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a book of texts

for the study
of marist spirituality

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compiled by edwin l. keel, s.m.

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The call of Colin is to an adventure.

John Jago, S.M., *Mary Mother of our Hope*

Introduction

This book is an offshoot of the courses in Marist Spirituality that I have been offering since 1986 at the Center for Marist Studies in Rome and the Marist House in Framingham, and in 1992 at St. Anne's Presbytery in London. In 1991 I decided that the *mélange* of photocopied English translations of texts that I was using then needed to be expanded. I also wished to make the texts available in their original languages. These will be found in the French edition.

Because the book is structured around the three symbolic moments of *Fourvière*, *Cerdon* and *Bugey*, which the Constitutions of 1988 offer as the framework both for Marist formation and for the whole of Marist life, the book should be of use not only for Marist renewal programs, but for those involved in Marist initial formation and for any Marist who seeks a deeper grasp of Marist spirituality through a thematic study of texts significant in our spiritual tradition. The texts are collected and presented here with little or no commentary. It is for the reader to meet Colin and the other founders and early Marists in their own words, and to let those words open up new paths of insight, of feeling and of action.

The book is an attempt to let the symbolic framework of Marist life unfold on its own terms. Under *Fourvière* the development begins with the inspiration at Le Puy, and takes up the Colinian articulation of that inspiration in terms of Mary as the support of the newborn Church and at the end of time. Related to these themes that have to do with the *raison d'être* of the Society, i.e. its mission, is that of *the whole world Marist*. Then there is a consideration of the more immediate impact of the Le Puy inspiration on the group of Marist aspirants at the major seminary in Lyons, leading to the pledge at Fourvière. Also included as witness to the reception of the mission of the Society are texts on the theme of *the work of Mary* and some particularly significant texts from the Marist heritage.

Cerdon was the scene of Colin's earliest experiences in ministry and the place where he received some of the fundamental inspirations that went into the half century of work on the Constitutions of the Society of Mary that he began there. Following anecdotal material on those experiences there are texts on themes related to Colin's reflections at Cerdon: *tasting God; the name we bear*; the rejections of greed, of dominative uses of power, and of the desire for attention that make for his *marian vision of the Church*; the section ends with some important texts on *the spirit of the Society*.

Bugey, the name of the mountainous region where the first Marist missionary activity took place, is first considered in anecdotal material about the missions themselves and the life of the missionaries. After that, themes related to missionary work are presented: *mercy; communion*, which is an ideal for life within a Society that wishes to promote this same value in the Church; *the missions to sinners and unbelievers*; *joy*, an important characteristic of Marist apostolic life; and *Nazareth*, symbol of integration for Marist apostolic religious life.

There is no attempt to provide here a sacred canon of Marist texts. There is, for instance, no direct treatment of prayer or the vows or such ministerial activities as

preaching, teaching, hearing confessions, etc., themes on which Colin undoubtedly has much to say to us, but on which the basic research has yet to be done. Furthermore, any selection of themes and texts is necessarily biased, regardless of the attempt to allow the tradition to speak for itself and to unfold according to its own dynamic. What is brought together here is simply a rather large amount of significant textual material relating to the symbolic framework of Marist life. It will need to be supplemented as research continues to explore our spiritual tradition, and as others, with other concerns and biases, attempt their own syntheses of the material.

With some of the dossiers an attempt has been made to be exhaustive: *Mary, the Support of the Church; The End of Time; At the End as at the Beginning; The Work of Mary; Tasting God; Nazareth*. The other dossiers attempt to gather what is most significant on a given theme. Given the vast amount of extant Colinian material, no claim to be exhaustive can be guaranteed.

Use has been made of English translations where found, but these have been altered freely, usually to provide a more literal rendering where this has been considered important. Short Latin phrases within the original French texts have been translated into English, and italicized.

Texts are arranged chronologically within dossiers or subsections of dossiers, unless otherwise noted. Rather than encumber the user with searching out cross-references, texts have been repeated in whole or in part where their content is apropos to more than one theme. For each text, the context has been indicated in the heading: this is context, not description; therefore, while most texts are extracts of larger material, this is seldom explicitly stated.

Much of this book rests upon work done by Fr. Jean Coste: themes studied by him and, in a few cases, dossiers assembled by him. In the execution of the present work, I am especially indebted to two Marists: Frs. Gaston Lessard and Charles Girard. The former in helping me find, interpret and translate texts, and supplying me with material that had already been stored on computer disks; the latter with translation of large sections of the material, but especially with his professional knowledge of computer lore to assist my very amateur and timid approaches to this contemporary technology. Neither of them hesitated to give valuable time taken from their own pressing labors. Both met my many impatiences with remarkable patience. Sr. Mary Magdalen Smyth and Fr. Yvan Mathieu did a great service by their meticulous proofreading of the text.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude the confidence and support of Fr. John Jago's administration during my tenure as director of the Center for Marist Studies. In particular, Fr. Jago saw this book as a valuable contribution and gave much encouragement for its execution; Fr. Albert DiIanni has engaged me in many provocative discussions on things Marist; and Fr. François Grossin, official liaison between the General Administration and the Center for Marist Studies, not only offered much personal support, but often assisted in the details of organization for the Center and of the courses it sponsored.

Edwin L. Keel, S.M.
January 1, 1993
Solemnity of Mary,
Mother of God

Abbreviations

- AFM = Archives of the Marist Brothers (Rome, piazza M. Champagnat 2).
- APM = Archives of the Marist Fathers (Rome, via A. Poerio 63).
- ASM = Archives of the Marist Sisters (Rome, via Aurelia 292, and Belley, “Bon Repos”).
- ASMSM = Archives of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (Rome, via Cassia 1243).
- AT = *Antiquiores Textus Constitutionum Societatis Mariae*, 7 fascicles, Rome, 1955; fascicle, document and paragraph.
- CMJ = Historical Committees of the Marist Fathers and Sisters, *Correspondence of Mother Saint Joseph*, Rome-Anzio, 1966; document and paragraph.
- DS = *Doctrine spirituelle, vertus et esprit du vénérable J.-Cl.-M. Colin, fondateur de la Société de Marie*, Lyon-Paris, Vitte, 1917; page.
- 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 (a translation of *Quelques souvenirs*), document and paragraph.
- FS = *A Founder Speaks*, Spiritual talks of Jean-Claude Colin, selected and introduced by Jean Coste, translated by Anthony Ward, Rome, 1975 (a translation of *Entretiens spirituels*); document and paragraph.
- IMJ = Historical Committees of the Marist Fathers and Sisters, *Index Mother Saint Joseph*, Rome, 1977; document and paragraph.
- Jeantin = [Jean Jeantin] *Le très révérend Père Colin*, 6 volumes, Lyon, Vitte, 1895-1898; volume and page.
- LChamp = Paul Sester and Raymond Borne, ed., *Letters of Marcellin J. B. Champagnat*, 2 volumes, Rome, 1991; document and line.
- LColin = Gaston Lessard, ed., *Projet d'édition des lettres écrites par Jean-Claude Colin sous son généralat*, Hull (in preparation); letter number and paragraph.
- LM = Charles Girard, ed., *Lay Marists: Anthology of Historical Sources*, Rome, 1993 (a translation of *Maristes laïcs: Recueil de sources historiques*); document and paragraph.
- Mayet = *Mémoires*; volume and page.
 ND = Detached notes.
 NP = Personal notes.
 S = Supplement.
 B = copy B.
 C = copy C.
 m = in the margin.

- NHC = Jeantin, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la rédaction de nos constitutions*. (Manuscript: APM 131.6); page.
- OM = J. Coste et G. Lessard, ed., *Origines maristes*, 4 volumes, Rome, 1960-1967, document and paragraph.
- RMJ = Historical Committees of the Marist Fathers and Sisters, *Recollections: Mother Saint Joseph*, Rome, 1974, document and paragraph.

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FOURVIÈRE

At the shrine of Fourvière twelve companions promised before the image of the Blessed Virgin to express their love for God and their neighbor by founding the Congregation of Marists.

Like the twelve young men at Fourvière, Marists respond to a special call.

— Constitutions 1988

Le Puy

It was Jean-Claude Courveille who first “brought to light” the idea of a Society of Mary. Fr. Gabriel-Claude Mayet transmits to us Courveille’s account of the inspiration that was the basis of his action, as he remembered it about 40 years after the event.

1

c. December 1853. Mayet/Courveille. Narrative on the origins of the Society of Mary, based on letters of Dom Courveille of 1852. [Mayet C4, 2649-2661 = OM 718, 1-21]:

[1] Words of M. Courveille, found in the month of February 1853.

[2] At the age of 10, he caught smallpox, which damaged his eyes. He could hardly see. His mother consulted doctors who told her it was incurable. After he grew up, he had a great desire to study to become a priest, but his bad eyesight made it impossible for him to study.

[3] In 1809, he was very strongly inspired to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Le Puy, which was only five leagues away, to take oil from the lamp which burns before the statue of Our Lady and to rub his eyes with it. This he did. He no sooner had than he perceived distinctly even the smallest objects in the cathedral, and he has enjoyed excellent eyesight ever since.

[4] In 1810, in the same Church, before the same miraculous statue, he promised the Blessed Virgin to devote himself entirely to her, to do whatever she wanted for the glory of Our Lord, for her own honor, for the salvation of souls. His whole thought was to become a priest and, by exercising priestly zeal to accomplish this threefold vow.

[5] In 1812, while renewing his same promise to Mary, at the foot of the same altar, “he heard, not with his bodily ears, but with those of the heart, interiorly but very distinctly:.... Here...is what I want. I have always imitated my Divine Son in everything. I followed Him to Calvary itself, standing at the foot of the Cross when He gave His life for man’s salvation. Now in heaven, sharing His glory, I follow His path still, in the work He does for His church on earth. Of this Church, I am the Protectress. I am like a powerful army, defending and saving souls. When a fearful heresy threatened to convulse the whole of Europe, my Son raised up His servant, Ignatius, to form a Society under His name, calling itself the Society of Jesus, with members called Jesuits, to fight against the hell unleashed against His Church. In the same way in this last age of impiety and unbelief, it is my wish and the wish of my Son, that there be another Society, one consecrated to me, one which will bear my name, which will call itself the Society of Mary and whose members will call themselves Marists, to battle against hell...” (words of M. Courveille).

[6] Question. Was this interior word of Mary a true revelation like some that occur and which are very certain, even though nothing is heard with bodily ears, or was it just a strong inner inspiration?

[7] “Reply. I heard no words. It all happened inwardly, in my heart...” (M. Courveille).

[8] “I was astonished, dismayed... I spoke of it to no one, not even my directors. I figured it was a great illusion... The phenomenon repeated itself very often and I always disregarded it...”

[9] In 1813, he entered the major seminary of Le Puy, and, he says, since it is right next to the cathedral, I went almost daily to the foot of the altar to renew my promises.

[10] Inwardly, it seemed to him that the Blessed Virgin reproached him with all his hesitations and, as he felt great pain because of this, that she replied, inwardly also: Speak to your directors about it, disclose the matter to them, and you will see what they say.

[11] He spoke to two of his directors, one of whom was M. [Issartel], professor of moral doctrine, to whom he usually went to confession.

[12] Long enough after M. Courveille had opened his soul to them, they told him that the phenomenon seemed good, that it might well come from God, that it was not to be disregarded...

[13] He was on the verge of seeking out confreres who would begin the work with him, when, he says, "toward the last months of 1814, I was forced to leave the seminary of Le Puy for that of Lyons, by order of His Eminence Cardinal Fesch, archbishop of Lyons. It is to be noted that according to the new division of French dioceses, my native parish, which had belonged to Le Puy, was made part of Lyons." (Words of M. Courveille.)

[14] At what period were you at the major seminary of Lyons? -- In 1815 and 1816 (Mr Courveille).

[15] He took as his director M. Cholleton, who was professor of moral, and he told him what he had told the directors of the major seminary of Le Puy (words of M. Courveille.)

[16] "I spoke to several seminarians, specifically to the younger M. Colin, who spoke to his brother, who was a pastor. The latter came to talk with me about the project at the major seminary, and he asked to be part of it." (Words of M. Courveille.)

[17] (Nota. M. Courveille errs here. We shall give a *decisive proof* of it a few lines below).

[18] "We were about 12. We were about 12. We spoke as often as we could about the Society of Mary. This lasted until 1816, when we all went to Our Lady of Fourvière to dedicate ourselves to the most holy Virgin. I offered the holy sacrifice alone. All the others received communion from me, those who were priests as well as those who were not. The older M. Colin had come to Lyons for the ceremony."

[19] (Nota. M. Courveille errs in this case as in the preceding one. It is certain that on July 22 or 23, 1816, the older M. Colin did not even know about the pious project. He has just said so to Fr. Maître pierre. Written in December, 1853. — The older M. Colin was so little informed that when M. Claude Colin, his brother, our Father Founder, came with him to be his curate, he warned the pastor that there would be letters which he would not be able to show him. — My brother, you are perfectly free, his elder brother replied. I do not have to worry about the letters you may receive or send. — These errors of M. Courveille show that his narrative cannot be relied on entirely.)

[20] "After this ceremony, M. Courveille says, each one went to the post which had been assigned to him by ecclesiastical authority..... etc., etc."

[21] Known details follow.

Mary, the Support of the Church

Jean-Claude Colin often spoke of Mary as the support of the Church at the beginning and at the end. This seems to be his way of referring to the inspiration Courveille experienced at Le Puy. Presented here is the dossier of texts gathered by J. Coste, S.M., in *Acta Societatis Mariae*, vol. 5, pp. 264-271. In several cases a wider context is offered than was needed for Coste's purposes. These are marked with a (+) in the apparatus. At the end of the dossier is added a text of Fr. Peter Julian Eymard that also speaks of Mary as the support of the Church.

The support of the newborn Church and at the end of time

2

About the end of December 1837. Colin. Mayet does not indicate a context. [Coste text A = Mayet 1, 11 = OM 422 = FS 4, 1]:

“The blessed Virgin has said: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be so as well at the end of time. My bosom will be open to all who would enter there.’”

3

c. 1839. Colin. Conversation with Mayet. [Coste text B (+) = Mayet 1, 458f = OM 482, 1-3]:

“In our little chapel in Belley, I want to place St. Francis Regis and St. Francis Xavier, the first to be the patron of the Marist missionaries in the countryside, the other to be the patron of the Marist missionaries in the towns. We are the younger brothers of the Jesuits. There ought to be a strong union between the Jesuits and the Marists. This has already begun; I am very happy about it. The Jesuits look upon us with the greatest pleasure. This, I think, is due in part to the revelations which have been made concerning the Marists; the Jesuits do much spiritual direction, and I know that they have received confidences about a number of these revelations.” He then repeated to me what he had told us about this revelation where Mary said: “I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be so in the last times.”

4

September 25, 1844. Mayet and Colin. Conversation, noted in margin next to the 1837 text. [Coste text C = Mayet 1, 11m = OM 582 = FS 4, 2]:

On September 25, 1844, I said to him: “It seems that the great number of wonders worked by the blessed Virgin forebode the end of the world, for devotion to Mary is usually the last resort of Divine Providence when It wants to lead back a sinner.” “Yes,” he replied, “*I was the support of*

the newborn Church; I shall be so as well at the end of time... These words have presided over the first beginnings of the Society.”

5

October 26, 1844. Colin. Insertd by Mayet after the 1837 text. [Coste text D = Mayet 1, 11 = OM 422, c = FS 4, 3]:

On October 26, 1844, he repeated those words and said: “It is now about thirty years ago that that was said to a priest.”

6

1844. Mayet. Personal remark on Colin’s manner of speaking about the origins of the S.M. [Coste text E = Mayet 5, 391-392 = OM 591, 2]:

Whenever he (Fr. Colin) talked intimately about our origins, he would do so in broken and mysterious words which I have often recorded, for instance: “The first picture of the Society was given under the emblem of a three-branch tree...;” or again: “The blessed Virgin has said: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be so at the end of time, etc., etc.’”

7

December 1845. Colin. Conference to scholastics preparing for profession; items recorded by one of them. [Coste text F (+) = Mayet 5, 6942-695]:

[1] “Just as Jesus spent three years forming his apostles, so Mary takes three years to form us during the time of our theological studies.

[2] “Jesus left his mother with his newborn Church to form it in its cradle. She reappears at the end of time to call in those who have not yet entered its bosom and to lead back to it those who have left.

[3] “We should not be astonished if Mary takes a lot of time to make her Society numerous. Jesus Christ, who was God, had only five hundred disciples when he left the earth, after having traversed Judea, after having given sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and done so many miracles.”

8

September 23, 1846. Colin. Table talk at Puylata two days after the general retreat. [Coste text G (+) = Mayet 4, 520f = OM 631 = FS 117, 2f]:

[2] “As for miracles, ah, nowadays miracles are useless; the world does not believe in them. Prince von Hohenlohe worked a great many a few years ago. What notice did anyone take of them? Nowadays people do not talk about them, because unbelief and indifference are everywhere. As the end of time draws nearer, the faith is disappearing. Would you not say that we are in the days of which our Lord said, ‘Do you think the Son of Man will then find much faith on the earth?’ Messieurs, I am no prophet, but it seems to me that the end of time is not far off. The

human race appears to me today to be like an old stump, one whose roots have been eaten into by a worm. That worm is the unbelief, the indifference which has made the world pagan for a second time.

[3] “As for us, Messieurs, we must reproduce the faith of the first believers. That is precisely what was foretold from our very beginning (he uttered these words in a somewhat mysterious and uneasy manner). It was foretold that the Society of Mary was not to model itself on any of the bodies which have preceded it; no, nothing of all that; but that our model, our only model, must be and was the early Church. And the blessed Virgin, who then did such great things, will do still greater ones at the end of time, because the human race will be even more ill.”

9

December 2, 1847. Colin. Remark inserted in margin after text of September 25, 1844. [Coste text H = Mayet 1, 11m = OM 582, a = FS 4, 4]:

He repeated these same words on December 2, 1847, at Puylata, and he said: “About 36 years ago.”

10

January 19, 1848. Colin. Statement in the refectory. [Coste text I (+) = Mayet 4, 466f = OM 674 = FS 152, 1]:

“Messieurs, it is only later that you will understand a certain phrase in the rule: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. You could say that the whole spirit of the Society is there. Let us then keep within the limits of our vocation. Although we should not exclude any work of zeal in our ministry, we must always remain *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us not be concerned with our honor. If we do good, we shall have merit in the sight of God. Let us seek only the honor of God and for ourselves... *unknown*. Let us not look to what the societies that have preceded us have done, for, when a society comes to birth, it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (and here he assumed a solemn tone of voice) I am pleased to be able to repeat it here once again: *I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time*. These are the words which served us as a foundation and an encouragement at the very beginning of the society. They were always present to us. We have worked along that line, if I may so speak. We must admit that we are living in very bad times; humanity is really sick. At the end of time it will need a great deal of help, and the blessed Virgin will be the one to give it. Messieurs, let us rejoice to belong to her Society and bear her name. The other communities coming to birth envy us our fine name.”

11

September 14, 1848. Colin. In the refectory during the general retreat. [Coste text J (+) = Mayet 3, 271f = FS 160, 6f]:

[6] “No, I have no fear of exaggerating when I say that our age is worse than that of the apostles. Nowadays, just as much virtue, just as much holiness, just as much dedication and heroism is needed for the saving of souls. I repeat: never will any other means than those which Jesus Christ taught to his disciples succeed in changing the world. Meditate, therefore on these means during this precious retreat; do not emerge from this cenacle except as men dead to

themselves, living the life of Jesus Christ, the life of the apostles, a life of renunciation, and of the cross. It was for this that you became missionaries. Ah, those of you who are to leave for Oceania, do not complain, then, if you lack something. A man who is upset at the first deprivation, just as soon as he realizes he has not got something he had expected, why did such a man want to become a missionary? He should have had no other intention but to suffer. Why, then, does suffering surprise him? Such a man is neither religious, nor priest, nor true Christian. Strip yourselves of this love of self, and put on the spirit of sacrifice. Put yourselves in the state you would wish to be in if you had to die. It is the best way to make yourselves ready and able to make a good start on all the works you will have to undertake.

[7] “Times are bad, but Mary who consoled, protected and saved the newborn Church will save it in the last times. I am not saying that the end of time has already arrived; it will soon arrive for us in any case. When you have meditated on these words: ‘Do you think that when the Son of Man comes, he will still find a little faith in the world?’ You cannot but be afraid, for there is so little of it to be seen these days. Mary will make use of us, her sons. Let us make ourselves worthy of that trust. Through us she will struggle with the devil and the world, and through us she will overcome it, if by the purity of our lives, and our innocence of heart, we put ourselves in the way of deserving her favor and graces.”

12

January 31, 1849. Colin. Part of an outburst in the refectory occasioned by a young Marist speaking against teaching. [Coste text K = Mayet 7, 651f = OM 690 = FS 172, 23]:

“Messieurs, 15 centuries after the preaching of the Gospel, there appears all of a sudden a body of apostolic men. The name of Jesus has been reserved for them, and accordingly they imitate Him. Like Him, they prepare themselves in retirement; like Jesus, who only initiated His ministry at the age of thirty, they are ordained priests only at the age of thirty. It is the society which has done most good in the Church. And I dare say that their superiority comes from the fact that they oriented themselves towards teaching; that is the source of all the good which the Jesuits have done. In its turn also, 19 centuries after the founding of the Church, there comes a small society. The name of Mary has been held in store for it, as it were, and given to it by God. The blessed Virgin has said to it: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be the support of the Church at the end of time.’ We must also follow the path of the Jesuits. My greatest ambition, one of the first ideas in establishing the Society, its first aim, is teaching. I have no hope in its future, I consider it as lost, if it does no teaching.”

13

May-October 1853. Maître-pierre. Notes on the beginnings of the Society. [Coste text L (+) = Maître-pierre notebook p. 36 = Mayet ND 1, 98 = OM 752, 43]:

[Colin’s] modesty was born of supernatural sentiments that penetrated to the depths of his soul; it was strengthened in the many trials that he did not cease to meet in these enterprises. He was and is always so persuaded that his work is the work of God and of the blessed Virgin that the idea and the name of founder really makes him indignant. Ah! yes, founders, ah! wonderful founders! God leads us, sometimes we obey, often we resist, we put up obstacles, and that’s all. Thus, persuaded that it is the work of God, his modest simplicity has never stopped him from believing that the Society of Mary was called to do great things in the Church of God. “Mary,” he

said, “was the protectress of the Church in the cradle; she is to be so in a very special way at the end of time.”

14

July 1863. Colin. Declaration of Colin to Fr. David. [Coste text M = Mayet 1, 3m = OM 802, 1]:

“Mary was the support of the Church in the first times; she will be so as well at the end.” I asked him, Fr. David writes, whether he had any particular motive for believing that it would be so. He told me: “Mary herself has revealed it, and it was in reference to the future of our little Society.”

15

June 20, 1866. Colin. Remarks at the end of the Chapter session, before taking leave of the capitulants. [Coste text N = Minutes of the chapter = OM 807, 4]:

“The more I think of it, the more I congratulate myself that I did not undertake to finish the Rule any sooner. The matter was not yet ripe. I needed the time to clarify my thought. And that is what makes me hope that our little Society will live and that it will live until the end. I have always thought that the Society is called to fight until the end of time. Mary was the support of the newborn Church; she will be so as well at the end, and she will be so through you. We must therefore fill ourselves with her spirit, and this spirit we must draw from her heart. The Apostles never did anything without consulting her, because she had the new law written in her heart and had been taught by the Holy Spirit even before the Incarnation.”

16

September 1868. Colin. Thoughts on the S.M. and its destiny, recorded by Fr. Gautheron. [Coste text O (+) = Mayet B3, 2197-2199 = OM 811]:

[1] “I have always had the idea that the Society was destined to work for the salvation of souls in the last times.

[2] “The blessed Virgin sustained the Church at its cradle; she is to assist it in a special way at the end of the world.

[3] “The Society of Mary as it is conceived in the rules ought to live in the Church; God wants it; were it destroyed at some time, it would revive. To be called to the Society of Mary is a *special* mark of predestination. I do not believe that any religious who dies in the Society will not be saved; I speak of the salvation of those who die Marist, but I fear very much for those who leave the Society.

[4] “I would like each Marist to set aside in a special way one day every year to thank God for the grace He has accorded him in calling him into the Society of Mary.

[5] “The Society will only accomplish its mission by taking the apostles as models; to return to the conduct of the apostles is the only way to do good today; one will not change the present age by seeking to captivate it by the wealth of the churches.

[6] “We ought to live united to Mary, to consult her, to love her in a particular way. We ought to become as nothing, to let God act, God alone. We spoil everything in wishing to act ourselves and in believing that we are something.

[7] “You will see what the Society will be like when it is as old as the Society of Jesus is today. A particular devotion towards the blessed Virgin is a *necessary* mark of vocation.”

17

September 1868. Colin. Words recorded by Fr. Jeantin. [Coste text P = Note of Fr. Jeantin during his retreat in 1868 = OM 812, 4]:

“The blessed Virgin said, referring to the Society: ‘I was the support of the Church in the first times. I shall be so again at the end of time.’”

18

February 6, 1872. Colin. Words of encouragement at the Chapter. [Coste text Q (+) = Minutes of the chapter = OM 846, 32]:

“See how the protection of the blessed Virgin on our behalf has been evident in these unhappy times. How many other societies have been put to the test and ours spared. This is a proof that we have nothing to fear for the future. It is true that the future does not belong to us. But, as the blessed Virgin supported the newborn Church, so she will be the support of the Church at the end of time. Let us cling to her spirit, and she will be with us always; let us hold her by the hand. *To think as Mary, judge as Mary, act as Mary.* By imitating the blessed Virgin, we imitate her Son, of whom she is the most perfect image. We are her beloved children. We want to be present to the Son through the Mother. The more wretched we are, the more we ought to have confidence.”

The support of the Church at all times

19

February 8, 1846. Eymard. Extract from a letter to M. Frédéric Salvioni, professor at the major seminary of Milan. [Archivio Istituto Missioni Estere, t. 28, *Corrispondenza, Religiosi*, pp. 747-750, § 15f; for another extract from this letter, see OM 908]:

[15] The blessed Virgin has been at all times the support and the protectress of the Church, but one might be tempted to say that perhaps never have her maternal feelings been more in favor of men than in the 19th century. What works of zeal and of salvation have appeared everywhere under her auspices! Not to mention many others, is it not a new proof of her tenderness, I dare say, toward the men of our unfortunate times that there appears in our days a society of Marist priests, that is, a society under the name of Mary, and of a third order of the same society that counts already more than 800 lay brothers who take vows approved by the bishops, have their own government, live in community and devote themselves, like the Brothers of Christian Schools, to the education of children, especially in rural parishes.

[16] And there is also a Marist third order for people who live in the world, and this third order itself has been enriched with indulgences by the Sovereign Pontiff.

The Newborn Church

Gathered here are all the texts in which Colin or other early Marists speak of the early Church, with the exception of those already contained in the above dossier on “Mary, the Support of the Church,” and in the dossier “At the End as in the Beginning,” to be found further below. The texts here are presented in two sections: “Our only model: the early Church” and “Our models: Mary and the apostles.”

Our only model: the early Church

20

June 4, 1826. Courveille. Letter to the community at the Hermitage, praising the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle, where he is living. [OM 152, 8]:

I have not been less struck by that perfect union that reigns among them, by that charity, worthy of the first times of the Church, which makes all Christians *one heart and one soul*, by that holy kindness they have for one another, by that continual attention to help one another on all occasions; they never meet without greeting each other with a profound inclination of the head, always in a great silence; it is easy to see after all that they have for each other a great respect and a love worthy of the true disciples of Jesus Christ. Which makes me say with the psalmist: *Behold how good and how pleasant where brothers dwell as one.*

21

April 8-14, 1838. Colin. Conversation at table. [Mayet 1, 29 = OM 425, 1-6]:

[1] “Twelve of us signed a brief formulary.

[2] “The Society does not take any other as a model. The beginnings of the Society are like those of the Church. Those who began it were without learning, without talents.

[3] “But it is necessary that the others seek to become educated.

[4] “An educated man will produce more fruit than one who is holier, provided however that he has the spirit of God, because God wants us to use the ordinary means.” (Another time he said: “Of two men who are equally holy, the more learned one will produce more fruit.”)

[5] “Oh! you young men, you must seek an education; use every opportunity; but don’t rely on that, otherwise!...

[6] “Only four persevered.”

22

September 18, 1838. Colin. To the Marists of Belley. [Mayet 1, 9 = OM 430 = FS 10]:

On his return from that retreat, he said, “Nevertheless, it is to Belley, this little corner, that the most important letters arrive from Rome and elsewhere, and it is from this little spot among the mountains that they go out. Who would have believed it? Who would have believed that the Society would come to birth in this corner?” Someone remarked, “No order has ever begun like this in a small town.” “Yes there was one,” he said, “but only one: the order of the Church. Nazareth was its cradle. Jesus, Mary and Joseph: there you have the Church coming into being. It began there.”

23

1838-1839. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 19 = OM 453, 1 = FS 20, 1]:

“The early days of the Society are like those of the Church. At one moment circumcision is permitted, later it is forbidden; at one moment eating of meat sacrificed to idols is permitted, later it is not. Little by little things become established, and discipline is worked out and becomes uniform only with the passage of time. It is the same in the Society.”

24

May 18, 1840. Champagnat. Spiritual Testament. [OM 417, 3]:

I also beg you, my very dear Brothers, with all the affection of my soul and by all the affection you have for me, keep ever alive among you the charity of Christ. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Let there be among you but one same heart and one same spirit. Let them say of the Little Brothers of Mary as they said of the first Christians: “See how they love one another!” ... That is the most ardent desire of my heart at this last moment of my life. Yes, my dearest Brothers, hear these last words of your Father; they are those of our most beloved Savior: Love one another.

25

Spring 1841. Colin. Remarks to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 286 = FS 42, 3]:

“If the world speaks against us, we should not be surprised. The apostles were not liked by the rich, or those with power: they turned to poor people like themselves. Then God raised up a Saint Paul, full of magnanimity and afraid of nothing, who turned his attention to everyone. They were right in saying that he was not lettered, that he did not speak well: it did not matter... He did not concern himself with what people said about him. As for ourselves, we do not take any congregation for our model, we have no other model than the new-born Church. The Society began like the Church; we must be like the apostles and those who joined them and were already numerous: *One heart and one soul*. They loved each other like brothers. And then, ah! no one knows what devotion the apostles had for the blessed Virgin! What tenderness for this divine mother! How they had recourse to her! Let us imitate them: let us see God in everything.”

26

March 1842. *Mayet, summary of his findings to date on the origins of the Society of Mary. [Mayet 1, 735 = OM 535, 24 and addition k]:*

[24] “The clergy was opposed to the Marists, and so they ought,” Fr. Colin used to say with humility. There were those who said: “It is the second volume of the Jesuits bound in ass’s hide.” Others accused them of being Jansenists. People mocked them and no one reproached the mockers.

[Addition k:] In effect, the first members were quite poor. “The Society began like the Church,” Fr. Colin used to say.

27

April 1842. *Colin, at the end of the chapter meeting. [Mayet 1, 723m]:*

[1] “It is a great consolation for us to see how the good God blessed us during this meeting. We were: *one heart*. Behold a great sign that the good God was with us.

[2] “This will be a model for the future; we can say as did the apostles: ‘*It has seemed thus to the Holy Spirit and to us.*’ We were here as in a cenacle, Mary was at our head.”

28

September 27, 1846. *Colin, conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 250 = FS 119, 9]:*

Then returning to the first article, *as if unknown and hidden*, he said: “Really in actual fact, Messieurs, it is the way to take over everything. It was the approach that the Church followed, and you know that we must have no other model than the early Church. The Society too is beginning with simple men, poor men, but see what the Church achieved later.” Father Eymard then said, “A man of great judgment told me, ‘Your Society is really beginning in the way the Church did.’”

29

1846. *Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 4, 45m = OM 652]:*

He repeated in 1846 that he had composed his whole rule without having read that of the Jesuits. He said that the Church which was founded by Jesus Christ is the model for all religious societies and communities.

30

September 11-18, 1849. *Colin, speaking to a meeting of preachers. [Mayet 4, 467m = FS 178]:*

During the general retreat of 1849, at a special meeting for preachers, Father Colin said, “My consolation is that the cradle of our Society had no model in any society. It was copied only on the model of the Church. The Society did not have the time for training and learning in the beginning.

The apostles, as soon as they received the Holy Spirit, were obliged to go their separate ways without having time to prepare themselves further. It has been the same for us. But now we must lay down solid foundations.”

31

1850-1851. *Eymard. Rule for the Third Order of Mary of the Interior Life. [APM, Third Order collection = LM 173, 20]:*

A holy and generous charity ought to reign among all the members of the Third Order. Like the first Christians, they will have but one heart and one soul in the service of Jesus and Mary.

32

1850-1851. *Eymard. Spiritual rules for the perfect tertiary in the world. [APM 921.147, Cahier C, #7, pp. 67-69 = LM 174, 74]:*

A tender and holy charity ought to reign among the members of the Third Order, in the love of Mary, their common mother, having, as did the first faithful, but one heart and one soul in the service of Jesus and Mary, encouraging one another and supporting one another in virtue and in the spirit of their vocation, loving to offer service, being pleased to visit sick or afflicted members, and never forgetting in their prayers those whom God has called to himself, and who may be suffering in purgatory. A tertiary must be recognized everywhere by his christian and fraternal charity; each must work at his own sanctification in the spirit of the rules, and must make them the frequent subject of his meditation; he must practice it with simplicity and with confidence in Jesus who only demands good will of him; he must measure his progress less in the fruits of virtue than in his generous constancy until the end.

33

July 18, 1867. *Colin to Mayet. [Mayet ND 2, 14 = Coste, Nazareth T32]:*

- [1] “If the Society has not its original spirit, I would prefer that it did not exist.
- [2] “Without its own spirit, it no longer has any *raison d’être*.
- [3] “The Society’s first intention was to imitate the life of Nazareth, the life of the apostles.
- [4] “The spirit of poverty should animate us.” [*There follows a development on poverty*].

34

Spring, 1869. *Jeantin. Extract from “Account of the origin and foundation of the Society of Mary,” drawn up by Fr. Jeantin on the basis of reminiscences of Fr. Colin. [OM 819, 40 = Coste, Nazareth T35. This text is the basis for texts OM 820, 74; OM 821, 61; OM 827, 6]:*

From his arrival in Cerdon until 1821, he was busy drawing up the Constitutions of the Society of Mary. For this work, he had no other help than what the Gospel has left us on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth and on the first missions of the apostles.

35

1869. *Colin. Words of Colin reported by Jeantin as an addition to the above "Account..."* [OM 819, 41a]:

He said in 1869: "I received the *order* to consider only the apostles and no other religious society."

Our models: Mary and the apostles

36

c. 1823. *Colin. Fragment of primitive Rule. (See parallel texts in later editions of the Constitutions.)* [AT I, g, 5]:

In council, the superior shall always express his opinion last, that is after all the others, and the opinion which has more votes shall prevail. The superior himself, however, shall propose subjects for the various offices or works of the Society; he may even say what he has it in him to say so that the councilors might go along with these nominations. If the votes are equally divided between both sides, it is lawful for the superior to choose the side he wants, but he is invited and even beseeched, for the sake of humility, to choose the side which is contrary to his own. For, Mary always followed the will of others rather than her own.

37

1833. *Colin. From the "Summarium Regularum S.M."* (See parallel texts in later editions of the Constitutions.) [AT I, s, 23]:

In their hearts and in their works, let them obey the superior as though it were Christ commanding; their obedience is to be so prompt and complete that they may be surpassed in this virtue by no one and may truly be called sons of Mary, who always subordinated herself to those with whom she was living.

38

1838 or 1839. *Colin speaking to the Marists of Belley urging the practice of modesty.* [Mayet 1, 232f]:

"Oh! Messieurs, look, then, at the blessed Virgin, she who was the Queen of Heaven: she was employed in lowly tasks, in the kitchen: there is our model. I like very much what a very holy nun said, that the blessed Virgin had so much respect for the apostles, the successors of her son, that when they entered her house to consult her on the affairs of the Church, she knelt before them and spoke to them only out of obedience, when they ordered her to do so. Ah! Messieurs, let us respect, let us respect the other bodies."

39

1838-1839. Colin. *Discussion on politics, in the refectory at the Capucinière. [Mayet 1, 467-469 = FS 31, 3]:*

Father Colin said, “What do you see in the Gospel to support your answer?” “What do you see which condemns it?” replied the theologian. Stirred by this, Father Colin quoted the passage of Saint Paul: *‘Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities’*. “Scripture,” he said, “does not distinguish between *de facto* power and power by right. It is to the *de facto* power that we must submit. Otherwise public peace would be disturbed. How could anyone in conscience give approval to the undertaking of a man who, in order to restore a prince, even a legitimate one, to the throne intends first of all to create turmoil, stir up rebellions and cause great bloodshed? Let people offer prayers and devotions for the prince’s return, for a new flourishing of good principles, all well and good! *That* is the way, the acceptable way, the best way and even the most effective way. Yes, if a quarter of France, or rather — since there would after all be fewer than that — if only a small part of the population entered into fervent prayer, they would obtain all they wanted. But for the rest, we must submit. What did the first Christians do? During the first three centuries, were there many legitimate princes? Is not theirs still the conduct of the Church, and what do they say in Rome?”

40

1838-1839. Colin. *Spiritual identification with Mary in her actions. [Mayet 1, 509 = FS 33]:*

He often said that people do not pay sufficient honor to the blessed Virgin in the services she rendered her son during his childhood. He recommended this practice to the Marists and to the boys in the college. He had obtained many consoling results from it.

41

February 22, 1839. Colin. *Extract from a letter to Champagnat. [LColin 390222.Cha, 1f]:*

[1] Four or five times now I have invited you, or have had someone ask you, to send a brother to Fr. Chanut in the diocese of Bordeaux.

[2] My demand, so often repeated, shows you the importance that I attach to this act of obedience that I expect of you. Remember that Mary our mother, whom we ought to take as a model, after the ascension of her divine son, busied herself entirely with the needs of the apostles. There we have one of the first aims of the congregation of the brothers and of the Marist sisters, in regard to the priests of the Society, so that these latter, entirely free of temporal cares, might give themselves more freely to the salvation of souls. A brother at the service of the priests of the Society does twenty times more good, in my opinion, than if he were employed in a municipality where, thank God, the means for instructing young people are not lacking today.

42

January 2, 1842. Colin. To some confreres. [Mayet 1, 534]:

On January 2, 1842, he brought the Rev. Frs. Jallon, Favre, Dussurgey, Lagniet and Eymard together in the so-called house of the Capuchins and spoke to them in words burning with zeal, saying to them that zeal is the essential quality of priests, of Marists; that Marists must be like the apostles; that the apostles were only 12 in number and that they had converted the world, “and we, Messieurs, we already number 40!”

43

September 27, 1842. Colin. Conference during the general retreat. [Mayet 4, 138 = FS 60, 1]:

“Let each one work for the good of the Society by his conduct and his prayers. Look at the blessed Virgin! See how she hastened the coming of God by her burning desire. When she learned that she had been chosen to be his mother, what an effort she made to cooperate! When Jesus Christ was born, he was the object of all her thoughts and affections. After his death, her sole thought was the extension and development of the mystery of the Incarnation. That is the sign by which, precisely, you can recognize a Marist. But this desire must be prudent. He does not turn away vocations, but encourages them. If he sees about him someone who could profitably work in the Society of Mary, he will perhaps say a word or two, but without departing from the spirit of the Society. This concern, Messieurs, this interest and attachment, should extend to the other branches of the Society: we all form one body. Without any collusion, everything appeared at the same time and without effort. Let us then love the family that God has given us.”

44

December 29, 1844. Colin. Remarks in council. [Mayet 3, 411 = FS 85, 2]:

“Indeed, Messieurs, the blessed Virgin (as the Church tells us) is the channel of graces, the Queen of Apostles, and what great good she did for souls. Yet in this world she was hidden and as it were unknown.”

45

November 25, 1846. Colin. As he was considering leaving shortly for Rome. [Mayet 6, 457 = FS 133, 2]:

“I recommend very strongly that the superior call his council together whenever he has some business to deal with. I recommend that very strongly, and I wish it to take firm root in the Society. When this point was under examination” (he did not say “when I was examining” out of modesty), “when this point was under examination during the drafting of the Rule, I know it was stressed for three reasons: 1. It would be a comfort to the superior. 2. Such conduct would show a diffidence towards oneself. 3. To imitate the blessed Virgin after the ascension of her divine Son. Although she held the first place when the apostles met to consider the interests of the Church, she often said nothing, she who read all in the heart of her divine Son. And when finally the apostles

turned to her, Mary, always the last to speak, would say to them, ‘My lords and masters, it seems to me that one could do such and such. This would be in accord with the spirit of my Son.’ And by council, Messieurs, I do not mean a council of one or two, no. One or two are soon won over to one’s own opinion. I would want a gathering of several — not all, for that should not be done and would not be a council, but several. For myself, I am not afraid to hear out those who are not of the same opinion as myself. It is often one of the least who gives the best advice.”

46

June 29, 1847. Colin. To the novices at La Favorite. [Mayet 5, 702 = FS 140, 4]:

“People are bored, too, at doing nothing, for we are made for action and we feel a need for it. But look at our mother after the Ascension of the divine master. She is the support, the director of the newborn Church. She is called *Queen of the Apostles*. Yet she seemed to be doing nothing, although she did more by her prayers than the Apostles by their preaching. Look also at our Lord Jesus Christ in Nazareth for thirty years. These are your models.”

47

June 29, 1847. Colin. To the novices at La Favorite. [Mayet 5, 704 = FS 140, 13]:

“Come, let us take courage! Look upon yourselves as the apostles, gathered together with the blessed Virgin in the cenacle. Make good use of this time. Warm yourselves at the fire of God’s love. Have courage!”

48

August 22, 1847. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 187 = FS 141, 18]:

“And our heavenly mother, she was the light, the counsel, the consolation of the newborn Church. And did she create a stir? The Gospel says little about her, very little, yet it was she who drew down graces from heaven upon the earth. Let us imitate these holy models in their zeal and their humility. Let us go everywhere, let us do all the good that we can, all the while remaining unassuming and hidden. But the Society, Messieurs, must also apply itself to learning, otherwise it would never attain its goal.”

49

December 4, 1847. Colin. Exhortation at table. [Mayet 4, 453 = FS 146, 5]:

After lunch, someone said to him, “But, Father, when the Society comes to have a real influence on its age, surely it will be impossible for its name not to spread abroad, for it not to be spoken of?” “And the blessed Virgin,” came the reply, “was she spoken about when on this earth? Yet who had the greatest influence upon her age, upon the birth of the early Church? It was she who directed the apostles, she who converted the whole world.” “Yes,” the Marist rejoined, “but now the whole world rings with her name.” At this Father Colin was surprised and a little taken

aback. He started to laugh, saying, “That is true, but now she is in paradise, ...she is in paradise.” This was no reply, and he knew it, and the look in the eyes of his questioner said as much too. He added, therefore, “Well, they will speak of our modesty, of our humility. We shall do a lot of good, but let us not look for glory in the eyes of men.”

50

January 24, 1848. Colin. After announcing in the refectory the death of brother Blaise. [Mayet 7, 625f = FS 154, 4]:

“Messieurs, the times we live in are in some ways more difficult than those of the apostles: look at Europe, what confusion! How greatly we need the help of the blessed Virgin. Let us imitate her, following the spirit of our vocation, let us hide ourselves so as to do good. The Rule says we should devote ourselves to all kinds of ministry, to all works of zeal. Nevertheless, we should behave so as to be *unknown and hidden*. I was saying to a gentleman yesterday that nowadays there is only one way to do good: to stay hidden. The good people are timid, the wicked have the upper hand. If someone tries to do good in a certain way, they are at once arrested and find themselves under the feet of the wicked, powerless. Did not the blessed Virgin remain hidden all her life? She did good for the Church without showing herself. Our Lord himself buried himself for thirty years in oblivion. He showed himself for three years only, when the time came. But even then he knew how to withdraw and slip away in the mountains to be alone. He hid himself when they wanted to make him king, and even when they wished to stone him — his hour had not yet come — he made himself invisible and passed through the midst of his enemies. For the Society too, the time, the hour for making an appearance may come, when God wishes! ...One day too ... [he did not finish]. But as for us, let us be *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us do nothing to attract the honor of men to ourselves. What can man give us? Are we to work for the honor that human glory will bring?”

51

January 30, 1848. Colin. Remarks to the council on the question of approbation by the current government. [Mayet 7, 354 = FS 155, 4]:

“Messieurs, the Church conducts its business and deals with this government. Let us do as the Church does. The times we live in are in a way worse than those of the apostles. Nevertheless, the apostles said nothing, went about their business, and worked for the Church. I shall touch up the Rule and I intend to forbid anything connected with politics. It is up to the bishops to take the initiative. We are auxiliary troops, which does not prevent us doing great good, but on the contrary is the means to it.”

52

January 30, 1848. Colin. Remarks to the council at Puylata. [Mayet 6, 720fm]:

He said to us: “Messieurs, one does not find, one cannot cite one single word on Jesus Christ or on the apostles which indicates that they ever got involved in politics. We don’t meditate enough on his life. When Herod wanted to kill Jesus, Mary fled. There is our model. The apostles preached doctrine, they took care of people. I am not at all inclined to approve the conduct of the

Jesuits who have published the *Monopole universitaire*; it was up to the Bishops to take the initiative.”

53

February 29, 1848. Colin. To the Puylata community. [Mayet 7, 601f = FS 157]:

On Tuesday February 29th, Father Colin told us, “We should remember our maxim: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Today this is the only way to do good, we should bear that in mind. Let us imitate our holy Mother who did so much good during her life and the apostolic life of her divine Son, but without anyone talking about it. Let us not be like those who are intent on *showing off* and on having people talk about them. I do not want the Society ever to have any mansions, and I repeat that so that everyone will understand it well;” (at that moment he turned to me and gave a significant look, which seemed to say: “If you sometimes note down what I say, note that”) “it is in the Rule. Then let us take our Lord Jesus Christ as our model. He was always surrounded by the poor: *the poor have the Gospel preached to them*. I should make one thing clear: I would like our men to preach well, certainly, but I would have you know that I do not want (at least at the moment) illustrious preachers like Father Lacordaire. If they come, I am not saying that I would refuse them, but that is not necessary for doing good. Look at the Society: it does a great deal for the glory of God, it gives many missions which are very successful. People ask for us on all sides, we arouse no animosity. Why all this? Because the Society is unassuming.”

54

September 14, 1849. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 719f = FS 175, 2]:

“In the pulpit let us never touch on these matters, let us make no allusions to current affairs. I know that certain theories are entering politics today which are entirely opposed to Catholicism. Alas, that is the destruction of the faith! One might say that we are nearing those unhappy days of which the apostle speaks. People want to substitute a new justice for that of God. Nevertheless, we must not tackle these errors head-on. If you attack them too directly you prevent people who approve of and share in these opinions, from heeding our arguments, from being converted. No, Messieurs, do not launch yourselves into these debates. Convert them, and they will no longer be socialists. The word of God has a marvelous effect. Preach it therefore, as I said yesterday, in all its purity and simplicity, just as the apostles did. In their time, as in ours, there were opinions and political theories, but they did not get involved in them. They proclaimed the truth, and they added, ‘Whoever believes this will be saved, whoever does not believe will be condemned.’ Let us do as they did. At meals, if a *Deo gratias* is given, let there be no talk of politics.”

55

September 17, 1849. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 730 = FS 176, 3]:

“Listen, my dear confreres. Is there not an analogy between the mission of the apostles and our mission? On the one hand it is the Son who sends, on the other, the Mother, and is not the spirit of the Mother that of the Son? It was she who called you, it is she who sends you out, she who promises and gives you her spirit. In these hazy times, when all the ideas of faith are tainted

and destroyed by being mixed with the most monstrous errors, in these days we are on top of a volcano, a volcano of all the passions. People have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear. The most absurd errors pass for truths. Well, it is in the midst of this century that the blessed Virgin shows herself. She is saying to us: ‘My children, it is not you who chose yourselves, it was I who chose you. I know your weakness, your troubles. The enemies you have to overcome are no less numerous, no less to be feared than those the apostles encountered. They are perhaps even more fearsome, for this age has misused many graces, and nothing withers the heart so much as misuse of graces. But I am with you.’”

56

September 18, 1850. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 8, 398 = FS 182, 60]:

Then Reverend Father spoke of how fortunate we were to bear the name of Mary, and of the zeal with which we should imitate her. “She did not create a great stir during her earthly life,” he said, “but how much good she did and still does for the Church! There is our model. Let us clothe ourselves in her spirit.”

57

September 3-10, 1854. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet ND 1, 56f = FS 190, 2f]:

[2] “In all things let us look to Mary, let us imitate her life at Nazareth. She did more than the apostles for the newborn Church; she is Queen of the apostles, but she did it without any stir, she did it above all by her prayers.

[3] “I urge you, preserve that spirit among you, without troubling about other congregations which do not concern us. When anyone speaks to me about this, I say: ‘But we must have a different spirit, the spirit of Mary, humble and hidden.’ I said that she did more than the apostles by her prayers. Let us therefore unite silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary desires that we, her children, should be missionaries of action, and missionaries of prayer.”

58

1869-1870. Colin. Jeantin: Memorandum on the origins of the S.M.... [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 146]:

“The Superior General ought to be like the blessed Virgin in the Cenacle; she asked St. Peter for permissions, she who had more lights, the law of grace written in her heart, who kept in the background. So too, the Superior General ought to seek advice in all things and to depend on his council.”

59

May 19, 1880. Fr. Stanislas Trotin. "Corrected" redaction of Cozon's postulatam. [APM 322.568 = LM 435, 7]:

Our Venerable Fr. Founder hopes that through the Third Order, as he presents it to us, the Society of Mary will receive from its august Queen a fertile blessing to shower the entire world with graces of which this Virgin is the channel. That is why he wanted to give it the broadest means of propagation by confiding it to the parish priests [i.e. diocesan clergy] who will thus find it to their advantage. In the Third Order thus understood we will better practice that humility and that abnegation which our constitutions recommend to us in the article *On the Spirit of the Society*. We will be hidden under the parish priests' activity; we will do good without show, like Mary who, after the ascension of her son into heaven, was the soul of the Church and yet the servant of the apostles. We will also consider ourselves as servants and not as masters, as helpers and not as those in charge.

The End of Time

In this dossier are collected all the texts in which Colin or other early Marists speak of the end of time, with the exception of the texts already contained in the above dossier on “Mary, the support of the Church,” and in the dossier “At the End as in the Beginning,” further below. The texts here are divided between those that speak of the Society or its works lasting until the end of time, those that describe conditions or the work of the Society precisely in the last days, and two texts that give an evaluation of Colin’s thought on the end of time.

Until the end of time

60

c. 1837. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 5f = OM 444 = FS 3, 2]:

“The Society, I do believe, will be one of the last congregations before the Last Judgment. It must pass through most difficult times.”

61

c. 1838. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 11f = OM 450, 1 and addition b]:

[1] One day he said: “I don’t think that the Society ought to last a long time: it has too many branches and is too composite a body. If it were to last a rather long time, I think that this body would be simpler.”

[Addition *b*:] Let us compare these words with those where he says that the Blessed Virgin will open her bosom at the end of time, in reference to the Society.

62

1839. Mayet. Narrative based on information provided by Colin. [Mayet 1, 33 = OM 461]:

Having gone to Rome, he only asked for some letters of encouragement. When he learned that Fr. Trinchant was making some moves towards approbation, he promised God that, if it were obtained, the day when it would be obtained would be a solemn feast in the whole Society, until the end of time, so long as the Society should last.

63

February 8, 1845. Mayet/Colin. *Thoughts of Colin on the goodness of God. No context indicated.*
[Mayet 3, 418]:

[1] He loved to remark on the goodness of God toward France.

[2] “He has not treated England so; for he has inflicted the most terrible of all punishments on her. He let her fall into schism,” he said. “But he has had pity on France. He has chastised her in a striking way, and has weighed her down with evil times; but she has recovered. Eh! what! One sees France adoring a creature, and in a way revolting to all the senses! And, nevertheless, some years later, Catholic worship is restored; who would not admire the providence of God?”

[3] Then, speaking of the way France abuses so many graces, and of some impious endeavors and outrages of irreligion, he said, “I can’t help believing that God is going to rise up, and that it is soon upon us.”

64

September 19, 1845. Mayet/Germain. *Extract from a talk at the closing of the annual retreat.*
[Mayet 6, 120-123 = OM 608, 3]:

“[...] Messieurs, you know the history of our modest origins; you all know how this name that had come from heaven was received by the representative of Jesus Christ on earth, and the remarkable favors that the holy pontiff wished to attach to it; but each knows especially how this holy name drew him to the Society. Oh! how many already owe their salvation to this holy name ‘Marists’! How many still, every day, embrace this sacred name as the miraculous plank that ought to lead them to a safe port! How many, until the end of time, will not cease to bless God for having called them to bear this name which is so great, so holy, and at the same time so humble and so sweet? Thus is fulfilled, and will be fulfilled every day, those inspired words of the successor of the apostles when, squeezing in those hands of his that bless the world the hands of our venerable founder, he said to him with emotion: ‘*Crescite et multiplicamini*. Increase and multiply and fill the earth.’”

65

May - October 1853. Maîtrepierre. *Notes on the beginnings of the Society.* [Mayet ND 1, 70 = OM 752, 4]:

But the name of Mary was still to be taken; eighteen centuries hailed it and did not assume it; it was reserved to the nineteenth century, it was reserved to us *until the end of the ages shall have come*.

66

c. 1854. Mlle Sophie David. *Report on the origins of the Third Order of Mary in Lyons.* [Mayet 10, 259 = OM 720, 11]:

What surprised them was the fact that they were only four in number. They kept looking at the door, still believing that it was going to open and that others, or at least some important person,

would come in. This first meeting took place at La Favorite in the room of Mrs. Pichot. This lady had put out several chairs and armchairs; she had taken on the costs of moving all that furniture. When Fr. Pompallier was among us, she could not help but ask him, "Father, is that all?" Yes, indeed that was all. But I am quite sure that this gathering, however small and without interior or exterior means, was all that was needed to begin the first link of a chain of mercy and graces, fastened to the divine Heart of Mary to bind a countless multitude of souls to her holy love and that of her adorable Son, until the consummation of the ages.

67

July 18, 1867. Colin. To Mayet. [Mayet B1, 189]:

"I do not think the world will last much longer. I believe the Society has been brought into being at the end of time."

68

1869-1870. Jeantin/Colin. Memorandum on the origins of the S.M. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 115f]:

[115] He often recounted that the most holy Virgin had said, speaking of the Marist Fathers: "I was the support of the Church in the beginnings; I will be so again at the end of time."

[116] Father announces equally as promises from on high: 1° that all those who will die in the Society will be saved; 2° that the Society will produce great saints and that it will have many martyrs, whensoever it may happen; the promise, then, is absolute. But the Society will only shine forth toward the last times; 3° that there will not be public scandals against morals. A failing is one thing and a scandal is something else.

69

1869-1870. Colin. Jeantin, Memorandum on the origins of the S.M. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 147]:

"I do not believe the world can last much longer. This is an idea I have always had. I don't need to be a prophet to say it. Look! Our Lord said there may be no faith in the last times... I have made provision for the case where the chapter may be unable to meet."

70

February 6, 1872. Colin. Note written to the Chapter. [Minutes of the Chapter = OM 846, 7]:

"I regard this chapter as fundamental for the little Society of Mary, seeing that it has worked together for the achievement of the constitutions which ought to rule it, conserve it and increase it until the end of time."

At the end of time

71

January 6, 1842. Colin. *Letter to the Marists of Verdélais*. [Mayet ND 1, 402f = LColin 420106.Ver, 2]:

It is above all before the crib of Bethlehem, our very dear confreres, that during these days of retreat and repose, I have understood more than ever the happiness and the duties of our vocation. How sweet it is for us to think that we are the chosen children of the Mother of God, that we fight under her banner, that we have the honor of bearing her heavenly name, that we are the first stones of the building that her divine Son desires to raise in these last times to her glory, for our salvation and the salvation of many others.

72

April 1843. Mayet. *Article on Colin: His thoughts on «The Mystical City» by Mary of Agreda*. [Mayet 4, 620 = OM 554, 2]:

“In Italy,” he told us, “there are prelates who always use it for their meditation; it is a treasure for these last times.”

73

December 16, 1843. Colin. *Conversation about freedom of education*. [Mayet 1, 873f = OM 572 = FS 71]:

He said, “Our Lord, speaking of the end of the world said, ‘Do you think there will be much faith left on the earth then?’ ... Well, where is the faith in France? ... Nowadays it is pure pantheism. What they say is really, ‘Everything is God, except God himself.’” Then, giving vent to his ardor, he said, “Ah, I wish people would stir themselves, that they would wake up... Really, nowadays, good Lord, the clergy are dead, they are asleep. I am sure that if I were young I would fight... When I was a young priest, an important question was being debated... I set about writing something, and the article was published, but I did not give my name. Yes, I would like each town to have a newspaper to stand up for what is good. Give a sermon: nobody comes. You convert more people with a good newspaper. If we had the time, if we had more men, I would not shrink from... One day we may well battle with a pen, but now we have so many strings to our bow! A while ago I was urging and pushing them strongly at Lyons for the establishing of a good gazette... We must pray. Without prayer we will achieve nothing.”

74

1843. Colin. *Commenting on a mission in a difficult place where a man who mocked the missionaries was struck dead; many conversions followed. [Mayet 5, 195m]:*

Fr. Colin, speaking of what happened at the mission at St. Aignan, in the diocese of Autun, in 1843, said: “It seems that in these last times the good God wishes to use extraordinary means to draw souls to himself; but we must take care not be presumptuous, not to expect everything from him. We must work, we must pray and not get discouraged.”

75

September 23, 1844. Colin. *Exhortation in chapel. [Mayet 5, 668 = FS 78, 2]:*

At the end of the retreat, Very Reverend Father Superior spoke a few words in the chapel, among which I noted the following: “We are now in the age of Mary. Yes indeed, for this is an age of indifference, unbelief, an age of crime, of false learning, of this earth. Nowadays the inhabitants of the earth are bowed towards the earth, stuck to it, breathing for it alone. That is why in these last times she has appeared with her hands stretched out towards the earth, with her hands full of rays, which stand for graces, being poured forth upon men. What gratitude should we show to Mary for having chosen us to spread her Society, this Society comprising the three branches, because Mary intends to cover the whole earth with her mantle. Let us make this lovable mother known, let us bring people to love her. Let us win hearts for her. In winning them for Mary, we win them for Jesus. We win for them most powerful protection. How could children forget their mother? Let us always hold on to her hand. What I would ask you, Messieurs, is to add this to your resolutions: to do nothing, say nothing, undertake nothing, even a brief talk, without casting a glance towards Mary.”

76

February 8, 1845. Colin. *Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 681 = FS 92, 15]:*

“Messieurs, our Lord said: ‘Do you think there will be a lot of faith when the Son of Man appears?’ Faith is disappearing, yes, disappearing. It will soon be a misfortune to have been born for it is indeed a misfortune to be born when the way to heaven is so overgrown that you cannot follow it. When we see all this, we understand why our Lord said: ‘Alas for the mothers, happy the sterile!’ and also: ‘If these days had not been cut short, the elect themselves would have been led astray.’ Is not that what we see nowadays? The light of faith is becoming dim for many.”

77

September 26, 1846. Colin. *No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 219 = FS 118]:*

[1] “Messieurs, I am no prophet, but I cannot help thinking that we are at the end of time, that era of which Jesus Christ said: ‘When the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find the Faith on earth?’ Yes, I would venture to say that if the Word were to become incarnate for a second time nowadays, if I may be permitted to speak in such a way, he would be crucified again by the French, and this in less than three years. We live in evil days, the great Revolution has left deep traces

upon this France of ours. We are given over to indifference, to pantheism, and to materialism. Where is the faith today? Even those whom you would from their words judge to be good, belie themselves by their actions.

[2] “And why then has the Society of Mary waited until the 19th century to make its appearance? It would have been so natural to take the name Society of Mary! They told me that again on this last journey to Rome.” (Father Colin’s third to Rome. He had just returned.) “Messieurs, if not a single hair falls from our head unless it is the will of our Father in heaven, we must not think that this happened by chance. Yes, it means that the blessed Virgin is going to redouble her efforts at the end of time to gather together the elect” (his very words).

78

August 25, 1847. Colin. Retreat conference. [Mayet 7, 219 = FS 142, 31]:

“Come, dear confreres, let us love one another, let us support one another, let us embrace each other in a holy charity. God at the end of time has looked upon this depraved world, and he has gathered a little flock, and handed it over to the blessed Virgin to fight for her, and to the little flock he has given the blessed Virgin as patron. At the end of time there are more dangers, and we have greater need of Mary.”

79

September 13, 1853. Colin. Opinion expressed at the general retreat. [Mayet 8, 707f]:

Ouija boards. “I am pleased to see that people have complied with our prohibition. I would not try those games so long as I did not know the cause of their marvelous effects. They do not appear to come from a good source. One would be tempting God. The bishops of America have forbidden it. Let us await the decisions of the Church. I was very pleased to learn that it has been forbidden at the major seminary. At the end of time there will be many illusions and frauds. Our Lord has warned us about that.”

80

May 15, 1854. Colin. To the last session of the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter, APM 321.35 = Jeantin 6, 94]:

“You have a beautiful life, a magnificent horizon before you. You see at your head the Queen of Heaven who, at the end of time, wishes to honor you with her blessed name. Which of you would not see a special protection of Mary in the development of our Society? We would be the only ones not to notice; people proclaim it everywhere around us. But what do people praise in you the most? Your good spirit. It is to the point that people say, ‘Oh! if only they were to keep that spirit always. But they will spoil it when they get bigger.’ No, my dear confreres, we shall keep it faithfully with Mary’s help. She is counting on you; you are the foundation stones; so remain firm, unshakeable.”

81

May 6, 1856. Fr. Huguet. Talk at a meeting of the "Christian Maidens" third order group. [Minutes of the meeting, Frat. VChr, assemblées, p-v, t. 3, p. 901-904 = APM 813.12 = LM 273, 7f]:

[7] "Let us stand in awe, first of all, of Providence that reaches to everything in the physical world, from the simple flower to the tallest tree. Everything lives by it, everything is enlivened by it. And on a much higher level, let us stand in awe at how God has taken care of his Church for 18 centuries. He watches over her as a shepherd does, he defends her against the furies of hell and of the world. According to the needs of each century, he sends new help to his children. The religious orders are his inspiration.

