

## **The New Constitutions, a response in creative fidelity and an instrument of renewal of the SM.**

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It is true that we can speak of our Constitutions in many ways and from many points of view. I will speak to you from the point of view of a witness who had the good luck to be present and to participate in a privileged way as, with Gaston Lessard and Pat Bearsley, one of the three members of the writing commission of the draft of the new constitutions with the aim of their approbation by the 1985 chapter, and then, as delegate of my province to the chapter, I was able to take part in the debates and corrections of the draft until their final approbation. My contribution to this renewal course will consist of trying to help you to read what the constitutions say in the light of what they don't say; to read the text in its context, to understand what is said and its connection with what is intended to be and understood as the mission of the Society of Mary from its beginnings. In other words, I will be satisfied if what I say helps you to sustain and increase your love of some constitutional texts that constitute and establish us as a social group in the Church and that identify and signal our form of being Christian and of announcing the Gospel and building the Christian community. On the other hand, the Constitutions accepted and lived with generosity, are those that can really constitute us and, in fact, constitute us in our Marist identity; they found and refound us constantly. Our Society and we Marists exist in the measure in which we allow these constitutional texts to inspire and mould our behaviour and shape our lives as individuals, as communities and as a Society. It is not a case of mythologizing some texts. It is a case of opening ourselves to the force they transmit and the Spirit that inspires and animates them.

### **A little history of the redaction**

The chapter of 1969-70, responding to the demands of the recently celebrated Vatican II and specifically, to *Perfectae caritatis*, didn't decide in favour of the proposal of giving the Society new Constitutions based on the text prepared by Father Coste with a short summary (*Fontes*) of the most inspirational or foundational and historical Colinian texts for the SM and for Marist charism. After two marathon sessions of two years the chapter opted to maintain as the fundamental canon the Constitutions of 1961 as a Colinian reference and not to promulgate the *Fontes*, but rather to mandate publishing them as a

Chapter document to the General Administration and to begin consulting experts and the Society with a view to presenting a more studied and careful redaction of the same, in order that the chapter of '77 might receive them as fundamental canon "ad experimentum" and meanwhile, give to the SM the **Declarations** with the idea of promoting the renewal of Marist religious life, formation, ministries and missions, and some **Decrees** o Statutes in order that the legislation, the government and the administration of goods of the SM might conform to the demands of the II Vatican Council.

However the 1977 Chapter opted for having Constitutions in two parts (a 1<sup>st</sup> part, the Constitutions of the Founder, John Claude Colin from 1872 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, a contemporary presentation of our spirit and our mission, in compliance with the renewal promoted and demanded by Vatican II) and the *Capitular decrees*. The chapter of 1977 wanted to recognise Fr Colin as the founder and lawgiver of the Society. It was to him that the chapter wanted to remain loyal, at the same time it owed fidelity to Vatican II and the new era. The will of the Society, as the capitulants saw it, was that the Colinian text should remain as the expression of the nature and ends of the Society.

With this in mind, in accordance with the guidelines of the chapter of 1977 and of the Council of the Society in Quebec (1983), the chapter of 1985 appointed a redaction team of three Marists (Pat Bearsley, Gaston Lessard and Jose Rodriguez) from three different continents to prepare, beginning from the modern text of the chapter of 1977, constitutions that could be definitively approved by the chapter, given that the time given by Rome to present the definitively approved Constitutions was running out. The CS '83 in Quebec already knew that the SCRSI (Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes) would not approve the historical text of 1872 as part of the Constitutions. Other congregations had proposed to the SCRSI a similar solution to that adopted by the Chapter of 1977 and had received a negative response. The SCRSI would not approve a text that had already been approved, nor give juridical value to a historical text, however notable it was. It was necessary that everyone knew clearly the current laws to which members of a congregation were subject. For this reason the bipolar solution of Colin's text and a modern text alongside had to be discarded.

The redaction team, at the end of a month's work came to the following conclusions:

a. Fr Colin's constitutions of 1872, which the founder worked on for fifty years and which constitute the real basis of the spirituality of the Society, could not form part of the Constitutions of the SM, because the SCRSI had already determined this in similar cases. Therefore this was taken as read and, of course, it was not possible to continue down this path. This meant beginning anew.

b. The new constitutional texts produced by the chapter of 1977 were accompanied by the founder's constitutions of 1872 and therefore they omitted fundamental elements about the nature and the mission of the Society, given that these were understood to be defined already in the constitutions of 1872. These deficiencies of the modern text of the chapter of 1977 had not passed unnoticed by numerous Marists who, among their proposals about what should be the new definitive constitutions, asked for a more clearly definition of the nature, spirit and mission of the Society and of the identity, spirit and mission of Marists in the Church and the world of today. It was not enough to add or subtract things from what the chapter of 1977 had done. What had been written presupposed a first part that gave it context. To take separately the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, that is, the modern text of 1977, was to begin with a definition of religious life that was practically identical to all forms of religious life and to make ineffective the multiplicity of congregations. The differences between the congregations would be minimal and unimportant. This is not what Colin thought of the Society of Mary: "our congregation is for doing what the others cannot do: merely this" (FS doc 1,2) Colin was sure that when a new Society was born it was for some special need; its mission was exclusive and unique, which doesn't mean that it would have many elements in common with other forms of serving the Gospel and following Jesus in a radical way. But the point of view is very different. Therefore it is not a case of beginning with the commonalities, but rather from the necessity or mission for which the congregation is born.

c. It seemed to the redaction team, in a concern deeply shared by the General Administration of Fr Ryan, that the option of 1977 would be better served by the elaboration of a modern text that responded to the demands of the Holy See and which at the same time would send the reader continually to the text of Fr Colin, not by way of quotes, but by inviting the Marist to enter into the dynamic of Fr Colin's thought at the time he was establishing the foundations of the Society, and the vocation, spirit and mission of the Marist. Similarly it was considered that adding or subtracting from the text of 1977 would not be sufficient

to respond to the desiderata expressed by numerous Marists from the world over, that is, their expectations which were delivered to the redaction team in a box of considerable dimensions that came to be known as “Pandora’s box”, about what should be the form of the new definitive constitutions. The somewhat poetic declaration which begins the modern text: “to be Marist is to have been called...” showed beautiful elements about the vocation of the Marist in the Church and in the world, as is proved by the appreciation it awakened in the whole Society; but it is necessary to say it was the only inspirational text about Marist identity, and not sufficiently precise to be a constitutional text about the nature, spirit and mission of the Society and of the Marist vocation.

d. The redaction team in their keenness to enter into the mind of Fr Colin in his work of founding and forming the Society and Marists, understood that the text of 1872 could be enriched and understood better in the light of the earlier constitutional texts of 1833, 1835 and 1842, as well as the other more primitive texts that, even though not of constitutional character and not appearing in some constitution, had fed “the Colinian vision” and had inspired and sustained the thought and action of Fr Colin as he gave body to the inspiration of Le Puy and the promise of Fourvière. These references would better arrive at a understanding of what the Society of Mary is called to be; and at a more ample vision of what makes up the spirituality and vocation of the Marist in the Church and in the world of today. It is a case of perceiving and expressing in the best possible manner the Founder in his work as founder and formator of the Society of Mary. It is not enough simply to rely on the text of the Founder, in this case from 1872, in order to enter into its dynamic and take on its purpose. Certainly, this text is the final Colinian reference that was left to the Society in his role as Founder, and this is how Marists have understood and held it, and the redaction team held fast to this; even though they didn’t want to lose sight of that first resolve when the Spirit breathed forth the Founder and prophet of his time, John Claude Colin. It is a question of adding to and not taking away; it is a question of opening horizons and not of narrowing them. It is a question of holding on to, not just the project of the man as he is dying, but also the project of the man at time of the freshness and creativity of the project that is being born and beginning its life.

The redaction team during the 1984 project, in addition to the texts of Colin, had before them the text of previous chapters particularly the modern text of the constitutions of 1977. But it took a Colinian

perspective: “we do not take any congregation for our model, we have no other model than the new-born Church.” (FS 42, 3) To speak of religious or consecrated life, as do the theological writings about religious life and the texts of the Church (*Perfectae Caritatis*, *Vita Consecrata* etc), implies that there is one religious life for all, Benedictines, Jesuits, Franciscans, Daughters of Charity, Marists etc. However each religious congregation gives new expression to the Gospel, a new response to the signs of the times. This doesn't mean that they don't have much in common. But this is not a good beginning place, given that we might easily lose the novel perspective that the appearance of a new religious family brings to the Church. Everything in the new Constitutions (formation, consecration, vows, common rule, administration of goods, government etc) is in function of the mission and of the spirit of those who bear the name of Mary.

The project of the new Constitutions didn't end until August 1984, six months after beginning. This project of the Constitutions was made up of two parts: The Constitutions (The fundamental canon, of constant character) and the *Decreta Capitularia* (Canon able to be modified by later chapters). The General Administration put the project into the hands of all the Provincials and they sent it as well to 13 Marists from various nations, chosen for their experience and their interest in the work of the Constitutions. These 13 readers, for those who are interested in knowing them, were: A. DiIanni (B), J. Hulshof (N), R. Dumortier (F), A. Barker (E), J. Jago (A), J. Foliaki (O), J. De Baciocchi (F), H. Bonnet-Eymard (F), F. Arnold (G), E. Keel (W), J. Coste and A. Ward (Rome) and C. Larkin (NZ). At the same time the project was put into the hands of two experts: Frs William Hogan CSC, consulter to the SCRSI and Frank Morrissey OMI, a renowned canon lawyer of the University of Ottawa. With the suggestions received the General Administration revised the project and presented it as a working document to the Chapter of 1985, after lightly modifying some aspects, mostly of Canon Law and aspects referring to the government of the Society.

