



Marist Links

Issue 7
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Advent Prayer:
Henri J.M.

Lord Jesus
Master of both the light
and the darkness,
Send your holy spirit
upon our
Preparations for
Christmas.

We who have so much
to do
Seek quiet spaces to
hear your voice each
day.

We who are anxious
over many things
Look forward to your
coming among us.

We who are blessed in
so many ways
Long for the complete
joy of your Kingdom.
We whose hearts are
heavy
Seek the joy of your
presence.

We are your people,
Walking in darkness, yet
seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come,
Lord Jesus".

AT THE SCHOOL OF MARY, "WOMAN OF THE EUCHARIST"

Above is the surprising title of the last chapter of Pope John Paul II's Encyclical on the Eucharist (2003). Surprising, because the Pope acknowledges that the Gospel is silent on the subject of Mary and the Eucharist, yet he continues strongly: "*Mary can guide us towards this most holy sacrament, because she has a profound relation with it.*"

Pope John Paul's words here, and in the short letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine* for the opening of the Year of the Eucharist, recalled to me some memorable developments in Marist spiritual life.

ENCYCLICAL "De Eucharistia" SUMMARY, Chapter Six

Mary is the sign and model of the Church. Certainly she will have been present at celebrations of the Eucharist in communities of first generation Christians. As Jesus says: "*Do this in memory of me*", so am I to accept also Mary's invitation at Cana: "*Do whatever he tells you*" (Jn. 2.5)

The Eucharist essentially commemorates the passion and resurrection, but is also in continuity with the incarnation. In offering her womb for the incarnation of God's Word Mary lived her Eucharistic faith even before the institution of the sacrament. She conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, and thus anticipated within herself, what to some degree happens sacramentally to us, receiving the body and blood of Christ.

Mary's "*Be it done unto me*" is paralleled by our *Amen*

as we receive the sacrament. Elizabeth's "*Blessed is she who believed*" anticipates the Church's Eucharistic faith. Mary, carrying the child in her womb, is in some sense the first 'tabernacle' in history. Cradling the newborn Jesus in her arms, contemplating his face, inspires us as we take communion.

Throughout her life Mary made the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist her own. Simeon, foretelling the child would be "*a sign of contradiction*", begins to prepare her for the Cross. Through the communion of the Eucharist we hear Jesus' word: "*Behold your mother*". So in the memorial of Calvary we are her child, with the beloved disciple.

In the Eucharist the Church is completely united to Christ and his sacrifice, and makes her own the spirit of Mary. Re-read the Magnificat in a Eucharistic key. Here is praise and thanksgiving through, with and in Jesus, *God my Saviour*. In the simplicity of the sacramental bread and wine, the *mighty are put down, the lowly are exalted*. The Eucharist has been given to us so that our life, like that of Mary's, may become completely a Magnificat.



THE EUCHARIST and EARLY MARIST EXPERIENCE

Many of the early Marists, particularly those secular priests who were the majority of the early entrants to the priests' branch, were strongly motivated by the desire to live a religious life *under the name of Mary*. They were inspired by the very name "Society of Mary". Simply bearing her name suggested a way of life and ministry. In some members, their companying with Mary also led on to a marked awakening of devotion to the Eucharist. For example: The founding Superior of the Marist Sisters, **Jeanne-Marie Chavoin**, combined a strong sense of practical ministry, with spiritual insight. At the end of a laborious day she would go to the chapel and spend the best part of an hour before the Blessed Sacrament. This was not part of the Rule, but quite spontaneously, sisters in her community began to ask if they might join her there.

Jean-Claude Colin, busily establishing the Fathers and their missions, began to nurture also the hope of setting up a house of prayer and Eucharistic adoration for Marists as a work of the Society. Some of the other priests were much in favour. Father Colin bought a house in the country with a view to this undertaking. It was not to be, but this was part of a tendency towards Eucharistic devotion in a Society inspired by Mary.

The great Eucharistic apostle among the early Marists was **St. Peter Julian Eymard**. A secular priest, he aspired to religious life and was attracted by the possibility of mission under the name of Mary. He joined the Society in 1839. Peter Julian had an open, ardent personality, was an intelligent and deeply spiritual

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man. Fr. Colin put him in charge of the lay branch of the Society, appointed him Provincial of communities in the Lyons area, and finally rector of the naval school at La Seyne, Toulon. All this time there was developing in him a desire to combine Eucharistic adoration with pastoral ministry. As early as 1843 he believed that it was Mary who was asking him to found a Eucharistic congregation. Through lay Marists in the Third Order and his ministry in school, he was in contact with like-minded people and began to form Eucharistic Adoration groups. Although very busy in his ministry and devoted to the Society of Mary, he was increasingly aware of his Eucharistic vocation. He hoped this could be associated with the Society, particularly as there were other Marists, becoming devoted to Eucharistic Adoration in a pastoral context.

