

name of Mary and with her help, we shall spend ourselves and all we have in saving souls by whatever way possible; all this is, however, subject to the wiser judgment of our superiors.

Praised be the holy and immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.

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## A BACKGROUND TO THE FOURVIÈRE PLEDGE

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In preparation for the July 2016 bicentenary of the pledge to form the Society of Mary, Fr Alois Greiler prepared this background to accompany multiple translations of the text. The English text is included here, with a selected bibliography for further reading.

## Introduction

The original copy with around twelve signatures of priests ordained the day before, among those Courveille, Colin, Champagnat, Terrailon and Déclas, and seminarians, probably stayed with the man who initiated the project, Jean-Claude Courveille. This original copy is lost. Four copies of the text with no signatures came down to us, all in the handwriting of Pierre Colin. One of the copies is kept in the archives of the Marist Brothers, two in the archives of the Marist Fathers, and one in the archives of the diocese of Pinerolo, Italy. One of the copies was found in the papers of Jean-Claude Colin. Colin had destroyed many of his papers from the Marist origins in June 1841 but kept this document. On the other hand, Colin never mentions the Fourvière-pledge.

Prepared during their time in the major seminary and signed there, the promise was pronounced on 23 July 1816, the day after the priestly ordination of some who had signed. As it was customary for newly ordained priests, they made a pilgrimage up to the Fourvière-Chapel. The pledge was placed on the altar during the mass celebrated by Courveille. It is about the promise to work for a society of Mary as imagined by Courveille, based on his inspiration from Le Puy and marked by expressions typical for him. This was one of the many societies of Mary started around the turn of the century. The Society of Mary of Le Puy saw some small foundations but finally disappeared like many other new foundations. Courveille himself joined the Benedictines at Solesmes in 1836.

Like with many other founders, Colin and Champagnat had had their own intention for a project in mind before July 1816 but in an intermediary phase joined the Courveille-project. From this, both separated after about eight years. Champagnat founded the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools. Colin founded the Society of Mary based on his own vocation, the early ideas of Cerdon, and the further work done. The name came from the Courveille-project.

Fr Colin's constitutions of 1872 do not mention Fourvière. The constitutions of 1987 refer to it in numbers 2, 51, 52, and 92. Frs Jean Coste and Gaston Lessard have published a critical edition in *Origines Maristes*, volume 1, document 50. The original text was in Latin.

## Constitutions 1987

2. On July 23, 1816, at the shrine of Our Lady of Fourvière, Lyon, twelve priests and seminarians pledged themselves to found a congregation bearing the name of Mary. Those who worked for the next twenty years to carry out this promise were convinced that they were responding to a wish of the Mother of Mercy, which found expression for them in the following words: "I supported the Church at its birth; I shall do so again at the end of time".

51. The foundational Marist experience can be seen as symbolized in the promise made at Fourvière, the spiritual experience lived by Jean-Claude Colin at Cerdon, and the missions of the first Marists in Bugey.

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

92. Marists are called, above all, to make their own a Marian vision of the Church. To achieve this, nothing will be as effective as a re-living of the founding experience of the Society. Like the twelve young men at Fourvière they respond to a special call. By 'tasting God' as Father Colin did at Cerdon, they realise the radical opposition between the spirit of Mary and the spirit of ambition, covetousness, and the lust for power. Like the first missionaries in Bugey they proclaim the Good News of God's mercy to those most in need. Thus in continuity with the experience of the first Marists, the Society of Mary, generation by

generation, becomes a reality in the world and its members know the joy that comes from a whole-hearted response to their vocation.

## English text of the Pledge

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. All for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus.

We the undersigned, striving to work together for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus, assert and make known our sincere intention and firm will of consecrating ourselves, as soon as ever it is opportune, to founding the most holy congregation of Marists.

That is why by this present act and our signatures we irrevocably dedicated ourselves and all we have, insofar as we are able, to the society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we do this neither childishly nor lightly, nor from any human motive or hope of temporal gain; but seriously, having taken timely counsel and weighed all before God, solely for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, mother of the Lord Jesus.

We pledge ourselves to endure all sufferings, labours, inconveniences, and, if needs be, torture because we can do all things in him who strengthens us, Jesus Christ: to him we promise faithfulness in the bosom of our most holy mother, the Roman Catholic Church, and adhering to its supreme head the Roman pontiff with all our force; also to our very reverend bishop, our ordinary; that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished by words of faith and wholesome doctrines which, by his grace, we have received; confident that under the reign of our most Christian king, which is favourable to peace and to religion, this special institute will see the light of day.

We solemnly promise that, under the most august