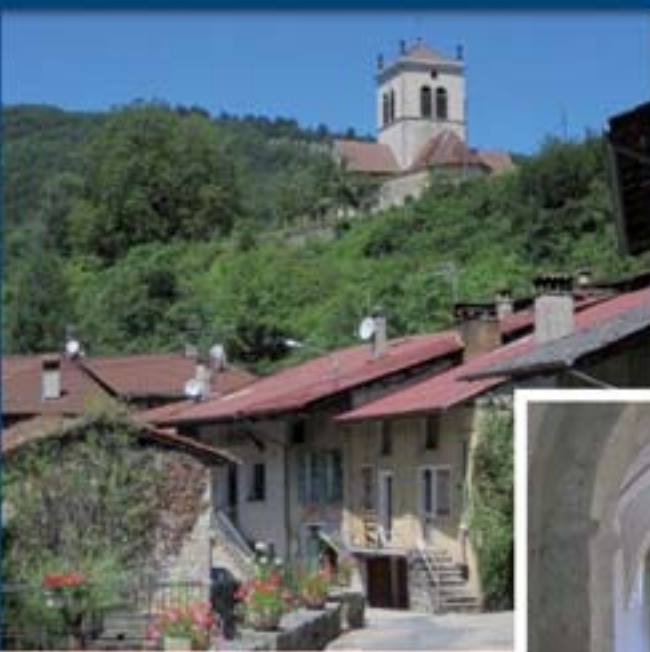




# PILGRIMAGE

A guide-book to places of Marist origins



Craig Larkin sm





# **Pilgrimage**

**A guide-book  
to places of Marist origins**



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A group of hikers is seen from behind as they walk along a dirt trail. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a red backpack and has a large white water bottle attached to the bottom. A large, dark, cylindrical object, possibly a rolled-up mat or sleeping bag, is strapped to the top of the backpack. In the background, a stone tower with a pointed roof and arched windows stands prominently against a clear blue sky. The scene is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage, suggesting a forest or park setting. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

## Introduction

This is a pilgrim's guide-book to places of origin of the Society of Mary, and in particular to the places associated with Jean-Claude Colin.

Our reason for making these journeys is to visit the places where Jean-Claude Colin grew interiorly, to understand the influences that shaped his life, to find a way of entering into his mind and heart, and to make his attitudes our own.

Jean Coste wrote of Jean-Claude Colin:

*"Basically he was one thing only, but he was that to the fullest extent possible: a founder. This man spent his life bringing into existence, enabling to grow, strengthening and defending a well-defined religious body."*

In visiting the places of origin of the Society of Mary we try to enter into the experiences which transformed Jean-Claude Colin

- from child to seminarian to priest
- from priest to founder of a congregation
- from founder to superior general
- from superior general to man of wisdom.



In each of these moments we see a man transformed by grace and used as an instrument for the foundation of a religious congregation.

*"Basically, he was one thing only, but he was that to the fullest extent possible: a founder".*

The Constitutions of the priests and brothers of the Society of Mary (Const. 50-55) present three places which symbolize a stage in the formation of Jean-Claude Colin as a founder, a spiritual leader, and an administrator of an international congregation:

Fourvière – Cerdon – the Bugey

Other places are also significant:

- Le Barbery and St Bonnet-le-Troncy, Colin's place of birth and upbringing;
- Belley, where he developed the Society's ministry of education to young people and where he was elected superior general;
- Lyons, from where he governed the Society as superior general;
- La Neylière where he lived for 21 years after his retirement as superior general.

We also visit places connected with other personalities associated with the founding and early years of the Society:

- Jean-Marie Chavoin,
- Marcellin Champagnat,
- Jean-Claude Courveille,
- Pierre Chanel and
- Jean-Marie Vianney.

### ■ USING THE GUIDEBOOK

This guide-book has two parts.

The first sections provide information useful for visiting each of the places of Marist origin. The journeys outlined in the book follow a time-line which reflects the life of Jean-Claude Colin. This explains, for example, why three visits to the city of Lyons are presented.

The last sections, entitled "Marist texts" and "Chronologies" provide background historical texts which could be used as reflection before or after the visits, as well as chronologies of the lives of each of the three founding figures: Marcellin Champagnat, Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, and Jean-Claude Colin.







**Lyons (1)**

## ■ THE CITY OF LYONS

Lyons is the second largest city in France, ranking behind Paris in size and population.

## ■ POLITICAL HISTORY

The origins of the city of Lyons date to the year 43 BC. A plaque on the hill of Fourvière marks the spot and commemorates the day on which the old city was founded. The inscription reads:

*On this site, on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 43 BC, Lucius Munatius Plancus carried out the rites of founding the colony of Lugdunum.*

In less than two centuries Lugdunum had become a cornerstone of the Roman Empire. The Emperor Agrippa recognized its unique position as a natural communications hub, and he made the site the starting point for the principal Roman roads throughout Gaul. Lugdunum (Lyons) quickly became the main city of Gaul, and then the capital of Gaul.



*The first martyrs of Gaul were put to death in the amphitheatre of Lyons in 177 AD*

In 1933, excavations on the slopes of the hill of Fourvière uncovered many old buildings and sites, and in 1958 a large amphitheatre, built by the Emperor Augustus Caesar in 15 BC, was discovered. The theatre seated 4,500 people. In the time of Emperor Hadrian (119 AD), it was enlarged to hold 10,000 people.

This part of the city was the place for the annual meeting of the delegates from the 60 tribes of Gaul; so it can be regarded as the earliest known example of the French parliamentary system.

## ■ CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Lyons has a prime place in the Christian history of France. It was here, in the amphitheatre on the hill of Fourvière that the first Christian martyrs died for their faith in 177 AD. Among them were two Christians revered in France, the bishop Pothinus and the young woman Blandina.

Lyons is also significant for its second bishop, Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna, who in turn was a friend of St John the Evangelist. The living Christian memory of Lyons reaches back to the time of Jesus.

## ■ CATHOLIC HISTORY

Two ecumenical Councils were held in Lyons, in 1245 and 1274.

The agenda of the first Council (1245) was to clarify the position of the Church with the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The Council formally deposed Frederick, but lacked the power to replace him. The Council decided other purely ecclesiastical matters, including that cardinals must wear red hats.

The second Council (1274) was called by Pope Gregory X primarily to achieve a reunion between the Latin West and the Greek East. Over a thousand clerics and five hundred bishops attended - including St Albert the Great and St Bonaventure. St Thomas Aquinas died on his way to the Council. Gregory outlined three themes for the Council: union with the Greeks, the Crusade, and the reform of the Church. The desired reunion never happened.

*Fourvière - a place  
of pilgrimage since 1170*



Fourvière has always been a popular place of pilgrimage. There has been a shrine at Fourvière dedicated to the Blessed Virgin since 1170. The basilica on the top of the hill rests on the site of the ancient temple of the Romans. The present Basilica was consecrated in 1896.

### ■ MARIST HISTORY

Many moments in Marist history are connected with the city of Lyons. Jean-Claude Colin was confirmed in the Cathedral of St John in 1803. In 1815, the first Marist aspirants met together in the seminary of St Irénée. In the following year, in the chapel on the hill of Fourvière, the 12 aspirants made their promise to begin the Society. Françoise Perroton was baptized in the Church of St Nizier.



Le Puy

### ■ LE PUY

When Etienne Déclas spoke to Gabriel-Claude Mayet about the beginnings of the Society of Mary, he said, “The first one to whom the idea was given was a M. Courveille, from the diocese of Le Puy.” We start our pilgrimage here at Le Puy.

Situated 140km south-west of Lyons, Le Puy is built in a volcanic crater, dominated by two unusual stalagmite-shaped rock formations. On one, 630 metres high, a chapel in honour of St Michael has been built. On the other is a statue of Our Lady, 16 metres high. The statue is made of cast iron from a cannon captured in the Crimean War.

Christianity came to this area at the beginnings of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Marian devotions, healings and pilgrimages date from as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and the Chapel of St Michel d’Aguilhe dates from 962.

St Jean François Regis, famous as a preacher of missions in France during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, used Le Puy as a base for his missions during the years 1633-1640.

Le Puy is a significant point of departure for pilgrims making their way to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.



*Le Puy – the chapel of  
St Michel d’Aguilhe*

### ■ THE CATHEDRAL OF LE PUY

The site of the present cathedral church dates to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and has welcomed many famous people, including the Emperor Charlemagne, six popes, and sixteen European emperors and kings.



*Architecture reflecting Oriental and Arabic influence*

The present church was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, restored in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its striking architecture reflects signs of Oriental and Arabic influence, following the Crusades.

Bishop Adhemer of Le Puy diocese was a central figure in the First Crusade (1096-1099). A tradition claims that he composed the “Salve Regina” for the Crusades.

It was in the Cathedral of Le Puy that Jean-Claude Courveille had a religious experience that was to be of major significance in the foundation of the Society of Mary.

### ■ JEAN-CLAUDE COURVEILLE

Jean-Claude Courveille, the 7<sup>th</sup> of 13 children, was born on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1787.

At the age of 10 he caught smallpox, which produced lesions in the cornea of his eye and this prevented him from attending school or studying like others. By the time he was 22, he was almost totally blind.

In 1809, Courveille made a pilgrimage to the miraculous statue of Our Lady at Le Puy. He bathed his eyes in the oil of the votive lamps surrounding the altar. He was suddenly cured.

Three years later, on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1812, he returned to the same statue. There he heard “not with the ears of the body, but with those of the heart”, the call of Mary saying that she had been the support



*Strongly inspired...  
to take oil from the lamp and  
to rub his eyes with it.*

*Jean-Claude Courveille*

of the Church at its birth, and she desired to be so at the end of time, through a religious congregation which would bear her name. The statue before which Courveille knelt has disappeared, but it has been replaced by what is said to be an exact copy: this statue is positioned above the main altar. It is a "black Madonna", the type of which is found in several other churches. The "black Madonna" was a symbol of wisdom.

When Courveille went to the major seminary of Lyons in 1815, he began to spread the idea of a religious society consecrated to Mary, and he gathered round him a small group of aspirants. From there, the Marist idea began to take shape.

Courveille's subsequent moral lapses led him to retire to the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes in 1838. He stayed there till his death in 1866, at the age of 79.

Within the branch of the Fathers and Brothers, Fr Colin did not mention him, and his former seminary companions believed that he had died or disappeared. But in 1846, an apostolic missionary priest informed Gabriel-Claude Mayet that Courveille was still alive, and told him where he was living. In July 1851 and in February and May of 1852, Mayet wrote to Courveille to obtain information from him concerning the origins of the Society of Mary. Courveille replied, outlining his experiences forty years previously at Le Puy.



## ■ LE PUY AND THE MARIST PROJECT

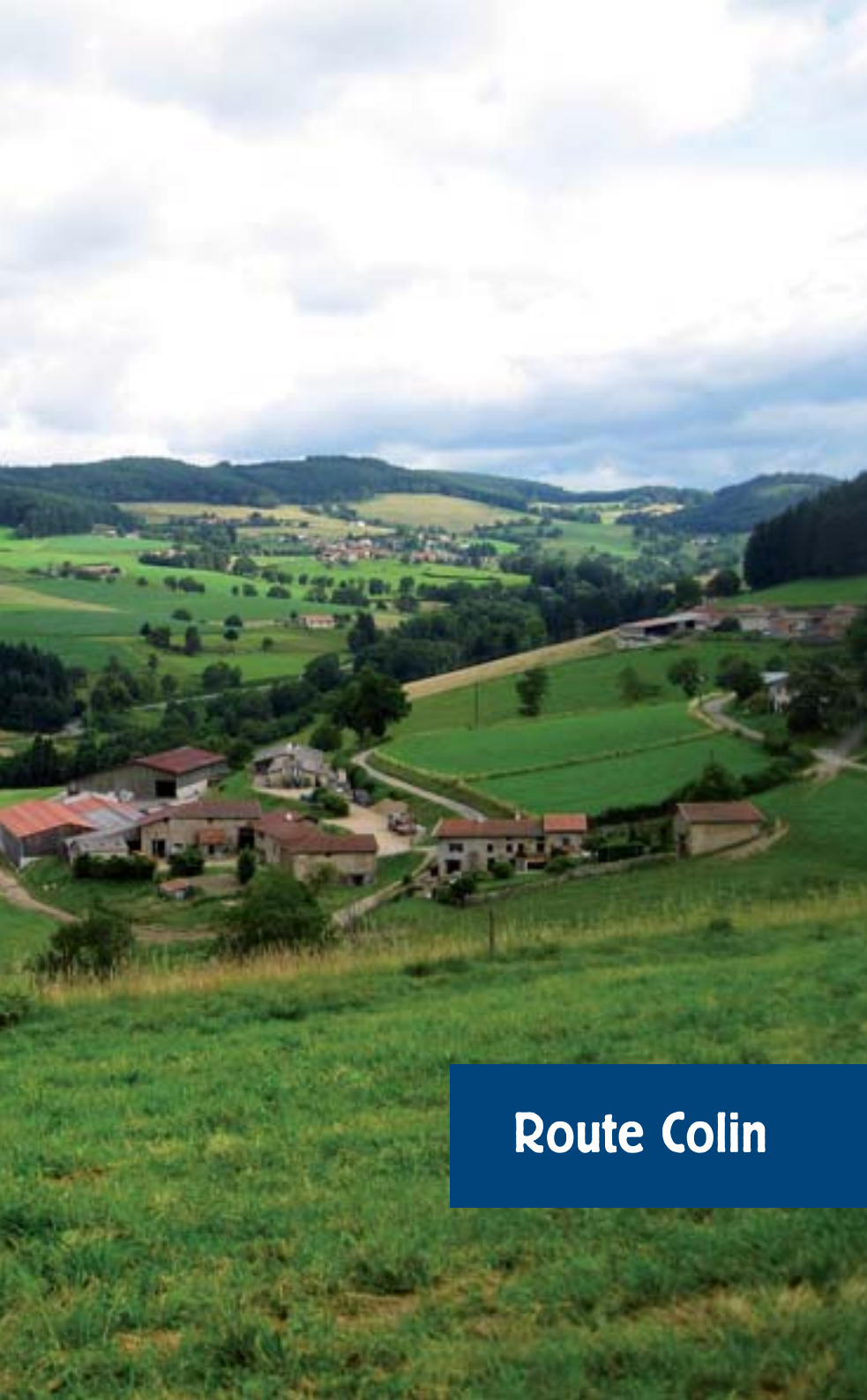
Le Puy was always looked on by the early Marists as a place of great significance. In 1822, when the dioceses of Lyons and Belley seemed to be so strong in their opposition to the Marist project, the Colin brothers sent Jeanne-Marie Chavoin to the diocese of Le Puy to make enquiries about the possibility of laying the foundations of the Society there where the first inspiration to found a religious congregation had been received.

*(Refer to "Texts",  
The first inspiration)*

*"The first idea of  
the Society of Mary  
is due to  
Our Lady of Le Puy"  
- Etienne Terrillon*







## Route Colin



## ■ JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN

Jean-Claude Colin was born on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1790, the 8<sup>th</sup> of nine children.

His parents suffered a great deal through the Revolution, and died within three weeks of each other, leaving Jean-Claude an orphan at the age of 5.

*The site of the house where Jean-Claude Colin was born in 1790*

A shy boy, Colin saw in the life of a simple priest the chance to withdraw from the world.

At the major seminary in Lyons, he met Jean-Claude Courveille and others who shared the idea of a Congregation bearing the name of Mary. He responded enthusiastically to this plan, and he joined the group. The day after their ordination in 1816, they placed on the altar of the Chapel of Our Lady of Fourvière a promise to work to bring about the Marist project.

As time passed he found himself more and more responsible as leader for the project. His work in the parish of Cerdon, in the mission area of the Bugey, and in the College at Belley, further shaped his ideas of a Congregation dedicated to Mary.

In 1836 he was elected superior general of the Congregation of Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Mary.

Jean-Claude Colin governed the Congregation for 18 years until 1854. He spent 21 years at La Neylière where he completed his work on the Constitutions. He died on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1875.

## ■ LE BARBERY

Jean-Claude's parents, Jacques Colin and Marie Gonnet, were married on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1771. Jacques was 24 years old; Marie was not yet 14. They lived at Le Barberty, about 2kms away from St Bonnet-le-Troncy, where they owned and cultivated a piece of land. During the winter months they turned to weaving.

### The Colin family

Jacques and Marie (parents)	Jeanne-Marie
Claudine	Pierre
Jean	Anne-Marie (died at birth)
Mariette	Jean-Claude
Sebastien	Joseph

Jean-Claude's godparents were his oldest sister, Claudine, and his oldest brother, Jean. Hence his name, Jean-Claude.

The house where Jean-Claude was born no longer exists, but a cross, erected in 1936, marks the site of the house.

The surroundings of Le Barberty had a formative influence on Jean-Claude. Above the house is the hill of Le Crest, where Jean-Claude loved to walk.

*Father Colin said one day that when he was very young before he began his classical studies, he had a burning desire to withdraw alone in a forest, to live far from this world. Since he could not do this, he went to the minor seminary of Saint Jodard."*

(OM III, doc 819:7)

## ■ SAINT BONNET-LE-TRONCY

In 1790 the population of St Bonnet-le-Troncy was 1125.

An official report on the village of St Bonnet-le-Troncy describes the population as “largely belonging to the nobility and the privileged.”

At the age of 10, Jean-Claude Colin came to live at St Bonnet where he was under the care of his uncle Sebastien and his uncle’s housekeeper, Marie Echallier. Jean-Claude did his schooling here under the care of Soeur Marthe.

The church in which all the Colin children were baptised, dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The present church was built in 1821, and the bell tower was added in 1826.

A parish priest at the time when the Colin family lived at St Bonnet wrote this report:



*“All the inhabitants are Catholic.  
Most of them frequent the sacraments.  
They are more or less fervent in attending  
services. Catechism held fairly often.  
There is no school properly speaking.  
A good lass does her best to teach  
the youngsters. Most of the parishioners  
have some knowledge.”*

In the autumn of 1804, Jean-Claude Colin left St Bonnet and went to the minor seminary of St Jodard. He returned only for holidays, except for a time in April 1809 when he was seriously sick and returned home.

