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*Constitutions*

# Bearings

THE SPIRIT  
OF THE CONSTITUTIONS  
OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY  
REFLECTED

*Commemorating the 25th Anniversary  
of the Approval of the Constitutions of  
the Society of Mary*

**CRAIG LARKIN SM**



## Foreword

### *Opening the Constitutions*

I am writing this foreword in Bougainville, PNG, after spending three months meeting and sharing with our Oceanian Marists on our personal and shared mission. It is an experience of grace and favour.

The intention of Craig Larkin through this creative presentation is to enable today's Marists to reflect prayerfully upon the Constitutions with a view to helping us to absorb through the lived experiences of our fellow Marists the deeper content of our rule of life. The witness of our forbears is a sure way to help us to approach the Constitutions in an imaginative way and to discover in them pathways to an ever deeper understanding of our Marist Call so that we become more committed followers of Jesus in Mary's way of being faithful.

On 12 September 2011 we commence a year of special study, prayer and reflection on our Constitutions leading up to the celebration of the 25th jubilee of their approval on 12 September 2012. I am confident you will find here a source of inspiration and grace. I wish to thank Craig Larkin for his dedication to this commission which he generously accepted. I pray that all who reflect on these texts will gain a deeper knowledge of and commitment to the Marist vision which means so much to us.

John Hannan sm  
Superior General

## Introduction

“Bearings” is a word well-known to travelers and pilgrims. Wise travelers will “set their bearings” at the beginning of their journey, and on their way will consult their compass to “check their bearings”, to ensure that they are still going in the right direction.

Like travelers or pilgrims, Marists use the compass-points of their Constitutions to set their course at the beginning of their lives as religious, and consult them to check that they are still on the right course.

But Constitutions often describe the ideals. Do we have any evidence that someone, at some time in our history, has lived according to these ideals?

Our Congregation’s history is dotted with stories of confreres whose lives have reflected the spirit expressed in the Constitutions. The recently published 10 volumes of *Lettres reçues d’Océanie* contain many of these stories, and frequent – but not exclusive – reference is made in these pages to the early missionaries and their letters. The Marists who are mentioned in this book are not necessarily the “greats” of the Society. Many are unknown to most Marists today. But they have this in common: some aspect of their lives reflected some aspect of our Marist Constitutions. This is why the book is subtitled, “The spirit of the Constitutions *reflected*.”

A significant number of our Constitutions concern legislative or administrative procedures. These are not dealt with in this book. Other Constitutions concern our way of proceeding. It is these that we can see reflected in the lives of our ancestors.

## How to use the book

The aim of the book is to help you to re-appropriate the Constitutions, as urged by the General Chapter of 2009. (SD 25)

The book will work best if the reader uses it slowly and reflectively, avoiding the temptation to skim through the book or to read the stories without reflecting on the Constitutions.

### A five-step process is suggested:

- 1** Read the number of our present Constitutions quoted at the top of the left-hand page.
- 2** Read the phrase from the 1872 Constitutions of Fr Colin quoted at the bottom of the left-hand page. This phrase will usually echo the present Constitutions. Spend some time pondering how the two texts reflect each other.
- 3** Read the story on the right-hand page. Usually a section of the story is highlighted in the colored box. This is the part that might call for reflection.
- 4** Read again and reflect on the Constitution at the top of the left-hand page.
- 5** If you are doing this exercise by yourself, you might now enter into a more prayerful reflection on the Constitution, asking “In the light of what I have read, how am I called to act?” If the exercise is being done in a group, this may be the time to reflect together how the Constitution touches the life of each person, or how it may affect the life of the community, or province, or district.

## Abbreviations & references

APM	Archives of the Marist Fathers, Via Alessandro Poerio, 63, Rome.
AT	<i>Antiquiores Textus Constitutionum Societatis Mariae</i> (Roma, 1955).
CL	Claude Rozier (ed.), <i>Écrits de S. Pierre Chanel</i> (Rome, 1960).
Colin sup	Gaston Lessard and Bernard Bourtot (eds), <i>“Colin sup”: Documents pour l’étude du généralate de Jean-Claude Colin (1836-1854)</i> (vols I, II, IV) (Roma, 2007 – 2009).
Coste, J. (1963)	<i>The Spirit of the Society: Historical commentary on the Constitutions of the Marist Fathers</i> (Rome, 1963).
Coste, J. (1990)	<i>A certain idea of the Society of Mary: Jean-Claude Colin</i> (Rome, 1990).
FA	Jean Coste (ed.), <i>A Founder Acts, Reminiscences of Jean-Claude Colin by Gabriel-Claude Mayet</i> (Rome, 1983).
FS	Jean Coste (ed.), <i>A Founder Speaks, Spiritual talks of Jean-Claude Colin</i> (Rome, 1974).
Goulter, M.	<i>Sons of France</i> (Wellington, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1957).
Graystone, P.	<i>A short history of the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers and Brothers) 1854 -1993</i> (Rome 1998).

- Greiler, A. (ed.) *Catholic beginnings in Oceania: Marist missionary perspectives* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009).
- Hayes, B *Quasi Occulti: Some of the first twenty Marists* (Dublin 1969).
- LRO Charles Girard (ed.), *Lettres reçues d'Océanie* (10 vols) (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2009).
- MAW Archives of the New Zealand Province of the Society of Mary, Wellington.
- Mayet Gabriel-Claude Mayet, *Mémoires* (ms APM), 11 vols.
- Mullins, D. *He spoke the truth in love, Bishop Patelisio Finau* (Auckland: CPC Press, 1994).
- OM Jean Coste and Gaston Lessard (eds), *Origines Maristes 1786-1836* (4 vols) (Rome, 1960).
- OPS *Our Pioneer Sisters – from correspondence 1836-1885 (Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary)* (4 vol) (Rome, 1972).
- RMJ *Recollections: Mother Saint Joseph, Foundress of the Marist Sisters 1786-1858* (Rome, 1974).
- Snijders, J. *Pacific Commitment: Colin, the French founder of the Marist missions in the Pacific 1835-1841* (draft – 2010).
- Wiltgen, R. *The founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825-1850* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979).



**AD MAIOREM DEI GLORIAM  
ET DEI GENETRICIS HONOREM**