

Brother Louis-Marie and his Personal Conception of the Society of Mary

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The *Life of Father Champagnat* is, of course, essentially about him, even if we do learn a great deal about his first companions. It is insistent on the charismatic character of his project, but informs us fairly well about the hazards and progress of the organisational-side of his group. Having said that, the reader needs to remember that, for almost a century, and particularly at its origins, the Institute was not organised in accordance with Canon Law. It is useful, then, to check the exact meaning of some of the original titles and functions which we, sometimes wrongly, believe that we know. This is particularly the case with concepts such as “Superior”, “Director”, “Master of Novices”, “Novitiate” etc.

For example, the biography of Brother Bonaventure holds some surprises. Born in 1804 at Pélussin, Antoine Pascal, a servant at Ampuis, was admitted to the Novitiate on 31st May 1830¹ and took the habit on 9th October 1830 after a postulancy of just over three months in a fiercely antireligious atmosphere following the 1830 July Revolution. Sent to Sorbiers, his virtue captured the notably hard-won admiration of Brother Cassien². On 12th June 1831 he took his temporary vows for three years and on 12th October the same year³, he took his perpetual vows.

The reason for this rushed second profession was given to us by Brother Avit (*Annals 1830* no 147) “He made profession in October 1831 and replaced Brother Louis as Master of Novices.” It is true that his determination to enter Religious Life at a particularly difficult time must have made an impression on Marcellin and the community, as, in 1831, he was 27 years old. Nevertheless, it is strange that a Brother formed so rapidly would have attained an important post which made him the successor of Marcellin’s first disciple.

¹ In *Biographies de Quelques Frères* the date of 27th June 1830 is given. His entry would have been shortly after the departure of five novices, one of whom was from Ampuis, which was unfortunate for L’Hermitage. We can, however, wonder if these departures did not follow on from the July Revolution, which had brought about widespread excitement. Brother Jean-Baptiste, keen to develop his theory of substitution, would have been able to manipulate the timings. In any case, Brother Bonaventure seemed to have effectively entered only on 27th June.

² His stay poses a problem of timing, which was raised by Brother Paul Sester (*Letters of Father Champagnat* Volume 2 Page 90 Standard English Translation), as Brother Cassien had not even taken the habit in 1831.

³ Brother Bonaventure himself noted the date as 2nd October.

We need, first of all, to qualify some of the dates. If it is true that Brother Louis was sent to Charlieu in 1831, Brother Bonaventure would not have succeeded him until after his stay in Sorbiers, around 1833⁴. However, the essential point lies elsewhere: we cannot confuse the “novitiate house” i.e. L’Hermitage with the “Novitiate” properly so-called, constituted by young men in formation in which religious formation is accompanied by the teaching of secular subjects such as reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic. The term “Teacher Training College” was beginning to replace the word “Novitiate”⁵. Even after having had the benefit of such training, Brother Bonaventure was certainly not capable of giving lessons in secular subjects. His function as Master of Novices was that of a model and supervisor of the young and not-so-young men in formation, but not that of Spiritual Director. As Brother Avit said, “Brother Bonaventure became an excellent Master of Novices. He instructed them as much by his example as by his words.” (*Annals 1831* no 153).

That is what he did “for almost twenty years” up to 1851⁶. He spent the last twelve years of his life in charge of the farm at St Genis Laval and died on 20th October 1865 surrounded by the veneration of the Brothers. His final employment clearly showed that, even although he had been a fervent Religious, he was hardly considered to be an educated man nor a high-flying character. Also, while we use the term “Master of Novices”, it is helpful not to be anachronistic: it was only with the Roman Constitutions⁷ of 1903 that the title would take on its precise canonical sense.

Directors of Novitiate Houses

Brother Bonaventure gave up his post a little before the writing of the Rules of Government in 1854, in which Chapter 3 is devoted to “Rules for the Brother Director of Novitiate Houses”. The first section discusses the “Master of Novices”, who must possess to a high degree nineteen qualities, such as “a lively faith” (No. 1), “a spirit of prayer” (No. 2), “exemplary conduct” (No. 12), but also “sufficient education in the sciences proper to the Brothers” (No. 18) and even “much experience in the Institute’s own teaching method” (No. 19). Brother Bonaventure had no lack of the majority of these qualities, but he would have been very weak in education and teaching.

