

# MARIST notebooks





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## EDITORIAL

This issue number 36, planned during the Bicentenary Year of the Institute and before the General Chapter of 2017, may by the time it appears in 2018 seem to be somewhat behind matters of more current interest in the Institute. Furthermore, unlike several of the preceding numbers of Marist Notebooks, this one does not contain a special theme (such as the laity, the Montagne myth, and so on) which could give it a clearly distinctive character.

In order to redress a possible impression of lack of focus, an effort has been made in the Table of Contents to define a structure. With the long articles, two axes have been discerned: one of reflection solidly grounded in spirituality and theology; the other offering new topics or stimulating reinterpretations of various aspects of the history of the Institute.

Among all this valuable material, the article by Brother Patricio Pino, with its supporting schemas, consti-

tutes a truly noteworthy synthesis on the transmission of the Marist charism from its origins to the present day. In the historical domain, the article by Brother Juan Miguel Anaya presents a particularly innovative piece of research on the myth of the “Trois-un” (Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie, successors of Marcellin Champagnat between 1840 and 1860). The short articles are rather numerous and marked by the atmosphere of the Bicentenary; some among them refer to the Institute’s activity in research, while others are more clearly informative or commemorative.

It is hoped that this imposed organisation does not mask the diversity of authors and subjects in the issue. This diversity is a sign that Marist research is now less than in the past a matter concerning a small number of researchers and topics. It now involves both Marist Brothers and Marist Laypeople, is less focused on Marcellin Champagnat and the origins, and does not hesitate from

opening up new areas of work, or offering different interpretations of material from our past which to date has been insufficiently critiqued or needs to be gone into in more depth.

In short, this number 36 of Marist Notebooks bears witness in its own way to a clear evolution in the capacity of Marists to engage in reflection on their identity.

# PASSING ON THE MARIST CHARISM inherited from Marcellin Champagnat and the First Brothers



**Patricio Pino  
Medina, fms**

My interest in this topic and this essay on it have arisen from two real-life experiences. First, is my own lived experience from the time I came to know the Marists (around 1960 when I was four years old) in my country, Chile, and my home city, Rancagua. From these early days, Marist Brothers and Laypeople have always been part of my world and experience, since both groups were my teachers at school, the *Instituto O'Higgins*. Both animated the month of Mary, Eucharists, national events and parades, camping etc. Moreover, as my father was a Marist teacher and alumnus himself, I used to go occasionally to the Brothers' house, or some of them would come to my home for one reason or another. Also, at home we had a copy of the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat* and his relic. My father often spoke of him at home and we did too. How did people, Brothers and Lay, succeed in imbuing their lives with what we call today the Marist charism, and how were they able to transmit it to our generation and those coming before and behind us, as forcefully as I felt it in my childhood and adolescence, as

have many ex-students in recent years as well?

Second, my interest comes from my academic research in this topic of the Marist charism, which has complemented my being a Brother and formator. I had the chance to attend a specialised program in Mexico, at the Centre for Study of the Marist Spiritual Patrimony (CEPAM), led by Br Aureliano Brambila, which was based on inductive research of copies of the original writings of the Founder, the first Brothers, and the Marist Institute down the years. This preparation has led me to pass on the foundations of this charism to our candidates in a house of formation, and also to generations of laypeople and Brothers through courses, workshops, formal studies, talks, retreats, and so on. How has this charismatic gift taken flesh in our Marist Institute in each historical phase that we have lived through over these two centuries of Marist life in the world? Was what we see today as Marist presence – a living reality in some countries, of Brothers and Laypeople continuing and adapting Marist life and mission – already present in our origins and in the

initial steps of our historical journey? And if it was, what form did it take?

From 1992 to 1994 I took part in the annual programs, a month at a time, on Marist spiritual patrimony at CEPAM, Mexico. Br Aureliano Brambila raised the question of the transmission of the Marist charism between Brothers and Laypeople from the very beginning of our charismatic family. This was when I first felt an interest in this topic, something I will now try to describe using a schema that I have shared on many occasions with the Brothers and Laypeople around me, and that has been enriched through such moments of dialogue. As can be seen, it is an approach that has been developed from my Province and Latin-American perspective, and may not necessarily be the same across the Institute, especially in the final steps I describe.

## **1. AN APPROACH TO A BASIC CONCEPT: THE MARIST CHARISM, A GIFT OF THE SPIRIT TO THE CHURCH FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD**

I would like to be explicit in this section on what I understand by 'Marist charism', about what I believe to be essential to be retained in what is passed down from one generation to the next. I should state clearly that this conceptual framework is based on current theological research and

on my own experience of life and of my community. These concepts, however, were not necessarily those of the founders of our religious family, nor those that have prevailed down the years that followed the founding period.

Charisms are gifts that the Spirit grants the Church for the benefit of all. They help the Church accomplish its mission. They are the soul of a religious congregation and its identifying characteristic. In the beginnings of congregations, this gift of the Spirit is very present and makes it possible for Founders to perceive the great needs of the time, discover a dimension of the mystery of Christ, and, from this experience, offer a significant and effective response to these needs. Over time, such charisms come to include structures, apostolic works, a spirituality, discernment, a particular style of government and of formation of people in religious institutes.<sup>1</sup>

Our Marist charism is a concrete response to some needs of society and Church. This charism, through the action of the Spirit, invites us, brings us together, and sends us on mission; it is transformed into mission. Our Founder and the community of the first Brothers received this gift of the Spirit, felt moved and challenged by it, and converted it into a fount of living water which makes us different to others, gives us originality, makes us bring our own special contribution in the field of mission and also in our way of living the Gospel. From this found-

<sup>1</sup> Cf: ARNÁIZ, José María, *Vida y misión compartidas. Laicos y religiosos hoy*, pp. 19-21, PPC, Madrid, 2014.



ing charism was born the founding project: the Marist Brothers, the Institute of the Marist Brothers. But the history of the way this charism was incarnated across two centuries of journeying provides clear signs that the Marist charism is much more than this project alone.

The charism provides us with and is itself a key how 'we' draw close to the Gospel and approach God. It is our way of living the Gospel, of following Jesus and shaping our lives on his; it is a light that allows us to see the whole panorama of the Gospel; a lens that helps us to focus our way of seeing reality, and to be sharper in our reading of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

What was the key for reading the Gospel that Champagnat cultivated in his Brothers?

The answer to this question was the fraternal aspect of Jesus of Nazareth who was compassionate, close to people, and service-minded, who evangelised from the bottom up, and who welcomed everyone. It is his

incarnation itself, his abasement and *kenosis*<sup>3</sup>, his love for the little and the least. We have been called to perpetuate the abasement of Jesus in the Church through our lives and ministry. Father Champagnat thought of the members of his congregation as brothers; he gave them the name of the little brothers, with a mission to be carried out among the little ones: the children, youth and young people, especially the poorest; his lifestyle took its inspiration from Nazareth and was to be characterised by simplicity<sup>4</sup>, trusting abandonment, the love of Mary united to Jesus by an unbreakable bond, the love of work, and the spirit of family<sup>5</sup>.

The charismatic biblical texts that we find most developed in the writings of the Founder are the following: Jesus and the children<sup>6</sup>, a community of one heart and soul<sup>7</sup>, and the *Nisi Dominus*.<sup>8</sup>

As a starting point, moreover, the charism is a well of fresh water that requires a relational and dialogue

<sup>2</sup> See further discussion on this topic and other interesting points in section 2.2 Spirituality, Charisms and Spiritual Families in the Church in GREEN, Michael, *Marist Education since 1993: Its vitality and potential for the creation of something new. Collection on Charism and Marist educational principles, Vol 3*. EDITORA CHAMPAGNAT, Curitiba, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> See further discussion of this aspect in the conclusions of: VARONA GREGORIO, Mariano. *Jesucristo en la espiritualidad y escritos de Marcellin J. B. Champagnat (1789-1840) a partir de las fuentes directas. A thesis for a License in Theology, specialising in Spirituality*. Moderator: Bruno Secondin, O. Carm. Rome 1987-88, Cepam reference ch420008.doc.

<sup>4</sup> See especially the conclusion to the second part of MESONERO SÁNCHEZ, Manuel. *Espiritualidad de San Marcelino Champagnat a partir del estudio crítico de su biografía*. 2003. ch420006.doc. Doctoral thesis in Spiritual Theology.

<sup>5</sup> PROVINCIA SANTA MARÍA DE LOS ANDES, Hermanos Maristas. *Modelo Marista de Evangelización. Una experiencia y un camino*. Chile, March 2015. N° 66, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> Mt 19,14: Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. Mk 10, 14. Lk 18, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Jn 13, 34-35. Acts 4, 32. Acts 2, 44.

<sup>8</sup> See the general conclusion of: MESONERO SÁNCHEZ, Manuel, op. cit. It is also extensively developed in Chapters 4 and 5 of: VARONA GREGORIO, Mariano, op. cit.

context for mission, and this on three fronts simultaneously: with ourselves – the interior movements we experience; with others – those with whom we minister and those we want to serve; and with the Spirit of God who plants thoughts and feelings, provokes, sends and accompanies us on mission. This means reaching agreements, collaborating and supporting one another, feeling co-responsible. In this way, mission leads to communion and charismatic communion leads to mission.

We can picture the Marist charism as a beam of light with three tones: spirituality, mission and shared life<sup>9</sup>. The three are intimately related: “spirituality is lived in and for mission; mission creates and inspires shared life; shared life, in its turn, is the fount of spirituality and mission”<sup>10</sup>.

Considering each of these tonalities of our Marist charism, we can summarise their core elements as follows:

**Community** is the way the Spirit inspires us to relate with others. In our case: being brothers and sisters; horizontal relations; being a place of communion, inclusion, shared life characterised by solidarity, welcoming of diversity, satisfying our hunger around the same table, sharing life and faith.

**Spirituality** is our way of relating to God, under the influence of the Spirit: in the way of Mary, attentive, discerning, available, submissive, trusting and doing God’s will as we understand it. It is also apostolic, feeling the passion and compassion of God for the needs of people and responding to them, and speaking constantly about this and what such needs evoke in our own inner selves and hearts.

**Mission** is the way we put the Gospel key we have been given into action. In our experience: evangelising through educating children and young people in their context, especially those who are on geographical or existential peripheries. There are three features of our action: a sensitivity to recognise what are today’s needs in the world of children, youth and young people; the daring to be with them wherever they are; and ministering to them, accompanying them with the simple spontaneity of a mother caring for her children. This is how we make Jesus Christ known and loved.

Obviously, these descriptions are based on a concept of charism in today’s context but, as we said at the start, it has taken us two hundred years of evolution, and the accents and nuances of each period that we will try to describe have been different.

<sup>9</sup> Institute of the Marist Brothers, *Gathered around the Same Table. The vocation of lay Marists of Champagnat*, N° 35, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, N° 34.

## 2. THE FIRST STAGE: BEGINNING A JOURNEY FROM A PARTICULAR TIME AND PLACE WITH ALL ITS MILESTONES, AND THESE PRESENT IN THE HEARTS OF ALL INVOLVED

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1789, Marcellin Joseph Benoît Champagnat was born in a hamlet in the south of France, Le Rosey, part of the commune of Marthes, in the Department of La Loire. On the following 14<sup>th</sup> July, the people of Paris stormed the Bastille and so began the French Revolution.

In their region, Marcellin and his family were strongly influenced by the social, political, military and religious dimensions of what was to follow, developments that changed profoundly ways of conceiving the human person, society, beliefs and civilisation ... and the role of and feeling for the Catholic Church in France.

During his youth he felt invited to seek meaning for his life in a vocation to the priesthood. He accepted the invitation and, in 1805 when he was 16, he entered the minor seminary at Verrières, situated about fifty kilometres to the west of Lyon, to undertake a formation that would lead to his being ordained a

priest on 22 July 1816.

He himself had suffered the lack of a good education as a child and was aware of the negative consequences of religious ignorance rife around him<sup>11</sup>. Even when he was still a seminarian, he devoted himself to the catechesis of children and adults during his holidays in his hamlet and surrounding areas<sup>12</sup>. His immediate aim at that time was to give religious instruction to the families of his neighbours.

During this time of formation, in addition to his clear intentions and apostolic activity, he underwent a parallel conversion experience that was leading him to seek to do the will of God in his daily life. He cultivated a very intense spiritual life, one that brought him into a faith relationship with the will of God that was becoming more and more real in his life. Humility, simplicity, human warmth and openness to all, the experience of the love of God for him and for all, trusting and constant prayer to Jesus and Mary – these were the keys that started to appear in his life project.

While he was in his final years at the seminary, the intuition grew in him that teaching brothers<sup>13</sup> would be able to do something about the evil of the ignorance of God in post-Revolutionary France. He shared his concerns and intuitions with some of his companions<sup>14</sup>,

<sup>11</sup> Letter of M. Champagnat to His Majesty LOUIS PHILIPPE; KING OF FRANCE; 1834-01-28; PS 034A-B; ch110034.doc; Copy AFM 113.4; Original in the National Archives in Paris f.17 dossier Petits Frères de Marie; copy of the minute: AFM, RCLA, 1, p. 1, n° 1; edited in CSG, I, p. 182 and in AAA, p. 140.

<sup>12</sup> Testimony of Ms Juliana EPALLE. CARAZO, Agustín (Postulator), “Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat”, Diocesan Inquest, Rome 1991. p. 197. ch336001.doc

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

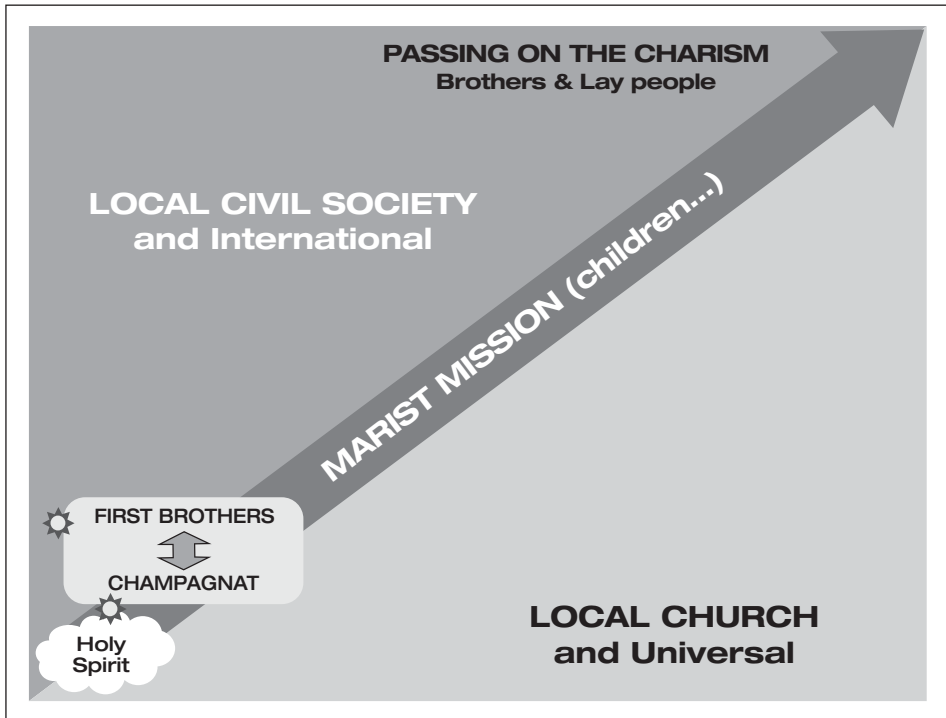
<sup>14</sup> Testimony of Fr. BOURDIN, Jean Antoine — OM 754, ch338001.doc., Fr. CONVERS — OM 748, ch338003.doc, and also Fr. MAÏTREPIERRE — OM 752. His own testimony can be found in OMEEx 152(416) of 1837-09-18.

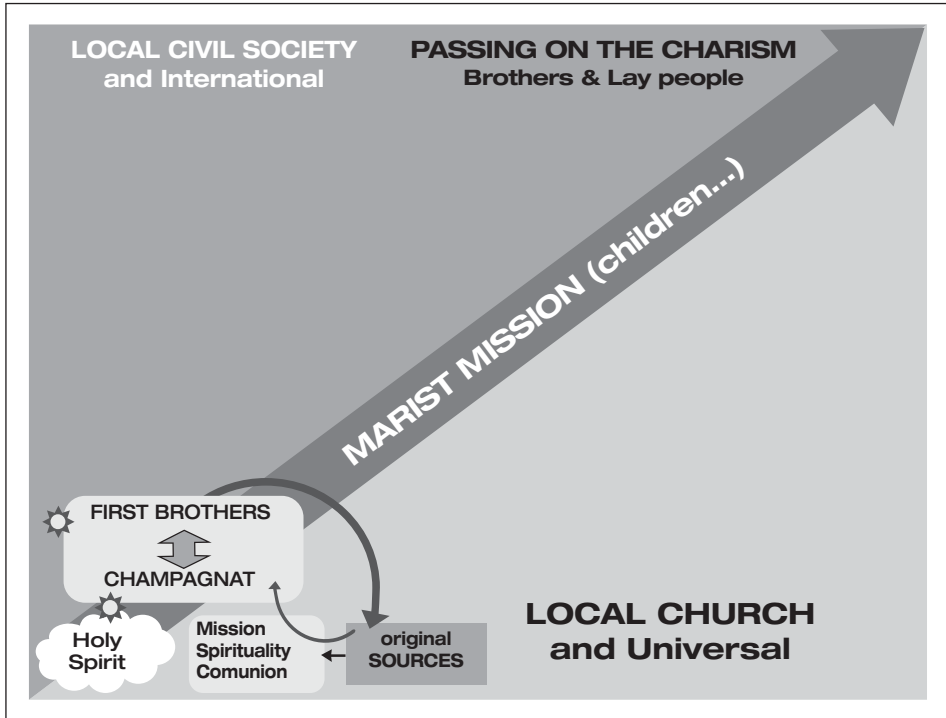
who had invited him to join a proposed association of diocesan priests dedicated to parish missions, under the banner of the Blessed Virgin Mary; they entrusted this project (of the Brothers) to him.

### 3. 1816: THE CHALLENGES AND CALLS OF A NEW DAWN

In the middle of August 1816, Marcellin arrived as curate in the village and parish of La Valla, near Saint-Chamond. What he saw there with his own eyes, inspired by the Spirit of God, led him to move on the intuition he had had as a seminarian, of starting a community of teaching brothers,

with the name of Mary, fully dedicated to looking after the children of the countryside through education. Obviously, we are speaking of a concept of brother and of community as understood in that time and context, one that would certainly be different from our understanding today. With this in mind, he gathered young candidates from the local area, and, through dialogue with them and with the Holy Spirit, he started to give shape to his project of evangelisation. In reality, this dialogue involved more than just these three parties, since other elements were actively involved as well in what was germinating in this project: the civil society of that region as well as the local Church were both part of the context that shaped this ini-



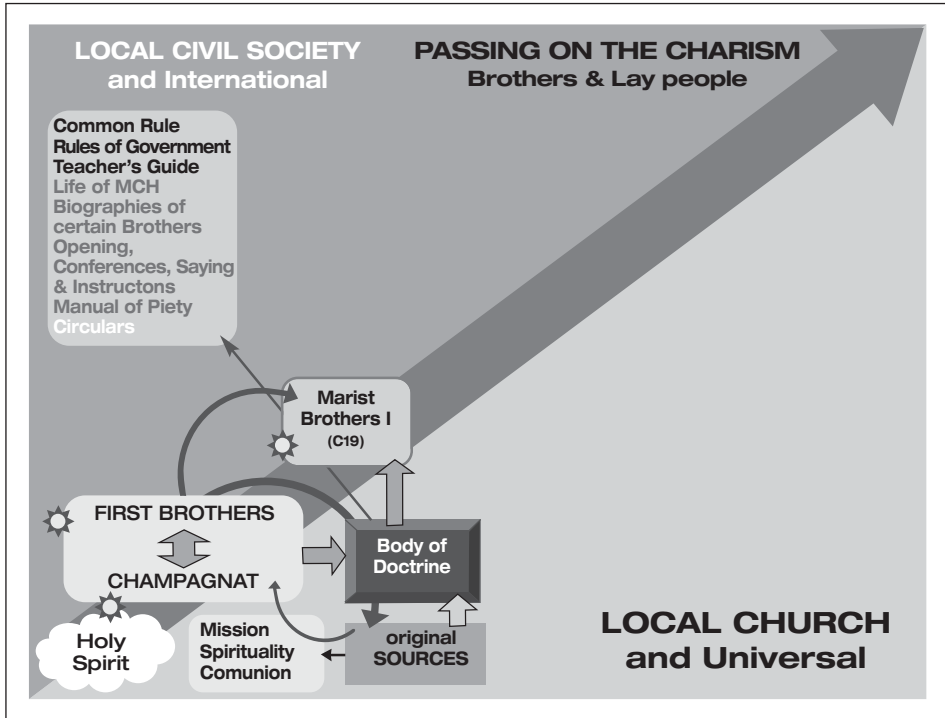


tiative from the start, through their approvals, criticisms, financial assistance, trust, civil and canonical requirements, infrastructure, and so on.

It was here as well that Marcellin and the first Brothers, and those helping them, came to understand the needs of the context and interpreted them in faith as signs of the times. We can say, therefore, that there were five players actively involved in this process of incarnating our charism at the beginning of the founding period, all contributing something from their particular circumstances. Thus was born a missionary project, with a local, evangelising character, that was to continue over time and spread out to the world: making Jesus Christ known and loved, through Christian education in all its

forms, through small, brotherly and ecclesial communities, imbued with a Marian and apostolic spirit.

This life-giving dialogue and interaction went on to produce various 'sources', both tangible and intangible – the original sources: on the one hand, there were all sorts of written documents with various authors and readership (letters, notebooks, internal Rules, conferences, etc.). These give some concrete expression to the charism as it was taking shape in their particular context. They are writings that speak to us of a living together marked by communion and fraternity, by spirituality and mission, along with its associated structures of organisation, government, leadership and administration. They were also elaborating an



emerging 'Marist' style and practice, ways of relating to one another, and ways of living out various aspects of the charism. For the most part, this transmission played out intangibly, from group to group, from person to person. It was the beginning of what would, over time, become a tradition cultivated and enriched by those who lived the charism in successive periods of history. Traces of their attempts at living out the charism can be found in the buildings, properties, houses and equipment that were built, designed and/or acquired to advance their project.

Additionally, there are documents coming from civil society and the Church that had a direct bearing on their project, and that forced continuous adap-

tations, revisions, improvements, additions ... many of them influencing the way the charism was to be incarnated in their area of control. All of this in the stretch of time when the Founder was still alive and the founding community were living with him (1789-1840).

#### 4. SECOND STAGE: THE NECESSARY STEP TO A SECOND CHARISMATIC GENERATION

The Brothers who entered the Institute after June 1840 had a different experience from those before. Without knowing the Founder personally, these candidates and later Brothers,

arrived attracted by the Holy Spirit – the source of this gift – and principally by the mission of the Institute, by the witness of Brothers they had known, and by the project of primary school education in France after the 1833 Guizot Law. Some of them may have arrived with other motives. None of them, however, cultivated and clarified his motivations under the guidance of the Founder, apart from the Brothers who received them into the Institute in this second stage. In this essay, we will consider the founding period to extend to 1863, the date of approval *ad experimentum* of the new Constitutions by the Holy See.

In the approximately 25 years that followed the death of Marcellin Champagnat, the Brothers in charge of animation, governance and management the Institute strived to develop a corpus of doctrine for the formation of future generations of Brothers, and to give clear guidance to the mission of the Institute and its identity.

There are three types of writing in this corpus:

- The documents of the Second General Chapter: *Common Rule, Rules of Government, Teachers' Guide*
- The internal teaching of the Superior Generals through their *Circulars*
- A combination of publications, requested by the General Government with a primarily teaching purpose: *The Life of Father Champagnat, Biographies of Certain Brothers, Manual of Piety*, among others.

For almost a hundred years, until Vatican II, his corpus of doctrine served as the basis for the formation in the charism of all the Brothers of the Institute. It represented a remarkable effort and a strategic initiative, planned to transmit the charism to generations to come, deprived of the living and temporal presence of the Founder but having access to his spirit and intercession.<sup>15</sup>

In the nineteenth century, this first generation of Marist Brothers who had not known the Founder in life, were formed as much by this corpus of doctrine as by the influence of the first Brothers, those who had lived with the Founder personally. It was a generation that knew the Institute at a time of considerable growth and expansion, and that cultivated a vocation that was intent on giving an appropriate response to the needs of the society and Church around them. They represent a generation that successfully received the transmission of Marist charism born in La Valla in 1816, as interpreted by the founding generation.

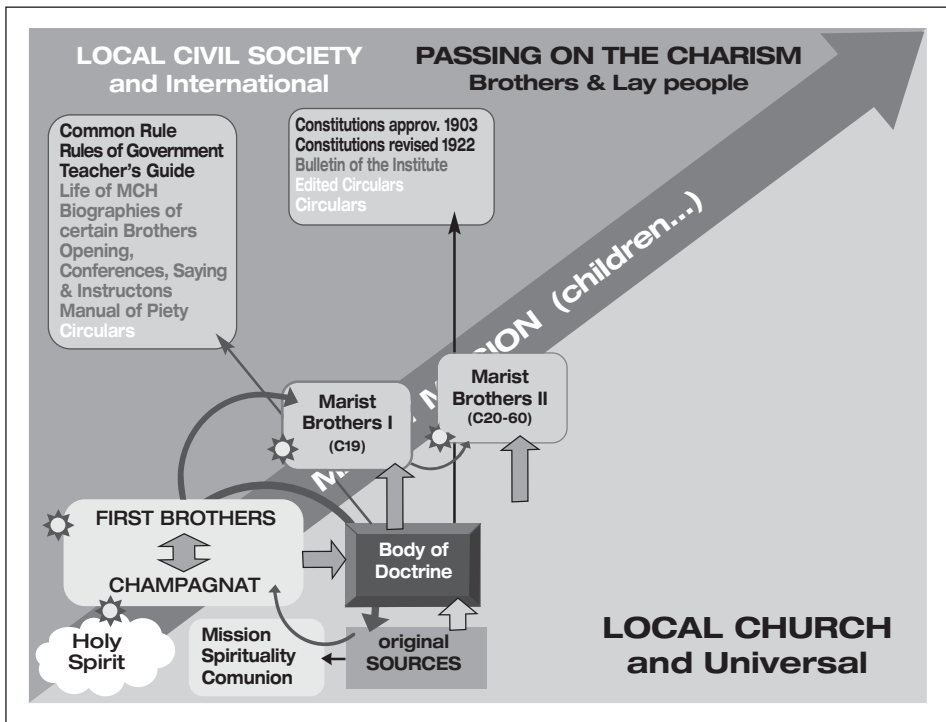
## 5. THIRD STAGE: A NEW MARIST GENERATION IN A NEW CENTURY

The coming of the twentieth century up till the beginnings of the 1960s brought another generation of Marist Brothers. They were Brothers who had received the charismatic gift from

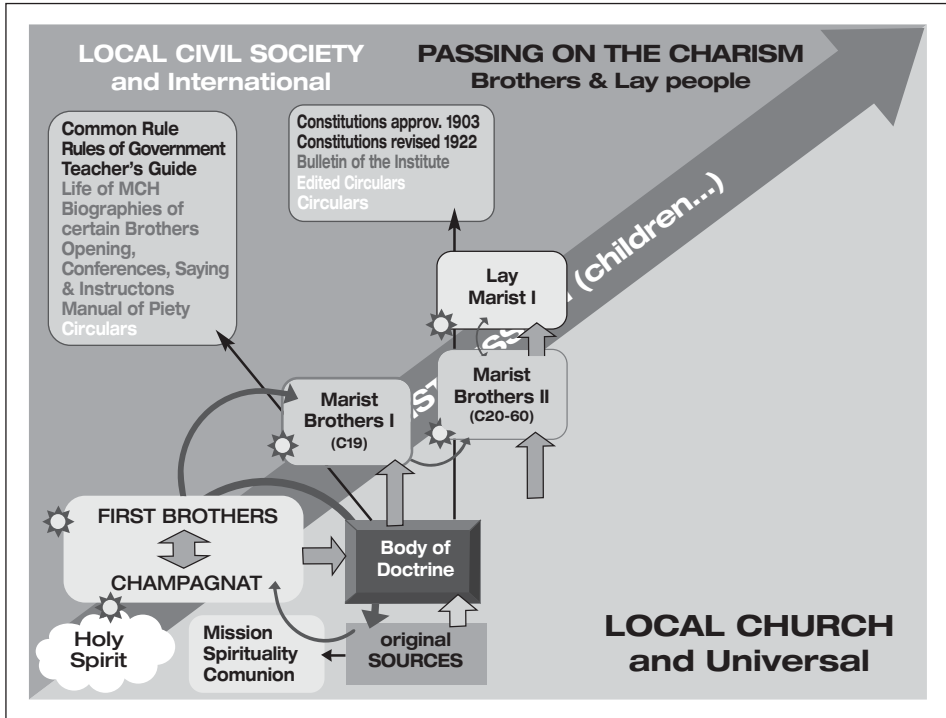
<sup>15</sup> Circulars of Br FRANÇOIS to the INSTITUTE, 1840-06-06; CSG 1, 41; ch310022.doc y 1840-09-08; CSG 1, 43; ch310024.doc.

the Holy Spirit to live the Marist charism in an Institute that was living through an intensive process of internationalising, expanding to the five continents, losing its French roots slowly and progressively, and opening itself to become a multicultural institution. Obviously, these Brothers had not known the Founder or the first Brothers in person, and neither had they known at any depth the country or culture of France. However, their formation was still characterised by the same body of doctrine that had formed the previous generation. They had received, as well, the formative influence and witness of this generation. It was the second successful transmission of the Marist charism, but it was to face a crisis as the period came to an end.

