



23 JULY

## 200 YEAR OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

On July 23, the Marist Family is celebrating 200 years since its birth. The commitment that was taken in 1816 at the feet of Our Lady of Fourvière, in Lyon, France, was the event that marked the beginning of the birth of the Society of Mary.



Shrine of Our Lady of Fourvière, Lyon, where the first Marists made their promise to found the Society of Mary in 1816

Father Courville, one of those present at the Fourvière promise, describes the event like this:

*"There were about twelve of us. We talked about the Society of Mary whenever we could. This lasted until 1816, when we went to Fourvière as a group to consecrate ourselves to the Blessed Virgin. I celebrated the Holy Mass. The others took communion from my hand, both the priests and those who were not ordained"* (OM 718)

The wish of the young priests turned into reality in different ways and today there are four branches within the Marist Family: the Marist Fathers, the Marist Sisters, the Marist Brothers and the Marist Missionary Sisters. It highlights the commitment of many lay people who wish to live the Marist charism; it is the Marist charismatic family.

For the Marists of Champagnat, brothers, laity and followers of Marcellin Champagnat, priest of the Society of Mary, this date marks the end of the Fourvière year, the second of the three preparation years for the Institute's bicentenary.

During this year, we focus on the spirit of the family, united for the mission. The origins of the Society of Mary remind us that we, religious and laity, are integrated in the mission and we are called to offer the Marian face of the Church with our special way of being and of building the Church.

This Saturday, 23 July, representatives of the whole Marist Family, united in Lyon, will celebrate this anniversary. Participants will also take part in the International Marist Youth Encounter, which will include youth of the four Marist congregations.

## FOURVIÈRE PLEDGE

### "My wish is that there can be a Society consecrated to me in these times of wickedness and unbelief"

On 15 August 2012 we recalled the 200th Anniversary of the words directed by Mary to Courville "heard, but not with his bodily ears, but from the heart...a Society which will bear my name...calling itself the Society of Mary". Consequently, 12 young men from the major seminary in Lyon, including five newly-ordained priests signed the Pledge of Fourvière on July 23 1816; only 4 persevered in this project, among these were Jean-Claude Colin and Marcellin Champagnat.

They went their separate ways. Jean-Claude Colin was made curate at Cerdon, where his brother Pierre was parish priest. Pierre embraced the Marist project and brought to Cerdon Jeanne-Marie Chavoin and her first companion Marie Jotillon who laid the beginnings of the Marist Sisters. From Cerdon, Jean-Claude Colin and Etienne Déclas began to preach parish missions. Groups of lay tertiaries, from whom the Marist Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary later took their origin, were formed in subsequent years. Consequently, the multi-branched Society of Mary, the object of the act of commitment consecrated at Fourvière in 1816, gradually took shape.

*All for the greater glory of God and the greater honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus.*

*We the undersigned, striving to work together for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus, assert and declare our sincere intention and firm will of consecrating ourselves at the first opportunity to founding the pious congregation of Mary-ists. That is why by the present act and our signatures, in so far as we can, we irrevocably dedicate ourselves and all our goods to the Society of the blessed Virgin.*

*We do this not childishly or lightly or for some human motive or the hope of material benefit, but seriously, maturely, having taken advice, having weighed everything before God, solely for the greater Glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus.*

*We pledge ourselves to accept all sufferings, trials, inconveniences, and if needs be, torture, because we can do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthens us and to whom we hereby promise fidelity in the bosom of our holy mother the Roman Catholic Church, cleaving with all our strength to its supreme head the Roman Pontiff and to our most reverend bishop, the ordinary, that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished by the words of faith and by the wholesome teaching which by his grace we have received.*

*We trust that under the reign of our most Christian king, the friend of peace and religion, this institute will shortly come to light and we solemnly promise that we shall spend ourselves and all we have in saving souls in every way under the very august name of the Virgin Mary and with her help. And may the holy and immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary be praised.*

Amen



## A BREEDING GROUND FOR SHARED IDEALS

Twelve seminarians came to the shrine of Fourvière after a long inner pilgrimage. Their spiritual path had begun in Le Puy, as it was the case for many other pilgrims who wished to visit the tomb of the Apostles in Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago. It was indeed in Le Puy where Courveille had started an inner process after hearing a voice “not with the ears of the body, but of the heart” that told him: “My wish is that there can be a Society consecrated to me in these times of wickedness and unbelief”.