The majority of replies, from Provincials and from readers, looked on the project favourably and valued positively the entire project, even if some had some reservations with some not unimportant aspects. There were very few who felt deceived by and opposed to the entire project of the redaction team. These thought that if it was unable to maintain the 1872 text in the bipolar solution of 1977, the redaction team should have worked from the modern text of the same 1977

chapter. I remember one of the expressions that one of these brothers used to describe the project: “it is like a false brother of Colin”; another said: “to try and reproduce Colin in a modern text is as useless as trying to raise a cadaver and some constitutions, whatever they are, are as dead as Colin”. The majority, however, could see themselves in the project and saw that the text expressed better than any other, beginning with the Chapter of 1969-70 of renewal mandated by Vatican II, the nature and mission of the Society, as well as the identity and mission of the Marists in the Church and world of today. Fr. Coste, who maintained himself at the margin of the project under elaboration, while being available to the redaction team’s consultations expressed it in similar words.

### **Finally, New Constitutions**

Finally the chapter of 1985 approved a definitive text of the Constitutions of the Society of Mary. Before doing so, the chapter introduced important modifications in some areas to the working document prepared by the redaction team and revised by the General Administration, all the while conserving the basic scheme of the project of the Constitutions. Chapter three (“Forming a Communion for Mission”) and chapter four (“Government”) were the ones that were most altered by the capitulants; in order to retain the greatest autonomy and self government possible in the provinces, as opposed to the proposed constitutions which in name of the nature, identity, ends or mission, as well as the international character of the Society gave a greater power to the General Administration in order to conduct the Society towards achieving its mission. The first chapter (Nature and Foundations of the Society) and fifth (Growth and Fidelity) were enriched with an explicit quote of two texts of Fr. Colin’s constitutions so that in regard to the nature, mission and spirit of the Society, Marists have no reference other than what the founder left written in the Constitutions of 1872 and which Marists of all times wish to conserve as a treasure. Chapter two (New Members) is, without doubt, the one that practically preserved the text of the working document, without any important modifications.

The definitive text of the constitutions approved by the chapter of 1985, as can be seen in the *Actas Capitulares*, won a wide consensus of the capitulants. This was joyfully received by a Society that had been 15 years trying to agree on constitutional texts responding to the demands of Vatican II and approved by Rome.

The fact of having arrived at a constitutional text that achieved a consensus in the chapter room was wonderful news for the whole Society. It was the best indication that the new Constitutions would be well received by each Marist and by the Society of Mary in general. The truth is that the welcome was generally good and even enthusiastic.

This constitutional text, approved by the General Chapter of 1985, was not only well received by the Society of Mary, but by the very Church, which recognised them on the 12 of September 1987. These Constitutions are the “fundamental charter of the Society of Mary and a powerful means of growth in the spiritual life. Each Marist by his profession undertakes to live them in the spirit of Mary and considers them the source of strength as he strives to do her work” (CS 230) The Church ratified its approval, reminding Marists “May the generous living of these constitutions encourage all the members of the Society to an ever deeper commitment to their consecrated life in accordance with the spirit of the Venerable Jean-Claude Colin, their founder, and under the strong and tender protection of Mary, their Mother and Patroness.” (Decree of Approbation).

This Constitutional Text has changed from being a project of the redaction team to being the fundamental document of the Society; and, by being ratified by the Holy See, becomes an evangelical document for we Christians who are Marists and by the will of what the Spirit desires of them who have been called by God to follow Jesus and construct his kingdom, following the footsteps of Mary, receiving from Mary her name, forming part of her family, filling themselves with her spirit and labouring in her Work, in order to carry out the Mary’s desire of being “the support of the Church in these end times, as in the beginning”, and contribute in this way to renewing the Church in the likeness of Mary.

### **The Constitutional Text and the Spirit that animates it**

The solution adopted by the Chapter of 1985 was to take a constitutional text in two parts. The first, unvarying part, the actual Constitutions, which gathers the basic constituent parts of the nature, ends and mission of the Society of Mary and of the Marist vocation, as well as some elements of Canon Law that the SCRSI demanded in order to approve them, and that can’t be modified without the authorization of Roman Church and needing the previous agreement of two thirds of the members of the General Chapter of the Society. The second part, able to be modified by the Society of Mary according to the situation and present needs (*Decreta Capitularia*), gathers the legal elements and

orientations and policies of life and ministry according to the demands of a concrete moment or place.

One thing that was a pleasant surprise to most Marists, anxious to live in a Marist way their religious consecration and their priestly ministry, was the great unity of all the entire constitutional text; but above all of the foundational part or actual Constitutions. There is one spirit that speaks throughout the whole. If Fr. Colin needed many years to give to the Society definitive Constitutions toward the end of his days, it was because he was aware that he was not occupied in writing norms for a group of priests who wanted to be good priests and good religious. Colin knew that what he was about was laying down foundations for, building, and raising up the Society and tracing the way of formation for Marists, so to be suitable instruments for the Work of Mary. He is founding, building, and raising up the Society of Mary and forming Marists. All he writes has to contribute to make possible this project that is the Society and the Marist so that they are suitable instruments of the Work of Mary. He is giving body to the spirit that spoke to him and to the group of the first Marists. It is not the same to be founding one thing as founding the other. It is not the same teaching the way of becoming a Marist as it is being a Jesuit or a diocesan priest. To do the Work of Mary requires certain qualities, requires that the instruments to be prepared. The ends of the Society require certain conditions of whoever enters her. Everything that organizes and regulates the ordinary life of the Marists in all their manifestations has to have in perspective the ends, the mission for which they have been gathered, and the demands of the name that they bear. Therefore it is not just the case that the constitutional text determines the nature, the end, the mission and the spirit of the Society. It is necessary everything move in the same direction. There can be no airtight compartments; areas of life that don't allow themselves to be moulded by the same rationale of the project. A single project. A single unity of life. It is this that is first noticeable and is a pleasant surprise as one scans the text of the new Constitutions. If the Society has received a mission and been given a spirit, it is in order that it penetrates and invade everything: formation, ministries, ordinary life, the vows, community life, government, administration of goods and so on. In the redaction team's project opposite the page that describes the name, nature and ends of the Society of Mary, a quote of Father Colin (*A Founder Speaks*, doc. 152 from the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, 1848:

“Let us not look at what the societies who have preceded us have done, for when a society comes to birth it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (here his tone became more solemn), I do not mind repeating it here once more: the words “I was the mainstay of the new-born Church; I shall be again at the end of time”, served us, in the very earliest days of the Society, as a foundation and an encouragement. They were always before us. We worked in that direction, so to speak”.

As well as the internal unity (everything that makes possible the wishes of Mary and the *raison d'être* of the Marist in the Church), the spiritual richness is noticeable (and it is also interesting to see within the theological, ecclesiological, Marian and Christological aspects) and it is a constituent and legislative text, one that deals with being a Marist and helps him to be the most suitable instrument of the Work of Mary, the *raison d'être* of the Society and of the Marist. As Colin himself had made the Constitutions more than a simple code, that is, an inspiring spiritual book, a book of spirituality, the new Constitutions have this same character: they are the premier book of Marist spirituality. They present much of what Colin hinted at in his Constitutions and which he was unable to make explicit there; they make explicit much of what Colin explicitly said and much of what he implied; they gather much of what Colin sowed with this words, with his conversations, with his confidences about experiences which made him the Founder and which never stopped revealing. He wanted them to remain as he had himself lived; “hidden and unknown”. But for the Marist who becomes aware of this hidden treasure, in the language of Saint Matthew, “he leaves it hidden and, full of joy, sells everything to buy that field” (Mt 13:44). With the dream of one who has something precious in his hands we prepare ourselves to enter into the secret of the book of our life as Marists which are the Constitutions.

*Translation: Patrick Brophy sm*

*[The editor: Translation for Chapter 1 to be supplemented]*

## **The Society Continues and Renews Itself**

### **Chapter 2. Admission and Incorporation of New Members**

#### **1. The Society chooses and decides what it wants to be.**

Chapter 2 about the ‘admission and incorporation of new members’, follows Chapter 1 on the ‘Nature and Foundations of the Society’. In the process of admission, inclusion and formation of new members, the Society is deciding what it is going to be. Fr. Colin, in the *Epitome* of 1836 (no. 31 – 41), as in the Constitutions (1842 no. 28, and 1872 no.52), insisted that ‘they must be examined, with the greatest care, those whom God calls to this least Society’, since the common good of the Society, and of the individual, require that ‘only the called and chosen be admitted.’ The foundations of the Society are in the balance. The ends and mission of the Society are at risk.

Therefore, the decisive element at the time of admitting a new member to formation, and the type of preparation he will have, must be the mission in which he is called to participate, and the spirit with which he must carry it out. Throughout the process of incorporation into the Society, that is, into its mission and spirit, the new member has to make his own, the foundational experience of those who began the project. He needs to have had an experience, analogous to that of the founders, and, like them, to be committed to put all his energy and service behind the ends of the Society. The Society will collapse when the process of admission, incorporation, and formation of new members is made in an indiscriminate way, without taking account of the spirit and ends of the Society. It is not true that all that a Marist does is Marist. What *is* Marist is what corresponds to the ends, mission and spirit of the Society. For that reason, a chapter on formation describes how one becomes, or is made a Marist.