During this period, the Institute's corpus of doctrine was augmented by two new developments. The first was the full canonical approval of the Rule of the Institute by the Holy See. This Rule had been approved *ad experimentum* in 1863 with the authorisation extended every five years. The new Rule was finally approved in 1903 and completely brought up to date in 1922. The second was the celebration of the centenary of the Institute in 1917, an event that prompted the publication of the complete Circulars of the Superior Generals, and the appearance of the *Bulletin of the Institute* as a regular source of information of the Institute, apart from the *Circulars*, and of great importance in creating a global family spirit in what



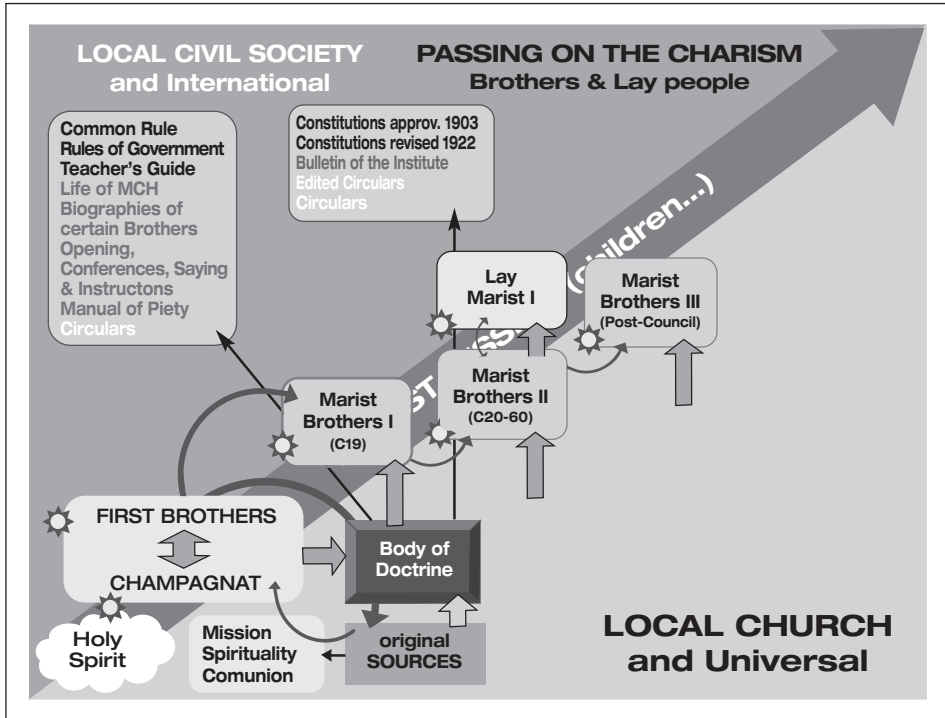




was now an international Marist Institute.

New contexts in various countries where the Institute established itself during this period, meant that Marist ministries did not always look the same. Differing circumstances, mainly functional, led to an ever-increasing number of laypeople working and assisting in the mission of the Institute in many Marist works. Most of the time they were engaged in activities that Brothers could not or did not want to do. They were employees. But some of them came to feel engaged in more than just a job; they were able to live out their own mission as educators with the same approach as the Brothers. Quite apart from their professional training, they

learnt from the Brothers to see their work as a mission of the Church, with the same Marian and apostolic spirit nurtured by the Brothers. Some of them saw this as a spiritual vocation and received extra formation from some Brothers who used summaries and extracts from the documents and resources that had been used in their own formation. There were schools founded in this period that were mixed, Brothers and Lay, from the outset: they ran the schools together but always with the Brothers in charge and looking after the spiritual animation and management. In such places, the students and their families saw clearly the Marists as a single group of Brothers and the laypeople working alongside them.



## 6. FOURTH STAGE: THE GENERATION OF MARISTS OF THE COUNCIL AND POST-COUNCIL

This generation of Marist Brothers belonged to an Institute at the peak of its numerical strength, that had transferred the General House to Rome, and that had celebrated the beatification of the Founder in the previous decade. It was clearly an international generation, and one that would take in the fresh air of Vatican II in a range of different ways, Brothers who accepted with joy and expectation the renewed, human and attractive face of the Church, open to examining itself and the world it served. It was a generation that received

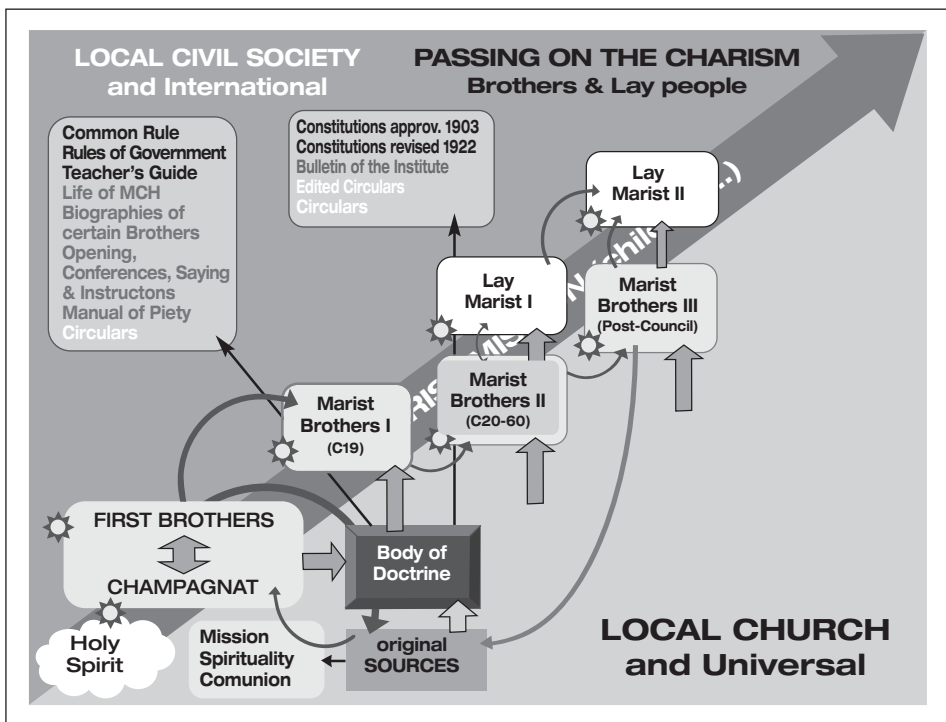
the inspiration of the Spirit in this changing context to incarnate the Marist charism in this new reality and times that signalled the beginning of a change of epoch. With respect to the number of vocations, these Brothers were also witnessing the start of the crisis that engulfed the whole Church: there were many departures, and not only of young Brothers, and at the same time the number of candidates began to decrease, especially in places where we had been historically numerically strong, such as in Europe, Canada and Australia, to name places most representative of this phenomenon. The Brothers were also witnesses and actors in a variety of challenging and life-giving experiments to implement the guidelines, vision and proposals of the Council.

This generation had been reared on the charism using the old body of doctrine from the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth, and had also been mentored by the previous generation, a generation that was soon to be confused, if not defensive, in the face of the many rapid changes in the Institute, the Church, and society.

But, prompted by the invitation of the Council, this generation of Brothers in the post-Council period began to re-interpret the body of doctrine they had received, in the light of direct contact with the original sources mentioned in Part III of this essay. In this stage, more and more use was made of these sources, and a sizeable group of Brothers devoted themselves or were appointed by Superiors to research,

gather and re-organise these primary sources, providing a critical re-interpretation of the body of doctrine from the second generation, and using new means of communication to disseminate this critical vision and the primary sources themselves. This introduced a notable change of perspective for our vocation as Brothers in the initial formation of candidates and Brothers.

In parallel with this process, during this period a second generation of Marist Laypeople entered the scene. Certainly, their number was to increase significantly in some countries because of both the decreasing number of Brothers and the continuing growth of Marist ministries in countries and places where we were present. Many of these employed laypeople saw their

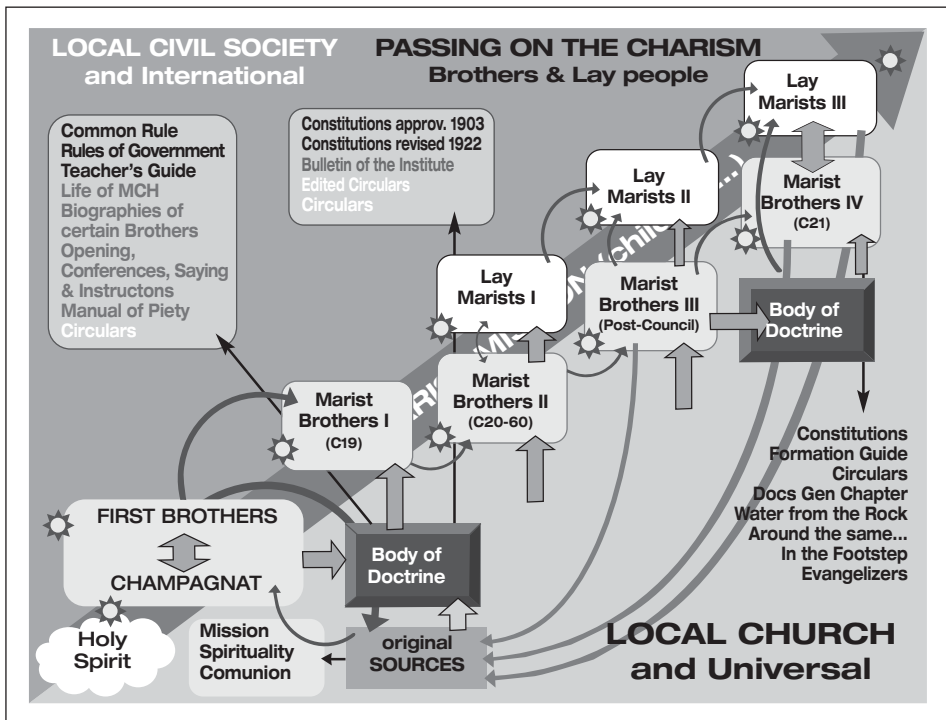


professional work as also a call of the Spirit, and they felt that the charism provided a space for their personal vocation. These laypeople continued to receive the formative influence of Brothers alongside whom they were working, and through the sources and body of doctrine, in summary form and now transmitted with a critical eye. But they also received a formative charismatic influence directly from the previous generation of Marist Laypeople, where these existed. It is important to recognise this, since a number of these laypeople were employed by other Marist lay men and women who were by then co-responsible for Marist schools in various Provinces of the Institute. It is noteworthy, as well, that a number of these laypeople were not

employees but members of apostolic and spiritual movements that the Congregation had promoted, in the light of the renewal being undertaken.

## 7. FIFTH STAGE: THE MARIST GENERATION OF THE THIRD MILLENIUM

It should be emphasised that this generation has arisen simultaneously in those countries where this process (of lay inclusion) had been happening, affecting both Marist Brothers and Marist Laypeople. The Spirit is giving the charism as a gift to each particular vocation. There are laypeople and religious trying to live out the Marist



charism, inculturating it in around eighty countries throughout the world, as a charismatic family striving to bring about a new dawn by being Good News to the children and young people of today, especially those living in the geographical and existential peripheries of our world. It is a generation striving to show the Marian face of the Church through relating as brothers and sisters of a single family. The transmission of the charism now happens in a fluid way, with both vocations receiving, on the one hand, the formative influence of previous generations of brothers and laypeople, but with both vocations having direct contact with the original sources of the charism through a variety of formation, research and experiential programs, and so being in a position to interpret the charism from the viewpoint of their local social and church contexts and their particular vocations.

This generation of Marists has also received a formative 'package': a new corpus of doctrine, thanks to the hard work of previous generations of brothers and laypeople; approaches that have been developed to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world in fidelity to the Spirit and to imagine together the future vitality of the Marist charism as a gift to receive and share; a new body of doctrine as expressed in various documents, some legislative in nature, some authoritative and enlightening, about the Marist vocation in general (*Constitutions, Formation Guide, Circulars* of the Superior Generals of the period, Chapter documents, *Water from the Rock, Gathered Around the Same Table, In*

*the Footsteps: A Vision for Marist Education Today, Evangelisation in the Midst of Youth*, etc). It is of note that some of these documents were produced by brothers and laypeople working together in both their initial preparation and final editing.

It is worth mentioning, as well, that at various moments when legislative or authoritative documents were being prepared, many laypeople were involved in the consultation phase.

## **8. A NECESSARY DIALOGUE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE MARIST CHARISM**

As this century starts, there is a serious dialogue happening in some countries of the Marist Institute between the two particular vocational expressions that are giving flesh to the Marist charism in the Church. In the same way that initially a priest founder and a clerical Church were in dialogue with a group of young teaching brothers to give birth to this spiritual charism, today in a similar way, but in a different context, the Marist Brothers are in dialogue with Marist Laypeople, discerning together, from different standpoints yet on an equal footing, the calls of the Spirit present in the signs of the times in today's world, and the possible response we can give to these calls, together or separately as Brothers and Lay. In this way, we hold out the hope of a new dawn for this charism that has done so much good in the Church and society.



# THE MARIAN FACE OF THE CHURCH: its history and appropriation by the Institute of the Marist Brothers<sup>1</sup>



Angelo Ricordi<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The object of this work is to offer a reflection on the expression *Marian Face of the Church*, examining its history and appropriation by the Institute of the Marist Brothers. This expression represents a form of Christian being and living in following of Jesus after the example of Mary. It grew in its usage in the Marist Institute from the XXI General Chapter. As we begin to plumb its significance, some questions present themselves: When and where was this expression used for the first time in the history of the Institute? How did it evolve? What is its theological basis? Was it recognized by the Magisterium of the Church? What impact did it have in the renewal of the Institute? The desire to give a response to these questions was the motiva-

tion for writing this article. The intention was to explore these questions through the official publications of the Marist Brothers, the tradition of the Marist Fathers, and the Magisterium of the Church. For Marists in the tradition Marcellin Champagnat, the evolution of thinking on this subject was especially significant during the Generalate of Brother Emili Turú, in the context of the process of renewal within the Institute that took place during this time.

## 1. “MARIAN CHURCH”, AN INSPIRATION

Father Colin and the first Marists expressed their desire to live their Christian faith in the way of Mary at the birth of Christianity by using the term *Église naissante*. That That is

<sup>1</sup> Article written for the Encounter of the animators of Marist spirituality, UNBRASIL Florianópolis, November 2016. For the realization of this work, the author counted with the valuable orientation of Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún, scholar of the theme the Marian Face in the Marist Institute.

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how the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers) understood their pastoral and eschatological mission in the Church. From the beginning of the Society, Father Colin felt inspired by a somewhat mysterious thought:

At the end of 1837 – more than twenty years after that Colin had left Saint Irenée seminary – Fr Mayet wrote the following words of Colin: “The Blessed Virgin has said: I was the support of the *l'Église naissante* and I will also be it at the end of time”<sup>3</sup>. (TAYLOR, 2015, p.27)

That double affirmation constituted one of the main or central points of the spirituality of the Marist Fathers, rediscovered in the movement to return to the sources<sup>4</sup> which arose with the renewal processes impelled by Vatican Council II. Just like in the Institute of the Marist Brothers, the Marist Fathers found aspects of their foundation and spirituality which had been forgotten.

Colin and the first Marists never used the expression *Marian Church* in an explicit way. They adopted the term Society of Mary: a Society gathered together under the auspices of the Virgin, with the mission of working for the re-Christianizing of France and of the world. Father Coste, when speaking about the idea of the Society of Mary, says clearly that it was not a unique inspiration of the Marist group of seminarians in Lyon, but that they

shared in something already playing out there, in the Church and in other congregations (COSTE, 1965).

However, there are still elements that point to an authentic and distinctive Marian identity at the heart of the nascent Society of Mary in Lyon, which according to Father Keel (1993), a Marist scholar, was inspired by three fundamental aspects of the primitive Church: Mary as support of the Church; Mary and the *Église naissante*; and Mary and the Apostles.

### 1.1. Mary as support of the Church

In the *Memoires* of Father Mayet (*Origines Maristes*, 1961) Colin speaks of Mary not only as support of the Church, but also of the new Society which was coming into being under her name. Drawing an interesting analogy with the three years of public life of Jesus and the formation of the group of the Apostles, Colin offers a reflection on the years during which the Marist aspirants were preparing themselves in the major Seminary of Saint Irenée.

Colin affirms there was a Marian intuition, a Marian identity, which was not solely centered on the person of Mary, but more on her living attitude as First Disciple of her Son. Colin was less a founder of a Mariology, but rather of an ecclesiology, which served as a model for the Society of Mary.

<sup>3</sup> « The Blessed Virgin has said : I was the support of the *Église naissante*; I will also be it at the end of times” (COSTE: LESSARD , 1960, Doc. 422)

<sup>4</sup> The writings and research of Fathers Jean Coste, Antoine Forissier and Gaston Lessard are fundamental in the process of the rediscovery of the Marists sources. That process reaches its summit in the selection and edition of the work *Origines Maristes* in four volumes, Rome Society of the Marist Fathers, 1960



## 1.2. Mary and l'Église naissante

The experience of the Church at its beginning was the fundamental reference for the ecclesiology of the Society of Mary. The first Marists gave a faithful witness of that inspiration of Colin. Br. Antonio Martínez Estaún in his article "Herederos de la promesa" – "Heirs of the Promise" – writes:

The Society did not take as model anything already existing. We have no other model of Society but the Church at its birth. The Society began like the Church; it is necessary that we are like the apostles and like the numerous persons who followed them: "Cor unum et anima una". They loved one another as brothers. (TAYLOR; ESTAÚN; DROUILLY, 2015, p. 50)

From this image of the primitive Church springs one of the key elements of Marist spirituality, of the Fathers and also of the Brothers, inspired by the Lucan verse: "*Cor unum et anima una*"<sup>5</sup> (Acts 4:32). That same expression is strongly present in the Spiritual Testament of Father Champagnat:

"I also urge you, my dear Brothers, with all the love of my heart . . . that there will always be among you but one only heart and one same spirit" (FURET, 1999, p. 223).

It is a utopian vision that aligns the great desire for fraternity in primitive

the Church, born around Mary, with the beginnings of the Society of Mary.

## 1.3. Mary and the Apostles

One of the discoveries of the Marist Fathers as they returned to their sources was the Marian dimension that enlightened and inspired Colin in the beginning of the Society of Mary. This was the presence of Mary gathered with the apostles<sup>6</sup>.

Mary present in the midst of the Apostles, the powerful but discreet support of l'Église naissante: a model for the Society during what they understood to be the last times, just as she was at the time of the first apostolic community. (COSTE, 1980, p. 10)

## 1.4. Marcellin Champagnat<sup>7</sup>

Marcellin Champagnat, Marist priest and founder of the Little Brothers of Mary, did not write explicitly or systematically on Mariological and eschatological themes to the same extent that Colin did. Nevertheless, some of his letters reveal a conviction that the *Society of Mary* was a work that was desired and wanted by Jesus and by Mary, at a time of moral crisis and religious unbelief. In a letter sent to Archbishop de Pins, Administrator of Lyon, he includes the following words:

<sup>5</sup> One heart and one only soul

<sup>6</sup> On that theme exists a field of investigation still open, around the influence of the work of Maria de Ágreda in the spirituality of the Marist Priests, as well as in Marcellin Champagnat (LANFREY, 2007, p. 23; COSTE: LESSARD, 1961, Doc. 554: LESSARD, [S.d.], p. 46)

<sup>7</sup> For further exploration of this, we recommend the study of Br. Francisco das Chagas Ribeiro (1989): "La Superiora de los Maristas" – "The Superior of the Marists" – A work of synthesis and hermeneutics of the texts of Marcellin Champagnat related to Mary.

Jesus and Mary, there you have in whom I hope despite this century of perversity I keep a firm trust that God wants this work, despite the more than diabolical efforts of Satan to destroy it since the beginning. I firmly believe that God wants this work in these perverse times.

(CHAMPAGNAT, 1997, Letter n. 6)

In Marcellin Champagnat, we do not see the same the all-embracing and utopian view of Father Colin who thought that one day even the Pope would become a Marist (COSTE; LESSARD, 1961, doc. 459). Marcellin's view, even there are traces of the universality of the Marist project

"All the Dioceses of the world enter in our plans [...]"

(CHAMPAGNAT, Letters, n. 93, 112, 208)

finds its realization in the mystical city of the Hermitage. For him the Hermitage is the prototype of the true Cenacle. In the circular letter of January 1828, inspired by the text of the Letter to the Galatians (1, 15), he tells his Brothers:

"God has loved us from eternity; He has chosen us and separated us from the world. The Blessed Virgin has planted us in her garden. She takes care that we lack nothing". (LETTERS, n.10).

From a less universalistic perspective, Br. Alexandre Balko emphasizes that the fundamental characteristic of Marcellin's Marian view is a *filial attitude*. The Society which flourished in the Hermitage is more simple. In it, the fundamental role of Mary is to be mother, not queen<sup>8</sup>. The conception of Mary is not original; on the contrary, it has its foundation in Christian piety. Mary is, above all, the Good Mother<sup>9</sup>, the one who takes care of Jesus and, consequently of each one of her children who goes to her. The fundamental attitude that comes from that devotion, according to the Marist historian and researcher Br. Balko (1983), is filial abandonment in the hands of Mary.

## 2. LA "MARIAN CHURCH" AND THE XXI GENERAL CHAPTER

The subjects suggested with the expression *Marian Church* of the first Marists reappears for the first time among the official documents of the Brothers in one of the letters of the time preparatory of the XXI General Chapter. It is the regional Letter of Oceania, dated January 1, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> But just the same there are exceptions, like what happened in the Revolution of 1830. Before the political and religious instability, Marcellin revealed a clear evolution concerning the Promise made at Fourvière. He no longer entrusted his foundation to the protection of the King or of the Queen, but to the only royalty capable of protecting them, Mary. Beginning that year, he recommended a practice which remained incorporated in the life of the Institute: the Prayer of the Salve Regina (FURET, 1999, p. 321; LANFREY, 2015, p. 351).

<sup>9</sup> In several letters of Marcellin Champagnat appears the expression Good Mother. In almost all of them, Champagnat refers to determinate situations from which he extracts a profound and filial mysticism, with trust placed on someone who for him was a concrete, real, close person: Cf. Letters n. 11, 23, 58, 74, 95, 109, 122, 144, 172, 249 and 278 (Letters from the Brazilian edition of 1997).

There it is spoken of the projection of the **Marists in view of the future**, and the following words are given as an argument:

Increasingly Marists will be an international movement in the Church with an identified charism and spirituality, a vision for a Marian Church, dynamic and daring in its evangelisation and solidarity. INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS, 2009, p. 4)

The concept of *Marian Church*, mentioned in the regional Letter from Oceania, mentions decentralization and solidarity as characteristics of a Church which is a fecund and attentive mother, sensitive to the needs of all especially of the more vulnerable. It is a Church which is not marked by masculine and institutional hegemony or superiority, but rather is one which expresses the freedom of the Spirit.

The dream of a lay Church seems to be reflected in the intuition for the foundation of the *Little Brothers of Mary*. The value of the laity is inherent in the Marist Project of Marcellin Champagnat. Already in the conversations of the group of Marist aspirants of the major Seminary of Lyon, Marcellin insisted on the need of brothers who were lay: "We need Brothers!"<sup>10</sup> According to Br. Antonio Estaún,

when Marcellin returned to Fourvière on his own the day after the pledge, he not only consecrated the Brothers that he wanted to found, but he also carried

in his heart all those who would be touched by that gift of the Holy Spirit which is the Marist charism in the Church (ESTAÚN, et al., p. 45).

The presence of Mary in the XXI General Chapter was felt in the way that the Chapter sessions developed. According to Br. Emili Turú, that influence could be seen in what he called "Marian dialogue": frank, open, decentralized conversation.

"I feel very strongly that we are being called to live in the spirit of that dialogue at all levels of the Institute: personal and interpersonal, communitarian, provincial, interprovincial and inter-congregational". (Turú, 2010, p. 12)

### 3. EVOLUTION OF THE EXPRESSION MARIAN CHURCH TOWARD THE TERM MARIAN FACE OF THE CHURCH<sup>11</sup>

Starting from the reflection of Br. Emili Turú and of the projection of this theme both in the General Chapter as well as outside of it, Br. Antonio Estaún, at the time when he was Director of Communications of the Institute, began to publish a series of articles on the *Marian Face of the Church*, in the bulletin *Marist News*.

In the first one of them dated May 20, 2010, Estaún included the idea that the term *Marian Church* went

<sup>10</sup> FURET, 1999, p. 28

<sup>11</sup> The first theologian who speaks on the *profile or Marian principle* of the Church was the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, a Swiss Jesuit born in 1905 in Lucerne. Von Balthasar was one of the greatest theologians of the XX century. He was a great defender of the *theology genuflexa*, and affirmed that *the true theology is written kneeling down, in prayer* (BOFF, 1988, p. 142).

back to the Mariology of the Marist Fathers, and arrived at the General Chapter as a reflection, as an echo of the regional Letters of Oceania.

In the second article (ESTAÚN, 2010, n. 107) he went further with the term *Marian Face* because of the influence of the works carried out in preparation for the month of Mary in the General House. Starting from the reading of the work *The Marian Principle in the Church*, of Brendan Leahy (2005), Brother Estaún made a synthesis of the principal themes treated by the author, the result of which we shall develop in the next section<sup>12</sup>.

The objective of von Balthasar goes beyond the intention of presenting Mary as a model to be lived or followed individually in the Church. On the contrary, in quoting the Council document *Lumen Gentium*, he proves or demonstrates the validity of the Marian principle for the whole Church. According to him, the identity of the Church oscillates between the Marian principle and the Petrine principle (LEAHY, 2005). As a whole, the theologian von Balthasar speaks of five principles that constitute the fundamental structure of the Church: Petrine, Pauline, Johannine, Jacobean, and Marian. This last one gathers all the others.

In the **Petrine principle**, von Balthasar indicates the figure of Peter, relating it with the proclamation of the *kerigma* and its concrete realization in Christian life. The **Pauline**

**principle** is linked to the missionary character of Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who became a Christian by the grace of God. In the **Johannine principle**, von Balthasar considers the mission of John like a mission of unity which continues. He synthesizes the Petrine and Pauline elements, combining them with a contemplative vision. The **Jacobean principle** is based on James, brother of the Lord, who represents, above all, the continuity between the Old and the New Covenant, the Tradition, and Canon Law.

Finally, the **Marian principle** indicates that Mary is the model of faith for all the members of the Church. The foundations of this principle are supported in the Trinitarian logic, in the ineffable mystery of God, revealed in Christ. Mary is an explanation of this mystery of love and is the model of our encounter with the mystery of God, revealed in Jesus Christ<sup>13</sup>.

In the editions 128, 133 and 136 of *Marist News*, Br. Antonio, taking von Balthasar as theoretical basis, sees that the Marian principle of the Church is sourced in three founding moments:

**Annunciation (icon of the mystery):** in Mary, the faithful Mother, there is continuity in the faith of the Church: the Church founded in Nazareth, in the “yes” of Mary. The mystery of the Annunciation reflects a Church faithful to the Word given, a Church made fruitful by the Word which remits to a trusting and committed faith before a promise which is known if it is certain only at the end.

