tenderness of heart. His strength of will communicated its drive to all about him and his tender and ardent heart loved strongly. In return, Champagnat was loved unreservedly. Some of his letters to his Brothers illustrate his affection, e.g.: "...Time seems long to me only because I am not among you... I hold you all very dearly in my heart." (18 March 1838.) "Tell all the Brothers how much I think of them and how earnestly I desire their happiness...May our good sick Brothers, whom I love with all my heart, continue to be well cared for and to be well nourished<sup>31</sup>." (20 June 1838) Through simplicity and piety he directed the lives of his Brothers towards their supreme goal.

Untiringly good humoured, Champagnat had an awareness of people and their needs; he was also possessed of a natural pedagogical aptitude. Through his mother he shared

<sup>30</sup> "Letters of Marcellin Champagnat", p. 192.

<sup>31</sup> Both letters from "The Letters of Marcellin Champagnat".



in the solid Christian traditions of the past, while from his aunt, a Sister of St Joseph, came the precious gift of a deeper awareness of the spiritual life and perhaps the first suggestions of the apostolate of Christian education. His father, loyal officer of the Republic, by his actions as an official under the Revolution, opened up to his son the perspectives of the new social order<sup>32</sup>.

The deprivation of early education was something which influenced Champagnat throughout his life. His schooling having begun only when he reached fourteen years of age, he was consequently handicapped in educational attainments. As mentioned earlier, in the minor seminary record for his last year at the minor seminary of Verrières he scored only “Weak” for “Knowledge”. Nevertheless, the same report shows that his application had improved to “Very well”. A happy outcome of Champagnat’s backwardness in formal studies was his interest in providing a solid Christian and basic primary education for young people.

There were, however, characteristics of Champagnat which were probably influenced by his lack of academic stature. For instance, he obviously felt ill at ease in dealing with highly placed or highly educated people. His reluctance to meet Vicar-General Bochard<sup>33</sup> is one instance

of this, as is also his seeming passivity in certain other crises with archdiocesan authorities— the projected amalgamation of his Brothers with Fr Coindre’s Brothers of the Sacred Heart and a further proposal of union, this time with Fr Querbes’ Clerks of St Viator. On both these occasions Champagnat made no vigorous defence of his position but seemed to be merely hoping and praying that the crisis would be averted or that friends would help him out. It had been much the same in the Bochard episode and can again be seen in his deference to Courveille when the latter arrived at the Hermitage, and also in much of his dealings with his Superior General, Colin, especially in the Verdelaï affair. Of course, his humility must be considered in these matters, but he is not the same Champagnat who led his Brothers with assurance, vigour and élan.

### Colin’s spirituality

The sadness of Colin’s boyhood years was initiated by the untimely death of both parents when he was only five years old. Their deaths were brought about through their sufferings under the Revolutionary government, which pursued them because of their loyalty to the Catholic faith. The world was not kind to Colin; he learnt to distrust it. For this youngster the world was a bad place, so there

<sup>32</sup> Preceding four paragraphs are based on “Voyages et Missions”.

<sup>33</sup> Bochard wanted to absorb Champagnat’s Brothers into his own Society.

was engendered in him a fear of the world. He came to prefer to remain hidden and unknown, even coming close to adopting an attitude of “what is hidden in me is what they cannot take from me”. His youthful attitude to the world was entirely different from that of Champagnat. So the humility that both men practised had different foundations.

Colin’s upbringing under an uncle and a severe housekeeper did nothing to warm him to the world. He sought to avoid contact with people and with the world in general. He elected to follow a secluded style of life where he could pray and converse with heavenly friends.

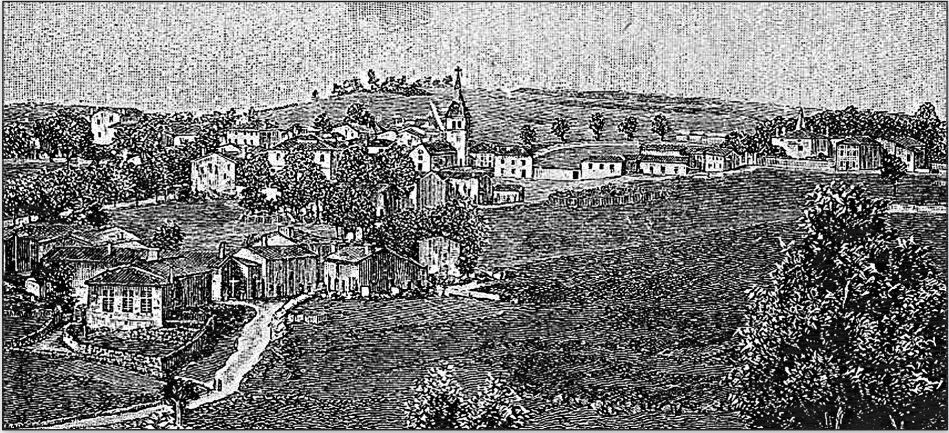
At the age of fourteen, on the suggestion of his confessor, Colin agreed to follow the example of his elder brother Pierre; he went to the minor seminary, thinking that there his dream of living for God alone would be realised. At the minor seminaries of St Jodard, Alix and Verrières, under the influence of excellent masters, his yearning to serve God was strengthened. In the austere atmosphere of these minor seminaries he found conditions conducive to a life of true solitude with God. Among the early works given him to read at the seminary, a book that was to influence his whole life was *Life Hidden in God*, by Boudon. Yet Colin still did not accept fully the idea of the priesthood; this led to

more scruples. He was worried about the clash between his yearning for solitude and the demands of the diocesan priesthood for the pastoral care of, and contact with, so many people. When Courveille spoke about a Society of Mary, Colin saw his future — a hidden life within a religious congregation and the practice of the priesthood in a way that could be controlled.

After ordination in 1816 Jean-Claude Colin was placed in the quiet parish of Cerdon, where his brother Pierre was parish priest. For six years there followed for Jean-Claude a period of sensible consolations during which he felt a deeply rooted conviction that the plan of the Society of Mary would succeed. This was a special grace, “an interior and almost irresistible movement”<sup>34</sup> that transformed the seminarian into the founder. This grace sustained him as he set about fashioning a precise and solid foundation for the Society — a Rule.

The spirituality which Colin practised was that which he recommended to his followers. It was a way of being apostolic (after all, that was a priest’s normal mission), yet being seemingly hidden and unknown in the world; it was the spiritual way of Mary. To be true sons of Mary they must constantly try to breathe her spirit — a spirit of humility, self-denial, close union with God and ardent love

<sup>34</sup> “Origines Maristes”, Vol. 3, Doc. 816, Lines 5–6.



**View of Marlies with the ancient church**

for the neighbour. They must think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things. This was Colin and this is what he wanted for his fellow Marists.

For Colin, the expression “hidden and unknown” best captured Mary’s presence in the Church. Marists learnt from Colin and, like him, from Mary, how to approach the work of evangelising — by emptying themselves of all self-seeking so that nothing would prevent the word of God from being heard. The spirit of “hidden and unknown” leads to an exemplary life, so that nothing in one’s personal life will cause people to resist the salvation offered by God.

Marists must act with great poverty and modesty, with simplicity of heart and with absence of all vanity and worldly ambition. A love of solitude and silence and the practice of the hidden virtues would ensure that they appear to be unknown and

even hidden in the world. It was Colin’s desire that all his Marists should cling to this spirit in the knowledge that it is the pivot and foundation of their whole Society. In regard to being “hidden and unknown” in apostolic work, Fr Jean Coste S.M. speaks about the Marist being like the man in the prompt box at the side of the stage. Nobody will look at him; he is there simply to help in the drama of the life of others — to help the dialogue between the soul and God.

“Hidden and unknown” is therefore a personal experience, a true discovery of God, and, at the same time, a manner of being engaged in the apostolate. This is the central theme of Colin’s spirituality; it encapsulates everything about him in this regard — a personal experience in the discovery of God and a way of approach in apostolic work. In conversations during his Generalate, Colin often spoke of the hidden life,



have to see Mary in the Marists in the self-effacing way in which they work zealously in the apostolate, at all times giving evidence of lowliness, self-forgetfulness and obedience to superiors.

There are three constants in Colin's definition of Marist spirit:

1. The missionary idea of the Church starting again — apostolic activity now takes place once more.
2. Keeping alive the sense of the presence of Mary.
3. The fact that one is a Marist has to be shown in the behaviour expected of a Marist. True Marists are people who do not seek to dominate, but yet are afire with the presence of God.

In conferences given to Marist groups, Fr Coste S.M. also presents some ideas concerning the Mariology of the founder of the Marist Fathers and Marist Sisters. Given the pressure of time and other limitations imposed on Coste in his conferences, we have made some slight modifications to his spoken words. The minor changes were suggested by two Marist priests:

The most fundamental characteristic of Colin's Marial devotion is that Mary, rather than being only an "object" of cult or of devotion, is a "sub-

ject" with whom you identify. For Colin, Mary is clearly seen as "subject", as acting. For apostolic work the message is clear: the more I belong to Mary, the more I have a Marial heart, then the more I shall respond to the needs of the times.

Colin did not have his knowledge of Mary from the Scriptures; there are only marginal references to Scripture in Colin. He derived most of his ideas about Mary from the book, "The Mystical City of God", by Maria of Agreda, a 17th Century Spanish nun of the Franciscan Order. He also spoke of Mary in the light of Chapter 21 of the "Book of Revelations". Mary is the Mystical City coming down to help people on earth. Mary had helped the Church at the beginning of apostolic work and will help it at the end of time. Mary is the gate<sup>37</sup> through which all will enter heaven. These ideas are to be found in the writings of Maria of Agreda.

Colin was no theologian, and, for some, he tended, so it seemed, to neglect Christ in favour of Mary, e.g. "Mary sent you out" and "At the end of time there will be only one kingdom — the kingdom of the Blessed Virgin." All this seems very fervent, but it is not expressed with theological clarity and precision.

Other authors drawn on by Colin are Arias and Doublerein, but the fact remains that he did not set out to

<sup>37</sup> Book of Revelations, Chapter 21.



establish a distinct school of spirituality; he was more on the lines of setting out a pastoral spirituality based on the following of Mary. We can best define his way of talking of Mary as imaginary projection. He adopted an eschatological approach — Mary helped the Church at its birth; she will help it at the end of time. He was eschatological, utopian — he wanted a restoration of the Golden Age. Colin was the very opposite of a revolutionary; he was a visionary, a dreamer of the future. His mind was mythical; and in myth — which is a symbolic story or history that gives meaning — Colin looked forward to the entire world becoming Marist. Even the Pope would be at the head of the worldwide family of Marists! We must bear in mind, however, that a myth is also a means of overcoming fear of the world, and this fear certainly was a strong influence on Colin.

Yet there is a certain validity in the imaginative way in which Colin treats Mary. Just as artists and poets have been inspired by Mary, so Colin was nourished by Mary. His insistence on

Mary's coming to assist us, on her helping us to start the Church anew is an indication of the arrival of post-modern man. In pre-modern times affectivity and sentimentality towards Mary were in vogue. There came a reaction to this in modern times, as is demonstrated by Vatican II and by the theology of Vatican II which, in effect, reduced Mariology to what is essential and sound. (For example, there was no separate Decree on Mary at Vatican Council II.) Now, many years after that Council, we are witnessing the return of symbols, icons, myths and utopian and imaginative concepts, for it would appear that post-modern man is tired of the analytical and the cerebral. The minimalists are giving way to the followers of a theology of Hope — and Hope gives emphasis to myth, to symbols, to icons, etc. So Colin is not an embarrassment to the present age; he belongs to the post-modern age; he belongs to eschatological man, to post-modern man.

One of Coste's fellow-Marist priests makes the following comments:

*I am sure that one could not say that Colin really 'neglected Christ in favour of Mary'. In the book, 'A Founder Speaks', there are very many references in the index under the heading, 'Jesus Christ'. In addition, for all the early Marists, earlier Sulpician formation gave an emphasis to devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. That there 'will be only one kingdom at the end of time — the kingdom of the Blessed Virgin' would not imply for Colin, I am sure, that it was not also, and primarily, that of Christ. In his own personal devotion to Mary, Jean-Claude Colin was indeed traditional, but there were some additional elements. As a founder graced with experience of Cerdon [i.e. the long period in the Cerdon presbytery where, believing himself to be graced by God, he set about writing the Constitutions], he saw and recognised Mary as a 'subject' with whom you identify.*

Much the same remark is made by Coste (above).

*Colin was certainly no theologian; he did not articulate a theological understanding of, and an adequate exposition of, the apostolic spirituality which should characterise the Society that 'Mary wanted'. Its members were to be imbued with Mary's way of being apostolically present.*

Here is a selection of comments from conferences given by Fr Jan Snijders S.M. about Fr Colin's ideas about the Blessed Virgin:

*Mary, Mother of Mercy, is going to intervene. She will re-double her effort at the end of the world. We Marists work on her behalf. Our situation is similar to the period when Mary was in the midst of the Apostles when they faced a pagan world. This is Mary who, as Mother full of tenderness, comforts us in all our miseries, meets all our needs, grants all our prayers. She is the motherly image of God, a God of tenderness and grace.*

*Colin's advice in accepting this work with, and for, Mary is this: 'Approach people with respect, gentleness, compassion, kindness and trust. Adopt the most merciful approach imaginable. Do not be too demanding; do not treat people harshly. Do not alienate people; be unassuming. Avoid all thirst for prestige and recognition; do not boast. "All for souls" and "Salvation before law" are to be borne in mind.'*

## Champagnat's spirituality

Marcellin Champagnat was blessed in being a member of a fine Christian family. Despite the Godlessness of certain aspects of the French Revolution, the milieu in which he lived was essentially Christian, and during his boyhood years he was fortunate in experiencing the good example of family members. His paternal aunt Louise, who lived with the Champagnat family during part of the French Revolution period, was a reli-

gious of the Sisters of St Joseph. The spirituality of her congregation was drawn from Salesian and Ignatian sources, and we find in Champagnat's writings many traces of Salesian spirituality; the aunt could have been influential there. Marcellin was also blessed with the acquaintance of people like Fr Soutrenon, a local hero and an upright man of God.

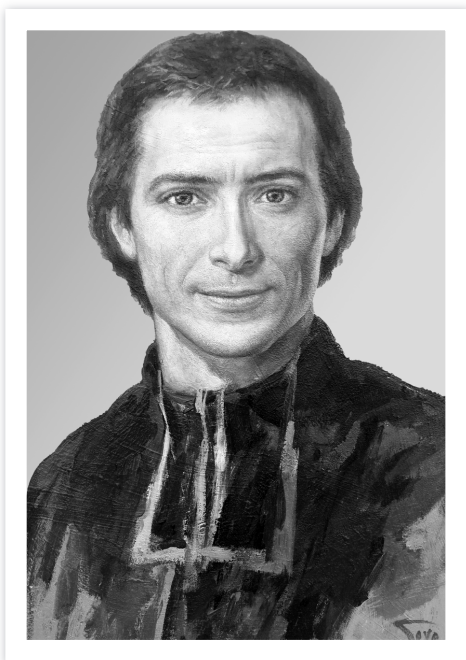
During his priestly formation, particularly at the major seminary of St Irénée, Marcellin took more and more seriously his relationship with God. In

his later writings we recognise the main traits and formulas of the French school of spirituality, imparted by the teachings and practices of the seminary.

Progress in the spiritual ascent was no easy matter for the young Champagnat. He found that a well-programmed mode of living was important during seminary holidays and during his priestly apostolate at La Valla. An analysis of his resolutions shows a line of spiritual development – from focusing on self-purgation, through focusing on law, to focusing on God and man. His Retreat resolutions give evidence of his quest for self-discipline and for that serenity of soul that helps towards loving God more deeply and helping neighbour more effectively. He felt the need to curb and control; he heard the call for prayer and penance.

Fortunately, Champagnat's common sense and perception saved him from falling into any of the excesses to which some of the spiritual practices of the times could have led. Champagnat was no slavish follower. He could discern; he could decide. He adopted all the practices of the interior life but without stifling the natural dynamism of his strong personality; he remained a real man while becoming a saint.

As a practising priest, Champagnat seemed to rise above the legalism and rigorism which characterised most of the moral theology taught in seminaries in the France of his era.



Marcellin Champagnat (Goyo 1999)

He revealed himself as an outstanding confessor from the start of his priestly life, attracting people by his sympathy and his willingness to assist.

And what about occasions for ongoing renewal of spirit? Apart from spiritual reading (he had a good library of spiritual books) and those means normally available to diocesan clergy, Marcellin maintained contact with fellow Marist priests in Retreats and other gatherings. Here he was able to participate in the exchanges on theological and spiritual topics that took place among these zealous men.



Among the other fervent young men who later joined him to become Marist Brothers, Champagnat made himself the father of a family, showing all the spiritual qualities of a good *pater familias*. He shared their meals, their manual labour and their exercises of piety – and all this at a time when the model for priestly behaviour was somewhat more aloof and opposed to such intimacy. He worked hard to cultivate family spirit among the Brothers, writing to individuals and communities in terms of warmest friendship and bringing the Brothers together at the Hermitage, where the spirit of family was enhanced by fulfilling simple exercises that led to the cultivation of community spirit.

Champagnat's own spiritual simplicity is to be found in his generous and energetic willingness to be available, frankly and joyfully, for the service of God and the neighbour. This virtue developed readily in Champagnat, for his limited attainments in the academic and intellectual spheres saved him from subtleties of mind, while his great vitality expanded into action and affectivity. With this went independence of mind and the grace to be simply and completely himself. His basic simplicity and the resulting freedom enabled him to live humanly and spiritually a sincere life of close co-ordination between the natural and the supernatural; he thus acquired a well-balanced personality.

Simplicity, in its meaning of sincerity and openness of mind, was influential in shaping Champagnat's

concern for others— his charity. Being a man of feeling and action, being deeply affectionate and sensitive to the needs of others, he responded with the exercise of his determined will. The episode of the Montagne boy illustrates this. He imbued charitable human activities with the spirit of the Gospels.

An interesting feature of Champagnat's spirituality is the extra dimension that came to it through his love for, and insistence on, manual work. In such work were to be found the spiritual qualities of simplicity, courage, and determined devotedness. In truth, the founder was only restoring the great monastic tradition that ascribed to manual work a fundamental ascetic value.

Gregarious by nature, Champagnat was concerned for people. It is little wonder, then, that a strong trait of his spirituality was an emphasis on the Incarnation. He was strong on Christology, on the Lord in His human nature. Although there is nothing specific in Champagnat's own writings about attachment to Christ through Crib, Cross and Altar, there is no doubt that he approved of this practice which became part of the devotional life of the Brothers. They learnt to resort to these havens in their reflections and prayer. They led the children there, to places where the incarnate Christ could be met.

From such incarnational spirituality flowed the concept of the presence of God, who was a living reality

to Champagnat. We find in his writings a much-used expression, “You know, my God”. He scribbled these words on many documents, even on financial reports – he was praying while he worked. A state of continuous colloquy was emerging between Champagnat and the Lord. From this came his confidence in God, an attitude of abandonment to God. “May God be blessed unendingly. This sovereign Master has His very good reasons”, he wrote in 1837 when he had to turn back on a journey because of a bout of illness.

Another characteristic, already mentioned briefly, was his confidence in this Lord who was so very close to him. He frequently expressed the words and sentiment of Psalm 127: “Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it.” The theme of confidence in God was underscored in many of his letters, often in the form of trusting in the hearts of Jesus and Mary – again the stress on the incarnational.

In the Champagnat story we do not view a saint from birth, but a man in process of becoming a saint. It is both instructive and enlightening to follow the life of this saint-in-the-making. The story of Champagnat’s saintliness concluded with his canonisation in St Peter’s Square, Rome in 1999.

## Champagnat and Mary

Champagnat was on the level of life. A deeply human person, he was no intellectual, but rather a man of

heart, of feeling and of action. His devotion to Mary, sprung from childhood family influences, is on the personal level, the existential level. There was a living relationship between Champagnat and Mary which found expression in his use of invocations and in devotional practices. His dialogue with Mary can be seen in expressions like “You know”— an utterance addressed sometimes to God, sometimes to Mary. So there was a type of soul-to-soul relationship, a direct link between persons.

Champagnat’s devotion to Mary, the Mother of the incarnate God, was fundamental, but was not specialised under one of her particular titles, such as Queen of Virgins, or something similar. He knew that he could turn to the ‘whole’ Mary in complete trust, because in the Incarnation Mary had such an important role and carried it out so well. “With Mary, we have everything,” he said. “Without her, we are nothing.” Yet there was never any question of his priorities going awry. Jesus was the destination; Mary was a clear pathway leading to Him. In his letters he often spoke of Jesus and Mary together, but there was always the correct emphasis, for example, “Mary, offer my resolutions to your son, Jesus.” Our attention is drawn to the fact that, in Champagnat’s writings, whenever the name of Jesus is used, it is frequently linked with the name of Mary. For instance, in the founder’s Spiritual Testament, we find: “I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.” And again: “Such is my

last wish for the glory of Jesus and Mary.”

Being the son of a family that loved Mary, being a child of the Marist district of Lyon, being a spiritual descendant of Saints Pothinus and Irenaeus (the latter being the earliest Western theologian to write about Mary), and being a citizen of a nation touched by such Mariologists as Olier and Grignon de Montfort, Champagnat was strongly attached to the Mother of God. His Brothers were named after her; she was part of their spiritual heritage.

Externally, Champagnat’s devotion to Mary was expressed in sermons, statues, novenas, and letters. These letters show a direct invocation of Mary, with recommendations to the reader to have confidence in her. Sometimes, a mystical communion with Mary is manifested, as in, “I leave you all in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; these are such good places.” Indeed, a section of his letter to Pompallier, 27 May 1838, is a veritable poem to the Blessed Virgin. Part of this reads: “Mary, yes, Mary alone is our prosperity. Without Mary we are nothing. With Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her adorable Son either in her arms or in her heart.”

It may be argued that there was a certain triumphal strain in Champagnat’s Mariology — he did give his Brothers the Feast of the Assumption as their patronal Feast Day —



Statue of the “Good Mother” of the Hermitage

but he is much closer to the popular, peasant tradition. It was not the triumphant aspect of Mary that was the centre of his devotion to her. Nor was he as eschatological as Colin. Rather, it was the humble peasant’s loving attachment to Mary the good Mother that was fundamental to Champagnat.

This popular, “peasant” devotion to Mary may in part be traced to the religious history of the times leading up to the life of Champagnat. Under the influence of Jansenism, the God of Mercy did not receive much emphasis; even Jesus had come to be

regarded as seemingly remote and inaccessible. Hence arose the strong devotion to the Virgin Mary, evidenced in France by the Black Madonnas revered in many rural churches, and by the peasant devotion to Mary under the title of “the Good Mother”.

This “Good Mother” phrase, linking the peasant tradition with some aspects of the Berullian courtly tradition, leads us to other aspects of the Founder’s Mariology — it is filial, imitative, domestic almost, rather than noticeably courtly and eschatological. The Brothers are urged by Champagnat to regard Mary as their Mother, to strive to imitate her virtues and her interior attitude to Christ. Even in their teaching and their other works with youth, they are “to find their inspiration in Mary bringing up Jesus at Nazareth”.

Champagnat encouraged the Brothers to look on Mary as their Mother — “the good Mother, our good Mary”. She was presented as a model for imitation, and also as a refuge, one to be approached with childlike abandonment and with filial confidence. It is interesting to note that, in the Rule of 1837, Champagnat included a special prayer, “Abandonment to the Most Holy Mother of God”.

The “Good Mother” title was often used by Champagnat; he encouraged his first disciples to refer to her in this way. We find this title and the invocation of Mary repeated ceaselessly in the writings of the early years:

In writing to Br Marie Laurent (8 April 1839), Champagnat assures him: “Never despair of your salvation; it is in good hands — those of Mary. Isn’t Mary your refuge and your good mother? The greater your needs are, the more she wants to rush to help you.”