By and large, the dynamic is the same as in the first chapter (Nature and Foundations), but from the angle of appropriation. That means to take anew the name, the ends and mission, the characteristics and spirit of the Society with a view to owning them. It is to lead the new members again, through the great Marist events, or foundational experiences, of those who first got the project moving. And so, by the candidate having an analogous experience, he may make an analogous commitment, to bring into being and give body to the Society of Mary, and to realize this desire of Mary Mother of mercy. In fact, it is this same Society, or its head the General, and, by delegation, the provincials etc., who are responsible for ensuring that, in this process, all be done with the spirit and mission of the Society as the point of reference.

## 2. The history of the text.

The precapitular project of 1984, took its inspiration from the Constitutions of the Founder, both those of 1842 and 1872. These had taken from St. Ignatius, the outlining of the process of evaluation and admission to the novitiate. With the ends of the Society in view, the text deals with the selecting and admitting to the process of incorporation and formation, those people who have taken seriously their baptism, and feel attracted by the name and ends of the Society. The novitiate formation has as its goal, that the novices grow in knowledge of the Society's lifestyle, and advance in the things of the spirit (74). The primary concern is that of setting out, with conviction, on the way of personal perfection, for which they entered the Society, and of forming in themselves the Society's spirit.

The pre-chapter text follows the 1872 Constitutions of Fr. Colin. In this case the texts of 1842 and 1872 are practically the same, though in 1842, the vow of stability is mentioned in chapter 1, article 5. – *De variis personis...* as a fifth grade of belonging, or class of membership in the Society. The text which would come out of the Chapter of 1985 kept the scheme of the precapitular project, practically in its entirety. The Chapter added a preamble which echoed the concern of a number of capitulants who wanted explicitly maintained the content of n. 83-85 of chapter 3 (Stages of Marist Life) of the modern text of the Constitutions (1977). There, Marist formation is referred to as preparation for a religious, apostolic and priestly project, according to the type of vocation (priest or brother) – a preparation which should help combine both aspects, the collective and personal (n. 85c). The General Chapter changed the position of what was said of the vow of stability and of expulsion from the Society. These originally came after profession, as the culmination of the process of incorporation into the Society, and were shifted to the end of chapter 2 after article 3 (Preparation for Mission). Neither the project of 1984, nor the text of the Constitutions voted on in 1985, dealt with the vows in this chapter. That treatment is reserved for chapter 3 (Forming a Communion for Mission).

The definitive scheme voted for by the 1985 Chapter remained thus:  
 Chapter 2: Admission and Incorporation of New Members.  
 Preamble.

Article 1. Admission of New Members.

1. Invitation to Enter the Society
2. Examination and Admission of Candidates to the Novitiate.

#### Article 2. Incorporation of New Members.

1. Aims of the process of incorporation.
2. Levels of Responsibility.
3. Novitiate.
4. Profession.

#### Article 3. Preparation for Mission.

1. Principles
2. Responsibilities
3. Ongoing Formation
4. Vow of Stability
5. Separation from the Society.

### **3. Reading the text**

The text of Chapter 2 of our current Constitutions is not a treatise on formation or pedagogy. It only speaks of: that which is required, in order for a new member to become a suitable instrument in the Work of Mary; that which leads him to the choice of the Society as the place where God calls him and Mary chooses him, to follow Christ and serve the Church in the spirit of Mary; that which is required and helps him to be useful to the society - in other words, all that enables the Society to continue fulfilling its mission and living according to its spirit. What is said in this chapter concerns the aptitude and the progressive assimilation of the spirit and the mission of the Society, and the preparation to be able to respond to its challenges. Included are elements of law required by the SCRIS and those elements which define the levels of responsibility in the process.

#### **Preamble (n. 33-35)**

The Preamble will not speak of a double project, but of the common vocation of the Society and the personal vocation of the religious. The Marist, in each stage of formation, is called to integrate these two elements (34). By participating in the common vocation of the Society, he responds to God's call and Mary's choice (33). Perhaps it could have been made clearer and less ambiguous, and more consonant with all that will be said about the process of admission and incorporation of new members. It may have been clearer if, instead of personal vocation, it

had spoken in the Colinian terms of cultivating the ‘personal aptitudes’ for better serving the ends and mission of the Society. However, it may be, that to leave this ambiguity in the text, is to leave a positive tension, albeit a dangerous one. The temptation is either not to take into consideration the personality of each person, or to forget the ends of the Society. In this gradual incorporation, through living the life, becoming familiar with its history, spirit and mission, and preparing for the mission by acquiring the necessary skills, the candidate assists the Society to keep serving the Church and the world, and to renew itself continually (35).

## **Article 1. Admission of New Members**

### **1. Invitation to Enter the Society (n. 36-39)**

If the Constitutions of Colin follow the Ignatian dynamic and begin with the testing of candidates who present themselves to see if they correspond to the nature, spirit and ends of the Society, then the current Constitutions follow the scheme of the 1984 project and, after the preamble, address the invitation, or recruitment of new members. The invitation is to have as its criterion: ‘those whom God calls to this least Society’, - ‘that only those who are called and chosen be admitted’ (CS 1872, 52); - ‘that not all who arrive be admitted’ (CS 1872, 57); - ‘I do not want or wish for any more than those whom God and the Blessed Virgin have chosen, those and none more’ (FS, doc. 172, 26). The text of our Constitutions about the invitation to enter the Society stresses confidence in the Holy Spirit, in prayer that God may give to us that gift, and to those in whom He has placed that Marist seed, the help necessary to respond (36). The text also stresses works with the poor and abandoned, the joy of belonging to Mary’s family, and the generosity with which they work (37). They respect scrupulously the freedom of the candidate (38). This does not mean, in my opinion, that the invitation is made passively, believing that candidates will come to us, without effort and searching for them.

### **1. Examination and Admission of Candidates to the Novitiate.**

The criteria for admission take into account the ends of the Society and its spirit, as do the requirements of Canon 625 of Canon Law (Impediments). Those who make the examination try: - to recognise and respect the form in which the Spirit acts in them (attitude of discernment), - to help discern their vocation in the Church, - to help the

Society achieve its goals. It falls to the major superiors to admit new candidates. However, it is the superior general who has the right to admit to the novitiate, though normally he does so, through the provincials and their councils (40). It is the superior general who is responsible for the process used in each province, district or delegation (41).

## **Article 2: Incorporation of New Members**

### *1. The goals of incorporation.*

Thanks to incorporation of new members, the Society continues and is renewed; the tradition is transmitted to new generations and, at the same time, it is renewed and enriched (49) with new expressions. However, in order that this tradition be a living transmission on the part of the Society, and an effective appropriation on the part of the new members, it is always necessary to keep in mind the goals of the process (n 50-55). That is, to make possible for the new members, an experience of the Gospel analogous to the experience of Jean Claude Colin and his companions. In other words, the new members take the same road today, passing through a similar experience, thus making their own, the foundational experience of those who began the project. This foundational Marist experience, consisting of the most significant Colinian experiences, has a flexibility and evocative power, and as such, can enable a greater owning of the Marist project.

1.1 Fourvière: that is the commitment before the image of the Virgin, of the twelve companions who express their love of God and of neighbour, committing themselves to work for the foundation of the society of Marists (51), in response to what Mary has asked of them (Le Puy). They make their own the desire of Mary and her concern for the Church in these last times. Upon making profession, the novice has learned to recognize the Society as the place where God wants him to live the Gospel, and he assumes the responsibility for the project which took shape at Fourvière (52).

1.2. Cerdon: there Colin acquired the certainty that the project came from God. In prayer and meditation on the mystery of Mary present in the new born Church, he learned how the Society should be present in the Church. During these years of unspeakable consolation and savouring God in prayer, and in the contemplation of the mystery of

Mary in the Church at its beginning, he learned that ‘when God speaks to the soul, He says many things in few words, such as the “ignoti et oculi” (OM, doc. 819, 122). For the novice (and we could say the same of the professed), this is the experience that leads him to taste God in prayer, where he learns to stay united to God while at work and in all that he does. In the meditation on the mysteries of Mary, he learns that he should live in the spirit of his mother, open to the action of the Holy Spirit in his life and in all that he does (53).

1.3 Bugey: If Cerdon represents mystical experience, and symbolises the joy felt in announcing the Gospel to all, especially to those on the periphery, the forgotten and the abandoned, then the Bugey represents apostolic joy. It is another way of tasting God, of experiencing the love and mercy of God pardoning sinners, and attracting and reconciling those on the margins. This experience of pardon as joy and liberation, helps one to understand that, tasting God, is to develop in oneself a liking, or ‘taste’ for sinners. This missionary joy, this urgency to respond to the call of the needy, and to forget one’s personal interests, is equally part of the experience of Le Puy, that is to say, the relationship with Mary, mother of mercy.

## *2. Levels of Responsibility in Initial Formation*

Given that initial formation concerns the very fundamentals of the Society, and on it depends the realising of the Society’s goals, it is logical that the superior general should have the final responsibility over provincial programmes, ensuring that they be faithful to the Constitutions. The provincial is responsible for formation in his province and keeps the general informed about it.