It was on this occasion that he experienced the shock of realizing how family relationships could be damaged by interests in money and property.

Seemingly on the point of death, he overheard his relatives talking of his will, and what property would come to them following his death.

The doctor prescribed medicine which he hoped would bring a cure to Jean-Claude. Someone who had an interest in the Colin estate tried to dissuade Jean-Claude from taking the medicine, telling him that it had been poisoned. Only the persuasive tears of his brother made Jean-Claude take the medicine.

This incident, and the tragedy of losing his parents during the French Revolution, marked the early years of Jean-Claude Colin.

“The world” for young Jean-Claude was not a friendly place.

### ■ SAINT JODARD

St Jodard was one of several minor seminaries that had been founded during the time of the French Revolution in an effort to provide priests for ministry.

In Colin's time the superior of the seminary was Father Phillibert Gardette. This man was to have a significant influence on Colin, as his superior at this minor seminary and later as his superior at the major seminary of St Irénée in Lyons.

When Jean-Claude Colin was at St Jodard, it was reputed to be one of the finest minor seminaries in that part of France.

Records of the minor seminary show that Colin was a very devout, bright and diligent pupil. In 1806-07 his rating for piety and progress were both “excellent”.

*“... one of the best minor seminaries  
in the diocese of Lyons ...”*









**Route Chavoin**

## ■ JEANNE-MARIE CHAVOIN

Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn was born in Coutouvre, in the Beaujolais region.

Her childhood was secure and tranquil, even though these were the times of the French Revolution. Before the Revolution, village life had circulated round the church and its feasts. Now the church was closed, the priests were in hiding and had to celebrate the sacraments secretly, the village school was closed.

When Jeanne-Marie was in her twenties, public Catholic worship was restored, but there was now an urgent need for pastoral and spiritual renewal. Jeanne-Marie was drawn to this movement.

When she was invited to Cerdon to talk with Jean-Claude and Pierre Colin about the Marist project, she knew immediately that this was what she wanted, and before the end of 1817 she and her friend Marie Jotillon arrived in Cerdon to begin their part of the Marist enterprise.

Differences in personality, temperament and background led Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Jean-Claude Colin to see crucial elements of the Marist charism in different ways. But despite these differences, each respected the other deeply.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn died on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1858.

## ■ COUTOUVRE

The name “Coutouvre” means “a hill open on all sides”. Jeanne-Marie’s birthplace reflects her temperament.

Her parents were Théodore Chavoïn and Jeanne Verchères. Théodore was aged 20 and Jeanne was 19 when they married in 1786. Jeanne-Marie was born three months after they were married, on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1786. She was baptized in the parish church on the day of her birth, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1786. Two more children were born into the family: Marie, who lived only a year, and Claudine-Marie.

The Chavoïn Family  
Théodore and Jeanne (parents)  
Jeanne-Marie  
Marie (died aged 1)  
Claudine-Marie

Jeanne-Marie lived all her childhood and early adult life in the village. At the time, the village had a population of 1700.

Jeanne-Marie's father Théodore was a tailor, whose home and shop was in the middle of the village. Villagers would gather to talk and exchange views while they did business with the tailor. Jeanne-Marie, being extroverted by temperament, would have been caught up in the life of the village. She developed an open, friendly and outgoing attitude to people.

"The world" for her would have been a friendly place, where one acts for the Lord in a simple, practical and down-to-earth way.

An incident in Jeanne-Marie's family life illustrates this. In France during the Revolution, each parish kept a memorial book which contained a list of all the families who during the Revolution helped and protected priests and saved them from persecution.



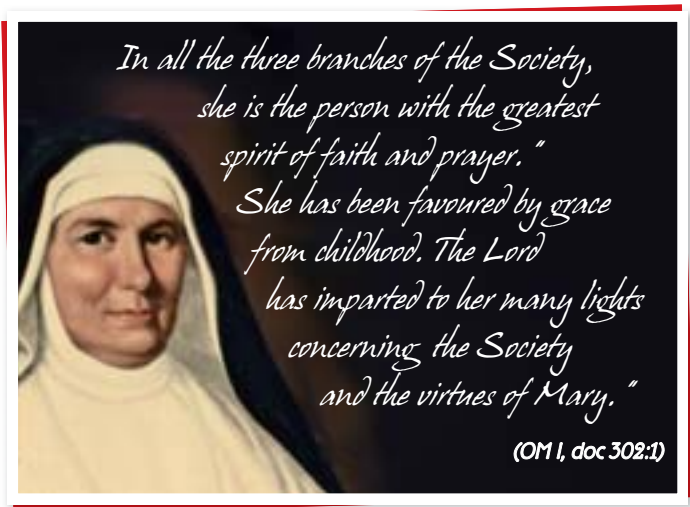
The Chavoïn name does not appear on any of these lists. But after the Revolution, an elderly priest who had taken the Constitutional Oath and had renounced his faith, now wanted to return to the Church. The Chavoïn family took this priest into their house and looked after him for 10 years until he died: an example of charity carried out in a hidden and practical way, when such deeds were neither glamorous nor fashionable.

*Jeanne-Marie with other religious  
born in Coutouvre*

In her adolescent years, Jeanne-Marie was influenced by a seminarian, Jean-Philibert Lefranc, who used to come to Coutouvre during his holidays. Lefranc initiated her into the life of prayer and spirituality. It was he who had advised her, "God does not want you to join an existing congregation, but one which has yet to come into existence."

Jeanne-Marie was 31 when she moved from Coutouvre to Cerdon with her friend Marie Jotillon at the invitation of Pierre Colin. She understood instinctively the deep implications of the Marist insight.

Jean-Claude Colin later said of Jeanne-Marie Chavoin:



## ■ JARNOSSE

Jeanne-Marie Chavoin (Mother St Joseph) resigned as superior general in 1853. Two years later she arrived at Jarnosse with three other sisters to open a school to teach young women in the village who were still uneducated. Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, now aged 69, began the project with great energy. The work soon flourished. Sixty

young girls of 16, 17, 18 and even 20 years of age were accepted as boarders. This was the beginning of a domestic science school where elementary instruction and particularly religious instruction took place.



*The convent she built still stands*

The sisters also visited the sick, looked after a girls' club, supervised the parish choir, looked after the church and the sacristy and prepared young girls and boys for First Communion. The parish priest of Jarnosse was Fr Lefranc, who had guided Jeanne-Marie at Coutouvre.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoin died in Jarnosse on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1858.

### ■ PRADINES

Jeanne-Marie often came to Pradines to the monastery of nuns, to pray for wisdom and enlightenment as she decided her vocation in life.

*(Refer to "Texts", 'Jeanne-Marie Chavoin Last Words'.)*





**Route Champagnat**

## ■ MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

Marcellin Champagnat was born on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1789, the ninth child in a very Christian family. He was educated at home by his mother and his aunt, a religious driven from her convent during the time of the French Revolution. His father was a farmer and a miller.

Marcellin began his studies for the priesthood at the minor seminary at Verrières. He later went to the major seminary in Lyons, where he met Jean-Claude Courveille, Jean-Claude Colin and the first Marist aspirants. Deeply aware of the cultural and spiritual poverty of the children of the countryside, Marcellin had insisted that “We must have brothers!” in the Marist project.

After his ordination, Marcellin was appointed to the parish of La Valla. Within six months of his arrival in the parish Marcellin had brought together his first two disciples.

Marcellin was among the first 20 Marists who took their vows in 1836. When Rome approved the Society of Mary and entrusted to it the missions of Oceania, Marcellin sent three Brothers with the first missionary priests to Oceania. “Every diocese of the world figures in our plans”, he had written.

Marcellin died at the age of 51 on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1840.

## ■ LE ROSEY

Marcellin was born in the hamlet of Le Rosey on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1789. The house where he was born still stands.

The Champagnat family  
 Jean-Baptiste and Marie Thérèse (Parents)  
 Jean-Barthélemy  
 Anne-Marie  
 Jean-Baptiste  
 Marguerite-Rose (died)  
 Marguerite Rose



Anne-Marie (died)  
Jean-Pierre  
Marcellin  
Joseph-Benoît

Marcellin's father was clearly a leader in the village. During the years of the French Revolution he was selected by the people for the position of town clerk.



*The Champagnat family home at Le Rosey*

His mother had a strong and robust faith. She attended Catholic worship

secretly, while her husband's position as a public figure required that he should preside at the secular rituals prescribed by the Revolution. More than once when Marcellin was finding difficulty during his seminary course, his mother accompanied him on foot to the shrine of St Francis Regis at La Louvesc.

With his background, Marcellin's view of "the world" was positive. The world was a place where one used one's practical gifts in the service of God and others. "Humility" meant using one's talents, getting on with the task, and making no fuss about it.

The windows of the Chapel at Le Rosey portray several incidents in the life of Marcellin:

- Marcellin's baptism in the Church at Marlhes
- Marcellin offering a bouquet to Our Lady
- The shrine at Fourvière
- Marcellin at Marlhes and La Valla
- The "three first places" that Marcellin desired for his Brothers
- Pius XII who consecrated the world to Mary and beatified Marcellin on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1955

## ■ MARLHES

Marcellin was baptized in the parish church of Marlhes. The population of Marlhes at the time was 2,700.

The church where he was baptized has been replaced by the present one, built in 1899.

One of the first schools that Marcellin opened was at Marlhes. The parish priest treated Marcellin's young Brothers badly. Marcellin withdrew the Brothers, but they eventually returned, and the Marist Brothers remain to this day at the elementary school of Marlhes.

## ■ LA VALLA

Marcellin was assigned to La Valla immediately after his ordination.

The church of Marcellin's time was situated in front of what is the present Town Hall. The presbytery, behind the present church, is the one in which he lived.

*Marcellin called  
La Valla "the cradle  
of the Institute"*

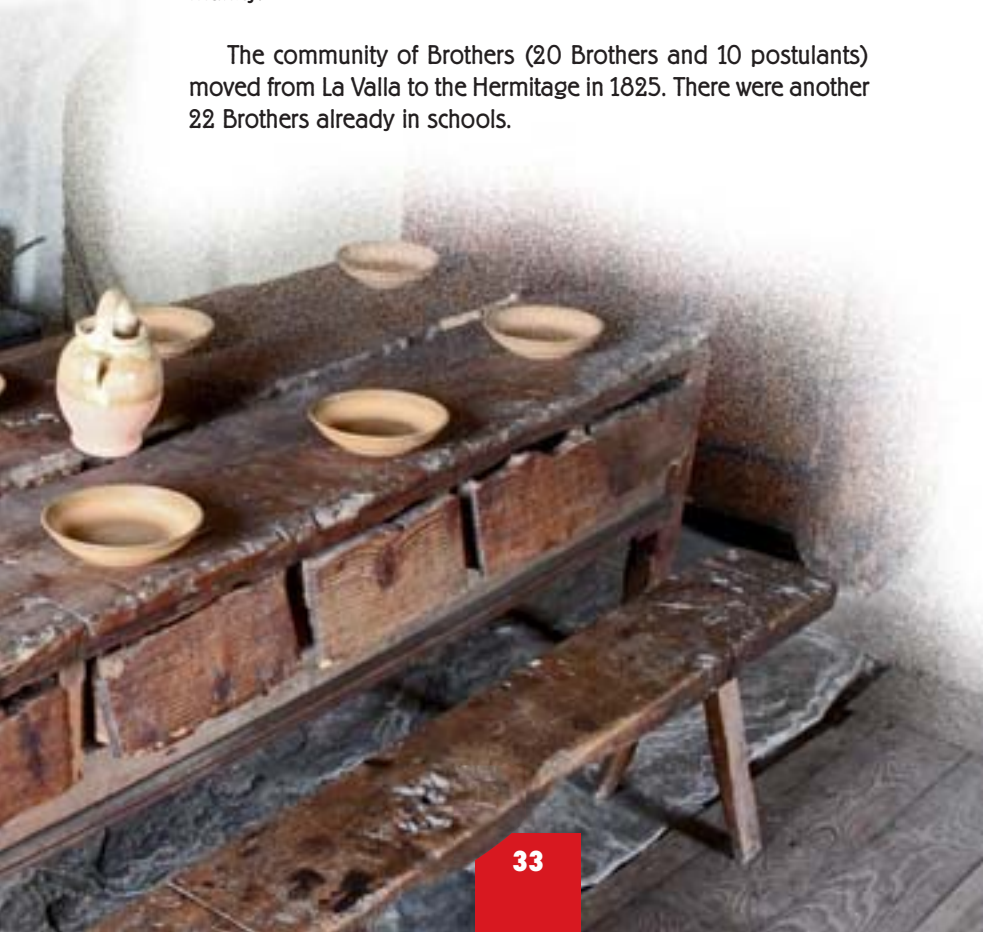


His encounter with a dying 17-year-old boy who had never heard of God moved him not to delay in organizing catechist Brothers. On January 2nd 1817, Marcellin gathered the first group of young men who would become the first Brothers.

The Brothers' house attached to the school is the original house bought by Marcellin. The house became the Institute's home for nearly 8 years. Here, Marcellin developed his style of Marist education. La Valla is rightly called "the cradle of the Institute".

In 1824, when Marcellin went to build the Hermitage, he left Jean-Claude Courveille in charge of the novices for the year. Courveille tried to take over the community, and made changes to the way of life. This brought great distress to Marcellin and to his community.

The community of Brothers (20 Brothers and 10 postulants) moved from La Valla to the Hermitage in 1825. There were another 22 Brothers already in schools.



## ■ THE HERMITAGE

Marcellin was a practical man, a builder, a man of rock. The Hermitage as he built it still stands – carved almost literally out of the rock hillside. Marcellin helped the stonemasons in the construction of this huge Mother House. It was Marcellin's home from 1825 till his death.

Until 1830 the Hermitage was the rallying point of Marist priests of the Lyons diocese. In 1830, Marcellin was elected regional superior of the Lyons group of Marists. In 1832 the priests moved to Valbenoite and the Hermitage remained the centre for the Brothers.

Three incidents in Marcellin's life had a marked effect on his spirituality:

- As a child, he witnessed a teacher harshly treating another pupil.
- Later, he witnessed a boy being humiliated by a teacher who gave the pupil a name which made the other pupils laugh.
- As a priest, he was called to the bedside of a dying boy who had no knowledge of God or the Christian faith.

*The house that Marcellin built – the Hermitage*





*"He was a man of rock,  
a man of strong mind  
and gentle heart."*

*– Frederick McMahon, fms*

Marcellin often said:

*I can never see a child  
without telling him  
how much God loves him.*

Marcellin always considered the Marist project as a single enterprise, even while he devoted his energies to the Brothers. He worked closely with Jean-Claude Colin whom he recognized as leader of the enterprise. Jean-Claude Colin often came to the Hermitage since the Brothers still considered him as their superior until the formal separation of Brothers and Fathers required by Rome took effect in 1852. Marcellin strongly supported and encouraged the efforts of Jeanne-Marie Chavoine and the Marist Sisters as well as the initiatives for the lay branch of the Marist project.

Marcellin was from beginning to end a practical man. His background formed him to be the sort of person who had a sense of what is a good tool and how to use it; what is a good stone and where best to put it; who is a good man and where he might best give glory to God.

Marcellin died at the Hermitage on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1840.

*(Refer to "Texts", 'Marcellin Champagnat Last Words'.)*



## Lyons (2)



## ■ LYONS AND MARIST HISTORY

We associate Lyons with Fourvière and with the Promise, made in 1816, to begin a Society with the name of Mary. But before and after this event, Lyons played a significant part in Marist history. Jean-Claude Colin was confirmed in the Cathedral of St John the Baptist; the Marist aspirants found themselves together at the major seminary of St Irénée from 1815; it was from Lyons that Jean-Claude Colin governed the Society from 1839-1854.



*"At the shrine of Fourvière twelve companions promised to found the Congregation of Marists."*

*- Constitutions, no 52*

## ■ ST JOHN'S CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral of St John the Baptist was built between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is the See of the Archbishop of Lyons, the Primate of Gaul.



For thirteen years, following the French Revolution, public religious worship was forbidden in the church. In 1803, the church was re-opened for worship. On Trinity Sunday of that year a great Confirmation ceremony was held in the Church. Jean-Claude Colin, aged 14, was confirmed.

*Jean-Claude Colin  
was confirmed in the Cathedral  
of St John in 1803*

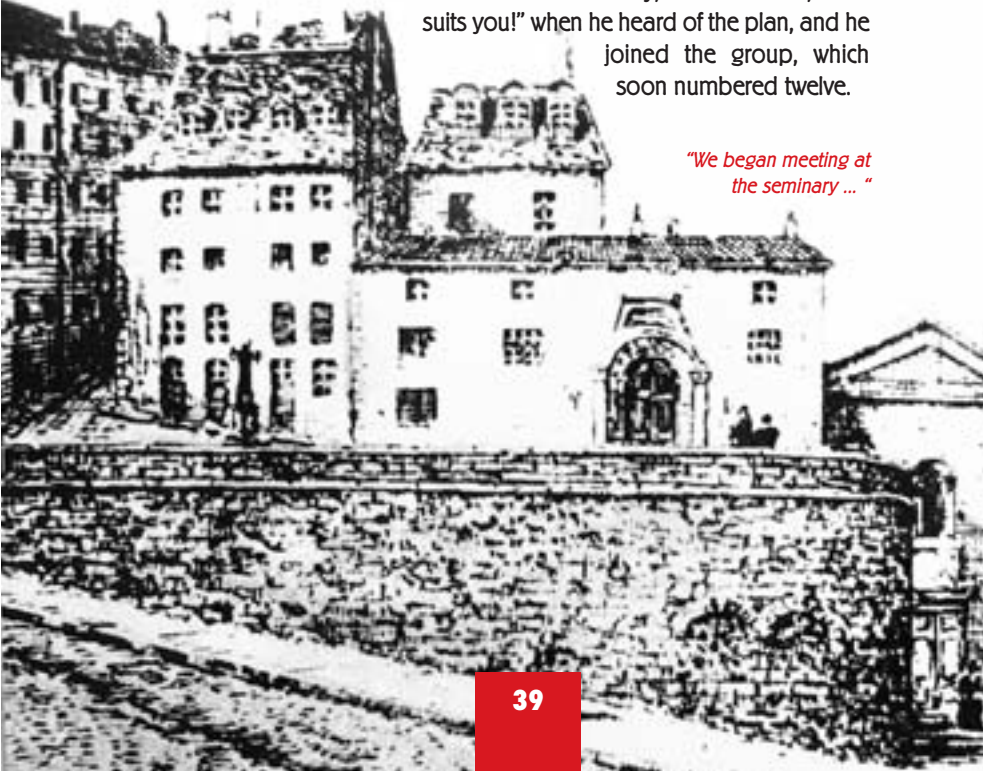


In July 1835, the Vicar General of the diocese, Jean Cholleton, was approached by Father Jean-Louis Pastre, a Canon of the Cathedral and a retired missionary priest, who had been asked by the Holy See to undertake missions in Western Oceania. Pastre had declined the offer, but the conversation eventually led Cholleton to suggest the name of Jean-Baptiste Pompallier who had associated himself with the group of “Marists” in Lyons. This conversation was to lead eventually to the approbation of the Society of Mary in 1836. So began the history of the Marist Missions in Oceania.

