



Frank McKay

THE MARIST LAITY

Finding the Way Envisaged by Father Colin

LAICAT MARISTE

**Vers une mise en oeuvre
des perspectives du père Colin**

MARISTICA
TEXTUS ET STUDIA 4

Back cover:

We sometimes speak as if the task to-day is to recover from obscurity and confusion what Colin really wanted for the Marist laity. But that task has been done not once but several times. The vision of how to integrate lay Marists into the global mission of the Church in the way envisaged by Father Colin is available to us. The challenge is rather the one made by Coste in his Allocution to the 1977 General Chapter: 'It is my profound belief that it is up to our own age to listen to the full power of the Founder's voice and to translate it into action.'

*Frank McKay is a member of the New Zealand province and the International Animator for Marist Laity. He was educated in New Zealand and at the University of Cambridge, England. He taught for many years at St Patrick's College, Wellington, and English Literature for twenty years at Victoria University of Wellington. He also held a Visiting Professorship at the University of Augsburg, Germany, and a Japanese Government fellowship to teach in seven Japanese universities. His publications include literary criticism, poetry, and *The Life of James K. Baxter* (Oxford University Press, 1990). He has had wide experience in setting up and working with Marist lay groups.*

Nous parlons quelquefois comme si la tâche d'aujourd'hui consistait à retirer de l'obscurité et de la confusion ce que Colin voulait réellement pour le laïc mariste. Mais on s'est déjà attelé à cette tâche dans le passé plus d'une fois. La vision d'une intégration possible des laïcs à l'intérieur de la mission globale de l'Église, selon la conception envisagée par le père Colin, nous pouvons la trouver là. Le défi est plutôt celui que Coste a présent, dans son allocution au chapitre général de 1977: «Il revient à notre époque, je le crois profondément, d'entendre dans toute sa force cette voix du Fondateur et de la traduire en acte».

Frank McKay est membre de la province mariste de Nouvelle-Zélande et animateur international du laïc mariste. Il a étudié en Nouvelle-Zélande et à l'université de Cambridge en Angleterre. Il a enseigné plusieurs années au collège St Patrick de Wellington et a été vingt ans professeur de littérature anglaise à l'université Victoria à Wellington. Il a été professeur invité à l'université d'Augsbourg en Allemagne et a bénéficié d'une bourse du gouvernement japonais pour enseigner dans sept universités du Japon. Il a publié des ouvrages de critique littéraire et un recueil de poésie, ainsi que la biographie de James K. Baxter (Oxford University Press, 1990). Il a organisé et accompagné plusieurs groupes de laïcs maristes.

MARISTICA: textus et studia

- 1 Jan Snijders, The Age of Mary
Le siècle de Marie
- 2 Jean Coste, Études sur les premières idées de Jean-Claude Colin - I
Studies on the Early Ideas of Jean-Claude Colin - I
- 3 François Drouilly, Les Avis de Jean-Claude Colin au personnel du petit séminaire de Belley
Jean-Claude Colin's Instructions to the Staff of the Minor Seminary of Belley
- 4

Frank McKay

The Marist Laity

Finding the Way Envisaged by Father Colin

Laïcat mariste

Vers une mise en oeuvre des perspectives du père Colin

Traduit de l'anglais par Antoine Forissier

Rome, 1991

INTRODUCTION

The 1985 *Decreta Capitularia* in No. 112 speak of the responsibility of the Superior General and his Council and of the Provincial Superiors and their Councils to foster the development of the Third Order and Marist lay groups. The nature of the responsibility is specified when the decree goes on to speak of their duty to 'initiate reflection and research with the laity themselves on how to integrate lay Marists into the global mission of the Church in the way envisaged by Father Colin.'

In May 1988, at the request of Father General, I presented to the Council of the Society in Madrid a paper: *The Marist Laity: Finding the Way Envisaged by Father Colin*. The present paper is a considerable development of the earlier work, adding documentation from Marist history and contemporary thinking in the Church, something necessarily restricted in the short presentation to the Council of the Society. The Synod on 'The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World, twenty years after the Second Vatican Council,' had taken place in October 1987. In preparing the Madrid paper it was possible to draw on the contributions made during the Synod as a complete set of documents was available at the General House. Since the Synod *Christifideles Laici*, the 'post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation,' has appeared bearing the date 30 December 1988. Several commentaries, notably in French, have also appeared. There has also been Father Jago's second letter to the Society *Regina Societatis Mariae* (1989) and Father Charles Girard's scholarly editions of early Marist documents on the laity.¹ I have drawn on all this material in the quest to find the way envisaged by Father Colin, always bearing in mind 'to think Church is to think Colin.'²

What often paralysed our capacity for action in the past was the nagging doubt that we don't really know what the way envisaged by Colin is. With an assortment of various texts drawn largely from *Origines Maristes*, with snippets of what we have picked up of the relations of Colin and Eymard bubbling around in our unconscious, many of us have been inclined to clutch at the notion of Colin as visionary, which he was, and of his writings as prophetic, which they were. But 'visionary' is not a synonym for opaque. And Colin is not prophetic in the way Ezechiel's vision of the four animals and a chariot by the river Chobar is prophetic. Such prophecies almost defy exegesis. Colin is prophetic in the sense that he was a medium of Mary for us, indicating what she wanted and how we were to go about achieving it. He is prophetic too in the way he anticipated much that has been taken up by the contemporary Church.

We sometimes speak as if the task to-day is to recover from obscurity and confusion what Colin really wanted for the Marist laity. But that task has been done not once but several times. It was done first by Alphonse Cozon in time for the General Chapter of

¹ Referred to on p. 6 below. The early editions were ready in time for Madrid.

² Conversation with Jean Coste.

1880. It was done again by Brendan Hayes in the fifties in *The Story of Father Colin's Third Order Rule and Passing on the Torch*. It was done again by Jean Coste in his four lectures at the Third Order Congress in Rome in 1979, then again cursorily in his third lecture at Framingham in 1980. But both were given to English-speaking audiences so the discoveries of Hayes and Coste still had not reached many Provinces in the Society. The vision of how to integrate lay Marists into the global mission of the Church in the way envisaged by Father Colin is available to us. The challenge is rather the one made by Coste in his Allocution to the 1977 General Chapter: 'It is my profound belief that it is up to our own age to listen to the full power of the Founder's voice and to translate it into action' (p. 15). TO LISTEN, TO TRANSLATE. That is already beginning to happen in some Provinces. I am thinking of the Marian Mothers' groups in New Zealand and their appeal well beyond Catholic boundaries, of a Marist parish in Gramercy, Louisiana, of what is happening in France, Germany, and Fiji. I could also add the immense promise of provinces like Ireland and San Francisco which I have visited. To what has already begun I will add some concrete suggestions for further ways in which Colin's vision can be translated into action to-day, and as I think we will agree that is still largely ahead of us.

I should like to begin by offering a brief overview of how Colin's vision for the Third Order passed from the early ambiguity to the clarifications of his last years. I shall cut through the complexity of historical detail so as to place the emphasis on those aspects of the story most relevant to our task of discovering contemporary strategies. I will rely on the recent research of Eymard's most authoritative biographer, Donald Cave S.S.S. in *Eymard: the years 1845-1851*, published in 1969;³ Charles Girard's editions of *Lay Marists: Anthology of Historical Sources* and of the writings of Alphonse Cozon, all printed in 1988. I will also use the writings referred to earlier, as well as material from Mayet that still exists only in manuscript.⁴ The very full references will allow those who wish to explore the sources more thoroughly to do so. Throughout I use the term Third Order because that is the term used for the most part in the documents. Later I shall suggest reasons it is no longer an appropriate title.⁵

³ Romae, ex Pontificia Universitate Gregoriana.

⁴ Mayet, "Tout ce que j'ai pu trouver de 1837 à 1891" (ms APM 921.147).

⁵ This was recognised in France in the sixties with the change from Third Order to *Fraternités maristes*.

SIGLA AND ABBREVIATIONS

APM = Archives of the Marist Fathers (Rome, via A. Poerio 63).

APM 921.147 = part of Mayet papers (description in OM 3, p. 27).

Cave = Donald Cave, S.S.S., *Eymard, the Years 1845-1851*. [Rome, 1969].

CFL = John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 1988.

Chantraine = Georges Chantraine, *L'expérience synodale*. Lethielleux, 1988.

CMJ = Historical Committees of the Marist Fathers and Sisters, *Correspondence of Mother Saint Joseph*. Rome-Anzio, 1966.

Coste, Contribution = J. Coste, "Contribution of the Marist Archives to a fuller knowledge of St. Peter Julian Eymard," *Acta Societatis Mariae*, vol. 6 (1962), p. 560-580.

Coste, *Lectures* = J. Coste, *Lectures on Society of Mary History*. Rome, 1965

Coste, *Spirit* = J. Coste, *The Spirit of the Society* (= *Acta S.M.*, vol. 6, p. 445-533, 581-680), Rome 1963.

FA = *A Founder Acts*, Reminiscences of Jean-Claude Colin by Gabriel-Claude Mayet, selected and introduced by Jean Coste, in an English translation by William Joseph Stuart and Anthony Ward. Rome 1983.

FS = *A Founder Speaks*, Spiritual talks of Jean-Claude Colin, selected and introduced by Jean Coste, translated by Anthony Ward. Rome 1975.

Hayes, Story = [Brendan Hayes], *The Story of Father Colin's Third Order Rule* (1875), typescript.

Jeantin = [Jean Jeantin], *Le très révérend père Colin*, 6 vol., Lyon, Vitte, 1895-1898.

Leonard = Jessica Leonard, S.M., *Triumph of Failure*, Middlegreen, Slough, St. Paul Publications, 1988.

LM Anth = *Lay Marists: Anthology of Historical Sources*. Ed. Charles Girard. Rome, Centre for Marist Studies, 1988.

Mayet, Tableau = Mayet, *Constitutions. Tableau comparatif* (ms APM 921.142; description in OM 3, p. 25-26).

Mayet, Jugement = Mayet, *Jugement du très-révérend p. Colin sur un de mes écrits que je lui avais soumis*, 26 pages (ms APM 921.146.1; description in OM 3, p. 26-27).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Sigla and Abbreviations	7
Chapter I	
Historical Overview	9
Chapter II	
The Vision	27
Chapter III	
Principles for Action	32
Chapter IV	
Strategies	42

Chapter I

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Pierre-Julien Eymard and the Third Order

First of all it is important to clear up the obscurities in the relationship between Eymard and Colin. What Eymard made of the Third Order is still prevalent and it is not at all what Colin wanted.

Pierre-Julien Eymard was a young diocesan priest when on 20 August 1839 he entered the Society of Mary. Colin spoke admiringly of the tactful way he had wrung permission from a reluctant Bishop. Eymard became Colin's right hand man and in 1844 was appointed Provincial, which at that time was equivalent to being Vicar General. When Colin was away, Eymard acted for him and attended to the day to day administration (Coste, *Lectures*, p. 209).

There was in Lyons at the time a group of some fourteen young women called *Les Vierges chrétiennes*. When it was suggested to Colin that Eymard be appointed their Director he innocently appointed him to look after what was a small enough group. These women had been part of an attempt to form a Marist Third Order and their general idea was to live a form of religious life in the world, to be what to-day we would call a secular institute.¹

Eymard was a man who needed a ministry that was both personal and on a large scale, and he was an excellent organiser. Within a few days of being appointed Director in December 1845, he swung into action. He called a meeting and outlined his programme. In describing the four branches of the Society, Fathers, Brothers,² Sisters and Third Order, he said: 'Finally the Third Order, destined to live like religious in the world' (Cave, p. 75). That was fair enough for *Les Vierges chrétiennes* but too narrow as a conception of the Third Order. He continued: 'The goal is first of all to honour and to imitate the poor and hidden life of the Most Holy Virgin ...' (Cave, p. 75). That remains part of the Marist charism but it is only part. Eymard also instructed the tertiaries to keep their affiliation secret. These three emphases, the laity as a kind of religious living in the world, the centrality of Nazareth, and the secrecy, characterised Eymard's view of the Third Order throughout his time in the Society. And he left these attitudes as a legacy.

¹ Eymard's view of what they needed was based on his pastoral experience. His ideas were given a focus by his meeting with Marguerite Guillot, who became a life-long friend and supporter. Her aspirations were for a life of greater recollection lived in the world. Eymard felt that what suited her would also suit other devout young women. She was to become the Foundress of the 'Servantes du Saint-Sacrement.'

² By brothers he meant 'the brothers who share their (i.e. the priests') ministry by accompanying them to the shores of Oceania' (Cave, p. 75).

Les Vierges chrétiennes was an elite group with strict criteria for membership. Again this was reasonable for such a group, but it was also characteristic of Eymard's outlook in these years. He was very successful and the group expanded rapidly. When he took over in 1845 it numbered fourteen. In June 1850 he was able to write to a friend: 'I direct at Lyons the Third Order of Mary and which already includes more than three hundred very pious members. Among them are some ecclesiastics and above all lay men' (Cave, p. 77). And he told Mayet: 'Things have reached such a point, that if they let me loose now, I would soon cover France with members of the Third Order' (LM Anth, 5.G.1, § 47).

The first week of every month Eymard devoted about five days to the Third Order. He prepared conferences, drew up the minutes of each meeting, and wrote numerous letters giving spiritual direction. He had a veritable passion for making rules for the various fraternities and spent an enormous amount of time perfecting them (Coste, Contribution, p. 575).

Colin was unhappy with his Provincial. He had given him care of a small group of women and Eymard had turned it into a big movement. Eymard was more interested in pastoral ministry than administration. He had been Provincial for two years and during the last ten months of them he had worked with the Third Order. Colin decided to relieve him of his position and make him Assistant and Visitor. That would mean he would have to visit the various houses and would be taken away from the groups over which he had been presiding. Yet Eymard felt that in the Third Order he had found his vocation and was, as Cave says, 'its true interpreter.'³

The approbation of the Third Order in 1850

The question that interests us to-day is how did Colin regard the structure and nature of the Third Order as developed by Eymard? The first striking indication we have is Colin's reaction to the papal approval of the Third Order secured by Eymard in 1850. The received version in the Society goes like this. A Marist home on furlough from Oceania, Father Bernin, was going down to Rome from Lyons. Eymard said to him 'Get what you can for the Third Order!' He meant indulgences, so lavishly bestowed at that time. In Rome Bernin went to an Oratorian, Father Theiner, a good friend of the Society. Theiner said: 'But you can't get indulgences for something that does not exist. The first thing is to get the Third Order approved.' Without too much trouble that was arranged. The approval was by accident and not foreseen by Eymard (LM Anth, 5.G.1, § 20).