The seven other sections speak of the reception of postulants, of their admission to the Taking of the Habit, and of their being sent to a school: they recall how a “Brother Director of Novices” has to provide the direction of conscience. However, the ninth section, entitled “Conduct which

⁴ This is the proposal of Brother Paul Sester in Brother Bonaventure’s biographical note in Volume 2 of *Letters*.

⁵ Some of the “Novices” in the De la Salle Brothers’ novitiates were laymen who had come to train as teachers.

⁶ The Letter of Convocation of the General Chapter, 17th April 1852, lists his name among the eligible Brothers, with the description “former Master of Novices. His successor was Brother Pascal, named Assistant in 1854, and not lasting long in the post.

⁷ [Translator’s Note] i.e. The Constitutions approved by the Church when it granted canonical recognition to the Institute.

the Brother Director must adhere to in the management of his house” give us to understand that this Director is responsible, not only for the novitiate, but also for the administration of his house, and even beyond that: “He would be able to temporarily move Brothers in establishments dependent on his novitiate [...] He has some sort of authority over all of the Brothers of the Province” even to receiving their accounts of conscience. At each retreat he renders temporal and financial accounts of the state of the houses dependent on his novitiate. In short, he is a little less than a Provincial and clearly more than a Master of Novices. This is a Director of a Provincial House.

In an organisational table of the Institute for 1854, the function of Master of Novices is absorbed by that of Director of the Novitiate House who delegates to a “Master of Novices” the day-to-day care of the aspirants in formation. Even if they were more educated than Brother Bonaventure around 1833, they did not have an official status.

A tradition from the beginning

These findings lead us back to before 1833 and to ask ourselves the following question: did Brother Bonaventure really succeed Brother Louis, or even ask ourselves if he was not more than a Master of Novices, but Director of the L’Hermitage house?

This question send us back to the year 1819: the year of the election by the Brothers of Jean-Marie Granjon as Director (*Life* Part 1 Chapter 6 Page 89⁸). The story of his activities, something certainly idealised, gives us a good idea of what was expected of a Director of a Novitiate House: “He was always a leader to his Brothers, first to arrive for an exercise and a model of regularity, piety and all the virtues of a Religious.” (*Life* Page 91). In Chapter 7 Page 97 Brother Jean-Baptiste reminds us of Marcellin’s conduct while he lodged with the Brothers. Even although he was the Superior, he insisted on his closeness to the Brothers: “Like the Good Shepherd, he constantly led his little flock: he worked with his Brothers whether in the garden or making nails”. The Brothers deeply respected him, but treated him as an equal. He did not encroach on Brother Jean-Marie’s role: “he entrusted to him the details of the running of the house, leaving him full liberty to act” (Page 98). In short, there was a clear distinction between the Director, responsible for the daily life of the community, and the Superior, who took on the spiritual direction of each Brother, but also for relations with the Archdiocese, parish priests and communes.

Subsequent chapters show that this two-headed form of government more or less worked. At the end of 1821 (Chapter 8 Page 114) Brother Jean-Marie Granjon, who “expected the same perfection of others” as he himself had, was sent to Bourg-Argental and replaced at La Valla by

⁸ [Translator’s Note] All quotations and page numbers are taken from the standard English translation of the *Life*.

Brother Louis who took on the mixed role of Director and Master of Novices that would only be taken up again with the 1854 Constitutions.

