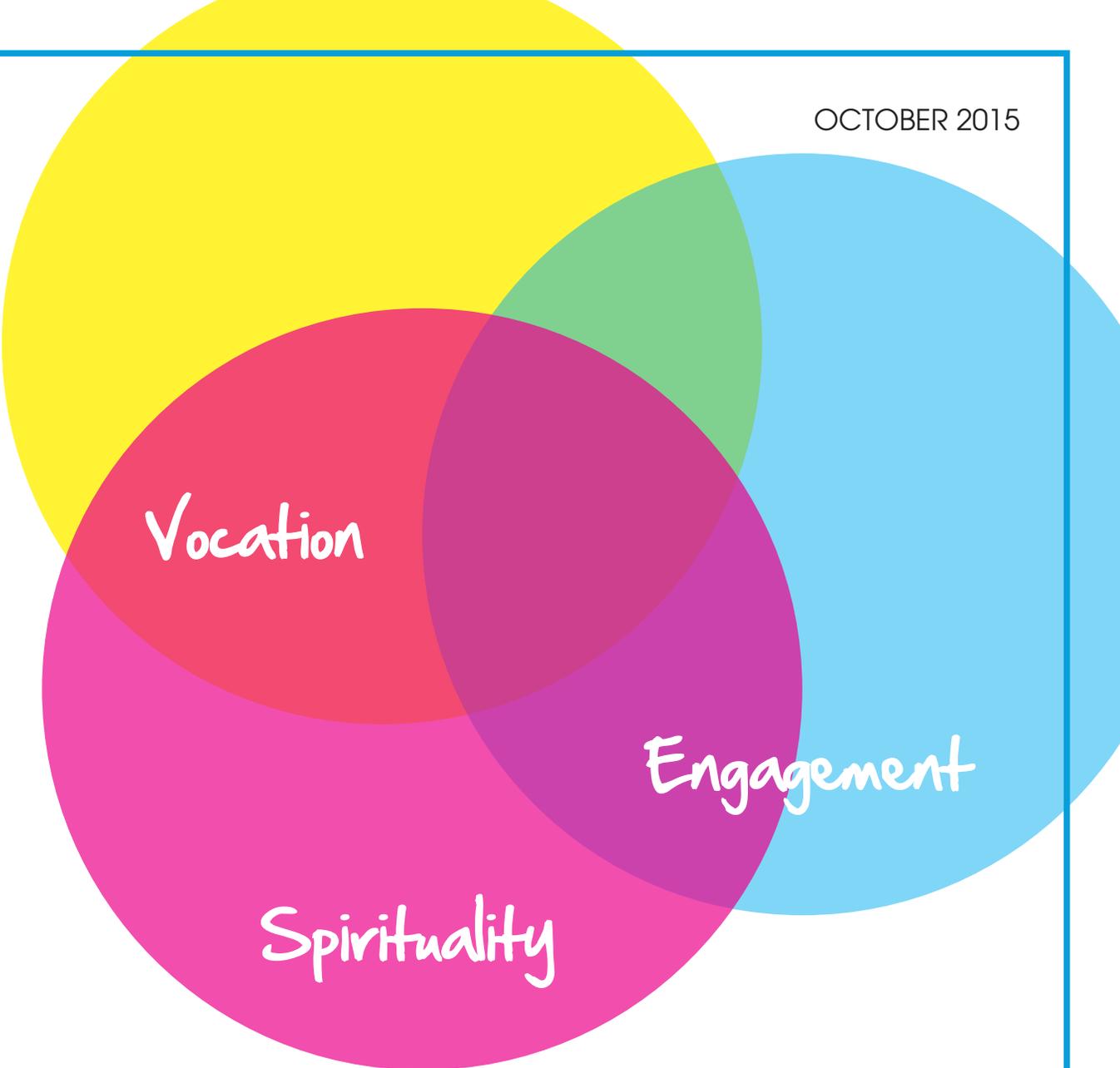


OCTOBER 2015



Vocation

Engagement

Spirituality

# CHAMPAGNAT

AN INTERNATIONAL MARIST JOURNAL OF CHARISM IN EDUCATION

volume 17 | number 03 | 2015

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Inside:

- Standing on the Side of Mercy
- Marist Icons: essential to our Life and Mission

*Champagnat: An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education*  
aims to assist its readers to integrate charism into education in a way that gives great life  
and hope. Marists provide one example of this mission.

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# Champagnat

An International Marist Journal of Charism in Education

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Volume 17 Number 03

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## EDITORIAL AND CONTRIBUTORS:

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*New Provincial Br Peter Carroll (left), Br Emili Turu (Superior General) and former Provincial Br Jeffrey Crowe (far right).*

### CHANGEOVER OF MARIST LEADERSHIP...

One of the first and many lessons for those seeking a spiritual path is to find one's way. All of us, as Marists, or simply as seekers, seek the same destination: namely, the light

of Jesus Christ. That destination calls us to find one's way together in community and with those that we encounter each day in our ministries. It calls for loyalty to our Church, to our Marist charism, and at the same time acknowledging that the journey is always taken within the framework of our human differences; within the framework of "the other person" whose opinion on how to move forward may be very different to our own.

The newly created Australian Marist province is three years old. More than five-thousand people are involved in our Marist ministries in Australia and our off-shore ministries in countries like Cambodia, Melanesia and Timor-Leste. In any such organization, there is always one person who is the leader; who leads in consultation with many people and agencies, but at the end of the day is responsible for the organization.

Brother Jeffrey Crowe has just completed three years as the first Provincial of the new province. In this time the province has consolidated its structures; created new ministries and established the Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. In a nutshell, a strong foundation has been put in place



*Australians at the International Mission Assembly in Kenya 2014.*

*L to R: Br Tony Leon (Rome), Br Michael Green (Melbourne), Sarah Nowlan (Forbes), Br Chris Wills (Rome), Jack Stammers (Melbourne), Br Jeffrey Crowe (Sydney) and Frank Malloy (Sydney).*

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so that we can continue to develop and build our Marist life into the twenty-first century. This is not a question of just bricks and mortar, but more to the point, a foundation has been laid that allows us to move forward, to seek Jesus Christ through our Marist lives as Brothers and Lay-Marists; and to do this in the context of dialogue and respect for the other opinion. This has been a strength for us and we sincerely thank Brother Jeffrey for his leadership over the past three years. Our gratitude and our prayers go with him as he takes a well-deserved break.