<sup>12</sup> We recommend the whole reading of the texts presented in the Bulletin *Marian News*, n. 105, 107, 111, 128 and 133, written by Br. Antonio Estaún.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. ALONSO, *apud* ESTAÚN, 2010, n. 111, p. 2

**Mary, the Spouse (icon of communion)**, the Church of the cross. At the foot of the Cross, a lay man and a lay woman receive the command or charge of the continuation of the mission Son-Mother. Mother-Son is the expression of the community of faith born from the open side of Christ. The Church is born from communion in the vocation of Mary who, in turn, precedes the function of John. John and Mary are a community of believers: John receives her in his house as the bearer of faith, the faithful believer of Nazareth.

**Pentecost (icon of fecundity)**, consolidation of the experience lived in Nazareth. In it the Holy Spirit consolidates his work.

Something to highlight is the clear influence that the reflections offered by Br. Antonio have in the preparation and writing of the first Circular of the Superior General Emili Turú, *He gave us the name of Mary*. We can confirm in the texts published by Br. Estaún in *Marist News* that there is some conceptual proximity, starting from the hermeneutics supported in the Marian profile of the Church, based on the thought of von Balthasar.

#### **4. THE MARIAN FACE IN THE CIRCULAR HE GAVE US THE NAME OF MARY**

The first Circular of the Generalate of Br. Emili Turú (2012) deepens in a series of contents which had already appeared in an intense manner in the XXI General Chapter. In writing a Circular which deepens in the expression *Marian Face of the Church*, Turú introduces within the line of the magisterium of the Superiors General a new theme in the reflection of the

Marist Institute. It is necessary to emphasize that the concept *Marian Face of the Church* presented by Estaún and also by Turú differs from the concept *Marian Church* in the tradition of the Society of Mary. They indicate a renewed manner of conceiving the role of Mary and of the Marist Institute in the Church.

#### **4.1. Called to construct the Marian Face of the Church**

The first one who used the expression *Marian profile* in the history of the Church was the Jesuit theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. To speak about a Marian face of the Church is the same as realizing an experience, like Mary, of believer and member of the Christian community in the unique mystery of which Christ is the unique point of convergence.

In any case, to understand that expression better, Brother Emili's Circular presents, in the same way as does Estaún, the principles or archetypes which comprise the face of the Church: the experience of Peter contributing his firm faith in the resurrection of the Lord (*kerigma*); the charismatic experience of the life of Paul; the mystical experience of the vision of John; and lastly, the experience of the Mother of the Lord.

#### **4.2. The dream of a renewed Church**

Brother Emili offers a reading of the founding event of Fourvière according to the perspective of a renewed Church. He sees in the desire of J-C Colin the need for a profound renewal of the Church. Colin speaks

about re-starting the Church anew:

“The Society has to begin a new Church. I do not refer to this in a literal sense, since this would be blasphemy. Nevertheless, in a certain sense, yes, we have to initiate a new Church” (COSTE, 1980, p. 15)

On the other hand, Marcellin addresses the need for a nonhierarchical Church in a more practical way: “We need Brothers”. By valuing the brother as a lay person, Marcellin gives worth to the apostolate of education. He thinks that by means of education in faith, through the teaching of catechism to children, the religious brother shares in a ministry as sublime as that of the Apostles.

## 5. THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH AND THE MARIAN PROFILE OF THE CHURCH

In a plenary session of the Council, Pope Paul VI gave Mary the title of Mother of the Church. Afterwards he came back to treat this theme in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, in which he states:

“Thus love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other” (PAUL VI, 1974, n.28).

All the Popes who succeeded him continued to advance on this same path of the evolution of the role of Mary within the Church.

### 5.1 Pope John Paul II

In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II underlines

the sublime and fundamental relationship of the maternity of Mary with her maternity of the Church. In giving Mary as Mother to the disciple on the cross, Christ offers her as a gift of the Holy Spirit to each disciple, to each Christian:

“The Marian dimension of the life of a disciple of Christ is manifested in a special way precisely in that filial gift in regard to the Mother of God [...]” (JOHN PAUL II, 1987, p. 39).

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated in the year 1992, the expression *Marian dimension* finds its place in the official teaching of Catholic doctrine. In the *Catechism* we read the following:

“[The Church’s] structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members, and holiness is measured according to the ‘great mystery’ in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom.” Mary goes before us all in the holiness that is the Church’s mystery as “the bride without spot or wrinkle.” This is why the “Marian” dimension of the Church precedes the “Petrine.” (CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, n. 773)

### 5.2 Pope Benedict XVI

In the homily of the commemorative Mass of the 40th anniversary of the closing of Vatican Council II, Pope Benedict XVI recalls the conciliar event within a Marian frame”. Recalling the discourse of Paul VI, he reaffirms Mary as Mother of the Church:

“Mary does not only have a singular relationship with Christ, the Son of God, who like man he wanted to become her son. Mary, being totally united to Christ, she also belongs totally to us” (BENEDICT XVI, 2005, p. 2).

With a Marian hermeneutics regarding the Council, he points out:

The Council wanted to tell us this: Mary is so united to the great mystery of the Church, that she and the Church are inseparable, just as she and Christ are also. Mary reflects the Church, anticipates it in her person and, in the midst of all the turbulences which afflict the suffering and aching Church, she always continues being the star of salvation (idem. p. 3)

### 5.3 Pope Francis<sup>14</sup>

In the Encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis presents a plan of government for the Church. In the introduction of this document it is noticed that the exhortation is programmatic, that is, it contains in germ the guidelines for the path that the Church has to follow the next years. In the line of a post-conciliar renewal, Francis proposes a Church on mission, a Church going out, a servant Church. And he recognizes in that style, the Marian style of the Church:

There is a Marian style in the evangelizing activity of the Church. Because always when we look toward Mary, we again believe in the revolutionary force of tenderness and affection. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong, of those

who do not need to ill-treat others in order to feel important (FRANCIS, 2013, p. 227)

## 6. THE MARIAN FACE OF THE CHURCH AND THE RENEWAL OF THE MARIST INSTITUTE

Brother Emili Turú makes the expression *Marian Face of the Church* a charismatic inspiration for his program of animation and government. The decisions of his mandate as Superior General give continuity to the movement of renewal which was lived through the XXI General Chapter. His later letters *Montagne: the Dance of the Mission* and *Fourvière: the revolution of tenderness* reveal that the flame kindled by a Church with a *Marian Face* continues to enlighten the paths and options of the Institute in these times.

The letter of the Fourvière Year underlines the call to be a Church with a *Marian Face*, a *Samaritan Church*. In short, a *merciful Church* (TURÚ, 2016). In profound harmony with the magisterium of Pope Francis, Br. Emili traces in communion with the whole Institute, a new way of living fraternity and of being a sign of the presence of God in the world.

<sup>14</sup> The *Document of Aparecida*, redacted under the presidency of the then Cardinal Bergoglio, presents, in n. 268, a very beautiful contribution of the Church of Latin America and the Caribbean to the Marian vision of the Church: "Like in the human family, the Church-family is generated around a mother, who confers "soul" and tenderness to the living together of the family. Mary, Mother of the Church, besides being a model and paradigm of humanness, is maker of communion. One of the fundamental events of the Church is when the "yes" sprang from Mary. She attracts crowds to communion with Jesus and to His Church, as we frequently experience in the Marian shrines. This is why the Church, like the Virgin Mary, is **mother**. This Marian vision of the Church is the best remedy for a merely functional or bureaucratic Church" (CELAM, 2008, pp. 124-135)

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this article was to analyze historically the reception of the expression *Marian Face of the Church* in the Institute of the Marist Brothers. It was a question of responding to the fundamental problem which inspired the idea of this article: the pastoral impact of this expression in the recent history of the Marist Institute. For this purpose, I have tried to develop the hypothesis that there has been an evolution, not only in the Mariology of the Institute, but also in the adopted ecclesiology that started from the movement of renewal of Vatican Council II.

This evolution is evident in this study through four aspects:

In the first place is the intuition, or original Marian identity, which moves from the Project of Fourvière, with the Marist aspirants, to the foundation of the Little Brothers of Mary by Marcellin Champagnat. It is clear that, even though there exists a similarity in the Marian mysticism, the projects of foundation (Marist Fathers and Marist Brothers) follow a quite different ecclesiology in their realization.

The use of the expressions *Marian Church* and *Marian Face of the Church* reflects an ecclesiological attitude which began with the spirit of renewal of Vatican Council II. In the Marist Institute, that spirit had as catalyst the figure of Mary, icon of the identity of the Institute and sure model of its renewal.

Another important outcome of the investigation has been the confirmation that the expression *Marian Face of the Church* is accompanied by extensive theological and magisterial support. This can be seen as an evolution of way Mary is understood in the Church's process.

Finally, it seems that it can be affirmed that the expression *Marian Face of the Church* has been adopted more as a form of pastoral animation of the Institute more than as a systematized and developed reflection in its documents.

A limitation of this study has been the fact that we do not have a comprehensive narrative on the theme. For this reason, there is a broad field of work available for other writers and researchers to continue advancing in the analysis of the renewal of the Institute, situating the place of Mary in the shaping the pastoral options of that renewal.

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# HOW IS A FOUNDER FORMED? Marcellin's formation at the Minor Seminary



**Manuel Mesonero  
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*"To educate is to draw  
from the inner person, not to impart  
from outside.  
We are not empty buckets  
in need of filling;  
we are like a fire which  
must be kindled."*

Dr. Mario Alonso Puig

This article forms the first part of a more extensive study in which explores the formative legacy of the major and minor seminaries on Marcellin Champagnat. This formation would deeply influence his vocation as founder and gives us a means for understanding his charism and its importance.

The article, entitled "How is a founder formed?", will relate the successive failures which Marcellin experienced in his studies and the obstacles he faced during his formation as a seminarian, and which affected him for a period equivalent to half of his seminary formation.

These events took place at Verrières. There he became a leader, but this was preceded by a long period caused by personal issues at the beginning of his student life and at a seminary which at the time did not foster his progress due to a lack of good teachers to act as formators.

## 1. A SYMBOL: THE ARTIST AND HIS WORK

When speaking of formation, I sometimes think of the work of the sculptor. A marble block is quarried. The artist sees in it the possibility of creating his sculpture. For example, Michaelangelo with his chisel succeeded in transforming a stone block into his "David" or his "Moses".

In some ways education can be compared to the craft of the sculptor. Educating and forming a religious is an art which has much to do with the relation between two things: the charism that needs to be handed on and the candidate himself.

*"The Marist spirit is clearly revealed to the novice who tries to make it his own and to give it his heart's allegiance." (C 99)*

The raw material has limits of which the sculptor must be aware and

accept. The creative miracle happens through the interaction of this dual reality. The candidate in formation attains his goal through a docility not in the sense of passivity but through an interior assimilation of what his formator proposes. This apprenticeship implies reaching out to the model to which one aspires.

“The Brother takes as his model for community living the simple life of the first Brothers.” (C99)

Taking the analogy of nature, we know that for a plant to grow it needs to be exposed to sunlight and assimilate the light from the sun. Without light the plant cannot survive. But the assimilation of this process which we call photosynthesis involves the whole plant. It is the same with formation: to make what we receive our own nourishment.

To understand the transformation Marcellin underwent during his ten years at the minor and major seminaries we must begin by picturing the young man who started at Verrières at the age of sixteen.<sup>1</sup> Of what “block of stone” are we speaking? What material did his formators encounter? His biography gives us few leads, in a small number of external traits:

“His timidity, his awkward demeanour, his rustic ways, at first drew the taunts of his fellow students; but his sincerity and his good behaviour soon won for him

the approval of all. He was then in his seventeenth year, a young man of tall stature which made him the biggest yet the weakest in his class.”<sup>2</sup>

However, we need more information to appreciate the education this young man underwent. A good educator needs to take into account Marcellin’s family story. In the summer of 1803 at age 14 he witnessed the death of his second eldest brother, Jean-Baptiste, aged 23. At Christmas in the same year, barely after mourning the loss of Jean-Baptiste, the youngest of his siblings died of unknown causes. Two months later, with the family still grieving the deaths of these two, his sister Anne Marie aged 25 was wed. That left a huge gap in the family, with the added financial sacrifice of a dowry that had to be paid. Then during the following summer, the greatest loss occurred with the sudden and unexpected death of his father Jean-Baptiste. The death of the head of the family sharpened the grief the family was suffering. To this was added the financial crisis resulting from the many debts that his father had accrued. The family structure had dramatically altered, and new roles had to be established.

The adolescent Marcellin lived through these losses, affecting his emotional stability and causing him to ponder the meaning of life.<sup>3</sup> It is likely that a young man of sixteen would

<sup>1</sup> Marcellin was 16, not 17, when he entered the minor seminary.

<sup>2</sup> Life of Marcellin Champagnat, Part 1, Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> “[Adolescents] ask themselves: Why me? What reason do I have to live? The adolescent reflects on life. Such reflections can become self-indulgent and unreined, in some cases uncontrollable.” Grollman, E. *Straight Talk*. p.145.

have perceived a future trapped in this family context and sought a way out. At the same time, it is possible that this would have produced in him a fair amount of pain and uncertainty in thinking about the family's situation as he was leaving Le Rosey.

In addition to Marcellin's psychological state, his formators came to learn of his aptitude as a student. His profile was that of a student with marked disadvantages. The first setback occurred during his childhood when he didn't receive elementary lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic. The consequence of this was to quit school prompted by the teacher's manner and discipline.<sup>4</sup>

The second academic setback took place in his effort to attain the level needed to begin the study of Latin. His brother-in-law, Benoît Arnaud, who became his teacher after Marcellin quit school, judged that he did not have the capacity for this study and advised the family against an ecclesiastical career for Marcellin. It seemed like another shipwreck was looming in the midst of a tragic family history. In situations like these "some adolescents drop out from

school. The fact of being overcome with emotion prevents the possibility of thinking and concentrating."<sup>5</sup>

## 2. THE FIRST STAGE 1805-1810: LACKING A CENTRE

Marcellin entered the seminary to take on a long course of study while dealing with a difficult personal situation.<sup>6</sup> Verrières was a small seminary which had just opened.<sup>7</sup> The building which sheltered a hundred students was inadequate for it to function satisfactorily.<sup>8</sup> It was overcrowded. Daily food was a ration of soup, some bacon or potatoes, and rye bread. In their free time the students worked for the local farmers in exchange for their produce.

Fr Perier (b.1765), the founder of the seminary, acted as both rector and parish priest. He was a virtuous priest but

"lacked the authority needed to establish the necessary order and discipline for an establishment of this kind."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The Life*, Part 1, Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Payás, Alba. *El mensaje de las lágrimas*. Paidós, Barcelona, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> The full seminary course comprised a preparatory course, five classes that made up the first stage, the three levels of the second stage, and of a philosophy course. The courses were numbered in descending order.

<sup>7</sup> It was located in a small town near Montbrison, and 36km from his home town.

<sup>8</sup> "For a dormitory we had a loft under the roof which we reached it by means of a staircase. The badly damaged windows were covered only with paper. In the winter we were frozen and in the summer we were cooked." Thiery, I. FMS, *Vie de Bienheureux Marcellin Champagnat*. Genval 1956, p.22

<sup>9</sup> Chausse, J.M., *Vie de J.L. Duplay*. Delhomme et Briguët, Saint-Étienne, 1887, p.91

Two other teachers assisted him in the running of the seminary.

Marcellin spent his first year following the prep course for beginners. It included students of various ages and his teacher was a lay man by the name of Raynaud. The year ended for Marcellin with poor results so that before leaving on holidays Fr Perier urged him to forget about continuing his studies. So Marcellin suffered his third setback. What was the cause of this failure? Everything points to his personal situation and the poor conditions at the seminary.

The fact of his dismissal was overlooked in his biography for it was not an edifying episode.<sup>10</sup> However, we have witnesses who confirm it, one of them his neighbour<sup>11</sup>, Jeanne Epalle:

“After a year of study the Superior of the minor seminary thought that the young man did not have the ability to continue.”<sup>12</sup>

Why was Marcellin determined to be readmitted? Who persuaded him to try again? In all honesty we don't know. What we can state is that the permission granted to him to make a

second attempt did not produce in him the expected conversion.<sup>13</sup> In his second year at the seminary Marcellin was put in the eighth class.<sup>14</sup> The seminarian endowed with a very sociable character “indulged in a happy lifestyle surrounded by many like-minded companions.”<sup>15</sup> Marcellin's taste for group gatherings led him to become part of the *bande joyeuse* (“happy gang”). They all frequented the taverns despite a seminary rule which forbade it.

“At Verrieres ... during his first two years Marcellin was prominent in the group known as la bande joyeuse.”<sup>16</sup>

Marcellin's lack of improvement should not surprise us since the organisation of the seminary and its study program left a lot to be desired. A report by M Cabarat published the following year, and which talks of the second year, helps us understand the situation:

“The well which provides water to the house is located outside in a public place opposite the entry gate. The young seminarians leave the property

<sup>10</sup> This approach to writing a biography is reflected in a comment of Br Avit with Br Jean-Baptiste Furet: “Only good things good are said in a biography” (AA 619).

<sup>11</sup> These are the declarations of Julienne Epalle, neighbor of the Champagnat, and of Jean Claude Granottier, Parish priest of Marthes, and of Brother Marie-Abraham.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. SUMM. Fol. 310. Julienne Épalle, Report 26, p.81.

<sup>13</sup> It is more than likely that the family turned to Linossier, a friend of the family, to secure Marcellin's readmission. He begun that year as teacher in the minor seminary.

<sup>14</sup> During this second year, the seminray building underwent refurbishments. Périer constructed a three-storey building for a refectory and dormitory to accommodate about 160-180 seminarians who helped in its construction. The seminary staff increased from three to seven professors and five employees in service roles.

<sup>15</sup> Balko, Alexandre. *Jeunesse et études de Marcellin Champagnat*. Notes. CEPAM.

<sup>16</sup> M. Bedoin, Parish priest of La Valla. A. Carazo. Rome, 1991. Cited in Lanfrey, A. *History of the Institute*, Vol.1, Rome 2015. p.37

under pretext of going for water ... The town-centre of Verrières is busy place where there are many taverns. A strict surveillance is needed ... but such surveillance is not adequate. Communication with outsiders is very common. Fr Perier does not concern himself with the study program ... In general, the teachers do not seem very interested in the place. Only Fr Linossier is happy to be so."<sup>17</sup>

When a study program is in disarray and the formators are not committed in a house of formation, it is difficult to expect the seminarians to be focused on their vocation. This is what happened to Marcellin. This year was not a complete failure for Marcellin, but it was a long way from the success which his biographer describes when he says Marcellin "advanced two classes in a year".<sup>18</sup> In reality, the teachers being aware that Marcellin was in a class that didn't match his age, as was the case with the majority of students, allowed him to skip the seventh class.

The sixth class, 1807-1808, marked his third year at Verrières. Marcellin was nineteen. Several sources attest to his turnaround that year. A comment by Fr Bedoin, the parish priest of La Valla, states:

"The unexpected death of one of his companions and the salutary reprimand from Fr Linossier, teacher of rhetoric, were the occasion and cause of a genuine and lasting conversion in Marcellin Champagnat."<sup>19</sup>

His classmate was Denis Duplay whose death occurred on 2 September 1807. He was a student with whom Marcellin had a good relationship and was of similar character. These circumstances, together with a reprimand from the dean of studies and discipline, led to greater seriousness and reflection. But his scholastic improvement had to wait longer. The poor academic culture of his group worked against it.

His class had a wide age range, from 10 to 23. This fact complicated the task of creating a rhythm of study suitable for the whole group. The teacher, Simon Breuil, a twenty-year-old, was only a year older than Marcellin and younger than some of his students. Moreover, it was his first year as a teacher and, since he had not yet been ordained he was, in reality, a seminarian like them. Marcellin's progress had not yet overcome his past challenges. The comparative marks for class conduct confirm this:

7 students with "very good;" 11 with "good";  
2 with "acceptable"; 4 with "fair"; 1 with "poor";  
2 with "questionable"; 2 with "suspect morality".

Marcellin is in the group designated "fair". Fr Coste comments:

"In comparing these marks with those of others in the class Marcellin's conduct is not viewed favourably by the teachers."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Marist Notebooks*. 34. FMS, Rome, May 2016. Information about Verrières. Br. André Lanfrey

<sup>18</sup> *The Life*, Part 1, Ch.2

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Lanfrey, A. *History of the Institute* Vol.1, p.37

<sup>20</sup> OM 140. Note: 'Marcellin was therefore poorly rated by his teachers for his conduct.'

The fifth class was more numerous with 43 students. It was the fourth year of Marcellin's time at Verrières. The evidence suggests that it was a time of transition and he was carried along. On the 10 February 1808 his status as seminarian allowed him to obtain exemption from military service. That was the reason behind his skipping fourth class and passing straight into third. It was an administrative matter which was applied to the whole group<sup>21</sup> and not an academic promotion. And so we have to wait for the third class (1809-1810) to witness some transformation in Marcellin. He was 21 and this was his fifth year at the seminary.

It began with the appointment of a new Rector, Fr Barou.<sup>22</sup> He was a priest who was far more organised than his predecessor.<sup>23</sup> Academic life became more rigorous and the teachers more committed as formators in spirituality appropriate for a seminary. All this impacted on Marcellin so that he began to improve his conduct.

Furthermore, during this scholastic year his mother died, on the 24 January 1810. She was 64. Marcellin was to take this death more calmly

and with more composure than the deaths of family members during his adolescence. This time suffering and death proved a good opportunity for him to reflect on the meaning of life and the goals he wanted to achieve. His resolve for the priestly life strengthened.

The best evidence of this radical change in his life's direction are the notes written in his exercise book containing his resolutions.<sup>24</sup> This manuscript includes all the essential elements of a real and sincere conversion:

"My Lord and my God I promise to offend you no more and to make acts of faith and hope as often as I remember; to no longer visit the taverns without necessity; to avoid bad company; in short to do nothing beyond serving you. To give good example and lead others to virtue as far as I can; to instruct them in your divine teachings; to teach the catechism to the poor as well as the rich."<sup>25</sup>

His intentions have as their objective the clear decision to begin to live a consistent life. The first intention to "no longer offend you" displays a change of life from bad to good. The second intention, "to make acts of faith hope and others" alludes to living in the

<sup>21</sup> Surely the pupils that year followed subjects of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Father Barou had been a professor at l'Argentière for one year. He was just the kind of man and priest to whom Marcellin was attracted, and he prompted him to new levels of effort

<sup>23</sup> The Seminary was enlarged occupying also the Castle of Solailan a gift from Antonieta Monte.

<sup>24</sup> This manuscript is undated. The date proposed by the official Marist archive, 1812, is only a remote possibility. This text is a stand-alone document because there is a beginning, certain purposes, and an end. It is likely written before the other manuscript which is dated 1812. Balko dates it at the end of the 1810 academic year. It seems more likely in the context of the rest of the data we have about Marcellin.

<sup>25</sup> Resolutions



presence of God. Marcellin sees himself as a creature of God. His concern leads him to speak to this Being who lives in him by means of short prayers at any moment of the day.<sup>26</sup>

The third intention, “not to return to the taverns without necessity” alerts us to the fact that his habit of visiting the taverns still persisted.<sup>27</sup> The expression “not to return” indicates abandoning an activity which still continued. “Without necessity” suggests it was a deeply rooted custom carried on during leisure time. This self-written testimony provides us with a more realistic view of Marcellin’s life. The resolution contradicts the testimony of Fr Bedoin who confines this habit of Marcellin’s to his first two years at Verrières, whereas Marcellin himself speaks of abandoning the practice in his fifth year.

The fourth resolution “to avoid bad company” adopts a well-known strategy: avoidance. Bad company corrupts good habits and is a source of abandoning good behaviour. Marcellin, a cheerful and sociable young man, a with a good sense of humour throughout his life, had kept company with a group of friends who made it difficult for him to focus on his studies. His rich and extroverted per-

sonality as a seminarian was “difficult to subdue”.<sup>28</sup> He only achieved his goal through a constant effort at self control.

After this first series of resolutions dealing with behaviours to be amended, Marcellin began a more creative and optimistic stage where he perceives himself as a light for others (Cf. Mt.5:14), a light to his companions “by giving good example and leading them to virtue.” The strategy of the newly converted is related to public witness and at the same time personal rapport with those whom he could convince to amend their behaviour and focus on their vocation:

“Not content with giving good example he let no occasion pass by to engage his disciples in the practice of virtue ... A young man ... became totally alienated from study and piety and was on the verge of leaving the seminary ... together they made a novena ... and the young seminarian realised that the cause of his aversion to study and neglect of piety lay in the bad advice he was getting from a slack companion.”<sup>29</sup>

Such change in behaviour is evidenced in his moving on from “bad company” to form a group of friends focused on their vocation.

<sup>26</sup> This is what St Teresa describes as the call to enter the inner castle, that is to say, into oneself, God dwells within the person. Cf. 1 M 1, 59.

<sup>27</sup> Some visitors to the seminary, such as M Cabarat in 1808, had already warned of the need to “control in a more rigid manner the seminarians’ going out” since Verrières, being a town with much through-traffic, had many taverns.

<sup>28</sup> Balko, 59.

<sup>29</sup> “Marcellin ... ensured he met up with him during recess and ... he said to him: ‘My friend, it’s one of two things: either you deserved these penances or you did not deserve them. If you deserved them, you must not be angry and even less blame your teacher ... If you think you did not make the mistakes ... you should accept the penances to practice mortification and imitate Jesus Christ.’”. *The Life*, Part 1, Ch.2.

The second promise consisted in “instructing others in the commandments”, foreshadowing his future mission as a pastor who would guide the flock in the parish to which he was sent. He sees his future mission as priest through the prism of teaching.

He completes the list of personal initiatives with one which is very significant: “to teach the catechism”. We can sense in this desire to catechise the germ of a charism of founding: to evangelise children and lead them to God, something one day he will develop as founder. The history of his summertime breaks as seminarian at Le Rozey serve as the best proof of his fidelity to what he had written:

“Often, he would gather in his room  
the children of the hamlet to teach them  
the catechism and prayers”.<sup>30</sup>

In his early writings we find a rough pearl. They reveal Marcellin as a recently reformed seminarian who was beginning to plot his course in life and becoming aware of his vocation. In this writing we see nothing which is prodigious or heroic. The heroism consisted simply in fashioning systematically, even, stubbornly, the plan which, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he had set for himself.

### 3. BIRTH OF A LEADER

It is understandable that an institute of educators would want to gloss over any phase of academic failure in its founder, since he is offered as a model to seminarians and students of that institute. Yet an understanding of Marcellin’s failure can provide us with a more profound and complete vision of the Marist charism.

The first evidence of Marcellin’s motives to start the Brothers are enlightening. Records tell us that the idea of the Brothers was introduced on his insistence. The other members of the group who would one day sign the pledge of Fourvière, whole not opposed to this, did not seem to think it was centrally important. In the end they told him:

“All right. You take responsibility  
for the Brothers since it is your idea.”<sup>31</sup>

How did he justify his goal? His followers have recorded it thus:

“My early education was quite deficient. I would be overjoyed to be able to help bring to others the benefits of which I was deprived.”<sup>32</sup>

They acceded to his request.

Marcellin alludes to his first bad experience of schooling. His account

<sup>30</sup> *The Life*, Part 1, Ch.3

<sup>31</sup> *The Life*, Part 1, Ch.3 Cited in a footnote: Father Colin records in his memoirs: The idea of this Institute The idea of this Institute goes back to him exclusively. It was he who, remembering how much he had struggled to learn ... “ (OM, 171, 470)

<sup>32</sup> Maîtreperrière, OM II, Doc. 752, lines 702-709

goes beyond the anecdote of the schoolmaster's slap during his childhood at Marlihes and suggests the existence of serious and longstanding problems of schooling in his time. His interest in founding the Brothers was the result of an interior resonance in him that was painful, deep and enduring, due to the experience of academic failure in his formation. These difficulties were caused by a lack of capable and dedicated formators.