Brother Jean-Marie's running off to Aiguebelle in the spring of 1822 upset the new organisation since Brother Louis had to replace him at Bourg-Argental for 1822 - 1823. However, he undoubtedly took on the formation of Brother Stanislas and the postulants from Haute-Loire during the summer of 1822 and only went to Bourg-Argental at the end of that year.⁹

Which Brother could have exercised the direction from the end of 1822 to the end of 1823? Brother Jean-Marie Granjon remained at La Valla after his return from Aiguebelle with the title of Director, but how far was he capable of carrying it out?¹⁰ The first of Marcellin's conserved letters, from 1st December 1823, allows a little clarification of the situation. Brother Jean-Marie Granjon had been at that time Director at St Symphorien-Château since the Feast of All Saints, a place far away from the society's centre.¹¹ Nevertheless, he was more than a simple local Director. Marcellin, while perhaps managing his susceptibility, kept him informed of the progress of the Society as a whole.

We learn that Brother Michel "did very well" at Bourg-Argental. Would Brother Louis have returned to La Valla? That is probable, even if Brother Jean-Baptiste does tell us in the Annals of Bourg-Argental that he remained in his post for two years (1822 - 1824).¹² Yet it was in 1823 that Brother Louis joined the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart in La Valla, a sign that he was present in the parish from the end of that year. The same letter tells us that Brother Jean-François (Etienne Roumesy) was withdrawn from St Sauveur-en-Rue, in spite of his reluctance, and the *Life* tells us that Marcellin "summoned him to the Mother House, where he was put in charge of the work and temporal affairs." (Part 1 Chapter 14 Page 171.) However, this expression, "in charge...of temporal affairs" does not indicate simple material or administrative tasks. In fact, Brother Jean-François would have become the Director of the Novitiate House, receiving many very young novices with little education, as Marcellin's letter informs us.

The presence of Brother Louis at La Valla appears to be justified by the influx of novices since 1822, without our knowing how Marcellin coordinated the work of the two men in charge. Chapter 12 of the *Life* gives us perhaps the beginning of an explanation, because it was in 1823 that, thinking about building L'Hermitage, it tells us that "he combed the surrounding district with two of the principal Brothers." (Page 143) before deciding on the most suitable site. It is

⁹ This would explain the sympathy Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet has for him since he would have been under his direction from the end of March 1822 until his taking of the habit in October of that year.

¹⁰ On this topic, see the Bourdin Memoir (*Origines Maristes* Vol 1/754) which suggests that there was quite a lengthy crisis.

¹¹ In the Lyons Mountains, far to the north of the Gier Valley. It was perhaps both a sending away and the chance for Brother Jean-Marie to make a fresh start.

¹² He was replaced by Brother Barthélemy.

just a glimpse that it was Brothers Jean-François and Louis who corresponded at La Valla to the status of “principal Brothers”.

We must, however, take into account the arrival of a third person: Brother Stanislas, who entered in February 1822, taking the habit in October, and, his biography tells us, wanting “to serve (Marcellin) and take on the running of the house”. Brother Stanislas quickly became the factotum for Marcellin, busying himself mainly with his room and doing all sorts of things Marcellin did not have time for himself. Moreover, his biography emphasises the care he took of the postulants and novices as, in practical terms, he exercised the role of assistant to the Master of Novices.

We should consider that, in 1823 - 1824, the hierarchy of the association of Brothers was constructed thus:

Father Champagnat: formal ecclesiastical Superior and Founder, but also curate in the parish.

Brother Jean-Marie: elected Director General, but far off in St Symphorien-le-Château.

Brothers Jean-François and Louis: jointly managing La Valla and helping with Marcellin’s plans for extension.

The other school-principals.

Some working Brothers, such as Stanislas, more particularly involved in helping the Founder, but tending to increase their competence in other areas, notably in looking after novices.

We should not, therefore, be too influenced by Brother Jean-Baptiste’s version, which focuses all the attention on Marcellin’s enlarging the house and preparing for the building of L’Hermitage, while continuing with his work as a curate. In fact we should think of an elected Director becoming somewhat overburdened and relying on several assistants capable of taking on the day-to-day tasks along with a group comprising Brothers in different places, novices and boarders.