In a letter to Br Antoine (21 December 1836), Champagnat writes, “I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, our Good Mother”, and to the young Br Apollinaire (4 August 1837), “Throw yourself into the arms of our common Mother. She will be touched by your condition and that of your confreres, and she is quite able to remedy it.”

Marial piety finds further expression in the closing paragraph of a letter to Bishop Pompallier (27 May 1838), mentioned above: “Without Mary we are nothing, and with Mary we have everything.”

In teaching about Mary, Champagnat often linked her with Jesus, but he always maintained the correct emphasis: “Mary, offer my resolutions to your Son, Jesus.”

In Champagnat’s relationship with Mary there is sometimes the hint of a struggle. In a letter to Brothers Antoine and Gonzaga (4 February 1831), we find: “Make Mary interested on your behalf. Tell her that, after you have done all you can, it is so much the worse for her if things do not go well. Recommend your children strongly to her.” While urging the

Brothers to a confident approach to Mary through prayer, Champagnat is, in a sense, letting her know that her petitioners have done their best. From that point onwards the responsibility is hers.

The struggle, if struggle there was, was resolved. Champagnat's relationship with Mary ripened with the passage of the years. His recommendations to the Brothers are clear indications of his loving commitment to Mary. For example, he wanted a picture or a statue of Mary in the regular apartments of the house. He also wanted the Brothers to carry something with them as a reminder of Mary. Later, he recommended a touching practice in honour of Mary — offering the keys of the house to her. "She is in charge of us; she is our patroness, our protectress."

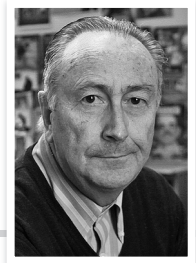
Many of the devotions which Fr Champagnat favoured — statues, novenas, the scapular — have fallen

on lean times since Vatican II re-emphasised the Trinitarian and Christocentric essence of the Good News and called for the restoration of a more liturgical and scriptural piety. But Champagnat's basic premise that Mary's virtues were to be imitated was well justified by Vatican II's recognition of Our Lady as the model of the Church.

Champagnat always maintained a theologically correct and balanced attitude in his Christology and Mariology. Devotion to Our Lady was a special way of going to Jesus. We go to Mary because she has Jesus. For Champagnat, then, we can perhaps say that devotion to Our Lady was part of an encounter with God through the Incarnation. And the God encountered is a loving God, whose affection for us is suggested by the warm embrace with which Mary holds Jesus in a favourite statue of Champagnat's now venerated at his shrine - Notre Dame de l'Hermitage.



# REFLECTING ON A RATIONALE FOR MARIST PRESENCE



**Br. Antonio  
Martínez Estaún**

## INTRODUCTION

These pages aim to contribute, from the perspective of the Patrimony Commission, to the ongoing reflection carried out by Brothers and Lay Marists about the sense we give to the term *Marist presence* and what it means to affirm this *presence* as a typical trait of our Marist pedagogy.

For a long time we have underlined *Marist presence* as one of our characteristic educational traits. Discussion about this topic is little heard outside Marist circles. The only study I know on the *pedagogy of presence* as it is implemented by the Marists was released in April 2005 – following the publication of a book entitled *The Marist Educator 1* (1983) and the celebration of the National Education Conference in Salamanca (1985) during the anniversary of the arrival of the Marists in Spain. The author was Brother António

Leal das Neves Jorge, who presented a dissertation at the Open University of Lisbon to obtain a Master's degree in *Educational Administration and Management* entitled "How the students from the Marist schools perceive the pedagogy of presence". As part of a theoretical framework, he defines a set of indicators of pedagogical presence, which he uses to define a statistical sample in the Marist schools of and Carcavelos. The research is mainly quantitative. Based on the data from the survey, the author presents the results and interprets in statistical terms how students perceive the educator's presence. The author concludes that "the notion of *education through presence*, at least under this designation, hardly exists outside the Marist milieu"<sup>1</sup>. Apart from this study, I know about no other specific piece of research aimed at substantiating the *pedagogy of presence* in Marist education<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Leal das Neves A., *Percepção dos alunos das escolas maristas acerca da educação pela presença*. Universidade Aberta de Lisboa, 2005, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> Brother Basilio Rueda learned about a statement from the Australian Education Minister, Mr. Beazley, asserting the importance of Catholic schools for the future. But I am not aware of any specific studies on the *pedagogy of presence* in Marist education during that period.



The importance of *presence*, however, has been consistently emphasised and extensively nuanced in General Chapters, Marist documents, the Constitutions, and the Circulars from the Superiors<sup>3</sup>. *Marist presence* can be seen as valuable in other dimensions of Marist life without confining it to the educational field. Although there is a shortage of specific studies and much systematic development on this topic, there are references with some depth in a number of articles, conferences, and other writings on pedagogy. The first European Congress of Marist Education held in , on May 11 to 15, 1992, made a space for the *pedagogy of presence* through the lecture given by Brother Maurice Bergeret entitled *The Marist Teaching Tradition*<sup>4</sup>. Studying this *presence* in the Marist documents would also be an interesting topic to explore. Thus far the emphasis has been on the *pedagogy of presence* with explicit reference to our educational work. Is this only a typical trait of the Marist Brothers' educational style or does it also – and especially – refer to the very Marist identity?

Outside the Marist setting I found two interesting books analyzing this *presence* from the perspective of education and ethics. The first is by José María Toro, *Educating with the Heart*<sup>5</sup>, which includes a chapter entitled '*The Presence. On Being a Presence*'. The second is by Josep M. Esquirol, *Respect or the Attentive Gaze*<sup>6</sup>, whose third interesting chapter is entitled '*Analysis of Respect and the Attentive Gaze*'. From the philosophical perspective, I consulted a work by Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*<sup>7</sup>, and the doctoral thesis of Manuel Maceiras Fafián, *The Experience of Mystery: Gabriel Marcel's concrete ontophany*<sup>8</sup>. The book by Antonio Carlos Gomes Da Costa, *Pedagogy of presence. From loneliness to encounter*<sup>9</sup>, has an informative character but his approach is interesting because it overlaps in many aspects with the Marist *pedagogy of presence*.

The present reflections are structured around the following core themes: motivations that moved me to carry out this work; an analysis of

<sup>3</sup> In *the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat. A Vision for Marist Education Today* (1998), 97, 98, 99, 100, 126, 156, 172. *Water From the Rock. Marist Spirituality Flowing in the Tradition of Marcellin Champagnat* (2007), 135, 149, 155. *Gathered Around the Same Table. The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity* (2009), 27, 49, 59, 63, 111. The Marist International Network of Institutions of Higher Education wrote the document *Marist in Higher Education* (2010), 36. *Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth. Reference Document for the Marist Institute* (2011), 123, 124, 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Marist Notebooks*, No 4, March 1993, p. 39-57.

<sup>5</sup> José María Toro, *Educación con 'co-razón'*. Desclée, Bilbao 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Josep M. Esquirol, *El respeto o la mirada atenta*, Gedisa, Barcelona 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser*. BAC, Madrid 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Manuel Maceiras Fafián, *La experiencia del misterio: ontofanía concreta de Gabriel Marcel*. Madrid 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Carlos Gomes Da Costa, *Pedagogía de la presencia. De la soledad al encuentro*. Editorial Losada, Buenos Aires 2007.

what *presence* means; consideration of the dynamics elicited by *presence*; and finally, a description of how we experience *presence*.

## 1. MOTIVATIONS TO STUDY THE PEDAGOGY EFFECTED BY THE PRESENCE OF A MARIST EDUCATOR

### 1.1. A tradition inherited from our elders

The fact of studying the importance of the educator's *presence* in Marist pedagogy<sup>10</sup> comes from a personal interest, which is also fuelled by the institutional insistent presentation of this attitude as a Marist educational principle.

Our Marist tradition speaks of the *pedagogy of presence* as a typical feature of the Marist educational style. Referring to it with the simple term *presence* is a colloquial shortening referred, in its most common sense, to the fact that the teacher is physically present in the various spaces or scenarios where educational activities take place, such as the classroom, playground, cultural outings, field trips, chapel, theatre,

laboratories, sport fields, gym, etc. Therefore it refers to *the educator's presence* in any space or occasion in which the educational process takes place. So the term *presence* in this context refers, first and foremost, to the teacher's attitude within the educational environment.

But a Marist educator is always part of the institution he or she represents, and belongs to the staff of a Marist work. The individual presence of a Marist educator reflects his or her own person, to start with, but also represents a particular Marist work and even the entire institution<sup>11</sup> with its legal personality, under the authority of a delegate or representative.

Historically speaking, the emphasis on the Marist educator's presence comes from the Founder and the first Marists, and passed down as a family heritage thanks to the charismatic presence of many Marist Brothers who served the Institute as religious educators. The presence of the Brothers was always related to the physical space in which they worked, such as the locations, objects, calendars, documents, constructions, etc., but especially the classroom and the playground.

<sup>10</sup> Some of the ideas in this paper come from the thesis written by the author for a Master's Degree of Education at the Marist University of Mexico under the title of *The importance of the educator's presence in Marist pedagogy* (Importancia de la presencia del educador en la pedagogía marista), Mexico City (2007).

<sup>11</sup> The institution itself has enhanced the term *presence* by using it as a title for high circulation Marist news magazines in a or set of Provinces. has published *Présence Mariste*; , *Presencia 7* and *Presencia Marista*; and , *Presencia Marista*.

The means through which the institution becomes present are the school or educational building itself, its design, its appearance, and organization; the images, pictures, paintings, phrases, flags, shields, etc., which decorate the walls and rooms; and also the social gatherings, celebrations, significant events, special days, etc., all of which are an expression of Marist *presence*. Other strong expressions of *presence* as a form of identity are the documents such as mission statements, leaflets, constitutions, educational programmes, magazines and publications produced by the Institution. The spaces dedicated to various services – such as the chapel, catechesis areas, meeting room for solidarity activities, campus ministry department, social action department, and so on – also express an institutional presence, and contribute to organize the educational setting and resources at the service of the institution’s activities, not only in an efficient way, but actually rendering the identity of the institution visible.

Constructions, buildings, courtyards, halls, calendars, celebrations and holidays, decorations such as statues, pictures, wall phrases, etc. are part of this *presence* under the form of a cultural heritage, thanks to which the students discover the meaning of things and open up to life. These elements – expressing an educational charism initially embodied in the Brothers – are educational tools through which the identity of the students flourishes in the midst of an *alma mater* that spiritually begets

them. That is why the students, once they leave the actual place where they were educated, still talk about *their* school, *their* teachers, *their* experiences, *their* days, etc. The elements of the cultural world surrounding the individual become impregnated with meaning. Through these signifiers and their significance, the student is socialized and educated.

The positive assessment by the students – a sort of overall statement of their schooling process – will be expressed with phrases such as: “I am a former student from...”, “I went to school at...”, “I was educated in...”, “I learned to read at...”, etc. Or they may do the same through the signifying things, recalling that “there was a palm tree in the middle of the courtyard”, or that “the staircase was presided over by a statue of...”, “during recess we always saw Brother...”, “the chapel had a special appeal...”, “the laboratories were the best...”, “the Brothers’ House had...”, “my class window overlooked the schoolyard...”, “the celebrations were...”, “Saturdays we had...”, etc. These forms of *presence* become pedagogical elements and teaching resources to convey a sense of country, personal and institutional identity, belonging, and values.

Personally, when I started my work in the field of education within the Marist classrooms during the sixties, it was normal practice among teachers to take turns monitoring the students when entering and leaving the school and during recess time;

to notify the Brother or teacher in the adjoining classroom when an emergency or *force majeure* made you leave the classroom for a while, albeit briefly; to accompany the students formed in rows from the school gate to the corner of the next street, helping them cross the road and protecting them from the traffic; to always have two Brothers accompany the groups in outings and trips, etc. This way of doing things was not the personal style of a charismatic teacher, outstanding personality, or creative person in the educational field, but a common practice for the members of the institution, stemming from a practical way of going about when sharing in community meetings or informal chats to discuss insights and initiatives. This was a simple way to discern and evaluate daily practice and the concrete applications of a way of doing things, which also served to interconnect the activities of the teaching staff and the school community.

## 1.2. A heritage that is forever relevant

Marist educational mission statements often make public mention the *pedagogy of presence*. This educational approach may appear in leaflets – which were called *brochures* (prospectuses) in Champagnat's time – briefly describing the institution's identity and the nature of the school<sup>12</sup>; or on the website many schools have, where we explain “who are we”, “our school's history” and “our pedagogical features”. Most of these websites reflect the same text that is in the printed leaflets. But a quick glimpse to the educational proposal in our Marist schools' websites is enough to see that there is no unified understanding of the concept of *presence* in relation to Marist pedagogy<sup>13</sup>.

The Marist institution's positive assessment of the educator's *presence* began with a set of three books which *Editorial Luis Vives* of Zaragoza

<sup>12</sup> As an example, the following quotes can help us appreciate the wide range of meanings attributed to the term *presence*: “*Pedagogy of presence and simplicity: they must have the ability to be warm, frank and respectful to children and youth, through a friendly, caring and unassuming attitude, with a Marist educational style*” (Province of the Hermitage, 2000). “*Pedagogy of presence: (Marist Province of Iberica, 2009)*”. “*The Pedagogy of Presence: (Educational Approach of Marist Schools. Province of Santa Maria, 1988, p. 8)*”. “*Being present: (Pedagogical Guide. Education Union of Santa Catarina - UCE. Province of Santa Catarina, 2001, p. 23)*”. “*Presence: (Pedagogical Guide. Education Union of Santa Catarina - UCE. Province of Santa Catarina, 2001, p. 25)*”. (Marist Educational Mission Statement. Original version: Marist Provinces of Rio de la Plata and Cordoba; Portuguese version coordinated by the CIME, p. 14). “*Pedagogy of Presence: Marist Educational Proposal. Marist Province of Santa Catarina, 1995, p. 19)*”. “*The pedagogy of friendly presence : (Marist Educational Style. Province of Rio Grande do Sul, 2003, p. 12)*”.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, the mission statement of the Marist school in Algemesi considers “the educator's presence” as “a core value in the process of maturation” of the students. See: <http://www.maristasalgemesi.cam/organizalndice.htm> Marists Huelva, Calón Marist School, considers “the educator's presence” as “an effective means of pedagogical action”. See: <http://www3.planalfa.es/calanh/presencialpresenciaOO.htm>. The educational project of the Sacred Heart Marist School in Valencia equates “Marcellin Champagnat's pedagogical style” with the “pedagogy of presence”. See: <http://www3.planalfa.es/scozazonva/maristas.htm>

started publishing in 1983<sup>14</sup>. The first book of the trilogy, *The Marist Educator 1*, prompted much reflection in Spain and elsewhere in the Institute, and its most significant result was the *National Congress of Marist Education* held in Salamanca in 1986, under the motto of *The Educator of the Future*<sup>15</sup>.

From these two events – the release of *The Marist Educator* and the celebration of the *Marist National Education Congress* in Salamanca<sup>16</sup> – the publication of numerous pamphlets with similar titles has followed: *Principles, Principles of Marist Education, Particular Nature of the Schools, Mission Statement of the Schools*, etc., with pedagogical resonances throughout the Marist geography worldwide. Today we can find the documents published by each Province or group of Provinces which have studied *The Marist Educator* and the *Acts of the National*

*Education Congress* held in Salamanca, and also the digital version of these documents in the websites of many Marist schools.

The document *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today* was published in 1998<sup>17</sup>. In 2007 another document was released: *Water From the Rock, Marist Spirituality Flowing in the Tradition of Marcellin Champagnat*<sup>18</sup>. The publication of another important document took place two years later: *Gathered Around the Same Table, The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity* (2009)<sup>19</sup>. The following year, the Marist International Network of Institutions of Higher Education approved and published a document entitled *Marist Mission in Higher Education* (2010)<sup>20</sup>. In 2011, the International Commission of Marist Youth Ministry, after a long process, issued a document entitled *Evangelizers in the Midst of Youth*,

<sup>14</sup> One of the authors, Dr. Juan Jesús Moral Barrio fms, presents the complete work as follows: *The Marist Educator 1, Identity and Style* (1983), Marcellin's direct legacy. *The Marist educator 2* (1986) tells its history whose value the Institute should not forget. *The Marist educator 3* (1989) tries to envision the society of the future.

<sup>15</sup> The main fruit of the Education Congress was the contribution of Brother Basilio Rueda about the future of Marist education. These lessons were subsequently included in a book by Antonio Martínez Estauín: *El hermano Basilio y su cátedra universitaria (Brother Basilio and His University Teachings)*, Editorial Progreso, Mexico 2004, p. 121-186.

<sup>16</sup> The *Marist Education Congress* was definitely prepared by Brother Basilio Rueda's thinking regarding education, stated in his circular about *The First Session of the XVI General Chapter, Part 4, A Chapter for Today's World*. Rome, January 2, 1968. Brother Basilio Rueda, *Circulars*, T. 24, p. 209-248.

<sup>17</sup> This document is an update of *Guide des écoles* – known in Spanish as *Teacher's Guide* (guía del maestro)

<sup>18</sup> It states that *we go to the places that require our presence* (149), *we communicate the message of Jesus and his way of being and acting through our presence* (135), and *we readily carry the gift of education and Marist presence* (155) to others.

<sup>19</sup> This document addresses the presence of Marist laity in the Church. Lay people recognize *the vitality of the Marist presence* (49) and claim that *the presence (of the Brothers) among young people has captivated us* (27).

<sup>20</sup> This document recognizes that *certain lessons cannot be taught with words alone*.

Reference Document for the Marist Institute<sup>21</sup>. All these documents speak about Marist presence as a characteristic educational principle. And to this long list we should add the Constitutions and General Chapter documents, especially those held after Vatican II.

Contemplating this broad panorama of Marist thought across a quarter-century, some spontaneous questions arise: Why so much importance is given by these key documents to the Marist educator's *presence* in the field of education? What is the value Marist pedagogy attributes to the educator's *presence*? Or what is the rationale behind the statement that the Marist educator's *presence* is a source of distinctive pedagogy?

### 1.3. Reasons to study the concept of presence today

Besides academic curiosity, there are other particularly interesting reasons today to study the concept of *presence* in pedagogy within Marist institutions and in teaching in general.

It should be noted, first, the interest this topic has awakened across the Institute after the last Marist General Chapters<sup>22</sup> and the canonization

of Saint Marcellin Champagnat. This has been in relation to the promotion and participation of the laity as Marist educators in the classroom and in other educational contexts. In many places and educational works within the Marist Institute, the Brothers' presence as educators is decreasing while lay people, as educators within the Marist charism and teaching tradition, are becoming more and more numerous.

The qualification of teachers working in Marist educational centres has not always included specific training aimed at ensuring that their *presence* before the students will be in tune with the Marist teaching tradition. Teacher training in order to exercise the pedagogy of *presence* in Marist educational works has been often accomplished indirectly or by simple osmosis.

At least in the historical period in which teaching was carried out mainly by Brothers – through the structure known as “the Brothers' School”<sup>23</sup>, in which most teachers were Marist Brothers, who also filled the leadership positions – the lay teachers who worked with them learned many practical skills in the areas of education, pedagogy, didactics and organization directly from experience within the institution

<sup>21</sup> This document states that *as Marists, we know very well that we educate, first and foremost, by being present to young people* (123).

<sup>22</sup> Acts of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (1993), 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (2001), and 21<sup>st</sup> General Chapter (2009).

<sup>23</sup> *From the Brothers' School to the Marist School. In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat*, introduction, p. 3.

and by being in touch with the Brothers' practical ways. One such educational practice was the way to be present among the students and to spend time with them. But years had to pass – and the right circumstances were needed – before the Institute considered offering training for *the Marist educational style* not only to the Brothers but also to the lay people working in the Marist educational centres<sup>24</sup>. This has led many Brothers and *Lay Marists of Champagnat* to assume – as a priority in their mission – the responsibility of training those who work in the Marist educational centres.

Some of the Brothers' contributions in this historical context are a real pedagogical inheritance to be passed on to the future generations along with the Marist charism and mission. Such patrimony is worth the effort to provide the Marist educators with a sound reflection on the scope this key element of the Marist teaching tradition called *pedagogy of presence* has had.

In this paper I will just analyze what is meant by the term *presence*, besides indicating a number of educational dynamics posed by it, and describing some characteristics of the *presence* experience.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM PRESENCE

### 2.1. Presence-absence in everyday language

For a long time, we defined what we meant by *presence* as follows: there are things and people that are available to our sensory organs and therefore we can see, hear, touch or smell them; they are before us. That is how the concept of *presence* materialized. By contrast, when you could not see, hear, touch or smell people and things, then there was *absence*.

Etymologically, *presence* comes from the Latin *praesentia*. The first meaning given to this term in the (Spanish) dictionary is that of “personal attendance, state of a person who is in front of or in the same place as another.” With the word *presence* we designate the act of someone who is participating in an event, in which he or she is the protagonist, a spectator, an actor or the narrator. A secondary meaning is that of “size, shape and bearing of the body”<sup>25</sup>.

Language describes presence by the use of the verb *to be*, whose etymology (in Spanish) comes from

<sup>24</sup> By *Marist educational centers* we mean those owned by the Marist Institute, which is also in charge of the school's educational project.

<sup>25</sup> The (Spanish) dictionary includes other meanings. In chemistry and medicine the term is equivalent to “the existence of one substance inside another”. In theology, the fundamental dogma of any treaty on the Blessed Sacrament is the *real presence*, that is, the statement that “Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist”, according to the Council of Trent (s. XIII, 1<sup>st</sup> canon).



Latin, and is related to the Latin '*in stare*', that is, *being there*, but in a significant way. The act by which someone's presence becomes concrete is the manifestation of what this person is.

The experience of *presence* is linked to the experience of *absence*. For example, while attending a conference someone could say: "I am attending a conference at the Convention Centre of my city and it is half past ten." This person is aware of his or her presence in a particular place and time. But the person speaking could also make up a story and give us a completely different description of what is happening. The description and the actual facts are not necessarily the same. So the person could pretend to be present in the imaginary event he or she is narrating, without actually being there. Thus you can be present and absent at the same time.

Moreover, we do not always live in the present but are often worried about and tied by the past, or anxious about and pulled by the future. In other words, we tend to be absent, because *presence* is only possible when you are here and now.

In a normal conversation we could use the terms "appearance-disappearance" to indicate that a person is

present before us or not. So it happens, for instance, when you look for a guy who is usually working together with a group and you realize he is not present. To explain what happened we say: "He was here a while ago but disappeared". The same is true when referring to a person's psychological dimension, for example when his/her attention level seems to have weakened. In such cases we say: "He seemed absent", "she seemed gone."

This is a first pass at the variety of meanings of the term *presence* in ordinary speech. Let's take a step further in our research.

## 2.2. Beyond vocabulary: what do we mean by presence?

The true meaning of *presence* comes from Gabriel Marcel, the personalist philosopher, and thanks to him this concept has become part of our culture. Marcel says that *presence* manifests our Being, what each of us is. His philosophical thinking offers a unique reflection on the manifestation of Being in the ordinary experiences of life. The most original contributions of this philosopher is the transcendent value attributed to these specific experiences, which reveal the human being's personal core, and place us before the person as he or she is<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> His approach to philosophy did not attempt to formulate a system, but was rather a personal reflection on human existence. He argued that existence and the human person are more important than any abstraction, and are the foundation of all thought. He stated that individuals can only be understood within the specific situations in which they are involved and engaged.

In his book *The Mystery of Being* (1951), he begins by asking the question: “What is Being?”<sup>27</sup> Marcel’s purpose in his twenty Gifford Lectures – collected in the aforementioned book – is to discover the spiritual reality of the human Being, how it manifests itself and how we apprehend it.

Marcel holds that the *presence* of a human being is the manifestation, the revelation of the Mystery this person is. When we become present as human beings, our presence manifests the Mystery of our entire person. The reality we grasp in these experiences is not a concept, but the realization of what we actually are.