### ■ THE MAJOR SEMINARY OF ST IRÉNÉE

Jean-Claude Courville came to the Seminary of St Irénée in Lyons in 1815. Here he spoke to Etienne Déclas about his plan to begin a Society of Mary. Déclas was “singularly struck” by the idea, and passed it on to others, including Jean-Claude Colin, who was “struck to a supreme degree” and was left “kind of stupefied” by the idea. Colin, who had been thinking of something along these lines before he came to the seminary, said to himself, “That suits you!” when he heard of the plan, and he joined the group, which soon numbered twelve.

*“We began meeting at the seminary ...”*



*"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.'"*

(OM II, doc 705:3)

The first Marist aspirants completed their seminary training here, and 8 of them (including Courveille, Colin, Champagnat, Déclas and Terrailon) were ordained by Bishop Louis Dubourg, the Bishop of New Orleans, U.S.A. on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1816. The seminary was located where the present Metro station Croix-Paquet is situated. Nothing remains of the seminary.

## ■ THE SEMINARY COUNTRY HOUSE

At times the young Marist aspirants used to meet in the rooms of Father Jean Cholleton at the seminary's "country house". Their enthusiasm was fired by realizing the importance of being given the name of Mary, and by reflecting on the great needs of souls.

*Fr Cholleton lent his room at the country house of the major seminary to us, and there we met secretly to encourage each other in the project."*

(OM II, doc 591:8)

*We used those meetings to inflame our enthusiasm, at times with the thought that we had the happiness of being the first children of Mary, and at times with the thought of the great needs of the people."*

(OM II, doc 750:5, 6)

No trace of the country house remains today.

## ■ THE SHRINE OF FOURVIÈRE

There has been a shrine dedicated to Our Lady on the hill of Fourvière since 1170. Many religious Congregations look to this shrine as a significant place in their history.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1816, the 12 Marist aspirants climbed the steps to the shrine of Fourvière to make their commitment to the Marist project. They attended the first Mass of Jean-Claude Courveille, the originator of the project, who had been ordained the previous day. Under the corporal used at the Mass they placed the written Promise which they had signed. In this document, they resolved to devote themselves to the foundation of the Society of Mary.



*"We climbed the steps to the shrine of Fourvière ..."*

In the years that followed, many Marists came to the shrine.

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1833, a Mass was celebrated here before the departure of Frs Collin, Chanel and Bourdin for Rome.

In October 1836, before the departure of the first missionaries for Oceania, Bishop Pompallier had a novena of Masses said here and on the first day, Fr Chanel hung a heart containing the names of the missionaries round the neck of the infant Jesus.

Fourvière, and the heart containing the names of Marists, became very important to missionaries who often make reference to these in their letters.



*"When you go to Fourviere you will see the image of the heart of Our Lady which contains a list in which the name of your son is written. This surely will bring you pleasure."*

*(Catherin Servant to his parents. LRO Vol 1, doc 14:9)*

*An immense association  
to embrace the whole world."*

*- Jean-Claude Colin*



*Father, when you go to Fourviere, do not forget me  
in the presence of the Blessed Virgin. "*

(Br. Colomb [Pierre Poncet] to Colin,  
8 May, 1842. LRO Vol 2, doc 150)

On the left of the chancel is a plaque commemorating the event of the Marist promise: on the opposite side there is a plaque commemorating the Marist Brothers.

## ■ THE TOWER HOUSE AND THE THIRD ORDER

One of the first groups of lay people in the Society was composed of men who banded themselves together to live a spiritual life in the world. They called themselves the "Institute of the Tertiary Brothers of Mary".

Little is known about this group except that it was the responsibility of the Bishop, that it was a lay organization run by a layman (M. Colard), who had the title of "Rector", that it was organized very democratically, and that it was directed by Fr Pompallier. The motto of the group was "Openly Christians, secretly Religious".

The house where the group of men used to meet was the round tower house near the present Basilica and Chapel. The house was bought by M. Colard in 1823.

Throughout his whole life, Jean-Claude Colin held firm to his ideas about the Third Order. In 1872, at the end of his life, he said:

*"You will be astonished to hear that I have  
a great ambition - to seize the whole world under  
the wings of Mary by means of the Third Order.  
The Blessed Virgin entrusts (the Third Order)  
to you like a bridge to go to souls, to sinners. "*

(OM III, doc 846:35-36)

(Refer to "Texts", 'The Beginnings of the Society',  
'The Fourvière Pledge', 'The Third Order'.)





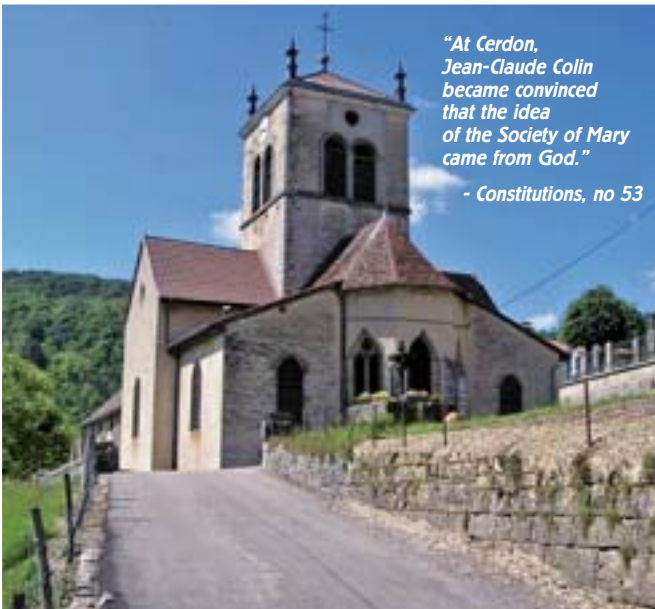
# Cerdon

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1816, Pierre Colin was named parish priest of Cerdon. His assistant was his newly-ordained younger brother, Jean-Claude.

At this time Pierre had no idea of the “Marist enterprise”. When Jean-Claude did reveal the project to Pierre, Pierre sent for Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, who came to Cerdon in 1817, bringing Marie Jotillon with her.

Colin lived at Cerdon from 1816 to 1825. He considered Cerdon as a place of significant graces for himself and the Society.

- At Cerdon Colin became convinced that the Society of Mary came from God.
- At Cerdon, probably in 1819, he made a vow to go to Rome.
- From Cerdon he made two visits to the Nuncio in Paris.
- From Cerdon he wrote to the Pope in 1822.
- In Cerdon he began to write the first ideas for his Rule.
- On a journey from Cerdon, at La Coria, he had an experience which became a decisive moment for him.



*“At Cerdon,  
Jean-Claude Colin  
became convinced  
that the idea  
of the Society of Mary  
came from God.”*

*- Constitutions, no 53*



The “graces of Cerdon” changed Jean-Claude Colin. From being wooden and “dead” in his sermons, he became an effective preacher: from being timid he became someone that the men in the parish turned to for advice: from being a follower of the Marist project he became someone who took up more and more responsibility for establishing the project.

Colin never made a novitiate. But if there was a place and a time in which he experienced an essential element of the novitiate process, it would be here at Cerdon.

*For six years I experienced a tremendous sweetness when I thought of this Society, with a clear certainty that this was the work of God.*

(OM II, doc 447)

“Interiorly filled with a lively confidence amounting to a kind of certainty that the project came from God and that it would eventually succeed, he used whatever free moments the sacred ministry allowed him, to prepare for this success by jotting down the first thoughts that were to serve as a basis for the Constitutions.”

(OM III, doc 815)

Later in his life he wrote that the experience of “tasking God” was a key experience in formation, especially in the novitiate.

“I would try simply to unite them to God, to bring them to a spirit of prayer. Once they were united to God, everything

*“... I experienced a tremendous sweetness when I thought of this Society....”*

*– Jean-Claude Colin*



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 you do is completely useless. ...But once having tasted God a novice will turn to Him again and again.”

(FS 63)

## ■ LA CORIA

In July 1823, Colin made a journey to Belley to talk with Bishop Devie. He left the presbytery at 4.00am, but after 20 minutes, as he climbed the track up La Coria leading to Mérial, he felt a great sense of weariness which made him stop his journey. After a prayer to Our Lady and what Marist tradition regards as a significant spiritual experience, Jean-Claude Colin felt re-energized and able to carry on.

Colin later said,

*On one of the voyages I made for the Society it seemed to me that all the devils were after me to stop me from going. Yes, I believe it. I was heavy... I could not continue. I felt an invincible repugnance. Twenty minutes along the way I fell to my knees in the moonlight in the middle of the path and I said, "My God, if it is not your will, then I will not go. But if you will it, give me back my strength and so show me if it is your holy will. All at once, I felt invigorated, light-hearted, relaxed. I raced on like a hare."*

(OM II, doc 425:10)

Later, Mayet wrote that “the Blessed Virgin had appeared to him and that this was a confirmation of the will of God for the Society, and that it would be desirable that a chapel be built on the site where Mary appeared.

*(OM II, doc 670: d, e, f. Also 717, 748:6, 752:15, 819:52)*

When asked point-blank by Fr Choisin if he had had a vision of the Blessed Virgin, Colin replied, “Oh all right, yes ...” He regretted saying this.

*(OM III, doc 827. Intro. P. 407)*

## ■ THE PARISH CHURCH

The site of the Church dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The centre of the present church was built in 1772. The clock tower, destroyed in the Revolution, was rebuilt in 1844.

The church reminds us of several significant events:

- Colin’s prayers before the statue of Our Lady
- The confessions heard by the Colin brothers in the Lady Chapel.
- Pierre Colin’s dramatic gesture of prostrating himself in front of the altar to ask God’s pardon for those who worked on Sunday.
- The clothing ceremony of the first Marist Sisters on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1824.



## ■ THE PRESBYTERY

The presbytery dates from 1822, and was built in the time of the Colin brothers.

From the outside one can see the two windows of Jean Claude's room. It was here that he prayed and drafted the Rule for future Marists.

*(OM III, doc 839:36)*



## ■ THE SISTERS' HOUSE

This is found on the old road to La Balme, to the left before one leaves the village. It can be identified by the flight of steps at the front. The sisters moved there on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1824. The first postulants then joined them, and they took on a few pupils. They lived in this house till June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1825, when they left Cerdon for Belley.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn recalled:



*We remained 13 months in this house. Although we had more room than in the first, we had much more to put up with, because we had continual contacts with an old widow who had let us her rooms, which communicated with ours. This widow was a person without religion, who insulted us and caused us every kind of annoyance.*

(RMJ doc 99)

*"If I went back to Cerdon I would go and see the small study at the foot of my bed... where I wrote the first ideas on the Society."*

Jean-Claude Colin





**Le Bugey**

Jean-Claude Colin often referred to the mission work in the Bugey as a touchstone for all that was basic in Marist life and practice. It was here that he experienced the workings of God's mercy, and here that he became convinced that Marists were to become "instruments of divine mercy."

The missions in the Bugey area, along with the Missions of Oceania are cited by the Society's Mission statement of 1985 as key symbols of Marist life and practice.

### ■ MISSIONS IN RURAL FRANCE

Missions in rural areas of France were part of the revival during the post-Revolution Restoration times (1815-1830). The Society of Missions of France, founded by Fr Rauzan; the Congregation of the Missions, founded by St Vincent de Paul; the Company of Mary, founded by Grignon de Montfort, were dedicated to missions at home. Preaching missions as St Francis Regis did was what lay at the heart of Courveille's dream. This is what he had communicated to Etienne Déclas and to Jean-Claude Colin.

*"In the mountains of Bugey the first Marist missionaries experienced the joy of proclaiming the Good News to forgotten people."*

*– Constitutions, no 54*





The aim of the post-Revolution Missions was to rekindle the faith among the people, to bring people back to the Church, or to regularize marriages entered into without the church's blessing.

But in many cases the Mission had another aim: - to confirm the thinking of the Restoration among the people: to unite throne and altar throughout the country. The Marist approach to missions was different in emphasis.

### ■ AN ABANDONED OUTPOST

The Bugey is an area of country 1500 – 3000 feet above sea level. It was a part of the diocese that had been neglected from 1802-1823. It was considered to be an outpost, and to be sent there was regarded by priests as a punishment or a penance.

Being in the mountain area, the Bugey usually lies under snow from November to March. Conditions in the churches and confessionals would have been most difficult.



*In winter, conditions would have been most difficult*

Some of the parishes in this area had no priest at the time of the mission. According to Colin, some of the priests had no faith.

*(OM II, doc 606:6)*

The priest at St Jérôme was described as “a schismatic, an apostate; a stubborn man in whom no one has any confidence.” One at least was living an immoral life.

*(OM II, doc 581)*

The state of the churches and their furnishings was generally bad; belfries which had been knocked down during the Revolution had not been replaced. Many marriages were without the blessing of the Church. Spiritual needs were immense.

## ■ MARIST MISSIONS

When Etienne Déclas joined the Colin brothers at Cerdon on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1824, Pierre Colin wrote to Bishop Devie: "Today the Society of Mary begins."

From 1825 to 1829, Colin, Déclas and Jallon (joined by Humbert in 1828) preached missions in this area.

The first missions (La Balme, Corlier and Izenave) were preached from Cerdon. The rest of the missions were conducted from Belley.

Marists preferred to call themselves catechists rather than missionaries. They were very respectful to the parish priests, and they made sure that they gave no offence to the people. There was special emphasis on catechizing children.

The mission usually lasted three to four weeks. On arrival at the place of the mission, the first thing the missionaries did was to visit the church; then they visited the Parish Priest; then they heard children's confessions.



*"We must win souls  
by submitting to them."  
- Jean-Claude Colin*

The first instruction to the people was a friendly invitation to come to the mission. The sermons in the first week were on the mercy of God, and other subjects calculated to win the confidence of the people. Later, they preached on the commandments, and when most of the confessions were over, they preached on sin. It was the goodness of the priest, Colin claimed, not the fear he created in people, which brought them to Christ.

Colin insisted that the missionaries should give no fiery sermons against those who were failing in their obligations, and no public reproaches for those who did not come to the mission.

The motto of the missionaries was:

*We must win souls by submitting to them.*

The missionaries held practical liturgies:

- A service of the dead, with a procession to the cemetery and a sermon
- A blessing of children
- A consecration to the Blessed Virgin
- A service of atonement
- Renewal of Baptismal promises
- Planting of the Cross
- Missioners' farewell

*(OM II, docs 446 a; 581:19; 583, 587:4,5,6; 662)*

Most of the travelling of the missionaries was done on foot through snow and mud.

Living conditions were primitive. If there was room in the parish priest's house, the missionaries stayed there. Otherwise they slept in the local inn. Either option presented difficulties.

In some places the parish priest was strange and eccentric. In other places, the conditions in the inns were primitive: rat-infested, and with inadequate accommodation and poor food. In one place, the only bedroom in the inn belonged to the landlady, and she planned to share it with the missionaries!

*(OM II, doc 639:2)*

## ■ MISSIONS 1825 – 1829

Between 1824 and 1829 the Marists preached 27 missions, of which 3 were retreats. The significant ones in the first years were:

<b>From Cerdon:</b>	La Balme,	January	1825
	Corlier,	February	1825
	Izenave,	March	1825

<b>From Belley:</b> Lacoux,	October	1825
Chaley,	October	1825
Châtillon de Corneille,	November	1825
Poncieux,	November	1825
Châtillon de Corneille,	December	1825
St Jérôme,	Jan/Feb	1826
Vieux d'Izenave,	February	1826
Aranc,	March	1826
Innimont,	November	1826
St Germain,	December	1826
Contrevoz,	Jan/Feb	1827
Ordonnaz,	February	1827
Tenay,	March	1827
Ruffieu		1829
(Last mission preached by Colin)		

Colin looked back on the Missions in the Bugey with great fondness and saw them as a key moment in the Society's history. The hardships meant little to him. It was more important to him that a man had said, "Wife, give me a rosary. Tonight I cried. Tomorrow I will confess", or that someone had whispered to him, "Father, I've waited 10 years for you to come!"

*(OM II, doc 663:4)*

Our journey through the Bugey will follow some of the first missions that the Marists undertook: La Balme, St Jérôme, Chatillon de Corneille, Corlier, Izenave, Ordonnaz, Innimont, Ruffieu, Lacoux, Chaley and Tenay.