Emergence of the plan for the priests’ branch and a crisis in the Institute

The building of L’Hermitage and the arrival of Father Courveille in the summer of 1824 upset this system, primarily at La Valla where he considered himself the Superior while Marcellin was busy with building-work along with the majority of Brothers. Nothing has been said on relations between Brothers Jean-François, Louis and Father Courveille. We know, however, that the novitiate and small boarding school remained at La Valla since, during the construction of the house, a postulant abused a boarder, a scandal that Marcellin, in his capacity of Superior, energetically suppressed (*Life* Part 2 Chapter 13 Page 432).

At the beginning of December 1824, Father Courveille was sent by the archdiocese to Charlieu, 100 km north of L'Hermitage, to found a school. The senior of the three Brothers who accompanied him was Brother Louis¹³. The choice might appear logical: La Valla did not need two Brothers in charge in addition to Father Courveille and an experienced man was necessary for taking on the foundation in a town far away from the society's centre. On the other hand, the teacher that the Brothers had to replace was forming novices and Father Courveille sought to found a missionary house with a novitiate for the Brothers. In essence, Brother Louis went off to found a school in a delicate situation and ran it from December 1824 to October 1825. This seems to be too brief a period to settle into the work.

We do not know where he was during the crucial period from the end of 1825 to the end of 1827. Certainly not at Bourg-Argental. Very probably at L'Hermitage where Marcellin, having just been elected Superior, needed him. But then, why does Brother Jean-Baptiste, who was very favourable towards him, never mention him during the quarrel between the senior Brothers and Father Courveille in 1826?

On the other hand, who was the Brother Director of the L'Hermitage Novitiate House? Was there one? In reality, the arrival of Father Courveille in 1824 and Father Terraillon in 1825 rendered the previous system obsolete, even if it had not been running smoothly given the erratic behaviour of Brother Jean-Marie. In particular, there was a complete change to the plan: it was now a question of constructing the Society of Mary, with a branch for priests and one for Brothers, the former governing the latter.

During this time there was a sharing of tasks from 1824 between Father Courveille, who thought of himself as Superior and Marcellin, who took over the running of the house, without giving up the post of Superior¹⁴. There seemed to be a repetition of the system of 1819, a Superior and a Director, except that the two roles were carried out by priests. Administrator and Master of Novices were the only roles that remained for the Brothers, the first undertaken by Brother Jean-François, the second by Brother Louis, under the authority of priests at variance with each other.

To put an end to this duality at the head of the Society¹⁵, Father Courveille tried to get himself elected as Superior by the assembled Brothers¹⁶. Marcellin's election in October 1825 clearly shows that the influence of the senior Brothers remained strong and the idea of the foundation of the Institute at La Valla in January 1817 was already established. However, this election, as related by Brother Jean-Baptiste, resulted in Marcellin finding himself Superior despite his

¹³ Father Courveille had considered founding a novitiate for the Brothers.

¹⁴ His suppression of the scandal at La Valla showed him in a good light. In October 1824, he gave his Brothers "a short written summary" (*Life* Part 1 Chapter 12 Pages 150 - 152)

¹⁵ Father Terraillon took on only the role of chaplain.

¹⁶ It was not a question of pure ambition. He wanted to form a Society of Mary of Lyons and certainly to clarify the situation at L'Hermitage.

wishes while Father Courveille was reduced to the rank of Director. On the other hand, his responsibilities were not slight since he had the novitiate and the direct management of the L'Hermitage house in his charge¹⁷. However important the choice of the Brothers was on a symbolic level, he weakened Marcellin's position.

And so, the Society remained under the control of the three priests and the Brothers were confined to subordinate tasks. The disappointment was particularly great for those who had taken on responsibilities before the arrival of the priests and who now found themselves under Father Courveille's direct authority. They also experienced a crisis of confidence with regard to Marcellin, who they believed, by wanting to integrate the priests, had modified the original plan. Each one dealt with the consequences in his own way.

