

# Colin and Marist Spirituality / Colin et la spiritualité mariste

## What in the very beginning of the Society served as foundation and support

(Chapter 1: Nature and Foundations of the Society)

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### 1. The history of the text

If we compare the four outlines of the first chapter of the constitutions, to the left the outline of the plan of the 1984

#### Outline of the 1984 team:

Ad majorem Dei gloriam

Cap. 1. NATURE AND FOUNDATIONS  
OF THE SOCIETY

1. Mary gives her name to the Society
2. The name and ends of the Society
3. Characteristics of the Society:
  - 3.1 Marists in the Church
  - 3.2 Marists and study
  - 3.3 Union between Marists
  - 3.4 Hidden and unknown
4. The members of the Society

#### The outline of 1842: Chapter 1: END AND FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

1. The end and way to proceed in the Society
2. The end of the Society and respect for the pope, the bishops and civil authorities.
3. The end of the society and sciences
4. Other means to attain the ends of the Society: 1) mutual unión, 2) hidden and unknown, 3) renouncing eclesial and civil honours.
5. The different categories of the members

1985 outline: 0. Motto and slogan of the Society: "Ad majorem Dei gloriam et Dei Genitricis honorem".

Cap 1: NATURE AND FOUNDATION

1. Mary gives her name to the Society
2. Name and end of the Society
3. Marist presence in the Church
4. Other characteristics of the Society:
  - 4.1. Hidden and unknown in the world
  - 4.2. Marists and Science
  - 4.3. The unity between Marists
5. Members of the Society.

Ad majorem Dei gloriam et Dei Genitricis honorem  
1872 Outline: Chapter 1: ENDS AND FOUNDATION OF  
THE SOCIETY

1. The name and end of the Society
2. Means to attain these ends
3. The way that the Society deals with eclesiastic and civil l
4. The different people that live in the the Society
5. Union between memebrrs
6. Manner of living in the SM
7. Mortification and Penance
8. Spiritual exercises
9. Study.
10. The Spirit of the Society

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<sup>1</sup> For the Spanish original and the translation of the other chapters by Rodríguez see: *Forum Novum* vol. 12 (December 2010).

Constitutions team in view of the the 1985 chapter and the plan of the 1984 team the plan that the chapter touched up and approved; to the right, the outline of the first chapter of Father Founder of 1842 and that of 1872, we recognize all that unites and separates them.

The plan of the the project of the 1984 team follows the **dynamics of Father Founder 1842 Constitutions** inspired by the dynamics that Saint Ignatius used to set up the project of the Society of Jesus and the Jesuits, and it seemed to the team more simple and clearer in its structure than the 1872 text. Even though it took article 1 from the 1872 outline 1: The relationship between the Name and the ends of the Society, (2) and had it preceded by an article of its own elaboration (1), that did not form a part of Colin's 1842 nor 1872 plan, but with the purpose and by way of putting the Society and today's Marist in contact with their origins and situate them face to face with the first inspiration and in connection with what the original Marist project tried to be and what it became from 1836 with the separate approbation of the congregation of the fathers and (coadjutor) brothers. The 1985 chapter modified a little this outline to bring it closer to the outline of chapter 1 of the 1872 constitutions, the only constitutions of Colin as such approved by Rome, and the same 1985 General Chapter wanted this so in continuity with the the preceding general chapters of 1969-1970 and 1977, that it be his last reference the constitutions that he left to the Society. The modifications introduced did not change significantly the plan of the 1984 pre-capitular project. The 1985 chapter showed its attachment to the Founder's 1872 Constitutions referring to Colin's very words by way of a large citation (art. 1, 1872) in all that refers to the nature and mission of the Society in Article 2. It again shows this attachment with another large literal quotation of art. 10, nn. 49-50 in what referred to the "spirit of the Society" of Colin's 1872 Constitutions in Chapter 6 (Fidelity and growth).

## **2. What served as foundation and support**

It might seem a bit strange that the first chapter of the Constitutions dedicated to the 'Nature and Foundations' of the Society begin with a large historical invocation and a presentation elegantly drawn of what was the Marist project in its beginning. But quickly we realize that what this first article does is to put the Society of Mary and today's Marists in contact with those who initiated the project, as too with what was

original about the project and the events that brought it about. It tries no more nor less to enter into contact and make ones own "what predominated at the beginnings of the Society" (*A Founder speaks*, doc. 4, 2; 1844), what "served in the beginnings of the Society as foundation and support" (FS, doc. 152, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1848). Le Puy (1812), Fourvière (1816) strengthen in an ambitious project what Colin briefly describes and presents in Rome in 1833 when he requests a blessing and recognition of the lay branch of the Society. These events had for Colin and his companions a foundational character. From them they received the impulse, the inspiration and reason of be of the ambition of the project and its urgency. Entering in contact with them the Society and today's Marist show their willingness to assume them as their own and continue the project, convinced that they respond to the very wish of Mary mother of mercy.