The contributors to this edition of the *Champagnat Journal* contribute to our seeking; to our forward movement as Marists:

- Karen Prendergast is a senior teacher at Newman College in Perth. She is currently the Acting Head of the Senior School, and has been in the process of completing post-graduate studies at Notre Dame University in Fremantle on a part-time basis. Her paper reflects on the significance of Fourviere, Montagne and La Valla as spiritual icons for us in our Marist ministries.

- Brendan Geary is the Provincial of the Marist Central West Province in Europe. He has previously written for this journal, and his short reflection here challenges us to think in terms of just how inclusive our Church is. This is a question that Pope Francis has also put before us and seeks a response at the forthcoming Synod in Rome.

- James Gray is a former teacher and archivist

at St Joseph's College at Hunter's Hill. In his reflection he recalls the life of the late Brother Julius Walsh, who at the time of his death, was the oldest Brother living in Australia. The reflection tells all of us something of what it means to be Marist, to be loyal to one's commitment to the journey, and open to all that tomorrow holds.

- Robert O'Connor has had many years of experience as a school administrator, and more recently as a spiritual director. His reflection on Marist schools as places of encounter – where we encounter in the name of the Marian Church – is of significance for all of us in our own personal lives as well as how we respond to those around us.

- Richard Dunleavy and Andre Lanfrey present their second and final paper where they discuss our Marist Constitutions in light of the process to update them. As mentioned at the commencement of this editorial, one of the crucial characteristics of our Marist charism is 'the other'. We all have opinions on what should happen and how it should happen. Our charism calls us to dialogue, to listen, and to reflect. This dialogue between Richard and Andre has the potential to enrich our understanding of the Constitutions, and to possibly form an opinion on what we see as central to the revision process.

Our sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to the publication of this edition of the *Champagnat Journal*.

**Tony Paterson**

## THANK YOU

Our gratitude to those who have contributed papers to this edition, and to the proof-readers and to those who have assisted with the peer-review process. The Management Committee.

KAREN PRENDERGAST

# Marist Icons – Fourvière, Montagne and La Valla

## INTRODUCTION

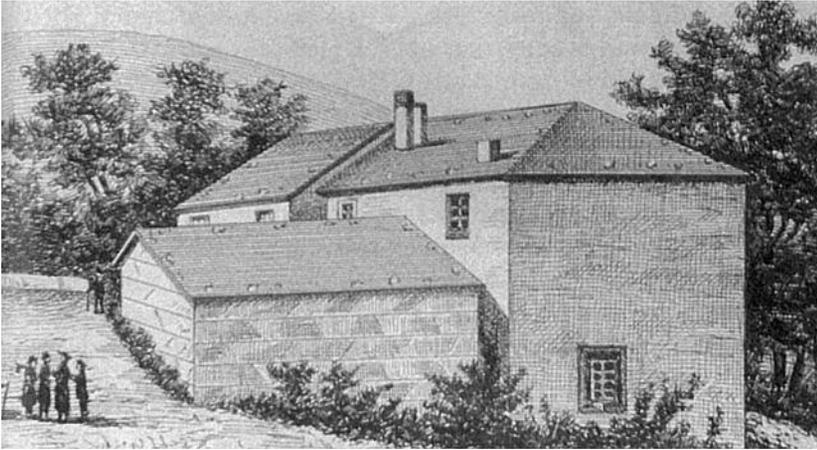
In his letter of April 2014, Br Emili Turú, the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, looks ahead to the bicentenary of the Marist Institute, in January 2017. In the video, *Bicentenary of the Marist Brothers. Message from Br Emili Turú, Superior General* (2014), Br Emili refers to the bicentenary as “A new beginning” for the Institute. To guide the Institute for the next three years, Br Emili (2014) identifies three icons, or dimensions, which will help Marists “Recall essential aspects of our life and mission” (p. 1). The icons are Fourvière, Montagne and La Valla and they illustrate three “Fundamental Christian and Marist dimensions: mission, shared life and spirituality” (Estaún, 2009, p. 34). Br Emili (2012) discusses the value of icons when he says, “In the West, we underline the importance of words, of logic, of the need to listen. In the East, by contrast, importance is given to the image, to intuition and the need to contemplate” (p. 44). Before considering the significance of each icon, it is important to understand that they are not paintings, or works of art, but places and events that give an insight into the Marist charism. This paper will consider the role each icon plays in understanding key characteristics of Marist identity, mission and spirituality.

## THE ICON OF FOURVIÈRE

There has been a shrine, a place of pilgrimage, at Fourvière in Lyon, since 1170. It was at this shrine that the first Marists gathered on the 23rd July, 1816, the day after they were ordained. On this day twelve newly ordained priests and seminarians, including Father Marcellin Champagnat, went to the Chapel of Notre Dame de Fourvière and made their pledge to form the Society of Mary. These Marists had a strong devotion to Mary, which developed throughout their years in the seminary and which is reflected in their pledge, as each of them promised to “Spend ourselves and all we have in saving souls in every way under the very august name of the Virgin Mary” (“Fourvière Pledge – The Marist Places,” n.d.). Br Sean Sammon comments that the early Marists believed Mary “Was calling their Society to a renewed way of being Church; at Fourvière they pledged themselves to make that dream a reality” (Br Estaún, 2007, p. 9). The icon of Fourvière clearly reflects this strong devotion to Mary, one of the defining characteristics of Marist spirituality.

The icon of Fourvière illustrates the Marian face of the Institute and also highlights the importance of the various branches that make up the Marist family. The first Marists believed that the Marist project “Would be structured like a multi-branched tree by including lay people, priests, sisters and brothers” (Estaún, 2007, p. 25). Over time, the branches of the tree became separate and individual congregations of Priests, Brothers and Sisters were formed. Champagnat formed the Marist Institute, an order of Brothers, in 1817. As the Marist Institute approaches its bicentenary, Br Emili (2014) suggests that the origins of the order reflect the fact





that Brothers and lay “Come together for mission and are called to be the Marian face of the Church” (p. 3). The icon of Fourvière is a reminder that the Marist family has always been comprised of several branches and that the recent increase in involvement of lay Marists is both an opportunity and a challenge for the Institute.