## *3. The Novitiate*

It is a decisive moment, requiring a special environment, a house especially designated for this purpose by the superior general and his council, in consultation with the provincial concerned. Also in a novice master, certain special characteristics need to come together; in this case, although he may be nominated by the provincial and his council, approval must be obtained from the superior general. In Colin’s Constitutions, the attention is given mostly to the master of novices, and to the docility of the novice to the direction given by his novice master and the movements of the spirit. The current Constitutions, give more space to the formator, or the novice master, since it must be said, canon

law and the SCRIS require it (n.58-63). This is in order that the novice have a practical preparation into the way of living in the Society, into making his own the goals and mission of the same, and that these may confirm his vocation and choice, as says Colin in CS 74. Number 64 is dedicated to what Colin wanted to achieve, in asking such docility from the novice:- attention to the Word of God so as to make himself a better disciple of the Lord, in the hands of the Holy Spirit;- and to come to recognise in faith, that the Society of Mary is the place where God is inviting him and calling him. Creating in the novice, such an opening to a reality that existed before he did, namely the Society, an opening to a new world which he is entering, this will enable him to discover that here is where God and Mary want him for their work. This opening is described by Colin in CS 82, as fruit of the spirit which is formed 'treading the footsteps of Mary', making one humble and welcoming like Mary. It seems, as Fr. Lessard affirms in his 'Preliminary Reflections' to the redaction of the text, that Colin intended to suppress this chapter II from the Constitutions, because all these teaching observations would have been better suited to a directory for the novice master.

#### *4. Profession*

This commitment renews the promise, made at the foot of the Virgin of Fourvière, by those who laid the foundations of the Society. This image, this icon, has already been alluded to, along the way, as part of the foundational experience which the novice has had to make his own; this now takes on its full meaning. The canonical requirements of profession, the bonds which are established between the new member and the Society, are determined by Canon Law. Here are included those aspects with the SCRIS asks for, in order to be able to approve the Constitutions, with the authority of the Church. This text of the Constitutions (as do the Constitutions of Colin, and as required by Canon Law), explicitly states that the profession is received, in the name of the Church, by the superior general, though he may do so by delegating to another. The formula of profession is the same as that in the Constitutions of Fr. Colin, and which has been used by all Marists for one generation to the next. It recalls that this action is directed to the Trinity, before Mary and the other confreres. This formula states the vows as an expression and desire to commit oneself to following Jesus, and taking on his style of life. The vows are made before God, and the superior general (or his delegate – normally the provincial) of the

Society of Mary, whose Constitutions are taken as the reference point for putting the vows into practice. This profession is a work begun by God, and it needs God's strength to bring it to completion. Profession establishes special bonds with Mary, changing the professed, to belong to her. At the same time, he may be assured that Mary belongs to him too, and will guarantee him a particular intercession.

### **Article 3: Preparation for Mission**

If the novitiate puts the emphasis on the process of incorporation, that is, in the assimilation of the spirit and the mission of the Society, then the time approaching perpetual profession is given to the preparation needed to complete that mission. It is not exactly the case, since both elements have to go together throughout. However, it could still be said that, in the stage of incorporation, what dominates is the joy of being a favoured son of Mary, while in the preparation for mission stage, the sights are on the great needs of many peoples. We have already seen in Chapter 1 (Nature and Foundations of the Society) the reference to Marists and learning. Formation for Mission allows us to see the goal of this education. This goal is that the Marist develop the talents, and acquire the skills needed to effectively do the Work of Mary, and that he be taught to put all these talents and skills at the service of the mission of the Society. Father Coste, in a conference from the workshop on formation (1983), says that, for Colin, the goal of formation was to prepare and form missionaries - missionaries of Mary, i.e. instruments of what Mary, Mother of Mercy wanted, formed at her feet, and in a special relationship with her. In summary, according to Colin, it would translate thus:

To form missionaries (not contemplatives or administrators)

To form Marian missionaries:

- a) at the service of Mary's wish, of attracting those most distant,
- b) formed at Mary's feet, in a special relationship with her.
- It is Mary who sends them.
- They have the feeling for the needs of the times.

All learning – scientific, technical, philosophical, theological and pastoral - is to be employed and is at the service of these objectives.

The text of the new constitutions (n. 71–79) is under the heading of:

### *1 Principles*

that is what the entire project of preparation for mission, or of formation for ministry, is to have as its goal and criterion:

- The entire process of formation, from the novitiate, to on-going formation is to change the Marist into an ever more effective instrument for the mission entrusted to the Society (71-72). In other words, the type of preparation is determined by the mission and the ends of the Society. That mission of the Society is to announce the Gospel to the people of our time, with particular reference to the ministry of Mary in the Church (73-74). This announcing of the Word implies a previous study of it, in faith, using appropriate instruments and techniques. They will read it and announce it from the perspective of those on the margins, the poor and the abandoned (in relation to Exodus) (75-76).

- The preparation is not only intellectual. The Marist prepares himself, learning to stay close to Christ, by means of the prayer, the sacraments – Eucharist and Penance – sacraments of communion and reconciliation. This re-establishing of communion is at the heart of his vocation and the mission of the Society. This preparation is not to be separated from the reality of human life. On the contrary, it is to be sensible to the great needs of people, so as to respond from the Gospel (77).

- They prepare themselves to be present in the Church, in the manner of Mary, learning to love the Church as it is, being at the same time agents of renewal and of unity (78).

- Formation must be specific and in accordance with the two-fold possibility in the Society of exercising ministry: either as a brother or as a priest. The preparation for priesthood must be adapted to the demands of Canon Law (79).

### *2 Those Responsible for Formation*

It is true that all members of the Society are involved, but it is the General who must ensure that formation for the apostolate in all provinces is in keeping with the mission of the Society. Both provincials and individuals remain open, and take into account, not only the needs of their province, but of the entire Society (82-83).

### *3 Ongoing Formation*

Preparation for mission is always an open, lifelong process. Daily, community life is a source of constant renewal. However, it is necessary to set aside special periods for spiritual growth, conversion and for

updating the skills required for ministry. This is an opportunity, to be had by all Marists (84).

#### *4 The Vow of Stability*

These numbers present the vow of stability as an opportunity to deepen the commitment to the Society. The vow of stability is not presented here as constituting a different category of Marists, as Colin's text of 1842 would suggest. Neither is it presented as the highest grade of membership in the Society, as in the text of 1872.

#### *5 Departure from the Society*

The Constitutions view the possibility of the separation of a member of the Society coming either from the request of an individual, or from the Society itself. The current text, as in the Constitutions of the Founder, is extremely sober in the face of a situation that, it would be hoped, would never occur. Nonetheless, it asks that Canon Law be fully respected, that all means of correction and reconciliation be exhausted, and that all be done in charity and justice (89-90).

#### **By way of feedback**

- 1) Is there something that particularly struck you, and that you would like to comment on?
- 2) Do you believe that these criteria and processes of admission and incorporation have been received and applied in the provinces, districts and at the working level of the Society of Mary?
- 3) Do you believe that the processes of invitation, admission, incorporation and preparation are adequate for the situation of society, people and young men of today?
- 4) Do you believe the texts of the Constitutions to be stimulating and provocative in the field of on-going formation?
- 5) Other things you may wish to share....

*English translation: Peter McAfee sm*

## **Communion for Mission**

### **Chapter 3. Form a Communion for Mission**

#### **The text and its history**

This third chapter of the new Constitutions of 1985 (1987) is made up of 3 articles: the vows, daily life and the administration of goods. We

can say that the three come together and follow very closely the dynamic of Constitutions of 1842, chapter 4 (observance of the vows), chapter 6 (common rule), chapter 7 (temporal goods). In the 1872 plan slightly modified it practically follows the same order: chapter 3 (observance of the vows), chapter 5 (the common rule), chapter 7 (temporal goods) and in chapter 6 it introduces an article on the missions, where it gathers the important teachings and advice that have to do with an immediate situation, proper to a directory and not to constitutions. The 1985 general chapter introduced some changes in redaction and some content of the modern 1977 text (apostolic life), with some explicit references to what is meant to live more fully the vocation of the baptized, to make ones conversion and ones way of life and to follow Christ more closely. But it must be said that the project of the 1984 constitutions commission had made their own the words of Colin: “We do not take any congregation for our model, we have no other model than the new-born Church” (FS, doc. 42, 3). To have only the modern 1977 text was to take it that there is only one form of religious life and that the differences between congregations were insignificant or secondary; the vows of the Benedictines or the Jesuits are the same as those of the Paulists and Marists. On the other hand the perspective of the new Constitutions that each congregation is a recreation of the evangelical life: everything changes and all has to be understood then in new situation and at the service of the new mission. So from these many elements, taken from the 1977 Constitutions situate things in a new light in which the vows, daily life, common life, the apostolic life and the administration of goods must all be read.

### **Reading the Text: A project of Marist life (91)**

The third chapter describes the process by which is organized each community in all its aspects, individual and communitarian, spiritual and apostolic, as in the management of goods in such a way that the members of the Society form a body capable of fulfilling the mission that it has been entrusted with. Daily life becomes a project and the projects become life. Life gives form to the project and the project sets up the style of life and relationships. The Society of Mary has a mission, an end well defined, a particular mission; it is a part of the mission of the Church. Because the demands of her mission and her spirit for the name that the Society bears and which each Marist has elected to bear, because his vocation is to follow Jesus, walking in the footsteps of Mary, being present in the Church as Mary was present in

the beginnings, a Church with “one heart and one mind”, a Church in communion. The Marist makes his the concern and wish of Mary, mother of mercy, a desire that is of communion and not only community. With the vows as the base, the common rule which disposes into form a Marist community even the administration of goods, are at the service of the mission and the mission gives form and sets up the way of living the vows, and of establishing the common norms for possessing material goods. The type of communion and community, the activities and apostolic commitments that are undertaken, the management and administration of goods etc., is determined by the name that they bear, the spirit that moves them and the mission received that Mary wants carried out. Her mission calls them to “make their own the Marian vision of the Church” this same meaning commits it in its construction beginning by giving their lives and actions each day.