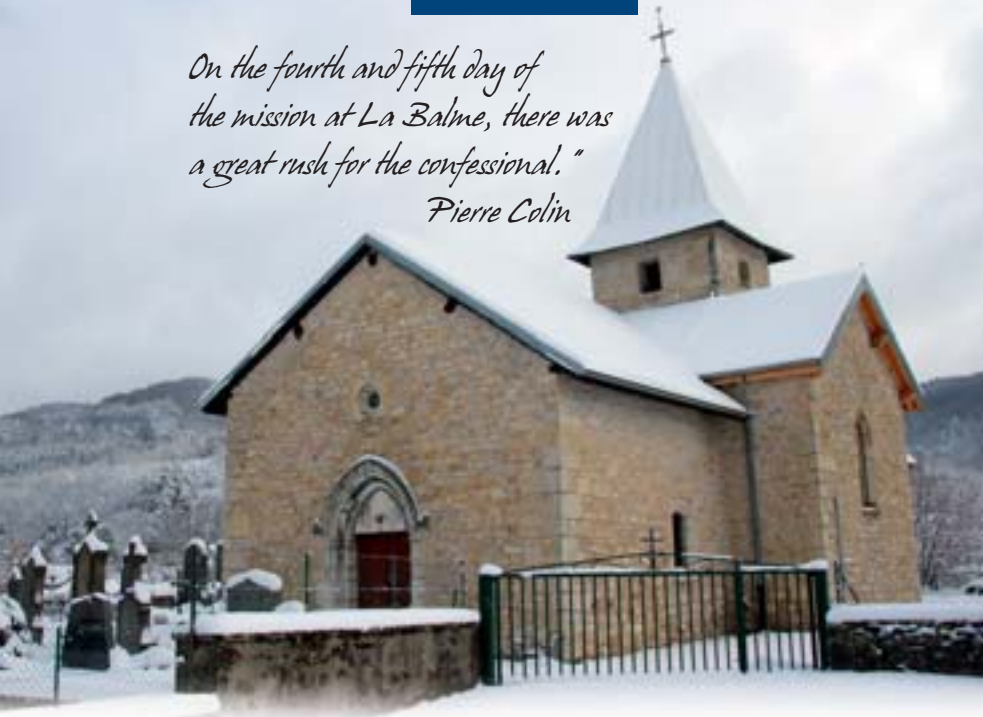
## ■ LA BALME

This was the first mission preached with Déclas. Colin and Déclas walked two and a half miles up the hill during which Déclas alarmed and amused Colin by stumbling as he walked up the hill, his eyes glued to his breviary.

*(OM III, doc 819:59)*

They offered Mass, gave a morning instruction, visited families, conducted a catechism class for children, and finished the day with evening instruction before heading downhill to Cerdon. In a letter

*On the fourth and fifth day of  
the mission at La Balme, there was  
a great rush for the confessional.”  
Pierre Colin*



to Bishop Devie, Pierre Colin reported that from the fourth and fifth days, there was a great rush for the confessional.

Déclas was a very bad speaker and preacher, who made many mistakes. “At first I couldn’t bear to listen to him, he made so many mistakes”, Colin said.

*(OM II, doc 468)*

Colin forbade Déclas to preach in any of the towns or to say Mass in public, “because he said it in a way that provoked ridicule.”

*(OM II, doc 469)*

“But then,” Colin said, “I realized something else: despite Déclas’ mistakes in French, God blessed the preaching.”

*(OM II, doc 468)*

Déclas became known as “the apostle of the Bugey.” “No one else is surrounded by so many people,” said Colin.

*(OM I, doc 122:2; 131:1-3; OM II, doc 433:2; 469; 581:6,22; 591:16; 748:11; OM III, doc 819:59)*

## ■ ST JÉRÔME

This parish was in a bad state at the time of Colin. The parish priest did not give the sacraments to the people, and he did not preach to them.



*"We never  
reproached people,  
never ..."*  
– Jean-Claude Colin

## ■ CHÂTILLON DE CORNEILLE

The locality has changed little since Colin's time. The present church is as it was in Colin's time. The mission took place in 1825-1826.

An incident took place here. The missionaries had to stay at the inn. But this inn had only one bed to offer the travelers, and that happened to be in the same room occupied by the proprietor and his wife. In order to give a chance for the missionaries to change for bed, the proprietor and his wife went out for a time. As soon as they had gone out, Colin locked the door on them: he was not going to sleep in the same bed as someone else – even another priest. The missionaries took both the available beds, and when the proprietor banged on the door to get in, Colin told them to go and look elsewhere for a bed.

*(OM III, doc 819:61)*

*"Show great kindness to sinners  
who come to you in the confessional."*  
– Jean-Claude Colin



## ■ CORLIER

The second mission was preached here in 1825.

Colin was accompanied by Jallon, who was so short-sighted that he did not realize that he was preaching to only one person in the pews. Father Colin said,

*"You're lucky you are so shortsighted.  
It doesn't matter to you whether the church  
is full or empty."*

(OM III, doc 819:62)

On the second day of the mission there were a few curious souls at the back of the church. Before the first week was over, the church was full to overflowing.

There are stories told of how Colin profited by the deaths of people to take the chance of preaching on the eternal truths of life and death, sin and repentance. In spite of the indifference of the people, the missionaries stuck to their job, and many people in the area returned to the practice of their faith.

## ■ IZENAVE

In the winter of 1825 Father Jallon invited the Colin brothers to preach a mission at Izenave, where he was the parish priest.

Jallon had been Jean-Claude Colin's 8th level professor at the minor seminary at St Jodard. He became Colin's confessor and director during some years of Colin's formation.

Jallon later joined the mission band. He began as a rather rigid moralist, but developed into a compassionate confessor during the missions.

## ■ ORDONNAZ

Colin's advice to missionaries came out of his experience in the missions:

*Gentlemen, 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.*

(Mayet 6, 683f; Keel, doc 492)

## ■ INNIMONT

At the time of the missionaries there was no inn in this town, and the presbytery was a stone shack which had been empty for 25 years. All the furniture had disappeared. The roof had large holes, and there were no doors, and no panes in the windows. Colin, Déclas

*At the end of the mission the villagers pleaded with the missionaries to stay with them.*





and Jallon began the mission by sweeping out the rubbish from the house. Then they went out begging for their food, with little result.

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 odour used to kill me."

*(OM III, doc 819:64)*

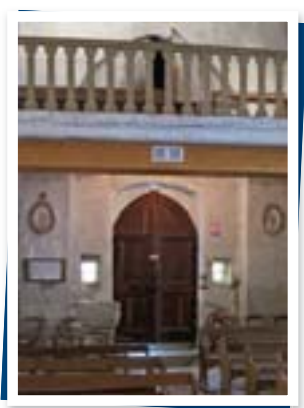
But at the end of the mission, the villagers pleaded that the three men stay. Men and women knelt in the mud and tried to kiss the feet of the missionaries. As the three men tried to move off, the mountains rang with the shouts of the people who cried: "Vive les missionnaires!"

*(OM II, doc 662:1-4)*

## ■ RUFFIEU

Jean-Marie Humbert preached the mission at Ruffieu with Jean-Claude Colin in 1829. He later recalled: "On the closing day of the mission so many people came from the neighbouring 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, Father 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 the 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."

*(OM III, doc 879)*



*Father Colin said,  
"Go up to the choir loft  
and from the window speak  
to the people outside."*

This was the last mission given by the Marists in this "Bugey period" (1825 – 1829). It was during this mission that the superior of the minor seminary in Belley, Fr Pichat, died. Bishop Devie re-

called Jean-Claude Colin to take charge of the minor seminary. A new epoch for the Marists was to begin.

This brought to an end the career of the first group of missionaries in the Bugey. Etienne Déclas, however, continued preaching in the area. From 1832 to 1862, using La Capucinière as a base, he covered the entire region of the Bugey. At his death he was called "The Apostle of the Bugey".

## ■ LACOUX

The first mission to be given by the Marists after they had moved from Cerdon to Belley was in Lacoux in 1825.

In the register of the parish there is the first mention of the missionaries as a group of "Missionaries of the Society of Mary."

In Lacoux the missionaries found the people to be reasonably committed to the practice of their faith. The missionaries probably put in place a "Mission Cross" here after the mission. But Colin insisted that a cross should not be put in place if it aroused antagonism or triumphalism. The principle was: "As long as the cross is planted in people's hearts, there is no need to plant it in the ground."



## ■ CHALEY

At Chaley the Marists probably preached a series of spiritual exercises rather than a mission. They did this here in Chaley while they were giving the mission in Lacoux in 1825. The countryside and the distance in height from Lacoux to Chaley give an idea of the physical difficulties of missions in this area.

*"Follow those opinions which give greatest play to the mercy of God."*

*- Jean-Claude Colin*

■ TENAY

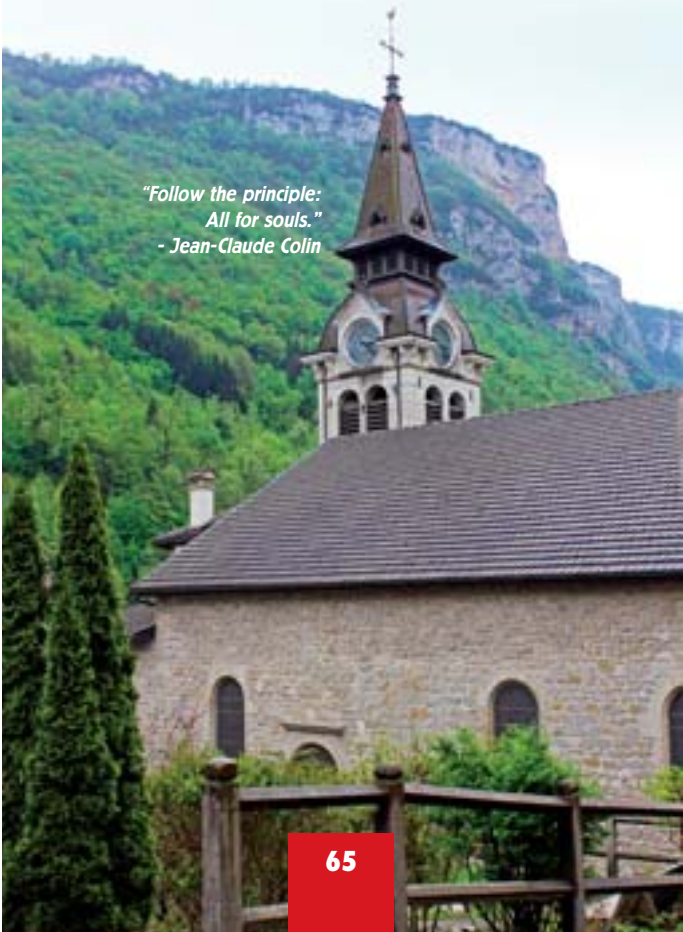
A mission was given here in March 1827 by Colin, Déclas and Jallon. It was the only mission given in an industrial area. It was difficult for the people to get to the mission here because work began just as the mission was beginning. But Colin managed to encourage people to come to the mission. It was through his experience in this mission that Colin advised Marist missionaries to encourage and not reprimand people.

“Speak with esteem and respect of those who have not made the mission. Excuse them by attributing their absence to the pressure of business or other responsibilities.”

*(OM II, doc 661:2.)*

*(Refer to “Texts”, ‘The Bugey Missions’.)*

*“Follow the principle:  
All for souls.”  
- Jean-Claude Colin*







**Belley**

## ■ BELLEY

Belley town was the See of the diocese of Belley, restored as a diocese in 1823. In 1832 its population was 4,286. Today its population is 6,000.

In Belley Colin came to appreciate the value of education in the mission of the Society. While he was teaching in the College in Belley, he wrote the document, *Advice to the Staff of the College of Belley*.

In Belley Colin was elected superior general of the Society of Mary.

In Belley the first Marist vows were taken.

In Belley the branches of the priests/brothers and of the sisters of the Society of Mary were consolidated.

In a sense, Belley is the place where the seed of the Marist idea materialized for the Marist Fathers and Brothers, for the Sisters and also for the Marist Third Order.

The Fathers, called to form part of Bishop Devie's plan for a diocesan missionary group, arrived in Belley in June 1825. They were lodged in the minor seminary, and from there they continued to preach missions in the Bugey for the next 4 years. They were already spoken of as "Marists" at this stage. In 1829 Devie named Jean-Claude Colin as superior of the College.

The Sisters arrived in Belley on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1825. They bought a piece of enclosed but uncultivated ground which they named as Bon Repos. This was the Mother House of the Sisters from 1825 to 1891.



*In Belley, consolidation of the Marist idea began*

The Third Order could be said to have begun here. At the beginning of Lent in 1833, a retreat was given to lay people. It was attended by 10 women from the town. Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn made the retreat with them.

### ■ THE COLLEGE/MINOR SEMINARY

When Colin arrived in Belley in 1825 the College building was a minor seminary for the diocese and a day school for local boys.

Bishop Devie had asked the two Colin brothers to form a Home Mission Band with Etienne Déclas and Etienne Jallon. He gave them lodgings in the minor seminary and from there the missionaries set out to preach missions in the Bugey area: Lacoux, Chaley, Châtillon de Cornelle, Poncieux, St Jérôme, Vieux d'Izenave, Aranc, etc., etc.

The four "Marists" were lodged in rooms on the top floor. They were barely tolerated by the staff of the seminary. (OM II, doc 465)

The rector, Fr Guigard, was antagonistic towards the missionaries, and his attitude was communicated to the pupils.



Fr Déclas was a ready target for mockery and scorn. He had strange habits – facial grimaces and arm-flinging as he warded off distractions in prayer. The pupils quickly picked up these idiosyncrasies. While engaging him in conversation, they would tie pieces of rag to the bottom of his soutane.

*"We suffered quite a lot in this house."  
– Jean-Claude Collin*

Jealousy and resentment towards the Marists was open. One typical jibe was: “Here at Belley we have the second volume of the Jesuits, bound in the hide of an ass.”

*(OM II, doc 535:4)*

Jean-Claude Colin said: “We suffered quite a lot in this house ... You could hardly call it warm, and we were not too well off up there ... in the little corner we occupied .... They jeered at us now and then. ... They would willingly have spat on us ... Still, it was the most wonderful year of my life. We were poor, four poor priests – not famous men.”

*(OM II, doc 425:16)*

When Jean-Claude Colin was appointed superior of the seminary in 1829, there was an atmosphere of great tension among staff and pupils. Colin changed the atmosphere, and



*At the seminary college, Colin wrote his “Advice to the Staff of the College”.*



he developed into a remarkable educationalist. But this period of his life cost him a great deal in health. Mayet records that it was during this year that Colin's hair turned white.

(OM II, doc 476)

In the present college chapel are the statues of two men who were spiritual directors of the school between 1832 and 1844: Peter Chanel and Julian Eymard. Two canonized saints in the space of twelve years is an impressive record.

Today the school is the Institute Lamartine – named after the French poet who studied there from 1803 to 1807.

## ■ LA CAPUCINIÈRE

La Capucinière was given to the Marists in 1832. It was the first house the Marists owned. For this reason, and because it was for many years a house of formation for Marists, Father Colin considered it to be “the cradle of the Society.”

La Capucinière was the house where Jean-Claude Colin was elected superior general, and where the first Marist professions took place on September 12th, 1836.

The Brief *Omnium Gentium* had given the Marists the right to elect a superior general and to take vows. But a difficult decision had to be made: Where should this event take place? The original diocese of Lyons had been divided into two (Lyons and Belley). Each diocese wanted to retain its priests. Colin made a compromise: the gathering would be in Belley, but the Mother House would eventually be in Lyons.

*Father Colin called La Capucinière “the cradle of the Society”.*



In the 20 years since the Fourvière Pledge, about 50 priests had joined themselves in one way or another to the Marist project. But at the time of the first vows, there were 20, apart from Mgr. Pompallier who had already been named bishop.

Four of the 20 were the original signatories of the Fourvière Pledge:

Jean-Claude Colin  
 Marcellin Champagnat  
 Etienne Déclas  
 Etienne Terrailon

Pierre Colin had joined in 1817 before the separation of the dioceses.

Then there were the following:

<b>From Belley:</b>	Antoine Jallon	1825
	Jean-Marie Humbert	1828
	Pierre Convers	1830
	Denis Maîtreperre	1831
	Peter Chanel	1831
	Claude Bret	1831
	Antoine Séon	1832
	Claude Baty	1834

<b>From Lyons:</b>	Etienne Séon	1827
	Antoine Bourdin	1828
	Jean-Baptiste Pompallier	1829
	Jean-Baptiste Chanut	1831
	Jean Forest	1832
	Catherin Servant	1832
	Claude Chavas	1833
	Pierre Bataillon	1836

At the time of the professions, of the 20 confrères who took their vows, 11 belonged to the diocese of Belley, and 9 to the diocese of Lyons. Of these 9, five had been formed in Marist life by Marcellin Champagnat.

The meetings of the first 4 days of Retreat took place in the physics room of the Petit Séminaire. Four talks were given each day by Mgr. Pompallier. The other two sessions were conducted by Father Colin who explained the rule of the Congregation.

After his election as superior general, Father Colin remained at La Capucinière until 1839 when he moved to Puyлата in Lyons.

From 1834 La Capucinière was a scholasticate as well as a boarding school. It functioned as a novitiate for non-ordained Marist candidates until 1860, when the novitiate was transferred to Ste Foy in Lyons.

From 1860 to 1880 La Capucinière was the scholasticate until the scholasticate was transferred to Ste Foy in 1880. Following the expulsion of the Marists from France, it was used as a boarding school by a group of Sisters. It became a scholasticate again between 1897 and 1902.

La Capucinière was sold to the town of Belley in 1958, and is now an educational establishment for the town.

Today, all that remains of La Capucinière of the time of the Marists are the outside walls and the chapel where the Marists took their vows. The altar steps where they knelt remain as they were at the time of the first Professions.

*At the steps of the altar  
we made our vows,  
each one placing his hand  
in the hand of  
the superior general.*



## ■ BON REPOS

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1825, a group of 10 sisters and 5 postulants arrived in Belley. It was the same month that the Colin brothers arrived in Belley.

Bishop Devie offered to Jeanne-Marie Chavoin and the Sisters a property which contained a small house and a barn.

Originally, Bishop Devie had wanted them to take up residence in a property with a high surrounding wall. But Jeanne-Marie Chavoin opposed this from the beginning.

The barn was converted into a chapel and was used in this way for 12 years.

The whole Marist family took an interest in Bon Repos. Father Colin often went there to ask for prayer for particular intentions of the Society. Peter Chanel's sister was a member of this community, and Peter was farewelled from here as he left for Oceania.

The body of Jeanne-Marie Chavoin rests in the Chapel. In 1891 the house ceased to be the site of the general administration.