This historical reference attempts to lead the Marist and the Society of Mary to connect and be taken over by this conviction. Without it the Marist project would remain dispirited, souless, without bases or context. This conviction is not aquired by the texts. This conviction we have to allow Mary to put in our hearts. It is not expressed in words, but rather like the first Marists in prayer at the feet of the Virgin. The Marist is a "founder" or "refounder" in an analogous sense, but real, in the measure that he assumes the conviction of those who initiated the project and struggled to establish it, even though they only managed that Rome partly approved it (by separate branches). And as "founder" or "refounder", Colin had said this of each Marist who lives profoundly his Marist vocation, each Marist is capable of carrying out this conviction in each moment and place.

It is not a matter of reproducing the past, of creating a type of historical imitation of the past that cannot return nor of trying to live ignoring the present or denying the new that the future calls for. It is a matter of, as I have just said, making the present productive and open oneself to the hope of the future. This makes possible the conviction that the Society exists not by pure chance, nor that the Marist is the product of circumstances. The Society exists because it is Mary who has wanted it and who wants it as instrument of her Work. Marists are Christians to whom Mary, in function of mother of the brothers of her Son, mother of the Church and mother of all Christians, mother of all people, convokes and calls, gives them her name, her spirit and confides in them the same mission of being "instruments of mercy", for the

Church in these last times, the same that Mary was for the Church at its beginnings.

The project of the Constitutions team had suggested the placing of a quotation of the text of the *Summarium* of 1833 (cf. note 4) (*Ant. Textus* I, p. 83, s 109) in front of number 3 of our Constitutions. The chapter judged that it was not necessary, what was said in no. 3 was sufficient. Neither did the chapter consider necessary to place the complete quotation of a *Founder speaks*, doc. 152 in front of no. 2 to show what in the beginning served as foundation and support for those who began the Marist project and what today's Marist should continue to found and refound.

In the minds of all who initiated the project of a Society of Mary it was clear that it was God and the will of Jesus which moved them; but they also were clear that the person of Mary was decisive, the instrument whom God used. This will help us to understand the special relationship of the Society and the Marist with Mary and draw the consequences of bearing her name and making ones own Mary's wish for the Church and today's world. And so the wish that they feel called to carry out and the name they bear determines the meaning of mission, the ends of the Society and the manner and style of presence in the Church and the world.

### **3. A brief review of the Constitution text**

*Ad majorem Dei gloriam et Dei Genitricis honorem*

A motto that gives meaning to all the elements

The slogan of the Society and the motto of each Marist "Ad majorem Dei gloriam et Dei Genitricis honorem", the same as in the Founder's 1872 Constitutions, Jean-Claude, has it presiding over the new constitutions. It is a solemn declaration of what is and has to be the final word on the Society and for each of those who enters it. It reminds us of the Ignatian motto and the Jesuit Constitutions from which Father Colin took the outline to construct his own. The honour of Mary is subordinated to the greater glory of God. In the other formulation of the motto of the Society "ad majorem Dei gloriam et Mariae Genitricis Domini Jesu honorem" (which only Courveille used).

#### **Article 1 Mary gives her name to the Society**

Number 1 defines the congregation of fathers-brothers, canonically approved in 1836, and the juridic reality, canonically approved on the

29 of April 1836 (a clerical congregation of pontifical right) and the mystical or spiritual reality, such as it was perceived in its beginnings by those who initiated the project of the Society of Mary. The Society of Mary as a clerical institute of pontifical right, is to say, the congregation of the Marist Fathers, recognizes that it was born of this first project of the Society of Mary, such as on the 23 July 1816, 12 priests and seminarians promised at the feet of Our Lady of Fourvière to found. This promise interprets the serious and binding commitment in conscience of bringing to life the spiritual inspiration and experience of Le Puy.

The first article in no. 2 transmits to us the conviction of those who initiated the project: that it is Mary herself who impels the project and that they respond to a wish of Mary the "mother of mercy", expressed by them in these words "I was the support of the early Church and will be so at the end of time".