### **The foundational experience in daily life (92)**

The Marist takes to daily life the contemplation of the three icons that call him forth and help him to take to life the foundational experience of Colin and his companions, just as they learnt to do it in novitiate and committed themselves to it in profession. Numbers 91 and 92 of our Constitutions lead the Marist to the mountain of the transfiguration and situates them by means of the three icons in the transfiguration light as happened to Colin and the founders of the Society of the most Holy Virgin, untiring labourers of Mary’s Work to respond to the great necessities of the time, supported, enlightened and filled with a contagious joy at being specially chosen sons of Mary. It has to do with drawing out from the shining light of these three icons of the foundational experience the consequences for daily life. Face to face with these icons the Marist finds himself in:

*Fourvière*: in the words of Fr. Lessard (Material from the study of the 1988 Constitutions), one leaves all, leaves his homeland, to enter in to the world opened by the words of Le Puy a Colinian expression (‘I was the support of the early Church, I will support the Church at the end of time’), and makes a commitment at the feet of Mary whose desire and invitation he makes his own, to make real these words, is to say, bring into existence the Society that responds to the demands of the name of Mary that it bears, as did the 12 young priests and seminarians on the mountain of Fourvière.

*Cerdon*, time of interiorization and of deepening, where the taste for God and the things of God, make the Marist discover the radical opposition that there is between the spirit of Mary and covetousness, ambition and lust for power.

*Bugey* or the joy with which the announcing of the mercy of God compensates the missionary of mercy. In this icon the Marist enlightens his apostolic life and discovers that from the very joy that is born from bringing the Good News of the mercy of God to the most needy, his vocation is genuinely missionary.

### **Article 1. The vows**

The vows are not an end in themselves, but a means to “live more fully the baptismal vocation”, to be identified with the way of the Christ life, to follow his steps to express his commitment with the spirit of the beatitudes and build a communion of brothers in a community that wants to be “one heart and one mind” putting their lives and persons at the service of the Gospel in the mission entrusted to the Society (93). The Constitutions, together with the theological and canonical meaning of the vows, introduces the Marist to their peculiarly Marist meaning: create communion, help build the communion of the Church, like the primitive community. The vows express his identification with the crucified and risen; they die to the world and proclaim a new world. The vows express the love with which God loves them, frees them from selfishness and allows them to be servants of the divine will. They create a more profound communion and experience the joy one has (hundred for one) who has left father, mother, wife, children and goods for love of the Kingdom of God (Luke 18:29). The pre-chapter text in more direct reference to the Marist view of the vows, said that to free them from something that is totally contrary to the name they bear, to Mary’s spirit, and the ends of the Society: greed, ambition for money and the lust for power (in clear reference Colin’s text of 1842). And the text of Colin’s Constitutions of 1872 (n.118) says that “the vows have as an end to make the Marist an instrument ever more suitable of the divine mercy”. Maybe it is enough what is said in n. 92 which refers to all Marist life being a Marian vision of the church and the Marist foundational experience with the three symbols of Fourvière, Cerdon, Bugey. Anyway it is good to bear in mind this Marist context, certainly underlying the text of the Constitutions, and is more evident if we read the vows in the context given in the introductory numbers of chapter 3. Be that as it may the vows to which the Marists are committed beyond

the theological and canonical sense which of course are givens, are to be understood as the way to be Marist and become Marist, which is to be suitable instruments of the divine mercy towards the neighbour, following n.118 of the Constitutions of Father Colin in 1872.

### *Chastity*

Besides the preconciliar perspective of the theology of religious life and the point of view of canon law about the demands of the vows, we have to read what is said about this vow from a Marist point of view: *frees for communion and for the Marist mission (95) makes them listen more attentively* (and permits them simplicity of heart, meaning, all that is within them is oriented to God and what God's interests and nothing distracts them) and more eloquent witnesses of the Word that they listen to (in watchful reference to Mary, model of "listening attentively to the Word" (96) permits them to love others *with a compassionate love* as they themselves are loved by God (97), and placing them in the lines of this mission, of being instruments of mercy to and with men and women; leaving them available for those in need (with reference to the needs of peoples), meaning and witnessing that the love and service of Christ fill the heart.

Chastity is not possible, nor is it maintained if life is not rooted in faith and in prayer or in other words, in communion with God and with Christ. Other means help to keep it alive: live relationships with detachment; healthy asceticism, climate of joy, friendship and trust in community (99); watchfulness in the type of relationships established, control in the use of the media; avoiding self-deception and seeking spiritual direction and fraternal counsel when relationships are not clearly transparent (100).

### *Obedience*

Over and above the theological and canonical demands in the case of religious obedience to which of course we give value, the Marist should go discovering the Marist meaning of obedience, as he has done with that of chastity. This means to understand its meaning and significance in the light of the mission of the Society of Mary and of the name he bears. It is from there that n. 101 after referring to the theological meaning and canonical significance, takes us into the Colinian view that to obey a man because he represents God implies that the individual projects be left aside so as to put all ones energies at the service of the common project, at the service of the mission (103) and to make the

brothers live united, meaning “establish and reinforce the unity of the Society in its common mission of unifying and renewing the Church”. Thus they follow the lines of their vocation making of the Church “cor unum et anima una”. Number 104 relates obedience to Mary, always attentive to the Word of God, manifested through any event. Obedience makes Mary the model of listening attentively to the Word. Obedience frees the Marist from doing his own will and disposes him to live, like Mary, attentive to the Word and the will of God. Obedience broadens one’s own points of view and leads to peace of mind (104). Obedience helps to live a united community life so that the community in itself, with its superior at the head, looks to obey the Lord and discern in all things his Will. The role of superior is to help so that all in the community leads to and joins into la unique Marist mission. This means that the superior in the community and in the Society is the first to obey, trying to listen to the brothers and discerning the will of God and the demands of the mission for this part of the Society which is the community or for all the Society (105). The authority then, is at the service of freedom; allowing the members of the community to be free persons in the full sense of the word, teaching them to be free, open to listen, not locked into themselves.

En resume: obedience, the same as chastity, is a form of participating in the mission of the Society, in Mary’s work and a means to make the Marists suitable instruments of the divine mercy with ones neighbour.

### *Poverty*

Like the other vows, poverty, after expressing the theological meaning and canonical ramifications, poverty, appears in the Constitutions in its Marist perspective of service of the mission of the Society.

Right from the first number (106) poverty is *placed in context of the primitive community of disciples who held everything in common*. It is a dimension of the Society of Mary that has no other model than that of the Church at its beginnings. This asks of Marists that because of their vocation and the name they bear, they are neither to have nor to hold anything as their own without permission, even though they may retain the ownership of goods and may acquire new goods through inheritance. The gospel is certainly the model of the attitude that individuals and communities should have with regard to material goods. Material goods should be at the service of Christ’s mission in which the

mission of the Society takes part (108). Number 109 carries on the idea of poverty as sharing, as an expression of those who have the intention of renewing today's Church taking on the model of its beginnings. This sharing begins with the Marists of the whole world and then the people around us. It not only implies material goods but also time, education, and talents. All these are good to place at the service of others and at the service of the Society. Number 110 speaks along the lines of the 1872 constitutions (n. 148) that also refer to number 123 of the 1842 constitutions of not making a farce of poverty, but something to be proven in daily life, in accommodation, food, etc. and the relationships we establish in our environs and the type of friendships which we gather around us.

Number 111 places us in the line of Paul VI's *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971) and invites us to place ourselves *at the side of the poor* and to work for the establishment of justice, since it is an integral part of the proclamation of the gospel.

Numbers 112 and 113 are inspired by the 1842 constitutions and should be put in relation to the demands of the name that they bear and of the mission of the Society. Ambition for power and siding with the powerful, attachment to money and any form of greed is against the spirit of Mary, and the spirit of the gospel and so should be eradicated from this small group which is the Society of Mary. All who they are and all that they have is grace, is gift from God, they can't but give back what they have been freely given. So we enter fully in the joy of the Kingdom, in the joy of God who gives and is given.

## **Article 2. Daily life**

We now enter into the chores of everyday living where great projects take on force or simply remain in empty words. For this reason daily life needs to be regulated (Common Rules, Constitutions of 1842, chapter VI, and Constitutions of 1872, chapter V), take measures (and use them), in view of making true our project of Marist life. To succeed in making the rules, means that permit us to maintain and renew our project of life, rectifying strategies, amending errors, fine tuning the motors, "winding up the clocks" in the words of Colin so that our "treasure does not get lost" is all what is called the life plan. It means to organize life in such a way that the great intentions are not eaten into by monotony and don't becoming trivial: that the great dream of holiness with which Colin dreamed for Marists does not turn common place going nowhere making the Gospel ineffective and ineffective the Marist

project; that the great needs that moved the first Marists and made them committed missionaries turned out in the best of cases in comfortable pastors without much initiative. It is a matter of keeping the bow string tight and not let go cold the first enthusiasm, nor to lose the great motivations, the ends for which we chose to enter the Society and to bear Mary's name. It is a matter of living the obligations of our baptism day by day and the radicalism with which by making our profession we proposed to follow Christ. This is the meaning of numbers 114 – 115 of our Constitutions. Number 116 sets the Marist up to face the responsibility (the text says two-fold, not that they are two distinct things that could function separately) that he has made an agreement to enter the Society and participate in her mission: to develop his spiritual life and to form a community which can carry out the mission. Note that it says “to develop” and “to form”. This means that until now we have the seed, the material, but we have to give it form each day. So it is not enough to live life and let oneself drift on. It is not sufficient to receive the adequate means without making use of them, and putting them into practice. Each Marist has the responsibility that his individual or community daily acts help to form communion for the mission. To be a free spirit, acting in an isolated fashion, is not to respond to the vocation and is to be unjust with the others (115).