In his *Dictionary of Psychology*, Umberto Galimberti coincides with Gabriel Marcel when he defines *presence* as “self-disclosure of all there is by the mere fact of its existing”<sup>28</sup>. By contrast, *absence* would be the lack of self-disclosure of all that actually exists but is not there<sup>29</sup>.

The idea of self-disclosure implies that *presence* manifests the very Being of each person, who does not receive it from anybody else. Each person manifests his or her own Be-

ing, and in that sense we understand the difference between the presence of one person and that of another. So according to this approach, any existing reality is present but becomes *presence* if it reveals its essence, if it discloses its Being. Your *presence* basically discloses the essence of who you are.

The human person is the privileged place for the manifestation of Being. Through the experience of my own existence – as evidenced by my own body and my senses, by my encounter with others and with the events of history – I can discover the ways in which Being in general discloses itself. We experience our own existence through our sensitive presence, which is its immediate revelation. The deepness of Being is disclosed in a person through his or her body and specific human acts, such as thoughts, decisions, feelings, emotions, and by encountering others in love, fidelity, and hope. Every feeling is an inner resonance elicited by someone’s presence. There are nuances of reality that only feeling can capture and discover, since it has a deeper cognitive power than merely rational knowledge. The feel-

<sup>27</sup> “I had initially decided to entitle this course ‘Research on spiritual reality’”. In the *Gifford Lessons* (delivered in 1949-1950), twenty in all, he shows that the presence of a human being, in whom the spirit is incarnate, is a Mystery. Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser*. BAC, Madrid 2002, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Galimberti, Umberto. *Diccionario de Psicología* (2002). Entry: presencia.

<sup>29</sup> The term *absence* comes from the Latin *absentia* and indicates the state of being absent, or the period of time that one is absent. In law, according to common meaning, the term amounts to nonappearance. In the (Spanish) juridical terminology, it has two connotations: in a broad sense, it indicates the situation of a person who is not home, but whose existence is certain; and in a strict sense, the status of a person who has left his/her residence, whose existence is uncertain and his/her whereabouts are unknown.

ing of “being dragged from within” to pursue beauty, goodness and truth, is not a blind impulse but a participative communion. These acts belong to the realm of the spirit. Only the spirit has access to Being.

*Presence* should not be considered as an object we can feel or, on the contrary, as something vaporous in contrast with the solid, tangible, durable objects with which we are in touch in what we call real life. *Presence* differs from a merely physical object and also from an abstract concept, and becomes concrete through a disclosure of Being which we can experience. We must avoid, then, the idea that *presence* is the transmission of content, something that could be rationally conveyed from person to person, or intellectually grasped<sup>30</sup>. We know that Being differs from the object through which it becomes present, for the object can be considered as absence or presence, whereas Being can only be *presence*. The privileged place where Being discloses itself is the concrete person: Being conveys itself through bodily presence. Therefore the actual body is the privileged means through which Being communicates itself and becomes *presence*.

### 2.3. Marist Presence

Our Marist Being is defined by the call “to follow Jesus and to serve others in a particular style of life. This call is a gift. A consecration coming from God is attached to this gift: the vocation to become part of a religious family, the Little Brothers of Mary”<sup>31</sup>. Each of us is a personal being, and this is a gift we have not chosen, programmed or commissioned.

Marist *presence* reveals our Marist being, the self-disclosure of what each one is, of the essence of our being Marist, which distinguishes us from other ways of being. The XVI General Chapter (1968), in the document *The Spirit of the Institute*, included a section on *our original characteristics in the Church* which states that “we have a way of being, feeling and acting; we also have a way to bring the souls to God; an original style within the Church, among other religious families. This is what we call *our spirit*”<sup>32</sup>. “This spirit is the fruit of a common formation, faithfully transmitted from the origins. It is a seed in each of us from our calling to the Institute, becoming more precise in the formation houses, and developing to its full extent in the communities. Each of us gets to own and develop

<sup>30</sup> “We shall see our way more clearly if we say that a presence is something which can only be gathered to oneself or shut out from oneself. [...] A presence can, in the last analysis, only be invoked or evoked”. Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser*. BAC, Madrid 2002. Chapter X, p. 187.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Howard, Circulars XXIX, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> XVI General Chapter (1968), *The Spirit of the Institute. The characteristics of our originality in the Church*, N° 1.

it through an affectionate and assiduous meditation of the Founder's life. The times, the cultural milieu, and even each Brother enrich it with innovative nuances"<sup>33</sup>. The characteristics of our spirit "desired by our Founder, express a set of values to which he paid very special attention"<sup>34</sup>. Marist *presence* is closely related to the spirit of the Institute. We could say that Marist *presence* is the concrete manifestation of the Marist Institute's spirit. "I am convinced," said Brother Basilio Rueda, "that the Marist spirit is a deep intuition coming from the Founder, who clearly perceived what the Brothers needed in order to teach and educate the poor boys in the countryside"<sup>35</sup>. The Marist Brother's particular way of being, feeling and acting is a legacy from and a partaking in Marcellin Champagnat's charism.

## 2.4. Our identity in the Church and our responsibility

Marist *presence* is a distinctive expression of the Marist charism and Institute, which becomes visible through our life witness in the Church. "Our Institute was founded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to exercise – through our life, wit-

ness, and apostolic action – an enlivening influence in the Church and in the world"<sup>36</sup>. "All Institutes should share in the life of the Church, adapting the Church's undertakings and aims as their own and implementing them in accordance with their own characteristics"<sup>37</sup>, but each of them in keeping with the peculiarities of the foundational charism. It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. "Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them, as well as their sound traditions – all of which make up the patrimony of each institute – be faithfully held in honour"<sup>38</sup>. But each Institute has its own peculiarities – defined by the Constitutions and by its proper law – which become concrete through the personal and community projects.

Since Marist *presence* manifests the essence of who we are, then our actions are a source of information to define the profile of our being. Brother Basilio Rueda stated: "Christianity is not mere activity. It implies *being*, which always enables us to act, since action stems from being. So when we set out to identify our spirit we closely examine both what we are and what we do: the internal

<sup>33</sup> Id. Nº 2.

<sup>34</sup> Id. Nº 9.

<sup>35</sup> Brother Basilio Rueda, *Circulars XVI*, Nº 3, p. 214-215. Circular on *The Spirit of the Institute*. December 25, 1975.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Howard, *Circulars XXIX*, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Id. p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

dynamism shaping us for our pedagogical mission”<sup>39</sup>.

A collective of biography would be the fullest expression of Marist *presence*. “The religious educator obviously exerts influence around him because of what he is and what he does. His suitability, the way he relates to others, his human and religious values, his entire life, give clear testimony to his mission”<sup>40</sup>. We can identify the Marist way to “be, feel and act” through the reading and analysis of several thousand Marist educators’ “biographies” which have been “written” in the Institute. The set of educational traits that stand out in these “biographies” is a mosaic of Marist *presence* bearing its most typical features, from its origins to our days. The Marist Brother’s Being has been modelled in history by the effect of different animation and leadership initiatives prompted by the highest authority of the Institute, the General Chapter. The documents, guidelines, regulations and decisions of the Chapter meetings have gradually oriented the Marist Brother’s *presence* in the world and especially within the educational field, adapting it to the changing circumstances of history, purifying it with continued calls to conversion, and prompting initiatives inspired by the calls of the Spirit and the signs of the times in order to enrich his life witness and the

fidelity to the essence of his charismatic vocation.

### 3. DYNAMICS PROMPTED BY MARIST PRESENCE

#### 3.1. Presence and the educational project. Marist testimony

Our societies nowadays need role models whose lifestyle can enlighten the people around them and raise their spiritual and human well-being. The Marist educational project – aimed at kindling the quality of spiritual life – should promote a lifestyle which people can perceive as liberating and dignifying. Society needs the witness and presence of spiritually mature people who can act as role models and show the road leading beyond mediocrity. These people will not draw the masses towards them: their presence will have an educational function, but not in a massive way, for education is a personalized process. The masses cannot be educated: they can only become fanaticized and be led on.

It is the Marist educator’s responsibility to be present in society as a spiritually mature person. This kind of educators, who possess a real *presence*, do not impose anything or monopolize any kind of power: they

<sup>39</sup> Brother Basilio Rueda, *Circulars XVI*, Nº 3, p. 214-215. Circular on *The Spirit of the Institute*. December 25, 1975.

<sup>40</sup> XVI° General Chapter, *Formation*, p. 597.

are simply themselves and people immediately recognize their values. Education always elicits the appreciation of values.

Our attitudes reveal the quality of our spiritual life. A spiritually profound experience and way of life lead to holiness as an ultimate goal. Actually, to become a Brother is to commit oneself to becoming a saint. This quality of spiritual life is manifested through a way of acting and living which can only be perceived by other people who are the same space. It cannot be verified or empirically objectified. It cannot be the subject of sociological inquiry to determine whether a person has it or not. Spiritual quality as such cannot be quantified. Nor can we claim it as a personal quality we possess. It can only be discovered and appreciated. It is a way of being that comes across in the normal circumstances of life, making the person appear as spiritually developed, endowed with an exquisite and profound sensitivity and open to spiritual realities, which are the supreme and most valuable human achievements.

Nobody can claim to embody this spiritual quality, for the fact of pretending to possess it would immediately destroy it. If you claim the virtue of humility for yourself, you obviously deny it by that very fact. An allegedly humble person who boasted of his or her humility, would inevitably become self-regarding. Truly spiritual people can only *be*, unknowingly disclosing themselves, without seeking to be noticed or applauded. They

cannot deny what they are, for a false humility would render them inauthentic. The only thing they can do is to *be present*, freely offering themselves to those who can profit from their help in order to learn how to participate in this deep spiritual experience. Anyone who is able to appreciate the exquisiteness of a spiritual person's way of living is already on the right track. Perhaps the only thing an educator can actually do is awaken and spread the desire for a profound spiritual experience.

An educational project seeking the fullness of what it means to be human and aimed at the maturity of the human person, must be an eye-opener to help people appreciate the value of spiritual fulfilment, a goal to which everyone is called from the depths of the human heart. Some people who are presently teaching our youth claim that, scientifically speaking, there is no human interiority: there would be only the brain, its instincts, and sequences of stimuli and responses. Others, by contrast, claim there is indeed a human interiority and that you must pay attention to it in order to become a truly human person. Only an inward oriented person is able to spiritually "give birth" to others through fruitful dialogue. Our *being* is an active part of the spiritual cosmos in which we exist and love. Marist educators fulfil themselves insofar as they participate with their whole being in this spiritual universe.

There can be no real spiritual experience without humility, simplicity, responsibility, and true unhappiness at

the spiritual impoverishment of ordinary people, those with fewer opportunities. Marists know their spiritual richness must be shared and offered to others. Freely offering this spiritual experience and wisdom is a natural expression of selflessness.

The spiritual person's leadership can bring about collective transformation, for the spiritual master is leaven in the dough. A spiritual person does not attract the masses, as we said, but has a personal relationship with each of them so that people can become self-motivated through an educational process which teaches them how to master their own existence. At the end of the road, there are only ties of grateful recognition between master and disciple. Such is the spirit's fruitful development: no possession, no surrender; only mature freedom and full liberation remain. Education intended as a spiritual activity brings about true liberty.

### 3.2. From ordinary encounters to the encounter

We come into contact with *presence* through certain events which fall outside the categories of physical science and can only be explained with the language of experience. They occur in the privileged realm of

our relation with other people: "There cannot be an encounter or a meeting in the fullest sense of the word except between beings endowed with a certain inwardness"<sup>41</sup>. We access the depth of *being* thanks to the data coming from our relationships; it takes place not in an abstract way, but by "drilling" through or dipping into such data. Our encounter with people can range from the trivial to the most highly significant; from accidental physical contacts with hundreds of strangers on the street – "mere bodies occupying a certain share of space in the *lebensraum* in which we have to maintain our own share of space and through which we have to thrust our way" – to an intentional approach that "acknowledges", "creates a connection", and "welcomes"<sup>42</sup>. The recognition of another human being is a fundamental part in the experience of *presence*.

*Presence* is at the basis of any true encounter, and it renders rich relationships possible<sup>43</sup>. *Presence* is also the first step in the overall educational process. In the early stages of an interpersonal encounter we do not have a clear and distinct intuition of the other person's *being* but only an imprecise intuition, which must be clarified in consecutive contacts to get acquainted with each other and become *present* to one another. *Pres-*

<sup>41</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser* BAC, Madrid 2002. Chapter VII, p. 132.

<sup>42</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser* BAC, Madrid 2002. Chapter VII, p. 131-140.

<sup>43</sup> Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Theory and Reality of the Other*, (*Teoría y realidad del otro*, Revista de Occidente, Madrid 1968). Other works devoted to this subject: *Sobre la Amistad* (*On Friendship*) (Revista de Occidente, Madrid 1972) and *La relación médico-enfermo* (*The Doctor-patient Relationship*, (Revista de Occidente, Madrid 1964).



ence is also the way in which I experience the other person: grasping this *being* that becomes *present* to me necessarily implies a non-transferable knowledge, which is unique to each of us and comes about in day-to-day interaction. It is something you must experience firsthand.

Every encounter actually starts with the perception of another person: *presence* arises as something I feel but cannot fully grasp, initially surrounded by endless unanswered questions, as a germinal knowledge still to be clarified. Whose presence is this? In everyday life we often ask: "Who's there?" That is, we experience *presence* before actually knowing the person.

Marcel explains in detail the situation that led him to ask the question "who is this before me?" When he was a volunteer for the Red Cross during the war, the relatives of those who had gone missing anxiously asked for their whereabouts. In the Red Cross offices these soldiers were nothing more than an ID card bearing a name and some additional information, but Marcel was able to perceive an *absent presence*. The experience of being close to the families of these people and sharing their concern was the basis on which Marcel constructed and

developed his thinking about presence and interpersonal encounter. Rather than achieving the definition of *presence*, he experienced its core thanks to his role as mediator.

Interpersonal encounter requires the *presence* of two people. A person I come across on the road of life can only be a real person for me if there is an encounter between us. Otherwise I cannot say I met a person, for there is only an anonymous coincidence in space and time. Experiencing an interpersonal encounter requires my openness and close *presence*. Opening my *presence* to someone else is a prerequisite for interpersonal communication.

We can only speak of an interpersonal encounter when the other person becomes a *you* for me, and I become a *you* for this person. For the other person to become a *you*, he or she must stop being a *thing*, an *object*, or an *idea* for me. At first, the other person is only a "*him*" or a "*her*", an *absent object*, which does not count for me and for whom I do not count. To illustrate the presence of this *other* before whom we behave as if this person were absent, Marcel quotes a text dated April 1918 from the *Journal Métaphisique*, which is mentioned by all those who study his thinking:

*"I meet someone I don't know on the train; we talk about the weather, the war, but even though I am addressing him, he continues to be "someone" for me, "that man there", the particulars of whose biography I get to know bit by bit. It is as though he were filling out a questionnaire, as if he were providing me with fragments of an account with which he identified himself (...)*

*The remarkable fact, however, is that the more my questioner is external to me, the more I am by the same token external to myself; in confronting a Mr. so-and-so I also become a Mr. so-and-so, unless I literally happen not to be a person anymore – a pen which traces words on paper or a simple recording apparatus...*<sup>44</sup>

This is one of the key elements of Marcel's thinking, which also shows the richness of the educational process that *presence* can elicit. The more the other person is outside myself as an impersonal and absent object, the less I exist, being outside myself too and becoming an existential nothingness, being nobody. Instead, I am a new man when the other person lives within me as a

fruitful and dynamic *presence* empowering my being, without making me lose my personality. As I give myself to and trust another person, I become myself more deeply.

Marcel describes the experience of entering the “existential orbit” of another person, who is perceived as a *you*, opening up new possibilities:

*“It may be that a deep bonding appears between the other person and me, for instance if I discover a certain experience we have in common (...), thus creating unity, in which the other person and I become us, that is to say, he or she ceases to be him or her and becomes you: the expression “you also” acquires a completely essential sense here”*<sup>45</sup>.

Partaking in common and unifying events is what allows us to say “you also” participate in my experience. A participative communion takes place between us. We have something in common which makes us be close and similar to each other. We become an existential unity.

We seldom perceive the people around us as present, for we are so used to them that they run the risk of becoming something like a piece of furniture that is just there. Billions of people are physically present in our world, but only a very small fraction will appear as *present* according to

<sup>44</sup> G. Marcel, *Filosofía Concreta*, 54. See also: *Du refus à l'invocation*.

<sup>45</sup> G. Marcel, *Filosofía Concreta*, 54. See also: *Du refus à l'invocation*.

Marcel. The distinction between presence and non-presence cannot be reduced in any way to the opposition between being attentive or distracted. However, those who are not available for us, are distracted from their own lives, are unable to be present to us, and in that sense they appear as *objects*. In fact, *presence* has to do with the way we *relate* to our world not with the objects we simply *observe*.

Experience tells us that *presence* is not only about physical proximity. We can be as close to someone as to touch his or her body, and yet feel that this person is far away from us. By contrast, we can be many miles

away from a loved person and feel that he or she is very close to us. Thus the person is not confined to the limits of his or her physical body, but creates a *field of presence* touching all that falls under its influence as a free offering. In the spiritual realm, absence is the only way to experience certain presences, which become more present the more absent they are.

### 3.3. Presence and spiritual fruitfulness

Marcel gives a clarifying example to help us grasp the scope of this *presence*. He describes the situation of a stranger sitting in a room next to us:

*"We can, for instance, have a very strong feeling that somebody who is sitting in the same room as ourselves, sitting quite near us, someone whom we can look at and listen to and whom we could touch if we wanted to make a final test of his reality, is nevertheless far further away from us than some loved one who is perhaps thousands of miles away or perhaps, even, no longer among the living. But what do I mean by presence, here?"*

*It is not that we could not communicate with this person; we are supposing him neither deaf and blind, nor idiotic. Between ourselves and him a kind of physical, but merely physical, communication is possible; the image of the passing of messages between a reception point and an emission point, which we have rejected on several other occasions, is in fact quite applicable here. Yet something essential is lacking. One might say that what we have with this person – who is in the room, but somehow not really present to us – is communication without communion: unreal communication, in a word. He understands what I say to him, but he does not understand me: I may even have the extremely disagreeable feeling that my own words, as he repeats them to me, as he reflects them back at me, have become unrecognizable. By a very singular phenomenon indeed, this stranger interposes himself between me and my own reality, he makes me in some sense also a stranger to myself; I am not really myself while I am with him.*

*The opposite phenomenon, however, can also take place. When somebody's presence does really make itself felt, it can refresh my inner being; it reveals me to myself, it makes me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact. All this, of course – though nobody would*

*attempt to deny that we do have such experiences – is very difficult to express in words; and we should ask ourselves why. The fact is that the notion of the object, as such, is linked in our minds with a whole set of possible practical operations that can be taught and that can thus be regarded as generally communicable. But these considerations do not apply, in any sense at all, to the notion of the presence, as such. It would be quite chimerical to hope to instruct somebody in the art of making his presence felt: the most one could do would be to suggest that he drew attention to himself by making funny faces! The whole business would be rather like teaching a woman how to have charm. It is as clear as can be that the notion of a lesson in charm is a self-contradictory one. In fact the whole notion of teaching charm, as of teaching people to make their presence felt, is the very height of absurdity<sup>46</sup>.*

In this example we can identify several educational dynamics related to *presence*:

### **3.3.1. The fruitfulness of presence**

We know that *Being* becomes present for us through concrete beings with whom we have a personal encounter revealing the inexhaustible depth of their interiority. I am renewed inside when I experience another person as present in my life. The *presence* of the other person, who is before me, makes me be more fully myself. In this sense we can speak of the fruitfulness of *presence*. Thanks to the quality of *presence*, educator and learner truly generate each other throughout the educational process. One of the most efficient educational achieve-

ments brought about by the *presence* of another person in my life is the enrichment and fulfilment of my own person. When someone is not present to us, we feel we are not fully ourselves; however, when someone is, we experience in ourselves a kind of self-revelation, a deeper knowledge of our own Being we would have never reached had not that presence touched us<sup>47</sup>.

Experience shows that when *presence* manifests itself as authentic, beautiful, attractive, desirable, it is easily accepted, welcomed, followed and imitated. Through these experiences of *presence*, eliciting a call to full self-realization, people perceive that *Being* is revealed and becomes visible. Conversely, when *presence* causes fear, it brings about rejection, avoidance and distancing.

<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser*, BAC, Madrid 2002. Chapter X, p. 185.

<sup>47</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser*, BAC, Madrid 2002. p. 207-211.

### 3.3.2. Creating conditions for presence

*Presence* cannot be taught. “It would be quite chimerical to hope to instruct somebody in the art of making his presence felt”, as already stated by Marcel. This is because Being is Mystery, in the sense that it emanates so much light that it dazzles us and prevents us from seeing and knowing its deepest reality. The Mystery of Being must be welcomed and acknowledged. *Presence* is not only to be perceived or apprehended, but to be fundamentally accepted, invoked, so that it can produce the magical effect of wrapping and including us within it. Welcoming the Mystery of Being requires the capacity to hold it within ourselves. Human beings are the witnesses of the invisible, of the spiritual realm. Personal maturity implies becoming increasingly open to the invisible, the unverifiable, to mystery. The person who is witness to Mystery becomes illuminated, radiates light and animates life around him or her. When spiritual beings disclose their inner life, when they manifest the spirit, Mystery is revealed. The most honest answer before a concrete *presence* would be to simply welcome it within me, in that space where I am open to Being, which by its own incompre-

hensible intimacy creates and grounds communion between us.

*Presence* cannot be taught, but we can learn to present ourselves. The 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, quoted above, states that the Marist Brothers “have a way to bring the souls to God; an original style within the Church, among other religious families”<sup>48</sup>. This “original way to bring souls to God” is the subject of an entire Marist formation plan, in which silence, recollection, contemplation, inner life, meditation, prayer, desert retreats, and solitude play a decisive role. This way to bring souls to God has a particular flavour within the Marist spirit. “This spirit is the fruit of a common formation, faithfully transmitted from the origins. It is a seed in each of us from the moment we are called to the Institute, becoming more precise in the formation houses, and developing to its full extent in the communities. Each of us gets to own and develop it through an affectionate and assiduous meditation of the Founder’s life. The times, the cultural milieu, and even each Brother enrich it with innovative nuances”<sup>49</sup>.

The Marist formation plan provides the Brother with a number of skills which strengthen his *presence*<sup>50</sup>. Certain people appear as present, while

<sup>48</sup> XVI General Chapter (1968), *The Spirit of the Institute. The characteristics of our originality in the Church*, N° 1.

<sup>49</sup> Id. N° 2.

<sup>50</sup> It would be interesting to include here the bibliographical references of all the proposals made by the Marist rules, constitutions, statutes, and government rules recommending silence and recollection as valuable means to develop a deep capacity to actually perceive the reality around us, and bring about a particular lifestyle, a qualified *presence*; or the texts asking for a formation process aimed at helping the Brothers become exemplary persons.

others do not. *Presence* becomes immediately evident through a glance, a gesture, a smile, a tone of voice, a handshake. Becoming present implies presenting ourselves, manifesting our availability, conveying the capabilities of our being through gestures, attitudes, right timing, etc. All this needs education. It means that the person must assume the right attitudes for self-disclosure so that his or her being can be fully manifested. We become present to the other person, who in turn becomes present to us, when we both present ourselves, when we are available to each other.

*Presence* manifests the spirit, the deepest Being of the person who comes to me. But the full manifestation of *presence* in all its depth, and its perception by the other person, require particular conditions. *Presence* is manifested to “this, that, or the other specific person; felt in an atmosphere of a certain intimacy; not necessarily (...) by anybody (...) at a large public meeting”<sup>51</sup>. Profound and intimate experiences can only be communicated as *confidences* offered to those who are bound by ties of friendship. Outside this context, they would be meaningless, and would become a desecration. Spiritual depth leads our attention to instances in our lives which transcend immediacy. Communion with another

person means sharing what happens within us, and requires constant communication and reflection, accompanied by silence, recollection and serenity, which allow intimacy and spiritual maturation to take place.