[8] "Is it not he who in these last times has brought to birth this little Society of Mary, destined by its simple and hidden life to combat the spirit of the age, and also to bring to birth the family spirit so ignored today. Rejoice, then, my sisters, at belonging to the Third Order of Mary and at having among you but one heart and one soul."

82

1857-1860. Favre. Constitutions. [AT III, Z, 34]:

Since it often happens, unfortunately, that even religious hearts are contaminated by the dust of the world, if Marists want to know which vices they should preferably shun and which virtues they should cultivate with more care, let them see clearly and hate the wickedness proper to this age. Let them remember, therefore, that our Society had its origin and was destined to fight in these last days which are said by the Apostle to be *dangerous times*; and in which, he says, *men will be lovers of self, greedy, proud, arrogant, blasphemous..., disobedient..., without peace..., and lovers of pleasure rather than of God* (II Tim. III, 1, 2, 5).

83

June 20, 1866. Colin. Chapter intervention. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 807, 6.]

"Alas! The times are bad. Let us attach ourselves *with all our strength* to the Holy See. Let us respect the free opinions, but let us always be with Rome. Carry this spirit into all your houses; inspire it in all the members of the Society. Look at what is happening in the world. They want to reason with God; they allow themselves to add to and to subtract from the teaching of the Church; they want to know more than the Pope. But Jesus Christ said: *You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church... Feed my sheep, feed my lambs*. This will be our salvation at the end of time! Then the dangers will be great, so great that the elect themselves, if it were possible, might be shaken. But by remaining inviolably united with the Pope, we have nothing to fear."

84

May-June 1870. Jeantin. After mentioning the pressures on Favre for Constitutions, e.g. from administrators, vocation prospects, etc.; and Colin's lack of dispatch and his involvement in the Eucharistic project; and the fact that the intention was not to produce fullblown Constitutions, but only a small volume of principles and practices, some "Fundamental Rules," which would be superseded once Colin finished his. [APM 131.6, NHC p. 30fm]:

[1] Such were the avowed motives which led Father Favre and his council to work immediately on writing our rule.

[2] I think, however, that ultimately there was another reason, not put forward, but determining nonetheless, namely, that they did not have a precise enough notion of Father Founder. More than that, Father Favre and his councilors did not have a correct notion of the Society of Mary. Anyone who is in the least familiar with Father Founder knows that the destiny of the Society of Mary is that of a religious order properly so-called. In this age of pride, of luxury, of materialism, of sensualism, of human and earthly progress, of religious indifference, and even of impiety, the Society makes its appearance in order to react against all those nefarious tendencies through humility, modesty, mortification, simplicity, and all the other virtues which made up Mary's character and spirit. 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 high and lofty idea he has of the sanctity which members of this Society are to have.

[3] But Father Favre did not have 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 living under a broad and easy rule, who give missions, run schools, do apostolic work within a limited scope and in a very unimportant capacity. Nor do I say this just on my own. I heard Father General himself talk about the Society of Mary in this way and blame Father Colin for having too high an idea of the Society and for wanting to found a *great religious order*. These are his own words.

85

February 6, 1872. Colin. Note written to the chapter. [Chapter minutes = OM 846, 36]:

You will be astonished to hear that I have a great ambition: to seize hold of the whole universe, under the wings of Mary by means of the Third Order. The Third Order is not an essential part of your congregation; but the blessed Virgin entrusts it to you like a bridge (the expression is not my own) to go to souls, to sinners. Never have the nations shown such eagerness to turn to the blessed Virgin, and at the end of time there will be only one kingdom, the kingdom of the blessed Virgin.

86

February 7, 1872. Colin. Parting words to novices. [APM 249, Alphonse Cozon, Personal diary, pp. 123f = FA 395, 4f]:

[4] "You must bless God who has brought you to the end of time. There is much to be done to lead souls back. But you must be very obedient to your Superior, to reveal to him your most secret thoughts; the devil does all he can to give you a distaste for your vocation, but he fears nothing so

much as being found out. When we have told our director what is troubling us, the devil does not know what to do next.

[5] “We must also have recourse to the blessed Virgin, we must confide to her all our difficulties. ‘Oh, good Mother, put them all in your heart and when they are there, close the door.’”

87

August 16, 1872. Colin. Parting words to the chapter, following the gratitude expressed by Fr. Favre. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 848, 4]:

The Very Reverend Father, visibly moved, lets escape from his heart some words of tenderness and of encouragement. Exposing first the ideas that he has always had on the purposes of Providence for our little Society, he says, “Just as God, by a plan of mercy, seems to have reserved for our unhappy times the manifestation of his adorable Heart, so he seems to have prepared Mary to be in a special way the support of the Church in its last battles. I have always felt in the depths of my soul, from the origin of our Society, that it was destined to fight against the Antichrist under the banners of her who crushed the head of the infernal dragon. Among so many congregations consecrated to the blessed Virgin, only ours, by a singular privilege, has received this beautiful name of Mary. Marists! This name, so consoling, ought always remind us of our duties as well.”

88

January 15, 1877. Fr. Dominget. Letter to Fr. Jeantin on the origins of the Third Order of Mary. [APM 921.302 = OM 891, 5]:

There you have, my dear Father, all that I can tell you on the third order, which was too circumscribed by Fr. Eymard, and which Fr. Colin wanted to spread all over, in order to place souls, in the last times, under the maternal direction and the special protection of the most blessed Virgin.

89

1895. Jeantin. Corrections of volume 1, p. 38 of his biography of Colin, regarding the role of Courveille. [OM 881, 1f]:

[1] We say that Fr. Courveille’s mission was to manifest exteriorly the names *Society of Mary* and *Marists*. Thus, one naturally asks oneself whence came these names and these ideas. His contemporaries have transmitted to us two explanations of this extraordinary fact: the project written and sketched by a Jesuit priest, of which we have spoken in the volume in question; and a revelation of the blessed Virgin herself. While the young Courveille was a student in the fifth or fourth class at the minor seminary at Verrieres, they say, he was suddenly stricken with blindness. Full of confidence in Mary, he made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Le Puy and there was miraculously healed of his infirmity. [2] As he humbly prostrated himself at the feet of his celestial benefactress and expressed to her his filial gratitude and his absolute devotion, he heard a voice which said interiorly: “I imitate my divine Son in all that he does for the Church of God. Just as at the time of Protestantism he raised up the Company of Jesus, whose members were named Jesuits, so I wish that in this century of impiety, of immorality and of revolution, a society

be founded which will bear my name, which will name itself Society of Mary, and whose members will name themselves Marists. This society will last until the end of time; it will produce great saints; it will have great glory and will wage the last battles against the Antichrist.”

90

1899. Grenot/Colin/Louyot(?). *Letter of Fr. Grenot reporting a conference of Colin and a later recollection of one of the auditors. [APM 922.3 = OM 886, introduction]:*

[1] We have spoken above of the mysterious presentiments that heaven sometimes inspired in the pious founder. We can't resist recalling here a personal memory which goes back to the year 1859. Here are the facts, which you can evaluate as you wish and name as circumstances permit.

[2] Numerous novices, drawn to the Society of Mary in the wake of Bishop Bataillon's visit to France after 22 years in the missions in the savage isles of Polynesia, had come in great numbers to Belley, from nearly all the dioceses of France. The holy Founder, in an interview he had with these good young people, after having strongly encouraged them in their holy vocation, is supposed to have added, as if seized with a sudden inspiration, the following predictions, roughly as follows: “Our little Society, my children, has been called forth by God near the end of time because he wants its members, adorned with the virtues of the blessed Virgin, to combat the Antichrist: in his pride by their humility, in his rebellion by their total obedience to the teachings of the Holy See, etc.... You will not see it, my children, not you, but those who will follow you, after one or two generations.” The one who reported this fact, a missionary who has since died at Fiji, concluded his account, as we are brought to do ourselves, by saying that those unhappy times might be expected to begin in the first half of the 20th century, for, at the moment when we are writing, 1899, only six survivors remain of the generation of young Marists to whom this revelation was made, which makes us believe that only thirty or forty years separate us from that epoch, which will be only the beginning of the sorrows: “*These are the beginnings of the woes.*”

Evaluating Colin's ideas on the end of time

91

December 13, 1847. Mayet. *Response to Maître pierre regarding Colin's prophecies about the end of time. [Mayet 1, 3 = OM 660]:*

[1] Having given my notes to Fr. Maître pierre in 1847 for him to read, he insisted, in his response, that I suppress what seemed to be prophecies on the end of the world, on page 5 of tome 1, and he wrote to me: “These prophecies, were they true, would inspire distrust.”

[2] I answered him: “One reason leads me to retain what Fr. Colin says on the destiny of the Society, what will happen to it in the last times” (this latter is the term he uses): “namely that in 1834 in his request to Rome — which is an act of such gravity and solemnity — he was not afraid to say: ‘There will be seen at the end of time what was seen at the beginning of the Church, the faithful forming *one heart and one soul*, under Mary's protection.’ [3] Moreover, at the 1846 retreat he used the same language four or five times in his talks to the community. Could anything be more official, anything more serious than documents addressed to Rome and words addressed to the whole Society? We cannot treat these words like those mentioned to two or three people. I

believe in the prudence and truthfulness of cutting out whatever might sound like prophecies when it was only remarked in conversation — anyone might speak like that — but not in the case of what we have here. My opinion is to let it stay. If these words were inspired by God, what right have we to cut them out? If we suppress them and they come to fulfillment, how will people know that it had been foretold?”

[4] Fr. Maître pierre, having read these lines, agreed, and he asked me to leave beside the article in question the reflections that I had thus formulated, which I do today, December 13, 1847.

92

September 14, 1899. Fr. David. Reply to Fr. Grenot. [APM 922.3 = OM 886]:

[1] I don't remember the conference of Rev. Fr. Colin in which he is supposed to have expressed his thought on the end of the world. He spoke of it several times in my presence: but I have only seen in it some personal impressions. He certainly claimed that the Society of Mary would have to serve the Church in its last battles. [2] As for whether the time for these great events was near or far, I have never understood that he had received any special enlightenment. We read to him the secret of la Salette according to Melanie; and, as he told me, he did not feel at all inclined to believe in it; far from it, he experienced a marked repugnance. — The calculations of Holzauzher are evidently incorrect.

At the End as at the Beginning

Here we present all the texts, except those in the dossier “Mary, the support of the Church,” above, in which Colin links the beginnings of the Church with the end of time, or speaks of recreating now the conditions that prevailed in the beginning.

93

1833. Colin. From the “*Summarium Regularum S.M.*” [AT I, s, 109]:

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, and to gather, so to speak, all the members of Christ, whatever their age, sex or standing, under the protection of the Blessed Mary Immaculate, Mother of God; and to revive their faith and piety and nourish them with the doctrine of the Roman Church, so that at the end of time as at the beginning, all the faithful may with God’s help be *one heart and one soul* in the bosom of the Roman Church, and that all, walking worthily before God and under Mary’s guidance, may attain eternal life. For this reason entry into the Society is open even to lay persons living in the world in the confraternity or third order of the Virgin Mary.

94

June-July 1838. Colin. Table conversation in Belley. [Mayet 1, 190f = OM 427, 1f]:

[1] “Ah! Messieurs,” he said to us one day, “pray that God will raise up someone to spread the third order over the whole earth. I desire this with all my heart, I ask God for it; I need someone who would have an apostolic zeal, who would be full of the spirit of God, who would preach apostolically.

[2] “Oh, I laugh when I think of the simple and good-natured way in which I acted. I just quite simply put in my request for approbation of our confraternity of the Third Order that there would be seen at the end of time what had been seen at the beginning: *One heart and one soul*. That by means of it all the faithful, all who remained in God, would have but one heart and one mind. Cardinal Castracane burst out laughing and said to me: ‘So the whole world will be Marist, then?’ ‘Yes, Eminence,’ I told him, ‘the Pope too; he is the one we want for our head.’ Well, you know, I gained three Briefs for the Third Order as a consequence. Ah, Messieurs, let us bestir ourselves; our undertaking is a bold one;” (laughingly): “we intend to invade everywhere. When will the time come?”

95

September 21, 1846. Colin. Concluding retreat talk. [Mayet 6, 300 = FS 115, 5]:

“My dear confreres, may the closest bonds of charity unite us always, may we truly be but one heart and one soul. The Society of Mary must make present once again the first times of the Church.”

96

September 21, 1846. Colin. Concluding recommendations for the retreatants. [Mayet 6, 681 = FS 116, 7f]:

[7] Moving to another topic, he said, “Messieurs, that our Lord left the blessed Virgin behind on earth after his ascension is without doubt a great mystery. The apostles needed her to guide them, and to be in a sense the foundress of the Church. At the end of time her protection will shine forth in an even greater way. The apostles had their reasons for not making it known to the world, but she will make her presence felt even more than in the beginning.

[8] “Let us therefore be filled with courage. Let us all have but one heart and one soul. Let us not like to have people speak of us. Let us imitate our mother: she did not have people speak of her, the Gospel only named her four times, and yet what good she did! The time has come when she must make her power burst forth. As for us, let us have her spirit, let us do good *as it were unknown and hidden in this world*. May the world not know of our works, but the eye of God will see them from heaven and we shall be rewarded for them.”

97

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 429 = OM 632 = FS 120]:

[1] “Let us take courage, and work hard, but always *unknown and hidden*. Let us keep away from those who rely on a merely human eloquence. The Society must begin a new Church over again. I do not mean that in a literal sense, that would be blasphemy. But still, in a certain sense, yes, we must begin a new Church. 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 all together through the Third Order - heretics alone may not belong to it.

[2] “Let us be small, Messieurs. *Do not become proud*, let us be small. The blessed Virgin was so small, although in reality she was the Queen of Heaven and the first of all creatures. She is our model. Let us do a great deal of good, but like her let us do it, *as it were unknown and hidden*.”

98

August 26, 1847. Colin. Closing address at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 219f = FS 143, 2]:

“Yes, Messieurs, *one heart and one soul*: we shall not be united in body, in the same place, since Mary does not wish it, but very much so in heart and mind. It seems to me that we must shut ourselves up in the castle of our soul. And what is that castle? Is it not the heart of our good Mother? I like what was just said very much. Yes, it is Mary who gives each one his mission, his

task, the position he must fill. Just as her divine Son once entrusted a mission to his apostles, calling them his friends, telling them, *Go, teach all nations* and to go their separate ways, just so this kind mother, at the end of time, says to us, ‘Go, proclaim my divine Son to the world. I am with you. Go, we shall still be united.’”

99

September 2, 1848. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 9m = OM 679 = FS 159]:

On September 2nd, 1848, Father Colin said, “Let those who are leaving for Oceania imitate the apostles; let those who are staying in Europe imitate the early Church. At the end of time the church will be as it was in the time of the apostles.”

100

September 18, 1848. Colin. Exhortation in the refectory. [Mayet 6, 463-465 = FS 161, 5f]:

[5] “We are all gathered here, and it is a great grace to have made the retreat. I did not think we would have the happiness of doing so. I arrived here on the eve of the Assumption, thinking that we could gather some of you together at our house at La Favorite, but they told me there were a great number of you. I did not know where such a crowd could have come from” (everyone laughed). “Still, it took place. Let us thank our Lord and the blessed Virgin, but above all let us profit by it, let us be men of sacrifice. Ah! How I suffer, when I think there will be souls in hell because we are not men of sacrifice and prayer. It seemed to me, when I wrote that letter I was speaking about to your confreres waiting to set out from Toulon, that I had been too hard. I corrected the end of it, but now I regret doing so, for I see more clearly now that we shall do no good, we shall not win souls, except by faith. We shall only make converts, we shall only save through the cross, and never by following the maxims of our age. The world wants nothing of faith, or of the cross either, it wants only reason. Poor reason! It is ruining the world. Indeed, philosophy has done dreadful harm and every day it deepens the abyss it is digging for us. It is paving the way for the end of time. Let us oppose it with simple and unshakeable faith. Miracles today could do nothing. Prince von Hohenlohe worked a lot, but what effect have they had? None. Who have they converted or transformed? No one, or almost no one. Nowadays, faith and prayer alone can convince people’s minds, enlighten their intellect and touch their hearts. Let us set to, therefore, to have this spirit of faith and of union with our good Lord. Let there be no love of show among us, no seeking after reputations... Let us imitate her who is our Queen, what a model Mary is for us! She bears the title *Queen of Apostles* and rightly, and yet she is more hidden than any of the apostles.

[6] “Today everything is done through Mary. All the congregations honor her mysteries by their different titles, and it is truly remarkable (as they told me in Rome) that no one until now had thought of taking the name that the Society bears. Are we worthy of it?”

101

September 5, 1866. Colin. In the refectory at La Neyliere after his return from the chapter. [Mayet ND 1, 397-399 = OM 808, 5-7]:

[5] “Eh! well, yes, I was very happy with the sessions of the chapter; I was impressed with the good spirit that presided there; they produced a work that will last; but let us be apostles and let us all place ourselves in the heart of our superior. The times are bad, our dear little Society is called to battle the Antichrist, it will have some martyrs. I repeat, my dear children” (this word thrilled us because it conveyed an incredible tenderness and because he always calls us “Messieurs”), “since we are in an age just as evil as that of the apostles, we must have the heart of an apostle, so that, like them, we might, in all things, assist ourselves with the counsels of the blessed Virgin; we must march as one man, with the superior at our head. Let us make no noise, no display, but let us do good and do it with perseverance, as did the apostles who renewed the entire world without noise and without violence.” [6] Then, addressing himself to the youngest among us, he repeated his advice; strongly emphasizing the same idea, he continued: “And you, too, for you are young, march as one man under one chief, your superior. In your life there will be annoyances and sufferings; so it was throughout the whole life of the blessed Virgin; but, be good religious, good Marists, have the spirit of simplicity and of prayer, it is the spirit of Mary; those who do not have it will not remain in her Society. [7] — The chapter that just took place was admirable for its wisdom, it has shown what we are called to, and we are called to great things. Courage, then, Messieurs, accept well the will of God for you and place yourselves in the heart of our superior. In this you will only be imitating me, I have placed myself there the first of all. You are young, I am old, the blessed Virgin has no more need of me. We need apostles, we need saints. Eh! well, yes, when you have arrived at my age, you will see that our Society is beautiful and great, since she will have them.”

The Whole World Marist

The eschatological theme, Mary as support of the Church at the end of time, seems to have led naturally in Colin's mind to that of the universality not only of the Society's work but of its very extension and inclusion. The worldwide range of its field of work seems to echo the eschatological theme of the Gospel being preached to the ends of the earth; and the openness of the Society's membership to all but those who would exclude themselves (heretics and schismatics) is designed to serve the great eschatological in-gathering of the peoples.

102

January 25, 1822. From the letter of the Marist aspirants to Pope Pius VII. [OM 69, 3]:

In the meantime, however, we presume to recall to the memory of Your Holiness the object of the Society which will be established, should it please your Holiness. Its purpose is to expend everything for the greater glory of God, for the honor of Mary the Mother of God and for the service of the Roman Church. To work for the salvation of their own souls and those of their neighbor through missions to believers and unbelievers in whatever part of the world the Apostolic See might wish to send us; [...]

103

1825-1829? Colin. Sermon for a ceremony of consecration to Mary. [APM 241.42, sermon #28]:

[...] Finally, she is the mother who in her tenderness is more of a mother than all the mothers on earth, the mother of all Christians, for whom she underwent on Calvary all the pains of childbearing, whose motherly heart is forever open to all and whose boundless charity embraces all the ages of the new covenant, all nations and all peoples, [...]

104

December 1833. Colin. Extracts from the "Summarium Regularum S.M.": the first paragraph on the lay confraternity and the first paragraph on the superior general. [AT I, s, 109 and 114 = LM 9, 109]:

[109] The general aim of the Society is to contribute in the best possible way, both by its prayers and by its efforts, to the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just, and to gather, so to speak, all the members of Christ, whatever their age, sex or standing, under the protection of the Blessed Mary Immaculate, Mother of God; and to revive their faith and piety and nourish them with the doctrine of the Roman Church, so that at the end of time as at the beginning, all the faithful may with God's help be *one heart and one soul* in the bosom of the Roman Church, and that all, walking worthily before God and under Mary's guidance, may attain eternal life. For

this reason entry into the Society is open even to laypersons living in the world in the confraternity or third order of Blessed Mary.

[114] The whole Society of Mary is governed by the Superior General on whom all the various branches of the Society depend, just as the various branches of a tree draw life and activity from their trunk. In this way let unity be preserved in the Society and the children of Blessed Mary be united by mutual bonds of charity as members of the same family. Let them encourage one another to virtue by their advice, their prayers and their efforts; let them stand firm in the faith, adhering with all their heart to the Supreme Pontiff, the head of the Roman Church, whom they are to obey in all things as they would Christ.

105

1833-1834. Colin. Memorandum on the S.M. [OM 299, 6f = LM 11, 6f]:

[6] The Society of Mary in a way even opens its bosom to the faithful who live in the world, and with whom it shares all its spiritual benefits by means of a confraternity formed for their benefit. This confraternity has already begun in the city of Belley, where the confreres meet together on set days, listen to the word of God, do retreat exercises from time to time, and encourage each other to virtue. [...]

[7] One of the principal works of the confreres and of the other members of the Society of Mary is to contribute to the conversion of sinners by their prayers, advice and any other possible means; [...]

106

January 31, 1834. Castruccio Cardinal Castracane. Report on the Marist project. [OM 304, 9 = LM 16,9]:

And it may also be noted that there is a proposal to establish, besides the three Orders, a confraternity of men and women of every status and from every country, over whom the superior general would likewise preside. How outlandish and irregular would be the plan for this confraternity to spread over the whole world under a single superior, it may easily be pointed out, if one considers that the practice of the Church allows only confraternities, that is, particular societies aimed at stimulating piety among the faithful. These societies are formed with the approval of and are dependent upon their respective diocesan bishops and priests by whom they are directed. Therefore, it would be outlandish and, at the same time, irregular for a confraternity, which has no purpose other than coming together for acts of religion, to take the name of universal confraternity, and for it to be emancipated from the authority of the diocesan bishops in order to come under a single superior. Consideration should also be given to the suspicion that might be aroused in princes by a confraternity of this kind, dependent upon a single superior.

107

April 29, 1836. Pope Gregory XVI. Extract from the brief of approbation of the S.M., "Omnium Gentium." [OM 384, 1f]:

The salvation of all nations, a charge we have received from the prince of shepherds and bishop of souls, compels us to be ever watchful that we leave nothing untried by which from the

rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord may be glorified and the most holy catholic faith, without which it is impossible to please God, may flourish and shine forth throughout the world. Wherefore we cherish with a truly special benevolence of our paternal heart those ecclesiastics who, gathered in a society and mindful of their state and vocation, do not cease by the preaching of the divine word and the dispensation of God's manifold graces to exhort the people in sound doctrine and who strive by every care and effort to bring forth abundant fruits of virtue and goodness in the Lord's vineyard. We felt indeed not a little pleasure when we learnt that our beloved son Claude Collin and some priests of the diocese of Belley in France had many years ago laid the foundations of a new society of religious under the title Society of Mary. Indeed this Society is concerned above all that the glory of God and the honor of his most holy Mother be increased and that the Roman Church be propagated, whether by the Christian education of children or by missions even to the farthest shores of the earth.

108

November 20-22, 1837. Colin. Remarks to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 275f = FS 1, 1 = LM 39]:

“Take courage. Our aim,” he said, “is nothing less than to make the whole world Marist.”

109

Late December 1837. Colin. Response to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 5 = OM 421, 1f = FS 2 = LM 41]:

[1] Someone reminded him that he had said the whole world must be Marist. He said, “Yes, God the Father has appointed our Lord as judge of the living and the dead. The body of Jesus is a simple body. With the Jesuits you must have talents and many other things.

[2] “In the congregation of the blessed Virgin, it is not so. She is the mother of mercy. Her body will have several branches. She will be open to all kinds of people.”

110

c. 1837. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 11 = OM 422 = FS 4, 1 = LM 42, 1; see text #2 above]:

“The blessed Virgin said: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I will be so at the end of time; my bosom will be open to all those who wish to enter there.’”

111

June-July 1838. Colin. Table conversation at Belley. [Mayet 1, 190-192 = OM 427, 1, 2, 5 = LM 47, 1, 2, 5]:

[1] “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. [2] Oh, I laugh when I think about the good-hearted, simple way I acted. In my request for the approval of our confraternity of the Third Order, I simply wrote that people would see at the

end of time what they had seen at the beginning: *One heart and one soul*. That, thereby, all the faithful, all those who were to remain faithful to God, would have but one heart and one soul. Cardinal Castracane began to laugh and said to me: ‘Well, the whole world would be Marist then?’ ‘Yes, your Eminence,’ I said to him, ‘the Pope, too; he’s the one we want as head.’ Well, right away I obtained three documents with indulgences for the Third Order. Ah, gentlemen, let’s come alive; our undertaking is a bold one;” (laughing:) “we want to invade everything. When will the time come?”

[...]

[5] “However, our Third Order has the advantage that it is not only for the conversion of sinners, but also for the perseverance of the just, and so, consequently, it includes all Christians. I have asked specifically that there be no exceptions other than heretics and schismatics. Moreover, I have asked that the simple inscription of one’s name in the register of the confraternity would be enough in order to share in the prayers and good works of the members, because I foresaw that many sinners who might need such prayers and good works would be reluctant to have recourse to Mary. Also, when a family has someone who needs conversion, his relatives could have him registered secretly. A sinner could be recommended to all associates; prayers could be requested and offered. A person would not have to do anything in order to have a share in the prayers.”

112

c. 1838. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 11f = OM 450, 1 and addition b]:

[1] One day he said: “I don’t think that the Society ought to last a long time: it has too many branches and is too composite a body. If it were to last a rather long time, I think that this body would be simpler.”

[Addition *b*:] Let us compare these words with those where he says that the Blessed Virgin will open her bosom at the end of time, in reference to the Society.

113

1839. Colin. Casual conversation. [Mayet 1, 13-15 = OM 452, 1, 3, 4]:

[1] In 1839, someone told him that, twenty years earlier, someone had seen the Society as forming a little nucleus, a small number; but had then seen it grow little by little and fill the earth. The same prediction said that nothing would be able to resist the Society and that its members would have a courage that nothing would be able to stop.

[3] That prediction also said that no Society would have such great intensity as this one.

[4] “I believed it,” he said, “because I do not think that the Society of Mary is supposed to last a long time (about a hundred years, maybe), and so God will give it in a short span of time what others received over many years, and all of a sudden what others received little by little. We can also see it that way because the Society, with its three branches and its Third Order, embraces all. A body which was supposed to last a long time would be simpler. Ours is composite.”

114

c. 1839. *Castracane and Colin. Narrative of Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 1, 27f = OM 459 = LM 52]:*

Someone (a cardinal) once said to him in Rome: “Well, the whole world will be Marist, then?” “Yes,” he said, laughing, “the whole world, you, too, if you want. And the Pope too; the Pope will be the superior of the Society.”

115

September 23, 1844. *Colin. Exhortation at the end of the 1844 retreat in Lyons. [Mayet 5, 668f = FS 78, 2 = LM 83]:*

At the end, the Rev. Father Superior said a few words to us in chapel, among which I noted the following: “We are now in the age of Mary. Yes indeed, for this is an age of indifference, unbelief, an age of crime, of false learning, of this earth. Nowadays the inhabitants of the earth are bowed towards the earth, stuck to it, breathing for it alone. That is why in these last days she has appeared with her hands stretched out towards the earth, with her hands full of rays, which stand for graces being poured forth upon men. What gratitude should we show to Mary for having chosen us to spread her Society, this Society comprising the three branches, because Mary intends to cover the whole earth with her mantle.”

116

September 14-21, 1846. *Colin. During the general retreat. [Mayet 2, 45-46 = OM 630 = LM 112]:*

[1] During the general retreat of the Marist fathers in September 1846, he said to us: “Gentlemen, we ought to admire the providence of God at our beginnings. It was important that we did not know that the four branches were not to form a single congregation. That was necessary so that there might be union among them. Our way of thinking and acting in this matter has Roman approval.”

[2] Then he spoke about the Third Order and told us: “During my last trip (his third trip to Rome), Cardinal Castracane did not act the way he did the first time when he laughed a lot and said, ‘The whole world will be Marist, then.’ This time, as he heard of the spread of this Third Order, he took the matter quite seriously.

[3] “Gentlemen, our Third Order will be open to everybody except heretics and pagans.”

117

September 27, 1846. *Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 429 = OM 632, 1 = FS 120, 1 = LM 114]:*

“Let us take courage and work hard, but always *unknown and hidden*. Let us keep away from those who rely on a merely human eloquence. The Society must begin a new Church over again. I do not mean that in a literal sense, that would be blasphemy. But still, in a certain sense, yes, we must begin a new Church. 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 — heretics alone may not belong to it.”

118

September 29, 1847. Colin. At supper. [Mayet 5, 579 = OM, vol. 2, p. 124, n. 3]:

“The Marists are supposed to conquer the world; they will be scattered everywhere; but never will they be more united than when they are thus separated by the will of God for his glory and the salvation of souls.”

119

1853. *Maîtrepierre. History of the origins.* [OM 752, 30]:

One must not believe, however, that trials ceased to pursue the work of Mary. At Lyons they were multiple and strong; I don't know the details well enough. But at Belley, they pursued the work and led it, in a way, irresistibly toward its destruction. The protection of the diocese smothered it. Bishop Devie was endowed with a very active and very effective zeal, but his zeal was diocesan, his zeal was personal; he wished to act on his own and, every time he took action on behalf of his diocese, he succeeded marvelously. But the little Society that took root at his side ought, by its end and its means, to launch itself into the universe; his zeal was irritated by this idea. “What does this colossal aim matter to me? I would give them good men, and they will send them I don't know where. It will be diocesan.” [...]

120

May-October 1853. *Maîtrepierre. Extract from his “Overview of the origin of the S.M. and its status in 1853.”* [APM 125, 50 = LM 226, 66f]:

[66] The Society of Mary has four branches, the fathers, the brothers, under the name of Little Brothers of Mary, the sisters, under the name of religious women of the Holy Name of Mary, and the Third Order. Isn't the Society like the mantle of the blessed Virgin which offers shelter to all God's children? And aren't the four branches like avenues which lead us beneath the folds of that protecting mantle? And isn't the cardinal's question — “The whole world could belong to it?” — applicable in the phrase, *There is nothing concealed from its burning heat*? The brothers and the sisters give generous help to the children of the common people; they welcome these creatures of God which hardship picks up at the entry-point of life and exposes to all sorts of dangers; the brothers and the sisters become like a second providence for them; under the influence of their devoted attention, these children, saved from shipwreck, could sing with the Psalmist: *Though my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.*

[67] Those whom the world threatens to devour during the age of passion will find a protecting shelter in solitude, and souls drawn to contemplation will be able to hide themselves in the presence of the Lord under the wings of Mary. In the Third Order, Mary extends her arms to every age, sex, condition, degree, shade of meaning which can be found in souls. Men, fathers of families, young men, children, women, mothers of families, young women, little children, those who are perfect, advancing, beginning, strong, weak, sinners, impious, even the children who are still enveloped in the misfortune of original sin: *There is nothing concealed from its burning heat.*

121

May 7, 1854. Colin. Speaking about the TOM to the capitulants of 1854. Notes of Fr. Millot. [APM 321.383.1, fasc. 2, 10 = LM 248, 3]:

“The blessed Virgin should draw everything after her. You know what a Cardinal said to me after having examined the drafts of our Rule: ‘But the whole world will then belong to your Society’ — it was, in effect, a question of the fathers, the brothers, the sisters, the third order. And when he went on to say: ‘But what government would tolerate such an organization’ — frankly, it made me laugh to think that we were going to make governments tremble. How much need we have of God. Without him we cannot succeed at all.”

122

c. 1872. Colin. Dictated note on the TOM. [APM 242.15 and 242.54 = AT V, u, §2 = LM 332, 3]:

And since she is the mother of all God’s children, and since she wants to save them all, her Society ought to open its bosom to all her children who want to be saved and lay claim to her help. That is why the Society takes all kinds of people into association with itself through a Third Order, under the name of Confraternity of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners and the Perseverance of the Just. These are divided into several categories: [...]

123

February 6, 1872. Colin. Note to the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 846, 18 = LM 334, 18]:

“I have recently sent you a brief overview on the Third Order of Mary. You were perhaps surprised by some of these ideas, but I have never understood it in any other way. The Third Order of Mary in my view ought to be an immense association which will envelop the whole world. Even sinners and the ungodly may be enrolled; the share they will thus have in the prayers and good works of the Tertiaries will prepare their conversion. Likewise parents may enroll their little children. In a word, the whole world will belong to the Third Order of Mary, and all souls will be enrolled under the banner of the Mother of God.”

124

February 6, 1872. Colin. Allocution at the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 846, 36 = LM 334, 36]:

“You will be astonished to hear that I have a great ambition: to seize hold of the whole universe, under the wings of Mary by means of the Third Order. The Third Order is not an essential part of your congregation; but the Blessed Virgin entrusts it to you like a bridge (the expression is not my own) to go to souls, to sinners. Never have the nations shown such eagerness to turn to the Blessed Virgin, and at the end of time there will be only one kingdom, the kingdom of the Blessed Virgin.”

125

August 15, 1873. Colin. At the general chapter, as related by Fr. Ducournau. [APM 322.459 = QS 396, 3-5]:

[3] “I am leaving you, no doubt for ever in this world... even now I am no longer of it, this world: my age, my infirmities! But you, Messieurs, are in it and that is enough for me. You will carry on the work of the blessed Virgin. I am content to say how happy, how consoled the good spirit animating you makes me. I have seen the Holy Spirit in the midst of your deliberations, in your midst the blessed Virgin, the one who is to guide you into the harbor of salvation.

[4] “Let us remember, Reverend Fathers, that we have acknowledged her, as indeed she is, our true and only Foundress, and that we have chosen her for our first and perpetual Superior.

[5] “She is, Messieurs, at the head of the barque which is bringing all her children to harbor. How could we perish under the banner of such a General? No! Let us have faith... Let us see the great goal that Providence destines you to. Our age is one of impiety. In the time of Noah all flesh had entered into the path of corruption; God commissioned Noah to build a barque to save the human race. In our day all truths are under attack. Well then, yes, God has prepared a barque. It is the barque of his Mother. It is up to you, Messieurs, Reverend Fathers, to finish it, to consolidate it, this barque, to conserve its spirit. So let us march at the head of the faithful. There is your mission.”

126

October 10, 1873. Fr. David. Letter to Colin. [APM 233.2 David = LM 364, 2]:

How happy we have been to learn of your news by way of Frs. Jeantin and Chapel, and to know that you are better than when you left the chapter! We will do so much before our great and good Foundress, that she will keep you yet for a long time in our affection, and that she will give you the strength and the inspiration necessary to crown your work by composing the rule of the Third Order. It needs be that the whole world can become Marist, without our seeming to want to dominate it.

127

May 6, 1874. Mayet. From a letter to Colin: the second “key idea” of Colin on the TOM. [APM 921.142 = LM 376, 5]:

Secondly, the Third Order of Mary will be able to open its bosom to all (heretics excepted), even to sinners and to children before their birth, in an indirect way. The external bond that will link all these members to Mary will be very broad, very simple, very easy. The archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories seems to have been what came closest to what Fr. Founder had in mind, and to what he set forth in Rome from the beginning. I often heard that institution taken as a point of comparison twenty-five or thirty years ago.

128

October 15, 1874. Colin. Words spoken to Fr. Alphonse Cozon. [APM 249, Cozon's diary = LM 335, 46]:

“This idea of a third order is one that has always greatly concerned me. It was one of the early ideas of the Society, and those ideas that I had then, I have kept them. I had the plan that I drew up examined in Rome by Cardinal Castracane. That great cardinal had it examined, and he understood that idea; he was struck by it. And he said to me: ‘Fr. Colin, will the whole world then be Marist?’ and he added, ‘Even the Pope?’ ‘Yes, Eminence, but he will be its head.’ That great cardinal had understood this idea. But you, no. People put up opposition; they are rationalists.”

129

October 15, 1874. Colin. Words spoken to Fr. Alphonse Cozon. [APM 249, Cozon's diary = LM 335, 55]:

“You have to try to do what you can for the present; later, the work will grow. God will raise up someone; men do not become great all of a sudden, nor do works; they are not great all at first. If it were up to me, I would like to enroll the world under the Blessed Virgin's banner. Oh, the world is getting rotten.”

130

April 26 - May 3, 1875. Colin/Jeantin. Draft of preface to the TOM constitutions. [APM 921.147 = LM 392, 4]:

May our most sweet mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, favor and increase this part of her well-beloved family! How desirable it would be to gather the whole world together under her banner, for her honor and the salvation of souls!

131

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 12]:

“Father, in this world there are two spirits, the spirit of God and the spirit of rationalism. You must keep away from the latter and ask to understand the former. There are Marists who see the Society as an ordinary enterprise... But if we were to go on our own, we would be fools. Our way of looking at things can only produce a work that does not last; yet the Society ought to be a work that lasts in the Church. Man ought not to count in it... We would create marvels with this rationalist approach. But, don't you know, not a hair falls from our head but that God wills it so; yet people would want to engage in these works with their own spirit. This idea of a third order is one that has always greatly concerned me. It was one of the early ideas of the Society, and those ideas that I had then, I have kept them. I had the plan that I drew up examined in Rome by Cardinal Castracane. That great cardinal took his time, he had it examined, and he understood that idea; he was struck by it. And he said to me: ‘Fr. Colin, will the whole world then be Marist?’ and

he added, ‘Even the Pope?’ ‘Yes, Eminence, but he will be its head.’ That great cardinal had understood this idea of the Third Order. But you put up opposition; you are rationalists.”

132

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 16]:

“Beware of rationalism. There are those who say, ‘These ideas come from illuminism.’ No, this is not illuminism; on the contrary, those people, rather, are rationalists. I wanted to keep silent, not to say anything anymore; but my conscience cried out that, if I did not speak, God would not be pleased with me. I fear rationalism. Rationalism is oneself. You need to go to God, not to men. If you go to men, they will make fun of you. Consider Rehoboam. He had to consult men. If it were up to me, I would like to enroll the world under the Blessed Virgin’s banner. The world is getting worse.”

133

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 20]:

I think that all those who spoke with the Very Rev. Fr. Founder on this topic will see here the ideas which he expressed to them on this topic, and which are reproduced in the constitutions which he dictated to his two secretaries. Several conclusions may be drawn. Permit me to draw one conclusion which I think is most important. In the mind of the founder, the third order ought not to be confined within the limits of the society. It ought to be, in a sense, a work outside the Society, to which the Society ought to communicate its own spirit, which is the spirit of the Blessed Virgin. Its development, therefore, ought not to be restricted to the proportions of the Society; we are not to retain it in our hands, but only let it pass through them. Thus, it is not a piece of the mechanism in the Society’s clockwork, it should not revolve around us, so to speak, like a planet around its constellation, but it should shine out into the Church. Thus, it is no longer a precious way to help the Society by drawing the interest of pious faithful to the Society, but rather it is a way to extend the Society’s action over the world, in such a way that the same thrust, going forth from Mary, passing through the Fathers and the members of the Third Order, might go forth and lose itself in the Church without any personal consideration.

134

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 24]:

Consider, in the first article [i.e. the first paragraph of Colin’s TOM constitutions], the spirit of greatness which ought to be its proper spirit. I will give a translation and draw a conclusion. Mary is the mother of all Christians, the gate of heaven; now, since our society is the Society of Mary, it ought to be the society of all Christians, both the just and sinners, and this means that, by its very constitution, it ought to seek to be for the world what Mary is for the world.

135

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 25]:

And in the second article [i.e. paragraph of Colin's TOM constitutions]: the Society of Mary, which owes its origin to the blessed Virgin and which chose her as its first and perpetual superior, should devote all its strength to conquering all men for this sweet mother and increasing the number of her children. That should be something our hearts need to do of necessity and it should be impossible for us to hold back from doing so.

136

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 34]:

[Colin] is a new Moses, a new Joshua; he must lead us into the promised land. So, listen to him affirm that he did not found just any work but the special work which God wanted. Listen to him affirm that the Society has received a fertile blessing to shower the entire world with the treasures of which Mary is the source.

137

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [APM 322.581 and 811.3 (A5) = LM 431, 36]:

Then, if the founder's thought was not always so clearly formulated during his life, the substance was always there. "My thoughts on the Third Order," said he, "I have always had since the beginning." And besides, when I quote Cardinal Castracane's words, "Fr. Colin, the whole world then will be Marist," it was a question, then, of a third order which would have had the broadest means of propagation, and this will happen only when parish priests [i.e. diocesan clergy] find it advantageous to them; it was a question of a third order such as we have pointed out according to the founder's thoughts.

138

May 19, 1880. Colin/Fr. Stanislas Trotin. "Corrected" redaction of Cozon's postulatum. [APM 322.568 = LM 435, 2]:

"This idea of the Third Order," the Venerable Father said, "is an idea which has always concerned me a great deal. It was one of the first ideas that came to mind when I thought of the Society. To imagine that the Third Order is a human creation would show a lack of faith. It is a work which ought to last; it dates back to the very origin of the Society. Its aim is to renew devotion to Mary in the world. The world is getting rotten; if it were up to me I would want to enroll the entire world under the blessed Virgin's banner. For that to happen, the Third Order ought to be a work of the Society, but outside the Society. The director of the Third Order is not the superior; his job is to keep the registers, to have the names inscribed. But the work should be as though abandoned to the parish priests [i.e. diocesan priests]. The parish priests sometimes keep

their parishioners from entering the Third Order. Well! It has to be made an episcopal and parochial work to which the Society will communicate its spirit.”

139

May 19, 1880. Fr. Stanislas Trotin. “Corrected” redaction of Cozon’s *postulatum*. [APM 322.568 = LM 435, 3]:

“The ideas I had on the Third Order, I’ve always kept them. Its constitutions were done when I was a curate. I brought to Rome the plan that I had drawn up, and I presented it to Cardinal Castracane, who took his time and had it examined. He was struck by it and he said to me, ‘Fr. Colin! The whole world then will be Marist! Even the Pope?’ ‘Your Eminence,’ I answered him, ‘the Pope will be its head.’ The work was blessed in Rome; it received a brief from Gregory XVI.”

140

May 19, 1880. Fr. Stanislas Trotin. “Corrected” redaction of Cozon’s *postulatum*. [APM 322.568 = LM 435, 7]:

Our Venerable Fr. Founder hopes that through the Third Order, as he presents it to us, the Society of Mary will receive from its august Queen a fertile blessing to shower the entire world with graces of which this Virgin is the channel. That is why he wanted to give it the broadest means of propagation by confiding it to the parish priests [i.e. diocesan clergy] who will thus find it to their advantage. In the Third Order thus understood we will better practice that humility and that abnegation which our constitutions recommend to us in the article *On the Spirit of the Society*. We will be hidden under the parish priests’ activity; we will do good without show, like Mary who, after the ascension of her son into heaven, was the soul of the Church and yet the servant of the apostles. We will also consider ourselves as servants and not as masters, as helpers and not as leaders.

141

1919. Cozon. *Draft of a manual for the TOM (commentary on the constitutions of the confraternity)*. [APM 832 = LM 474, 30-33]:

[30] 5° If Mary indeed is the mother of all men on earth; and if they have all been given to her as children by our Lord Jesus Christ at the moment when he died on the cross; if the royal mantle of that august sovereign is immense and ought to serve as refuge for all without exception, as has been pre-figured, according to the holy fathers of the Church itself, by Noah’s ark, the refuge of all the elect, it follows that the Society of Mary ought to be open in a certain way to all men and it ought to consider itself as contributing to the salvation of all and it ought to provide for this by all the means that charity can suggest.

[31] Nevertheless, Venerable Father Founder divided the children of God, whose salvation the Society of Mary ought to foster, into two classes: those who do not conform their lives to the teachings of religion and those who live as good Christians. The former are called simply to receive the sanctifying influence of the confraternity; the latter, to be a part of it properly speaking, provided that they have not given bad example for which they have not made reparation or that they have not been fully submissive to the ordinances of the sovereign pontiff, since this

submission is, as has been said, one of the aims of the confraternity. It is easy to understand the basis of these restrictions; if they were not there, the Third Order of Mary would not exercise in the Church the influence that it should.

[32] Once these obstacles have been overcome, the confraternity becomes open to all Christians and all can belong completely.

[33] This is the conclusion which Cardinal Castracane drew already when Venerable Father Colin set before him his plan on the Third Order: "The whole world then will be Marist," said the Cardinal, "even the Pope." "Yes, your Eminence," Venerable Father Colin answered, "but he will be its head."

142

1920-1921? Cozon. Sketch for a preface for the eighth edition of the TOM manual. [APM 832 = LM 476, 7-10]:

[7] Under these conditions, therefore, the Third Order of Mary should not gravitate in some way around the Society as do other third orders around the orders to which they have the honor of belonging; it should move only within the Church. Its only aim should be to lead souls to knowing and loving Jesus through knowing and loving Mary, and to fight through the practice of the interior life against the completely superficial spirit of the world, which causes souls to be lost.

[8] Such is Venerable Father Colin's idea of the Third Order of Mary. He had that idea from the very beginning, it was one of the early ideas of the Society, he used to say.

[9] When he had set it forth before Cardinal Castracane in Rome, along with the plan of the association and its proposed aim, the Cardinal, after examining it and having it examined, was struck by the breadth and relevance of this association, and he said to Venerable Father Colin, "Father Colin, the whole world then will be Marist, even the Pope?" "Yes," Father Colin said to him, "but he will be its head." In the Cardinal's thinking, as in Venerable Father Colin's, it was a question of a new conception of a third order, bearing within itself the cause of its universal spread.

[10] Until the Very Reverend Father Founder's death, the Society of Mary thought it needed to keep the Third Order of Mary close to it, the way a good mother cannot be separated from her young child, so as to give him the care required by his weakness. Very Reverend Father Colin thought that the time had come to spread it in the Church, and he wanted to set it in motion before he died.

At the Major Seminary, Lyons, 1815-1816

Fr. Étienne Terraillon has left us with two accounts of the reception, by a group of seminarians, of Jean-Claude Courveille's story about his experience at Le Puy, and how they went about giving shape to the Marist project.

143

1840-1842. Terraillon. Written account on the origins of the Society. [APM 123 = OM 750, 1-6]:

[1] The first idea of the Society of Mary is due to Our Lady of Le Puy. M. Courveille was afflicted with a grave infirmity. What did he do to be cured? Since he had full confidence in Mary, he had recourse to this kind mother. To secure her powerful protection more efficaciously, he devoted himself to Our Lady of Le Puy. Therefore he set out promptly for this famous pilgrimage, fulfilled his vow, and his indisposition disappeared. From then on, his gratitude knew no bounds. He examined what he could do to express it to such a kind mother. After thinking it over, he told himself: "Wherever Jesus has altars, Mary usually has her small altar besides. Jesus has his society, so Mary should have hers also." Filled with this happy idea, he thought seriously about implementing it.

[2] That was in 1815. He arrived at the major seminary of Lyons, and immediately busied himself with the execution of his pious project. With this in mind, he looked over the students of that establishment to see which ones would seem to have a vocation. The first to whom he communicated his plan was M. Déclas, from Belmont. This overture singularly struck this seminarian and left him deeply impressed. He came away with enthusiasm for this project and thought only of talking about it to the people he considered fit to contribute to its execution.

[3] He spoke first to M. Colin or to myself. He does not remember which of the two he spoke to first. With both he started out with the words M. Courveille had addressed to himself: "Wherever Jesus has altars, Mary also has her small altar beside. Jesus has his society, so Mary should also have hers." This message struck us both to a supreme degree, and left us kind of stupefied. We then shared our impressions, and we decided to lend ourselves resolutely to the execution of a project that had appealed to us the first time we heard about it.

[4] From that time on, the four of us began meeting. In those meetings, we fed each other's enthusiasm about the happiness of devoting ourselves to the success of such a beautiful work. First, we decided not to talk about our project, but to get down seriously to the means of bringing about its realization. For this, we decided that each one of us would examine separately the subjects who would seem fit for the work we envisaged, and that, before telling them anything, we would discuss it among ourselves, in order not to go too fast. For this, we met as often as we could, without however attracting notice, which we always avoided with the greatest care.

[5] We shared our secret with M. Cholleton, professor of moral. We asked his advice whenever necessary. The place where we met most frequently was the bushes in the garden of the country house. Sometimes we met in one of the rooms of the house or elsewhere, according to circumstances. We used these meetings to inflame our desires, at times with the thought that we had the happiness of being the first children of Mary, at times with the thought of the great need of the peoples. From time to time, M. Courveille would give us short, heartwarming talks. These

short talks would usually revolve around the need to imitate Mary, especially in her unspeakable humility. He often told us these beautiful words of holy king David: *Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory....*

[6] While following always the rules of prudence we had imposed on ourselves, we gradually reached the number of twelve aspirants. I shall name here only those who persevered to the end. They are the younger M. Colin, M. Déclas, M. Champagnat and M. Terraillon. We continued seeing each other and doing our little exercises until our ordination to the priesthood. This ordination took place on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, on July 22, 1816. On the following day, we went up to Our Lady of Fourvière, to place ourselves and our project under Mary's special protection. M. Courveille said mass alone and I assisted him. The others simply received communion, because they were saving their first mass for their parish. We placed our names on the altar as a symbol of our dedication. Then we were appointed as curates, each in his own sector, and we faithfully rejoined our posts. We continued obeying our superiors with punctuality, as all of us together had resolved to do.

144

c. December 1850. Terraillon. Oral account to Mayet. [Mayet 5, 390m = OM 705]:

Around December of 1850, Fr. Terraillon told me: “At the major seminary, when we gave shape to this project, we used to say: ‘There is a Society of Jesus, there will be a Society of Mary. Wherever people raise an altar to Jesus, there is an altar for Mary. One body bears the name of Jesus; another ought to bear the name of Mary. That was our dominant thought. What the Jesuits do under their appellation indicated to us what we must do under ours.’”

The Fourvière Pledge

This document is the oldest existing historical witness to the project developed at the major seminary in Lyons to found the Society of Mary. The three extant manuscript copies are in the hand of Pierre Colin, who never knew of the project until about a year after the ceremony at the shrine of Our Lady of Fourvière, on July 23, 1816, at which the commitment, signed by twelve seminarians, was placed under the corporal at the first Mass celebrated by the newly ordained Jean-Claude Courveille. The original signed copy probably disappeared with the rest of the latter's papers relating to the Society of Mary. Of the twelve who signed the commitment, four took vows in the Society of Mary: Marcellin-Joseph-Benedict Champagnat, Jean-Claude Colin, Étienne Déclas, and Étienne Terrailon.

145

July 23, 1816. The first Marist aspirants. Formula of commitment. [OM 50]:

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

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

We the undersigned, striving to work together for the greater glory of God and the honor of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus, assert and declare our sincere intention and firm will of consecrating ourselves at the first opportunity to founding the pious congregation of Mariists. That is why by the present act and our signatures, in so far as we can, we irrevocably dedicate ourselves and all our goods to the Society of the blessed Virgin. We do this not childishly or lightly or for some human motive or the hope of material benefit, but seriously, maturely, having taken advice, having weighed everything before God, solely for the greater glory of God and the honor of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus. We pledge ourselves to accept all sufferings, trials, inconveniences and, if needs be, torture, because we can do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthens us and to whom we hereby promise fidelity in the bosom of our holy mother the Roman catholic church, cleaving with all our strength to its supreme head the Roman pontiff and to our most reverend bishop, the ordinary, that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished with the words of faith and of the wholesome teaching which by his grace we have received. We trust that, under the reign of our most Christian king, the friend of peace and religion, this institute will shortly come to light and we solemnly promise that we shall spend ourselves and all we have in saving souls in every way under the very august name of the Virgin Mary and with her help.

All this is subject to the wiser judgment of our superiors.

May the holy and immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin Mary be praised.

Amen.

The Work of Mary

“The work of Mary” was a phrase used in reference to the Marist project by all of the founders — Marcellin Champagnat, Jeanne-Marie Chavoin and Jean-Claude Colin — and, it seems, by Jean-Claude Courveille as well. It gives a further indication of how the founding inspiration was received and understood. For a study on the meaning of this theme, see the article by Jean Coste in *Forum Novum*, (yet to appear). The dossier of texts in that article has been reproduced here, but in several cases more contextual material has been added.

146

November 15, 1824. Chavoin. Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 118, 2 = CMJ 2, 2]:

My Lord, kneeling humbly before you, I come to unburden my heart of all that worries me. Ever since we have the privilege of possessing your Lordship in the Diocese of Belley we have never doubted that God willed the work of the Blessed Virgin in this diocese. But now, it seems to me that our faith is wavering as we see all that is being done in Lyons and the possibilities there of housing both men and women. Our one fear is to be separated from your Lordship. [...]

147

December 18, 1828. Champagnat. Letter to Fr. Cattet, vicar general. [OM 185, 1-3 = LChamp 11]:

[1] The interest you have so far shown in the work of Mary encourages us to take new steps for its growth. While groups which tend only to evil are formed so easily, will these which seek only the glory of God always face insurmountable difficulties?

[2] For the fifteen years that I have been involved in the Society of Mary, whose growth is in your hands, I have never doubted that God wants this work in these times of unbelief. I beg you, show me that this work is not of God, or else do more and more to help it succeed. The society of brothers cannot be explicitly considered as the work of Mary, but only as a branch, posterior to the Society itself.

[3] We would still need someone for the proper administration of the branch of brothers, which is beginning to take hold. Allow me to remind you here, parenthetically, of the promise you made me to give us all the men who would be well-suited for our work, and who would consequently ask only for their *clothing* and *food*. [...]

148

January 25, 1830. Colin. Letter to Champagnat. [OM 209, 2]:

From the side of Belley, everything seems to be moving towards the success of Mary’s work; I do not know what they think in Lyons. Little by little, you could prepare the way and open people’s minds to a center of unity. That could take place while we remain for the moment under

our respective superiors [i.e. the bishops]; and it would be good to propose it to them in advance and even to let them know when we intend to meet in Lyons so that they will view this work with pleasure and give us their consent.

149

September 10, 1830. Colin. Letter to Champagnat. [OM 220, 2]:

I still hold more than ever to the work of the Blessed Virgin; the times serve only to increase my confidence and my courage; but I don't know when the meeting that you suggest would be prudent. I know that the selection of a central point is necessary for this pious enterprise; I want it as much as you do; but I don't think it would be wise for a great number of us to be traveling at present; however, for this election it would be necessary that we all be there; we are seven; you are only four; it would be easier for you to travel than for us.

150

January 25, 1831. Colin. Letter to Champagnat. [OM 227, 1]:

I am sure you have no doubts about the sincerity of the good wishes we expressed for you at the beginning of this new year. I wished for all of you especially great courage, a great desire for your advancement and the salvation of souls, and the readiness to suffer anything for the work of Mary. I notice with pleasure that little by little it is developing. Your numbers are increasing and, on our side, several excellent people are applying.

151

May 6, 1831. Colin. Letter to the confreres at the Hermitage. [OM 228, 1 & 4]:

[1] It is with very sincere feelings of joy that I see your zeal and your devotion for the work of Mary. I can't thank the Lord enough for inspiring these dispositions in you. Be very sure that I desire, no less than you, its immediate success, and that my desires to see you and to confer with you are every bit as ardent as your own. But apart from the reasons that I gave you in my last letter, it would still be impossible for me to make the journey during May without the house suffering. So be patient; if, during June, the times are less difficult, we shall have the pleasure of seeing each other. Meanwhile, here is what seems to me to be most useful and most in accordance with God's will for the moment. I think that for the month of May we must put all projects aside, think about no new establishments, banish from our hearts all cares, all anxieties, think only of the present and put aside all thoughts of the future. So if you permit me to give you this advice, let us offer this act of obedience to the blessed Virgin: in this we shall find our own advantage and that of the Society. Let us not even speak of our projects. Let us give the whole month to progress in virtue. Let us offer ourselves to the blessed Virgin in order to work for the glory of her Son and her own.

[4] Finally, dearly beloved confreres, I long to see you as much as you do me; I also have some communications for you in the interest of the Society of Mary; but since our desires cannot yet be fulfilled, let us submit ourselves to God's will. [...]

152

November 7, 1831. Colin. Letter to Champagnat. [OM 239, 1]:

I am not sorry for the little contradictions you experience; the work of the Blessed Virgin will progress only through the cross and sufferings; let us rejoice then; we must suffer the tongues, we must first be scorned, even at times calumniated, before we can be solidly established. The Valbenoite business is important for the interests of the Society; I advise you to recommend it to the good God in a particular way; make a novena for this intention, that is to say, to know the will of God; have all your brothers who are in the house make this novena. On our part, we are seeking before God to know well the designs of Providence in this affair.

153

December 31, 1831. Colin. Letter to Champagnat. [OM 241, 1f]:

[1] I was preparing to go to see you, and the day was even fixed, when unexpected obstacles came up and obliged me to put it off. However, it won't be long, I think, before I shall be able to let you know our thoughts with regard to the work of Mary in the diocese of Lyons.

[2] Since All Saints, we have been praying to obtain from God that he enlighten us and let us know what is more for his glory. After having well examined and taken the advice of our Belley confreres, we think that the moment has come to give greater consistency and solidity to the Society in the diocese of Lyons, so that, if the times become more favorable, it can immediately extend itself and bring assistance to the faithful. For that, we think that the corps of missionaries ought to be separated from the corps of the brothers, and that each corps ought to have its own superior. The result will be a perceptible good for each corps. [...]

154

February 2, 1833. The priests of the Belley group. Vow to work for the success of the Society. [OM 263, 1]:

Lord Jesus, I lie prostrate at your feet. It is as a result of your mercy that you have called me to labor in the work of your blessed Mother. What would I do to respond to such a favor, of which I realize I am quite unworthy? Ah! if only I had a thousand hearts, a thousand lives to give to you! how I would love to bring the glory of your name to the ends of the earth! But alas, Lord, you see my helplessness. I have only one heart, I sacrifice it to you for ever. I have only one life, I want to spend it entirely in making you known, in spreading everywhere, as far as I can, the cult of your glorious Mother, who is also my mother; and, full of confidence in your goodness and mercy, I commit myself in a special way to do all in my power for the advancement and the success of the Society of this august Sovereign. I make a vow of this, O my Savior! Support and strengthen my will.

155

Autumn 1833. Colin. Travel journal. [OM 293, lines 7-11]:

Vow 100 Masses for the souls
in purgatory, application made by
the Blessed Virgin, to be said by me
or my confreres, if I succeed
with the work of Mary.

156

September 8, 1834. Champagnat. Letter to Cholleton. [OM 323 [M], 2]:

I see clearly that the work of the priests is going to collapse completely at Valbenoite. My God, what do you ask of me? There is nothing I am not ready to sacrifice to save the work of Mary from shipwreck. I assure you that I still believe more than ever that God wills this work, but in another situation than where it is now. The interest, the desire to become rich will ruin everything.

157

March 24, 1836. Colin. Letter to Cholleton. [OM 377, 1s]:

[1] I have already had the honor of telling you, in a letter of the 16 February, that I had said in Rome that we renounce the idea of including under the name Society of Mary the brothers and sisters, and that we restrict all our requests to the company of priests alone. [...] [2] [...] I cannot tell you, Vicar General, the sentiments of confidence that the Lord's goodness with regard to our little enterprise raises up in my heart. For the past twenty years I seem to have had no taste for anything except this work of our good Mother; perhaps I will have the joy of seeing it organized and approved by the Holy See before I die. I cannot describe the sentiments I feel. [...]

158

October 12, 1837. Champagnat. Letter to M. Joseph Marie Dumas, parish priest of Saint-Martin-la-Sauveté, Loire. [LChamp 142, §1]:

We will receive with pleasure the young man about whom you spoke with me if he has, as you tell me, the qualities that you indicate to me. I thank you at the same time for the interest that you take in the work of Mary. May that good mother grant you the hundredfold even in this life.

159

1838-1839. *Colin. A word caught by Mayet. [Mayet 1, 11 = OM 449]:*

Speaking of the beginnings of the Society: People made fun of us: it was to be expected; for myself, I would have made fun of a similar work had I seen it come to birth. With such material, how could one undertake such works? It is the affair of God, the work of Mary.

160

December 31, 1843. *Colin. To the confreres at the Capucinière. [Mayet 1, 682sm = OM 573 = FS 75]:*

[...] At the origin of our work, it was quite nebulous; everybody was against us, we were lacking in everything. It was necessary to rely on God alone; there was only Him. On the other hand, I felt myself pushed to this work, not by youthful ardor, as one often sees, but by a movement that I felt come from on high. That is what gave me the habit of praying always and for everything.

161

April 1844. *Mayet. Letter to the missionaries in Oceania. [IMJ 299, 2]:*

The Blessed Virgin continues to shower blessings on Her work and the small tree She planted in Her Son's Church is prospering. The three branches of the Society have increased greatly, especially the Fathers and the Brothers. The Marist Sisters, whose noble object is to imitate the life of Mary and who draw down so many graces on our missions and our works by their prayers and penances, are established in Belley, in Lyons, Meximieux, Ste-Foy-lès-Lyon where they have a good orphanage, and, quite lately at St Antoine in the diocese of Grenoble where an existing community asked to be affiliated to them.

162

1844. *Déclas/Courveille. Narrative on the origins of the Society, written by Étienne Déclas. [Mayet 5, 393 = OM 591, 6]:*

However, since M. Courveille's home parish was in the diocese of Lyons after the new division which was made after the revolution, he had to come into his own diocese. The vicars general of Le Puy wanted to keep him, but despite their requests M. Bochard, vicar general of Lyons, refused to agree to it. M. Courveille, having been snatched from their hands by ecclesiastical authority, when he arrived in Lyons went to pay his respects to M. Bochard, who asked him why these people in Le Puy were so anxious to keep him. He replied naively that it was because of the work of the blessed Virgin which he had in mind and which he hoped to set up in Le Puy. "My friend," M. Bochard said to him, "you will find in me as good a father as at Le Puy, and you will do here what you wanted to do at Le Puy." M. Courveille went away happy.