### *Spiritual Life*

The Project of the 1984 constitutions commission under the title “Means that can help to live according to the spirit” touched on themes of the spiritual life, community life, and mutual help (openness to superiors) and the apostolic life. The revised pre-chapter text, organized the content and introduced contents and formulas of the modern 1977 text in different sections: community life; spiritual life; evaluation of ministries, mutual help, special practices in honour of Mary, all figured in the project of the commission. The 1985 chapter changed the order a little and left the schema as follows: spiritual life, common life, apostolic life, mutual help, evaluation of ministries, finishing with special practices in honour of Mary.

Our text on the spiritual life begins with a reference to Mary, woman of faith, model of the spiritual life for the Church and for the Society of Mary. This number (117) as practically all the content of the article 2 (everyday life) and concretely on the spiritual life follows the text of the second part of the 1977 Constitutions. In those the content of number 117 closed the section about the demands of the spiritual life after

having spoken on mortification; in these also is presented Mary as the first disciple in clear reference to the primitive Church, and here it does so in reference to the woman of faith of Luke 1:45, and loosens up more the reference to the “Christian experience of Mary”. The text is not defining Marist spirituality, but is introducing the subject of the spiritual life and proposing to all Marists the model of Mary (cf Lessard, ‘Materials for the study of the constitutions of 1988 on n° 117’).

The text takes up what the 1977 text said with regard to the means that the Marist has to nourish his spiritual life and favour spiritual growth. Number 118 - 125 describe those means: meditation on the Word of God (which allows the Marist to keep alive the presence of the risen Jesus, live in his presence in continual prayer), community prayer (vital for those who have set off together on a spiritual and apostolic adventure), personal prayer, including the busiest of days (1/2 hour) daily Eucharist, sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual reading, spiritual direction, prayer of the Church (Divine Office), and annual retreat. Practices in honour of Mary have their own section.

As number 116 had left clear that “to enter fully in the mission of the Society” implies to develop the spiritual life (as it says in n.10) grow in holiness, carry out in practice these spiritual means that the Society gives means, to found or destroy the Society, favour or maim its mission.

### *Common Life*

The first Project of the constitutions team, following the outline of the 1842 Constitutions (Common Rules) did not treat separately community life from the apostolic life. But the pre-chapter project, revised by the general administration, now included a section on community life, and also collected different paragraphs of the 1977 text. Number 126 reminds Marists that they are not simple workers of a common enterprise but members of a Society built on faith and a shared ideal (a shared mission) “like the apostles, moved by the Spirit and supported by the presence of Mary”. The 1977 text said “supported by the presence of Mary”. The present text changes “supported by Mary”. So the idea takes us more easily to the first community, gathered around Mary having “one heart and one mind” In this way we are placed in the Marist spiritual universe and we are permitted to understand the next number (127), which draws the conclusions of a community called to be “cor unum et anima una”, sign of what the Church (a Marian Church) is called to be in the world: a communion of brothers. This communion

opens the Marist to share with the other communities and Marists of the province and of the Society (n. 131-132), and with others who live in their environs and have contact with them (134). This is in the name of their mission and is part of it.

The characteristics of a Marist community: place of participation and sharing, place of growth, conversion and renewal (127), place of friendship and mutual support, sensitive to the weakest members (128), open and welcoming (134), *follows on from the name he bears and of his being called to be "cor unum et anima una"*. Without community the Marist is out of place and not intact; it is an essential dimension of the Marist project. And we understand that mutual love in the heart of the community is a primordial apostolate because it belongs to the ends and foundations of the Society (127).

The means that a community uses on faith and shared ideals are: the Word and the Eucharist which call forth and make communion (127).

The norms which govern the community or the decisions that the community makes commit all so they will be followed as their own way of living the Gospel (135), cf n. 230: they oblige in as much as they are the fundamental charter of the Society and a means of growth in the spiritual life. As Colin also denied this does not mean that they bind in conscience; but form part of the fidelity to the vocation.

Number 130 responds to the demands of Canon Law and SCRIS to approve the Constitutions.

### *Apostolic Life*

The Project of the constitutions commission did not dedicate any special section to the apostolic life. With what is said in the first chapter on the ends and foundations, it was thought enough for the fundamental code which are the Constitutions. Like the 1842 Colinian text the apostolic character of the Marist vocation is given of course once the ends and mission of the Society is defined along these lines. The direction of the Marist mission was "in quavis mundi plaga". However some ministries were to be avoided (n. 165): be executor of wills, guardian of orphans, be businessmen. They go against the ends. In the 1872 Constitutions the situation of the Society is different. There are ministries to avoid (confess nuns), parishes, if not in mission territories. The pre-chapter text had maintained this same openness. Besides, the 1872 Constitutions are not the basic code that Colin had foreseen that were to be the constitutions, but at the end of his days include all the directions that he considered important for the smooth running of the

Society. The general chapter considered it opportune to introduce a specific section on the apostolic life, gathering some paragraphs of what the second part of the 1977 constitutions said, in chapter 2, II and III. The emphasis goes two ways: indicating the Marist way of carrying out the apostolate (*ignoti et occulti, instruments of mercy*) (136-137) and the taking on of traditional ministries and the rule of thumb to be open to any apostolate) to be inclined towards the less attractive and gratifying. Nothing is new from what had been said in chapter 1. The association of lay people and the participation of all in the mission of the Church, although each in a different way, makes explicit and repeats what was said in the first chapter, in speaking of the various branches and the including of laity in the original project of the Society of Mary.

### *Mutual Help*

Mutual help and the subject of the evaluation of ministries in the 1984 project of the Constitutions commission, following Colin's view in his 1842 and 1872 constitutions and given that in chapter 5 (growth and faithfulness) they would return to treat the case of mutual help, fraternal love, they did not consider it necessary to say more in the basic code. From number 139 to 141 it is left clear that the ends of the Society "grow in personal holiness and work for the salvation of the neighbour" In number 141 is given the sense of a common project and a shared task with other Marists. "They will help one another in the common search for God and in the fulfilment of the mission". A Marist is not an island, but a communion embodied in an ideal and a shared mission, projected, executed, evaluated in community. In this is the connection with the subject of community life. Consultation, advice, help that is sought in the companion and particularly in the superiors, should be in the Marist something spontaneous. On the other hand it should be too for the superiors. For this communities have to create a climate of mutual confidence.

### *Evaluation of Ministries*

The evaluation of ministries and of community life is something that can't be left out for those who live and work with concrete intentions. The evaluation is the way of taking responsibility for the mission and Marist spirit (142-143) and way of knowing periodically if adequate means are being taken for fulfilling the mission and if the what and how are leading to mission and the received spirit.

*Special Practices in honour of Mary.*

With little change in compilation, the text follows the 1984 project, slightly modified in the pre-chapter text. The text brings out the consequences of bearing the name of Mary and to have as mission to do what the mother of mercy wants. And so then as established in chapter 1 (nature and foundations of the Society) by the demands of the name borne and the desire that the Marist and the Society enter into special relationship with Mary (n. 15) and Mary in a special relationship with the Society and each Marist, that one could well interpret all in terms of an alliance. In this article on daily life, is treated how one gives form and expression to this relationship. If for vocation one is called to be the presence of Mary in the Church and in the world and if they have as mission to do God's work, doing Mary's work, if for "gratuitous choice" she has called them and given them her name; one has to translate this relationship and union with Mary in some special practices (Hail Holy Queen, three Hail Mary's, Sub tuum) and in some symbols (image of Mary at the door of the superior) that make present what Mary means to them and to the Society (first and perpetual Superior), prayer for the conversion of sinners and non-believers (as did the first Marist missionaries), the rosary, the Angelus. The spirit of the Church is the norm of worship that they practise and teach the faithful to practise. They work with the Church to renew these traditional devotions.

**Article 3. The administration of goods and the ends of the Society.**

As in the 1842 outline and in that of 1872, after the common rules, the administration of temporal goods is treated (chapter VII in both) as something that closes what has to do with the way of living as Marist or in other words the vocation with the fundamentals of the Society. If to fulfil the mission of the Society, is needed sources of stable income, in the same way the name of the mission, it is necessary that the way of administering the goods do not go against the same mission and against the spirit of the Society. Because the Society is the work of God, this confidence the Marists expresses putting his confidence in Him and in Mary and not in human support (n.146). Goods can never be converted in ends. The name that they bear and the mission they have to fulfil in the Church and in today's world: be what Mary was in the beginnings of the Church (cor unum et anima una), means that they administer goods at the service of communion, of solidarity in the heart of the

Society (146). Because the spirit of Mary is contrary to covetousness, greed and consumerism (147), they make efforts to remove this disorder as Colin would say. On the other hand, the administration of goods must be managed in accordance with the demands of Canon Law (153, 154) and in agreement with Marist tradition, so that it be an expression of the poverty of Mary, spirit so opposed to covetousness (155). Grateful to benefactors, Marists in the name of their mission and their spirit do not accept properties or other goods which are heavily conditioned and in perpetuity (154).