Their inner pilgrimage had crossed the seminary classrooms and courtyards in Le Puy, and then in Lyon, when the diocese was subdivided. This is where Courveille met Champagnat and the other classmates: “There were about twelve of us. We talked about the Society of Mary whenever we could. This lasted until 1816, when we went to Fourvière as a group to consecrate ourselves to the Blessed Virgin. I celebrated the Holy Mass. The others took communion from my hand, both the priests and those who were not ordained”.

The seeds scattered throughout this fruitful spiritual path germinated and grew thanks to a breeding ground for shared ideals, and found confirmation in a profession of faith and a consecration at Mary’s feet.



Fourvière in 1830

### Linking up with the early Christian faith

This group of seminarians climbed the Fourvière Hill, an elevated place, a “hill that prays”, where nature offers the universal language of beauty, and believers partake in transcendence. The small group carried a germ in their soul, the seed of a new way of being Church they wished to entrust to the Lord’s Mother, to the partner who walked along with them through the paths of faith. Fourvière was the first Marian reference point of the Marist foundational charism. Fixing their eyes on Mary, the believer, a new cell of the Church was born – a Church that wanted to go in pilgrimage to the sources, to the cradle of the ancestors’ culture, but also to the origins of the faith.

The shrine dedicated to Mary stands on the ancient pagan city where the bishop Saint Pothinus was martyred. He was arrested in 177, under the rule of Marcus Aurelius, together with a group of Christians, who became the first martyrs of Lyon. He died in prison because of the mistreatment he suffered at the hands of his torturers. His successor was Saint Irenaeus, who received the faith from Saint Polycarp, who in turn had received it from the Apostle John. This high land received the early seeds of the faith, and was irrigated by the blood of martyrs. It was a meeting point with the early Church agreed upon by the group of seminarians from Lyon, an early Church with which they connected through the witnesses to the faith, and a place that became a reference icon for their mission.

### Stating their intentions and purposes

The pilgrims are twelve apostles newly elected for the mission. Advised by their spiritual director, they envisioned wide horizons for their future. Some were priests; the rest had not been ordained yet. They carried in their pockets a statement of intentions they wanted to place at the foot of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Fourvière as they committed to devoting themselves to the new Society of Mary.

The Mother of Fourvière welcomed and accompanied the project of this Apostolic Church cell that was being born. “I was the support of the emerging Church, and I will be so again in the last days. These words presided over the beginning of the Society”, and “acted as a foundation and a source of encouragement”.

The “sincere intention and determination” to consecrate themselves was a collective commitment. The pilgrims’ promise expressed by “the ceremony and the signature” took place on July 23, 1816. This is considered as the foundation date and the first official act, although private, carried out by the candidates to the Society of Mary.

*Br Antonio Martínez Estaún*

## MARIST FATHERS AND BROTHERS

After the promise of Fourvière, in 1816, the newly-ordained Jean-Claude Colin was appointed parish priest of Cerdon for six years. During this period, he worked in the first draft of what is called the "rule" of the Congregation. He wrote to Pope Pius VII and, following the recommendation of the Pontiff, went to Paris to visit the Nuncio. He turned out to be a good negotiator and was recognized for his modesty and sincerity. For his dedication, tireless work for the foundation, at the recognition of the new Society, he was elected Central Superior of the small group of Marists of Belley and Lyon in 1830. On April 29, 1836, after the priestly branch of the society was approved, Fr. Colin was elected first Superior General and received the great responsibility of the Mission in the Western Pacific.

During the 18 years of his generalship, the Society grew considerably. He founded several houses in France and sent many Marists to the Mission field in Oceania. He also devoted much time to writing the constitutions. It was a time of many challenges and difficulties.

