

## Chapter two : *Launching the mission*

### No lack of volunteers

As told above, Pompallier, immediately after his first interview with Pastre, in July 1835, rushed to consult his fellow Marists in Valbenoîte. He probably went to Saint Chamond and the Hermitage as well. On his return to Lyon Pastre could write to Cardinal Fransoni that five missionaries would in his view be enough for the first team. Evidently, five had already presented themselves: probably Bret, Forest and Chavas in Valbenoîte and Servant in the Hermitage. Bret and Servant would in fact leave in the first group for Oceania. Forest was to leave at a later stage. Chavas went many years later to Louisiana.

Although the pontifical approval of the Society was promised in January and issued in March, the priests were until their profession in September under the authority of their respective bishops, and needed to be appointed by them. In Lyon, the appointments were arranged by vicar general Cholleton.<sup>1</sup> In Belley Colin himself would deal with Bishop Devie. After 10 February Pompallier began lining up the men. He again went to Valbenoîte and came away with the assurance that Claude Bret would indeed be available.<sup>2</sup> He found out that Servant was ready to sign on. He asked Champagnat to have him apply formally to Cholleton.<sup>3</sup>

Champagnat had agreed to the participation of the Brothers. Pompallier asked him to propose three or four of them, out of whom they could together choose two. The formal appointment could then be finalized between the archbishop, being their ecclesiastical superior, and Colin, whom Champagnat considered to be their religious superior.<sup>4</sup> Champagnat seems to have taken his time, because on 11 April Colin had to urge him on.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime Cholleton had approached Pierre Bataillon, a diocesan priest of Lyon without Marist connections so far, who at the time of his ordination in December 1835 had expressed a desire to devote his life to the foreign missions.<sup>6</sup>

That Colin was somehow involved in the selections is clear from the fact that he kept back Jean Forest.<sup>7</sup> In Belley Colin would have had even more of a say. There he turned down Jean-Claude Deschamps, because, when he asked Colin to be sent to Oceania, he insisted on an answer within eight days. Enough for Colin to answer: 'Well, in that case, you will not go at all'.<sup>8</sup> In the choice of the Brothers too Colin was involved. We know that, in the case of Brother Marie-Nizier Delorme, Colin warned there could be problems because of the fact that Marie-Nizier was not yet of age.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> OM I, doc. 370 [4].

<sup>2</sup> OM II, doc. 732 [12] & n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OM I, doc. 370 [4].

<sup>4</sup> OM I, doc. 370 [4]. For Champagnat the priests and the Brothers were members of the same congregation and thus to be sent as members of the same team, sent out by the same Society, cf. Sester, *Lettres de Marcellin J.B. Champagnat* (LC), doc. 65: '*nous envoyons cinq de nos prêtres et deux de nos frères*'. Canonically Colin had no say over the Brothers, not before and not after the papal approbation of the priests' branch. His position towards them was ambiguous and he was not always careful with the limits of his authority, which led to some painful situations, cf. below, p. 76, and CS, docs. 58 [5] & 60.

<sup>5</sup> OM I, doc. 380.

<sup>6</sup> OM I, doc. 372.

<sup>7</sup> FS, doc. 172 [14]. cf. OM IV, pp. 282f.

<sup>8</sup> Kerr, op. cit. p. 299 n. 13. Kerr and the *Origines Maristes* (OM IV, pp. 264 f.) may be right in thinking that this refusal refers to a later date. In any case, Deschamps did not join the Marist retreat and he was not professed with the other priests in September, but writing from Valparaiso in July, Chanel believed that he was at the Capucinière, cf. Rozier, *Écrits de S. Pierre Chanel* (EC), doc. 37 [13]. In March 1837 he was preaching parish missions as a *prêtre mariste*, cf. Greiler, *Colin Studies II*, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Bataillon to Colin, 25-10-36, LRO, doc. 3 [5] '*suyvant votre prévision*'.

On 12 May 1836, Jean-Baptiste Pompallier left Lyon for Rome to be consecrated a bishop. On 25 May Colin wrote to him that the official brief *Omnium Gentium* by which the Society was officially approved had arrived. He asked him to express the Society's gratitude to the dignitaries concerned. He admits having alluded to Pompallier's appointment to Cardinal Castracane (evidently in a letter that we do not have), but without trying to prevent this burden being put on him. 'You should submit to what Providence has ordered for you'. He adds: 'The companions of your mission are doing their best to prepare themselves', implying that the appointments at least of the priests were finalized. Answering on 9 June, Pompallier wrote to Colin that he is looking forward to hearing more news from him, and from the confreres.<sup>10</sup> The appointments of Chanel and Bret (both of the diocese of Belley) are first mentioned in correspondence of May. Cholleton in a letter to Pompallier in Rome on 24 June wrote that four priests are appointed and preparing themselves.<sup>11</sup>

While in Rome, he received many letters from France and on 16 July, after his consecration, he could write: 'How are things with my four missionaries and the two brothers?'.<sup>12</sup> Evidently, their appointments had been communicated to Pompallier. We do not know how. On 22 July Peter Chanel could write to a friend that the news of his departure for Polynesia would soon be all over the place.<sup>13</sup>

Around that time a third Brother (from Belley) had been added to the group.

### Who were they?

**Peter Chanel**<sup>14</sup>, born 12 July 1803, fifth in a family of eight, was two years younger than Pompallier, who was the oldest of the group. His earliest education he had received from an old priest who had gone underground during the persecutions and whom Peter and a few other boys accompanied on his pastoral visits. He taught them on their walks from village to village.<sup>15</sup> After a few years at the minor seminary of Meximieux, Peter had entered the major seminary of Brou for the diocese of Belley and was ordained a priest at the age of twenty-four. He first was a curate in Ambérieu, where he found Claude Bret, whom he had known in Meximieux and who ran a school in the village. The two became very close friends, so much so that – unusual in those days – they wrote to each other in the familiar *tu*.<sup>16</sup> A year later Chanel was appointed parish priest of Crozet. The two friends thought of volunteering for the missions in Louisiana<sup>17</sup>, but Bishop Devie held them back. Together they became interested in the Marist project and in 1831 they joined.<sup>18</sup> In September of that year they took part in the common Marist retreat and both were at the same time assigned to the minor seminary of Belley under Colin as superior. Shortly afterwards Chanel's sister Françoise joined the Marist sisters in Belley.<sup>19</sup> In 1832 Peter became director of the minor seminary. In 1833 he accompanied Colin on his voyage to Rome. In 1834 he became vice-superior of the minor seminary. On 1 May 1835, Chanel's father died in a tragic accident. No sooner did the Oceania project come in view, than both Peter Chanel and Claude Bret, having waited five years after their first attempt to go the missions, volunteered.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> CS, doc. 2 [7]. OM I, doc. 395 [9]. Champagnat, 08-05-1836, speaks of two Brothers, LC, doc. 65.

<sup>11</sup> CS, doc. 3 [1]. EC, p. 75, and, quoting from Bourdin, p. 316.

<sup>12</sup> OM I, doc. 398 [8].

<sup>13</sup> EC, doc. 15 [3].

<sup>14</sup> For a summary of the life of Peter Chanel, cf EC, pp. 21 – 29.

<sup>15</sup> EC, p. 135 n.2.

<sup>16</sup> EC, doc. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. EC, p. 74 & p. 136f. Cf. Nicolet, *Vie du bienheureux Pierre-Marie-Louis Chanel*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> OM I, doc. 227 [1].

<sup>19</sup> RMJ, p. 102, n. 9.

<sup>20</sup> EC, doc. 28 [2].

**Claude Marie Xavier Bret**<sup>21</sup>, the third eldest of the group, son of a shoemaker in Lyon, was born on 29 July, 1808. Wanting to be a priest he was sent to the minor seminary of Meximieux where he got to know Peter Chanel. He was a very small man, who, later, on the ship to Oceania, joked that he was the only one who could stand up straight and walk without bending his head in the low and narrow confines of the schooner.<sup>22</sup> He was very intelligent. At the age of nineteen he had already finished his second year of theology, but being too young for ordination he was put in charge of a school in Ambérieu at about the same time as Chanel was appointed there as the assistant priest. Having been held back from departing for Louisiana, he joined the Marists with Peter Chanel in 1831, and was appointed to teach at the minor seminary in Belley while still a subdeacon. Ordained a priest in 1832 for the diocese of Belley, he was in 1834 appointed to Valbenoîte. When Pompallier visited that community to seek associates, he immediately volunteered.<sup>23</sup> We can safely assume he would have been the first one to tell Peter Chanel (then in Belley) of the new mission project.

Only a few months younger than Bret was **Catherin Servant**<sup>24</sup>, born 25 October 1808, in Grézieu-le-Marché. He studied at Saint-Irénée from 1829 to 1832 and was ordained 22 December 1832. On his desire to join the Marists he was appointed by his bishop, in January 1833, to the Hermitage to work with Marcellin Champagnat. He must immediately have shown an enthusiasm for Oceania, because Pompallier counted on him in February 1836.<sup>25</sup>

The youngest of the four priests was **Pierre Bataillon**<sup>26</sup>, born on 1 January 1810, in Saint-Cyr-les Vignes (Loire). He went to school in Lyon and was in Saint-Irénée from 1832 to 1836. Although his father was mayor of the village at one time, the family was of moderate means, and he had to ask for remittance of his fees.<sup>27</sup> He was ordained on 19 December 1835. He had not shown any interest in the Marists but he asked Cholleton to be considered for the foreign missions. He was first appointed as a curate in Saint-Laurent-de-Chamousset, but, when looking around for candidates for Oceania, Cholleton offered him the possibility of joining Pompallier's team.<sup>28</sup> In July he moved to the Marist community in Valbenoîte and was professed a Marist with the first group on 24 September.