We sometimes act as if ignorant of what was at play in the calls of Jesus. For example, we forget that the first apostles before Jesus called them to leave their trade as fishermen and to join him. Also, is the case of Matthew the tax collector where all were scandalised by Jesus's choice. But God does not judge people as we do. Hence the quotation from Jesus to justify the choice of Matthew: "I have not come to call the just but sinners". (Mt. 9:9-13)

In formation course which I run for those accompanying prisoners, I can attest that those who best accompany suicidal prisoners are other prisoners who have suffered from this same situation and survived it. On occasion, the best carers of drug addicts are former drug addicts themselves. We can apply the same logic of action to Marcellin: a student who failed in his childhood, adolescence

and manhood has been converted as a founder of an institute of educators. Let us not forget that frequently the greatest success happens after many bitter failures and that "good people attain wisdom through failure."<sup>33</sup> This is what happened to Marcellin who, on account of the "huge difficulties he experienced in learning to read and write"<sup>34</sup>, gained the inspiration to bring to birth an institute of educators.

#### **4. CONFIRMATION OF HIS CONVERSION: HIS ACADEMIC REPORT**

In the scholastic year which followed his conversion he proceeded into second class, taking the course in Humanities (1810-1811). From here on Marcellin was prepared to take on the role of dormitory supervisor aided by Fr Linossier, supervising discipline while reducing his sleep time in order to study. His being given this responsibility "was the reward for several years of effort supported by exemplary conduct".<sup>35</sup>

With the passage of time the fruit of this conversion became established and visible. One aspect attests to this is the academic reports given by his teachers. They show his marks in parallel before and after his change:

<sup>33</sup> A quotation from William Saroyan (California, 1908-1981), son of poor Armenian immigrants. He distinguished himself as a writer of many works and stories on the topic of emigrants.

<sup>34</sup> Letter 34, to the King.

<sup>35</sup> Balko, 1, 89

Minor Seminary, 1810: Application – satisfactory;  
Aptitude – satisfactory;  
Conduct – fair.

Philosophy, 1813: Application – excellent;  
Results – weak;  
Conduct – very good;  
Character – good.

Marcellin had totally reversed the perception teachers had of him. We refer to the Copernican revolution reported in his application – from satisfactory to excellent – and in his conduct – from fair to very good. However, his results remained weak: only a pass in spite of his efforts. We have confirmation of the difficulties he had in exams through the entrance exam for the Lyon seminary which was taken by all the seminarians some months later:

“5 seminarians: very satisfactory; 19 seminarians: satisfactory; 27 seminarians: average; 16 seminarians: below average; 8 seminarians: very unsatisfactory;  
5 seminarians: no qualification awarded.”<sup>36</sup>

Marcellin was in the “below average group”. Through this piece of evidence among others his “non-intellectual character”<sup>37</sup> is confirmed. Instead of a negative interpretation of this situation it must be regarded as

the gift which spurred him to identify with simple people and so change this liability into a gift.

## 6. TO KNOW ONESELF: THE FIRST TASK OF FORMATION

During the scholastic year (1811-1812) Marcellin, aged 23, was studying rhetoric. From this year comes a second autobiographical text that helps us see the first steps in his spiritual evolution:

“Lord, I confess I have not known myself yet; that I still have great faults but I hope that having granted me the grace to know them you will grant me the grace to conquer them by combatting them with courage...”<sup>38</sup>

Formation begins with the search for knowledge of self. Its acquisition will allow a seminarian wanting to be a priest to face the fundamental question: what does he want to make of his life? No study of rhetoric, philosophy or theology can replace knowledge of self.<sup>39</sup> The student who doesn’t engage in this cannot discover the mission he is called to even if he receives the sacrament of Holy Orders:

<sup>36</sup> Not receiving any qualification meant that the student was too weak to be evaluated (Zind 1, # 125, 3). The qualifications are taken from “Excerpts from the register of pupils of the major seminary St. Irénée”, Archives of the major seminary of Lyon, reg. 1, School year 1813-1814.

<sup>37</sup> BALKO 33

<sup>38</sup> “I take today, this 9 day of January 1812 ...” *Resolutions*

<sup>39</sup> Monbourquette, J., *A cada cual su misión. Descubrir el proyecto de vida*, Santander: Sal Terrae, 2000, p. 25.

“Knowledge of self is the main factor in the discovery of one’s personal mission. No matter what form the mission takes it will always be rooted in the identity of each individual.”<sup>40</sup>

In his notes Marcellin admits his pride. The proud person is a narcissist. He has an exaggerated self esteem which creates a false self-perception. From this, the proud person lives in a mirage. That is why knowledge of self causes a movement inversely proportional to the main role of the ego. The more knowledge of self increases, the more my ego is diminished, because knowledge of self will reveal its capacities and limitations.

“I will speak clearly to my companions of any repugnance I may have. For these repugnances, I am convinced, can only come from pride.”<sup>41</sup>

To understand these lines, we must keep in mind that during the scholastic year there arrived some new students from Agentière, one of the seminaries closed by Napoleon.<sup>42</sup> That undoubtedly occasioned some trouble in the way of life his group had been leading for four years, resulting

in rivalries and antipathy.

Marcellin had decided to break from his former group of friends – the happy gang – and adopt a wider orbit in his relationships. Here he had a large opportunity. What difficulties did he face on this new path? His pride, his ego, which fed on comparisons<sup>43</sup> and in which considered himself superior in order to conceal his own fears. This was the origin of his “repugnances” which he chose to confront and overcome.

In these resolutions one can appreciate the docility Marcellin was beginning to show towards his formators in employing the method suggested by them for self correction.<sup>44</sup> It involved a consistent dynamic to diametrically resist temptations by going to the opposite extreme which allowed him a greater objectivity to give his life balance.<sup>45</sup>

The fruit of his resolutions will be evidenced at the beginning of his ministry in La Valla. His parishioners relate that “he spoke freely at first encounter ... That he was quite humble”<sup>46</sup>. And the Brothers with whom he spent recreation time were grateful for his presence with them.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Monbourquette expresses it masterfully in *To each one ...*, 26

<sup>41</sup> *Resolutions* 1812

<sup>42</sup> Among the students was Collin, a priest who later will be the first Superior of the Society of Mary.

<sup>43</sup> The ego is socially defined as a whole of proud attitudes, inconsiderate, competitive and selfish. Meaning of ego <http://significado.net/ego/#ixzz4Zi8NEdSo>

<sup>44</sup> *Opositum per diametrum*. Cf. E.E. 12

<sup>45</sup> If his ego incited Marcelino to believe himself a “know-all”, for example, in the manual work that he did in the seminary, he goes to the other extreme and sees himself “as the last of the class”. Given his tendency to look better than others, he perceives himself “without the virtues” that others do have

<sup>46</sup> Testimony from the process of Beatification, quoted in BALKO p. 43

In conclusion if we look back while imagining the young sixteen-year-old Marcellin entering the Verrières seminary for the first time we can understand that at this time he could not see clearly what he wanted to do with his life. Viktor Frankl defined this unawareness as “existential frustration”: “Man is the only creature capable of

being conscious of his self awareness.”<sup>47</sup> To discover it requires time. This task is the fruit of experience rather than intellect, for “there is a huge difference between philosophising about life and discovering the sense of my own life.”<sup>48</sup> Marcellin had reached it but there was still much ground to cover.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

CEPAM	2000:www.cepam.umch.edu.pe/cepam/ch332000.doc.
BALKO	Balko, A, <i>Marcelino Champagnat. Volviendo a las fuentes</i> , Zaragoza 1983.
BALKO 1	Balko, A., <i>Re-Thinking Our origins</i> , Rome, 2001.
C	Constitutions of the Marist Brothers (1986 Edition)
EE	San Ignacio de Loyola, <i>Ejercicios espirituales</i> , Mensajero, Bilbao2000.
M	Santa Teresa de Ávila, <i>Obras completas. Las moradas</i> , Burgos 1987.
Letters	<i>Letters of Marcellin Champagnat</i> (Ed. P. Sester). Rome 1991.
OM	Coste, J. And Lessard, G. <i>Origines Maristes (1786-1836) Vols. I-IV</i> , Rome, 1985.
Resolutions	M. Champagnat, “Resolutions”, in, Sester, P. <i>Origines des frères maristes 1</i> . Rome 1985.
SUMM	Carazo, A. A. <i>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)</i> . Rome. 1991.
The Life	Furet, J.B. <i>The Life of J.B. Marcellin Champagnat, Bicentenary Edition. Rome 1989</i> .
ZIND 1	Zind, P. <i>Sur les traces de Marcellin Champagnat</i> , Rome 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Frankl, *The Suffering Man*, Herder 1972

<sup>48</sup> Monbourquette, J., *To each one...*, 53.

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# A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE UNITY OF THE LEADERSHIP of Brothers François, Louis-Marie & Jean-Baptiste



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*This is a longer article than normal for Marist Notebooks. Because of the importance of the subject, however, the Patrimony Committee decided to publish it in its entirety.*

## ABSTRACT

Marist tradition has usually extolled the unity displayed by Brothers François, Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste as a model of leadership, to the point of coining the expression the “*three-in-one*”. This article considers seven situations in which this unity seems to have been exaggerated and re-interpreted by Marist tradition.

Divergences can be seen in these matters: the renovations in 1841 to buildings on the section of the Hermitage property formerly owned by M Patouillard; the confidential letter of Br François to some Brothers asking for their help in his leadership responsibilities in 1846; the failure of Br François

to obtain canonical approval for the Institute; the building of the new General House at Saint-Genis-Laval; differences among the three Brothers over how to get recruits and, especially, their opinions about boarding schools (these three situations from the second half of the 1850s); the reasons leading to the resignation of Br François in 1860; the existence of differing traditions on the role fulfilled by Br François in the history of the Institute.

An examination of such situations seems to reveal that the Superior General and his two Assistants disagreed over the means of leading, managing and governing the Institute. Such disagreement went much further than occasional instances, af-

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fecting the very character of their leadership and the principles and means to be used to carry out the task that the *three-in-one* had inherited from Fr Champagnat.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This article is based on written primary sources. It takes material into account that is available in books, articles, manuscripts, letters, and other archives, printed or virtual<sup>2</sup>. This allows for a revision of our idea of our institutional history that, in the light of some remarks present in the documents cited above, may have been exaggerated or re-interpreted in oral and written transmission. It deals with the example of unity traditionally attributed to Brothers François, Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste in their time as leaders during the years following the death of Fr Champagnat, which came to be known as the *three-in-one*.

The investigation covers elements that are scattered in regard to time and geography. This is the reason behind opting for a bibliographical study that allows for a wider range of facts. In being an historical study, this type of investigation is what provides greater opportunities for getting at the truth and contributing something significant to our knowledge of Marist history.

As the main source material, the letters and *Circulars* of those involved are our focus. These make reference to the probable way that the three Brothers grew in unity as leaders, and to reasons behind any identifiable disagreements. There are also statements taken from the journals of Br François and other official administration documents that can be found in the Archives of the General House.

Critical literature on this topic is found in the *Bulletin of the Institute*, the *Biographies of Some Brothers* by Br François, some books on our origins authored by Brothers Jean-Baptiste, Sylvester and Avit, and some other studies on the period available in the General House library or in *Marist Notebooks*.

## 2. ORIGIN OF THE EXPRESSION, THE THREE-IN-ONE

To understand the origins of this Marist tradition of strong unity between Br François and his Assistants General, Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste, we have to read what Br Jean-Baptiste himself wrote in *The Life*.

[Our venerable Founder] understood that strength comes from unity and that this was the guarantee of the obedience of subjects, of the

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<sup>2</sup> Most of this material was originally published in French. The bibliography at the end of the article indicates which material has been translated into English and Spanish in an official version. Where such a version exists, it is used here. Where there is no version in Spanish (the original language of this article) the author of this article has done the translation himself.

success and good government of a religious community. So, on a number of occasions, he recommended to Br François, his successor, and to his collaborators in leading the Congregation, that they seek to agree and remain always united. “You will face many problems”, he said, “but you must not lose confidence: God will be with you if you remain united, since it is His work you are doing<sup>3</sup>.”

Br François and his two Assistants, not only because of the affection they had for their venerated Father, but out of virtue and feeling conscience-bound, made every effort to show themselves faithful to this advice of Fr Champagnat: their union was complete, constant and unchanging. It gave them strength and respect; it gave them authority in dealing with the Brothers; and was the main cause of all the good done by the Institute.

Putting this on record here was the reason for his entitling this chapter *From unity comes strength*, with the aim of its serving as a model for all the Brothers, particularly those called on to lead the congregation.

When the Founder was still alive, Brothers François, Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste, all three of much the same age<sup>4</sup>, were elected by all nine-

ty-two professed Brothers to lead the Institute: the first as Superior General and the other two as his Assistants. After the election, presided over personally by Fr Colin, Fr Champagnat expressed great satisfaction with the outcome of the voting and spoke these words, “I am delighted with the election. They are precisely the men I wanted. Praised be God for such vocations!”<sup>5</sup>.

The three of them were veterans<sup>6</sup>. They had lived for a long time with the holy Founder, had received a specialised formation from him, and had helped him in leading the Institute. They had learnt from his example and teaching, and were thoroughly imbued with his ideas and principles. The spirit of the Founder had passed fully to each one of them, and this spirit became the soul of their administration and of each of their undertakings.

Leadership of the congregation was passed to them at a critical moment and in the worst of circumstances, namely, the death of the Founder: i.e. when the Institute was going to need prudent and enlightened leaders; when the traditions of the beginnings had to be gathered together; and the Rule and Teaching

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Br. Jean-Baptiste, 1989, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> Their dates of birth were respectively, 1801, 1810 and 1807.

<sup>5</sup> Br Jean-Baptiste, 1988, p. 319. Something similar is affirmed in Br. Sylvester, 1990, p.76. The quote appears in all the biographies of Br François but what is striking is that this statement of Br Jean-Baptiste appears in the *Sentences*, and is not contained in the biography of Fr Champagnat which he also authored. Cf. Ponty, 1899, p. 56; Chastel, 1948, p. 52; Michel, 1996, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> We are not speaking of ‘veteran’ in the classical sense of the term, given that they were all about thirty years of age; and, in the case of Br Louis-Marie, it cannot even be said that he was a true *veteran* of the Institute since he entered in 1831. But his humanistic and theological formation in the major seminary gave him the respectability of the other two, who entered in 1818 (François) and 1822 (Jean-Baptiste).

method revised, applying all the principles of the Founder and completing the foundations of his work.

It is clear that the task was anything but easy. If they were to succeed, as they did, it would be above all because they remained united. There is something quite extraordinary here and worthy of admiration. Three men, of quite different temperaments, governed the congregation together for more than twenty years, without letting any minor divergence of opinion become public, without anyone noting, not even once, that any one of them thought differently from the other two.

Whichever one the Brothers consulted, they heard the same kind of answer, identical viewpoints and evaluations of things, identical ways of dealing with issues; in short, the same spirit and manner of leading. Nothing was ever conceded that another had denied; no-one ever criticised one of the others; there was not even the slightest indication of disapproval of what one of the others had done or said.

To listen to them or see them at work, it could be said that they had but one soul. At least one would have to acknowledge that they were animated by the same spirit. Given such perfect, evident and widely respected unity, the authority and ascendancy of each were identical, and anything that one of them ordered, promised or carried out was considered settled and above appeal.

Amazed at such perfect and constant unity which on so many occasions could have been, if not broken, then at least weakened by a divergence of opinion or preferred course of action, one of the more talented and

sharp-witted Brothers exclaimed,

“It would be harder to separate these three men than to plant a rosebush in the middle of the ocean”.

A rather flowery expression but quite appropriate to communicate how close their unity was, what the Brothers thought about it, and how it influenced them to maintain a spirit of submission and obedience. A respected priest, who had some business dealings with the Institute, said to a Brother Director, “Your *three-in-one* are the clearest confirmation I have seen up to now of the maxim of the Holy Spirit:

“A three-ply cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12).

What is most admirable and worthy of praise in such unity is that it remained unchanged in the midst of circumstances most likely to break or at least weaken it. Br François, chronically ill and unable to manage business, saw himself forced to leave the weight of the administration to the Assistants who shared the work between them, dealt with business arising, led the Brothers, took charge of everything, and carried everything out with such a perfect spirit of unity and personal dedication. They did this in such a way that the authority of Br François, far from decreasing, continued to grow stronger. The Brothers at large did not perceive that he was being overshadowed and was running things through his two Assistants.

The 1860 General Chapter showed very clearly how much the Brothers were moved by such a display of unity.

It voted unanimously that a portrait<sup>7</sup> be painted of the three superiors united by the same spirit to remind all the Brothers of such a unique and edifying fact. (Br Jean-Baptiste, 1988, p. 319-321).

Various remarks, however, found in a number of sources, starting from the year 1841 itself, has led me to harbour doubts about this unity, or at least to come to a preliminary conclusion that this unity did not just happen as a matter of course but that the three Brothers had to work at it to make it happen and needed help along the way to attain it.

Let us describe briefly each of the cases to which I am referring.

### **3. RENOVATION OF THE BUILDINGS ON THE PATOULLARD PROPERTY AT THE HERMITAGE**

Chronologically, the first comment that I found which was at variance with the traditional version was in a description by Br Avit of the renovation of the buildings at the Hermitage to provide a more systematic production of more linen cloth in this house (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1841, n. 48).

The current house at the Hermitage is sited on both sides of the Gier, but this was not always the case. On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1824, Fathers Champagnat and Courveille, bought the piece of land, in the municipality of Saint-Martin-en-Coailleux, where they wanted to construct the house of the Hermitage

of Our Lady (Cf. Sales Records in Perrin, 2014, p. 140). On the other side of the river, which belonged to the municipality of Izieux, there were workshops and light industrial buildings belonging to Antoine Thiollière-Laroche who sold them on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1824 to Mathieu Patouillard. This made him a neighbour of the Hermitage until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1839, the date of the sale of this property to Fr Champagnat for the sum of 39,000 francs, a high price for that time. Thus, despite its name, the Hermitage had been obliged for fifteen years to have close neighbours with a completely different purpose.

We know a little about M Patouillard from Marist sources, thanks to the sales record from 1839 (Cf Perrin, 2014, p. 153-154). He was married to Françoise Touillieu and had three children: Jeanne, Vincent and André. The records indicate that he was a fuller and provide a precise description of the property he had acquired in 1824:

“It consisted in a machine shop, a workshop for whitening cotton, a dwelling, hayloft, stable, water tank, dyke, channel, water course and means of extracting water from the river Gier, a field, orchard, pasture, open land, woodland and rocks” (Perrin, 2014, p. 153).

It was, then, a small industrial set-up specialising in the removal of grease and the carding of wool (a fuller’s mill), and the finishing of cotton fabric, thanks to the strong hydropower provided by the Gier. He was also the owner of agricultural properties in Izieux and in St Martin-en-Coailleux.

<sup>7</sup> The portrait can be seen in Br Jean-Baptiste, 1986, p. 12.

In buying all this, Fr Champagnat more or less doubled the surface area of the Hermitage and acquired the right to use the watermill over the Gier.

By the time of death of Fr Champagnat, around 18,200 francs had been paid of what was owing (Cf Lanfrey, 2015, p. 122). The remaining debt was one of the main worries of Br François, successor to Fr Champagnat. Br Avit, moreover, cites the conditions of a loan of 22,000 francs for 5 years, obtained by Br François and Br Jean-Marie, from the two sons of the notary Finaz, at an interest of 4.5% and a mortgage over all the assets of the civil Society held in Gaux and Grange Payre (Cf. Br. Avit, 2012, Year 1840, n. 19-22).

Fortunately, M Antoine Thiollière, a factory owner from St Chamond and benefactor of the Congregation, was quick to pay the amount outstanding (cf. Lanfrey, 2015, p. 122). But before this providential payment was

arranged, Br Francois entertained the possibility of utilising the fuller's shop, the mill and the oil press (not mentioned in the sales records), which were spread out in the cluster of buildings, to generate resources and sources of income. It is a known fact that the Brothers living at the Hermitage contributed to the finances of the Institute through various small-scale and farming workshops and enterprises.

One might also wonder, moreover, if Br François was trying to carry out, in some way, the desire of Fr Champagnat in 1824 to establish a type of non-formal learning centre for orphaned youth, some of whom might become Brothers.

His two Assistants, who disagreed with him, had recourse to Fr Colin who vigorously disapproved of the project, as recounted by Br Louis-Marie who wrote to Br François on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1841 after consulting Fr Colin<sup>8</sup>:

*My very dear Brother,*

*I think I have to let you know the attitude of Reverend Fr Superior General to the construction you are planning. I have already told you that Br Jean-Baptiste is totally opposed to it. Like Br Jean-Marie, I have also communicated my feelings about it. I have put down here more or less what R.P.S.G. said to me last night. We talked of little else from 8 till 11.*

*"My Brothers, don't even think about it. How could you, without consulting me, and with a debt of more than 60,000 francs, undertake a construction program that will increase your debt by between 12 and 15,000 francs? And you say that I am the superior! ... My Brothers, if I am your superior, I don't want to be treated like a Superior of convenience! [...]. If it was something absolutely necessary, it could be accepted, but the words used refer to its being useful, of presumed benefits, of commerce... My Brothers, will it really be useful? Wouldn't the Brothers to be engaged in these enterprises have to be withdrawn from teaching, your principal and sole purpose? You may say that you would call on Brothers who cannot teach, but this is an illusion. Brothers who are exhausted from the classroom are not going to want to be buried in a fuller's shop,*

<sup>8</sup> The whole letter, which deals with other topics, can be found in Lessard (Ed.), 2007, doc. 267.

*a mill or a winepress [...]. Shouldn't such a matter be discussed, at the very least, in a meeting of the Council and your senior Brothers? Shouldn't you have submitted your plan and budget to me? [...] Each one of you is going his own way and you are not looking to agree, let alone be united. You say that you have discussed things together, that Br Jean-Baptiste is strongly opposed, and you have said nothing at all to me. And yet you are going ahead? I just don't understand what is happening. This is no way to act"*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1841, n. 42-48).*

After this intervention by Fr Colin, prompted by Br Louis-Marie, the Pa-touillard buildings ended up being turned into stables, a forge and lock-

smith's shop, a bakery and various storerooms in the buildings in the back-yard. These latter buildings were later demolished. (Br Avit, 2012, n. 41-53).

#### **4. THE CONFIDENTIAL LETTER OF BR FRANÇOIS TO SOME BROTHERS IN 1846 AND THE PROLONGATION OF THE SITUATION UNTIL THE CHAPTER OF 1852-1854**

The biographies of Br François contain references to a confidential letter<sup>9</sup> sent to the oldest Brothers in

August 1846 by Br François (Cf. Michel, 1996, p. 118-119; Ponty, 1899, p. 149) which described how:

*"My weakness of health and failing strength are forcing me to delegate some of the details of outside dealings and of general government of the Society, so I can concentrate more on internal leadership, the Constitutions etc... For this, I need to have alongside me a Brother who can represent me when necessary, attend to needed correspondence, be it with Brother Directors or others; in short, to take charge of the details of congregational matters. It is not that I want to cut my contacts with the Brothers, nor withdraw from the government of the Society, but, on the contrary, concentrate on it in the most profitable manner possible. After reflecting on this a lot before the Lord, praying about it and having prayers said, I am asking your opinion and want you to tell me, as soon as you can, which of the Brother Assistants or other older Brothers you judge to be most capable of carrying out the responsibility I wish to entrust to him."*

*(Letter of Br François, August 1846).*

Br François added in a postscript:

*"You can use the back of this letter to express your opinion and send it back to me".  
To how many Brothers did he send the letter? We do not know if he received spoken or written replies.  
Is it daring to suggest that the Brothers were thinking that Br François, in the prime of his life, was doing his job well and did not need any help?"*

*(Cf. Michel, 1996, p. 119).*

<sup>9</sup> The appendix contains a copy of this letter.

The matter was not resolved and did not come up again publicly until the Second General Chapter, but Br François handed over the management of all ordinary business, bit by bit, to his Assistants, reserving for himself the responsibilities he believed he should bear. In this, the necessity was in accord with the concept Br François had of the General Administration:

“Supreme and perfect authority consists in leading those who look after the details . . .  
A desire to examine everything personally is a sign of distrust and small-mindedness . . .  
To plan large projects, one needs a free and relaxed spirit . . . Superiors who work, care for details, and attend to most matters themselves are those who lead the least. They are doing others’ jobs and their own job goes undone: no-one is concerned about this . . .  
Simply put, a real Superior should not do things that others could do without him”

(Notebook 304 of Br François, p. 800-801).

Br François, then, was invoking the principle of subsidiarity. Why deal with matters at a higher level when they should be handled at lower levels? Yet his viewpoint does not seem to have been understood and, Br Avit, for example, uses the following words to describe the situation Br François found himself in a little before and during the General Chapter of 1852-1854:

*“The houses and Brothers were quite numerous, the administration more and more complex, and the number of Council members insufficient. For the previous ten years or more, the Brother Superior General had added to the roles proper to his office, those of being Assistant of the Province of Nord. His headaches were becoming more frequent and the problems and complexities of matters were becoming more difficult for him to deal with”*

(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 46).

In these circumstances, while the Chapter was proceeding, Br François took a decision that shows that there was a very serious crisis in his being out of step with his Assistants who had not understood the proposal for the new style of government that François was proposing or did not go along with it because they could sense that they would be left “holding the baby”. François decided to widen his field of consultation to learn the opinion of capitulants based on their experience:

*During the third session, he gathered all the capitulants, without telling the two Assistants, to announce his intention to them of transferring part of the administration to a Brother Vicar and asked them to indicate, by secret vote, which of the two Assistants they considered most fit for this role. When they found out about this consultation, Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste did not appear very happy. The Reverend Brother kept these voting slips without communicating the result”*

(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 47).



*“Eighteen votes went to Br Louis-Marie and sixteen to Br Jean-Baptiste. In fact, Br François did not dare speak about it to either of them. He continued seeking support from both”*

*(Michel, 1996, p. 228).*

Whether it was the discontent of his Assistants, or the closeness of the result, the designation of one of the Assistants as the *alter ego* of Br François remained off the table.

Discontent with the system of government, however, was not the cause of disagreement solely among the *three-in-one*. It extended to a good group of Brothers.

In the third session of the Second General Chapter, a request was received from Fr Mazelier. Moreover, he visited the Brothers in Chapter to ask that the sector of Saint-Paul have a

resident Provincial. He wanted a local leader for Saint-Paul, relatively independent of the general government. Such a demand for a new government structure presented a challenge to the model of government by the *three-in-one*. At the Chapter there were a dozen Brothers party to the idea of Provincial government in the Institute.

The request opened the door to discussion of how the centralised government of the Little Brothers was to be understood. In theory François understood it this way:

*“The Superior held hands with the Assistants, and they, in turn, with the Directors, who likewise held onto the Brothers and the children to move together to paradise along the path shown by the Rules and the Commandments”*

*(Notebook 304 of Br François, p. 981).*

However the reply given by the Chapter to Mazelier, in which the hand of Br Louis-Marie can be seen (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 45), shows us the interpretation in practice that the Regime (i.e. the General Government) had taken regarding this issue, and that we can summarise in two points:

- a) Provincial Assistants were created with the advantage of being close to both the base and the Superior General;
- b) these Assistants were the only ones to be responsible for listening to each Brother manifest his

conscience. After 15 years of experience it could be said that all the success of the Congregation was due to this practice (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 30-34).

It seems quite alarming that Louis-Marie attributed the success of the growth experienced over 15 years to the way the Institute was organised to listening to each Brother manifest his conscience, when this would be one of the issues later denounced to Rome by a number of capitulants.

Before the closure of the third and final session of the Chapter, Br François asked that a third Assistant

be named. The election, carried out in accord with the recently approved Constitutions, resulted in the appointment of Br Pascal (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 48).

The new Assistant (Br Pascal) was assigned to the Province of the North so that the Reverend Brother could rest a little and concentrate solely on overall leadership. He also passed official matters over to the Assistants and kept for himself matters related to the internal life and religious oversight of the Institute (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 54).

This Chapter also approved the introduction of the vow of Stability into the Institute<sup>10</sup>. Was its introduction what Br François wanted, the senior Brothers, or all of them?

Br André Lanfrey maintains that this Chapter was disappointing on the questions of appointing a new Assistant and the establishment of the vow of Stability. With respect to the first of these, Br François got part of

what he had asked for in 1846. With respect to the second, there are indications that François was not opposed to the idea of the vow of Stability (Cf. Notebook 301 of Br François, p. 41), but such an initiative seems closer to the spirit of Br Louis-Marie who was less concerned about the traditions of the early years (Cf. Lanfrey, 2015, Chapter 36<sup>11</sup>).

It could also be thought that the establishment of the vow of Stability was a concession to the wishes of a section of senior Brothers, since this vote created a real aristocracy in the Congregation from which they stood to benefit. But this norm marginalised the younger Brothers who could not take on leadership roles without having given proof of conforming to the founding spirit (Cf. Martínez Estaún, 2015, p. 159-160).