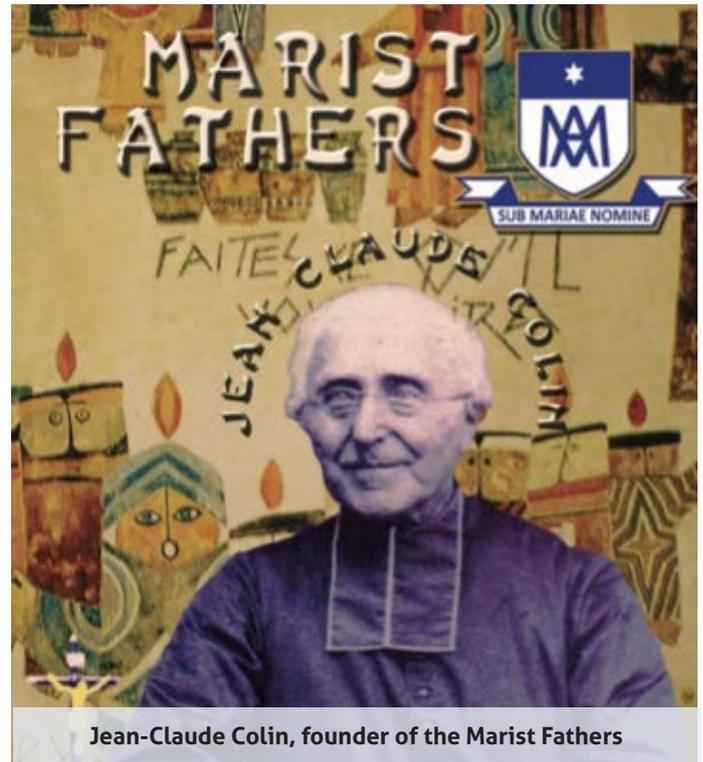
Jean-Claude Colin was a man of deep passion for the "Work of Mary" and "Her Society". A holy man with a great love for the Blessed Virgin. His modesty and firmness became well known. His fine intelligence and determination made him a person with a great personality. He died at La Neyliere on November 15, 1875, two years after the constitutions were approved by the Holy See.

The Marist Fathers seek to bear witness, in the style of Mary, of the Church of Jesus Christ, a humble and servant Church, reaching all, especially the most abandoned. This is their mission. They are present in 37 countries and their priority is to proclaim the Gospel to young people, especially those with difficulties, and to non-believers.

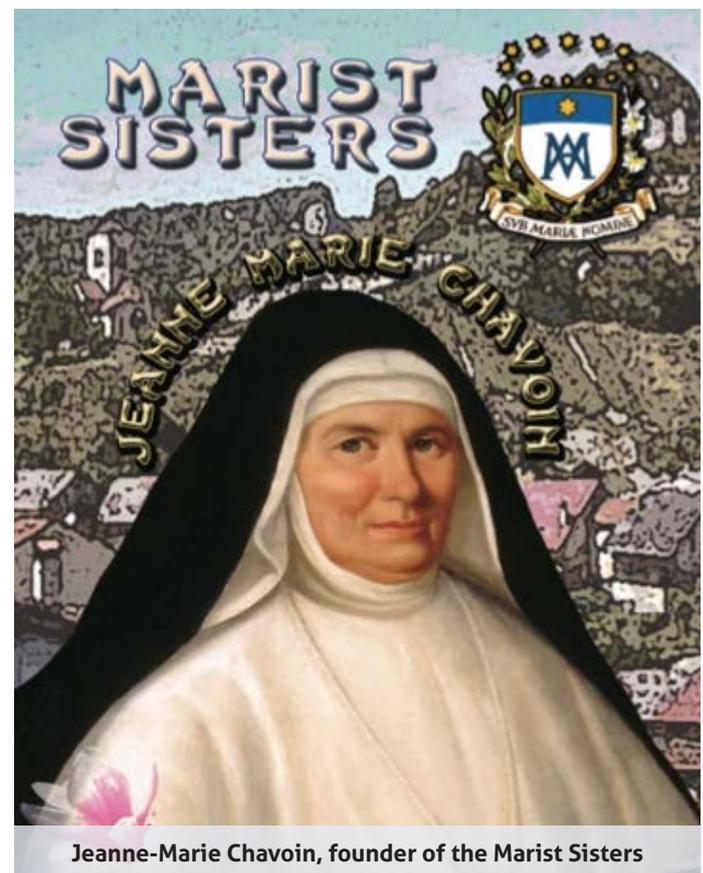
## MARIST SISTERS

Jeanne-Marie made was born in a French village called Coutouvre, northwest of Lyons, on August 29th, 1786. Jeanne-Marie spent 30 years of her life at Coutouvre. In 1817, when he was 31 years old, she received a letter from Pierre Colin, Jean-Claude Colin's brother, inviting her to Cerdon, to collaborate on the Marist project. She knew immediately that this was where God was calling her. With her close friend, Marie Jotillon, she left for Cerdon. Around June 1825, the opportunity arose to have the sisters move to

Belley, where Jean-Claude Colin had also been transferred. The Bishop gave them a larger House and they had there more possibilities for growth as a congregation. In 1838, they settled in Belley; they were already 44 sisters, who came from Cerdon and the Belley sur-



**Jean-Claude Colin, founder of the Marist Fathers**



**Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, founder of the Marist Sisters**

roundings, where Jeanne-Marie had lived. Jeanne-Marie Chavoin or Mother St. Joseph was superior General of the new Congregation until her resignation in 1853. At age 69, she began a new work in Jarnosse, an abandoned and extremely poor village. She was able to live the kind of active religious life that she always wanted for her sisters. He died at Jarnosse, on June 30, 1858, at the age of 71.