**Antoine Colomb** was born in 1812 in Mottier (Ain). He joined the Marist Brothers in the Hermitage in 1931, and made his perpetual profession on 7 April 1934, as Brother Michel, - 'Brother of the Society of Mary'.<sup>29</sup> He was selected for Oceania by Marcellin Champagnat.<sup>30</sup>

At nineteen, **Jean-Marie Delorme**, born 19 July 1817, was the youngest of the group. He came from Saint-Laurent-d'Agny, some 20 km South-West of Lyons. Jean-Marie had received a good schooling and he had picked up a bit of the trade of his father, who was a tailor. Years later, on Futuna, for lack of black cloth, he made a white cassock for Catherin Servant from a bed sheet, which pleased everyone so much that from then on all the missionaries wanted white

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<sup>21</sup> OM IV, pp. 206 – 208.

<sup>22</sup> Maurey, op. cit. I, *Bret*, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> OM II, doc. 732 [12], n. 1.

<sup>24</sup> OM IV, p. 353.

<sup>25</sup> OM I, doc. 370 [4].

<sup>26</sup> OM IV, p. 194.

<sup>27</sup> APM, personal file, undated letter (1832?).

<sup>28</sup> OM I, doc. 372.

<sup>29</sup> FMO, p.16 - 22. APM, personal file. This was how the Brothers were called at that time in the register of professions of the Hermitage.

<sup>30</sup> That Champagnat selected him would seem to follow from what Br. Michel wrote to him: '*je remercie le Seigneur de m'avoir procuré une si belle vocation par votre entremise*', 17-05-1840, FMO, p. 17.

cassocks!<sup>31</sup>. When the parish priest of his village, Jacques Fontbonne, went to join the Marists at the Hermitage, Jean-Marie followed him. He did his novitiate and was professed on 12 October 1834, as Brother Marie-Nizier.<sup>32</sup>

The oldest of the three Brothers on the team was **Joseph Luzy**, born 2 March 1807 in Marboz (Ain), not far from Chanel's home village. With his brother he had been a student at the minor seminary of his home town. When he found the studies too hard, he stayed on at the seminary as a *factotum*, first in Marboz, later in Belley. Colin asked Champagnat if Joseph should not move to the Hermitage for further formation, but nothing came of it. It is not clear whether he volunteered or was invited, but in June or July he was added to the team for Oceania. In September, while the priests were in retreat in Belley, Joseph left Belley for Lyon and the Hermitage, where he did a retreat and immediately made his perpetual profession under the name of Joseph-Xavier, on 26 September 1836. He stayed on to attend the opening of the retreat on 2 October in the Hermitage, but left a day or two later with Pompallier for Paris.<sup>33</sup>

This completed the first missionary team to leave for Oceania: one bishop, four priests, two from the diocese of Lyon and two from Belley, with three Brothers, two from Marcellin Champagnat's teaching Brothers in the Hermitage and one from Belley.

There is no indication that either Pompallier, de Pins or Pastre, let alone Jean-Claude Colin, even considered having women on the team. Some Marist Sisters in Belley, Françoise Chanel for one, would have jumped at the occasion.<sup>34</sup> Colin mentioned the Sisters only after the men were on their way, telling Pompallier that they had decided to offer all their prayers and actions for the intention of the missionaries until the first message would come back from wherever they were on their journey.<sup>35</sup> Peter Chanel thought it the most natural thing that the Sisters would follow them to Oceania. 'We know only too well, he was to write later to Françoise, how interested you all are in our mission'.<sup>36</sup> In his last letter from le Havre he made a point of mentioning to Colin that there were Sisters in the group of missionaries leaving for New Orleans.<sup>37</sup> He had already found in Le Havre a house where they could stay while waiting for the departure of their ship! He was also realistic enough to accept that as yet it was too early, but he did not forget to tell Françoise about the numerous Sisters' convents they found in Valparaiso.<sup>38</sup>

### **The bishop and the superior**

There is no doubt that Pompallier was sincerely committed to the Society of Mary, even though, as a bishop, he would not be answerable to the religious superior, and hence could not be professed with the other Marists. The Cardinals Sala and Frasoni explained this to him in

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<sup>31</sup> Ronzon, *Jean-Marie Delorme, Frère Marie-Nizier*, p. 24. In one of his letters from Valparaiso (28.07.1837) Pompallier writes to Colin that of the three Brothers with him, one is a tailor, one a cabinetmaker and the third a cobbler. It is not very clear who was what! Cf. LRO, doc. 18 [8].

<sup>32</sup> Ronzon, op. cit., pp. 13 – 25.

<sup>33</sup> Ronzon, *Frères Maristes en Océanie* (FMO), pp.10 – 16. In early July, Colin paid a visit to the Hermitage to discuss a project of joining the Marist teaching brothers with the *Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, cf. LC, doc. 66. The two would have discussed the candidates for Oceania and it was not unlikely on that occasion that Joseph Luzy was added to the team. According to Ronzon (FMO, p. 11) there is some doubt as to whether he made his profession at the Hermitage, or had perhaps already done so in Belley.

<sup>34</sup> Kerr, op. cit., p. 300.

<sup>35</sup> CS, doc. 5 [1].

<sup>36</sup> EC, docs. 31 [2] & 36 [2].

<sup>37</sup> EC, doc. 29 [1].

<sup>38</sup> EC, doc. 31 [2]. From Valparaiso to Françoise: 'The bishop knows too little yet of his mission to invite a few Sisters of Our Lady'. The list of houses of the congregation of the Picpus Sisters gives 1838 as the founding year of their community in Valparaiso. EC, doc. 36 [1].

Rome, and Pompallier wanted to be in the same position towards the Society as he would have been, had he been a professed member of the Society before his promotion. He intended to make an appropriate declaration when the others would take their religious vows.<sup>39</sup>

Once the official papal recognition of the Society of Mary been received, two decisions had to be made. Where, in Belley or in Lyon, would the retreat take place at the end of which the Marists would elect their first superior general and make their first profession? And, where, in Belley or in Lyon, would the central administration be established? Neither of the two questions would have become an issue, had the two bishops, of Belley and Lyon, not publicly announced their claims, at which the divided loyalties among the Marists flared into the open. That happened just before Pompallier's departure for Rome. Unfortunately, Pompallier showed himself to be insensitive to the delicate position that religious bishops have within the religious congregations to which they belong.<sup>40</sup> In his first letter to Colin from Rome, dated 9 June, he wrote:

We shall need a lot of adjustments in our relations to the bishops, now that we move out from under their jurisdiction according to the Brief that has given us our autonomy. Especially towards Lyon we need to be most accomodating in my view. Even though it is true that the Church of Lyon has often made things difficult for us, you know, dear superior, what she has suffered when this undertaking was gravely compromised by the behaviour of its first leader and only founder... From what I have always heard Lyon was the first cradle of the Society, and in the present situation she can be of great advantage to us... Wish that one day the General of the little Society could reside in Rome, near the Supreme Pontiff.<sup>41</sup>

Meddling by Pompallier was the last thing Colin needed in this tricky situation, and there surely was no cause to rake up the sad story of Courveille. We can only imagine that he had heard somebody in Lyon making this nasty remark in the heat of the argument. As if the poor archdiocese had suffered more of the affair than the Marists themselves!<sup>42</sup> When Colin did not answer, Pompallier was annoyed.<sup>43</sup>

In the meantime the controversy had come to a head. The contemporary documents are suspiciously silent on what exactly happened, but from later narratives it is clear that feelings ran high. Colin feared that, on the point of being established in fact as well as in law, the Society might as yet break up. Nor was he sure that all the aspirants would turn up for the retreat.<sup>44</sup>

Colin panicked and rushed to the Marist sisters to ask for their prayers. In their parlour, looking up at the statue of the Blessed Virgin, he suddenly knew what to do: hold the retreat in Belley and tell de Pins that the motherhouse would in due time be established in Lyon.<sup>45</sup> While relations with Lyon had remained cool and touchy<sup>46</sup>, Bishop Devie in Belley and Jean-Claude Colin had, after some difficult years, come to appreciate each other. They had become friends.<sup>47</sup> Devie felt that he and nobody else had wholeheartedly promoted the Marists. He had given them a house of their own, and really been their protector and guide. Three times, in 1830, 1831 and in

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<sup>39</sup> OM I, doc. 401. The declaration Pompallier later made can be found in OM I, doc. 404.

<sup>40</sup> As told by Colin himself in 1850: OM II, doc. 709. Cf. above, pp. 10f.

<sup>41</sup> OM. I, doc. 395 [11].

<sup>42</sup> OM. II, doc. 689 [12], cf. Kerr, op. cit. pp. 216ff

<sup>43</sup> OM. I, doc. 398 [1].

<sup>44</sup> The only hints, possibly, are remarks that Colin makes to Champagnat about Terraillon, the spokesman of the Lyon group. Champagnat and Terraillon were likely to meet regularly. Colin writes (11.04): 'Tell Terraillon that I love him all the same' (OM I, doc. 380 [1]) and (06.07) 'Get Terraillon to examine before God what Mary has the right to expect from him' (OM I, doc. 396 [5]). Cf. OM I, doc. 396 [1] & footnote 1.

<sup>45</sup> OM II, doc. 677. Kerr, op. citi. p 294.

<sup>46</sup> OM II, doc. 625 [20].

<sup>47</sup> Cf. OM I, doc. 311. OM II, doc. 547 [39], & p. 335, n.s. Cf. RMJ, doc. 130.