We have seen as well how Br Louis-Marie took on a leading role at the time that some official texts were being prepared that set down the

<sup>10</sup> In the session 6<sup>th</sup> May 1854, the capitulants approved the introduction of the vow of Stability. In a letter of 31<sup>st</sup> May 1858, Br Louis-Marie explained to the Cardinal of Lyon, Mgr. de Bonald, the reasons for introducing the vow: "Even though the vow of Stability was never done in the life of the Founder, he was in favour of it in principle, since in the Rule there is an article written by him personally that says, 'the Brothers will take the four vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and stability... This vow is open only to the most capable and virtuous Brothers... The hope is that this vow will ensure good governance for the Institute, providing a leadership group from the better subjects of the Congregation'. The first Brothers to make the vow were Brothers Andronic and Pascal at Beaucamps; Brothers François, Louis-Marie, Jean-Baptiste, Bonaventure, Jean-Marie and Léon at the Hermitage (Anonymous, 1967, p. 632. Cf. G. Michel, 1996, p. 228-229. Br Sylvester maintained that he never heard Father Founder speak of such a vow, but in the Chapter that approved it, "a writing signed by the Founder was shown to each capitulant with the text: 'the Brothers of this Institute will take the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and the vow of stability', with no further explanation. I held the writing in my hands and can assure you that the writing was his; the various letters he had written to me leave me in no doubt" (Br Sylvester, 1990, p. 53)

<sup>11</sup> Br André Lanfrey made critical remarks, in writing, about the *Life of Br François* by Br Gabriel Michel, to be used by a group of PUCPR (Brazil) who were doing a study of Br François. This is the text just referred to. Since the remarks made by Br André are grouped together by chapter in this book, references are made to the relevant chapter.

foundations for the future of the Institute. The letter-response that the Chapter sent to Fr Mazelier is an example. His leading role was to be even more decisive in the preparation of the Constitutions a short time later.

This leading stance of Louis-Marie is evidence of two things: one the one hand, that of a discrepancy between

the thinking of François and that of Louis-Marie on principles and policies of government and organisation.

Second, the superior leadership style of Louis-Marie in being able to express ideas clearly and in imposing his vision for the government of the Institute.

Br Avit is very clear on this:

*"The Minutes of the Chapter secretaries, before being read and adopted in the plenary assembly, had to pass across the desk of Br Louis-Marie, both before and after his election as General"*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1852, n. 67).*

## 5. THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE TRIP TO ROME TO TRY TO OBTAIN CANONICAL APPROVAL FOR THE INSTITUTE

Brothers François and Louis-Marie travelled to Rome to try to obtain approval for the Institute<sup>12</sup>, but the decisions of the Chapter of 1853-1854 had not been welcomed by all the Brothers. Messages of discontent, sent to Rome via ecclesiastical channels, arrived at the same time that they did. These messages came from some Brothers who did not agree with the new legislation approved by the recently concluded Chapter. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1858, Br Marie Jubin had also lodged a formal complaint in Rome, using the Archbishop of Lyon as intermediary, regarding the conditions in which the Constitutions had

been finalised at the Chapter. It seemed to him, and to other Brothers, that some points had been approved under strong pressure from the Administration.

In addition, the way Brothers had to 'manifest their conscience' meant that the Superiors were, in practice, taking on the role of confessors. Yet the Brothers were lay.

"Our priests who come to hear the confessions of Brothers and Sisters are frequently distressed when asked if serious failings are to be made known to the superior, who is lay. Given that this is an existing practice, they do not know what to say in reply" (Letter of Fr Favre to C. Nicolet, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1858).

The simultaneous arrival at the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars (SCBR) of these interventions from some Brothers, the Archbishop of Lyon and the Marist Fathers,

<sup>12</sup> A description of Br François' stay in Rome can be found, in diary form in his *Notebook* 305, p. 1-197. The General Archives in Rome also hold an attempt to systematise his account, (*Sur les traces de Frère François, Pèlerin à Rome*), or one could read Chapters 5 and 6 of Br Antonio Martínez Estaún, 2015.

explains the reticence of the Roman authorities towards the efforts of the government of our Institute to have the Constitutions approved.

In fact, Br Louis-Marie was to return to France after three months' stay in Rome, leaving Br François there. He focused on the business of government and on the construction of the new General House at Saint-Genis-Laval, something that was to increase his leadership status in the Institute.

After staying in Rome for six and a half months (February 6 to August 22), Br François wanted to be in France for the retreats and so left Rome with nothing to show for his efforts. He had barely begun the process. The failure to gain Roman approval in 1858 put him in a difficult position.

The year 1858 was one of great failure for Br François who returned home after six and a half months empty-handed. He had left from the Hermitage but returned to Saint-Ge-

nis-Laval. During his absence his two Assistants had assured the government and the house at Saint-Genis-Laval had heightened the prestige of Br Louis-Marie. These various happenings must have contributed significantly to the desire of Br François to resign (Lanfrey, 2015, Chapter 44).

## 6. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW GENERAL HOUSE AT SAINT-GENIS-LAVAL<sup>13</sup>

The transfer of the central house happened in the absence of the Superior General. Indeed, Br François was still in Rome and this circumstance did not allow him to live through such a considerable change alongside his Brothers, a change that saw the transfer of its central house from the quiet valley of the Hermitage to the township of Saint-Genis-Laval. Br Avit recounts that:

*During the preparations and discussion of proposals for modifications, Br François was opposed to the plan that the windows on the bottom floor were to be curved and the columns of the cloister made of cut stone. It did not appear sufficiently modest to him, nor in conformity with the simplicity always wished for by the pious Founder. [...] To overcome the scruples of the Reverend Brother, and avoid any direct confrontation, the plans had been submitted to Cardinal de Bonald and his Eminence had said that he saw nothing contrary to religious simplicity in what was proposed..., but after François' arrival at Saint-Genis-Laval, it was easy to see that his satisfaction was mediocre, at best*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1858, n. 38-39).*

The time spent at Saint-Genis-Laval by Br François after his return from Rome was a long desert period, one of interior purification of the spir-

it, an opportunity to look back and ruminate on all that had happened during his stay in Rome. On his return from the eternal city he found that

<sup>13</sup> More information on this topic can be found in Br Avit, 2012, Year 1853, n. 16. 29-33; Year 1854, n.13-16; Year 1855, n. 18; Year 1858, n. 38-47.

everything had functioned without him. Moreover, he noted the discrepancies between his policies and those of Louis-Marie and his disagreement with Jean-Baptiste on various matters.

## 7. DIFFERENCES OVER HOW TO OBTAIN RECRUITS. THE QUESTION OF BOARDING SCHOOLS

Another practical problem that came up, above all during the construction of Saint-Genis-Laval but afterwards as well, was that of the source, or sources, of new vocations

to justify the expenses related to the constructions.

Br François, speaking of the building projects at Saint-Genis-Laval, wrote in 1854:

*There is great interest in putting the foundations down this year and building one section, if we can ... Institute... we have only our small savings available... if we can use things with the greatest of care, avoid or postpone certain expenses that are not indispensable, save the expenses of trips, a letter that is not really useful, cut down on office expenses, that is, make a number of small savings ... To help in the construction, the Brother Bursar has requested a personal contribution from all Brothers and their families, has insisted that postulants and novices who have not yet paid the fee for the novitiate speak to their families to do this as soon as possible, has asked Brother Directors to send 50 fr per Brother, saving on clothing or other economising or obtaining it from charitable people nearby.*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1854, n. 14-16).*

So, his approach seems to have been a continuation of the policy of the Founder: meeting with the expenses related to the growth of the Institute and the need for new works by austerity in the life of the Brothers, taking care that any new constructions were not lacking in the simplicity of our origins, and the accumulation of small savings made through economising in

communities and works, trusting moreover in Providence to make benefactors appear and other means of financing operations.

For his part, Br Louis-Marie wanted to increase the number of boarding institutions and large schools to get quick access to funds needed to pay off outstanding debts<sup>14</sup>. He was also open to considering large loans<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> This idea of boarding sections as a source of income to pay off debts that had been contracted in building initiatives was to be one that Br Louis-Marie would implement all throughout his life as Superior. Chapter 9 of his biography (Anonymous, 1907) was dedicated to the buildings and schools he founded. We could instance the great work of Saint-Genis-Laval, or the 5 renovated or custom-built Provincial houses, nine large boarding schools and a further nine enlarged. The reality is that all these buildings and purchases required a great amount of money and put the Institute in debt. In all, by the end of his time as General, he had made 195 new foundations. This expansionism, taken together with a risky financial policy, generated strong discontent among the Brothers.

<sup>15</sup> For example, from 1857 to 1860 he obtained 113,550 Fr. in loans, of which 131,961 Fr. in returns (see Avit, 2012, year 1860, No. 73-74).

On this point, there was also a significant difference of opinion with Br Jean-Baptiste who said that the boarding institutions and hostels exhausted the Brothers and that there should not be any more of them. François was on the side of Br Jean-

Baptiste regarding boarding schools and large institutions.

To the parish priest of Neuville who was encouraging him to purchase a piece of land on sale to put up a boarding school, the Brother Director General answered,

*"We have less desire than ever to have boarding schools. More and more we are of the opinion that it is better for our Brothers to have simple day-schools where after school they can have the peace and calm for the exercises of piety and live in recollection and the strict observance of the Rule ..." The thinking of the Brother Director General was in complete agreement with that of Br Jean-Baptiste who had closed the boarding section of Saint-Paul, would very soon thereafter close that of Our Lady of La Blanchette, and would not accept any more such institutions. Br Louis-Marie was less inclined to this idea. Well-organised boarding institutions interested him, those that were adequately staffed and able to generate income for the Institute*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1852, n. 74-78).*

## 8. THE REASONS BEHIND THE RESIGNATION OF BR FRANÇOIS<sup>16</sup>

The only motive given by Br François for his resignation in his final general Circular to the Brothers on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1860 was his state of health. Br Avit, however, outlined what was happening to Br François in the lead-up to the Third General Chapter in these terms:

The headaches of the Reverend Brother had become chronic, the task of administration more heavy and complex, and his desire for the interior and peaceful life kept increasing. All of this made his position more un-

tenable. Moreover then, and for quite a time beforehand, the three Assistants had been taking charge of all the business. In his state of mind, he was fearful of any responsibility (Br Avit, 2012, Year 1860, n. 25).

In his description Br Avit made mention of chronic headaches but also that François was fearful of any responsibility. Thus, he was hinting at signs of both physical ill-health and psychological limitations and incapacity as well. In doing this, Br Avit added a second and third reason for the resignation to that of ill-health: the administration of the Institute, which was becoming more and more overwhelming, and the call to a more contemplative life.

<sup>16</sup> There is an excellent discussion of this topic in Br Pierre Zind 1960 (written under his religious name, Br Louis-Laurent). Br Pierre Zind had access to the Institute Archives and copied direct quotations from the Acts of Chapters, or other documents he found there, without citing them. Such quotes in here indicated by «...».

From his study of the history of the four Marist branches, Br Pierre Zind suggested, in addition, a fourth motive: the example of Fr Colin who had also resigned on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1854. That is, in presenting his resignation as Superior General, Br François was not doing anything completely new within the Society of Mary. Even if we do

not take Fr Champagnat into account, who in a certain way resigned to force the election of a Director General, Fr Colin had given an example in resigning, six years earlier, as Superior General (Cf. P. Zind, 1960, p. 291-292).

For his part, Br André Lanfrey has added a fifth reason:

*François was aware that the leadership group of the Institute had to be increased to provide better supervision of growth and to confront growing internal problems (Brothers who were insufficiently motivated) and the affairs of the Society and management generally. Basically, there was a structural crisis. The Church authorities and Rome felt the same way for they cast doubt on the capacity of the Superiors to govern and believed that the government was too centralised.*

While in 1852-1854 Br François was crowned with the prestige of having gained legal recognition, in what followed he became the weak link in the group of successors of Fr Champagnat: basically, he was the only one who could step down without causing too much upset to the Brothers since he held the least prestige and also because, as one of the first disciples, he had the authority needed to enable this change without creating problems. In a certain way he was the scapegoat sacrificing himself voluntarily (“making reparation for the past”) so as to re-establish unity.

François seems to have failed, above all, in his being able to blend his charismatic and leadership role with the task of administration. Working against him here was the tradition of

leadership he had inherited from Fr Champagnat. Later, Br Louis-Marie was able to strike a happier balance of government, charismatic authority, and administrative tasks. While he was General, the problem of providing a better spiritual formation for the Brothers would not really be resolved, even though there were important official guidelines in the writings of Br Jean-Baptiste and the Circulars. (Lanfrey, 2015, Chapter 46).

To support this fifth reason introduced by Br André, let us look briefly at the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Br François from his office of Superior General, even though this may lengthen this article.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1860, Br François convoked a Chapter assembly, inviting all the Brothers with Stability (Circular of

Br François, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1860). There would be no elected delegates<sup>17</sup>. Three of the Brothers with Stability were absent (Cf. *Chronologie mariste*, 2010, p. 198). The terms of the Circular of Convocation were as follows:

*In accordance with the procedures set out in Article 11, approved by the 1854 Chapter, that appears in the book of Acts, called transitional, and that deals with convening a Chapter, we have decided to bring together in a Chapter assembly the Brothers who have made the four vows so as to follow due process in deciding on the means necessary to help us [the Council] and thus guarantee the good running of the Institute. The Chapter, as you can see my dear Brothers, has a very important purpose . . .*  
*The Institute, by the mercy of God and the protection of the august Virgin Mary, is growing constantly, and this makes our mission increasingly heavier and more difficult. To this I must add that my ill health is getting worse and is making things almost impossible for me.*  
*The good of the Congregation demands that I take the means needed to not fail in my role, and to take the lead on administrative matters with all the precision and care that will ensure success*

*(Circular of Br François of 2nd July 1860, p. 400).*

So, Br François did not announce that he intended resigning, but only his desire to take the means needed for providing better leadership and handling of administration. Therefore, the problem he identified was that of management, not health; the constant growth of the Institute was

<sup>17</sup> It should be pointed out that neither the first Chapter that elected Br François on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1839, nor the third which accepted his resignation on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1860, had any elected members in its number. All the perpetually professed Brothers were members by right at the first Chapter, of whom there were 112; in fact, only 92 voted. All professed Brothers with the vow of Stability were members by right at the third Chapter.

42 Brothers had made the vow of Stability starting from 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1855, of whom three had already died (Brothers León, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1856, Urbain 14<sup>th</sup> June 1857, and Angilbert 31<sup>st</sup> May 1858). So, there were 39 Brothers with Stability remaining to participate in the Chapter assembly, including the Reverend Brother and his three Assistants. The number of 39 Brothers with Stability made redundant the second of the four transitional articles approved by the second General Chapter in the afternoon of 19<sup>th</sup> May 1854, to which Br François made explicit reference in his Circular of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1860. This article said, "If it is necessary to convene a Chapter before there are thirty-three Brothers with Stability, the method and criteria set out in the Circular of 17<sup>th</sup> April 1852 will be followed for the election of delegates". As a result, they had to follow the procedure set out in article 7, in the first section, Chapter IV, of the Rules of Government, in which it was stipulated that members of the Chapter would be elected from among the Brothers with Stability by all the perpetually professed Brothers of the Provinces. In practice, this meant electing 33 capitulants out of 35 eligible, given that the members of the Regime (4) were members by right of the Chapter. Such an election seemed ridiculous, even more so when foreseeable absences were considered, as in fact happened. The smartest thing to do at such a moment was to convoke all those eligible and that was the decision adopted by Br François. The Circular of 2<sup>nd</sup> July invited all capitulants to be at Saint-Genis twelve days later. After a day of Retreat, the Chapter began on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. For some reason unknown to us, maybe due to understandable late arrivals given the suddenness and short notice of the convocation, the opening of the Chapter was put back one day (cf. P. Zind, 1960, p. 387-389).



making his task ever heavier and more difficult. The reason behind François' proposal for a new model of running the administration was the constant growth of the work and the management difficulties related to this. The particular relevance that Br François gave to the group of Brothers with Stability "to follow due process in deciding on the means necessary" is a demonstration of the new management model he had in mind, surely to get around his Council who were resistant to any change. It therefore points to a difference of opinion or lack of agreement within the leadership group, meaning the others

did not understand or accept his proposal. Health does not seem to have been the fundamental argument used by Br François, but rather an additional factor that was exacerbating the difficulty he had in the increasingly complex affairs of administration. (Cf. Lanfrey, 2015, Chapter 46).

At the opening session, there were 33 Brothers with Stability present, including those of the Council. The Chapter assembly changed to being a General Chapter but without elected members. It was opened with the same ceremony as in 1852, but in Saint-Genis-Laval. Br François made the following opening remarks:

*The Chapter is coming together mainly, as I told you in the Circular of Convocation, to give assistance and personnel to the governing group. You yourselves have seen and felt the need and urgency of doing this, given the state of our health and the task that is so heavy and difficult for us to accomplish, in the measure that the Society spreads and increases. From some time back. Brothers have been commenting on this"*

*(Zind, 1960, p. 390).*

This new General Chapter "was a continuation of that of 1852-1854 rather than a new Chapter as such since its purpose was simply to confirm decisions taken by the Council" (Lanfrey, 2015, Chapter 46).

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1860<sup>18</sup> he announced his decision to request the Chapter

assembly to relieve him of his responsibility for the leadership of the Institute (Cf. *Chronologie mariste*, 2010, p. 198).<sup>19</sup>

He spoke of having consulted the Secretary of the SCBR, his state of health, and the increasingly complex administration.

<sup>18</sup> To relate the events of this day I have followed the account given in Zind, 1960, p. 393-395. I remind readers that we are using the signs ' ... ' to indicate the textual quotations made by Zind in his article without any corresponding reference. Occasionally I was able to find ideas from other writers which indicated the sources.

<sup>19</sup> "Br François was determined to show that the decision has been taken by the three superiors and he invoked the authority of Fr Champagnat as well. This was the birth of the myth of the *three-in-one*" (Lanfrey, 2015, Chapter 46).

*There must be at the head of the Administration someone possessing all the physical and intellectual qualities needed to undertake all aspects of the administration of the whole Institute and hence replace the Superior General in everything that he cannot manage by himself.*

At the same time, he proposed the transfer of full authority to Br Louis-Marie, along with all the necessary faculties for the general administration and governance of the Institute, as Vicar to the Superior General. The proposal that was presented to the Chapter had been examined closely in Council and they had decided by common accord to consult Rome. They entrusted the handling of this to Fr Favre, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, who took advantage of a trip to Rome in May 1860 to consult Archbishop Bizzarri, Secretary of the SCBR, on the issue. The reply of Bizzarri was that 'Given that the Little Brothers of Mary are currently in the process of obtaining authorisation of their Institute from the Holy See, it is not an opportune moment to be making significant changes in administration. Therefore, if the Brother Superior General cannot accomplish his responsibilities, it is necessary that the Brother who is First Assistant take his place in doing this.'

There is no mention of who communicated the decision (of the Council) to Fr Favre nor the specific content of the consultation they wanted him to undertake in Rome. Favre did not duck the responsibility but rather accepted to carry it out. Did Favre hope that it was still possible that the Holy See would place the Brothers under the protectorate of the Fathers?<sup>20</sup> The reply from Rome made allusion to changes in the administration and roles of the Superior General. It did not speak about health, nor of resignation or substitution, but rather of providing a deputy. The appointment of a deputy was not considered a significant change, but one of little importance and temporary.

With this reply, Bizzarri and the SCBR seem to have gained the upper hand since, in practice, they had kept their criteria of having the Superior General elected for a fixed term. Their acceptance for another to deputise for the current Superior

<sup>20</sup> We already know the opinion of Fr Champagnat on the union of the Brothers with the Fathers and the Brothers' dependence on them. However, in 1845, from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> September, the General Chapter of the Fathers met in Lyons, in which the question of the union of the Brothers and Fathers was studied. Fr Colin asked the Chapter, "Is it appropriate for the Superior General of the Marist Fathers to also be the Superior General of the Brothers with the same name?" The response of the Chapter was in the negative (Cf *Chronologie mariste*, 2010, p. 164). Later, on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1852, Fr Colin, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, went to the II General Chapter of the Institute to express his conviction that the time had arrived for the Brothers to govern themselves and obtain their own pontifical recognition, given that the Holy See has not accepted the idea of the Society of Mary with four branches (Cf. *Chronologie mariste*, 2010, p. 177). His words are recorded in the Acts of the II General Chapter, p. 122-124. On the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1859, Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons, had written to Rome about the Marist Brothers, saying that in his opinion it was necessary for the Marist Brothers to be dependent on the Marist Fathers as they had been in the past (Cf. *Chronologie mariste*, 2010, p. 194).

General did away with the criteria in the Constitutions of the Superior having a mandate for life. At the same time, this decision showed the opposition of the SCBR towards the person then in charge. The disaffection of some officials of the SCBR for the person of François as Superior General had been brewing as a result of his visits to them during his stay in Rome, along with information arriving from Paris and Lyon and perhaps also

from anti-French prejudice current in the Curia.

The decision discussed in the General Council and resolved through the consultation to Rome was then put before the Chapter. According to the direction from Rome, François could not resign pure and simple, but had to ensure that he was replaced in everything by his First Assistant, Br Louis-Marie (Martínez Estaún, 2015, pp. 98-99). Hence the proposal:

*Therefore, I propose to hand over to Reverend Br Louis-Marie, as Vicar of the Superior General, full and complete authority and all the necessary powers for the administration and general government of the Institute. I do so with much confidence since it seems that the words of Father Champagnat addressed to the two of us some days before his death are coming true today. On the other hand, you know that from the time of our first appointment, we have always acted together in handling the business of the Congregation, be at the Hermitage, in Paris, or in Rome. Rome has indicated how we should proceed in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.*

For his part, Br Jean-Baptiste supported the proposal in front of the capitulants, that the Reverend Brother Superior General transfer those cares of office that were incompatible with his state of health to his first Assistant. Out of deference to the Holy See, the Chapter felt pressured to adopt this approach. Immediately Br Louis-Marie jumped to his feet and protested loudly with much gesticulation and, with many tears, gave a number of reasons against the proposal, rejected the vote that had been taken by acclamation and demanded a secret ballot in the hope of avoiding the heavy burden that was being placed on him.

The attitude of Br Louis-Marie before the Chapter made clear for all to see how much he had interiorly reflected over the previous few years, as François had spoken openly to the

Council of his desire to introduce changes to the government structure of the Institute, but which Louis-Marie had not been able to express openly, because the outcome would somehow directly concern him (Martínez Estaún, 2015, p. 99).

Br Pascal, the third Assistant, then presented a neat compromise: to determine by secret vote whether the Chapter accepted the opinion of Archbishop Bizzarri or else would make its own decision. The proposal from Rome was accepted by 31 votes to 2. After this ballot, the Chapter in its totality and unanimously conferred on Br Louis-Marie all the powers of being Superior, with all the responsibilities entailed. From that moment on, it was Br Louis-Marie who led the Institute and assumed responsibility for its affairs.

On the morning of the following day, at the initiative of Br Jean-Baptiste and to avoid any confusion, the Chapter decided unanimously to call Br François “Reverend Brother General”, and Br Louis-Marie “Reverend Brother Superior” (Cf. Zind, 1960, 180, p. 396; Anonymous, 1967, p. 633. Br Avit confused the titles, as can be seen in Br Avit, 2012, Year 1860, n. 28). In spite of his official title, Br François considered himself only an honorary Superior, looking on Br Louis-Marie as his successor, despite his being technically still his Vicar (Cf. Ponty, 1899, p. 229; Circular of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1860 of Br François, p. 402-403).

They took advantage of this Chapter to reorganise the existing Provinces and to create new ones, this requiring fresh elections (Cf. Anonymous, 1967, p. 633). After the ritual of fraternal embracing that concluded the handover of authority to Br Louis-Marie, the capitulants proceeded to the election of three new Assistants. In the first round, Br Théophile, Director de Valbenoîte-Saint-Etienne was elected by 26 votes out of 33; in the second, Br Philogone, Director of the Novitiate, by 20; and in the third, Br Chrysogone, Director of Arbresle, by 27 (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1860, n. 29; Zind, 1960, p. 395-396). So, through his resignation, Br François finally succeeded, with these three appointments, in getting approval for his model of government.

At the close of work of the Chapter, Br François, in well-chosen words, announced that his authority over the Institute had come to an end, and that from then on he wanted to be seen as the “grandfather” of the

Brothers. At the time that Br François stepped down from his role, he was only fifty-two years old (Cf. Ponty, 1899, p. 204; Chastel, 1948, p. 100).

In his first Circular published on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1860, Br Louis-Marie “indicated the Provinces assigned to each Brother Assistant, named the Secretary General, and retained the position of Econome General for himself (*Chronologie mariste*, 2010, p. 200).

The new Council decided to divide the Central Province into two: Notre Dame de Saint-Genis Laval and Notre Dame de l’Hermitage. The former was entrusted to Br Jean-Baptiste, First Assistant, and the latter to Br Philogone, Fourth Assistant; the two in the south (Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux and La Bégude) to Br Pascal, Second Assistant; and that of the North, as well as the house in the West, to Br Théophile, Third Assistant. Br Chrysogone, Fifth Assistant, was placed in charge of the Mother House and the Novitiate, which served both Provinces of Saint-Genis-Laval and Notre Dame de l’Hermitage (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1860, n. 86; Circular of 27<sup>th</sup> December 1860 of Br Louis-Marie, p. 29-30).

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1860, the Reverend Brother Superior appointed the Reverend Brother General as Director of the house at Notre Dame de l’Hermitage. He said to Br François, “I am doing to you what you did to me. I grant you full authority and responsibility over this house, just as you gave me full authority and responsibility for the Institute (Zind, 1960, p. 399; Ponty, 1899, p. 210).

Br François retained the title of Reverend Brother General until 22<sup>nd</sup>

July 1863. After the approval of the Constitutions by Rome on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1863, the IV General Chapter proceeded to elect a Superior General to conclude the temporary situation created in 1860. In the voting, Br Louis-Marie gained 37 out of 40, and Br Jean-Baptiste 2. From that time on, the former took the title of Reverend Brother Superior General and Br François returned to being a simple Little Brother of Mary.

On the following day, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1863, Br François blessed Br Louis-Marie with these beautiful words, “May the Lord grant you the authority of a father, the tenderness of a mother, and may you lead us all to heaven”<sup>21</sup>. On his return to l’Hermitage, François “gave himself fully to prayer and meditation, edifying the Brothers by his numerous and eminent virtues, practised alongside the tomb of our revered Founder” (Br Avit, 2012, Year 1860, #67).

## 9. VARIOUS TRADITIONS ON THE ROLE THAT BR FRANÇOIS PLAYED IN THE HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE<sup>22</sup>

The personal letters of Br François present him as a Superior who was both brotherly and firm. In this sense,

it appears to contradict a tradition coming down to us, in particular from Brothers Louis-Marie, Jean-Baptiste and Avit.

There is nothing that illustrates this more than the Circular dedicated by Br Louis-Marie to Br Jean-Baptiste after the latter’s death in 1872, and while Br François was still alive. For Louis-Marie, “The Venerable Founder can be indebted (to Br Jean-Baptiste) that he was able to outlive him by thirty years” since “hasn’t he been for us like a second Founder?” Br Jean-Baptiste “had a particularly important mission in the Institute, that of setting up the structures and completing it”. He had no equal in being capable of “penetrating, as only he could, into the personal and original thinking of the Father Founder, [...] and, with the same recall of people and places, taking us back to the origins of the Institute; defining, with the same authority, our spirit, our aim, our Rules, in conformity with the Administration and the General Chapter”<sup>23</sup>

Br François, despite his having been the first Superior and the longest-living disciple, would seem, then, to have been forgotten. Already in his biography of Br Louis [Audras], Br Jean-Baptiste had written a quite ambiguous tribute:

<sup>21</sup> The text of blessing can be found in the Acts of the IV General Chapter. Details of the 1860 Chapter can be read in the III General Chapter, p. 206-217.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Richard, 2015, p. 85-100.

<sup>23</sup> Circular of Br Louis-Marie, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1972, p. 239-306. Most of the citation in this paragraph is taken from p. 250.