A crisis of confidence among the principal senior Brothers

We know that Brother Jean-François left to join the project for the foundation at Larajasse¹⁸ and that in March the Archdiocese noted his refusal to return to L'Hermitage (*Letters of Champagnat* Volume 2 Page 296¹⁹). Brother Jean-Marie Granjon remained at St Symphorien-le-Château for only a year. On his return to L'Hermitage his eccentricities, reported by Brother Jean-Baptiste, became evident before he was sent away²⁰. According to the Bourdin Memoir (*Origines Maristes* 1/754) he would have chosen to live in a hut where he would have made nails²¹. As Jean-Claude Bonnet, who was admitted at L'Hermitage on 2nd September 1826 took the habit on 2nd December with the name of Brother Jean-Marie, Jean-Marie Granjon therefore left some time before that. The sending away of the only elected Director marked a definitive rupture with the La Valla stage. As for Brother Louis, it was the time of his temptation to the priesthood, which Brother Jean-Baptiste disclosed in a very allusive manner²², underlining Brother Louis' obedience. Nevertheless, the text clearly states that Brother Louis persisted with his intentions for a long time in spite of Marcellin's contrary advice. As Brother Louis (1802 - 1847) did not

¹⁷ Hence the significant requirements concerning formation and numerous dismissals (*Life* Part 1 Chapter 13 Page 159)

¹⁸ In the Lyons Mountains. He was recruited by Father Colomb de Gast, the parish curate, whom he had known at St Sauveur.

¹⁹ [Translator's Note] All references and quotations are from the standard English translation.

²⁰ *Letters* Volume 2 Pages 305 - 307 and *Life* Part 1 Chapter 14 Pages 170 - 171. The *Life* could be mixing-up two stages: first at La Valla in 1822 - 1823 and then at L'Hermitage in 1825 - 1826. His eccentricities perhaps began at St Symphorien, from where he was recalled. [Translator's Note] Brother André gives the *Life* reference as Chapter 15. However, the story of Brother Jean-Marie's dismissal is told in Chapter 14.

²¹ This is a winter-activity, which he would have practised between January and May 1826. He seems to have remained in the house until the retreat of October 1826. The Brothers who went to the retreat asked where he was, but were dissuaded from visiting him. See *Annals of the Institute* 1825 No 9.

²² *Life* Part 1 Chapter 14 Pages 173 - 174. Would he have wanted to leave the Society of Mary or change his status within it? In any case, Father Matricon, a former pupil of Marcellin and future chaplain at L'Hermitage, barely younger than Brother Louis and certainly well-known to him, received the tonsure on 23rd July 1826 and was ordained priest on 31st May 1828.

participate in the first emission of perpetual vows on 11th October 1826, it is clear that, at that date, the crisis had already begun. His perpetual vows in September 1828 marked the end of his hesitation. It was, therefore, a long-lasting crisis based, as with his two companions, on a two-fold crisis of confidence against Marcellin and against the new form of the Society of Mary. It could have started around 1825, which would explain why, when Marcellin fell ill around Christmas 1825, there was a lack of older Brothers in charge of works since they were not in positions of responsibility and were against the developments in the project²³.

With the lack of leadership from the most senior Brothers, it was time for Brother Stanislas, up until then, on the second rank. He had several assets: on the one hand, admitted at La Valla in February 1822 just before the arrival of the postulants from the Haute-Loire, he was, relatively speaking, a senior Brother; on the other hand, very much tied to Marcellin, he was not only his nurse, but also his spokesman. It was therefore he who took on in practical terms the role of Director of L'Hermitage at a time when Marcellin was too weak, the most senior Brothers were on retreat, and the other more or less young Brothers were looking for a guide. He was very much a representative of the category of Brother who was very emotionally attached to Marcellin but did not reflect too much on the institutional aspect of the Society