### THE ICON OF MONTAGNE

The second icon of Montagne clearly reflects Marist mission. Shortly after Champagnat was ordained, he was sent to the rural parish of La Valla, as curate to the Parish Priest, Father Rebod. According to Br Michael Green (Personal Communication, 27/4/2014) “Rebod was a troubled character, a pessimist and a drunk” and Champagnat believed that Rebod’s ministry left much to be desired. In contrast to Rebod, Br Manuel Mesonero (2014) comments that Champagnat’s “Ministerial work...went above and beyond his duty as a curate” (p. 8). On October 28th, 1816 this ministerial work took Champagnat to the Montagne household in Les Palais, to tend to their dying son, seventeen year old Jean-Baptiste. Champagnat was saddened to find that Jean-Baptiste had no knowledge of God, due to his lack of education. After the boy’s death, Champagnat reflected on the experience and considered it to be “A summons from God” (Estaún, 2007, p. 24), a sign that he should progress with his vision to form “An Institute of

teaching Brothers for the country districts” (McMahon, 1989, p. 34). The mission of the Brothers was “To bring the good news of Jesus to people on the margins of Church and society” (Estaún, 2007, p. 24). Br Emili (2014) emphasizes the importance of the Montagne icon when he states it “profoundly marked Father Champagnat’s life, and clearly brought about the birth of the Marist Institute” (p. 2).

This early experience had a significant impact on Champagnat and shaped the mission of the Institute. It confirmed for Champagnat the need for an order of teaching Brothers, to educate the young and vulnerable. Br Emili (2014) illustrates the relevance of this icon, as it represents “The need to direct our mission in a clearer and more decisive way towards the children and young people who are on the margins” (p. 2). Br Emili (2014) stresses that this fundamental aspect of Marist mission is as important now as it was in Champagnat’s time, and he comments that all Marists must respond to the “Call to get going and meet the Montagnes of today, wherever they may be” (p. 2). This is a particularly important message for teachers in Marist schools.

### THE ICON OF LA VALLA

The third icon, the house at La Valla, has as much significance today as it did for the first Marists. On 2nd January 1817, Champagnat brought the first two Brothers to live in the house



and the Institute was born. Unusually for a curate, Champagnat spent the majority of the eight years he was in La Valla living in the house with the Brothers, rather than residing in the Priests' house. Champagnat and the Brothers remained at La Valla until 1824, when they moved to the Gier valley to begin building Notre Dame de L'Hermitage. It was in the house at La Valla that the unique characteristics of the Marist charism were formed.

The house at La Valla has three floors, each of which relate to aspects of Marist identity, mission and spirituality. Br Emili (2014) comments that the first floor is the space of mission, as it is open, bright and outward facing and represents "The call to move to the frontiers and to the margins of society" (p. 4). Br Michael Green (Personal Communication, 27/4/2014) also identifies a link between this top floor and mission, as he says that this floor is related to a Marian way of educating the young, which focuses on nurturing and maternal practices.

The ground floor is dominated by the original table from Champagnat's time and this floor symbolizes "Building community around Mary" (Br Joseph McKee, Personal Communication, 17/4/2014). A focus on fraternity and community is important for Marists, as these are the key ways in which evangelization occurs and their relevance is illustrated by this floor. The ground floor symbolizes the ways in which Marist educators gather their students around the same metaphorical table as Champagnat gathered the first Brothers. The main message from this floor reflects that of the Fourvière Pledge underlining the importance of the relationship between Brothers and lay Marists as "Partners in mission" (Br Emili, 2014, p. 5), working together to take the word of Jesus to the young and vulnerable in their care.

The basement has only recently been fully exposed to the public. Many consider this floor to be the most important part of the house, because it is related to spirituality and is the foundation on which everything else is based. Br Emili (2014) comments that the basement "Symbolizes the inner space in which each of us is inhabited by the Mystery" (p. 4). This inner space, or interiority, represents the mystical dimension of life, the "Getting in touch with one's inner-self" (Br Joseph McKee, Personal Communication, 17/4/2014). Br

Emili (2014) emphasizes the importance of Marists cultivating this interiority so they may become "Contemplatives in action" (p. 4), a central characteristic of Marist spirituality. To minister to the young people in their care, Marist educators must become spiritual contemplatives, who take time out from the busyness of their daily life to develop their own spirituality and reflect on their mission. Br Emili (2012) emphasizes that this mission must focus on servant leadership, "A leadership from below" (p. 53) and that this must form the basis of the teacher-student relationship. The icon of La Valla is a powerful reminder to Marists of these key characteristics of the Marist charism.

### CONCLUSION

The three icons illustrate the central characteristics of Marist identity, mission and spirituality. The icon of Fourvière relates to a spirituality with a Marian face and provides insight into the mission of the different branches of the Marist family. The Montagne icon reflects the



importance of reaching out to the poor and those on the margins of society. This icon demonstrates that the fundamental nature of Marist ministry is to be non-judgmental and accessible to all, a message that is as relevant now as it was in Champagnat's time. The La Valla icon symbolizes the importance of community and of the spiritual dimension of one's life, with a focus on creating an interior space that allows one to seek God in the depths of one's heart. As Br Emili (2014) illustrates, consideration of these icons "Will guide us on our journey" (p. 1), as the Institute approaches the 'New beginning' that the bicentenary offers.

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## BROTHER BRENDAN GEARY, PROVINCIAL, WEST CENTRAL EUROPE

# Reflections

## 1. Standing on the side of mercy

Two years ago I attended the funeral of one of our Brothers where I was struck by an intervention by the Parish Priest. Just before Communion he approached the microphone and informed those present that only those who were in a state of grace should receive Communion. He then went further and explained that being in a state of grace required attendance at mass every Sunday and adherence to the Church's teachings. He then said that anyone not in a position to receive communion could ask to receive a blessing.

I was sitting beside the family of the Brother who had died and the shock and upset they experienced was palpable. I quickly tried to console

them and reminded them that they were there to honour the memory of the Brother who was their cousin and friend, and not to conform to the expectations of the Parish Priest. Some of those beside me chose to receive communion. Most stayed in their seats. The priest who was presiding at the mass, who was the Vicar General in another diocese, was shocked at what he had just heard.

#### POPE FRANCIS AND MERCY

The 14th ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will take place in the Vatican between 4 - 25 October. The theme chosen by Pope Francis is, "the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world."

According to the Introduction to the *Instrumentum Laboris*,<sup>1</sup> "it will "reflect further on the points discussed" at the 2014 Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that was held in October 2014,"so as to formulate appropriate pastoral guidelines" for the pastoral care of the person and the family.

As a result of the statements, gestures, and changes to the management of the Synod initiated by Pope Francis, there have been high expectations regarding possible changes in the area of family life and the Church's teaching on some aspects of sexual morality. These expectations are in line with the central message of Pope Francis who has highlighted the importance of mercy in the mission of the Church.