163

June 4, 1852. Colin. Allocution at the chapter of the Marist Brothers. [AFM Acts of the chapter of 1852, p. 123]:

O my dear brothers, how your Society has grown; a few days ago it was still but a little sapling, and now look at it, it has become a great tree that protects in its shade the most interesting part of the flock of Jesus Christ. Effectively, my dear brothers, I hardly know how your Society began; Fr. Champagnat and some other confreres, we had this idea at the seminary but hardly even knew what we would do; but Providence, that wanted this work, developed it little by little; it wished that Fr. Champagnat be charged with the branch of the brothers and I with that of the fathers, in such a way, however, as to make for only one and the same congregation..... Yes, my dear brothers, I ought to tell you, I was really worried when I saw the health of Fr. Champagnat deteriorating every day. I hardly knew what was going to become of your congregation; but the good God, who saw to the conservation of this work, provided for everything: he inspired Fr. Champagnat to nominate a successor while he was still alive; you all remember with delight the important ceremony that took place on that occasion and the one you chose..... Fr. Champagnat made me depositary of his last wishes; I would have been able, after that act, to get involved in your affairs; but I understood perfectly that that would only confuse your government. I have, then, left everything in the hands of Brother Director General and his assistants. (They sent me their circulars for the convocation of the general chapter. All has been done with common accord.) And what have you to say, my dear brothers, about those whom Providence has charged with leading you? Have they not continued to lead you in the same direction as your superior? Has his spirit not rested upon them? Have you anything to complain about their administration? Isn't everything going as before? Aren't your houses multiplying every day?..... O my dear brothers, how true it is to say that your congregation is the work of the Blessed Virgin, that she continues to bless it and make it prosper.

164

1853. Maîtrepierre. History of the origins. [OM 752, 30, 32 and 43]:

[30] One must not believe, however, that trials ceased to pursue the work of Mary. At Lyons they were multiple and strong; I don't know the details well enough. But at Belley, they pursued the work and led it, in a way, irresistibly toward its destruction. The protection of the diocese smothered it. Bishop Devie was endowed with a very active and very effective zeal, but his zeal was diocesan, his zeal was personal; he wished to act on his own and, every time he took action on behalf of his diocese, he succeeded marvelously. But the little Society that took root at his side ought, by its end and its means, to launch itself into the universe; his zeal was irritated by this idea. "What does this colossal aim matter to me? I would give them good men, and they will send them I don't know where. It will be diocesan." [...]

[32] [...] This consolation [the letter from Pius VII] did not suffice for Fr. Colin; he had made a vow to labor at the work of the blessed Virgin until it had been presented to Rome, but it was impossible to obtain permission to present himself before the Sovereign Pontiff; Bishop Devie even refused any trip to Lyons. [...]

[43] In several conferences, Fr. Colin explained the constitutions that the spirit of God had dictated to him under the protection of the blessed Virgin. This venerable founder, on the basis of an unshakeable faith, sustained by the grace of Jesus Christ, and protected by Mary, had worked more than twenty years amid contradictions, scorn, grounds for discouragement, insufficiency of means, in order to make this work of heaven triumph over earthly obstacles. It was a tangible

consolation for him to see it at the point to which it had progressed. It was a pleasure for him to explain its spirit to confreres who were ready to consecrate themselves irrevocably to it. But, to nourish his edifying humility, the Lord gave him problems of language, a difficulty of expression and even a really extraordinary dearth of ideas. We all sensed, nevertheless, the spirit of God hidden under that apparent poverty and we admired in him a vigorous courage, a solid resolution, a subtle and provident spirit, a rare prudence and especially a charming modesty. This modesty was born of supernatural feelings that penetrated him to the depths of his soul; it was strengthened in manifold trials that he never ceased to meet in his undertakings. He was and still is so convinced that his work is the work of God and of the blessed Virgin that the idea and the title of founder really makes him indignant. Ah! yes, founders, ah! wonderful founders! God leads us, sometimes we obey, often we resist, we put up obstacles, and that's all. Thus, convinced that it is the work of God, his modest simplicity has never prevented him from believing that the Society of Mary was called to do great things in the Church of God. "Mary," he said, "was the protectress of the Church in the cradle; she is to be so in a very special way at the end of time."

165

1854. Colin. *To the chapter, speaking about the work at La Neylière. [Jeantin 6, 70]:*

I am no more in pain about this work than I was about the Society of Mary. It is not my work. That is what makes me confident. It is the work of God, the work of the Blessed Virgin.

166

June 28, 1858. Chavoin. *Last advice to her niece. [RMJ 107, 1]:*

[...] How many points of our simple rule will not be able to be practiced just as they are, how many practices of the common life will be changed. Oh, my child, I tremble for you, do not abandon prayer. Love that simple prayer which the blessed Virgin prescribed for us. Never miss your Office, you know it by heart, say it going and coming when you cannot be present at the community exercise, or if it is not said; say it in bed when you have not been able to fit it in otherwise. Replace me in this pious practice. For fifty years I have never missed it and it has always done me good. Never miss saying *Praised and adored forever be Jesus Christ in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, etc.* before leaving the chapel; you know the good that this prayer has done in all our houses. Oh, how I regret that it is now no longer said. These little formulas, which pleased our Savior so much since they had been ordered by his Mother, have been changed. I have bewailed it but could do nothing about it. I was not asked about it either before or after. May God be blessed for all and with my whole heart I ask him to bless fully all that is done (saying this she joined her hands) because I desire only the continuance and prosperity of the work of the blessed Virgin but I greatly fear a falling off... (she began to cry).

167

September 1868. Colin. *Words to spoken to Jeantin. [OM 812, 2]:*

Fr. Founder is always recommending the life of Nazareth; that is what we need, he says, we have not yet entered Nazareth. Then: mistrust of oneself, confidence in God, in the Blessed Virgin.

Whenever he made a blunder he used to say: Good Mother, you fix everything; well then, fix this now. He cried out with a great gush of feeling and lifting up his arms to heaven: O good Mother, the Society is your work; O, if only I had been a mere passive instrument, it would all have gone much better; it is because I mixed in something of my own that we have these misfortunes.

168

July 9, 1870. Colin. Letter to Choizin. [OM 837, 6]:

In my thought, seeing how events unfolded, the role of that priest [Courveille], in the designs of God, amounted to manifesting the project of a Society of Mary exteriorly, but not to see it through. The result was that others have been able to labor at the projected work, without making noise, without blowing their horn and in an entirely hidden manner. That was how little by little the work of the most humble of virgins was to come about.

169

July 19-25, 1870. Colin. Notes of Fr. Jeantin reporting some declarations made by Colin at La Neylière. [OM 839, 21]:

I say to the Blessed Virgin: Good Mother, you know well that it is not my work, but yours; you know how I acted and what my purpose was. Then he told me: I did not act *on my own initiative* when I signed M. Courveille's name.

170

1871? Eugene Colin. Testimony about his uncle Jean-Claude Colin. [Jeantin 1, 69a = OM 851, 3]:

Fr. Founder has never been prodigal of intimate communications with me. I often heard him say only that the Society was the work of the Blessed Virgin, that she was the one who did everything to establish it. But today he made me understand clearly that he had had in this affair something more than a simple *inspiration from heaven*; that the will of God had been manifested to him more evidently than by his own reflections and his personal inclination.

171

April 22, 1873. Colin. Letter. [Jeantin 6, 330-331]:

My only ambition at present is to conserve, to maintain and to nourish union of hearts, charity, and the spirit of the blessed Virgin in all the members of the family, regarding myself as being no longer of this world, and begging you all very humbly so to regard me. The Blessed Virgin herself will do her work much better through all of you than if I were to busy myself with it. The evident blessings which have accompanied you to Rome for the approbation of the Constitutions assure me that Heaven takes care of you without me. Just have a living faith, complete confidence and courage.

August 15, 1873. Colin. At the general chapter, as related by Fr. Ducournau. [APM 322.459 = QS 396, 3 & 10]:

[3] “I am leaving you, no doubt for ever in this world... even now I am no longer of it, this world: my age, my infirmities! But you, Messieurs, are in it and that is enough for me. You will carry on the work of the blessed Virgin. I am content to say how happy, how consoled the good spirit animating you makes me. I have seen the Holy Spirit in the midst of your deliberations, in your midst the blessed Virgin, the one who is to guide you into the harbor of salvation.

[10] “[...] I beg pardon of you for all the troubles I have caused you throughout my life as a Marist. I beg pardon of you for all the moments of bad example I have given. Pray for me, that the good God may forgive all the faults by which I have impeded the work of the blessed Virgin. I feel a very heavy responsibility weighing upon me on account of this work. I have not done all I ought to have done. Come, my children, bless me.” [...]

Further Witnesses to Reception

Grouped here are a few significant texts that give further indication as to how the founding vision was received and understood in the ongoing tradition.

173

January 25, 1822. The Marist aspirants. Letter to Pope Pius VII. [OM 69]:

To the Most Holy Father in Christ and Lord Pius the Seventh, Supreme Pontiff.

Most Holy Father:

[1] Prostrate at the feet of your holiness, we beg to be allowed to recall to your memory the project of establishing a new society of religious under the name Society of Mary, which several priests from the diocese of Lyons in France, conceived many years ago. In fact, we already presumed to explain briefly by letter the purpose, the origins and the progress of this society, first to Your Holiness in February of eighteen nineteen, and again to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Regulars in November of the same year. Since then, we have not ceased working for the aforesaid project with many bishops, to whom we confided everything and whose assent we obtained, and with the vicars general of our own diocese of Lyons, who consistently used the shortage of priests as an excuse to exhort us to be patient.

[2] Recently, however, we renewed our request, for permission to devote more of our energy to our project, and the vicars general of the diocese of Lyons finally begged us, as it were, to wait until next Easter. So we hope that in the near future we may be able to submit everything plainly to your Holiness.

[3] In the meantime, however, we presume to recall to the memory of Your Holiness the object of the Society which will be established, if it pleases your Holiness. Its purpose is to expend everything for the greater glory of God, for the honor of Mary the Mother of God and for the service of the Roman Church. To work for the salvation of their own souls and those of their neighbor through missions to believers and unbelievers in whatever part of the world the Apostolic See might wish to send us; to catechize the uneducated and ignorant; to train youth in every way to knowledge and virtue; to visit those in prison and the sick in hospitals; such are our projects as they are set out for us in constitutions already composed.

[4] For we have those constitutions, not taken from any book or any other constitutions; we hope to be able to submit them to Your Holiness and to let you know clearly also whence we have them.

We are of your Holiness, the most humble and devoted servants,

J.C. Courveille, s.p.g.

Colin, priest

Colin, priest

From the village of Cerdon, department of Ain, France, January 24, 1822.

174

September 8, 1831. The Marist aspirants. Consecration to the blessed Virgin at the close of the retreat at Belley. [APM 117 = OM 236]:

Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary

[1] Blessed Virgin, behold the children your divine Son has given you and whom you have chosen to work for the advancement of your Society. They know that they are unworthy of this favor, and, prostrate at your feet, beg you to accept this just tribute of their gratitude. O gentle and loving Mother, we place in your hands now and forever our hearts, our wills, our persons, our possessions and all we are. We promise to labor with all our strength for the prosperity and extension of your Society. We pledge to work our whole life for your glory and that of your divine Son, to spread devotion to you as much as possible and never to do or undertake anything without imploring your aid. Blessed Virgin, be for us always a most tender and compassionate Mother; be our advocate and protector before God. Keep far from us all spirit of discord or dissension. Obtain for us the grace to remain faithful until death to our vocation and to be united one day around the throne of your glory, as we are now assembled around your statue. Amen.

[2] Done at Belley, at the end of eight days retreat, this eighth day of September 1831. The members of the Society present have signed thus:

Rouchon; Terraillon; Champagnat; Chanel; F. Grandclément; J. B. F. Pompallier; Jallon; Maîtreperre; Déclas; Deschamps M.; Convers; J. Humbert M.; Debelay; Bret; Colin younger; Bourdin elder; Cellier, O Maria; Colin elder.

[3] After the retreat of 1834 given at the minor seminary of Belley, the members of the Society have again signed the above consecration.

Déclas; Champagnat; Terraillon, pastor of N.D.; P. Colin; Antoine Jallon; Etienne Séon; J. A. Bourdin, priest; J. M. Humbert; J. C. Deschamps; Convers, priest; Chanut; Chanel; Maîtreperre; Bret; Servant; A. Séon; Colin the younger; Emprin.

175

December 8, 1831. Professors and missionaries of the minor seminary of Belley. Consecration to the blessed Virgin. [APM 117 = OM 240]:

A.M.D.G.

To the greater glory of God

Holy Virgin, we are your children, you are our Mother. At your request, without considering our weakness or our unworthiness, your divine Son called us and brought us together in this refuge, the cradle of your Society, to be the first members of a family whose special mistress you want to be, to which you give your name and which wants to devote itself entirely to your service because it is proud to belong to you. Holy Virgin, what shall we give you in return for such a signal favor, which we value more than any good or honor on earth? May the angels and saints join with us in rendering you the fair tribute of our gratitude. With your servant St. Ildephonse, we wish to proclaim everywhere your greatness and your privileges, especially that of your Immaculate Conception, to publish your deeds of kindness and mercy, to love you and to have others serve you as much as we can and as long as we shall live. Mother of God and of men, accept the homage of our total dependence and the offering we make of all that we are and all that we have; we sacrifice it to you irrevocably. We install you as the Mistress and Superior of this house, which is yours. This solemn day when we celebrate the feast of your Immaculate Conception will become for us the time when, each year, we renew our fervor and increase our zeal in serving you. Purest Virgin, we pledge ourselves to celebrate each year this feast with the greatest devotion possible, to defend and sustain the glorious privilege of your Immaculate Conception till our last breath and to spread your glory everywhere.

J. L. V. Rollet; Chanel; J. Humbert; Colin elder; Colin younger, sup.; Bret, subdeacon; Deschamps; Debelay, priest; Déclas, priest; Ch. Balmont, priest;

Convers; J. A. Bourdin elder, priest; F. Grandclément; M. A. Lacôte, priest; Guillaumot, priest; J.P. Bordat; Jallon, priest; Peretiere.

176

May 18, 1840. Champagnat. Spiritual Testament. [OM 417]:

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

[1] Here, in the presence of God, under the auspices of the most blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph, wishing to make known to all the Brothers of Mary, the expression of my last and dearest wishes, I summon all my strength to make my Spiritual Testament according to what I believe most in accordance with the will of God, and most conducive to the good of the Society.

[2] I desire that whole and perfect obedience always prevail among the Brothers of Mary; that those under authority, seeing in their superiors the representatives of Jesus Christ, obey them heart and soul, renouncing, when necessary, their own will and judgment. Let them remember that the obedient religious will win victories, and that it is mainly obedience that is the base and pillar of a community. In this spirit, the Little Brothers of Mary submit blindly, not only to the major superiors, but also to all those who will be appointed to direct and lead them. They will let this truth of faith sink deep into their minds: that the superior represents Jesus Christ, and that when he commands, he should be obeyed as if it were Jesus Christ commanding.

[3] Also, dear Brothers, I beg you with all the love of my heart, and by all the love you bear me, keep ever alive among you the charity of Christ. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. May there be among you but one same heart and one same spirit. May people be able to say of the Little Brothers of Mary, as they did of the first Christians: "See how they love one another!..." That is the desire of my heart and my burning wish, at this last moment of my life. Yes, my dearest Brothers, hear these last words of your Father, which are those of our most Beloved Savior: Love one another.

[4] I desire, my very dear Brothers, that this charity which ought to unite you all together as members of a single body, extend also to all the other congregations. Oh, I implore you by the boundless love of Jesus Christ, guard against ever bearing envy of anyone, and especially of those whom God calls to work as you do, in the religious state, for the education of youth. Be the first to rejoice at their success, and to grieve at their misfortunes. Commend them often to the good God, and to blessed Mary. Give way to them readily. Do not lend an ear to any talk that would seek to harm them. Let the glory of God alone and the honor of Mary be your only aim and your whole ambition.

[5] As your wills must be united with those of the Fathers of the Society of Mary in the will of a single and general Superior, I desire also that your hearts and your sentiments be united with them always in Jesus and Mary. May their interests be yours; may you find your happiness in going to their assistance as often as you will be required to do so. May the same spirit, the same love, unite you to them as branches to the same trunk and as children of one same family to a good Mother, blessed Mary. Since the Superior General of the Fathers is equally that of the branch of the Brothers, he must be the center of unity for them both. Happy as I was with the obedience and the submission that the Brothers of Mary have always shown me, I desire and expect that the Superior General always find the same obedience and submission. His spirit is mine, his will is mine. I regard that perfect accord and that entire submission as the base and pillar of the Society of the Brothers of Mary.

[6] I ask also of the good God, and I desire with all the affection of my soul, that you persevere faithfully in the devout practice of the presence of God, which is the soul of prayer, of meditation and of all the virtues. May humility and simplicity always be the character of the Little Brothers of Mary. May a tender and filial devotion for our good Mother animate you at all times

and in all circumstances. Make her loved everywhere, in whatever way you can. She is the first Superior of the whole Society. With devotion to Mary join devotion to her most worthy spouse, the glorious St. Joseph. You know that he is one of your first patrons. You do the work of guardian angels towards the children entrusted to you; so to these pure spirits also, pay a special homage of love, respect and confidence.

[7] My very dear Brothers, be faithful to your vocation, love it and persevere in it with courage. Keep yourselves in a great spirit of poverty and detachment. Let the daily observance of your holy rule preserve you from ever failing in the sacred vow by which you are bound to the fairest and frailest of the virtues. There are some difficulties in leading the life of a good religious, but grace sweetens everything. Jesus and Mary will help you; besides, life is quite short and eternity will never end. Oh, how consoling it is, at the moment of appearing before God, to remember that we have lived under the protection of Mary, and in her holy Society. May it please that good Mother to preserve you, give you increase and bring you to holiness. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the imparting of the Holy Spirit be with you always. I leave you with confidence within the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, waiting the while until we can all reunite together in blissful eternity.

[8] Such is my last and express will for the glory of Jesus and Mary.

[9] The present spiritual testament shall be delivered into the hands of M. Colin, Superior General of the Society of Mary.

[10] Done at Our Lady of the Hermitage, the eighteenth of May, eighteen hundred and forty, in the presence of the undersigned.

The Superior and Founder of the Little Brothers of Mary,
Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat, priest.

[Brother Francois
Brother Louis-Marie
Brother Jean-Marie
Brother Louis
Brother Stanislaus
Brother Bonaventure.]

[11] I humbly beseech all those whom I may have offended or scandalized in any way, albeit I am not conscious of any willful offense towards anybody, graciously to grant me pardon, in consideration of the infinite charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to unite their prayers to mine to obtain from the good God that he deign to forget the sins of my past life, and receive my soul into his infinite mercy.

[12] I die full of respect, gratitude and submission to the Superior General of the Society of Mary, and with sentiments of the most perfect union for all the members that compose it, especially for the Brothers that the good God confided to my care and who have always been so dear to my heart.

Champagnat.

177

August 15, 1872. General Chapter of the Society of Mary. Declaration. [APM 322.152, minutes = OM 848, 11-14]:

[11] [...] A Declaration of the General Chapter of the Society of Mary assembled at Sainte-Foy on August 15, 1872, whereby Mary is acknowledged and proclaimed, in the name of the whole Society, our founder and our first and perpetual superior.

[12] "The undersigned members of the general chapter of the Society of Mary hereby declare to all Marists now and of the future that by this solemn act they gladly recognize Mary, Queen of

heaven and earth, as their true founder and choose her again, freely and spontaneously, as their first and perpetual superior.

[13] “By this solemn statement they openly proclaim that always, in all circumstances and particularly during their proximate deliberations, they wish to depend completely on this most noble Virgin. Wholeheartedly and with all their strength they renounce their own views, their own wisdom, their own inclinations, so as to have no other views but Mary’s, no other wisdom but hers and no other inclinations but those of her Immaculate Heart. In this heart they place their understanding and their wills so that she may purify, enlighten, inspire and guide them. Thus they will be preserved from all illusions of nature and the devil and put no obstacle to the accomplishment of the plans of this merciful Mother. With sure steps they will walk along the path she has traced out for them.

[14] “Since this session of the Chapter opens on this great feast of the Assumption and triumph of our noble Queen, they humbly beseech her not to leave them orphans but to do for them what Elijah did for his disciple Elisha as he went up to heaven, to allow the mantle of her protection and the fullness of her spirit to descend on all Marists present and to come. May she guide them until the end and may all the glory of the good they do redound to her and, through her, to Jesus Christ our Lord. For themselves, the only reward they seek here below is to reproduce as perfectly as possible the mystery of her hidden life and see fulfilled in themselves these words of their rule: *Let them think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things.*”

CERDON

At Cerdon Jean-Claude Colin became convinced that the idea of the Society of Mary came from God. In prayer and meditation on the mystery of Mary's presence at the birth of the Church, he discovered how the Society should be present in the Church of his time.

By "tasting God" as Father Colin did at Cerdon, Marists realize the radical opposition between the spirit of Mary and the spirit of ambition, covetousness, and the lust for power.

—Constitutions 1988

Cerdon: Experiences

This dossier contains various materials that can help us understand and enter into the spiritual experience of Jean-Claude Colin at Cerdon. The texts are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

Setting the scene

178

1878-1881. Fr. Benedict Lagniet. Historical notes. [OM 853, 1-13]:

[1] At the first manifestation of the Society by the 12 from the seminary, there was formal opposition on the part of the diocesan administration to their coming together as a community.

[2] We recall that Cardinal Fesch, the Archbishop, was exiled to Rome with the family of the Emperor Napoleon by Louis XVIII. The Vicars General, MM. Courbon, Renaud and Bochart, saw only the need of priests for parishes. At the first request to gather in community, the response was: "There is a diocesan community at the house of the Carthusians. Those who so desire and are judged worthy to be admitted may enter there." [3] Meanwhile, under the pretext of a lack of

priests the 12 were dispersed in the 3 Departments that formed the diocese of Lyons. This was the stumbling block for several who lost sight of their original intentions. From outside, it seemed as if it were all over. Those who kept their vocation did not want to come together at the diocesan house, but pronounced themselves in favor of a society truly Catholic and truly Roman in its thrust. [4] The Very Rev. Fr. Colin was of this number; furthermore, since he was inspired to this vocation from his youth and the haste of some to manifest the project at the seminary could have worked against it, a gathering at that time would have been imprudent. As for the one who put himself forward in influencing the others, his action did not come from God. Moreover, his overly forward manner was bound to alienate some of the members rather than bring them together into a society. Without doing anything to break with him, Fr. Colin, whose character led him to hide rather than put himself forward, went to Cerdon with his elder brother, who had the same spirit as he. They prayed, they waited, they took advantage of opportunities.

[5] The one who appeared to be the center at the seminary and who celebrated the Mass at Our Lady of Fourviere would persevere in his views, it is true, but his obtrusive manner did not reassure the others and was even the reason why a few left the project. And because he thought he was the center elected by God to direct the others, and had some papers to show, he claimed to be the one to act on behalf of the group.

[6] The Rev. Fr. Colin, who was the elect of God, kept himself hidden through modesty. As a curate at Cerdon (Ain) with his elder brother as pastor, he devoted himself to prayer and silence, awaiting God's good time and His will. And what could he do without a miracle of grace?

[7] 1. We are familiar with his shyness and modesty at the seminary, where he always appeared in the last place.

[8] 2. His isolation in that part of the Department of the Ain, Cerdon, kept him apart from interaction with the others.

[9] 3. Neither he nor anyone else dared to communicate with the administration in Lyons concerning the project. There was, of course, Fr. Cholleton, their director at the seminary; but aside from the fact that this dear spiritual father and protector from the seminary was not in a position to speak up, Colin had to keep silent before his ecclesiastical superiors and be content with fruitless wishes.

[10] 4. Scarcity of resources were felt in a little country parish where, like anywhere else, the works to be maintained and the poor to be helped exhausted the meager stole fees and even made him watch the amount spent on correspondence and on the purchase of books.

[11] And so he was obliged to bury himself in his retreat, to pray, to meditate, to wait for better days, to persevere in the project with three or four companions dispersed as he was, confident, and living frugally and in self-denial. He was happy to be able to confer with Archbishop Bigex of Chambery and the Nuncio in Paris, and to correspond with Rome. It was there, that is in God alone, that little by little he found counsel, direction and encouragement.

[12] That former companion of his, mentioned above, who had previously dominated him and worked against him in the path he had to follow, made an attempt at something at the Hermitage but then had to be sent away forever; and so he left Colin at ease with other more modest companions who walked in his spirit of abandonment to the holy will of God.

[13] In Cerdon, they lived in prayer, poverty, zeal, humility and sacrifice, that is, they lived the Marist life. It was the mustard seed.

179

End of 1840. Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn (Mother St. Joseph). Anecdotes concerning the beginnings of the S.M. recounted orally to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 728-730 = OM 513, 1-10]:

[1] When the Fathers Colin were at Cerdon, they were revered by all the inhabitants. Had they remained there, the whole parish would soon have been like a religious community; already a fervent group of 30 men used to meet in the presbytery. Their domestic arrangements were so poor and they lived in such poverty that everyone in Cerdon was astonished.

[2] During this time they used to receive very harsh letters from M. Courbon, vicar general of Lyons. Another vicar general, M. Bochard, made them suffer a lot. He meant well, otherwise, she added laughing, the blessed Virgin would be vexed with him.

[3] When the Fathers were almost overwhelmed by these annoying difficulties, I felt full of courage and cheered them up. At other times, when they were untroubled, my turn came. Ah! those were our finest hours. One day they received a letter which upset them very much and the same post brought an important answer. The Fathers were discouraged. I said to them, "Let us go to the church." We all three went. We prayed for an hour, or an hour and a half, and we came out feeling peaceful and contented.

[4] Finally, seeing how M. Courbon was acting, I made up my mind to go and see him. Pretending to be discouraged with regard to the fathers, I told him it was normal that the priests should begin before the sisters, but that, in my opinion, the Society of priests would not succeed and I wanted to get going on my own account. M. Courbon replied, "They will succeed. The time has not yet come, but they will succeed. We want to test them thoroughly. They are still only unbearded youngsters." (As we know, M. Courbon liked a joke.) That consoled me a great deal. Afterwards I went to holy communion at Fourvière.

[5] (At this time the Holy Father, by arrangement with the government, created several new dioceses, among them that of Belley. Mgr. Devie, vicar general in a southern diocese, was appointed bishop.)

[6] He more than anyone made trouble for the Society. He did so to such an extent that people — and I myself — found it hard not to be uncharitable. He wanted to destroy the work, to stifle it.

Then he tried to shape it in his own way. If we had done what His Lordship wanted, we would not be here today.

[7] When he came to Cerdon, I went to speak to him with my companion, who was from the same district as myself. He suggested that we should enter the community of St. Joseph. We answered: No. — St. Charles? Still less. — Other communities? No again. Then I spoke out boldly like St. Peter, and I said, “My Lord, there are two of us. If we had the older congregations in mind, we could have entered a convent long ago. But we left home and family to start the Society of the Blessed Virgin.” Then I told him that someone was inviting us to Le Puy and that we would like to go there. It was Madame d’Apinac, a former Visitation nun who had a relative in the ministry. This relative had undertaken to let her have back her old convent, which had been turned into a barrack and was in a good state of preservation. Bishop de Bonald, then bishop of Le Puy, told me later, when he was installed as Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons, “You would have been better off there than in Belley, but God did not wish it so.”

[8] Shortly after this interview Bishop Devie, Bishop of Belley, allowed us to take a habit. It was evident that it was in the designs of God’s Providence that the daughters of the best families of Cerdon come to join us, we two poor girls, to begin.

[9] How I like to recall our beginnings! We were very poorly housed, with a bad floor, over a stable with a horse. (I think the floor had holes right through in several places.) I often thought the horse was better housed than we were!

[10] At last the Fathers left Cerdon, where they had been for about ten years. The people wept and regretted their departure. But when, 8 days later, they saw the Sisters leaving also, what tears were shed! They had hoped we would stay in Cerdon and we were going to Belley! They came in a body to visit us and say good-bye, and showed great eagerness to help us.

Ministry and life

180

1838-1839. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 524s = OM 487, 2]:

“For my first two months as a curate, I never spoke one word louder than another... Everybody complained that I was cold, that I was dead. Of course, I have changed quite a bit. I began once to speak strongly from the pulpit, and then etc. All my life I have been very much attracted to solitude, the hidden life, prayer, the church and my bedroom. Ah, well! God has always kept me busy and active. I thank him very much, however, for the taste he has given me for the hidden life, because this attraction serves as a counterbalance for me in the stress and strains of the active life.”

181

Schoolyear 1841-42. Mayet. Incidents in ministry at Cerdon, recounted by Colin during one or another of the four preceding years. [Mayet S1, 122-125 = OM 541]:

[1] He was very resolute on occasion. Once, when a man came to present himself as a sponsor for Baptism, he believed he had to tell him that he would be obliged to refuse him, seeing that he had no proof of his Catholicity. The man flared up and ranted about the foolishness of the things of religion. Two other men were there; Fr. Colin said to them, “Gentlemen, I call upon you as

witnesses of the fact that Mr. *** has turned to ridicule of our ministry at the very moment when he came to demand it.

[2] Another time, people were making a hubbub at night. Fr. Colin took a lantern and went to the place where he thought the noise was coming from. "Father, Father," someone shouted, and everyone fled and dispersed like straw before the wind. He laughed a lot while recounting this incident.

[3] A person who interested him and whom he wished to correct had immersed himself in worldliness and finery. Fr. Colin met him and made a deep bow, a gesture that doubtless was well understood.

[4] Another time, he went to see a good woman who was quite sensible and whom he wanted to cure of dancing (she had had a party the previous evening or some short time before). He asked her about her health with the greatest anxiety, asking how she was and annoying her with these signs of concern; she was, I believe, the mother of a family.

[5] Another time, he cured a rather upright woman of dancing by giving as a penance that she dance all alone by the wall of a barn. She thought at first that he was joking, but later she said that that little lesson, indirect as it was, had, more than anything else, made her see how silly dancing is.

[6] "One must know the territory," said Fr. Colin; "In the Beaujolais, one must be wary of doing things like that. But I knew the terrain."

[7] He also said, in other circumstances: "The people of the Bugey are cowardly. If you give the impression of being afraid, they are audacious; if you stand up to them, they back down." And he did not forget this maxim when dealing with them and later with the parents of the pupils in Belley, without, however, ever forgetting his manners.

[8] His brother the pastor, who undoubtedly knew what a gift of God he had in him, and whose humility made him hide behind a curtain, as it were, would push Fr. Colin forward whenever he had some great task to accomplish. One day, the latter had ranted in the pulpit; he descended, and afterwards he said to his pastor, "You always push me forward; I am not the pastor." "Stop grumbling," said his brother; "Why do you do that? You think you are not doing any good! Ah, well! After your instruction, a man who had not been to confession for ten years came looking for me. Do not complain." (They used formal language with each other even though they were brothers).

[9] Then there was the day when, having thundered from the pulpit on the previous days, he began to speak in a paternal tone and from the heart; everybody cried.

[10] On another occasion, he was in the pulpit about to begin his sermon when he suddenly left aside the subject prepared and began to improvise. This sermon produced the liveliest impression; the ladies of the parish came to beg the Sister of Bon Repos to get them a copy of it, but it was not possible. *The Spirit breathes where he wills*. I think he took as theme the abuse of grace, and it was, perhaps, on this occasion that he caused the funeral pall to be carried through the town.

[11] He told me that in general one must beware when a pastor no longer has any enemies in his parish.

[12] One time, a priest who was not very well informed on the matters about which he was preaching gave voice to a false doctrine. This caused an uproar. Fr. Colin, in a sermon, returned to that subject, and without contradicting that priest's teaching openly, he gave the appearance of explaining it and thus adroitly corrected all the errors.

[13] Someone once invited them to dinner and let forth with some ideas against religion. It was not the moment to take them up, but, on the following Sunday, Fr. Colin brought out in his sermon everything that had been said and refuted it. Thus he made an end of such bad talk.

[14] Another time, he played a very clever trick on the mayor of the place who, at least one year, against the grain of these Fathers, wanted to hold a second dance fest. He had recourse to the civil authority, the prefect, I believe, and instead of making an outcry against the mayor, he gave the impression of asking the prefect's advice, as one would to a vicar general: "Look and see,

Prefect, Sir, if we can allow this fest to be established in this way, where one might fear public disorder.” The poor Prefect was quite distressed. Then, a few Sundays later, I forget just when, these Fathers got into the pulpit and told their parishioners all that they had done to warn the civil authorities. Some evil-minded people were listening in order to criticize them; but they were unassailable, and their blow struck home. The mayor didn’t know what to say.

[15] The whole time they were at Cerdon, “We were quite happy,” he said; “we only had one crime in the parish: an unmarried woman had a baby.” That poor, unfortunate girl didn’t dare appear in church, to my knowledge. — Vice was decried. — They had organized some pious associations. — The parish went well. Their wise and firm conduct went a long way.

[16] Their unity was perfect. They only differed when it came to bothersome things that had to be done, like going to see the sick who lived a long way off when the roads and the weather were awful. Then there were duels of charity and holy disputes, each at pains to relieve his brother.

[17] It was during this time that they linked up with Fr. Jallon, pastor of Izenave, who came to see them and who had one of them, I believe, as his confessor. Eventually he joined up with them and took part in their project.

[18] Someone told me that one night when the two brothers were at prayer in the church at Cerdon, there was a big hubbub. They moved forward in the church to find out who was causing it, but the noise retreated before them and did not abate. I don’t remember who told me about this.

[19] It also seems to me that young Fr. Millot, who was quite small at that time, told me that at night he could hear the bodily mortifications Fr. Colin was doing.

182

No date (1847-1848?). Mayet. Collection of stories about ministry in Cerdon recounted by Colin. [Mayet S2, 44-49 = OM 745]:

[1] One year, the younger Fr. Colin fell ill. When his brother, the pastor, spoke to the parish about it, the whole church was filled with tears. They prayed very much for him.

[2] When they announced that they were leaving Cerdon, everybody began to sob. The younger Fr. Colin himself could not hold back the tears during vespers and his heart got away from him.

[3] They never did any visiting, except when some important need required it. When people saw them visiting some family, everyone said, “There is something wrong in that house.” Moreover, they only went when matters were public knowledge, and their visits produced the desired effects.

[4] One day, an older boy skipped catechism and during the class he loitered at the cemetery. Fr. Colin went right to his father’s house to complain to the father for not sending his son to catechism class. As soon as he heard this, the father got indignant, picked up a stick, and was going to beat the boy. Fr. Colin got between the two of them and said to the father that he would regret giving this punishment, etc., etc., and calmed him down.

[5] One day he wanted to stir up and awaken the zeal of the parish; he questioned all those children he knew would not be able to answer, asking them one after the other, “My child, What is God? What is the Trinity?...” They were all speechless... Then Fr. Colin walked about without saying anything; he stooped over, his face took on a sad expression (he did this on purpose), and he shouted, “You poor children, your poor children!... If you had just fallen dangerously ill and someone came looking for us (as they should), we could not in conscience absolve you because you do not know the things that are necessary for salvation. You poor children! You poor children! You are on the edge of an abyss...” After this sermon, several people, in great distress, came to offer to go around to the families and teach catechism to the children. Fr. Colin achieved his goal.

[6] He never made personal remarks in the pulpit.

[7] One day, a young man presented himself to be a Baptismal sponsor. Fr. Colin said to him, "How can you take on the responsibility for someone else when you do not take responsibility for yourself? You don't go to confession." The young man promised to do so. Fr. Colin allowed him to be sponsor. Some time later, the young man presented himself again to be a sponsor. But he had not kept his promise. Fr. Colin said, "But how can I allow it? Didn't you promise to go to confession?" The young man said, "Father, it is quite easy. Just sit down right over there." Fr. Colin was taken aback, and he said some friendly words, but without hearing his confession, and then went ahead with the baptism. This time the young man kept his word and made his confession.

[8] He announced the word of God with vigor and the men loved it. When he got up to preach, the men would say, "It's the curate, it's the curate," and they were very pleased.

[9] One day the Fathers needed a ciborium for the parish and they preached about it. Right away some women came to offer to take up a collection. Everybody contributed except for one who refused. When the ciborium had been bought, Fr. Colin showed it to the parishioners and thanked them for their quick response. The one who had refused was so ashamed that he gave the church some 15-franc bouquets. The Fathers had been very careful not to say anything in the parish (about his not wishing to contribute); people would have pointed the finger.

[10] The younger Fr. Colin wanted to stop people from dressing in a certain indecent fashion. One day he met a woman who was unmarried and was dressed in that way. He stopped and, without looking at her, he pretended to look her over and to follow her with his eyes, and said to someone who was passing by, "Who is that married woman? ..." The other said, "She's not married." Fr. Colin looked dumbfounded and repeated, "She's not married? ..." That was all. This story got around the village and they stopped dressing that way.

[11] Fr. Colin, speaking about this and about many other things, said, "I know a lot of areas where you couldn't do that sort of thing, for example in the Beaujolais; you would do a lot of harm. But I knew my terrain. They are good people.

[12] At Cerdon there was a big 18 year old who for several years they could not get to make his first communion, because he didn't care. Fr. Colin, quite troubled at not being able to help this soul, decided to try a physical remedy to shake up this inert lump. He asked him some catechism questions; the young man made no response; then he took a rod from under his cassock and said to him, "Hold out your hand." The young man held out his hand, received the reward for his indolence, and, in the course of the year, he finally made his first communion, to the great satisfaction of Fr. Colin.

183

1838-1839. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 453 = OM 480]:

"After I had left the seminary, I was writing every minute to Fr. Cholleton, my spiritual director. I didn't dare, so to speak, to take a step without consulting him. He always answered me right away. Finally, after a certain amount of time, he wrote me saying I had to step out, to think for myself, to cut the apron strings. I got his point. I was more discreet. I could see that otherwise I'd never accomplish anything worthwhile and get all bent out of shape."

184

School year 1841-42. Colin. Words added after a discussion of a case of conscience about stores being open on Sunday. [Mayet S1, 129f = OM 543]:

[1] He added, "When I was curate at Cerdon, I got into the pulpit one day and, after having spoken forcefully, I turned toward my brother (the pastor) and said to him vehemently,

[2] "'And you, pastor of this parish, isn't it true that last Sunday you appeared in the midst of your people and, like Moses, you had the sadness of seeing them prostrated at the feet of the god of greed? So, your soul was troubled, your eyes gushed with tears, and like him you wanted to oppose the disorder. But like Moses, were you not received with insults by this people? And now, O pastor of this parish, what else is there for you to do but to climb back up the holy mountain and say to God, 'Either pardon them this sin or erase me from the book of life.'"

[3] "Then the whole parish knelt down spontaneously; my brother went up into the pulpit; this stroke proved most fruitful."

185

About 1892? Fr. George David. "Some notes towards a biography of the Very Rev. Fr. Colin." [OM 885, 4f]:

[4] One Sunday the pastor found some of his parishioners working, and felt he ought to say a few paternal words of correction; but they were ill received with murmurs and insults. The good pastor withdrew, silent and sad, and told his curate about it. The latter felt it would hardly do to let such a grave matter go by without protest. So, the next Sunday he got up in the pulpit and, in the course of his sermon, he reminded them of what had happened: "Children," he shouted in a tone of holy indignation, "forget the respect and affection they owe their father. His admonitions are scorned. When they hear them, they make fun of them and shake their heads. They treat him the way the Jews treated our Lord...etc...." Then, turning toward the pastor, "And now, pastor of this parish, go before the throne of God, hold out your hands in supplication. Beg mercy for this people lest the arms of divine justice fall heavily upon the guilty ones."

[5] At this very moment, by a sudden inspiration, the pastor got out of his stall and, weeping, prostrated himself at the foot of the altar. The effect of this unexpected movement was startling. They all mingled their tears with his. Since then, they no longer work on Sunday. They even got scrupulous about it. They would come to ask permission for things that didn't really matter.

186

School year 1841-42. Mayet. Narrative about Colin. [Mayet S1, 125-128 = OM 542 and addition j]:

[1] While at Cerdon, he had some very rigid principles because of the rigid, indeed all too rigid, training they were given at the major seminary of Lyons. He evidently backed off from them later on by self-instruction, since he told me that he was even more broad-minded than Bishop Devie, the Bishop of Belley.

[2] This rigidity sometimes caused him a lot of trouble; but God, who saw his uprightness and purity of heart, came to his aid.

[3] Here is an incident that proves it and that I relate as well as my memory allows. He told me it a long time ago, and I may err in some less important detail.

[4] A good and pious woman was the victim of the misconduct of her husband and of the offense of onanism. According to the principles he had been taught, Fr. Colin could not pardon this woman and give her absolution, although she had serious reasons for putting up with such an offense, although she was horrified by it, and in spite of all that she was doing to avoid it. This poor woman grieved at being barred from the sacraments that she loved, and the good Fr. Colin suffered even more than she did. But Mary did not abandon the confessor whose conscience was too severe and the poor penitent who was innocent before God. One night, this poor woman saw the blessed Virgin who, showing her a rosary, told her that with this weapon she would triumph. She gave herself, then, to Mary, prayed to her, and ever since, her husband did not make any more sinful demands, he respected the holy laws of marriage, and Fr. Colin was happy to open the fountain of the sacraments once again to a soul whom he had kept away from them for 6 months by an innocent error.

[5] The Lord is good to souls who seek him.

[j] Fr. Colin did not stick very long with such rigorous and incorrect principles as he learned during his theological studies at the major seminary of Lyons. See, to the contrary, in my memoirs, with what force he gave the Society a different thrust, even with his old professor, Fr. Cholleton, around.

187

April 1849. Maître pierre. A note on the rigorism of Colin at Cerdon. [Mayet S2, 221f = OM 693]:

[1] What made the confessional so terrible for him (for Fr. Colin) were the principles, so severe and difficult of application, that he learned at the major seminary of Lyons — and his delicacy of conscience.

[2] Later on, he corrected his ideas on the application of these principles, and he abandoned the extreme principles, even while he was still involved in parish ministry. Study, and his rather remarkable theological instinct, helped a lot in this.

188

1838-1839. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet S1, 36-38 = OM 506]:

[1] When someone who by nature was a very active person was speaking to him about this, he said, “As for me, I have never felt drawn to put myself forward; it is only with effort that I have done all this exterior ministry. This protected me from many temptations, for example from certain temptations toward natural attractions that one can experience in the confessional.

[2] “I have never had but one attraction, a unique attraction, and that was to pray and to lead a hidden life. When I was small, I liked to pray in the evening, and my uncle got angry and made me go to bed, because he figured that I was spending the nights in prayer.

[3] “Everything else I do exteriorly, God is the one who made me do it. For about 9 years I never left the confessional without throwing myself at Mary’s feet and telling her: ‘What ministry have you given me there? O my good Mother, what have you exposed me to?’ My confessional was in the chapel of the blessed Virgin. Confessional ministry is a terrifying ministry; I never went there without trembling. Be good, because you take the place of our Lord; be just, you are a judge and you must weigh things fairly. However, the scale must lean a little on the side of mercy. Nonetheless, let’s go to the confessional just the same with confidence in God.”

189

1838-1839. *Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 436 = OM 479]:*

“When my brother and I arrived in Cerdon, people were quite surprised and happy and edified when they saw the way we did things. Neither one of us seemed to be attached to our penitents; neither of us was worried about who was going to confession to the other. In one parish, people had to move stealthily when they wanted to change confessors. With the two of us, people could change as much as they wanted. You wouldn’t believe how that pleased people, how it provided some breathing space. It got to the point, on the days when we were quite busy hearing confessions, that when one of us finished before the other, the larger number who were left at one confessional went over to the other.”

190

1838-1839 (1839). *Mayet. Narrative about Colin. [Mayet 1, 457f = OM 481]:*

The way he went about converting unbelievers was not to argue with them; on the contrary, he avoided argumentation with all his might. “The devil,” he used to say, “has more wits about him than we do. Their faith,” he would add, “is hidden.” He liked to tell them, “Make your confession,” and he would have them begin. In Cerdon, there was a man who did not practice his religion; I believe it had been forty years since he had gone to confession. Several attempts had been made, several arguments had been put forth, but they were useless. Fr. Colin went one day to the man, who said, “Sir, I know what you want; it’s no use, it’s no use.” Fr. Colin said to him, “I would like to speak to you privately.” That man took him into a room. Fr. Colin sat down. “Kneel down,” he said to the man. The man gave him a hard time. “Come on, my friend, do this to please me.” He knelt down. “Make your sign of the cross.” He did so. “Begin.” And he began. He made his confession, and afterwards he was a good Christian and would go to Mass and confession... Oh! I once had something to regret, he said. I was hearing confessions. An unbeliever came to see me. I was tired. How I regret the way I answered him. It produced no results. I should have gotten him to make his confession.

191

1840. *Fr. Convers. Conferences on the origins. [APM 122 = OM 748, 4]:*

At that time Fr. Colin was exercising the holy ministry as curate in the parish of Cerdon with his elder brother who was pastor in the same parish. He was soon distinguished for his consummate virtue and his brilliance, and the power of the little Society was invested in him. Both gave the most beautiful examples of zeal and charity toward the poor. They kept only the bare necessities for themselves. The story is told how, one winter evening, one of them (the younger one) was accosted by a poor man who had no shoes. A lot of snow had fallen. He took off his shoes and gave them to him, and, when he got home, he gave as an excuse that he had left his shoes on the way. To all this zeal and charity, they added the example of a most austere and mortified life. They swept their rooms themselves. They washed their linen and their dishes themselves. God also came to them in sufferings and great humiliations, which drew down great blessings on their parish, for after some time it was completely changed.

192

No date (1845-1848?). Mayet. Note on the catechetical method used by Colin at Cerdon. [Mayet 3, 157m = OM 733, 2]:

When he was curate, he tried 3 or 4 catechetical methods to see which would be most useful. He ended up by having them recite the whole catechism lesson 3 or 4 times before he explained it. In the evening, all the children were busy at home learning with such ardor that their parents could not get them to do anything else.

193

Autumn 1846. Mayet. Article on Colin. [Mayet S2, 40f = OM 648]:

[1] When he was curate at Cerdon, Father analyzed the book called *The Triple Crown*, which is entirely about the blessed Virgin, and he often used this work of his later.

[2] The mayor of Cerdon was the nephew of a pastor who was a learned man and who had left a sizeable library. Father took advantage of it and studied several important authors, notably Noel Alexandre, and he worked with so much fervor that, when he was studying a question and wanted to go deeper into it, he would stay up until two o'clock in the morning. The next day he got up just the same at the ordinary time, even though it made him tired.

194

April 1843. Mayet. Article on Colin. [Mayet 4, 620f = OM 554]:

His thoughts on *The Mystical City* of Mary of Agreda.

[1] He liked this book with a rare passion; it was his delight. In 1843, he came to spend a few weeks in Belley; he never got tired of letting it nourish his soul. He told us that he used it for his meditation and his spiritual reading. Reading it gave him his greatest and most tender ideas about Mary. He would repeat to us what he read sometimes; he would weep when he went over certain pages. He never exhausted the subject. He was enthused about it.

[2] "In Italy," he used to tell us, "there are prelates who constantly meditate on it; it is a treasure for these last times. This book has been judged and approved by many learned men. One feels that the human spirit could not have gone that far. Yes, man could not have invented such things. Rome has said that this work could be read *without stumbling*; she has not approved it; that doubtless was not what divine Providence intended. But we Frenchmen, we do not have faith. In France," he would say, "our faith is a philosophical faith which kills true faith." [3] As soon as he would arrive in Belley, he would pick up this *Mystical City* which belonged to him and which he had placed in the library. In Lyons, he had somebody look for another copy; he could not find one, and did not want to take to the motherhouse the one from the library of La Favorite. (What a remarkable thing, and what a grand example of regularity, poverty and order.)

[4] Finally, at this time (in 1843), after he had poured out his heart before us and had spoken for a long time about Mary of Agreda, he said, "If I had time, I would like to be a fool for the blessed Virgin and do nothing but that!"

[5] Note. We must not forget either, that at the time when he was exercising the sacred ministry he did not want to keep on reading this work, fearful that in the pulpit he would confuse what he had read with what the Gospel and tradition teach us. For the same reason he forbade

several young Marist Fathers to read it, and even forbade it to the most learned in the Society, Fr. Favre.

Extreme sweetness, invincible repugnance, graced encounters

195

1869-1870. Jeantin. Memorandum on the origin and foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 43]:

Within that interval, he shared his project with his brother the pastor; it was around the second year of his stay in Cerdon. The good pastor said immediately: "I will be part of it; I did suspect something." How could he suspect it? "Because at times I felt an extraordinary interior and exterior contentedness."

196

1838-1839 (c. 1838). Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 10 = OM 447]:

"Over a period of six years I experienced an extreme sweetness when thinking of this Society, with a clear feeling that it was the work of God. Young people often have ideas of the sort; I felt a great difference between this work and what we call young people's ideas, which I never did like."

197

School year 1840-41. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 140 = OM 519, 7]:

"In the early days," he said, "for six years, whenever I thought of the Society, I experienced a tangible consolation at the very thought of it; whenever I learned a bit of news, I brightened up completely, my face beamed. Nature over-reacted. I bless God. Ah! He really cured me." It appeared to me that here he was referring to the time when he was appointed superior. "Oh! God has put order everywhere so as to make me consider things in a favorable light. This is providential. Otherwise when nature rejoices, we move forward too promptly, we go too far. We would not have felt the need we have for prayer, we would not have acted by faith... It is a happiness."

198

December 31, 1843. Colin. To the confreres at the Capuciniere. [Mayet 1, 682fm = OM 573 = FS 75]:

On December 31st, 1843, Father Colin said, "Messieurs, you must not think I mean to reproach you if I tell you so often to pray. Personally from the very beginning I formed the habit of

praying for everything, and I say that it is the best way, that we must do that always and in everything. At the start of our enterprise, things were very hazy. The whole of creation was against us, we lacked everything. We had to rely on God alone; there was only him. On the other hand, I felt impelled to this work, not by the ardor of youth, such as you often see, but by an impulse that I felt came from above. It was that which gave me the habit of praying always and for everything.”

199

December 14, 1845. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet S2, 33-35 = OM 620, 1f]:

[1] He told me one day, at the end of 1845, that he had always had the thought, the trust, the assurance, amid the opposition we met at the beginning, that the Society would succeed. He told me, “God gives that assurance. It is a support. Man is so weak.

[2] “Ever since the Society was planned, since the major seminary, I have also always had the trust, the assurance that God would give me enough health to do what he required of me. Several times in my life I have been sick unto death; during my major seminary, I could hardly drag myself. But that trust never left me, never. God had given it to me. It is a support. Without that, man would dare do nothing, undertake nothing. Man is so little.”

200

May 6, 1870. Colin. Letter to the Fathers and Brothers of the S.M. [OM 827, 6]:

About this time, the idea of a religious Society under the name of the Mother of God, and utterly consecrated to her, filled my heart with consolation and joy. This joy was accompanied by a confidence that I would say amounted to certitude. I was in my innermost self convinced that the idea came from God and that the Society would succeed. This tangible feeling of confidence lasted a full seven years. [...]

201

December 1845. Mayet. Article based on an account by Fr. Colin. [Mayet S2, 32f = OM 622]:

As a young priest, whenever he thought of the Society, Fr. Colin would say, “Rome, Rome, Rome.” This single word made his heart beat and electrified him. It was for him like the name of the homeland for the exile, like the name of the port for a ship adrift, like the cry of deliverance for a prisoner. Something told him that he would go to Rome one day. It was in one of these ecstasies, and compelled by a supernatural enthusiasm, that he promised God by vow to work for the Society until he shall have gone to the holy city. Later, this vow sustained him and, when he saw so many obstacles and a thousand oppositions attend his pious project, the thought of accomplishing what he had promised pushed him, and this is why, in part, he sought so many times the permission to go.

202

September 1868. Colin. Words spoken to Jeantin. [APM 131, 1 = OM 812, 3]:

“The constitutions (the first draft) were written entirely between 1817 and 1821, in the Cerdon rectory. (A poor little curate, without talent, without any learning, without resources, without having read any religious rule, and all the rest, he did that? Isn’t that something? I was sure it would succeed. Later on, discouragement...) The second draft, which we have, was written later, following the observations of the Sulpicians; that is the one that was presented in Rome.”

203

January-April 1869 (?). Colin. Note dictated to Brother Jean-Marie. [APM 242, 31 = Jeantin 1, 44f = OM 815, 3]:

“ Then Fr. [Courveille] and his young associates, ordained priests at the end of the academic year of 1816 and appointed to parish ministry in one place or another, gradually forgot about the project, except for two of them: Fr. Champagnat, who was appointed curate in La Valla and who immediately set out to establish the branch of teaching brothers; and Fr. [Colin], who became curate in a parish of the Department of Ain and who, filled interiorly with a lively confidence equivalent to a kind of certainty that the project came from God and that it would take shape in the long run, used the free time left him by the holy ministry to prepare its success by putting down on paper the first thoughts which were to serve as a basis for the constitutions.”

204

January-April 1869 (?). Colin. Note dictated to Brother Jean-Marie. [APM 242.1 = Notebook of Jean-Marie B, p. 11 = OM 816]:

“From the first years of my priestly ministry, I found myself committed to work for the Society of the Marist Fathers and even to prepare its first constitutions. The movement that brought me to this business was less a voluntary one involving my own choice, than an interior movement, I would say nearly irresistible, with the conviction that the Society was in the designs of God, and that it would succeed, although I did not know how and by what means nor whether my work for it would be of any use some day.”

205

September 14, 1869. Colin/Jeantin. Historical notes on the beginnings of the S.M. and on the constitutions of Fr. Colin. [OM 821, 32]:

“Here begins for me one of the most painful trials to which God subjected me throughout my whole life. Up until then, that is to say, during the first seven years, I had had the sweetest and firmest certitude that this work was of God and that it would succeed. I tasted only consolations. But at the moment of beginning definitively the execution of our project, poor little country curate that I was, without any resources, I swear that discouragement frequently took hold of me; the shadows invaded my spirit, and I felt in my will an all but invincible resistance to all that I had up to then so firmly believed was in the designs of God. But divine Providence, which has never

failed me, restored my courage, even though, from that time, I have had to carry many crosses and to swallow many a bitter pill.”

206

School year 1840-41. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 138f = OM 519, 1-4]:

[1] Somebody told him, “Fr. Superior, at times one experiences feelings which one cannot dominate; then, it seems as though one suffers a kind of agony.”

[2] “Yes,” he replied, “they are the real pains of the agony. I have indeed experienced that, I tell you quite simply, Monsieur. It was at the time I saw myself obliged to take charge of the Society’s affairs.” [I understood that it was the time when he was made superior, although he did not say so expressly.] “I suffered very much. There was in me such strong resistance against doing that; I would have gone I don’t know where to escape. My soul was all confused. Yet I was saying, *My God, your will be done!* I forced myself to say it, but it seemed to me that it was not said wholeheartedly. I also had great temptations against the blessed Virgin which led me, yes, to trust her no longer because she left me in charge of all those things whereas I had begged her so much to do otherwise.

[3] “I went to Lyons. I went to see Fr. Cholleton. I could not go to people who did not know the Society, who did not know us. In any case, there were those who saw us as ambitious. Alas! ambitious... Ah! They did not know what violence one did to oneself, how much one suffered to put oneself forward, how many efforts it took just to take one step forward. So, one had to see someone who was informed about all our affairs.

[4] “I went to Fr. Cholleton, I made my confession to him, I told him, ‘But I don’t know where I am. Yes, I do tell God I want nothing but his holy will, but everything rises up in me when I say that.’ He told me that was fine, that was enough, I was submitting to God’s will.”

207

August 16, 1872. Colin. To the chapter. [APM 322.152, Minutes of the chapter = OM 848, 6]:

But when he had to put himself forward in order to prepare the way for the establishment of the Society, nothing can express the repugnances against which he had to struggle. “My mouth said, ‘Yes.’ My heart said, ‘No.’ I fought with God. Yes, I repeat, Mary did everything; she is our true Foundress; we ought always depend on her as on our first and perpetual superior. [...]”

208

1895. Jeantin. Reflections on the mission of Fr. Courveille and that of Fr. Colin. [OM 881, 7]:

Once the idea was manifested publicly by Fr. Courveille, the aim of the blessed Virgin, for her part, was attained. Everything that the pious seminarians would try to do would miscarry. But the true founder, Fr. Colin, would be able to act *without appearing to be the creator of the project*. Nevertheless, to persuade him to do so, the Queen of Heaven would have to multiply the warnings, the promises, the threats, the miracles, perhaps even, one might dare say, the apparitions. This martyrdom of a will that aspired to nothing but the hidden life, to retire into a wood or a desert, and who nevertheless had to immolate all his inclinations, had to deal with people and become a sort of

passive instrument of a power greater than his own, as the holy man himself said, this martyrdom filled his whole life.

209

About 1892? Fr. David. Some notes towards a biography of the Very Rev. Fr. Colin. [OM 885, 6]:

This interior trial which engendered in him a nearly invincible repugnance to working for the establishment of the Society did not, I believe, last his whole life, as the manuscript says. There simply remained in him a painful impression that he bore without let-up as he discharged the duties of superior. The real martyrdom of his whole life, he often said, was the fear of putting something of himself in the work that God had confided to him.

210

1838-1839 (c. 1838). Colin/Mayet. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 23 = OM 454]:

“One day,” (it was a long time ago, I believe, in the time of trials at Cerdon), “I experienced at the altar some thoughts of discouragement regarding the Society and our plans. But, I did not think I had given in to them. Nevertheless, a soul to whom God alone could have revealed what had gone on inside myself told me that on that day I had saddened the Holy Spirit very much.”

211

1847. Mayet. Parallel between the beginnings of the Jesuits and of the Marists. [Mayet 4, 297 = OM 670, 7]:

Jesus Christ told St. Ignatius that he would support him in Rome. Fr. Colin says that the work to which he committed himself came from God and was not an effect of the imagination or of the rather common fervors of youth. One day, at holy Mass, he had not exactly a doubt about it but a bit of distress to which, he says, he did not believe he had consented; right away, Jesus Christ sent him a soul who said to him, “You just troubled our Lord greatly; why did you doubt?”

212

About 1881-1883? Fr. David. Incident recounted by Colin, speaking about empty days and full days. [OM 884]:

[1] Regarding the topic at hand, he recounted something that happened to him. One day he had worked very hard and happily had taken care of a good number of important items of business. That evening, upon reflection, he felt that the day had been well spent. But someone, whom he did not name and who knew what was happening in the depths of his heart, said to him that God was not happy with him and that that day had been nearly sterile in his eyes, because he had let himself be guided by completely natural inspirations.

[2] Fr. Colin profited by this lesson and, another evening, after a quite unremarkable day, the same person said to him that he had gained very much because, in the simple and common

occupations to which he had applied himself, he was forced interiorly to keep his will and his spirit better united to the will and the Spirit of our Lord.

213

1838-1839 (c. 1840). *Colin*. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 23f = OM 455]:

“I once saw Miss Jaricot, at a time when I was pondering something of major importance. I had not spoken to anyone about it. Eh! well, she told me everything I was thinking about. She said to me, ‘You must forget about yourself, you must renounce this project.’ I was stupefied. I did not admit to her that she was so very right.” He did not tell us what he had been thinking about, but I am quite certain it was this: he was thinking at that time of no longer handling the affairs of the Society, of discharging himself and having someone else named ----- . For at that time there was no duly constituted superior, since the Roman court had not spoken. There was an acting superior for the purposes of consultation.

214

1869-1870. *Jeantin*. Memorandum on the origin and foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 114]:

In Belley in 1869, he told about something that happened to him in the early days of the Society and which explains how he found himself at the head of this work. It was at the moment when the first steps were taken with the ecclesiastical authorities. He was seized with such a strong distaste, such a violent repugnance at putting himself at the head of this work, that he turned over in his mind the idea of fleeing, like Jonah, and of hiding himself somewhere. One day as he walked along the quays of Lyons, ruminating this idea, someone accosted him and asked if he could come into her house for a moment; he agreed. Scarcely had he entered than she said, “You are thinking about something displeasing to God....” He answered neither yes nor no.

215

April 8-14, 1838. *Colin*. Conversation at table. [Mayet 1, 30 = OM 425, 10]:

“On one of the trips I made for the Society, and I made many, it seemed to me that all the demons were after me to prevent me from making it. Yes, I really believe it was so. I felt weighed down!... I couldn’t hold myself up. I felt an invincible repugnance!... After twenty minutes on the road, I threw myself upon my knees in the moonlight, in the middle of the road, and I said, ‘My God, if it is not your will, then I won’t do it. But if you want it, give me back my strength, and thus show me whether it is your holy will.’ All at once, I felt relieved, gay, buoyant; I ran like a hare.” (He did four leagues that way, I believe.)

216

December 1853. Favre. Story about Colin. [Mayet 1, 30m = OM 717]:

“He was weighed down by a fatigue of the spirit and a profound weariness... When he prayed, then the blessed Virgin appeared to him, and he felt himself filled with heavenly joy and a superhuman courage. He told me this.”

217

1869-1870. Jeantin. Memorandum on the origin and the foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 52 with addition a, and 53-55]:

[52] As soon as Bishop Devie had arrived in Belley, Fr. Colin rushed off to him to explain his project. He left Cerdon one day to go and take the public carriage. He was hardly a few minutes from the village, 20 minutes more or less. He was climbing a hill. All at once he felt as if his legs were tied, and it was impossible for him to go on. He fell on his knees then and said, “My God, if it is not your will that I go any further, I’ll go back to the rectory; but if you want me to make this trip, give me my legs back.” As a matter of fact, God manifested his will by suddenly giving the good Father more than he had asked for: not only did he give him back his legs, but he gave him an extraordinary agility. He said, “I got up and began walking as lightly as a lark.”

[a] This happened at the base of the hill of Mérygnat, when he was going to take the carriage at Ambérieu for Belley.

[53] Bishop Devie was then lodged at the rectory in Belley; that is where Fr. Colin saw him for the first time. As soon as Father had said he was the curate in Cerdon, the Bishop said to him, “Ah! the curate of Cerdon! The Nuncio has spoken to me about your affair. Everything will go well.” Divine Providence had chosen Bishop Devie to be a distinguished benefactor of the Society of Mary. It is he who, after having been the wise and firm instrument for testing the divine origin of this project, was the devoted father and protector of its cradle.

[54] On the way back from this trip on which Fr. Colin, without ceasing to be curate at Cerdon, obtained the authorization to begin his apostolic vocation, the devil still wanted to make a supreme effort to stifle the work at its beginning. The public carriage in which Fr. Colin was riding was between Rossillon and Tenay, near a lake, when all at once it rolled into a ravine and right into the lake. The horses escaped with a piece of the broken carriage and, thank God, not a single traveler perished. Fr. Colin found himself outside the carriage and lying spread-eagled in the direction of the lake. “My first thought was, ‘The blessed Virgin has saved you!’” All he had lost was his hat, which he found again at Tenay. When he stood up, he saw a poor woman who was still in the lake with the carriage. She was trying to float with the help of a wheel, but as this wheel did not offer her a solid point of support, the unfortunate woman kept falling back into the water. Fr. Colin reached his umbrella out to her; she was able to grasp it and thus could get back on land. At that point our two travelers headed for Tenay. But, since it was bitter cold, the poor woman’s clothes soon froze, and she could no longer walk. “What to do? I did something that I have never done since. I had to, short of letting her die on the way; I offered her my arm.” Thus they reached Tenay. They were well received and cared for at an inn.