## ■ THE CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral was begun in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Work continued on it until 1851. The Cathedral contains the tomb of Bishop Devie, in the floor of the chapel on the left hand side.

Colin and Devie admired and respected each other greatly. Bishop Devie said once, "If God is

*"Monsignor Devie is one of the finest examples of a bishop that I know."  
– Jean-Claude Colin*



merciful to me, I will certainly not forget the Society of Mary in heaven.”

*(OM IV, p.271)*

Bishop Devie was keen to promote the Society, but his plans were different from Jean-Claude Colin's. While Father Colin had the view of a Society as an international body of people “going from place to place”, Bishop Devie wanted the Society to remain a congregation within his diocese. When Father Colin took a vow that if ever the Society had 30 members, he would have three thousand Masses said, Bishop Devie realized that Father Colin's view was that the Society of Mary would be universal or it would not exist

*(OM II, doc 749)*

## ■ THE BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

The building was constructed between 1766 and 1780. Bishop Devie moved into it in 1823 when the Diocese of Belley was established.

Jean-Claude Colin, Marcellin Champagnat and Jeanne-Marie Chavoin visited the Bishop here many times. Colin came here to plead with the Bishop to have his appointment as superior of the College revoked – without success.

Equally unsuccessful were Colin's efforts to avoid being made a Canon of the Cathedral. Having been given the canon's cape, Colin left it with the porter at the door of the Bishop's house as he left. From his upstairs window, the Bishop observed Colin sneaking away without the cape, and he called him back to retrieve it.



*“I will certainly not forget the Society of Mary in heaven.”*

*– Bishop Devie*

*(Refer to “Texts”, ‘The Election of Jean-Claude Colin’, ‘Jean-Claude Colin as formator’, ‘Bon Repos’.)*



A large, multi-masted sailing ship is visible on the left side of the frame, its dark silhouette contrasting against the bright, hazy sky. The ship's masts and rigging are clearly defined. The sea is calm, reflecting the golden light of the setting sun. The sun is a large, bright orange orb on the right side of the horizon, creating a soft glow across the sky. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image, containing the text "Route Chanel" in white.

# Route Chanel

## ■ PETER CHANEL MARTYR OF OCEANIA

Peter Chanel was born on July 12, 1803 at the farmstead of La Potière, near the little hamlet of Cuet. He was the fifth of eight children born to Claude-François Chanel and Marie-Anne Sibellas. Peter's father was a farmer and a miller.

The parish priest, Fr Jean-Marie Trompier, recognized in Peter the seeds of a vocation, and gave him lessons in preparation for seminary studies. Peter then began schooling in the town of Cras.

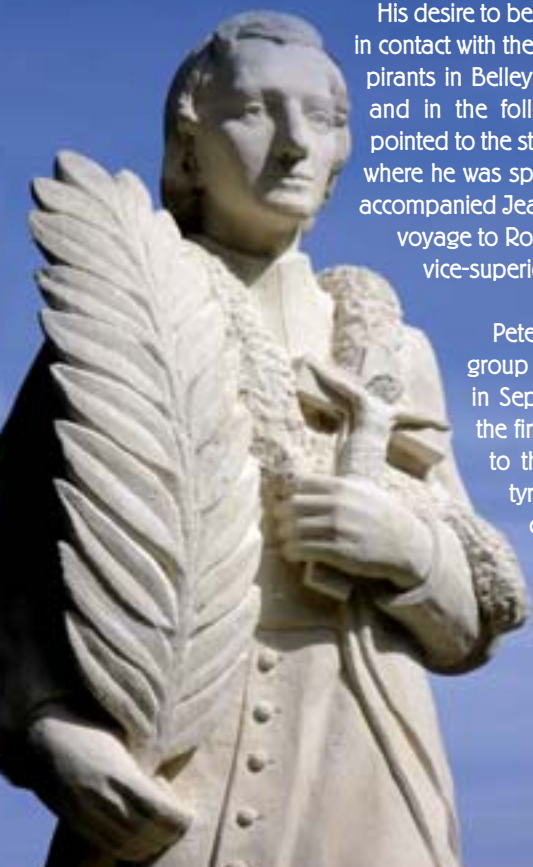
He entered the minor seminary at Meximieux. Here he met and became friends with two future Marists, Claude Bret and Denis Maîtreperre. He continued his studies at the major seminary at Brou, and was ordained priest by Bishop Devie on July 15, 1827.

His desire to be a missionary brought him in contact with the small group of Marist aspirants in Belley. He joined them in 1831, and in the following year he was appointed to the staff of the college at Belley, where he was spiritual director. In 1833 he accompanied Jean-Claude Colin on his first voyage to Rome. In 1834 he was made vice-superior of the college at Belley.

Peter Chanel was one of the group of 20 who took their vows in September 1836. He was in the first group of Marists to sail to the Pacific, and was martyred on the Island of Futuna on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1841.

*"How great is our consolation to think that the martyr intercedes for us in heaven!"*

*– Catherin Servant*





### ■ CUET

Peter Chanel's family home was near the hamlet of Cuet. As well as Peter's parents and 7 brothers and sisters, the home was shared by Peter's grandfather and his uncle and aunt and their two children.

The family home has been demolished and re-built. Only the well in front of the house remains from the time of Peter Chanel.

*Only the well  
in front of  
the family house  
remains*



### ■ CRAS

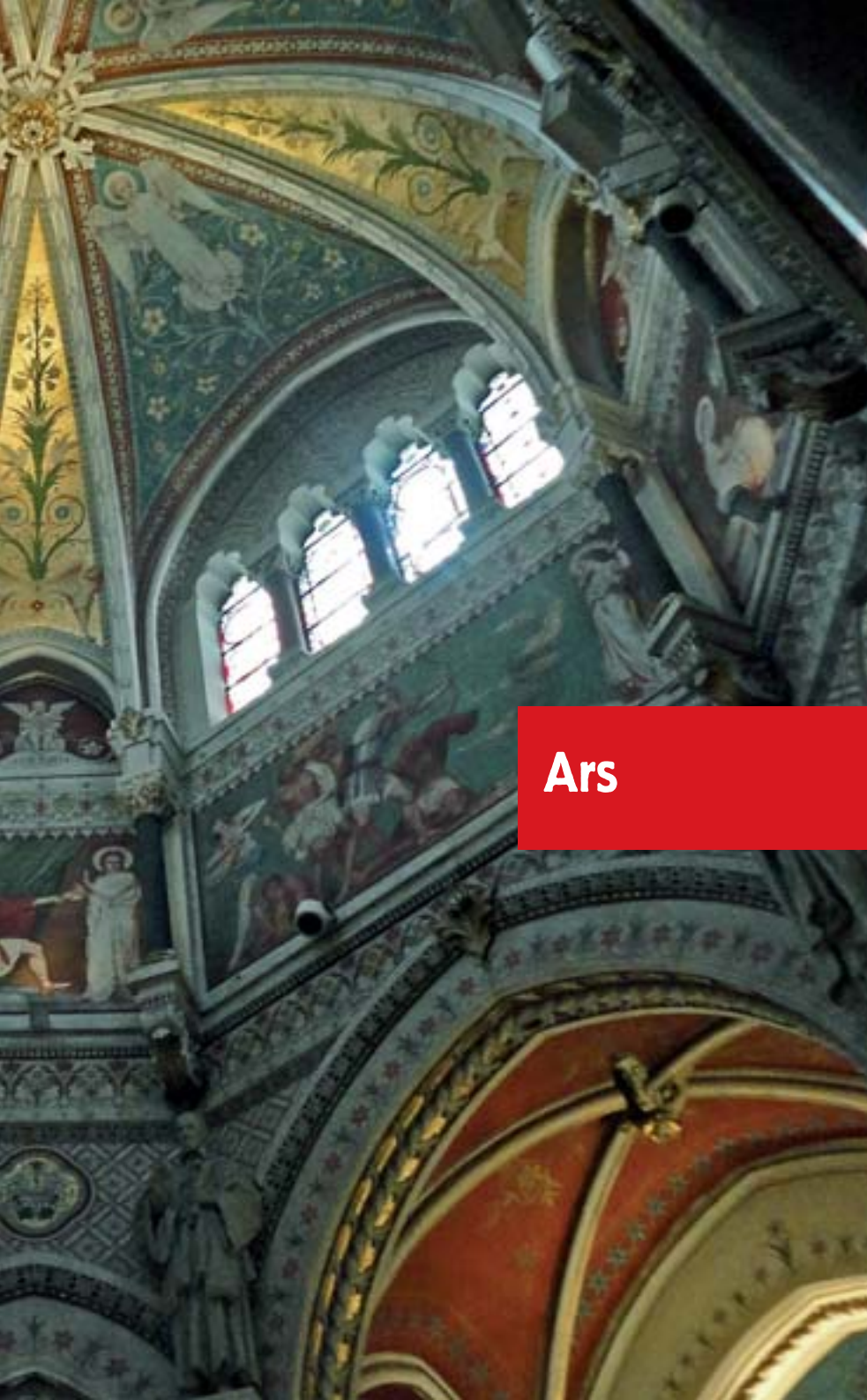
The Chanel family farm was situated in the parish of Cras. As a young boy Peter boarded here with the parish priest, Father Trompier, while he continued his studies. He made his first Communion in the church on March 23, 1817 at the age of nearly 14. He later told Br Marie-Nizier that it was at this time that he made up his mind to become a missionary.

On one occasion during his seminary studies he became discouraged; his mother brought him to pray at the statue of Our Lady of Consolation which still remains in the church.

Peter Chanel offered his first Mass in the church of Cras in July 1827.

*(Refer to "Texts", 'Peter Chanel'.)*





Ars

## ■ JEAN-MARIE VIANNEY

In 1812, Jean-Claude Colin, Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Marie Vianney were pupils at the minor seminary of Verrières. The following year they were together again at the major seminary of Lyons, but Vianney stayed for only 6 weeks. At that time he could not have heard about the Marist project. But later, when he was curé at Ars, he heard of the missions being given by the Marist group, and he was impressed by the simplicity of this man.

*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.*

*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.*

(OM II, doc 419)



As superior general, Jean-Claude Colin paid several visits to Ars, drawn there no doubt by the simplicity of Jean-Marie Vianney.

Of Colin, Vianney once said,

*" Oh, what a holy priest!  
How he loves the Blessed Virgin! "*

Jean Vianney expressed a desire to become a Marist. In 1853 he ran away from his parish, to take refuge at La Neylière, which Fr Colin was then establishing as a retreat house and a place of prayer for priests.

When he was able to send vocations to the Marist Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, the saint did so gladly, and he also encouraged the Third Order, into which he was received on December 8th, 1846 by St Peter Julien Eymard.

*(Refer to "Texts": 'Jean-Marie Vianney'.)*



## Lyons (3)



## ■ COLIN - SUPERIOR GENERAL IN LYONS

Jean-Claude Colin left Belley in 1839 and came to Lyons. From Lyons he governed the Society until he resigned as superior general in 1854.

Colin was 49 years of age. He remained here until he was 64 years old. During these years we see Colin at the peak of his energies and skills. We also see the Society of Mary growing and expanding both in Europe and in Oceania. In 1836 twenty Marists made their profession. When Father Colin retired in 1854, the Society numbered 258 members – twelve times as many as at the beginning. In the first six years there were 60 professions, but after this the number increased rapidly and from 1844 there was an average of 18 professions per year.

Within Europe, Colin established 27 houses. Among these were 4 houses of formation, 12 residences for missionaries, 6 colleges, 3 seminaries and 2 parishes.

Colin's commitment to Oceania was immense. He sent 121 missionaries to Oceania in 15 groups: 74 priests, 26 Little Brothers of Mary, 17 coadjutor brothers, 3 laymen and 1 laywoman (Françoise Perroton).

However, the difficulties of the mission took their toll on the missionaries' lives: Peter Chanel martyred on Futuna (1841), Bishop Epalle murdered on Isabella (1845), Br Blaise murdered in New Caledonia (1847), three Marists murdered at Tikopia, and two Marists lost at sea in New Zealand (1842). Many missionaries suffered early death through deprivation or illness. During his years as superior general, Colin began to doubt whether the Society could sustain its commitment to the Oceania mission.

## ■ PUYLATA

Colin bought a property with an entrance at No 9 Montée des Capucins. This became the mother house of the Society. Colin spent 15 of his 18 years as superior general in this house, and from here he



laid the foundations for the Society of Mary. From Puylata he made 4 of his 5 journeys to Rome to negotiate matters concerning the Society.

Puylata was the centre of an intense apostolic activity, particularly with regard to the missions of Oceania. Colin had asked each missionary to write to him at least twice a year, giving him a full account of their lives and activities. The missionaries were faithful to this request. Of the detailed and sometimes very long letters from missionaries written between 1836 and 1854, 1373 have been preserved and published.

Father Poupinel wrote of Father Colin in 1850: "He is a boon to the postal service and the paper merchants. ... in the space of 3 years, almost the entire Society has passed through there."

A glance at the Index of the Society for the years 1836 to 1855 gives an indication of the extraordinary energy that was evident in Puylata in those years. Mayet records many incidents that took place at Puylata: the treasure buried under the house (FA, 287), the farewells to missionaries (FA, 362), and some significant Council meetings. (FA, 288; FS, 129)



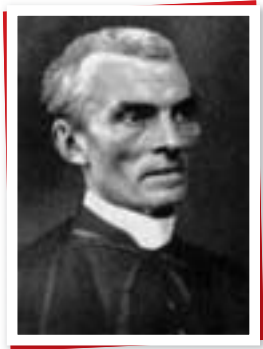
The community counted among its members the two Colin brothers, and Fathers Maîtrepierre, Lagniet, Terrailon, Poupinel, Forest, Yardin, and many missionaries passing through on their way to Oceania. Here we recall 3 confreres in particular.

## ■ JULIEN EYMARD AND THE THIRD ORDER

In September of 1844 Colin appointed Julien Eymard as Provincial of the Society, which meant that in effect he was the Vicar General of the Society. He held this position for two years. In December 1845, Eymard was named director of the Christian Maidens in Lyons, and the meetings of the group were held in the Chapel in the house of Puylata.

Praying before the Blessed Sacrament at Fourvière in 1851, Eymard felt called to establish a Marist community devoted to Eucharistic adoration. His plan did not meet the approval of the Society of Mary, and eventually he resolved to leave the Marists to begin his new Congregation devoted to the Blessed Sacrament. The Congregation was approved in 1863.

*In Lyons I direct  
the Third Order of Mary which  
already includes more than  
three hundred members."  
- Julien Eymard*



Eymard was a charismatic figure and an incredible organizer. He died in 1868 and was canonized a Saint in 1962.

## ■ VICTOR POUPINEL AND THE MISSIONS

Victor Poupinel entered the Society of Mary as a deacon in 1838, and was professed in 1839. Colin chose him immediately for the task of Procurator to the Missions. He carried out this task for 20 years: 1840-1857, and 1871-1874. He was also Visitor to the Missions for 13 years: 1857-1870, and 11 years as Assistant General with special care for overseas missions: 1873-1884. His output of letters was staggering, and his influence on the Marists Missionaries, both religious and lay, was enormous. He had contacts in almost every mission station in the Islands. Father Rougeyron, one of the first missionaries in New Caledonia wrote to Poupinel: "Yes, Father, I am not afraid to repeat: you can be considered as one of the founders of our missions in Oceania." (1872)

*Nothing is more important  
to me than my confreres or  
the success of their works."  
- Victor Poupinel*



It was here at Puylata that the Pioneers (SMSM) were received as novices in the Third Order of Mary.

## ■ GABRIEL-CLAUDE MAYET AND THE MÉMOIRES

Gabriel-Claude Mayet joined the Society of Mary in 1837. He was already suffering from the sickness that was to take away his power of speech. When Father Colin accepted him into the Society, Mayet decided to make himself useful to the Society by recording the words and acts of Colin. His commitment to this task has enriched our

knowledge of Colin and the Society's beginnings. His *Mémoires* filled 11 volumes (of which 9 remain) and take up 6,000 pages.

Mayet continued to record the sayings and deeds of Colin until 1854, the year the Founder resigned. He then considered his work finished, and he handed the *Mémoires* to Father Favre, the second superior general.



Mayet's whole life was influenced by the fidelity which he had vowed to the Founder. In a touch of humility, Mayet says of his work of recording:

*I think  
our successors  
will be grateful to me  
some day."*

*- Gabriel-Claude  
Mayet*

(FA. 369)

## ■ ST NIZIER

The church of St Nizier and its site are steeped in religious history. It is first connected with the memory of the 48 martyrs of Lyons and Gaul, who were put to death in 177 AD. The present church was built over a period of 300 years, from 1310 to 1580. It is dedicated to St Nicetius (St Nizier), a saintly bishop of Lyons who died in 573.

The church is connected with several founders of religious orders and lay movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Blessed Claudine Thevenet who founded the Congregation of Jesus and Mary;



*The church of St Nizier is connected with several founders of religious orders and lay movements.*

Frédéric Ozanam, who founded the St Vincent de Paul Society; Louis-Joseph Querbes who founded the Clercs of St Viateur; André Coindre, who founded the Brothers of the Sacred Heart; and Suzanne Aubert, foundress of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion (in New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific).

Of particular interest to Marists is the church's association with two great women: Pauline Jaricot, who founded the movement of the Propagation of the Faith, and Françoise Perroton, the first of the Pioneers who became the SMSM branch of the Marist Family.

## ■ PAULINE JARICOT AND THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

Born in Lyons in 1799, Pauline Jaricot dedicated herself at the age of 17 to total service of God as a consecrated laywoman. She founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1822. Jean-Claude Colin knew her and had contact with her. Her interests in the missions corresponded with the departure at that time of Marist missionaries for the Pacific. Pauline Jaricot died in 1862. Her cause for sainthood continues to be studied. Her tomb is to be found on the right of the main altar in the church.

## ■ FRANÇOISE PERROTON AND THE SMSM SISTERS

Françoise Perroton (1796-1873) was baptized in the church of St Nizier. From 1820, at the age of 24, she was in charge of a group in the movement of the Propagation of the Faith. This Society printed a journal called the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, which published letters sent from mission lands.