Refounding the Brothers' branch

At All Saints 1826, Marcellin was the uncontested Superior. He did not reject the creation of a Society of Mary with priests, even if he did not know how that would come about. Moreover, of his three main companions of the early days, only the hesitant Brother Louis remained. On the contrary, the list of nine Brothers who, for the first time, had taken perpetual vows gives us a good idea of those who had followed Brother Stanislas, who had become, against all expectation, leader of the refounding: Brothers Antoine Couturier, Laurent Audras, François Rivat, Stanislas Fayol, Joseph Ponset, Paul Préher, Etienne Poinard, Damien Mercier and Jean-Pierre Deville. These were all Brothers on the second level and included Brother François, who was only eighteen years old. Which capable Brothers supported Marcellin at that time? Brother Louis, who had not made his vows in 1826, made public his reservations about refounding the society of Brothers. If he had not been inactive, it is quite possible that he would have been involved with the novices. Very few young men took the habit that year²⁴. Brother Staislas had certainly continued with the role of leader of the Brothers and the coaching of the novices. Yet Marcellin's letters to the ecclesiastical authorities in 1827 are clear: he is alone²⁵.

²³ Brother Jean-Marie Granjon, who was making nails in his hut at L'Hermitage, symbolically expressed this rejection by reproducing the tasks of the first winter in 1817.

²⁴ How did the Brothers feel about his not taking vows in 1826?

²⁵ i.e. the only priest.

We know that, from 1827, young clerics will arrive to support him. In the same year, Brother Louis leaves for St Paul-en-Jarret to replace the Director who had drowned in July. In making his perpetual vows on 8th September 1828 he stuck to the new order of things, but again it was priests who took over the essence of the responsibilities, as is clearly shown in the letter of Marcellin to Father Cattet of December 1828: “The society of Brothers cannot be explicitly considered as Mary’s work²⁶, but only as a branch, behind the Society itself.” (*Letters* no 11 Page 42)

This statement does not only mean that the foundation of the community of La Valla on 2nd January 1817 was subsequent to the consecration of 26th July 1816, but, in particular, that the real foundation of the Brothers’ project dated from 1826. Marcellin added, “We still need someone for the proper administration of the branch of Brothers, which is beginning to take hold.”²⁷ He then asks for a priest for the role of bursar since “the time I can give to the temporal upkeep of the house is very much insufficient.” He then give a list of priests who have taken on roles:

Father Séon “takes care of the spiritual needs of the house, supervises our ribbon factory and helps out from time to time in nearby parishes.”

“Father Bourdin supervises the novices’ classes, penmanship, mathematics, singing, catechetics, supplying books for the communities, and the small chapel.”

He himself is busy with “the general...upkeep”, visits to the establishments, correspondence, “reception of the novices”.

It is clear, then, that, from that time on, L’Hermitage was a Novitiate House run by priests, with Marcellin as the Superior of the two branches. If Brother Louis exercised the function of Master of Novices, it was under the direction of Marcellin and Father Bourdin. In any case, Brother Bonaventure’s biography tells us that in 1830, he was “Director of the Novitiate”²⁸, in the sense of being a model and supervisor for the novices, as Brother Bonaventure would be.

Durability of the debate on the two models of the Society of Brothers

A traditional story of the Marist Fathers, the author of which was Father Séon, allows us to understand that, for a while, Marcellin had doubts about the foundation of the Society of priests. I would rather see it as that during the period 1825 - 1830 he prioritised a Society of Mary in

²⁶ [Translator’s Note] There is a footnote in *Letters* stating that this phrase means “the Society of Mary”.

²⁷ A significant phrase, ten years after the beginnings at La Valla.

²⁸ We should interpret this title as the equivalent of “Master of Novices”

which the Brothers were under the direction of the Fathers. The foundation of the Brothers at La Valla on 2nd January 1817 would only have been a preliminary stage, now outstripped. Brother Louis had a hard time seeing this point of view. Do we have to go as far as seeing that, aware of the change in the project, he would have wanted, in becoming a priest, to take his place in the new management team?²⁹

When he made his perpetual vows at the end of 1828, he would certainly have taken into account the fact that the Marist Fathers were not very happy in their work of coaching the Brothers and were moving towards mission-work and affiliation with Father Colin. The 1830 Revolution very much contributed to accelerating the process of separation.