Over the years, the Congregation continued to grow and spread to other parts of the world. It is present in 15 countries, with more than 400 sisters who work in areas of education, social work, health, training of lay agents in the Church, and respond to the call where the needs are greatest. Imitating their foundress, they serve others, "as Mary". A presence of Mary among the Apostles that does not dictate the content or methods used to announce Jesus, but which inspires a spir-it of respect for all, of what the Spirit does in each one.

## MARIST MISSIONARY SISTERS

As a religious congregation our beginnings date back to Marie Françoise Perroton and ten other brave women who left France between 1845 and 1860, to respond to the Christians on the island of Wallis in the Pacific that had requested that "some devout women be sent to teach women". They formed small communities in Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia, and later in Samoa.

The organization into a religious congregation took place in several stages. In 1881, the sisters were recognized by the Church as Sisters of the Regular Third Order of Mary (TORM), consecrated by vows as religious women in Diocesan Congregations in the Oceania missions. In 1881 they opened two novitiates to give training to women who were preparing to enter the Congregation: a novitiate in France and one in Wallis. The congregation later spread to Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and then Boston in the United States and New Zealand.

The first rules of the sisters were written by bishops and priests of the Society of Mary, and several of them worked tirelessly to help the small congregation take its place in the Church. Thanks to their efforts, especially thanks to Frs. Rieu and Grimal SM, the congregation was approved as an Institute of Pontifical Right in 1931, with a mandate for the universal mission.

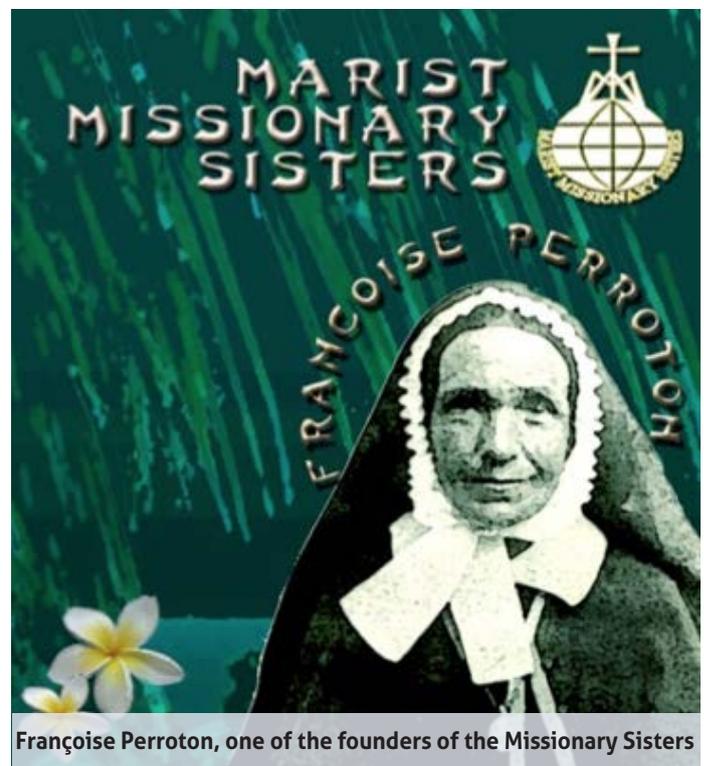
Since its approval, the Congregation has continued

## ONLINE RESOURCES

In the two letters written to the Marists, the general superiors of the four branches of the Marist Family stressed that the celebration of 200 years since the Fourvière Promise was made is a special opportunity to strengthen the Marist identity as a "Marist family" and give a new impetus in the commitment regarding the work of Mary.

To achieve this goal, various materials were prepared. They are available in the website of the Marist family (<http://www.maristinter.org>) and others in the session "Year Fourvière" of our website dedicated to the bicentenary of the Institute (<http://goo.gl/qjdv0i>).