In 1842, five years after Fr Bataillon and Br Joseph-Xavier Luzy arrived on the Island of Wallis, two women from Wallis wrote an open letter to the women of Lyons in the name of all the women on the Island. The main paragraph read: "We have already had proof of your charity and we are making one more request: If you love us, send us some devout women to teach the women of Uvea."

Françoise recognized in the letter a personal call. Having talked with Peter Julien Eymard, she prevailed on Captain Auguste Marceau to take her on board his ship bound for the Pacific.

The journey to the Pacific took one year.

Françoise was 49 years of age when she set out for the Pacific.

On arrival she was not welcomed by Bishop Bataillon who refused to give her any occupation.

Françoise lived on the Island of Wallis for 8 years by herself.

She then lived on Futuna for 4 years by herself.



She never managed to master the language of the people.

After 12 years of isolation, some women arrived to be with her.

*I am happy  
and proud  
to have launched  
the movement."*

*- Françoise Perrotin*

This great woman would never have considered herself to be a founder, but she was glad that somehow she had begun a movement. The movement became what we now recognize as the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM).

She died on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1873, aged 77.

*(Refer to "Texts", 'The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary')*

## ■ STE FOY

Strictly speaking Ste Foy belongs to the second generation of Marist life. The present house was built between 1858 and 1860, after Fr Colin had resigned as superior general. Nevertheless, the house has significant connections with Jean-Claude Colin. After his resignation as superior general, he spent long periods at this house in Lyons city.

May 1870 is of particular importance in the story of Colin's stay at Ste Foy. Having spent the last months of 1869 completing the Constitutions, Colin drafted a letter to present the text to the Society. Given that the second superior general, Julien Favre had already printed and published a volume of Constitutions, this act of the Founder had significant repercussions. As well as that he put to-



*It was here that the peace-making Chapter of 1870-1872 was held*

gether a text on the origins of the Society, which he hoped would put an end to rumours circulating at the time. This document came to be known as the *Spiritual Testament* of Fr Colin.

This document created an impassioned response from Fr Maîtrepierre who wrote a letter of 8 pages, beginning what we now refer to as the “Maîtrepierre Controversy.” Maîtrepierre was the one who had founded the Society “spiritually”, given the important positions of formation he had held in the Society in its early years. Now a rift developed between the one who founded the Society concretely, and the one who founded it in the spiritual sense. Both men were living in the house at the time, and it is sad to think of these two men living in two corners of the same building, and no longer able to communicate with each other.



Ste Foy knew happier times. It was here that the Peacemaking Chapter of 1870-1872 was held, when the rift between Colin and Favre was resolved.

Jean-Claude Colin's last stay at Ste Foy was at the Chapter of 1872-1873. At the end of the Chapter he said to the Capitulants:

*I have seen the Holy Spirit in the midst  
of your work. I have seen in the midst  
of you the Blessed Virgin,  
she who must lead you to the gates of salvation.*

Colin then left Ste Foy for La Neylière, where he was to die in 1875.

Ste Foy was to be the training place for many generations of scholastics, and for about 40 novices. It was the house of the General Administration from 1880 to 1906, and it was the location for 10 sessions of General Chapter.





# La Neylière

## ■ LA NEYLIÈRE

As early as 1842 Jean-Claude Colin had wanted to establish a place where the Fathers and Brothers could come and pause, refresh themselves and prepare for the next phase of the apostolate. Superiors, he suggested, could also send there any members of their communities who were exposed to dangers. His hope was that all who came to La Neylière could find peace, strength, and encouragement for their future.

Father Colin bought La Neylière in 1850 when he was superior general. The money (48,000 francs) came from Father Viennot, a former lawyer.

*Everything  
tells me  
that my mission  
is accomplished.*

*Jean-Claude Colin*



After his resignation as superior general in 1854 Jean-Claude Colin lived at La Neylière. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine him as an isolated recluse during the 21 years he lived here. Colin was a great traveler and was frequently on the move.

But apart from those times of absence from the house, Colin remained at La Neylière. One of his tasks was to complete the writing of the Rule. This was the time of the “Maitrepierre controversy” which concerned the history of the foundation of the Society. While this episode caused conflict and difficulties, it also resulted in the writing of a great deal on the beginnings of the Society.

While Colin worked on the Constitutions, he was helped by two great Marists, Fr Jean Jeantin and Fr Georges David.

## ■ JEAN JEANTIN

Since his ordination in 1848, Jeantin had worked in formation, both as professor of theology and as novice master and second novice-master.

The Chapter of 1866 commissioned Jean-Claude Colin to write the Constitutions and from 1868 to 1870 Jeantin worked closely with the Founder at La Neylière, and became Colin's constant companion and spokesman. From 1871 onwards they no longer worked together.

Jeantin was appointed as the official biographer of Colin. This work was a labour of love for him. A contemporary, Fr Antoine Monfat, wrote that "Father Jeantin is working lovingly on the life of the Founder."

*(OM III, p.929)*

Jeantin's work resulted in the 6-volume biography, "*Le Très Révérend Père Colin, Fondateur et Premier Supérieur Général de la Société de Marie.*"

*"Father Jeantin  
is working lovingly  
on the life  
of the Founder."*





*Father Colin called  
Georges David  
“the most Marist  
of Marists.”*

## ■ GEORGES DAVID

Georges David spent all his life from ordination in 1850 in the work of formation, either as professor of theology or as master of first and second novices. Like Jeantin, David lived closely with Colin in the last years of the Founder's life (1868-1870) at La Neylière. The Founder liked to call him “the perfect Marist” or even “the most Marist of Marists.” (OM III, p.971)

## ■ COLIN'S BETHANY

Jean-Claude Colin called Cerdon his Bethlehem, and Belley his Nazareth. But neither of these places seemed to him to compare with the peace and solitude he loved to find at La Neylière. Perhaps La Neylière was his Bethany.

Jean-Claude Colin died here at La Neylière on November 15th 1875, and is now buried in the Chapel of the house.

*Tombstone  
of Colin*



A short text on the tombstone of the Founder expresses the confident desire of Marists:

*"Father, pray for your sons."*

*(Refer to "Texts", 'Jean-Claude Colin Last words'.)*

es mêmes libraires, et par  
même auteur :

la Conduite des confesseurs, pour servir de  
référence ; ouvrage utile aux personnes de tout  
vol. in-12.

CONDUITE

DES

CONFESSEURS

TRIBUNAL D'INSTRUCTION

SELON LES INSTRUCTIONS  
DOCTRINALES

PAR M. ...

Imprimé par ...

1850



SEURS

DE LA PÉNITENCE,  
DE S. CHARLES BORROMÉE ET LA  
DE S. FRANÇOIS DE SALES,  
DAON, PRÊTRE, EUDISTE.  
Par ordre de M<sup>r</sup> l'Évêque de Bayeux, pour servir  
aux Confrères de son Diocèse.

Érudition qui justifie l'ouvrage.  
Ps. x. v. 10.  
Nul homme ne peut servir deux maîtres.  
Mat. 23. 9. 4.

NOUVELLE ÉDITION,

A LYON.

CHEZ PERISSE FRÈRES, LIBRAIRES,  
rue Mercière, n<sup>o</sup> 11.

A PARIS,

AU DÉPÔT DE LIBRAIRIE DE PERISSE FRÈRES,  
Place Saint-André-des-Arts, n<sup>o</sup> 21.  
1829.

Marist Texts



## THE FIRST INSPIRATION

**J**EAN-CLAUDE COUR-  
VEILLE, WRITING IN  
THE THIRD PERSON,  
SENT THIS ACCOUNT TO  
GABRIEL-CLAUDE MAYET  
IN FEBRUARY 1852, 40  
YEARS AFTER THE EVENT.

*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.*

*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. No sooner had he done this than he perceived distinctly even the smallest objects in the cathedral, and he has enjoyed excellent eyesight ever since.*

*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.*

*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 to battle against hell, one consecrated to me, one which will have my name, which will call itself the Society of Mary, whose members will call themselves Marists."*

*(OM II, doc 718:1-5)*



# THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SOCIETY

FROM ETIENNE TERRAILLON'S NARRATIVE ON THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SOCIETY, 1840-1842. AN ABBREVIATED ACCOUNT.)

*The first idea of the Society of Mary is due to Our Lady of Le Puy. M. Courveil 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.*

*That was in 1815. He arrived at the major seminary of Lyon, 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. Déclat, from Belmont. This opening up singularly struck this*

*seminarian, and left him deeply impressed. From then on, he became enthusiastic about this project and thought only of communicating it to the people he considered fit to contribute to its execution.*

*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. Courveil had addressed to himself: Wherever Jesus has altars, Mary also has her small altar besides. 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.*

*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 have always avoided with the greatest care.*



# THE FOURVIÈRE PLEDGE

*We the undersigned,  
striving to act together for the greater glory of God  
and of Mary the Mother of the Lord Jesus,  
assert and declare  
that we have the sincere intention and firm purpose  
of consecrating ourselves at the first opportunity  
to founding a congregation of Mary-ists.*

*Therefore, by making and signing this declaration,  
we dedicate irrevocably, insofar as we can,  
all that we have and are to the Society  
of the Blessed Virgin.*

*We do this,  
not out of some whim of callow youth,  
nor for any human motive, or the hope of temporal reward,  
but seriously, after mature consideration,  
and listening to the advice of others,  
having weighed everything carefully before God,  
solely for the glory of God and the honour of Mary,  
the Mother of the Lord Jesus.*

*We pledge ourselves to endure  
all manner of hardships, labours, difficulties,  
and, if necessary, even physical sufferings,  
since we can do all things in Him who gives us strength.  
It is to Jesus Christ that we thus promise our fidelity,  
in our Most Holy Mother the Roman Catholic Church,  
pledging our wholehearted loyalty to its supreme head  
the Roman Pontiff,  
as also to his Lordship our Bishop,  
so that we may be worthy ministers of Christ Jesus,  
nourished with the principles of faith and sound doctrine  
which by His grace we have learned.*

*We trust  
that under the government of the Most Christian King,  
favourable to peace and religion,  
the Society will shortly be established,  
and we solemnly promise to spend ourselves and all  
that we possess  
in saving souls by every kind of apostolate  
under the sacred name of the Virgin Mary  
and with her protection and help.*

*(OM I, doc 50)*

FROM THE RECOLLECTIONS  
OF JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN

*When my  
brother and  
I arrived at  
Cerdon, people*

*were quite surprised and happy and edified when they saw the way we did things. Neither 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 other 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.*

*(OM II, doc 479)*

*My confessional was in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin. The ministry of confession is an awe-inspiring ministry. I never went there without trembling. You have to be good, because you take the place of Our Lord; you have to be just, because you are a judge and you must weigh things fairly. However, the scale must lean a little on the side of mercy. Nevertheless we should go to the confessional just the same with confidence in God.*

*(OM II, doc 506)*

*For my first two months as a curate, I never spoke one word louder than the other. Everyone complained that I was cold, that I was dead. Of course I have changed quite a lot. I began to speak strongly from the pulpit, and then ...*

*(OM II, doc 487:2)*



*At Cerdon, 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.*

*(OM II, doc 447)*

*For those six years, whenever I thought of the Society, I experienced a tangible consolation at the very thought of it; whenever I heard a bit of news, I brightened up completely; my face beamed.*

*(OM II, doc 519:7)*

**F**ROM THE MÉMOIRES OF  
GABRIEL-CLAUDE MAYET

*While at Cerdon, Father Colin had some very rigid principles*

*because of the rigid, indeed all too rigid, training they were given at the major seminary of Lyons. This rigidity caused him a lot of trouble (but God, who saw his uprightness and purity of heart, came to his aid.) Father Colin did not stick very long with the rigorous and incorrect principles. Later, with great force, he gave the Society a different thrust.*

*He told me that he was even more broad-minded than Bishop Devie the Bishop of Belley was.*

*(OM II, doc 542:1)*

*He announced the word of God with vigour 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.*

*(OM II, doc 745:8)*

*On one 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 leaders of the parish came to beg the Sisters to give them a copy of it, but it was not possible. The Spirit breathes where it wills...*

(OM II, doc 541:10)

**F**ROM THE RECOLLECTIONS  
OF JEANNE-MARIE CHAVOIN  
(MOTHER ST. JOSEPH)

*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.*

*During this time they used to receive very harsh letters from M. Courbon, the vicar general of Lyons. Another vicar general, M. Bochart, made them suffer a lot. ...*

*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's 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.*

*(OM II, doc 513:1-3)*

*Finally, the Fathers left Cerdon, where they had been for about ten years. The people wept and regretted their departure. But when, eight days later, they saw the Sisters leaving also, what tears were shed! They had hoped we would stay at 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.*

*(OM II, doc 513:10)*



# THE BUGEY MISSIONS

## JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN'S REFLECTIONS

*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.*

*(OM II, doc 597:1)*

*We always began the mission with the little children. I was very careful not to tell them to pray for the conversion of their parents. That could have irritated them and put off parents who might often be irreligious.*

*Then we would hear their confessions, and hardly had we finished with what concerned them than the adults would arrive. Often, as we heard their confessions, the parents would thank us for what we were doing for their children.*

*In the first mission we stirred up the whole parish by doing so, and I don't believe there was a single inhabitant who was not won over.*

*(OM II, doc 581:6, 10)*

*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, and then the harsh truths followed. We would explain the obligation in detail only when just about all the people had come once to confession. Otherwise we would have scared them.*

*(OM II, doc 581:17, 18)*

*Gentlemen, 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 laughed 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.*

*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.*

*Sometimes we were very cold all night long, and when the day dawned, we preached anyhow. 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. Gentlemen, we gave a lot of missions like that. When you suffer deprivation, you are happy.*

*I had stayed in damp confessionals and other damp places; I had some pain, some rheumatism.*

*(OM II, doc 639:1,2,5,6)*

*Never were we so joyous. Never did we laugh with such good heart. I have always had a soft spot for that period. They were good times. When we resign ourselves to our circumstances, there might be some physical hardship to put up with, but it is then that we are happiest.*

*(OM II, doc 639:1)*

*Look at our first confrères, Fathers Déclas and Humbert and Jallon. They were humble, straightforward and simple souls. See how the good Lord blessed them. Everything in their lives reflected poverty. We ate with peasants, we slept all together. Their preaching was utterly simple, and the people fell at their feet. We were overwhelmed in the confessional.*

*(Acts of the Chapter of 1870 – 1872)*

*No, I know no greater pleasure. No, there is nothing on earth to compare with the happiness of a priest who sees souls loaded down with sins coming to throw themselves tearfully at his feet, with contrition in their hearts, and then getting up drunk, crazy with joy, to the point of meeting their confessor in the street and kissing his feet even in the mud, as happened to me during a mission.*

(FS 171:1)

*I would very much like 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.*

(FS 11:7-9)

## JEAN JEANTIN'S ACCOUNT

*I especially want there to be in the Society some record of our beginnings, not just so that we shall be talked about ... but so that in the future people will conform to our way of acting and imitate the simplicity that God blessed. Later, when the Society has grown and certain people will be tempted to discard this way of acting, these written records will serve as a rallying point.*

(OM II, doc 581:1)

*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," Father 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 confrères had settled in Belley.*

*Such was the first nucleus; these were like the four corner-stones of the little Society of Mary. They were indeed pebbles from the stream which Mary's hand used in order to overthrow Goliath. 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," Father Colin would say, "did we dream of doing grand things, of preaching missions in the cities; we only wanted to evangelize the countryside."*

*(Jean Jeantin, Essay on the origins of the Society.  
OM III, doc 819:56)*





# BELLEY

## THE ELECTION OF JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN

*On September 24<sup>th</sup>,  
in the year 1836,  
the feast of Our  
Lady of Mercy,*

*the priest members of the Society of Mary, who had gathered at the minor seminary of Belley, went in silence to La Capucinière at 5.30 in the morning. In the Chapel there, they spent an hour in meditation on a topic presented by the Bishop of Maronia (Bishop Pompallier). At the end of this exercise, they recited the little hours of the breviary in common. Father Colin then called everyone to the election room, where they found their places in order of seniority.*

*At 7.00, Bishop Pompallier, member of the Company, offered Mass for the graces necessary. He intoned the Veni Creator Spiritus, and all the members of the Society assisted at the Mass, lined in rows four by four in order of seniority in front of the altar.*

*After the Mass, Fr Colin said the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin, the Ave Maris Stella and a spontaneous prayer beginning with the word: Memorare - Remember.*

*Everyone then returned to the voting room.*

*There was a great silence in the room. Everyone prayed on their knees for half an hour. At a signal given by Fr. Humbert, master of ceremonies, everyone got up, and moved towards the table where an urn had been placed for the votes. The voting took place beginning with the Bishop of Maronia (Pompallier) then the others, two by two, in order of seniority.*

*The Bishop read out the names, showed them to the scrutineers who took careful note. At the solemn moment when such a heavy responsibility was about to be conferred on one head, the silence became overwhelming, and a profound atmosphere of prayer took over the assembly. This became even more striking as with each nomination, one could hear sobbing coming from the one whom God in His infinite wisdom, had chosen from all eternity.*

*The votes were counted: Father Jean-Claude Marie Colin, by unanimous vote, was proclaimed Superior General of the Society of Mary.*

*Father Champagnat, addressing the newly-elected Superior, spoke of the heavy burden that had been imposed on him, and promised in the name of everyone, that they would do all in their power to lighten his load. After that, everyone embraced the Superior General.*

*All went in solemn procession to the Chapel, reciting the Ave Maris Stella. Then everyone, re-vested in stoles, took their place. Fr Humbert gave a homily on the theme: "The Lord loves a cheerful giver."*

*As soon as he had finished, Father Colin, Superior General, knelt down on the altar step, and, holding a candle in his hand, pronounced out loud the formula of vows as contained in the rule.*

*Everyone stood around him as witnesses to this solemn and sacred act. Then Father Superior General, seated on a chair on the step of the altar, received the vows of each member, one by one, in order of seniority, each one placing his hand in the hand of Father Superior General.*

*(Minutes of the election process. OM I, doc 403)*

**M**AÎTREPIERRE'S  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE ELECTION  
OF JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN

*The Society of Mary was constituted: it was no longer of the diocese of Lyons, nor of the diocese of*

*Belley: it was catholic. The members departed with a brotherly embrace and the blessing of their superior, filled with the burning and sincere desire to work for the glory of God, the honour of Mary, and the sanctification of souls under the orders and the counsels of obedience.*

*(OM II, doc 752:52)*

**C**OLIN AS  
FORMATOR

*In 1842, there came to the theology house at Belley a number of young men aged between seventeen and eighteen years old. With them*

*in view, Father Colin mitigated the discipline of the house (these youngsters were in humanities, rhetoric and philosophy). "They are not students in theology," he said to Father Dussurgey, "they are children. You will allow talking in the refectory so many times a week. We must not put them off the house by too strict a discipline. They must feel at home in the*

*Society. We rise at four: that is too early. Let us retire at half-past eight and rise at half-past four. Shorten the meditation because of them.*

*"All these young men, pupils and theology students alike, should have a relaxed piety, a holy gaiety. As soon as you see them with their head in their hands, call a halt, relax things a little. There is no rule against such good reasons. There must be no long faces, no stilted piety. Whatever is stilted will not last."*

*To ensure an atmosphere of joy and holy freedom, he himself kept things going at meals in an incredibly lively fashion. The whole community was often in high spirits. At every turn he mingled jokes with interesting snippets, edifying news and the odd word to the wise which created a great hush. Then he would launch forth with glowing accounts of the missions and again come back with cracks full of fun. One of the young men used to say, "I like saints that are light-hearted."*

*(FA 242:1-2)*

*In 1843, he sent all the theologians on holiday. "They need a rest," he said, "let them go home, because the Society has no house in the country for them yet and is not wealthy enough to provide them with amusements. It cannot do them any harm, it will help them a little with their piety. As for their vocation, I am not averse to it being put a little to the test. If they stay at home, so much the better! That will show that the vocation was not very solid."*

*(FA 251)*

**B**ON REPOS (FROM  
THE RECOLLECTIONS  
OF MOTHER ST JOSEPH

*We were very hard up  
in our early days;  
often we spent ten  
days with only a few  
pence in hand. I slept*

*for a month in a room so cold that in the morning I  
was frozen and there was hoar frost under my bed.*

*But how happy we were! We were never more  
contented than when the purse was nearly empty.*

*At that time we were light-hearted and simple as  
children: the greatest charity reigned among us. Never  
a harsh word. Such happy periods are blessings  
attached to the poverty of beginnings.*

*(RMJ, doc 104:1-7)*

*Father Colin often came to Belley, to our convent of  
Bon repos, to ask the sisters' prayers. "I would like a  
novena." "Father, we are making one," came the reply.  
"Well, make a second, a third if necessary until the  
grace is granted." And then I have seen the Sisters  
leave their work at once and kneel down to say the  
Rosary to obtain the desired grace.*

*(RMJ, doc 253:1)*

## PUYLATA

COLIN AS ADMINISTRATOR  
AND LEADER

*An eminent member of the Society applied to him the words*

*said of someone else: "It is not good to grow beside a genius." And he added, "But it must also be said that when he is around, however numerous, however intricate the matters are that crop up, we sleep very peacefully."*

*Thus in 1846, troubles of every kind cropped up: difficulties with Bishop Pompallier, the demands of Archbishop Polding of Sydney, difficulties in Central Oceania, all the news brought by Father Dubreul. But Father was there. We could rely on him as on our second Providence. He set off for Rome, for the fourth time, on the first Sunday of Advent, with Father Dubreul, and we said, "Good Lord! If Father Colin should fail us in these circumstances, how would the Society get over it? May God preserve him! ... He is going to Rome; whatever he does will be done well." And we had not the least anxiety about the representations he would make or about their success.*

*(FA 360:19,20)*

*He referred to the frequent councils held by the Superior as the soul of the Society, and he said that he wished by his example and way of acting to leave a pattern after him, so that the Superior might thereby grasp that he was to espouse a distrust of self, modesty.*

*When he wanted to form a subject, acquaint him deeply with the spirit of the Society and the approach to be followed in its administration, he called him to the Council. Then they discovered new horizons; and I would even go so far as to say that the only ones who really knew or have known Father Colin were those who were called to the Council by him.*

*It was only there that he really revealed his whole self.*

*There I saw that a council is nothing unless there is a man of God, a man of outstanding quality, as its soul. And in our councils, it was our founder who was their soul.*

*We used to say: "The council in the Society, that is Father Colin. Where Father Colin is, that is where the council is, too."*

*For whenever he was absent, even though we came together with all due form, the horizons contracted, questions no longer had that depth which Father Colin's contributions opened up for them; no longer were they seen in all their aspects. Difficulties multiplied at the very point where, in a word, he used to side-step them, or rather they lurked where his sharp eye would have spotted a thousand and one obstacles.*

*A young Marist, uneasy about being a member of the Council, said to him jokingly that only the old men should be called to his Council. Father Colin replied, "Yes, but only when they have been formed early on, otherwise they will go bringing their 'parish priest's ideas' into the council."*

(FA 288:2-10)

*I picture him, as I watch him, as a pilot quietly seated at the helm, letting the waters bear the ship along and buffet it on all sides.  
The pressure of his guiding hand is scarcely felt, but nevertheless he is the one who governs its course.  
Such was Father Colin.*

(FA 321:5)



# THE THIRD ORDER

JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN SPEAKS  
OF THE THIRD ORDER

*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.*

*(OM III, doc 846:36)*

*I have recently sent you a little outline sketch on the  
Third Order of Mary. You were perhaps surprised by  
some of the ideas, but I have never understood it in  
any other way.*

*The Third Order of Mary, in my eyes, must be an  
immense association to embrace the whole world.  
Sinners and even ungodly men may enter it.  
The share that they will thus have in the prayers  
and good works of the Tertiaries will prepare their  
conversion. Likewise parents may have their little  
children inscribed. In a word, the whole world*

*will belong to the Third Order of Mary  
and all souls shall be enrolled under the banner  
of the Mother of God.*

*(OM III, doc 846:18)*

**A**LPHONSE COZON  
SPEAKS OF  
THE THIRD ORDER

*According to the idea  
of the Very Reverend  
Father Founder, the Third  
Order ought not to be*

*confined within the limits of the Society. It ought 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 propor-  
tions 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.*

*There can be no doubt that this is exactly what the  
Very Reverend Father Founder thought.*

*(Alphonse Cozon, Postulatum to the General Chapter 1880.  
Lay Marists, doc 431:20, 21).*

# THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY



## A LETTER TO THE SHIP CAPTAIN

*Dear Sir*

*The important business you are engaged in has no doubt pushed into the background of your thoughts the memory of a woman who had the honour of meeting you at the Hotel de Provence.*

*You gave me the hope that I might see you again before your departure for Rome, and that you would even send me news during your stay in Italy. I am not in the least surprised that these hopes were in vain. Affairs far less weighty than yours would absorb more than one man's attention: besides, in the immense undertaking you have in hand, I am nothing at all. Yet, Sir, this nothing wants to be something, and my wishes are quite unchanged. My thoughts turn with joy towards this proposed departure that you seemed to find easy. My firm wish is to serve on the mission fields for the rest of my life, and you, Sir, are the only person who can provide me with the means of doing so by taking me under your care on a voyage that is so long and so expensive.*

*Would that I had a fortune to offer! But as you know, my resources are very meager and the only thing I have of value is my good will. I have only a very small*

*sum of money, and this is nothing, nothing at all. But I would have you accept it as a compensation for the things you will have to provide me with during the voyage.*

*Once I have arrived, God will provide for my needs. I am confident of this for I do not wish for anything else than His glory and the salvation of those good people of Oceania for whom I will willingly sacrifice myself if that is what God wants of me. I am praying that He will prompt you to look favourably on my request. I want merely to be taken on board your ship as a servant, if one is needed, and I can work in this capacity at whatever has to be done. Do not go looking for anyone else; you will find no one prepared to serve you more devotedly than I, despite the fact that I am no longer young.*

*Pardon the liberty I am taking, Sir, but if I let this opportunity slip by, I will have missed my only chance, and I do not want this to happen through any neglect on my part. If God wishes me to depart for the missions, He will guide you in your reply. But I beg you, however busy you may be, to have the goodness to steal half an hour and send me a reply.*

*Whatever your decision, I shall be grateful to hear it, so convinced am I that you will be acting according to God's good pleasure. If your reply is in the negative I shall feel it deeply but I will be submissive, and I would not want you to be the least worried on my account. If, however, you promise to take me on board, please be so good as to tell me what I must do to act to the best advantage, for I shall have to give notice to my employer and get ready for the journey. I don't want to make any blunders. At my age, one can't afford to act impulsively. No, I have given the matter much thought, and my decision is final.*

*Now, Sir, I have but to wish you success in your holy undertaking. Be assured that if I do not have the happiness of sharing your perils and your glory, I shall at least accompany you with my prayers and my regrets, and I shall await with the liveliest impatience news of this dear boat whose name (L'Arche d'Alliance), so well chosen, recalls many memories of far-off times.*

*Letter of Françoise Perroton  
to Commandant Auguste Marceau. 1845.*

**A** LETTER TO THE SECOND  
SUPERIOR GENERAL

*Very Reverend  
Father,*

*Please excuse my  
too familiar style, for I know no other; this does not  
prevent me from having a deep respect for you at  
the bottom of my heart.*

*Reverend Father, my heart is overflowing, but I leave it  
to yours to express all that mine feels. For 12 years  
I was alone! Alone to endure times of extreme tedium,  
above all when I suffered from the afflictions the good  
Lord has seen fit to send me. ... Not that I have any  
regrets, no, no, Rev Father, the only regret that I have  
felt since my arrival here is to see how far my results  
lag behind my hopes and desires.*

*I thought in 1845 that I was going to do marvels  
in Oceania. There is no school there, I used to say to  
myself, so you will teach them to read, you will give  
catechism lessons to these poor little girls, you will  
have them learn how to love God and pray to Him,  
you will teach them devotion to the Blessed Virgin,  
what a beautiful work! You will be associated*

*with the works of the Marist Fathers, you will be of service to these good Fathers when they are sick, you will mend their socks (and here nobody wears them but me). In short, I made beautiful castles, not in Spain which is too near Lyons, but in Wallis. Then after a year's travelling I landed here. Now, let's set to work, I said to myself.*

*What a disappointment! I was 30 years too old, my old head has been able to grasp very little of the Uvean language. The same thing applies to the Futunian; the result is that what I have been able to do is reduced to very little. But let me draw a veil over the past; a new era is beginning.*

*I will not try to describe my feeling at the reception of a note from Father Poupinel announcing that he was happy to be bringing me helpers and companions all devoted to Mary. .. Father Poupinel arrived with my three poor Sisters, dead tired on account of the horrible road that leads here. They were, you might say, very welcome but badly received as the only bed we had to offer them was a few mats on the floor. We could not help laughing as we made up this poor camp bed. As for me, I don't know what was uppermost in my feelings, joy, surprise, or gratitude to God, the Blessed Virgin and you, Rev. Father, who have had pity on my isolation. We passed many happy days together.*

*Thank you, Father, thank you a thousand times! Blessed be God, blessed be our Immaculate Mother who has inspired you to send me help, or rather successors, and at the same time supply Sisters of the Third Order for several other parts of the Vicariate. May they multiply and produce all the fruit that your*

*paternal zeal expects from them. I am happy and proud to have launched the movement; my thirteen years of trial will be counted among the best times of my life. I would never have dared to hope for such happiness, for I had resigned myself to die here alone; and now the good Lord has willed that I become a Tertiary of Mary. ... Father Poupinel has put his hand to the work, telling me in all his letters: "Enter, Sister, enter the Society of Mary forever."*

*Letter of Françoise Perroton to Julien Favre,  
second Superior General, on hearing the news that  
he was sending helpers to her at Futuna. March, 1859  
(Letters, Vol I p.42-44)*



## JEAN-MARIE VIANNEY

*When he entered the seminary of Verrières in 1812, Jean-Marie Vianney met for the first time those who were to be the foundation stones of the Society of Mary: Marcellin Champagnat, Etienne Terrallon, and especially Jean-Claude Colin and Etienne Déclas. Already M. Déclas began to pay attention to and to have esteem for (Jean-Marie Vianney), and he regretted that his stay at the seminary was so short. Only one ordination, that to the diaconate, brought these five together, while the idea of a Society of Mary was to be broached only after Abbé Vianney had begun his apostolic ministry.*

*When did the Assistant at Ecully or the new Parish Priest of Ars first hear of this project? We do not know, and nothing leads us to think that it was very soon. In any case, when, after 1825, the first Marist aspirants began to preach missions in the Bugey, Abbé Vianney could not for long be ignorant of their existence, especially since the work of missions was very close to his heart. The apostolic methods of the little group which grew up around Abbé Colin, the simplicity of their ways, attracted the humble Curé, over and above the fact that he found many of his former fellow students in the group. It is understandable that he could have had some regret at not being himself a member of this group, especially since*



*the responsibilities of his pastoral office were beginning to weigh upon him. Father Déclas' friendly visits as well as Father Colin's occasional pilgrimages, kept him in contact with the Marists.*

*The holy parish priest lost no occasion to praise the Society and its superior. When it was possible for him to direct a vocation to the Fathers, Brothers or Sisters, he did so willingly. In other cases, he pointed to the Third Order, the existence of which was known to him, and which he recommended even before it was canonically constituted and organized.*

*When we remember that the Society of Mary was at the time the only clerical religious congregation in the diocese of Belley, and when we think of the many bonds which united the Curé d'Ars to its founders, it is not surprising that to his plan for fleeing from his parish should have been associated the idea of retiring among the Marists. The two ideas seem to have been intermingled already in 1843.*

*In any case, in 1846, the attachment of the Curé d'Ars for the Society of Mary is shown by his entering the Third Order which had now been organized by Father Eymard.*

*Finally, in 1853, with the opening at La Neylière of a retreat house for priests under the guidance of Father Colin, the Curé d'Ars tried once more to leave his parish in order to retire in the shadow of the Society of Mary. It seems that the Curé d'Ars never had the idea of becoming a Marist in the canonical sense of the term, with novitiate and religious profession. For him, it was rather a question of retiring in a friendly religious congregation, whose spirit he loved, and whose superior, whom he admired, would provide for him the possibility of a life of retreat and prayer.*

*It was not in the designs of God that this project be realized. To the end of his life, M. Vianney was to remain glued to his confessional in Ars, directing more and more vocations to the various branches of the Society of Mary, and himself receiving many of the faithful into the Third Order.*

*Thus the relations between the Curé d'Ars and the Society of Mary seem to have followed a very simple path; one might almost be tempted to call it natural. One of the noblest titles of the early Marists is certainly that of having drawn to themselves the love and esteem of a priest who lived so close to God, while the memory of the solicitude of the Curé d'Ars for our Society should be an incentive for us today to show again in our lives those characteristics which had won over his heart to our religious family.*

*Jean Coste, sm, The Curé d'Ars and the Society of Mary.  
(ACTA Vol V, p. 369)*



# PETER CHANEL

## A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF THE MARTYRDOM OF PETER CHANEL

*Father Chanel had just persuaded the king's son to embrace true religion.*

*On April 27<sup>th</sup> last, the king sought out his son in the village where he was living with the greater part of his family. Having tried in vain to win back his son to his own gods, he had a meeting with the family and then withdrew.*

*The next day at about 7 o'clock in the morning, a local man entered the priest's house and asked him for something to put on a wound he had just sustained. While the good Father set about helping this wretched man, he received a club-blow on the forehead. He saw then that the house was surrounded by armed locals. Another hit him with a staff and he slid to the ground, wiping away the blood flowing from his forehead.*

*A third man stabbed him with a blade which entered at the top of the shoulder and emerged under the arm. He pulled it out himself, without saying anything. The house was by now full and they were all bickering over the various objects there.*

*The first to arrive now gave the order to finish off the white man. No one listened to him, as they were all intent on grabbing something from the pillage.*

*In his impatience the wretched man seized Father's adze, which was lying there, and struck him a blow to the head, lifting off the whole upper part of it. The king was not far away. They say he washed the body himself, covered it with a piece of local cloth and buried it near the house.*

*(General Archives of the Society of Mary, Rome.)*

# MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT LAST WORDS



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

*Here, in the presence of God, with the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph as heavenly witnesses, desirous of recording for all the Brothers of Mary, the last and dearest wishes of my heart, I summon all my strength to make my Spiritual Testament in terms of what I believe most in accordance with the will of God, and most conducive to the good of the Society.*

*In the first place, I humbly beseech all those whom I may have offended or disedified in any way, albeit I am not conscious of any willful offence on my part towards anybody, graciously to grant me pardon, pressed by the boundless charity of Christ, and to add their prayers to mine, asking of God in His goodness to overlook the sins of my past life, and admit my soul to the embrace of his all-loving mercy.*

*I die with sentiments of grateful and respectful submission to the superior general of the Society of Mary, and in the closest bonds of union with all its members, especially the Brothers, who in the designs of Providence were to come under my care, and who have always had a special claim on my affection.*

*I desire that absolute and perfect obedience should always prevail among the Brothers of Mary; that those under authority see in their superiors the representative of Jesus Christ, and render them willing and implicit obedience, being ever ready to sacrifice at need their own will and judgement. Let them remember that "the obedient religious will speak of victories" and that it is mainly obedience that forms the base and buttress of a community. With hearts thus disposed, the Little Brothers of Mary submit blindly to the guidance, not only of the major superiors, but also to all those whose duty it is to lead and direct them. They will let this truth of faith sink deep into their minds, that the superior takes the place of Jesus Christ, and that when he commands, he should be obeyed as if it were Christ himself commanding.*

*Also, dear Brothers, I beg of 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. Be of one heart and one mind. Have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said 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 Blessed Saviour: Love one another.*

*It is my wish also, dear Brothers, that the same charity that must bind you one to another as members of a single body, should embrace also all the other Congregations.*

*Oh, I implore you by the boundless love of Christ, cast out of your hearts all envy of anyone, and especially of those whom God calls like yourselves*