*Br François has always been a lover of the hidden life. Prayer and being united with the mysteries of our Saviour captivate his soul. In this way he has been able to rise to the height of virtue that we all admire in him, and to offer such significant service to the Institute. When elected Superior, he left the bothersome administrative matters in the hands of his Assistants; he got them to handle business matters with the men of the world, while he, lifting his arms to heaven, took them to God, and gained the blessings that have been the main cause of the development and extraordinary progress of the Congregation*

*(Br Jean-Baptiste, 1986, p. 43-44).*

In his Annals, Br Avit would include, as was his custom, highly critical and biting judgements:

*Despite his being much admired by all, Reverend Br François did not possess the character, initiative, energy or enthusiasm of Fr Champagnat. He did not know how to win the hearts or shape the wills as our deceased and deeply-missed Father had done with such success. The Brothers did not really like his manner which was cold, slow, and moralising in his talks. They found him over-meticulous, sometimes giving excessive importance to small failings, reluctant to accept excuses, and they were quite apprehensive of his comments.*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1840, n. 684).*

Discussing the *Circular on the Spirit of Faith*, published by Br François from 1848<sup>24</sup>, he seems to pass over the outstanding teaching it contains to remark:

*Allow us to say that the Circular was mainly the work of Fr Matricon and of Reverend Br Louis-Marie<sup>25</sup>. For his part, Reverend Br François was beginning to feel tired out by his frequent headaches, which made any serious work heavy-going for him*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1850, n. 53).*

When Br François presented his resignation in 1860, Br Avit somewhat over-stated the affection and warmth of Br François for the Hermitage and his desire to be relieved of leading the Institute (Cf. Br Avit, 2012, Year 1860. n. 25 and 67).

Finally, in his comments on receiving notice of his death, he limited himself to these words:

<sup>24</sup> It was published in four parts.

<sup>25</sup> It is true that Br François did not write this Circular on his own, but Br Avit was exaggerating in minimising François' contribution.

We are not going to add anything to what we have already said

*at various times about this virtuous man, now deceased, except to say that he combined his knowledge of medicine with his sweet and pleasant propensity for religious poetry. Indeed, he wrote four of the Hymns in our collection*

*(Br Avit, 2012, Year 1881, n. 36).*

Br Sylvester gives us a completely different tradition. In his *Memoir* of Fr Champagnat, he mentions Br François by name 35 times<sup>26</sup>, and presents him as more than a model Brother. When discussing the marvellous growth of the

congregation after the death of Fr Champagnat, he placed special emphasis on the prominent role of Br François and avoided any mention of the name of Louis-Marie in the purchase and construction of Saint-Genis-Laval:

*Under the mandate of his immediate successor, vocations were more and more numerous, foundations were multiplying, so much so that the Hermitage, which is the great relic of Father Champagnat, as Br François the first Superior General used to call it, was no longer a single house nor spacious or appropriate enough to be the centre of the Institute... Saint-Genis-Laval, a town situated some kilometres from Lyons, was chosen as the spot to build the new Mother House of the Congregation, leaving the Hermitage as a simple branch, yet precious in every aspect During the mandate of his successor, Brother François, the Congregation was approved by the Holy See, with the faculty of canonically electing the Superior General and making the simple vows of religion*

*(Br Sylvester, 1990, p. 94-95).*

I believe that a study of the personal letters of Br François helps to reinforce the thesis of Br Sylvester, weakens the statements and judgments of Br Avit, and qualifies those of Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste.

In fact, it was during the generalate of Br François that fundamental changes were effected in the Institute, changes that should not be attributed

solely to his two Assistants. Also, Br Avit seems to forget that after his resignation Br François kept on doing a lot for the formation of the Brothers (conferences, retreats) as his notebooks reveal. But it is regrettable and strange that we have none of his correspondence from after 1860, since it quite improbable that his activity as a spiritual director stopped (Cf. Richard, 2015, p. 99).

<sup>26</sup> 21 times for Louis-Marie and very few mentions of Br Jean-Baptiste. But it should be taken into account that Br Sylvester was constantly referring to the Life of the Founder written by the latter.

## 10. FINAL REMARKS

Apart from particular instances that show that the *three-in-one* had their moments of disagreement and held opposing opinions and approaches from time to time, we have discovered a matter of fundamental disagreement among them, especially between François and Louis-Marie: the manner in which the Institute was to be led, administered and governed. Br François wanted more people in leadership, with more clearly defined responsibilities, in which the Superior had a specified role. The older Brothers and the Assistants did not understand his concept of government.

Surely this misunderstanding was the basis for his reputed poor health that is such a feature in the descriptions of Br François as passed down in his biographies. The interpretation given was that he wanted to withdraw, when what he wanted was a different style of government.

Louis-Marie's letter of 1841 concerning changes at the Hermitage shows that the *three-in-one* functioned rather like a triumvirate. Br François was uncomfortable that there were no precise rules of government. The Assistants carried out the function of visitors, while François remained rather at the Hermitage to handle administrative affairs. In this first period, Br Louis-Marie kept very close links with Fr Colin, arising from the priestly formation they had both received. The three superiors did not have the same concept of what the Congregation was or should be.

For his part, Br François' letter of

1846 proved provocative, since it seemed to bypass his own Assistants and Fr Colin, despite the fact that they would have to be included sooner or later. On the other hand, the letter seems like an appeal to those who elected him in 1839, as if they were the legitimate group for changing the style of the government. It could be that Br François wanted to contrast the tradition of the Marist Brothers with the tendencies of his two Assistants who were more inclined to a policy that aligned with the Marist Fathers' approach.

In his way of conceiving government, Br François invoked the principle of subsidiarity: each level should be capable of resolving the issues arising at its own level, without referring them to a higher level to be resolved. It was a response to becoming over-involved in matters from lower levels such as he felt obliged to do in the government model they had adopted.

Gaining legal recognition of the Institute in France was the great success of Br François, an achievement that, for all his efforts, not even Fr Champagnat had managed.

Yet Br François did not succeed in bringing the Brothers around to his thinking on what the role of Superior was in the Institute, even though his thinking was the fruit of extended meditation and reflection on the topic, as can be seen in the reflective writings in his *Notebooks*. The idea started to spread among the Brothers that François would prefer to withdraw from active life.

During the period 1852-1860, the high opinion that the Brothers had of



Br François as leader began to decline. His meeting with the Brother capitulants, not including his two Assistants, allowed him to expound on his wish to devote himself to the spiritual formation of the Brothers more than to administrative matters, and he explained some health issues more clearly than in 1846, but still the capitulants did not give their assent and were reticent even to appoint a new Assistant, although they did so in the end. Br Louis-Marie began to act as de facto Vicar-General, even though he had not been formally appointed as such. Hence, François had been partially successful in getting his vision adopted, but the topic was not well understood, especially by Br Avit who passed down to us the image of an ill Superior who withdrew from day-to-day management.

The failure to obtain canonical approval in Rome in 1858 ended up putting François in a difficult position. He returned from Rome empty-handed after having been there for six months. During his absence, his Assistants had ensured the government. The General House had moved from the Hermitage to Saint-Genis-Laval. The prestige of Br Louis-Marie had grown as a consequence of his being in charge of the building of the new General House. Most probably all these events were significant factors in the desire of Br François to resign.

The 1860 Chapter was more a continuation of that of 1852-1854 than a new Chapter. There were no elected delegates and only Brothers with Stability (all older men) attended. Their purpose was nothing more than to ap-

prove decisions that the Council had already taken. Br François had the plan, especially in his opening address, of showing that the decision had already been taken by the *three-in-one*.

But when Br François was talking about *our health*, he was not just talking about his own, but that of his two original Assistants as well, both of whom had had serious health issues as can be seen in their respective biographies. It is curious that Br Jean-Baptiste, an asthmatic who went to spend the rest of his life in semi-retirement at Saint-Genis-Laval, did not consider resigning. So, health was not the main factor. It was rather a question of a better organisation of the government of the Institute to guide its growth correctly and deal with the challenges within it (poorly motivated Brothers) and from without (social changes and the multiplying of administrative and management tasks). Deep down, François was aware that they were facing a structural crisis. All this got mixed in with the doubts shown by the Church and Roman authorities about the capacity of the Superiors to govern and their opinion that the government of the Marist Brothers was too centralised.

François knew that more and more he was seen by the Brothers as the weak link in the group of successors of Fr Champagnat in leadership. He realised that he was the only one who could walk away without provoking a crisis, and that he also had the moral authority, as one of the first Brothers, to get the change accepted. I am convinced that he sacrificed himself voluntarily to provide the answer that the Institute needed.

In the end, he got some changes that he had been trying in vain to introduce since 1845. The leadership group was increased in number and the Superior General received uncontested authority. Basically, his resignation opened the way for his successors to govern as he believed they should. But such clear-mindedness and detachment was not destined to be understood at any depth.

Hence grew the myth that François resigned for health reasons and that he felt attracted to a more contemplative lifestyle. Moreover, his withdrawal was only relative, since he quickly found himself given the role of Director of the Hermitage. What has persisted, however, is the image of Moses on the mountain, an image that should be used with caution if one wants to be faithful to historical truth.

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## ***CAMÉRISTES, BESACIERS and FORAINS*** in Marist Brothers' schools in the Nineteenth Century



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The *Annals* written by Br Avit record details from several hundred of our schools in the nineteenth century. Among them are not only town or village schools with day-students only. There are also several categories of boarders which are mentioned and which are somewhat difficult to define precisely:

The ***besaciers*** (“bag carriers”). As their name suggests they came to school carrying a bag containing their provisions for the week – bacon, potatoes, fruit, etc. For a small fee they stayed at school where they were served soup as their hot meal. They may have come from distant hamlets of the commune or from neighbouring communes. Their defining criterion was their distance from the school. But the word “besacier” carried a somewhat pejorative sense, *besace* being the bag of a vagabond or an outsider. Not being citizens of the town, but rather from the hamlets, the *besaciers* were viewed as rustics. Moreover, they only attended school in winter and their attendance was often irregular.

The ***caméristes*** (“lodgers”). Traditionally this word referred to collegians who boarded at the school or with a boarding housemaster in order to attend the courses offered by a *collège*, which was often only a small school of an average quality. Quite often the college itself served as a boarding school. In Marist language, the terms *camériste* and *besacier* may have denoted the same thing: children coming from a distance and staying at the school during the week. However, the word *camériste* is of a higher register: it refers to children from a higher social level and more serious students.

The ***forains*** (“foreigners”, “out-of-towners”). This word denoted the collegian or the student who did not belong to the commune or the town where the school was located whether he was a boarder or a day student. Thus, a certain number of *besaciers* or *caméristes* were simultaneously *forains*. The communes charged them a higher fee than those who belonged to the commune.

The *pensionnaires* (“full-time boarders”). Irrespective of whether they belonged to the commune they resided permanently at the school during the school year, with meals and a dormitory area provided. A high number of communes had boarders who paid additional fees which provided them with extra services.

By the end of the century, new words came to replace some of the terms mentioned above:

Gradually the difference between *pensionnaires* and *caméristes* became unclear and the term *internes* covered both. Moreover, a certain number of *caméristats* changed into small *pensionnats*.

*Demi-pensionnaires*. This term tended to replace the older words *besacier* and *camériste* by the end of the nineteenth century to describe students who took their meals at school.

There remained other categories easier to define: *externes* (day students) in supervised study or not, in adult courses, and so on.

The Brothers’ school in the towns and small villages was therefore a complex matter mainly accommodating children and sometimes young adults of diverse backgrounds and varying status. It was not, properly speaking, a country town school but a small cultural centre drawing on the tradition of the *petit collège* of the *Ancien Régime* (except for the teaching of Lat-

in) rather than the parochial school focussing on the catechism and practising the individual mode of education.

## 1. FR CHAMPAGNAT’S DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF BOARDING

*The Life* informs us that Marcellin made his first communion at eleven years of age<sup>1</sup>, which is not impossible but seems quite early since it was normally done at age thirteen. No extant document can corroborate this assertion of Br Jean-Baptiste. If it were the case, it would mean that Marcellin attended school between All Saints Day 1798 and Easter 1799 as an eleven-year-old to learn reading and catechism. Coming from a nearby hamlet of Marlhès, he was certainly an *externe* but also would have mixed with *besaciers* and *caméristes*<sup>2</sup> who came in from hamlets further away.

When Marcellin went to study at St Sauveur-en-Rue in 1804 and 1805, at the small *collège* of his brother-in-law a dozen kilometres from Marlhès, was he a *pensionnaire* or a *camériste*?<sup>3</sup> It is quite possible due to lack of finance that he returned each week to Marlhès to obtain food and supplies. At the minor seminary of Verrières, however, then at St Irénée in Lyon, he would certainly have experienced the life of a *pensionnaire*.

<sup>1</sup> In the Annals of the houses (Marlhès), Br. Avit says that he made his First Communion in 1800.

<sup>2</sup> When describing the School of the Brothers in 1818-22, Br. Avit remembers that they accepted a large number of pupils in spite that the place was small and narrow.

<sup>3</sup> It is not a Primary school but a small school or “pedagogy” .

We next find Fr Champagnat at La Valla starting a *caméristat*. Unfortunately, we cannot give a precise date to this, but it was certainly after 1820. As the school grew and was divided into two classes, a number of children resided at the school following the old custom of the *caméristat*.<sup>4</sup> As they were left to themselves after classes Fr Champagnat proceeded to make arrangements in the Brothers' house to accommodate them. It would seem that the famous table still preserved in Fr Champagnat's room at La Valla – a very low set table with multiple draws – served as a meal table for *caméristes* and *besaciers*.

The founding of this boarding school has more significance than it appears since it shows that the Founder envisaged the school as a broader educational centre. It is not by accident that towards 1820 he was accused of starting a clandestine *collège*.

The prospectus of 1824 makes no mention of a *caméristat*, nor did that of 1838. On the other hand, the prospectus of 1840 makes a clear point in its final article: "The *pensionnaires*, the *demi-pensionnaires* and the *externes* from outside the commune are the responsibility of the Brothers". In fact, it could be a sensitive matter of negotiation between the commune authorities and the Institute when the Brothers wanted to assume responsibility for students who came from outside the commune: a struggle to

which the *Annals* of Br Avit give ample testimony.

Even after the Guizot Law (1833) which obliged each commune to take responsibility for its school, the Institute refused to be limited by the strictures of a commune school and maintained its practice of receiving students from a much wider area. Additionally, given the insufficient remuneration from commune authorities, the Brother Directors needed to find other sources of income. The vocabulary that came to be used shows that the old terms *besacier* or *camériste* were no longer apt.

## 2. A SCHOOL MODEL ACCORDING TO FR CHAMPAGNAT

On the 21 January 1840, a little while before his death, Fr Champagnat outlined to Fr Gire, parish priest of Saint Privat d'Allier, his plan for an ideal school. He did not use the word *camériste* but did make an implicit distinction between a *caméristat* and a *pensionnat*:

On the ground floor there is need for a kitchen, an office, a refectory and two large adjoining rooms ...

so that the Brothers can be seen ...

The first of these two rooms needs to accommodate 60 students mastering writing, and the second 70 to 80 children who are learning to read.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> I have still known this custom in St. Martin-Haut during the years 1962-63: a Brother accompanied a group of Boarders who had to lodge in the houses of the neighbors of the place.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters*, n° 315

<sup>6</sup> The simultaneous learning of reading and writing is not usual as yet. .

If the normal number of boarders [pensionnaires] was to be 20 to 30, there would need to be a third room adjoining the two others to have a separate class ...

The first floor should include two or three rooms and a dormitory big enough to contain 40 beds spaced one metre apart.

It would be good to have a window in the Brothers' rooms through which they can supervise the children in the dormitory.

Champagnat's plan therefore envisaged three categories of students: the *externes* from the town or nearby countryside; the *pensionnaires* who had their own dormitory and, if they are numerous, (20 to 30) a class of their own; the more numerous (40) *besaciers* and *cameristes*.

The model described by Champagnat did not, therefore, reflect the parochial or commune school model but drew more from the small *collège* capable of serving as an educational centre with a variety of services. In fact, did not align completely with *collège* model, even though it did include the privilege, often more theoretical than actual, of teaching Latin. In chapters 20 to 23 of the *Life of Fr Champagnat* which describes his educational approach, Br Jean-Baptiste says nothing of this complex experience of the boarding school however widespread and attempted it may have been.

But it is true that Br Jean-Baptiste was quite opposed to the boarding schools which he described as *crève-frères* ("Brother-killers").

### 3. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES OF GOVERNMENT (1854)

The Rule of 1837 says nothing about boarding schools (either *caméristats* or *pensionnats*). The rule of 1852 limits itself to one mention: in Chapter 4, Article 8 recommends that children do not have ease of access to the house and notably "that they do not enter the Brothers' rooms and even the kitchen without knocking and without permission ..."

In Chapter 4 of the second section of the Constitutions of 1854, the Rules for Brother Directors present several articles concerning students boarding in the Brothers' house. Article 10 forbids the conducting of lessons in the house without the permission of the Superior General. Article 11 states clearly: "He (the Director) cannot receive boarders nor even teach extern students after class without permission." Article 14 foresees that "in houses where there are boarders" he (the Director) will make special arrangements for Brothers acting as supervisors. Article 32 makes a clear reference to the *caméristat* without using the word: "When there are children residing at the house" he will supervise them or have them supervised carefully."

Obviously, these legislative texts are not designed to describe the social background of school students and they avoid using informal or local expressions. Officially, the Institute



only recognised *pensionnaires* (“those who live on the premises”) and *externes*.

Br Avit adds that if this opinion was shared by Br Jean-Baptiste, Br Louis-Marie favoured the idea of

“well organised boarding schools with sufficient personnel which could create financial resources for the Institute.”

#### 4. BOARDING SCHOOLS IN THE TIME OF FR CHAMPAGNAT’S SUCCESSORS

In the *Annals of the Institute* Br Avit briefly discusses the range of opinion of superiors regarding boarding schools by quoting from a letter to the parish priest of Neuville who wanted to begin a well set-up boarding school there. Br François was opposed to the project:

“The longer we continue the more we see that the best course for our Brothers is to conduct only simple schools so as to be able to attend quietly to their exercises of piety and to follow a recollected life in the strict observance of their Rule.”

Br François envisaged a type of establishment which did not overload the Brothers and he dismissed all forms of boarding school. Two solutions remained possible: either close the boarding schools (which Br. Jean Baptiste had already done in the Provinces of St-Paul and Aubenas) or work out some sort of compromise. But the scarcity of funds for the Brothers’ schools in the oldest provinces of St-Genis and l’Hermitage, and the necessity of responding to the needs of the people, resulted in boarding schools continuing there for a long time.

**Table of Schools with Besaciers, Forains and Caméristes by Province provided by Br. Avit**

Provinces	Besaciers	Forains	Caméristes	Total
Aubenas	0	31	8	39
NDH	16	33	26	75
SGL	16	54	24	94
St Paul	0	21	0	21
Beaucamps	0	14	1	15
Lacabane	1	5	2	8
Varenes	2	19	16	37
Total	35	177	67	279

This table shows clearly that the *besaciers* and the *cameristes* typically were found in the old Provinces: in Notre Dame de l’Hermitage and St-Genis-Laval and, less so, in Varenes. In the south (St Paul and Aubenas)

and north (Beaucamps) where the population was either more concentrated or urbanised, this tradition barely existed. The influence of Br. Jean-Baptiste was certainly felt in the Provinces of the south.

## 5. THE BESACIERS IN THE PROVINCE OF NOTRE DAME DE L'HERMITAGE

There were 27 schools with *besaciers* and *cameristes*. Six of them had *pensionnaires* numbering more than 91. Br Avit gives us a good idea of the arrangements between the school and the *besaciers*: “at Cramponne the Brothers had to provide soup three times a day, heating, lighting and a constant surveillance”. At Marlies the conditions were fairly similar: the *cameristes* pay 4 Francs per month. “They were provided with lodging, meat and vegetable stock twice daily, heating, lighting, supervision day and night and instruction.” In general, Br Avit in his commentary underlines that there was little equivalence between the amount of work involved and the fees paid: “It was quite cheap”. He notes that at Firminy there were some *cameristes* “who were of poor appearance”. It was demanding work and Br. Avit notes that at Cremaux in 1876 the Brother Visitor was bemoaning that Br Ceran, the Director, did not have his *brevet*, and added “Study does not count for much in the houses where there are *besaciers*.”

The Institute would have liked to terminate this demanding practice, for example at Lay in 1873 where “the Brother Visitor was insisting on the termination of the *besacerie*.” But people clung to a model of education which was low cost. So at Jonzieux, a commune near Marlies, in 1866-68 the school had two classes with 87

students in winter of whom eight were *cameristes* and 45 *paysans* and 40 in summer. This term *paysan* (“peasant”) is not mentioned elsewhere but is equivalent to *besacier* with its pejorative overtones. The analyst makes an interesting addition: “*Internes* who were brothers were permitted to sleep together ... Despite the prohibitions of the Brother Visitors, two interns were permitted to share the same bed.”

The Institute, therefore, faced some stubborn local opposition in introducing its preferred modern educational thinking. It had to persist with out-of-date practices, some of which were also morally dubious. The *besacerie*, especially, achieved little by way of serious education but demanded much. At St Pierre du Champ in 1874 there were a high number of *besaciers* who paid only 3F per month “and disappeared in large part during summer.” The *besacerie* operated at schools mainly during the winter season, from the All Saints Day until Easter.

## 6. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

At St Just between 1864 and 1876 we have precise figures concerning the students. The maximum enrolment was 101 students and the minimum was 35, of whom there were 52 fee-paying *externes* and 26 *internes*, mostly *besaciers*, which indicates the number of non-paying students rose to 23. But the *Annals* record that

those from outside the commune (*besaciers forains*) paid 5F per month for boarding fees and the others 2F50 in addition to the monthly payment. “A small number of boarders paid 25F per month.” The annalists adds: “With these fees and a fixed stipend of 1100F, the Brothers were at no risk of becoming millionaires.” At St Jean Soleymieux there were 60 *internes*: the few *pensionnaires* paid 320F per year and the *besaciers* 4 or 5F per month. The legal wage was 1900F. At St Didier around 1840 and 1850, the Brothers’ school had 200 students including a high number of *besaciers*. Schooling was free for the *externes*. The *besaciers* or *caméristes* from the commune paid 2F50 per month and those from outside the commune paid 5F. Their number ranged from 40 to 50. The

four Brothers were paid a salary of 1200F, “barely enough to feed the sparrows.” At St. Sauveur the maximum enrolment was 130 and the minimum 61 of which 14 were *besaciers* who paid 5F. The others were free of charge. At Montagny, the three classes numbered 123 students of whom there were 17 *besaciers* who paid 8F if from outside the commune and 6F if they came from the commune.

At Craponne after consultation between the commune and the Superior General it was agreed: “For the *forains*, the *pensionnaires* and the *demi-pensionnaires*, the Brothers will have the option to charge as in the past the fees according to the class they attend.” In 1862 the salary was 2200F plus 3F50 per month for each *cameriste* and 2F for each *externe*.

School	Date	Students	Boarding	Besaciers	Externs fee-paying	Externs non-paying
Andance	1860-66	112 (average)	12	14	41	24
Charlieu	1850	?			Some	
La Valla	1868 1869	103 113		7 16	0 0	
Usson	1849	175		14		
St Pierre du Champ	1874			Big number		
St Just en Bas	1864-76	101 max. 35 min.	rare	<i>Besaciers</i> and <i>forains</i>		
St Jean-Soleymieux	?	184	Yes	Yes (60 <i>internes</i> )		
St Pal en Chalancon	?			Sim (special room)		
St Didier	1840-50	200		40 to 50		Non paying
St Sauveur	1875-85?	130 max 61 min.		14	0	

School	Date	Students	Boarding	Besaciers	Externs fee-paying	Externs non-paying
Tarentaise	1840 1860	57	Yes (How many?)	Yes (How many?)		
Serrières	1876 1877-79	30 to 40 61	9	4		15
Pélussin (2 schools)	1872 1873 1874 1875	227 280 202 269	10 12 7 10	8 15 20 25		45 27 50 50
Montagny		123		17		
Lay	1873 ?	77 max. 56 min.		6 8	34	
Craponne						
Crémeaux	1876			Yes (How many?)		
Jonzieux	1861-66 1867-68?	96 max 39 (min.) 87 (winter) 40 (summer)		<i>Caméristes</i>  8 cam. 45 farmers		
Vanosc	1855-59	125 (winter) 70 (summer)		20 cam.		
Vion	1872			3 cam.		6
St Maurice sur Loire	?	64		4		
Préaux	1851	80 (winter) 28 (summer)		2	40	
Marlhes						
Doizieux	1864-69	90		15 cam.		10
Firminy	1840	140		some		
Boulieu	1836			12	20	
Peaugres	1836			50	50	
St Sauveur	1836				80	

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that the practice of welcoming students from a large catchment area goes back to Marcellin Champagnat who sought to establish a model of school more in line with the *petit collège* tradition that existed in towns and small villages rather than the parochial school model. But he was also pragmatic. *Pensionnaires*, *forains*, *caméristes* and *besaciers* came from a old educational model characterised by: attendance at school in winter; resistance by families and communes to pay for schooling; the weak identity of commune schools. The duties of the schoolmasters were broadly cast including, as in the old college system, with the dual task of boarding master and teacher.

The role of teacher would become more and more regulated by the State which fixed a minimum salary, 200F through the Guizot law and 600F through the Falloux law, for

the commune teacher and sometimes for an assistant. It was the commune who paid the teacher. It was the tax inspector who received the remuneration for the commune's budget; and the Brothers relieved their financial burden by taking in *internes* through various means. Up until the laws of 1881-86, the Brothers would be governed by contracts between the communes and the Institute.

The notion that Fr Champagnat began his work for the people of rural areas is both true and false. In fact, he sought to establish educational centres for children of the towns and small villages and for the surrounding region. The Brothers, while often of rural origin themselves, carried out a lot of their work in urban or semi-urban places. In taking in boarders, *caméristes* and *besaciers*, the Brothers were quite prepared to welcome a mix of social groups. The goal of the Institute was religious and secular instruction of children of diverse social status whether they be rural or urban.

## ANNEX

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### **MARIE-MADELEINE COMPERE, IN HER WORK, *DU COLLÈGE AU LYCÉE* (1500-1850), OUTLINES THE STORY OF THE COLLÈGES AND SO THROWS LIGHT ON MARIST HISTORY**

Conceived at the dawn of the sixteenth century in Paris, the model spread through all towns of the Kingdom. Church and State considered it the best means of forming an elite class. From the end of the seventeenth century there were signs of it breaking down. The college lost its educational monopoly. It was joined by schools of charity (notably with the De La Salles), begun at around 1680 and in which Latin was no longer indispensable. Along with these, primary, technical and professional schools also began. This was accompanied by private tuition by tutors, teachers, and boarding housemasters. The mas-

ters of boarding houses increasingly claimed the right to teach those who boarded with them. In small villages new colleges, often of mediocre quality and little concerned with the broad humanist approach, proliferated. The minor seminaries also grew in number. Napoleon established the monopoly of the University over schools in 1806-1808, but from around 1830 the State no longer enforced this monopoly over secondary education. Following the Falloux Law of 1850 which ended the monopoly, the *pensionnat* emerged during the Second Empire period (1852-1870). It would absorb all other forms of boarding school.

# INSERTION COMMUNITIES IN MARIST BÉTICA after the Vatican Council and the XVI General Chapter



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## Editor's Note:

*Because the number and length of the notes made this interesting article longer than is possible for this type of publication, we have abbreviated or removed most of the notes contained in the original text. Those interested in the original text can approach the author.*

## 1. THE POST-CONCILIAR CHURCH IN SPAIN

Vatican II forced the Church to change direction and made it possible for what seemed unchangeable to change, what was tightly bound to loosen up, and what was frozen solid to melt. Despite their being disoriented by the Council, the Spanish bishops generously and decisively assumed the task of implementing it even when some documents came into conflict with the political regime, and of moving from a Church of a "Christendom" to a Church "on mission". To this end, they convened a "Joint Assembly of Bishops and Priests"<sup>1</sup> to prepare a roadmap for renewal. This about-turn was also felt in religious life and gave rise to a series

of conflicts as the new approaches failed to change centuries-old practices or lead to other deeper changes. They were aborted by leaders when they realised where these changes were headed, for fear of destabilising the group.