A video commemorating the event is available online: <http://goo.gl/iSOzOe>.



Françoise Perroton, one of the founders of the Missionary Sisters

to spread in its field of service, sending sisters to Jamaica, Algeria, Senegal, Mauritania, Burundi, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Philippines, Germany, Tanzania and more recently England.

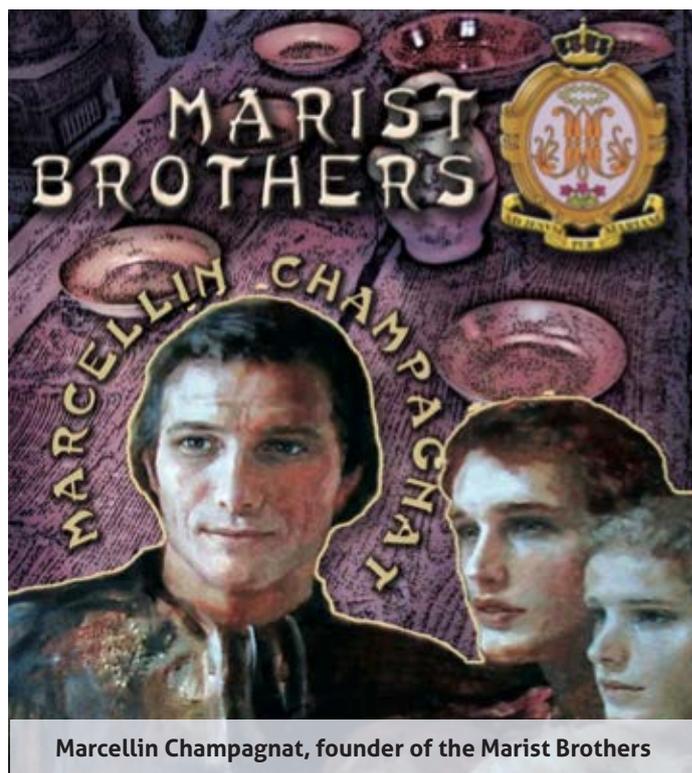
This Saturday, 23 July, representatives of the whole Marist Family, united in Lyon, will celebrate the anniversary. **If your community organises an initiative to commemorate that date, send photos or other details of the event to our office ([comunica@fms.it](mailto:comunica@fms.it)).**

## MARIST BROTHERS

Marcellin Champagnat was born in France on May 20th, 1789. He was the ninth son of a peasant family. Appointed vicar at La Valla, on July 12th, 1816, one month after his ordination to the priesthood, he took the opportunity that Providence gave him - after helping a dying young man (J.B. Montagne) who was unaware of the fundamental truths of the faith - to meet two young people of the parish and founded the Institute of the Marist Brothers, on January 2nd, 1817.

In 1824, he built a new house on the banks of the Gier River, in the vicinity of Saint Chamond, giving it the name of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, in honor of the Virgin Mary. On June 6th, surrounded by his brothers, he died at l'Hermitage, at age 51. Pope Pius XII beatified him on May 29th, 1955, and John Paul II canonized him on April 18th, 1999.

Inspired by the charism bequeathed by Marcellin, Marists assume the mission "To make Jesus Christ be known and loved" by children and young people. To perform this task, they dedicate themselves to education, evangelization, solidarity, promotion and defense of the rights of children. They recognize a privileged place in Marist Youth Ministry to help young people discover their Christian vocation and become agents of change in the Church and in society.



Marcellin Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers

## Marists of Champagnat

The charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat is expressed in new ways of Marist life. One of them is that of the Marist laity.

The Marist lay vocation, like all vocations, originates and develops reading one's own life in the light of the Spirit, where we discover a personal call to a specific way of being disciples of Jesus. "There are a group of people who, after a journey of personal discernment, have decided to

live the Christian spirituality and mission as Mary did, following the intuition of Marcellin Champagnat. These are us, the Marist Laity" (Gathered around the same table, No.11).

The vocation of the lay Marist is reaffirmed in the 21st General Chapter7, in which the Marist future is contemplated as a communion of people within the charism of Champagnat, "where our specific vocations will be mutually enriched."

### Institute of the Marist Brothers - General House

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2 - Rome, Italy - [comunica@fms.it](mailto:comunica@fms.it)

Our site: <http://www.champagnat.org>

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