1834 the common Marist retreats had been held in Belley.<sup>48</sup> He accepted Colin's decision, but took it for granted that he would at least preside at the retreat, the professions and the election.<sup>49</sup>

Archbishop de Pins, although only apostolic administrator, always firmly upheld the prerogatives of the Primatial See of the Gauls. He could boast of having opened the way for the new missions of Oceania<sup>50</sup> and of having created the opportunity for the little Society of Mary to become a congregation of pontifical rank. Anyway, moving to Lyon was the only sensible thing to do. Colin himself had expressed this view already several times.<sup>51</sup> Now that the superior general would have to oversee foreign missions, the need to move from the relative isolation of Belley was even more obvious and Colin wrote accordingly to Archbishop de Pins, who, on that pledge, agreed with Belley as the place for the vows and the election.<sup>52</sup> Reversing his preference in January that same year, Colin immediately started looking around for a suitable place in Lyon, but he was in no hurry to move himself. Later on he always thought back of 'his little cell and the seclusion of Belley'. He did not move until autumn 1839.<sup>53</sup>

Five weeks later, after his consecration, evidently not aware of the way Colin had in the meantime solved the problem<sup>54</sup>, and insensitive to what Colin may have meant by not answering the first letter, Pompallier made things worse by writing that he had consulted Cardinal Castracane on the question of where to establish the general administration. The Society, Castracane had said, was still in its infancy and should grow and develop in the places where it was born. Lyon may have been a trying mother, it still was the cradle of the Society, where it enjoyed protection and that allowed it a share of its vocations and resources. The Society should gratefully honour and trust Lyon in preference to the neighbouring dioceses. That is where the General should reside until such time as Rome claimed him.<sup>55</sup> Wise words of a friend of the Society! Not so wise of Pompallier to involve the Cardinal.

## Paris

Pompallier returned from Rome around 5 August, did confirmations in Lyon, presided at a profession ceremony of the Marist Sisters in Belley on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and left for Paris with Champagnat on 25 August. As a bishop he was in a good position to introduce Champagnat to various officials to obtain government approval for the institute of the teaching Brothers. He also wanted to find out how to book a passage to Oceania and lay contacts with government people in connection with the Oceania mission. He had an audience with Queen Marie-Amélie.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> OM II, doc. 701 [4] & doc. 703.

<sup>49</sup> OM I, doc. 403 [1]. OM II, doc. 750 [13].

<sup>50</sup> Cf. OM IV, p. 335, & n. 3. In a letter of 20 April 1840, after he had abandoned his position as apostolic administrator of Lyon, he bitterly complained of the lack of appreciation on the part of the Pope, among other things for his involvement in the missions of Oceania of which he saw himself as the originator. Cf. Colin Studies I, p. 45. Nor was he the only one to think so. The first mention of the missions in Oceania in the foremost Catholic newspaper in France, *L'ami de la religion*, on 13 August 1836, says the mission is entrusted to 'missionaries of the diocese of Lyon'. Somebody must have tipped them off because three weeks later the mission is said to be entrusted to the 'Congregation of the Priests of Mary'. Cf. Colin Studies II, p. 57.

<sup>51</sup> In May 1833 (OM I, doc. 271 [1]) & in November 1834 (OM I, doc. 328 [3]).

<sup>52</sup> OM I, doc. 403 [1].

<sup>53</sup> OM I, doc. 358 [1]. cf. OM I, doc. 409 [2]. Nearly all Colin's letters are sent from Belley until the autumn of 1839. The *Index pro Societate Mariae* for 1873 (the oldest one at hand) says of the *Domus Generalitia*: 'Primum Bellici, ab Electione canonica primi Praepositi Generalis die 24 Septembris 1836 fundata, Lugduni decursu Novembris 1839 translata fuit'. On Colin's later nostalgia for Belley, cf. Coste (ed.), *A Founder Acts* (FA), doc. 217 [1].

<sup>54</sup> The actual dates of the happenings are not sure, but this is the more likely sequence of events.

<sup>55</sup> OM I, doc. 398 [5].

<sup>56</sup> Farrell, op. cit. p. 183, mistakenly puts the departure of Pompallier and Champagnat for Paris on 12 August. Cf. LC, docs. 67, 75, 83. On 24 June, Cholleton had been at a loss as to where and how to arrange bookings, which indicates that at that time nothing had been done yet regarding the journey. Cf. CS, doc. 3 [7].

If Father Coudrin, the founder and the superior general of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus) had not already heard in some other way, of the erection of the new vicariate in Oceania, or of the appointment of Pompallier, he would have read it in the newspaper.<sup>57</sup> In any case, he had offered Pompallier the hospitality of their head-house in Paris. Pompallier however preferred to stay at the *Missions Étrangères de Paris* (MEP). Unlike the Picpus house it was situated in central Paris. The day after Pompallier arrived Fr. Coudrin came into town to see him.

Coudrin himself was at that time arranging the departure of four of his men to Eastern Oceania via Valparaiso. It is inconceivable that Pompallier would not, at that stage, have been told of the disadvantages of going via that same route to Western Oceania, but the pressure of Roman thinking, the advantages of joining with an experienced organization and the prospect of seeing the successful mission of the Gambier Islands, made the choice easy. They booked the eight Marists together with the four Picpus missionaries on the *Delphine*, the same ship that had taken Bishop Rouchouze two years earlier to Valparaiso. Pompallier visited the Picpus community the next day. On 4 September he went there again to administer confirmations at the Sisters' boarding school, a week later he celebrated a pontifical Mass in their church and on 13 September he presided at the prize giving.<sup>58</sup>

## Farewells

In August and September the eight new missionaries, the oldest thirty-five, the youngest eighteen, said good-bye to their families. They said farewell with the prospect of never seeing them again. As Pierre Bataillon ended his first letter to Jean-Claude Colin: 'we meet again with God, in heaven: *A Dieu!... au ciel!!!*'.<sup>59</sup> The surviving documents give us a glimpse of how some of them coped.

Pompallier left Paris on 14 September, and given that it took three days to travel between Paris and Lyon he must have gone nearly straight to the retreat in Belley that started on 20 September. Only between 24 September and 4 October when he consecrated the new chapel at the Hermitage, he may have had a little time to stay with his family. He left Lyon on 7 October for Paris. Parting does not seem to have been particularly painful. He had a portrait made of himself for his mother and wrote to her from Le Havre.<sup>60</sup>

Peter Chanel had a difficult time. Several of his friends raised objections, and, typical for the gentle and impressionable man that he was, he wavered. The superior of the Marist Sisters, Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, who had often supported him when he was superior of the College, got him over the moment of anxiety with 'a few energetic words about priests who grow mouldy in the midst of comfort and do nothing for God's glory'. He said good-bye to his sister Françoise, now Sister Saint-Dominique. Their last words were short and simple: 'good-bye sister', 'good-bye brother'. After he left, she cried. They were very close. From Le Havre he began his letter with the touching words: 'Just a short letter between the two of us'.<sup>61</sup>

Taking leave of his widowed mother was even more difficult. He went home on Saturday 1 October and had ample time to talk with her and the rest of family. The next day he sang the

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<sup>57</sup> *L'Ami de la Religion*, 13.08 had mentioned Pompallier as bishop of the new vicariate. Cf. Colin Studies II, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> Pompallier, op. cit., p. 10. On Pompallier in Paris, cf. H. Lucas, *Mémoires sur la Congrégation des Sacrés Coeurs de Jésus et de Marie*, X, p. 260. By kindness of Fr. André Mark, SS.CC. On his subsequent visit, cf. below, p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> LRO, doc. 2 [7].

<sup>60</sup> OM I, doc. 401, Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 128. LC, doc. 132. Farrell, op. cit., p. 185, puts the consecration of the chapel on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the time needed to travel from Lyon to Paris, cf. LC, 67. The Pompallier family owned a large estate at Vourles, where, in 1816 or a bit later, his mother Françoise went to live with her second husband Jean-Marie Solichon, their four children, and the three of her first marriage. François, as he was called in the family, considered Vourles his home and must have gone there to say good-bye. CS, doc. 8; LRO, docs. 7 [19]; 12 [5]; 16 [2].

<sup>61</sup> RMJ doc. 105 [1] & [3]. EC, doc. 27 [9 & 10], doc. 31 [1 & 3], doc. 35 [4], doc. 57 [1]. Kerr, op. cit., pp. 303f.

High Mass in the parish, and preached in two Masses. In a later letter he described his mother as resigned. Father Terrier, the parish priest, received Peter and his mother for dinner and they talked until Vespers. She then left to prepare things for the next day, thinking he would still be there. But he could not face it. Without warning her, he left. She did not read or write so he could not write to her personally. From le Havre he wrote to Terrier asking him and another friend to help his mother to be courageous. He admits he should have asked her blessing. He asks Terrier to take his place with her (*tenez ma place auprès d'elle*) and to be her secretary. Writing a few days later to Françoise he explained to her as well, expecting her to excuse him to his mother. Another way of saying good-bye, he wrote, would have been just too hard on both of them.<sup>62</sup>

For Claude Bret too it was not easy. Knowing how difficult the departure of their only child would be for his parents, he asked the advice of Bishop Devie who encouraged him to go ahead. He then went to see his parents, to ask their consent. They were quite reluctant, but in the end while his mother cried, his father could only say: 'It is not up to me to give you permission for what the Lord calls you to'. His special friend Claude-Marie Chavas undertook to take his place with his parents. Still, shoemaker Bret entered enough into the spirit of the thing to take all the missionaries' foot measurements, so he could send them new shoes. By the time they got to Valparaiso Chanel was happy to be able to order ten pairs for each of them!<sup>63</sup>

For Catherin Servant also, taking leave of his parents was far from easy. On 23 June he wrote to his parents: 'I understand how big a sacrifice it is, and how painful to nature. My heart does not allow me to underestimate what your heart feels towards me. Don't forget that the absence of a little time does not take away the love we have for each other ... I know there is criticism from people, and not everybody will understand that it can also be a source of happiness for parents to give their son to go and win souls in far away countries'.<sup>64</sup> Two years later, in Hokianga, New Zealand, he still hears in his heart his dear father and mother tell him that nothing is lacking from their happiness, except his absence. Your son left you for good reasons, he answers, and he is happier than he can tell you.<sup>65</sup>

For Bataillon leaving was somehow less dramatic. His mother had died when he was quite small and he had been cared for by his elder sister Françoise. 'I can't say that I found leaving France all that difficult, and if I had to do it again, it would have been even less so. Don't imagine that it is impossible to be a missionary. Just get on the road!', he wrote later to his friend Étienne Séon. With a large family around him, dad seems to have made himself comfortable enough. Pierre kept writing regularly, urging him in nearly each letter to lead a good christian life. Some years later, Pierre invited him to come to Wallis where he could enjoy a kava drink under the coconut trees every evening!<sup>66</sup>

Joseph Luzy left Belley in the beginning of September to stay with his family and say good-bye. When the day came, taking leave of his mother turned into a dramatic experience. She was so much overcome by grief that she fainted in the arms of the neighbours! At which he quickly walked off.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kerr, op. cit., p. 304. EC, doc. 27 [10], doc. 36 [5], doc. 57 [1].