Training the spirit so as to arrive at a spiritual experience requires an enabling environment<sup>52</sup>. The quality of *presence* will be its consequence. *Presence* does not need words, gestures or noise to be experienced. *Presence* is felt in silence, which is not the mere absence of words, but the habit of staying within my inner dynamism with all the attention I can develop. After experiencing silence and internalization, I become a different person; every time I collect myself into this experience – which is full of creative strength and inner transmutation – I come out changed. This is because reality contemplated in recollection permeates that same recollection. I pull together my own life, and assimilate it as my vital nourishment. This unity is a complex experience, in which contemplation and recollectedness merge together. “It is within my recollectedness that I take (...) my stand towards my own life. I am weighing the actual life I have been leading in the balance of the potential life I carry within me, the life that I aspire to lead, the life that I

<sup>51</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser*, BAC, Madrid 2002. Chapter X, p. 187.

<sup>52</sup> We can recall Saint Ignatius' requirements to the people who take part in his Exercises, or the recommendations made by Saint Teresa of Avila. Those of us who were educated by Brother Eduardo Corredera – Director of the Marist Scholasticate located in the city of Vic, Barcelona – will remember that he fervently followed the spirituality of Saint Teresa and continually referred to her teachings.

would have to lead if I wanted to become fully myself; it is into this life (...) that I penetrate when I turn inwards”<sup>53</sup>.

Entering total silence requires an initial attitude of recollection. Ingatheredness questions the relationship between me and my life, and is linked to the act by which I achieve silence within me. Contemplation, silence, and recollection, are all-encompassing experiences in which I endorse and welcome my own life. When I collect myself through contemplation and silence, I sink into my own life and discover what it actually is. This is the immanent dimension of experience. The reality I am becomes evident, and I can no longer fool anyone without fooling myself first.

Educating you to become a person means helping you to get to know yourself, to recognize your own inner space, and welcome within you all what you have discovered in your journey through life. This ability to internalize is what Marcel calls *recollectedness*. It is not introspection or self-analysis, which belong to another type of insight. For Marcel, recollectedness is linked to contemplation: it allows us to internalize in a welcoming embrace whatever we discover as true and valuable when we encounter other people, in order to assimilate this experience, making it our own, developing and nurturing our spirit. Contemplation and recol-

lectedness are like the digestion and breathing of the spirit, through which we get to know our soul.

For this reason, we easily understand the great importance given in Marist formation – now and in the past – to the practice of silence and recollection during the novitiate and in the following formation stages. The Rules, Constitutions and other regulatory documents for the life of the Brothers have guided the way of being present in the midst of their students and have wisely advised them regarding inner life, recollection, prayer, silence, vigilance, etc.

It becomes clear that silence, inner life, and recollectedness are not only disciplinary resources aimed at achieving greater pedagogical efficiency, but rather essential elements in any life story which embodies the quality of what it means to be Marist. Our *presence* reveals the authenticity of who we are. Silence and recollectedness are means to experience the state of *presence* in which we discover the authenticity of what we live. If you are a spiritual person, you can only Be, disclose yourself as you are. You cannot deny what you are, for it would be false humility, which would make you inauthentic. The depth of your Being becomes present and is freely offered. It is kindly proposed, not imposed. Authenticity, on the other hand, is a feature only pertaining to the present mo-

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<sup>53</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *El misterio del ser* BAC, Madrid 2002. Chapter VII, p. 131.



ment. As we look into the past or the future, we can remember or imagine feelings, but they are not real: they are only pale reflections of our perception of things. We live out the present moment, but we only imagine, fantasize about or describe what is not present. Ego-centred consciousness has learned to give up the richness of the present moment, and live in the sensorial poverty of nonexistent fantasies and disembodied concepts.

## 4. THE EXPERIENCE OF PRESENCE

### 4.1. Presence is the radiance of Being

We do not experience the fullness of Being and its *presence* in a systematic and continuous way, but only in those life moments which are full of dense light. It is a unique revelation that takes place in very particular and unexpected moments, which are always unpredictable. These are moments when we are endowed with a deep understanding, in whose light life values have a new meaning; moments that break free from the way you see things in normal circumstances; moments when we use phrases like “I saw it clearly”, “I realized”, “it became evident”, as if a new radiance had illuminated our understanding and we had discovered the hidden meaning of things. When this experience is over and we return to our ordinary state of mind, we have the impression that something or someone was there but has

moved away from us, leaving us transformed by an irruption of creative *presence*.

This enlightenment is the profound experience of Being, which makes us experience ourselves as persons. Thanks to this experience, we can discover ourselves as Marists, linked to the Marist charism and flowing from it. The Marist educator’s encounter with the reality of his or her own Being comes to razor-sharp consciousness in some special moments like a sudden flash of light illuminating the whole horizon of existence. This type of experience is very peculiar and marks particular episodes in our life, which are then framed as defining, meaningful, important, and outstanding moments in our personal history. We could certainly collect numerous accounts of how these experiences took place in our own life.

When you live such experiences, you realize that *presence* is manifested to us in a state of consciousness that can emerge in the most varied situations of our existence. Most people experience this at least once in their life. It is a privileged but always normal experience, which brings fullness of knowledge not in a permanent and automatic way but in exceptional situations, in those “moments” when I can say “I saw it clearly”. These quick, fleeting, unexpected moments leave an indelible mark in our lives. We always remember them because they made us become ourselves in a deeper way. But

these exceptional moments do not preclude day-to-day experience. Speaking about our Marist spirituality, Brother Charles Howard stated: "This principle is very important; we need to encourage people to recognize God's presence in the experience of every day and not just in special 'spiritual' moments"<sup>54</sup>.

*Presence* cannot be mastered by the whims of our will, for it is not susceptible to control: it can only be invoked or evoked, as noted elsewhere in this paper. It is not in our power to elicit those moments of fullness at will as we could do with an experiment in a laboratory: we run into them as surprising and joyful events, although we cannot objectify them, measure their intensity or keep perceiving them uninterruptedly. The experience of *presence* – which does not recur everywhere and for everyone – is a manifestation of Being, and can only be invoked and evoked.

## 4.2. Presence and feeling

The fact of welcoming a *presence* to the point of holding it within us is always accompanied by a *concrete* feeling. I attest my Marist Being by the *concrete* way in which I manifest the life of the spirit. Referring to the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family, Brother Charles Howard highlights the value of Marist spirituality as a tan-

gible expression of our own self: "Spirituality refers to our relationship with God, and the way this shapes our other basic relationships: with ourselves, with others, with creation"<sup>55</sup>. Our life witness is a mediation allowing people to touch the depths of Being, a process which not only requires concrete perception through the senses but also a concrete feeling on their part. We face the person as a whole when we are open to his or her felt *presence*, through which Being is disclosed. These deep, personal and fulfilling experiences bring about feelings and sensations because they touch our deepest and most inner self. However, we cannot say that *presence* is just a feeling: our entire being is permeated by it.

*Presence* is reciprocal; it implies being present within each other. Real *presence* is penetrating and life-giving, and must be freely offered and welcomed. For someone to be present in me, I must intimately welcome his or her *presence*. By the same token, when someone tries to impose his or her *presence* within me regardless of my acceptance, I experience intrusion into my privacy.

Wherever there is Being, *presence* follows; if *presence* is lacking, there is no Being<sup>56</sup>. Our personal Being is a gift we received without the possibility to choose, program or

<sup>54</sup> Charles Howard, *Circulars* XXIX, p. 403. Circular on the *Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family*, October 15, 1991.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> Marist Being – collective and individual – generates Marist presence.

commission it. Accepting it thankfully is the best we can do.

Marist educators are witnesses to a pedagogical charism, not brand marketers. Therefore, their presence in the field of education is not aimed at competing in the market; it is a spiritual call with a particular mission. Being Marist is a vocational gift, a grace flowing from God's initiative, both for lay people and the Brothers, and it is meant to offer a fruitful *presence* to our world.

Our vocational answer is a personal participation in the charism received by Champagnat. Therefore, our Marist Being is vocational by nature, and it bears a charismatic gift which identifies us with Champagnat. The deepness of Being we convey when we stand before our students as Marist educators is a gift we have freely received, and it is concretely disclosed through our personal skills.

Marcel says that Being is light, and that its brightness is the result of truth and love meeting in our hearts. The revelation of our Being conveys the splendour of truth and love lying within us, and whoever contemplates this light experiences attraction, admiration, identification, and a desire to follow our same path.

These statements lead us to clear conclusions. If our personal Being is a gift we freely receive, then delivering it to others through our presence in the field of education has a vocational meaning and a faith dimension which we must take into account when we make a personal choice to dedicate ourselves to this task for life. *Presence* is the way we materialize our vocational answer<sup>57</sup> as Marist educators. *Presence* does not only mean "to stand before someone", but to be there with the student conveying all the density of our existence and our personal history. The authenticity of being ourselves is our personal capital amounting to what we are really worth. The experience of *presence* lies beyond sensitive perception, and includes an intentional revelation. Sharing with other spiritual beings entails an exposure to each other's Being. This presence of an *I* before a *you* opens up a dialogue and creates a sort of interpersonal correlation, which generates a new way of existing, and a dynamic relationship based on mutual questioning and responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this reflection by quoting two texts which are a good summary of what has

<sup>57</sup> Vocation, profession and occupation are part of any person's life project. Vocation is always a calling from the God above us or from the God within us. By contrast, a profession is the answer to a vocational call that implies a lifelong dedication, fulltime and forever. And finally, an occupation is a concrete job through which we make a living. Blessed and fulfilled are the people whose vocation, profession and occupation coincide.

been said, something of a final definition after discussing the scope and meaning of *presence*. Both texts speak about the rich interpersonal relations arising from “intersubjectivity” – the experience of two human beings sharing their presence and mutual values. Acknowledging each other’s presence is inevitably a transformative experience. Thanks to intersubjectivity, two persons can open up to each other and discover real intimacy.

The first text is from A. C. Gomes Da Costa<sup>58</sup>:

“The truth of the teacher-student relationship, from the point of view of the pedagogy of presence, is based on reciprocity. In this context, reciprocity is understood as an interaction, in which two presences are revealed to each other and mutually accepted, communicating a new consistency to one

another, a new content, a new strength, without minimally putting into question the originality inherent to each of them”<sup>59</sup>.

The second is about Gabriel Marcel:

“Presence, according to Marcel, is not so much the coexistence of two bodies or the fact of living together in the same room but, rather and mostly, the awareness that someone is with me, a deep intercommunication between two or more people, an intimate relationship, an inner flow of life, and a conscious communion.

This is an analogue description of the notion of presence. More than spatial and temporal, it is spiritual in nature; rather than physical proximity, it is a deeply personal intercommunication and exchange between two people, overcoming distances and even the barrier of death. It is a fully human act filling the heart of two people with joy and peace, uniting them in this unique way to one another”<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Antonio Carlos Gomes Da Costa is a Brazilian educator. Among other responsibilities, he served as Administration Secretary in Ouro Preto (MG); as chairman of the FEBEM (Brazilian State Foundation for the Well-Being of Minors) in Minas Gerais; as project officer for UNICEF, and as executive director and president of the *Brazilian Centre for Childhood and Adolescence*.

<sup>59</sup> A. C. Gomes Da Costa: *Pedagogía de la presencia*, pp. 27-75.

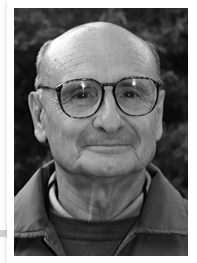
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# MARIST SPIRITUALITY AND PATRIMONY



**Br. Aureliano  
Brambila**

## SPIRITUALITY OR IDEOLOGY?

Among the beautiful things that are happening today in the life of our Institute is the desire in many lay people to live the spirituality that blossoms from the charism given to Marcellin Champagnat by the Holy Spirit.

In the eagerness that we Brothers show for bringing this spirituality to light to the greatest possible number of people – a praiseworthy thing – confusion can slip in surreptitiously between concepts that may appear to be similar but in reality are diametrically opposed: *spirituality* and *ideology*. Certainly, in everyday language we can use the terms interchangeably without giving it a second thought. Nevertheless, as we reflect more deeply on the theme of Marist spirituality and as the number of people to whom it is exposed grows, it is well for us to clarify the definitions of these concepts. This will help to avoid confusion.

## WHAT DO I UNDERSTAND BY IDEOLOGY?

Ideology is a human group's systematic and logical rationale for acting in characteristic ways. It is used to predetermine the behaviours that the group wishes to establish. Ideology starts with a schema of pre-established behaviours and looks to produce a mindset and attitude that guarantee these behaviours are expressed. It carefully develops these models, that is, profiles. It expects adherence to this established model. It is a matter of putting all collective, individual, and psychic mechanisms at the service of the management of attitudes conducive to determined behaviours. It makes constant and skilful use of behaviourism. It extensively and effectively utilizes media of social communications, to foster identity and group survival. Adoption of a distinctive ideology is the *sine qua non* of belonging and continuity in the group.



## WHAT DO I UNDERSTAND BY SPIRITUALITY?

If we envisage the human person as a being who is within a network of relationships that build him or her through communion, then we can say that there is spirituality when the relationship with the transcendent is of such a nature that it can consistently configure (modify, qualify, shade) the other relationships that make up the human person (selfness, cosmos, otherness).

The transcendence that can configure that with which it is in relationship is not impersonal in nature – a principle (truth), or a virtue (solidarity, commitment, etc) – nor a mere idealization (auto-projection). It is personal: GOD. Not the “god” of the philosophers – unipersonal and therefore solitary – but the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, a Trinity of persons, that is, a family, a Divine community.

Spirituality goes from fundamental attitudes to their concrete expression. Its object of analysis are the attitudes in face of the totality. It proceeds from a cosmic vision. It is born from coherence: “If my relationship of communion with God is of such intensity, what should be my attitude towards all the rest: other human beings, things, myself?” Acquiring adequate attitudes toward the whole of reality from God’s viewpoint, personal conduct will take on an old and new slant at the same time. Spirituality thus induces new

ways of acting, with the same spirit although diverse in outward appearance and concrete modality.

Since the Incarnation, the encounter with this triune God is marked by the unique mediation of Jesus Christ. And so is born Christian spirituality, whose Magna Carta is the Gospel.

## SOME POINTS ON CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Christian spirituality arises from the contemplation and following of Christ. Given the richness of the figure of Jesus, there is not just one Christian spirituality, but many. What is important is following Christ; the ways of doing it vary. They are all valid, and among themselves, they are complementary. They are not rivals. They possess the same fundamental points, although in different proportions and accents: Christ-centered, evangelical, incarnational, Paschal (liberating), community-based, universal, Marial.

Marist spirituality is a specific form, among others, of that Christian spirituality. Whoever decides to live it can do so at various levels of commitment, from one which involves the whole being – such as the vows – to another of a simple sympathy, with a whole spectrum in between. Marist spirituality is therefore an existential choice, one way of living the Christian life. It presupposes a movement of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, it is something to propose, not to impose. It should be approached from a vocations ministry: a search and promotion of attractions and resonances.

## SOME POINTERS OF MARIST SPIRITUALITY

### *Filial*

From and with Christ (with a view towards God the Father, with a view towards Mary); incarnational dimension – manger, kenosis, concreteness, manual work, diligence, etc; redemptive dimension – cross, sacrifice, vicarious intercession, etc; Eucharistic dimension – altar, oblation, resurrection (hope, happiness, optimism, etc.)

### *Fraternal*

In and for Christ, from Mary, community of Brothers (family spirit), universal brotherhood, young people; in a community of brothers and sisters (Church).

### *Marial*

Total and constant fidelity to the mission, coherence, simplicity, humility, discretion, joy, Nazareth and Cana (solidarity), Joseph.

### *Apostolic*

This is central to Marist spirituality. It places us fully among the ecclesial groups with **apostolic spirituality**. It is the thing that configures the entire way of being and acting of Brothers and their Communities in their mission. Not without reason did the 19th

General Chapter devise a document entitled “MARIST APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY”.

The Montagne experience is the particular (historic) and perennial (always renewable) source of Marist apostolic spirituality. As particular, it was the transcendent reading of a concrete event. The cry for help of young Jean Baptiste Montagne, on October 28, 1816 in Les Palais: “**Father Marcellin, help me!**”; such an appeal was interpreted by Champagnat as the anguished cry of children and youth of all places and times. And Marcellin responded to this cry by founding the Brothers.

We came therefore to institutional existence with a very precise purpose. Our mission was not thought up *a posteriori*; we were born from it and for it. Marcellin wanted us to be living witnesses of God’s presence among children and youth, men of prayer who would dedicate all their prayers for them, religious who would structure their whole personal and community life based on the mission of evangelizing through education.

This apostolic dimension refers to evangelize through education and has as its recipients children and youth, with its own pedagogy (presence, love, self-sacrifice, etc.), with a preference for the marginalized (missions, the poor, neglected children and youth).

**Lay**

This aspect of Marist spirituality has the value of a noun, not an adjective. It manifests the original holiness of a person's being a Christian through the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Eucharist). It represents the capacity for programmed development of "belonging to God" by means of the internalization and experience of the "I am yours" and "you are mine" expressed in the baptismal covenant.

Is not the Brother a sort of companion on the way for every person, especially children and youth, without any more "baggage" than his own experience of God who desires to share fraternally? Structurally he belongs to the world of the ordinary, of the small, one more of the flock that the Shepherds tend, at times marginalized by a Church tempted by clericalism.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MARIST SPIRITUAL PATRIMONY

The Holy Spirit is the author of religious life. The founders have a primary and preferential place, even though they not the fundamental source of the charism. But it is not always clear that the Spirit aspect of the charism has first place. Or at least, it does not seem that all its expressions are drawn from it.

Basically we must see Marcellin as someone placed at the service of the Spirit. It's up to us to carry the Mar-

cellin's project beyond his original dreams and achievements. His project is greater than he is. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to his Church, to humanity. Certainly not every aspect of Marcellin is part of the institutional Marist charism, (e.g. his ministerial priesthood). But those aspects that are part of the charism need to be strongly promoted, with strong apostolic zeal, and special enthusiasm.

The study of Marcellin's spiritual patrimony affirms some of his basic attitudes:

He was docile to the action of the Spirit. Marcellin knew the loving look with which Jesus embraced children and young people. And he wanted to incarnate this in time through the Brothers that he founded.

The image of Jesus taking pity on the distress of the little ones, the afflicted, and the neglected attracted him especially. All Marcellin's energies were tended toward a single objective: the foundation of an Institute that would care for those children and youth for whom the other Church institutions did not care.

The existence of the school by itself did not soothe the conscience of Marcellin. It was a matter of offering an integral Christian education to children and youth.

The driving power of mysticism was very evident in the origins. He would undertake any project and bear any inconvenience, including prema-

ture death. The atmosphere he created was an open invitation to holiness.

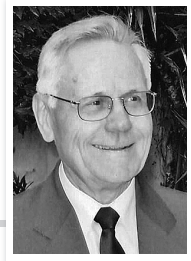
We should not reduce the study of the charism to the study solely of the person of the Founder. The first disciples of Marcellin are also bearers of the foundational charism. They merit our attentive study. It is impossible to limit ourselves only to the Founder and his historical period. We must have a vision of the whole. The charism is alive, not consigned to history. The Spirit continues to work miracles. The study of the healthy tradition, that is, of the Marist spiritual patrimony, is indispensable to an understanding of ourselves.

A simplistic and non-critical reading of the Bible gave rise to superficiality of Fundamentalism, keeping the peels and throwing out the fruit. Might not something similar happen to us if our re-readings of Marist origins were to lack depth? Too many things that were done simply through custom have been given the rank of "essential". It is easy to confuse "the habitual" with "the essential", and "traditions" with "tradition".

"If you knew the gift of God..." The Spirit gifted the Church with the spirituality of our Institute. We must come to know this gift, and to keep, to deepen, to update and to share it. The Holy Spirit has not left us on our own to do so. We can and must continue to respond from our Marist spirituality to today's world and Church. We have to believe in the power of God. One speaks of "re-founding": returning to the enthusiasm and daring of the beginnings. It's not a matter of copying Champagnat, but of translating him. We have to acquire the foundational attitudes of Marcellin and his founding group. But, how do we make a good translation if we ignore the original? The study of the original is vital. And how do we translate correctly if we ignore the language of today? Solidarity and insertion are equally important. It is impossible, then, to "re-found" the Institute without people with Marist spirituality. To continue with the charism of Marcellin one must be like Marcellin. "You are the Champagnats of today"... Yes, on the condition that you know and live his spirituality.



# OUR SPIRITUALITY ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTIONS



**Br. Alain Delorme**

For a religious Institute, the book of the Constitutions is regarded as “an application of the Gospel” (See C.169) where the Brother finds his light for the road in following Christ. According to the recommendations of the Canon Law of the Church, the style of this book has to be both dynamic and inspirational in the presentation of the theological and juridical elements of the religious life. In the course of our history, the normative texts – *Common Rules*, *Rules of Government*, and

others – have never proposed a definition of the spirituality of the Little Brothers of Mary. Moreover, the word itself has only recently become part of our vocabulary. We had to wait until the arrival of the eighteenth General Chapter in 1985 to see an article entitled “Spirituality” appear in our Constitutions, in Chapter 1 which describes the identity of the Marist Brothers in the Church.

Article 7 says:

*The spirituality bequeathed to us by Marcellin Champagnat is Marial and apostolic. It flows from God's love for us, gains strength as we give ourselves to others, and leads us to the Father. In this way, our apostolic life, our life of prayer, and our community life are blended into harmony. Jesus was the whole focus of Mary's life; he is to be the focus of ours. In whatever we do, we act as she did, with her discretion, her sensitivity, and her respect for each person. Following the Founder's example, we live in the presence of God, and we draw our dynamism from the mysteries of the Crib, the Cross and the Altar. We are content to leave the results of our work entirely in God's hands, convinced that “if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour.”*

The members of the General Chapter qualified our spirituality as “*Marial and apostolic*”. Among many others proposed, these two qualities became the focus for the Chapter’s reflection. We will endeavour to show that their choice was a judicious one with the support of the facts of our history in connection with the life of Father Champagnat and other articles of the Constitutions.

## A MARIAL SPIRITUALITY

Marcellin’s relationship with Mary was defining in the foundation of the Institute.

It was in one of his frequent visits to the Blessed Virgin that the idea struck him of founding a congregation of pious teachers, and of naming it after the one who had inspired it  
(Life, 1989 edition, p.333)

Before leaving Lyon, Father Champagnat visited Notre Dame de Fourvière to renew his consecration to the Blessed Virgin and to place his ministry under her protection.”

(Id., p.30)

And Brother Jean-Baptiste gives the text of this consecration which ends thus:

Holy Virgin, I put all my confidence in you.  
I offer you, I give you, I consecrate to you, my person,  
my labours and all the actions of my life.  
(Id., p.31)

The young curate goes to Lavalla on a Saturday and officially begins his ministry on 15 August, on the

feast of the Assumption of Our Lady. He cleans out the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the church himself and orders an altar at his own expense. He introduces the practice of the Month of Mary in the village and the hamlets of the parish.

On 6 May 1818, he accepts Gabriel Rivat, aged 10, who will become his first successor under the name of Brother François, a name chosen to honour the memory of his mother, Françoise. In confiding her child to him, she had told the curate:

My child belongs to the Blessed Virgin. I have often given and consecrated him to her. Now I give him to you. Do what you please with him.  
(Id., p.64-5)

In a personal note written later, Brother François writes:

Given by my mother to Mary, at the foot of the altar of the chapel of the Rosary in the church of Lavalla.

In 1821, following the difficulties of Father Champagnat with Vicar General Claude Bochard, responsible for religious congregations in the diocese of Lyon, Brother Jean-Baptiste writes:

It was to the Blessed Virgin that he had recourse with the greatest confidence, earnestly asking her protection in a chapel dedicated to her, not far from the village of Lavalla.