This account is found in Mayet's life of Eymard, still in manuscript (Cave, p. 97). It needs to be modified in the light of documents now available. Bernin in fact took with him to Rome a letter Eymard wrote to Theiner giving a summary of the aims, rules, and practices of the Third Order and requesting certain indulgences. The upshot was that Theiner approached the relevant Roman congregations and on 8 September 1850 a petition

³ Speaking of the Third Order, Eymard said to Mayet: 'Ah! God had placed in me a light which prevented all doubt, and with the help of this inner light I had formed my conscience well' (quoted by Cave, p. 86).

was presented to Pius IX. It claimed to express the wish of Father Colin, Superior General of the Society of Mary, and of Padre Carlo Eymard, Provincial of the same Society. Eymard's name of course was not Carlo and he had not been Provincial for four years. The errors were probably because of Theiner's lack of information. The approval was granted and the news sent to Eymard on 27 September 1850. Rome and its postal system move slowly; when the letter eventually arrived, Eymard steeled himself to break the news to Colin.

Colin was very angry. The approval had been gained in his name and without his consent. And he had played no part in preparing the submission. After a thorough examination of all the evidence, that available to Mayet and that available only later, Cave is of the opinion that the approbation was no accident but deliberately sought by Eymard. He argues that Eymard had every reason to believe that God had blessed his work for the Third Order. Maître pierre, Mayet, and many others thought the same (Mayet, Tableau, p. 172). And he had already been opposed often enough by Colin and others to know that it was in jeopardy. The bold step of gaining papal approval would preserve the Third Order once and for all, even from Colin. Some personal anguish from Colin's reaction was inevitable, but he was prepared to pay the price. The approbation of the Third Order had been in his mind for a long time. As early as 1846 he had tried to get it approved but Colin had opposed it and was quite dismissive. 'Father Eymard is not used to these matters, his Rules are useless' (Cave, p. 108). In 1850 Eymard was more determined. He confided in Mayet that he had gone to Fourvière to ask for two special favours for the New Year: the approbation of the Third Order by the Holy See, and the approbation of the Cardinal of Lyons in relation to his diocese. And he told Our Lady that for them he was prepared to suffer 'what you will and I submit in advance to any criticism, to any fulminations' (Cave, p. 107). And he knew from whence they would come.

Eymard expressed regret that his action in 1850 had upset Colin and for the appearance of his name in the application without any kind of authorisation. But at no time did he disclaim responsibility for the Approbation. Colin's response was to move Eymard from Lyons, the heartland of the Third Order, and make him Superior of the College at La Seyne. 'Let the punishment fit the crime,' as Gilbert and Sullivan would say. It should be added that Colin's action was not mainly punitive. He knew from experience that the diocesan clergy might well fear that the Third Order would take people away from their normal parish life. Even Bishop Devie had expressed this reservation when Colin had first told him of the Roman briefs he had received for the Third Order. Colin feared the papal approval, especially in Eymard's hands, would give the Third Order increased publicity. This could exacerbate the difficulties. >From now on Colin distrusted Eymard's methods. Eymard too had been shaken. The whole incident contributed to the foundation of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers.

The Chapter of 1854

The next significant indication of Colin's attitude to Eymard's Third Order was given at the General Chapter held at Puylata in 1854. Colin was resigning as General and

Eymard pressed him to dispel, while he still had the authority of office, the widespread impression that he was opposed to the Third Order. Colin came over specially from La Neylière, and Mayet, who was not a Capitulant, reported what Colin said, based on what Eymard told him. But a much more detailed account is to be found in the very full notes taken as Colin spoke. Looking at all the sources it can be said that Colin's approval of Eymard's Third Order was at best ambiguous. He could not but support the general idea of the Third Order 'since I was the one who took the first steps at Rome.' And naturally he approved of the prayers and sacrifices of Eymard's groups. But instead of praising Eymard's work directly, he expressed himself evasively: 'What do we want? To spread what is good, to extend more and more the communion of saints. That's all, then let us support all Third Orders... everything that leads to the Heavenly Father' (Cave, p. 116-119).

More significantly he spoke of the briefs granting indulgences to the Third Order which he himself had obtained long before. But he made no reference either to those obtained by Eymard nor to the papal approbation of the Third Order in 1850. And though he knew of Eymard's fondness for making rules and that his groups already had a Rule he added: 'The Third Order will have its rules like the other branches of the Society. It enters, I believe, into the designs of God' (Cave, p. 118-119). This shows quite clearly that he found the present situation unsatisfactory.

I believe that at the Chapter of 1854 Colin was stalling. Quite simply his thought on the Third Order was not yet sufficiently mature for him to make a statement in so formal a gathering as the General Chapter. Colin always had a sense that the right time to act in such important matters would be made known to him by Providence. He did not believe that time had come. In support of this interpretation I would point, first of all to his words in Mayet's account: 'I have never been opposed to the Third Order, but I found they were going too fast' (Tableau, p. 172). Then there are two references in the notes of his address: 'I complained a bit, raised objections at the beginning because it (the Third Order) was running ahead of my ideas'. And 'Let us not anticipate the moment of Providence' (Cave, p. 118-119). The interpretation is confirmed by the fact that one reason he had given for wanting to resign as General in 1845 was to devote 'the rest of my life to the rules necessary for the different branches of the Society' (FA, doc. 317, § 3). Mayet believed that in the elation of having his resignation as General accepted by the Chapter Colin withheld his true attitude. His words went 'a little further than his thought' (Tableau, p. 172). Colin's procrastination has caused many problems for posterity. By 1854 he still had not written a set of guidelines for the Third Order, much less a Rule. A lot of the good to be done with the laity would have been left undone if Eymard had not filled the vacuum.

Mayet wrote that the Chapter asked Eymard to give a conference on the Third Order to 'pay solemn homage to his apostolic success' and that there was a general desire to have Eymard as Director-General of the Third Order (LM Anth, 5.I.1). But there is no reference to either intention in the minutes of the Chapter nor in the very full notes to which I have referred. Cave's conclusion is that Mayet, a close friend of Eymard, was drawing on an apocryphal source. Certainly Eymard himself 'did not conclude in any way that he himself would necessarily, at a future date, be called upon to continue his work' (Cave, p. 121). It is

of interest that Coste in printing the Mayet extract in *A Founder Speaks* omits the reference to the Chapter's alleged intentions (doc. 189, p. 547).

Surprisingly Eymard professed himself satisfied with Colin's intervention. Saints no doubt are more easily satisfied in such matters than the rest of us, but he had little enough grounds for satisfaction. If the Third Order were merely a human invention it would be difficult not to feel sorry for him, especially after his immense and fruitful exertions. But Colin always regarded the Third Order as part of the work he had been given to do by Mary. His responsibility was to see it was carried out in the way he had always understood it. Meantime the only one who had done much in practice was Eymard. The Chapter accepted his rule provisionally (Cave, p. 136).

The next twenty years were difficult ones for the Society. Favre's Constitutions and the way they were finally displaced by Colin's at the Chapter of 1870-72 is a saga well known to us. Mayet had played a large part in achieving a successful outcome to that issue, but he knew there was still a serious gap in the Rule in regard to the Third Order and that Colin had expressed some dissatisfaction with the way the movement had developed. He spared no effort to remedy the deficiency.

The Life of Captain Marceau

When his very successful life of Captain Marceau was due to come out in a new edition in 1872, Mayet got his opportunity. Since Marceau had been professed into the Third Order in 1849 by Eymard the life included an appendix on the Third Order. It attributed its origins to 1832-1833, told how the first members made their consecration at the shrine of Our Lady of Fourvière, and gave an enthusiastic account of how the movement developed and flourished under Eymard. The highlights were Pius IX's approval in 1850, the canonical erection the following year by 'an eminent Cardinal delegated by the Pope', and the 'definitive approbation of the rule in 1857.' Mayet drew the conclusion that 'The Third Order of Mary is the work of the church, the work of God, and the souls whom Mary has chosen can come to drink with confidence at this new spring of blessings.' He also expressed the characteristic Eymardian view that 'A third order is not only a simple confraternity ... it is above all the extension of the religious life to the secular state' (Tableau, p. 147).

Before reprinting the article on the Third Order in the new edition of the Life, Mayet thought it prudent to submit it to Colin for his approval. Knowing of the solid ecclesiastical approval Mayet must have thought Eymard had the Third Order well sewn up. Colin did not agree. He replied in June 1872 'that, since the Third Order of Mary, *being a continuation of the Society of Mary itself*, (my italics) is not definitively organised, it is prudent to suppress what you have written in the Life of Captain Marceau. Later a complete note on the Third Order will be published' (Tableau, p. 147). The Society of Mary itself, with its Constitutions not yet finalised, was not definitively organised. Since the Third Order was a continuation of it, it could hardly be definitively organised either.

Father Brendan Hayes wrote in the fifties that Colin's reply 'placed beyond doubt that the existing organisation did not correspond - at least in its entirety - to that envisaged in Our Lady's mission to Father Founder as he conceived it.'⁴ Colin's reply clarified his views on Eymard's Third Order. But more was obviously required than this negative response. Hearing in 1873 that Colin was thinking of leaving something on the Third Order Mayet wrote to him with some candour.

He pointed out how important it was for Colin to carry the plan through and how very awkward it would be for the Society should he die before it was done. He went on: '... on the one hand you tell us that the Third Order, as it exists, does not entirely meet your views, and on the other hand you do not tell us what those views are. No one knows them. I, myself, who have had the happiness of living with you for a long time, of hearing everything, and remembering much, would have very great difficulty in formulating your desires and plans . . . so you see very Reverend Father the significance of this reflexion and the position in which we would find ourselves if God recalled you before you had decided something in the matter. We would abandon the present situation without knowing what to commit ourselves to in the future and the door would be wide open to every uncertainty, conjecture, and all kinds of experiments . . . As regards the salvation and sanctification of souls, Father, there is certainly in the Third Order a most powerful lever, a motivation as strong as it is gentle to lift people up. The important thing is to know well what God wants, to discover it and to do it, *Nec plus, nec minus, nec aliter*. Have the goodness then, dear Father, to offer yourself to the Blessed Virgin for this purpose, to put yourself in her hands as the pen in the hands of the writer, in a word: do what you can: she will do the rest.' Mayet told Colin they were going to pray for this intention. But it was especially Colin's own prayer that would be effective 'because you have the grace of state to obtain it since you have the mission' (Mayet, Tableau, p. 153).

Mayet's letter was calculated to provoke the old man into action. Urged on by him and by his own sense of personal destiny, Colin wrote asking for the material on Eymard he had mentioned in a previous letter. He also said: 'I had commissioned this good Father to direct the Third Order at Puylata. He directed it without coming to an understanding with me, according to his own personal and independent ideas, of which I had no knowledge. As I propose to leave a short notice on the Third Order myself, I earnestly desire, in order to avoid the danger of our contradicting one another, that you would obtain for me a copy of this good Father's work on the matter, and if this work corresponds to the original aim of the Third Order, I shall make it a duty and a pleasure to adopt it . . . My greatest desire is to be able to work at this task... after Easter and during the summer... at this serious matter of the Third Order' (Hayes, Story, p. 8). The letter expresses once again Colin's dissatisfaction with Eymard's way of doing things. But I do not think it demonstrates that Colin had no knowledge of Eymard's writings. All it shows is that he did not have them to hand when he needed them. He seems, however, to have had the impression that Mayet had some fugitive pages of Eymard which did not in fact exist.

⁴ Hayes, Story, p. 7. He is quoting from Mayet, Tableau, p. 142-192 (fragments on the Third Order). This was the main source of Hayes' documentary evidence.

Book VI of Mayet's Life of Eymard

Colin wrote again for these imaginary pages on 4 August 1873 saying he hoped to work on the Third Order after the Chapter which was then in session. Mayet could not oblige. Instead he speeded up a draft of his article 'Father Eymard, Director of the Third Order of Mary' which he planned as the sixth book of his biography of Eymard. Meantime he sent Colin an encouraging letter he had received from Father Dauphin. The special interest of the letter is that Dauphin was one of the capitulants and expressed not only his own views but those of the other capitulants. Dauphin began by saying that Colin 'always loves the Third Order with a very special love, he speaks of it continually.' Now that God seemed to have restored his strength in a way that surprised them 'is not this the moment, the only moment perhaps, to write down his ideas. Father Girard tells me his ideas are precise, only the work of drafting is needed. If he does not do it now, we shall never repair this loss, never fully. That is my opinion, especially when I listen to what is being said around me. The Third Order will be restricted and will not have the great and vast scope which Reverend Father has in mind . . . There must be no delay. Father has written us spontaneously a fine letter which shows how coherent his ideas are, but we must be quick, because during his stay with us, he was growing very weak' (Mayet, Tableau, p. 163-164).

Father Girard could speak of the precision of Colin's ideas with some authority. He had been director of the Third Order in Lyons before Eymard. And he had worked closely with Colin in modifying the rather rigid rules Pompallier had drawn up for the Tertiaries of Lyons. Brendan Hayes commented on Dauphin's fear that the Third Order would be very restricted in scope unless Colin set down his own ideas: 'This is just what has happened historically, through losing sight of Father Founder's work in these closing years of his life' (Hayes, Story, p. 11).

Colin's secretary, Brother Jean-Marie, replied to Mayet: 'Continue to pray much. Now all his prayers and mine as well, are for the rule of the Third Order. He is determined to leave something in this matter if he can' (Mayet, Tableau, p. 164).

When Father Molino had to go to La Neylière in October 1873 Mayet had his draft of 'Father Eymard, Director of the Third Order of Mary' ready in time. Molino agreed to read it to Colin. The article ran to about a hundred and ninety pages and Mayet sent as well the earlier part of his biography which he regarded as a necessary prelude. He asked Molino to read the material with great circumspection. He wanted Colin to get the whole picture by listening first to the biographical section and then above all to suspend judgement until he had heard the entire article. Neither condition was fulfilled. With the understandable impatience of an old man, and one in poor health, Colin wanted to hear straight away what Mayet had written on the Third Order. The reaction was more explosive than Mayet had feared. Molino was allowed to read only the first seventy pages, up to the approbation of the Third Order in 1850. By then Colin had had enough. He said he was now in a position to judge the rest.⁵

⁵ In the following account quotations are from Mayet, Jugement, p. 8-18.

On 18 October 1873, Molino gave Mayet Colin's reaction in some detail:

Father Founder is not at all pleased, not at all with your work. He condemns both the substance and the form . . . He condemns the substance because it does not tell the truth. In fact, Father Eymard was never commissioned by the Founder to establish the Third Order. Father Eymard took this mission on himself, worked at it energetically and rather secretly. He was near Father Founder, and never spoke to him of what he was doing for the Third Order; and the so-called Third Order which he formed and directed is a completely different Third Order, absolutely different from the one the Founder had and still has in mind...