[55] Some time after these events, Fr. Colin found himself in the public carriage on the same route. The woman whom he had pulled from the lake and led to Tenay was also in the carriage. She told her story and spoke a lot about a priest who had saved her. But she did not recognize that her savior was this very priest who was listening to her, and Father was careful not to let on.

Cerdon: The Constitutions

This dossier contains a collection of texts about Fr. Colin's work at Cerdon in writing the first draft of the constitutions. It includes some of the points of the rule and the experiences out of which his insights and convictions arose, the text of the two fragments of the original rule that have been preserved, and the discussions about the supernatural helps Colin experienced when writing the rule. The texts are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

Writing the rule

218

July 19-25, 1870. Colin. Notes of Fr. Jeantin reporting some statements of Fr. Colin at La Neylière. [APM 132.3 = OM 839, 36 and addition a]:

[36] "If I were to go back to Cerdon, I would go to see the little closet, five feet square, that was at the foot of my bed. That is where I spent the nights and where I wrote the first ideas on the Society.

[a] "I only knew Rodriguez on the religious state."

219

May 6, 1870. Colin. Letter to the Fathers and Brothers of the S.M. [OM 827, 6]:

About this time, the idea of a religious Society under the name of the Mother of God, and utterly consecrated to her, filled my heart with consolation and joy. This joy was accompanied by a confidence that I would say amounted to certitude. I was in my innermost self convinced that the idea came from God and that the Society would succeed. This tangible feeling of confidence lasted a full seven years. It was during this time that certain circumstances which I had in no way anticipated, led my brother and me to put in writing the first elements of a Rule, without foreseeing then what was to result from it. In this I had no other assistance than what the Gospel has left us on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth and the first missions of the apostles. The draft of my work was more or less finished in late 1819 or early 1820.

220

1869-1870. *Jeantin. Memorandum on the origin and the foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 40-42]:*

[40] From his arrival in Cerdon until 1821, he occupied himself with redacting the constitutions of the Society of Mary. For this work, he had no other help than that which the Gospel has left us on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth and on the first missions of the apostles. He knew no existing religious rule and had no manuscript notebook. Fr. Colin affirms that he has never seen the notebook that Fr. Courveille put forward as his rule; he says he never even knew that Fr. Courveille had a notebook of that sort. He adds, "I could have said to Fr. Eymard that I had had a notebook for writing the rules, but my intention was to say that the blessed Virgin was my notebook, the notebook that I copied. If I wrote to Pius VII, as they say, *We wait to tell Your Holiness orally how it is we have the rules*, my intention was to say that, if we had these rules, it was not *in a human way*."

[41] This is why Fr. Colin often says, when speaking of the constitutions, "I am not the master of the material; these ideas are not from me. Only the style is mine; I rendered these ideas as I was able. I didn't write a book. But I wrote your constitutions. But they are not from me." When someone told him that the description of the spirit proper to the Society seemed in effect a heavenly inspiration, he responded that it could not come from man. And when someone told him that he had been heard to say that, at the moment of writing that article, he knelt at the foot of a statue of Mary and said that it was not up to him but to her to define the spirit that ought to animate the Society of Mary, and that after that prayer, he took up a pen and wrote in one stroke what concerns the spirit of the Society, he interrupted this question and, as if to prevent it from going any further, said, "Yes, yes, indeed yes! I prayed a lot! Do you know that there are some articles that I carried to the altar for more than 40 days? Why? To know the will of God. I would never have found that material; man does not find things like that." Then he said with a moan, "But I am saying too much. I am going to regret it."

[42] He said again, "At Cerdon, I often spent the nights writing the constitutions; it was no bother; but by about 4 a.m. the next day, I couldn't do any more."

221

October 29, 1868. *Colin. Statement about the latest redaction of the constitutions. [APM 314.221 = OM 814, 7f]:*

[7] "From 1817 to 1822, at Cerdon, I wrote a first draft of constitutions. The competent men to whom I submitted it at that time told me that those rules did not take sufficient account of human weakness. I retouched it and from that came the manuscript of constitutions that was explained to the Society for many years and that was copied by several confreres.

[8] "I maintain that in writing that manuscript, I had no other rule or manuscript nor any printed work. Only after 1833 did I read the constitutions of St. Ignatius. Since our little Society had the same goal as the Company of Jesus, I borrowed and appropriated some things from those constitutions, especially on what concerns government. In any case, it was not a definitive draft, but only some notes."

222

August 5, 1870. Colin. To the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 842, 12]:

“For nine years as curate in Cerdon, I occupied myself with the Society. I only communicated my ideas to Bishop Devie, to Fr. Cholleton, then vicar general of Lyons, and later to Cardinal Odescalchi. I especially dreaded attracting attention and bringing to this work my own spirit.”

223

May-October 1853. Maîtrepierre. History of the origins. [OM 752, 16-20]:

[16] At Paris he consulted those men most outstanding in learning, virtue and experience, and showed them his draft of the rule. He presented it in particular to Archbishop de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, who begged that he leave it with him so that he could examine it at leisure and could consult about it, and he gave him this quite modest and edifying response: “It would be desirable that, in every administration, the one who is first be first in everything; it is not so in Paris.”

[17] The result of all these consultations was: the rules are excellent, but too perfect for a society that could become numerous. He has come to see through experience the accuracy of this observation and, in the modifications of these rules, he has kept them quite perfect for the strong and has rendered them accessible to the weak, so as to be useful to the greatest number.

[18] But he wished above all to consult Bishop de Frayssinous, Bishop of Hermopolis and minister of ecclesiastical affairs. Three times he presented himself at his house, and three times he was told, “He is not in.” Finally he approached one of the officers there and said to him, “What must one do to see His Excellency? I have come three times and they always tell me, ‘He is not in.’” “Have you a card?” “No, Sir.” “You need a card; give me your address, and I will try to get one for you.” The next day, he received a card. At the hour indicated, he came to the ministry, carrying his card visibly and with a bold modesty between thumb and forefinger. “Ah! this time,” says Fr. Colin, “it went well. Everybody made room for me, everybody bent over backwards for me, everybody gave the impression of respecting me.”

[19] He was in the waiting room; he waited a long time; finally the minister arrived. He explained his plans at length to him. The minister listened to him until the end without saying a single word, he then reflected quite a long time, and he responded, “I believe that your idea comes from God; pursue it.” The curate of Cerdon returned to his post, carrying away with him these three ideas: this work comes from God; it is excellent; he must render it accessible to a great number.

[20] He continued to exercise his ministry with zeal, to compose his rules, to consult people, to pray to the Lord, and to honor Mary with limitless confidence. Three times he received special and tangible favors from her against the rather noisy attacks of Mary’s mortal enemy. In 1823, Mgr. Devie, vicar general of Valence, was named and consecrated Bishop of Belley, whose territory had up until then been attached to Lyons; the members of the Society found themselves perforce separated, and this separation, which ought to have retarded and even split up the work, contributed, by the workings of Providence, to test it, to affirm it and to accelerate its success.

May-October 1853. Maîtrepierre. History of the origins. [OM 752, 43f]:

[43] In several conferences, Fr. Colin explained the constitutions that the spirit of God had dictated to him under the protection of the blessed Virgin. This venerable founder, on the basis of an unshakeable faith, sustained by the grace of Jesus Christ, and protected by Mary, had worked more than twenty years amid contradictions, scorn, grounds for discouragement, insufficiency of means, in order to make this work of heaven triumph over earthly obstacles. It was a tangible consolation for him to see it at the point to which it had progressed. It was a pleasure for him to explain its spirit to confreres who were ready to consecrate themselves irrevocably to it. But, to nourish his edifying humility, the Lord gave him problems of language, a difficulty of expression and even a really extraordinary dearth of ideas. We all sensed, nevertheless, the spirit of God hidden under that apparent poverty and we admired in him a vigorous courage, a solid resolution, a subtle and provident spirit, a rare prudence and especially a charming modesty. This modesty was born of supernatural feelings that penetrated him to the depths of his soul; it was strengthened in manifold trials that he never ceased to meet in his undertakings. He was and still is so convinced that his work is the work of God and of the blessed Virgin that the idea and the title of founder really makes him indignant. Ah! yes, founders, ah! wonderful founders! God leads us, sometimes we obey, often we resist, we put up obstacles, and that's all. Thus, convinced that it is the work of God, his modest simplicity has never prevented him from believing that the Society of Mary was called to do great things in the Church of God. "Mary," he said, "was the protectress of the Church in the cradle; she is to be so in a very special way at the end of time."

[44] When composing his rules, he was sometimes sickened by the feeling of his unworthiness and his inability; then he would fall on his knees before the image of Mary and, his eyes fervently fixed on her, would cry out, "Who am I to do your work?" Then, feeling his soul dissolve into a kind of confidence, he would say to her, "Speak, holy Virgin, speak; tell me, what should I put here?" He would stand up filled with this holy emotion and would quickly sketch those ideas that characterize so well the spirit of the Society. "At other times," he says with a naiveté that betrays a rich store of simplicity than any other sentiment, "at other times, in my poverty of ideas, determination and expression, I would cast my eyes on a little statue of the blessed Virgin, I would put the pen in the little hand that she stretched out toward me, and I would say to her, 'Write it yourself, blessed Virgin.' She would not write, but after that I myself would write with greater facility."

Points of the rule and of Marist ethos

1838-1839 (c. 1838). Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 175f = OM 467]:

"What gradually put me at the head of the Society was the fact that some of my confreres wanted to fight against the episcopate; that's when I separated myself from them. I have been the recipient of one great grace. The greatest grace I have received is that I have always remained united to the episcopate; I was convinced that none of it would succeed but through the bishops."

226

March 1842. *Mayet. Gathering of data on the origins of the Society.* [Mayet 1, 732f = OM 535, 12f]:

[12] Someone (I don't know who) proposed going ahead in spite of episcopal authority. Fr. Colin shuddered within himself and exclaimed: *May the Society perish rather than operate in that way!* "That was," he says, "one of the great graces that the good God has given me." We can regard that proposal as one of the temptations of the devil and as a strategy directed by him. It was one of the best ways to remove the protection of heaven from a society destined to be but one body with the episcopate and destined to give the example of subordination to the ecclesiastical authorities.

[13] Tested by the bishops, the Society did not cease to attach itself to them, and to obey them; it was content with grieving, praying, asking; but it was submissive. Each remained at his post of curate, of pastor, of superior, even at the post that seemed most contrary to the work. "An unprecedented example in the Church," says Fr. Colin; and while exteriorly there was neither bond nor unity nor community, and while they were all overwhelmed and as though prostrated by the obstacles, spiritual unity was preserved.

227

1840. *Convers. Conferences on the origins.* [APM 122 = OM 748, 5]:

From time to time they would take some step with the authorities, but always praying for a long time in advance and after a great deal of careful reflection. If someone wrote a letter, he placed it on the altar for nine days to sanctify it, as it were. The distinctive character and spirit of the Society was to be entirely submissive to authority, and to do nothing without its approval; and as the authorities were not encouraging, things remained where they were, without advancing or retreating. [...]

228

About 1892. *Fr. David. "Some notes toward a biography of the Very Rev. Fr. Colin."* [OM 885, 8f]:

[8] One day, the Rev. Fr. Founder, while considering in the presence of God that he and his companions were little versed in the sciences and liberal arts, not having had time to study, asked himself how, with such instruments, such a great work could be realized. He heard immediately this interior word: "Don't worry, the scholars will come later. If you had now the men you want, you would not be able to put into this institute the spirit I want." And the Very Rev. Fr. added: "Alas! The scholars have come all too soon!" We ought to express this thought in another way, for example: "May heaven see to it that the scholars who will come later on always be imbued with our spirit!"

[9] In his first manuscript, which they judged to be too exacting, he had forgotten the article *On learning*. Someone brought it to his attention and he added it afterwards. Above all, the Very Rev. Fr. was preoccupied about giving the Church men who are humble and have a solid interior life. He knew well that learning would be the necessary corollary of sanctity. In that same period, Lamennais was considering founding the congregation of St. Peter as a society of scholars. According to him, the Church was menaced with ruin for lack of scholars. The spirit of Rev. Fr. Colin was completely different. Speaking of an interview he had had with him to consult him on

his plans, he said, “Lamennais received me well. But after a few minutes of conversation, I saw that this was not the man for me; some of his ideas were *too pompous*.”

229

1838-1839 (c. 1839). *Colin. To the priests at the Capucinière. [Mayet 1, 268f = OM 470 = FS 25]:*

“Ever since I have been here, I have never written an important letter without showing it to Fr. Humbert or Fr. Favre, or without consulting someone. I have always found it advantageous to do so in the past, and I shall always do it in the future. I want that spirit to take hold in the Society. Act in this way with your confreres, it brings unity. See, the first year that we lived together, before Rome spoke, we lived in unity, as brothers. We consulted one another, not doing anything without one another.”

230

December 29, 1844. *Colin. Words spoken in council. [Mayet 3, 412 = OM 584]:*

Since the opinions on the council were divided, he told us, “I have never acted when I saw that things were in doubt. My brother could tell you that, when there were only the two of us to handle the affairs of the Society, whenever we were not of one accord, I waited.”

231

1895. *Jeantin. Biography of Colin. [Le très révérend Père Colin, 1, 71 = AT I, ε2]:*

There are some points that he really understood only after he had prayed and reflected for a long time. And there are even other points that he understood perfectly only at the time of the final redaction toward the end of his life. So it was that for the recommendation made to the Superior General to follow the opinion of the majority of his council rather than his own, even in things left to his choice, he said, “At first, I could not understand, because there are some cases where he will see clearly that the majority is mistaken. It is only later that I understood the true meaning: *He is invited to act that way when, in spite of all his reflections, the doubt remains.*” To the question that was put to him regarding this: “It wasn’t you, then, who conceived this idea?” he responded with charming candor, “If I had conceived it, I’d have understood it well.”

Two fragments

232

About 1823. Colin. "Supplement to the Rules of the Society of Mary." [AT I, h]:

Supplement to the Rules of the Society of Mary

Article I

[1] 1. On Wednesdays and Fridays, the religious shall wear for three hours the iron cilice; on Mondays they shall give themselves six lashes of the whip; on Saturdays they shall fast. On Fridays, during the last quarter of an hour of the evening mental prayer they shall pray with their face bent to the ground, in union with Christ praying in the garden of Olives. [*In the margin*: The rule encourages to do these penances, but it does not command to do them.]

[2] 2. The brothers coadjutor shall fast on Saturdays, shall give themselves five lashes of the whip on Wednesdays and shall wear the iron cilice on Fridays for two hours.

Article II

[3] 1. If they have made their first profession at the age mentioned elsewhere, namely at twenty four or the years immediately following, the religious shall solemnly renew their vows when they reach the age of thirty. However, if they have made their first vows at the age of thirty or the years immediately following, they shall renew them after three years. As for those who made their first vows after the age of thirty or the following years, they shall renew them two years after their first profession. They shall prepare themselves for this second profession in the same way as they did for the first, namely through an eight-day retreat and a general confession going back to their first profession.

[4] 2. Once they have renewed their vows in the Society, however, it will no longer be licit for them to transfer from this Society to another or to go back into the world.

Article III

[5] 1. All must take extreme care lest the spirit of covetousness and the pursuit of profit should invade the house or hold sway, under whatever pretext. The superior or any of his councilors who should retain this spirit of covetousness for more than a quarter of an hour shall confess his fault before the whole council and say how long he persevered in that fault. Further, so that all means be taken to expel this covetousness completely from the house of blessed Mary, who always abhorred this spirit of covetousness throughout her life, should any of the religious likewise commit this fault, he shall confess it promptly before the whole council, which shall have been summoned, and, having said it, he shall withdraw with the permission of the superior. [*In the margin*: This twofold confession, to be made in a general way and with the consent of the superior, is not commanded by the rule, but strongly recommended, because of the great fruits to be derived therefrom. Humiliation is the way to humility. St. Bernard.]

[6] 2. Likewise, every religious who shall have committed some fault of pride shall confess it before all the religious after one of the exercises of piety, like the morning meditation, or after the recitation of the divine office. Having said it while prostrate at the feet of the superior, he shall implore his blessing and, kissing the ground, he shall leave with the others.

Article IV

[7] 1. Any religious who commits a grave fault must submit to the penance the superior shall give him. If the fault was public, the guilty one shall divest himself of his mantle as being unworthy of wearing it, and he shall wear a rough cord around his waist over his clothes, for as long as fifteen days or three weeks according to the nature of the fault.

[8] 2. On the other hand, if the fault was secret, the guilty one shall be condemned to wearing the iron cilice every single day for three weeks, and also to lash himself with the horsehair whip three times a week.

[9] 3. If, God forbid, the guilty one should rebel and refuse to submit to the penance imposed on him, he shall be confined to a cell furnished with one seat and a straw mattress with two blankets for the winter; in the summer, however, blankets shall not be provided and the guilty one shall sleep in his clothes. [*In the margin:* If this cannot be carried out because of the conditions of the time, let some other way be found.] Religious who are guilty of whatever grave fault shall be confined in this fashion, even for several months, until they think better of it and submit. They shall eat breakfast, lunch and supper in their cell, and every third day someone shall give them pious advice.

[10] 4. Even if the guilty one has been confined for only one day, should he repent, ask permission to confess his sins and submit, he is to be taken out of the cell immediately.

[11] 5. After evening office on the day after leaving the cell, the guilty one, on his knees and with his face to the ground, shall ask the superior and all the religious forgiveness for his bad example. He shall remain prone on the ground until the superior tells him: Go and sin no more. Then he shall come out with the others.

[12] 6. The house shall have three of those cells for the confinement of the noxious ones.

Article V

[13] 1. The superior general shall watch with care whether the local superiors fulfill their charge correctly. If he foresees that someone else would discharge the task to better effect, he must remove the present superior from his office and put in his place the other, chosen with his council. [*In the margin:* Local superiors are to be changed every five years. After this time, however, the superior general is free to keep them in office or to remove them, according to how he judges that this will affect their health and the good of the house.]

[14] 2. Periodically every religious shall be sent to the kitchen to help the brothers. The general superior or the local superior shall, however, only send one once a week and in turn to the kitchen, for an hour or two, more or less, no one excepted and without consideration of the position or the dignity which the religious had in the world or without regard to the merit of each. However, someone who has bad health or who does not feel well shall not be sent.

[15] 3. If one of the religious should fulfill his office negligently or badly, the superior shall take care to remove him from office, but not until he has warned him two or three times nor until he has the consent of his councilors. When a religious is thus removed from office, he shall be occupied in the kitchen or in lowlier tasks until people find out what he is capable of doing.

Article VI

[16] 1. Except for missionaries during missions, and never outside them, they shall not hear the confessions of outsiders except in case of necessity. For instance, if someone comes to the house on business and stays, they could not refuse to hear him. Article VII

[17] 1. The community of men may not buy properties or estates, as has been said elsewhere, nor may it have money set aside and kept at the house. It may, however, be endowed with estates offered to it gratuitously or with donations sufficient to provide at least the revenues that are

absolutely necessary. The religious may, however, accept properties or estates or houses given to them over and above what is absolutely necessary, but for the community of women, not that of men. They will arrange for the deeds to be drawn up in the name of the women and they will also hand over to them the surplus money.

[18] 2. The community of women may not, of course, own extraordinary riches, but it may buy properties, estates or houses, it may accept all that is offered gratuitously and it may keep a reserve of money for the unexpected needs of both communities, of men and women. However, the sisters may not dispose of the estates or of the surplus money except with the advice of the superior general and of his councilors.

[19] 3. Should they become pressed for resources, they must not be ashamed to beg to provide for their needs. Two religious may be sent to do this.

Article VIII

[20] 1. When the superior general dies, all the members of the general house, religious or brothers, shall offer to God for three days all their actions, their prayers and their good works in general, and they shall fast for one day so that the will of God may become known in electing the next superior general and so that the best choice may be made. [*In the margin:* If some were unable to fast, they must give their reasons to the assistant or to the vice superior.]

[21] 2. The superior general is to be chosen only among the religious of the general house; he must be endowed with sound and right judgment, excel in charity and humility, be of a suitable [*The manuscript ends abruptly here.*] [*In the margin:* The other houses of the Society which are in the same place or the same city as the general house are considered as being part of it.]

233

1823? *Colin. On the manner of holding council in the Society. [AT I, g]:*

When must the superior have recourse to the councilors
and how should he act when in council?

1. Always and everywhere the superior holds the first place, acts as superior, and everything is referred to him. [*In the margin:* Outside the council.] However, besides the cases already mentioned elsewhere, he is obliged to have recourse to his councilors in the cases of some importance and in those which are mentioned below.

2. Thus, the superior must remember that he cannot take a decision on his own regarding unnecessary money which might be in the house, without the consent of the councilors, whose agreement he must also obtain before that money can be spent for this or that good work.

3. He must also admit no one to profession or make no new foundation of men or women religious, nor buy houses or land to make a new foundation or to expand the houses of the Society, unless he first call the councilors together so as to know their opinion.

4. He shall also have recourse to the councilors when it is a question of receiving donations which require a public deed, of sending missionaries to the missions, of appointing subjects to the various offices or works of the Society or of removing them from these offices or works; also before the superior goes to the house of the sisters for the election of a new general prioress or for the deposition of the general prioress if the latter should be involved in a case of deposition, so that they may implore the help of the Holy Spirit and of Mary in unanimous prayer.

5. In council, the superior shall always express his opinion last, that is after all the others, and the opinion which has more votes shall prevail. The superior himself, however, shall propose subjects for the various offices or works of the Society; he may even say what he has it in him to say so that the councilors shall go along with these nominations. If the votes are equally divided

among both sides, it is lawful for the superior to choose the side he wants, but he is invited and even beseeched, for the sake of humility, to choose the side which is contrary to his own. Mary always followed the will of others rather than her own.

6. In council and elsewhere, the superior is always first except in the discussion and decision of a point. In council, he must see to it that the councilors never contend among themselves nor procrastinate. He may remove from the council those who are proud and contentious and, once the council is over, do what is necessary to complete the business.

7. The superior is free to talk with the assistant about things, even the smallest and even those that pertain to the council, like the things he would plan to do to humiliate one of the religious. Still, he is asked, beseeched even, to do this, so as to lighten his burden and so that there should exist a greater intimacy between the superior and the assistant, and so that the assistant, who must take the place of the superior when the latter is absent, can be informed of everything and be practiced in everything.

Inspirations and graces

234

February 8, 1823. The two Fathers Colin. Letter to Archbishop Macchi, Nuncio to Paris. [OM 82, 2f]:

[2] We have profited eagerly from the remarks which your Excellency was kind enough to make on the rules which you read and examined; and, in accordance with the interpretations and explanations given to some articles which presented some difficulties, it appears that these difficulties are removed or at least much diminished; thus, the penances prescribed in the rule will not be binding on those with weak or delicate health, who, in fact, will not be allowed to do any without permission from the Superior. Confessing faults of pride or of greed is only a counsel and is left to the fervor or the desire of each religious to acquire humility. We are bound to confess to your Excellency that these interpretations are no more ours than the rule itself.

[3] As for the article on the superior, which also presents some problems, despite our desire, we felt unable to modify it on our own; however, we are quite willing to make, on this as well as on any other point of the rule, all the changes which His Holiness or our Lords the Bishops will judge necessary.

235

1869-1870. Colin. Jeantin, Memorandum on the origin and foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 142]:

“They didn’t want the rules because they believed they came from me. However, I have only written in virtue of a special mission. But they don’t want to believe it. I must kneel to them.”

236

1869-1870. Colin. Jeantin, *Memorandum on the origin and the foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin*. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 162]:

On the subject of the rule given to the superior general, that he follow the majority that is opposed to him, he said, "At first, I did not understand, because there are some cases where he will see clearly that the majority is wrong. It is only later that, by dint of prayer and of reflection, I understood that the sense was, *He is invited and encouraged.*" Since Fr. David asked whether he had conceived this idea on his own, he replied, "If I had conceived it, I'd have understood it well."

237

1869-1870. Colin. Jeantin, *Memorandum on the origin and the foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin*. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 164]:

"They consider what I did my work. I have been only an instrument, only a pen... If I hold to it, it is not as to my work."

238

May 19, 1870. Fr. David/Colin. Note reporting various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 316.1 = OM 831, 3-5]:

[3] He said recently, and has often said to me, "*The Rule, in its substance, is not from me; it is from the most blessed Virgin.*"

[4] Interrogated by Fr. Gilles and myself on what made him believe in the future of the work, he replied, "I would be quite rash to tell you what I have seen. Besides, people scoff at visions today. Anyway, why seek so much after causes. Aren't the effects sufficient indication for you? As for me, poor unknown that I am, not being the type to put myself forward, would I have dared to launch out without an extraordinary intervention of God? That's all you need to know."

[5] Asked again if he had been enlightened directly or by intermediary, he replied, "Never have I acted under the influence of supernatural communications coming by any intermediaries."

239

July 19-25, 1870. Jeantin. Notes reporting some statements of Fr. Colin at La Neylière. [APM 132.3 = OM 839, 14]:

The work that he presented in Paris was not from him nor from men, but from God alone. In the constitutions, the principal points, nearly all, were from God.

240

July 19-25, 1870. Colin. Jeantin, Notes reporting some statements of Fr. Colin at La Neylière. [APM 132.3 = OM 839, 47]:

Fr. David asked Fr. Founder if God, in the inspiration, dictated... “Oh! no, God says many things in a few words; thus, ‘hidden and unknown in the world!’” “Then, it was like an outline that a professor dictates to his pupils, which the latter then amplify.” “That’s it.”

241

August c. 10-20, 1870. Fr. David/Colin. Study on the supernatural assistance accorded to Fr. Colin for the work on the constitutions. [APM 322.183 = OM 843, 5-12]:

[5] He said and repeated many a time that, seeing his character and the inclinations of his spirit, he would never have dared to put himself forward to write a religious rule if he had not felt pushed and as if forced by an impulse from on high.

[6] Recently, someone interrogated him on the nature of this inspiration. “Is it like those that grace is accustomed to give to people who do a supernatural work?” He replied, “If there were only that, do you think that I would have felt obliged to speak of it to the Pope and that I would have confided it to a cardinal?”

[7] Some days later, the same confrere said to him that this inspiration would perhaps be considered by several as a special help but containing nothing of the miraculous. He replied, “The inspiration of which you speak is not outside the ordinary course of Providence. But there is an inspiration which has something miraculous about it. Both were at work in the matter of the rules. But there has been a superior and miraculous assistance for the substance of the ideas and even for certain sentences.”

[8] A little later, he said to the same confrere, always speaking of the rules, “Ah! if only we knew how these things happen!” “Precisely, my Very Rev. Father, we might need to know it, and it is up to you to teach us.” “But I have said enough about it for those who know how to reason and reflect. It is not necessary that I go into the details. Look at the blessed Virgin. She always lived in the extraordinary, but she did things like everybody else. When she saw her spouse in perplexity, she did not tell him what had taken place in her, but she waited for God to enlighten St. Joseph. Haven’t I said in my printed letter that the circumstances which we were far from anticipating led my brother and me to write the bases of a rule. Isn’t that clear enough?”

[9] Interrogated on the nature of those unforeseen circumstances, he replied, “We hardly expected, my brother and I, that the blessed Virgin would do us any such extraordinary favors.”

[10] To explain his silence on the details of these graces, he said further, “Women have generally made known the supernatural favors that they have received, because God is accustomed to oblige them to disclose them. He doesn’t always do that for men.”

[11] Several times, while speaking of Brother Jean-Marie, whose services he used to write letters, he said, “That poor brother often gives me a lot of trouble: he writes without understanding. As for me, that is what I have been for the blessed Virgin when writing the rules. I did not always understand, but someone told me, ‘You will understand later.’ There are, in fact, several points that I only really grasped after having prayed and reflected for a long time. And,” he added, “there is even something I only understood at the time I did my last work on the rule.”

[12] To explain this, here is what he said just recently to a confrere, “The light from on high shows you the thing so perfectly that, when you wish to express it, you make use of terms that do not take human weakness sufficiently into account. That happened when I composed my first manuscript. I had to retouch it, while always conserving the substance of the ideas. Then, too, you

grasp the thing without always seeing how it is to be applied. Afterwards it is prayer, reflection and advice that show you the way.”

242

August 16, 1872. Colin. To the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 848, 5]:

The Very Rev. Father next recalled the origin of the Society and resolutely declared that he does not recognize any founder but the blessed Virgin; that, for his part, he has been only a passive instrument. He does not hesitate to affirm once again, in the presence of God and on the threshold of the grave, that he never would have had the temerity to write any constitutions if he had not been forced to it by a power greater than his own. The circumstance that led him to do it is his secret; no one knows it; we will only know it in heaven. It is to this circumstance that he alludes in the passage in his letter to Pius VII, in which he manifests the intention to make known orally to the vicar of Jesus Christ how he had been assisted in the work on the constitutions. Later, at the time of his first trip to Rome in [1833], not having been able to explain himself to the sovereign pontiff Gregory XVI, who did not understand French, he unburdened himself to Cardinal Odescalchi, then prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

The real miracle

243

August 28 - September 3, 1839. Champagnat, Mayet, Colin. Conversation at the retreat and additions by Mayet. [Mayet 1, 7 = OM 440 and additions a, b, c]:

[1] “There are some (I speak of those who were not present at the beginnings) who at all costs want to find something miraculous in the beginning and the origin of the Society. The miracle is that the good God wanted to make use of such instruments for this work.”

[a] There were, however, some extraordinary things.

[b] I report these words to show the humility of Fr. Champagnat; but it suffices to glance at these memoirs of mine to see that his words have no other basis than the modesty of that holy confrere.

[c] “I am not of the opinion of Fr. Champagnat,” says Fr. Colin, the Superior General. “Had there been nothing extraordinary, the Society would never have done what it has done. In my case, I was pushed in all that I did for the Society.”

244

September 1868. Colin. Words spoken to Fr. Jeantin. [APM 131.1 = OM 812, 1]:

On the subject of the origin of the Society and of its constitutions, Fr. Founder said one day with a sigh, “I was obliged to say some things that I would have wished to bury in the grave with me.” And some days later, “When they ask me how I found myself at the head, they are going too far; they are asking me things that I cannot and ought not say; they will say that this is illuminism.

Let them say what they want. The greatest miracle is that the Society succeeded in the hands of such miserable instruments. That ought to satisfy you.”

245

1869-1870. *Jeantin. Memorandum on the origin and the foundation of the S.M. and various statements of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.2 = OM 819, 117]:*

We heard him say many times that one day, in the beginnings, he was complaining to the most blessed Virgin about not having with him talented and capable men. The answer came to him: “Calm down; they will come later. If they were here now, you would not be able to give it the spirit I want.”

246

September 14, 1869. *Colin. Jeantin, Historical notes on the beginnings of the S.M. and on the constitutions of Fr. Colin. [APM 131.4 = OM 821, 60]:*

“ I’ll stop there; I’ve said enough to show the course of events that took place at the foundation of the Society.

“ Now, if you ask what were for me the signs of God’s will that led me to put myself forward like that in spite of my repugnance, I would only say one thing in reply: ‘God, who wanted all the glory for himself, chose the most guilty and unworthy one, and, by means of such a miserable instrument, the work has been able to succeed. This miracle is more than enough.’”

247

July 19-25, 1870. *Jeantin. Notes reporting some statements of Fr. Colin at La Neylière. [APM 132.3 = OM 839, 1 and addition a]:*

[1] The Very Rev. Father does not relish what they tell him about the obligation to disclose all (the revelations affecting the origins). He says that he has said enough about it in saying that he had a confidence equivalent to certitude. *All comes from God. I regard the blessed Virgin as the foundress.* However, he does not say no in an absolute way. *I will see what God will inspire me to do.*

[a] He says that the very fact of the existence of the Society is a proof of the intervention of God.

248

February 6, 1872. *Colin. To the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 846, 12]:*

“If some were to say to me that the supernatural intervention is not certain, proven, regarding the origin of the Society and in particular of our constitutions, I would respond to them: ‘For you, perhaps; but for me it is proven, certain, incontestable.’ Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross teach that there are, in this order of things, some convictions so firm that no opposition can shake

them. Moreover, the very existence of the Society, when you think of those who began it, isn't that an obvious miracle?"

249

1871. *Colin. Response to his nephew, Fr. Eugene Colin. [Jeantin 1, 69a = OM 851, 2]:*

"I have said too much about it; it is quite easy to understand that what I did, I did not do *on my own initiative*. All I did was obey God who was pushing me. I resisted quite a long time, and I suffered a lot for it... But what I have said is quite clear; I have no need to explain myself any further. If someone asks who is the founder of the Society of Mary, you can tell him with every confidence that it is the most blessed Virgin."

Tasting God

We have seen, in the dossier “Cerdon: Experiences,” above, how Colin experienced at Cerdon a period of “extreme sweetness.” There are a number of texts, which we gather here, in which Colin speaks of “tasting God” as crucial to spiritual formation. The Constitutions of 1988, in nos. 53 and 92, bring the two themes together in the contexts of novitiate formation and ongoing Marist life. Also included is a text from a letter of one of the pioneer missionary sisters, testifying to such an experience.

250

About 1838-1839. Colin. To Mayet: Colin is telling him in spiritual direction that he has built too much on nature. [Mayet 1, 318f = FS 26, 1]:

“Come, my good friend, my son, we must mortify our nature. You need not be afraid that I will humor you, or spare your feelings. You will not find any flattery in me. I must tell you that so far your acts of penance, your long prayers, your works of zeal, all that, has not brought you great merit in the sight of God, and has not been the fruit of grace alone. Nature has played a great part in it. Very often you have been following only your own instinctive desires. You must rebuild it all in faith. Your life must go through a great process of purification so that you can put on a new life. The will must be purified by the test of contradictions, the understanding must be purified. The good Lord allows that we no longer see anything, he leaves us as it were in a dark night, so that the will no longer knows what to do and the understanding is at a loss. Then, when you emerge from that night, you no longer see God in the same way: that is faith. You taste the truths of God in a completely new way: you have a completely new idea of the holiness of God, and so on. And so we must pass first of all through the dark night of the senses, where only faith remains, and an obscure faith at that (for true faith is obscure); but then a new horizon is revealed where truths appear in a new light of day. Then, if God wills, we may taste the sweetest consolations, but they are consolations of faith. Come, my son, take courage.”

251

Early 1840's? Colin. To some Marists including Mayet. [Mayet S1, 5m = OM 499, addition I]:

Speaking to us one day about the pious young men at the minor seminary of Belley, he said: “But really, I can’t understand those who are well behaved, and who will spend several days in study without having a notion of opening the New Testament, the Imitation, the Spiritual Combat, etc., to nourish their souls for a moment, to converse with God, to taste God; all the more so if they were the Society’s theologians [= scholastics]. These latter must have the liberty to spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament.”

252

Late 1842. Colin. *Speaking to the Marists at the Capucinière, seat of the novitiate.* [Mayet 1, 667-669 = FS 63, 2f]:

[2] “If I were in charge, I would see the novices individually twice a week. For the first two or three months I would not take the initiative in making any observations to them. The Rule says that in the beginning they must be treated ‘more considerately and attentively.’ I would just let them speak, replying to what they said, and indicating the way they might correct the faults that they have noticed in themselves and pointed out to me. I would try simply to unite them to God, to bring them to a spirit of prayer. Once they were united to God, everything else would take care of itself. When the good Lord dwells in the heart, it is he who sets everything in motion. Without that, everything that you do is completely useless; no matter how you plant the seed and tire yourself out, the life-giving principle is still lacking. But having once tasted God, a novice will turn to him again and again. It is a treasure in his soul, something to which he is constantly brought back as to his own center. There he will love to converse with God. All his little trials and humiliations will be welcome, he will even seek them out and wish for still more than he finds. Indeed, I have seen men who tasted great happiness in their novitiate retreat and who left it extremely reluctantly. There are even some who asked to be allowed to retire into houses of recollection like Carthusians, to devote themselves to contemplation, they had had such a taste of God. But nevertheless their call was to an active life.

[3] “Later, in the course of life, since you have tasted the gift of God, you remember it and return to it with pleasure. The novitiate has created a treasure in the soul and this attracts to itself.”

253

Academic year 1842-43. Colin. *To Mayet, socius at the novitiate.* [Mayet 1, 677 = FS 64, 1]:

“Why do you always read out points to them during meditation? That disturbs them. They are not children. The night before, give them some indication sometimes, two or three times a week, for example. Sometimes even, especially in the beginning, do a whole meditation for them with the preludes of Saint Ignatius, the application of the senses and faculties, and the affections, once or twice every 15 days for example. That teaches them to make a meditation. However, you should often leave them free. Let them choose a subject for meditation themselves. If they feel drawn by inclination to something in particular, to the blessed Sacrament for example, or the Passion — as indeed often happens with young men — well, then, give them some books on the subject. If they do not make a meditation on their own now, when will they? People make a great mistake. Man can do nothing in this domain, it is a matter for God. If once they are united to God, they will gain more in a day than by everything that you might do. Yes, if once they have tasted God, you will have only one problem left: how to hold them back. You will say, ‘But they will sleep.’ Well, then, let them sleep, and give a charitable admonition later in direction to anyone who has allowed himself to doze.”

254

January or April 1843. Colin. Advice to the scholastic Gabriel Germain on how to pray well. [Mayet 2, 384f = FS 65, 3]:

“You have also to learn to taste God; oh yes, to taste God... to taste God is to feel your heart wounded.”

255

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 534f = FS 121]:

[1] “Father Fremont, Messieurs, (and you cannot repeat this to him since he is fifteen thousand miles away) is a man of God. When he was first sent to La Favorite, he suffered a great deal at the change of circumstances, but he did not let his human nature get the better of him, he braced himself against his own nature. Then he tasted God, he made his novitiate as a man of God.

[2] “Messieurs, if a man does not taste God in his novitiate, he has not died to self [his very words].

[3] “For a priest like Father Fremont who has already exercised his ministry, the novitiate is quite a wrench at first, but if he refuses to listen to the voice of nature, God will speak to him. Some have already thanked me for sending them there despite their reluctance to go.

[4] “It is a great opportunity, Messieurs, when you can recognize it. For myself, it would, I think, give me great joy if for one year I could take rest in God.

[5] “When you are in the active life, you fail to see your own true motives. There are many things mixed up together in our souls, many things that escape detection [his own words].

[6] “That is why the Rule says there shall be a second novitiate after four, five or ten years of ministry. It is a breathing space. A man takes a year’s rest, to concern himself with God alone, and to root himself firmly in the spirit of God.

[7] “We are fools if we think that we can do anything without the spirit of God [his very words].

[8] “Once this novitiate is made, then we shall have some men of God. I should like it to happen soon, but it cannot be done yet, and we have so few men of both profound learning and spirituality who could direct others. I greatly desire that this article of our Rule may be implemented.”

256

June 29, 1847. Colin. To the novices at La Favorite. [Mayet 5, 702 = FS 140, 5]:

“You must work hard at achieving the aim of the novitiate, which is first of all to get to know yourself, and then to unite yourself to God, to become men of prayer, men of faith... I have known some develop a taste for prayer and the interior life who later on worked marvels in Oceania. They even considered opting for the contemplative life.”

257

March 30, 1868. Sr. M. de la Merci. Letter to Fr. Favre. [ASMSM = Our Pioneer Sisters, from correspondence, vol. III, letter #496]:

I have always loved the Society of Mary, she has been a mother to me, so I shall never forget her, nor her missions where Our Lord has allowed me to taste the sweetness of His mercies. I am happy to have given them my health; and I hope with God's grace I will be able to give all the strength that remains to me to serve Jesus where and as He wills.

The Name We Bear

Mary has given her own name to Marists and to their Society. For all of the Marist traditions, great significance is attached to this name and to the fact that it was reserved for us.

The common origin of the traditions

258

(August 15, 1812) c. December 1853. Mary. Words Courveille "heard interiorly" at Le Puy. [Mayet C4, 2653 = OM 718, 5]:

"[...] I am like a powerful army, defending and saving souls. When a fearful heresy threatened to convulse the whole of Europe, my Son raised up His servant, Ignatius, to form a Society under His name, calling itself the Society of Jesus, with members called Jesuits, to fight against the hell unleashed against His Church. In the same way in this last age of impiety and unbelief, it is my wish and the wish of my Son, that there be another Society, one consecrated to me, one which will bear my name, which will call itself the Society of Mary and whose members will call themselves Marists, to battle against hell..."

259

(1815-1816) c. December 1850. Terrailon. Oral account to Mayet. [Mayet 5, 390m = OM 705]:

Around December of 1850, Fr. Terrailon told me: "At the major seminary, when we gave shape to this project, we used to say: 'There is a Society of Jesus, there will be a Society of Mary. Wherever people raise an altar to Jesus, there is an altar for Mary. One body bears the name of Jesus; another ought to bear the name of Mary. That was our dominant thought. What the Jesuits do under their appellation indicated to us what we must do under ours.'"

260

July 23, 1816. The first Marist aspirants. Formula of commitment. [OM 50]:

[...] we solemnly promise that we shall spend ourselves and all we have in saving souls in every way under the very august name of the Virgin Mary and with her help.

The Marist Fathers and Brothers, S.M.

261

December 8, 1831. Professors and missionaries of the minor seminary of Belley. Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. [APM 117 = OM 240]:

Holy Virgin, we are your children, you are our Mother. At your request, without considering our weakness or our unworthiness, your divine Son called us and brought us together in this refuge, the cradle of your Society, to be the first members of a family whose special mistress you want to be, to which you give your name and which wants to devote itself entirely to your service because it is proud to belong to you. Holy Virgin, what shall we give you in return for such a signal favor, which we value more than any good or honor on earth? May the angels and saints join with us in rendering you the fair tribute of our gratitude. [...]

262

January 6, 1842. Colin. Letter to the Marists of Verdélais. [Mayet ND 1, 402f = LColin 420106.Ver, 2f]:

[2] It is above all before the crib of Bethlehem, our very dear confreres, that during these days of retreat and repose, I have understood more than ever the happiness and the duties of our vocation. How sweet it is for us to think that we are the chosen children of the Mother of God, that we fight under her banner, that we have the honor of bearing her heavenly name, that we are the first stones of the building that her divine Son desires to raise in these last times to her glory, for our salvation and the salvation of many others! [3] The more we meditate on the excellence of our noble vocation, the more our heart will expand with feelings of gratitude, self-abasement and generosity so as to correspond with the designs of the Lord for us. And what are these designs of the Lord for us? They are unmistakable. From the moment when he gives us his Mother to be our Mother, he wants us to have unlimited confidence in her; he wants us, as she was, to be humble and small in our own eyes, obedient without arguments, generous about overcoming the inclinations of nature and refusing God nothing; he wants us to have zeal and that our hearts beat only for the glory of Jesus and of Mary.

263

1842/1872. Colin. Constitutions (this number in the 1842 draft was taken over with slight alterations into the 1872 text). [AT II, a, 1 and V, C, 1]:

This least congregation, which the Supreme Pontiff Gregory XVI graciously approved on April 29th, 1836, received from the very beginning the name SOCIETY OF MARY. This name indicates sufficiently the banner beneath which it desires to serve in fighting the battles of the Lord, and what its spirit should be. It is marked out by this tender name SOCIETY OF MARY:

1. so that all who are admitted into it, mindful of the family to which they belong, may understand they are to emulate the virtues of this loving Mother, as if living her life, above all in humility, obedience, [1872: self-denial], mutual charity and the love of God;

2. so that in the various works they undertake for the greater service of God, keeping before their mind's eye this [1872: lovable] Queen of angels and of men [1842: as their helper], fired by the example of so great a leader and renewed by her merits and prayers, with greater resolution and with a more lively confidence, they may by the help of God's grace spend themselves both for their own perfection and for the salvation of their neighbor, hold more loyally to the [1872: Roman] Catholic faith until death and defend it with all their strength. In his way they will be able to achieve with greater fruit the purpose towards which the Society is directed.

264

1842. *Colin. Constitutions. [AT II, a, 356]:*

[...] the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, which is the feast of the Society [...]

265

September 25, 1843. *Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 5, 214fm]:*

He recommends to us in the most moving, most touching, most ardent, most tender terms that during the whole of this year all of us make a visit to the sacred heart of Mary for a quarter of an hour once or twice a week, to commend to her the welfare and growth of the Society. "Let us repose," he says, "a quarter of an hour on her divine heart; let us knock at the door of that heart; we are her children, we bear her name, she cannot refuse us."

266

December 29, 1844. *Colin. Remarks in council. [Mayet 3, 410f = FS 85, 1]:*

"[...] Let us always remember that we are to do good in such a way that we appear *in this world, unknown and indeed even hidden*. Before I die I want to see to it that this is well rooted in the society. Someone said once: 'The Marist Fathers... there is no need to ask what their spirit is. Their name is a sufficient indication, if they understand it properly.'"

267

1844. *Colin. To the retreatants, and note of Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 5, 667 and addition a]:*

[1] "Can a Marist priest forget the one whose name he bears? Every beat of his heart ought to be done for her."

[a] I am not going to make a cross-reference here to the articles that treat of Mary, since the name of that good Mother is mingled in all Father's words as the smell of flowers in the springtime air.

268

September 19, 1845. Mayet/Germain. Extract from a talk at the closing of the annual retreat. [Mayet 6, 120-123 = OM 608]:

[1] Fr. Germain got into the pulpit and gave a touching talk on the honor we have in bearing Mary's name and on the obligations that this name imposes on us. After he had shown the importance that people attach to a name in the world, in the family, in society, in religion, and had demonstrated rapidly the grandeur, the holiness, the gentleness, and the power of the name of Mary, he cried out, and we shivered as we heard his words:

[2] "Well, Messieurs, this name which is so great and so sublime, this name which is so holy and so august, this name which is so gentle and sweet, this name which is so powerful and so awe-inspiring — God in his infinite wisdom had decided from all eternity not only to give it to the one he destined to be his Mother, but eventually to honor with this same name a group of men whom he would call to carry out his designs. Now, eighteen centuries had passed since the appearance of the privileged creature who has made that name illustrious, and (astonishing fact!) still no congregation had taken this venerated name as its own appellation, when, one day, God inspired a humble priest with such a divine thought, and placed and engraved this blessed name of Mary first of all in his heart, so that he might give it to his brothers. He kept it in this heart, which is dear to all of us, as in an ark of salvation amid the storms and, so to say, a universal deluge, when, for more than twenty years, he was battered by waves of contradiction. [3] But finally the sign of peace appeared in the skies and, upon seeing this heavenly sign, a venerable and holy bishop could not refrain from exclaiming, carried away with admiration: *'The finger of God is here'*. Messieurs, you know the history of our modest origins; you all know how this name that had come from heaven was received by the representative of Jesus Christ on earth, and the remarkable favors that the holy pontiff wished to attach to it; but each knows especially how this holy name drew him to the Society. Oh! how many already owe their salvation to this holy name 'Marists'! How many still, every day, embrace this sacred name as the miraculous plank that ought to lead them to a safe port! How many, until the end of time, will not cease to bless God for having called them to bear this name which is so great, so holy, and at the same time so humble and so sweet? Thus is fulfilled, and will be fulfilled every day, those inspired words of the successor of the apostles when, squeezing in those hands of his that bless the world the hands of our venerable founder, he said to him with emotion: *'Crescite et multiplicamini. Increase and multiply and fill the earth.'*"

269

December 19, 1845. Colin. Words spoken to the young theology students who made their profession that day. [Mayet 5, 695]:

"All religious societies boast of having Mary for their mother, but none is more justly entitled to boast than the Society of Mary, since it is the first to which the Blessed Virgin has given her name."

270

September 26, 1846. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 219 = FS 118]:

[1] "Messieurs, I am no prophet, but I cannot help thinking that we are at the end of time, that era of which Jesus Christ said: 'When the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find the Faith on

earth?’ Yes, I would venture to say that if the Word were to become incarnate for a second time nowadays, if I may be permitted to speak in such a way, he would be crucified again by the French, and this in less than three years. We live in evil days, the great Revolution has left deep traces upon this France of ours. We are given over to indifference, to pantheism, and to materialism. Where is the faith today? Even those whom you would from their words judge to be good, belie themselves by their actions.

[2] “And why then has the Society of Mary waited until the 19th century to make its appearance? It would have been so natural to take the name Society of Mary! They told me that again on this last journey to Rome.” (Father Colin’s third to Rome. He had just returned.) “Messieurs, if not a single hair falls from our head unless it is the will of our Father in heaven, we must not think that this happened by chance. Yes, it means that the Blessed Virgin is going to redouble her efforts at the end of time to gather together the elect” (his very words).

271

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 453 = FS 146, 4]:

“[...] Let us [...] try to adopt a modest way of behaving, one which gives the least possible offense to those among whom we live and which is in conformity with our vocation and the spirit of the Blessed Virgin whose name we bear.[...]”

272

January 19, 1848. Colin. Statement in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 466f = OM 674 = FS 152, 1]:

“Messieurs, it is only later that you will understand a certain phrase in the rule: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. You could say that the whole spirit of the Society is there. Let us then keep within the limits of our vocation. Although we should not exclude any work of zeal in our ministry, we must always remain *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us not be concerned with our honor. If we do good, we shall have merit in the sight of God. Let us seek only the honor of God and for ourselves... *unknown*. Let us not look to what the societies that have preceded us have done, for, when a society comes to birth, it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (and here he assumed a solemn tone of voice) I am pleased to be able to repeat it here once again: *I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time*. These are the words which served us as a foundation and an encouragement at the very beginning of the society. They were always present to us. We have worked along that line, if I may so speak. We must admit that we are living in very bad times; humanity is really sick. At the end of time it will need a great deal of help, and the Blessed Virgin will be the one to give it. Messieurs, let us rejoice to belong to her Society and bear her name. The other communities coming to birth envy us our fine name.”

273

September 18, 1848. Colin. Exhortation in the refectory. [Mayet 6, 465 = FS 161, 6]:

“Today everything is done through Mary. All the congregations honor her mysteries by their different titles, and it is truly remarkable (as they told me in Rome) that no one until now had thought of taking the name that the Society bears. Are we worthy of it?”

274

January 31, 1849. Colin. *Part of an outburst in the refectory occasioned by a young Marist speaking against teaching.* [Mayet 7, 652 = OM 690 = FS 172, 23]:

“Messieurs, 15 centuries after the preaching of the Gospel, there appears all of a sudden a body of apostolic men. The name of Jesus has been reserved for them, and accordingly they imitate Him. Like Him, they prepare themselves in retirement; like Jesus, who only initiated His ministry at the age of thirty, they are ordained priests only at the age of thirty. It is the society which has done most good in the Church. And I dare say that their superiority comes from the fact that they oriented themselves towards teaching; that is the source of all the good which the Jesuits have done. In its turn also, 19 centuries after the founding of the Church, there comes a small society. The name of Mary has been held in store for it, as it were, and given to it by God. The Blessed Virgin has said to it: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be the support of the Church at the end of time.’ We must also follow the path of the Jesuits. My greatest ambition, one of the first ideas in establishing the Society, its first aim, is teaching. I have no hope in its future, I consider it as lost, if it does no teaching.”

275

September 13, 1849. Colin. *Conference to the retreatants.* [Mayet 7, 676 = FS 174, 1-3]:

[1] “Messieurs, a Society must have its own spirit. The spirit of a Society is like the soul that gives life to the body: if the spirit is good all goes well.

[2] “The spirit of the Society of Mary is essentially a spirit of modesty. The name we bear is alone an indication of that. It should be a spirit of charity, of humility, of modesty.

[3] “And so in the Society we must be *as if unknown in this world*. That, Messieurs, is an important point for us. We must let ourselves be forgotten by men. Our spirit prompts us not to rely on men.”

276

September 17, 1849. Colin. *To the retreatants.* [Mayet 7, 731 = FS 176, 4]:

“Messieurs, what have we to fear? The Blessed Virgin is leading us. She is saying to us, ‘I am marching at your head.’ Messieurs, given that thought — the Blessed Virgin is marching with me — who would not feel full of courage and of confidence in any trial. And then, if I reflect on the name I bear, what a source of hope, of reassurance! But the name is no longer enough. For I profess to belong to Mary, and I want to profess my belonging to her even more. I want my devotion to her to redouble, my dependence on her to be total and continual. I shall always hold her by the hand. In my troubles, in my difficulties, I shall say to her, ‘Blessed Virgin, help me, I falter. I cast myself into the bosom of your mercy; help me to find my way again.’”

277

September 18, 1849. *Marist retreatants. Act of consecration at the closing ceremony of the retreat. [Jeantin 5, 419]:*

O tender Mother, we are your most unworthy servants, but mercifully marked with your name; we take refuge in your heart with full confidence and, beset everywhere by the enemies of salvation, we cry out to you: tender Mother, open your heart to us; hide us in the bosom of your mercy and under the wings of your protection. Do not allow any one of us, the undersigned, to perish in eternity. O clement Virgin, we choose you today as our Superior and as Superior of your whole Society, and also as our Mother and Advocate; tender Mother, accept us as your true sons; keep us united in charity and save us in eternity. Amen.

278

September 15, 1850. *Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 8, 379 = FS 182, 12]:*

“Meditate also on the *Imitation of the Blessed Virgin*. We bear her name, and it should not be for nothing.”

279

September 18, 1850. *Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 8, 398 = FS 182, 60]:*

Then Reverend Father spoke of how fortunate we were to bear the name of Mary, and of the zeal with which we should imitate her. “She did not create a great stir during her earthly life,” he said, “but how much good she did and still does for the Church! There is our model. Let us clothe ourselves in her spirit.”

280

December 1, 1850. *Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 168dm]:*

“See how the need for Mary in this age is so great that all the societies that are being formed all over the place want to belong to her and to bear her name in some way. Again, see how, in Bordeaux there is a society that, even though we were approved before it under the name Society of Mary, is now taking this name. This is causing quite a bit of confusion, but the good God will take care of it, for it is his design. As for us, let us let it be. *Would that all might prophesy!*”

281

May-October 1853. *Maîtrepierre. Notes on the beginnings of the Society. [Mayet ND 1, 69f = OM 752, 2-4]:*

[2] All the religious orders, all the military orders, all the congregations have, always and everywhere and in a manner wonderful to behold, honored this lovable, admirable Mother. How

many of these societies have taken their name from the mysteries of Mary: Conception, Nativity, Annunciation, Visitation, Holy Heart of Mary, Assumption, etc.

[3] What zeal, what generosity, what holy efforts on the part of so many religious in honor of Mary!

[4] But the name of Mary was still to be taken; eighteen centuries hailed it and did not assume it; it was reserved to the nineteenth century, it was reserved to us *who are at the end of time. Let us rejoice, we who are called, and indeed are, sons of Mary.*

282

September 10, 1853. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 8, 687f]:

“Ah, dear confreres, if you rely on yourselves... what a pity, this reliance on your own efforts. Do you think that will be the mother of success?”

“Ah, you make a big mistake. One of the really essential virtues in the Society is modesty... Since we take the Blessed Virgin as model, we ought to be modest. If we call ourselves Marists, what spirit ought to animate us? We ought to make a study of this for the whole year. Let us not be satisfied with bearing the name ‘Marists’ but without really being Marists. The name doesn’t matter; the reality does.”

283

May 15, 1854. Colin. To the last session of the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter, APM 321.35 = Jeantin 6, 94]:

“You have a beautiful life, a magnificent horizon before you. You see at your head the Queen of Heaven who, at the end of time, wishes to honor you with her blessed name. Which of you would not see a special protection of Mary in the development of our Society? We would be the only ones not to notice; people proclaim it everywhere around us. But what do people praise in you the most? Your good spirit. It is to the point that people say, ‘Oh! if only they were to keep that spirit always. But they will spoil it when they get bigger.’ No, my dear confreres, we shall keep it faithfully with Mary’s help. She is counting on you; you are the foundation stones; so remain firm, unshakeable.”

284

July 1863 (c. 1857). David/Colin. Extracts from a note written by Fr. David to Fr. Mayet reporting some statements of Fr. Colin. [Mayet 6, 466m = OM 802, 8]:

About six years ago, Fr. Colin (he had already resigned from the generalate) said to me: “*Now that I am old, I don’t insist on making a mystery out of it. The name of Mary that we bear was not given us by men; it came to us from heaven.*” He spoke to me like that on the subject of the name of Mary that we have the good fortune to bear.

285

1872. Colin (and Chapter). *Constitutions: article on the Spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 49]:*

Let them always bear in mind that they belong by a gracious choice to the family of blessed Mary, Mother of God, from whose name they are called Marists, and whom they have chosen as their model and as their first and perpetual superior from the beginning. [...]

286

August 16, 1872. Colin. *Parting words to the chapter, following the gratitude expressed by Fr. Favre. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 848, 4]:*

The Very Reverend Father, visibly moved, lets escape from his heart some words of tenderness and of encouragement. Exposing first the ideas that he has always had on the purposes of Providence for our little Society, he says, "Just as God, by a plan of mercy, seems to have reserved for our unhappy times the manifestation of his adorable Heart, so he seems to have prepared Mary to be in a special way the support of the Church in its last battles. I have always felt in the depths of my soul, from the origin of our Society, that it was destined to fight against the Antichrist under the banners of her who crushed the head of the infernal dragon. Among so many congregations consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, only ours, by a singular privilege, has received this beautiful name of Mary. Marists! This name, so consoling, ought always remind us of our duties as well."

The Marist Brothers, F.M.S.

287

Early May 1835. Champagnat. *Letter to Her Majesty the Queen Marie-Amélie. [AFM 132.1 = LChamp 59, lines 21-33]:*

Elevated to the priesthood in 1816, I was sent to a village in the canton of St. Chamond (Loire). What I saw with my eyes in this new position, regarding the education of young people, recalled to me the difficulties I had experienced myself at their age because of the lack of teachers. I hastened then to carry out the plan I had of forming an association of teaching brothers for the rural villages, a great number of which, because of their poverty, cannot afford the Brothers of the Christian Schools. I gave the members of this new society the name of Mary, convinced that this name, by itself, would bring in a great number of subjects. An immediate success, in spite of the lack of temporal resources, while justifying my hunches, surpassed my hopes.

288

May 27, 1838. *Champagnat. Letter to Bishop Pompallier. [LChamp 194, lines 51-56]:*

[...] Mary shows her protection very visibly in regard to the Hermitage. Oh, how much power the name of Mary has! How happy are we to be adorned with it! Without this holy name, without this miraculous name, people would long ago have ceased to speak about our Society. Mary: there you have all the resources of our Society.

The Marist Sisters, S.M.

289

December 1843. *Colin. Remarks to the confreres at the Capucinière. [Mayet 3, 328-330 = CMJ 24, 7]:*

“They will not be called Marists... They will not have the same name as ourselves because of the wickedness of the age. I do not know what name to give them. If there were no religious of the Holy Heart of Mary, I would have selected that. But I do not want to take away the Blessed Virgin’s name from them. I want them to bear the name itself of the Blessed Virgin and not that of any particular mystery.”

290

May-October 1853. *Maîtrepierre. Historical notes on the Society of Mary. [APM 125, p. 47 = CMJ 93, 7f]:*

[7] The aim of this Congregation is the instruction and domestic training of girls, the care of children in orphanages, and zeal in arranging retreats for people of their own sex who so wish.

[8] Since up till now their aim has not been sufficiently defined, they have not spread widely. They have only five houses, Belley, Lyons, Sainte Foy, Meximieux, and Collonges. They now await God’s blessing under the protection of Mary, who honors them with her beautiful name.

291

1855-1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. Dictated by Fr. Colin. [ASM 311.2: Manuscript copy 1, nos. 1 & 2]:*

1. This little society formed under episcopal authority, in the hope of obtaining approbation from the Holy See, has, since its birth adopted the name of Congregation of the Daughters or of the Religious of the Holy Name of Mary.

This very name indicates that it chose the Queen of Virgins as mother and model and as its first superior, that under the auspices of this august Queen it wanted to shelter its weakness, that it desires to support the Lord’s battles, and strive for perfection by imitating her virtues.

Consequently, all who belong to the congregation have a stricter obligation to see themselves as consecrated by their vocation to the service of the Mother of God, to honor this august Virgin with a special devotion, to be animated constantly with her spirit which is so much like her divine Son's spirit, and, as true daughters of such a mother, to live her life, principally her humility, her obedience and her detachment from creatures, her zeal and her charity towards their neighbor. It follows, moreover, that the members of the Institute, since they see that they are especially under the patronage of a mother so merciful, so full of merit, so powerful before God, ought to be filled with a firm confidence, to be on fire with holy courage in the midst of the difficulties and trials of this short life and even unto death to remain unshakeable in the practice of solid virtues, in perfect dedication to works of zeal which the Institute undertakes towards their neighbor, always having recourse to their very sweet and very tender protectress so that she might obtain for them this strength and this singular grace.

2. With this lively confidence and the desire to respond to the holiness of their vocation, the Religious of the Holy Name of Mary propose, first of all, to serve the Lord with uprightness and simplicity of heart, by lovingly applying themselves every day to bring their inner being and all their actions more in line with the inner being and actions of the one whom God has given them as mother and model.

And, secondly, in order to please God and by means proper to women, they propose to contribute to the wellbeing and salvation of their neighbor, following the example of the same august Mary, who, all her life, yearned only for the happiness and salvation of humankind.

292

1855-1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. [AT VI, σ , 4f]:*

[4] The spirit of this modest Institute ought naturally to participate in that of the Mother of God whose name it bears, whom it takes as its model, and whom it has chosen as its first and perpetual Superior; it ought, then, to be essentially a spirit of humility, of union with God and of charity toward the neighbor.

[5] The Religious of the Holy Name of Mary, then, will be penetrated and constantly animated by this threefold spirit, and in order to please God, they will strive in all their conduct to join modesty, the love of seclusion and the practice of solidly interior virtues with acts of the most heartfelt charity for the salvation of souls, in such a way that, without losing the spirit of prayer, they may, at the same time, engage in the exercise of zeal proper to their Institute, and may nevertheless appear, in some way, forgotten and unknown in the world.