(Id., p.112)

This was the little sanctuary of Notre-Dame de Pitié, situated not far



from the village, at the place called L'Étrat.

It was again to Mary that Marcellin had recourse, in 1822, when the novitiate was empty.

In her honour, he celebrated Mass and offered many novenas. He reminded her with the simplicity of a child that being the mother, the Superioress and the protectress of his community, it was up to her to take care of it and ward off its ruin. " . . . Unless you come to our aid, we shall perish and like a lamp without oil become extinguished. But if this work perishes, it is not our work that fails; it is yours, since you have done everything for us. We therefore rely on your powerful protection and we shall count on it always'.

(Id., p.93)

And Mary responded to the young Founder's confidence.

One day in February 1822, at the door of the novitiate, Claude Fayol is waiting for Father Champagnat who has just celebrated Mass at Notre-Dame de Pitié to obtain vocations. This young man of twenty will become Brother Stanislas, a treasure for the Institute according to the prophetic words of his parish priest.

Towards the end of March the same year, the eight postulants arrive from the Haute-Loire in the circumstances with which we are all familiar. Among them is Jean-Baptiste Furet, aged fifteen, future chronicler of the Institute and biographer of the Founder. Our Lady of Le Puy had heard the prayer of her servant. The testimony of Brother Jean-Baptiste

retains all its force:

If I am asked now what made us cling to a Society which would have nothing to do with us, my answer is: the devotion to Mary which that Society practised. The day after we arrived, Father Champagnat gave each of us a pair of rosary beads; he spoke to us several times about the Blessed Virgin in his own convincing way . . . Every single one of us was so touched by the good priest's wonderful references to Mary, that there was just no hope of anything diverting us from our vocation.

(Id., p. 98-9)

Mary intervenes again in a decisive way, in February 1823, when the Founder and Brother Stanislas are lost in the snow on returning from Bourg-Argental, where they have been to visit the young Brother Jean-Baptiste, ill in bed. This is the episode known as "The Memorare in the snow". The narrative ends in this way:

Father Champagnat declared on several occasions, that if help had not arrived right then, they would both have perished and that the Blessed Virgin had snatched them from certain death.

(Id., p. 344)

In 1826, the episode of the postulant, Benoît Deville, disheartened by the words of Fr Courveille, allows us to discover in our Founder "the man of encouragement". He takes the young man to the chapel.

After praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, he showed the statue of the Blessed Virgin to him and said: 'See that august Virgin! She is our Good Mother and she will be yours if you come to live

in this house which is consecrated to her;  
she will help you to overcome the difficulties  
of religious life'.

(Id., p.142)

**July 1830: Revolution in Paris. The Brothers are troubled. Father Champagnat maintains confidence. He is opposed to the Brothers discarding the soutane and recommends they have confidence in Providence and in Mary:**

Don't forget that you have Mary as defence ...  
To merit her protection and to keep away every  
danger, we shall sing the *Salve Regina*  
of a morning before meditation.

(Id., p.342)

And on 15 August of the same year, in spite of the revolutionary climate reigning in the region, the Founder gave the religious habit to some postulants, arousing the astonishment and admiration of the Archbishop and his Vicars General (Id., p.174).

Father Champagnat's reply to Pierre-Alexis Labrosse, the future Brother Louis-Marie, asking him about the conditions of admission to the Institute, is significant. In its conciseness, it testifies to his profound relationship with Mary and the place that he gives it. He writes:

Mary, our Good Mother, will protect you,  
and after having had her as your First Superior,  
you will have her as your Queen in heaven.

(Letter of 29 August 1831, doc. 23)

**The Circular of 21 January 1837 accompanied the sending of the Rule of the Little Brothers of Mary to the communities. There we read:**

At five in the afternoon the office begins,  
which is recited in common, unhurriedly, attentively  
and with devotion, in honour of  
the very Blessed Virgin, in order to beseech her  
to bless the school and the whole Society,  
for the greater glory of God.

(Ch. II, 3)

**We know that the Founder gave preference to this vocal prayer over a second meditation, estimating that the Brothers would be too tired at the end of the day for such an exercise.**

When it received this first Rule, the Congregation was celebrating twenty years since its foundation. But from the beginning, in Marlies, Brother Louis, who opened the school there at the end of 1818 with Brother Antoine Couturier, had inaugurated what would from then on become known as the "Saturday catechism", to honour the Virgin Mary. In the book *Our Models in Religion* (known in French as *Biographies de quelques Frères*), we read:

"As Brother Louis had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he chose her as Superior of the house and wished to be looked upon only as her steward. His zeal to have this good Mother loved and to inspire her devotion to the children was indefatigable. Every week he gave an instruction on the subject and on many other occasions he reverted to it"

(p.35, 1936 ed.)

The tradition of the Saturday catechism, when the Brothers spoke to the children of the Virgin Mary, gave rise to the publication of various works proper to our Institute, among them *The Little Catechism of the Blessed Virgin*. Its author, Brother Amphiloque (1847-1929), had spent twenty years working on it. The work, published in 1894, was a success and later translated into English as *Behold your Mother* (see Chronologie Mariste, Rome, 2010, p.270).

During his second stay of six months in Paris, in 1838, to try to obtain the legal authorisation of his Institute, the Founder wrote to Brother François on 23 June:

I still have great confidence in Jesus and Mary.  
We will obtain what we want,  
I have no doubt ; only I do not know when.  
(Letters, doc.197)

We know that this authorisation did not come until 20 June 1851. In gratitude, Brother François, Superior General, had the statues of Our Lady of Victories and Saint Joseph, erected at Our Lady of the Hermitage. The statue of Saint Joseph there now is the 1851 one and it has never changed place.

On 13 April 1840, Holy Thursday, Father Champagnat went to say Mass at the boarding school of la Grange-Payre. He told the students:

Yes, children, if you have great confidence in Mary,  
I promise that she will bring you to heaven.  
(Life, p.225)

These words, just a few weeks before his death, may be considered the last Marial message of our Founder to all the youth in our schools. On 11 May 1840, receiving the last sacraments amid the Brothers gathered in the community room, he declared:

Ah, my children, how good it is to die  
in the Society of Mary ! I find it today,  
I can assure you, my greatest consolation.  
(Id, p.229)

In his Spiritual Testament, read to the Brothers a week later, on 18 May, the Founder asked for them:

that a tender and filial love for our Good Mother  
never fail you in all the changes of time and  
circumstance. Proclaim her love in every place,  
as far as lies in your power.  
She is the first Superior of the whole Society,  
(Id., p.243)

Early on the morning of 6 June 1840, Marcellin went to sleep peacefully in the Lord while the Brothers were reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and singing the Salve Regina. It was a Saturday, the day consecrated to Mary. The Brothers have always regarded this detail as a sign of Mary's attention with regard to her servant.

Let us remember that the Founder asked his Brothers to fast on Saturdays

“to honour Mary and to obtain, through  
her intercession, the beautiful virtue of purity”  
(Life, p.337)

And Brother Sylvestre, in his *Memoirs*, declares that

“Father never dispensed from the Saturday fast.”

(Frère Sylvestre raconte Rome 1992,  
p.23 and p.268)

In fact, it was a light fast, consisting of soup or coffee with milk, with bread but without butter or jam. This would explain why Marcellin never dispensed the Brothers from it. It is of interest to note that statute 27.1 of the Constitutions invites us to keep up this tradition.

In his testimony in 1842, Brother Laurent wrote:

Father Champagnat had such a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin that he inspired it in everyone and spoke of it in all his discourses. He always had something to say in praise of this good Mother ... He often told us: ‘If the Society is doing some good, if the number of subjects is growing, it is to the Blessed Virgin that we owe it. It is to this good Mother that we are indebted for all the progress that the Society has made from the beginning. Without her we would not have been able to succeed’.

(O.M. doc. 756 ; Extraits, doc. 167)

Brother François, in his *Circular of 2 February 1858*, recalls these words of the Founder:

The good Father was not afraid to say that the Congregation owes as much (to Mary) for the subjects she has excluded from it because of their bad spirit, as for the good Brothers she provides and preserves for it.

(Cir. Vol.II, p.317)

By way of further example, here are some extracts from Father Champagnat’s letters concerning episodes of his life, some of which have been recalled. They underline the place held by the Virgin Mary in the foundation and development of our Institute.

To Fr Jean Cholleton, Vicar General of Lyon, in August-September 1833:

Mary does not abandon us ...

Mary is helping us, and that is enough.

(Letters, Doc.30)

To his Majesty Louis-Philippe, King of the French, on 28 January 1834:

I thought seriously about creating a society of teachers, whom I felt I should consecrate to the Mother of God, since I was convinced that the name of Mary would by itself attract many candidates.

(Letters, Doc.34)

To Archbishop Gaston de Pins, Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Lyon, Lent 1835:

I dare not refuse those who come to us; I consider them as having been led here by Mary herself.

(Letters, Doc.56)

To Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier, Vicar Apostolic of Oceania, on 27 May 1838:

Mary shows very clearly how well she protects the Hermitage. Oh, what power the name of Mary has! How lucky we are to bear it!

Without that holy name, without that miraculous name, people would long ago have stopped talking about our society. Mary: there you have the sum-total of the resources of our society. Mary, yes Mary alone, is our only prosperity. Without Mary we are nothing, and with Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her divine son either in her arms or in her heart.”

(Letters, Doc. 194)

As a Founder, Marcellin Champagnat followed a profound intuition to propose a woman as model for male educators: Mary, who educated Jesus in Nazareth (See Const. 84). In giving his Brothers the name of Mary, he was well aware that the imitation of this Good Mother would lead them to model their hearts on hers in their relations with their pupils. In her school, they would learn to maintain hope and confidence even in the case of the most difficult youth. A mother never despairs of her child.

In the text approving our Constitutions, the Church states that it has recognised the text as a call to the Brothers to look upon Mary, the perfect disciple of Christ, and to make her known and loved as one who will lead to Jesus. Is that not an excellent way of highlighting that our spirituality is Marial?

The members of the 1985 General Chapter, then, had solid reasons for qualifying our spirituality as “Marial”. And if the description of this spirituality has been condensed in Article 7 of the Constitutions, in many other articles can be found other aspects which make it specific. I mention sim-

ply the eminent place the Virgin Mary occupies in our Rule of life overall. If you need convincing, just go the Index and look at the word “Mary”.

## AN APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY

The lives of Father Champagnat and his first Brothers will allow us to show the relevance of this second descriptor of our spirituality as Little Brothers of Mary.

Article 2 of the Constitutions, entitled “Charism of the Founder”, is worded in this way:

Led by the Spirit, Marcellin was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had for him and for others. His experience of this, as well as his openness to events and to people, is the wellspring of his spirituality and his apostolic zeal. It made him sensitive to the needs of his time, especially to the ignorance concerning religion among young people and the poor circumstances in which they were placed. His faith and eagerness to do God's will led him to realise that his mission was to “make Jesus Christ known and loved.” He often said: “Every time I see a child, I long to teach him his catechism, to make him realise how much Jesus Christ has loved him.” It was this attitude that led him to found our Institute for the Christian education of the young, especially those most in need.

This description of the charism of the Founder is like a condensed life of him and his first disciples, who may justly be considered co-founders. What could the young curate of Lavalla have done without the

Louises, Laurents, Barthélemys, Antoinés, Françaises, Stanislases, Jean-Pierres and others?

The young Marcellin was fired with the love of Jesus and Mary. At the minor seminary of Verrières, he manifested this passion by his concern for a discouraged comrade (See *Life*, p.15-16, 1989 ed.). Brother Jean-Baptiste writes:

He didn't simply give good example; he let slip no opportunity of having his fellow students commit themselves to virtuous living. Helped by a natural eloquence and a persuasive tone of voice, he easily found an audience and won over a number of them to God.

(Id.)

This temperament, which had once attracted him to the "happy gang" (in French: *la bande joyeuse*), would make of the young seminarian an excellent catechist, one who knew how to captivate an audience of children or of adults. This is how we see him at work in Le Rosey, during the holidays, when he was at the major seminary of Saint Irénée in Lyon.

Even the adults were assembled and he spoke to them briefly but feelingly on the mysteries of religion and the duties of a Christian...

(*Life*, p.23)

As a child, his schooling had been spoiled by an inept schoolmaster and he had had to suffer in making up for the time lost in his studies in view of the priesthood. Conscious of the miserable state of the country

schools, he insisted among his seminary companions on the need to have a branch of catechist brothers beside that of the priests and lay people in the future Society of Mary. Delegated by them to found this branch, he began this foundation in the first weeks of his ministry in Lavalla. On Monday 28 October 1816, his encounter with the young Jean-Baptiste Montagne reveals the ardent pastoral love which burned in the heart of the young priest. It was for him a sign and a call to begin. Thus he would be able to fulfil the deep desire of his heart which Brother Jean-Baptiste expressed thus:

More than anything else he wanted to have access to the children.

(*Life*, p.521)

The parishioners quickly discovered in Father Champagnat an accessible and ardent apostle. "He was not proud" the people of Lavalla said. *He used to speak freely to the first person he met.* (Testimonies, Vol. I, p.154, Br Aidan). *He preached on the Gospel simply, not too long.* (Testimony of Jean-François Badard, Id. p.179). The parishioners appreciated his manner of teaching them. Françoise Baché declared:

I attended the catechism classes of Marcellin Champagnat and, very young as I was, I liked to listen to him and especially to see the church full of adults following the explanation of the catechism assiduously. He spoke simply, so that the most ignorant could understand him; but he said such beautiful and moving things

that he won all hearts. People said: "Let's go to catechism, it's Fr Champagnat who's taking it". And the church would be full.

(Testimonies, Diocesan Enquiry, p.187, Rome 1991)

The young curate was always ready to visit the sick, the old, and to look after abandoned children. *In the first year, there were twelve of them* whom he placed with the Brothers (Life, p.510). Brother Jean-Baptiste describes the case of Jean-Baptiste Berne, a child of nine, whom Father Champagnat took in after the death of his mother and entrusted to the Brothers. The Founder's attitude is evidence his compassion, patience, goodness, which he knew how to communicate to his Brothers disheartened by the indiscipline of this difficult child. In the end, the boy asked to become a Brother and died, at nineteen years of age, in Father Champagnat's arms (See Life, p.511-513).

And his biographer adds:

Though his religious state and his limited resources were a barrier to his giving the poor all the material help he would have wished, Marcellin amply compensated for the fact by training teachers to give primary instruction and Christian education to poor children. It was especially for the sake of these that he founded his Institute.

(Life, p. 517)

Father Champagnat's zeal, during the eight years he was curate in Lavalla, is well described by the person concerned himself in a confidential remark to a close friend and reported by Brother Jean-Baptiste:

"How many miles have I trudged through these mountains, how many shirts have I soaked with sweat! If it were all gathered together in that valley, I think there would be enough to take a bath."

(Life, p.56)

The same zeal he put into forming his Brothers, visiting them, making the house of the Hermitage a centre of ongoing formation, especially during the months of September and October, when all the Brothers were gathered for a spiritual retreat and to receive the "Advice, Instructions and Sayings" of their good Father before returning to their schools after All Saints Day. We remember one of his sayings with regard to zeal:

For a Brother, zeal is the philosopher's stone, it works like alchemy, turning all it does into gold.

(Life, p. 545)

In a letter to Brother Barthélemy, he writes himself:

Oh! How I would like to have myself the happiness of teaching the children, and of contributing in a direct way by my efforts, to their formation in virtue !

(Life, p.520, citing Letter 14, p.54 )

It is the whole life of Father Champagnat which shows his "heart that knows no bounds," to take up the slogan of the canonisation. Did he not write to the Bishop of Grenoble, on 15 February 1837:

All the dioceses in the world enter into our plans?

(Letters. doc. 93, p.210)



When the Society of Mary received from Rome responsibility for the missions of Oceania in 1836, Marcellin asked Father Colin, his Superior, for permission to go there, in order, he said,

to devote his last days and his little remaining strength to the instruction and sanctification of non-Christians

(Life, p.202)

Following the refusal of his request, Brother Jean-Baptiste writes:

Though he was resigned, he did not manage to conceal the strength of his longing.

(Life, p.203)

And he adds:

He did not have the satisfaction of consecrating his last days to the salvation of the peoples of Oceania but he made up for it by preparing Brothers to be effective catechists in that region. In the short time left to him, he dispatched twelve of them to the missions.

(Id.)

In fact, nine Brothers departed in the Founder's lifetime, as indicated in footnote 41 (Life p.203) which gives their names. Among them is Brother Marie-Nizier, companion of Saint Pierre Chanel, martyred on 28 April 1841, on the island of Futuna.

It was just this apostolic dynamism, remaining ardent right up to his death, which Father Champagnat knew how to communicate to his first disciples. Among them, Brother Laurent remains the model of the dedicated catechist. We can see him

once more, climbing the slopes of Mount Pilat to reach the hamlet of le Bessat, every Thursday, carrying his meagre provisions for the week. Towards the end of his active life, in a letter addressed to Brother François, then Superior General, he asked earnestly for authorisation to leave for Angoulême to teach the children there catechism. With his usual simplicity he wrote:

All I need is a catechism and a bell.

(Cf. Letters Vol.2, p.323)

Marcellin Champagnat, apostle, is presented to us in Article 81 of Chapter 5 of the Constitutions which treats of "Apostolic Life". It gives a résumé of his life consecrated to the education of children and young people:

Father Champagnat was alive with a zeal born of the Gospels and knew how to respond effectively to specific problems.

He felt himself called to form religious for the Christian education of little country children whom no one bothered about. He saw the mission of the Brother as helping children and young people to become good Christians and good citizens. Being a man of faith, he believed that it was prayer above all that influenced the children to become gentle of heart. Good example and constant presence are other important elements of Marist pedagogy, which Father Champagnat summarised thus:

"To bring children properly, you must love them".

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.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this survey which has brought us to rediscover the Founder's words and some episodes of his life, we return to Article 84, entitled: "Mary and our Apostolate". There we read:

We attract young hearts to Mary,  
Christ's perfect disciple, making her known  
and loved as one who will lead us to Jesus.

Summing up, the fact of affirming that "our spirituality is Marial and apostolic" is an invitation, for each of us, as our Constitutions remind us, to "keep alive the dynamism of our vocation, in making present today the charism of Marcellin Champagnat." Our Founder would then be able to recognise in each of his sons, someone who works for the Kingdom, who is chosen by the Father and inspired by the Spirit

"to make Jesus Christ known and loved".

(See Art. 171)



# BIRTH OF CHAMPAGNAT'S HERMITAGE AT LES GAUXGAUX

according to the records  
of Me. Finaz (1824-1841)



M. Eric Perrin

## PRESENTATION

*M. Eric Perrin, a historian of Saint Chamond, offers us a summary of thirty-eight documents dating from 1824 to 1841, basically concerning the notarised acts of the Founder. The existence of many of these documents was certainly known to us through the Annales de l'Institut; and the recent publication of Origines des Frères Maristes by Brother Paul Sester in 2011 offered us a publication in extenso of the acts preserved in our archives or discovered by our researchers.*

*But, thanks to a systematic research, M. Perrin has discovered a good fifteen documents new to us (indicated in the text by \*\*\*), some of which are capable of giving us a fresh perception of the origins. A few examples: in Document 3 and several of the following we see born, so to speak, the original name of the establishment – L'Hermitage de Notre Dame; other documents throw light on aspects of the collaboration-rivalry between Courveille and Champagnat from 1824 to 1826; finally, the last document reveals the presence of a community of Sisters at the Hermitage in 1841. So readers should be aware that this somewhat dry list presents a significant advance in our knowledge of our origins.*

*Br. André Lanfrey*

## TABLE DES DOCUMENTS

N°	Date	Buyer/ Debtor/ Testator	Beneficiary/ Seller/Lender/ Inheritor	Amount concerned
1	1824/5/13	Champagnat Courveille	Monteillier P.M.	5 000 F.
2	1824/7/3	Champagnat Courveille	Thiollière A.	500 F.
3	1824/10/2	Champagnat Courveille	Bonnard B.	Loan: 3 000 F.
4	1824/10/4	Champagnat Courveille	Thouilly C.M.	100 F.
5***	1824/11/25	Barge Joseph	Courveille J.C.	Loan: 824 F.
6***	1825/1/28	Berlier C.	Champagnat M.	Inheritance
7	1825/4/14 (1817/10/1)	Champagnat Courveille	Bonnaire J.B.	Registration of deed 1 000 F.
8	1825/5/25	Champagnat Courveille	Montellier P.M.	Receipt: 2 000 F.
9	1826/1/6	Champagnat M.	Courveille J.C. Verrier J.	Will
10	1826/2/14	Champagnat Courveille	Bertholon E.	1 000 F.
11***	1826/5/5	Champagnat Courveille	Montellier P.M.	Receipt: 3 000 F.
12***	1826/11/16	Freycon J.C.	Champagnat M.	Loan : 200 F
13	1826/11/21	Petitain A.M.	Champagnat M.	Foundation: 12 000 F.
14	1827/4/17	Champagnat Courveille	Bonnard B.	Release of mortgage
15***	1827/5/1	Bedoin E.	Champagnat M.	800 F.
15b. ***	1826/10/5	Courveille J.C.	Champagnat M.	Power of attorney
16***	1828/5/16	Gratalon A.	Champagnat M	Power of attorney
17***	1829/2/5	Champagnat M. Courveille	Couturier A.	1 000 F.
18	1829/10/24	Champagnat M.	Ginot A.	300 F.
19***	1829/10/27	Champagnat M.	Montellier P.M.	200 F.
20***	1830/1/27	Champagnat M.	Audouard J.M.	Receipt: 160 F.
21***	1833/5/15	Fournas M.	Champagnat M.	La Grange Payre
22***	1833/9/12	Fournas M.	P.F. de Marie	1 000 F.
23	1833/9/12	Champagnat M.	Ginot A.	400 F.
24***	1834/1/20	Champagnat M.	Parrin P.	300 F.
25	1835/4/15	Champagnat M.	Boiron C.	Life annuity

N°	Date	Buyer/ Debtor/ Testator	Beneficiary/ Seller/Lender/ Inheritor	Amount concerned
26	1836/4/7	Champagnat M.	Parrin P.	20 F.
27	1836/4/11	Champagnat M.	Fara M.	1 000 F.
28	1836/4/11	Champagnat M.	Roussier E.	1 000 F.
29	1836/8/4	Champagnat M.	Fara C.	600 F.
30	1839/1/1	Champagnat M.	Patouillard M.	39 000 F.
31***	1839/3/11	Royer de la Bastie	Champagnat M.	Foundation : 12 000 F.
32***	1839/5/16	Crapanne J.M.	Champagnat M.	1 500 F.
33	1839/8/4	Jaboulay J.J.	Champagnat M.	7 000 F.
34	1840/3/22	Champagnat M.	Six frères	Civil incorporation
35	1840/3/23	Champagnat M.	Société civile	Furniture and property
36***	1840/10/23	Société civile	Finaz V.L. et E.J.	Mortgage
37***	1841/1/20	Témoins	Société civile	Notoriety of the deed of society
38***	1841		L'Hermitage	Inventory

In gratitude to Marist Brother Aimé Ollier, who was my teacher in CM2<sup>1</sup> at Saint François School in Saint-Chamond, to whom I owe something of my passion for sharing knowledge

In the course of other research, I had occasion to notice that many deeds of the notary Finaz of Saint-Chamond that concerned Marcellin Champagnat. Consultation of the registration records confirmed this observation<sup>2</sup>: all the deeds of sale or purchase under Champagnat's name

referred to either a deed under individual seings, or to a deed received by Me Finaz. From information obtained from the Marists of the Hermitage, many of the deeds that were discovered were found to be unknown to Marist history. It then became a matter of interest to go sys-

<sup>1</sup> Final class of primary schooling.