Finally, it proved impossible to contain within the Society, the inspired work already underway. In 1856, Eymard had to leave the Society, so to carry out what he firmly believed to be his Eucharistic call. Two Marist priests and numerous lay Marists were among those who joined or aided Father Eymard as despite difficulties and suffering he founded the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and a congregation of women, Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. Only fifty-seven when he died, Peter Julian Eymard was canonised in 1965.

MARY STILL GUIDES US TOWARDS THE EUCHARIST

Being “Marist” is really a personal relationship with Mary, tending to deepen over the years. It has that quality of “hiddenness” which characterises our spirituality. Awareness of Mary is purifying us for a more personal, dare we say, “mystical” relationship with the Saviour, living in us through his Spirit and his Holy Sacrament. Nowadays we may use a different kind of language from other times, simpler signs, explore other theologies, perhaps be less “pious”, but we are still there in humble faith *breaking the bread, drinking the cup and doing this in memory of him.....*

Denis Green S.M.

Advent – Christmas Reflections, Henri J.M. Nouwen

Third Sunday of Advent

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

When Jesus came to redeem us, he came to free us from the boundaries of time. Through him it became clear not only that God is with us wherever our presence is in time or space, but also that our past does not have to be denied but can be remembered and forgiven, and that we are still waiting for him to come back and reveal to us what remains unseen.

*Jean-Claude Colin, Founder of the Marist Fathers and
Co-Founder of the Marist Sisters*

In Marist Links Issue 5, I gave a good deal of space to the development of Jean-Claude up to his appointment as curate to his brother Pierre, in the large village of Cerdon, in the mountains east of Lyons. I explained why it is difficult to appreciate Jean-Claude, without knowing something of how he came to be himself! If you are interested and have saved your Marist Links it might be worth looking at the opening paragraphs of No.5 and/or look at Issue 6, the first paragraph and last two paragraphs of the article on Jean Claude Colin there.



Jean-Claude Colin

Curriculum Vitae from 1816 to 1836

1816-1824 Curate at **Cerdon** by day, working at night on Constitutions for the projected Society of Mary (i.e. all branches); assisting Jeanne Marie Chavoin to establish the Marist Sisters; drafting the first letters to Rome in view of approbation: no reply. Contacts with Marcellin Champagnat, establishing the Marist Brothers, and a group of intending Marist Fathers in the Lyons diocese. Problems over the conduct of Jean-Marie Courveille, founder of the seminary group and putative “superior” of the Society. After receiving a reply to the third letter, Colin visits Paris to see the Nuncio at Rome’s suggestion. He meets the archbishop of Paris, the Grand Master of the University, and other

informed people. He also visits Archbishop de Pins, Administrator of Lyons and many times, Bishop Devie of Belley, in which Cerdon was now situated. The division of the priests between two dioceses after 1823 would be a source of continual difficulty.

During this time Colin was aware of an emerging confidence as a priest, and of being graced with insight and joy in his work on the Constitutions. He felt strongly impelled to commit himself to bringing the Society into existence. Later on he would refer to this period as ‘six years of consolation’.

1825-1829 The Bishop called the Marist Sisters and the priest-aspirants to come and live in Belley, a small market town. Bishop Devie lived there himself. There was a Petit Seminaire, serving also as a Catholic secondary school. Over four years the priests were installed in a garret of the school in utterly miserable conditions, were ill-fed and treated rudely by the school staff.

Against this background the Marists began giving missions every winter in the mountainous area of **Bugey**. This is a hard region in winter. Most of the people were poor, the presbyteries exceedingly frugal, the churches unheated, the roads bad. Yet Colin and the others were filled with holy enthusiasm and would always recall these days with joy and thankfulness. The Bishop appointed Colin superior of the mission band. After the first experiences he drew up “Instructions for Missioners”. The Marists followed the

general programme for missions in France, but their approach to people was marked by consideration, gentleness and humility. They showed respect to the parish priests and asked for little. In contrast to the generally severe confessional practice at the time, Colin studied, practiced and taught the others to follow the more merciful approach associated with St. Alphonse Liguori. Consequently they were overwhelmed in the confessional. Later Colin would write: "On account of poor human nature, the Society of Mary shall profess all those opinions which leave most scope to God's mercy". It was especially these experiences that inspired in the Constitutions: "They strive to become ever more effective instruments of the divine mercies." Again, in contrast to general practice, no reference was made to current politics.

"The foundational Marist experience can be seen as symbolised in the promise made at Fouvriere, the spiritual experience lived by Jean Claude Colin at Cerdon, and the missions of the first Marists in Bugey." (Constitutions S.M no.51)

1830-1833 Bishop Devie insisted on Jean-Colin leaving the mission band, where he had been so happy but in increasingly poor health, and appointed him to be Rector of the Junior Seminary. He was now to learn how to be a firm administrator, and a Catholic educator. In the first years political unrest led to a sensitive situation among

In the same year, Colin was elected by the priest-aspirants to be their acting Superior. He would also continue to work for approbation of the whole Society of Mary by Rome ! He was now forty, but despite his slight physique, he was to show an ever increasing capacity for dealing with many undertakings and problems at the same time!