Distancing of the Marist Fathers and the emergence of a new elite among the Brothers

The situation in the novitiate suddenly changed at the end of 1831 when Father Bourdin, who had been at L'Hermitage since the summer of 1828, was authorised in September to move to Belley. It is highly likely that, in October of that same year, Brother Louis went to Charlieu, where he remained until 1836. This appointment had two causes: following the 1830 Revolution the Brothers of Charlieu were in difficulty and Marcellin needed a solid Director in place. This moving away by Brother Louis would be long-lasting, in contrast to previous episodes in Bourg-Argental, Charlieu in 1824 and St Paul-en-Jarret in 1827. Clearly, Marcellin was no longer holding on to him at L'Hermitage, since he had at hand disciples who were closer to him in spirit. It was Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste and Jean-Marie, among others, who took the place of the preceding teams. It is as an assistant to this new elite that we need to situate Brother Bonaventure.

These changes went a long way to bringing Marcellin's project back to its situation before 1824 since, finding it very difficult to count on the diocese or the Marist Fathers, the Founder had to surround himself with Brothers to manage the L'Hermitage house and govern the more numerous establishments. Paradoxically, Brother Louis, whom one would have thought of as being able to take on important responsibilities again, is removed, as if there was a problem between Marcellin and him.

The evidence from Brother François' notebooks

We know from Marcellin's letters that, from 1836, Brother François became his right-hand man at L'Hermitage, but without a formal title. Nevertheless, present at L'Hermitage since his

²⁹ The practice of suggesting the priesthood to Brothers judged sufficiently capable was quite common in Congregations. Priests in L'Hermitage, for example Father Terrillon, would have encouraged Brother Louis in this.

perpetual profession in 1826, he had for some time been taking on numerous tasks in the house. His notebook, "*Retreat Notes*" no 302, started in 1819, suggest that, from 1828, he was a formator at L'Hermitage, as is shown by these words taken from one of Marcellin's talks: "The class³⁰ here must be the model for those in all the establishments. Any misbehaviour here would therefore have the serious consequence of leading to laxity in the other houses. Do as much as you can and have boundless confidence in Jesus and Mary." (18th January).

He stated, probably in 1829: "Pray to obtain the discernment which is so necessary for me. Consult the Lord and those appointed by him often as to how to apportion punishment, praise, blame etc."

He quoted from a talk on 15th May: "A Master of Novices must insinuate himself into the spirit of each one to lead them and take on their burdens, their worries etc... either for discipline or for their vocation." Further on he adds: "If the Brother in charge of the novices was a saint, they would also be saints: one is reproduced in those one forms."

In July, he was much clearer: "I am in an elevated position. My Brothers all have their eyes on me. What regularity, what piety, what modesty! Evil is imitated rather than good.

A little later (Pages 159 - 162) he drew up a sort of programme around formation: "To reform negligence, lessons, recitation, writing, visits, penances given, forbidden cliques, work, imitation, to excite. To practise: prudence, equality of character, energy, good example, charity. Those who oppose divine order draw condemnation upon themselves (Romans 13). The Lord has given me a very heavy cross. I must carry it for the love of God, with courage, firmness and endurance for the salvation of my Brothers. (Confession 7th November).

During 1828 - 1830, Brother François was therefore in charge of the novitiate class and exercised the functions of Master of Novices, perhaps under the supervision of Brother Louis. From 1831 his reflections on governing men were multiplied:

"The greatest dignities are pedestals, great burdens, true servitude, honourable torture, preferments which diminish men without merit. It remains with one. Those who govern are like heavenly bodies which have much radiance, but no rest. (Blanchard, *School of Morality* Vol 3 Page 329)

"There is much to read, to say, to write, to examine. I can neither study, speak nor meditate. My God, inspire me, instruct me, direct me, change me, heal me, transform me. Pray for His Grace the Archbishop (the Office-Book of Lyon), applied to the Superior."

"The ways of sweetness, sentiment and religion are more efficacious for the hearts of young people. [...] If someone speaks, may it appear as if God is speaking via his mouth. If someone is

³⁰ Of the novitiate.

exercising some important ministry, let him exercise it as if acting through the virtue that God gives him, so that, in everything God may be glorified. (1Peter 4)

In Notebook 303, which begins in 1831, he again multiplied quotations from spiritual masters on government, in particular, that of novices. It seems that, in 1832 (Notebook 303 Page 318), the year the Marist Fathers left L'Hermitage, he succeeded to responsibility of the highest level, perhaps that of Director of the house. "What can I do in this post which so many holy Religious, pious missionaries and above all our venerated Founder have held!"