<sup>2</sup> ADL Q 6921 (Table of sellers in the registration of deeds 1823-1824), Q 6924 (Table of buyers in the registration of deeds 1819-1824), Q 6925 (Table of buyers in the registration of deeds 1825-1830).

tematically through the archives of this notary. The period under scrutiny start the beginnings of the Hermitage in 1824 and finish the year after Champagnat's death, in 1841.

So I am proposing a direct approach to Marcellin Champagnat by means of the deeds signed before Me Finaz, then Me Mioche, successive notaries at Saint-Chamond. These records are kept in the Departmental Archives of the Loire. For the nominated period, they are found under serial numbers from 5<sup>E</sup> Vt1233-7 to 5<sup>E</sup> Vt 1233-24, each serial number corresponding to a year.

In each case, I have copied only the essential information of the deed, keeping to the spelling of the period when it seemed to me to be important. To attempt to make the reading of the whole clearer, I have attached to this somewhat dry list of deeds a series of maps which allow past and present views of the area where the property of the Hermitage was built.

**1. The first deed is dated 13 may 1824  
It concerns a sale by Pierre Marie Montellier to Marcelin Champagnat and Jean Claude Courveille<sup>3</sup>**

Pierre Marie Montellier merchant residing in St Chamond rue du Sépulcre, sells to MM. Marcellin Champagnat and Courveille, the first being curate of the parish of la Valla and resident there, the second being parish priest of Epercieux<sup>4</sup>, acquiring jointly:

1. A holding of wood and bush in the territory of Chez Coulaud (St Martin-en-Coailleux) of about 114 ares or 12 bicherées of old measurement
2. Two plots of meadow separated by a little gully, together containing about 30 ares, known as Pré de Gier (St Martin-en-Coailleux)
3. A holding of wood and rocks about 30 ares, in the territory of Chez Coulaud (St Martin-en-Coailleux).
4. A meadow in the territory of Pré de Gier (St Martin-en-Coailleux) of 32 ares

Sale agreed for 5000 francs which Champagnat and Courveille pledge and promise to pay in a year at an interest of 5% pa.

<sup>3</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-7 ; published *in extenso* in Origines des Frères Maristes (OFM), t. 3, doc. 646

<sup>4</sup> He was appointed to Epercieux on 1 October 1819. The day before this purchase, 12 May 1824, the archbishop authorised him to join Fr Champagnat. Although the official notification had not yet reached him, Champagnat and he had certainly received assurance on this matter.



## 2. On 3 July 1824

### *A new sale by Antoine Thiollière to MM. Marcelin Champagnac and Jean Claude Courveille<sup>5</sup>*

Antoine Thiollière-Laroche, merchant residing in Saint-Etienne, sells to MM. Marcelin Champagnac and Courveille, the first curate at la Valla and resident there, the second parish priest residing in Epercieux<sup>6</sup>, Marcelin Champagnac alone present, a holding of rocks and wood in the place of Bois Collaud (St Martin-en-Coailleux), of 16 ares 20 centiares of rock and 40 ares 80 centiares of wood.

The sale is agreed for the sum of 500 francs, paid immediately in coin<sup>7</sup> by Champagnac, half for himself, half for Courveille.

## 3. ON 2 OCTOBER 1824

### *An obligation by MM. Marcellin Champagnac and Jean Claude Courveille to Benoît Bonnard<sup>8</sup>*

Messieurs Marcelin Champagnac and Courveille, the first curate of la Valla and the second priest, both residing in the town of la Valla, recognize that

they owe Benoît Bonnard, landowner extractor<sup>9</sup> resident in Rive-de-Gier, the sum of 3000 francs loaned in gold and silver coins. MM. Champagnac and Courveille pledge themselves jointly to repay on 15 September 1826 with interest of 5% per annum. To guarantee their loan, MM. Champagnac and Courveille mortgage the property of buildings, meadows, lands, pastures, undeveloped land and woods which they possess in the territory of Chez Colaud (St Martin-en-Coailleux) where they are after<sup>10</sup> founding a hermitage dedicated to Our Lady<sup>11</sup>.

## 4. ON 4 OCTOBER 1824

### *A sale by Claude Marie Thouilly to Marcellin Champagnac and Jean Claude Courveille<sup>12</sup>*

Claude Marie Thouilly, landowner and farmer in Bagniarat (St Martin-en-Coailleux), sells to MM. Marcelin Champagnac and Claude Courveille, the first curate of the parish of la Valla and resident there, the second volunteer priest<sup>13</sup> residing in la Valla. They buy together a plot of thicket in the territory of Chez Coulaud (St Martin-en-Coailleux) of about 10 ares...

<sup>5</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-7; OFM/3, doc. 647

<sup>6</sup> So Fr Courveille is not yet installed at La Valla.

<sup>7</sup> Since the Revolution had abused paper money, the French long remained distrustful of bank notes.

<sup>8</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-7 ;

<sup>9</sup> Extractor of charcoal.

<sup>10</sup> The use of "après" was a popular expression of the time meaning "in the process of".

<sup>11</sup> It is not yet a question of the Hermitage, but of a hermitage. Name given, it appears, jointly by Courveille and Champagnac.

<sup>12</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-7 ; OFM/3, doc. 649

<sup>13</sup> Fr Courveille has no official ministry in La Valla.

Sale agreed for a sum of 100 francs paid in cash.

**5.\*\*\* On 25 November 1824**  
*An obligation by Joseph Barge to Jean Claude Courveille*<sup>14</sup>

Joseph Barge, landowner and farmer in Epercieux<sup>15</sup>, canton of Feurs, recognizes owing to Courveille, superior of the Hermitage<sup>16</sup> established on the site of les Gaux (Izieux), and residing there, the sum of 824 francs presently loaned in coin. Joseph Barge pledges himself to return it to Courveille in two years at interest at the legal rate. To guarantee his loan, Joseph Barge mortgages the property he possesses in Epercieux.

**6.\*\*\*On 28 January 1825**

*Registration of a sale by Clément Berlier*<sup>17</sup> and *Françoise Chavanne to Marcellin Champagnat, priest and curate, without mention of notary, in an inheritance entitled "portion of immovable property in Izieux"*<sup>18</sup>

**7. On 14 April 1825**

*Registration by MM.Champagnat and Courveille*<sup>19</sup>

Marcellin Champagnat and Courveille, the latter priest and the former curate<sup>20</sup> both resident in the town of la Valla, register in the records of Me Finaz a deed of sale under private signature agreed to their benefit on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1817 by Jean Baptiste Bonnaire, landowner and farmer residing in la Rivoire (La Valla), of a

<sup>14</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-7. Does not concern Champagnat directly, but Courveille and a certain Barge. People of this name are found in la Valla.

<sup>15</sup> Fr Courveille ministered in Epercieux from 1 October 1819 to 30 June 1824. We see from this deed that he retained relations with his former parish. In addition, this loan, after the expenses linked to the purchases of les Gaux, shows that, unlike Champagnat, he disposes of notable financial resources which he has not invested entirely in their common work.

<sup>16</sup> Fr Courveille has, then, announced to the inhabitants of Epercieux that he has become superior of the Hermitage while the archbishop has only appointed him assistant to Champagnat. Moreover, only the major work on the house is finished and a team of Brothers is at work on arranging the interior under the orders of Champagnat. The community is still at La Valla.

<sup>17</sup> Annales de l'institut, t. 1, 1825 § 1. According to Br Avit, author of these annals, Clément Berlier was living in the hamlet of le Bachat, very close to the Hermitage. Ill and on bad terms with his mother, he is succoured by Champagnat who procures him sheets and blankets. Deceased shortly afterwards, he leaves him something in his will. But the mother of the deceased contests this gift claiming that Champagnat had influenced him during confession. The latter having justified himself, « the matter will remain there ». In fact, it is going to go on for a long time as document 20 below reveals.

<sup>18</sup> ADL 3 Q 6925

<sup>19</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-8. Does not directly concern the Hermitage ; OFM/3, doc. 650

<sup>20</sup> At this date Fr Champagnat is no longer curate. He was relieved of this ministry in November 1824.

property of house, garden and small field of about 5 ares, situated in la Valla for the sum of 1000 francs, paid in cash, half by Champagnat and half by Courveille.

The original deed, attached, specifies that Marcellin Champagnat and Courveille are then curates, Champagnat in la Valla and Courveille in Rive-de-Gier<sup>21</sup>. It also specifies the location of the property, along the road from la Valla to Luzernod.

## 8. On 25 May 1825

**Receipt by  
Pierre Marie Montellier  
to MM. Marcelin Champagnat  
and Jean-Claude Courveille<sup>22</sup>**

Pierre Marie Montellier, merchant resident in Saint-Chamond, rue du Sépulcre, confirms having received from MM. Champagnat and Courveille, priests residing at the Hermitage called of the little brothers of Mary<sup>23</sup> in the location of les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux) the sum of 2000 francs to settle the price of the sale authorized for him by deed of Me Finaz on 13 May 1824.

## 9. On 6 January 1826 *will of Marcelin Champagnat<sup>24</sup>*

Marcelin Champagnac, priest residing at the Hermitage of Notre Dame (St Martin-en-Coailleux), ill but enjoying full use of all his faculties, after having commended his soul to God, dictates his will and testament as follows:

"I rely for my funeral rites and pious works on the honour, faith and attachment of my heirs named below.

To inherit all my movable and immovable possessions, rights and shares without exception which I leave, I name and appoint as my sole legatees messieurs Courveille, priest residing currently at the hermitage Notre Dame<sup>25</sup>, commune of Saint Martin Accoalleu, and Joseph Verrier, priest director of the minor seminary of Verrière<sup>26</sup>. I desire and intend that all these goods belong to messrs Jean-Claude Courveille and Joseph Verrier in sole ownership after my death, in return for taking responsibility for the rights of succession.

Finally I revoke all other testaments made previously by me and wish that the present be the only one executed according to its terms."

<sup>21</sup> Fr Courveille is curate at Rive-de-Gier from 20 August 1817 to 1st October 1819.

<sup>22</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-8 ; OFM/3, doc. 650

<sup>23</sup> This is the first time that the Hermitage is mentioned as a dwelling place and that the Little Brothers of Mary are indicated in a civil deed. One can recognise in this the effects of the prospectus of July 1824 which for the first time used the expression « Little Brothers of Mary ». The date confirms the Marist sources which indicate that the installation of the community of the Hermitage was carried out in May.

<sup>24</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-9. The part of this act concerning the dispositions dictated by Champagnat is transcribed in full ; OFM/3, doc. 653

<sup>25</sup> « Hermitage Notre Dame » or « hermitage de Notre-Dame » are the primitive names before the use of the formula « N.D. de l'Hermitage ». The use of the primitive name in Champagnat's testament shows that he is at least its co-author.

<sup>26</sup> Etienne Terrailon, Marist priest, resident at the Hermitage, refused to become a sole heir of Champagnat.

Deed made and signed at the Hermitage of Notre Dame, domicile of the testator, at the foot of the bed to which he is confined by illness, on the afternoon of six January of the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty six, in presence of Antoine Desgrange, Brother serving in the Hospice of Charity of Saint-Chamond, Mathieu Pathouillard, fuller and landowner in the location of les Gaux (Izieux), Lespinasse, tailor residing in the location of les Gaux (Izieux) and Pierre Robert, cultivator resident in L'Ayat.

(The act is signed only by the notary Finaz, Pathouillard and Desgrange. The two other witnesses do not know how to sign. There is no signature of Champagnat<sup>27</sup>).

## 10. On 14 February 1826

*A sale by*

*Ennemond Bertholon and his wife to MM. Champagnat et Courveille<sup>28</sup>*

Ennemond Bertholon, merchant resident in Saint-Chamond, rue du Sépulcre, and Jeanne Catherine Zoé Dulac, his wife, sell to MM. Marcelin

Champagnat and Courveille, priests residing at the place of the Hermitage of les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux), acquiring jointly:

1. A field called Pré de Gier, in the territory of les Gaux, of about 19.5 ares
2. All the rights which the sellers have in a terrain of scrub and rock in the locality of Chez Collaud called Roche du Bois, of about 50 ares 30 centiares...

The sellers reserve the right to take the water flowing into the basin of Pino adjoining the communal land sold by those present. The purchasers are bound to leave in their fence, on the side of the Montellier gate at the base of the rock, an opening to allow the sellers to run off for a half day each week the water which passes into the canal<sup>29</sup> from the field sold into the properties which remain to them. This half day is fixed on Sunday from 6 am to 6 pm.

The sale was agreed for the sum of 1000 francs paid the same day in cash<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> In the copy of the act in OFM/3 doc. 653 Champagnat is unable to sign « because of excessive weakness ».

<sup>28</sup> ADL 5Ev1233-9 ; OFM/3, doc. 654

<sup>29</sup> Bief : reach : the straight portion of a stream or river or canal, etc.

<sup>30</sup> This sale is important under several heads: on one hand, it indicates that Champagnat is again strong enough for this transaction ; on the other hand, it contradicts the official Marist history which speaks of discord between Courveille and Champagnat and the menace of bankruptcy.

**11.\*\*\* On 5 May 1826**

***A receipt by  
Pierre Marie Montellier to  
Marcellin Champagnat and  
Jean Claude Courveille<sup>31</sup>***

Pierre Marie Montellier, merchant residing in Saint-Chamond rue du S pulcre, confirms having received in cash from MM. Marcellin Champagnat and Courveille, priest directors<sup>32</sup> of the Hermitage of the little brothers of Mary, residing in the establishment of this name situated in the locality of les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux), absent, the notary acting on their behalf, 3000 francs for final payment of the sale price agreed on 13 May 1824 by deed of Me Finaz.

**12.\*\*\* On 16 November 1826**

***An obligation by  
Jean Claude Freycon and his  
wife to Marcelin Champagnat<sup>33</sup>***

Jean Claude Freycon, cultivator, and Madelaine Berne his wife, residing in the locality of Citrey (La Valla), confess owing to Marcelin Cham-

pagnat, priest director of the establishment of the Hermitage of Notre Dame in Saint-Chamond, situated at the site les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux), the sum of 200 francs loaned in coin. The sum is repayable without interest within a year then beyond that at an interest "au denier vingt"<sup>34</sup>. To guarantee this sum, the Freycon couple mortgage the little property they have at Citrey<sup>35</sup>.

**13. On 21 November 1826**

***Constitution of an annuity  
by Marcelin Champagnat to  
the benefit of  
Albert Marie Petitain<sup>36</sup>***

Marcelin Champagnat priest superior<sup>37</sup> of the little brothers of Mary residing at the Hermitage (St Martin-en-Coailleux) establishes for the benefit of M. Albert Maurice Petitain, priest and curate residing in the town of Ampuy, absent, represented by Brat, priest and director of the college of Saint-Chamond, and residing there, 600 francs of annual and perpetual allowance payable every six

<sup>31</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-9

<sup>32</sup> For the first time, the status of the priests of the Hermitage is indicated without a hierarchy being determined among them. This is, in fact, the period of the rivalry between the two priests for the government of the Brothers. The situation is going to be clarified at the end of the month with the departure of Fr Courveille.

<sup>33</sup> That is, 5%; OFM/3, see doc. 657 complementary of this.

<sup>34</sup> 5% pa. ADL 5Evt1233-9; OFM/3, see doc. 657.

<sup>35</sup> It is surprising that Champagnat, who is at this moment deeply in debt, lends such a sum. But the absence of interest for a year leaves us to understand that the loan is a short term one.

<sup>36</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-9. OFM/3, doc. 657 copies a similar document drawn from the archives of the notary of St Chamond but dated 1st May 1826. The constitution of annuity is signed by M. Courveille and Champagnat « priest superiors of the Little Brothers of Mary ». The departure of Fr Courveille at the end of May 1826 has meant obviously a new deed. See also *Annales de l'institut*, t. 1, 1825 § 11-12 et *Annales des maisons* : Ampuis.

<sup>37</sup> This is the first time the title of superior is attributed to Fr Champagnat while a few days before he was only director. This change of title is doubtless linked to the departure of Fr Etienne Terrailon which Marist sources place after All Saints Day. Since he is now the only priest, Champagnat can declare himself superior.

months as from first of November 1826. This allowance is made by means of a principal sum of 12,000 francs which Marcelin Champagnat confirms having received from Albert Maurice Petitain in gold and silver coin.

In guarantee of the annuity mentioned, Marcelin Champagnat mortgages the property of buildings, garden, meadows, lands, pasture, small oak trees of about 4 hectares called Hermitage de Notre Dame which he possess in the place of this name.

#### **14. On 17 April 1827**

***Release of mortgage by Benoît Bonnard to the benefit of MM. Champagnat and Courveille<sup>38</sup>***

Benoît Bonnard, landowner extractor (of charcoal) residing at Rive-de-Gier, grants release of the mortgage required by him of MM. Marcelin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Courveille, the first curate serving the parish of la Valla, the second priest, both residing in the town of Valla, on 14 October 1824<sup>39</sup>.

#### **15.\*\*\* On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1827**

***A sale by Marcelin Champagnat to Etienne Bedoin<sup>40</sup>***

Marcelin Champagnat director of the establishment of the little brothers of Mary residing in the place of the Hermitage (St Martin-en-Coailleux), in his own name and in that of Jean-Claude Courveille priest residing at Saint-Claire (Isère)<sup>41</sup>, whose representative he is by deed made at Chavanay on 5 October 1826, sells to Etienne Bedoin parish priest ministering to the church of la Valla, the southern part<sup>42</sup> which the sellers possess in common in the town of la Valla on the road leading to the hamlet of Luzernod. Sale agreed for a sum of 800 francs paid on the spot.

#### **15 bis.\*\*\***

Attached to the deed is Courveille's power of attorney to Champagnat<sup>43</sup>: "I the undersigned Jean-Claude Courveille, priest domiciled at St Clair<sup>44</sup> Department of l'Isère, give by this present document full and complete authority to M. Marcelin Champagnat, priest domiciled at the

<sup>38</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-10; OFM/3, doc.658.

<sup>39</sup> See document 3. The deed of sale took place on 2 October 1824.

<sup>40</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-10. Does not directly concern the Hermitage but La Valla. In the *Annales de l'institut* Br Avit declares the document lost. We see here that it was nothing of the sort.

<sup>41</sup> St Clair-sur-Rhône where there is a community of Sisters of Mary founded by him.

<sup>42</sup> In this part is the building constructed by Champagnat in 1822 which served as the parish school. Note that, by this deed, Fr Courveille shows himself very obliging to Champagnat.

<sup>43</sup> Deed not known by Marist sources.

<sup>44</sup> In connection with the convent of sisters which he founded at Rive-de-Gier and which he had moved to St Clair.

Hermitage\_commune Acoalleux to sell on my behalf and in my name, at the most advantageous prices, charges and conditions, in total or in part, all the property I possess jointly with M. Champagnat in the commune of la Valla, to lodge, sign all contracts, receive, mortgage, require any registration; to make release, pursue any debtor, obtain any judgment, have it carried out, take up residence, to give attorney, and generally also to give authority to any bailiff, to validly take possession of any properties of debtors overdue. Promising to agree to all and to ratify, if necessary, his decisions. Made at Chavanay five October eighteen hundred twenty six.”

**16.\*\*\* On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1828**  
***General power of attorney***  
***of Antoine Gratalon***  
***to Marcelin Champagnat***<sup>45</sup>

Antoine Gratalon member of the congregation of the little brothers of Mary residing at the place of the Hermitage of Mary<sup>46</sup> (St Martin-en-Coailleux) appoints as his official and legal representative M. Marcelin Champagnat priest and superior of the said congregation, residing in the same place, to whom he gives authority to manage and administer both actively and passively all his goods, rights and affairs<sup>47</sup>...

**17.\*\*\* On 5 February 1829**  
***Sale by M. Marcelin***  
***Champagnat and another***  
***to Jacques Couturier***<sup>48</sup>

M. Marcelin Champagnat director of the establishment of the little brothers of Mary residing at the place of the Hermitage (St-Martin-en-Coailleux), in his own name and the name of M. Courveille priest residing in the commune de Saint-Clair (Isère), for whom he acts officially by deed under private signature made at Chavanay on 5 October 1826 and registered in the office of Saint-Chammond on 10 March 1827 by M. J. Guerre and attached to the contract of sale which the latter consented to M. Etienne Bedoin by deed of Mr Finaz dated first May 1827. M. Champagnat, sells to Jacques Couturier, cultivator in the locality of le Coin (La Valla-en-Gier):

1. The northern part of the house which the sellers own in the town of la Valla, the garden and little field adjacent, and the joint estate of the courtyard with M Etienne Beaudoin. Terrain bordered on the east by the land of the vendors, on the south by the common courtyard with Bedoin, on the west by the road leading from the town of la Valla to the hamlet

<sup>45</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-11

<sup>46</sup> Variant perhaps unique of “l’Hermitage de Notre Dame”.

<sup>47</sup> Document of great importance. It is the only example we know of an official deed of proxy by a brother in favour of his superior. Antoine Gratalon (Br Bernard) entered Lavalla in 1821 and pronounced his vows for five years on 11 October 1826.

<sup>48</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-12. This deed does not concern the Hermitage directly.



of Luzernod and on the north by the land of Etienne Roussier.

2. A little meadow situated in the same place and commune, in area about 5 ares, bordered on the east by the same road, in the south by the land of Jean Claude Dazod and the old cemetery, on the west by the same properties and on the north by the little wood belonging to the parish priest of la Valla. These properties were acquired by the vendors from Jean Baptiste Bonnair, according to deed of Mr Finaz on 14 April 1825, except for the part of the house and joint estate of courtyard acquired by Etienne Bedoin by deed of Mr Finaz on first May 1827 already cited. The sale is agreed for the sum of 1000 francs, which Jacques Couturier pledges to pay on 5 April 1833 at interest beginning on this day of 4% per annum<sup>49</sup>.

### **18. On 24 August 1829**

***A sale by Antoine Ginot  
and his wife to  
M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>50</sup>***

Antoine Ginot manufacturer of soft goods residing in Saint-Chamond and Simonne Ravachol his wife, sell to M. Marcelin Champagnat

superior of the convent of the little brothers of Mary residing in the place of les Gaux (Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux), a little wood of saplings of an area of about 9 ares, situated in the territory of Colaud (St Martin), belonging to Simonne Ginot as an inheritance from Mathieu Ravachol her father, who had acquired it from the married couple Laurent Montellier and Marie Linossier by deed of Mr Perraud, notary at Saint-Chamond, on 18 prairial year X (7 June 1802)...

The sale is agreed for the sum of 300 francs, payed cash down in coin by M. Champagnat.

### **19.\*\*\* On 27 October 1829**

***A sale by Pierre Marie  
Montellier and his wife to  
M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>51</sup>***

Pierre Marie Montellier, *taillandier*<sup>52</sup> and merchant residing in Saint-Chamond and Catherine Chapellon his wife, sell to M. Marcelin Champagnat superior of the establishment of the little brothers of Mary, situated at the locality of les Gaux (Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux), the half belonging to the vendors of the parcels of waste and heath land marked on the land survey map of St Martin-en-Coailleux, section of Pouey, Nos 368 et 369<sup>53</sup>, the

<sup>49</sup> In the *Annales de l'institut* (t. 1, 1829, § 93) Br Avit summarises the terms of the deed. The complete contents of this, joined to the deed of the Bedoin sale gives a good idea of the properties possessed by Champagnat at La Valla.

<sup>50</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-12 ; OFM/3, doc. 660

<sup>51</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-12.

<sup>52</sup> Maker of sharp edged tools.

<sup>53</sup> This is the first time that the land survey map, in course of being drawn up since Napoléon, serves as reference.

other half already being the property of M. Champagnat by means of the purchase made from Ennemond Bertholon by deed of Me Finaz. The sale is agreed for the sum of 200 francs paid in coin by M. Champagnat. The vendors declare that they have no intention by the present agreements to close the path which go down from the hamlet of les Roches to the Gier river and crosses the pieces of land sold. They declare on the contrary that it is expressly reserved and will continue to remain in perpetuity.