## 2. THE MARIST RESPONSE TO VATICAN II

### 2.1. The response of the Institute

The 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, as mandated by the Council, gave a clear definition to the lifestyle and apostolic engagement of the Congregation: "the Christian education of youth, particularly the least favoured. Human promotion and work for justice,

<sup>1</sup> Welcomed with enthusiasm by the majority of the clergy, religious, laypeople and seminarians, over 1700 groups worked on the documents. They expressed what they were thinking honestly and openly. Never in the history of the Spanish church had there been such a mature and sincere debate.

through Catholic schools or others with a vision that respects human values. Catechesis outside of schools and other forms of apostolate adapted to the needs of the times". Later Chapters were to develop this doctrine with greater precision and modify it in new emerging contexts. Despite some difficulties, fears, blocking tactics, and limitations, some interesting steps forward were made.

## 2.2. The response of the Province of Bética

### 2.2.1. Provincial Chapters

The first of these, presided over by Br Javier G. Terradillos, proposed among other things: "Let us move generously to ministry to the poor and marginalised, open the doors of our colleges to as many of them as possible." To make this happen, "Brothers working as teachers [were] asked to gain Government recognition, so that the colleges could be reclassified as 'Patronato' (governed by an association), and receive State subsidies."<sup>2</sup> In the second Provincial Chapter, there was discussion of "the vocational crisis and the future of Marists in Andalucía" and there was agreement on introducing a new style of Marist religious life into the Province.<sup>3</sup> This topic was studied again at the third Chapter, along with the future of our schools and their future direction. A

disconnect was noted between official stance and what was actually happening to give priority to the least favoured. There was also a range of choices in schools and other ministries being made, closely related to the problem of vocations. The fourth Chapter recognised that there was still insufficient awareness and motivation among the Brothers and that they needed more preparation, and so the Chapter took up the idea of a "Plan for Poverty and Justice". The fifth Chapter devoted its third session to an evaluation and decision regarding Insertion communities. It was agreed to keep and improve them. In the seventh Chapter, a Plan for Poverty and Justice figured in the Province Plans.

### 2.2.2. The visit of Br Basilio

This occurred in 1972. Twelve surveys were conducted during retreats in the month of July to get to know the reality of Bética. The visit concluded with a message that invited the whole Province "to proceed on the path of renewal with unity and charity, avoiding tensions resulting from a minority group racing ahead." This paragraph was an example of the problem. Unity was spoken of in a theological sense, unity which in practice, as many authors state, "is more than just impossible; it is useless. In the end, the conservative group always finishes on top."

<sup>2</sup> In this they were responding to the wish of the XVI General Chapter: "That, as regards new foundations, the establishment, maintenance and management of the schools be left to private bodies, such as parent associations, parishes, dioceses, or the state itself. (...) Such witness of real detachment is something to which the world today is becoming very sensitive."

<sup>3</sup> The creation of an Andalusian style of Marist life was seen as necessary, different from the rest of Spain, in as much as Andalucía is different. This would help Brothers be fully at home with Andalusians and would lead progressively to all positions of responsibility being held by locals.



### **2.2.3. The vocations crisis**

This became a great concern for the Province, as it looked back nostalgically to its golden early years. Br Julián Nebreda, encouraged by Br Basilio, conducted a scientific and grounded study which showed that the crisis in the Institute began at the start of the twentieth century for reasons related to politics and war. The current crisis arose after the Council and was more acute and demoralising with wide-scale repercussions. Its roots were different and deeper from previous ones and were not passing as those had been. This crisis was calling for a fresh way of conceiving and expressing Marist identity and would last as long as it was not faced up to and responded to effectively; any new resurgence in vocations depended on this. If this did not happen, extinction would slowly but surely follow.

### **2.2.4. A half-hearted renewal**

The same as happened in the Church, despite the efforts of Chapters, most Brothers turned inwardly towards tradition, with no desire for change. The Institute was very open to change, but any application of decisions meant preparing the hearts and minds of Brothers sufficiently. Even though such change was desired by the Church and being led by the Holy Spirit, at such an unprecedented moment, there were not enough superiors or trained, qualified people to live such change themselves or lead others to accept it.

## **2.3. Some initiatives**

### **2.3.1. A sector of the Province was anxious to open new pathways to renewal**

This was mainly the young Brothers who, as Brother Provincial told the third Chapter, “are not at all satisfied with our way of living and are anxious to open new pathways to renewal.” Yet, for the most part, they were to meet all kinds of difficulties.

### **2.3.2. Ministry impetus in educational works**

Thanks to this sector, a Ministry Team was formed that helped to re-imagine and re-orient the social and religious formation offered in our schools, getting the student body involved with the most needy and in apostolic movements, as well as organising the “Marist Family”, Brothers and Laypeople together.

### **2.3.3. Brothers’ Discussion Group**

After 1969 Br Terradillos initiated some meetings with young Brothers who were quite numerous at the time. Many of them were unsettled about being religious in the contemporary world. They spoke of the possibility of doing things differently, as per our new Documents, and were searching for ways and means of bringing them to life. A discussion group, open to all, grew out of these meetings.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Such meetings, with around 50 Brothers taking part and varying degrees of energy and passion, continued almost until the final years of the Province.

### 3. INSERTION COMMUNITIES

#### 3.1. Insertion communities in the Church in Spain

As a response to the Council, some groups of religious began to develop projects to evangelise in new ways. They saw that one of the big difficulties was the failure to accept that a post-Christian era was beginning to flourish, in which religious symbols were no longer shaping the culture and priests and religious were losing their acceptance, appreciation, relevance and distinction ... What was needed was an attitude of incarnation and inculturation, and it was a matter of finding ways of embodying such an attitude to continue announcing the Gospel in society, not from above or being at the centre, but from a position of service, commitment and following the poor and humble Jesus.

#### 3.2. Insertion communities in the Marist Province of Bética

##### 3.2.1. *Brothers who wanted to respond to the calls of the Council and Chapter Documents*

As happened with other groups in the Church, they saw how new problems and needs demanding new responses were beginning to appear in the suburban belts of cities where the new poor were growing in number. They came to the conclusion that this demanded two lines of action: one was

to educate students in our colleges to make an option for Gospel values and the least favoured in their personal lives and career choices. The other was to make themselves present in these areas through insertion communities. With the support of Br Terradillos, they initiated the first of these communities.

##### 3.2.2. *The community in the neighbourhood of "la Picuriña" in Badajoz*

The Brothers had been present since 1954 in this neighbourhood where the need for schooling, human and religious formation were very great. At the end of the 1973-74 academic year, the Province established a new community there. Its members collaborated with a Community Association and other organisations in the neighbourhood and parish, and taught in the parish school. In August 1983, owing to the lack of Brothers available, the Council decided to close the community for a time, (a decision that was met with sorrow by the people of the neighbourhood), but with the promise of opening and collaborating in a social work in its place. This was fulfilled in 1992 when an agreement was reached to re-start the diocesan work for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, "Proyecto Vida", with the appointment of three Brothers who continued to work in the college where they were living. In 2001, after a period of reflection, with the support of the Provincial, Ventura Pérez, they presented a plan of action and mission that was implemented in 2003. They shifted into an apartment in the neighbourhood of "Las Malvinas", a simple open-house

close to the people, collaborating with the parish, other groups and the network of religious in the neighbourhoods on the periphery of the city.

### **3.2.3. The community of Polígono Norte in Seville**

In 1974, with the agreement of the Provincial Council, after consultations with some of the Bishops of Andalucía about establishing a new insertion community, the offer of the Cardinal in Seville, José M<sup>a</sup> Bueno, to go to Polígono Norte was accepted. This was a working-class area in which most residents were living in poverty in every sense of the word. The community started on 12<sup>th</sup> October, after developing a community life plan during a week of prayer and discussion, accompanied by Brothers Basilio S.G. and Terradillos, Provincial. From the outset, three objectives were identified: a) to work with the recently-created parish to care for seven nearby neighbourhoods with a population of around 20,000, integrating into this and joining the parish team of Carmelite Sisters and dedicated parishioners; b) to be very conscious of the local context; c) to work in the public school and civil and social institutions so as to be present in society in a new way, not from works that we run but in a different way, one of simply offering our service.

Given the frequent tensions that arose between these two communities and the majority of the Brothers

of the Province and with the Provincial and his Council, it was decided to hold a meeting between them and Br Basilio S.G. As a result, Br Fernando Hinojal was appointed as representative and link-person of the Council with these communities. They were visited by General Councillors in the company of the Provincial.<sup>5</sup> The comment was again made that if those who visit Provinces and speak about Poverty and Justice are not personally identified with this, they are pouring cold water on this type of project rather than being encouraging. In 1990 they received a very cordial and intense visit by the Superior General, Br Charles Howard. In September the Council decided on an alternative direction for the community. The community closed in September 2004 for lack of Brothers.

### **3.2.4. Other communities**

Other insertion communities were founded in the Province after 1997. Lack of space prevents my speaking of them.

## **3.3. Marist insertion communities in Spain**

Some were founded in other Provinces as well. The Commission on New Forms of Community Life, preparatory to the 17<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, convened a meeting of them at El Escorial. From that time on, they

<sup>5</sup> In 1979 the visitors were Arturo Chaves and Luis Silveira. They found great value in the project and saw no political overtones. In 1987, the visitors were Eugenio Magdaleno and Alain Delorme. They were not really in favour of this style of Marist life. This was an enormous difference to the previous visitors.

continued to meet there periodically, with the Superior, Br Casimiro Sánchez, as convenor, to get to know one another, talk together, exchange ideas, and explore and enlighten one another on various topics. They also made contact with groups in other countries about which they had heard.

### **3.4. The objectives of these insertion communities**

#### **3.4.1. *To put the General Chapter documents into practice***

A number of them talked about “the superficial character of quite a few communities that were not committed to a solidarity orientation to their apostolic works. There is not enough evidence of everyone’s being on board. They are running the risk of not yet being a ‘communion’ of Brothers, actively seeking God, attentive to his calls and ready to be helped to respond. Our relationships of brotherhood are not satisfactory and are failing to attract youth”. Given this reality, they wanted “to increase their passion for Jesus and his Gospel and grow in a faith that is able to sustain mission and life, and in a lifestyle that is more simple, Gospel-based, and open to all”.

#### **3.4.2. *To model and be a reference point for a new style of Marist life***

They were convinced, as is said in our Documents, that “our spirituality is community-based, that it is ex-

pressed and lived better when we are united as a family or community. We relate together in meaningful ways and keep our promise of being present to one another.

The experience of loving and being loved becomes a normal part of daily life. We give thanks for the blessings of God in our community companions with whom we share our mission and existence and in everything they do: work, struggle for greater justice, serve society, pray, share meals and relax.”

They felt called to revitalise community life by living in a poor neighbourhood on the city periphery, working on youth projects, in contact with various institutions and people (the parish, schools, Caritas, Community Associations, volunteers, etc.).

#### **3.4.3. *With the help of a Community Life Plan***

They considered such a plan as one of the most important means of building community, since “it helps to make progress in sharing life, feelings, mission and faith”, and “setting up structures that favour fraternal relationships, being people who know how to welcome others, listen, exchange ideas, and be of mutual help to all”.

In their plan, they tried to set down “the values they wanted to highlight, the objectives they were committed to, and the means of reaching them, with the Constitutions as their point of reference.” Everyone was involved in their formulation.

### **3.4.4. Meetings for prayer, discussion and communication at depth**

“So as to dialogue and help one another grow in faith, life and mission”, based on what each one was discovering in turn about the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of living Marist life in contemporary society undergoing secularisation, among the poor and marginalised of neighbourhoods on the peripheries. They reviewed “the life of prayer and ministry of the community. They shared experiences, jobs, projects, struggles, disappointments and successes. They reflected together on various topics and evaluated their community life plan.” This enabled them to face difficulties and “to exercise co-responsibility in their search for the will of God.” For some matters the community included other people from the neighbourhood: religious communities, the parish priest and other committed Christians.

## **3.5. Reflections of Brothers who lived in these communities**

### **3.5.1. Difficulties and defects**

The path taken had its problems. Despite their enthusiasm to achieve their objectives, there was no lack of mistakes and defects, for there is nothing perfect in this world and not in insertion communities either. Below are some of their reflections:

### **a) At the level of the Province**

#### **1. The relationship between the superiors and the Brothers**

They say that relationships were good with the superiors in Rome, but tense and difficult with those of the Province, who showed good will but, generally speaking, were not ready to adopt changes. Provincials found themselves with two groups in their Provinces a minority, although numerous, generally the younger Brothers, who had taken up the directives of Chapters (the ‘progressive’ minority); and a majority who, to use the expression of Br Benito, stopped in 1967 (the “conservative” majority) who did not want any change and opposed and were disturbed by the proposals and suggestions of the minority. There were tensions that posed a dilemma for the Superiors:

- a) *to choose to support the younger group*, much criticised by the conservative group. This would mean that a large section of the older Brothers would be upset for some years, but they were not going to leave the Congregation and surely they would have accommodated themselves to the new situation even if they did not assimilate it themselves;
- b) *to choose to support the older group*, which would mean that there would be peace on the surface but that the upset Brothers were going to complain and renewal would not happen. With

the exception of Br Terradillos, they took the second option. As a consequence, more than a few Brothers were to end up discouraged. At the same time, another group of Brothers became involved with the Focolare movement. They agreed with the group from the insertion communities that a return to the Founder was needed as well as taking seriously the charism of the Institute, but those from the insertion communities were emphasising the methodology of See, Judge, Act, and so seeking the conversion of structures, while those of the Focolare group were focussed on spirituality and personal conversion. This latter approach always had the backing of the superiors.

## 2. Whose charism?

This was another focus of conflict. For most Brothers, the concrete expression of the charism was to be found uniquely in the schools to which they had dedicated their lives, making sacrifices to build new ones. To speak to them of a renewed charism or of new presences was to provoke a visceral rejection, something that was transmitted to the insertion communities. The majority group was not happy with the type of work and social involvement of these communities; they did not understand or want to hear of different ways of educating or living community as set out in the new documents. The closer the insertion communities came to following the documents, paradoxically

the bigger the gap became between the two groups. The 'traditional' group criticised them harshly and looked on them with suspicion to the point of distrust.

## 3. Unity – uniformity – pluralism

The internal cohesion of the Province has always been a preoccupation for superiors, intent on advancing their plans for the Province. Without denying a need for pluralism, these Brothers were looking for a balance between uniformity and pluralism, something of which they were afraid. Most of the 'traditional' Brothers did not accept that they were living in a changing world or that it was necessary to adapt to new contexts and processes in education.

## 4. Availability and obedience

The different ways of understanding this question gave rise to some of the greatest disagreements. Traditionally, ministry had a certain military and functional character, and working in schools predominated. The new theology was based on a more adult and responsible concept of obedience that gave greater importance to personal freedom, discernment, mediation, the signs of the times and the poor. The more traditional superiors asked the Brothers from insertion communities to be available to work in the schools (in "our" works). Yet, the superiors were able to find few Brothers available for the insertion communities, and those who offered themselves were needed in the schools. There needs to be enough humility on both sides to recognise

that things were not done as they should have been, and that one side was not better than the other.

### 5. An excess of radicalism

This was a consequence of the fact that there was a lack of clarity at times among the Brothers of these communities when it came to communicating the plan for Marist life that they wanted to adopt. Also, at some moments they thought themselves stronger than they really were. This led them sometimes to adopt an excessively critical stance towards other Brothers and superiors. Sweeping judgements were made on both sides that led to communication breakdowns and suspicions. The doubt remains as to whether a change of approach may have led to greater acceptance or whether inertia would have simply swallowed up the projects.

#### ***b) At the community level:***

##### 1. They did not always achieve an effective balance

among prayer, ministry and community life, between contemplation and action, according to what was said by those interviewed. In some cases, there was a lack of prayer and Christian reflection because of overwork.

##### 2. An excess of individualism and personal projects

At times, assertiveness was lacking in the form of saying what one was

feeling, and this complicated communication. They did not achieve a serious discernment between themselves and the superiors, to be able to distinguish between hopes and reality, to clarify their identity, and to discover what they had to keep and what let go.

##### 3. The number and personal circumstances of the Brothers

The number was always quite small. Also, if “the community wants to be a centre of spiritual life, made up of responsible and dynamic adults who have reached a certain level of affective and social maturity, with a minimum of human gifts such as good judgement, sufficient professional preparation, a capacity for taking on responsibilities, able to live with feelings of equality, friendship, enthusiasm and hope”<sup>6</sup>, often enough people were sent to these communities who did not live up to these requirements. Either they did not identify with this type of ‘neighbourhood’ ministry or they arrived with serious vocational issues and decisions already taken. And when they left the Brothers, it was a hard blow for the community. This did not help the communities to grow as they should.

#### ***c) At the level of realisation***

The reflections show that on occasions they did not see clearly what posture to take in order to ground their commitment of building the king-

<sup>6</sup>XVI G. CHAPTER

dom in this world of the poor, marginalised and oppressed, to adapt themselves and be understood by the people around. They were aware that it was not simply a matter of living in the neighbourhood that made them one with the people. Yet they thought that, even if this was not completely possible, and even though they had connections and resources that made them different, they could grow closer, adapting themselves over time to the local context (housing, entertainment, food, relationships, clothing, free time, transport, finances, etc.), but eliminating what would constitute any false aspiration. Given their formation, their ability to speak, and their training, they succumbed more than once to the temptation of taking the lead. They had a certain Manichaeism that led them to see financial and political figures as enemies, and to idealise the working-class. And many times, they found themselves admired but not followed; that the poor, because of their poverty, were not so straightforward or charming, and that they had their share of human limitations and did not always evangelise the Brothers.

### **3.5.2. Values and Successes**

#### ***a) A project that tried to bring post-Conciliar and Chapter ideas to life about being Marists today***

Those interviewed were of the opinion that, despite all the defects signalled in the above paragraphs, it was a rich, gratifying and powerful experience on all levels with many

poignant moments. Starting insertion communities was a prophetic and courageous decision on the part of Br Terradillos, the prime mover and his Council, in collaboration with a group of Brothers worthy of praise<sup>7</sup>. In spite of obstacles placed in the path of these communities and their closure in the end due to problems that had arisen and a lack of Brothers, shifting from work in well-organised schools to insertion communities, that at the time had no writings or experience to draw on, was a giant leap for an institution that was almost 200 years old.

#### ***b) With a new type of community, a support and springboard for its mission***

In their words, they were trying to live their consecrated lives in a “community of adult, responsible, free and autonomous people”; with the experience of being called by the Lord Himself to be “experts in humanity”, to use an expression of Paul VI. They did not just live in the same house, but they tried to make daily life a place of pleasant relationships and spontaneous communication, a place of close personal sharing; where each person felt cared or, friendship flourished, and people accepted and supported each other. They were seeking personal relationships which would lead to appropriate affective and human maturity; growing in ideological and existential communication of personal, committed and community action, life and faith; being constantly open to God, centring their

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Section 3.4. of this article.



lives around listening to God's Word and being faithful to it; doing professional development that would assist them achieve their goals. They tried to live this way as good news, from a standpoint of hope. They tried to transform monastic and institutional structures, living a simple domestic life in a flexible way regarding timetables; that allowed them to be open to neighbours, work companions, workers and people on the margins, and to fashion spaces of peace and welcome. They felt the need for spending stretches of time in personal prayer, family life, deepening relations with other communities, the superiors and the Brothers of the Province. In spite of their shortcomings there was a strong resemblance between these communities and the followers of Jesus and Marcellin.

***c) Sustained by a deep faith  
and creative,  
contextualised prayer***

Aware as they were of their smallness and imperfections, in a spirit of faith and from their reading of the Gospels, they tried to find the will of God in the way of Jesus, whom they loved deeply. So, they gave a lot of importance to prayer, giving it pride of place, ensuring the time and setting needed, and making an effort to be creative in ways of praying that facilitated sharing of life, feelings and experiences. They considered this as an interpersonal relationship with the Lord, developing within, making a total gift of themselves to Him, and enjoying His company. Through the intercession of Mary, they asked for the light they needed to go out, in the way

Marcellin did and with his help, to discover the means of getting to know and love people with bleak futures. It was a way of praying that, even though encouraged by our Documents, was a long way from what predominated (and still predominates today) in communities, where time and space is reduced to a minimum, with little reference to the world around or to those who are suffering. They were aware that without prayer their living of the Gospel could be reduced to an ethic or an ideology.

***d) Their community ministry:  
the Christian education  
of the least favoured  
in their context***

Their intention was to shape their activities to the charism, as asked for by our documents. They felt that they had to carry this out by an evangelising and missionary presence, one that was low key but active, one that was adapted to the context, in a poor, working-class neighbourhood on the periphery. It was not easy. The cost was high. It demanded change, constant effort, and great generosity, working side by side with the people, at their pace, sharing their aspirations. They became aware that choosing to live in that place meant re-thinking the Gospel, the Constitutions, theology ... from a new perspective. They lived on what they earned, with some money set aside for the Province and Caritas. Their house was the same as all the others in the neighbourhood, simple, with the minimum of mod cons, but clean, pleasant, tidy and welcoming. It showed that one can live comfortably and with grace, without giving in

to the demands of consumerist society. Their door was open to all, who were always well received and looked after. Their commitment to the human and Christian development of the children and young people with whom they worked, and indirectly with the whole neighbourhood and the members of its organisations, took shape gradually. Romanticism lost out to realism, as they looked for issues on which to make an impact and effect social change. It meant an extended period of time to get to know people and live alongside them, to settle into the context, to work from needs that were detected, and to force themselves to get used to being rather than doing. They undertook a serious study of political ideologies, using contributions from the social sciences for this purpose.

**e) *Presence and work in the neighbourhood and public centres***

Their decision to be 'sowers' among their neighbours led them to a new way of being present in the local society, in general working in places that did not belong to the Institute, instead of setting up a Marist work. This had the positive effect of uprooting them from our own little 'kingdom', stripping them of the status and security of being the owners or being in charge. Their intention was that over time they would have a community of Brothers, with Marist laypeople and dedicated Christians, as the creative energy in a neighbourhood centre in an under-resourced locale or a neglected rural area. They wanted to work alongside their companions in a team

ministry (parish – educational centre – family), without the need to be owners, employers or to have contracts that very often had obligations attached; or, as our documents state, to provide employment for teachers who do not share our Marist vision and are in our schools for the salary alone. They became heavily involved in the field of education, in co-ordination with the neighbourhood association, the parish and local schools. In these, the contact with the children and young people, their families and companions, was gratifying. The school leaders were very happy with their presence in the staffroom. They developed a close, friendly relationship with all, who could clearly see their attitude of service, something that led to the people's accepting the type of Church they were presenting and personifying, without misgivings.

**f) *Integration into the parish***

This was the context in which they carried out their pastoral work, moving beyond helping out and a focus on sacraments to one of living Gospel values and mission through the witness of committed people. They trusted that passing on their experience would, sooner or later, end up sowing the seeds of a Basic Christian Community among the people around them so that, under the influence of the Spirit, it would lead to new ways of being human, to being free, healthy, community-minded and balanced, to being capable of realising their full potential and of achieving their historical social task. They would become people who would be open to God, with personal faith and engaged in working for a new

democratic society, with greater justice and solidarity, for the Kingdom; people whose lives would challenge the complacent, the powerful and the rich; people who would build up a new Christian community that, in response to the Word of God, would grow into a community of faith and sharing what they have, with the Eucharist as their meeting point; people who would be signs of God's saving action in the world and would proclaim their faith in effective ways. They worked in close collaboration and in teams with the priests, religious sisters, and the most committed Christians of the parish, as well as with other congregations, diocesan organisations and church groups.

***g) Periodic meetings with other insertion communities***

They looked forward to these moments, and recognised the value of sharing and comparing notes on "working outside, unprotected". They pooled their experiences and difficulties of being heavily engaged in social issues and of being more linked to the local Church, and discussed possible responses. They ended their time together with the Eucharist, the meeting place of work, spirituality and commitment for the sake of others.<sup>8</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Madariaga has pointed out, it is regrettable how the efforts, struggles,

experiments, successes and failures in the whirlwind of post-conciliar Church life are at times being lost from memory. Many young Brothers, sons of a new epoch, anthropology and culture, and a different way of committing themselves, have little idea of what happened in those years, and of what it cost to reach the present moment thanks to those who made the effort needed at that time and gave themselves generously and enthusiastically to adapting to the culture of the people around them and to caring for the least favoured. Some religious from those years ask themselves with sadness if their work was fruitless, seeing that there is no interest today in re-examining their story. They have the impression that there are those who are trying to suppress anyone intent on remembering the experience and who want to get rid of what they call "the passing whims of the post-conciliar period" and return to the style of life that predominated in the years before the Council, the style that they want to promote as the only right one. But the effort of the Brothers of these insertion communities has not been in vain. The need remains for us to overcome the ever-present temptation to give in to the dominant culture and transform institutions into idols to be adored. Despite all their apparent failures, may their effort enable us to relive the Emmaus story which continues to give meaning to Marist life today, in the here and now, just as they tried to do.

<sup>8</sup> There were also meetings in El Escorial of Marist insertion communities from across Spain (Cf. Section 3.3.).



## THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF MARCELLIN

### A study of his mystical life

Antonio Martínez Estaún, fms

Brother Manuel Mesonero has published a work entitled *Saint Marcellin Champagnat, Biography of the Founder of the Marist Brothers*<sup>1</sup> coinciding with January 2, 2017, the date that marks 200 years since the foundation of the Institute.

Brother Patricio Pino, who writes a preface, emphasizes that in the book it is possible to discover “the experience of humanity, of growth, of faith, of search for sense, of risk, of decision and of abandonment in Marcellin”.

In the lines in which the author expresses his gratitude he includes a special reference to a woman, who has participated in the work, for her contribution as a “psychologist and her sensitiveness of woman and mother”. The reader will be able to see the contribution of this woman in the study concerning the life of Marcellin especially between the years 1803 and 1805.

The book is divided into six stages which mark the process through which the author classifies the life of Marcellin: 1789-1816, the stage of conversion and life of asceticism; 1816-1825, the stage of love and dedication; 1826-1827, the stage of the dark night; 1827-1837, the stage which describes the way of illumination and the mysticism of the *Nisi Dominus*; and finally, 1838-1840, the stage of abandonment

on God and the dark night of the spirit.

In the bibliography, the author makes reference to fundamental works of Marist spiritual patrimony and to two eminent saints of the Church who have guided the spiritual journey of many people: Teresa of Avila and Ignatius of Loyola. Their influence is obvious, and the author uses them as a tool of analysis to describe the spiritual itinerary of Marcellin.

The chapters tell well-known stories in the life of Marcellin, supported by basic primary sources, and enriched by the added value of the analysis that the author makes of the mystical experience of Marcellin, something which gives the work a particular richness and novelty. The study of his “dark night” is quite thought-provoking, as well as the long stage of interior maturation that Marcellin lived in the Hermitage. The work proposes a description of Marist spirituality in its infancy.

To explore in the inner mystical journey of Marcellin and to study the deeper secrets of the spiritual life may be a challenge for readers who are used to a hagiography more concerned with factual history. This book brings into stark relief a perspective of Marcellin Champagnat which has been previously partly hidden in the shadows.

<sup>1</sup> This is the title that appears on the cover and on the first two pages inside, which serve as a front and back cover but at the bottom of each page of the book the title says; *Biography of Saint Marcellin Champagnat*.

## HISTORY of the Province of Germany

André Lanfrey, fms

The Province of Germany has recently published in Furth, a booklet of 128 pages in two versions, German and English, entitled *1914-2014, Marist Brothers, Germany. 100 years* and which was co-authored by Brothers Augustin Hendlmeier, Alois Engel, Heinrich Schamberger.

Among other things we learn is that the first German Brothers entered the Novitiate of Beaucamps in 1872. Beginning in 1888 their formation was carried on in Arlon in Belgium. From that date until 1914, there were 456 German Brothers who joined the Institute, 213 of whom worked in the Province of Beauchamp and 140 who left for the missions. The Institute could not establish houses in Germany until 1914. A District was created in 1920. And the Province of Germany was officially erected only in 1946, under conditions that we can imagine to be very difficult.

In 2014 Brother Heinrich Schamberger published a book of 296 pages, entitled *140 Jahre. Deutsche Maristenbrüder, 1874-2014 (149 years of German Marist Brothers, 1874 - 2014)*. The actual text of the book is

limited, with most of it comprising numerous photos, statistics, and maps that offer a visual journey through the history of the German Province. Two appendices accompany it: the first one (168 pages) offers an alphabetical list of 1240 German Brothers, indicating exactly the date of birth and place of origin, date of profession, of death or of departure if they left, and the Province to which they belonged, from 1874 to 2014. Even for someone who is not a fluent German speaker (as in my case) it is a document which is quite accessible. But the second appendix (149 pages) is, in my opinion, even more interesting since it offers a classification of information of the preceding one – and we clearly perceive the geography and the importance of the German mission in the Institute of which the charts below give an account. A quick calculation of perseverance according to the countries give surprisingly varied results. It would be premature to try to give explanations but I hope that I am able to give a glimpse of how interesting are those statistics in the global history of a Province.