293

1855-1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. [AT VI, σ , 185]:*

[185] *Cult of gratitude.* Let each one count, if possible, the favors she has received since her birth through the mediation of Mary, favors whose number and value she will know only at the hour of death. Let all, too, acknowledge that it is to her maternal solicitude they owe it that they have been withdrawn from the mire of the world, that they have been led to this dear Society which is completely consecrated to her, which she herself formed, which she honors with her name, to which she admits only daughters of choice, privileged ones, of whom she wishes to be the advocate with her divine Son, of whom she wishes to be the mother, the president, to lead them, as dearly beloved children, to the happiness of heaven.

The T.O.M./S.M.S.M. tradition

294

April 13 - August 15, 1847. Eymard. Rule of the Third Order of Mary; act of consecration. [APM 831.1, pp. 11f = LM 132, 118f]:

[118] O Mary, mother of fair love and of holy hope, because I desire with all my heart to work more perfectly toward my salvation in the vocation in which God has placed me, I dare to beg you to take me under your powerful protection and to receive me as a novice in the Third Order which has the happiness of bearing your name and whose duty it is to imitate your virtues, especially your vigilant purity, your tender charity, your love for the simple and hidden life, and your spirit of prayer. It is true that I do not deserve to belong to your privileged family and, for such a grace, I can offer you only my desire to become worthy. O my good mother, receive this desire, and enliven it with your spirit and with your tender and generous love for Jesus.

[119] I consecrate my entire life to you, so that it may be a continuation of your life on earth, so that I may come to share one day in your glory in heaven. Amen.

295

Spring 1850. Eymard. Report on the T.O.M., presented with the request for approbation. [APM 812.1 = LM 159, 40]:

[...] The infant enrolled before birth ought to be given the name Mary as a sign of consecration. [...]

296

August-September 1857. P. Jacquet. Manual of the Third Order of Mary, introduction. [Manual, p. 1 = LM 283, 1]:

The little Society of Mary had just been founded, and the charm of its name, in an age so rightly called the age of Mary, was already drawing to itself, as though by a hidden instinct, a great number of pious souls.

297

August-December 1857. P. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., first edition. [Manual, pp. 22-24 = LM 284, 4f]:

[4] The name alone of our Third Order is enough to make us appreciate the happiness of belonging to her. Third Order of Mary! this means being part of her privileged family. Members of the Third Order of Mary! the specially chosen children of this heavenly Mother. And this name is not an empty title; it bestows a true right to the heart of Mary, the right that children have to be specially loved, protected, and heard by their Mother. When we have favors to ask for ourselves or for those who are dear to us, it makes us happy to think that the hand that grants them is the hand of

our mother! Doubtless Mary is tender, clement and merciful to all people; but our quality of privileged children confers on us yet one more claim to her goodness, her tenderness, and her favors.

[5] This title of privileged children also imposes a duty on us, that of working more than others to make ourselves like our Mother, and this duty is a new gift. What a happy obligation that puts us on the most secure, easiest, and most pleasant path to get to heaven! One enters heaven only through being like Jesus Christ, the divine model of all who are to reach heaven. But imitating Mary means imitating Jesus, of whom she is the most perfect image. Being clothed with Mary means being clothed with Jesus Christ. Being united with Mary also means being united with Jesus, but with a Jesus who is close to us, more within our reach, more accommodating to our weakness, to a Jesus who looks like a mother.

298

August-December 1857. P. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., first edition. [Manual, pp. 29f = LM 284, 20-22]:

[20] The principal aim of the Third Order of Mary is the religious perfection of its members who are living in the midst of secular society. It seeks especially to make each Christian family a domestic community on the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth, living according to the same rule, one within everyone's reach, so that all are quickened by the same spirit and aim at the same goal by common means.

[21] Its secondary aim is the perseverance of the faithful and the conversion of sinners, which its members strive to accomplish through their good example and prayers. It also seeks in a special way the grace of holy baptism for all the children recommended to it before their birth and whose names are written in a book reserved for this purpose.

[22] The tender name which distinguishes the Third Order of Mary shows clearly enough in what spirit and under what powerful auspices it is destined to bring about both of the goals it sets before itself.

299

1859. P. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., second edition. [Manual, pp. 11f = LM 284, footnotes 4 & 5]:

[4] And at what period in history is the Third Order of Mary born? Ah! it is in this century when heaven appears to redouble its efforts to glorify upon earth the August Mother of God. It is at this time when the Church of Jesus Christ proclaims the greatest of Mary's privileges. It is indeed in these days when the power, goodness, and mercy of the August Queen of the heavens have never been more visibly manifest nor more piously implored. The name of this new Third Order is no other than the title given to the age in which it is born. It is called the Third Order of Mary. Third Order of Mary! This name is no vain term. It reminds you, pious Tertiaries, of your duties and of your privileges. Your duties are to bear the name of Mary worthily, to honor it by the holiness of your lives, by imitating the virtues of the August Queen of all the saints and following her example. But this duty is already a rich advantage.

[5] Your privileges include being able to count on the special protection of Mary, who is so powerful. By permitting her name to become your name, she also wants to see you bear it with honor; she will help you. By calling you to belong to the new family which she has given to herself, she wishes to become your Mother by a special title; it is also your right to call yourselves her children. Consider, therefore, all that you may henceforward expect from the goodness and mercy of Mary, both for yourselves and for all those whom you may recommend to her.

Toward a Marian Vision of Church

The Constitutions of 1988, number 92, say that “Marists are called, above all, to make their own a Marian vision of the Church...By ‘tasting God’ as Father Colin did at Cerdon, they realize the radical opposition between the spirit of Mary and the spirit of ambition, covetousness, and the lust for power.”

Jean Coste, in a paper entitled “A Marian Vision of the Church,” published in the original French by the Centre d’Etude Saint-Louis-de-France, says, “Even within the context of his unconditional loyalty to the Church, we find in the Founder of the Marists an implicit criticism of a certain way of being and acting on the part of Churchmen. From the earliest texts we have by him right up to his final words to his Society, three very strong rejections are constantly present, three ‘NOes’ to the three forms of power which make up the apostle’s personal temptation: the power of money, decision-making responsibility, and personal prestige. Each of these rejections is rooted in Colin’s very personal experience as a youth: his awareness of a pathetic spirit of greed, both within his family as well as in his fellow priests; his orphan’s psychology with its lack of self-confidence and search for security; the discovery that, through his very inclination toward obscurity and the hidden life, God wanted him to do good.

“ In these three areas, what Colin saw as the antidote to evil and to the corruption of the apostle’s heart through greed, authoritarianism, and vanity was the image of the Virgin Mary and of the newborn Church whose example and support she was. We already know that we are not dealing here with a set of statements that Colin could prove through scriptural passages, patristic quotations, or theological reasoning. We are dealing with a global, intuitive insight containing from all indications a good dose of imagination—an idealized vision whose source is neither history nor dogma, but which is essentially and astonishingly accurate: in Mary the Church of *Cor unum et anima una*, the Church as servant of the Word, the Church of Faith finds its purest image.”

Gathered here are texts on the three “NOes” that are central to Colin’s Marian vision of the Church.

Fundamental points of the Rule

300

January-March 1842. Colin/Mayet. Remarks made while working on the Constitutions. [Mayet 1, 726f = FS 54, 1-3]:

[1] “I want to leave something in addition to the Rule,” said Father Colin, “something which would tell Marists what they should especially avoid. There is one matter about which I shall not speak here.” — I think it was purity, a virtue so dear to him that he scarcely dared to name it, and about which he used to speak only in veiled terms, since its very name makes people think of its opposite.

[2] “The second thing is *let them abhor every form of greed*. [...]

[3] “The third thing I want to urge is that the Marists not think so much about themselves.”
[...]

301

March 31, 1845. Colin. Remarks at table. [Mayet 6, 64-66 = FS 98, 1-5, 7-8]:

[1] During supper on March 31, 1845, speaking of the great efforts the Society must dedicate itself to and prepare for, he said:

[2] “Messieurs, everything the Jesuits have done, that is what the Society must do!

[3] “There are only three points in which we should differ from them.

[4] “Firstly, *with such...* [then he quoted the article of our Rule where it says that Marists must behave with such great modesty, deference and respect, that the bishops *might love and protect the Society as if it were their own*].

[5] “Secondly, we must not try to flatter or win over anyone in the hope of gain for ourselves or the Society...

[7] “Thirdly, Marists must be in this world *as if unknown and hidden*.

[8] “There, then, are the points of our Rule which ought to distinguish us from others, for basically the rules of all the Orders are similar, for they are founded on the Gospel.”

302

Late 1845. Colin. Remarks to Marists. [Mayet 4, 508f = FS 108, 2]:

At the same time [as he was showing how humiliation is the way to humility], speaking of the culp, he told us that it must only be made about exterior faults, but that the Rule would even permit the accusation of interior faults (with the Superior’s permission) in two cases: when one has given way to feelings of greed or to feelings of pride. “In the latter case,” he said, “one can only gain by it, for pride is mastered by such blows. In the former case, an excellent means to arrest this inclination, this passion which leads us to be self-seeking and calculating, is to expose it in public, and so humiliate oneself.”

303

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 248-250 = FS 119, 6-8]:

[6] “Messieurs,” he said, “there are three things in the Rule that I earnestly want to be in the mind and heart of all Marists. How I have set my heart on these articles being well observed!

[7] “Firstly, it says in the Rule that although the Society intends to devote itself to all good works, whatever they may be, and to make use without exception of all means available for the good of the Church and of souls, *in every way*, Marists must behave nevertheless in all things in such a way that *they may appear as if unknown and hidden in this world*. Secondly...,” he continued, but Father Eymard interrupted saying, “*Let them show themselves pleasant to all*.” “Ah no,” Father Colin went on, “what you say is common to all. The articles closest to my heart are those peculiar to the Marists. Secondly, the Rule says that we must behave with such esteem and regard for the bishops that they will look upon our Society *as their own*. These words, *as their own*, were not put there by chance, but only after much reflection. When I was drawing up the

Rule and these words occurred to me, my mind was at rest. I have found only this expression capable of expressing my thought well.

[8] “Thirdly, our Rule says that we must not seek to curry favor with anyone [...] with the aim of making some temporal gain by it.” [...] Then he said with great ardor, but with a laugh too, “If I could work miracles, I would engrave just these three articles on the forehead of all Marists.”

304

October 22, 1847. Colin. Remark to Father Maîtrepierre. [Mayet 4, 249m = FS 144]:

On October 22, 1847, Father Colin said to Father Maîtrepierre, “Legislative power will be within the Society: it is too difficult and awkward to have recourse to Rome. But there will be points which will never change and which people will not be able to touch: for example, that article of the Rule which says we must behave in such a way with the bishops that they regard our Society *as their own*; or the other one which says not to curry favor with people in high places with the aim and in the hope of obtaining some advantage.”

305

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 449-452 = FS 146, 1]:

On December 4, 1847, while speaking of the hidden life which must be that of the Society, Father Colin returned to two of his favorite articles: firstly, that we must not seek to curry favor with anyone in high places, nor with the pastors of parishes, so as to obtain some advantage; secondly, that although the Society must take up without exception all ministries compatible with the religious life, its members must be *as if unknown and hidden* in this world.

No to greed

306

About 1823. Colin. “Supplement to the Rules of the Society of Mary.” [AT I, h, 5]:

All must take extreme care lest the spirit of greed and the pursuit of profit should invade the house or hold sway, under whatever pretext. The superior or any of his councillors who should retain this spirit of greed for more than a quarter of an hour shall confess his fault before the whole council and say how long he persevered in that fault. Further, so that all means be taken to expel this greed completely from the house of blessed Mary, who always abhorred this spirit of greed throughout her life, should any of the religious likewise commit this fault, he shall confess it promptly before the whole council, which shall have been summoned, and, having said it, he shall withdraw with the permission of the superior.

307

February 8, 1823. Pierre and Jean-Claude Colin. Letter to Mgr. Macchi, the Nuncio in Paris. [OM 82, 2]:

[...] The confession of the faults of pride and of greed is only recommended, it is left to the fervor or to the desire of each religious to acquire humility. [...]

308

February 7, 1833. Colin. Letter to Bishop de Pins of Lyons. [OM 264, 4]:

The Society of Mary [...] will be in a certain way diocesan, [...] because the surplus revenues, especially of the diocesan establishments, in accord with the Superior General, can be turned over to the diocesan coffers, [...]

309

December 1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.," section on poverty. [AT I, s, 21]:

Therefore let them love and cultivate poverty, so that, unimpeded by temporal goods, they may cling to God alone; let them take care lest, under any pretext whatsoever, that spirit of greed, so loathsome to God, should creep in among them: every means must be taken to drive this pestilence, namely greed, completely from the houses of blessed Mary, who throughout her entire life always abhorred this ruinous vice.

310

December 1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.," section on the superior. [AT I, s, 70]:

The spirit of the Society is alien to greed and one's own convenience; let him nurture this spirit in himself and beget it in others; never under any pretext whatsoever should he act when led or spurred on by greed; in this he is to be most vigilant.

311

About 1839. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 58 = Jeantin 5, 217]:

"Perhaps the Society will be rich one day. It will be a great misfortune, Messieurs. Let us pray, let us pray always that disinterestedness will persist in the Society. Let us request that favor from God. If ever the spirit of greed penetrates, if ever the spirit of poverty is lost, people will soon lose the spirit of God; alas! they will lose it as they lose the spirit of poverty."

312

1842. Colin. *Constitutions, section on the administration of goods. [AT II, a, 200]:*

The General can also, if the houses of that same province have been relieved in their need, spend any surplus revenues on external pious works, provided that this is done through the hands of the local Ordinary, who can, however, in no way demand them nor an account of their administration.

313

1842. Colin. *Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT II, a, 224]:*

The truly special spirit of the society consists in their being alien to all greed for earthly goods and especially to a worldly spirit [...] This spirit the General is to nurture carefully in himself and to beget it and preserve it in others. For love of poverty he must do nothing whatsoever to the detriment of the Society, but his confidence in God and in the protection of blessed Mary ought to be such that he never act, under any pretext whatsoever, even that of the glory of God, led or spurred on by greed; [...]

314

January-March 1842. Colin/Mayet. *Remarks made while working on the Constitutions. [Mayet 1, 726 = FS 54, 2]:*

“The second thing is *let them abhor every form of greed*. Yes, indeed, may we abhor this spirit. I have seen in the rules of certain congregations that they should strive to win over *people in high places*, to curry favor with them... Personally, I have taken the opposite course, and I say that confidence placed in a creature, whoever it may be, is always to the detriment of the creator. It is so much detraction from the good Lord. Speaking for myself, when I have some plan in mind and the thought comes to me, ‘Such and such a person could be of use to you,’ I dismiss it immediately, and I say in defiance of myself, ‘Yes, and then the Blessed Virgin will leave you to fend for yourself, when she sees that you are looking elsewhere for your resources.’ Therefore, Messieurs, we shall limit ourselves to visits that are in the line of duty, that are necessary, but we shall never go asking or soliciting anything for ourselves. Let us guard well against that, let us not go rubbing shoulders with men of standing.”

315

March 31, 1845. Colin. *Remarks at table. [Mayet 6, 64-66 = FS 98, 5f]:*

[5] “Secondly, we must not try to flatter or win over anyone in the hope of gain for ourselves or the Society. This is the article I have observed best of all,” he said. “The Blessed Virgin should be enough for us.

[6] “Nature inclines us to that. When someone is in contact with the great, with the powerful, nature inclines him even secretly to hope for some gain, to think that way. But the Blessed Virgin should be enough for us. It is perhaps the only article I have observed well.”

316

September 17, 1845. Colin. Talks on home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 413f = FS 102, 17]:

“All possible precautions should be taken to avoid the impression that the mission is going to be a costly affair. That would give the missionaries a bad reputation, which would in turn discourage parish priests from providing missions for their people, and so have a bad effect on the parishioners. I should not like them to be counting up in a dozen parishes round about what a four week mission has cost, or that people say, ‘The mission cost ten thousand francs,’ as was said not long ago about other missionaries. These were not Marists but I cannot believe it was true. What a misfortune it would be if the Society were one day to give rise to such rumors! But that will not happen. In the early days of the Society, when we were missionaries [he corrected himself and said ‘catechists,’ which appealed better to his modesty], when we were catechists, the word went about one time that the mission we were giving was going to cost so much. One of us [it was really him, but he used this turn of phrase to avoid naming himself] went into the pulpit and said, ‘I hear, my dear brethren, that some of you were wondering what this mission is going to cost. Well, listen carefully: it will cost nothing, and if someone were moved by generosity, gratitude or some such sentiment to offer us something, we would accept nothing at all.’ Messieurs, it is not for money that we are working, but for the salvation of souls, and we can count ourselves far richer, more highly honored and fortunate to be the instruments of salvation and to be called to spread peace and joy in the souls of men.”

317

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 250 = FS 119, 8]:

“Thirdly, our Rule says that we must not seek to curry favor with anyone whatsoever, neither the great, nor the rich, nor laymen, nor priests, nor pastors of parishes, with the aim of making some temporal gain by it. Messieurs, that was not what the Blessed Virgin did. She was poor, hidden, unknown, but did she ever ask anything from anyone? She is our model, let us imitate her.” [...]

318

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 452 = FS 146, 2]:

As to the first point, he said that if we sought to curry favor with men, we should be doing a human work, it would no longer be the work of God, whereas our confidence should be in Mary, who will not forsake us. “Whatever are our needs, it is to her alone we must have recourse. She will always come to our aid.”

319

December 29, 1847. Colin. To the abbé de Charbonnel. [Mayet 4, 460f = FS 150, 1]:

“[...] Our union must be such that the bishops can look upon the Society *as their own* (these are the very terms of the Rule); such that when our houses are sufficiently well established (which I do not think will be in my lifetime), the surplus funds of each house must go into the bishop’s coffers.* In a minor seminary we ran, they used to give us only 300 francs. The Vicar General wanted to increase it. ‘No,’ I told him, ‘the diocese is too poor.’”

*Fr. Mayet noted in the margin, “Father has changed his mind (1849). Nevertheless, it is well for it to be known that, had it been possible to leave this article without harm to good government, he would have done so. It is a desire he has cherished for thirty years.”

320

September 3, 1850. Colin. Conferences on education. [Mayet 8, 361 and 364 = FS 179, 1 & 7]:

[1] [...] “Messieurs, let us seek our resources only in the heart of the Blessed Virgin. Let us be ever more faithful in resisting the inclination to curry the favor of *people in high places* in the hope of gain.”

[...]

[7] At this time he also said, “Let us not curry favor with anyone, *in the hope of gaining something*, but always betake ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, who will come to our aid, as the Rule tells us. These words are very brief, but you would be fortunate indeed if you understood their implications. We become slaves for fear of offending people. We lessen ourselves, and even forfeit respect. [...]”

321

After 1860. Mayet. A remark of his own. [Mayet 7, 6824m-683m]:

When, in the Society, people will no longer do works of zeal without money, when superiors will boast of their skill in finding and choosing works which produce money, when there will be much talk about a ministry which produces much money but little glory for God and there will be little talk about a ministry which gives much glory to God but no money, when members will be rated according to the money they bring in, when there will be incessant talk about stipends for Masses or sermons or about the money brought in by the preaching of Advents, Lents or missions, etc., then, there will no longer be a Society of Mary, an apostolic society, but a society of trade, an association of merchants, honest, conscientious, Christian even, if you like, living a pleasant, respectable and bourgeois life. *May our good Mother forbid it.* That will never happen. But *it is important to resist openly those who have that mindset*, no matter who they are, by all legitimate means.

322

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, article on the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 50]:*

Therefore, following in the footsteps of their Mother, let them above all be entirely removed from the spirit of the world, from any greed for earthly goods, and be totally emptied of all self-concern; [...]

323

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the vow of poverty. [AT V, C, 144]:*

Likewise, they are not allowed to retain gifts or small presents of whatever kind spontaneously offered, even from their family, but must hand them in to the community. Indeed, it will be useful to distribute such small gifts as clothing and the like, to other members of the Society, to remove totally any temptation to greed.

324

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the vow of poverty. [AT V, C, 150]:*

In order to walk more freely in the service of God and give greater edification to the faithful, as well as to avoid any appearance of earthly greed, let them not ask for stipends for preaching or other such ministries that are exercised in the Society for the salvation of souls, in keeping with the nature of the Institute.

325

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the vow of poverty. [AT V, C, 151]:*

For the same reason and to avoid many other difficulties, let them not curry favor with parish priests or people of influence in the hope of obtaining something from them, even something very useful for the house, but instead let them place their full confidence in God alone, who in his great mercy and through the intercession of blessed Mary and Saint Joseph, will himself provide for their needs. Should it perchance happen that they lack bare necessities, they may make their need known to people of means from whom they can expect friendly aid, and if need be, let them not be ashamed to beg from door to door.

326

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the home missions. [AT V, C, 259]:*

Like blessed Paul the Apostle, who, to avoid being a burden to others, worked with his hands day and night to meet his own needs and those of his companions, our men, too, as far as possible, shall strive to be a burden to no one, but rather, as long as they have a roof and food, they shall offer their services in the missions and other ministries as a favor and without any payment, and

although they may accept what is spontaneously offered, they shall nevertheless refuse it if one day the Society has sufficient funds.

327

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the administration of goods. [AT V, C, 292]:*

In order to maintain poverty and remove all appearance of greed, let local superiors, if perchance they have superfluous income, not keep it themselves but send it to the provincial. Let the provincial, however, after paying the required contribution to the general subsidiary fund, deposit the rest in the provincial fund, to be used, with the advice of his councilors, to provide for the needs of the province, but first informing the superior general when there is question of a large sum.

328

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT V, C, 322]:*

[...] For love of poverty he must do nothing that might harm the Society, and his trust in God and in the protection of blessed Mary should be such that never, under any pretext, even that of the glory of God, ought he act motivated or influenced by greed or desire for gain. Let him take the greatest care that the Society's members never follow worldly ways, in their rooms, furnishings, dress, food, accommodation or anything else, so that everything in the Society may always and everywhere be determined in keeping with the highest standards of religious poverty. [...]

329

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the virtue of poverty. [AT V, C, 442]:*

Finally, the preserver of all virtues, and hence the true defense and guardian of the Society, is poverty. Since this virtue, in fact, fully uproots from our heart greed for temporal things and curtails all superfluous use of necessary goods, it preserves a religious soul in humility, in mortification, in contempt for transitory and worldly goods, in simple submission to God and filial trust in his providence; and thus in a wonderful way fosters interior recollection.

330

May 5-27, 1875. *Colin. Constitutions of the T.O.M. [AT, V, T, 24 = LM 395, 28]:*

It is especially to be avoided that any recompense ever be demanded of the Members or even that any agreements seem to be stipulated, as, for example, that money is to be spent on temporal things, gifts are to be offered, religious articles are to be bought, etc... When, nevertheless, the Members meet, collections may be taken up to take care of necessary expenses. Neither the Directors nor others, however, may demand anything for the exercise of the sacred ministry.

No to the lust for power

331

1823? Colin. *“On the manner of holding council in the Society”*: a fragment of the Cerdon rule. [AT I, g, 5]:

In council, the superior shall always express his opinion last, that is after all the others, and the opinion which has more votes shall prevail. The superior himself, however, shall propose subjects for the various offices or works of the Society; he may even say what he has it in him to say so that the councilors shall go along with these nominations. If the votes are equally divided among both sides, it is lawful for the superior to choose the side he wants, but he is invited and even beseeched, for the sake of humility, to choose the side which is contrary to his own. Mary always followed the will of others rather than her own.

332

February 8, 1823. Pierre and Jean-Claude Colin. *Letter to the Nuncio, Msg. Macchi*. [OM 82, 3]:

As for the article on the superior, which also presents some problems, in spite of our wishes we do not think we can make any modifications ourselves; but we are quite disposed, on this point of the rule as on the others, to make all the changes that his Holiness or our Lords the bishops will deem necessary.

333

February 7, 1833. Colin. *Letter to Bishop de Pins of Lyons*. [OM 264, 3f]:

[3] The Society of Mary will be similar to the Company of Jesus in several ways, but it will differ from it in its way of going about things. The Company of Jesus is in some way outside the episcopacy: it is independent. The Society of Mary, in its government, will march in concert and in a spirit of union with the bishops. Like the Company of Jesus, we will take on the running of colleges, home missions and foreign, but, more than the Jesuits, we will devote ourselves to all types of good works. We will be more dependent than they on the bishops: the Jesuits administer their revenues as they see fit; as for us, we will administer them in concert with the bishop of the place, especially the revenues of the diocesan establishments that will be confided to us.

[4] The Society of Mary will be at the same time, if I can so express myself, both universal and diocesan; it will be universal in the sense that it will have its own Superior General who will, on his own or through the Provincials, govern all the houses of the order, on whom will depend all the members of the Society, and who will place them everywhere according to need. It will be in a certain way diocesan, because the religious of particular houses, provided it does not go against the wishes of the Superior General, will be at the disposition of the bishop of the place for missions, retreats, etc... and even to replace provisionally the pastors of parishes who are sick or absent, etc.; because, if necessary, each diocese could have a novitiate; because the surplus revenues, especially of the diocesan establishments, in accord with the Superior General, can be turned over to the diocesan funds, etc., etc... The spirit of the society will be, then, a spirit of union and of good accord with the episcopacy, and the Superior General will have among his duties that of promoting

good understanding with the bishop of each of the places where the establishments of the Society will be located.

334

About October 1838. Colin. Some collected comments. [Mayet 1, 180 = FS 11, 8]:

“When a missionary arrives in a parish, he should make himself small, very small. If I may be allowed to say so, the Marists, the little Marists, have already been the cause of one good thing. There were sometimes missionaries who arrived in a parish, took their place at the head of the table, said the *Benedicite*, and took first place. Now, in the diocese of Lyons and in this diocese of Belley, that is no longer done. Our example has contributed to that. Yes, Messieurs, a Marist missionary must submit himself to the parish priest, and take his advice. Let him preach, hear confessions, all well and good. That is where his business lies. But for the rest, let him not lay down the law.”

335

February 8, 1845. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 682 = FS 92, 16]:

He spoke again of preaching, “Let us be small, let us be humble. If in the pulpit we try to gain a victory and take him by storm, our man reacts against it and slips through our hands. *We must take him from beneath* [his very words]. By taking him from beneath I mean making ourselves so small, so very small [...]”

336

January-March 1845. Colin. Collected remarks. [Mayet 4, 599 = FS 99, 1]:

“Messieurs,” he said to us, “each century has its sickness. In the past there was faith but the heart was sick; now the malady has risen to the head. We live in a century of pride, of madness. We must cure this spirit by our simplicity, by our humility. In the pulpit let us not seem domineering, or else we shall alienate people. Man is more jealous than ever of his freedom and his independence.”

337

September 17, 1845. Colin. Talks on home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 419 = FS 102, 30]:

“The pastor of the parish should preside throughout, and let us show respect also for the curate. We must win the people’s confidence for them, and always show them honor in public. Even in the pulpit we should show deference, but without lapsing into flattery. Let us also leave the ceremonies to the pastors; I know that they are never displeased by it. It must not be said that we are grasping at his stole. We are only helpers. It is only through order that good can be done, the order established by God.”

338

September 17, 1845. Colin. Talks on home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 420 = FS 102, 33]:

“[...] We are living in an age when everything should be done in a modest fashion. The more modest we are, the more we shall be doing God’s work. Every age has had a certain arrogance, and ours has more than its share, an arrogance that has its source in unbelief. It is only by being unassuming that we can achieve success nowadays. We must win souls by submitting ourselves to them. [...]”

339

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 251 = FS 119, 10]:

Father Colin then spoke of the second article which is so dear to him: the Society’s attachment to and union with the bishops. “I am not speaking of the Holy See,” he said. “The Society is based on the Holy See. I have made attachment to the Holy See, to the Pope, one of the ends of the Society. As for the bishops, I want them to look upon our Society *as their own*. On the foreign missions, too, I have made those of our bishops who still wish to be Marists repositories of the authority of the Society, with the functions and powers of provincial. Messieurs, the Society is the only congregation which has done that. Moreover, I shall not conceal from you the fact that other religious have counseled me against it. But, in spite of their advice, I am not ready to change it yet. These distant missions need unity above all else in the beginning, and this is one way to ensure it. I am not sending men out there to dispute about what they think are their rights.”

340

September-November 1846. Mayet/Colin. Collected remarks on the council. [Mayet 5, 440f = FS 139]:

[1] Sometimes on important occasions, the council of the general house was perplexed. Prayers were said that the will of God be made manifest, and they used to meet often.

[2] Father Colin at that time was very fond of praying to God to make known his almighty will to the confreres on the council.

[3] He used to say that there was greater humility and purity of intention in this, than praying: “Lord, let me know your will.”

[4] He sometimes urged the members of the council to do the same: “Provided we attain a knowledge of God’s will, that is enough for us.”

341

December 29, 1847. Colin. To the abbé de Charbonnel. [Mayet 4, 460-463 = FS 150, 1-6]:

[1] On Wednesday December 29, 1847, Reverend Father Colin said to the abbé Charbonnel, “Nowadays, people will recognize neither hierarchy nor authority. That is why the societies now being established must make it clear that they are most submissive to the bishops. I may even add

that none of the societies that preceded us, nor even those which exist today, neither the [Oblates of Mary] nor the [Religious of the Holy Heart of Mary] are, with regard to this point, what the Society of Mary must be. Our union must be such that the bishops can look upon the Society *as their own* [these are the very terms of the Rule]; [...]

[2] “I have never laid down any condition with the bishops, except that they allow us to look upon them as our fathers and upon ourselves as their sons.

[3] “A confrère wrote to me for permission to accept a donation someone wanted to give us by private deed. I replied, ‘The Bishop must be informed and give his consent.’

[4] “If God gives me the leisure to concern myself with the Rule, as I hope he soon will, I intend to trace out the line of conduct concerning respect for the bishops and the union we must have with them. In the diocese the Society must not draw everything to itself, not work at its own undertaking, but at the common undertaking, that of the Church, of the bishop, and it must act in such a way as to give prominence to the bishop. In the past, perhaps, people thought it possible to do good in other ways. I am not concerned with that. Nowadays, however, it is inadvisable to act other than as I say, apart from the fact that we live in evil days where religious congregations are scarcely tolerated. After all, in the early days, the superiors of religious were the bishops; it was they who established and endowed them.

[5] I am having a difference of opinion at present with the Bishop of Amata. He wants a provincial alongside the bishop to safeguard the Marists, and I want it to be the bishop (it is a question here of a Marist bishop) who discharges these functions.

[6] “People say to me, ‘But what if a bishop were like Bishop Pompallier?...’ I answer, ‘Well...we would do what we have done for ten years, we would suffer.’ Besides, that would hardly happen in one of twenty cases.”

342

September 14, 1849. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 7, 726-728 = FS 175, 23]:

“What should be the dispositions of those called to the council? They should be free, indifferent to everything but the holy will of God, possessing a great purity of intention. No rigid ideas, especially not those which stem from their being self-opinionated. All human considerations must be put aside. When we go into council, we all go to find and do the will of God. In the council, therefore, let there be no desire to gain acceptance for our own opinion, but simply the desire to do the will of God. They must see the matter in all its ramifications. If they only look at it from one side, they will not be able to judge it or else the judgement will be rash. No undue haste. Let no one assume the role of a dictator. It is the superior who lays the matter before the council. He must not be interrupted. Only when he has finished putting forward his business should each give his reasons. You should do this with circumspection and not make hazardous statements. Otherwise, if the superior has any intelligence, he will see that your judgement is rash. Do not take long to give your advice. Above all, I repeat, no desire to have one opinion win the day rather than another. but simply a desire to do the will of God. If ever I do not feel completely free and at peace in my soul when there is a decision to be taken, I never take sides, and I do not push myself forward. I may speak, but as for acting, that is another question. There is always time to reach a decision, provided the thing is done properly, if the will of God is fulfilled. Once again, I say, I do not like to push myself forward. If I do so in words, I do not do so in action. The good Lord has blessed this approach in the Society, and I notice that in the council at the general house we always take the better side. Let us all, Messieurs, follow that line of conduct. Yes, nothing is more opposed to the will of God than to bring preconceived ideas to the council.”

343

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities. [AT V, C, 14]:*

Let them be friendly and humble with everybody, especially parish priests, and give no occasion for anybody to blame or mistrust them, for the greater service of God. Let them hold other religious in high esteem, believing themselves in all truth to be inferior to them; they are to show them a sincere and heartfelt charity both in their manner of speaking and in their behaviour; indeed, let them beg graces from God for them, and truly rejoice with them when they prosper in the Church.

344

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the home missions. [AT V, C, 258]:*

Let them be very humble and respectful towards parish priests, curates and other local clergy; they must not accept the parish priest's role or place in the church or at table, nor set about anything of importance without consulting the pastors, and meticulously avoid doing anything against their will.

345

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT V, C, 307]:*

In all matters of major importance he is obliged to hear the assistants in council; and then, even though they do not have a deliberative vote except in cases specified in the Constitutions, and though the superior be left full freedom to choose whatever seems best to him in the Lord, nevertheless whenever a majority of the councillors take the opposing view, he is invited and even entreated to adopt that view out of humility, for Mary was always ready to follow the will of others rather than her own.

Provincials also shall conform themselves to this manner of proceeding.

346

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT V, C, 334]:*

The assistants shall be called in council as the need arises, and regularly once or twice a week. The ballot shall be secret when their consent is required, and also in other cases if one of the assistants requests it. Should there be a tie in the voting, the superior remains free; and even when all, or the majority of the assistants agree with what he proposes, it is still up to him to act or not, as he sees best in the Lord. But let the superior remember that when all or a majority of the assistants are of an opposed opinion, he is strongly invited, and indeed for the love of our most sweet Mother even entreated, if the irresolution persists, to follow the councilors' opinion rather than his own; for doubtless he will in this way gain great peace and special grace for himself.

347

May 9, 1880. Cozon. *Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [LM 431, 28-31]:*

[28] The pastor of a parish in Paris, in a talk I had with him, confided in me all the problems he had with the pious works established in his parish by the Daughters of Charity; then, while speaking of the Third Order of Mary, to which he belonged, he said to me: "In the mind of the founder, the Third Order was not supposed to be restricted the way it is today. The Very Reverend Father Founder would have wanted the parish's congregations and associations to become part of it." This testimony is all the more significant because this venerable pastor had gone to see the Very Reverend Father Founder in La Neylière.

[29] And then, if we were to go to pastors and say to them: "*One heart and one soul*," how easy we would find it to propagate the work, for then it would no longer be a question of laboriously creating a nucleus of persons who would perforce necessarily be removed from existing works.

[30] It is easy to see in this Third Order, when thus understood, a perfect harmony with the Marists' motto: *Let them appear unknown and hidden in this world*, and this is a harmony which should exist, for the founder's thought was complete. From the Society, it should flow into the Third Order, as onto a branch which lives on the sap from the tree.

[31] There can be no doubt that there is a very special spirit in the Society, if only we meditate upon the admirable chapter of our constitutions entitled *The Spirit of the Society*. Well, if our exterior life should be the manifestation of our humility and our complete abnegation, we will manifest it admirably well with a Third Order thus understood. Hidden beneath the pastors' actions, we will do good without attracting attention. Like Mary, who, after the ascension of her divine son, was the soul of the Church and yet the servant of the apostles, we, too, will consider ourselves as servants and not as masters, as helpers and not as the ones in charge.

No to the desire for attention

348

November 15, 1824. Chavoin. *Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 118, 1 = CMJ 2, 1]:*

[...] We have seen and most warmly appreciated the way traced out for us by your Lordship, of remaining hidden and unknown in the eyes of men. It is the way which we proposed to ourselves from the first moment that we thought of this work. We trust that Providence will make known to your Lordship the moment when it should be known and a little less hidden, especially as regards the men.

349

December 1833. Colin. "*Summarium Regularum S.M.*," section on humility. [AT I, s, 32]:

[32] After the example of Blessed Mary, let them strive to live hidden and as it were unknown in the world; with humility, let them avoid honors and positions of prestige. Any religious, no

matter who he is, who is shown to have been ambitious for the position of superior, whether superior general or local superior, or to have said or done anything to try to obtain one or another position of this kind, is to be perpetually barred from that office which he dared to grasp at out of vanity or presumption.

[33] It is likewise completely forbidden to them to accept any dignity, whether in the church, such as the episcopal dignity or the position of vicar general, or in the secular order, should a ruler wish to elevate any of them to some office; they should utterly reject and not accept at all such dignities, unless compelled otherwise by the urgent command of the Supreme Pontiff. However, those preachers who work in foreign lands among heathens may licitly accept the episcopal dignity and any other dignity offered them, to the greater glory of God and for the good of the mission.

350

1836. Colin. *“Regularum S.M. Epitomes,”* section on aids for achieving the ends of the Society. [AT II, e, 21]:

For the same reasons, and to remove all impediments to greater fruitfulness in the vineyard of the Lord, let them show themselves everywhere to be humble of heart, and everywhere act with prudence and especially modesty, giving no one occasion for criticism, that, following in the footsteps of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while they may and indeed ought to expend themselves in any ministries whatsoever for the salvation of souls, nevertheless may appear as if hidden and unknown in the world.

351

August 2-10, 1839. Colin. *Casual conversation at Belley.* [Mayet 1, 184f = FS 18, 1]:

“I can tell you, Messieurs, and I am pleased you should hear it, that I have been asked for information about the Society. I have not given it; I prefer us to remain hidden, in oblivion and obscurity. God forbid that the Marists should want to put on a show! Look at the Blessed Virgin: what did she do? Not that I condemn those who follow another way of making God loved, of working for his glory. They do right, because that is the spirit of their vocation, and each should conform himself to the spirit of his vocation. Not everyone is called to be a Marist: the Church would have good cause for complaint if it had only the little Marists to serve it! But the spirit of our Society is different. We must behave like our mother.”

352

1838-1839. Colin. *Conversation with the Fathers of the boarding school at La Capucinière.* [Mayet 1, 258-260 = FS 24]:

[1] “[...] Messieurs, let us not be among those who cannot bear to hear other congregations spoken of. Do we not all have the same purpose, the same goal? Do not all congregations belong to the Blessed Virgin, and more than we do? I should be very much afraid of that. I want us to pass unnoticed in the Church: *as if unknown*; unnoticed from every point of view. I should not even like us to be conspicuous by our piety. Let us have a simple, ordinary piety, with nothing remarkable about it.

[2] “As for modesty, too, nothing out of the ordinary. When the Jesuits arose, the Lutherans were crying out against the clergy and the times were very different from our own, as were the needs too. Many precautions were necessary. They — the Jesuits — had rules of modesty traced out for them which were very singular. Nowadays there are some who are attracted by that, but there are some who are repelled by it. And so I should not like our modesty to be other than well ordered and ordinary. Let us be no more conspicuous in that than in anything else: *as if unknown*.”

[3] “With the pupils’ parents there is a certain way of behaving: do not talk too much of piety. It puts them off. They say, ‘What is all that about?’ Often the most successful are those whose piety is the most simple and natural. People are less wary with them. Look at Monsieur ***: very often in one or two conversations he brings to confession a man who was very far from it.”

353

January-March 1842. Colin/Mayet. Remarks made while working on the Constitutions. [Mayet 1, 726f = FS 54, 3]:

“The third thing I want to urge is that the Marists not think so much about themselves. Let us not always be coming back upon ourselves, let us not look at ourselves so much. Really, what a spectacle! We are so fine! Rather, let us look to God, who is uncreated beauty. Let us walk in his presence. By always looking at him we shall become like him, we shall become perfect. How I pity those who are always caught up with themselves and who like to steep in their own juice.” As he said this, he laughed heartily. “Ah, yes,” he said, “we soil ourselves with our own company.” He added that a broader approach raises up the soul, makes it capable of great good, while those characters who are engrossed in themselves make no great progress, even in their own sanctification. “Let us laugh,” he said, “for God wants us to laugh—we shall weep on other occasions. Life is a mixture of laughing and weeping. Let us follow the path before us with our eyes fixed on the good Lord.”

354

December 29, 1844. Colin. Remarks in council. [Mayet 3, 410f = FS 85]:

[1] “[...] To make ourselves known, to impose ourselves on others, is alien to our spirit. It pleased the Lord to bring the Society to birth in the wilderness at the Hermitage, and in the wilderness at Belley — I call it a wilderness because grass grows in the streets of the town. Let us always remember that we are to do good in such a way that we appear *in this world unknown and indeed even hidden*. Before I die, I want to see to it that this is well rooted in the Society. Someone once said: ‘The Marist Fathers... there is no need to ask what their spirit is. Their name is a sufficient indication, if they understand it properly.’

[2] “Indeed, Messieurs, the Blessed Virgin (as the Church tells us) is the channel of graces, the Queen of Apostles, and what great good she did for souls. Yet in this world she was hidden and as it were unknown.”

355

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the Refectory. [Mayet 4, 250 = FS 119, 9]:

Then returning to the first article, *as unknown and hidden*, he said, “Really, in actual fact, Messieurs, it is the way to take over everything. It was the approach that the Church followed, and you know that we must have no other model than the early Church. The Society too is beginning with simple men, poor men, but see what the Church achieved later.” Fr. Eymard then said, “A man of great judgment told me, ‘Your Society is really beginning the way the Church did.’”

356

August 22, 1847. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 187 = FS 141, 18]:

“And our heavenly mother, she was the light, the counsel, the consolation of the newborn Church. And did she create a stir? The Gospel says little about her, very little, yet it was she who drew down graces from heaven upon the earth. Let us imitate these holy models in their zeal and their humility. Let us go everywhere, let us do all the good that we can, all the while remaining unassuming and hidden. But the Society, Messieurs, must also apply itself to learning, otherwise it would never attain its goal.”

357

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 452f = FS 146, 3f]:

[3] “As to the second point, we ought to have only one ambition, the ambition to do good, and in no way to make a show. Our first aim in entering the Society was our own sanctification, and the foundation stone of sanctification has always been humility. Without this virtue, the others are not virtues at all. Let us guard ourselves also against what you might call collective pride, which seems to me to be just as opposed to Christian humility as personal pride.

[4] “That, Messieurs, is one of the characteristics of the Society, the one by which it should be distinguished, in accordance with the particular spirit of its vocation, from the others which have preceded it, which others I neither judge nor condemn. The animosity which some of them encounter does not all stem, it seems to me, from hatred for religion. In several cases, the alienation could also come in part from the style these communities have adopted. I heard tell that at one time there were some bishops who as a matter of conscience and principle, supported certain religious congregations when, in actual fact, they would not have been sorry to see them leave their diocese. Let us take good note of this instance, and try to adopt a modest way of behaving, one which gives the least possible offense to those among whom we live and which is in conformity with our vocation and the spirit of the Blessed Virgin whose name we bear. One of our models is Saint Vincent de Paul. However, the Society of Mary should not exclude certain good works which this saint did not allow for his own men, for example, that they become writers. No, everything that the Jesuits have done, the Society will be able to do; writing and publication is not forbidden them. However, the Society of Mary must do these works in a different way from the Jesuits, according to the particular spirit of its vocation, with the spirit of Mary. If someone brings out a work, he will not try to attract public attention, neither for himself nor for the Society. Rather, aiming only at doing good, he will have no other ambition than that of remaining hidden. This is what the apostles did.”

358

December 22, 1847. Colin. *Exhortation at table.* [Mayet 4, 460 = FS 147, 12f]:

[12] He concluded saying that we must serve holy Church with all our strength.

[13] “For,” he said, “everything which the other congregations have done, in particular everything which the Jesuits have done, we must do, relying upon God and upon Mary, but always *unknown and indeed even hidden*, according to our calling.”

359

January 19, 1848. Colin. *Statement in the refectory.* [Mayet 4, 466f = OM 674 = FS 152, 1]:

“Messieurs, it is only later that you will understand a certain phrase in the rule: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. You could say that the whole spirit of the Society is there. Let us then keep within the limits of our vocation. Although we should not exclude any work of zeal in our ministry, we must always remain *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us not be concerned with our honor. If we do good, we shall have merit in the sight of God. Let us seek only the honor of God and for ourselves... *unknown*. Let us not look to what the societies that have preceded us have done, for, when a society comes to birth, it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (and here he assumed a solemn tone of voice) I am pleased to be able to repeat it here once again: *I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time*. These are the words which served us as a foundation and an encouragement at the very beginning of the society. They were always present to us. We have worked along that line, if I may so speak. We must admit that we are living in very bad times; humanity is really sick. At the end of time it will need a great deal of help, and the Blessed Virgin will be the one to give it. Messieurs, let us rejoice to belong to her Society and bear her name. The other communities coming to birth envy us our fine name.”

360

January 24, 1848. Colin. *After announcing in the refectory the death of brother Blaise.* [Mayet 7, 625f = FS 154, 4]:

“Messieurs, the times we live in are in some ways more difficult than those of the apostles: look at Europe, what confusion! How greatly we need the help of the Blessed Virgin. Let us imitate her, following the spirit of our vocation, let us hide ourselves so as to do good. The Rule says we should devote ourselves to all kinds of ministry, to all works of zeal. Nevertheless, we should behave so as to be *unknown and hidden*. I was saying to a gentleman yesterday that nowadays there is only one way to do good: to stay hidden. The good people are timid, the wicked have the upper hand. If someone tries to do good in a certain way, they are at once arrested and find themselves under the feet of the wicked, powerless. Did not the Blessed Virgin remain hidden all her life? She did good for the Church without showing herself. Our Lord himself buried himself for thirty years in oblivion. He showed himself for three years only, when the time came. But even then he knew how to withdraw and slip away in the mountains to be alone. He hid himself when they wanted to make him king, and even when they wished to stone him — his hour had not yet come — he made himself invisible and passed through the midst of his enemies. For the Society too, the time, the hour for making an appearance may come, when God wishes! ...One day too ... [he did not finish]. But as for us, let us be *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us do

nothing to attract the honor of men to ourselves. What can man give us? Are we to work for the honor that human glory will bring?"

361

February 29, 1848. Colin. To the Puylata community. [Mayet 7, 601f = FS 157]:

On Tuesday February 29th, Father Colin told us, "We should remember our maxim: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Today this is the only way to do good, we should bear that in mind. Let us imitate our holy Mother who did so much good during her life and the apostolic life of her divine Son, but without anyone talking about it. Let us not be like those who are intent on *showing off* and on having people talk about them. I do not want the Society ever to have any mansions, and I repeat that so that everyone will understand it well;" (at that moment he turned to me and gave a significant look, which seemed to say: "If you sometimes note down what I say, note that") "it is in the Rule. Then let us take our Lord Jesus Christ as our model. He was always surrounded by the poor: *the poor have the Gospel preached to them*. I should make one thing clear: I would like our men to preach well, certainly, but I would have you know that I do not want (at least at the moment) illustrious preachers like Father Lacordaire. If they come, I am not saying that I would refuse them, but that is not necessary for doing good. Look at the Society: it does a great deal for the glory of God, it gives many missions which are very successful. People ask for us on all sides, we arouse no animosity. Why all this? Because the Society is unassuming."

362

March 1, 1848. Colin. To the community at Puylata. [Mayet 7, 602 =FS 158, 1]:

On March 1, at lunch, Father Colin told us, "Someone who is by no means hostile to the Capuchins, told me that the great house that they have built at La Guillotière — rather, it was not they, I know that they have nothing, someone built it for them — that this great house has done them more harm than good, even though they are very popular and in general very well liked. Messieurs, let us remain small. I say that so that no one will ever think of changing our way of doing things. [By this I think Father meant our way of doing everything in an unassuming way.] This is the only way to do good, being small. The Society is called to do an enormous amount of good. It must be faithful to its vocation. To be small, *unknown and hidden*. The times call for that, we must accommodate ourselves to our times."

363

November 9, 1848. Colin. Remarks heard by Mayet. [Mayet 6, 718m = FS 167]:

On November 19, 1848, I myself heard Father Colin say, "A layman told us recently, 'It is well known what the Marist Fathers do, but it is not talked about. It is seen that when preaching they do not concern themselves with politics, and in listening to their sermons people see that they do not concern themselves with the newspapers, and they find that edifying.' That gave me great pleasure, Messieurs. We must always do the same. We must do good in a hidden way, take on all sorts of works, but always remaining *unknown and hidden*. That does not mean that I want us to preach badly, certainly not. Nor do I want us to be lacking in zeal, in eagerness, in energy for

doing good, to restrict ourselves to a narrow circle. Did not our Lord burn with fiery zeal? Did not Mary feel that searing flame which sets afire all that it touches? What souls were more aflame than theirs? What a blaze of zeal! And yet Jesus remained hidden for thirty years until the hour came that his Father had determined, and Mary did so for the whole of her life.”

364

December 1, 1848. Colin. To the Puylata community. [Mayet 7, 659 = FS 168, 1]:

“Messieurs, this should make us very cautious. There are practicing Catholics in all shades of opinion. They say there are some among the original Republicans, some among the new ones, there are some in every class. Consequently we should keep out of politics. We are here to lead all the parties to heaven. Now, if ever, is the time to practice our maxim: *as unknown and indeed even hidden.*”

365

1867. Mayet. A remark of his own. [Mayet, B16, 121-123]:

May we be permitted to remark that Father did say unceasingly: *Unknown and hidden*, but not *dead*. It is the hidden life that he praised, not a useless, sterile life; it is the nothingness of humility, of self-contempt, of modesty, not the nothingness of the tomb. While he repeated without ceasing *Unknown and hidden*, he also repeated without ceasing that we are called, that we must offer ourselves, to do great things for God. More, he even made his *unknown and hidden* the true basis for great deeds. How wrong would be those who, being of a temperament that is soft and peaceful, or fearful and pessimistic, or cowardly and lazy, would want to shut themselves up in their shell under the pretext that we must lead a hidden life, and who would do nothing, or next to nothing, under the pretext that we must act *unknown and hidden*. That mistake would be even more prejudicial to good, and to souls, if it were made by a local superior. Nature is clever at self-justification. Corpses are also *unknown and hidden*; good-for-nothings are *unknown and hidden*, too. Yes, it is the hidden life that Father extols, and to which we are called after Mary’s example, but it is *Life*... We will make this remark only once; the thing is so obvious. But we do feel that we should make it at least once, because, on very rare occasions, we have seen some subjects, and even a superior, make a false application, at least in part, of this vital, productive principle *unknown and hidden*, which they made a principle of death, of sterility and even of sheer idleness.

366

1869. Colin. Response to questions about the inspirations he received. [Jeantin, NHC 9]:

“When God speaks to a soul He says much in a few words. For instance, that phrase: *Unknown and hidden in the world.*”

367

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the means to attain the Society's ends. [AT V, C, 8]:*

In the various ministries of zeal which they must undertake in obedience, let them behave with such modesty, self-forgetfulness, and self-denial that they seem to be really unknown and indeed even hidden in this world.

368

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, article on the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 50]:*

Therefore, following in the footsteps of their Mother, let them above all be entirely removed from the spirit of the world, from any greed for earthly goods, and be totally emptied of all self-concern; let them strive to deny themselves completely in all things, seeking not their own interests, but only those of Christ and Mary; considering themselves as exiles and pilgrims on earth, indeed as worthless servants and as the refuse of the world; using the things of this world as if not using them; sedulously avoiding in their buildings and living quarters, in their life style and in all their dealings with others, anything that might suggest display, ostentation, or a desire for attention; loving to be unknown and subject to all; without deceit or cunning; in a word, acting always with such great poverty, humility and modesty, simplicity of heart, and unconcern for vanity and worldly ambition, and moreover so combining a love of solitude and silence and the practice of hidden virtues with works of zeal, that even though they must undertake the various ministries helpful to the salvation of souls, they seem to be unknown and indeed even hidden in the world.

369

1872. *Colin. Words to the Chapter. [Minutes of the Chapter, p. 183.]:*

“ Let us always be *Unknown and hidden in the world*. If we hide in the midst of men we will draw them to us. But if, on the contrary, we put ourselves forward, they will resist us.”

The House of Mary and the Spirit of the Society

The earliest extant use of the word “spirit” in reference to the Society of Mary is found in fragment *h* of the Cerdon rule where it speaks of “the spirit of greed” that must be “expelled completely from the house of Mary.” Thus, from the very beginning the spirit of the Society was not thought of as wholly interior and ethereal, but is always concretized in actions, life-styles and even buildings. This dossier, consisting largely of constitutional texts, considers the link between the theme of the “house of Mary” (including the “family of Mary” in the sense of house or lineage, references to the houses or buildings of the Society, and building imagery used by Colin) and the spirit of the Society.

370

About 1823. Colin. “Supplement to the Rules of the Society of Mary,” section on penances. [AT I, h, 5]:

All must take extreme care lest the spirit of covetousness and the pursuit of profit should invade the house or hold sway, under whatever pretext. The superior or any of his councillors who should retain this spirit of covetousness for more than a quarter of an hour shall confess his fault before the whole council and say how long he persevered in that fault. Further, so that all means be taken to expel this covetousness completely from the house of blessed Mary, who always abhorred this spirit of covetousness throughout her life, should any of the religious likewise commit this fault, he shall confess it promptly before the whole council, which shall have been summoned, and, having said it, he shall withdraw with the permission of the superior.

371

After 1823?/after 1858. Chavoin. The manuscript of Sr. Saint-Jacques. [RMJ 241, 146]:

Mother often said to the sisters in the early days of the congregation that they should all regard themselves as the superior as far as the well-being, interest and order of the community were concerned, and as being the bursars of the house of the blessed Virgin.

372

December 1833. Colin. “Summarium Regularum S.M.,” section on poverty. [AT I, s, 21]:

Therefore let them love and cultivate poverty, so that, unimpeded by temporal goods, they may cling to God alone; let them take care lest, under any pretext whatsoever, that spirit of greed, so loathsome to God, should creep in among them: every means must be taken to drive this

pestilence, namely greed, completely from the houses of blessed Mary, who throughout her entire life always abhorred this ruinous vice.

373

December 1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.," section on charity. [AT I, s, 31]:

They should look after each other with charity and Christian gentlemanliness and diligently preserve perfect harmony among themselves, as befits sons of the same family, whose head is the Mother of God; they should neglect nothing that could foster the greatest harmony among themselves; therefore, they are to pay no attention to what region the others come from and never speak ill of one another or of each other's country or family; and, if anyone injures another by word or in any other way, he should quickly ask forgiveness and humbly submit himself to the penance which the Superior will impose.

374

December 1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.," section on the superior. [AT I, s, 70]:

The spirit of the Society is alien to greed and one's own convenience; let him nurture this spirit in himself and beget it in others; never under any pretext whatsoever should he act when led or spurred on by greed; in this he is to be most vigilant.

375

December 8, 1831. Professors and missionaries of the minor seminary of Belley. Consecration to the blessed Virgin. [APM 117 = OM 240]:

Holy Virgin, we are your children, you are our Mother. At your request, without considering our weakness or our unworthiness, your divine Son called us and brought us together in this refuge, the cradle of your society, to be the first members of a family whose special mistress you want to be, to which you give your name and which wants to devote itself entirely to your service because it is proud to belong to you. Holy Virgin, what shall we give you in return for such a signal favor, which we value more than any good or honor on earth? May the angels and saints join with us in rendering you the fair tribute of our gratitude. With your servant St. Ildephonse, we wish to proclaim everywhere your greatness and your privileges, especially that of your Immaculate Conception, to publish your deeds of kindness and mercy, to love you and to have others serve you as much as we can and as long as we shall live. Mother of God and of men, accept the homage of our total dependence and the offering we make of all that we are and all that we have; we sacrifice it to you irrevocably. We install you as the Mistress and Superior of this house, which is yours. This solemn day when we celebrate the feast of your Immaculate Conception will become for us the time when, each year, we renew our fervor and increase our zeal in serving you. Purest Virgin, we pledge ourselves to celebrate each year this feast with the greatest devotion possible, to defend and sustain the glorious privilege of your Immaculate Conception till our last breath and to spread your glory everywhere.

376

January 6, 1842. Colin. *Letter to the Marists of Verdélais*. [Mayet ND 1, 402f = LColin 420106.Ver, 2]:

[...] How sweet it is for us to think that we are the chosen children of the Mother of God, that we fight under her banner, that we have the honor of bearing her heavenly name, that we are the first stones of the building that her divine Son desires to raise in these last times to her glory, for our salvation and the salvation of many others!

377

February 6, 1842. Colin. *Community meeting at the college in Belley*. [Mayet 1, 420f = FS 44, 6]:

“But let us bless God, Messieurs, for I see with great pleasure that the spirit of the Society is alive at Belley. It is their unity and simplicity which make these two houses so dear to me. I am fond of all the houses of the Society, but especially these two. Take courage. You are the foundation stones. These must be dressed and properly laid. Then, on this foundation a building must arise, not for our honor, oh no, but for God, and it must be for his glory not only during our lifetime but after us. Then we shall look down from heaven with pleasure upon the edifice whose beginnings we have witnessed on earth.”

378

1842. Colin. *Constitutions (this number in the 1842 draft was taken over with slight alterations into the 1872 text)*. [AT II, a, 1 and V, C, 1]:

This least congregation, which the Supreme Pontiff Gregory XVI graciously approved on April 29th, 1836, received from the very beginning the name SOCIETY OF MARY. This name indicates sufficiently the banner beneath which it desires to serve in fighting the battles of the Lord, and what its spirit should be. It is marked out by this tender name SOCIETY OF MARY:

1. so that all who are admitted into it, mindful of the family to which they belong, may understand they are to emulate the virtues of this loving Mother, as if living her life, above all in humility, obedience, [1872: self-denial], mutual charity and the love of God; [...]

379

1842. Colin. *Constitutions, section on the Superior General*. [AT II, a, 224]:

The truly special spirit of the Society consists in the fact that its members are far removed from all desire for earthly goods and especially from any worldly spirit, and are of such great poverty, humility, modesty, simplicity of heart, lack of interest in vanity and worldly ambition that, although they must apply themselves to all the ministries by which the salvation of souls can be furthered, yet they appear to be unknown and, as it were, hidden in the world. This spirit the General is to nourish in himself and to bring it to life and preserve it in others. For love of poverty he must do nothing whatsoever to the detriment of the Society, but his confidence in God and in the protection of blessed Mary must be such that he never, under any pretext and even that of the glory of God, acts under the influence or impulse of greed; he is likewise most carefully to beware lest

the worldly spirit of recent entrants mar this little field or least Society of blessed Mary our mother and render it completely sterile in the fruits of salvation. In this let the Superior be most vigilant and severe.

380

1842. *Colin. Constitutions, section on preserving and increasing the Society. [AT II, a, 355 = AT V, C, 422]:*

Since it was God himself who, at the intercession of the Mother of God, laid the first foundations of this smallest Society, which, arrayed for battle, as it were, against the enemies of salvation, with the same Mother of God as leader and protector, must always be ready to fight on the side of the Lord, it is the divine mercy itself which will increase it, guide it, preserve it, and fill it with the Holy Spirit. But since the same divine mercy, by a wonderful and gentle disposition of things, expects effort and application on our part, nothing must be overlooked that would enable us to erect this Society upon the foundation of every solid virtue, and in the first place on the four unshakeable cornerstones: *humility, obedience, charity, and poverty*; so that what was once apparent in the house of Nazareth, where resided the Incarnate Word, the blessed Virgin and the Patriarch Joseph, may also be seen in this Society, for the greater glory of God and the honor of that same Virgin.

381

1855-1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters: "Spirit of the Institute" [AT VI, σ, 4-8]:*

[4] 1° The spirit of this modest Institute ought naturally to participate in that of the Mother of God whose name it bears, whom it takes as its model, and whom it has chosen as its first and perpetual Superior; it ought, then, to be essentially a spirit of humility, of union with God and of charity toward the neighbor.

[5] 2° The Religious of the Holy Name of Mary, then, will be penetrated and constantly animated by this threefold spirit, and in order to please God, they will strive in all their conduct to join modesty, the love of seclusion and the practice of solidly interior virtues with acts of the most heartfelt charity for the salvation of souls, in such a way that, without losing the spirit of prayer, they may, at the same time, engage in the exercise of zeal proper to their Institute, and may nevertheless appear, in some way, forgotten and unknown in the world.

[6] 3° In their furnishings, in the way they build their houses, in their manner of life, and even in their relations with their pupils, they should carefully avoid all that savors of a desire to impress and oversteps the boundary of true modesty, so that everything about them will breathe forth only the spirit of interior life, humility and religious simplicity.

[7] 4° The Institute may have some houses devoted solely to the exercise of this interior and hidden life, where the religious, cut off from all the preoccupations of teaching, will divide their time between prayer and manual work, and will strive, with the help of grace, to reproduce in themselves the virtues of Jesus and Mary in the home of Nazareth.

[8] 5° In the same spirit of humility and modesty they will make use of no titles of distinction in addressing each other, but will simply address one another as *Sister*. However, when speaking of Superiors or addressing them, out of respect they will use the title of *Very Reverend Mother* for the Superior General; *Honorable Mother* for the Vicar Superiors, and *Mother* for the local Superiors and the elderly sisters.

382

September 4, 1866. *Colin. Remarks at the Chapter. [Minutes of the Chapter, pp. 70-71]:*

[...] Very Reverend Father General explained to the members of the Chapter the rules of prudence which should guide the administration when there is question of giving permission for building or major repairs. [...]

Very Reverend Father Founder endorsed the remarks of Very Rev. Fr. General and insisted on the simplicity, the modesty and the poverty which should make our house a reflection of that of Nazareth. The words *unknown and hidden* of our Constitutions apply to buildings as well as to persons.

383

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, article on the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 49f]:*

[49] Let them always keep in mind that they belong by gracious choice to the family of blessed Mary, Mother of God, from whose name they are called Marists, and whom they have chosen from the beginning as their model and their first and perpetual superior. If therefore they are and wish to be true sons of this dear Mother, let them continually strive to draw upon her spirit and breathe it: a spirit of humility, self-denial, intimate union with God, and the most ardent love of neighbor; and so they must think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things, otherwise they will be unworthy and degenerate sons.

[50] Therefore, following in the footsteps of their Mother, let them above all be entirely removed from the spirit of the world, from any greed for earthly goods, and be totally emptied of all self-concern; let them strive to deny themselves completely in all things, seeking not their own interests, but only those of Christ and Mary; considering themselves as exiles and pilgrims on earth, indeed as worthless servants and as the refuse of the world; using the things of this world as if not using them; sedulously avoiding in their buildings and living quarters, in their life-style and in all their dealings with others, anything that might suggest display, ostentation, or a desire for attention; loving to be unknown and subject to all; without deceit or cunning; in a word, acting always with such great poverty, humility and modesty, simplicity of heart, and unconcern for vanity and worldly ambition, and moreover so combining a love of solitude and silence and the practice of hidden virtues with works of zeal, that even though they must undertake the various ministries helpful to the salvation of souls, they seem to be unknown and indeed even hidden in the world.

Let them all cling fast to this spirit in the knowledge that it is the very pivot and foundation of their whole Society.