"He walked not with measured step but with giant strides which, granted, tended to splash mud on the next man, but while the nit-pickers... were still at the beginning of the road... he had already covered an immense distance." (Mayet)

One of the factors which allowed him time was the very long seminary break.. July to October. Many of the priests were now permitted to meet for an annual retreat together. In 1833 Jean-Claude, Peter Chanel and Antoine Bourdin were able to visit Rome. This broadened their sense of the Church. Colin could meet people to whom he had been writing while seeking the Pope's approval for the Society. He was learning how things went in Rome. He stayed on some weeks after the others had to return to France.

1834 to 1836 It became increasingly clear to Colin: Rome recognised the Third Order, but simply would not accept the multi-branch format of the Marist project. This was disappointing for Marcellin Champagnat and Mother St. Joseph (Jeanne Marie Chavoïn). Yet if Colin were to leave things as they were in the hope that people in Rome would eventually change, there was a danger that the priests branch would fall apart. Unlike lay religious, each priest

*Jean-Claude Colin, Founder of the Marist Fathers and Co-
Founder of the Marist Sisters, continued.*

was personally anchored to his bishop. It had been difficult over the years to keep aspirants together, to develop a common approach to mission and religious life, to prevent their being absorbed for diocesan projects.

Meanwhile the Roman authorities had for sometime been looking for a congregation to undertake a huge mission area, i.e. all of Western Oceania including New Zealand. Colin got wind of this, won support from the Archbishop of Lyons, took the enormous decision to offer the Marist Fathers for this distant mission, on the understanding that they would first be constituted a religious congregation with vows and a Superior General ! So then

1836

29th April : Approbation of the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers) by Pope Gregory XVI.

24th September: Colin elected Superior General, twenty priests take their vows in the Society

24th December: Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier, four Marist priests and three brothers set sail from Le Havre for Oceania... via Cape Horn!

It was impossible here to go into the ins and outs of negotiation, the many arrangements to be made, problems to be resolved over these six years since 1830. Even now we marvel at how Colin coped. Donal Kerr's book, "Jean-Claude Colin Marist" gives a fascinating and beautifully written account of it all. Nor does he miss the

human element.

Some of you have Donal's book, or you can borrow it. In any case, it would be really good to read pages 296 to 300. In those pages you see how the 24th September must have been one of the most emotionally exhausting in Colin's life. We find him utterly dismayed and in floods of tears, yet through it all maintaining clarity of mind, authority and deeply spiritual conviction.

So much for now!

Denis Green S.M.

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://www.maristfathers.org/>

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Then Mary said, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your work." Then the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38

In Mary we see all the beauty of Advent concentrated. She is the one in whom the waiting of Israel is most fully and most purely manifested; she is the last of the remnant of Israel for whom God shows his mercy and fulfils his promises; she is the faithful one who believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled; she is the lowly handmaid, the obedient servant, the quiet contemplative. She indeed is the most prepared to receive the Lord.

You Know You Are Living in 2005 When.....

1. You accidentally enter your password on the microwave.
 2. You haven't played solitaire with real cards in years.
 3. You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of four.
 4. You e-mail the person who works at the desk next to you.
 5. Your reason for not staying in touch with friends and family is that they don't have e-mail addresses.
 6. You go home after a long day at work and still answer the phone in a business manner.
 7. You make phone calls from home and accidentally dial "9" to get an outside line.
 8. You've sat at the same desk for four years and worked for three different companies.
 10. You learn about your redundancy on the 11 o'clock news.
 11. Your boss doesn't have the ability to do your job.
 12. You pull up in your own driveway and use your cell phone to see if anyone is home to help you carry in the groceries.
 13. Every commercial on television has a web site at the bottom of the screen.
 14. Leaving the house without your cell phone, which you didn't have the first 20 or 30 (or 60) years of your life, is now a cause for panic and you turn around to go and get it.
 15. You get up in the morning and go on line before getting your coffee.
 16. You start tilting your head sideways to smile.
 17. You're reading this and nodding and laughing.
 18. Even worse, you know exactly to whom you are going to forward this message.
 19. You are too busy to notice there was no #9 on this list.
 20. You actually scrolled back up to check that there wasn't a #9 on this list.
- AND NOW YOU ARE LAUGHING AT YOURSELF. Go on, pass this on to your friends
...you know you want to!

Advent – Christmas reflections – Henri J.M. Nouwen

*Christmas - The people who walked in darkness have seen a
great light.....Isaiah 9:2*



The joy that Jesus offers his disciples is his own joy, which flows from his intimate communion with the One who sent him. It is a joy that does not separate happy days from sad days, successful moments from moments of failure, experiences of honour from experiences of dishonour, passion from resurrection. This joy is a divine gift that does not leave us during times of illness, poverty, oppression, or persecution. It is present even when the world laughs or tortures, robs or maims, fights or kills. It is truly ecstatic, always moving us away from the house of fear into the house of love and always proclaiming that death no longer has the final say, though its noise remains loud and its devastation visible. The joy of Jesus lifts up life to be celebrated.

Marist Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2005