As for the form he considers you are not an historian but a panegyrist. You want to speak from the pulpit of someone who has been beatified, of a canonised saint...

To ensure he had understood Colin correctly Molino read Colin the letter he proposed to send to Mayet. Colin listened attentively and told him to send it just as it was. So as Molino put it the letter Mayet received was 'rigorously and word for word' what Molino had read to Colin. He added that Colin had said a good deal more. Before leaving La Neylière Molino read more of it to Colin and sent it to Mayet. Colin expressed his admiration for Eymard's virtues and his affection for his biographer. But:

Father Eymard is presented as being commissioned to direct the Third Order or rather to found it and organise it; for in reality the Third Order did not yet exist. But he never received this mission. He was only commissioned to preside over some pious meetings. Father Founder had several times presided over them himself but never thought to give them the name of Third Order nor of having them called Third Order. Father Eymard then took a special mission on himself, but he did not receive it. He worked secretly without instructions from Father, and against his intentions.

Given the strength of Colin's feelings, even so long after the events, it may well be wondered why he had not raised these objections in the heyday of Eymard's Third Order. Molino was told by Colin that he had not let all this happen 'without noticing, and even without protesting. However, as Father Eymard used to act a good deal on his own, without consulting him, for the sake of peace and waiting for the day of Providence, Father Founder deemed it prudent to let things take their course, as he had let them take their course in more important matters, for which the day of Providence has come.' This was a reference to the Constitutions for the Fathers and Co-adjutor Brothers, convincing enough evidence of Colin's procedure. Molino went on: 'the Third Order which exists is not at all, not at all what he conceives. And the Manual, such as it is, is not at all, not at all what he would wish.'

Again Molino read what he had written to Colin who approved it. Mayet noticed the discrepancy between Colin's earlier letter which said Eymard had been appointed to direct the Third Order at Puyлата and the apparent denial in Molino's letter. The solution for

Mayet was simply that Eymard had interpreted his commission much more widely than Colin had intended.

In fairness to Eymard it should be added that he was not the only one who sometimes found Colin's instructions obscure. But he was strong enough to live with uncertainty. He took advice from Maîtrepierre and then got on with it. As early as 1873 Mayet wrote in his note book that he considered Eymard was a saint and would one day be canonised. Certainly his dealings with Colin over the Third Order have survived the scrutiny of the devil's advocate.

Colin when roused did not pull his punches. Mayet was now in no doubt that 'he reproved entirely the manner in which Eymard understood this work and in which I myself had understood it until that time.' It is a measure of how these early Marists saw Colin that he could conclude: 'It is necessary that the Third Order be what God and Mary wanted *nec plus, nec minus, nec aliter.*' And he had no doubt it was destined to be revealed through Colin.

Eymard had left the Society in 1856 and was dead by 1868. One cannot but speculate wistfully that had things gone differently he could have remained in the Society, as another great founder, Marcellin Champagnat, did. In his reply to a confrère distressed at his decision to leave the Society, Eymard wrote: 'I remain a Marist in heart and devotion. I shall serve the Society . . . there is neither scandal nor war. There is brotherly friendship' (Paris, 1 June 1856; APM 451.111). It might be said that neither the Third Order in 1873 nor the Manual were as he left them. But both were his legacy and profoundly affected by him. Since Colin's disapproval of Eymard's approach to the Third Order was now manifest, it became all the more urgent to know what he wanted. A crusade of prayer was organised so that God would give him the necessary strength and motivation for the task. Colin was especially grateful for the prayers and sacrifices of the Tertiaries of Paris as so spiritual a man would have been for those from any source.

Father Colin Speaks

Finally the time so long delayed and looked for arrived. On 25 April 1874 Brother Jean-Marie wrote to Mayet: 'As for the rules of the Third Order, very Reverend Father Founder authorises me to tell you that he has entrusted someone with the task, and that in accordance with the notes he has given him and the explanations *viva voce*, he has made a summary of the rule which has been put into the hands of the Very Reverend Father General and his Council. We have kept a copy here at La Neylière. Keep up the prayers' (Mayet, Tableau, p. 176). Colin had used the same procedure on that earlier moving occasion when with Father David's help he had written *De Societatis spiritu* (Coste, *Spirit*, p. 617-618). This time the man chosen was Father Jeantin. He had been Colin's secretary for many years. What Colin liked about Jeantin and David was their ability to record his views faithfully without modifying them in any way by their own. And Jeantin was well aware of how much the Third Order meant to Colin. In his life of Colin he wrote: 'In his

last years the thought of this work (the Constitutions of the Third Order) pursued him day and night' (Jeantin 6, 325).

We know the details of the composition of Colin's rule for the Third Order from Father David's reply on 21 February 1880 to an enquiry from Father Mayet:

Reverend Father, before replying to you, I wanted to consult Father Jeantin, only to be in a position to furnish the information you desire. Here it is in order:

1. The principles concerning the Third Order have been dictated in French by our venerated Father, not to Father Jeantin, nor to me, but to Brother Jean-Marie, his usual secretary. This text has been given to Father Jeantin who translated it making all the additions or modifications indicated by the Very Reverend Father. And it goes without saying that this work has been seriously examined by the one who had inspired it ...

2. There has never been a work explaining the text of the rule of the Third Order.

3. The monitum which is at the beginning has certainly been submitted to the Very Reverend Father Founder and approved completely by him. It was written only in Latin.

David also said that 'the great work of the Third Order' was destined to do an immense amount of good,' and that the next Chapter would doubtless examine 'this serious question'. He added: 'more and more we must go back to our source' (copy in APM 921.147, cahier A). Brendan Hayes gave an admirable commentary on Jeantin's sources:

There are five articles in the finished rule. Of these the first two articles follow closely Father Colin's dictated notes. For the third article Father Jeantin had the early work of Father Founder, the *Summarium* and Petition of 1833. The fifth article, that on devotion to Our Lady, is substantially the same as a conference given by the Founder to the Marist Sisters, and published by Father Jeantin in his life of Father Colin.⁶ There is the same five-fold treatment of the subject: gratitude, love, confidence, honour, imitation. The devotional practices which are woven into the text are for the most part those given in the *Summarium* and Petition of 1833. (Hayes, Story, p. 25)

Mayet had played a crucial role in ensuring that the Society had the full resources to accomplish its mission. He expressed his satisfaction: 'Thanks be to God, to Mary, to Joseph, at last he has spoken. What he leaves on the Third Order is like the last provision of his testament. His work is finished. Now he can die' (Tableau, p. 185). And at the end of the account of the painful episode over his sixth chapter of his life of Eymard he wrote in February 1875 his 'final word': 'May God be blessed. At last . . . we have what we so much desired. The Very Reverend Father Jeantin, Assistant, has just informed me that the Very Reverend Father Founder has been able, despite his eighty four years, and his infirmities, to give in thirty pages, in Latin, all his ideas on the *Congregatio beatae Marie Virginis in formam tertii ordinis* (Congregation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the form of the Third

⁶ Jeantin 2, 320-324; rather than a conference, the text is part of the 1855-1856 draft Constitutions of the Marist Sisters (see *Antiquiores textus* 4, p. 8-9 and 51-53).

Order). Nothing has been lost by waiting. Everything has been gained. It will be a beacon' (Mayet, Jugement, p. 18).

Colin's remaining concern was to have his rule for 'this branch of the Society' printed. On 3 May 1875 he wrote to the Superior General Father Favre: 'Concerning the Third Order, I have also very much at heart leaving after me the fundamental ideas which it has always seemed to me should serve as a basis for the organisation of this branch of the Society of Mary, which I think is called to do much good. I have received quite lately a sum of money which I am told is meant to cover the expenses which the printing of the little work will necessitate. I think it should be printed so that it may be circulated, read, and examined more conveniently' (quoted by Hayes, Story, p. 24). Colin wanted to have it printed to present to the Bishops and even to Rome 'something clear, precise, and methodical' (Colin-Cozon, 19 April 1875).

Colin's text was printed in May 1875 under the title *Constitutiones Confraternitatis seu Sodalitatis sub auspiciis B.M.V. ad conversionem peccatorum et ad justorum perseverantiam* (Constitutions of the Confraternity or Sodality under the protection of the B.V.M. for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just).⁷ Colin had not tried to find a donor for the printing expenses, providence sent one along. One of the women in the Third Order in fact undertook to pay the bill (Colin-Cozon, 19 April 1875). It is of interest that in the rule Eymard made for the Third Order in 1850-1851 the title was 'Third Order of Mary for the Interior life'(APM 921.147, cahier C). It is also worth noticing that Colin in his most considered statement on Marist laity does not use the term 'Third Order.' It was a way of distancing his conception from that of Eymard.

Colin's Central Position in Marist Tradition

An appeal was made during the Colloquium in Rome in 1989 for a greater sense of the tradition of the Society, something broader than what Colin said and wrote. The appeal is to be welcomed. But it remains true that an important part of that tradition is the central position the early Marists assigned to Colin. They saw him as the man chosen by providence to give the Society the mission and the spirit Mary wanted and to write the rule which would show how these could be realised. The many quotations used in this study make that quite clear. As a final piece of documentary evidence with a direct bearing on the Third Order, here is Mayet at a time when the earlier difficulties had been resolved:

He alone has had the first idea (which came from on high) of his Third Order (Confraternity, Sodality), at the same time that God inspired him to found the Society of Mary. Both things in his mind were parallel, something rarely seen in the church.

It was from him alone when we entered the Society that we received this idea of a Third Order affiliated to our congregation. Which of us had thought of it previously?

⁷ Three copies with Father Veyre's French translation bear the title *Règles fondamentales sur le Tiers-Ordre de Marie* (APM 921.147).

To arrogate to oneself his place and position, to say what the work ought to be, without any other mission but one's own opinion, after he has explained with so much clarity, solemnity, force, and persistence, both orally and in writing, right up to his last breath, even dictating his thoughts to an uneducated Coadjutor brother for fear that death would surprise him, making secure what he has never varied over sixty years and since his first communication to the Pope, to put oneself in such circumstances in his place and position and to declare that it is better not to conform to the declaration of our Founder, would be an act of presumption and pride of which no one certainly would wish to be knowingly culpable of, an act as contrary to reason as to the spirit of faith, a scandalous and pernicious act which would alienate us from the heart of Mary. (APM 921.147, cahier I, p. 17-18)

Mayet comes on pretty strong, but what he says and the passionate way he expressed it is striking testimony to the place assigned in Marist tradition to Colin's views on Marist laity.

The best modern witness to the central position of Colin for Marists is Jean Coste's reply to the question 'What is the Marist spirit?' at the end of his classic monograph *The Spirit of the Society*: 'We call the Marist spirit that common manner of feeling and reacting which unites and characterises Marists from the moment they accept to direct their lives in relation to the person of Mary, the intuitions of Father Colin and the living tradition of the Society' (Coste, *Spirit*, p. 677). A few pages earlier the same ideas were usefully expanded:

It is in the person of Mary and the experience of Father Colin, therefore, that Marists find their points of reference, and it is along the line joining these two points that the Marist spirit is to be found. Everything has not been said, however, when we have discovered these two principal points. There is a third element which the history of the *De Societatis Spiritu* brought out very strongly and without which the Marist spirit would lack one of its essential coordinates, namely the fact that this spirit cannot be separated from the body it animates, from the living tradition of the Society of Mary. (*ibid.*, p. 674)

The 1985 General Chapter was true to our tradition when it approved No. 112 of the new *Decreta Capitularia* which calls for the 'integration of lay Marists into the global mission of the Church in the way envisaged by Father Colin'. I believe too that Father Jago made a notable contribution to the understanding of our Colinian inheritance when he said in his homily, 'Let us live the Marist way', at the opening liturgy of the Council of the Society in Madrid, 1988:

Jean Claude Colin believed in a divine intervention in human history, in a special initiative of Mary, in a call of grace which it was his personal destiny to transmit. His fierce loyalty to the call, and the tenacity with which he strove to keep the early Marists faithful to it are well known.

What Colin accepted as truth cannot be demonstrated by argument any more than the truth of the Gospel can be demonstrated. The angel announced the good news and Mary believed. It is the special grace of the Marist vocation to be able to respond in a personal way to the Marist story and to be able to believe.

Colin had fulfilled his historic destiny for the Marist laity. Eymard had played the important role of catalyst. Charles Girard observed that Colin acted most efficiently when he was reactive. The same phenomenon occurs in literature. Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua* and R. L. Stevenson's essay on Father Damien written to rebut an opposed position, both spring to mind. It took a Superior General to get Colin really moving on the 1872 Constitutions, it took a saint to get him moving on the Constitutions for the Confraternity. Yet the heroic effort both represented for Colin must not be forgotten. When they were composed he was burdened by old age and many infirmities. And in these last years he had other serious matters on his mind such as completing his work on the Constitutions for the Marist Sisters.

A Latin preface to the Constitutions for the Confraternity tells us of Colin's conviction that it was his mission to give each branch of the Society its Constitutions, and that his soul would never rest until the last of the Constitutions, those for the Third Order, were completed. With a fine sense of understatement we are informed that they were *diu et mature perpensas* (long and maturely weighed). Of immense significance is the following: *Sequens expositio nihil aliud est quam Constitutionum presbyterorum Societatis Mariae quoddam complementum*. 'The following exposition is nothing other than as it were a certain completion of the Constitutions of the priests of the Society of Mary'. That said, it is understandable that they are so short. There was no need to repeat what had been said so carefully in the Constitutions of 1872.

Rejection of Eymard's Third Order

The document continues the earlier rejection of Eymard's Third Order. Instead of referring to the approbation by Pius IX in 1850 it refers to the favour shown the Third Order by Gregory XVI, presumably through the briefs of 1834. Colin's view of his Confraternity is very different from that of Eymard's Third Order. He sees it as an organic part of the Society with the same spirituality, the same spirit, and the same mission. That is why his new Constitutions are *nihil aliud . . . quam Constitutionum presbyterorum Societatis Mariae quoddam complementum*. Eymard on the other hand saw the Third Order as something outside the Society. One of Eymard's first biographers, Father Tesnière S.S.S., wrote that Eymard founded and directed the Third Order and quoted him as saying: 'God alone knows what the foundation of the Third Order cost me' (Mayet, Tableau, p. 169). His most authoritative biographer, Cave, shared the same view. Eymard never saw his work for the Third Order as implementing the ideas of the Founder, but regarded himself as the 'founder and legislator' and as having 'a certain personal control' (Cave, p. 136-137). That is the basic reason why to-day the Eymardian Third Order is unsatisfactory for the Society. Our new Constitutions (No. 6) affirm that the Constitutions Colin gave us remain 'the authentic expression of the nature and ends of the Society of Mary'. In making that recognition they are true to the call of Vatican II to religious institutes: 'Therefore the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully retained ...' And the new *Decreta Capitularia*, No. 112, calls for the integration of 'lay Marists into the global mission of the Church in the way envisaged by Father Colin.' The excellence of Eymard's work, its

effectiveness, the high personal regard in which he was always held by Colin, are not in doubt. What is being claimed is that there are special graces given to an institute when it is true to its distinctive call in the Church and that those graces are lost when it departs from it.