384

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on dealing with outsiders. [AT V, C, 215]:*

Neither shall they visit their family except for a serious and urgent reason and with the permission of their superiors, nor shall they express the wish to stay with them, even for the purpose of a more rapid convalescence, but let them peacefully entrust themselves to the Society as to a mother, whose role it is to cherish and console her children with all possible care, especially

those who are ill, and if need be let them eagerly choose to die in a house of Mary, their most sweet mother, and among their brother religious, whenever it pleases the Lord to call them.

385

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on things concerning the body. [AT V, C, 237]:*

In the houses of the Society only those games are to be allowed which are truly suited to religious priests vowed to a life that is poor and far removed from worldly spirit.

386

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on the Superior General. [AT V, C, 322]:*

Let him diligently nourish the proper spirit of the Society in himself and enkindle and maintain it in others. For love of poverty he must do nothing that might harm the Society, and his trust in God and in the protection of blessed Mary should be such that never, under any pretext, not even that of the glory of God, are his actions motivated or influenced by greed or desire for gain. Let him take the greatest care that the Society's members never follow worldly ways in their rooms, furnishings, dress, food, accommodation, or anything else, so that everything in the Society may always and everywhere be determined in keeping with the highest standards of religious poverty. Let him likewise most carefully ensure that the worldly spirit of those who have recently entered not ravage this little field of blessed Mary our Mother, namely this smallest Society, and render it completely barren of the fruits of salvation. On this point let the superior be most vigilant and severe.

387

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on the "cornerstone" virtue of poverty. [AT V, C, 445]:*

Woe to the one, whoever he may be, who in such a grave and very necessary matter would be the cause whereby the Society as a whole or a single house fell into deplorable laxity! For if indeed they were to lose the spirit of poverty, Jesus and Mary would no longer recognize this congregation as their own, nor deign to live any more in its midst, and thus, abandoned to its own fragility, it would quickly and inevitably fall into total ruin.

388

1872. *Colin. Constitutions: other numbers mentioning the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 37, 75, 155, 262, 295, 303]:*

[37] [...] the spirit of piety [...] that truly interior life which ought to be the very hallmark of the Institute [...]

[75] [...] the spirit of the Society, which is a spirit of obedience and self-denial [...]

[155] [...] vow of stability [...] love of the Society and its spirit [...]

[262] [...] in accordance with the spirit of the Society, to evangelize the poor, the uneducated and country people.

[295] [...] The administration of the Society's goods [...] in keeping with the Institute's laws and spirit [...]

[303] [...] that [the Superior General] have made a very profound study of the Society's constitutions and its spirit [...] and that he be a most faithful custodian of its proper spirit and of the traditions and customs observed in it from the beginning [...]

BUGEY

In the mountains of Bugey the first Marist missionaries experienced the joy of proclaiming the Good News to forgotten people.

Like the first missionaries in Bugey Marists proclaim the Good News of God's mercy to those most in need.

—Constitutions 1988

Bugey: the Missions

This dossier contains various accounts and anecdotes about the missionary work of the first Marists in the Bugey mountains. The texts are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

The missions and the missionaries

389

1844. Déclas. Account of the origins of the Society. [Mayet 5, 393f = OM 591, 7]:

Fr. Déclas says: “I am the first, despite my unworthiness, to whom he made known his design. It was in 1815, on a Wednesday, a holiday. Both of us were at the major seminary of Lyons. He told me that he intended, when he became a priest, to do like St. Francis Regis and to go into the rural areas to help the poor people, who often have greater need of outside priests than people in the cities or large towns who have priests to choose from, whereas the former often have only one priest and are exposed to making bad confessions. He asked me whether I wanted to do like him. I said yes. He said no more at the time, and through the year he kept me with the same thought, telling me only: ‘We shall do like St. Francis Regis, and no more.’ But the day before we left for the holidays, he took me aside (until then, he had spoken to no one about this project) and told me: ‘You know, what I told you about during the year is something serious. An order will be set up which will be about the same as that of the Jesuits, except that its members will be called Marists instead of being called Jesuits.’ We promised that we would write during the summer, and we kept our word.”

390

January 16, 1825. Pierre Colin. Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 131]:

[1] Fr. Déclas and my brother have begun the retreat in La Balme, on the first Sunday after Epiphany. They are giving two instructions every day, one in the morning and the other in the evening; they also teach catechism to the children after dinner. I went up to La Balme myself twice this week. I also spoke to the people who are going to the retreat exercises eagerly and assiduously.

[2] Starting on the fourth and fifth days of the retreat, there was a general rush to go to confession. They think that almost everyone will approach the sacred tribunal, and already many people who had not gone in a long time have come forward.

[3] If this retreat is in any way successful, we can attribute this only to the prayers of your Excellency and to those of the brave souls who are praying for the conversion of sinners. The

retreat in La Balme will end only on the 29th of this month. More and more, we feel how much we will need a fourth confrere.

[4] Our little community of young women is still going well; there are now fourteen of them in a very small house, and we want as much as they do for them to have larger quarters, for they cannot expand in Cerdon.

391

1844. *Déclas. Narrative on the origins of the Society. [Mayet 5, 395f = OM 591, 15-17]:*

[15] The division of the diocese of Lyons came about. From it another diocese was created, that of Belley. I happily left my rectory, and I went to join the Fathers Colin. Things happened within me that I cannot explain. My joy was complete. We began by giving Mary's habit to several young women who, like us, were waiting impatiently for this happy day.

[16] The missions began. Rev. Fr. Colin, presently Superior General, and I began in La Balme above Cerdon, where there was no pastor. Then we went to evangelize Corlier, Izenave, Vieud'Izenave, Aranc, Poncieux, Saint-Jérôme, etc. (They were residing in Cerdon, where the elder Fr. Colin was pastor.) All our missions were a marvellous success.

[17] Then we went to Belley. The Sisters left with us and settled at Bon Repos (in Belley). The bishop assigned as our residence the secondary school (the secondary school of Belley). God knows the problems we had there. The superior and I continued to go out on missions. Lacoux, Chaley, Innimont, Lompnaz, Montagnieux, Serrières, Briord, Ordonnax, Prémillieu, etc., were the parishes entrusted to us. All these missions were a marvelous success. Only one of them did not correspond perfectly to what we hoped for. The bishop wanted to send us to a certain parish despite the pastor; we made a few comments to him, pointing out that, even if the mission were to succeed, there would be no solid results in view of the fact there would be no one to sustain its good effects. He yielded to our wishes, and we went to the parish I mentioned where the pastor and the parishioners had asked for us. The thing did not go as well as we had hoped. I always regretted it; that shows more than ever that one is always sure of doing God's will when one follows the will of one's superiors.

392

1869-1870. *Jeantin. Essay on the origins of the Society. [OM 819, 56-70]:*

[56] At that time, the Society as yet consisted only of the founder and his brother. The third member was Fr. Déclas, who was then pastor of a humble parish. When Fr. Colin asked Bishop Devie to have him, the bishop was surprised and said: "What will you do with Fr. Déclas. He does not have any talent." "That's true, your Excellency," Fr. Colin answered, "but he has good will." And he added, "We needed men like him, so that we might properly shape the spirit of the Society." Fr. Jallon was the fourth Marist but he left his rectory in Izenave only later, after the other confreres had settled in Belley.

[57] Such was the first nucleus; these were like the four cornerstones of the little Society of Mary. They were indeed the pebbles from the stream which Mary's hand used in order to overthrow Goliath. Well can we say: *Where is the wise man to be found? Where is the scribe? Where is the master of worldly argument? Has not God turned the wisdom of this world into folly? ... It pleased God to save those who believe through the absurdity of the preaching of the gospel.*

[58] We shall now look at the first works of these humble apostles. The places they evangelized were neither the large cities, nor even the large parishes in the country. A few poor

parishes, a few poor outlying churches, which had been without priests since the great revolution — such were the first stages on which they appeared, the first lands they evangelized. “Never,” Fr. Colin would say, “did we dream of doing grand things, of preaching missions in the cities; we only wanted to evangelize the countryside.”

[59] The first mission was given in La Balme, near Cerdon, by Fr. Colin and Fr. Déclas. They slept in Cerdon and every day climbed up to La Balme on the steep road. Fr. Colin loves to remember how Fr. Déclas would climb up those difficult paths while reciting his breviary.

[60] The second mission was undertaken in Chatillon de Corneille by the same two Fathers. Since the inhabitants of that place were hostile to the voice of the missionaries, the latter took a little bell and went through the villages calling everybody to the mission. It was all useless; nobody answered their invitations. A woman in that parish was seriously ill; Fr. Colin went to visit her and offered her the help of his ministry. Alas! The good Father was extremely pained that he again failed with this poor sick woman; she refused the priest. When Fr. Colin talks about this, he softens this refusal with the reflection that this poor woman didn’t want to see him because she did not know him.

[61] It also happened at the time of this mission that the two missionaries had to lodge at the inn; this inn had the pompous name of *Hôtel du nord*. But this “hotel” had only one bed to offer the travelers, and this bed was in the same room as the proprietors’ bed. To leave the two missionaries more free when it was time to go to bed, the masters of the house left the room. At that point Fr. Colin locked them out and when they wanted to come back in Father answered them that he would not open the door and asked them to go sleep someplace else.

[62] In Corlier, a church dependent upon Izenave, where Fr. Jallon was pastor, Fr. Colin gave his third mission; he was helped by Fr. Jallon. An event which gives us a good idea of the modesty of these beginnings took place during this mission. One morning, Fr. Colin preached before an audience which consisted of a single person and Fr. Jallon. That evening, Fr. Jallon preached before the same audience and Fr. Colin. The latter told his confrere laughingly, “You are fortunate to be so nearsighted; you preach before a single person as you might before several; it’s all the same to you. But I would really like to see you in my place.”

[63] The fourth mission in Poncieux, succeeded very well. From there they returned to Chatillon de Corneille. The sick woman had died, and Fr. Colin wanted to preside at her funeral. His arrival made a most fortunate and most lively impression. A great many people came together for this ceremony. Word spread among this simple and credulous crowd. “There’s the bishop! There’s the bishop!” With great zeal, Father made good use of these fortunate dispositions. In the church, in front of the deceased woman’s casket, he climbed into the pulpit and gave a vehement instruction. Everybody gave in and this poor parish, which shortly before had been so rebellious and so dead, filled the missionary with the sweetest consolation.

[64] Since, in this parish, there was no confessional for hearing women’s confessions, the missionaries had to make one for each; this improvised confessional consisted of a chair with a back to which they attached a piece of loose grillwork which they had found in the debris in the sacristy.

[Addition:] During the mission in Innimont, they lodged in a house whose windows they had to block with straw.

Sometimes they slept two in the same bed; they would lie on the edges of the bed, sometimes with Fr. Déclas, at other times with Fr. Jallon; the latter had very bad breath; “That odor used to kill me.”

[65] “I had,” Fr. Colin exclaimed in a touching way, “the unusual pleasure of making things easier for these poor souls. I went through fire for them.”

[66] Fr. Colin had been in Cerdon for nine years, and the first Marists had been active in the apostolic life for three or four years, without leaving their posts as pastor or curate in the diocese. Around 1826, they obtained permission to devote themselves exclusively to the missions; at first,

they thought of getting established in Bourg, but they soon gave up that idea to choose Belley definitively.

[67] They were lodged in the minor seminary, in a few small rooms on the second floor on the north side. The pastor in Belley who visited them on New Year's Day in their cells, was extremely surprised and pained upon seeing that they had no heat in such a rigorous season and in such a cold place. He told the bishop about it and the latter consequently did something about it. A stove was set up in the corridor; a partition was built; and that is where these poor missionaries came when the cold was too bitter.

[Addition:] When Fr. Jallon came to join them, Fr. Colin gave him his own room and moved to a room through which everybody had to pass.

[68] These rooms remained until recently; they were demolished in order to make a dormitory. Fr. Dulliard recently told me that a teacher who was staying in one of these rooms, before they were torn down, used to burn a load of wood every day during the winter without really overcoming the cold. They were iceboxes. The floor was made of cold and damp bricks, and the north wind penetrated through a thousand cracks in the door and the window.

[69] But these good Fathers were exposed not only to the rigors of winter, but even more to the criticisms and sarcasms of tongues. In this regard, things went so far that Fr. Founder one day thought he had to point out to a teacher that the latter was far overstepping the bounds of freedom and especially of decency toward them.

[70] For four years, that is from 1826 to 1829, our early Fathers gave various missions in the diocese. It was at that time that Fr. Pichat, the superior of the minor seminary after Fr. Guigard, joined up with Fr. Colin and entered the Society of Mary.

393

December 1844. Jallon. Account of the first missions of the Marists. [Mayet 4, 431-434 = OM 587]:

[1] They went out on mission under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, carrying on their backs the bag containing what they needed during the mission. When they arrived at the edge of the parish where they were going, they would recite five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys* in honor of the holy guardian Angels and a *Miserere* for the conversion of sinners.

[2] Upon arriving, they would go straight to the Church to adore Jesus Christ and pray to him for the parishioners; they would also pray for the souls in purgatory. They would then go to the pastor's house, when there was one, and when there wasn't, to those who were charitable enough to receive them. They would begin their ministry by hearing the confessions of the children who had not made their first Communion, and ordinarily the adults would then come to confession.

[3] The first instruction was ordinarily a paternal invitation to come to the mission; then they would preach on the mercy of God awaiting poor sinners and, during the first week, they gave gentle instructions such as the explanation of the Apostles' Creed, etc. Then came the explanation of the commandments of God and of the Church. When a great many people had started to go to confession, they would preach on the malice of sin, on the injury it inflicts on God and on those who commit it. They would have a solemn service for all the deceased of the parish, preceded by a sermon on death and accompanied by a sermon on purgatory. After the Mass there was a procession to the cemetery; four of the leading parishioners carried the shroud ahead of the clergy. When there were two of them, they put one up as a banner. They would stop in front of the cemetery cross, and there they gave an instruction on death.

[4] Around the middle of the mission they gave an instruction on the kind of confidence one should have in the Blessed Virgin. They held a procession in which the statue of the mother of God was solemnly carried while people sang litanies and canticles in her honor. The next morning

they would have all the little children come to Mass, at which an exhortation was made to the parents. After the instruction which followed the Mass, the pastor would put on a cope and come in front of the altar, accompanied by the missionaries and the neighboring priests who wanted to honor the ceremony by their presence. The preacher would ask the children if they wanted to choose the Blessed Virgin as their mother, their advocate and their protectress. He then told them that the Blessed Virgin wanted only docile children, and he had them ask pardon of their parents for all their acts of disobedience. After that he would ask the parents to retract all the curses and imprecations which they had unfortunately pronounced against their children. Then he would invite the parents to extend their hands over their children, and the pastor and all the other priests, with their hands extended, would consecrate all these children to the Blessed Virgin, and the ceremony was concluded with benediction of the blessed Sacrament.

[5] When they explained the commandments of God and of the Church, they would insist more on those which were more often violated. They then went on to the sacraments, especially Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist, the institution of these sacraments, the dispositions one had to have in order to receive them worthily, the effects which they produced and the unhappiness of those who received them unworthily. A few days before the general communion, they would give an instruction on the promises of Baptism, and the obligations contracted thereby. After the sermon one of the missionaries would put on vestments as though to celebrate Mass; he would go up to the altar and sing the gospel *In the beginning...* and the Creed; then he would recite each article of the Apostles' Creed, and the one who was in the pulpit would explain them briefly and would ask the assembly if they believed this article, and each would answer "I believe," while lifting up the lighted candle which he held in his hand. The one who was at the altar would likewise recite the commandments of God and of the Church, and the one who was in the pulpit would also explain them briefly and would ask the assembly if they wanted to observe them. A preacher would pronounce the renewal of the baptismal promises, and the ceremony was concluded with benediction of the blessed Sacrament.

[6] Sometimes a day or two before this ceremony, an altar was set up in the middle of the Church. The blessed Sacrament was exposed on it. A sermon was given on mortal sin, after which all priests removed their surplices and, prostrate before the blessed Sacrament, offered honorable amends.

[7] They always recited three *Hail Marys* before beginning the instruction. If, at the end of two weeks, there was still a good number who had not come forward, they would announce from the pulpit that every evening at eight o'clock the church bell would be rung and that each family would recite five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys* for the conversion of sinners, and all this was done precisely as laid out. One of the missionaries who was in the Church would leave the confessional and recite these prayers aloud.

394

1878-1881. *Lagniet. Draft on the missions at the origins of the Society. [OM 855, 9-21]:*

[9] But what means do they have to give missions?

[10] 1. They will get down to the work under the guidance of God, with the inspiration and protection of Mary, whom they have named their superior, whom they want to take as their model in everything, in Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, etc. Human means were not relied upon. St. Joseph will furnish what is necessary in poverty, not comfort, the easy life, or a pleasant lodging.

[11] 2. When they give short missions in poor country parishes, they will go, whenever possible, two by two under the direction of the bishop. His Excellency will prefer the most abandoned parishes, sometimes without a resident pastor or with the pastors very poorly housed and so poor that they will not be able to offer any stipends to the missionaries. This kind of

payment is often imposed by the bishop on pastors who are not thinking about missions or fear them, whose spirit of faith and zeal leave something to be desired.

[12] But already the four poor priests have been tested — on their modesty, their love of poverty, their patience in accepting poor food as well as good and tiny and unfurnished lodging as well as some small comfort. On occasion they will be able to do without even *food* and *proper clothing*. There is only one poor bed for two; they will be able to separate the cloth mattress from the straw mattress and cover themselves with poor bedclothes. Such a lodging is not even a poor cell protected from the cold winds. It will be in a corner on the ground floor, with only a poor attic above. — They will rejoice in accepting it laughingly. If anyone were to tell Fr. Jallon that the window doesn't have a casement and there is only a piece of furniture called a "wind" in order to cut off the cold air, Father would answer, "That's it. A 'wind' against the wind." The church is in ruins with barely decent vestments. "Ho! it was like this in Nazareth, Bethlehem and Egypt. Rest assured, Reverend Pastor, the mission will be all the better for it. Your poor parishioners for the most part do not have anything more." Etc.

[13] As for the ceremonies in the church, first of all, we will have few of them, we will do them without cost for the faithful. The bishop has given his authorization to be satisfied with what is strictly necessary. No sumptuous lighting; four candles, or even three, will be enough. No cope for benedictions; the Mass stole will be enough; not even a good surplice, provided that there is an alb for Mass, etc., etc.

[14] When the pastors see that they need so few things and that there is so little bother, they are reassured and spread the good news everywhere that the priests of Mary are not a burden and that it is good to live with them.

[15] Ordinarily, poor meals — soup, vegetables, milk if there is some, and meat as an extra; wine, however ordinary it may be, etc. With this, nobody dies of hunger.

[16] Other congregations had thought that it would be better if the missionary were received with show, and a costly one at that, in order to impress the people. This way made people believe that a mission was only for cities and rich parishes. Our first four fathers wanted to proceed only with modesty, patience and poverty. They did not want to preside either at the ceremonies in church or at the modest rectory's table. It is the pastor's role to preside at the ceremonies in church, to say the blessing at table, and to keep his own bedroom. He needs the small prestige of honor. For the missionary besides the Mass, there is the pulpit and his confessional, and if there isn't any suitable one, they will make do as they can, in accord with the bishop. They will preach from the altar, they will hear confessions in a corner, with an ill-fitting door between two of them, etc., etc. It's a little like being in a mission country.

[17] So will be the missionaries among the savages. They will think only of the good of souls.

[18] What good are precautions, costly preparations in poor parishes so long abandoned, in deserted churches in which there has not been any kind of ceremony and in which two candles added to the Mass candles are an *extra*. If there are only a few people attending an exercise or an old deaf woman, Fr. Jallon the missionary will give his instruction as though there were a thousand there. People talk about it, and soon the church is full.

[19] Such was the simplicity, the poverty, and the adaptability of our first missionary fathers from 1823 to 1836. There was hardly any need to recall that Very Reverend Fr. Colin was the soul and mover in all these things. For him, there was only God and his will. Jesus Christ with...

[20] We are happy to add that this spirit has persevered. Our fathers will bring much the same spirit to Lyons around 1830 to 1840, to Bordeaux between 1838 and the present, to Chartres in 1855, to Amettes. In some parishes of this diocese [of Bordeaux], between three and four, and sometimes even between five and six, parishes from before the revolution are now served as outlying churches where a single pastor comes to say an early Mass on Sundays in one outlying church after another, before returning around eleven o'clock or noon to celebrate the high Mass at the central church. I have seen our missionary fathers going to these outlying churches in turn during the week in order to say Mass and give an instruction at ten o'clock to often less than ten

people, with the simplicity and poverty of those who were in Belley in 1824 — and it was thus that, around 1844, they were consoled in seeing an edifying audience grow little by little towards the end of the long missions. We say that they were long, sometimes they lasted from six to seven weeks. Archbishop Donnet, formerly a missionary in Lyons and in Touraine, always had the apostolic spirit to a high degree and thus he renewed his poor clergy, who were not very homogeneous, and his vast diocese which he has been evangelizing since 1837, and which is desolate because it has so few priests. He was the first, outside Lyons and Belley, to have called the Society, which is indebted to him for the example of the best way for bringing back sinners, sometimes by encouragement, sometimes by stirring people from their lethargy and by going everywhere to attend the conclusions of the missions, in order to confirm the word of his missionary and the souls of the converts.

[21] The spirit, poverty, modesty, and prudent and devoted zeal which our early fathers brought with them produced their fruits in the missions — that spirit sustained them back at home.

395

June 1844. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet 3, 154-161 = OM 581]:

[1] “I have a very special desire that in the Society we should have some memories of our early beginnings, not for us to be talked about (for on the contrary I would not want the names of the first men ever to be pronounced and for that reason I have always been so repelled by taking notes), but so that later on others may conform to our way of doing things and of imitating that simplicity which God has blessed. Later on, when the Society will have grown larger and certain people will be inclined to reject this way of doing things, these written memories will be a rallying point.

[2] “At the beginning I had written out a few points of advice on prudence and on proper behavior when one is on mission, and I asked Fr. Pichat to be kind enough to give them to my confreres, without saying that they came from me. Fr. Pichat thought they were good, he was astonished at them, and brought them to the bishop of Belley who because of them felt only greater attachment for us. Perhaps I may yet get them back.

[3] “When the time for the mission came, we would go with our little black bags” [Addition: “In our little black bags was our treasure, I mean our sermons; this would not be a treasure for others, but well, it was for the missionary.”] “I still remember how one day I walked four leagues while I was suffering from violent attacks of colic.

[4] “We used to pray, and we had others pray; that is what I would like for us to remember well. If we should happen to forget the spirit of prayer, we will forget the very basis for success in the missions.

[5] “As soon as we set foot on the territory that we were coming to evangelize, we would kneel down; we would pray to the Blessed Virgin, we would say our three *Hail Marys*, we would pray for that place’s souls in purgatory, and we would get up while saying the *Memorare*.

[6] “We always began the mission with the little children. In the first mission we stirred up the whole parish by doing so, and I don’t believe that there was a single inhabitant left who was not won over. I kept the catechism for myself; I was always very much drawn to people that age! Then again, that is a task for which all are not suited. I explained to them what a missionary was by telling them that he was someone sent by God and by the bishop. I had them understand that the mission was a very special time of grace, and in order to have them understand this, I made use of familiar comparisons. ‘Every day,’ I told them, ‘when mealtime comes, your parents give you something to eat; it’s always about the same thing; but during the year, from time to time, aren’t there days when two or three additional dishes are set out; these are festive days, aren’t they?’ All their eyes were upon me. Then I would say to them, ‘Children, you too ought to be little

missionaries.’ Then I would explain to them what I meant: little missionaries by being very good and by praying for their parents. I was very careful not to tell them to pray for the conversion of their parents; oh, no, because that could have irritated and put off their parents who might often be irreligious. But this is how I went about it. ‘My little friend,’ I would tell one of them, ‘your parents love you a lot, don’t they?’ ‘Yes, Father.’ ‘If you were to die, what would they want for you?’ The child would lower his head. I would tell him: ‘Paradise. And if your parents died, what would you want for them?’ ‘Paradise.’ ‘Then that is the best thing we can want for those whom we love.’ ‘Yes, Father.’ ‘Well, then, come on, children, you must pray to God so that your parents might go to paradise, and thus you will be little missionaries.’

[7] “Then we would hear their confessions, and hardly had we finished with what concerned them when the adults would arrive. Often as we heard their confessions, the parents would thank us for what we were doing for their children: ‘Oh, Father, how thankful the parish is for what you have done for our children!’ And, at the end of the mission, it happened that some fine people would say: ‘What’s going to happen to our children now that the missionaries are going away?’”

[8] “Then, on Sundays, ah! I didn’t overlook the children. After Mass I would teach catechism and we would keep the children from remote hamlets, those who could not come in the evening. The church, the sanctuary were filled. During these catechism lessons and those on weekdays, I did not dwell on a particular chapter, but I would go from one point to another and I stopped on the things about which I understood that people needed to be instructed. I would give an explanation with much goodness and I would really try to show how to practice what I was teaching, for example an integral confession, much easier than commonly thought. I could point out such a parish where these catechism lessons were the cause for the salvation of adults who, without that, would have remained in sin. In one place these instructions shed light on and furnished me with the means for remedying great misfortunes” [Addition: The pastor was a libertine and he had perverted all the men during their youth by persuading them that there was no harm in the infamous actions he was teaching them. Father’s instructions gave them doubts which they had never had; the whole parish woke up and came to fall down in the confessional, and they took the means to return to God.]

[9] He cited still other admirable incidents which occurred to him concerning guilty children whom he had absolved and who, at that tender age, had made such resolutions, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, that they had persevered.

[10] “We don’t know,” he said, “what there is to be gained with the children, other than that this practice is a great grace for the mission. That is what I would want written.”

[11] “Father,” I told him, “the one who speaks about missions during the retreats, when he speaks about children, always talks about the care to be given them if time permits. When I hear that phrase, ‘if time permits’, it always seems to me that that is not what you would want us to say.”

[12] He then testified what great displeasure this caused him as he paused a great deal on the good that one would do, and as he repeated to me what I just said about the grace which this practice attracts; then he expressed to me his tender love for people that age in a most touching manner.

[13] I said to him, “Father, someone, while consulting the curé of Ars” (he is a priest of the Lyons area, of eminent sanctity, who probably will be canonized one day) “at a time when he was deliberating whether to enter the Society of Mary, the curé answered him: ‘The Marists are men of God; they begin their missions by teaching catechism.’ It seems that he cited this point as the one way of recognizing the supernatural nature of the work.”

[14] These comments pleased Fr. Superior very much, and he also said to me that in Rome people were highly sympathetic toward the Society; that Fr. Dubreuil, who was in Rome for some time (1844), had written to him on this point; that he really wanted us to preserve this letter; and that it might well have a place in the history of the Society.

[15] When he talked to me about writing those things, he ordinarily added a few words which showed the repugnance he had. It was evident that he was always afraid that others would speak about him.

[16] Then he came back to talk to me about the way they gave missions in the early days of the Society.

[17] “During the mission we would recommend prayer. Every day, during Benediction of the blessed Sacrament, we would publicly say three *Our Fathers* and three *Hail Marys* for the conversion of sinners; each time we would repeat aloud ‘for the conversion of sinners.’ Before each instruction we were very careful to say the three *Hail Marys* to put ourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. During the first week we preached only on topics suitable to win people’s confidence. This is extremely important, and I want very much for this to be observed. It was only on the fourth day that we began to say something to shake people, then the harsh truths followed.

[18] “We would explain the obligations in detail only when just about all the people had come once to confession. Otherwise we would have scared them.” (Father Superior even said that he would sometimes hold up and even stop giving these detailed explanations when it was noticed that this agitated people, made them tremble, and dampened the joy of their hearts.)

[19] “At the end of the mission we never reproached people, never. One must always try to win everybody’s friendship, even of those who have not profited from the mission. In one parish where the middle class people had not come forward, though they did come to the setting up of the mission cross, Fr. Jallon, who was supposed to preach, reproached them tearfully, and this might have alienated them forever. I was very angry about this, but then I found the opportunity at the end to say a few words. I spoke with a great deal of esteem, attention, and respect about those who had not come forward. I even made a few compliments to them. Well, one of their leaders hid himself when I went to see him with the pastor, and before the year was up, he had gone to confession.

[20] “On such occasions,” he used to say, “you must excuse those who have not come forward, attribute that to their business affairs, etc. Otherwise you risk alienating them forever.” He greatly admired that prudent zeal of St. Francis Xavier, who, after having unsuccessfully made a thousand efforts to convert the king of Bongo in Japan, left him and said that he hoped that the word of God that he had heard would one day bear fruit and he expressed a thousand wishes for his happiness and showered all his friendship on him.

[21] Then he continued to talk to me about the missions.

[22] “We would do our own cooking. One day I was alone; my confrere had gone to offer the second Mass in Cerdon. I told him to put on the cooking pot and to prepare the fire so that we would only have to light it after the service. I then began to make the soup, but I didn’t know how; I couldn’t eat it, and so I began to eat bread. But we were never so happy.

396

Spring 1842. Mayet. Synthesis on Déclas. [Mayet 1, 295-297 = OM 537, 7-13]:

[7] Father Déclas is a man of God, hard on himself, very mortified, full of faith and of the spirit of prayer, tireless at work, seeming not to have a body when he is on mission, and very zealous. Zeal is his distinctive virtue.

[8] He gave a lot of missions and he moved a great number of country people in the diocese of Belley.

[9] “In all the Society he is the one,” Fr. Colin used to say, “who will have the greatest number of souls around him on judgment day.”

[10] When winter began and with winter the time for going out on mission, Fr. Déclas was beaming with joy; his face, his comportment, his words, everything in him spoke of the apostolic man who is going to sow conquests for heaven.

[11] He used to commend most insistently the sinners whom he was going to evangelize.

[12] During the summer, he was often asked for on Sundays by some neighboring parish, and he always went there eagerly when obedience permitted it. He used to say, “Truly I would have some scruple about not answering the call. I never go out, almost never, without bringing some soul back to God.”

[13] Several times in these *Memoirs*, Fr. Déclas is, directly or indirectly, the one we are talking about.

Preaching

397

1838-1839 (c. 1839). *Colin*. Extract from an oral statement on the need to rely only on God when preaching. [Mayet 1, 249 = OM 468]:

“Look at Fr. Déclas. In the early days, I could not listen to him without suffering a great deal, because every once in a while he said something incorrect or made an error. Afterwards, that didn’t bother me any more because I saw that God was blessing him. It even seemed to me that God blinded his listeners and that they did not hear what they shouldn’t hear, not to mention his errors in French; God blessed him.”

398

1838-1839 (c. 1839). *Colin*. Extract from an oral statement on the need to rely only on God when preaching. [Mayet 1, 257 = OM 469]:

“At the beginning, people spoke to me against Fr. Déclas. They thought he had too little of the proper forms; what did they not say against him? The bishop of Belley himself; I myself, the first time I went on mission with him, I really suffered because of what he was saying from the pulpit. Well, I thought about it. I saw that God was blessing him; often the wisest men wanted to speak to him; there is perhaps no one in the Society who is surrounded by so many souls; so now I have given him free rein.”

[Addition:] Note by the copyist. — Prudence nevertheless did indeed govern Fr. Colin’s behavior. He did not let Fr. Déclas preach in the cities, in Belley, etc.; he forbade him to say Mass in public in Belley because he would say Mass in a ridiculous manner. He suffered a great deal from his manner. He sent him almost nowhere. He let him go only to places where he was known, Bugey, Valromey, (the upper Bugey)... etc., etc. It is important to see that Fr. Colin is consistent. (1846).

399

March 27-31, 1841. Colin. Account to the Belley confreres. [Mayet 1, 124-127 = OM 516]:

[1] “Ah! in the pulpit one must speak especially from the heart. Sometimes it happened that I did; not always; one is not always well-disposed. At such times, it seems that one does some good. Once, I was really inspired; I really didn’t know where I was getting all that I was saying; afterwards, I was angry that I had not written down all I had said. That’s how it is: one’s heart is touched, electrified. Yes, there is a kind of electricity for a missionary and one really feels it sometimes.

[2] “Once we were giving a mission in a parish whose pastor spoke in a very cold manner; all those souls were cold and apathetic. Ah! how I suffered there! All during that time, I had only one thought that I couldn’t get away from: what was needed was for somebody to take a whip and beat all those people; that’s the only way to give them a little life.” (As he said that, he laughed a lot and everybody laughed with him.)

[3] “I always remember how once, on a mission, Fr. Jallon made me shiver and suffer. I turned pale. It was about the sixth commandment; the most formal texts in holy scripture, he was translating them word for word, and so clearly! ... I was sweating... I didn’t say anything, because, well... there... A little later, we were giving a mission not far from there; I found a person who asked to make a general confession; she told me her faults. Ever since such and such a time there was a clean break and this soul was doing well. I asked her for an explanation. She told me, ‘On such and such a day, in such and such a parish, I heard a sermon that affected me a great deal.’ I calculated: that was precisely the same sermon that had caused me so much discomfort. That was what had affected her. We used to see that happen every day. [4] Messieurs,” he said laughing, “I am still happy with my confreres. Today, young priests are not so stiff, I believe, as they were twenty years ago when I left the seminary. Two of our missionaries went to a parish of fifteen hundred souls. They were helped by other confreres. Well, after ten days of retreat, twelve hundred received communion. Twelve hundred! After six days! In a parish of fifteen hundred! That’s just an approximation. Well, that really pleases me. [5] There is only one who wants the missions to come to an end. He’s a little tired and he’s a little rougher than the others. Come on, Messieurs, we are exposed to that. I remember once I was harassed; we were at the end of a mission. It was at the end of the day; I couldn’t go anymore. Someone came to get me; there was a problem about his confession. I said to him, ‘My dear friend, I can’t take you.’ He had barely gone out when I was devastated by it. It seemed to me that maybe I could have taken him; I prayed to God all night long, and I said, ‘God, send him to me if you think I could absolve him.’ The next day, he was there; I took care of him. [6] Ah! Messieurs, you must be good. And after all, what difference is there between them and us? They are our brothers. The only difference there is between them and us is that we speak and those poor people do not have the right to answer, I mean when we are in the pulpit; only we have a ministry to carry out.”

400

1844. Colin. Incident during a mission. [Mayet 3, 339f = OM 590]:

[1] “To have the key to the human heart is quite something,” he used to say. “Yes, you must win a man’s esteem and his heart in order to win him over.” On this point he cited the incident which, I believe, he had witnessed during a mission he had given.

[2] “‘My wife, give me a rosary,’ said a man who had no religion, as he was leaving after a sermon. ‘Today I cried; tomorrow I am going to confession.’ Yes,” Fr. Colin said, “a tear is not a conversion, but the supernatural follows. You have to know how to approach people.”

401

January 1845. Colin. *Advice on preaching.* [Mayet 4, 603 = OM 604 = FS 99, 6]:

“[...] Messieurs, I myself during four years of giving missions never preached without prior preparation, with a single exception, and then it was out of necessity, for the priest who was to give the talk did not turn up. I was in the confessional when they came to call me. There was no way out, and up I went.”

402

September 1845. Mayet. *Extract from an article.* [Mayet 5, 514 and 529 = OM 609, 1]:

Our oldest member, Fr. Jallon, who had been Fr. Superior's teacher, was in the habit of preaching long sermons; it happened that Fr. Superior, his former pupil, would say to him from below when the sermon lasted too long, “That's enough.” Fr. Jallon would stop short, would obey like a little child, without murmuring, without bitterness, and he would come down quietly, not even suspecting that he was practicing one of the most beautiful virtues of religion in a superhuman fashion.

403

April 1846. Colin. *Extract from an article on the necessity of instruction for Marists.* [Mayet 6, 655f = OM 626]:

[1] “When I was giving missions, before the approval of the Society, Fr. Pichat, superior of the minor seminary in Belley, commissioned us to give the retreat in that establishment. I got right down to composing sermons and instructions on the sacrament of penance. Everything was written down. I certainly would not have agreed to it without doing that. At the end of the retreat, I was supposed to give the instruction on the Blessed Virgin; I had not entirely finished it; for that reason, I did not want to preach, and I asked to have Fr. Déclas go into the pulpit in my place. Fr. Pichat did not want this. I can't understand how people can get up in public like that.”

[Addition:] It happened after that instruction that Fr. Pichat told him *that it was a masterpiece of argumentation.*

404

October 1, 1846. Mayet. *Article on an unfortunate sermon of Fr. Déclas during a mission.* [Mayet 5, 432f = OM 635]:

[1] During a mission, the irreligious and unbelieving people came to an exercise; they probably wanted that it be someone eminent who was preaching; it was someone else; he railed at them. That had a bad effect.

[2] (The pastor had wanted to see Fr. Colin, whose prudence was well known, get up into the pulpit; he did not name himself when he told us about that. The other missionary was Fr. Déclas.)

405

1848. *Mayet. Narrative based on words of Colin. [Mayet S2, 319-321 = OM 686, 2-9]:*

[2] In a certain parish they refused to receive the missionaries. One of the inhabitants was dying; Father went to see him and exhort him. The sick person answered him, "I don't need you." They went to the neighboring parish. After the sick person had died, someone came to get the missionaries to bury him (for there was no pastor there). Fr. Colin went and, since no one had witnessed that person's refusal to receive the sacraments, he went ahead with the burial ceremony.

[3] As all the people had come to the church for this ceremony, Fr. Colin said, "This time I have them; I must make use of the occasion to announce the eternal truths to them." At the cemetery he gave a second sermon. It was frightening; the whole parish was terrorized and filled with remorse. Then he returned to his post.

[4] Shortly afterward he fell sick and they sent him away. As he was going to Belley, he had to pass through the parish of the person who died. As soon as these good people saw him, they began to cry out, "There's the bishop, there's the bishop."

[5] They beat the drum; everybody came to church. He preached to them, heard confessions for part of the night, and left for Belley, to which the bishop had recalled him. The first thing Father did was to beg the bishop to let him go back to that parish. Oh, the justice of God! The bishop needed him, and so refused his request.

[6] But this seed was not lost. Soon afterwards there was a mission not far from there; the whole parish profited from it and was converted.

[7] It happened during these missions that the missionaries would take a handbell and go through the village, ringing it and calling to the instruction those who were not going there.

[8] Fr. Colin told us that he had noticed that all those who came to the instructions sooner or later ended up by coming forward, and with this remark, spoken in general terms, he encouraged our missionaries.

[9] Didn't St. Vincent de Paul also say to his men: "For anybody to make a retreat and not to be converted at it, that is a miracle."

406

About 1842. Mayet. Note reporting a reflection by Colin. [Mayet 1, 159fm = OM 723]:

During a mission when the mission cross was being set up, Fr. Colin gave a sermon on the cross which delighted the bishop of Belley. This was probably the occasion when Colin came to the notice of his bishop, and this was the reason for his appointment as superior of the minor seminary in Belley. "Since this place was the means that God wanted to use to begin the Society, it was really necessary that he should blind the bishop in my regard," Fr. Colin would say later.

407

1845-1846? Mayet. Note about Colin and Jallon on mission. [Mayet 3, 160m = OM 734]:

[1] Sometimes when Fr. Colin saw that the people were not well instructed, he would leave the confessional at the time of the instruction, would ask questions of Fr. Jallon without having warned him, saying, "Father Missionary, let me ask you a few questions." Then he would ask him

questions on the topics that he wanted the people to learn about. He knew about Fr. Jallon's strength and knowledge of doctrine.

[Addition:] He would not have done that with others, for example with Fr. Déclas.

408

1846? Mayet. Note on the opinions of Frs. Seon and Déclas. [Mayet 4, 423m = OM 736]:

[1] At that time, Fr. Seon admitted that for a long time he believed that the Society was supposed to preach only in the country, like the Lazarists; he also admitted that he had contributed to spreading this opinion among the public and that it was only recently that he became familiar with the intentions of Fr. Colin and of our rule on this point. Fr. Déclas had shared that same error; several of the early fathers too.

[2] I think that comes largely from the fact that most of them were incapable of preaching before a well-educated audience, for they were not men of letters, they made errors in French, etc., so through prudence and because of a healthy judgment, and especially through Fr. Superior's vigilant conduct, they did not go too far and confined their ministry within the circle of their ability.

409

August 20, 1887. Jeantin. Extracts from a conference to the novices of Paignton. [APM 921.381.1, pp. 23f = OM 879, 1]:

However, the missions continued and prospered. One characteristic out of a thousand, as related by Fr. Humbert, who had joined up with the missionaries shortly after their arrival in Belley, can be used to prove the point. "In one parish," said he, "where I was preaching with Rev. Fr. Founder, there was a very small church. However, everybody came to the sermon; they seated themselves as they could. Grace was mightily at work there; the whole parish came to the sacraments. — On the day of the closing so many people came from the neighboring villages that, with the church full, there were still more people outside than inside. How would all these people be able to hear? At the time for the sermon, Rev. Fr. Colin said to me, 'Go up to the choir loft and put yourself by that little window and repeat to the crowd who can't hear me some of the words that I am going to say from the pulpit.' I did as best I could, and those who were outside were as moved as those who were inside, so true is it that when God is with a man he needs very little to move hearts."

Hearing confessions

410

1838-1839. Colin. Words to his confreres. [Mayet 1, 358-370 = OM 475]:

[1] A mission was about to end. On the day before the closing, a man came to see Fr. Colin. He had already come to confession, but he had fallen back into the same sin and his female accomplice (hiding her sin) had just profaned the sacrament and received absolution.

[2] What to do? “What do you want me to do, my friend? I can’t give you absolution.”

[3] However, in order really to move that heart and to inspire him and at the same time test his contrition: “Are you willing to do the penance that I will give you?”

[4] “Yes, Father.” “Well, you will spend so much time tonight in prayer (a considerable length of time). You will go before your crucifix, and then you will say: ‘You who have created me, you who have redeemed me, have pity on me for I have crucified you...’ You will ceaselessly repeat these words and each time that you say them over again you will strike your breast... You will come back tomorrow.”

[5] The next day, that man came back. “Well, did you do what I told you to do?” “Yes, Father.” “Begin your confession.” “Father, I accuse myself...” He fainted; his cheeks were pale and colorless; he looked emaciated, so much had sorrow disfigured him...

[6] “Oh, may it not please God,” said he, “that we should ever be like those who say, ‘Let it go by,’ and who throw souls into hell by their softness in the confessional.”

411

1842. Mayet. Article entitled “Fr. Colin’s Faults.” [Mayet S1, 111-113 = FA 235, 12-14]:

[12] He told us a very funny thing that happened to him in the course of his ministry, which amused us much and made him laugh heartily himself.

[13] A man came to him for confession (on a mission, I think). He was one of those apathetic souls, lacking in energy, whom nothing can get through to. Father Colin, finding himself face to face with this solid mass, and not knowing what to do, in a *primo-primus* movement which overtook reflection, gave him a good cuff. Much astonished at what had suddenly befallen him, the man looked up in bewilderment and gazed at his confessor. But by now the latter had realized what he had just done and, smiling at his penitent, began to pat him. The poor man took the slap he had received from the confessor as a tap of affection, and everything turned out well between them.

[14] How we laughed at this story! If I recall this incident, it is not because I consider his action blameworthy in the sight of God; it was an imperfection in human nature rather than an act of the will. This little anecdote will amuse readers, as much as it amused us.

412

1845. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 601fm = OM 610]:

[1] In 1845 he told us, “As I was traveling on the missions...” He checked himself and said, “that is, when I was a catechist in the villages, and a very poor catechist at that, the thought that preoccupied me the most was this: ‘It is because of a lack of instruction that these people are being lost.’”

[2] “It is true that, at that time, there were fewer priests than today; we had just come out of the revolution, etc., etc.

[3] “Things happened to me that prove this,” he would say to us.

[4] “Before giving absolution to country people, I would say to them, in order to stir up their contrition: ‘My friend, how many mortal sins do you need to have to go to hell?’ ‘Father, just one?’ ‘If you had died, where would you have gone?’ ‘I don’t know.’ ‘Have you committed any mortal sins?’ ‘Father, I don’t know.’

[5] “And there were some,” Fr. Colin also said to us, “who were covered with them from head to toe.

[6] “So I would say to them, ‘Haven’t you confessed such and such a sin?’ ‘Yes, Father.’ ‘Well, that’s serious. You’ve done it so many times per day, that makes so many times per week, so many times per month, so many times per year.’

[7] “Then, great sighs came from him, and I would say to myself, ‘People are being lost for lack of instruction and lack of remorse.’”

413

January 20, 1849. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 6, 693m-696m = FS 171, 1]:

On January 20, 1849, Fr. Colin said while chatting in the refectory, “Ah no indeed, I know of no greater pleasure, of nothing on earth which can be compared to the happiness of a priest who sees souls coming burdened with sins to cast themselves weeping at his feet, their hearts full of contrition, and then rising again intoxicated, wild with joy to the point of waiting for their confessor in the street and even kissing his feet in the mud — as happened to me once during a mission. I have known poor souls who had waited thirty-six years for my arrival although, apart from missing their Easter duties, they had not a single other sin to confess. Apart from these sins, I doubt if I could have found sufficient matter for absolution in the rest. Ah, what good our ministry does for souls! Messieurs, my sons [there were a dozen or so young priests present] there is not one of you listening to me now, not one, who is not called to save a great many souls — yes, a great many. May your hearts, then, quiver at the thought, and to prepare yourselves so as to be able to gather even more of them later on, devote yourselves wholeheartedly to your work now. The time you have been given for that now is most precious; you will only realize its real worth later.” [...]

414

January 22, 1848. Colin. Words to the confreres. [Mayet 6, 617m = OM 675]:

“Never say ‘I can’t see you; I can’t absolve you.’ Do not distrust grace. What do you know about what will happen? Since they come to you, that is a sign that they need something; that’s the beginning of good will. As for myself, I have never refused anybody while on mission; it would happen that I was exhausted, obliged to drag myself on all fours to get to the pulpit; I was in a damp confessional, where water was dripping. Well, even then, during those missions, I did not refuse anybody.”

The children

415

Autumn 1844. Bishop Epalle. Note to Fr. Mayet based on what Fr. Colin told him. [Mayet 3, 155fm = OM 583]:

[1] “During the mission we would hold a very touching ceremony; it was the one which Rev. Fr. Superior held most dear, and during which he preached himself, *the blessing of the children*. Every time he talked about it, he did so with an ineffable happiness, and he really desired that this practice, which he considered so useful, should be preserved in the Society.

[2] “All the fathers and mothers would arrive with their children; the preacher would go up into the pulpit, would speak to the children and to the parents, and, at the end, all the clergy from a place where they could be seen” (from the altar, I believe) “would all together bless the children.

[3] “Once, Fr. Colin said at the end of the sermon, ‘Before calling down graces from on high upon the children, the parents must retract the curses which their mouths may have spoken upon them while their hearts disavowed them, so that God’s blessing may rest upon their heads. Fathers and mothers, pardon your children.’

[4] “The parents did not understand what Fr. Colin was asking of them.

[5] “He stopped for a moment and said, ‘My children, God cannot bless you yet because your parents have not yet decided to pardon you. I am going to ask for pardon in your name a second time,’ and he repeated, ‘Fathers and mothers, forgive your poor children.’ Then cries and sobs broke out, and all cried out that they did forgive.”

416

1845-1848? Colin. Note by Mayet on the catechetical method used by Colin. [Mayet 3, 156fm = OM 733, 1]:

“When teaching catechism on a mission,” Fr. Colin used to say, “you must never upbraid the children, you must not tell them that they have not understood, never in the case of disagreeable things, speak as though you were on stage, nor have them do so either. For example, don’t say, ‘I have committed twenty mortal sins, I accuse myself of only nineteen;’ ‘you have committed twenty mortal sins, you accuse yourself of only nineteen.’ ... There are people who are so limited that they would believe that you, who are speaking, or that the child who is as if on the stage, that you have really committed those sins.”

Dealings and relationships

417

Academic year 1842-1843. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 206m = OM 560]:

[1] “I would consider that the Society was lost if I saw that spirit introduced among us.” He was speaking about the method of a certain group of missionaries who, for the missions, demanded that people go out to meet them in procession, who wanted to be the masters in the Church. “No, no, we must follow the counsel of Jesus Christ: *take the last place at table*. [2] One day we, along with Fr. Jallon, were supposed to give a mission in the Bugey. We knew that people wanted to come to meet us in procession; there was no way to voice any opposition to their doing so. So I said to Fr. Jallon, ‘Let’s go,’ and we arrived two hours before the time fixed for it. We found everybody there. We had only to put on a surplice and announce that the mission was open.”

418

About October 1838. Colin. Collected comments. [Mayet 1, 179-181 = FS 11, 7-9]:

[7] “I would very much like,” he said, “that our early days be committed to writing. People would see with what simplicity missions were conducted. I can see that it is the best way of getting to know the spirit of the Society. I tremble lest later on the spirit of complacency make its way into the Society.

[8] “When a missionary arrives in a parish, he should make himself small, very small. If I may be allowed to say so, the Marists, the little Marists, have already been the cause of one good thing. There were sometimes missionaries who arrived in a parish, took their place at the head of the table, said the *Bless us, O Lord*, and took first place. Now, in the diocese of Lyons and in this diocese of Belley, that is no longer done. Our example has contributed to that. Yes, Messieurs, A Marist missionary must submit himself to the parish priest, and take his advice. Let him preach, hear confessions, all well and good. That is where his business lies. But for the rest, let him not lay down the law.

[9] “Someone told me of a missionary — fortunately not a Marist — who arrived in a parish. At lunch there were more than two dishes. He summoned the maid and had her take away all the dishes on the table which he considered excessive. May no Marist ever do a thing like that! Moreover, there were several people present at this lunch to witness that. The parish priest was very irritated, as he had a right to be. It is quite all right for a missionary to say to the parish priest, ‘Monsieur, I beg you to carry on as usual; that will be quite sufficient for us. Please act as if we were not here.’ But if the parish priest does not take any notice and wants to honor his missionaries, they must abide by that.”

419

August 3, 1843. Colin. In council in Belley. [Mayet 2, 155f = OM 558]:

[1] “During one of the missions I was giving, the pastor, coming into the sacristy, found a host that had been cut” (it was probably the transversal line which many mark with the paten before the

sacrifice). “He got angry; he fussed at me. I excused myself, I think, by saying that I didn’t know who had done that. That was better than arguing.

[2] “Another time, when a churchwarden tolled the bell for some service or some other reason, the pastor thought that we had given the order, he made a terrific uproar. I had said nothing; I didn’t know that nobody else had said anything to the churchwarden either. At dinner the pastor began his harangue all over again. We simply said, ‘The churchwarden did not do his duty.’”

420

December 1847. Colin. Praise for Bishop Devie. [Mayet 7, 824-826 = OM 665, 3-5]:

[3] “The bishop of Belley,” he used to say, “is one of the finest models for a bishop that I know. He did an immense amount of good in his diocese. When he arrived it was an abandoned territory, as are almost all those which are located in the far corners of dioceses.” (Before 1823, the department of the Ain was part of the diocese of Lyons.) “He completely renewed it. Jesuits, Capuchins, Marists, missionaries from the diocese, missionaries from Lyons, Bernardines: he called on all of them to give missions. Each parish has been evangelized four or five times. Thus the department of the Ain, which formerly was one of those where there were more misdemeanors, has already several times been the one where are the fewest misdemeanors in all of France, as is proved in the annually published crime statistics.

[4] “Shortly after his arrival, when we began to give a few missions with Fathers Jallon and Déclas, he asked me to offer the mission to pastors whose parishes stood in the greatest need. This was a rather delicate commission. I wrote to the pastor that the bishop would look with great pleasure upon his asking for a mission. The pastor would ordinarily refuse because of the expenses. Immediately, the bishop would say that he would take care of the expense, and we went. It was so little... I remember that in one parish where we two missionaries lived for a month in the inn during a mission, all our expenses, which I noted down, amounted to 50 francs for everything. Ah, today people think...” said he.

[5] Coming back to the bishop of Belley: “He conducted himself,” he said, “with admirable prudence. When he arrived, he didn’t change anything. Acting too precipitously causes a commotion. He began by issuing some circulars. His ritual only came out when people’s dispositions had been prepared, and it has been favorably received. I know that it includes some rather bold propositions, where it extends a bit too much the rights of the bishops, but it is a book that nevertheless is quite useful. For the missions, you see how he began, not operating by means of authority, but acting in such a way that the pastors were obliged to ask for them. Formerly, there was a lot of opposition to these exercises, but today the pastors are the first to ask for them, to such an extent that it is impossible to satisfy all of them.”

421

End of 1844 - beginning of 1845. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 594-597 = OM 595]:

[1] The cardinal of Lyons said to the Marist Fathers and to the Capuchin Fathers that he didn’t like the missions to be too short and that he would forbid his pastors to have them last less than four weeks. That was reported Fr. Colin. He answered, “If I had something to say to the cardinal, I would say to him, ‘Your Eminence, missions lasting five or six weeks are good only for making hypocrites, while when we don’t try to do the whole sowing by force, those who have not come over will come later.’”

[2] He told us, around the end of 1844 or the beginning of 1845, that during missions in the country he would not want the Marists to speak themselves about setting up a mission cross (unless

they were asked freely and spontaneously to do so), nor should they have people spend a lot for big ceremonies. His reason was that, even when the people seem well-disposed at the time, the memory of the expenses which the mission would have incurred, would later prevent them from wanting any more missions when their good dispositions would not be the same.

[3] “Formerly,” he said, “in the diocese of Lyons, the parishes had to give eighteen hundred francs to have a mission. The Society has already caused this good change, that things aren’t done that way anymore. Its example has changed the order of things and, in the diocese of Belley likewise, our way of doing things has been a model for the diocesan missionaries.”

[Addition:] (The Marists did and still do go about without inquiring as to whether they would be paid; they come back without asking for anything; they accept if they are given something. It has happened that they were not even reimbursed for their travel expenses.)

[4] On this point he told us that, at the time when he was giving missions in the diocese of Belley, there were some people in a parish who were saying, “The mission costs the parish so much.” Fr. Colin, one day while he was preaching, brought up this comment and attributed it to outsiders. (“That’s what you should always do,” he said, “so as not to alienate the parishioners whom one is evangelizing.”) After he had really aroused their attention, he cried out, “You outsiders, do you want me to tell you how much the mission is costing this parish, how much?...” All eyes were fixed on him, all ears were attentive... Then he told them that the mission wasn’t costing anything, and that, if gratitude urged the parishioners to offer them something, he would refuse it.

422

After 1850. Mayet. Note on the missions. [Mayet 1, 133m = OM 722]:

In the early days of the Society, after Rev. Fr. Founder and Fr. Déclas had given a mission, the pastor gave them a small amount of money (maybe 40 francs). They took what they needed for the trip and gave back the rest.

423

December 1847. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 5, 410m = OM 664]:

He didn’t want us to denounce the tavern-keepers. In December 1847 he told us, “When I was a missionary I was the friend of all the tavern-keepers. I’m the one who had their customers” (laughingly).

424

December 22, 1847. Colin. Conversation. [Mayet 4, 466 = OM 661 = FS 148, 3f]:

[3] Father Ducournau said to him, “Father, in one parish where I gave a mission there were some factories. The works manager prevented his workers from coming to our talks. What should we have done?”

[4] “Well, in that case,” Father Colin replied, “a little patience and balm, not speaking out, making excuses for them, expressing regret that the managers’ business did not allow them to arrange suitable times for the working people. If some should come, you should compliment them,

speak to them kindly, show your gratitude to their masters... That happens several times and little by little they all come. The managers are ashamed of their behavior. While I myself was giving missions, we went once to quite a large town where there were some factories. We adopted that approach and everyone followed the mission. It was at Tenay, near Belley.”

425

March 1, 1842. Mayet. Account of the diocesan missionaries of Belley. [Mayet 1, 724 = OM 533, 1]:

When he was in Rome for the first time, Fr. Convers wrote to him that diocesan missionaries had just been established in the diocese of Belley, and that this seemed to be a bit in opposition to the Society, which had already given a few missions in the diocese; we could also see in this action by the bishop of Belley, who up to that point had considerably tested the Society of Mary, a new kind of opposition on his part. When Fr. Colin read this letter, he was upset at first, but faith took over immediately and he said within his heart, “Blessed be God.” Later, he pointed out that what seemed to be in opposition was really providential, because, since the Society had few members at that time, it would have exhausted and weighed its members down with fatigue in order to do all the mission work.

Bugey: Missionary Life

The texts collected here concern the life of the missionaries aside from the actual missionary work itself: such external conditions like lodging and cooking and study, and the personal feelings and interior struggles that accompanied their missionary activity. The texts are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

Life on mission

426

1844. *Mayet. Note based on words of Colin. [Mayet 1, 401fm = OM 589]:*

[1] In the missions which Fr. Colin gave with Frs. Jallon and Déclas, all during dinner he would joke with them, not to make them uneasy, but to say something pleasant. He told us that he did so for two reasons: first, to relax their minds; and second, to keep them from saying unbecoming things before the servants. He added, "In my opinion, those who know how to get people to laugh without offending against charity have a great advantage which is often very useful."

[2] One day in 1844, at the motherhouse in Lyons, he was making pleasantries and, speaking about himself, he said to us, "When you get old, you need to be like a child. When I worked on important matters, I really liked having someone with whom I could exchange pleasantries; that loosens up your head and your nerves."

427

January 15, 1845. *Colin. Chatter after dinner. [Mayet 6, 55f = OM 597 = FS 87, 14]:*

[...] "Messieurs, in the early days of the Society, I was on the mission band with Fathers Déclas and Jallon for four years. We must have made each other suffer; that's part of life. God wills that men should have merit for charity. Even if there are only two or three together, it will always be the same. Besides, each has his way, which is as it should be. But, as I was saying, never, never during those years was there the slightest shadow of dissension among us."

428

February 26, 1845. *Colin. Conversation with Fathers Germain, Millot and Mayet. [Mayet 3, 161f = OM 605]:*

[1] On February 26, 1845, Fr. Colin told us that he had given missions in places where they were so badly nourished that they couldn't keep going anymore.

[2] On one of these missions, they had only one bed for two of them, and since out of modesty they lay as far apart as possible, they could neither move nor sleep. "Today," he told us, "I would not let our Marists do that; instead, I would send one of the two. I suffered so much during that mission that I felt the effects for six months."

[3] In one parish, there were no toilets and they had to go into the woods which was a quarter of an hour away from their residence.

[4] "It was our practice during our missions to laugh a lot during meals, but never in a way to hurt anybody."

[5] They had had to bring the sacred linens for the holy sacrifice because sometimes they found some which were so dirty that they could not conscientiously use them. When that was the case they would take their own without anybody noticing.

[6] They sometimes gave a mission in parishes where the pastor had no faith (one could find sacred particles all over). Sometimes the pastor without faith would joke about matters of religion; when that happened they appeared not to understand and laughed with him. They were very polite and very reserved, but always appeared not to understand and they kept their own counsel; otherwise, they would not have done any good.

[7] "On those occasions," Fr. Colin would say, "one must do what we did: a little battalion in square formation, impenetrable; we would give the word to each other; we were prudent, reserved. Let the superior always stand at the center of the battalion."

429

November 21, 1846. Colin. Story told at table. [Mayet S2, 72-75 = OM 639]:

[1] "It was," he said to us, "after the revolution. There were no priests; several churches had been abandoned; we were going into parishes where there were no pastors. Never were we so happy; never did we laugh so openheartedly. I still miss those times; they were good times. Messieurs, when you put up with something, nature suffers a little, but that is when you are happiest. Often we had to make our own soup. Once, we arrived in a parish where there had been no priests since the revolution. Nobody was living in the rectory. We were laughing as we went about sweeping as best we could. There were no panes in the windows, the ceiling was open; the cracks had been stuffed with straw. We went to bed. We were very cold, but we laughed.

[2] "Another time there were three of us; we found that there was only one bed in the parish. There was no rectory; we went to the inn and settled there; there were two of us, but there was only one bed. We didn't sleep because we tried to keep apart from each other; we had already locked the door when the woman whose rooms we had taken came and knocked during the night. She was coming to bed. There was only one other bed, which was separated from ours by some planks. I did not want to answer, but nevertheless one of us went to the window and sent her away. 'This room is ours.' Ah! we certainly would not have wanted that creature to come in."

[3] "We remained masters of the terrain.

[4] "Another time it was very cold and the door of the room or stable where we had gone to bed had an opening in it. Since there was only a winnowing-basket there, I told Fr. Jallon, 'Fr. Jallon, put the winnow against the wind'; and indeed we tried to stop the wind from passing through with this windscreen. Never had we been so happy.

[5] "One day, as Fr. Jallon was going out in the morning, his feet sank down into a puddle that had been covered by the snow, and he quietly said to us, 'there's water there.' Another time he got lost while coming back home and after wandering about in the countryside, he came back to us by another road. When the worry which we had had was over, we began to laugh. Sometimes we were very cold all night long, and when the day dawned, we preached anyhow.

[6] “Then we spent the whole day in the confessional and in the pulpit and, as we came back, we often still had to make our soup or else do without. Messieurs, we gave a lot of missions like that. When you suffer deprivation, you are happy. I admit, however, Messieurs, that I will never let our missionaries give missions like that; no, I will not permit it. I even feel that my health would not have held up, and that is why, I think, after four years, God had me appointed by bishop Devie, the bishop of Belley, as superior of his minor seminary. I had stayed in damp confessionals and other damp places; I had some pain, some rheumatism.

[7] “Oh! Messieurs, the spirit of poverty, the spirit of obedience!”

430

December 22, 1847. Mayet. Stories told by Colin in the refectory at Puyлата. [Mayet S2, 73-75m = OM 662]:

[1] It was in Innimont, near Belley. They stopped up the windows with hay; people also brought them a few rags. When they left, the poor people accompanied them, crying out “Long live the missionaries.” They had gone some distance, and the mountain still echoed with this acclamation. That’s where it happened, I believe, that in the middle of a group of men to whom he was giving signs of affection, Fr. Colin was surprised by a good peasant woman who, not knowing how to express her gratitude to him, grabbed him by the neck and kissed him. Another woman came up to do the same, but he withdrew.

[2] In that place they did not have a mattress; they slept on straw; and they had skirts to cover themselves during the night.

[3] There were some women who were so filled with joy after the mission that they even knelt down in the mud when Fr. Colin was going by and kissed his feet, and Father, who had been surprised and caught unawares, fled as fast as possible.

[4] Once, when he arrived in a parish to give a mission there, he came upon somebody who said to him, “Ah! Father, I’ve been waiting for you for ten years.”