<sup>63</sup> OM II, doc. 732 [14]. Maurey, op. cit. *Bret*, p. 5f.

<sup>64</sup> APM, personal file.

<sup>65</sup> LRO, doc. 25 [1].

<sup>66</sup> Bataillon to Séon, LRO, doc. 19 [1 & 9], 23.06.1836. *Qu'on ne se figure pas que ce soit la mer à boire que d'être missionnaire*. Later letters to his father: *vivez en bon chrétien, songez à votre âme*, (15.08.41). *En songeant sérieusement au salut de votre âme* (12.05.42). APM, personal file

<sup>67</sup> *Journal of Brother Joseph-Xavier Luzy*, p. 5. APM, personal file. Ronzon, FMO, p.11.



Brother Marie-Nizier Delorme had already taken leave of his parents, when, just before leaving for Paris, it became clear he would not be allowed to leave the country without the written permission of his father. Nor had he passed the selection for military service. So he had to rush home to get the necessary documents from his father and from the mayor of Saint-Laurent; all in so much of a hurry, as he later told himself, that Chanel forgot to give him money to pay the toll required to cross the bridge at *La Mulatière*. The guard let him through and could not believe his eyes when the young man came back the next day to pay the two centimes!<sup>68</sup>

### **A firm spiritual director**

Most of the missionaries had already taken leave of their parents and gathered in Belley when the retreat opened there on 20 September. The rules for the retreat stipulated that prior to the profession everyone should have a talk with the provisional superior, i.e. with Jean-Claude Colin.<sup>69</sup> In this conversation Claude Bret admitted that the encouragement he had been given by Bishop Devie had not taken away all his hesitations. Colin gave him Bossuet's *Discourse on the Act of Self-Abandonment* to read, a text he often recommended.<sup>70</sup> We can assume that other missionaries were given the same text, or at least were guided along similar lines. Chanel knew it, and during the same retreat, he gave it to his friend Bourdin to read.<sup>71</sup>

‘Only one thing is necessary’. Only God is necessary: he is everything, the rest is nothing. Whatever might be, fades before His face, and all nations are a void and a nothing in His eyes. He alone is necessary for man. Him alone we must desire and to Him alone we must bind ourselves. ‘Fear the Lord and observe his commandments’... Everything else is alien to man ... This is the ground of his being. ... Whatever you might lose, o man, you have lost nothing provided you do not lose God, you have lost nothing that could have been your own. Let go of everything else: keep only to the fear and the love of God. ... (p. 535)

I have abandoned everything for you, O Lord, do with it what You want. I leave my life in your hands; and not only the life I lead here, in ... exile upon earth, but also my life in eternity... (p. 535)

I have surrendered everything. I have nothing for myself. ... (p. 536)

We must let ourselves fall into the welcoming arms of our God, our Saviour and our Father. That is when we learn to use the name ‘Father’ properly, like children, innocent and simple, without effort, without anxiety, without worrying about the future. .... (p. 538)

It is this act of total surrender that creates room for the Spirit to move us, and to turn us entirely into action for God. ... (p. 539)

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<sup>68</sup> Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 28f.

<sup>69</sup> OM I, doc. 402, 7.

<sup>70</sup> OM II, doc. 727. Reading Bossuet appears to have been not unusual at the time, cf. EC, 21, and there must have been several copies available. Perhaps it should be added to the list of classical sources of Marist spirituality, cf. Colin Studies I, pp. 27 – 47.

<sup>71</sup> OM II, p. 605, n. 1. These excerpts are from Bossuet, *Discours sur l'acte d'abandon*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. F. Lachat, t. 7. Paris 1882. Of the earlier edition used in 1836, no copy has been found back.

The meditation of this little known text seems to have lifted Claude Bret over the threshold. Smiling and joyfully he set out for the journey that, for him, was not to be long.<sup>72</sup>

It was this spirit of total commitment, based on radical self-denial and flowing from the passionate love of God and of God alone, that Jean-Claude Colin wanted to see in his missionaries as he sent them out into the unknown Pacific. In fact, he sent them not only to the other side of the world, but also up the road to instant holiness, which he found more important. The same thing that Mother Saint-Joseph also meant to convey to Peter Chanel with the firmness that Colin admired in her.<sup>73</sup> Only men driven by such saintly determination were able to set their hands, without looking back, to the formidable task of opening up the missions of Oceania.

### **The retreat in Belley**

The retreat<sup>74</sup> was held in the buildings of the minor seminary, the profession and the election in the Marists' own house, the *Capucinière*. Colin's choice of Belley and his promise to establish the mother house in Lyon had taken the sting out of the quarrel, but the division was smouldering on, and Colin was determined not to have further discussions during the retreat, especially not with Pompallier present, who one could expect to be always ready to explain what Rome thought about it. Point one of the rules for the retreat was clear: not a word on Belley and Lyon, *ne parler ni de Lyon ni de Belley*.<sup>75</sup> Colin could also be decisive!

When it became known that Bishop Devie expected to preside, and when Colin showed himself inclined to agree, the Lyon faction objected and it fell to the charming Chanel to tell the Bishop he was not welcome.<sup>76</sup> Right up to the retreat Colin was not quite certain how many men would in fact turn up and take the definitive step.<sup>77</sup> He also made sure that only those who were decided to make their vows in the Society, would vote in the election.<sup>78</sup>

The newly consecrated bishop Pompallier was invited to give the retreat conferences, two each day, and another one preceding the profession and the election.<sup>79</sup> Years later Denis Maître-pierre recounted that Pompallier developed his themes with unassuming modesty. He made the retreatants taste the riches of the religious vows: to consecrate one's possessions, one's body and one's soul to Him through religious vows, was the best way to enter into God's views. He invited them to approach their vows with generosity, with love and with joy. On the third day of the retreat Bishop Devie was invited to give a conference<sup>80</sup> and every day Colin himself explained the Constitutions. He must have used the text submitted to Rome in 1833, enriched with the intensive reworkings during March 1836, when it seemed that Rome would want to have a text in hand before granting the pontifical approbation.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 'avant de tomber malade je lui avois souvent entendu dire qu'il n'avoit plus rien à coeur dans ce monde que de gagner le ciel, après cela, ajoutait-il, peu importe que nous soyons mangés par les vers ou par les poissons pourvu que nous arrivions là haut'. Bataillon to Étienne Séon, 30.07.37, doc. LRO, 19, [1].

<sup>73</sup> RMJ, docs. 105 [3] & 138.

<sup>74</sup> Kerr, op. cit. gives a complete detailed summary of the retreat, pp. 293 – 309.

<sup>75</sup> OM I, doc. 402, 1°. Although in part written down after the first session, the minutes (doc. 403) show that Colin himself was the main author. Cf. p. 918.

<sup>76</sup> OM II, docs. 709 [3] & 750 [13].

<sup>77</sup> OM I, doc. 396 [1] & [5].

<sup>78</sup> OM I, doc. 402, 6°.

<sup>79</sup> OM II, doc. 752 [41].

<sup>80</sup> OM I, 403 [10].

<sup>81</sup> OM I, doc. 403 [4]. Coste, *Antiquiores Textus etc.* fasc. introd., pp. 15 – 17; fasc. I, pp. 65– 87. On this text Colin worked in Rome in 1833/1834 (OM I, doc. 295 [4]; doc. 296 [2]; doc. 298 [1]; doc. 299; doc. 303 [3]). He made a short summary that he left with Cardinal Castracane, cf. OM I, doc. 295 [4]; doc. 367 [2]. On one or on all of these he worked in March, 1836, cf. OM I, doc. 377 [1]. What particular version he used in his conferences and which one he gave to the parting missionaries is not clear.

Seventeen years later Maître-pierre remembered that Colin spoke poorly and with difficulty, as if unable to express his thoughts.<sup>82</sup> Colin had long overcome the nervous stutter of his childhood.<sup>83</sup> He had been a successful preacher of village missions and later on he could be quite eloquent as is clear from the many informal talks recorded by Mayet. The haltering presentation in this instance must be attributed to the stress of the moment and to the discrepancy Colin always seems to have felt between his high Marist ideals and the literary genre of Constitutions in which he felt constrained to express them.<sup>84</sup>

On 24 September 1836, Jean-Claude Colin was elected by the unanimous votes of his confreres (including Pompallier) to become the first superior general of the Society of Mary. Marcellin Champagnat, in his strong and rough accent, and in his typically undiplomatic way addressed the newly elect<sup>85</sup>:

We have just given you a very bad present. What miseries wait for you in your administration! Your dignity lifts you up only to expose you to winds and tempests... When your sons pass before the great Judge, you will be on the carpet and, if just one is condemned through your fault, you will answer for it.