That this was the way the early Marists thought can be readily demonstrated. When Mayet asked Alphonse Cozon to write down his observations on the sixth book of the life of Eymard, he replied: first that it was not up to Eymard but to Father Founder to establish the Third Order: 'He alone had the grace to see clearly how to establish what God and the Holy Virgin wanted.' Secondly Colin had chosen Eymard for the Third Order because he saw in him 'a powerful man of action, he wished to use him to organise but not to constitute.' For Cozon this was self-evident 'since the very Reverend Father Founder tells us, and we ought to believe him, that the ideas he had on the Third Order, he had from the beginning' (APM 921.147, cahier sans cote, p. 29).

When we look at Eymard and Colin from the perspectives we have to-day, it is not difficult to see major differences of outlook between them. For us the dominant Marist myth is not Nazareth, as it was for Eymard, but Mary among the Apostles. The contemporary Marist goes out on mission (even if it is just outside the front door) in the spirit of Nazareth, but he goes out. The very first number of Colin's Constitutions for his Confraternity places the emphasis on Mary's burning desire that all men and women be saved. This characteristic perspective, so quickly established, is sustained through the text. In this brief overview it is not necessary to develop the remarkable openness and inclusiveness of the text. Suffice it to say that much of what Colin wrote still speaks to us to-day. His suggestion for example that children in the womb can be enrolled in the prayers and merits of the Confraternity has been taken up by the young travellers (gipsies) in the West of Ireland, as it has been welcomed by more sophisticated parents in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. At a deeper level there is the thrust to a Church in the image of Mary in Nos. 31 and 32.

A Decisive Step: Arrival of Alphonse Cozon

With the Constitutions of 1874 (published the following year), Colin had greatly clarified his mind for his contemporaries. But more was needed if the inheritance he held in trust was to be handed on in all its richness. It will be remembered that when Father David sent the details of the composition of the rule for the Confraternity he observed, 'there has never been a work explaining the text of the rule of the Third Order.' Colin was aware of the deficiency and took steps to remedy it. In 1874 he sent for a young Marist, Alphonse Cozon, thirty five years of age and professed only nine years.⁸ Colin was pleased with the way he had been able to collaborate on a series of guidelines for the Co-adjutor Brothers. They resulted in the Directory for the Brothers. Despite his achievements, Cozon had little self-confidence and though Colin had asked for him several times he procrastinated. He was afraid Colin might ask him to take on something beyond his

⁸ Father Maurice Sérol's short life of Alphonse Cozon was translated by Brendan Hayes in *Passing the Torch* (typescript).

capacities. Finally he decided to go out of respect, telling himself, 'If the good God wants me to be humiliated I give my consent' (APM 921.147, cahier F, p. 1). Cozon went to La Neylière on 13 October 1874. Colin gave him a copy of his Constitutions for the Confraternity and told him to go away and reflect on them. When he had done that they would talk about them. On 15 October he was ready.

Cozon was amazed at Colin's zeal for the Third Order which he found truly astonishing. He believed the reason was 'that he had at heart to leave behind him the proper spirit of the Holy Virgin in this work, a spirit which he saw as deficient in an essential point, and his anxiety had no other motive' (LM Anth, 7.B.2, § 35). Colin led off by deploring the rationalist spirit of those confrères who saw the Society as an ordinary enterprise. If it was merely that it would pass away but 'the Society ought to be a lasting work in the Church' (*ibid.*, § 12). 'They imagine that the Third Order is a human creation, that is to have little faith. It is a work which ought to last. It began from the beginning. It was blessed at Rome. It received a brief from Gregory XVI. The Constitutions were made when I was a curate' (*ibid.*, § 15). He continued: 'This preoccupied me a great deal; it has been one of the first ideas of the Society, and those ideas I have kept' (*ibid.*, § 12).

When Cardinal Castracane had expostulated in Rome all those years ago, Colin said he showed that he had understood what was being said: 'Then the whole world will be Marist, even the Pope!' But now 'the rest of you, no; you raise objections, you are rationalist' (LM Anth, 7.A.1, § 46). Colin also warned Cozon: 'You will have to become a saint to do what I am asking you' (*ibid.*, § 53). But he had to do all he could right now. Later the work would grow. 'God will raise up someone, men do not become great all at once, neither do works' (*ibid.*, § 55). If it depended on Colin, 'I should like to enrol the world under the banner of the Holy Virgin. The world is going to the bad' (*ibid.*). Colin recommended that Cozon consult with David and Jeantin, but not with everybody, because not everyone understood. Cozon left with a feeling of exhilaration. Colin had spoken like a Founder and with a Founder's charisma.

To Cozon we owe what is in effect Colin's last will and testament on the lay confraternity. And he recorded not only the ideas; frequently the Founder's words were taken down as he spoke (FA, p. 437). Colin also offered Cozon some general considerations and advice for the composition of a new manual since he did not like the Eymardian one then in existence (LM Anth, 7.B.2, § 9).

Cozon has some interesting things to say about the Constitutions Colin wrote for his Confraternity. He remarks for instance that those who had heard Colin speak on the subject would recognise in the text ideas they had already heard from him orally. But Cozon's best observations are contained in his Commentary on Colin's Constitutions which he included in the Manual he drafted for the Confraternity. Writing of one element he regarded as capital he said:

According to the idea of the Very Reverend Father Founder, the Third Order ought not to be confined within the limits of the Society. It ought, in a sense, to be a work outside of the Society, to which the Society will communicate its spirit, the spirit of

the Holy Virgin. Its development ought not to be limited to the dimensions of the Society. It ought not to remain in our hands, but pass to others. It ought not to be an essential mechanism of the Society, nor revolve around it as a planet around the sun, but ought to radiate freely in the Church. It would be wrong to consider it as a valuable means for aiding the Society by interesting the pious faithful in its works: it is rather the medium for transmitting farther the impetus received from Mary, so that, passing through the Fathers and the Tertiaries, it might keep on going and finally disappear at the farthest reaches, so to say, of the Church, without any personal consideration. (LM Anth, 7.B.2, § 20)

That is a passage central to our understanding of Marist laity to-day, and it is a good touchstone to judge a new initiative. Illuminating too is the comment that since Mary is the Mother of all Christians, the Society ought to be the Society of all Christians, both just and sinners. 'By its very nature, it ought to seek to be for the world what Mary is for the world' (LM Anth, 7.B.2, § 24). Cozon was well aware that many associations existed in his time and that the Third Order as it was then, was little different from them (*ibid.*, § 27). But Colin's conception was very different and it was well adapted to the needs of the Church.

A very practical comment was that Colin envisaged a movement which would have 'the vastest means of propagation, and that could happen only when pastors found it was to their advantage' (*ibid.*, § 36). I believe one reason for the great success of the Marian Mothers' groups in New Zealand is that from the beginning they have followed that advice.

Two Objections to Colin's Views

Finally Cozon answered two objections to what Colin was saying. First of all that his plan was not practical and secondly Colin did not always express himself as clearly as he had done in his last years. To the first he replied: 'Let us listen to him affirming that he has not founded just any work but the work which God wanted. Listen to him affirming that the Society has received a fruitful blessing to water the whole world with the (graces) of which Mary is the source' (LM Anth, 7.B.2, § 34). Secondly if the thought of the Founder had not always been clear in the past 'it was perfectly clear during the last years of his life' (LM Anth, 7.B.2, § 35). In any case if the formulation had not always been clear the substance was plain. When we come to interpret the earlier texts on the Third Order I believe we should view them from the perspective of Colin's last years. Then they will be seen to be all of a piece.

The Rejection of Cozon

Cozon had done what he could. But he admitted he had been unable to propose ways of realising the thought of the Founder. His main difficulties came from within the Society itself. The resistance put up by some of the Fathers was too much for him. He said that to overcome it he would have needed an extraordinary humility and self-effacement. As Colin had warned him he would need to be a saint to do what he asked him. Cozon died with the mission Colin gave him unaccomplished. His famous postulatam presenting the

Founder's mature thought was rejected by the General Chapter of 1880. The main opposition was put up by Father de Mijolla, the General Director of the Third Order. He based his case on historical evidence, all of which, as Father Coste has shown, was inaccurate. When the true story was presented to another General Administration in the early sixties, that Administration was unable to move beyond the parameters of the status quo. The apparent reason was pragmatism - the Eymardian model then seemed to be working. But I believe the real reason was the understanding of Marist spirituality in which those making the decisions had been formed. In a lecture given at the General House in Rome, Father Coste usefully distinguished the historical phases through which Marist research has passed.

>From 1895-1955 the emphasis transmitted to the Society by Jeantin and his followers was on the spirituality of the Hidden Life, on Nazareth, the ascesis of hiddenness. The interior life was seen as the *character proprius* of the Society. The shift of interest to the years of Colin's Generalate 1836-1854, that occurred in the middle fifties, resulted in an apostolic focus. The new insights were on Mary's place in the Church or on *Ignotus et quasi occultus* as an apostolic formula. It takes time for the findings of research to be assimilated and Father Buckley's Administration simply had not reached that point. From 1975-1985 Marist research concentrated on the period of our origins 1816-1836. Its findings placed the emphasis on the whole world Marist, the work of Mary, and on Marists as instruments of Divine Mercy.⁹

It is easy to see why men and women formed in the idea that the interior life was the distinctive characteristic of a Marist would espouse the Eymardian model. It is equally clear that we need a new model to respond to the more comprehensive and richer understanding of Colin's thought. I believe Alphonse Cozon is coming into his own and there is nothing stronger than an idea which has come into its time. After the presentation of my paper *The Marist Laity: Finding the way envisaged by Father Colin* to the Council of the Society at Madrid in 1988, Charles Girard, Cozon's editor, remarked, 'Cozon has had to wait a hundred years for a hearing.' Now at last the moment has arrived to listen to the full power of the Founder's voice and to translate it into action. How that might be done is the task of the rest of this paper.

Action and Vision

More and more the Society feels the time for words is over and that what is needed now is action. At the Council of the Society in Madrid in May 1988 Father General expressed this mood with some precision.¹⁰ He distinguished three phases in the history of a Congregation. The first, that of myth, includes the dreams, hopes, intuitions, challenges which give a group its sense of identity. The second phase, that of belief, is marked by statements of what the group believes, formulations of its purpose or mission. The final phase is that of norm where the question faced by the group is 'What are we to do?' When Father General suggested that to-day we are at the phase of norm he expressed something

⁹ I am drawing on my own notes during the lecture.

¹⁰ Report of the Superior General CS-8 9E.

most Marists, I believe, feel. They would agree too that, as he said, we must never lose sight of the levels of myth and belief. We are all anxious to move forward, but we must remember G. K. Chesterton's reminder: 'A step forward is not the same as a step in the right direction.'

Marists aware of their history should be especially appreciative of the importance of vision. Our previous General, Father Bernard Ryan, remarked once that at some point in our history we seem to have lost our original dynamism, the dynamism which lay behind the astonishing missionary outreach of our early history. The loss appears to have happened during the Generalate of Favre. Like Colin he was a very good and gifted man and a great Marist. The problem was not that Favre made any significant modifications of Colin's ideas. In fact his Rule, written while everyone was still waiting for Colin's Constitutions, simply re-expressed Colin's ideas in a more straightforward way and in better Latin.

The difference between Colin and Favre was at the level of vision. Jeantin's critique of Favre's rule was that it was not based on 'an accurate enough view of the Society of Mary'. In his well-known words:

In Father Founder's mind, the Society of Mary is to play a considerable and important, albeit hidden role, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls in these last times. Hence, the great and high idea he has of the sanctity which members of this Society are to have. But Father Favre did not share this view and had less lofty ideas and feelings about the destiny of the Society of Mary. He saw it as a congregation of pious priests who lived under a broad and easy rule, who gave missions, ran schools, undertook apostolic works within a limited scope and in a very secondary fashion.

Jeantin said he had even heard Favre blaming Colin for 'having too high an idea of the Society' and for wanting to found a 'great religious order' (APM 131.6, NHC, p. 30-31m).

Chapter II

THE VISION

1. We believe Colin and his companions, both men and women, were chosen by Mary to have a special relationship with her and to allow her to continue her work through them. They had a strong sense of personal destiny. They knew they were called to be something and to do something; to a special way of living and to a special purpose for living. In other words they received through Mary a spirituality and a mission. By a spirituality is meant simply the way we relate to God, to ourselves, to our neighbour, and to the world. It is the way we try to live the Gospel. Like the first Marists we believe 'we are the bearers of a particular grace in the Church and for the Church. We do not hide it under a bushel, we wish to share it' (*Fraternités maristes*, April 1988). To-day in some provinces the smell of death is strong in the nostrils. Like Nennius the probable author of *Historia Brittonum*, these provinces suffer an 'inward wound, caused by the fear that certain things dear to them should be like smoke dissipated.' I have heard it said that it does not matter much if we go out of business in this or that province. I would take a different view. For the spirit of the Society to disappear from a particular place where it once flourished is an impoverishment of the Church. It is like the disappearance of a species in nature. The appropriate response is not 'Does it matter?' but rather that of the poet: 'Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.'

2. From the beginning Mary was central to the whole Marist enterprise. In an 'age of indifference, of unbelief, an age of crime, of false learning, of this earth' as Colin described it, the first Marists believed Mary had taken a special initiative to bring the loving and healing mercy of God to all people, especially to those who needed it most. They believed she had chosen them and given them her name as a sign of a special relationship with her. Mary became a living presence in their lives. But the reason for the choice and the relationship was that Mary wanted something. The words which expressed this best were the words which Colin said presided over the early days of the Society: 'I supported the Church at its birth; I shall do so again at the end of time.' Mary would be that support through them. A modern way of expressing it would be: 'The times are evil, and I have charged you with their remedy.' Like the early Marists we are called to be for the world what Mary was for the world. We are to be a living Marist presence.

3. Our thinking about Marist Laity will depend on our theological model of the Church. For Vatican II and the Synods of Bishops, especially that of 1987 devoted to the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and the world, the dominant model has been the Church as a mystery of communion. This model is the one that has also been used in our ecumenical dialogues with the Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran Churches. In a short monograph, it will be sufficient to outline the chief

features of the model as expounded in the most significant document on the laity, *Christifideles Laici* (nos. 18-19).