## **20.\*\* On 27 January 1830**

***The receipt by Joseph Marie Audouard relating to the Berlier inheritance: M. Champagnat***<sup>54</sup>

Joseph Marie Audouard landowner cultivator in the locality of le Creux (Izieux) declares to have received on 19 January 1824 from Clément Berlier, since deceased, the sum of 300 F. in coin, and on 6 June last year 160F from M. Marcelin Champagnat, priest and superior of the convent of the little brothers of Mary established in the locality of les Gaux (Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux) sole legatee of Clément

Berlier, absent but represented by the notaries.

This 460F. is settlement for the repayment of the sums paid by him to acquire the inheritance of Jean-Claude Berlier father of Clément and the spouses Jean Bonnard and Françoise Chavanne widow of the first marriage of Berlier, joint guardian and tutor of the said Clément Berlier, as well as Jean-Claude Berlier son, merchant at Rive-de-Gier. He has compensated MM. Peyret and Poujols creditors of the Berlier couple. Audouard pledges to help M. Champagnat to assert his claims with the help of titles deposited with his lawyer<sup>55</sup>.

## **21.\*\* On 15 May 1833**<sup>56</sup>

***By a new will, Marie Fournas, landowner of private means rue du Garat, bequeathes to Marcelin Champagnat priest residing in the commune of St Martin Accoalieu***

"The entire estate with all its dependencies which I possess in the locality of, so that Monsieur Champagnat may make use of it in sole ownership after my death<sup>57</sup>."

<sup>54</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-13 See document 6 on this same affair of complicated inheritance. Audouard, creditor of the Berlier family obtains their goods in settlement of their debts. However, Fr Champagnat in succeeding in repaying the debt of Clément Berlier of whom he is sole legatee will receive part of the latter's inheritance. Thus the Berlier inheritance passes into the hands of Audouard and Champagnat.

<sup>55</sup> Although complicated in form, this deed sheds particular light on document no. 6. Fr Champagnat is sole legatee of Clément Berlier and therefore has to assume the debts left by the testator. In OFM/1, doc. 111.16, the book of accounts notes on 21 July 1833 a sum of . received for the purchase by Crapanne, of the hamlet of Laya, of the Clément Berlier assets.

<sup>56</sup> ADL 5EVt1233-16. This deed does not concern the Hermitage directly.

<sup>57</sup> In the *Annales de l'institut*, (t. 1, 1833, § 227) Br Avit makes allusion to this testament and gives the value of the property. He adds that the gift was not in return for taking in poor people at the Hermitage as the Brothers believed.

She annuls the legacy of her property of Bonzieu in favour of a hospice of charity which it is proposed to establish in Izieux in order to leave it to Jacques Victor Dugas<sup>58</sup> and confirms the remainder of her previous dispositions.

**22.\*\*\* On 5 June 1833<sup>59</sup>**  
*Registration of  
 the will written, dated and  
 signed of Marie Fournas,  
 dated 29 April 1830*

After various legacies, she destines a sum of 1000 francs to the Little Brothers of Mary at the Hermitage, then the same amount to the Ursuline nuns.

**23. On 12 September 1833**  
*A sale by Antoine Ginot  
 and his wife to  
 M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>60</sup>*

Antoine Ginot, manufacturer of soft goods residing in Saint-Chamond, and Simonne Ravachol his spouse, sell to M. Marcelin Champagnat, superior of the little brothers of Mary residing in the locality of the hermitage of Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux): a piece of land of about 48 ares, situated in the locality of Pineau (St Martin-en-Coailleux) be-

longing to Simonne Ravachol as an inheritance from her father.

The sale is agreed for the price of 400 francs paid under the eyes of the notary by M. Champagnat<sup>61</sup>.

**24.\*\*\* On 20 January 1834**  
*A sale by Pierre Parrin  
 to Marcelin Champagnat<sup>62</sup>*

Pierre Parrin farmer of the place of les Roches (St Martin-en-Coailleux), purchaser of the property owned by Ennemond Bertholon and Jean(ne) Catherine Zoé Dulac his spouse in the place of les Roches by deed of Me Finaz of 14 February 1826. The same sells to M. Marcelin Champagnat priest and superior of the establishment called the Hermitage of the little brothers of Mary, residing at the Hermitage or at les Gaux<sup>63</sup> (St Martin-en-Coailleux), the right to take and run off the water in the stretch of canal of the meadow sold by the said Bertholon couple to the benefit of M. Champagnat and M. Jean-Claude Courveille by deed of Mr Finaz of 14 February 1826, and to have it reach the properties remaining to the vendors, which have been conceded to the said Parrin during a half day each week, fixed at Sunday from 6 o'clock in the morning to 6 o'clock in the

<sup>58</sup> One of the administrators of the hospital of Saint Chamond. The project of a hospice in Izieux led people to believe that the cession of was linked to the creation of a hospice at the Hermitage.

<sup>59</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-16

<sup>60</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-16 ; OFM/3, doc. 663

<sup>61</sup> *Annales de l'institut*, t. 1, 1833, § 228: short summary of the deed.

<sup>62</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-17

<sup>63</sup> « The Hermitage » is beginning to replace « les Gauds » as the name place.

evening. This supplementary half day of water rights is agreed to by Parrin to Champagnat for the sum of 300 francs paid immediately by Champagnat in coin<sup>64</sup>.

**25. ON 15 APRIL 1835**  
*a sale by Claude Boiron to*  
*M. Marcelin Champagnat*<sup>65</sup>

Claude Boiron, landowner resident in the locality of la Rivoire (La Valla-en-Gier), sells to M. Marcelin Champagnat, priest residing in the place of the Hermitage (St Martin-en-Coailleux):

1. The estate he possesses at Rivoire and the vicinity, composed of buildings, garden, meadows, lands, pasture, fields, woods of saplings and large pines. The estate is at the time worked by Jean-Marie Giraudet, farmer, except for a meadow leased to Crapanne.
  2. The furniture and movable effects belonging to Boiron in the estate of la Rivoire. A detailed inventory is annexed to the deed and an estimate of the whole which amounts to the sum of 222 francs.
- ...

The sale is agreed to by M. Marcelin Champagnat who makes the formal commitment:

1. to pay to Gabrielle Boiron, sister of the vendor, the annual and life rent owed by Claude Boiron, of 5Kg or 12 pounds<sup>66</sup> old weight of butter, the same of dried cheese, 2.5Kg or 5 pounds<sup>67</sup> of nut oil, or 20 pounds of salt, a similar amount or weight of lard, 30 hen's eggs, 30 decalitres or 12 bichets<sup>68</sup> old measure of wheat, 4 cartloads of firewood and 20 decalitres or 8 bichets of rye<sup>69</sup>;
2. to take into the refuge which Champagnat has established in the place of the Hermitage, the said Claude Boiron, to accommodate him there, feed and maintain him during his lifetime, in health and in sickness, and to have him suitably buried and after his death and, in the case of incompatibility, to pay annually to Boiron only from the day he judges it convenient to withdraw from the refuge, the life rent of 300 francs in two equal terms of six months. It is declared that the supplies forming the rent of Gabrielle Boiron are of the following value: butter 7 francs,

<sup>64</sup> See document 10.

<sup>65</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-18. This deed does not directly concern the constitution of the Hermitage, but something of its operation ; OFM/3, doc. 665

<sup>66</sup> The pound weighs .

<sup>67</sup> In this case the weight of the pound is rounded out to . It is true that it is a question of a liquid which in principle is measured in litres.

<sup>68</sup> The bichet is an old measure used for grains. It is equivalent to 27.

<sup>69</sup> This list indicates the basic foodstuffs necessary for one person for a year.

cheese 5, oil 3.5, salt 3, lard 10.5, eggs 1.5<sup>70</sup> and wood 8<sup>71</sup>.

Annexed to the deed the inventory of furniture includes: one table of fir wood, one furnished bed, five wardrobes, one clock, one sideboard, three chests of fir wood, four chests or coffers for grain, one bed with curtains, one forge bellows, one laundry vat, two fireplace pothooks<sup>72</sup>, one anvil<sup>73</sup>.

**26. On 7 April 1836**  
*Sale by Pierre Parrin to*  
**M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>74</sup>**

Pierre Parrin farmer residing at the place of les Roches (St Martin-en-Coailleux), sells to Marcelin Champagnat priest superior of the little brothers of Mary residing at les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux), two small parcels of field and rocks called the Combe du Pino.

...

It is agreed that if M. Champagnat encloses these pieces of land, he will reserve at the base of his walls passage for the water supply of Parrin. During heavy rain, so that it does not flood the Parrin land, M. Champagnat will be able to take advantage of the water from the roofs and the path of

the chapel. The sale is agreed for the sum of 20 paid on the spot in coin by the buyer.

**27. On 11 April 1836**  
*A sale by Marguerite Fara*  
*widow Dumas to*  
**M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>75</sup>**

Marguerite Fara widow of Barthelemi Dumas, spoolmaker<sup>76</sup> residing in Lardière (St Martin-en-Coailleux) sells to Marcelin Champagnat priest superior of the little brothers of Mary residing at les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux). A holding of field and bushy wood listed on the land survey map section D parcels 348 and 351 in the locality called les Roches.

Sale agreed for the sum of 1000 francs paid immediately by M. Champagnat "in gold and silver coins in current usage".

**28. Also on 11 April 1836**  
*A sale by Etienne and*  
*François Roussier to*  
**M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>77</sup>**

Etienne and François Roussier father and son, masons residing in the locality of le Creux (Izieux), sell to

<sup>70</sup> In fact, a dozen eggs.

<sup>71</sup> The wood is . a cartload. The price of the cereals (wheat and rye) is not indicated but seems to be about a dozen francs.

<sup>72</sup> Probably for placing the pot on the fire at different heights.

<sup>73</sup> The list of furniture gives a good idea of the normal furnishings of a farm.

<sup>74</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-19 ; OFM/3, doc. 667

<sup>75</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-19 ; OFM/3, doc. 669

<sup>76</sup> Maker of spools for spinning.

<sup>77</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-19 ; OFM/3, doc. 668

Marcelin Champagnat priest superior of the little brothers of Mary, domiciled at the place of les Gauds (St Martin-en-Coailleux), three parcels of land joined together of thicket or field covering together about one hectare, in the locality of les Gaux (St Martin-en-Coailleux), section D parcels 350, 338 and 339 on the survey chart.

Sale agreed for the sum of 1000 francs paid immediately by M. Champagnat.

**29. On 4 July 1836**  
***A sale by Claudine Fara***  
***Widow Voron to***  
***M. Marcelin Champagnat***<sup>78</sup>

Claudine Fara widow of François Voron, housewife residing in the locality of Lardière (St Martin-en-Coailleux), sells to Marcelin Champagnat priest superior of the Hermitage of the little brothers of Mary, residing in the place of les Gauds (St Martin-en-Coailleux): two small parcels of woodland or meadow situated in the place of les Gauds (St Martin-en-Coailleux) of an area of about 40 ares, shown on the survey chart of St Martin-en-Coailleux, section D parcels 349 and 352. Sale agreed for the sum of 600 francs paid on the spot by M. Champagnat.

**30. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1839**  
***Sale by Mathieu***  
***Pathouillard and his wife***  
***to Marcelin Champagnat***<sup>79</sup>

Mathieu Pathouillard and Françoise Toullieu his wife, fuller at les Gaudx commune of Izieux, sell to M. Marcelin Champagnat, priest and superior of the Congregation of the little brothers of Mary, domiciled at les Gauds commune of St Martin-en Coailleux:

All the property belonging to the vendors at les Gaux in the communes of Izieux and St Martin-en-Coailleux, consisting of mill, workshop for bleaching cotton, residence, hayloft, stable, reservoir, dike, canal, water course and point in the Gier river, field, orchard, pastures, lands, woods and rocks. Property purchased by the vendors from Antoine Thiollière Laroche by deed of Mr Finaz on 3 July 1824 and from the widow Motiron by deed of Me Finaz on 16 June 1837.

All the equipment<sup>80</sup> currently used for fulling, carding the wool and the bleaching workshop will be removed by the vendors.

During the sale to the spouses Pathouillard-Touilleu, M. Thiollière-Laroche, owner of a silk mill downstream, at Moulin-Combat, had for-

<sup>78</sup> ADL 5Evt 1233-19 ; OFM/3, doc. 670

<sup>79</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-22 ; OFM/3, doc. 677

<sup>80</sup> The machines and various equipment.

bidden the purchasers to modify the water point on the Gier, or the basin, measured 80 metres by 3.6 metres at its junction with the reach, 5 metres in the middle and 6 metres at the end.

The sale was concluded for the sum of 39, 000 francs. Marcelin Champagnat pledges to pay 10, 000 francs in 2 months, 5, 000 in a year, 4, 000 on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1843 with interest of 5%.

No witnesses for the Marists.  
Signed "Champagnat".

**31.\*\*\* On 11 March 1839**  
***A treaty for the foundation of a free school between M. Royer de la Bastie and M. Marcelin Champagnat<sup>81</sup>***

Between Jean François Henri Royer de la Bastie, landowner of private means residing at Camp du Geai commune of Izieux and Marcelin Champagnat, priest and superior of the Marist brothers domiciled at the place of the Hermitage, commune of St Martin-en-Coailleux.

Wishing to respect the will of his dead daughter Léonie, deceased in Izieux on 6 September 1828, who desired to make a pious foundation for the poor of the commune, M. Royer de la Bastie consulted with the Vicars General of the diocese of Lyon and Henry Royer de la Bastie his son. He concluded that the foundation of a

free school for all the young boys and particularly for those of the lower class in Izieux would be a good outcome. M. Royer de la Bastie therefore approached M. Champagnat to propose to him, for the cost of a sum of 12,000 francs, to provide "two subjects from among his brothers capable of instructing the children in the Catholic apostolic and Roman religion and teaching them as well reading, writing, arithmetic and everything taught in the primary schools."

M. Champagnat having accepted, they made the following treaty together:

Art.1 – M. Marcelin Champagnat pledges to provide two Marist brothers to teach the young boys of Izieux, in perpetuity and at no cost.

Art.2 – Apart from the sum given, M. Royer de la Bastie reserves for himself to come to an understanding with the municipal administration for the providing of a local and the eventual grant of an annual subvention in cash.

Art.3 – The commitments of the parties are agreed for the 12.000 francs, paid "in silver of legal tender" by M. Royer de la Bastie to M. Champagnat.

Art.4 – If the teaching has to cease because of the disappearance of the Marists, oppositiob by the gov-

<sup>81</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-22. This deed does not directly concern the Hermitage.



ernment, or for any other reason<sup>82</sup>, M. Champagnat pledges to restore the 12,000 francs to M. Royer de la Bastie or his heirs.

Art.5 – This reimbursement can be made only in gold or silver coin of legal tender. To guarantee this repayment, M. Champagnat mortgages the property he possesses at Grange Paire.

Art.6 – Foundation on the express condition that the children who attend the school will say once a day one *Pater* and one *Ave Maria* “for the intention of M. Royer founder”, and each Saturday one *De profundis* for the deceased of his family.

Signed Champagnat.

### **32.\*\*\* On 16 May 1839**

*A sale by*

***M. Marcelin Champagnat  
to Jean-Marie Crapanne<sup>83</sup>***

Marcelin Champagnat priest superior of the brothers of Mary<sup>84</sup> residing in the place called the Hermitage (St Martin-en-Coailleux), sells to Jean-Marie Crapanne landowner

cultivator residing in the commune of la Valla, a holding of a field in three parcels called Béchu, Choméol and Verchère<sup>85</sup> of an area of about 86 ares, situated in the locality of la Rive, commune of la Valla.

...

Sale agreed for the sum of 1500 francs paid on the spot in cash of legal tender<sup>86</sup>.

### **33. On 4 August 1839**

*Sale by*

***M. Marcelin Champagnat  
to Jean Jacques Jaboulay<sup>87</sup>***

M. Marcelin Champagnat priest superior of the hermitage of the brothers of Mary residing at the Hermitage (St Martin-en-Coailleux), sells to Jaboulay, cultivator residing in the locality of la Rivoire (La Valla) a domain composed of buildings, gardens, meadows, lands, pastures, fields and woodland, except for three parcels sold by M. Champagnat to Crapanne by deed of Me Finaz on 16 May 1839.

...

<sup>82</sup> At this date, the Institute still did not have legal recognition.

<sup>83</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-22. This deed does not directly concern the Hermitage ; OFM/3, doc.678

<sup>84</sup> Expression frequently preferred to « little Brothers of Mary »

<sup>85</sup> These three fields are signaled in a sale of Champagnat to Crapanne on 26/10/ 1837 (OFM/3, doc. 673).

<sup>86</sup> See OM/3, doc. 673, 678. A project of this deed on 26/10/1837 is conserved at the Hermitage. The planned price is . A sheet of stamped paper conserved at the Hermitage concerns the sale of a property to Jaboulay « with the reservation of a holding of field sold to Sr. Crapanne ». Thus the above deed is the end of complicated transactions concerning the sale of the Boiron property (see no. 25) to two purchasers, of which traces are found in the Marist sources without, however, this deed being in evidence.

<sup>87</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-22. This deed does not directly concern the Hermitage; OFM/3, doc. 673, 679.

Sale agreed for the sum of 7000 francs. Jabouley pays immediately 5000 francs and pledges to pay M. Champagnat the remaining 2000 francs after the decease of Gabrielle Boiron, daughter of mature age residing in la Rivoire.

Claude Boiron, of private means residing at the Hermitage, was interviewed and declared he approved the bill of sale<sup>88</sup>.

### 34. On 22 March 1840

***A deed of association  
between MM. Champagnat,  
Fayol, Bonnet, Audras,  
Pascal, Rivat  
and Labrosse***<sup>89</sup>

Present herewith: MM. Marcelin Champagnat, priest residing at the place of the Hermitage (St Martin-Coailleux); Claude Fayol domiciled in the commune of St Médard, canton of St Galmier; Bonnet, domiciled at St Sauveur, canton of Bourg-Argental; Jean Baptiste Audras, domiciled at la Valla, canton of St Chamond; Jean Antoine Pascal, domiciled at Pélussin; Gabriel Rivat, domiciled at la Valla; Pierre Alexis Labrosse, domiciled at Ranchal, canton of St Nizier d'Azergues (Rhône); all teachers resident at the Hermitage<sup>90</sup>.

They establish among themselves a private and purely civil association in conformity with the dispositions of Art. 1841 of the civil code, regulated by the following articles:

1. This society has for object the possession and use in common and in the manner stipulated below certain movable and immovable goods which belong to the associates and which will be designated.
2. It establishes its seat at the Hermitage.
3. It is contracted for 25 consecutive years as from this day, save in the following cases.
4. Independently of the contributions fixed below, each of the associates promises the society his help and competence.
5. The assets of the society are composed of:
  - all the movable and immovable goods which will enter into the contributions listed below;
  - all the profits, grains, fruits and revenues whatever which the said movable and immovable

<sup>88</sup> A projected deed dated 26/10/1837 has been preserved at the Hermitage (doc. 673)

<sup>89</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-23. Fundamental ; OFM/3, doc. 686

<sup>90</sup> Names in religion and functions : Claude Fayol (Br Stanislas, economer and factotum of the Hermitage) ; Bonnet (Br Jean-Marie, director of the house) ; Jean-Baptiste Audras (Br Louis, 1st disciple of Champagnat in 1817) ; Jean Antoine Pascal (Br Bonaventure, master of novices) ; Gabriel Rivat (Br François, director general of the brothers) ; Pierre Alexis Labrosse (assistant of the director general). They are domiciled in the places of their birth. Champagnat, soon to be deceased, apart, no priest forms part of the society.

goods and the industry of each of the associates can procure for it;

- all the ownership and revenues from the goods of any nature which may be acquired during the duration of the present society, or which may come to them directly in other ways.
- The goods of the associates, other than those which are now going to be specified to constitute the social capital, are excluded from the society. However, the personal goods belonging to the associates which are found on their decease among the social property will belong to the society, apart from money which will return to their heirs.

6. M. Champagnat contributes to the society:

- a property called the Hermitage, situated in the commune of Saint-Marin-Accoalieu, composed of vast buildings of residence and industry, garden, courts, lands, fields, woods, meadows and livestock.
- another property situated in the locality of les Gaux, communes of Izieu and Saint-Martin, which he has acquired from Sr Patouillard, composed of buildings, factory and various types of terrain.

- another property situated in the locality of , commune of Izieu, coming from mademoiselle Fournas, composed of buildings and various types of terrain.

And generally, all the properties which M. Champagnat possesses in the communes of Izieu and Saint-Martin-Accoalieu, canton of Saint-Chamond.

- A house situated in the commune of Millery (Rhône) with court, garden, vineyard and dependencies.
- All the furniture contained in the buildings dependent on the properties designated above, such as tables, chairs, benches, beds, chests of drawers, offices, libraries, books, chapel, ornaments, collections, household provisions, kitchen utensils, and all other movable objects valued at the sum of twenty thousand francs.

The immovable goods enumerated above are contributed at present just as they are with all their equipment.

As from this day to the expiry of the society, all repairs, small, medium and large are without exception the responsibility of the society.

In addition, it takes from this day responsibility for all the direct taxes on the landed property specified

above, as well as all other charges which may be imposed by town or police during the duration of the present society.

7. The above properties contributed to the society by M. Champagnat are burdened by personal debts, mortgages or others for a total sum of fifty thousand francs which the society takes responsibility for, as much for capital as for interest, from this day on ; the other associates having been given, as they declare, a detailed account of the said debts<sup>91</sup>.
8. Each of the other associates, for the present, contributes to the society only his participation.

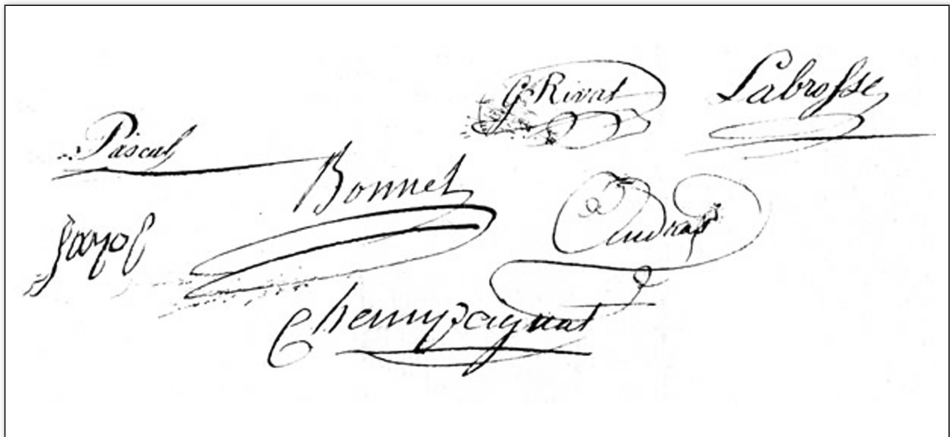
9. In case of the death of one or more of the associates, the society will not continue with their heirs but only between the surviving associates<sup>92</sup>.

...

Which deed made and passed at the said place of the Hermitage, commune of Saint-Martin-Acoalieu the year one thousand eight hundred forty the twenty-second of March.

And after the reading made all the parties signed with the notaries.

*The signatures figuring at the bottom of the deed. The intrusive signature of the notary has been erased in order to facilitate the reading of the first associates of Champagnat.*



<sup>91</sup> In the Annales de l'institut, (t. 1, 1840, § 658)<sup>o</sup> Br Avit evaluates at 200, 000 F. the total value of the properties, which is likely, and the debts at 40, 000 F.

<sup>92</sup> The articles following (10-21) concern relatively secondary questions.