*to the religious state, to labour for the education of youth. Be the first to rejoice at their success, and grieve at their misfortunes. Commend them often in your prayers to God, and to Mary, the Mother of God. Give way to them readily. Turn away from any talk that would seek to discredit them. Let the glory of God alone and the honour of Mary be your one aim and ambition.*

*As your wills must be united with those of the Fathers of the Society of Mary in the will of a single superior general, so I also desire that you be united with them in heart and mind in Jesus and Mary. May their interests be yours; may you find your happiness in going to their assistance as often as is required. May the same spirit, the same love, unite you together as branches of the same family to the one mother, the Blessed Virgin.*

*Since the superior general of the Fathers is likewise the superior of the Brothers, he must be the centre of unity for them both. Happy as I was to receive the obedience and submission of the Brothers of Mary, it is my desire that the superior general always find in them the same obedience and submission. His spirit is mine, his will is mine. I regard that perfect union and that entire submission as the basic foundation of the Society of Mary.*

*I ask also of God, and I desire with all my soul, that you be constant and faithful to the devout practice of the presence of God, which is the soul of prayer, of meditation, and of all the virtues; that humility and simplicity may ever be the distinguishing mark of the Little Brothers of Mary; that a tender and filial love for our dear Mother never fail you in all the changes of time and circumstances. Proclaim her love in every place, as far as in you lies. She is Superior of the whole Society, before all others.*

*With devotion to Mary couple devotion to her noble spouse, glorious St Joseph. He is, as you know, one of our leading patrons. You act as Guardian Angels of the children entrusted to your care, so, to these pure spirits also, pay a special homage of love, respect and confidence.*

*Dear Brothers, love your vocation, be faithful and steadfast to the end, with manly courage. Remain true to the spirit of poverty and detachment, and let the daily observance of your holy Rule preserve you from ever violating the sacred vow by which you are bound to the fairest of all virtues, and the frailest. There are difficulties in leading the life of a good religious, but grace sweetens all their bitterness. Jesus and Mary will come to your aid, and besides, life is soon over and eternity never ends.*

*Oh, what consolation we have, when about to appear before God, to remember that we have lived in the favour of Mary, and in her own 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 trustfully within the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, until we all meet again in eternal bliss.*

*This is my full and final will for the glory of Jesus and Mary.*



*The present Spiritual Testament shall be delivered  
into the hands of Fr. Colin,  
superior general of the Society of Mary.*

*Declared at Notre-Dame de l'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 of the Society of Mary*

*Brother François  
Brother Louis-Marie  
Brother Jean-Marie  
Brother Louis  
Brother Stanislaus  
Brother Bonaventure.*



## JEANNE-MARIE CHAVOIN LAST WORDS

*Pray for me, dear sisters.  
Be very united among yourselves, love simplicity.*

*Look, she is your Mother, you must promise her  
inviolable fidelity; but remember, if you want her love  
and protection, you must love and imitate her:  
be always humble and unassuming like her, docile  
to superiors; love work and the hidden life. Simplicity,  
the very greatest simplicity, should be your only  
ornament, never imitate those communities  
who seek to please the world by adopting its ways.  
A Marist sister's sole desire should be to resemble  
the little family of Nazareth—there she will find  
the perfect models of poverty, simplicity and love.*

*Always be a bond of union between your sisters  
so that all may have but one heart and one soul and  
so draw down heaven's blessings on this house.*

*As for the rule and our major superiors, always  
show great respect and obedience: that is the way  
to be happy in this world and in the next.*

*(RMJ, doc 108)*

# JEAN-CLAUDE COLIN LAST WORDS



## FATHER COLIN'S FAREWELL TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 1873 CHAPTER

*I am leaving you,  
no doubt,  
forever in this world...  
Even now I am no longer  
of it, this world: my age,*

*my infirmities! But you are in it and that is enough for  
me. You will carry on the work of the Blessed Virgin.*

*Let us remember that we have acknowledged her,  
as indeed she is, as our true and only Foundress,  
and that we have chosen her for our first and  
perpetual superior.*

*She is at the head of the barque which is bringing all  
her children to harbor. How could we perish under her  
banner? No! Let us have faith ... Let us see the great  
goal that Providence destines you to ... 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 to finish it, to consolidate it...  
to conserve its spirit. So let us march at the head  
of the faithful. There is your mission."*

*(FA 396:3-5)*

*From the spiritual testament of Jean-Claude Colin.*

*Now that the drafting of our Constitutions is finished, let us bless God! Everything tells me that my mission is accomplished and that all that remains for me is to prepare for death.*

*For your part, dear Marists, read this rule, absorbing ever more the spirit I have tried to express in it. It is my hope that you will recognize there the true dispositions which Mary, our noble and most holy Mother, wishes to be the inspiration of all the members of her little Society.*

*I leave everything in the hands of that Divine Providence which until now has cared for the Society in so fatherly a manner, and which will surely guide the Society towards its goal by the paths of mercy known to it alone. I count, too, on the good spirit which prevails among you, and of which you have given me, despite my unworthiness, manifold and touching proof. If God deigns to show me mercy when I appear before Him, I shall have you ever in mind.*

*I shall beseech Mary to preserve and increase in you a love of the poor and hidden life, a spirit of humility, or self-denial, of close union with God and brotherly love.*

*May you always love one another, my dear brethren, as sons of the most tender and loving of mothers! Your unity will be your strength and your consolation, and will ensure the success of your undertakings, for the greater glory of God and the honour of the most holy Virgin.*

*I am confident that you will remember in your prayers  
one who had the happiness of living among you  
and devoting his entire life to you.*

*Ask God to be merciful to him and to forgive him  
his many faults, and be pleased yourselves  
to forgive those he has committed in his dealings  
with you.*

*With the most tender affection and utter devotion,  
in the holy hearts of Jesus and Mary.*

*I am, my dear brethren,*

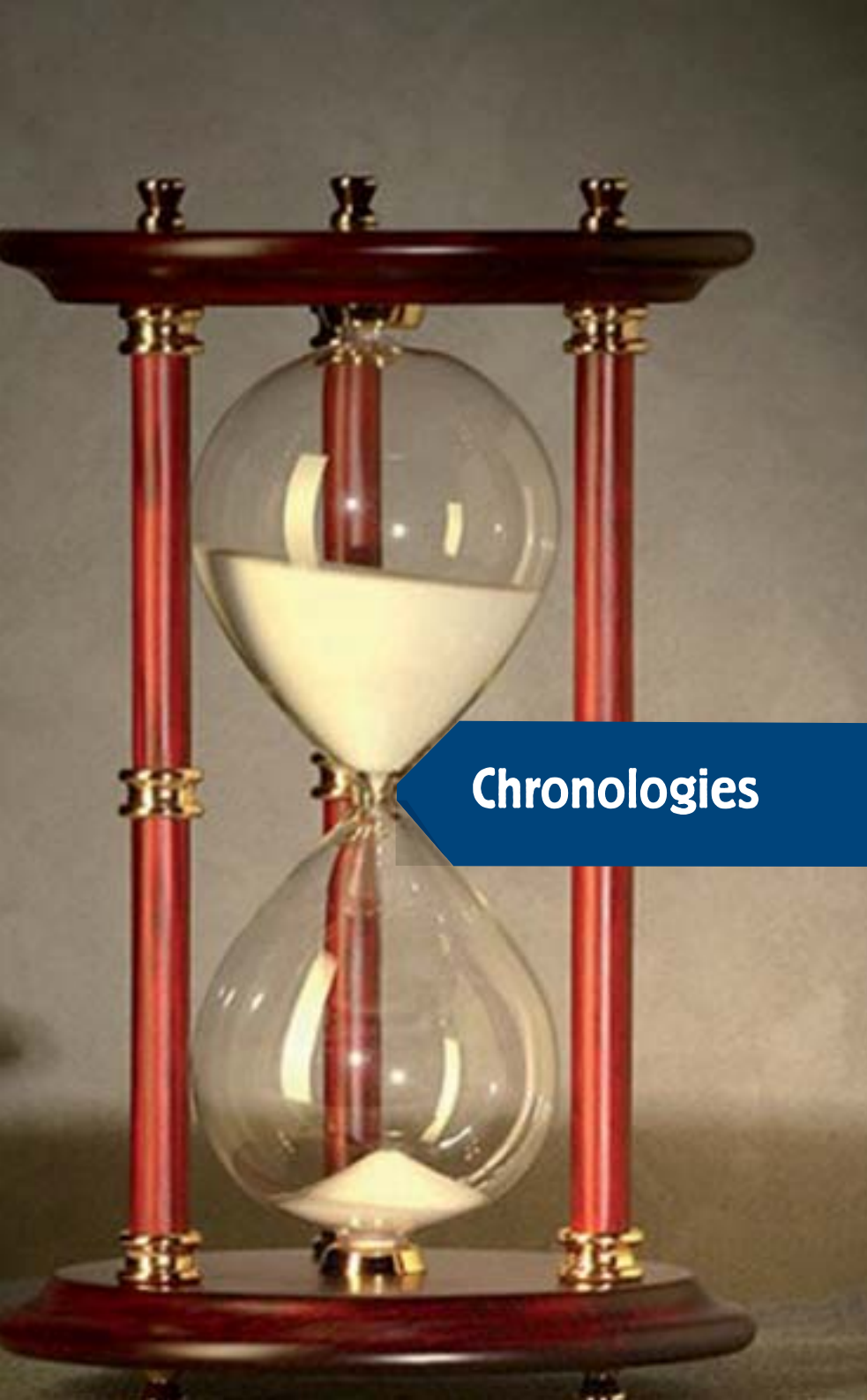
*Your most humble servant,*

*J.C. Colin*

*Lyon, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1870*

*(OM III, doc 827)*





**Chronologies**

## 1786-1858 **Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn**

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- 1786 August 29<sup>th</sup> Birth and baptism of Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn at Coutouvre.
- 1797 First Communion of Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, aged 11.
- 1806 Jean Philibert Lefranc, suffering ill health, spends a year with relatives. Begins the Association of Divine Love; introduces Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn to meditation and prayer.
- 1807 First retreat by Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Thérèse Jotillon at the Chartreuse of Lyons.
- 1810 Jeanne-Marie's father, Theodore, dies at Coutouvre, aged 45.
- 1811, 1814 Retreats and interviews with Cardinal Fesch at Pradines.
- 1816 July 22<sup>nd</sup> - Ordination of Courveille, Colin, and Champagnat.
- July 23<sup>rd</sup> Promise at Fourvière.
- 1817 Jean-Claude Colin shares the project with his brother, Pierre.  
Pierre invites Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Jotillon to join them at Cerdon.
- 1818-1823 Marie Jotillon goes to help in a school in Belleville. Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn becomes housekeeper at the presbytery.
- 1823 Mgr. Devie becomes Bishop of Belley.  
September 8<sup>th</sup> - Jeanne-Marie and Marie Jotillon given permission to live in community.  
October 23<sup>rd</sup> - Marie Gardet joins them.



- 1824 June. The sisters move to another house at Cerdon.  
November 15<sup>th</sup>, Letter from Jeanne-Marie to Bishop Devie.  
December 8<sup>th</sup>. - Sisters' first clothing ceremony.  
December 18<sup>th</sup> - Death Sr. Joachim, novice.
- 1825 Sisters leave Cerdon for Belley, June 28<sup>th</sup>.
- 1826 First Professions, September 6<sup>th</sup>.
- 1832-1823 Attempts at new foundations.
- 1835 New foundation at Meximieux.
- 1838-1841 Three houses at Fourvière.
- 1840-1852 Foundation at La Boucle.  
Autonomy of branches after Colin's visit to Rome.  
Jeanne-Marie Chavoin (Mother Joseph) repeatedly asks Colin to finish the Sisters' rule.  
Period of difficulty between Colin and Chavoin.
- 1852 Death of Bishop Devie.  
August 25<sup>th</sup> - First Session of General Chapter.  
Principal points of rule explained by Colin.
- 1853 Second Session of General Chapter at Bon Repos.  
Mother Ambrose elected General.  
Jeanne-Marie Chavoin goes to Meximieux as superior.
- 1854 Jean-Claude Colin replaced by Favre as general.  
New foundation opened in Jarnosse, very close to Mother Joseph's ideals.
- 1858 Death of Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## 1789-1840 Marcellin Champagnat

---

- 1789 Birth of Marcellin Jean Baptiste Champagnat at Le Rosey.  
French Revolution breaks out. Marcellin's father is sympathetic to the principles of the revolution.
- 1791 Civil Constitution of the Clergy, condemned by Pius VI. Marcellin's father holds important positions as Mayoral Secretary, Colonel of the National Guard.
- 1798 Marcellin's father made President of the Municipal Association.  
Napoleon controls and governs France.  
Pius VI exiled to Valence where he dies a prisoner.
- 1804 Marcellin's vocational decision.  
Death of Marcellin's father.
- 1805 Marcellin enters the Minor Seminary of Verrières.
- 1808 Birth of Gabriel Rivat, later to become Brother François.
- 1810 Death of Marcellin's mother.
- 1813 Marcellin and Jean-Claude Colin enter the Seminary at Lyons.
- 1815 Courveille, Colin, Déclas, Terrailon and Champagnat discuss the idea of a Marian Congregation.  
Marcellin insists "We must have brothers!"
- 1816 Champagnat's Ordination.  
Fourvière Pledge.  
Champagnat goes to La Valla.
- 1817 January 2nd, Foundation of Little Brothers of Mary.  
J-M Granjon, J-B Audras join Brothers.

- 1818 Gabriel Rivat joins the novitiate.
- 1822 Eight postulants from Haute-Loire arrive, quite unexpectedly.  
La Valla is enlarged.
- 1823 Re-arrangement of Lyons diocese.  
Bochard and Champagnat in conflict over uniting congregations.  
Archbishop de Pins supports Champagnat, giving him money and the permission to receive vows.
- 1824 Courveille joins Champagnat's community at La Valla and is the novice master.  
Champagnat moves to the Hermitage where he starts building.
- 1825 The Hermitage is completed.  
In the community, 20 Brothers and 10 postulants.  
Already 22 Brothers are in schools.
- 1826 Champagnat's grave illness.  
Departure of Terrillon, Courveille. A critical and dramatic test for Marcellin.  
Departure of some early Brothers. Debts.  
Br. Stanislaus' leadership. First Professions.
- 1828 By now the Little Brothers of Mary number 96 Brothers, 16 novices, 14 schools, 1600 pupils.
- 1829 Authority crisis in the Congregation.
- 1836 The Society of Mary is approved by Rome.  
The Congregation is given responsibility for missions of Western Oceania.  
Marcellin takes vows in the Society of Mary, with the 19 other first Marists.

Marcellin makes efforts in Paris to obtain the approval of the Government for the teaching brothers.

1837 Printed Book of Rules sent to communities.

1839 Brother François elected superior general.

1840 June 6<sup>th</sup> - Death of Marcellin Champagnat.  
At this time, the Little Brothers of Mary number 278 Brothers, working in 48 houses.

## 1790-1875 Jean-Claude Colin

---

- 1790 August 7<sup>th</sup> - Birth of Jean-Claude Colin at St. Bonnet-le-Troncy.
- 1795 Death of Jean-Claude's Father and Mother.
- 1804 Jean-Claude begins studies at minor seminary at St. Jodard.
- 1809 Jean-Claude changes to Seminary at Alix.
- 1812 Jean-Claude begins philosophy at Verrières.
- 1813 Begins theology at the Seminary of St. Irénée in Lyons.
- 1815 Discussions begin on the Marist project. Courveille, Colin, Terrailon, Déclas and Champagnat meet together.
- 1816 Jean-Claude Colin ordained priest.  
Pledge of Fourvière.  
Jean-Claude appointed to Cerdon. Begins to make initial notes towards a Rule for the Marist project.
- 1817 Marcellin Champagnat gathers a group of brothers around him at La Valla.  
Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Jotillon join the two Colin brothers at Cerdon.
- 1822 Letter of Colin brothers to Pius VII and the Pope's reply.
- 1824 Déclas joins Pierre and Jean-Claude Colin at Cerdon.  
Pierre writes to the bishop: "Today the Society of Mary begins."

- 1825 Bugey missions begin. First mission is preached from Cerdon.  
The community of priests and the sisters move to Belley.  
Missions in the Bugey are preached from Belley.
- 1826 Courveille scandal.
- 1829 Colin appointed superior of the College in Belley. He writes his "Advice for teachers".
- 1830 Jean-Claude Colin elected central superior of "Marist" groups of Belley and Lyons.
- 1833 Colin makes his first visit to Rome to present the ideas of the Congregation of Marists.
- 1836 Colin accepts missions of Oceania. Rome approves Society of Mary. Colin elected as first superior general of Society of Mary.
- 1839 Colin transfers the administration from Belley to Lyons.
- 1842 First General Chapter. Colin travels again to Rome.
- 1845 Second General Chapter. Colin makes determined effort to resign.  
Appoints Julien Eymard to direct the Third Order.
- 1846 Third visit to Rome
- 1846-7 Fourth visit to Rome
- 1848 Rome gives final ruling on Pompallier and New Zealand.
- 1850 Colin buys La Neylière for contemplative branch.

- 1854 Fifth visit to Rome.  
Colin resigns as superior general.
- 1855 Colin begins work on Constitutions of Marist Sisters.
- 1856 The Favre Constitutions.
- 1860 The Favre Constitutions approved by Rome on trial.
- 1864 The Mayet Memorandum begins “la grande affaire” of the rules.
- 1866 General Chapter agrees to return to Colin for final version of the Rule.
- 1868 Renewed controversy over Colin’s decision to return to the Rule of 1842.
- 1869 Favre agrees to accept Colin’s Rule.
- 1870 General Chapter accepts Constitutions of Colin
- 1875 November 15<sup>th</sup> - Death of Jean-Claude Colin.





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- Belley, Cerdon, La Neylière, St. Bonnet le Troncy: the places of Jean-Claude Colin
- Coutouvre, Jarnosse: the places of Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn
- Le Puy, Usson: the places of Jean-Claude Courveille
- L'Hermitage, La Valla, Marlhes: the places of Marcellin Champagnat