Christians believe that at the heart of all reality is that intimate communion of three persons we call the Holy Trinity, and that our common destiny is to enter one day into the happiness of their intimate life of love. For St. Cyprian the Church shines forth as a people who already experience the communion of the Trinity in some way and reflect it by their unity with Christ and one another. The love which is at the heart of this communion comes to them through the Holy Spirit in the measure in which they are united to Christ and to all those who make up the Church. *Christifideles Laici* presents the mystery of the Church as communion through a series of Biblical images, the sheepfold, the flock, the spiritual building, the Holy City, and above all the great image of Christ as the vine and of all those who have chosen Him as Lord as branches.

What difference does this notion of communion make? What nuance does it give to our vision of Church? To call the Church first and foremost a "communion," is to place the accent upon the creation of a bond of love and service among all of its members. No one can close in on oneself in spiritual isolation from the rest of the community. Each must take up the task of forming this communion, a reflection of the Trinity on earth, even though his or her role may be different. The priest will lead especially through his role in Word and Sacrament, and the laity primarily through taking an active role in witnessing to the gospel by word and example in the various areas of human culture, in business, art, in law and politics, in the media, etc. But both priest and laity are to be concerned about all aspects of the Church and its worship, of the world and its works. The Church as "communion" means that laity and clergy are bound together in one work and one mission, the evangelization of the world.

The other important way in which Marists think about the Church is expressed in that famous and teasing text where Colin said: 'In a certain sense, yes, we must begin a new Church.' The idea of a new Church received a solid theological foundation in 1987 in the course of an allocution of John Paul II to the Cardinals and prelates of the Roman Curia. The Pope drew a distinction between the Petrine dimension of the Church and the *dimensione mariana* the *profilo mariano*. That could be translated 'Marian dimension,' 'Marian profile,' 'Marian image,' 'Marian face.' In a passage precious for Marists he said: 'This bond between the two profiles, the Marian and the Petrine, is therefore close, deep, and complementary; the Marian profile is even first in the designs of God, as it is in time, not to mention in profundity and pre-eminence. And it is richer in personal and communitarian implications for each vocation in the Church.'

The Petrine dimension of the Church is the reason Colin chose as the third goal of the Society of Mary: 'to hold more loyally to the Roman Catholic faith until death and defend it with all their strength.' The Marian dimension is the basis of his perspectives on the role and style of Mary's presence in the Church.

I would argue that for Marists to help bring about a new Church would be to focus on the Marian dimension. Against the image of a Church perceived as authoritarian,

constrictive, and on the margins of human experience, Marists should work to bring about a Church with a Marian face and the compassionate heart of a mother. That would be to bring out from the Church's inner resources a new freshness, a graciousness that would help bridge the gap between the Church and our contemporaries. To characterise that gap it is sufficient to quote from one of the greatest of contemporary English novelists, V. S. Naipaul: 'Many of our contemporaries see the Church as locked into a restrictive framework and the more they see it like that the more it becomes an object that can be rejected.'

I believe that the Pope's emphasis on the Marian dimension signposts a new way of evangelising an unbelieving world. And if the approach was resolutely adopted I believe it would have immense consequences. We have only to recall the impact made against all the odds by Pope John XXIII. A contemporary theologian, Herbert Richardson, in a pioneering article on the Petrine and Marian dimensions of the Church, said that for a brief moment the Marian Church was realised in Pope John. That Church was listened to by the world in a way the Church had not been listened to for centuries. Even Nikita Khrushchev in the Kremlin, relentless persecutor of religion as he was, conceded: 'I am not a Catholic, but I have great respect for this Pope John.' And New Zealanders will be interested to learn that it was Pope John who attracted both of the poet James K. Baxter's parents to the Catholic faith.

4. The Place of Mary in our Work with Marist Laity. The Pope's call for a Marian Church is being echoed on all sides to-day. We applaud it and we are true to our traditions when we support whatever fosters it. Of course to talk of Marian is to talk of Mary. One of my impressions after visiting many provinces and attending several Provincial Chapters and the Marist Colloquium in Rome in 1989 is that some of our men wish to downplay Mary in their personal life and their pastoral ministry. This is either because they fear she may usurp the place of Christ or that she is being used for purposes we must oppose. Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium* and John Paul's encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater* comprehensively take care of the first objection. As for the second, the abuse of something does not invalidate its use.

We know that in the two decades after Vatican II Mary's role was diminished. She was seen as an obstacle to reunion with our evangelical fellow Christians. As late as 1980 the eminent Mariologist René Laurentin observed: 'The eclipse of Marian dogmas continues. Hardly any treatises on the Virgin Mary appear. What we get are rather essays and monographs.'¹ He saw not so much a state of conflict over Mary but one of malaise. The foundation for the big resurgence in devotion to Mary was laid with Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus*, where the Pope had said, 'the Church, taught by the Holy Spirit and benefitting from centuries of experience, recognizes that devotion to the Blessed Virgin, subordinated to worship of the divine Saviour and in connection with it, also has great pastoral effectiveness and constitutes a force for renewing Christian living' (No. 57). But the most striking recent evidence of the resurgence is John Paul II's *Redemptoris Mater*. The importance of Mary for our times is also clear in the writings of Karl Rahner, who saw her

¹ "Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 65 (janvier 1981).

as a model of the new apostles we need: 'It is not simply by a pious turn of speech that Mary is called Queen of Apostles and Confessors: it is what she truly is. . . So what the apostolate is can be read from her and what she did; she is a productive pattern for the apostolate, not a mere ideal instance of its abstract essence.'² For Cardinal Ratzinger Mary is a remedy for the crisis in which the Church finds herself, a remedy, he said, which 'has concretely shown its effectiveness throughout the centuries' (*The Ratzinger Report*, p. 104). He also told an interviewer: 'If the place occupied by Mary has been essential to the equilibrium of the Faith, today it is urgent as in few other epochs of Church history to rediscover that place' (*ibid.*, p. 105). His statement recalled the view of the Bishops of South America after the famous meeting at Puebla in 1979 which was opened by John Paul II: 'Mary must be more than ever the pedagogy, in order to proclaim the gospel to the men and women of today' (*ibid.*, p. 106). I remember too that in the age of the laity, and more and more a church of the laity, Mary is being seen as an archetype of the lay person.

Mary is essential in any work with Marist laity. But we need a good Mariology and one that is good for the Church. My basic assumption in finding it is that all Mary needs is the truth. We will not find a well developed Mariology in Father Colin's utterances. What we will find are two basic convictions: 1. Mary had a role as exemplar and support of the Church as it was being born, and this role will re-emerge strongly at the end of time. 2. Her spirit and mode of acting are those best suited to the needs of the modern apostolate.

Colin's personal devotion to Mary was both tender and deep. It led him to see her in a certain way in the Church. The mode of that presence which he envisaged became his emphasis rather than the devotion itself. Yet a devotion to the person of Mary was something he wanted for all Marists. In the 1872 Constitutions he wrote: 'To her let them go with full confidence in all their needs, and let them have her lovely name often on their lips, and more often still in their hearts, showing love and a special devotion towards her.' The new Constitutions even give as one of the criteria for admitting a young man to the novitiate 'a desire to give a proper place in his life to Mary.' The Colinian insights into the role of Mary in the Church need to be nourished by a deep personal relationship with her. She has to be the woman in our life.

The task of developing a good Mariology has to take account of our situation to-day. The laity will meet many people who misunderstand Mary and her role in salvation. Yet many whose initial reactions are hostile revere the Scriptures. Scripture is a bridge we must use. Then we must remember there are stages in the communication of Marist spirituality. The principle of gradualism should be respected.

5. To embody the Church in the image of Mary for the whole world is too big a task for the religious branches of a small congregation. But these branches are not and were never meant to be the whole Society. To describe the Society Colin used the image of a tree with three branches: the priests (and we can add the brothers associated with them in their ministries), the sisters, and the laity. All were seen equally as part of the same tree, nourished by the same spirituality and sharing the same mission. For Colin there was only

² Karl Rahner, *Mission and Grace*, vol. 1, Sheed and Ward, 1963, p. 180-181.

one Marist spirituality and only one Marist mission. Both are shared equally by all members of the Society: priests, sisters, and laity.

In the *Summarium* of 1833 Colin spoke of 'a Confraternity of lay people who are equal sharers in the spiritual goods of the whole Society' (LM Anth, 3.B.1, § 3 = s, 3). Colin used the language of equality again, in writing of 'The Confraternity of the Faithful of Both Sexes Living in the World.' He heads the section simply 'Confrères living in the world' (s, 109). Françoise Perroton, still a layperson and the first of the pioneers of the S.M.S.M.'s, rightly saw herself as belonging to the Society: 'I am really quite happy to be committed in the same Society' (LM Anth, 6.F.1, § 3). This insight should save us from a mentality once prevalent in the Church, which thought of spirituality as a two-tiered system, one tier for clerics and one for laity.

When I spoke to the International Director of the Franciscan Third Order in Rome, he was surprised to hear that Colin regarded the Marist laity as a constitutive part of his congregation. He said that was true for St. Francis of Assisi, but rare in the Church. For most orders and congregations associations with the laity are just that, associations. The Jesuits, for example, have done great work with the laity for centuries. But they are a body of religious men. Their sodality (modernised as the Christian Life Communities) has never been regarded as part of their Order. One consequence for those in the clerical branch of our Society is that they have to resist the tendency to look on themselves as at the centre and the laity on the boundaries. The Marist laity are at the very heart of the Society. Its members are heirs to the full Colinian inheritance. It could even be said that where a vigorous Marist lay movement does not exist alongside the other two branches the Society does not fully exist. It is like a defective tree with one of the fruit-bearing branches missing. Colin looked mainly to Marist laity to spread the spirit of Mary throughout the world. And he said there would be more saints among its members than in the other two branches.

Chapter III

PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

Principle 1: The Marist laity is a manifestation of the intrinsic dynamism of the Society and co-extensive with it.

This principle, which insists that the Marist laity is not a mere appendage to the Society but goes to its very core, has been explained sufficiently above and needs no further comment.

Principle 2: The Marist laity is to be seen primarily as evangelising. To-day it should be directed at the inactive in their faith and at unbelievers. The 'just' will be the evangelisers.

COMMENTARY: Eymard called his Third Order 'Third Order for the Interior Life.' Colin called it 'the Confraternity or Sodality under the protection of the Blessed Virgin for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just.' The biggest single shift in our thinking about the Marist laity has been to see it as an evangelising movement. More than any other insight this is being seen as a sign of hope. In fact Pope John Paul II has written: 'the entire mission of the Church is concentrated and manifested in evangelisation' (CFL 33).

And it has become a commonplace that all the faithful are called to work in the Lord's vineyard. The recent Synod on the laity declared that the chief fruit hoped for by the Synod was that the laity should respond to the call for evangelisation as a matter of urgency (CFL 3). And in *Christifideles* the Pope recalled, they have been well equipped for the challenge: 'With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, the baptised share in the same mission of Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour-Messiah' (CFL 13). When the Pontifical Council for the Laity wrote on the formation of laity, it stated: 'The most overriding aim of all Christian formation is to form evangelisers' (*The Formation of Laity*, 1987, p. 46). In this matter as in so many others, the vision of Colin is proving prophetic.

On what does the idea rest in Marist tradition? Colin's emphasis on the Third Order as an evangelising movement was in his mind from the beginning and remained constant throughout his life. The oldest document we have, one that presents Colin's ideas on the Third Order at some length, is the 'Petition of the Marist Pilgrims to Pope Gregory XVI' [[LM Anth, 3.A.1). It was signed by Fathers Colin, Chanel, and Bourdin and dated 26 August 1833. Up to this petition, Colin had merely alluded to the Third Order. Now he explained his aims and showed the links with the other branches of the Society.

The name he used is interesting. He spoke of the Third Order of Mary, 'that is to say, groups of the faithful working under the title of the Confraternity of the Mother of God for the Conversion of Sinners and the Perseverance of the Just' (§ 1). Colin gave as its aim:

1) to rekindle the faith among Catholics; 2) to unite Christians as members of the family of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, by bonds of love and devotion towards her, and 3) to collaborate with all their strength with the Religious of the Society of Mary in the work of converting sinners and ensuring the perseverance of the just (§ 2).

The summary of the Rules of the Society of Mary of 1833 makes clear that 'the general aim of the Society is to contribute in the best possible way, both by its prayers and its efforts, to the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just' (§ 109). At the second session of the General Chapter of 1870-72 he said of the Third Order: 'the Blessed Virgin entrusts it to you like a bridge to go to souls, to sinners.' Father General wrote in *Regina Societatis Mariae*: 'Wherever we minister as Marists, we must focus on evangelisation, on bringing the gospel to modern culture' (p. 5). He was expressing what might be termed 'the three calls.'

A. *The Call of the Signs of the Times*

All mission is directed to an actual situation not a desirable one. It begins with a humble viewing of what is happening, with an attentive listening to what is being said. The dominant factor in our situation to-day is that the whole balance of influence between the Church and the world has shifted dramatically. The Church no longer exercises the powerful influence on society it once had. A new generation has risen which is often not only without faith, but even without knowledge of Christ and the good news He brought. We live in a world which turns more on banks, governments, corporations, and markets than on the Church. To-day it is lay people, not clerics, who are in positions of greatest influence and they are more in touch with their culture. The attitudes of more people are changed over the back fence, in pubs, offices, canteens, and coffee-bars than in churches. Sometimes lay people occupy positions that allow them to bring Christian values to bear on decisions that, although secular in themselves, profoundly affect people's lives, even in their religious dimension. The balance of responsibility for evangelisation has shifted to lay people. If they do not become the prime movers in evangelisation the Church will become more and more an anachronism. As Father General pointed out in *Regina Societatis Mariae*: 'the need for the laity to minister to one another in today's Church radically transforms our role as priests and religious. It calls upon us to exercise new and important forms of leadership' (p. 5-6). Our role to-day is to be catalysts and facilitators. The period of the passivity of the laity is over. The task for clerics and religious is to work shoulder to shoulder with laity at the task of becoming authentic disciples of Christ in an unbelieving world. In the words of an American bishop at the Synod, we must work towards 'co-discipleship for the mission of the Church in the world.' Clerics, religious, and laity have to learn to look on the world with the same redemptive gaze as that of Christ.

B. *The Call of the Church*

In *Christifideles Laici* the Pope placed a strong emphasis on evangelisation. And for years he has been calling for a new evangelisation of Europe. With the crumbling of the

Berlin wall and the collapse of Communist dictatorships in the East, great opportunities are opening up. The Pope looks to religious orders, as he has often said, to give leadership and to show how the great task of evangelisation can be carried out. It is up to us Marists, religious and lay, to respond to those hopes in the Marist way.