The Pope wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, "The Church . . . has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy." (24).

Such sentiments should be good news for Marists as mercy was at the heart of the foundational experience of the Marist project.

## TWO FOUNDERS: TWO ROADS TO MERCY

Marcellin Champagnat was blessed with common sense and good judgment. Some of this, no doubt, came from significant role models in his life. He was born in 1789, the year of the French Revolution. As we know, his father took a leading role in the town of Marlhes, and held a range of offices, including Town Clerk, Colonel in the National Guard, Deputy, Magistrate and President of the Municipal Administration. It is notable that during his tenure of these roles only one person was executed, no one was taken away from the village, and the Church was not burned or sold. The young Marcellin must have watched his father balance law with compassion, in exercising power and authority in turbulent times.

When Marcellin decided to study for the priesthood he spent some months in Saint Sauveur with his brother-in-law, Benoît Arnaud, trying to acquire sufficient education to enter the minor seminary. Arnaud thought that Marcellin was

wasting his time. While staying in Saint Sauveur Marcellin had the good fortune to meet Fr. Jean-Baptiste Soutrenon, a young priest with similar personality and gifts as Marcellin, who developed an effective pastoral approach which showed sensitivity and understanding of the people among whom he ministered. It is highly probable that Marcellin looked to this outstanding young priest as a model of priestly ministry.<sup>2</sup>

## FORMATION IN MORAL THEOLOGY

Moral theology in France in the early nineteenth century was deeply affected by Jansenism, a theological system that viewed human nature in a negative light and which focused on sin and condemnation rather than on God's mercy. The advice to confessors was rigorist, with more emphasis on law than compassion. Marcellin Champagnat, Jean Claude Colin and Jean Marie Vianney, the Curé D'Ars, all learned this theology, but responded to it in a more compassionate way.

Marcellin appears never to have absorbed this rigorist approach; he was, for example, renowned as a compassionate confessor in La Valla. In an article that I read some years ago in Marist Notebooks the author noted that when we compare Fr. Champagnat's sermons with his sources, that he constantly edited out the rigorist, judgmental, harsh, Jansenistic passages and either simply omitted them or replaced them with thoughts about God's mercy and the tenderness of Mary.

Jean Claude Colin, Founder of the Marist Fathers, became personally convinced of the importance of mercy and compassion in Marist ministry through pastoral experience. In his early years as a priest he followed his training and the advice of his more experienced colleagues. In later life he recalled listening to their advice:

Since I was youngest, I followed their decision; mistrustful of myself, although deep inside my opinion was different . . . Later on I recognized that, in those cases, we paid too much attention to the law, and not enough to the fragility of human nature. (Origines Maristes, Doc. 577)

According to Fr. Jan Snijders, former General Councillor of the Marist Fathers, the early Marists saw themselves called to be instruments of God's

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1 [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20140626\\_instrumentum-laboris-familia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html)

2 See Seán Sammon (2013). *A heart that knew no bounds: The life and mission of Saint Marcellin Champagnat*, pp. 2 & 7.

mercy. A new approach to pastoral ministry was required in France in the early Nineteenth Century, and mercy was considered an essential element in the work of evangelization. Jan Snijders wrote, “But if we adopt our traditional mission . . . to the secularized world of today, then we must stand on the side of mercy.”<sup>3</sup>

### POPE FRANCIS AND THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

I suspect that everyone reading this article will know the story about Cardinal Walter Kaspar and the gift of his book on Mercy to Cardinal Bergoglio as they entered the Conclave in March 2013. Mercy has emerged as a central theme of this Papacy, and, as I have shown above, is consistent with the vision and pastoral approach of the early Marists. As such, it should be no stranger to Marists today.

We all know people who have a closed, negative attitude to the world, and who seem to be impervious to kindness, generosity and compassion. It can be easy to write off such people and feel frustrated by their pessimistic and critical outlook on life. Recently I read a chapter of a book where the author wrote, “Negative thought blocks the possibility of growth because it disconnects us from hope.”<sup>4</sup> Allowing for the possibility of mercy and compassion can be challenging for some people as it requires them to change hardened attitudes that they have developed for a range of reasons - possibly to defend themselves from more disappointments and hurts. Unless they share their thoughts and feelings with us, we can never know what is happening inside another person. We can, however, continue to show mercy, understanding and compassion, as Fr. Champagnat and the early Marists would have done, and as we are encouraged to do by Pope Francis.

### LAW AND MERCY

I began this letter by calling to mind an incident at a funeral that offended me. The funeral took place in November 2013, a few weeks before the publication of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. It seems to me that the Pope’s position is very clear:

The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” (47).

I would like to think that the Parish Priest I referred to above has read and meditated on the Pope’s words.

### CONCLUSION

There are high expectations for the forthcoming Synod. The commentators whom I have read do not expect changes in Church teaching, but anticipate a change in pastoral emphases in the direction of compassion, mercy and inclusion. The early Marists would all have been happy with this outcome, as it is an approach that is consistent with their own pastoral practice.

The early Marists looked to Mary as the Mother of Mercy, and the words, “Mary,” “mercy” and “tenderness,” were often found together in their writings. How often do we read in the Office that the “Lord is full of mercy and compassion”? I suggest that we should be grateful to our Marist founders for their insights and pastoral practice, and for the joy and hope that Pope Francis has generated in the Church and the world by highlighting the importance of mercy, which, as Cardinal Kaspar reminds us, is the “Essence of the Gospel and the key to Christian life.”

3 Jan Snijders. (1986). *The Age of Mary*. Maristica, 1. Rome: Marist Fathers, pp. 58 – 60.

4 Michael Meegan. (2007). *Changing the world from the inside out*. Eye Books: London. P. 152.

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JAMES GRAY

# Reflections

## 2. Remembering our most recent Senior Brother Br Julius Walsh FMS

**L**ance Edward (Br Julius) Walsh passed away quietly at Marist Ashgrove (Queensland) on the afternoon of Tuesday 21 July 2015, aged 92.

In 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, Lance, an only child who had lost his father early in life, came to St Joseph's all the way from Innisfail, North Queensland. He was 12 years old. He would spend a full seven years at the College, a second home where he was nurtured throughout his teenage years, guided by great Marist men such as Br Louis Hughes (his Headmaster in all that time), Br Angelus McKinley, Br Liguori O'Hearn, Br Gerard O'Donoghue, Br Henry Gaffney and Br Claude McLaughlin, to mention a few.

