

Prologue

Our Founder left us a heritage consisting of three items: a Vision, a Spirituality and a Rule. Over the next few days we are going to look closely at each of these three parts of Fr Colin's legacy, in the hope that this will make us more faithful Marists.

Colin's original vision has been recaptured and brought into focus over the last fifty years, thanks largely to the work of two Marists, Jean Coste and Gaston Lessard. We have become familiar with it, as it has been presented in retreats, workshops and many publications, generally in the form of a number of Great Themes, some of which are prominent in our Constitutions.

In one sense, there is no need to go back over all this material, which is already very familiar to you. Too familiar, perhaps, and sometimes the focus has got blurred. For that reason we are going to look again at three key elements of the Founder's Vision: Mary support of the Church at its birth; Mary support of the Church at the end of time; and the early Church as sole model of the Society. We will also look at some themes that can be grouped together under the heading 'Mary, the Church and her Society'.

Our Founder did not leave us only a Vision. He also left us a Spirituality, which is the spiritual underpinning of the Vision. We need to look at this, especially since it has often been neglected or misunderstood, or simply confused with the Vision. That this should be so is easy to understand. Unlike some Founders, who left a spirituality to their followers, Fr Colin did not sit down and write it out in the form of a book or a series of lectures. He often talked about it, but usually in passing; some aspects of it he never expressed but only implied. So we are going on a search for the sources of Colinian spirituality, followed by a study of some spiritual writers who we know influenced Fr Colin. With them we shall be led deeper into what it means to be contemplative in action.

Whatever else Fr Colin did or did not leave us, he left us a Rule. In fact, this is the only part of his legacy that he committed himself to providing. The history of the Rule lasts as long as Fr Colin's own history and is as complex. However, the Founder's intentions are clear. What he wanted to leave behind was a rule of life for Marists from which they would learn in concrete detail and in daily life what it is to be a Marist.