C. The Call of the Society

The General Chapter of the Society of Mary in 1985 took as its theme 'The Society of Mary at the Service of Evangelisation.' Four years later at the Council of the Society in Madrid in 1988 the theme was 'Marist Evangelisation in Partnership with the Laity.' That emphasis has been one of the major thrusts of the present General Administration. In *Mary, Mother of Our Hope*, Father General wrote: 'Our basic challenge as Marists to-day is to enable the laity to play their full part in the Church's life and mission and to recognise their gifts' (p. 28). *Regina Societatis Mariae* confirms that this remains our basic challenge (cf. p. 5-6). And it is very conscious that this is the moment 'to take a giant step forward' (p. 11). All this shows the desire of the Society to be true to the recovered Colnian vision. As true sons and daughters of Colin, Marists wish to be authentic children of the Church and to follow where the Holy Spirit is leading it. It is the way twentieth century Marists try to give meaning to the words 'I was the support of the Church as it was being born. I will be its support at the end of time.' Marist spirituality is a missionary spirituality with a global vision. It is not a closed circuit spirituality playing to an ever diminishing audience.

For an example of how powerful an evangelising force a lay movement can be we have only to look at South Korea. The spectacular growth of the faith there and the large number of adult converts are both well known to us. According to the International Director of the Legion of Mary, the Korean bishops attribute the spread of the faith largely to the Legion of Mary.¹

The 'Just' and Sinners

Whenever Colin speaks of the aim of the Society or of its lay branch he places first the conversion of sinners. But he always added 'the perseverance of the just.' These too must be helped to live out their vocation to holiness: 'Before the world was made, He chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in His presence' (Eph. 1:4). 'The vocation of holiness is intimately connected to mission' (CFL 17). The holiness of the faithful is their first and fundamental contribution to building up the Church and her apostolic dynamism. The measure of the Church's apostolic effectiveness is how closely she is united to Christ and led by the Holy Spirit.

Sinners themselves must be seen as potential evangelisers. The history of the Church from Paul to Augustine down to our own day shows how effective they can be. Graham Greene said he chose Thomas for his confirmation name for two reasons. Firstly it was Thomas who said, 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in

¹ Conversation with the author in Seoul (not, alas, during the Olympics!).

the marks of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe' (Jn 20:24). He was also the one who said, 'Let us go up to Jerusalem and die with Him.' Those who have passed through the fire speak to unbelievers and sinners with a special authority because they are recognised as people who understand the sinners' situation.

The True Vocation of the Laity: Witnessing to the Gospel in the World

It has been said that the Church's failure since Vatican II has been the failure to allow lay people to play their full part in evangelisation. And the real vocation of the laity has often been misunderstood. Even before the Synod on 'The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World' the Argentinian President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Cardinal Pironio, had warned that many lay formation programmes were focusing on preparing lay people for service in the Church. He knew, of course, that that was important, but his point was that the emphasis should be on training laity specifically for witness and for evangelising in society. At the Synod, Father Zago, the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a congregation with wide missionary and pastoral experience, said that wherever he went he discovered 'a vast growth in the commitment of lay people in the internal mission of the Church,' but there was 'less evidence of a commitment to the mission outside the Church.'² The Synod itself and its official expression *Christifideles Laici* of Pope John Paul II said that by concentrating almost exclusively on the laity's ecclesial service, the effect had sometimes been the clericalisation of the laity (CFL 23, par. 6).

The tragedy is that some pastors, good men, imagine they are responding well to the call to work with laity because they have in their parishes many lay ministers performing ecclesial service. The true emphasis in working with the laity is that placed by John Paul II in CFL where he identifies his position with that of Paul VI who wrote in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community - this is the specific role of the pastors - but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelising activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society, and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelisation, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering. (No. 70)

For the most part clerics and religious are more at home with ecclesial service than with the vast and complicated world of contemporary culture. In that area it is the laity who are the experts. We speak much about partnership with the laity. The crunch will come when we realise our role is to be the junior partner. It is a form of *ignotus et quasi occultus*.

² Quoted by Monsignor Peter Coughlin, *The Hour of the Laity*, Newtown, Australia: E.J. Dwyer, 1989, p. 113.

The Concept of Secularity

By now we all realise that laity are not religious living in the world. They are laity living in the world. But we need to reflect more on what distinguishes the lay vocation - without separating it - from that of clergy and religious. This was a central question for the Synod. Its solution is found in CFL: 'The place in the Church of the lay faithful is radically defined by their Christian newness and characterised by their secular character' (CFL 15). Nowadays we are reasonably familiar with the new dignity and missionary orientation conferred by Baptism. We are less familiar with the relatively new but crucial concept of secularity. The whole Church, as Paul VI remarked, has an authentic secular dimension flowing from the mystery of the incarnation. All members of the Church share in this secular dimension but in different ways. The secular world is where the laity receive their call from God (CFL 15).

The most famous text on the secular presence the Christian laity are to bring to the world is *Lumen Gentium* no. 31:

By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, that is, in every one of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very fabric of their existence is woven. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit of the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties.

All the official texts on the role of the laity in the Church to-day place the emphasis on the interaction between the laity and the modern world. In fact, 'a consistent, committed, and alert dialogue between the Church and the modern world is a fundamental condition for announcing and keeping alive in our age the timeless message of Jesus Christ.'³ The main thrust for Paul VI was 'to evangelise human culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer), but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots' (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 20). I use culture in the sense used by Paul VI in this document. (It has been pointed out that the definition of culture in Vatican II documents like *Gaudium et Spes* is anthropologically dated).

Inculturation

The word that best expresses the whole process is inculturation. It is a relatively new word in theology but one that is becoming increasingly current to express the post-Vatican II meaning of evangelisation. In 1986 John Paul II spoke of the Synod of Bishops 'placing

³ Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, S.J., "Inculturation and the Challenge of Modernity," in Ary A. Roest Crolius, S.J., ed., *Inculturation*, working papers on Living Faith and Cultures Rome, 1982, p. 3.

inculturation decisively at the centre of the mission of the Church' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 16 December 1985). The word conveys the new respect for other cultures; it expresses the critical interaction and assimilation between them and the Gospel. Far from beginning by clearing the decks of the culture to be evangelised to make room for the Gospel, it aims at an interior transformation of the authentic values in the culture through the power of the Gospel. It sees in each culture 'the seeds of the word', the traces of the action of God who has passed over it and who was present within it even before the evangeliser came on the scene. And it encourages the culture to express these transformed values according to its own genius. It realises that announcing the good news is not simply an encounter between the Gospel and a new culture. The Gospel is already embodied in the culture of the evangeliser. Marist self-effacement requires that we forget our cherished presuppositions (usually European ones) to allow the Gospel to break free in all its original vigour. Inculturation invites us to keep always in mind the vast difference between local churches and situations in which the people of God live: 'A non-inculturated evangelisation has no meaning; that is an evangelisation that is dissociated from the socio-cultural, politico-economic, and historical reality of the place and the people to which it is destined.'⁴

The Marist charism itself at the level of socio-cultural diversity finds its different expressions and symbols, new forms of action and communication, rising from the genius of the people and of the Church it serves. Fidelity to the charism, however differently realised, is what unites all our activities with Mary who is supporting the Church through us. All that has been said applies equally to every culture, whether of the Third World or the First World. And within these cultures full account has to be taken of sub-cultures which have their own sets of values that characterise their actions, communications, and symbolic expressions.

Marists and the Humanity of Christ

John Paul II told us: 'we need heralds of the Gospel who are *experts in humanity*, who have a profound knowledge of the heart of present-day men and women, sharing in their joys and hopes, anguish and sadness, and who are at the same time contemplatives in love with God' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 21 October 1985). Marists can resonate with that. The very first Marian definition, that of Ephesus in 431, defined Mary as Theotokos, Mother of God, against those who said Christ was not a truly human being. Mary was the guarantor of the humanity of Christ. Marists who imitate her are called to be witnesses and guarantors of Christ's humanity. Against a Church often seen as legalistic and remote we commit ourselves to establish a Church with the tenderness and gentleness of a woman. Especially towards unbelievers that is how we are called to act. Introducing the first Marist missionaries in the Bugey, Colin said: 'we come among you as instruments of divine mercy.' He also said to his confrères: 'In the Society we shall profess all those opinions which give greatest play to the mercy of God' (FS, doc. 37, § 2).

⁴ Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, S.J., Conference to U.S.G. meeting 1984, p. 10.

The Main Elements in Evangelisation

It is this approach to evangelisation/inculturation that Marists wish to adopt. We share with the Marist laity our spirituality and our approach to ministry. What all this might mean in practice is better worked out in the framework of workshops, the sort of Marist Laity workshop now being set up. As a final comment it might be useful to recall the three main elements in any evangelisation as set out in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

1. *Witness*

In the last resort there is no other apostolate than faith communicated through what we are. What is truly alive shows its life by the very fact of its life. An African proverb states: 'A tiger does not talk about being a tiger, it jumps.' A bull does not talk about being a bull, it charges. The main thing about being a Marist is being a Marist. We need the talk. We need the words, but the constant challenge is to reduce the distance between what we say and what we are.

2. *Proclamation*

But the proclamation is also important. As Paul VI reminds us in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: 'even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified - what Peter called 'always having your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have' - and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus' (No. 22).

In the first world with its dire need of inculturation we need to recover for our style of evangelisation the directness and challenge of those great texts of Matthew:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. No-one lights a lamp to put it under a tub. They put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.' (5:14)

It is one of the last vestiges of our earlier misunderstanding of *ignotus et quasi occultus* that causes us to shy off this direct proclamation. I believe it is necessary and that it can be done in a truly Marist way.

3. *Response*

The third phase of evangelisation is response, what people make of what they have seen and heard. The main thing for those who hear the word is not that they have a spiritual experience. The main thing is that they change their lives. And only the Holy Spirit can do that. We are utterly reliant on prayer. But Marists do not pray alone. Mary prays with

them. Vatican II's decree on the laity says that now Mary is in Heaven 'her maternal love keeps her attentive to the brothers and sisters of her Son whose pilgrimage is not yet over . . . until they make landfall in their heavenly homeland' (No. 4). It could be said that for Mary in Heaven there are two turnings, the turning inwards towards the Trinity in adoration, and the turning outward to the world with the redemptive gaze of Christ. But the two turnings are one and the same. Our prayers as Marists, religious and lay, is to join moment by moment in Mary's contemplation of the Trinity and to join too in her intercession for the world. In this way we will be as Colin hoped: 'fired by the example of so great a leader and renewed by her merits and prayers' (1872 Constitutions, no. 1).

To-day as we feel the exhilaration of the strong sap of evangelisation that is bringing life to all branches of the Society we look to Mary who the Middle Ages said was more apostolic than any of the Apostles. Just as on the morning of Pentecost she watched over with her prayer the beginning of evangelisation, so to-day she watches over us as we try to interpret the new pentecost John XXIII referred to in launching the Second Vatican Council.

Marists have their own way of going about evangelisation. They learn it from a prayerful contemplation of their Constitutions and the writings and sayings of Father Colin.

Principle 3: The scope of the Marist laity is as wide as the world, so a truly evangelising movement must be ecumenical.

COMMENTARY: As early as 1838 Colin said: 'Let us bestir ourselves. Our undertaking is a bold one; (laughingly) we intend to invade everywhere. When will the time come?' (OM 2, doc. 427, § 2). He also said at the Chapter of 1872: 'The Third Order of Mary in my eyes must be an immense association to embrace the whole world' (OM 3, doc. 846, § 18). Again: 'The Society of Mary, like the Church, began with simple, poorly educated men, but since then the Church has developed and encompassed everything. We too must gather together everyone through the Third Order' (1846; FS, doc. 120, § 1). I believe we have to enlarge our thinking well beyond Catholic boundaries - the whole world is the Marist arena. It is true our attitude to Marist laity must be a blend of idealism and realism. But the two are often closer than we realise. The ecumenical dimension is not pie in the sky. A way of proceeding can be found in the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁵ This was founded in 1967 by a layman, Martin Gillett. A plaque built into the wall of the Slipper Chapel at Walsingham, most famous of English Marian shrines, marks the place where his ashes are interred. The shrine was entrusted to the Society of Mary in 1968. Gillett's prophetic vision was that Mary, far from being a source of division, would prove to be a cohesive force for the ecumenical movement. To-day the presidents of the Society are the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Among the patrons are another Cardinal, an Orthodox Bishop, and a former President of

⁵ It flourishes in England and the United States. A branch was founded in Rome in 1988. The inaugural meeting was held at the Marist general house, Monteverde, on 24 March. Two Marist fathers were present.

the Methodist Conference. Other examples of ecumenical co-operation are the Federation of Christian Churches in France and the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in the United States.

After a careful discussion of the 'Reformed Tradition' on Mary, Max Thurian, Brother of Taizé, and now a convert to Roman Catholicism, wrote in his book *Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church*: 'the Marian doctrine of the Reformers is consonant with the great tradition of the Church in all the essentials and with that of the Fathers of the first centuries in particular.'⁶

In our efforts to allow the spirit of Mary to enter the lives of those of other faiths we have to be able to show that our attitudes to Mary are based on sound theology. To show as Paul VI insisted in *Marialis Cultus* that they have 'a biblical imprint.' We have to show that we share our fellow believers' conviction that 'in the Virgin Mary everything is related to Christ and dependent upon Him'. That is to say, Marian doctrine always expresses a truth about Jesus Christ. Mariology is an expression of Christology. Marists should be encouraged by the Christological emphasis in the very first of their 'sacred texts,' that of Le Puy:

I have always imitated my divine Son in everything. I followed Him even to Calvary, standing at the foot of the Cross as He gave His life for the salvation of the world. Now that I am in glory with Him, I imitate Him still in what he does for His Church on earth. (OM 2, doc. 718, § 5)

This perspective was readily grasped by Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn who wrote: 'Every child of her Society must live the life of the divine Mother, which is none other than the life of Christ' (CMJ, doc. 18, § 1).

Principle 4: Marist Laity is to be seen as an initiative of the whole Marist family.

The first known reference to Colin's plan for a Third Order is in a letter of Marcellin Champagnat to Bishop Devie (July 1833): 'Father Colin's idea of the Third Order, I find rather pleasing. I believe that, as Your Excellency envisages it, it will succeed' (LM Anth, 1.A.1).

The Foundress of the Marist Sisters was also involved from the beginning. Colin asked her to 'look after the members of the Third Order' and to stir up two of the Fathers 'to try to increase the members, to bring them together from time to time, and to do everything to encourage them' (LM Anth, 1.A.3). Of the pioneers of the S.M.S.M.'s who set out for the missions of Oceania four were members of the Third Order and all eventually joined it.