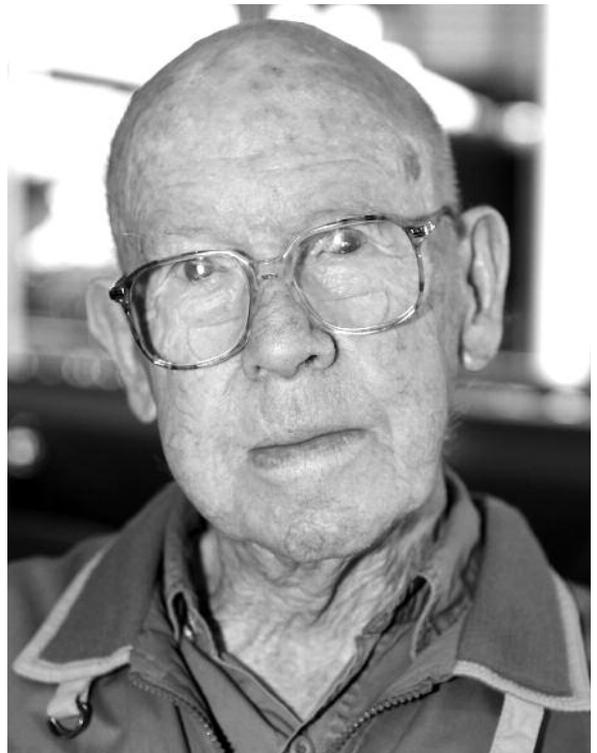
Lance Walsh was no ordinary scholar and was very involved in the life and interests of the College. In his Intermediate Year (1937), excelling in Violin, he achieved an Associate of the London College of Music Diploma. In 1938 he was awarded the Eric Miller QC Prize for Best Essay, "Sugar Metropolis", a beautifully worded, highly entertaining description of his home town, Innisfail. He was a prominent member of the Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament, and in his final years witnessed the construction of the magnificent College Chapel, finally blessed and opened in 1940.

In the 1939 Leaving Certificate Lance achieved an outstanding pass: 1st Class Honours in Maths I and Maths II, 2nd Class Honours in Physics, and As in English, French (with orals) and Mechanics. This won him an Exhibition to study Medicine at Sydney University.

Instead, in 1940, Lance chose to enter the Marist Brothers' Juniorate at Mittagong, in preparation for his vocation as a Marist Brother. He took First Vows as Br Julius in 1942, Perpetual Vows in 1947 and a Vow of Stability in 1961. Br

Julius' ongoing education began with studies in Mathematics and Physics at Sydney University. He was a highly gifted teacher of such subjects. An example of this occurred in 1955 when one of his students at Parramatta topped the State with First Class Honours in Physics. Only a few years before, another of his students had won the Barker Scholarship for first place in Mathematics. Br Liguori had taught Lance well!

Later in life Br Julius gained further qualifications: TAFE certification for Handicapped Assistance, Counselling with the Institute of Pastoral Care, and enrichment through a number of Religious Renewal courses in Fribourg, Auckland and Rome.



*Br Julius Walsh FMS*

His Secondary Teaching ministry and Community placements, which began in 1942, extended over 60 years at a great variety of schools: Kilmore, Bondi Beach, Hunters Hill, Eastwood, Parramatta, Randwick, Rosalie, Buranda (with Br Des Phillips and the Little Kings Movement for the Handicapped), Mitchelton (Enoggera) and Ashgrove (specialising in remedial work with primary and secondary students). At various times he exercised leadership responsibilities such as Principal and Community Leader at Bondi, Deputy Principal at Eastwood and Community Leader at Buranda. He finally retired, aged 80, at Ashgrove.

In summarising his humble, hard working life,

his Marist confreres wrote: "Br Julius lived his long and good life against a backdrop of enormous world changes and events. Yet condolence messages, received by his community after his death, had a recurring theme. This was the remembrance of a man who was kind, gentle and quiet. He seemed to have a profound and lasting effect on so many in his own quiet way.

He was remembered as a man of rich talents, a great teacher in his specialised fields, a prophet with the handicapped, a musician of note, a wordsmith, and a man who was loved by many and in turn, loved well." He now resides in peace with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, whom he served so well.

BROTHER ROBERT O'CONNOR

## Reflections

### 3. Marist Schools – Places of Encounter?

#### Some Reflections on Manifesting the 'Marian Face' of the Church

*'Today we do not need great prophets, but little prophets who live with simplicity, without noise and without complication, the radicalness and the paradox of the Gospel in daily life.'*

Johann Baptist Metz

"A Church with a Marian face is what we are committed to build."

[Br Emili Turu, *He Gave us the Name of Mary*]

**T**he French Revolution, saw the rich traditions of the French Church essentially destroyed. The founding Marists emerging from that turmoil spoke passionately about their aim to see a MARIAN CHURCH being born out of this time.

They believed, from the 'Revelation of Le Puy'

that Mary was inviting them to rebuild the church; a church that would mirror 'the early Church' with Mary present among them supporting, encouraging, praying, animating them, to "do whatever Jesus tells you." [Jn.2:5]. She was to be for them 'our sister in the faith'.

Our invitation as Marist educators is to make her accessible to ourselves before ever we can do so for our students. *"Mary's life was a genuine human journey. To deny that fact and take her out of the ranks of humanity is unfair to her and to all of us. This woman of faith was never, and will never be, divine..."* [Br Sean Sammon SG, 2003].

In most classrooms in our Catholic and Marist schools there would be images of Mary chosen because of their ability to communicate with the students in those rooms. The images chosen are an attempt to communicate something meaningful, appropriate to their age.

As Marist educators, let us strive reverently and

authentically to demythologise the Mother of Jesus. Let us position her within the cultural context of her time and place, recognising that her ‘westernised name’ is Mary, but properly acknowledging that in Hebrew she would have better been known as *Miriam*, or in Aramaic *Meryam*. Let us place her squarely in the reality of her world and her time. It can only be in this reality that the remarkable faith journey of this young Jewish woman will truly speak to us.

### MIRIAM – THE YOUNG JEWISH WOMAN

Seeking to know this real young woman, one author [Elizabeth Johnson CSJ] puts it this way: *‘Using the spade of archaeology, the measuring tools of social science and the quill of ancient authors we can picture the world in which Mary lived. This world – for both religious and historical reasons – intrigues us as the place of Mary’s encounter with God. It is precisely in this economic, political and cultural setting, living out her Jewish faith as a peasant woman of the people, that Mary walked her journey of faith in response to the promptings of the Spirit. It is precisely to such a woman who counts for nothing on the world stage, that God has done great things...’*

‘The new Testament provides us with a mosaic of Mary – the historical, graced, human woman, that allows us to remember her as our companion in the company of friends of God and prophets.’