Study

431

About 1839. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 55 = OM 462]:

“When I was coming back from a mission, I worked on my theology as much as I could; sometimes we would expound on it until eleven o’clock with Fr. Jallon, and I would say ‘I will not damn myself if I preach a little less well, but I will damn myself if I render a wrong decision.’”

432

1845. Mayet. Note reporting a detail furnished by Colin. [Mayet S2, 257 = OM 617]:

During the years when Fr. Colin gave missions (before the approval of the Society), every time when the work season had passed, he always went to make a retreat lasting four days at the

Capuchins in Hyenne, a town in Savoy, two leagues away from Belley. Then he would take up his study of theology again, and thus his summer went by.

433

September 14, 1846. Colin. To the professed of the Society at the time of the general retreat. [Mayet 6, 727 = OM 629 = FS 109, 16]:

He said, "In the beginning, before the approbation, when Bishop Devie wanted us to give missions, he would have had us giving them even during the summer. I told him, 'My Lord, you must leave us the summer to ourselves, to work, otherwise it will be impossible for us to do as you wish.'"

Lodging at the minor seminary

434

January 1838. Chavoin. Words spoken to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 1, 155-158 = OM 424, 6-8 = RMJ 100, 6-8]:

[6] Speaking of the beginnings of the Society, she added that these men had to put up with a great deal during the four years they spent as missionaries in the seminary at Belley. Several of the teachers made a laughing stock of them, as if they were fools or idiots, and those among the pupils who noticed did as they saw their masters doing. They would even have gone hungry (because of certain circumstances which Providence arranged) if the Marist Sisters had not been at Belley. As regards accommodation, we know they were lodged in a corridor. [7] "At last," said the Superior of Bon Repos, "I, who had seen all that, went to the Bishop of Belley and said, 'Ah, my Lord, will you leave the Blessed Virgin's Society in that condition?' and knowing how Fr. Pichat, a canon in Belley, loved the Blessed Virgin and how much he cherished the Society in his heart, I added: 'Couldn't you appoint Fr. Pichat to be superior of the college?' The Bishop answered: 'But you know that Fr. Pichat has very poor health.' 'My Lord, we shall pray. God will give him back his health.' [8] In the meantime one of my first companions, Sr. Saint Anne, fell ill. She thought she would die on a Friday, and after waiting for three weeks in vain, she was very sad on the evening of the third Friday. I asked her what was the matter, and she replied, 'I had always hoped that I would die today, but night has come, and I realize that this day is passing too.' I said what I could," continued the Superior, "to urge her to be resigned to God's will. But what I tell you shows you that she was truly an excellent soul. Well, a short while before she died, seeing that I was very much distressed, she said, 'Don't grieve so much. I will be more helpful to you in heaven than on earth.' 'Sister Saint Anne,' I replied, 'if you have any influence in heaven, you must get me three graces.' She died. Two weeks later I had obtained the three things I asked for. Fr. Pichat's appointment as superior of the college at Belley was the first. The other two were personal."

435

About 1838. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 151 = OM 465]:

[1] "Of all the trials the Society had to undergo, the one I consider to be the greatest is that of the minor seminary in Belley, where we had to live with fellow clerics who considered us as fools, who did not see things the same way we did, who opposed us. I kept an eye on the teachers even more than on the pupils.

[2] "Never was the minor seminary of Belley more flourishing than when we had the most crosses to bear, the greatest number of obstacles."

436

End of 1840. Chavoin. Oral account given to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 730f = OM 513, 11f = RMJ 101, 11f]:

[11] "Bishop Devie wanted to make the fathers diocesan missionaries and he persecuted the younger Father Colin (at present the superior general). When the latter came out from an interview, he was in a state of indescribable distress and worry. Then Bishop Devie would complain, 'Father Colin has his own ideas and holds fast to them. We cannot agree.' That was because his Lordship was asking for things which God did not want."

[12] (We can understand that it was a real agony for Father Colin to oppose a bishop he esteemed so highly, and not be able to adopt his views.) "What is more, in the junior seminary of Belley where these fathers were in residence, they would have gone hungry had it not been for us. Fr. Guigard, superior of the junior seminary, caused them very much trouble. They were made fun of. One day a lad who was taken care of by the fathers was punished very severely, and the elder Fr. Colin could not help remarking, 'It is the ass which has to bear the burden,' thinking that the affection he had for this child was the reason for this great severity. One day Fr. Colin had taken a dose of medicine. The sister in charge brought him a bowl of broth sufficient for the whole day, and then no one bothered any more about him than about a dog. In those days the elder Fr. Colin used to go every Sunday in all weathers to Bons, a village at an hour's distance from Belley. He had much to put up with; he was acting parish priest there. Sometimes he had to go to the inn for his meals, at other times to the churchwarden, who gave him only a potato stew for his dinner."

437

March 27 - April 9, 1841. Colin. Community meeting at the Belley college. [Mayet 1, 107f = OM 514, 4f = FS 39, 4f]:

[4] "We have put up with more than a little too, here in this house. Today I saw again the little corner we occupied when we first came. It was up on the third floor, in the corridor behind the glazed doors, next door to the chapel, and when I was asleep they used to wake me up early. Well, I just stopped sleeping, that was all. The one who suffered most was my brother, because he was in charge of the Sisters [the convent of Bon Repos]. While we went out on missions during the winter, he stayed all the time. Still, they were the best years of my life. Well, we were poor, four poor priests, nobody special. We had more than a few jibes directed at us, and they were right. What were we? We were fit only to be trampled underfoot, and they would gladly have spat upon us. Well, see how these poor men, these poor priests, soon changed position, rose to the head of the house, and the others were removed.

[5] “Ah, Messieurs, it is through the cross, through humiliations, that everything is accomplished.”

438

March 1842. Mayet. Synthetic account of the origins of the Society. [Mayet 1, 734-737 = OM 535, 21-30 = RMJ 145]:

[21] 14. Finally, Bishop Devie allowed the Marist Sisters to come and establish themselves in Belley. He also allowed Fr. Colin, Fr. Déclas (two of the four first companions) and the elder Fr. Colin, pastor of Cerdon, and Fr. Jallon, the pastor of Izenave, who had joined our holy father, to begin missions. His aim was to make use of their zeal, but not to allow them to form the Society of Mary. He was still thinking, I believe, of making them diocesan missionaries.

[22] 15. These fathers suffered a great deal in their missions. In one of them, at least I believe so, they slept in a stable, had to prepare their own meals, and protected themselves from the biting winter wind with a winnowing-basket which they set up against a door with a big hole in it, something which amused them a great deal. When Fr. Colin spoke about that period, he said laughingly, “That is still one of our best times.”

[23] 16. The bishop had lodged them in the college-seminary at Belley and this was a great cross for the Society. Some of the pupils, encouraged by certain masters, looked on them as fools and simpletons and made sport of them. The bishop did not know that their rooms were in a kind of corridor and that, at first, they had no fire in winter. The Superior of the Marist Sisters told me that, but for the Sisters they would not have had enough to eat. This state of affairs lasted four years and, added Fr. Colin laughing, “I consider these four years as good as any novitiate.”

[24] 17. “The clergy opposed the Marists, as well they should have,” Fr. Colin would say with humility. There were some who said, “This is the second volume of the Jesuits, bound in ass’s hide.” Others accused them of being *Jansenists*. They made fun of them and they felt no guilt in doing so.

[25] Fr. Ruivet, vicar general of the diocese of Belley, a man of great merit, a confessor of the faith during the French Revolution, and who had the greatest influence in the bishop’s council, was opposed to the Society; but he was a little taken by the faith and later by the success of this work.

[26] Fr. Greppod, another vicar general of Belley, who was very much concerned with learning, was also opposed to them. “He contrasted them with the men of genius and of high birth who began the institute of the Jesuits,” a young man from Belley said to me one day.

[27] I was told that in the major seminary of the diocese of Belley there were also some directors who were opposed to them.

[28] Fr. Perrodin himself, the superior of the major seminary, was not in favor of the Society. When Bishop Devie had changed the way he looked on the Society and Fr. Perrodin was entrusted with the task of announcing to the seminarians that the bishop would not oppose the vocation of those who wanted to enter it, he carried out this commission very sullenly, Fr. Maîtrepierre told me, and he let clearly be seen that he had no taste for the matter, and he is one who could present very well and highlight messages which suited him. Fr. Perrodin is highly esteemed in the diocese of Belley.

[29] Thus we can see that God allowed good people to turn against this work so that it might be marked with the seal of the cross, a necessary character of all godly works. Instead of having unfavorable opinions of those whom we have just mentioned based on their opposition, let us lift our eyes higher; let us see God in all events and bless him for having used not only his enemies but his very friends to crucify, purify, and test our little Society. Moreover, let us observe in passing that prudence required caution, resistance and even the way of trials on the part of ecclesiastical superiors, because not every spirit must be believed lightly, because it is up to them to govern the

Church of God, and since it is necessary that great works, like great saints, should pass through the crucible of humiliation and suffering. “It was necessary,” says the Gospel, “that Christ should suffer and so enter into glory.” “Unless the grain of wheat,” said Jesus Christ himself, “fall to the ground and perish there, it remains alone and bears no fruit.”

[30] 18. The Superior of the Marist Sisters went to Bishop Devie and asked, “My Lord, are you going to leave the Society of Mary indefinitely in such wretched conditions?” “My dear child, what can I do about it?” “Be kind enough, my Lord, to name Fr. Pichat superior of the college-seminary.” (Fr. Pichat, canon of the cathedral, was a holy priest who loved the Marists.) “But Fr. Pichat has no health, he can’t fill that post.” “We’ll pray, my Lord, and God will restore his health.” They prayed and Fr. Pichat did in fact regain strength. He was named Superior and the fathers heaved a sigh of relief.

439

October 1, 1842. Colin. Words spoken to Frs. Eymard and Mayet. [Mayet 2, 250f = OM 547, 27f]:

[27] Then he spoke to us again about the Society. “When we wanted to establish ourselves (the Marist missionaries) in the city of Belley, I asked permission of the bishop. I did not ask him for a penny for that; everything was at our expense. He was opposed to this. However, we were allowed to do so. We bought a property; just as we were about to settle, the bishop forbade us to do so. But alas, I said to him, ‘Your Excellency, where will we stay?’ He said to me, ‘At the seminary.’ ‘But, your Excellency, there is no room at the seminary.’ ‘You will put two in the same room.’

[28] “I had to look for a place [in the seminary], and I had rooms made.”

440

1847. Mayet. Parallel between the beginnings of the Dominicans and those of the Marists. [Mayet 4, 286 = OM 669, 11]:

For twenty years, Fr. Colin and his companions suffered all sorts of affronts. At the secondary school in Belley, they were lodged in the corridor. Everywhere people called them fools, imbeciles; they made sport of them by calling them *Marionists*, as if to say *Marionnettes*; others accused them of being Jansenists. They called them asses. You would have blushed to be among them. People even attached rags to their clothing in derision. The children of the school where they were living made fun of them. The bishop of Belley made great efforts to smother this Society in the cradle.

441

May - October 1853. Maître-pierre. On the origins of the Society. [OM 752, 22-25]:

[22] From 1825 to 1836 the Society was generally hidden; it seemed very unsure in the eyes of those who knew about its existence. Its members gave many missions, especially in small localities. At that time many parishes were ill served in spiritual matters. Many had been without priests for a long time; a few were still without them. Others had old, sickly, negligent, or even scandalous priests. Faith had lost its vigor; ignorance was profound; disorders were fashionable and religious practices were neglected or abandoned. The missionaries effectively supported the

zeal of their bishop, who finally succeeded in dispelling those clouds and in having religion flourish. Other confreres devoted themselves usefully to the education of youth, at the seminary and at the Capuchin house where they had established a boarding school. They began a bit to form candidates in the religious life, to establish a few language and theology classes. Those in the language and philosophy classes went to attend classes at the seminary; theology was taught at the Capuchin house. For a few years, the theology class was made up of one student, two, three, and a larger number. And finally, out of five or six, two or three persevered. Even among the professors at the seminary and at the boarding school, the rate of perseverance was often no better. Some, after they had declared themselves as aspirants, made a contrary declaration and were ashamed for having come forward. This was no small trial for the perseverance of the founder, but his courage, reinforced by Mary's protection, did not fail at all. Fr. Bret, frightened by these defections, was talking with him one day. Fr. Superior was trying to reassure him when he said to him, "But what if everybody withdrew?" Father answered suddenly and forcefully, "If everybody withdrew, I would sing the *Te Deum*, and I would begin again!"

[23] That was only one trial among a thousand; they were many, they were painful, but they were humble like the Society. At first, these good Fathers were thrown to the top floor of the seminary, into rooms that were cold, without fireplaces, without heat, in coldest winter. When Fr. Guillaumot, pastor of Belley, a man of firm character, had paid them a visit, he was indignant to find them in such an abandoned state; he went to the bishop and said to him, "Your missionaries have been thrown up there onto the third floor, without a stove, without a fireplace, and consequently without heat; it is shameful, in such a cold winter as this." The bishop gave orders; but the only thing done amounted to placing a stove in the corridor which separated their bedrooms; aside from that, no one bothered with them, and they did not complain about anybody or about anything. They often had the opportunity to practice the spiritual counsel, *love to be unknown and to be considered as nothing*. They were considered as useless, supernumerary, ignorant men, without any ability, etc...

[24] In 1826, Fr. Pichat, a canon of Belley, a priest distinguished by his tender piety and the solidity of his virtues, was offered the post of superior at the secondary school. He refused because of his bad health which had caused him to leave an ecclesiastical school which he had been directing very well in Lyons. The bishop ordered him to pray for thirty days in succession at the tomb of St. Anthelme, bishop and protector of the diocese of Belley, so as to obtain sufficient health to take on this responsibility. Fr. Pichat prayed, was healed, and was named superior. He was a Marist himself. Then things changed in favor of the missionaries. But nevertheless people did not stop molesting them. They were reproached for accusing the professors to the superior. One of the professors said one day to the elder Fr. Colin, "You should know, Father, that the professors are accusing you of reporting what they do to Fr. Superior." "Tell them on my behalf," answered Fr. Colin, "that I am quite happy that they think so and that they say so, and that I invite them to live with a great spirit of union among them, and when they notice that someone has spoken about them to Fr. Superior, let them not suspect each other, but let them say, 'Fr. Colin is the one who reported everything.'" They stopped talking on this topic. But all had not been said; people made fun of them in letters sent to pastors and to professors; these letters circulated in the diocese and perhaps outside the diocese. Obedience and respect ceased for about a year, at least on the part of the professors; the pupils tended toward open revolt. These unseemly things were carried out even as far as the theater, in plays given or declaimed at the awards ceremonies. Fr. Ruivet, a vicar general, who did not like religious in general, barely put up with the Marists and underhandedly thwarted them. Fr. Perrodin, a vicar general and the superior of the major seminary, did as much.

[25] However, since these simple, enduring and devoted priests carried out their duties with constant zeal, others could not help but appreciate their services; Bishop Devie held them in esteem, employed them, and consulted them. Then, through one of those inconsistencies common enough to heated feelings, people began to consider them as men who did everything, who ran the

bishop and the diocese, and what was said could be summarized in these often repeated words, “Now, to obtain something you have to bow and scrape before the Marists.” The bishop named Fr. Superior an honorary canon and he would have liked to have invested him himself, but that wasn’t easy; this new canon felt such repugnance toward everything that men call honor that he kept finding a way to get out of it. One day the bishop asked him to bring him the canon’s capes which he had inherited from Fr. Pichat; Fr. Colin understood that this was so that he might invest him with it himself; he sent them over with someone else. Then the bishop gave a definite order and he submitted. He also gave him verbally the powers of vicar general, but he never used them, and still less did he boast about them.

Colin: inner struggles

442

November 1838. Colin. Advice to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 1, 328f = OM 433]:

[1] “When we have something to do not to our liking, oh! then let’s get to it eagerly, let us bring all our strength to bear on it... That is an opportunity to mortify nature; let us embrace it joyfully. As for me, for the past twenty years I have only acted against my inclinations. I wanted a Society very much. Why? In order to be alone with God alone, in order to be able to converse with him, to lead a hidden life; that was what I was drawn to. And all the while I have always had to be on the move. [2] The first time we had to go out on a mission (there were only two of us; I had to put myself into it, since we were beginning with the missions), I experienced the most violent crisis; and then later I had to accept the post of superior at the minor seminary in Belley. Nobody knows what I have suffered even today in taking it up again.”

443

March 26, 1844. Colin. Spoken in council in Belley. [Mayet 5, 386 = OM 577]:

“How often I have personally experienced the effectiveness of prayer in difficult situations, in decisions which present the greatest problems, in the holy tribunal! Once when I was on a mission with Fr. Déclas and Fr. Jallon, I consulted with them on certain cases, and I found that they were rather severe; nevertheless, since I was the youngest one, I followed their decision, mistrustful of myself, although deep inside my opinion was different from theirs. Later on I recognized that, in those cases, we paid too much attention to the law and not enough to the fragility of human nature, and this has made me change a great deal my conduct in regard to several cases.”

444

About 1839. Colin. Spoken to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 1, 349f = OM 473]:

“As for myself, I am persuaded that in the world there are many people who are sick only because they take too much care of themselves, because they pause over a little nothing. Once, I

couldn't go anymore; I was supposed to go out on a mission; Fr. Pichat drove me to the bishop's residence; the bishop said to me, 'Do you have chest pains?' I said, 'No.' He said to me, 'Well, go, give your mission.' God gave me the grace not to experience the least difficulty in obeying; I gave the mission. How many times I went up into the pulpit when I couldn't go any more, and I came down healed."

445

November 21, 1846. Colin. Story told at table. [Mayet 5, 434f = OM 640]:

[1] On November 21, 1846, in the course of the same conversation in which Father spoke to us so strongly about poverty, he said to us:

[2] "The spirit of obedience, Messieurs, the spirit of obedience. I'm going to tell you a story about something that happened to me." (We were at table in the dining room.) "When we were giving missions in Belley, before the approbation of the Society, it happened one year that I was very tired, and the bishop of Belley wanted us to give the mission exercises in a parish. Since I was sick, Fr. Pichat, the superior of the Belley minor seminary where we were staying during the summer, had me get into a carriage and drove me to the bishop's house which, as you know, is only ten minutes away. Yes, I had not told him that I was sick.

[3] "He went in first to see the bishop, explained to him my condition, asked him not to send me, then I was ushered in. The bishop asked me a single question, 'Do you have chest pains?' 'No, your Excellency.' 'Leave.' I bowed respectfully as a sign of submission and then I got back into the carriage in order to return to the minor seminary. There, as I was going up the stairs to get to my room, I was suddenly cured, and I no longer felt indisposed.

[4] "Ah! Messieurs," he said to us, "nobody knows, no, nobody knows the strength of obedience: *The obedient man speaks of victories.*

[5] "Several times on the missions I was dragging myself on all fours to get up into the pulpit and, when I came down, I was cured."

446

Autumn 1846. Colin. Story; no context indicated. [Mayet S2, 111m = OM 651]:

[1] "There were certain missions which were so hard and in which everything was so lacking that I felt I had to make all my remarks to Fr. Pichat before going, because my health couldn't possibly hold up. I told him everything, but then I obeyed; he was my superior.

[2] "After one of these missions I was sick for five or six months. And indeed, Messieurs, how could anybody hold up under forced labor, without food or lodging? I obeyed, but I do not want others ever to give missions of that kind."

447

1842-1843? Favre. Note. [Mayet 1, 162m = OM 724]:

It happened during the mission in Ruffieu that Fr. Colin received his appointment as superior of the minor seminary in Belley. He was tired during this mission and was on his last legs. But he

had himself carried up to the pulpit, like a Francis Regis; he always came down feeling better. They had pity on him; they called him the poor old man, and he was barely forty-two years old.

448

1881-1883. *Jeantin. Extract from the fifth memoir. [APM 921.331.2, ff. 3f = Jeantin 1, 145 = OM 877]:*

The holy founder kept up his languishing and exhausted strength only with the help of violent means which he told others about later. In order to overcome a little the exhaustion which was crushing him and to find the strength he would need in order to be understood from the pulpit, he would wear a hard and crude leather belt, and since the belt was not enough, he would add a book to make it tighter. Thanks to this apparatus, he could hold up for some time, but even with these violent efforts, nature could not go very far, and it was evident that the ministry of preaching missions was no longer possible for a man who could hold up only with the help of such procedures.

449

Academic year 1842-1843. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet S1, 41f = OM 568]:

“Ah! I remember well the pastor who first called me *Father Superior of the Mission* during one of our trips at the beginning of the Society. Even if he had used a lance to make my heart bleed, he would not have made it bleed any more. And then at the same time, I felt that I was losing my freedom and that I could no longer be foolish with that folly that comes from being apostolic. A superior cannot act that way; he must not compromise the missionaries who come after him.”

450

1848. *Mayet. Article. [Mayet S2, 321f = OM 687]:*

[1] During the first four or five missions, Frs. Colin, Déclas and Jallon did not have a superior at all. Nevertheless, the greatest peace and the greatest union reigned among them. But, either because Fr. Montagny, who had given a mission with them, told the bishop about that, or because Frs. Jallon and Déclas had asked Bishop Devie to give them Fr. Colin as their head, it happened at Vieu-d’Izenave that he received the letter from his Excellency by which the bishop appointed him superior of the missionaries.

[2] He was humiliated.

[3] The first time that anyone addressed him with this title, *Father Superior*, he didn’t know where to hide. He said that he would never forget the place and the occasion, so confused was he.

[4] As he received this appointment to be superior, he felt at the same time that he was losing his apostolic freedom, and this only goes to prove his good sense and his prudence. Indeed, the superior is a moderator, but he cannot commit himself; he sets everything in motion, but he can hardly go to the fire. Bonaparte used to say, “Nowadays, battles are no longer won with courage.” Let us apply that to the superior of the missions. He is entrusted with the strategy. Well did Father sense this when he was appointed.

Acknowledgments

451

February 6, 1872. Colin. At the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 846, 33]:

“You are all reasonable enough to understand that a man like me could not have done all that has been done. I hereby declare that I recognize the intervention of the holy Virgin. Only she is Foundress. It is because I was the most unworthy of all that she made use of me. Look at our first confreres, Frs. Déclas, Humbert and Jallon. They were humble, straight and simple souls. Oh! how God blessed them! Everything was poor in their lives. We would eat with the peasants, we would sleep together. Everything was simple in their sermons, and the people *fell*. We were overwhelmed in the confessional.”

452

August 24, 1832(?). Fr. Vianney, Curé of Ars. Words spoken to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet, Personal notes, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 120-122 = OM 419, 3f]:

[3] “The Marists, that is a work according to the heart of God, because there is humility, simplicity, and contradictions; they go along very simply, they begin their missions with catechism and first communions.

[4] “If I had to choose between the Jesuits and the Marists, I would still prefer the Marists because the Jesuits have too high a profile and as a Marist one is hidden. Another good thing is that among the Marists, the superior does not accept brilliant minds, etc. If I had more means I would have become a Marist.” (the Curé of Ars)

Mercy

The Marist missionaries announced themselves as “instruments of God’s mercy,” and they would extol Mary’s mercy and how she is “the assured gate of salvation, always open, in which the sinner finds mercy.” Colin’s concern was that Marists, by prayer, by living their vows and by growing in virtue, might become “suitable instruments of the divine mercies,” and sought to establish mercy as a basic principle of Marists’ theological training and pastoral practice. Gathered here are texts on the theme of mercy. Included also is a set of texts, arranged thematically rather than chronologically, on a theme related to that of mercy: Mary’s open bosom or open embrace as image for a way of being and acting for the Society of Mary and for a Marian Church.

“Mother of Mercy”

453

1825-1829? Colin. Sermon for consecration to Mary; written in Colin’s hand; it is uncertain whether it is Colin’s own composition, or copied from other sources as per contemporary usage. [APM 242.41, sermon 28, pp. 13f]:

[...] She is the master work of the hands of God, the prodigy of his power, the miracle of his wisdom and of his mercy; [...] On earth she is the glory, the honor, the reparatrix, the asylum of the human race. She is the refuge, the defense, the support, the advocate, the light, the strength, the resource of the church militant. [...] She is that assured gate of salvation, always open, in which the soul, agitated by waves of tribulations, finds calm; the despairing, confidence; the afflicted soul, peace; the sinner, mercy; the just, a shelter against all the tempests that might threaten his virtue. [...] Finally she is the mother who in her tenderness is more of a mother than all mothers on earth, the mother of all Christians, for whom she underwent on Calvary all the pains of childbearing, whose motherly heart is forever open to all and whose boundless charity embraces all the ages of the new covenant, all nations and all peoples, comforts all miseries, meets all needs, grants all prayers. [...] Ought we be astounded to see all Christians unite their voices to proclaim her goodness, her tenderness, her mercy, and that never has anyone sought her help in vain; [...]

454

September 8, 1831. The Marist aspirants. Consecration to the blessed Virgin at the close of the retreat at Belley. [APM 117 = OM 236]:

[...] Blessed Virgin, be for us always a most tender and compassionate Mother; be our advocate and protector before God. [...]

455

December 8, 1831. Professors and missionaries of the minor seminary of Belley. Consecration to the blessed Virgin. [APM 117 = OM 240]:

[...] With your servant St. Ildephonse, we wish to proclaim everywhere your greatness and your privileges, especially that of your Immaculate Conception, to publish your deeds of kindness and mercy, to love you and to have others serve you as much as we can and as long as we shall live. [...]

456

1836/1840-42. Terraillon. Account of the founding of the S.M. [APM 123 = OM 750, 13]:

[...] Finally our definitive approbation arrived from Rome in 1836. We gathered at Belley for the election of the superior general on September 24, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy. [...]

457

Late December 1837. Colin. Response to Mayet, with an additional remark of Mayet. [Mayet 1, 5 = OM 421 = FS 2 = LM 41]:

[1] Someone reminded him that he had said the whole world must be Marist. He said, "Yes, God the Father has appointed our Lord as judge of the living and the dead. The body of Jesus is a simple body. With the Jesuits you must have talents and many other things.

[2] "In the congregation of the blessed Virgin, it is not so. She is the mother of mercy. Her body will have several branches. She will be open to all kinds of people."

[3] [Mayet:] This applies especially to the third order. Because, for the priests, although the rule admits more easily than others, nevertheless it demands a discernment in the choice and admission of subjects.

458

About July 16, 1839. Mayet. Summary of Colin's words. [Mayet 1, 517 = FA 195, 1 and 6]:

[1] He went on to extol Mary's mercies.

[...]

[6] Then, without wishing to say in any way that good faith could gain these indulgences without the required conditions, he said that the blessed Virgin does take good note of the heart and he cited the case of somebody who had told him that they had been saved by the scapular, although they had assumed it of themselves and put it round their neck, without being enrolled with any of the prescribed formalities.

459

August-December 1857. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., first edition. [Manual, p. 22 = LM 284, 3]:

Would it be presumptuous to think that the Third Order of Mary, born in our time and approved in our day by the Church, should naturally be more suited to our needs and ways? It has often been said already that our age is the age of Mary! Heaven is pleased to glorify her on earth; the Church proclaims the most beautiful of her privileges; the confidence and veneration of people shine forth in touching demonstrations; and never have the power, goodness, and mercy of the august Queen of Heaven been more visibly manifest or more piously implored by the devotion of the faithful.

460

1859. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., second edition. [Manual, pp. 11f = LM 284, footnote 5]:

Your privileges include being able to count on the special protection of Mary, who is so powerful. By permitting her name to become your name, she also want to see you bear it with honor; she will help you. By calling you to belong to the new family which she has given to herself, she wishes to become your Mother by a special title; it is also your right to call yourselves her children. Consider, therefore, all that you may henceforward expect from the goodness and mercy of Mary, both for yourselves and for all those whom you may recommend to her.

“My bosom will be open to all”

Bosom of Mary

461

c. 1837. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 11 = OM 422 = FS 4, 1 = LM 42, 1]:

“The blessed Virgin said: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I will be so at the end of time; my bosom will be open to all those who wish to enter there.’”

462

September 17, 1849. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 7, 731 = FS 176, 4]:

“[...] In my troubles, in my difficulties, I shall say to her, ‘Blessed Virgin, help me, I falter. I cast myself into the bosom of your mercy; help me to find my way again.’”

463

September 18, 1849. Marist retreatants. Act of consecration at the closing ceremony of the retreat. [Jeantin 5, 419]:

O tender Mother, we are your most unworthy servants, but mercifully marked with your name; we take refuge in your heart with full confidence and beset everywhere by the enemies of salvation, we cry out to you: tender Mother, open your heart to us; hide us in the bosom of your mercy and under the wings of your protection. Do not allow any one of us, the undersigned, to perish in eternity. O clement Virgin, we choose you today as our Superior and as Superior of your whole Society, and also as our Mother and Advocate; tender Mother, accept us as your true sons; keep us united in charity and save us in eternity. Amen.

464

September 26, 1846. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 219 = FS 118, 2]:

“[...] the blessed Virgin is going to redouble her efforts at the end of time to gather together the elect.”

465

c. 1838. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 11f = OM 450, 1 and addition b]:

[1] One day he said: “I don’t think that the Society ought to last a long time: it has too many branches and is too composite a body. If it were to last a rather long time, I think that this body would be simpler.”

[b] Let us compare these words with those where he says that the Blessed Virgin will open her bosom at the end of time, in reference to the Society.

466

1868. Mayet. Paraphrase of Colin within a comparison of the foundations of the Jesuits and of the Marists. [Mayet C4, 2735-2737]:

When at Rome Fr. Colin presented to Cardinal Castracane, who was given charge of this business, the plan of the Society of Mary, with all its branches, saying that the Blessed Virgin had been the support of the newborn Church and that at the end of time she would open her bosom to all to gather the elect, the Cardinal responded: “So then, the whole world will be Marist?” Fr. Colin, smiling, answered him: “Yes, Eminence, Your Eminence too, and the Pope at the head.”

467

May-October 1853. *Maitrepierre*. Extract from his "Overview of the origin of the S.M. and its status in 1853." [APM 125, 50 = LM 226, 67]:

[...] In the Third Order, Mary extends her arms to every age, sex, condition, degree, shade of meaning which can be found in souls. [...]

Bosom of the Society of Mary

468

c. 1872. *Colin*. Dictated note on the TOM. [APM 242.15 and 242.54 = LM 332, 3]:

And since she is the mother of all God's children, and since she wants to save them all, her Society ought to open its bosom to all her children who want to be saved and lay claim to her help. That is why the Society takes all kinds of people into association with itself through a Third Order, under the name of Confraternity of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners and the Perseverance of the Just. These are divided into several categories: [...]

469

September 27, 1846. *Colin*. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 429 = OM 632, 1 = FS 120, 1 = LM 114]:

"Let us take courage and work hard, but always *unknown and hidden*. Let us keep away from those who rely on a merely human eloquence. The Society must begin a new Church over again. I do not mean that in a literal sense, that would be blasphemy. But still, in a certain sense, yes, we must begin a new Church. 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 — heretics alone may not belong to it."

470

1839. *Colin*. Casual conversation. [Mayet 1, 15 = OM 452, 4]:

"[...] the Society, with its three branches and its Third Order, embraces all. [...]"

471

1833-1834. *Colin. Memorandum on the S.M. [OM 299, 6 = LM 11, 6]:*

The Society of Mary in a way even opens its bosom to the faithful who live in the world, and with whom it shares all its spiritual benefits by means of a confraternity formed for their benefit. [...]

Bosom of the Third Order of Mary

472

August-December 1857. *Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., first edition. [Manual, pp. 24-26 = LM 284, 6 & 8]:*

[6] The Third Order of Mary offers still one more advantage which will be appreciated particularly by the pious and zealous members of Christian families, and that is the ability to have all those people who are dear to them admitted into its bosom, or at least to have them participate in the spiritual riches which flow from being there.

[8] Finally, even those to whom the Third Order cannot open its bosom, because they would not want or could not enter it — even to them, the Third Order shows at least its concern and its zeal. It is particularly interested in sinners and in children before their birth, for it wishes that the former should receive the grace of conversion and the latter, the grace of holy Baptism. For either, one can ask for and obtain that the person be enrolled in the *book of prayers*, and then the favor, in all our meetings, of being especially recommended to the tender care and powerful mediation of the Queen of mercies.

473

1859. *Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., second edition. [Manual, pp. 12f = LM 284, footnote 7]:*

Do not fear that in return for such rich advantages, the Third Order exacts from its members onerous practices and great sacrifices. No, the Third Order of Mary, whether for the sake of honoring the pious simplicity of its august protectress, or out of consideration for the actual dispositions of many persons, the duties of their state and their position in secular society, proposes to its members only simple and easy practices. It does not oblige them to any particular work of zeal but prefers to leave the choice to the liberty and inclination of each one. The only penance it imposes is the voluntary sacrifice of the vanities and dangerous pleasures of secular society. And finally, it prescribes only a few vocal prayers, only a few exercises of outwardly visible piety; but it constantly urges its members to acquire those interior virtues, the practice of which goes with every position in society and with every age in life. Therefore, it becomes easy to be admitted and to live within its bosom. Husband or wife, an older person or a child, a young man or a young maiden, each one, without changing anything in their occupations or in the externals of Christian living, can make the commitment, follow its rule, and share in all its advantages.

474

May 6, 1874. *Mayet. From a letter to Colin: the second "key idea" of Colin on the TOM. [APM 921.142 = LM 376, 5]:*

Secondly, the Third Order of Mary will be able to open its bosom to all (heretics excepted), even to sinners and to children before their birth, in an indirect way. [...]

Bosom of the Church

475

July 23, 1816. *The first Marist aspirants. Formula of commitment at Fourvière. [OM 50]:*

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

476

December 1845. *Colin. Conference to scholastics preparing for profession; items recorded by one of them. [Mayet 5, 6942]:*

“Jesus left his mother with his newborn Church to form it in its cradle. She reappears at the end of time to call in those who have not yet entered its bosom and to lead back to it those who have left.”

477

December 1833. *Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.": the first paragraph on the lay confraternity. [AT I, s, 109 = LM 9, 109]:*

The general aim of the Society is to contribute in the best possible way, [...] to gather, so to speak, all the members of Christ, [...] so that at the end of time as at the beginning, all the faithful may with God's help be *one heart and one soul* in the bosom of the Roman Church, and that all, walking worthily before God and under Mary's guidance, may attain eternal life. For this reason entry into the Society is open even to laypersons living in the world in the Confraternity or Third Order of Blessed Mary.

“Instruments of the divine mercies”

478

1825-1829? Colin. *Opening talk for a mission. [APM 241.51, sermon 36, p. 3]:*

“*May the grace and peace of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you* (Rom 1, 7).

“These are the words that the apostle St. Paul puts at the head of his letter to the Romans and of almost all the other letters addressed to the faithful of the early Church. It is thus that the great apostle showed the faithful the purity of his zeal and of his charity and announced to them the goal and end of his preaching: *grace and peace be with you*. So too do we dare to address these same words to you on this the first time we appear in this pulpit in your midst. May grace and peace be with you, the grace that makes saints, the well-loved and friends of God; the peace of conscience, which is the fruit of grace and the germ of eternal peace: *grace and peace be with you*. Grace and peace, inestimable goods that the true Christian knows how to appreciate and seeks as his unique treasure on earth: we wish these for you at the beginning of these days of salvation which have been given to you for acquiring or augmenting these precious treasures of grace and peace. Yes, my very dear brothers, it is to help you, to encourage you to retain, to conserve, to augment this treasure of grace and peace, or to recover it if unhappily [you have lost it], that God gives you the extraordinary helps of a mission, that he sends us into your parish to be the instruments, all unworthy though we be, of his mercy toward you. We will be happy if by our ministry we can concur in your welfare and contribute to strengthen you in the faith and the practice of virtue, or to lead you back to it should you have strayed.”

479

December 1833. Colin. “*Summarium Regularum S.M.*”: *section on the home missions. [AT I, s, 43]:*

Missionaries are to take care to become, through solid virtues, suitable instruments of the divine mercies, and thus will they bear fruit in the vineyard of the Lord; they should not trust in themselves or in their own knowledge, nor should they rise to preach without having beforehand prepared what they are going to say; all, and especially the younger men, should present the sermons they have prepared to be read by those whom the superior has designated, so that whatever might be inaccurate or smack of vanity can be corrected.

480

1842. Colin. *Constitutions: introductory number on the vows. [AT II, a, 106 = Constitutions of 1872, AT V, C, 118]:*

Since those who are enrolled in this least Society offer themselves and their possessions of their own accord to the Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, in order to dedicate more fruitfully their whole life, — with her as leader and protector — to the service of God and the salvation of souls in whatever part of the world to which obedience may send them, they must be truly convinced that nothing can contribute more effectively to this noble aim than that, following

in the footsteps of the Virgin, they commit themselves to the practice of every virtue and, especially, hold fast to their promises. For, while they strive through faithful observance of the vows to strip themselves of all earthly and other inordinate attachments, they will doubtless become at once more prompt in obeying God's will, freer to take up for the greater glory of God whatever task in any part of the world, and more fruitful instruments of the divine mercies for the sake of their neighbor. Let them understand, therefore, with what application and fervor they should observe the vows, which are now to be discussed individually.

481

1842. Colin. *Constitutions: on the virtue of humility.* [AT II, a, 358 = *Constitutions of 1872, AT V, C, 428*]:

Let them understand from all this how highly this virtue is to be prized and with what intense application it is to be sought by all, as it clearly befits everyone, so much the more those in authority. Let them spur themselves on to acquire it perfectly by the example of blessed Mary, who, though filled with heavenly gifts, says nothing about herself except: *God looked on the humility of his handmaid* (Lk 1:48); *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Lk 1:38); and above all by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave* (Ph 2:6-7); who *came not to be served but to serve* (Mt 20:28), so that as he did we too may do. Let them strive with every fiber of their being to emulate these wonderful examples of humility as much as grace will allow, so that, completely empty of self and of all vainglory, they may be filled with grace and become, in God's hands, suitable instruments of the divine mercies towards their neighbor; and also so that the Society itself, firmly set upon this sure and solid foundation, may continually increase in the sight of the Lord and resist to the end the winds of perverse desires.

482

April 1, 1842. Colin. *Circular letter to all at a crucial moment for the Society.* [LColin 420401.Cir, 7f]:

[7] By state of life and by duty we are followers of Jesus Christ and of his divine Mother; our every thought, every stirring of our heart, our every step must be worthy of our august models. Let us live out of their life, let us think as they thought, judge things as they do. Our union with them through prayer must be such that we never lose sight of them and that the world, with its deceitful glory, be for us what it was for the great apostle: *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.*

[8] Only in that way, very honored confreres, shall we accomplish the work of God, become in his hands instruments of his divine mercy toward others and carry out the great work of our perfection. Only through holy eagerness for the Lord's gifts shall we deserve to be filled with them, according to the words of the tender mother of us all: *He has filled the hungry with good things.* It is only by the practice of a supernatural direction in our thoughts and in our intentions, by the pious groans and the holy enthusiasms of our heart toward God that we will fulfill the merciful designs of Providence upon us, and that we will see the Society of Mary send down deep roots and, like a tree planted at the edge of the water, stretch forth its humble and fertile branches in every sort of blessing: *and he will be like a tree planted beside running streams, that will give its fruit in due time. And its leaves will not fall, and everything he does will prosper.*

483

December 17, 1844. Colin. Letter to Fr. Lagniet at Verdélais. [LColin 441217.Lag, 1]:

I look forward to receiving news of yourself and of your missionaries. So it was with the greatest pleasure that I read your letter in which you tell me a word about each of them. I thank the Lord for the success that he has given to your works in your last mission. Continue to bring among the people you evangelize the true spirit of God, the spirit of the Society of Mary, a spirit at once of zeal and of moderation, of courage and of modesty, of prudence and of simplicity, of charity and of self-abnegation, and God will continue to bless your efforts. Look only to the glory of God, the honor of Mary and the salvation of souls. Then, freed from slavery to self-love and self-interest, you will become instruments of the great mercies of God toward sinners.

484

November 29, 1846. Colin. Letter to the novices who had written to him at the time of some public calamity, expressing a desire to eat less well. [LColin 461129.Nov, 2]:

Nevertheless, I could no longer delay expressing how edified and consoled I have been upon reading your letter. Your sentiments of charity toward the neighbor, your desire to share in something of the public misery, are worthy of your piety and of your character as children of Mary. I bless the Lord who inspires them in you, and I invite you, Messieurs, to nourish them and conserve them carefully in your heart. Continue to grow in virtue and in learning, so that you might be able one day to become the glory of the Society and worthy instruments of the mercies of heaven toward sinners. Grow above all in obedience, in simplicity and humility, in love for Jesus and Mary, in such a way that you might be able to say that you live from the life itself of her whose name you wish to bear.

485

August 14-15, 1872. Jeantin. Draft of the declaration recognizing Mary as foundress and first superior of the Society. [OM 847, 3]:

It is, in effect, Mary who inspired the project of this little Society and who gave it her name and her spirit. It is Mary who chose our venerated and well loved Fr. Colin as the instrument of all mercies toward us and indicated to him the first priests who were to lay the foundations of this humble religious congregation. [...]

486

August 16, 1872. Colin. Discourse at the general chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 848, 6]:

“[...] This title of superior, applied to Mary, touches my heart! It teaches us that in all things we ought to have our eyes fixed on her, consult her and abandon ourselves with confidence and docility to her maternal direction. It was once my great good fortune to feel that I was only her humble vicar. It is also the consolation and the strength of your venerated superior. By communicating her authority to him, Mary makes him the instrument of her mercies towards you, and by him as by a canal, that same grace is lavished on the provincials and on all the superiors.

You ought then to see in them and especially in the one whom she has charged with the general government of her family, only the representatives of your Mother and render to them, as to Mary herself, the homage of your respect, of your love and of your obedience.”

“Giving greatest play to the mercy of God”

487

1838-1839. *Colin. Spiritual direction to Mayet: on going against nature. [Mayet 1, 320 = FS 26, 2]:*

[...] if you hear the confessions of influential people, you must stand by your duty in conscience. Always show mercy to sinners, certainly, but when you cannot give absolution let them ask in vain: you must not give way. Well, then, all that goes against nature; surely, nature must die.

488

1838-1839. *Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet S1, 65 = FS 37]:*

[1] His Lordship the Bishop of Belley has been of great help to me for theology, cases of conscience, ways of dealing with things in the confessional. My way of doing things is very close to his. They even say I am more broad-minded than he is.

[2] In the Society we shall profess all those opinions which give greatest play to the mercy of God, on account of the great weakness of poor human nature, without however falling into a laxist theology.

489

1838-1839. *Colin. Words to spoken to Mayet. [Mayet S1, 37f = OM 506, 3]:*

“[...] For about 9 years I never left the confessional without throwing myself at Mary’s feet and telling her: ‘What ministry have you given me there? O my good Mother, what have you exposed me to?’ My confessional was in the chapel of the blessed Virgin. Confessional ministry is a terrifying ministry; I never went there without trembling. Be good, because you take the place of our Lord; be just, you are a judge and you must weigh things fairly. However, the scale must lean a little on the side of mercy. Nonetheless, let’s go to the confessional just the same with confidence in God.”

490

1839. *Mayet/Colin. Occasional remarks on education gathered by Mayet. [Mayet 1, 570-573 = FA 206, 3-12]:*

[3] The children allege that they prefer to be sent for punishment to the Superior [i.e. to Colin] rather than to others, because, they say, the Superior, although he comes down heavily upon them, afterwards encourages them, whereas the others leave them crushed. “That they should never do,” the Superior told me, “otherwise the punishment loses its full effect.

[4] “We must not extinguish the still smoldering wick. The kinder we are, the nearer we come to the spirit of Christ, who was mercy itself. Punishment that has no medicinal effect is of no use; in administering punishment, the best interest of the child must be served.

[5] “I once asked God’s guidance as to whether I should expel a pupil, with the thought at the back of my mind that we shall achieve good by imitating God’s forbearance — provided that such children do not present too much of a danger to the others — and that by so doing we avoid their committing hundreds of mortal sins. I do not know what transpires in schools where a child is expelled on the slightest suspicion. It is greatly to be feared that these children may have anxieties in the face of confession, and that they make sacrilegious confessions and communions.

[6] “We are not out for the healthy, but the sick.

[7] “Another time, as I was praying for these children, one of the thoughts that came into my mind and greatly consoled me was that most of these children would owe their salvation to us.”

[8] Speaking to me one day about a pupil whose behavior had been such that he deserved to be expelled, a child, moreover, whose character and lack of mature reasoning gave little hope of mending his ways, he urged me to pray, saying that we had to pray all the more and have an even greater confidence, that our hope was not founded on anything human.

[9] “Ah!” he said to me, “how I long for this notion of mercy to take root in all our men! Oh! how much easier it is to get rid of dangerous elements than to convert them. It is not zeal to send away straight off what stands in the way of good. If so, the matter would be quickly settled. Our Lord did not take that line. Look at St. Francis de Sales. Such would not be the spirit of God. We must do all we can, try every means, pray, and it is only as a last resort that we lop off the branch.

[10] “Personally, I pardon two, three times, and I am not afraid of doing this, because I say to the good Lord, ‘My God, this is the way you act.’

[11] “I have often exercised mercy, and I have been glad afterwards. In the sacred ministry there are many priests doing much good, whom I would have had to send away if I had been harsh — when I was the superior of the College in Belley. Younger men just starting out are generally strict, sharp, quick to expel. Theirs is a youthful zeal without great enlightenment. It is not true zeal.”

[12] There was a pupil whom he had made up his mind to expel. When the moment came for writing the letter, he still bided his time.

491

February 1845. *Mayet/Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 6, 614f = FS 95]:*

[1] One day (it would be about February 1845), Father General began to speak a great deal of the goodness of God towards sinners.

[2] He told us that the *Revelations* of St. Bridget had been very useful to him in forming a true idea of the mercy of God. She had seen souls who, when accused before the judgment seat of the Lord by the devil, had merely replied, “It is true that I committed that sin, but I confessed it.”

[3] “Yes,” he said, “someone who makes his confession with sincerity is not far from conversion. For myself, I am a Roman, and in the confessional I follow the same approach as they, the Romans, do. I am very fond of those principles: *All for souls and Salvation before law.*”

492

September 21, 1846. Colin. *Concluding recommendations for the retreatants.* [Mayet 6, 683f = FS 116, 11]:

“Finally, Messieurs, show great kindness to sinners who come to you in the confessional. Do not rebuff them, or appear surprised by their crimes, however great they are: that would be a great imprudence and very harmful to souls. Instead, remember that you hold the place of Jesus Christ, and our Lord Jesus Christ knew the profound depths of the human heart, he welcomed all sinners with gentleness. Messieurs, there are two infinities: the infinity of goodness, mercy and holiness, which is God; and the infinity of misery, baseness and sin, which is man. Listen, then, to these poor sinners quietly and with kindness. Do not frighten them by too severe a sermon, especially the first time. They are not always strong enough to take it. During missions, you should not enter into great detail about obligations at the beginning. That would spoil everything. Wait until the confessions are well under way. The missionary must have a great knowledge of the human heart. Grace does not find entry there straightaway, preparation is necessary: *‘I have much more to tell you but you cannot bear it now,’* said Jesus Christ. Let us imitate him, first of all gaining their confidence.”

493

September 1848. Colin. *No context indicated.* [Mayet 7, 834-835 = FS 163]:

[1] “Let us have compassion on poor sinners, let us not ask of them more enlightenment than they could be expected to have. Let us form a true idea of their position, and then we will absolve them more readily. Take a man standing at the entrance to a tunnel: light is already faint; he takes a few steps, darkness engulfs him; he walks further on, it is pitch black and he gropes in the dark. So it is with a soul which has forgotten God. The first mortal sin is like the entrance to the tunnel, where daylight is failing. The second mortal sin drives him further forward, then finally, as mortal sins succeed one another, the guilty soul finds itself in pitch darkness. When grace seeks it out and good will responds, it is like a little glimmer of light in the depths. It is impossible that the poor sinner who is at such a depth could enjoy the same enlightenment as you. Do not rebuff him, receive him back into grace, ask little of him, and grace will do the rest. Little by little day will dawn upon him as he goes forward. He did not fall into darkness suddenly, and he will return imperceptibly to the light. Messieurs, let us educate ourselves. The more learned a man is, the more he broadens the outlook of the one who consults him. If he is only half-learned he puts a spoke in your wheel and prevents your going further.

[2] “Rome was very useful to me on this point. It was there that I learned the maxim: *‘Law was made for man.’* *If I cannot save him with the law, I shall try to save him without it.*”

494

January 28, 1851. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 6, 617fm = OM 711 = FA 385]:

[1] On January 28th, 1851, he said to us, “When I used to hear confessions and I was perplexed, I used to say, ‘O my Savior, what would you do if you were in my place?’ Then I would feel the scales of mercy shift... ‘O my God, I can feel it, you would change this heart. Well, go ahead and change it this very moment.’ And I would finish up by giving absolution. If the Lord reproached me for it, I would reply, ‘My God, this is the kingdom of mercy.’”

[2] He told us on January 28th, 1851, “This is the kingdom of mercy; mercy here is boundless. Justice will take its course in the next world.”

An echo

495

November 12, 1925. Fr. Pierre Jouny. Extract from a letter, written in English from Niua Foou, Tonga, to a “confrere,” a scholastic in Washington, who is identified in the letter as the nephew of Fr. Edward Tremblay; this would be Fr. Louis Beauchemin; the latter has apparently written to Jouny about his plans to come to Oceania as a missionary. [Washington Province Archives. Paragraphs 6-10]:

[6] The book of books: *Avec Jésus formant en nous son prêtre* by Fr. Grimal. No doubt you will use it for your meditation during the Scholasticate. Ever since I have had this book, I have become a scholastic anew, in order to prepare myself for death. After my daily meditation, I say to myself: had I possessed this treasure at Ste-Foy-lès-Lyons and at Belley, I might have done more good among the Isles and waters of the Pacific. Do better than I did with this book, full as it is of the Marist and priestly life and spirit, that very spirit of the Ven. Father Founder, whom I saw and knew.

[7] Yes, I was privileged to know that Marist of Marists, of whom the Holy Curé of Ars loved to say: “Oh! How he does love the Blessed Virgin that founder of the Society of Mary!” And remember that this saintly pastor of Ars wished to die a Marist, by becoming a member of the Third Order through another saint, Bl. Father Eymard. This fact ought to incite us to love our little Society, and to cling to Mary, as children to their mother.

[8] Twice I had the occasion to see and hear Fr. Colin. The first time at the Novitiate of Ste. Foy during the general chapter which was being held there. Fr. Colin had been brought from La Neylière almost through force. He was then old and almost blind. To us, his loved ones (“mioches”) of the novitiate he deigned to give an interview and a “special blessing”: “Benedictio super mioches meos...,” and he wept, while we, his little ones, could not restrain our emotions. You ask a few words heard from the lips of Rev. Fr. Colin. Here are some, well-known to all Marists, and which I heard with my own ears at the last general chapter at which he assisted. He loved to repeat them: “All true Marists can be assured that their death will be a good one; let them always nestle fondly to her (Mary’s) mantle.” It is this word that I have brought with me to Oceania, even here on the top of this volcano (my dwelling place) and despite all my infidelities, at 80 years of age, I still hope to cling to Mary’s mantle.

[9] I had the happiness of seeing Fr. Colin once again. After my novitiate, I had stayed with Fr. David, master of novices at Ste. Foy. During vacation that year, Fr. Epalle, superior of the

novitiate at Ste. Foy, told me one day: “Fr. Jouny, we will take our vacation: we will go to La Neylière to see Rev. Fr. Founder.” My heart throbbed with joy. Two weeks of paradise to be spent near V. R. Fr. Colin! He had become altogether blind. He was led to church every morning by a brother; there, he assisted at Holy Mass and received Holy Communion. Often, on receiving His Lord, He was unable to restrain his emotions.

[10] During the day, seeing him under the porch in his couch, alone with his beads which never left him, I approached quietly and asked him to recite the rosary with him. Never a refusal! I know not who of us was the happier. He let me recite the beads, while he answered the Aves with such an expression of faith, piety, and love, that one might have thought he saw Mary, Mother of Mercy. When we had finished reciting the beads, Rev. Fr. Colin asked me news of Fr. David, made me talk of Brittany, questioned me about my mother and sisters, wishing to assure himself that they loved the Blessed Virgin. On receiving a satisfactory answer, he raised both hands towards heaven saying: “Benedictio super miochos et super miochas meas.” Oh yes indeed, it does one good to see and approach saints here below. I have always loved to recall those two weeks spent at La Neylière with Rev. Fr. Founder; this souvenir has been helpful to me on my volcano, especially in time of trouble.

Communion for Mission

A principal goal of the mission of the Society, according to Colin, is to further ecclesial communion: *to gather all into one heart and one soul in the bosom of the Church*. Thus chapter III of the 1988 Constitutions, which braids the several strands of Marist life (vows, prayer, common life, apostolate), is entitled *Forming a Communion for Mission*. Gathered here are a number of texts about the quality of our being together as Marists for the sake of our common mission.

496

October 29, 1824. Pierre Colin. Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 114, 1]:

It is today that the little Society of Mary begins. Fr. Déclas has arrived at Cerdon. I dare pray you, My Lord, to be so kind as to give him the powers necessary for the functions of the sacred ministry. Again I dare to beg Your Excellency not to give him the title of pastor of any neighboring parish, at least for a while, for reasons that appear to us very solid and that we will have the honor of submitting to Your Excellency in person, one or another of us, perhaps within the next two weeks, if possible.

497

1829. Colin. "Instructions to the Staff of the Minor Seminary of Belley." [AT I, b, 84]:

We shall love each other as brothers and honor each other with affectionate respect united to Christian politeness, so that our boys having on this score nothing but good examples before them, will behave towards each other in the same way or at least with charity.

498

1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.": common rules, on charity. [AT I, s, 31]:

Let them look after each other with charity and Christian gentlemanliness and diligently preserve perfect harmony among themselves, as befits sons of the same family, whose head is the Mother of God; let them neglect nothing that could foster the greatest harmony among themselves; therefore, they are to pay no attention to what part of the country they come from and never speak ill of one another or of each other's family or birthplace; and, if anyone injures another by word or in any other way, he should quickly ask forgiveness and humbly submit himself to the penance which the Superior will impose.

499

1833. Colin. “*Summarium Regularum S.M.*”: on the superior general. [AT I, s, 114]:

[...] Let them rouse themselves to virtue by mutual counsel, prayers and efforts; [...]

500

November 1840. Colin. *Circular letter to missionaries.* [LColin 401121.Mis, 9f]:

[9] If fraternal charity ought to reign among Christians, if it ought to be even stronger among religious, it seems to me that it is a severe obligation for you, dear children — for you who are so far from the one whose honor it is to be called your father because this word indicates his sentiments and his duties, the feelings of a father, paternal solicitude — it is a severe obligation for you, often separated one from another, to be in solidarity with one another; the Lord will demand of you an account for the weakening of the religious virtues in one of your confreres; I myself, I would complain quite bitterly about the ruin of a child who would perish under the indifferent eyes of his brother; acting, then, in concert, take all the means of strengthening yourselves in virtue. [10] See whether all or most of you could not meet for several days’ retreat if you spot an opportunity, propose the opportunity you perceive to the bishop and beg him to gather you around himself; there you can examine together how you understand the rule, how you can observe it in the works of the apostolate, how you will observe it in actual fact. There you can examine together the dangers of your situation, the means for diminishing them or of destroying them, the necessity perhaps of abandoning the post... There you can strengthen the bonds that unite so harmoniously and so usefully the hearts of true religious. You can communicate to one another that spiritual force which results from the union of vision, from the union of means, from the effects that the Holy Spirit is pleased to produce in those who unite themselves together under his impulse.

501

February 6, 1842. Colin. *At a community meeting at the College in Belley.* [Mayet 1, 416f = FS 44, 1]:

[...] “Messieurs, I have gathered you here to make a very important announcement. The Visitor, Father Maîtrepierre, will arrive shortly. I tell you so that you can prepare yourselves well for his visit and for opening your heart to him. You ought to rejoice at the news, for here is a friend, a brother, a confrère, a father, whom God is sending you — and also, certainly, a superior. These visits, Messieurs, are arranged for you by the Society, and you should regard them as a sign of her tenderness and care for her sons. A man travelling alone along a difficult path finds the going hard, he is afraid of falling down the precipice, and if he has to cross a forest at night he is seized by fear, he is scared of the wild beasts. Even when there is no cause for fear, his imagination gives him many a fright. But if he has a companion, he is not afraid and he steps out confidently. This is what the rule provides for by recommending to all members of the Society to open their heart from time to time to the superior — which applies to whoever the superior designates for that, since he cannot cope with everything himself. This opening of the heart is of the greatest importance. In the Rule it says, or rather it will say, *it is the safest way of not losing one’s way and of preserving peace,* [...]”

502

May 7, 1842. Garin (*Provincial of Oceania*). Letter to Colin. [APM Z 208]:

[...] Oh! Yes, I find that there are dangers indeed in leaving a priest live alone, he has no one to challenge him but himself, there is no one at all to witness his conduct, there are no examples to spur him on, he would need to be encouraged, to be admonished, to be forewarned, and nothing can replace all of that but virtue tried and true. [...]

503

After October 1843. Mayet and others. *Observations about the theology house at Belley, the Capucinière*. [Mayet 2, 134m]:

[1] "How do you expect us to be bored here," said the newcomers in October 1843: "it is family; we are brothers."

[2] "Oh! how happy I am," said one of them, already a bit older! "How pleasant are this simple, easy-going manner, this spontaneity."

[3] "It is so much nicer to obey than to command," said a former professor.

[4] There were in the house 6 former professors who were as simple and cheerful as little children.

504

After October 1843. Mayet and others. *Observations about the theology house in Belley, the Capucinière*. [Mayet 5, 220-223]:

[1] What particularly enraptured the newcomers was this spirit of family, of friendship, of brotherhood.

[2] An ecclesiastic from Viviers, recently entered into the Society, was witness to this and, carried away as he was, he said: "No, I don't think there would be a single house where this brotherly spirit exists."

[3] A novice who had remained a long time in the world, devoted to teaching and education, said: "Oh! how happy I am here, I am always sure that I am doing God's will."

[4] When one of those who had been there for a while spoke to him about the custom of monitions that was practiced once a week, he so admired that institution and was so touched by it that he immediately chose a monitor the one who had told him about such a good thing.

[5] They also told him that a provincial was there making the visitation and that each was opening his heart to him. This caring manner of the superiors gave him a great sense of gratitude.

[6] "I was on the verge of tears during the retreat," said another, "when they told us about Fr. Colin's tenderness and care for us, when I saw how they recommended everything that could be useful for our health."

[7] Then, noting the care of the superior of the house for them, he said: "The good father! Ah! how willing I am now to say, 'My father,' I who lost my own 18 years ago."

[8] At a time when the house was completely full: "Let the new ones come," said those who had been there for a while as well as the newcomers themselves; "Let them come! It will be a pleasure for us to sleep in the attic. Besides, can't we squeeze in a bit?"

[9] A former ecclesiastical professor offered to leave his room and go sleep in the dormitory. "I left 3 or 4 brothers at home; but here I find a house full of them," someone said. Their

detachment from their relations was quite edifying. One of them who had had some terrible hindrances said: “When you can’t knock the obstacles down, you jump over them.”

[10] In October 1843, several came who had many talents; but they only let them appear when they could not do otherwise, i.e. in class. Everywhere else they were unnoticed. I heard one of those who had been there for a while rejoicing very much over these new arrivals, and he said to me with joy painted on his face: “Those here longer aren’t brilliant,” and he added high praises for the modesty that the new arrivals joined to their talents.

[11] You couldn’t make them happier than by telling them the history and the beginnings of the Society. They made inquiries of those who were well informed about these things and listened to them and questioned them with the greatest interest.

[12] You had but to indicate to them something good and they went and did it.

505

September 21, 1846. Colin. Concluding retreat talk. [Mayet 6, 300 = FS 115, 5]:

“My dear confreres, may the closest bonds of charity unite us always, may we truly be but one heart and one soul. The Society of Mary must make present once again the first times of the Church.”

506

June 29, 1847. Grosselin/Colin. Exhortation to the novices at La Favorite. [Mayet 5, 704 = FS 140, 14]:

When we fell to our knees for his blessing he said, “My sons, I cannot help regarding you as a chosen flock, but sheltered from dangers. There is a need for secular priests in the ministry, but they need great virtue to persevere. In the religious life you are less exposed, and if you do happen to go astray or fall, you are surrounded by brothers whose prayers, good example, and charitable advice help you to pick yourself up again. [...]”

507

September 1849. Colin. Words at dinner after the closure of the retreat. [Mayet 7, 747f]:

[1] After dinner, father went between the two dining rooms and said:

[2] “Messieurs, you have all tasted the happiness to be experienced at finding ourselves together. You have grasped all the truth of those words of the psalm: ‘Oh! how good it is, how pleasant, for brothers to be together!...’ Now we are about to go each to the place obedience will indicate to us; but we will not be separate for all that, remaining united by bonds of one same spirit and one same charity. We are about to depart like apostles after their retreat in the cenacle, and are going to continue their work. [...]”

508

September 4-11, 1850. Colin and Epalle. Remarks during conferences on education. [Mayet 5, 444m = FS 181, 1-3]:

[1] During the great conferences held at Puylata in September 1850, Father Colin said on September 4th, “One very important point for unity is to respect one another. We are all men, we must show each other consideration, and have regard for one another.”

[2] Father Epalle, the superior of the major seminary at Moulins whispered to me, “I have closely examined the greatest cause of all the little troubles in our houses. It is a lack of regard for one another.”

[3] On September 11th, at the general retreat which followed, Father said, “Let us show one another not only charity, but also civility and respect. Let us respect and honor one another. [...]”

Missions to Sinners and Unbelievers

“Which ministries are appropriate for Marists?” seems a perennial question, and perhaps an unanswerable one. Colin says on the one hand that “the Society will not shrink from any ministry, any work,” and on the other he reacts ferociously against the suggestion that the Society take responsibility for a parish. Perhaps we are asking the wrong question. In Colin’s view, Marists are missionaries, so perhaps the real question is: “To whom are we sent?” Here are some texts that might throw light on the issue.

The vision from the beginning

509

December 1845. Colin. Conference to scholastics preparing for profession; items recorded by one of them. [Mayet 5, 6942-695]:

“Jesus left his mother with his newborn Church to form it in its cradle. She reappears at the end of time to call in those who have not yet entered its bosom and to lead back to it those who have left.”