After the election Colin himself made his vows, followed by the vows of nineteen Marist priests, including the first four about to leave for Oceania.<sup>86</sup> Pompallier had explained his position to Fransoni:

I intend to make a solemn declaration regarding my relationship to the society. It will put my status on a par with that of a bishop who before his episcopal ordination was bound by vows of religion. According to the views of Your Eminence and those of Cardinal Sala, it would be unbecoming for me as a bishop to make vows to a mere priest, especially so after I have made a promise under oath to give immediate obedience to our Holy Father, the Pope’.

So, Jean-Baptiste-François Pompallier, bishop of Maronea and vicar apostolic of Western Oceania, solemnly declared that he belonged, with heart and soul, to the Society of Mary and that he wished to live according to its spirit and its constitutions as much as he could. It always would be a source of happiness and consolation, he said, to follow the advice of the superior general, insofar as his duty of obedience to the Pope would allow. He declared that he wished to be a member of the Society ‘until my last breath’.<sup>87</sup>

Next an assistant was to be elected. When the votes began to converge on his brother Pierre, Jean-Claude intervened, making it clear that it might not be proper to have two brothers at the head of the Society. Pierre quickly withdrew and Terrailon was elected. The strong allegiance of Terrailon to the archdiocese of Lyon created a nice balance with Jean-Claude Colin, who was from Belley.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> OM II, doc. 752 [43]. Kerr, op. cit., p. 296f.

<sup>83</sup> Kerr, op. cit., pp. 36 & 60.

<sup>84</sup> Could it not be the same frustrating experience of every implementation falling short of his vision, that withheld him so long from finishing the Constitutions of the Society? The same thing that caused the contradictions in the way he dealt with the Third Order, and that made people around him sometimes bypass him in order to get results? (cf. above, p. 5, note 10).

<sup>85</sup> OM I, doc. 403 [15 – 19]. Kerr, op. cit., p. 297f. Farrell, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>86</sup> OM I, doc.403 [20].

<sup>87</sup> OM I, doc. 401. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 128, throws doubt on the assertion that this was exactly the advice Pompallier had received in Rome.

<sup>88</sup> OM I, doc. 403 [20 & 21]. OM II, doc. 684 [3 & 4].

The whole assembly then went to visit Bishop Devie and received his blessings and his good wishes for the Society. He congratulated them on the election of Jean-Claude Colin. They then assembled to sign the minutes and dispersed. Champagnat rushed to the Hermitage to prepare for the retreat of the Brothers, Pompallier followed him to bless the new chapel that Champagnat had just built.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Consecration of Oceania to Our Lady**

Departure for Oceania had been set for 25 October from Le Havre and lots of things needed to be done in Paris and in the port. Pompallier left Lyon for Paris on 7 October, with Catherin Servant, Claude Bret and Brother Joseph-Xavier Luzy. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, in Paris, Fr. Bret made the first entry in his diary.<sup>90</sup>

Chanel and Bataillon stayed behind to complete the purchases necessary for the mission and to look after the dispatch of some thirty odd cases. They were to wait for the Brothers Marie-Nizier and Michel Colomb, still in retreat in the Hermitage. The two priests started a novena and they bought a gilt-silver heart on which was engraved: *Missionnaires de la Polynésie*. On Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> the two brothers had arrived and together they closed the novena with a last Mass in the basilica of Fourvière after which they performed an act of consecration. The names of all eight of them, written on a ribbon, were enclosed in the ex voto heart that Peter Chanel then hung around the neck of the Infant of the black Madonna.<sup>91</sup> Next morning the two priests and the two Brothers set out for Paris. Although none of the missionaries had been present at the original consecration in 1816, their gesture associated them and their missionary project with the original intent of the first Marist group. Colin was told about the consecration and he later followed the example. It became a beautiful ceremony at many later departures.<sup>92</sup>

### **Colin`s own farewell messages**

It was with the knowledge of the painful farewells still in mind that, having returned to Belley, Fr. Colin, 13 October 1836, wrote a memorable letter to the missionaries. He addressed it to Chanel, still in Lyon, who took it with him to Paris for the other men.<sup>93</sup>

It is with a kind of secret jealousy that I see the holy courage with which you break all the bonds of flesh and blood in order to follow the voice that calls you, and to carry the torch of the faith to the peoples of Western Oceania. Wish I could share your happiness, your pains and your labours, so as to share also in the great reward that awaits you in heaven. Unfortunately, my sins make me unworthy of the grace of such an apostolate and of martyrdom. Still, allow me to give you a few points of advice, that may be of use to you and be a sign of my heart-felt love.

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<sup>89</sup> OM I, doc. 403 [24], LC, doc. 69

<sup>90</sup> LRO, doc. 1 [1].

<sup>91</sup> Claude Rozier, *The Consecration of Western Oceania to Our Lady in October 1836*, ASM, 1960, pp. 134 – 141, cf. Kerr, op. cit., p. 306. Marie-Nizier Delorme, much later, attributes the initiative to Pompallier, and Rozier takes this over. So does Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 132. When Pompallier alludes to the event in a letter to Colin (LRO, 10 [7]), he does so in a casual way, without claiming it was his idea. Neither Bataillon (LRO, doc. 3 [2]), nor Chanel (EC 27 [5]) attribute it to Pompallier. Kerr rightly does not follow Rozier and does not give Pompallier a role in the event. As a similar ceremony had already taken place in the Hermitage, we can safely assume that the idea came from there. Cf. Servant to Champagnat, 14.12.36. LO, Clisby004.

<sup>92</sup> The original of the consecration and the ribbon with the names have not been preserved.

<sup>93</sup> CS, doc. 4. Cf. Kerr, op. cit., p. 301f. Patrick Bearsley, *Father Colin on Spirit of Faith, Spirit of Prayer, Humility and Self-denial*, FN, vol. IV, nr. 2, pp. 185 – 209. Where possible the present translation follows Bearsley`s article.

1° Never rely on self - neither in adversity nor in prosperity – but solely on Jesus and Mary. The more you distrust self and trust in God, the more you will attract the light and the graces of heaven. The man of faith who places his confidence in God alone is unshakeable in the midst of great dangers; he is neither rash nor fainthearted. His device is: ‘I can do all things in him who strengthens me’. The success of your mission will be the reward of your faith and trust in God alone.

2° Live in the presence of the Saviour. It is on his behalf that you are leaving. It is He who sends you. ‘As the Father sends me, so I send you’. He will be with you everywhere as in the past he was with his apostles; he will be with you in your travels, on land, on sea, in the calm as in the tempest, in health as in sickness; if you are hungry or thirsty, he will be hungry or thirsty with you. It is he who shall be received where you are, persecuted when you are and rebuffed when you are. See him everywhere and at all times, in all events good or bad, see him intimately united to you, sharing your work, your sufferings, your joys, your consolations. Give him the glory of your actions, disregard yourselves as useless instruments. Constantly thinking of him will be the source of your strength, of your peace and of all the enlightenment you will need.

3° In persecution and in danger, in privations and in temptations, don’t argue with yourself, don’t look inward. If you do, desolations, regret and sadness will get the better of you and you will feel your courage and your virtue wither away. Immediately turn your eyes and your thoughts towards Jesus and Mary, towards heaven and the sufferings of Our Lord. I urgently recommend you this practice. You will soon feel how important it is.

4° Be men of prayer. Converting souls is more than raising the dead. Such things are not done without prayer. Pray continually for the conversion of your heathens. Offer your actions each day for that intention, and one day a week of your own choice, you can offer all the good actions in each of the branches of the Society for the same intention and for your own needs. This will attract many graces upon you.

5° However busy you are let no day pass without saying at least a few decades of the rosary. Place every island you may set foot on, under the protection of Mary.

6° As much as circumstances permit and you are up to it, be unassuming, modest, poor, but clean in your clothing and your external attire. If you cannot reach Mgr Pompallier, then ask each other for the permissions you may need.

7° ‘Woe the solitary’, says the Holy Spirit, and especially in Polynesia loneliness will be dangerous. Only in urgent need will you go out alone, or be alone. In all other situations be conscientious to the point of scrupulosity to be always at least two together, even if you only go for a walk. This precaution will shelter you from many a danger.

8° Finally, be united with Jesus and Mary. Let there be no contention among you, and do not argue among yourselves. Obey Mgr. Pompallier as your bishop and your superior. I again recommend that you address all letters to Europe to the Superior of the Society.

I end this letter as I began. I wish you the peace and the love of Jesus and Mary. Be courageous. Do not let fear or sadness take root in your soul. Read this letter again and

again. Make a copy for each. I embrace you all with the utmost tenderness. I promise that the whole Society will pray for you. Use every opportunity to let us hear from you.

By way of postscript Colin added:

I understand you can follow no other rule than circumstances will permit. Nevertheless, you may feel better with a summary of the constitutions of the Society. I send you one. But remember it is still far from perfect. I shall send it later, because I have not found the time to make a copy. Do not show it to anyone. Mgr. Pompallier, or whoever he will appoint, will be your superior. Adieu.

The letter remained a document of great value. The missionaries read it regularly.<sup>94</sup>

On 18 October Colin addressed a personal letter to Pompallier:<sup>95</sup>

We are with you on your travels in mind and in heart, and in a more useful way, I hope, by our prayers.... Be full of courage. I have sent *Monsieur* Chanel in Lyon a summary of the Rule. Be so kind as to ask *Monsieur* Coudrin, the superior of the Picpus, to allow me to correspond with him, so that he can pass me whatever news he gets from Polynesia and let me know how I can get news to you. He is closer to the ports than we are in Lyon.

Do not hide from me the dangers you incur, your sufferings and the other problems you may run into from the part of the unbelievers or from other people. These things will be very useful to me in the choice of future missionaries.