The link with the Third Order was just one manifestation of the common commitment of these first Marists to the great symbol of Fourvière. It represents a resolution to respond

⁶ (6) London & Oxford, Mowbray, 1963, p. 77. John Paul II told the New Zealand Bishops during an *ad limina* visit that he found this book very helpful when he was writing *Redemptoris Mater*.

to Mary's wishes expressed at Le Puy by founding the Society to do her work. How central this was in their consciousness is clear from a letter of Champagnat: 'There is nothing that I am not ready to sacrifice to save the work of Mary from shipwreck'(OM 1, doc. 323 M, § 2). In the eyes of Colin, Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn shared fully the burden of founding the Society. And her spiritual experience helped to develop and clarify what it meant to be a Marist. And we must never forget the thirty years during which the spiritual intimacy between Colin and Jeanne-Marie enriched Marist spirituality.

Our four congregations have developed differently with emphases that bring out the rich diversity of the Marist inheritance. And each highlights key elements in that inheritance. The Marist Brothers have preserved a strong sense of family and of the zeal of the first missionaries in the Bugey. Year after year in many countries they bring the Gospel to new generations of young men. The Marist Sisters have kept in a striking way the simplicity and graciousness of the Holy Family at Nazareth. The S.M.S.M. Sisters have preserved in its primitive purity the missionary impulse of the first Marists. In their new Constitutions they write: 'Missionary service and the Marist vocation were but one single call for the pioneers and those who followed them' (No. 47). Again, they are ready 'to set out or set out again' (No. 16). We would nevertheless expect congregations with different histories to reflect their differences in their work with the laity. The approach adopted by the Marist Brothers in the Champagnat Movement, for example, is very different from what Father Colin had in mind though both approaches have something in common. Each branch of the Society should respect the initiatives taken by the others and give them full support. We should practice Marist ecumenism.

The inheritance of Colinian thinking on Marist laity is not the property of the clerical branch of the Society of Mary. It is the common inheritance of the whole Marist family. At a time of great opportunity for partnership with the laity, all of us must bring our gifts, our experience, our distinctive perspectives and hammer out the best way of spreading the spirit of Mary throughout the world. We must not let the moment pass until we have accepted its special grace. Apathy or indecision before so clear a call would be rightly seen by posterity as an historic failure.

Chapter IV

STRATEGIES

Let's come alive,
our undertaking is a bold one.
(OM 2, doc. 427, § 2)

A notable feature of post-Vatican II times is what the Pope described in *Christifideles Laici* as 'a new era of group endeavours of the lay faithful' (CFL 29). And indeed these endeavours are numerous. They include Schönstatt, Focolare, Comunione e liberazione, Taizé, the Neo-Catechumenate, the R.C.I.A., Cursillos, Emmanuel (charismatic), Équipes Notre-Dame, L'Arche and the allied Faith and Light movement. All these and other movements converge in the common purpose of the Church's mission and reflect the richness and diversity of the spirit. The Pope has repeatedly stood by the movements. In fact as early as 1981 he said: 'As you well know, the Church itself is a movement.'¹ And in a clear reference to the movements he spoke of the need to be ready to leave 'atrophied structures to go where life is beginning, where we see fruits of life being produced according to the spirit' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 21 October 1985). Those familiar with, say, the Taizé or the Focolare movement will know how immensely effective they are, especially with contemporary youth.

In *Christifideles* the Pope came out solidly in support of the movements, writing for example:

Church communion . . . finds its specific expression in the lay faithful's working together in groups, that is, in activities done with others in the course of their responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church. (CFL 29)

And he laid down theological and pastoral guidelines for their free and orderly existence (CFL 29-36).

The movements vary considerably and not all have found equal favour with all members of the Church. The movements made up one of the four main topics discussed at the Synod. The Italian Bishops led by Cardinal Martini were especially critical. In his excellent and balanced account of the debate, G. Chantraine S.J. pointed out that they were working out of the only model of lay involvement they knew, that of Catholic Action where activities are tied very closely to a pastoral programme and so are firmly controlled by the hierarchy. The movements, on the other hand, come from below, not from above, so some adjustment to the relationship with traditional institutional structures has to be made. The rise of the movements was compared at the Synod to the religious transformation

¹ Quoted in *Christifideles laici: Comments and Reflections* (Bulletin of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Vatican City, 1989-90), p. 39.

brought about in the thirteenth century by the Dominicans and Franciscans. It was also recalled that their ministry of preaching, confession, and university teaching, their profession of mendicants ran into opposition from the secular clergy and certain Bishops (Chantraine, p. 103). History shows how triumphantly they overcame all obstacles.

It was necessary at the Synod for Cardinal Lara, president of the Commission for the authentic interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, to recall Canon 215, which some of the Fathers were forgetting. It states that the faithful are free to form associations for charitable or pious purposes to 'promote their Christian vocation in the world' (Chantraine, p. 101). As associations of the faithful the movements have their place in the Church by right. Jean Vanier wrote wisely of the need to give the movements time to settle down and of patience to endure the pain that is inevitable when previous ways of doing things have to make room for the new. Though we may choose to exercise our Christian liberty by joining this or that movement we are as Marists in the same situation to-day in regard to the movements as the young Jeanne-Marie Chavoin was in regard to the congregations. Her spiritual director said to her: 'You are not meant for a congregation already established, but for one yet to be founded'.² The Marist call to-day is to follow Colin along a free fresh road. To be men and women driven by the full force of the religious life-sap of our time, and to invite all those we meet on the way to come with us on our journey.

The movements have important lessons to teach us as we strive to develop the Marist laity. They demonstrate conclusively that ways have been found to fire up modern secular men and women with zeal for the Gospel. Within our tradition we too have the resources to do the same. But we need deep convictions. If Marists do not work strenuously to make their distinctive contribution by establishing Marist laity, who will?

The task will require a variety of approach and a multiplicity of strategies. But we need to work at it. An effective Marist lay presence does not happen by accident. More is needed than mere osmosis. And we need to be fully professional. We must look for the most effective ways. And we must try to be fully Colinian.

FIRST PROPOSITION: The Need for a New Name for the old Third Order.³

Older groups in particular are happy with the name of Third Order and should be allowed to keep it. But in many parts of the world a new name is preferred. The expression 'Third Order' has to-day overtones it did not have in Colin's time. People ask who makes up the 'first order'? The priests? Where does this leave equal partnership with the laity? It also suggests it is something to be drawn around the Society. In fact it is meant to go out from it. It was obvious at the last General Chapter that the reluctance to engage in serious discussion on the Third Order was because the Third Order as delegates had experienced it was more to do with personal piety than with the newly rediscovered missionary thrust of the Congregation.

² Jessica Leonard, S.M., *Triumph of Failure*. St Paul Publications, 1988, p. 15.

³ As noted earlier, the French province saw this in the sixties and acted on it.

Other congregations have thought it opportune to change the name of their lay movements. Christian Life Communities is the new name for the old Jesuit Sodality of Our Lady. The Dominican Laity is the new name for the Dominican Third Order. I think Marist Laity is a good name for us. It is accurate and general enough to cover a wide variety of forms. It also leaves each region free to choose a particular name that describes what they are doing. The name chosen should allow the movement to travel easily beyond Marist and Catholic boundaries.

SECOND PROPOSITION: 'Working with the laity themselves'

In our work with Marist Laity we speak rightly of working out everything as far as possible with the laity themselves. But we must not evade our own responsibility. In our present circumstances priests and religious are more likely to be familiar with the Marist inheritance than the generality of lay people. Marists are not born, they are made. Our task is to hand on to the laity the Marist vision, spirit, and approach to mission in their fulness. The first step is the handing on, the second the handing over. We must be patient and open to what the laity make of what they have received. They are moving into undiscovered country.

THIRD PROPOSITION: The Importance of the Group

The basic strategy is a group bonded together by the Marist spirit and the Marist goals. The group has three principles:

1. To become a communion bonded together in mind and heart.
2. To discover the Gospel together and to live it as Mary did.
3. To discover how each member can best serve the Kingdom and to live out that service.

The members of the group learn together how to become effective evangelisers, how to confront the challenges presented by unbelievers or by those inactive in their faith, and the group has a special concern for the marginalised and the neglected.

I believe the major procedural option for the Marist Laity to-day is the small group bonded together by the Marist spirit and committed to the Marist goals.

a) *Jean-Claude Colin and Structures*

i) The Society of Mary

The idea of forming small groups of laity should not be too difficult to accept for members of a Society with Jean-Claude Colin as Founder. His vision and procedures in founding the Society were anything but amorphous and indeterminate. In his lecture

'Structures of Government' given to the Framingham workshops in 1980, Jean Coste observed that Colin was not a latter-day Confucius proposing a kind of general wisdom with which many people could identify. Colin did not found a spirit, nor even a kind of spirituality. He founded a congregation. And he spent his life formulating its distinctive features. The Society of Mary was meant to be something specific and to work for something specific. Colin's conception of the Society was not a bunch of individuals merrily and zealously going their own way. He conceived the Society as a corporate body from which each Marist is sent on mission. Anterior and superior to what any Marist may feel called to do is the work of Mary.

In Charles Girard's *Lay Marists: Anthology of Historical Sources* there are plenty of references to show the importance Colin attributed to small groups meeting regularly. In 1833 he wrote to Mother Saint Joseph: 'Tell my brother and Fr Convers to try to increase the members, to bring them together from time to time, and to do everything to encourage them' (LM Anth, 1.A.3, § 11). Among the duties of members of the Confraternity was 'to attend meetings' (LM Anth, 3.D.1, § 2). He told the capitulants to the 1854 Chapter: 'People might be accepted into the Third Order without having meetings. But, alas, without meetings, there is no soul, no life, in the Third Order. However, it could be done for a few persons' (LM Anth, 2.B.3, § 8). In other words meetings of groups was the desirable procedure but exceptions could be made 'for a few persons.'

All the early forms of the Third Order and its proto-types used meetings of small groups as a standard procedure. This was true for example of the Sisters of the Third Order of Mary (Christian Maidens) and the Tertiary Brothers of Mary. Copies of their meticulously kept minutes survive so we often know what went on at meetings. All the early directors of the Third Order presided at meetings of small groups. That was true for the first three Directors, Pierre Colin, Claude Girard, Julien Eymard, and it was true for Julien Favre when a short time before his election to Superior General he was Director of the Third Order.

ii) Marist Laity

At the 1854 Chapter, Colin said that 'the Third Order must be envisaged as a sodality or fraternity; that a Third Order of individuals has less impact' (FS, doc. 189, § 2). For this sodality (not the world in general) he later wrote special Constitutions and offered a daily spiritual programme. What is noticeable about these writings is the ready acceptance of structures and the flexibility with which he wanted them to be applied.

b) *The Pope and Lay Structures* (CFL 29-30)

John Paul II has praised many times 'the new blossoming of Christian communities and ecclesial movements,' saying 'they certainly constitute one of the surprising manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church to-day . . . the new communities are a promising sign; one sees conversions taking place there and even the first fruits of

sanctity; one finds there a profound sense of communion, an outburst of missionary fervour in the service of others. Uniting a spiritual search and temporal action they offer a Catholic synthesis' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 14 November 1988, p. 14).

In urban situations especially, Marist lay groups such as I have described are a form of the communities the Pope praised. Already some of them are bearing the fruit of which he spoke.⁴

And in CFL the Pope made quite clear the importance he attributes to lay groups. He pointed out that the formation of such groups expresses our social nature and 'leads to a more extensive and incisive effectiveness in work.' The work of evangelisation is principally the work of the evangelisation of culture and for the Pope this is 'done not so much by an individual alone but by an individual as "a social being," that is, as a member of a group, of a community, of an association, or of a movement.' Ultimately the reason for the importance of groups is the idea of the Church as communion. It is the Christian community that evangelises.

As a final witness to the efficacy of groups in a parish situation, I wish to quote Archbishop May's intervention at the Synod on the Laity:

Most lay people who participated in our consultation regard small Christian communities within the parish as vital in deepening their life of faith and enabling them to fulfil whatever ministry God has for them. Small communities are proliferating in our parishes. The RENEW programme has been most fruitful in this development in the USA. So has the De Sales programme of small group prayer, study and action. The Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) gives promise of continued growth in small group work along with many other programmes in our country. These communities provide the ongoing formation of the laity in prayer, scripture study, life-sharing and outreach to the needs of society. Our laity seeks this community experience within, or at least along with, their regular parish experience. Since most of our parishes, especially in cities, are large, such small groups are more and more necessary for productive life.⁵

c) *The Movements and Structures*

The dozen or so movements with which I am familiar all use the strategy of the group and consider it essential. It has always been a feature of successful movements in the Church. A good example is the Jocists (*Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, JOC), the Young Christian Workers, who were founded by Joseph Cardijn, born 1882, a Belgian curate. Beginning with a group of young Christian men and women, most of whom were illiterate, it became a strong international movement. Two of its salient features were the organisation of small groups for the apostolate of 'like to like' and its method of formation (see-judge-act). Its success was advanced by the support of Pius IX and succeeding Popes.

⁴ I know this from personal experience.

⁵ Peter Coughlan, *The Hour of the Laity*, Newton and Philadelphia: E.J. Dwyer, 1989, p. 180.

I believe the conditions of unbelief that called forth the Jocist movement exist more devastatingly to-day and that their methods of small groups and of formation are as effective as ever.

Finally, it should be added that there are some excellent people who, for whatever reason, are not able to take part in group activities. They should not feel excluded from the Marist laity. On the contrary by living the Marist spirit and by their prayers they can be very much part of it.

d) *Application to our Present Circumstances: Levels of Commitment to the Marist Laity*

The variety that does not combine to form unity is confusion; the unity that is not dependent on variety is tyranny.

—Blaise Pascal

Colin always envisaged a variety of modes of belonging to the Third Order: 'And in the Third Order itself there will be several branches which will be more or less broad and more or less strict' (LM Anth, 2.A.1 § 6). Sometimes he divided members up on the basis of age (LM Anth, 3.H.1, § 11). 'Besides those various types of people which properly make up the body of the sodality, there is another type which might be called the participants' (LM Anth, 3.H.1, § 13). Under them he included sinners because they shared in the prayers and merits of the Society. A useful reminder that this spiritual sharing was seen as one of the essential features of the Third Order. The whole variety of forms can be conveniently embraced by a broad term like the Marist Laity. 'Third Order' has inbuilt restrictions which do not match the burgeoning of different types of membership as we know them to-day. It is important to notice for all Colin's flexibility that he speaks of branches 'more or less strict' and refers to 'the body of the sodality'.

It is worth adding that Colin was keen to have a branch for children: 'I feel particularly affectionate toward the children with whom the Third Order will have its beginnings (LM Anth, 2.B.1). To my knowledge the only time Colin's idea has been taken up systematically was by Father Brendan Hayes in Ireland in the fifties with his *Janua Coeli* branch for children. The advantage of such a branch is clear from the experience of the Jesuit Christian Life Communities. Beginning with young boys in secondary schools the Jesuits lead them through a spiritual formation, rudimentary in the beginning, and climaxing in a form of the Spiritual Exercises in their early twenties. The living of the spirituality continues throughout the life of members. One of the many advantages of the scheme is that it produces lay leaders capable of guiding those at the lower stages, stages they know well from personal experience.