At the end of this run through chapter 3 of our constitutions we have been able to recognize how nothing of what is or what makes the Marist should remain outside the intentions that have been gathered into the Society, of the name that it has chosen to bear and the desire of the Mother of mercy that she wants to be carried out. All plays its part and is needed to fulfil this commitment to create communion at the service of the mission.

*English translation: Anthony O'Connor sm*

**A Combining of two Chapters of the Constitutions,  
co-ordinated and adapted to serve the mission and to animate  
growth in fidelity to its spirit.**

(Chapter 4: Government - Chapter 5: Growth and Fidelity)

**I. - Chapter 4: Government**

If the community rules, the manner of living the vows and sharing of goods, of living in community, of leading a life in the Spirit, of exercising ones ministries and evaluating daily life and ones commitments, was for Colin a way of edifying the body of the Society of Mary, the structures of government serve to ensure an adequate co-ordination of the members of the body, and of the body with its head, that this social body that is the Society of Mary may walk effectively towards the mission with which it has been confided, animated by the spirit that characterizes and identifies it as being at the heart of the Church and can endure through time. This social body that is the Society, that is to say, the structured relations of the members with the body and of that with its head express this communion in all its manifestations. The mission and the spirit that animate this social body

that is the Society, demand, without doubt, the appropriate governing structure. Demand a type of structure, and declare others incompatible with the spirit and mission of the society.

### **The text and its history**

Father Colin was without doubt inspired by Saint Ignatius for the government of the Society of Mary, as was usual for Colin to say, 'the Jesuits for functionality and Saint Vincent de Paul for the spirit'. A body like the Jesuits, made men who sought no more than the greater glory of God, free and without attachments or conditions. A body such as this and a head that knew how to lead, could dedicate its energies to tracing grand plans that the body would be given to execute. This structure captivated Colin: but he knows that, "in the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin Mary it is different". The Spirit of the Blessed Virgin asked for something else; the name that the Marists carry and the mission that they have received raises its own conditions. The Ignatian influence and also the differences can be seen in comparing the text of 1842 with that of 1872. And if we compare the development of Colin within himself, we see the text remains the same, although in the Constitutions of 1842 the lines of the structures are simpler and sharper, while in that of 1872 the structures are influenced by accumulated experience and the change in the situation of the Society that lead to a more complex design of the text.

The draft Constitutions prepared by the pre-chapter committee for the Chapter of 1985, having been revised by the general administration based on consultations with experts both outside and within the Society were sent to the delegates of the General Chapter. The attention of the delegates was called to the changes introduced in the area of government in the draft text submitted for the approval of the Chapter.

The principle changes in relation to what had up to then been the manner of government touched especially upon: 1) the structures of consultation and participation, from community meetings up to the general chapter have become excessively heavy; 2) The role of the superior general is more clearly defined: name the provincials after consulting the Provinces, has ultimate responsibility for Formation in the Society, names the Novice master; 3) The exercise of collegiality has not extended beyond the cases foreseen in the new Code of canon Law: the function of the superior is different than that of the counselor: not only a member of the council, but the one who decides and carries the responsibility for the decisions taken. The reasons given for the

changes are: - The Colinian vision for the Society, wanted by Mary, and the function and responsibility of the superior general had the face of conducting and guiding the Society in the direction of fulfilling its mission. Because as the importance of the mission to the Congregation grew, this warranted the giving of more power to the central government: though not returning to older ways of exercising authority. The form of decentralized government that the Society had been living did not favor her specific mission in the Church: However this did not signify returning to the old centralization.

The pre-capitular text from the idea of the unified body, totally coordinated, translates the most powerful image for Colin, “*acies ordinata*“, an army organized against the enemies of salvation, beneath the banner and protection of the mother of God (CS 1872, n.296), speaks of consultation and participation, of a certain autonomy of the communities, regions and provinces that favors the union between all Marists and the fulfillment of the mission confided to the Society; government is by participation and is exercised in a spirit of fraternity and service. It is necessary to distinguish between the laws and orientations that are given by the competent organs and the executive decisions that the persons invested with authority take. Among the consultative organs are, provincial councils, provincial or regional assemblies, community meetings and general consultation at provincial and local levels.

The Chapter text introduces the terms shared responsibility of the government of the Society (156, in a spirit of co-responsibility (162), respect for the principle of subsidiarity (162).

## **Reading the Text**

### *Preamble*

The preamble in number 156 up to and including number 162 reflects the sense of authority in a Society that bears the name of Mary, founder and perpetual superior, as well as the structures of government required and the principles for those who govern in order to fulfill the mission of the Society. Number 156, is inspired by number 100 in the text of 1977, that places all Marists, but especially those that exercise authority, before Mary, founder and perpetual superior of the society, drawing out for all the consequences, but especially for those who exercise authority. This responsibility of government is a responsibility shared so that the society can fulfill its mission.

Number 157 comes from the pre-capitular project, and encapsulates number 296 of the Constitutions of Colin of 1872, regarding the image of one body, dispersed in mission, but unified in spirit, at their head the superior general. The Ignatian image of a military body of Colin's text yields to the image of a body in communion, coordinated and adapted to the particular situations that, under the weight of the international dispersion and thanks to a network of interchanges and solidarity, such that the diversity does not work against the unity required to fulfill the mission (158-159).

This image better reflects a Society that is called to be of "one heart and one soul", fitting for a Society that has no other model than the primitive church. The communion and the efficiency of action require that the members be consulted and participate in the taking of decisions, but leaving quite clear the authoritative function of the superior. Both the communion that the Society is called to be and to express, and its effective action, are governed by the principles of co-responsibility (but respecting the levels of planning and orientation and the levels of execution (162, ab) and subsidiarity (162, c).

### *Article 1*

The first article treats the organs of government and consultation: the general chapter, the Council of the Society, provincial chapter, community meeting, the image of the primitive church united around Mary, evaluates fidelity to the spirit and to the mission of the Society and plots the policies and orientations for the future ( nos. 163-176).

### *Article 2*

Article two deals with the superiors ,centre of communion, the promotion of the common good and of the ends of the society, guarantees for the freedom of the individual and a safeguarding of the spirit of the Society, that places them in front of their brothers, like Mary in the midst of the apostles, as one who serves.

The superior general who has the responsibility and care for all of the Society is the center of the communion and he ensures that the Society grows, fulfills her mission and guards her spirit and has full power over the provinces, regions, districts (creating, attaching or disbanding provinces), he has special responsibility for all stages of formation and over the mission districts (180-194).

The General Council (four assistants) (nos. 195-200) help, care for, and make sure that at the general level also is made real the call of the

Society to be “cor unum et anima una” and also at this level, as at the level of provinces and communities, that everything is done in accordance with the only model that the society has which is that of the primitive church.

The vicar General (no. 201-202) is the general in the absence of the general, or in the case of death, until a general chapter is convoked.

The general officials (secretary and bursar) are at the service of the general for the administrative management, economic or bureaucratic and do it in the spirit of the Society.

The Provincial promotes the religious life and spirituality of the province, and maintains its unity with the rest of the Society. He is responsible for provincial policies. The vicar provincial assists and substitutes in cases of absence and death (n. 205-206). The provincial Council advise and help in the taking of collegial decisions so that also at this level the Province is “cor unum et anima una”. The provincial bursar helps the provincial in economic matters and does so in the spirit of the Society.

The local superior unites and directs the community in such a way that favors the growth of its members and promotes the pastoral work, in accordance with the provincial policies and maintains the unity between the community and the province. The vice- superior and the bursar are to the community what the vicar provincial and provincial bursar is to the Province (212-216). The local council (community) make sure that at this level is made a reality ‘cor unum **et** anima una’, in the image of the primitive church.

In conclusion: The counterpoint of the general chapter of 1985 to the pre-capitular text of the Constitutions and to the project of the commission on the Constitutions, fulfilled the function of tempering the military image inspired by the Jesuits, to symbolize the Society, from the point of view of governing structures and to take decisions with the other image of communion “cor unum et anima una”, properly Colinian, and of a Society that seeks to reproduce its model, the primitive church, in its structures of government. What is needed is that the principles of co-responsibility, participation and subsidiarity, combine in such a way that the unity and the autonomy do not lead the Society to be a set of autonomous groups with little solidarity and which make non- viable the mission of the Society of Mary.

## II. – Chapter 5: Growth and Fidelity

Chapter 5 closes the Constitutions and establishes the union of all of the preceding chapters, from the first to the last. A manner of concluding that picks out the elements that for Colin were more definitive and in which the Society is solidly founded. At the same time they place before the Marist and the Society the great fidelities that have to be maintained at all cost.

### **The text in its history**

Chapter 5 of our Constitutions translates the article of the Constitutions of Fr. Colin of 1842 (chap. XII: Quibus auxiliis Societas augeri et conservari potest) and of 1872 (chap. XII: Quibus mediis Societas augeri et conservari potest). Colin follows the dynamic of Ignatius in the moment of putting this article in this place and with this title. Although Colin rapidly takes his own route and puts before the Marist article number one of both his own Constitutions of 1840 and those of 1872, that is to say, he places before him the realities that founded and brought the Society into being: the will of God and the prayers of Mary. Likewise he places before the Marist the reality wanted by God at the prayers of Mary, 'this little congregation, that is like an army organized against the enemies of salvation directed and inspired by the same mother of God, should be ever ready to fight the battles of the Lord (CS 1872 no. 422). After reminding the Marist of the reality into which he has entered, and to which he has committed himself, he infuses him with the confidence that God who wanted the Society, would help her grow and would conserve her; Mary, the woman of the Apocalypse, who wages the battle, continues protecting and praying for the Society, militating the same battle of the Lord. The text of the commission of 1984 and the pre-capitular text of 1985, maintain the dynamic of this number of the Constitutions of the founder, but not the militaristic image, nor that of the woman of Revelation 12, they are substituted by the image of communion or closeness to the people, the image of Mary in the primitive church. This same journey continues in the capitular text replacing the militaristic image of Le Puy with the Colinian image of Mary in the primitive church, although the Chapter of 1985 did introduce it as a reference note to the full text of article 1 of the Constitutions of the Founder of 1872. The rest are collected in the text of the Chapter of 1985.