Province or country	Number of Brothers	Deceased <sup>1</sup>	Who left	% of perseverance
Germany	656	209	447	31,5
Central. Western Europe <sup>3</sup>	50	17	0	
Brazil	127	83	43	65,3
Belgium-Holland	103	38	65	36,8
Beaucamps	103	46	57	44,6
South Africa	55	25	29	47,2
Uruguay	31	24	5	82,7
Argentina	22	18	2	90
China	16	13	3	81,2
U.S.A.	14	6	7	46,1
Australia	13	3	8	23
New Zealand	12	8	4	66,6
United Kingdom	12	6	6	50
Syria-Lebanon	10	2	8	20
Spain	9	3	5	
Constantinople	7	1	6	
Canada	4	0	4	
Kenya	3	1	0	
Chile	2	1	1	
Mexico	2	1	1	
Peru	2	1	1	
Sri Lanka	1	2	0	
Italy	1	1	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1255<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>509</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>42 %</b>

It is also interesting to note that the acceptance of young Germans to the Novitiate of Beauchamps began in 1872, just after the Franco-Prussian War, with the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. But thanks to the records that give the place of origin and the date of the first vows of the German Brothers,

we can easily identify the Brothers from Alsace-Lorraine. Now, the beginning of the first professions of the Lorrains began in 1871-79 (5 professions). Beginning in 1891 and up until 1910 the recruitment became regular. The first professions of Alsatians began in 1897 and did not stop until 1914.

<sup>1</sup> The total number of the deceased and of those who left sometimes give a number inferior since there are lacunae in the lists. .

<sup>2</sup> Figure 50 indicates the total number of Brothers at the moment of the foundation of the Province in 2000-2003. In 2014, the total number of Brothers of Germany then would be 50 - 17 = 33.

<sup>3</sup> This total number includes certainly some Brothers who are still alive.

<b>Periods</b>	<b>1° professions of Alsatians</b>	<b>1° professions of Lorrains</b>
Before 1871	0	2 (1855 & 1862)
1871-1880	1 (1878)	5 (1871-79)
1881-1890	3 (1887-90)	2 (1883-86)
1891-1900	33	30
1901-1910	11	23
1911-1914	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>64</b>

The quarrels of the frontiers and of nationality did not have a negative effect on the recruitment in the German regions, including

in Alsace-Lorraine where it seemed the development was comparable to that of the rest of Germany. Perhaps there we have a good indication of the global spirit of the Institute at the time.

In brief, Germany has been one of the greatest providers of Marist missionaries in foreign lands, and in a large number of countries. The recently published books are valuable in their recalling and specifying this too little-known fact.



## **PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK MYSTICISM, WISDOM AND AUTHORITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY Studies on Brother François, First Superior General of the Marist Brothers**

**Fabiano Incerti & João Luís Fedel Gonçalves**

A recent work on the life and work of Br François has been undertaken by researchers of the Laboratory of Studies of the Institute of Sciences and Faith of the PUCPR and the *Memorial Marista* of the Marist Province of Central-South Brazil. Their work presents someone who personifies a spirituality typical of the nineteenth century, and also reveals an outstanding and exceptional person whose mystical depth helps him to respond to the challenges that the transformation of the world, especially in France, created for the Church and the Institute at that time, and which unfolded rapidly during the years when he was governing the Congregation. Additionally, Br François assumed responsibility to negotiate with the French Government the official civil recognition of the Institute, as well as its canonical approbation with the Holy See. Of delicate health and with a tendency to introspection, both tasks weighed heavily on him and caused him to become a “very little appreciated Superior” (*Mysticism, Wisdom and Authority in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 35). Do we have someone who is a perfect religious but rather less outstanding in his of governing the Institute, who reached the point where he resigned his com-

mission? To respond adequately it is necessary to revisit the historical sources.

A good part of this work centres on a study of his *Notebooks*, the originals of which are unpublished and kept in the Archives of the General House. The content of these original documents was made available to the researchers by means of transcribed files in digital format (*Mysticism, Wisdom and Authority in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 18-19). The more than six thousand pages are distributed across 22 volumes, “with retreat notes, outlines for talks, annotations for religious study, notes of scientific studies, spiritual Diary or Journal, etc.” (p. 17). They reveal a knowledge which is both encyclopedic and self-taught, and which ranges from dense writings of Church mystics to curious recipes for beer, to recommendations for different herbal remedies for every type of sickness, since, among other duties, Br François was the infirmarian of the Hermitage community.

His writings show that Br François “developed a sophisticated model of spiritual life which, anchored in a solid philosophical-theological tradition of spiritual exercises and practices, was transformed into an all-embracing way of life.” (p. 141). In his spiritual

practices, besides reading and journaling, he recommends “prudence in the use of language, listening, obedience, consciousness of death, the examination of conscience, and a series of physical practices, such as prostration, use of the discipline, and diet, among others” (p. 143). His inspiration came from his initial formation as a Marist, and was later augmented through his books, a library in which we find “approximately 50 authors” (p. 103), notably Jesuit writers. Additionally, he was probably influenced by the model of life of the Desert Fathers – a theme to which he dedicated many readings. He felt great attraction to silence, and was seen more as a man of writing more than of speaking.

From all this, elements of mystical depth are clear. Some are easily recognisable as part of the Marist tradition, such as his Marian spirituality which is evident in texts of Br François such as his Circulars. We can see, “in Br François a preference for Marian attitudes rather than devotional Mariology” (p. 235). There are other themes characteristic of the French School of spirituality, for example the Act of Consecration and Perfect Union, which had existed since the sixteenth century and which Br François copied and modified. Surprisingly, in comparing the original and the one he re-wrote, there can be seen an “intrinsic connection between mysticism, morality and action in the ongoing search for the will of God” (p. 267).

Such spiritual and personal rigor is expressed in the methodical organization of the notebooks which he

maintained writing through his whole life. But it is important also to be alert to those lines, sometimes occupying the whole the width of the page, which reflect the fragilities, anguishes and fears of a human being who is constantly searching. There are pages which search for the meaning of life and religious vocation. Equally, he ponders the meaning of the work of which he is part. In this, they offer an invaluable aid for understanding the “spiritual formation of the Brothers” and as a “fundamental source for the study of the beginnings” (p. 80).

Let us turn now to the affair of the resignation of Br François. The “faithful disciple of the Founder”, two decades after taking office, decided to offer his resignation. It is helpful to recall that he accepted to be the successor of the Founder “under very difficult and poor conditions and that his election took place in the midst of an organizational vacuum”. Fr Champagnat did not have time to complete the project of foundation by ensuring that the Constitutions defined the roles of those in authority, the structures and the administrative processes” (p.40). Tradition has it that he resigned for health reasons. But closer reading of the facts leads us to look at such issues as the relationship with the Marist Fathers, models of government, polarization between the older Brothers and the younger Brothers, legal recognition of the Institute, General Chapters, and the position of Rome with respect to the Institute. Yet it is not easy to determine whether the resignation was the fruit of “a gradual becoming conscious of his limita-

tions to deal with the issues” (p. 74) or, from a Weberian perspective, was due to the fact that “his (charismatic) authority had gradually weakened because of events and with it his legitimacy among the Brothers” (p.196). Perhaps, it is not a question of choosing one or other hypothesis, but of continuing to reflect more deeply on this question.

It is not infrequent in history that exceptional persons, especially for mystics, keep a certain isolation from the world. With Br François it was like this. The increasing number of challenges facing the Congregation, and the acknowledged lack of an effective administrative structure, caused the last years of life to become a continual “desert experience” for him. After the General Administration had become centralized at Saint-Genis-Laval, he returned to the origins. He decided to live in the Mother House, the “new Jerusalem” which he called the “great reliquary of Father Champagnat” (p. 37). Curiously, these were the years in which it may appear that he wrote less in his notebooks. But appearances may be deceptive because it was during these years that he revised his writings, organized them, drew up indexes, made annotations on the margins and also between the lines, and did all this for his personal growth and for the formation of the Brothers.

In the “daily mysticism” of Br François, we can see essential characteristics of what today we identify as “Marist values” and which, through

ignorance, we may not have previously attributed specifically to him. Nevertheless, that is exactly what his notebooks confirm, line after line: care, presence, simplicity, life of prayer. These are the indelible marks of a developing charism which had in the figure of the first Superior General a moral and spiritual pillar, a person completely dedicated to a project of evangelization through education aimed at transforming the lives of children and young people. At the same time, it is important to see Br François more broadly in the Catholic context of that time: he, “is not only a religiously interesting personality, but typical of a strong current of Catholicism which has not been sufficiently recognised in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries,” (p. 274).

This and more has been published by PUCPRESS, at present only in Portuguese, in the book *Mística, sabedoria e autoridade no século XIX – Estudos sobre o Irmão Francisco, primeiro superior geral dos Irmãos Maristas (Mysticism, Wisdom and Authority in the Nineteenth century - Studies on Brother François, First Superior General of the Marist Brothers.)* This publication is the result of two years of work of the Laboratory of Studies, which involved eight researchers, Brothers and Lay, from different academic disciplines, under the guidance of Br André Landry. It sheds new light on the life and work of the first Superior General of the Marist Brothers, and makes it accessible to a wider readership.



## “THE FIFTH GOSPEL” Correspondence of Brother Henri Vergès

Michel Morel, fms

This is a play, written by Adrien Candiard OP, produced by Francesco Agnello, and often performed by the actor Jean-Baptiste Germain.

The title of the play is taken from some words of Br Henri Vergès, recorded by his friend, Father Christian de Chergé, Prior of the Trappist Monastery Notre Dame de l’Atlas, in Algeria, who was killed with six of his Brothers on May 2, 1996. *“Our life is the fifth Gospel that everybody is able to read.”* (Tibbirine, October 1984, Ribat meeting)

It is presented as an imaginary exchange of letters between two characters:

- Ahmed, created by Adrien Candiard to be a former pupil of Brother Henri at the Lycée of Sour-el-Ghoslane and whom he now situates in Damascus, as a young diplomat, and
- Brother Henri Vergès, his former mathematics teacher, who remained in Algeria.

Seven letters (four written Ahmed and three by Henri), the content of which is inspired in the life and the writings of Br Henri, provide a structure for the play. In dating them between July 1990 and 12 May 1994 – close to the day of the murder of Br Henri in the library on Rue Ben Cheneb, near the Casbah of Algiers, on

May 8, 1994 – the author helps the audience to appreciate the growing tension in Algeria during those “black” years which preceded the wave of murders of 19 religious and priests between 1994 and 1996. Br Henri was the first one, and Pierre Claverie, Bishop of Oran, the last.

### History of the play

The success of the play “Pierre and Mohamed”, produced by the same authors (Adrien Candiard and Francesco Agnello) was the prompt for this play.

### In November 2012

Br Maurice Berquet, then Provincial of l’Hermitage, during a gathering of French religious in Lourdes where this play was staged, was greatly impressed by the quality of the representation which evoked the death of Bishop Claverie and of his young friend Mohamed. He thought that it would be good to present the life of Brother Henri Vergès to the young secondary students of today. (Brother Henri had spent 25 years serving the young people of Algeria in different secondary schools, and had been recognized as an outstanding religious educator.)

The Marist Brothers then contacted the director of the play in **May 2015**.

They invited him to imagine a work that captured the qualities Br. Henri as an educator. With ample background on Br. Henri, provided by Br. Alain De-lorme, Francesco Agnello decided to approach Adrien Candiard OP to write the script.

Prominent among the purposes for writing the play was the hope to make known to a large number of people the figure of a “Little Brother of Mary” and religious educator, as a way of marking the Bicentenary of the foundation of the Institute in 2017. There was also the desire to offer more particularly to young secondary school students a means for reflection and dialogue on Islam, particularly as it exists in France. This was done in a context of tension with the Muslim community that followed a series of terrorist threats which had hit the country around that time.

### **On 3 August 2016**

At Notre Dame de l’Hermitage during a Provincial Chapter, Francis-

co Agnello (producer of the play and percussionist) and Jean-Baptist Germain (actor) staged the premier performance of “The Fifth Gospel” in front of an audience of Brothers and Laypeople. The force of the message, the remarkable interpretation of the actor, and the strong and close memories that a good number of Brothers had of Br. Henri, made for an experience of deep fraternal communion and deep emotion.

Between that date and **12 May 2017**, 52 performances have already been staged in France, in various circumstances, and for a range of audiences. On each occasion, people have been very impressed by the artistic quality of the play and the strength of the message of faith and hope that it has aroused.

A booklet has been published by AIRCAC. It gives a brief presentation of the history of the play, the authors, and Br. Henri. And above all, it reproduces, with the authorization of Adrien Candiard, his script of the play.

## SAINT MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT presented to the French public

André Lanfrey, fms

*The monthly liturgical journal “Prions en Eglise” of June 2016 presented the figure of our Founder. Even though the title (“Le Frère Educateur”, “The Brother Educator”) does not appear quite accurate, this piece and accompanying picture, has helped Saint Marcellin Champagnat to become known widely in France. Here is the text written by Alain Lecoœur.*

On October 28, 1816, almost two-hundred years ago, Father Champagnat was called to the bedside of Jean-Baptiste Montagne, a 17-year old adolescent who was dying with tuberculosis. The Curate of La Valla-en-Gier, near Saint-Chamond (Loire) was quite disturbed to discover that the boy was dying without having heard of God. His own past surfaced for him: a childhood devoid of any real instruction; the providential arrival at the family farm of a priest who had prompted him towards study; the difficulties encountered in the minor seminary at Verrières, then in the major seminary in Lyon, because of gaps in his learning; priestly ordination on 22 July 1816, and the pledge made before Our Lady of Fourvière, together with some friends, to found a “Society of Mary” to re-Christianize France.

On the long walk back, Marcellin Champagnat understood that the encounter with the young Montagne was a sign from God which invited

him to begin the project which he had at heart: the Christian education of rural children.

On 2 January 1817, Father Champagnat brought together in a shack two young volunteers interested in his idea. This is how the Institute of the “Little Brothers of Mary” (or Marist Brothers) began. This was a name which the Founder loved, since it summarized three of his priorities: humility, fraternal life, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Freed from his work as parish curate in 1824, Marcellin Champagnat was able to devote himself to the pedagogical and spiritual formation of his Brothers, open his first schools, and have the house of Notre Dame de l’Hermitage constructed ... In 1836, he pronounced his religious vows in the Society of Mary, directed by his friend Jean-Claude Colin. Exhausted by his apostolate, four years later he gave his soul to God.

Despite the skepticism and the hostility of some, his Institute devel-

oped very well. It is appropriate, therefore, to conclude by quoting a favourite question of Father Champagnat which sprang from his unshakeable faith and

trust in Jesus and Mary: “Can one fear not to succeed when he has the Good God on his side, and when he is carrying out God’s work?”



## MARCELINO CHAMPAGNAT FROM VARENNES-SUR-ALLIER TO MARLHES or from the banks of the Allier to the banks of the Rieu Marlhien

Lucien Brosse, fms

On 4 December 2016, the hamlet of Le Rosey near Marlhès was pleased to welcome a sculptured bust of a son of the local area to take its place near the Champagnat family house.

This sculpture is the work of **Antoine Anet Matussière**, the brother of Brother Jean Matussière who passed away on 5 December 2013 at St-Genis-Laval after having spent practically all his life in the service of the community of Varennes-sur-Allier.

The artist lived in Lempdes in Le Puy-de-Dôme and it is only natural that he used the volcanic rock of that region when, in 1999, he sculpted the face to the young founder of the Marist Brothers who had recently been canonized. The bust was placed in a memorial of the Brothers' property in Varennes-sur-Allier and remained there until the departure of

the Brothers in 2015. It sat on a column of with a bas-relief representing the pipes of the organ on which were etched the first notes of the tune of the *Salve Regina*.

Only the bust travelled to Marlhès and it was placed opposite the door of what is known as "Marcellin's bedroom". It faces the morning sun which each day floods it with its rays.

The pedestal of the sculpture has engraved on it the dates of birth and death of Marcellin (1789 – 1840) and also the date of his canonization by John Paul II (20.04.1999).

The metal support under the sculpture, fixing it to the granite of the Chapel of Le Rosey, is the work of Bernard Fermond, former pupil of the boarding school at Saint-Jean de Pélussin and of the La Mache technical school in Lyon.

## BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS IN ROME

### 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Michel Morel, fms

The feast of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017, was the date selected by the General Council to mark the Bicentenary of the Foundation of the Institute in a special way at the General House.

Some 170 persons, Brothers, lay and invited guests, thus came together for the celebration of this double event: Brothers from the General Administration and from the Marist communities of Italy; men and women religious, members of the General Councils of various communities in Rome, along with personnel from the General House; as also all the members of the International Marist Spiritual Patrimony Commission, given that the first important event in these celebrations was to be the official presentation of the History of the Institute.

### Launching of the History of the Institute

After the welcome to the guests, which began at 4.30 pm in the Sala Champagnat, everyone moved to the Sala Umanesimo of the Hotel. There Brother Emili, Superior General, gave the official address of welcome and reminded everyone of the reason for this festive gathering.

The launching of the *History of the Institute*, in three volumes and in our four official languages, began with an

interview with the authors of this History by Estefania Aguirre, head of the Bureau of Communications. Each one of the sequences of this interview was punctuated by a impressive slide presentation, put together by Brother Antonio Martínez Estaún from photos of Brothers and lay people, which had been taken in many different countries over the course of the 200 years of the Institute.

Brother André Lanfrey, author of the first two volumes, was invited to reply in succinct fashion to a number of questions such as:

- How are we to interpret the resignation of Brother François 1860-1863 (Volume I)?
- What explanation can be given for the contrasts in development between provinces, particularly in the cases of China and Turkey?
- What importance has secularisation had for the Institute in the course of the Twentieth Century?
- Why have there been so many differences in the formation of the Brothers from place to place?

Brother Michael Green, author of Volume III, responded in his turn to the following questions:

- Brother Michael, in the Introduction to Volume III you make it clear that you have retained the thematic approach, instead of presenting a straightforward historical narra-

tive. How have you structured your book, and also what was it that led you to choose the title: “Dawn’s Uncertain Light”?

- Was it difficult to write the history of such a recent period as 1985 to 2016? And how did you respond to that challenge?
- In the last part of your book, you suggest that the history of the Institute over these last 50 years can be divided into three broad phases, namely: renewal, refounding and reinvention. What do you mean by that?

### **Presentation of a photographic exhibition of the present day marist world**

The photographer, Mr Conor Ashleigh, introduced the exhibition before the presentation itself began. This exhibition was the fruit of more than a year’s work by a young Australian, an ex-student of St Francis Xavier College, Hamilton, NSW, who had been asked by the General Council to travel the Marist world and take as many photos as he wished in countries where lay and Brothers are living and working.

From the thousands of photos taken (approximately 10,000 in 18 countries) an initial choice of 379 was made by a small team comprising several Brothers and lay colleagues from the General Administration. A second selection resulted in 47 of these being picked out. Enlarged to A1 and A2 size format they had been put on display in the Superiors Gallery of the General House, and were also to be made up into a

souvenir album – A Glimpse of the Marist World – which was to be presented to the Brothers delegates, and also sent out to all the communities, at the time of the upcoming General Chapter.

### **Solemn Mass**

The Mass was presided by Cardinal Joao Braz de Avis, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in the Vatican. Two bishops were likewise present, Bishop Jorge Carlos Patron Wong, an ex-student of the Brothers in Mexico, and Bishop Gerardo de Jesus Rojas Lopez, Bishop of the Diocese of Tabasco, Mexico, along with several priests among whom were the chaplains from the General House and religious priests invited for the occasion.

An assembly so diverse in its composition clearly highlighted the Institute’s presence in the universal Church; the readings proclaimed in various languages and the African style Offertory Procession further underlined its internationality.

At the time of the Entry Procession Brother Alain Delorme placed on the altar the *bournous* that had belonged to Brother Henri Vergès, murdered in Algeria on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1994. This gesture symbolised all Marist Brothers who have given their lives for the faith in the course of the 200 years of our history. At the end of the Mass this Marist relic was solemnly handed over to Don Angelo Romano, representative of the San Egidio Community and rector of the Basilica of St Bartholomew on the Isola Tiberina in Rome, to be placed in the basilica, now a sanctu-

ary dedicated to the martyrs of the XX and XXI centuries.

### **A convivial meal to end the day**

A buffet meal had been set up on the grand terrace of the restaurant of

the Hotel Villa EUR. The tables had been arranged in language groups, and with people from different places seated together, thus allowing the guests to continue the rest of this happy day with much friendly conversation.

## MEMORIAL MARISTA – BRAZIL

Benê Oliveira, fms<sup>1</sup> & Dyógenes Philippsen Araújo<sup>2</sup>

Inaugurated on 29 April 2017, the *Memorial Marista* was a feature of the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Institute in the Marist Province of Central-South Brazil (PMBCS). The Memorial is located in the city of Curitiba, capital of the State of Paraná, in the south of Brazil. Images of the inauguration can be seen on this link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSCGP\\_LiiEk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSCGP_LiiEk)

The Memorial was conceived as expressions both of gratitude and of the shared responsibility between Brothers and Laypeople. It is clear that, if we are what we are, and we have come so far, we owe it to God and those who have gone before us. Even though these people lived their lives in fidelity, surrender, dedication and solicitude, just like Mary did, many of them remain unknown, since they have not left pictures or writings. Neither have they found mention in official documents. Among them have been outstanding leaders, saints, prophets, mystics, benefactors and heroes. Even in their anonymity, following the way of Marcellin Champagnat, they were all authentic contributors to this story, as we are today.

Therefore, the desire to recover, preserve and diffuse the Marist story is, above all, an exercise in appreciating the challenges they faced and an acknowledgement of these people themselves who dedicated their life to the charism they inherited from Marcellin, our Founder.

The heart of the Memorial is a reflection on our spiritual, pedagogical, cultural and historical tradition. It is a reflection which helps us to (re)discover our origins and the ideas that shaped our journey. At the same time, it permits us to kindle or rekindle the charism as new Marists of Marcellin Champagnat as we tackle the current challenges of our mission with hope and in fraternity as a global body, oriented toward a new Marist beginning.

<sup>1</sup> Former Director of SVCL; now Provincial.

<sup>2</sup> Coordinator and Curator of the Memorial



**The hope is that the Marist Memorial will foster a study of the historical, cultural and spiritual patrimony of the Marist Institute. happens through educational, artistic or religious activities, and also through formalised processes of research, cataloging, and preservation of the collective Marist memory and its legacy for Church and society.**

Within a decade, we hope that the Memorial will be well connected to the local Church and to other centres with aligned purposes (education centres, cultural centres, museums, and memorials in general). We see this happening through the innovation, creativity, dynamism, and usefulness of the Memorial. It will emphasise the importance of research and formative experiences, as well as of the relevance of the services offered for different groups of people, including children, young people or adults. From an inter-Provincial perspective, the desire is that the Memorial will contribute effective ways of strengthening the network of Marist

Centers (in Brazil and South America Region) in liaison with the General Archives and with the Brothers, and the researchers of Marist historical and spiritual patrimony (MHSP). Within the Marist Province of Central South Brazil and the Grupo Marista, the Memorial will offer charismatic formation to Brothers, Laity, young people and leaders.

To achieve all this, the activity of the Memorial is based on four strategic pillars:

**Formation:**

aspiring to maintain an offering of structured courses and lived experiences on Marist identity, at a deep

level, for Brothers and Laypeople, leaders and young people, and extending these courses and lived experiences as formative services for the Grupo Marista, the South American Region, and the Marist Institute.

### **Archives and preservation:**

trying to organize the Provincial Archives (documentary, pictorial, audiovisual, and three-dimensional resources) based on best-practice and international standards; facilitating access to information; enhancing security and synergy among the networks, in order to guarantee the right to this patrimony to future Marist generations.

### **Research:**

forming new teams of experts in MHSP with the help of reference Brothers, fostering formal research and growing historical-critical knowledge, through publications and relevant studies, in the lights of the needs of the Province and of the Marist Institute.

### **Historical and thematic expositions:**

an invitation to celebrate the memory of the first two hundred years of

the Marist Institute and its future in multi-platform, multi-lingual ways that include sensory, interactive, playful and spiritual activities. These will aim to build on other formation experiences and to communicate of the Marist legacy in society. The historical-thematic experience already operating in the Memorial is only part of an unfinished project. It is presented through long and short expositions which lead the visitor to become sensorily immersed in the history.

An example of the multi-platform design are virtual journeys which involve guided walks through the use smartphones or tablets. For a demonstration it is possible to have access through: [q-r.to/bak5gx](http://q-r.to/bak5gx)

Another example is the mosaic “VIDAS EN MISIÓN – BIOGRAFÍAS Y CRÓNICAS DE LOS HERMANOS MARISTAS” (“LIVES IN MISSION – BIOGRAPHIES AND CHRONICLES OF THE MARIST BROTHERS”)<sup>3</sup> which is supported by interactive content.

The central motif of the mosaic is the education of children and young people, the mission of the Marist Institute. This is represented by the fig-

<sup>3</sup> Technical information:

Authors of the Mosaic: Bem Pereira, Leticia Mefara (clothes, books, table, harmonization of objects); Rosangela Kusma Gasparin (face and hands); Paulo Rogéiro Biscaia, Luiz Moacir Havrechakj Junior, Leao Moliterno (micro-decorations and finishing touch); Dyogenes Philippsen Araujo (idea and sketch).

Approximate size: 6m2;

Time of the execution of the mosaic: 150 days.

Biographies and chronicles of the Brothers: Angelo Alberto Diniz Ricordi, Br. Alonso Levis, Br. Carlos Wielganczuk, Br. Ivo Strobino and Br. Bené Oliveira.

Selection of personal objects: Maria Palicz, Francieli Nierotka, Br. Rogério Polimeni and Br. Joaquin Sperandio.

Time of investigation and production of the content: 180 days.

Face of the child: Jorge Willian Taques Ribas Filho – Marist School Pius XII

Photography: Joao Borges.

Programming of the monitor *touch screen*, Paprica



ure of the child, a Marist pupil at school. There are two ways that are proposed to view it. The first is from a distance: a surrealistic background is seen, of vibrant texture, brightness and colours, that emphasise the child's world. Then, a view from closer in: an unusual blend of colours and fragments. They are school materials and toys donated by pupils from Marist schools and social centres, as well as recycled materials. In a mystical kind of way, these objects can be considered to be infused with the vital energy of those who used them: thousands of children and young people and hundreds of Brothers.

Altogether, there are 229 figurative pieces. Each piece tells the story of one Marist Brother. The objects that refer to deceased Brothers come from the Province Archives. The oth-

ers were chosen and donated by those to whom they refer: they are pieces that have a sentimental value, mementos, and objects that reflect the life work of the Brother or that simply symbolize aspects of his personality. The Crib (Holy Family), the altar (chalice, paten and ciborium) and the cross (Jesus Christ) – “the first three Marist places” – form an invisible triangle (the Most Holy Trinity) that thematically unifies the whole: the life of the Brothers (vocation) next to the child who is being educated (mission).

The visitor is free to interact with a touch screen, clicking on words and objects from the mosaic on a monitor, to discover stories, photos and videos of the Marist Brothers. He or she will find accounts of inspirational lives in the form of biographies for de-



ceased Brothers, or as chronologies for Brothers who are still living.

Before concluding, we want to express our immense gratitude to all who, over more than a decade, have participated in the working groups and whose ideas and efforts have made the Memorial. We are especially grateful to the Provincial Council for its audacity and far sightedness: Brothers Benê Oliveira, Delcio Balestrin, Joaquim Sperandio, Jorge Gaio, Rogério Mateucci, Tercilio Sevenhni and Vanderlei Siqueira. Our thanks are also extended to the Brothers, schools, and social centers which do-

nated personal belongings and materials for the development of the artwork, the archives and museum displays, and to Brothers André Lanfrey, Afonso Levis, Carlos Wielganczuk, Dario Bortolini, Ivo Strobino and Juan Moral Barrio, who collaborated in curating the content. We also thank those who helped in the Infrastructure, Communications, and Consecrated Life and Laity committees of our Province.

Finally, our hope is that all feel invited to discover the *Memoria Marista* in Curitiba. We will welcome you warmly, always ready to help.

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