### 35. On 23 March 1840

#### *New will of*

#### *M. Marcelin Champagnat*<sup>93</sup>

M. Marcelin Champagnat priest residing at the place of the Her-

mitage (St Martin-en-Coailleux), indisposed in body but sound of mind as he appeared to notary and witnesses, has made and dictated his will in the following manner:

*"I recommend my soul to God and rely for my obsequies and pious works for religion on my sole heirs established below.*

*I name and appoint for my sole heir or legatee civil society, considered as legal entity, which exists between me and Claude Fayol, Jean Claude Bonnet, Jean Baptiste Audras, Jean Antoine Pascal, Gabriel Rivat and Pierre Alexis Labrosse, constituted by deed of Me Mioche notary undersigned who has the record, and his colleague, dated yesterday; which must continue to subsist among the survivors, willing that the said society possess, use and dispose of my goods and rights after my death in the same way as it does and can do with its social goods, in terms of the contract of society mentioned above, with legal responsibilities.*

*And in the case where the present institution would not be judged valid*<sup>94</sup>, *and would not be authorized to receive my inheritance, I appoint by name for my sole heirs or legatees the one or those of the associates named above who survive and remain in the said society up to its expiry; and up to then, the survivors have use of my goods in common. Such are my intentions and last wishes.*

*I annul and revoke all other wills which I may have made previously."*

After the notary read through the will, the testator declared to have understood well and to persevere in it.

The deed was registered at the Hermitage, in the room of the testator, in presence of MM. Denis Joseph

Maitrepierre, priest superior of the minor seminary of Meximieux (Ain), Claude Besson, priest domiciled in St Marcel de Félines and residing at the Hermitage, Jean Marie Matricon, priest domiciled in le Bessat and residing at the Hermitage<sup>95</sup>, Jean Pon-

<sup>93</sup> ADL 5Ev1233-23. The dispositions dictated by Champagnat are copied in full ; OFM/3, doc. 684

<sup>94</sup> The belated constitution of the society is due to the fact that Champagnat hoped up to 1838 to obtain from the government autorisation as a charitable society of public utility. Moreover, it was only gradually that he became aware of the impossibility of obtaining this authorisation by new negotiations. The civil society, then, was only a stopgap in view of his approaching end and risked running into obstacles on the part of the administration. It appears as well that an inventory had been begun at the Hermitage in case the society was not recognized.

<sup>95</sup> All three are Marist Fathers. The latter two are chaplains at the Hermitage.

cet, cultivator domiciled in the commune of Boisset (canton of Bas-en-Basset)<sup>96</sup>, all neither relatives nor linked among themselves to the testator or his legatees.

The deed is signed Champagnat.

### **36.\*\*\* 23 October 1840<sup>97</sup>**

*Mention of a mortgage taken out by the brothers Victor Louis and Ernest Jean Finaz on the civil Society of the Hermitage*

### **37.\*\*\* 20 January 1841**

*A last deed concerns the notification for the heirs of Marcelin Champagnat<sup>98</sup>*

Present herewith : MM. Vérissel clerk of the justice of the peace of the canton of St Chamond, Charles Marie Hervier merchant of Saint-Chamond, Bertholon landowner cultivator in Izieux and Claude Reymond soft furnishings maker in Izieux, who declare that it is known to them and common knowledge that M. Marcelin Champagnat, priest residing at the place of the Hermitage commune of St Martin Accoilleu, whom they knew closely, died in the said place on 6 June 1840, after having made a public testament in the presence of

M. Mioche on 23 March preceding, registered on 10 June, by which he disposed of his entire estate ; that after his decease no inventory was made and he left no inheritance in reserve. That in consequence the dispositions of his will must be executed in their entirety.

### **38.\*\*\***

*Summary of the situation at the Hermitage the day after the death of Marcellin Champagnat, transcription of the first census of the commune of Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux in 1841<sup>99</sup>*

At the place of the Hermitage :

RIVAT Gabriel, brother director of the establishment of Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage; BESSON, priest; MATRICON, priest; GIRARD, priest; LABROSSE Alexi, brother attached to the establishment; BONNET Claude, brother attached to the establishment; PASCAL Antoine, brother attached to the establishment; FAYOLLE Claude, brother attached to the establishment; AUDRAS Jean-Baptiste, brother attached to the establishment; CHILLET Jean-Baptiste, brother attached to the establishment; PIQUET Jean-Claude, brother

<sup>96</sup> In fact Jean Poncet is a worker resident at the Hermitage for many years.

<sup>97</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-26: Finaz mortgage on the Scy of the Hermitage. In the *Annales de l'institut Br Avit* (t. 2, 1840, § 19) mentions a loan of 22, 000 F. obtained by the civil society from the two Finaz sons, for 5 years at 4.5 % without giving a date. The above document thus provides us with a useful piece of information.

<sup>98</sup> ADL 5Evt1233-24. Deed destined to assure that the transfer of the goods of an individual to a society is not fictitious and therefore tainted with irregularity.

<sup>99</sup> Municipal archives of Saint-Chamond - 1 Fsm 1.

attached to the establishment; GAPPELOUP Pierre, brother attached to the establishment; PONCET Georges, brother attached to the establishment; RIVORY Jacques, brother attached to the establishment; CIZERON Jean-Claude, brother attached to the establishment; BERTHET Joseph, brother attached to the establishment; ESCOT Antoine, brother attached to the establishment; GAI Claude, brother attached to the establishment; COURBON Jean-Claude, brother attached to the establishment; REMILLEUX Claude, brother attached to the establishment; GAUTHIER Simon, brother attached to the establishment; MOURGUE Jean, brother attached to the establishment; BACLON Joseph, brother attached to the establishment; POINARD Claude, brother attached to the establishment; SOUCHON Pierre, brother attached to the establishment; CHAZALLE Mathieu, brother attached to the establishment; DEVILLE Jean-Baptiste, brother attached to the establishment; MORAUD François, brother attached to the establishment; AROD ? Pierre, brother attached to the establishment; MON-

TEILLER Laurent, brother attached to the establishment; BELLE Jacques, brother attached to the establishment; SAGE Jean-Baptiste, brother attached to the establishment; DAMON Antoine, brother attached to the establishment<sup>100</sup>. Total of boarders and pupils, establishment of the Marist brothers of N.D. De l'Hermitage<sup>101</sup>.

CHAPELON Marguerite, religious sister situated near the establishment; GOUJON Françoise, religious sister situated near the establishment; VALLET Marie, novice sister ; PONCET Marie, novice sister; CHAMPAGNAT Jeanne Marie, novice sister; FOURNIER Marie, novice sister<sup>102</sup>;

ARNAUD Philippe, carpenter; PATHOUILLARD (wife of Arnaud) Jeanne; ARNAUD Baptiste, son; ARNAUD Marie, daughter; ARNAUD Génie, daughter; SEUX Augustin, Tailor; ARNAUD (wife of Seux) Génie; SEUX Camille, son; SEUX Antoine, son; BONNET Mathieu, worker; PREAT Claude, worker ; BARGE Jeanne, cook<sup>103</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> Thus we have a detailed list of the permanent personnel of the Hermitage comprising three priests and thirty brothers. The list, certainly drawn up by Br François, director general, corresponds to the hierarchical order of the house. The index of the brothers of OFM/3 does not include the following persons : Courbon Jean-Claude, Gai Claude, Remilleux Claude, Baclon Joseph, Arod Pierre, Belle Jacques, Damon Antoine, who were perhaps simple postulants or boarders.

<sup>101</sup> Total of the adult inhabitants and subjects in formation.

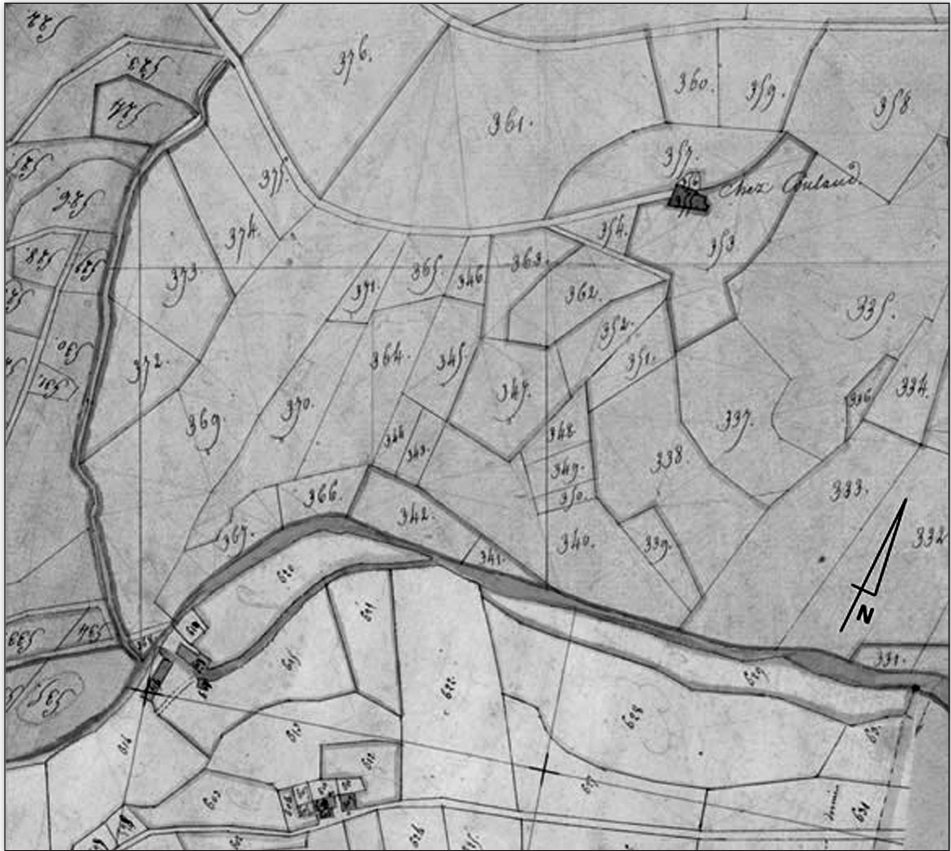
<sup>102</sup> So there is already a structured community of women associated with the Hermitage. It is a community of the congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family founded at in 1825 by Fr Pousset, parish priest of St Bruno des Chartreux, a former Marist aspirant. Three sisters were sent to the Hermitage in September 1840 to take care of the brothers' linen. See Jeanne Pousset-Carcel and Bernadette Carcel, *Deo soli. La vie d'un prêtre. Pierre Pousset, 1794-1883*, published at the expense of the authors, 1998, p. 240-242.

<sup>103</sup> Philippe and Eugénie Arnaud are nephew and niece of Fr Champagnat. The Seux family is also related to Champagnat.



## LES GAUDS BEFORE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HERMITAGE

Copy of the Napoleonic land survey map of the communes of Izieux (section C3) and Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux (sections A2 and D) showing the state of the places in 1812.



## THE ACQUISITIONS OF M. CHAMPAGNAT (1824-1840)

This aims to situate on the Napoleonic survey map the parcels of land acquired by Champagnat at les Gauds between 1824 and 1840. The first state of section, dated from 1830-31, gives for place name and nature of the parcels to “Marcelin Champagnard” the following notes. In St Martin-en Coailleux: 340-Chez Coulaud, wood ; 341-Pré de Gier, meadow; 342-Pré de Gier, meadow; 343-Chez Coulaud, wood; 344-Chez Coulaud, wood; 364-



Les Gaux, wood; 365-Les Gaux, rock; 366-Pré de Gier, garden; 367-Pré de Gier, garden; 368-Les Gaux, pasture; 369-Rochers des bois, rock; 370-Rochers des bois, wood; 371-Rochers des bois, rock. In Izieux, to Mathieu Pathouillard, at les Gaux: 614-pasture; 615-thicket; 616-house; 617-house; 618-fuller's mill and cards; 619-garden and 620-meadow.

## PLAN ON THE BASE OF THE NAPOLEONIC SURVEY MAP

- In light are the markings of the present land survey.
- In the shaded area is the Marist property on the death of Champagnat in 1840.
- Outlined in black is the boundary of the current property of the Marists.

Remark : No bridge is drawn on the plan below at the level of the Hermitage and the Patouillard property but one appears clearly marked on another plate of St Martin-en-Coailleux.



**ANNALS OF BROTHER AVIT,  
spanish translation**

Br. Alain Delorme

The three volumes of the *Annals of the Institute*, by Brother AVIT, published in Rome in 1993, through the work of Brother Paul SESTER, then Archivist General, have just appeared in Spanish.

There is one volume of 924 pages (24x16.5 cm), containing the three volumes of the French edition, published by Edelvives, in Saragossa, in a fine dark red binding. After the name of Brother AVIT, Henri Bilon, its title is *CRÓNICAS MARISTAS, VII. Anales del Instituto*.

Brother Antonio Aragón, translator, explains in a note to the reader, that this book required years of work, gratifying work undertaken in the interests of the Spanish language readers, Brothers and Lay, so that they could have access to sources

allowing them to know the Founder and his charism better. He expresses his gratitude to the Superiors who placed trust in him as well as to all who helped him in the course of the work, especially Brothers Paul Sester and André Lanfrey. There is a special mention for Brother Louis Richard, of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, who developed a triple Index: subject, names of persons, and names of places, covering 145 pages. This meticulous work will be very useful for Spanish-speaking readers. We hope it will be published without too much delay for French speakers, as a complement to the three volumes already in French. It will be, for them also, a great aid in their research.

Our wholehearted congratulations to Brothers Antonio Aragón and Louis Richard.

## **CIEN AÑOS de Presencia Marista en Chile**

Br. Patricio Pino

GAJARDO V., JULIO and LOYOLA E., CAROLINA. *Cien Años de Presencia Marista en Chile*. (A Hundred Years of Marist Presence in Chile). Hermanos Maristas de Chile. Santiago, June 2012. Limited Edition of 1,000 copies.

Celebrating 100 years of presence, the Marists of Chile present us with this thorough investigation requested by their Board of Mission to the authors, both professional historians, and one of them, a former student. They deliver, as external researchers, the vision of the Province of Chile they have developed. Their work is the result of over two years of work in archives located in different places: the Chilean Marist Sector office, the oldest Marist schools in the country, the Archdiocese of Santiago, the Ministry of Education, and the Christian Center, among others. The work consists of an extensive introduction, which allows us to understand the Marist foundation in Chile in the context of

the global expansion of the Congregation at the time. Then, in four chronological chapters, they show the initial organization, implantation, and development of the charism in the local situation of the country. In the fifth chapter they touch a cross-cutting issue of great importance: what is taught and who teaches, a chapter showing the essentials of Marist pedagogy, and the local formation of the Brothers. The work ends with six valuable annexes regarding the institution's staff, plus a note from a witness to these hundred years of Marist presence. It also includes a timeline of this period, and relevant historical images, selected and commented by Brother Agustín Carazo.

## **COURSE ON MARIST CHARISM AND EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

### **Marist spiritual patrimony for the post-graduate**

Br. André Lanfrey

Marist spiritual patrimony is to be more available for the formation of Brothers and Laity thanks to a specialist course in the Marist Charism and Marist Educational Principles, which is to be offered by the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR), directed by the Marist Brothers of South Central Brazil. This course is a response from the Marist International Network of Higher Education Institutions – which includes 30 Marist higher education centres from around the world – to the invitation made by the Institute through the Mission Commission in 2008.

In the Network's fourth meeting – which took place at PUCRS in Porto Alegre, from October 5 to 9, 2010 – Professor Ricardo Tescarolo presented the project for a postgraduate online course on Marist Mission and Spirituality, entrusted by the General Council of the Marist Brothers to the PUCPR. In the fifth meeting – held at the Marist University of Mexico DF in 2012 – the Network gave its approval to the implementation of a specialist course on Marist Charism and Educa-

tional Principles, which is the final name and academic credential for this Marist formation project.

This course in Marist Charism and Educational Principles has several goals: to qualify educators, administrators and staff in the Marist charism and the spirituality of Marcellin; to promote awareness of the Marist educational system and educational style; to motivate a commitment to live the Christian vocation, and to promote true educational communities in schools.

The course is an international programme at university level, consisting of 390 hours (32 credits), for the formation of Brothers and Laity, in four languages and online, carried out by eight doctoral level teachers who are expert in Marist education and spiritual patrimony, with the help of qualified tutors, under the coordination of Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún.

The course consists of the following subjects:

- **Marcellin Champagnat and the first Marist Brothers from 1789 to 1840.**

It outlines the origins of the Marist teaching tradition, its mission, and the educational principles of the founder and his disciples.

*Br. Juan Jesús Moral Barrio*



■ **The Marist teaching tradition and its historical development: mission and educational principles from 1840 to 1993.**

This subject is aimed at showing how the vitality of the Marist educational paradigm, already present at Marcellin Champagnat's death, is still alive in the Late Twentieth Century.

*Br. Michel Green*

■ **The vitality of the Marist educational model, and the construction of a new reality.**

This subject emphasizes that the basis of Marist education is essentially a particular spirituality shared and lived in community. A large number of lay Marists are currently giving continuity to this spirituality.

*Ricardo Tescarolo*

■ **Human-Christian Paradigm: prospects and challenges for the Church.**

Humanity is undergoing a transition which is full of potential for human beings and society. This new situation creates perspectives and challenges for the education of laity, religious, priests and bishops, whose presence must be a testimony of faith and life, active in the middle of the dough to ferment it.

*Br. Toni Torrelles*

■ **Education in XXI century conditions. Prospects and challenges of society**

Every human generation has raised the challenge of helping its members grow fully. The Marist education project, which began 200 years ago, is a response to the challenge of helping human beings grow into their full potential.

*Br. Seán Sammon*

■ **The vocation of the Marist educator.**

This subject highlights the characteristics of a Marist educator by vocation: state of life, ministry in the Church, status as a disciple of Jesus, and Mary's place in the educational activity. Mission, community and spirituality, and the complementary between lay people and brothers.

*Mário Antonio Sanches*



**■ Ethics: The sense of action.**

This subject is aimed at demonstrating that any action arises from a person situated within a particular context; that the sense of any action must arise from the meaning we give to life; and that the path that lies ahead depends on the path already traveled. In this perspective, ethics should not be understood as a pointing road sign, but as a rope binding and uniting two different elements: what we are and what we do, our worldview and our practice in the world.

*Adalgisa de Oliveira*

**Scientific Research Methodology**

The aim of this subject is to help the students prepare the monographic paper to be handed in at the end of the course.

The course is scheduled to begin in February 2014. More information can be found at the following address: [amestaun40@gmail.com](mailto:amestaun40@gmail.com)

*Br. Antonio Martínez Estaún*

## A BOOK ABOUT LAVALLA

Br. André Lanfrey

LA VALLA – EN – GIER. *Histoire d'un village*, décembre 2012, 260 p.

Autoédition : <https://sites.google.com/site/histoirelavalla>

By Gérard Clerjon – 3 impasse de Beauregard – 42400 Saint-Chamond

The author, with a passion for genealogy and numerous ancestors in La Valla, gives us an overview of the history of the town through the careful transcription of a mass of rare documents, in particular the memoirs of Jean-Louis Barge of the time of the Revolution and the Empire. He has taken care to mention Fr Champagnat and Br François (p. 169-170), the Marist Brothers, but also the three female congregations

in La Valla: the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the Sisters of the Holy Childhood, and the Sisters of Jesus Redeemer and Mary. The numerous plans, maps, photos and graphic, inform us about the village in different periods, its monuments (church, chapel of Leytra, wayside crosses, dams), its population, and so on. In short, we have a wide panorama of the territory which is home to the cradle of our Institute.

## THE FOUNDER'S RULE, its sources and evolution

Br. André Lanfrey

This is the title of *FMS Studia* - Volume 2, recently published in Rome. The author is Brother Pedro Herreros, former Councillor General, who originally wrote this work in Rome as a thesis in 1984. It remained as a mimeographed document, without the distribution it deserved, given that it presents a critical edition of our primitive legislation until the Rule of 1837. Identified by the Patriarchy Commission as a book that should have some priority for publication, and recently updated by its author, the interest it now enjoys is worthy of its importance. We hope that such a fundamental study will now be better known and appreciated, even if its content is a little dry. The fact that the book is bilingual (commentary in Spanish, and French sources) could be an additional barrier but it may also encourage researchers to develop their language skills.

The author presents six families of texts: the Institute's prospectuses (1824-1836); the Statutes of Association aimed at obtaining State approval (1825-1836); the Rules for com-

munities (1831-1836); various regulations for the Mother House. The Rule of 1837 is presented in full on pages 475-512. In the appendix (pp. 514-537), a number of tables allow you to quickly find your way through this set of 38 documents which are connected with one other. I particularly enjoyed the tables listing the various names of the Institute in these documents (pp. 521-522): "Little Brothers of Mary" cited 39 times; "Brothers of Mary" 44 times; and "Marist Brothers" appearing only 11 times.

The table entitled "*Concordancia con la regla impresa*" (pp. 530-537) lists the major legislative and spiritual topics contained in these documents: on the importance of holding the Rules in high esteem; the purpose of the Brothers; the Brother Director; relationship with parents and children; the method of prayer, etc. This table by itself, combined with the preceding documents, would enable many studies regarding our origins. From now on, in my opinion, no one should seriously discuss our origins without consulting this book.

## LA PUCPR OFFERS A NEW SERVICE OF MARIST FORMATION TO THE INSTITUTE

### Course on the Marist Charism and Principles of Education

Br. Antonio Martínez Estaún

On 3 February 2014, extramural classes began on the *Marist Charism and Principles of Education*. After almost two years of intense preparation, it has been possible to begin classes in this new service of Marist formation offered by the PUCPR to the whole Institute. It was an initiative of the Marist International Network of Higher Education which entrusted the creation of this course to the PUCPR. The financial and human resources to help PUCPR provide this

service have been the responsibility of the Province of Brasil Centro-Sul, which once again has provided the resources necessary for making it a reality.

The names of those taking part in this new experience of Marist formation in the Institute, offered by PUCPR online, in four languages and shared by brothers and laity, are worth recording. Here are their names and the Provinces to which they belong.

- **East Asia:** Allan de Castro. **East Central Africa:** Edouard Yatha Nanga Luka. **Southern Africa:** Felizardo Maceia. **Madagascar:** Jean Albert Thomas Randrianantenaina
- **Mediterránea:** Jean Miguel Anaya Torres. **L'Hermitage:** Raimundo Novell Donat.
- **Cruz del Sur:** César Concepción Borje Bogado, Daniela Costa Lane, Juan Pablo Garcia. **Norandina :** Francisco Javier Pérez París, Geovanni Velasco Devia, Julián Olmo Miguel. **Santa María de Los Andes:** Claudio Enrique Castillo Faúnez, Gladys Marcela Hormazábal Cruz, Víctor Guillermo Vidal Núñez, Raúl Amaya Rivera. **América Central:** Ana Isabel Saborio Jenkins, Mynor Estuardo González Polanco, Ricardo Alfredo Mendoza Martínez.
- **Rio Grande do Sul:** Aline de Cunha, Narciso Camatti, Gustavo Balbinot, Sérgio Barbosa Rodrigues, Sernízia de Araújo Correia. **Brasil Centro Sul:** Anacleto Perruzzo, Andreia Cristina Ruthes, Tiago Reus Barbosa Fedel, Mariel Manne. **Brasil Centro Norte:** José Augusto Júnior.

Seven women and 25 men, 10 of whom Marist brothers, have enrolled in the course. The languages chosen are distributed as follows: SP 15, PT 14, FR 3. The diversity of the Institute is represented by 15 different nationalities: Argentinian (1), Brazilian (13), Chilean (4), Colombian (1), Congolese (1), Costa Rican (1), Spanish (3), Filipino (1), Guatemalan (1), Malagasy (1), Mozambican (1), Paraguayan (1), Salvadorian (1), Uruguayan (1), Venezuelan (1).

The course has two tutors: Brother Ivo Strobino, who will cater for

students of the Portuguese and French languages, and Brother Joaquín López Barriuso, who provide this service for the Spanish-speaking ones. Some of the brothers and laity taking part in the course will also have the opportunity in time to act as tutors in subsequent editions of the course.

This service of PUCPR to the Institute is seen as part of the preparations for the celebration of the bicentenary of the foundation of the Institute, to be held in 2017.

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