Number 3 indicates to us how they put into daily practice the making their own the request by Mary and responding to her wish. It gives us an outline of how Colin and companions thought to take up the challenge of what they understood to be the wish expressed by Mary and respond to her challenge to take on her desire for the Church of their time; as they took it on for the Society and for the Marists, instruments of what Mary wants for the church. This places us before the utopia towards which the project tended: "a community of believers with one heart and one mind". The point of reference being: Mary in the Church at the beginning, amidst the apostles, a presence as effective as hidden. Such is how the Marists in the Church will be and will act.

Number 4 reminds us that, in spite of the partial achievement of the great utopia: a congregation with various branches bringing together all classes of persons, each one these partial achievements (Fathers, Brothers, Teaching Brothers, Sisters, Missionary Sisters, Third Order) form part of the one family contemplated by the original project, provocative point of reference of something that, maybe by other ways, one day could partly or totally be achievable.

Number 5 says that to enter the Society of Mary (a juridic reality approved 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1836) Marists "follow the footprints of those who began the Marist project and are decided to make their own Mary's wish for them to be the support of the Church in these times of uncertainty, as Mary was at Pentecost". Today's Marists and the Society of Mary continue to drink from the same spiritual well that Colin and his companions drank from and connect with the same life current.

## **Article 2 The name and end of the Society**

Article 2 opens with a reference to the Founder and the Constitutions that he left to the Society, including a complete quotation of no. 1 of the 1872 text, approved by Rome, connecting the name of the Society of Mary and the Marist with the mission he has and the spirit which characterises it. This name is a spiritual reality which shows the extent and the sense of the mission of those who carry it out (the Society and the Marist) and characterizes its way of life, form of presence in the Church, and the specific manner of working within it and sharing the mission in the world. The name that the Society and the Marist bears is not by accident, is something that it has by luck and with which they have been favoured; it is a name which situates and denotes the specific mission (in military terms: flag) and the spirit that animates it. This name and mission takes us directly to Jean-Claude Colin and his 1872 Constitutions (no. 1), but finally by means of the Colin text takes us to the project that he recognises as its origin, that is to say the inspiration of Le Puy and the promise of Fourvière, in which we find the basic pillars of the Marist mission and spirituality. For he who knows the terms of the inspiration of Le Puy and the promise of Fourvière, it is clear that the subject (Mary) has favoured the Society and Marist with this sweet name and it is easy to find ones place in the field of evangelical mission and the spirit that identifies it; to stand for what is necessary for the Church and in the Church defy that which puts it in danger and puts in danger the faith of her children. And once understood the novelty of the name reserved to the Society and its implications for Marists, understood that Marists obliged by their vocation involve themselves in the renewal of the Church, of the Christian community, of the faith of her children, knowing that theirs is more that maintenance implantation and renewal because their vocation is properly speaking missionary. If he responds faithfully to the name that he bears and the wish he wants to achieve he knows that his weapons are mercy, closeness to the most needy and marginal, to stand for those who suffer injustice and are not treated like sons and brothers. If he is consequent with the name that he bears he will stand for the servant and pilgrim Church, a Church with marian face and full of mercy. Because when one pursues the ends of the Society: search of personal holiness, salvation of neighbour and defence of the Catholic Church, according to the spirit of Mary, they are contributing to its renewal. The commitment to education and especially of the young is

an important traditional means in the Society to contribute to this renewal of the Church. The Parish ministry and other ministries have to be evaluated in function of what they contribute to the Church and its missionary dimension. The Constitutions list the traditional ministries in this field which respond to the demands of the name we bear.

The modern redaction of the third article does no more than make us read Father Colin's text in the light of this spiritual experience he had at the beginnings of the Marist project and situate it in the context of a post-conciliar theology and spirituality. In the redaction some expressions have been taken from the 1842 text ("a distinctively missionary vocation") and other expressions taken from Marist Chapter texts of 1969-70 (DD) and 1977 ('To be Marist'). We can't repeat here the text that we all have available for us.

The quotation in no. 7 of no. 1 of Colin's 1872 Constitutions is a clear way of expressing that the present Constitutions wanted to translate Colin's constitutions in the language of today and that the Society of Mary and the Marist of today and tomorrow must drink from the same spiritual well. However the binding text for today's Marist are the present Constitutions and not Colin's 1872 Constitutions nor any other previous texts not included in the present Constitutions.

From number 8 to 14, at the end of Article 2, in current language and theology of the present constitutions try to translate and transmit the same contents of the founder's text about the name, the demands required to bear it, and the nature and ends, the Marist identity and mission that one is committed to and so to guarantee that Mary herself is committed with them and in them. It is a consequence of bearing Mary's name.