Let us consider briefly this Marian Mosaic in scripture:

- Paul in Galatians positions her as one of us, a human woman chosen to bear the Messiah, who was ‘born of a woman’ [Gal.4:4] at a specific time and place.

- In Mark and Matthew she is part of the history of the Chosen people leading, as promised in the OT/Hebrew scriptures, to the coming of the Messiah. She learns as we read in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew that the close family ties with her Son, was not the main purpose of his role or hers; ‘who is my mother and my brothers?’ [Matt.12:48], but to initiate the ‘reign of God’, a call to a new form of ‘family’ and of discipleship.

- It is in Luke and John that we most closely watch Mary and her ‘way’:

- She is open and direct: “How can this be...?” [Lk 1:34]
- Responsive: “let what you have said be done...” [Lk 1:38]

- Familial: “son why have you done this to us?” [Lk 2:48]
- Prayerful: “she kept these things and pondered them...” [Lk 2:52]
- Courageous: “standing by the cross of Jesus” [Jn 19:25]
- Missionary: “do whatever he tells you...” [Jn 2:5]
- Communitarian: “they devoted themselves to prayer...” [Acts 1:14]

So these are hints, signposts if you will, as we consider our journeys of faith as Marists and our invitation to “go in haste to the hill country...” [Lk 1:39], where Jesus would have us follow him. Often, as for the disciples, Jesus calls us out of our comfort-zones.

In this Mary stands with us as model and mentor. Her journey began in questioning and confusion but ultimately through teenaged pregnancy, unmarried mother, refugee and worried mother of a lost son and later as terrified at Jesus’ scandalous’ words and stories, she as faithful Jewish mother, put her trust in God, she came to confidently stand at Cana and the Cross and joined the early community at Pentecost, our “sister in the faith”, now understanding better the new family Jesus had brought about.

We strive too, to say our “let it happen...” to whatever it is that Jesus invites me to each day never really knowing where it might take us. This trust and confidence in God’s promise in Jesus, is our Marist heritage. We do it too, as women and men of prayer taking time to ‘ponder’ all that God has done in us.

### MARY – MOTHER AND DISCIPLE

“In all her difference Miriam of Nazareth is one with us in the circle of disciples as

- our sister, a *poor woman of the people* to whom God has done great things;
- a ‘*God-bearer*’ who had divinity dancing under her heart’ in developing human flesh;
- a *young Jewish woman* vulnerable to violence in a patriarchal setting;
- a *friend* of God who made her own difficult choices with courage;
- a *prophet* whose word announced the awesome reversals God’s coming will bring about in this world;
- a *married woman* who toiled hard with her husband to provide for their family;

- *a woman with a questioning mind* who pondered what God was doing in the midst of her life;
- *the mother of the itinerant preacher* Jesus, terribly worried about his ministry;
- *a middle-aged woman* whose agonised grief over the public execution of her first born connects her with legions of bereaved women;
- *an elder* in the budding community of the early church.

She kept faith. We connect her Spirit-filled story with our own amid the drama of the human race in its history of suffering and hope and thereby find courage to carry forward God's dream for the world". [Johnson, Elizabeth, Truly Our Sister]

### 'A MARIAN CHURCH' - ITS FACE IN OUR SCHOOLS?

Returning to the opening remarks: What did the early Marists understand by a MARIAN Church and what did Saint Marcellin envisage as our MARIAN face?

The short answer is that they saw themselves as Jean-Claude Colin said: "...beginning a new church" a Church forever being re-born "l'Eglise naissante"; one not preoccupied by systems, organisation, competition, achievement, power, control, as important as these matters, properly understood, are in any good school. We as MARISTS are always challenged to keep BALANCE in all that we do; and to guide our students similarly. So we must also be places of compassion, nurture, silence, contemplation and relationships.

The Church properly understood in our Marist tradition, is not just a place where we can be saved, but more importantly a place where people grow in life. In this sense, Mary is the one who teaches us, as woman, mother and disciple, how to be followers of Jesus. So this MARIAN church, and consequently our MARIST schools:

- Need to follow Mary into the mountains; to a 'new land', where she encounters Elizabeth, new challenges and new life;
- Need to rejoice and sing; struck by the beauty of what God is doing in our lives, and not just bemoaning the world's darkness and challenges;
- Need to encounter in prayer, that we are the object of God's free love and that God has the heart of a mother; we have seen God throw his arms around his child's neck and welcome him home [prodigal son Lk 15:11-32].
- Need to live in Nazareth in simplicity, pondering, chatting, weeping, rejoicing with our sisters and brothers; sharing with and listening to them;
- Need to stand at the foot of the cross, vulnerable and with a courage that stands beside the most marginalised;
- Need to let in the winds of Pentecost, proclaiming that the promise has been kept, the fight has been won.

Mary's MAGNIFICAT celebrates that God has not found our broken world, with all its afflictions and pain and violence uninhabitable. It is there that he has met us in our realities, in our 'messiness'.

BR ANDRÉ LANFREY FMS AND BR RICHARD DUNLEAVY FMS

## A Marist North-South Conversation

"With Mary we go in haste to a new land" (Lk 1:39)

**A**s part of the dialogue and consultation for the revision of our Constitutions, the "North-South Conversation" below, is a fraternal exchange of views between Br Andre Lanfrey FMS, the distinguished Marist historian in France, and Br Richard Dunleavy in New Zealand. This is the second part of the conversation

dealing with a proposed textual change in the current Constitutions.

**RD**

In a recommendation to the Commission charged with reviewing our Constitutions, we submitted a revised text for Article 2 of the present Constitutions. Other later articles would also need changing if

this text was accepted as an expression of a new emphasis on part of our mission as Marist Brothers to live and promote the Marial face of the Church.