Colin continued reviewing those bases on which the Society was founded and he pivots and places the Marist before those medias that are necessary to put in practice if the Society is not to collapse. They are

the foundation and hinge on which he sets the Society and are those that help her to grow and conserve her; humility, obedience, fraternal love and poverty.

The novelty of the new text of the constitutions is that it places here article X of the constitutions of Colin of 1872, regarding the spirit of the Society (*de Societatis spiritu*). The text of the 1984 project and the pre-capitular text make a modern translation of the Colinian text. The Chapter did here what it had done with number one, as a solution to the meeting of the different positions of those who wished to reclaim the text of Colin and those who wanted only a modern reading: They introduced as a reference to numbers 49 and 50 the full Colinian text. The modern editing of the Spirit of the Society as had appeared in the pre-capitular text was not accepted by the Chapter. The same solution was applied to article 2 of the first chapter concerning the name and ends of the Society. After having invited the Marists to find in the presence of Mary in Nazareth and in Pentecost, and in the end of times, her wisdom, to make her present in the world and in the Church of today, in her manner of doing things, (*ignoti et occulti*), they introduced in form of a reference the complete text of numbers 49 and 50 of the Constitutions of Colin of 1872; “*De Societatis spiritu*”. This substituted the modern text of the pre-capitular project, from which it takes no. 247 that served to situate the text of Colin.

This displacement of the text of Colin (spirit of the Society) from the first chapter to chapter 5, and the last in the Constitutions, responds to the project of 1984 and to the pre-capitular text, that pretended to leave the Marist and the Society before the responsibility to remain faithful to the spirit of the Society as the major medium to grow and develop, in clear reference to the Constitutions of Fr. Founder of 1872.

### **Reading the text**

- The great conviction that will sustain the Society (217):

This image of Mary praying that the Society would exist, develop and grow, so that there would be men that would respond to the desire of Mary, mother of mercy, that Colin presented in his Constitutions of 1872 (CS 1872, no. 422, infused in the Marists the conviction that the Society is something desired by God and is in God’s hands (no. 217). The approved text of the Constitutions does not allude to this image and retain the conviction that the first Marists had that the project comes from God and in which Mary played a decisive roll.

- The cornerstones (218):

Together with their prayer, they will strive to practice the four virtues that the founder considered the cornerstones on which the Society is solidly set. If we compare these virtues with those of the first chapter, no.7, we realize that in the first chapter are the virtues of Mary, that the Marist, for being part of her family, has to emulate and live in a certain way the life of Mary; the list of virtues in the first chapter is a little different: humility, obedience, self denial, mutual charity and love of God.

In chapter 5, no.228, Colin defines the spirit of Mary, who has chosen the Marists from the outset, are her children and form part of her family, in a spirit of humility, of self denial, of intimate union with God and an ardent charity for ones neighbor. What's more, it is appropriate for those who follow Jesus, walking in the footsteps of Mary, to distance themselves from all worldly spirit, that is to say, from all avarice for worldly goods. *Ignoti et oculi*, proceed from that poverty, humility, simplicity of heart, disinterest in vanity and worldly ambition.

Here in number 218-226, there is reference to some virtues that do not coincide exactly in the different contexts in that they are referred to, and they refer to the Marists that want to live the Marist life and fight so that the Society can grow and be conserved. The Constitutional text follows the text of the 1984 project in this aspect and references the virtues that Colin treats in chapter X11: "*Quibus mediis.....*" of the Constitutions of 1872.

1. Humility: Freed from all paralyzing attitudes of unnecessary preoccupation and that makes them trust in God more than in themselves and not to look for their own interests but to those of Christ and Mary (nos. 219-220).

2. Obedience: Obedience maintains the unity of the body that is the society and disposes its members for mission that has been confided in them by God through Mary. It enables them to look above personal interests, of the province etc. (nos. 221-222).

3. Fraternal Love: Leads to communion with the resurrected Lord and with all creatures, united in heart and soul (*cor unam et anima una*) as the way of preparing for the coming of the kingdom. (nos. 223-224).

4. Poverty: Freely chosen it protects and safeguards the true spirit of the Society. Like Mary they praise the Lord "because he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has left empty" (Lk 1:53) (no. 225). Free from the avarice and confidence in human means. "A

Society of rich people will have difficulty in presenting a sign of the presence of Jesus and Mary” (no.226).

5. Prayer for the Society (227): The image of Mary praying for the Society, for her founding and for her growth and conservation of no.422 of chap. X11: “Quibus mediis...” leads the Marist and the entire Society to unite with this prayer of Mary for the Society and for all Marists. This prayer covers the Society as was contemplated in the original project with different branches, above all the 12 September, the feast of the name of Mary. This prayer also includes the living and the dead members of the Society and the members of all the branches.

6. Faithfulness to the spirit (228): The function of the article regarding the spirit of the Society is to indicate to the Society how she herself can constantly re-found herself returning to the realities that constitute her being.

The spirit of the Society is a true walking in Spirit, like the spirit of Mary, with whose shadow of Nazareth and Pentecost she is covered. It is the same maternal spirit that animated and sustained the Church in its beginnings and it is the same spirit that animates and sustains the Church in these end times. This spirit is the secret to her presence in the Church and is what distinguishes her at the heart of the Church: a discrete spirit and hidden, but effective (*ignoti et oculati*). This spirit comes to them in the name that they bear, of the family that they belong to, by a gracious choice that sees them take Mary as model and first and perpetual superior. Therefore it is a faithful spirit, the spirit of her Mother: a spirit of humility of self denial, of intimate union with God and of an ardent charity for the neighbor. They are children of Mary in the measure that they think, judge, act and feel as Mary.

The second part that corresponds to no.50 of Colin’s text, notes how the Marist can be the apt instrument of mercy that the work of Mary requires. I believe that we do not distort the deposit of Colin, if we affirm, all be it using other words, that what Colin is describing is the process of the participation of the Marist in the Pascal mystery, as a process of dying to certain realities (that contaminate the small field of Mary that is the Society): the worldly spirit or avarice and attachment ‘*lo proprio*’, ‘to self’ (In Benedictine monasticism the religious life is defined as ‘*sine proprio*’, ‘without self’ - nor woman, nor possessions nor autonomy). In this phase of dying, the Marist strips off the old man and prepares for the birth of the new man in the service of the interests of Jesus and Mary, ‘*sine proprio*’. In this way the Marist is born in the spirit of Mary, his mother, to a new life of resurrection that makes of

him an apt instrument for the work of Mary. Naturally the spiritual language that Colin uses of death may be a little shocking and translate into a negative asceticism and draw a face of dead person rather than of one resurrected, of a stranger more that of a witness. All of this may certainly be understood as being excessive for today and out of time; but that is the way when one has before one's eyes the Society and the mission that Mary has assigned to it; when one has before one's eyes not only that one has been emptied but that one has been filled, and what Work has been prepared to be fulfilled.

### **The book of our life**

In my first intervention, under the title of "The new Constitutions, a model of creative fidelity" I said, "The Marists and our Society will exist in the measure that we allow that these Constitutional texts inspire and model our behavior and conform our lives as individuals, as communities and as the Society. We do not try to mystify some texts. We strive to open ourselves to the force that they transmit and to the Spirit that inspires and animates them". They are our second gospel. It is our way of living and of being Christians. The Church recognizes this as "the fundamental letter of the Society and a powerful means of growth in the spiritual life. By Profession all Marists are committed to living them in the spirit of Mary, and consider them to be a source of strength in realizing the work of Mary". (no.230). They are treated as a unique reference for the Marists. It is not possible to fall into the temptation of substituting this Constitutional text for another, even if they are the Constitutions of Colin. What God and Mary want of and for the Society of Mary today is written in this book, to which we are spiritually committed. It is these Constitutions that found the Society today and found the Marist that the work of Mary needs. All of which does not detract from the importance of respect, consideration and appreciation and study of the Constitutions of Colin, whose study the same Chapter of 1985 and in like manner the general administration, has driven them to place at the disposition of all Marists in its proper language the text of the constitutions of 1872, of our Fr. Founder, Jean Claude Colin. But the normative constitutions that express, animate and sustain the Society of Mary are those that the Holy See approved on September 12<sup>th</sup> 1987, which in turn had been approved by the general Chapter of 1985.

The final theme of the Constitutions coincides with the theme of the beginning, and it is so true that: at the end equal to the beginning; "the

greater glory of God and the honor of his Holy Mother”. In this manner the Marist understands the meaning of his vocation and the continuing process in which he is permanently involve: from the beginning to the end of the constitutions; the glory of god and the honor of Mary at the beginning and at the end; Mary in the Church at its beginnings and Mary in the Church at the end of times. In this way is founded and re-founded the Society and the Marist life and so continues making a reality through time the desire of Mary, Mother of mercy.

*Translation: Cormac McNamara SM*