The direction of L'Hermitage

Marcellin's first letter to Brother François dated from 28th August 1836. Placed at the head of the house in Marcellin's absence, François had to ensure good order among the Brothers. There were three priests who had overall supervision (Fathers Servant, Matricon and Besson), but Brother François presided at the Council made up of Fathers Matricon and Besson, Brother Stanislas and Brother Jean-Marie. Realistically, if not officially, Brother François was Director of L'Hermitage.

Again, on 20th June 1838 Marcellin sent a letter to Brother François from Paris (*Letters* no 186) in which, after having mentioned the two chaplains, Fathers Matricon and Besson, he greeted, in order, Brothers Louis, Jean-Baptiste, Jean-Marie, Stanislas, Hippolyte, Jean-Joseph, Théophile, Pierre, Pierre-Joseph, Etienne, Bonaventure, "and all the novices". This is a good summary of the state of the administration: the first three Brothers named were, after Brother François, men from the general government of the Institute, in summary, its officers. The Brothers following were the heads of different services in the house.

Brother Avit (*Annals of the Institute* 1838 nos 385 - 387) gave us a fairly eclectic summary of the roles of the three officers: Brother Jean-Baptiste "helps Brother François govern" and gives talks to the Brothers and novices. As for Brother Bonaventure, "Master of Novices", he "forms more through his example than his lessons". In fact the officers participated in the general government, in formation, and in the local administration, as the priests of L'Hermitage had done in 1828. Ten years later, the chaplains were restricted to the spiritual domain.

From one Director-General to another

The election³¹ of a Director-General and two Assistants in October 1839 would only be the formalisation of a change already apparent from 1830³². There would be no place for Brother Louis, although he was the first disciple and a central figure up to 1831³³. Certainly, Brother

³¹ In fact, a sondage of the Brothers confirmed by the Fathers.

³² Brother Louis-Marie, who entered in 1832, would supplant Brother Jean-Marie who would, however become Director of the novitiate house of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux a few years later.

³³ He obtained only a few votes.

François did not succeed Marcellin: he was only Director-General, taking up a title held by Jean-Marie Granjon in 1819. However, Father Colin, who presided at the 1839 election, only fully felt himself Superior of the Brothers after the Spiritual Testament and a few days before Marcellin's death. When Brother Louis died in 1847, the Brothers were moving towards independence and Brother François had begun to take on the title of Superior General. We need, therefore, to distinguish several distinct institutional phases in the history of the foundation in L'Hermitage:

- The La Valla Period (1817 - 1824): the Marcellin - Brothers relationship, full of ambiguity; Marcellin seeking to create a fundamentally clerical Society of Mary, the Brothers foreseeing the Society of Brothers as self-governing or even stand-alone.
- The L'Hermitage Period (before 1830): Marcellin placing the Brothers under the supervision of the priests in spite of strong resistance.
- The Period of 1830 - 1840 which sees the priests distancing themselves from L'Hermitage, with Marcellin supporting a new elite, which had Brother François at its head and Brother Bonaventure a much appreciated helper.

Finally, Brother Louis was the only one to cross all three Periods, not only as a faithful disciple, but also as a lucid, if sometimes critical, companion for Marcellin. And he paid the price of that. It was through this man's destiny, a man who was profoundly spiritual, that we get the least bad impression of the enormous debate around the two key positions: Superior and Director, priest and layman. The debate would be closed only with the Constitutions of 1854 which granted the title of Superior General to a layman. In one way, it was a posthumous victory for Brother Louis and the spirit of the origins. It was not by chance that Brother Jean-Baptiste gave him such a prominent place in the *Life* in 1856 before doubling the recognition in 1868 at the beginning of *Biographies de quelques Frères*.