In my travels I have met a few sisters keen to do something for children in terms of the Marist Laity. The sisters' work with children gives them special skills and opportunities not shared by most of us. I believe if the Sisters take up this idea, so dear to Father Colin, it will prove very fruitful.

It is possible to translate Colin's ideas to our own situation to-day and distinguish three categories of Marist laity:

1. Those who wish to share fully in Marist spirituality and mission. For such people Colin wrote special Constitutions and looked to them to be the main instrument for spreading the spirit of Mary throughout the world. They form a branch of the Society. An example would be the young Filipino girl whom one of our missionaries met on his first visit into the mountains of Mindanao. When he introduced himself as a Marist priest, she replied: 'I'm a Marist too. Quite a few of us around here are Marists.' She and her friends had been introduced to the Third Order when an earlier Marist missionary had visited. They knew what they were and the way she and her friends wanted to live.

2. Those who admire certain things about the Society and would like to be associated with it. But they do not wish to make the same commitment as the first group. In fact they do not belong to a group as such nor do they wish to be called Marist.

3. Those who have come under the influence of Marists in some way and have absorbed certain Marist values perhaps without even knowing it. An example would be the Muslim students, teachers, and priests associated with our College in Lahore, Pakistan. It was illegal there to convert people to Christianity. But undoubtedly from what our men have said, many Muslims picked up something of the Marist spirit.

All three categories can find a place in the Marist Laity. The spirit of the Society should be available to everybody whatever their level of commitment. But it seems to me the main thrust of the Society to-day in regard to laity should be to build up the first group about whom Colin spoke so often. The Society cannot make its distinctive contribution to the Church unless there are people who live the Marist spirit intensely and radiate it into the world. Without such people there would very quickly be no one in the second and third categories. There would simply be no one from whom to pick up the spirit of the Society.

We are called to work with a wide variety of people in and across many cultures. Often even within one culture there are many sub-cultures. That means we need great openness and flexibility towards the strategies that are deemed appropriate. But we must be on our guard that a distrust of structures as such is not in effect an opting out, a lack of seriousness about the great opportunity that is presented to us. The Marist Laity deserve as fully professional an approach as we can devise. Over the years English gentlemen riders having an outing have contested big racing events like the famous steeplechase at Aintree. But the races are nearly always won by professional jockeys.

e) Two Objections to the Strategy of the Group

Many people throughout the Marist world have asked for help to get the Marist Laity going. It has been possible to offer models that can be adapted to a wide variety of situations. The advantage of these models is that they have been tried in several countries

and found to work. At this time of experimentation I shall be very interested in any other effective models that are emerging. A few people in the Society, neither anarchists, nor among those who see value in nothing unless they themselves have devised it, have expressed reservations, not about the structures presented, but about structures as such. What has been said already about groups might help them. But there remain two objections. One the bogey of elitism, the other the charge of directing people from the main altar to the side chapel. But the presence of reefs does not make shipwreck inevitable. It depends on how the captain and his officers handle the ship.

Elitism, like all pejorative terms, requires some scrutiny. In Christian history from the time of the Apostles there have always been men and women who chose to devote themselves to the highest religious ideals. They could properly be called an elite and they have done great things for the Church. But the exclusivity, the sense of being holier than thou, which is sometimes associated with the word, has no place in a Marist lay group.

The side chapel objection will dissolve in a careful reflection on the statements from *Christifideles Laici* already quoted. It can also be addressed in a different way. The overriding aim of work for Marist Laity is not to set up groups. That would be a confusion of means with ends. Not everyone wants to be called Marist nor to be enrolled in a clearly defined group and we are called to cater for everybody. But experience throughout the world shows that a surprising number do wish to enrol in a group and I believe the time has come to give them more attention than they have sometimes received.

The overriding aim of the Marist Laity is 1) to gather together into unity the scattered Children of God, 2) to form a Marian people that at the end of time will be gathered around Mary as the Apostles gathered around her at Pentecost. And the point of the gathering is to present them to her Son. Marists want a Marist Laity from which no one is excluded. And we have to take into account the different levels of commitment. But those who wish to make a full commitment have a crucially important role. If all lives are to be touched by the spirit of Mary, and that has to be our aim, we need, as I have said, intense centres of lived Marist experience which radiate the Marist spirit into the world. Centres of Marist religious are not enough. To reach the whole world lay groups have to be established on a much bigger scale. Good structures not only provide for effective action, they give the Marist Laity a better chance of outliving the enthusiasm of those who set them up.

The centres, the groups, the associations are not to be seen as made up of people outside the situation of parish, or college, or mission station. They are not a race apart, Martians blown in from outer space. They belong in their situation as much as anyone else. They are people called to work inside that situation, alongside their pastors, helping to transform their parish, their college, their station into a true communion for mission. They are change agents, a leaven. The groups are open to everyone and aim at affecting everyone. They try to be pastorally sensitive and they remember the wise advice of Colin: unless the pastors of a parish see the Marist Laity as a valuable support for their own efforts it will achieve little in that place. Side chapels have their uses but when the faithful meet as a communion they gather around the main altar. Members of Marist lay groups play an active and responsible part in the life of the ecclesial community. But above all

they fulfil their Marist vocation through 'a missionary zeal and activity towards the many people who still do not believe and who no longer live the faith received at Baptism' (CFL 34).

FOURTH PROPOSITION: The Need for Good Formation

We need good programmes for a solid and sustained formation of the laity. In its bulletin *The Formation of the Laity* (1987), the Pontifical Council for the Laity said: 'The Second Vatican Council envisages lay people who fulfil their vocation by fully experiencing the communion of the Church in their lives and actively participating in her mission. Simple faith, without any formation, is insufficient for this task. A thorough, fully human, profoundly Christian and resolutely apostolic formation is necessary' (p. 7). The Council also wrote: 'The most overriding aim of all Christian formation is to form evangelisers' (p. 46).

I would draw attention to the expressions 'thorough' and 'resolutely apostolic formation.' Given the complexity and seriousness of evangelisation to-day, I believe the challenge has to be taken up in a much more professional manner than we have usually managed. The group is clearly an excellent forum for formation. In fact for Cardinal Hume, 'small groups and basic communities are vital for personal and spiritual formation . . . [they] should be rooted in prayer and shaped by prayer and the supreme prayer of any group, any community must be the Mass' (speech in Bruges, June, 1985). There is the initial training when a group is getting under way. There is the ongoing training in preparation for each meeting offered by such aids as leaflets (Scripture from the Liturgical Cycle; Marist vision, Doctrine, etc.). Then there are retreat days, or retreat weekends where the retreatants meditate and share in the Marist vision. But a deeper training is needed for which perhaps the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, or the Christian Life Communities of the Society of Jesus might serve as models. I also think useful lessons can be learnt from two French models with which I am familiar. The first is the School of Evangelisation at Paray-le-Monial in the center of France. This has been running for six or seven years. It takes eighteen people for a programme of one year. When I was there in May 1989, some seven months before the new programme began, there were already ninety applicants. And they were prepared to pay their own way. A hands-on training in evangelisation is offered. At Biot, near Nice, a Catholic lay group has been able to attract year after year young people just out of French lycées, who want a similar formation. They also support themselves.

In the popular mind Catholics are too often seen as people with a fixation on sexual morality. Our pro-life and anti-contraception views are well known. The burning issues for most people to-day, however, are the effects of social and economic policies on their lives. With the Church's magnificently developed social teaching, Marists have a great opportunity. They have in their hands a key to the deepest concerns of the modern world. Most Catholics are woefully uninformed in the matter. A marvellous bridge to the minds and hearts of their unbelieving contemporaries remains largely unused. The Marist Laity has a great opportunity to produce evangelisers who are well informed on such matters as

each person's right to an equitable share in the world's wealth, the right to employment, the right that proper safeguards be observed at times of restructuring, etc. If members of at least some Marist Lay groups were well informed on the Church's social teaching, they would be seen as people with creative ideas in such areas as profit-sharing. A sharper social conscience and an ability to speak out of knowledge on the part of those in the Marist Laity would change the way Catholics are perceived and make them more credible evangelisers.

I believe we should accept as a guiding principle the Pontifical Council for the Laity's statement: 'The most overriding aim of all Christian formation is to form evangelisers'. More than anything else I believe we need to discover how this can be done at the level of the group, of the retreat, and in the most professional way of all, schools of evangelisation whether they run for three months, six months, or a whole year.

FIFTH PROPOSITION: Effective Animators in the Provinces are Crucial

It is crucial for provincials to appoint effective animators. I would expect them to be really inward with the Colinian view of laity, to be familiar with the excellent texts recently edited by Charles Girard, and to be fully aware of the currents running in the Church and the Society. They must know the Marist vision and they must be able to read the signs of the times. To be a good organiser, a lively personality or a good pastoral man is not enough. 'Confusion of action because of confusion of thought!' There is a Marist vision of laity which the Society is committed to implement. And it is that vision which gives the unity despite the diverse ways in which the vision may be realised.

I also believe that in some provinces the time has come to approach the Marist sisters or the S.M.S.M.'s for co-animators. An all male presentation has never been less appropriate than in our times.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE REDISCOVERED COLINIAN VISION?

The Christian call to holiness and to bring the Gospel to every creature remains to-day the same as that Christ addressed to the first disciples. Historically this or that aspect of the call has received greater or less emphasis. At times, important elements have been blurred or even forgotten. The same thing has happened in the history of the Marist approach to laity. The traditional Third Order, as it has developed, has placed the emphasis on the interior life. And the Third Order has taken very much the same form everywhere in the Marist world. It would not be true to say that the traditional Third Order never took account of the new approaches. But it is true that they were not its emphasis.

As a result of the impressively thorough research carried out in Rome by Fr Charles Girard, S.M., of the Washington Province, we are better informed today on the Colinian view of Marist Laity than we have ever been. And the present General Administration has done more than any previous Administration to see that the Colinian ideas are known and

implemented. The fruits of Girard's research, building as it has done on the work of his predecessors, notably of Brendan Hayes and Jean Coste, are now available in scholarly texts in French and in English.

A close study of all this material makes three things especially quite plain:

1. *Vision*. There is a Marist vision of laity, of the way we are called to share the Marist contribution to the Church and the world. A way not in the sense of any special technique, but in the sense of a particular spirit, that of the Society of Mary. Our response is fidelity to that vision, a fidelity that is necessary if Marists are to be united in a communion for mission.

2. *Evangelisation*. The emphasis to be placed in all our work with Marist laity is on evangelisation. If this is to be effective we need a deep spirituality, but our spirituality is that of an apostolic congregation, one that is firmly directed towards mission.

3. *Pluralism*. The more we read Colin the more we become aware of the great flexibility he allowed in the implementation of his vision. He presents only guidelines, general principles that invite us to give full play to our creativity. Nothing in the documents justifies the view that there is only one way of being Marist Laity. On the contrary Marists are presented as inclusive people, able to accommodate a multiplicity of initiatives, of ways of doing things to meet the different needs of different cultures. The Colinian approach could be expressed by the phrase: 'Let many flowers bloom.'

Note: the International Animator for the Marist Laity

In 1988 the General Administration appointed an International Animator for Marist Laity, an appointment approved by CS 1988 (No. 18). The idea of such an appointment goes back a long way in Marist history. Mayet recorded of Colin as early as 1839: 'He often said, too, that he was waiting for someone to promote the Third Order throughout the whole world and to make Mary known and loved everywhere' (LM Anth, 1.F.2). At the General Chapter of 1854, there was 'an expressed desire to have a General Director of the Third Order' (LM Anth, 5.I.1). The term General Director was used down to 1969 when Father Pierre Charil held the office. His successor, Father Earl Niehaus was called Promoter General. After a lapse of eleven years the next appointment was of an International Animator for Marist Laity. From what has been said of the new understanding of partnership with laity, of their dominant role in evangelisation to-day, of the complexity of the issues across many cultures and sub-cultures, and of the pioneering work yet to be done if a viable Marist Laity is to become a reality, it is obvious that Director is no longer an appropriate term. No-one to-day can pretend to the knowledge Director implies. And Marists do not wish to direct laity, they want to work alongside them. What Father General said of all Marists in *Regina Societatis Mariae* applies also to the International Animator: 'The need for the laity to minister to each other in to-day's Church radically transforms our role as priests and religious. It calls upon us to exercise new and important forms of leadership' (p. 5).

International indicates a significant change in the role of the Animator. He travels through all the provinces and is on the look-out for opportunities in countries where the Marists at present do not exist. The Book of Acts takes on for him special significance. Certainly he makes more journeys than St Paul. He could well write his own book of Acts putting in his own characters. And across the range he would have no difficulty in finding prototypes in the original. Mercifully, stoning and being let down in baskets from city walls is obsolete.

In 1838 Colin expressed the qualities he wanted the International Animator to have: 'Ah! gentlemen,' he said to us one day, 'please ask God to send someone to spread the Third Order all over the world. I want this with all my heart; I ask God for this. I need someone with an apostolic enthusiasm, someone filled with the spirit of God, someone who can preach like an apostle' (LM Anth, 2.A.1). The first thing to say about the role of Animator is that he is not a free-lance. Constitution No. 193 states that 'the superior general is responsible for promoting the development of the Third Order of Mary and other forms of Marist lay life.'⁶ And the *Decreta Capitularia* (No. 112) assign responsibility to the Superior General and his Council 'to initiate reflection and research with the laity themselves on how to integrate lay Marists into the global mission of the Church in the way envisaged by Father Colin.' The International Animator is the representative of the Superior General and his Council. He is appointed by them and is accountable to them. To them he submits for guidance the findings of his own research, and of his extensive travels. That is the reason he spends a certain amount of time each year in Rome.

In so far as in him lies he should try to master the Colinian vision of laity, contemporary Mariology, and the ecclesiology of communion. He must always ask himself the question 'What does it mean to be a Marist to-day?' and be constantly exploring how the Marist vocation can be lived out in many lives. He cannot do that unless he is a good reader of the signs of the times.

Ideally the International Animator will be a catalyst, a Marist memory, a source of ideals and inspiration, a force for unity between what is happening in the various parts of the world. One is speaking of ideals beyond most of us - the important thing for the Animator is to be always lessening the distance between what he is and the ideals. That like the whole Marist Laity is in the hands of Jesus and Mary. CS 1988 No. 18 called on 'all provinces to give the Animator full support.' A central part of that support must surely be to pray regularly that he will fulfil on behalf of all of us his important role in the way Jesus and Mary want.

⁶ The expression shows the need for a broader term like Marist Laity, which subsumes them all. Third Order to-day is too particular.