### **Article 3 Marist presence in the Church**

This article continues to draw out the consequences of bearing the name of Mary and the practical consequences that there is going to be in the way that Marists act. All that is said in this article has to do with the demands that bearing the name of Mary brings and the wish that we have committed ourselves to achieve. The 1984 precapitular text was inspired by the outline of the 1842 Constitutions at the moment of defining the features of the Society. Let's remember the 1842 and 1872 outlines to the 1984 project and the definitive text of the 1985 Constitutions (cf. page 1). There we will be able to see the changes introduced and the variations of a same tune.

Number 15 draws as consequence of bearing Mary's name that the place of the Marist in the Church is like that which Mary had in the beginning: as one who "listens to the word and puts it into practice" (Luke 8:21), without taking advantage of her privilege as mother. Before the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, they are always compliant (which does not mean blind or acrylic) but in all to try to situate oneself like Mary in the the Church at the beginning: available to the Pope for the needs of the Church anywhere, they are the centre of communion and unity and work of the unity of the Church (16); they must work in the local church in such a way that the bishops consider the Society as their own (17); building the christian community in a self-effacing hidden way (18); supporting priests, other religious and promoting the laity and their responsibility in the Church (19). With the authorities and civil powers they avoid identifying with any side but putting selves on the side of the oppressed and not remaining silent with regard to injustice (20); they renounce all ecclesiastic or civil dignities so as to be free from a spirit of ambition, so far from the spirit of Mary (21). This style of presence is demanded by those who bear the name of Mary and is required by him who is available to respond to the the great needs of the moment. Father Colin, since 1833 (this came from the years and inspirations in Cerdon), had in mind to make of this renouncing a special vow; but in 1872 the authorities of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars did no accept it at the moment of approving the Constitutions.

#### **Article 4 Other characteristics of the Society**

This article in the 1984 project had the same title: 'Characteristics of the Society'. The 1985 general chapter separated it and slightly changed the order as can be seen in the outline of page 1. We said the outline of the 1984 project followed the 1842 outline. The 1985 Chapter thought that the reference for Marists was the 1872 Constitution, as the two previous general chapters had stated. The 1984 text had some changes in order. And so the actual text has three sections:

1. Hidden and unknown in the world
2. Marists and science
4. The unity of the members

These characteristics belong to the foundations and have to do with the ends and the mission of the Society. They all are born from bearing the name of Mary and making her wish ones own life project.



### **1. Hidden and unknown**

From the generalate of Father Colin the formula was interpreted in the context of determining how the Marists were to work in the Church. The formula is fruit of those years of inspiration and great consolation of Cerdon, when God speaking to a soul tells her many things in few words. Number 21 of *Epítome* (1836-42) gives account of the present numbers 23, 24 and 25 about the *ignoti et occulti*. It has to do with following the steps of Mary and assuming the consequences of the name we bear; it has to do with situating ourselves in the Church of today as Mary situated herself in the Church of the Apostles. It is a demand that come from the name we bear and a manner of responding to the urgent necessities of the Church. It has to do with removing obstacles so that the Good News can reach the hearts of today's men and women with out prejudices, or real affirmations of certain behaviours in the name of God and the Gospel that convert into an insurmountable obstacle.

### **2. Marists and science**

In the 1842 outline science comes immediately related to the ends of the Society. Without science the ends can not be met. It comes immediately after putting the ends in relation to the pope, the bishops and civil authorizes. It is article no. 3 in the 1872 outline which passes to be article 9 (before the Spirit of the Society). The 1842 outline in a more immediate way places science as an indispensable condition whereby the Society can fulfil its ends. Science here is not a value in itself but rather it is in function of and at the service of the ends of the Society. It is a ministry that capacitates to carry out the others more efficiently. This science is definitely at the service of the kingdom, at the service of Mary's work and prepares them to become suitable instruments of Mary's work.

### **3. Unity among members**

This characteristic of Colin appears in the chapter where the foundations of the Society that characterize it are treated; Colin returns to treat it in the last chapter of the Constitutions (chapter 12). We also find ourselves with something somewhat decisive of the nature and mission of Society as for its growth and permanence. This vocation to create communion among them comes from being called by vocation to be the ferment of communion in the Church to the point of making her "one heart and one mind". This vocation comes as an imperative of the

name they bear and the wish that they want to achieve the state of being "one heart and one mind". This has to do with the ends of the Society and her mission of being ferment of communion in the Church of today, like Mary in the the church at its beginnings. Number 29 teaches the Marist to weave this framework of communion into the actions of each day, rejecting obstacles that create division and favouring what builds bonds of communion.