Make sure that your missionaries are faithful to the counsels I have given them in my letter to *Monsieur* Chanel, especially not to go out without a companion. Mind that these counsels are not just mine, they have cost me several days of prayer.

Try by all possible means to maintain among them unity, peace and a holy gaiety. Wherever you will be, you will find back your home country, because you will find back God, who, alone, will take the place of father and mother, of brothers and sisters and who will never fail to be with you.

Set great store by consulting your missionaries. It will enhance the interest they take in your projects and foster unity. Be with your whole heart a father and a mother for each of them. You are their bishop and their superior; they owe you obedience and respect on both counts.

Think of the poverty and the simplicity of the Apostles; they too were bishops, and still, often they worked with their hands for the first necessities of life. Missionaries of Mary will always be known for their simplicity, their poverty and their zeal. Her sweet name will remind you incessantly that you part under her banner, that it she who walks with you, who is the star of the sea, the fear of hell and that under her protection you have nothing to fear. In need and in danger, look only at Jesus and Mary; don't look for help elsewhere. Don't argue with yourself but look up at Jesus and Mary.

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<sup>94</sup> E.g. Fr. Servant. LRO, doc. 31 [23].

<sup>95</sup> CS, doc. 5.

Behave and arrange your external behaviour in such a way that people everywhere will recognise in you the children of Mary, and that the missionaries we shall send you, find back among you the spirit of the Society: a spirit of poverty, humility and simplicity.

Receive this letter in the right mind, and see it as a proof of my ardent desire to contribute to the success of your apostolate.

Pompallier certainly appreciated Colin's letter. Echoing the spiritual direction given by Colin, Pompallier writes: 'We leave everything to find everything'.<sup>96</sup>

### **Setting the Marist missions on an exceptional course**

From the day Pompallier had told Colin of the invitation to accept a nomination for the leadership of the new mission, Colin had been determined that his own reservations about him should in no way affect the attitudes of his confreres. There is no trace in the available documentation that he shared his fears with anyone. During twenty years, in all his difficulties with the bishops of Lyon and Belley, he had always avoided the confrontation and always submitted to their authority. It was a constant feature of his spiritual and administrative convictions that Marists should relate to the bishops in such a way that these will consider them as their own, *tamquam suam*. As from 1842 this expression appears in all the drafts of the constitutions and he often referred to it.<sup>97</sup>

In January 1836, trying to deal with the threatening break-up of the Society, he wrote to Champagnat: 'Let us keep up our courage and seek to give our enterprise a more uniform and strong direction with all the means that prudence and submission to Our Lordships the Bishops allow for.... The spirit of the Society is one of humility, self-effacement and commitment'.<sup>98</sup> When he wrote those words, he must have foreseen that very soon he might have to deal in this way with Pompallier too!

In his letter to the missionaries as well as in the one to Pompallier, Colin, almost casually, mentions that Pompallier was to be not only their bishop but their religious superior as well: 'Obey Mgr. Pompallier as your bishop and your superior'. And in the post-script: 'Mgr. Pompallier, or whoever he will appoint, will be your superior'. In the letter to Pompallier, underlined by Colin himself: 'You are their bishop and their superior, they owe you respect and obedience on both counts'.<sup>99</sup>

What Colin did here is more than advising. In all their casual appearance, his words are clear-cut and unambiguous. He knows what he is doing and expresses something he is quite decided upon. He is defining the structure of the mission. He appoints a vicar apostolic who is not a professed Marist, over whom he has no authority, who is canonically not a member of the Society and thus juridically cannot bear office in the congregation, to be the superior of a group of religious. We know Colin as a past master of letter writing and these letters were not written in haste, or on the spur of the moment. He had worked on them during 'several days of prayer'.

How exceptional was Colin's decision, apart from appointing a non-professed to be superior? Ever since the erection of the Sacred Congregation *De Propaganda Fide* in 1622 it was policy of the Holy See to entrust where possible specific mission territories to religious institutes and to appoint, usually on recommendation of the superiors general, alongside of the religious superiors who up to that time had fulfilled the other role as well, separate ecclesiastical superiors directly answerable to the Holy See. This system of double, parallel jurisdiction, whereby the

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<sup>96</sup> LRO, doc. 7 [18].

<sup>97</sup> Coste, AT, fasc. II, p. 34 l. 3; FS, 119 [7].

<sup>98</sup> OM I, doc. 358 [5].

<sup>99</sup> CS, docs. 4 & 5.

ecclesiastical superior directed the missionary activity and the religious superior guarded over the welfare of the religious missionaries, was explained in detail to Pompallier when he was in Rome to be consecrated a bishop.<sup>100</sup>

Of course, there is common sense in Colin's decision. He was dealing with a small group of eight men. Nobody could guess where and how they would be able to establish themselves. Difficult choices would have to be made. The obvious thing was to put all authority into one hand. Father Coudrin had done the same with the first group he sent to Hawaii in 1826 by allowing Fr. Alexis Bachelot to continue in his function of religious superior when he was appointed prefect apostolic. However, when the Picpus Fathers started their mission in the islands of the south-east Pacific, in 1833, under Bishop Rouchouze, Coudrin appointed Fr. Liausu to be the religious superior.<sup>101</sup> Nothing in the available documents shows that Colin knew about the way Coudrin had handled the question. Nor did he, as far as we know, try to find out. But Colin did know about the regular Roman procedure, and still, he followed his own intuition.

Did he discuss his decision with the men beforehand? The insistence with which, in the very same letter, he urged Pompallier to consult his missionaries would be less than sincere, if he had not done so himself on so crucial a matter. That he is not blind to the human realities of exercising authority, is evident when he reminds Pompallier that consulting the men 'will interest them in your enterprises and foster unity'. He knows only too well that, a few years earlier, the community of Valbenoîte had preferred not to have Pompallier as its superior.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, in none of the replies of the men to Colin there is a hint of surprise at the arrangement. We can conclude that Chanel, Servant, Bret and Bataillon, who in any case may not all have shared Colin's reservations about Pompallier, were consulted and were prepared to accept the arrangement. This would explain why there is only a casual reminder, at the end of Colin's letter. They knew Pompallier, they were aware of his limits but seem to have been at ease with him. He had the impression that they felt free to give their points of view.<sup>103</sup>

Did Colin discuss it with Pompallier beforehand? Unlike the missionaries Pompallier repeatedly expressed his surprise. From Le Havre he reminded Colin that, as explained to him in Rome, it is 'the Holy See itself that judges it appropriate for all missions staffed by religious, to establish two separate jurisdictions'. He now had to go against the instructions he got in Rome and showing his hesitation he wrote: 'I don't think I am going against the intentions of the Holy Father, when I accept this delegation'.<sup>104</sup> A few months later, from Santa Cruz, Pompallier wrote to Fransoni: 'I accepted the office, but let me know if I should give it up so that I then can be occupied exclusively with the mission'.<sup>105</sup> We must conclude that Colin did not discuss it with him beforehand and dropped it on him as a surprise. Pompallier accepted, gracefully and gratefully.<sup>106</sup>

Why did Colin set the mission in Oceania on such an exceptional course? Was it an inexperienced Colin, carried away by the euphoria of the moment? Was it his uncompromising interpretation of obedience as Kerr suggests?<sup>107</sup> Surely a bit of both. Ten years later Colin said: 'These distant missions need unity above all else in the beginning, and this is one way to ensure it. I am not sending men out there to dispute about what they think are their rights'.<sup>108</sup>

But to get a man so loyal to Rome, to go against established Roman practice, there must have been more to it. At the background, and what probably tipped the scales, can only have

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<sup>100</sup> LRO, docs. 4 [6]. Cf. below: Excursus A, *The Ius Commissionis and the Diarchy*, pp. 43f.

<sup>101</sup> Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 20 & 90.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. above, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> LRO, doc. 6 [10].

<sup>104</sup> 05.11.1836, LRO, doc. 4 [4 & 6].

<sup>105</sup> Quoted from Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 131. Cf. Roach, op. cit., pp. 23 – 32.

<sup>106</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [3].

<sup>107</sup> Kerr, op. cit., p. 302.

<sup>108</sup> FS, doc. 119 [10].



been that Colin, always wary of his own feelings, was attempting the impossible to build a trustful relationship. He was leaning backwards not to give any opening for discord.

Unfortunately, what in 1836 began as common sense and as nurturing a delicate relationship, grew into a matter of principle; and into an exceptional structure of governance with enduring negative consequences for the missionaries, for the Society and for the Church in the Pacific Islands.