510

January 25, 1822. The Marist aspirants. Letter to Pope Pius VII. [OM 69, 3]:

In the meantime, however, we presume to recall to the memory of Your Holiness the object of the Society which will be established, if it pleases your Holiness. Its purpose is to expend everything for the greater glory of God, for the honor of Mary the Mother of God and for the service of the Roman Church. To work for the salvation of their own souls and those of their neighbor through missions to believers and unbelievers in whatever part of the world the Apostolic See might wish to send us; to catechize the uneducated and ignorant; to train youth in every way to knowledge and virtue; to visit those in prison and the sick in hospitals; such are our projects as they are set out for us in constitutions already composed.

511

December 1833. Colin. “Summarium Regularum”: rules for missionaries. [AT I, s, 42]:

Our vocation is to go from place to place, and to devote ourselves to the salvation of our neighbors, by preaching the word of God, hearing confessions, catechizing children and the poor, and fulfilling other similar duties. Therefore, we are to be prepared to perform these works by

going to any part of the world out of obedience, with the help of God and under the kindly patronage of Blessed Mary, and for as long as the Superior desires.

“We should devote ourselves to all the works of zeal”

512

February 7, 1833. Colin. Letter to Bishop de Pins of Lyons. [OM 264, 3]:

[3] The Society of Mary will be similar to the Company of Jesus in several ways, but it will differ from it in its way of going about things. The Company of Jesus is in some way outside the episcopacy: it is independent. The Society of Mary, in its government, will march in concert and in a spirit of union with the bishops. Like the Company of Jesus, we will take on the running of colleges, home missions and foreign, but, more than the Jesuits, we will devote ourselves to all types of good works. [...]

513

November 20-22, 1837. Colin. Remarks to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 276 = FS 1, 2]:

“Our congregation is for doing what the others cannot: merely that. [...]”

514

1838-1839. Colin. Some collected comments. [Mayet 1, 17 = FS 19, 1]:

Father Colin said to us one day, “I told the Bishop of Belley one day, ‘My Lord, we are for doing what others cannot or will not do.’ That pleased him.”

515

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 249 = FS 119, 7]:

“[...] it says in the Rule that although the Society intends to devote itself to all good works, whatever they may be, and to make use without exception of all means available for the good of the Church and of souls, *in every way*, Marists must behave nevertheless in all things in such a way that *they may appear as if unknown and hidden in this world*. [...]”

516

August 22, 1847. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 187f = FS 141, 19]:

“Messieurs, let us understand that goal properly. There are those who think the Marists must devote themselves only to works that are hidden, unknown, neglected... Messieurs, the Society does not refuse them, it greatly prefers them, and those who feel attracted to such works may engage in them if obedience permits. But the Society will not shrink from any ministry, from any task. It is called to do anything, it is like a soldier who goes wherever there is danger, wherever there is need of his services. And so, Messieurs, we must have learning, and we must take all means to acquire it.”

517

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 449-452 = FS 146, 1]:

[...] although the Society must take up without exception all ministries compatible with the religious life, its members must be *as if unknown and hidden* in this world.

518

December 22, 1847. Colin. Exhortation at table. [Mayet 4, 460 = FS 147, 13]:

“For,” he said, “everything which the other congregations have done, in particular everything which the Jesuits have done, we must do, relying upon God and upon Mary, but always *unknown and indeed even hidden*, according to our vocation.”

519

January 19, 1848. Colin. Statement in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 466f = OM 674 = FS 152, 1]:

“Messieurs, it is only later that you will understand a certain phrase in the rule: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. You could say that the whole spirit of the Society is there. Let us then keep within the limits of our vocation. Although we should not exclude any work of zeal in our ministry, we must always remain *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us not be concerned with our honor. If we do good, we shall have merit in the sight of God. Let us seek only the honor of God and for ourselves... *unknown*. Let us not look to what the societies that have preceded us have done, for, when a society comes to birth, it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (and here he assumed a solemn tone of voice) I am pleased to be able to repeat it here once again: *I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time*. These are the words which served us as a foundation and an encouragement at the very beginning of the Society. They were always present to us. We have worked along that line, if I may so speak. We must admit that we are living in very bad times; humanity is really sick. At the end of time it will need a great deal of help, and the blessed Virgin will be the one to give it. Messieurs, let us rejoice to belong to her Society and bear her name. The other communities coming to birth envy us our fine name.”

520

January 24, 1848. Colin. After announcing in the refectory the death of brother Blaise. [Mayet 7, 625f = FS 154, 4]:

“Messieurs, the times we live in are in some ways more difficult than those of the apostles: look at Europe, what confusion! How greatly we need the help of the blessed Virgin. Let us imitate her, following the spirit of our vocation, let us hide ourselves so as to do good. The Rule says we should devote ourselves to all kinds of ministry, to all works of zeal. Nevertheless, we should behave so as to be *unknown and hidden*. [...]”

Home missions: “sent to sinners”

521

1815/1844. Déclas. Written account of the origins of the Society. [Mayet 5, 393f = OM 591, 7]:

Fr. Déclas says: “I am the first, despite my unworthiness, to whom he made known his design. It was in 1815, on a Wednesday, a holiday. Both of us were at the major seminary of Lyons. He told me that he intended, when he became a priest, to do like St. Francis Regis and to go into the rural areas to help the poor people, who often have greater need of outside priests than people in the cities or large towns who have priests to choose from, whereas the former often have only one priest and are exposed to making bad confessions. He asked me whether I wanted to do like him. I said yes. He said no more at the time, and through the year he kept me with the same thought, telling me only: ‘We shall do like St. Francis Regis, and no more.’ But the day before we left for the holidays, he took me aside (until then, he had spoken to no one about this project) and told me: ‘You know, what I told you about during the year is something serious. An order will be set up which will be about the same as that of the Jesuits, except that its members will be called Marists instead of being called Jesuits.’ We promised that we would write during the summer, and we kept our word.”

522

About October 1838. Colin. Remarks collected by Mayet. [Mayet 1, 179f = FS 11, 7]:

“I would very much like,” he said, “that our early days be committed to writing. People would see with what simplicity missions were conducted. I can see that it is the best way of getting to know the spirit of the Society. I tremble lest later on the spirit of complacency make its way into the Society.”

523

September 15-18, 1845. Colin. Talk during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 415f = FS 102, 23]:

At this point Father's voice softened and took on a note of brightness. Then, like a man deeply moved, he said, "And now, Messieurs, we come to the little children. It is with them that the mission should begin. The first missionaries, [he corrected himself and said:] the first catechists of the Society [this was the name by which he referred to himself when speaking of the missions he had given for four years at the very beginning of the Society], the first catechists of the Society always did so, and I very much wish the practice to continue. At the end of the sermon, if, as I suppose, it is a Sunday, the announcement is made that on Monday there will be catechism class and confessions for the children. This class should be entrusted to someone who is fond of children and who can get them to listen. Through the children you gain an entry into every family. If the children are pleased the whole parish is immediately roused and each missionary can clearly see that he has coming to him in the confessional all the parents of the children whose confessions he has heard. I shall not dwell at length on this subject but I place great store by it. Apart from the beginning of the mission, it would be highly desirable to continue the catechism classes from time to time. It should be done in public before the whole parish on a Sunday, especially round about the middle of the mission. This provides an excellent opportunity for giving the parishioners instruction on the sacraments without humiliating them. You question the children, and have them solve cases of conscience. You also try to show a fatherly kindness, to open up their hearts, to show how moved a confessor is when a penitent confesses his sins, and that nothing surprises him. You try, too, to let them see how easy it is to return to God's favor. [...]"

524

November 24, 1836. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 6, 694f = FS 132, 20-22]:

[20] "Messieurs, when you are giving a mission, pay great attention to what I am going to tell you.

[21] "If a great sinner comes to you, be full of charity and patience with him. Yes, even if you have to stay all day to console and encourage him and bring him back to the fold. Do not begrudge your time. That is what the Rule tells us, that is the work of a missionary: the conversion of sinners. If a soul comes who is already on the right path, then, you can be brief: after confession, a few words to encourage them to persevere, and then it is finished.

[22] "We are not sent to that kind of person. Marists may say what the Lord said of himself: *I did not come to call the just, but sinners.*"

Foreign missions: “Mary, it was you who sent me”

525

February 6, 1842. Colin. *A community meeting at the college at Belley.* [Mayet 1, 421-423 = FS 44, 8]:

“Messieurs, before I finish, I have one small thought for you: it concerns the foreign missions. Doubtless it is praiseworthy to have zealous intentions, but we must also take care not to let ourselves build castles in Spain, as they say, and to neglect our duties here. You want to exercise your zeal in a wider arena... but you must test yourselves and carefully set aside all human motives. You must contain your desire and then see whether it lasts. About six years ago, Fr. Séon, then bursar at the minor seminary in Belley, pleaded with me to send him on the foreign missions. Finally, one day he came to me and said, ‘I no longer feel an attraction for my work.’ ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘so you no longer feel an attraction for your work! Well, you are not going.’ He set off last year, but do you know, by then he no longer felt any great compulsion. I placed him in charge of the band of missionaries I was sending to Oceania as their superior. He worked wonders. [...] Messieurs, I will tell you something of my secret, and how I go about choosing men for the foreign missions, when the time comes. If I notice a certain impetuosity in those who apply, a certain over-keenness, they are not the ones I choose. If, on the other hand, I see in them a desire that is calm and tranquil and humble, then I make my choice. If a man wishes to go on the missions he should say, ‘Lord, who am I that you should think of using me? What would you do with this little speck of dust? What can I do, Lord, and yet you, my God, can do all things yourself. I offer myself to you, Lord, despite all my failings.’ Messieurs, when a man arrives at the point where he scarcely dare offer himself to God, because he sees himself as unworthy and incapable, that is the time when he is ready for the missions. [...]”

526

April 17-24, 1842. Colin. *To the members of the general chapter.* [Mayet 1, 693f = FS 56, 5]:

“[...] Messieurs, you must go to the missions with the purest of motives, nothing merely human. You must go only from motives of faith, to win souls for God, to extend the reign of Jesus and Mary. [...]”

527

August 7, 1843. Colin. *To the Marists of Belley.* [Mayet 2, 310f = FS 66, 1]:

“Do you know,” he said on August 7, 1843, “whom it gives me the greatest joy to see depart for the foreign missions? Those who have felt drawn to the missions for a long time and who have mastered that feeling, tried to overcome it even, and eventually becoming indifferent to it have placed themselves in the hands of their superior, in a great spirit of mistrust of themselves, and of reluctance, because of their own weakness, to follow that course by themselves. These do great good; they are at ease; nothing troubles them. For the missions, Messieurs, one must be entirely

dead to self, and have an unfailing gentleness and patience. Those, on the other hand, who give way to their desires and who have been carried away by grand ideas of the missions, who have been entirely set on going, they are the ones who are soon disillusioned. They are soon downhearted and a good number would now rather be sitting here.” [We were in his room.]

528

September 16, 1846. Colin. *Exhortation to the young priests.* [Mayet 5, 534 = FS 110, 5]:

“[...] You young men who feel a noble attraction towards these fine missions, take care not to stifle it. Tell everything to your superiors, but submit yourselves and wait patiently upon Providence, without browbeating your superiors.” [...]

529

September 23, 1846. Colin. *Table talk.* [Mayet 4, 523-525 = FS 117, 7f]:

[7] “[...] One of our missionaries in Oceania wrote to me that in really critical moments he said to Mary, ‘Blessed Virgin, it is not by my will that I am here, it was you who sent me, so help me in this danger: you have to do it,’ and Mary did not leave his appeal unheeded. Let us always abandon ourselves to Mary in this way. It will be our greatest consolation.

[8] “Those of you, Messieurs, who are thinking of the foreign missions, and who feel a desire to devote themselves to these distant mission fields, let them carefully preserve this attraction in their heart. It is a gift from God. Anyone who would put someone off the foreign missions would not have the spirit of faith. We should always have our eyes fixed on Jesus crucified. Then again, let those who have this desire make it known to their superior. Ah, certainly, I will never be the one to come along and say to someone, ‘Do you want to go? Go then.’ No, indeed, that must come from God. Take Saint Francis Regis for your model: when you have made known your desires, stay calm and abandon yourself to your superiors. Those whom God is calling, despite my procrastination and my discouraging them, as the Rule says, they always come back. [...] There is no need to go to Oceania to find suffering and danger. Are the majority of Frenchmen any better than the natives of Oceania? Have they any more faith? Better morals? Those of you who have traveled through France know well enough. Let us work then, all of us, Messieurs, with new zeal, some in France, others abroad. [...]”

“The Society’s first aim is teaching”

530

January 31, 1849. Colin. *Outburst in the refectory.* [Mayet 7, 649f = FS 172, 19]:

“As long as I am superior, I shall never allow anyone to pour scorn or discredit upon one of the aims of the Society, and if I may say so, the principal aim of the Society. At a time when the

Church, whether in Germany or in France, or anywhere, seeks as the sole means of regeneration to gain hold of the young, to instill Christian principles in their hearts, we see some young priests pour scorn on these noble and holy works! To what have all the efforts of our French bishops been directed since the Revolution? Surely, the reconquest of education so as to save the faith? Is not that the significance of all these struggles of the episcopate against the University? Is that not why the Church is increasing more than ever the teaching congregations, Brothers, Sisters, all those religious who devote themselves to education, to children? The little Society of Mary too comes along with its different branches, all of which devote themselves to teaching. There are among us some whose hearts beat only for children. Like the bishops, like the Church, they believe and say that the rest of the world is like spoilt fruit, like a rotten trunk, that there is only one way to save the plant, that is to care for the roots... and these young priests are so bold, so lacking in zeal and judgment as to deliver themselves of opinions to the contrary. Yes, I said it is a lack of judgment, and I repeat, so that those who are not checked by obedience and religious spirit may be checked by that thought... And what do you think you are going to do then? Go on the foreign missions? I think a hundred times more highly of the education of youth in our own countries, which are also pagan, than I do of the foreign missions. Did not the Holy Spirit say that we should first of all care for those whom he called *members of the household of the faith*?"

531

January 31, 1849. Colin. *Outburst in the refectory.* [Mayet 7, 651f = OM 690 = FS 172, 23]:

"Messieurs, 15 centuries after the preaching of the Gospel, there appears all of a sudden a body of apostolic men. The name of Jesus has been reserved for them, and accordingly they imitate Him. Like Him, they prepare themselves in retirement; like Jesus, who only initiated His ministry at the age of thirty, they are ordained priests only at the age of thirty. It is the society which has done most good in the Church. And I dare say that their superiority comes from the fact that they oriented themselves towards teaching; that is the source of all the good which the Jesuits have done. In its turn also, 19 centuries after the founding of the Church, there comes a small society. The name of Mary has been held in store for it, as it were, and given to it by God. The blessed Virgin has said to it: 'I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be the support of the Church at the end of time.' We must also follow the path of the Jesuits. My greatest ambition, one of the first ideas in establishing the Society, its first aim, is teaching. I have no hope in its future, I consider it as lost, if it does no teaching."

532

September 11, 1853. Colin. *To the retreatants.* [Mayet 8, 697-699 = FS 188, 13f]:

[13] "When I see any tendency to make ourselves known, when I hear people talking about taking on colleges on a grandiose scale, when I see and hear them say that they would like to make a greater impression, see them set store only by their own abilities, making comparisons with others, nothing so cuts me to the heart. Are these the kind of attitudes that the sons of Mary should have? Did not our Lord choose poor men to be his apostles? If I may say so, I shall set myself against such a spirit like a wall of bronze, and I ask your permission to inflict severe punishment upon anyone moved by such a spirit, anyone who is ashamed of our life hidden and unknown. What is the use of consecrating ourselves to Mary if we intend to be spoken about and push ourselves to the fore?"

[14] “The spirit of the Society leads us to choose the poorest foundations, because it is in these places that we can do most good in a hidden way; there is more good to be done there and with greater certainty.”

“I feel impelled toward the poor classes”

533

January 1839. Colin. Conversation in Belley. [Mayet 1, 230f = FA 193, 1f]:

[1] Speaking about the Marists in Lyons who were visiting the prisons and doing much good, he said, “Ah! as long as they achieve equal good while raising no commotion, I shall be calm and contented.

[2] “The more I have to do, the less I fret. God is able to raise up children of Abraham from among stones. M. Cholleton has offered our confreres in Lyons the office and title of chaplain to the workhouse. They raised objections, being keen to accept the duties but not the title of chaplain nor the stipend. M. Cholleton spoke to me about it, and I told him that the answer given by these gentlemen was a great consolation to me; that in fact nothing is dearer to me than such abandoned works — the prisons and workhouses, for example — but that I was in complete agreement with my confreres. [...]”

534

August 2-10, 1839. Colin. A casual conversation at Belley. [Mayet 1, 185 = FS 18, 3]:

“How I hope they will always continue as they are at Lyons. They work among the masons, which is a humble work. They go into the prisons, they serve the workhouse... Those are the tasks I like to see the Marists employed in. These at any rate are the works which bring vocations. People say, ‘The Marists go into the prisons, look after the poor... Yes, that is what must be done; that is truly a work of God.’ They request admission to the Society, and it is that which has won their affection. Let us not be numbered among those who only want to preach in the towns, to give fine sermons...”

535

1838-1839. Colin. Collected remarks. [Mayet 1, 239 = FS 23]:

Speaking one day about care for the poor, about preaching in the prisons, in the workhouse, etc. he said, “How I want the sons of the blessed Virgin to be known like our Lord by that mark: *The poor have the Gospel preached to them.*” He laid great insistence upon this, saying, “I love the abandoned works, hidden and secret, I love the poor.” One day I asked him, “Monsieur, will the Society also take on minor seminaries when the bishops call upon it?” “Do you think,” he said with feeling, “that we should educate and love only the rich? Yes indeed, the Society will educate the poor, the friends of our Lord.”

536

1838-1839. *Mayet. Narrative of an incident. [Mayet 1, 404f = OM 477]:*

He [Colin] esteemed simplicity so highly that when a priest who was thinking of entering the Society appeared a bit shocked at the lowliness of our work and spoke to one of our confreres about what could be done to relieve the situation a bit, [Colin] approved very much the fact that the confrere, instead of responding to these objections and destroying them, on the contrary took a strong stand on the profession that we make in the Society to seek out the lowly things, the small, the abandoned works, to flee showiness, not to maneuver for money, to love poverty, to trust in God, who has never failed us, etc. — [Colin] said confidentially to someone: “That priest is not fit for the Society; I don’t think I will accept him.”

537

October 19, 1842. *Colin. Conversation at La Capucinière. [Mayet 1, 670 = FS 61, 9f]:*

[9] “I feel impelled towards the poor classes, towards country missions, towards the poor of Lyons. To seek out outcasts, give catechism instructions, to help the beggars... These are the thoughts that pursue me.

[10] “[...] Come, pray; let us pray. I must have a Francis Regis for the poor classes.”

538

December 22, 1847. *Colin. Conversation. [Mayet 4, 464f = FS 148, 1f]:*

[1] “Messieurs, we must imitate our Lord who, if I may be permitted to use such an expression, was a man of the people. He was always with the poor, he loved the poor, the ordinary people, and he was constantly surrounded by them. Let him be our model. If the rich come, do not spurn them but receive them well and show them great consideration. Because of their standing, their education, their refinement, their pride and their strong emotions, we must take far greater precautions with them, for we have to save them. How difficult they are to deal with! Do not let them know at first what you will have to ask of them, otherwise you will risk turning them away from their own salvation.

[2] “How much more consoling it is to have to do with the poor! You can say anything to them, be straightforward, not waste any time, and have the joy of seeing your ministry bear great fruit. Nevertheless, Messieurs, I have never dared to say from the pulpit ‘*woe to you rich*’. In small parishes you could not as it were utter these words without giving wounding practical examples. In the cities there would be less difficulty, but nevertheless, I would be afraid of humiliating, irritating, and alienating people. Messieurs, let us learn to understand the human heart. Let us put ourselves in the place of those we are speaking to. Would outbursts of invective against us win *our* hearts? [...]”

Parishes: “That is not our mission.”

539

November 18, 1846. Colin. Tirade in the council. [Mayet 6, 403-413 = FS 129]:

[1] On November 18th, Very Reverend Father General called a meeting of his council at the Mother House in Lyons. There was question of sending someone to Valbenoîte to deal with a matter concerning the house which the Society owns at St. Etienne.

[2] Things were extremely muddled, and Cardinal de Bonald, the Archbishop of Lyons, who was due to visit the town had asked that someone from the Society be there during his visit. My aim is not to recount here all that happened in this affair, but simply to recall a very remarkable incident.

[3] Father Terraillon was to be the one to go. He said in council, “For example, if Cardinal de Bonald proposed that the difficulties be settled by the Society’s taking over the parish, as it did when Monsieur Rouchon was parish priest, I would not be opposed to seeing the Society accept the suggestion. I even think it would be a way of settling everything.”

[4] Very Reverend Father Superior was astonished at this, and stopped short for a moment, as if staggered. Suddenly he cried vehemently:

[5] “Messieurs, Messieurs, I am going away [he was about to leave for Rome]. Remember what I am going to say to you. If ever you start deliberating the fundamentals of the Society, the Society is lost.” Father Terraillon said, “But, Father, in council you call upon us for our opinion.”

[6] Father Colin replied with extraordinary vigor, “Monsieur Terraillon. Yes, your opinion on particular points, but not on the foundations of the Society. You are free to express your opinion before the council on whatever is under discussion, but not to call into question the fundamentals of the Society. Messieurs, Messieurs, if ever you start calling into question the fundamentals of the Society, the Society is lost. Ah! May that never happen again, never, never.”

[7] He stood up, waved his arms, paced up and down. I have rarely seen him so worked up. For three quarters of an hour he interrupted the business in hand, speaking of nothing but this incident, and with a tone of indescribable authority.

[8] As Father Terraillon is one of the oldest members of the Society, I think Father Colin intended to wipe out any impression at all that his words might have made, coming from the lips of an otherwise admirable man, words which in any case had found no echo among the other members of the council.

[9] “Messieurs,” he said, “if you want Marists to be parish priests, here and now I resign and I will begin again. If the Society can do good only by accepting parishes, it must come to an end, it must be wiped out, because it has no goal, no longer anything to do in the Church. There are already parish priests in the Church: that is not our mission.

[10] “Oh, Messieurs, let no one ever, ever shake the foundations, the basis of the Society here in council. St. Ignatius did not even leave the general congregations of the Order the right to debate certain fundamental points.

[11] “Marists parish priests? Never! If we are asked to run a parish for a fortnight, for three weeks, all to the good. But regularly, never. If abroad, in Sydney for example, I were asked to staff a parish, well and good, I might perhaps accept. The Jesuits have done that; these are missions. But in our own countries, ha! never, Messieurs, let anyone speak of that again.

[12] “It is true, I made an exception for Verdelaïs, because of the pilgrimage, because of the small number of parishioners [500 or 600]. Then again, it was the Society’s first foundation. Has not even that brought us a lot of trouble? Perhaps today I would not do it again. I would even say that if at the time I had seen the place I would not, perhaps, have accepted this foundation. But

after all it is only a question of five or six hundred souls. But to accept, Messieurs, a parish like Valbenoîte with five thousand souls! Oh! Messieurs, and then our men would compromise themselves, their virtue would weaken, they would spend their time hearing the confessions of the pious few, they would not apply themselves to study. Messieurs, I did not leave a parish to become a parish priest. In that case I had no need to come into the Society.

[13] “Messieurs, I would even say to you that any man I put in charge of a parish, would have the right to refuse me; that does not come within the vows.

[14] “Those who become Marists do not come to be parish priests. Yes, even at Verdélais! The man I sent as a parish priest would have the right to refuse me.

[15] “Messieurs, Messieurs, Messieurs, remember well what I tell you. In any case, I shall take steps to see that no one ever goes back on that after my death.”

[16] Father Terraillon had said that accepting this parish would be an exception. “Ah, yes indeed!” he said, “and if ever I make such an exception during my life, if I ever give an example like that, that is to say, if during my lifetime I give the example of overturning one of the principal foundations of the Society, of falling short of the very basis of the Society, the Society is lost.

[17] “Messieurs,” he repeated, “that article has been carefully considered; it is one of the basic principles.”

[18] Father Terraillon, who is an extremely virtuous man, did not utter another word, not even a whisper, and Father Colin carried on in the same vein.

[19] Then Father told us that the Archbishop of Bordeaux wished the Marists of Verdélais to attend the ecclesiastical conferences for their area, and was very insistent upon it. Eventually the Superior of Verdélais had been obliged to show him Father General’s letter. I think he said in it that if his Grace could not exempt the Marists from these ecclesiastical conferences, this would perhaps be a sign that Providence did not wish to make use of the Marists in that diocese. “Yes,” said Father Colin. “I would rather have seen that house fall! Yes, just imagine me sending my young priests! My priests to those meetings! I know only too well what often happens there, what they talk about. They spend their time criticizing the administration. Have I any need for my priests to learn that kind of thing?

[20] “Messieurs, never let anyone speak again of parishes for Marists!”

[21] He set forth in support of his decision, apart from reasons concerning the reputation, virtue and learning of the Society, a great number of others that I cannot recall, including difficulties with the parish council, the local authorities, and letters with the bishops.

[22] Parishes would never be satisfied with the subjects sent by the Superior; the parish priest would complain to the General, would complain about the General to the bishop, and for the slightest reason the bishop would be writing to the Superior General. The Society would be accused of amassing wealth, the dedication of the religious would be of no account, and the parish priest would be hindered in his administration of the parish by his vows. He would not be able to pay gifts into the parish unless the donor made it clear, etc. etc. Then the ravages of the pious few, as Father used to say. By that he meant the abuse that some confessors and penitents fall into of wasting time in the confessional, and the danger of all those regular confessions made not entirely under the inspiration of grace ...where human nature is mixed in with faith, and where starting with the spiritual, they end up with the natural...

[23] “Ah! Messieurs, I know the problems arising from that situation too well for there ever to be any question of that in the Society.

[24] “I have had a lot to put up with, Messieurs, during these few years that the Marists have run that parish. Do you think I was unconcerned for the Marists I was obliged to post there? But I used to say: ‘We must wait until Monsieur Rouchon [the parish priest who gave his house to the Society on condition that it provided him with curates] dies, so as not to hurt him. When he is no longer there we will leave that work.’ — And we did.

[25] “Messieurs, if I speak so forcefully it is so that you will remember. Ha! If I appointed parish priests I would no longer be a Superior General — I would be a bishop.

[26] “Monsieur Terraillon, if you are still of that opinion, if you are going to equivocate with the Cardinal at St. Etienne on this matter, say so, because in that case I shall not send you.”

[27] Father Terraillon made no reply, not wishing to say anything against the wishes of Father Colin. As soon as the latter spoke he held his peace. Very Reverend Father General sent him to Valbenoîte almost immediately and Father Terraillon carried out his wishes perfectly. Father Colin repeated perhaps half a dozen times during the conversation, “If the Society is to provide parish priests, I resign here and now, here and now. I express myself so forcibly because I am going away shortly. It is one of our basic principles.”

Joy

The 1988 Constitutions state that Marist spirituality is “characterized by spontaneity and joy” (no. 117). This is not surprising for a congregation that bears the name of her whose experience of vocation began with the invitation to rejoice, and who testifies: “My spirit rejoices in God my savior.” Joy, spontaneity, breadth of spirit are important features of Marist life for Colin (the Mayet index lists 140 references to laughter), although he never seems to link them explicitly to the Marian sources of our spirituality.

540

1838. Mayet and others. Observations. [Mayet 1, 400f = FA 192]:

[1] In 1838, some Marists coming back to Belley said to the Superior, “Oh! Monsieur, how cheerful things are in Belley! We have been in other houses where they seemed in the dining room to be somewhat on the watch, a bit on their guard and at recreation they appear under some restraint, rather stiff, somehow reticent.”

[2] If this way of things had existed in our houses, it would have greatly distressed him, and he several times enlarged on the matter to that effect. He wanted recollection, but he was equally anxious to have freedom of spirit, a good cheerful, brotherly way of living, a certain abandonment, a free-and-easy manner. At Belley, he himself fostered such an approach as much as he could, by his way of doing things and his conversations, and he had succeeded; and so he could say that for that reason he was delighted to come back to Belley after his journeys. He did not call the other sort of approach by the name of piety.

541

About 1839. Mayet/Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 411]:

He recommended the spirit of simplicity, of gaiety, of abandon in recreation: he said that he enjoyed coming to Belley because of this spirit: he did not like stiff, narrow, affected ways at all, and especially in recreation.

542

March 27 - April 9, 1841. Colin. Community gathering at the college in Belley. [Mayet 1, 121 = FS 39, 45]:

He then spoke a few joyful words to us. He had previously recommended gaiety and joy, showing how good it was for the soul. He had told us, however, to avoid buffoonery in our little jokes, and he wanted them to be such that what we said in private we could say in front of anyone.

543

Spring 1841. Colin. Remark to the Marists of Belley. [Mayet 1, 412f = FS 43]:

“How happy I am to see that the Marists have a certain breadth of virtue, a certain ease, full of abandonment. I encourage and establish this approach as far as I am able. When I say *I establish*, I do not mean I talk about it but I establish it by my ways of doing things. At one time in a certain house they were rather stilted and strained, but now that has all changed. They are more magnanimous, they conduct themselves in a simple and happy fashion. Ah! If we did not always have a certain joy in our soul like this, a certain liberty, where would be the charm in our life? I do not like those who always have their hands joined, those whose devotion is narrow.”

544

February 21, 1842. Colin. Advice to Eymard. [Mayet 1, 650 = FS 45, 3]:

“You must meet everyone with peace of soul, making yourself all things to all men, bringing joy to the hearts of others. When to do that costs you something, well then, we must make a sacrifice to the good Lord and then we must really die to ourselves. Love contempt, read Franchi [author of *The Love of Self-contempt*] often, you will find in it the philosophers’ stone. What a gold mine! He who finds it has found a treasure of peace, a peace that can never be disturbed. Always be joyful: *rejoice in the Lord always*. To be calm in spirit is a great virtue.”

545

January-March 1842 (?). Colin. Remark made to Father Fournier. [Mayet 1, 401m = FS 50]:

He said one day to Father Fournier, “Allow yourself to be possessed by joy. Joy is of benefit when it comes from God and when it is kept within the proper limits. Dance a little. Cheerfulness brings a little relief to nature. Very often there are little vapors rising in our soul. Cheerfulness gives them an outlet and dispels our little moods.”

546

January-March 1842. Colin. Remarks made while working on the Constitutions. [Mayet 1, 726f = FS 54, 3]:

“The third thing I want to urge is that the Marists not think so much about themselves. Let us not always be coming back upon ourselves, let us not look at ourselves so much. Really, what a spectacle! We are so fine! Rather, let us look to God, who is uncreated beauty. Let us walk in his presence. By always looking at him we shall become like him, we shall become perfect. How I pity those who are always caught up with themselves and who like to steep in their own juice.” As he said this, he laughed heartily. “Ah, yes,” he said, “we soil ourselves with our own company.” He added that a broader approach raises up the soul, makes it capable of great good, while those characters who are engrossed in themselves make no progress, even in their own sanctification. “Let us laugh,” he said, “for God wants us to laugh — we shall weep on other occasions. Life is a

mixture of laughing and weeping. Let us follow the path before us with our eyes fixed on the good Lord”.

547

September 27, 1842. Colin. Conference during the general retreat. [Mayet 4, 149 = FS 60, 20f]:

[20] “Messieurs, when someone is afraid of being criticized, of being judged, I would say that his virtue is not something solid.”

[21] He then enjoined upon us, on the strength of some remarks which had been made to him, a certain cheerfulness, a holy cheerfulness, but at the same time a dignified cheerfulness.

548

Academic year 1842-1843. Colin. Counsel to Mayet about the care of novices. [Mayet 1, 679f = FS 64, 10]:

“Maintain among the young men a holy freedom, a holy liberty, a holy cheerfulness. Anything that is strained is not genuine, not even solid. Devotions that are strained and unnatural do not last.”

549

September 15-18, 1845. Colin. Talks on the home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 414 = FS 102, 17]:

“[...] Messieurs, it is not for money that we are working, but for the salvation of souls, and we can count ourselves far richer, more highly honored and fortunate to be the instruments of salvation and to be called to spread peace and joy in the souls of men.”

550

August 25, 1847. Colin. To the retreatants, on giving missions. [Mayet 7, 208 = FS 142, 7]:

“Prudence too at table. Let us be full of respect for the local pastor. An easy manner, a certain holy cheerfulness, but always mingled with a certain seriousness. Let us weigh our words, let us learn how to joke without hurting anyone. [...]”

Nazareth

Colin emphasized the theme of Nazareth particularly during the latter part of his life, after his resignation from the office of superior general. It seems to have symbolized for him an entire set of attitudes that had to be integrated into a life of apostolic activity. Thus he could tell Marists active in the apostolate that, "I find the spirit of the Society entirely in the home of Nazareth." This dossier is placed at the end, then, for it represents the need for integration in our spiritual life. Reproduced here is the dossier collected by Fr. Coste when he wrote his study on this theme for *Acta Societatis Mariae*, vol. VI, no. 31, pp. 385-398.

551

1833-1834. Colin. *Memorandum on the S.M.* [Coste T1 = OM 299, 7 = LM 11, 7]:

One of the main duties of the members of the confraternity and of the other members of the Society of Mary is to contribute, by their prayers, their good advice and all other possible means towards the conversion of sinners; and it is in order that we may rejoice in their conversion, after the example of the Good Shepherd, and give thanks for their return to the Lord, that we request permission to celebrate in all the houses of the Society the feast of the return of Mary, our Mother, to Nazareth from the land of Egypt, and have it on the first Sunday of May, since, coming after Easter, this is the most opportune time to congratulate sinners on their return to spend the month of May, which is consecrated to Mary in a holy manner. This could be the principal feast of the confraternity.

552

September 10-17, 1838. Colin. *To the Marist retreatants at Meximieux.* [Coste T2 = Mayet 1, 48f = FS 8, 1 = Jeantin 2, 267 (altered text)]:

"Ah!" he said to us, "when I go to the Hermitage and am in the midst of the Marist Brothers, I often tell them: 'My children, I envy you your happiness.' They do in the Society what Jesus and Mary did at Nazareth. What would we do without them, gentlemen? They have the happiness of serving others. For me, gentlemen, you will pardon me for saying this [he was speaking to the Marist Fathers on retreat at Meximieux in 1838], but I must confess that it gives me more pleasure to spend the recreation with a Brother than with you." Then, speaking of the poor: "Our century," he said, "is a century which has no love for the poor. It cannot even bear to see them; that is why it has invented those prisons where they are locked away to keep them out of sight" [he was speaking of the work-houses].

553

September 17, 1838. Colin. Reflection. [Coste T3 = Mayet 1, 9 = OM 430 = FS 10]:

Belley, the Nazareth of the Society

On his return from that retreat, he said: "However, it is to Belley, that little corner, that the most important letters come from Rome and elsewhere; it is from that little spot in the mountains that they go out. Who would have believed it? Who could have believed that this Society should come into being in that corner?" Somebody said: "No Order has ever begun like this in a small town." He answered: "Yes, there was one, but only one. It is the Order of the Church. Nazareth was its cradle. Jesus, Mary, Joseph: there you have the Church coming into being. It began there."

554

1842. Colin. Constitutions, section on preserving and increasing the Society. [Coste T4 = AT II, a, 355 = AT V, C, 422]:

[...] nothing must be overlooked that would enable us to erect this Society upon the foundation of every solid virtue, and in the first place on the four unshakeable cornerstones: *humility, obedience, charity, and poverty*; so that what was once apparent in the house of Nazareth, where resided the Incarnate Word, the blessed Virgin and the Patriarch Joseph, may also be seen in this Society, for the greater glory of God and the honor of that same Virgin.

555

January 6, 1842. Colin. Letter to the Marists at Verdélais. [Coste T5 = Mayet ND 1, 403f = LColin 420106.Ver, 4f]:

Let us then be faithful, my dear confreres, to the grace of this vocation; it is only through such fidelity that we shall succeed in acquiring the perfection God asks of us. Let us love the Society of Mary; let us look on it as a harbor of safety for us. Away from that harbor, we should probably have been shipwrecked. Let us reproduce in it what the angels once saw with admiration in the home of Nazareth, that peace, that union, that humility, that dependence, that mortification, that disregard for the world; in a word, those virtues of which our models give us such a beautiful example.

556

February 6, 1842. Colin. Talk to the Marists at the college of Belley. [Coste T6 = Mayet 1, 419 = FS 44, 3 = Jeantin 5, 94 (altered text) = DS 346]:

"[...] by spirit of prayer I mean that one should be in continual dependence on the will of God, that one should be like a child at its father's side: for the child is content to know that it is by its father's side; and in a word, to want nothing but the holy will of God. See how Our Divine Lord advanced through all the stages of childhood, adolescence, maturity, and all the while occupied Himself with manual tasks in the home of Nazareth. Somebody could have told Him: you must go and preach. But no, Christ's whole business, it may be said, was to do the will of His Father. He

would remain in Nazareth as long as it pleased God. Let us do likewise, gentlemen, putting nothing before us but the holy will of God. Happy the man who does this! What happiness, what joy! Attachment to the will of God, it is heaven on earth.”

557

1842. Colin. *Talk to Marists engaged in education of the young.* [Coste T7 = Mayet 1, 384 = FS 49, 1 = Jeantin 4, 130 = DS 56]:

“I wish all Marists were like burning lamps. Prepare yourselves well in your solitude. The fire of charity must be drawn from the heart of Jesus, from the heart of Mary. In your seclusion, you are like Jesus Christ preparing Himself for His preaching during the thirty years in Nazareth. Think of yourselves also as the apostles making their novitiate with Jesus for three years: during that time they were, indeed, still imperfect, and yet how much they accomplished afterwards!”

558

April 14, 1842. Colin. *Letter to five students of the college at Belley who asked that they might enter the Society.* [Coste T8 = Mayet 1, 741]:

[...] I was edified by your good dispositions towards virtue. I cannot thank the Lord enough for them or pray enough that He bless you more and more, that He defend you against the enemy of salvation, and increase in you the grace of His holy love. Think of yourselves, my dear friends, as being in the home of Nazareth; look on Mary as your mother, the sweet Jesus as your brother, the glorious patriarch, St. Joseph, as the protector of your innocence. Strive to copy those august models. Go to Jesus through Mary, to Mary through Joseph; all for the greater glory of God, all for the honor of Mary and Joseph.

559

May 30, 1842. Poupinel/Colin. *Account of the journey to Rome.* [Coste T9 = Mayet 4, 3 = Jeantin 6, 12 (summarized)]:

On the 30th May we went to the Capuchin Fathers for confession and to say Mass; Father was really pleased at the simplicity and cleanliness of their chapel. At four in the afternoon we were on board the *Mongibello*; at five we left the port. We were in second class; but when Father saw the style of our quarters he showed painful surprise. Then he reminded me of how much more he preferred the little merchant vessel which brought him to Rome the first time, for he had slept on ropes, and everything breathed forth the poverty of Nazareth.

560

December 31, 1843. Colin. *Talk to scholastics gathered in his room.* [Coste T10 = Mayet 5, 660f = FS 74, 2 = Jeantin 2, 244 (altered text)]:

“Yes, my children, when I present you to God, I like to think that many of you will one day be apostles. You are not called to that at the moment; you are not called to work in the missions, to

preach. You are what Our Divine Lord was at Nazareth for thirty years; you are in seclusion. What are you to do? Simply what Our Divine Lord did during His hidden life: *And He was subject to them*, that is all the scripture has to tell us of Him. Following His example, you should practice perfect obedience; yes, obedience, humility, great humility. Ah, my children, I can say this because I know to whom I am speaking: we are gathered here within narrow walls indeed; well, then, you should rejoice in the smallness and poverty of the place; it reminds us of the house of Nazareth where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived; and at Bethlehem the Savior had only a stable.”

561

November 25, 1844. Colin. Address to the scholastics of Belley. [Coste T11 = Mayet 5, 705 = FS 79, 1 = Jeantin 4, 44f (beginning summarized)]:

“Here, gentlemen, you are in a place of retreat in order to imitate Jesus Christ at Nazareth, to prepare yourselves for your ministry, to practice before you preach: *Jesus began to do miracles and to teach*. When you begin your apostolic career you must be saints, and for that you must become saints now. You will be then what you become during the noviciate. If you are humble, obedient, mortified, you will continue to practice those virtues; otherwise you will find it extremely difficult. So exert yourselves in those virtues lay good foundations. Humility. Be little in your own eyes. Often say to God, like St. Augustine: *May I know myself, may I know you.*”

562

June 29, 1845. Colin. To the council. [Coste T12 = Mayet 1, 9m = OM 607]:

On the 29th June 1845, Fr. Colin, speaking of new foundations to be made, said to us: “Gentlemen, Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, the Blessed Virgin was born in Nazareth. The Society of Mary came to life in the small town of Belley (unknown spot) and in the little hermitage near Saint-Chamond, in isolation and solitude. Let us remember our origin; let us begin without noise. It is not necessary to make noise in order to do good; and afterwards, when the time comes, then. ...”

563

September 16, 1845. Colin. Words to Eymard. [Coste T13 = Mayet 5, 725f = Jeantin 2, 165 (altered text)]:

Reverend Father Superior, speaking of the foundation of La Seyne, near Toulon, on the 16th September 1845, said these striking words to Fr. Eymard:

“I am afraid lest this foundation should not succeed.”

“And why, Father?”

“Because it is not beginning like the others. It is off to too good a start... A fine house, with income... The other foundations did not begin like that; they all began in a small way, on the model of Nazareth. That is why God blessed them. When the Society makes foundations which are poor, the members who are there are led to have more confidence in and abandonment to Providence; when nothing is lacking, they never think of Providence. Besides, a house founded by the Society itself is more independent. These thoughts worry me; I am going to prescribe some prayers.”

564

September 19, 1845. Colin. Prayer improvised at closing of the retreat. [Coste T14 = Mayet 6, 130 = Jeantin 5, 421 = DS 531]:

O Blessed Virgin, O my good Mother, only St. Joseph is worthy to take your place. It was to him, in your humble home of Nazareth, that Providence wished to entrust the interests of Jesus and those of yourself. It was he who was obeyed in Nazareth. I trust, O Mary that he takes an interest in this little Society.

565

June 29, 1847. Colin. To the novices. [Coste T15 = Mayet 5, 701f = FS 140, 1 and 4 = Jeantin 4, 17f]:

[1] The novices went to pay their respects to the Reverend Father Superior General at the Mother House at Puylata on his return from Rome, where he had gone for the fourth time. He told them:

[4] “One gets bored too doing nothing, because we are made for action, we feel the need to be up and doing... But consider our Mother after the Divine Master’s Ascension. She was the support, the directress of the newborn Church; she is called *Queen of Apostles*. And yet she seemed to be doing nothing; but she accomplished more by her prayers than the apostles did by their preaching. Consider also Our Lord Jesus Christ during the thirty years in Nazareth: there are your models.”

566

December 4, 1848. Colin. To the young priests studying at Puylata. [Coste T16 = Mayet 1, 534fm = Jeantin 4, 109f (altered text) = DS 559]:

On the 4th December 1848, Fr. Colin, with great feeling and ardor, said to the young priests who were perfecting their learning at the Mother House:

“Young men, my children, the spirit of the priesthood is the very spirit of zeal. May this zeal lead you to work earnestly now at your studies, as it will lead you later to work night and day for the salvation of souls. Oh! how beautiful is the priest’s ministry! Three words: *I absolve you*, and he has wiped out a whole life of sin; at his command, grace drowns it all, just as the waters swallowed up the Egyptians at the mere signal of Moses. Make good use, then, of the time which has been given to you. Imitate Our Lord, who remained shut up in Nazareth for thirty years; when the time for the apostolate comes you will follow Him in the conquest of souls.”

567

September 11, 1853. Colin. Conference at the general retreat following a discourse on *La Neylière and the Eucharist*. [Coste T17 = Mayet 8, 697 = FS 188, 11f = Jeantin 5, 457 = DS 559 = *L’âme du P. Colin*, p. 186]:

“Oh! my dear confreres, let us ask Our Lord to give us all a tender devotion to the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist.”

Then, speaking of the spirit of the Society, Father said these striking words:

“Our spirit, the spirit of the Society, do you know where you can find it? For me, I find it entirely in the home of Nazareth. Did Jesus try to put Himself forward before the time fixed by His Father?”

568

January 15, 1854. Colin. Letter to Eymard, superior of the college of La Seyne. [Coste T18]:

My dear Confrere,

[1] The rarer your letters, the more precious they become; but if your hand is slow to take up the pen, I know your heart is not at fault, and that is enough for me. Rest assured that your prayers and New Year wishes are very welcome to me, as I know that they are not mere words on your part, and they will obtain for me from God the graces which I so badly need. For you, for your confreres and your pupils, I wish you the happiness of shutting yourselves up in the home of Nazareth, and remaining there with the Holy Family; nowhere could you be in better company, and it would be difficult for you to be seriously there for any length of time without acquiring the sentiments of Mary and Joseph towards the holy Infant Jesus. Then all of you would soon become small and humble in your own eyes, full of charity towards one another, full of love for Jesus and of zeal for His glory. You have Him in your midst, this divine Savior, in the holy Eucharist, as really present as He was in the home of Nazareth; go to Him, then, in all your needs, and may your hearts be like the holy hearts of Mary and Joseph; may they be adorned with every virtue. Such are my wishes for each one of you; I could not wish you anything better in this world.

[2] Tell your boys that it gives me the greatest pleasure to hear that they are good, obedient and hard-working, that they love with all their heart the holy Infant Jesus, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. I would ask them to grow more and more in this love, which alone can make them happy in this life and in the next. They will allow me to join my heart with theirs, and I ask them to present it with theirs to the Divine Savior, to the Blessed Virgin and to St. Joseph, through the hands of St. Victorinus.

569

May 7, 1854. Colin. To the general chapter. [Coste T19 = Mayet ND 3, 40f = Jeantin 6, 75f (altered text) = L'âme du P. Colin, p. 174]:

“It is true, when a work commences, people examine, calculate, consider the one who takes charge, they pass judgment on things and men; but those judgments are human judgments. That is all wrong; one must see things in God, and see men as in the hands of God who moves them. Let us not worry about what men may say or do. God will take care of everything in His own time. Our Lord Jesus Christ remained for thirty years in the obscurity of Nazareth. Then, when He came to choose apostles to convert the world, He did not look for scholars. He took humble, unknown men. It was necessary too that the Society should remain hidden and unknown. Yes, my dear confreres, if you want to find your spirit, look for it in the house of Nazareth, as I told you at the last retreat. Heaven was there in Nazareth: the Blessed Virgin, the Infant Jesus, St. Joseph; as it is here, in your midst [he added, pointing with his hand to the little altar in the Chapter-room, then]: I leave you” [and he left the meeting].

570

May 21, 1854. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse (Dubouché). [Coste T20]:

[1] The joy which I feel at being relieved of a burden I could no longer bear is such that I would ask you to join me in thanking the Lord. From now on I can follow my attraction for the retired life, for the eucharistic work, and prepare for death in the shadow of the altar. The feeling that I have done the will of God in resigning, and that my confreres have done it in appointing a successor, fills me with consolation. Now I long to live only for Jesus in the Eucharist, only to offer Him unceasingly the adoration He received from Mary and Joseph when, alone, they adored Him in the silence of the home of Nazareth.

[2] I do not know what God asks of me, Reverend Mother; but I cannot tell you how much I long to help in finding adorers in spirit and in truth for Our Lord in the Eucharist. I don't want a work that will dazzle, but one that will be in miniature the continuation of the work of Nazareth. I can expect nothing of myself, but I expect everything from God. I feel strongly moved to ask Him to form around the holy altars first a nucleus of priests, completely self-forgetful and filled with the spirit of Mary and Joseph, who by word and example, in their own church, will strive to arouse in souls the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. [...]

[3] That something lasting and solid be accomplished, I think it is necessary that the priests who offer themselves and the young men who have finished their preparatory studies and intend to go on for the priesthood in the eucharistic work, should come and do their novitiate at La Neylière, and that this house should become like the house of Nazareth, where they will acquire the spirit of the work, and whence they will set out two by two for the big cities to begin houses of adorers. That is the course which seems to me to be in the designs of Providence, and I would ask you to let me know what you think of it.

571

September 3-10, 1854. Colin. Words at the general retreat. [Coste T21 = Mayet ND 1, 56f = FS 190]:

[1] "We must hold strongly, my dear confreres, to the spirit which prevailed at the beginnings of the Society. Study it more and more each day. You will be good Marists only to the extent that you practice it well. And what is that spirit? It is the spirit of the Blessed Virgin. A Spirit of modesty, of humility, of prudence, of simplicity, of discretion.

[2] "Let us not get mixed up with others and their affairs; let us not criticize them, let us say nothing that would smack of fault-finding or hurt even the most sensitive. Let us not parade each other's merits, while at the same time not belittling each other. Those who run down their Society do wrong, it is no proof that they are good religious and strong in their vocation. It could be said that by their criticism they wish to justify their distaste. Let us look to Mary in everything, imitate her life at Nazareth. She did more than the apostles for the newborn Church; she is the Queen of the apostles; but she did it all without noise, she did it especially by her prayer.

[3] "Oh! I would recommend that you would indeed maintain this spirit of Mary in your midst, without worrying about other societies; that has nothing to do with us. When I hear that kind of talk, I say: ours must be a different spirit, the spirit of the humble and hidden Mary. I was saying that she did more than the apostles by her prayers; let us combine then silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary wants us, her children, to be missionaries of action and missionaries of prayer."

572

January 19, 1855. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T22]:

My attitude towards the eucharistic work is till the same; I want this work as much, perhaps, as you do, and, like you, I want it in the spirit of Nazareth. No other way of establishing it would suit me. I admit that this particular manner will suit few people, and hence in the beginning there will be a certain opposition from the world and those who have the worldly spirit. But do not let that upset you; place your trust in God alone.

573

February 1855. Mother Marie Thérèse/Colin. Letter of Mother Marie-Thérèse to Mgr Luquet. [Coste T23]:

[...] Since the new Superior General of the Marists is formally opposed to the holy undertaking at La Neylière, the good and very saintly Founder of the Society of Mary, in an admirable spirit of peace and humility, submits to halting the most cherished of his desires. [...] Everything pleased him here; having visited the house and heard the explanation of all our customs, he said with deep conviction: "God has done all that; the Work has been established; oh! how happy I would be to see the same thing established for men! While not being with them exteriorly, my heart would dwell in that heavenly Nazareth."

574

January 12, 1856. Colin. Letter to Mother Agnes of St. Joseph, superior of the Adoration Réparatrice in Lyons. [Coste T24]:

The happiness that is yours in being chosen, by a grace of predilection, to set up on earth the court of the King of kings at the feet of the holy altars, seems to me to compare in many ways with that of Our Lady and St. Joseph themselves in the home of Nazareth. To enable you to live up to your sublime and seraphic vocation, I wish you a share in the spirit of Mary and Joseph, in their lively faith, their deep humility, their profound respect and ardent love for the God-Man, their unshakable patience in privation, their detachment from creatures; and all this in such a way that your mind will see only Jesus in the Host, your hearts will beat only for Jesus in the Host, that Jesus will be your life, your All. Such are my wishes for you and for your whole community. Love and serve Jesus in the Host as Mary loved and served the Child Jesus.

575

1856. Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. [Coste T25 = AT VI, σ , 7]:

The Institute may have certain houses consecrated solely to the exercise of this interior and hidden life, where the Sisters, free from all the cares involved in the education of children, will divide their time between prayer and manual labor, and with the help of grace will strive to reproduce in themselves the virtues of Jesus and Mary in the house of Nazareth.

576

1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. [Coste T26 = AT VI, σ, 195]:*

Cult of imitation: This is the principal cult they must endeavor to pay to the Most Blessed Virgin. It is this cult she particularly desires and expects from each one of them. Only by striving to walk in the footsteps of Mary can they prove themselves her true daughters and servants, only thus can they make themselves agreeable to her, and draw down on themselves individually and on the congregation as a whole, the merciful benefits of her maternal protection. They bound themselves to this by entering her Society, since they chose her as model and since the first and basic aim of the Institute is to serve the Lord with straightforwardness and simplicity of heart, in striving each day with love to bring their interior and all their actions more into conformity with the interior and action of Her whom God has given them for mother and patron, and since, too, their entire Constitutions are in a way based on that imitation. Let them, then, fix their gaze unceasingly on that mirror of all virtue, in order to reproduce some of her features in their conduct, so that after the example of this perfect model, they will love and practice obedience, poverty, purity, humility, meekness, charity, modesty, abandonment and submission to God's will in everything; so that they will strive to form their interior in the likeness of the interior of their good and tender Mother; so that each of their communities may resemble in some way what was at one time to be found in the home of Nazareth where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived together. Then they can truly be called children of Mary, then will Mary recognize them as her children, surround them with her mercy, and have heaven shower down the abundant graces and blessings which they seek for themselves and for their Congregation.

577

May 24, 1858. *Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T27]:*

[1] It is only too true, Reverend Mother, that few people, even among the devout, understand the life of Nazareth, the mysteries of the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ; there are even less who wish to live consistently that heavenly life known only to God. It is a special grace of God that He has given you a taste for this life; and He has given you this grace so that you will communicate the taste to others and have the advantages of this life appreciated by the little flock of chosen souls of whom He made you mother and guardian and whom you must lead to the pastures of Nazareth and nourish with the mysterious bread of Nazareth.

[2] Do not be surprised to find few who share your attraction. For thirty years Our Savior Jesus Christ found only Mary and Joseph in the house of Nazareth; and when He decided to leave it to communicate the hidden treasure of His graces to the world, the world rejected Him, crucified Him... Only after He had hung from the cross did He draw all to Him. Such too, in proportion, will be the case with your work founded on the hidden life of Nazareth. After it has been thrown back, purified by contradiction, by difficulties, it will triumph over all; and those who are against it now will admire it and wish to join it. All you have to do, in the midst of interior and exterior trials, is to remain small in the presence of God, submissive to His divine will in suffering as in consolation, always meek towards everybody, but at the same time forever clinging to the work of Nazareth.

578

June 6, 1859. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T28]:

Yes, Reverend Mother, your eucharistic work has always been an object of special affection for me; I have always admired the spirit which you have tried to inject into this work. May the spirit of Nazareth always remain in your congregation; may your daughters preserve it and understand well its eloquence and its full range, and then they will really be a gathering of saints.

579

March 19, 1860. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T29]:

You should thank the Lord very much for having given you a guide according to His heart who will lead you in peace and in the way of Nazareth; for that is your path, and if you leave it you will find only uneasiness, anxiety and darkness.

580

September 4, 1866. Favre and Colin. At the general chapter. [Coste T30 = Minutes of the chapter, pp. 70f.]:

[...] Very Reverend Father General explained to the members of the Chapter the rules of prudence which should guide the administration when there is question of giving permission for building or major repairs. [...]

Very Reverend Father Founder endorsed the remarks of Very Rev. Fr. General and insisted on the simplicity, the modesty and the poverty which should make our house a reflection of that of Nazareth. The words *unknown and hidden* of our Constitutions apply to buildings as well as to persons.

581

September 4, 1866. Colin. At the general chapter. [Coste T31 = Minutes of the chapter, pp. 72f = Jeantin 6, 132 (altered text)]:

Very Reverend Father Founder took the floor at this stage, and returned to the idea closest to his heart. [...]

In a tone of deep conviction he recommended us to shun the spirit of the world, “of which yours should be at the very opposite pole,” he said; he recommended us to keep far away from all that shines and to take for ourselves whatever breathes forth Bethlehem and Nazareth, to prefer always humility to learning. “I do not want,” he said forcefully, “I do not want scholars who are not humble. I need learned men, yes but learned men who in a sense are not aware of their learning and who love to be thought little of rather than seek to put themselves forward.”

582

July 18, 1867. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Coste T32 = Mayet ND 2, 14 = Jeantin 5, 204 (altered text) = DS 434]:

- [1] "If the Society has not its original spirit, I would prefer that it did not exist.
- [2] "Without its own spirit, it no longer has any raison d'être.
- [3] "The Society's first intention was to imitate the life of Nazareth, the life of the apostles.
- [4] "The spirit of poverty should animate us." [Follows a development on poverty.]

583

Autumn 1868 (end of August - beginning of September). Colin. Notes taken by Fr. Jeantin during his retreat at La Neylière, fifth day. [Coste T33]:

[1] Father Founder constantly recommends the life of Nazareth: "That is what we need," he says, "we have not yet entered Nazareth." Then: "mistrust of self, trust in God, in the Blessed Virgin."

[It was probably this same sentence of Fr. Colin which Fr. Jeantin used in the Notes explicatives to comment on the "Quidquid in aedificiis..." Text published in Ant. textus, fasc. 6, p. 169]:

[2] This is one of the points which Very Rev. Fr. Founder seems to have most at heart. He wishes that our houses have nothing that would attract the attention of the world. Luxury in living quarters causes him a kind of martyrdom. "Alas!" he exclaims, "I see indeed that we have not yet entered Nazareth." He even wishes that our chapels should be somewhat similar to those of the Capuchins.

[It is from this latter text that the two passages in Jeantin 5, 446 and 6, 192 come.]

584

October 4, 1868. Colin. Constitutions. [Coste T34 = AT IV, n, 212 = AT V, C, 205]:

After blessed Mary, let them have a warm devotion to Saint Joseph. Let them all regard him, who was head of the Family of Nazareth, as the protector of this smallest Society and as its bursar, as it were, in temporal matters. Thus, they will resort to him with confidence in all their needs, celebrate his feasts with joy and do all they can to increase his cult in the Church.

585

Spring 1869. Colin. Extract from "Account of the origin and foundation of the Society of Mary," drawn up by Fr. Jeantin on the basis of reminiscences of Fr. Colin. [Coste T35 = OM 819, 40 and 827, 6 = Jeantin 1, 66]:

From his arrival in Cerdon until 1821, he was busy drawing up the Constitutions of the Society of Mary. For this work, he had no other help than what the Gospel has left us on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth and on the first missions of the apostles.

586

1870. Colin. *Explanatory Notes on the Constitutions, given orally and recorded by secretaries, Frs. Jeantin and David: commentary on no. 142 (= no. 147 of the 1872 Constitutions). [Coste T36 = AT VI, p. 176 = Jeantin 6, 176]:*

These practices of humility and of poverty are in use in all Orders that are truly religious. Marists should not be marked off from others except by greater humility and modesty. If we look at how Mary behaved at Nazareth, we shall not find these practices either too finicky or too severe.

587

July 25, 1870. Colin. *Extract from notes of Fr. Jeantin taken during the preparation with Fr. Colin of the memorandum in reply to the observations of Fr. Maître pierre. [Coste T37 = OM 839, 37-39 = Jeantin 5, 315 (altered text) = DS 500 = L'âme du P. Colin, p. 171]:*

When ministering to a sick man one day, the latter spat out the host. He (Fr. Colin) asked for a scissors and cut the portion of the sheet containing the Sacred Host. Having taken it to the parochial house, he wanted to swallow it, but his brother prevented him. "He did well, because I would have vomited it all."

"I place myself in the home of Nazareth and from there I see all that I have to do."

— Did you ask the Blessed Virgin [*this was crossed out immediately*].

When he got the idea of a Society of Mary, he saw it as a society which he wanted very much; he did not understand that he would be the founder.

588

August 5, 1870. Colin. *Extract from words of Fr. Colin to the preparatory meeting of the first session of the General Chapter, according to notes taken at the time by Fr. Gautheron and the account to be found in the minutes of the general meetings. [Coste T38 = OM 841, 4-6 and 842, 14f = Jeantin 6, 214]:*

[*Fr. Gautheron's notes*]:

[1] Model, house of Nazareth. See only God. Innovations. Society of Jesus. Chapter changes nothing. Commission submitting to Fr. Jeantin — presented to Very Rev. Fr. General. Freedom to speak against everybody unfortunate. Residence at Sainte-Foy. Pilata. Spirit of Nazareth. Not proprio motu.

[*Account in the minutes*]:

[2] "It was my duty to give you the first ideas of the Society, ideas which are not mine; I leave them to you, but I do not impose them on you. — But be on your guard against the spirit of innovation. Once you begin changing there will be no stopping. — St. Ignatius published no rule during his life. After his death twelve copies of it were found. The Chapter accepted, without making any alterations in it, what it believed to be the most faithful expression of the Founder's thought. All of you should have but one spirit, that of the home of Nazareth."

589

February 9, 1872. Colin. Extracts from advice given by Fr. Colin to Fr. Alphonsus Cozon, according to autograph notebook of the latter, pp. 125-127. [Coste T39 = LM 335, 7 & 9]:

[1] “The Brothers are not domestic servants; they must not be looked upon as domestics. Personally, I feel it very much when they are not allowed to come to recreation with the Fathers. Why? Why should they be put off like that? Do you want two bodies in one? Are the less noble parts of the body cut off from the rest of your body; do you not always have them with you? Look at St. Joseph in the home of Nazareth; it was his business to look after externals as the Brothers do in our houses; did he not mix with the Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin? Oh! what union among those three people! There the blessed Virgin obeyed, the Child Jesus obeyed. Our Lady was very careful not to make much of herself. There are Fathers who look upon the Brothers as hired labor, who do not go near them; they are ashamed of all that. Well, then, that is essentially contrary to the spirit of the Society.”

[...]

[2] “They should be left the initiative in their work. When at Belley, I used to go to the refectory and ask them: ‘What have you done today? And what will you do tomorrow?’ The Superior should know what is going on in his house. Such a thing is more urgent; it should be taken care of first. Besides, in the home of Nazareth Our Lord was the master; He was God, and yet in some ways He depended on St. Joseph. You tell them: such a thing needs doing, it is urgent. But they will tell you that something else is still more pressing. They should be listened to, because I see that they often know better what needs doing. I would even say that they always know. Better than the bursar. I noticed at La Neylière, when we had no bursar there was a fine garden; now that we have one who wants to run everything, there is nothing any more. You say that such a thing is more pressing; well then, go ahead and do it.”

590

October 25, 1872. Colin. Declarations noted by an unidentified Father. [Coste T40]:

“ There are some Marists who seek too much to show themselves; that is not our spirit. Hidden life, life of simplicity, the life of Nazareth.

“ There are those who want to ape the Jesuits. That is not our spirit. We, as little brothers of Jesus, should be humble and well hidden.”

591

1875. Colin. Third Order Constitutions. [Coste T41 = AT V, T, 10 = LM 395, 14]:

They should, insofar as they can with the help of grace, direct their efforts to imitating the Holy Family of Nazareth, especially in humility, modesty, simplicity of heart, mutual charity and the love of God. They should use the things of this world as if they were not using them; in their clothing, food, dwelling, and in all their dealings with other people, they should carefully avoid whatever appears to be arrogant, ostentatious, or looking for human consideration.

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