### **Article 5 Membership of the Society of Mary**

The 1842 text enumerates five degrees of belonging to the Society, from the postulantes to the professed with the vow of stability, to the Coajutor brothers. But the professed with stability are a privileged class. The Society of Mary because of the name it bears and the desire that it has to carry out, cannot be for what divides it but for what creates communion. The 1872 Constitutions distinguish three degrees: 1° degree: approved aspirants. 2° degree: lay brothers; 3° degree: priests or aspirants to the priesthood once they have completed their formation who have made the three vows and renounced all dignities and ten years later will do their second novitiate and take their vow of stability.

In the new Constitutions there is no talk of degrees, but of members of the same family, the family of Mary. Number 30 remembers the Primitive Church "one heart and one mind" and the family they form by profession, with the same rights for all, except those that come from ordination (in accordance with Canon Law). Number 31 reminds us that the project from the beginning counted on the a branch of lay associates, with the purpose that the Society be open to lay people who live in the world. See the text requesting the approval of the Third Order in Rome (*Summarium*, no. 53). The actual Constitutions remain open to other forms of association, but without making them formal members of the Church. And so at the end of the chapter we find ourselves with the same spiritual reality and with the consequences of making their own the request of Mary, Mother of Mercy.

### **By way of questionnaire**

1. The very motto of the Constitutions - Does it not suppose a maximalist mariology? (theology of glory), a mariology of the Mother of God which forgets that of the mother of Jesus, a mariology that

removes Jesus from the centre, a mariology that puts Mary not inside but outside the Church, that deifies Mary and disconnects her from Christology and from ecclesiology?

2. But this role that Colin attributes to Mary, isn't it to attribute to Mary functions that properly speaking are God's functions that belong to her Son? Is it possible to hold on to these convictions without falling into pre-conciliar positions and illegitimate vis a vis the conciliar and post-conciliar?

3. Won't we be making the Society entrenched in unsustainable and illegitimate mariological positions because of conciliar and post-conciliar christology, mariology and ecclesiology?

4. The reference to the promise of Fourvière and implicitly the revelations, inspiration or spiritual experience of Le Puy by Jean-Claude Courveille (as told by Mayet in 1852): Do they suppose a solid base on which to found the project of the Society, the Marist project?

### **Some texts of special reference**

(1) "Here... is what I want. I have always imitated my Divine Son in everything. I followed Him to Calvary itself, standing at the foot of the Cross when He gave His life for man's salvation. Now in heaven, sharing His glory, I follow His path still, in the work He does for His church on earth. Of this Church I am the protectress. I am like a powerful army, defending and saving souls. When a fearful heresy threatened to convulse the whole of Europe, my Son raised up His servant Ignatius, to form a Society under His name, calling itself the Society of Jesus, with members called Jesuits, to fight against the hell unleashed against His Church. In the same way in this last age of impiety and unbelief, it is my wish and the wish of my Son, that there be another Society, one consecrated to me, one which will bear my name, which will call itself the Society of Mary and whose members will call themselves Marists, to battle against hell..." Mayet, copy C, vol. 4 (English translation: E. Keel (ed.), *A Book of Texts*, Doc. 1, 5).

(2) "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 solemn), I do not mind repeating it here once more: "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." FS, doc. 152, 1 (19<sup>th</sup> of January, 1848).

In the same sense Colin said in 1837 (FS, doc 4, 1): "The blessed Virgin said: I was the support of the new-born Church; I shall be also at the end of time. My embrace will be open to all who wish to come to me."

And in Doc. 4, 2 of 1837, he assures that "...these words presided over the earliest days of the Society".

(3) "In its turn too, nineteen centuries after the foundation of the Church, along comes a little Society. The name of Mary has been as it were held in reserve for it and has been given to it by God. The blessed Virgin has said to it, "I was the support of the new-born Church; I shall be the support of the Church at the end of time." FS, doc. 172, 23 (comparing the Society of Mary to what happened to the Society of Jesus; 1849).

(4) "The general aim of the Society is to contribute in the best possible way, both by its prayers and its efforts, to the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the faithful, and to gather so to speak all the members of Christ, whatever their age, sex, or standing, under the protection of the Blessed Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God; and to revive their faith and piety and nourish them with the doctrine of the Roman Church, so that at the end of time as at the beginning, all the faithful may with God's help be of one heart and one mind in the bosom of the Roman Church and that all, walking worthily before God and under Mary's guidance, may attain eternal life. For this reason entry to the Society is also open to lay people living in the world in the Confraternity or Third Order of Blessed Mary." *Summarium*, 1833, Ant. Textus 1, p.83, s 109 (English translation: LM, doc. 9).