### **Provicar of Oceania**

Pompallier was profoundly touched by the trust Colin put in him. He wrote him four long letters before sailing<sup>109</sup>, and all of them overflow with declarations of loyalty and commitment to the Society of Mary. ‘With the grace of God and under the protection of the Blessed Virgin I shall do my utmost to follow the rule and the spirit of the Society in which you have wanted to grant me a delegation of your authority... I am deeply convinced that we cannot succeed unless the missionaries live as good religious according to the rules and the spirit of their institute’.<sup>110</sup>

Pompallier had been authorized to appoint a provicar in France to be his legal representative. The purpose was to have somebody in the home country, who could receive the subsidies of the Propagation of the Faith and other gifts on behalf of the vicar apostolic, and give an account of their use to the benefactors. The provicar could recruit missionaries, give them faculties and send them to the missions. The superior general of the Picpus Fathers, Father Coudrin, was the provicar of Bishop Rouchouze, and on 5 November Pompallier asked Colin to do the same for him. He left it to Colin to judge whether this is appropriate. If not, he mandated Colin to appoint someone else in his place. He confirmed the arrangement in a formal latin document, dated 23 November.<sup>111</sup>

If Colin’s misgivings about Pompallier were probably not entirely strange to his decision to make him the religious superior, so Pompallier may have had his own misgivings about Colin. Already the exchange of letters between the two of them did not run smoothly. Not only did Colin not answer every letter he received, he often did not react to things mentioned and he did not acknowledge receipt of letters either, which annoyed Pompallier.<sup>112</sup>

Would Colin actively support the mission? Pompallier fully realized how utterly dependent he would be on the supply of manpower and money from France. So far he himself had sought the men, gone after financial means, made contacts, planned, decided and executed. Even if Colin had wanted to, his involvement would surely have led to friction. Colin had limited himself to the spiritual preparation of the men, but now his role had to change. Somebody in France had to push the cart and who else was in a position to do so but Colin? The example of the Picpus came in useful. ‘Mr. Coudrin, their superior general offered himself to be provicar for Mgr. Rouchouze, and he is in fact. As for me, I gladly offer you this position: to whom else could I entrust it better?’. An echo of Colin’s: ‘For the moment I do not really see anybody but yourself’?<sup>113</sup>

Colin wondered what he was letting himself in for and he asked for a copy of the pertinent Roman document. Pompallier answered it was contained in his general faculties, of which Colin already had a copy. It was later on confirmed in a letter from Cardinal Fransoni. He added that he would notify Propaganda of the appointment, which he did in a letter to Fransoni, sent from Santa Cruz. Although entitled to entrust it to someone else, Colin took it on himself, which

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<sup>109</sup> From Paris 05.11.1836, LRO, 4. From Le Havre 28.11, 08.12, and 24.12, resp. LRO, docs. 7, 8 & 12.

<sup>110</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [3].

<sup>111</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [6 & 7] and doc. 5.

<sup>112</sup> LRO, doc. 8 [1]. Already from Rome: OM I, doc. 398 [1]. Also: LRO, docs. 7 [26] & 8 [20].

<sup>113</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [7]. Cf. Colin to Pompallier, 03.08.1835, above p. 8.

made him responsible for the needs of the mission. Apart from helping the mission he also saw it as a means to foster the unity between the missionaries and the other members of the Society.<sup>114</sup>

Asked by Pompallier, Rome had also allowed him to take in priests who did not belong to the Society of Mary, provided people in authority, prefects and pro-prefects were Marists, but Pompallier declared that he did not intend to make use of this faculty.<sup>115</sup>

He let Colin know that he had made a last will in which he left everything to the Society. The will was with a public notary.<sup>116</sup>

From his family estate Pompallier had a regular income of 400 francs a year. He had authorized Father Champagnat to receive it on his behalf and, as he wished to be as much a religious member of the congregation as possible, he arranged that it be used for the benefit of the Society as the superiors saw fit. He would not claim it for the mission except in urgent need.<sup>117</sup>

More harmonious the relations could hardly have been!

## Paris again

On the point of departure the money that Cardinal Fransoni had pledged for the mission in Oceania had not arrived. Pompallier had to appeal to the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon to advance him the promised amount. It was Champagnat again whom he authorized to cash the cheque when it would arrive, asking him to refund the association on his behalf.<sup>118</sup> This enabled the bishop to leave on 8 October with the Fathers Servant and Bret and Brother Joseph-Xavier Luzy for Paris, exactly a week later followed by the Fathers Chanel and Bataillon and the Brothers Michel Colomb and Marie-Nizier Delorme.

The Marist missionaries stayed again with the *Missions Étrangères de Paris* where Pompallier had stayed already in August with Marcellin Champagnat. The hospitality of the superior, Fr. Dubois, and the friendship of the experienced missionaries did them a lot of good.<sup>119</sup>

Twice Pompallier went out to visit the Picpus general house, on 23 and again on 25 October.<sup>120</sup> As he became better acquainted with the Picpus Fathers, he learned of the way these experienced missionaries had organized the support of the mother house for the missions, and Fr. Coudrin who was himself in Paris at the time, assured him that he would gladly communicate with Colin and be of service in forwarding mail and parcels to Oceania..<sup>121</sup> Pompallier was initiated in the art of exchanging currencies in the most profitable way, although he found out later that there were even better ways than he had heard about in Paris.<sup>122</sup>

Pompallier used his time in Paris well. He followed up on earlier visits of French government people and was received by King Louis-Philippe, Queen Marie-Amélie and the King's sister, Madame Adélaïde d'Orléans. He received important gifts from all of them.<sup>123</sup>

During the period of the Restoration (1815 – 1830) the French government had constantly tried to use the Catholic missions to expand its influence overseas. Anxious to foster a French presence on the increasingly important North-Pacific trade route between California and China,

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<sup>114</sup> Colin accepted the charge in a letter of 29 November that has not been preserved (cf. Pompallier to Colin, 08.12.1836, LRO, doc. 8 [2] & [4]; see his answer of the 24<sup>th</sup>) after receiving another letter from Colin of 9 December that has not been preserved either LRO, doc. 10 [2]. Cf. Colin to Fransoni, 25.05.37, CS, doc. 13 [3].

<sup>115</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [8].

<sup>116</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [9].

<sup>117</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [10].

<sup>118</sup> Pompallier to Champagnat, 07.10.36. LO, Clisby002.

<sup>119</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [2].

<sup>120</sup> H. Lucas, op. cit. p. 260. Also, Anon., *Vie du T.R.P. Marie-Joseph Coudrin*, p. 612. On Pompallier's earlier visit in August, cf. above, p. 27.

<sup>121</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [15] & doc. 7 [9].

<sup>122</sup> LRO, doc. 7 [14].

<sup>123</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [13].

the government had played an active role in getting the Picpus missionaries to go to Hawaii in 1825 - 1827. In 1829 - 1830 the same government had been on the point of giving significant support to de Solages when he was planning to open missions in the Pacific. It had also intended to establish French consulates in various island countries, whereby the political aspects of their plans were carefully left out of the texts presented to Rome.<sup>124</sup>

After the revolution, the July Monarchy (1830 – 1848) initially withdrew official support for projects concerned with colonial expansion in the Pacific. The instructions to naval commanders were to insist with local authorities only that French citizens, whatever their profession, be treated on an equal footing with citizens of other European countries.<sup>125</sup> Still, it did not take long before the old instincts recovered and the French government considered it important to have ‘agents to promote our flag in the Great Ocean’ as the instructions were to a navy vessel parting for the Pacific in 1837.<sup>126</sup> The British and American governments followed similar policies while missionaries of all denominations, on their part, were naturally eager to obtain from their governments whatever help they could get.<sup>127</sup>

Unaware of the political background, or simply disregarding it, and ‘not burdened by unpleasant memories of dealing with French government agencies’, Pompallier saw several representatives of a government that was ‘gradually dropping its anticlerical attitude towards missionaries in whom they saw fine ambassadors of the French spirit and of French culture’.<sup>128</sup> He got important letters of recommendation to French consuls on the West coast of America, and to French naval commanders operating in the Pacific. Not a little naively, he wrote to Colin: ‘The French state shows its deference to the Holy See through its goodwill and its co-operation with the mission’.<sup>129</sup>

The superior of the Irish seminary in Paris gave him a letter of recommendation for Bishop Polding in Sydney and promised to get similar documents from the Foreign Office in London that might come in useful with Methodist ministers in Oceania.<sup>130</sup>

Before leaving Paris Pompallier wrote a graceful letter to Fr. Coudrin to thank him for his help, his support and his friendship.<sup>131</sup>

## Le Havre

From Paris, the Fathers Chanel and Bataillon and Brother Marie Nizier Delorme were the first to leave for Rouen, where they stayed at the seminary, run by the Picpus Fathers. The bursar looked well after them and made them visit the town, the church of Saint-Ouen and the *Place du Marché* where Jeanne d’Arc had been burned at the stake. On 26 October they continued to Le Havre, where they arrived the 27th. The next day arrived the four Picpus missionaries who were to travel on the same ship: the Fathers Emmanuel Coste and Louis de Gonzague Borgella, the subdeacon Potentien Guilmard and Brother Bessarion Delon.<sup>132</sup>

Bishop Pompallier, accompanied by Claude Bret and Brother Joseph-Xavier Luzy also stopped at Rouen. While his companions visited the local churches, Pompallier went to see the Archbishop, the Prince Cardinal De Croy, Grand-Chaplain of France. This high dignitary and

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<sup>124</sup> Jaspers, op. cit., pp. 150 – 176. 191f.

<sup>125</sup> Jore, *L’Océan Pacifique au temps de la Restauration et de la Monarchie de Juillet (1815–1848)* vol. I, p. 322f.

<sup>126</sup> Jore I, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>127</sup> Jaspers, op. cit., pp. 176 – 195.

<sup>128</sup> Jaspers, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>129</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [13].

<sup>130</sup> LRO, doc. 4 [14]. At this time Pompallier called all Protestants Methodists.

<sup>131</sup> H. Lucas, op. cit., p. 260. Writing to Colin he called Coudrin *le bon mr. Coudrin* and *le vénérable vieillard*, cf.

LRO, doc. 7 [14]. Coudrin was sixty-eight at the time.

<sup>132</sup> EC, doc. 27 [1]. LRO, doc. 1 [4]. Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 33.

long-time promotor of the Propagation of the Faith,<sup>133</sup> had been involved in the early planning of the missions to the South Pacific in 1829 under de Solages and in getting government support for it (nothing had come of it)<sup>134</sup>. Father Coudrin had been the Cardinal Archbishop's vicar general,<sup>135</sup> and he was asking for faculties for his missionaries leaving through Le Havre which fell within the boundaries of the archdiocese of Rouen. The Marists too received faculties for the duration of their stay. Pompallier's visit to a highly political figure like the Prince Cardinal can only have helped his attempts to get government support for the new mission, especially as de Croy had been involved also in the founding of the new Picpus mission in South-Eastern Oceania in 1833<sup>136</sup>. Pompallier will have come away with extensive information on many things, especially on the political background of government support for the missions. Remarkably, he does not mention this visit in his otherwise detailed letters to Colin from Le Havre.