The text we first suggested follows immediately below. Then Br Andre gives his commentary on the ideas and wording suggesting some change arises from his historical research:

*Led by the Spirit, Marcellin was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had for him and for others. His experience of this, as well as his openness to events and to the needs of the Church, is the wellspring of his spirituality and of his apostolic zeal.*

*It made him sensitive to the needs of his times, to the sad state of the French Church, especially to the ignorance concerning religion among the young people, and to the poverty of their situations of life.*

*His faith and his eagerness to do God's will led him to realize that his mission was to make Jesus Christ known and loved, and with the other Marists, to renew the Church so that it would reflect the compassion, understanding and gentleness of Mary.*

*These convictions led him not only to support that mission of the Society of Mary, and to encourage the Brothers to support it likewise, but especially to found our Institute for the Christian education of young people, especially those in need, who would be drawn into a Church which radiated Mary's welcome.*

#### AL

Let me now comment on each sentence of your suggestions article, and propose some modifications:

Original text: *Led by the Spirit, Marcellin was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had for him and for others.*

I would think that this lacks an essential element coming from the introduction to the Fourvière consecration: "All for the greater glory of God and of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ". And the following sayings written about 1818 on the walls of the Brothers' oratory (which later became Champagnat's bedroom) are also of great significance because they provide us with a synthesis which, while being theological and spiritual, are also Trinitarian and Marial:

*Jesus all my love, Jesus all my happiness.  
Set my whole heart on fire with your love.  
Praised by the most Holy Sacrament of the altar.  
All glory is in God alone.  
Blessed be the most pure and immaculate  
Conception of the Blessed Mary,  
Mother of God.*

These phrases are especially more precious to us because our Marist texts say very little about the Trinity and particularly the Holy Spirit. As regards the exact formulation of the act of consecration we do know that the Brothers were familiar with it from an early stage because Brother Francois used it in his first Retreat Notes of 1819 (AFM 5101.302).

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*O most Holy Trinity (St Francis Xavier).*

*All for the great glory of God and the honour of the august Mary.*

And from Fr Champagnat's 1st Retreat of 1819 we have this text:

*I will remember the presence of God.....while praying, teaching, walking, recreating, at meals and.....acting always with a holy modesty for the glory of God, the honour of Mary and the good of Religion.*

*I will teach the children not only the respect, love and obedience they owe to their parents and all their superiors, and but also a particular emphasis on the catechism and prayer.*

*I will keep before me the example of Jesus, of Mary and the saints (1820), Furthermore my teaching will follow the example of Jesus, my master and model.*

*To seek only the glory of God, the honour of Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and the wellbeing of the holy, Catholic, apostolic, Roman Church and according to its prescriptions.*

There is also the question of "All the Jesus through Mary". As we have already noted this saying does not appear in the very first texts. But we can date it precisely in the 1827 notebook of Br Francois, no.302, as part of this prayer:

*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

*All for the great glory of God and the honour of Mary.*

*All to Jesus through Mary, all to the Mary for Jesus.*

Champagnat's notes are evidence that from 1815 onwards he has developed a profound personal Marial spirituality:

*My God, you know how wretched I am. Have pity on me, I implore you. And you, Holy Mary, you know that I am **your slave**. I am truly unworthy of such a great favour but it is in this very gift that you have showered your goodness on me. Amen.*

But it was only little by little that this spirituality of personal belonging to Mary spread out among the Brothers.

**My proposed change in the first sentence:**

*Zealous for the glory of God and the honour of Mary, and led by the Spirit, Marcellin, was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had **for God and for one another**, and therefore for him and for others.*

**Comment on the second sentence:**

*His experience of this love, as well as his openness to events and to the needs of the Church, is the wellspring of his spirituality and his apostolic zeal.*

It would be perhaps necessary to underline the fact that Champagnat's activity was not devoted just to its religious emphasis. Another motivating force in his efforts came from his own life-experience as a child in a rural environment, typified not only by poor educational opportunities but also by a lack of the ordinary conditions of civilized living. Thus his inspiration is focused on the grand vision of restoring a Christian civilization through the education of children along the same lines as the Jesuits, and the La Salle Brothers. That is why he accepted, not without certain hesitations and ambiguities, that the Brothers would teach not just the catechism but also secular subjects as well. For that reason, I would modify the second sentence:

**My proposed change in the second sentence:**

*His experience of this love, as well as his openness to events, to the needs of the Church, **and of the society around him**, is the wellspring of his spirituality and his apostolic zeal.*

**Comment on the third sentence:**

*It made him sensitive to the needs of his times, to the sad state of the French Church, especially to the ignorance concerning religion among the young people, and to the poverty of their situations of life.*

Yes, it did make him sensitive to the needs of his time, to the sad state of the Church, and to the ignorance among the young people (the children?) in what concerned both their religion and the poverty of the lives.

That focus on the children is the big difference

between Champagnat and the other Marists, so well expressed in his cry "We must have Brothers". The other Marists really saw themselves as general missionaries dealing primarily with the adults while leaving the teaching of the catechism to their lay helpers. They had no need for "Brothers". And Fr Colin never really did understand the vocation of the Marist Brother.

And those lay helpers were in fact called "brothers" and "sisters" without their having any commitment as Religious. So it was only slowly that those words came to refer to members belonging to a Religious Congregation. Up until the Chapter of 1852-54 the Marist Brothers were still largely regarded as a society of laymen, and many of the Brothers understood themselves as just that. That's part of the reason for the large numbers who joined and the many who left, I myself recall that when I was at the juniorate in 1953 until 1958 I was still hearing juniors say that they were becoming Brothers to be teachers.

As a result the promotion of an organized body of "Brothers" specialized in Champagnat education liberated us from what had been the traditional model of considering the Church in three orders: the clergy who teach, the monks who pray, and the laity who obey. Champagnat, however, believed that laity could, at least in part, fulfill all those three roles. That is why he clearly never went to the ultimate in that reasoning by conceding the Brothers would be independent from the Fathers. But that did not stop him from undertaking his dynamic initiative to create a body of zealous laymen.

It is also important to note this fact that, at the beginning of the Brothers' schools (Marhles, La Valla) they were parochial schools under the control of the parish priest. But very quickly Champagnat chose as far as possible to accept schools which were under the authority of the town, where the control of the clergy was much weaker. We can too easily forget that it was Champagnat himself who helped to promote the role of lay people as teachers in our schools.

**My proposed change in the third sentence:**

*It made him sensitive to the problem of religious ignorance, and **more broadly, of the material, intellectual and spiritual poverty** of the children, in a period of time when popular education was not regarded as an important issue.*

**Comment on the fourth sentence:**

*His faith and his eagerness to do God's will led him to realize that his mission was to make Jesus Christ known and loved, and with the other Marists, to renew the Church so that it would reflect the compassion, understanding and gentleness of Mary.*

Chapter VI of the 1852 Rule on devotion to Mary gives a very good summary of what the Brothers had retained from the teachings of Champagnat. In that text we do not find the universal vision of Fr Colin, but we do have the idea that the Brothers bearing her name, belong to her family (Article 1). And Article 2 goes even further in these words:

They will regard Mary as their mother, their patroness, their model, and their first superior. Everything in this Institute belongs to her: all our goods and persons; everything must be used for her glory...

Thus it is no longer just a question of the family but also of society in general, and even of the reign of Mary, which is close to the vision of a Church with a Marial face. I also add that Champagnat conceived of the construction of 1824-25 as "The Hermitage of Our Lady", a name which it seems to me is more significant than "Our Lady of the Hermitage", because it infers that this is the mystical "city of Mary". And that Marial image applies not only collectively but also in regard to each Brother, as we see in the words of Article 7 of the 1852 Rule:

*The love they have for Mary will lead them above all to imitate her and to live her spirit; she is to be their model and they ought to resemble her so much that everything in their person, in their conduct, in their words, and in their actions, recalls Mary, and is modelled on the spirit and virtues of Mary.*

So it is not an imitation of Mary but rather an identification with her; not a devotion but a Marial way of life. Which, in turn, should even inspire the manner in which each one carries out his teaching, as indicated in Article 9:

*In teaching and educating the children, they will point to the Holy Virgin holding up and caring for the hold Child Jesus....."*

**Thus I fully agree with the wording of this fourth sentence as it stands.**

**Comment on the fifth sentence:**

*These convictions led him not only to support that mission of the Society of Mary, and to encourage the*

*Brothers to support it likewise, but especially to found our Institute for the Christian education of young people, especially those in need, who would be drawn into a Church which radiated Mary's welcome.*

The above text also raises the implicit question of whether Champagnat was a co-founder of the Society of Mary, as suggested by Brother Jean-Baptiste in Chapter XIX of the Life. Whatever the case, it is clear that from 1827 onwards the Hermitage welcomed a number of priests who wanted to join that Society (Seon, Pompallier...), but that in 1832 they had almost all moved on, some to Valbenoite, and Pompallier to Lyons. So from 1832 to 1836 the Hermitage in fact became the house of the Brothers, becoming now the project of Champagnat alone, with some assistance from Fathers Matricon and Besson.

When the question arose about sending missionaries to Oceania three Brothers only were originally sent, and the choice was made in a somewhat ambiguous manner. Joseph Luzy had actually come from the Marist Fathers. And although the three Brothers were sent as catechists, Pompallier's correspondence shows that he was looking for men with technical skills. So one of them was a carpenter, another a tailor, and the third a shoemaker. So one could infer that the support for the Oceania mission, as far as the Brothers were concerned, and even probably Champagnat himself, was somewhat restrained

But that reticence is understandable because Rome's had recognized only the Marist Fathers, which therefore left the other branches with an uncertain identity. Because of that, at the time of the illness and death of Champagnat, Colin was very unsure whether or not he should keep the branch of the Brothers, about which he knew so little, as part of the providential plan of which he saw himself as the guardian. It was the spiritual testament of Champagnat that more or less compelled him to accept the legacy confided to him.

As for the Brothers, they remained somewhat distrustful of the Marist Fathers who had taken the title of the Society of Mary, as we can see in Chapter XIX (1st part) of the Life of the Founder. As I mentioned in Part One of this "conversation", the Society, although "mystically" one, was historically two (the Hermitage and Belley), and now canonically it was reduced to becoming a

bundle of congregations.

Furthermore, the Brothers were not committed to the education of older youth, but to focus on younger children before they made their first Holy Communion, which, in those times, took place at age 12 or 13. The concept of adolescence was not yet recognized, so one passed straight from childhood to adulthood. Therefore I think it is open to question, whether from Champagnat's time, the Brothers were working with youth. The only young people that really occupied the congregation were the postulants, novices, and young Brothers. If, in fact, one does look for a way to teach young people it is to be found in Champagnat's advice to Brother Directors (about the formation of young entrants) set out in the second part of the Life, chapters XVI-XVIII.

In regard to the question of caring for the less fortunate that matter is well documented, given that, right from the beginning of the Lavalla school, homeless or poor students were taken in. And it must be remembered that in those times children were setting themselves up as themselves gangs of young rebels. So to get them to stay in class and maintain a certain standard of discipline was a task that required a great deal of disciplined application. Conducting a school in that era was a veritable work of "civilization" in the most elementary sense of that word. For us to appreciate what it would have been like for those Brothers we need to think about the most socially dysfunctional areas in the cities of our own day.

**My proposed change in the fifth sentence:**

*These convictions led him to **actively participate in the foundation of the Marist Fathers**, and to support the mission of the Society of Mary, and to encourage the Brothers to support it in the same way. But he devoted himself more especially to founding our Institute for the Christian education of young people, especially those in need, who would be drawn into a Church which radiated Mary's welcome.*

**RD**

Many thanks Brother Andre. If we integrate all the modifications you have suggested, which are underlined below, the proposed Article 2 given at the start of this Part 2 of our "conversation" would now read as follows:

*Zealous for the glory of God and the honour of Mary, Marcellin, led by the Spirit, was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had **for God and for one another**, and therefore for him and for others. His experience of this love, as well as his openness to events, to the needs of the Church, **and of the society around him**, is the wellspring of his spirituality and his apostolic zeal. It made him sensitive to the problem of religious ignorance, and **more broadly, of the material, intellectual and spiritual poverty** of the children, in his time when popular education was not regarded as an important issue. His faith and his eagerness to do God's will led him to realize that his mission was to make Jesus Christ known and loved, and with the other Marists, to renew the Church so that it would reflect the compassion, understanding and gentleness of Mary. These convictions led him **to actively participate in the foundation of the Marist Fathers**, to support the mission of the Society of Mary, and to encourage the Brothers to support it in the same way. But he **devoted himself more especially** to founding our Institute for the Christian education of young people, especially those in need, who would be drawn into a Church which radiated Mary's welcome.*

My heartfelt thanks to you once more for your further, very enlightening contributions to our sharing of ideas through this "conversation". The detailed textual changes you have suggested are a valuable re-emphasis of key elements of our Institute's spirituality and mission. Let us hope that the commission charged with preparing the draft of new constitutions will take these ideas, and even the actual texts, into consideration.

Now may I suggest that this is a good point for us to end this "conversation". In doing so may I again send you warm thanks from our southern climes, and my sincere personal gratitude for being willing to share your intimate knowledge of our Marist history with this "petit frere" at the other end of the world!

Blessings on you and your important professional historical work for us all as you continue your invaluable research, and your writing of the history of our Congregation as part of our approach to our 200th anniversary in 2017.