Pompallier and his two companions reached Le Havre on 13 November. Fr. Servant and Brother Michel followed on the 14<sup>th</sup>. They then had to wait for a favourable wind, which allowed those who had not done so yet, to make their last wills.<sup>137</sup> Everyone had time to catch up on correspondence. Marie-Nizier wrote a letter to Champagnat that was circulated in the Brothers' communities.<sup>138</sup> They were a happy group, happy as butterflies, in Chanel's words, *gaiés comme des papillons*.<sup>139</sup>

They were impressed with the ship, a schooner with three tall masts 'as high as the eye can see', as Nizier put it. Pompallier wrote to Miolano, one of the vicars general of Lyon, the honorary president of the Society for the Propagation of the faith: 'The *Delphine* is an excellent sailing ship that has done already several voyages to Valparaiso. The captain is known as an able and experienced man. He has successfully been sailing the oceans for more than thirty years.'<sup>140</sup>

Pompallier used the delay to rush back to Paris to take care of some last-minute business and used the leisure time also to put a little order in his bookkeeping, of which he made a detailed report to Colin. Expenses and provisions had cost much more than foreseen. The initial costs of the mission had been estimated at 40.000 francs. In fact they had received about 70.000 francs, but after buying all the goods and the tools they might need, and paying the fare to Valparaiso they had only 22.000 left. Barely enough to get to their destination, and leaving nothing to live on once they would get there. For the future Pompallier admitted he could only trust in Divine Providence. He rightly worried how they would manage in places where literally everything had to be built up out of nothing. He urged Colin to have the Propagation of the Faith send money ahead to Valparaiso.<sup>141</sup> Colin took no action.

They were lucky enough to lodge free of charge with a rich widow, Mme Dodard, 'A modern Tabitha', as Servant called her. She took in the eight Marists, the four Picpus missionaries and a group of Jesuits with Bishop Blanc!. The Sisters leaving for Louisiana were divided over different convents in town.<sup>142</sup>

The Marists came to see that eventually the Society should have a house of its own for departing missionaries, in Bordeaux, which was the base of most ships going to the West Coast of South America<sup>143</sup> or in Le Havre. They also foresaw the need of a similar house, either on the

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<sup>133</sup> LRO, doc. 1 [3]. EC, doc. 27 [8].

<sup>134</sup> Jaspers, op. cit., pp. 166, 171, 179.

<sup>135</sup> Rademakers, *Geroepen om te dienen*, p. 61

<sup>136</sup> Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>137</sup> On Catherin servant cf. LRO, doc. 8 [3]. Peter Chanel already had done so before taking leave of his mother, cf. EC, doc. 17. Brother Marie-Nizier, not yet of age, could not make a will, LRO, doc. 7 [22].

<sup>138</sup> LC, docs. 79 & 80. EC, doc. 27 [1].

<sup>139</sup> EC, doc. 31 [5].

<sup>140</sup> Quoted in Lestra, op. cit., vol. III, p. 425. Nizier to Champagnat, 08.11.1836, LO, Clisby003.

<sup>141</sup> OM I, doc. 378 [3]. LRO, 7 [4 - 7].

<sup>142</sup> EC, doc. 31 [1]. Servant (thinking of Acts, 9, 36) to Champagnat, 15.11.1836. LO, Clisby004 [2].

<sup>143</sup> Jore I, op. cit., p. 99.

west coast of America, or in Australia.<sup>144</sup> When, in 1833, Rouchouze had been appointed Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Oceania, and the mission had been entrusted to the Picpus Fathers, the experienced Coudrin had shown a strategic approach that was new to the Marists. He had first sent four men to Valparaiso to establish a base from where his missionaries could try to get a foothold in the islands, and on which they could fall back if necessary. Such a base, or procure, allowed for better communications; great savings could be made by negotiating directly with ships' captains, and, one could make better use of the movement of ships. The contacts the Marists had in Paris and especially in Le Havre allowed them already to identify agents who could handle mail and goods for the islands. Pompallier reported everything in detail to Colin, with the remark that he himself did not have the means to start a procure: a gentle invitation to Colin to take the initiative.<sup>145</sup>

The contacts in Le Havre confirmed what Pastre had already pointed out in September 1835<sup>146</sup> and what Pompallier would have heard from Coudrin in August 1836, i.e., that there were better ways to go to Oceania than around Cape Horn and via Valparaiso. A shipping agent in the port pointed out that there was more regular and faster shipping from English ports directly to the Pacific. He had business connections in England and offered to assist them with mail. Father Coudrin had sent men to England in 1833 to explore ways of getting to the Pacific. They too had learned that the eastern route around Cape Good Hope and Australia was by far the better one. Propaganda had been told, but for the Roman dignitaries the Marist mission was an extension of the already established Picpus mission, and Valparaiso, the 'Macao of Oceania', was the right place to start from. At this stage, the Marists could do nothing than follow the traces of the Picpus missionaries to the Eastern Pacific and hope for the best.<sup>147</sup>

In Le Havre the world opened up. Pompallier told Colin that the knowledge of English and Spanish would be important for future missionaries. Servant studied Spanish with a Picpus missionary. Chanel, Bret and Bataillon did English with a priest leaving for Louisiana.<sup>148</sup>

Pompallier made sure the daily exercises of piety were held in common. He gave his priests daily conferences on the special faculties they had received, and on religious life in general. It was not a success. He gave them credit for their understanding and good will. That his conferences did not go down well, he blamed on their lack of background knowledge. The men found more satisfaction in assistency work in the surrounding parishes.<sup>149</sup>

Hearing that their departure had been delayed, Terraillon wrote Pompallier an encouraging letter in which he called him the Francis Xavier of the Society of Mary, waiting in Le Havre just as his great predecessor had waited in Lisbon to depart for the first great mission of the Orient. The letter got to Le Havre after they had left. Where and when Pompallier received it, we do not know, but he treasured it: it is preserved in the Auckland diocesan archives.<sup>150</sup>

Finally, on 24 December 1836, the *Delphine* and *La Joséphine* were able to sail.

## Conclusion

When Colin heard that the *Delphine* had left, he could look back on an eventful year. The Society of Mary for which he had worked twenty years had been approved. He himself was

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<sup>144</sup> LRO, doc. 8 [16 & 17].

<sup>145</sup> LRO, doc. 8 [16-17]. The importance of a base such as Valparaiso for Oceania had been well understood by Propaganda. The comparison with Macao as the base from which missionaries operated in China seems to have originated in Propaganda. Cf. the extensive report of 23.12.1835, OM I, doc. 351 [19].

<sup>146</sup> OM I, doc. 343.

<sup>147</sup> Jaspers, op. cit., pp. 181–183. LRO, docs. 7 [12] & 8 [16]. That Propaganda saw Western Oceania in this way is shown also in the fact that Pompallier had received the same faculties as Rouchouze. Cf. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>148</sup> LRO, docs. 7 [18] & 8 [3], EC, doc. 33 [3].

<sup>149</sup> LRO, doc. 7 [23].

<sup>150</sup> CS, doc. 8. Cf. Terraillon's letter, in similar words, to Chanut, 03.02.1839, CS 58 [11].

elected its superior general, and the mission in the South-West Pacific that was so intricately bound up with the approval of the Society, was launched.

In a way he had been fortunate. Pompallier, fully supported by Archbishop de Pins and his vicar general, Cholleton, had gathered a splendid group of young men for the pioneer group. Colin's own contribution was to involve the Marist Brothers of Marcellin Champagnat in the project. Colin had been able to get the support of Mgr. Devie in Belley to release Peter Chanel and Claude Bret.

The archdiocese had gained adequate financial support from the lay association for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon and from Propaganda in Rome. With the men of his team Pompallier had himself taken care of the thousand and one details, the purchases, the dispatching of the goods, the travelling arrangements, the laying of contacts etc. There had been no reason for Colin to get involved in all the practicalities. He had wisely let everyone do his own thing. It had left him free to concentrate on what he considered by far the most important thing: the spiritual preparation of the men.

He had evidently succeeded in arousing in them a holy enthusiasm, built, not on a spirit of adventure, but on total commitment and radical self-denial. They were a cheerful group of eight men, ready for anything that might come their way. Ready to die on the ocean, as one of them soon would; ready to die as martyrs, as another one would within a few years. None of the priests and only two of the Brothers had done a regular novitiate, one of the priests had come into contact with the Society only a few months before his profession. But the spiritual influence of Colin and Champagnat had been of such quality and so intensive as to mould them into the nearest thing to an ideal missionary team.

Pompallier too was determined to be as much a religious and a Marist as he felt his ecclesiastical status permitted. He had done his best to step over his feelings towards Colin, and was sincerely committed to be a good religious superior as well as a good bishop and to accept the guidance of the superior general in matters concerning the religious life of his men. He had appointed Colin to be his provicar in France and donated his personal income to the Society.

Colin had not had any say in the choice of the head of the mission. From the beginning he had his misgivings. But, from the moment he found out - and by then the selection was to all practical purposes irreversible - Colin stepped over his feelings and did everything possible to back him. In fact, he did more. Disregarding Roman directives, going in fact against canon law, he appointed, probably with the agreement of the missionaries, the Vicar Apostolic to be the Marist superior as well. In the eyes of one historian: 'What had been calculated .... to help avoid an explosive situation was in reality destined to bring it about'.<sup>151</sup> History will show whether it had been a wise decision.

An old Polynesian proverb says that the seaworthiness of a canoe shows only when it reaches the open ocean.

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<sup>151</sup> Wiltgen, *op. cit.*, p. 131.