

September 17, 1845. Colin. Talks on home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 413f = FS 102, 17]:

“All possible precautions should be taken to avoid the impression that the mission is going to be a costly affair. That would give the missionaries a bad reputation, which would in turn discourage parish priests from providing missions for their people, and so have a bad effect on the parishioners. I should not like them to be counting up in a dozen parishes round about what a four week mission has cost, or that people say, ‘The mission cost ten thousand francs,’ as was said not long ago about other missionaries. These were not Marists but I cannot believe it was true. What a misfortune it would be if the Society were one day to give rise to such rumors! But that will not happen. In the early days of the Society, when we were missionaries [he corrected himself and said ‘catechists,’ which appealed better to his modesty], when we were catechists, the word went about one time that the mission we were giving was going to cost so much. One of us [it was really him, but he used this turn of phrase to avoid naming himself] went into the pulpit and said, ‘I hear, my dear brethren, that some of you were wondering what this mission is going to cost. Well, listen carefully: it will cost nothing, and if someone were moved by generosity, gratitude or some such sentiment to offer us something, we would accept nothing at all.’ Messieurs, it is not for money that we are working, but for the salvation of souls, and we can count ourselves far richer, more highly honored and fortunate to be the instruments of salvation and to be called to spread peace and joy in the souls of men.”

317

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 250 = FS 119, 8]:

“Thirdly, our Rule says that we must not seek to curry favor with anyone whatsoever, neither the great, nor the rich, nor laymen, nor priests, nor pastors of parishes, with the aim of making some temporal gain by it. Messieurs, that was not what the Blessed Virgin did. She was poor, hidden, unknown, but did she ever ask anything from anyone? She is our model, let us imitate her.” [...]

318

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 452 = FS 146, 2]:

As to the first point, he said that if we sought to curry favor with men, we should be doing a human work, it would no longer be the work of God, whereas our confidence should be in Mary, who will not forsake us. “Whatever are our needs, it is to her alone we must have recourse. She will always come to our aid.”

319

December 29, 1847. Colin. To the abbé de Charbonnel. [Mayet 4, 460f = FS 150, 1]:

“[...] Our union must be such that the bishops can look upon the Society *as their own* (these are the very terms of the Rule); such that when our houses are sufficiently well established (which I do not think will be in my lifetime), the surplus funds of each house must go into the bishop’s coffers.* In a minor seminary we ran, they used to give us only 300 francs. The Vicar General wanted to increase it. ‘No,’ I told him, ‘the diocese is too poor.’”

*Fr. Mayet noted in the margin, “Father has changed his mind (1849). Nevertheless, it is well for it to be known that, had it been possible to leave this article without harm to good government, he would have done so. It is a desire he has cherished for thirty years.”

320

September 3, 1850. Colin. Conferences on education. [Mayet 8, 361 and 364 = FS 179, 1 & 7]:

[1] [...] “Messieurs, let us seek our resources only in the heart of the Blessed Virgin. Let us be ever more faithful in resisting the inclination to curry the favor of *people in high places* in the hope of gain.”

[...]

[7] At this time he also said, “Let us not curry favor with anyone, *in the hope of gaining something*, but always betake ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, who will come to our aid, as the Rule tells us. These words are very brief, but you would be fortunate indeed if you understood their implications. We become slaves for fear of offending people. We lessen ourselves, and even forfeit respect. [...]”

321

After 1860. Mayet. A remark of his own. [Mayet 7, 6824m-683m]:

When, in the Society, people will no longer do works of zeal without money, when superiors will boast of their skill in finding and choosing works which produce money, when there will be much talk about a ministry which produces much money but little glory for God and there will be little talk about a ministry which gives much glory to God but no money, when members will be rated according to the money they bring in, when there will be incessant talk about stipends for Masses or sermons or about the money brought in by the preaching of Advents, Lents or missions, etc., then, there will no longer be a Society of Mary, an apostolic society, but a society of trade, an association of merchants, honest, conscientious, Christian even, if you like, living a pleasant, respectable and bourgeois life. *May our good Mother forbid it.* That will never happen. But *it is important to resist openly those who have that mindset*, no matter who they are, by all legitimate means.

322

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, article on the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 50]:*

Therefore, following in the footsteps of their Mother, let them above all be entirely removed from the spirit of the world, from any greed for earthly goods, and be totally emptied of all self-concern; [...]

323

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the vow of poverty. [AT V, C, 144]:*

Likewise, they are not allowed to retain gifts or small presents of whatever kind spontaneously offered, even from their family, but must hand them in to the community. Indeed, it will be useful to distribute such small gifts as clothing and the like, to other members of the Society, to remove totally any temptation to greed.

324

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the vow of poverty. [AT V, C, 150]:*

In order to walk more freely in the service of God and give greater edification to the faithful, as well as to avoid any appearance of earthly greed, let them not ask for stipends for preaching or other such ministries that are exercised in the Society for the salvation of souls, in keeping with the nature of the Institute.

325

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the vow of poverty. [AT V, C, 151]:*

For the same reason and to avoid many other difficulties, let them not curry favor with parish priests or people of influence in the hope of obtaining something from them, even something very useful for the house, but instead let them place their full confidence in God alone, who in his great mercy and through the intercession of blessed Mary and Saint Joseph, will himself provide for their needs. Should it perchance happen that they lack bare necessities, they may make their need known to people of means from whom they can expect friendly aid, and if need be, let them not be ashamed to beg from door to door.

326

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the home missions. [AT V, C, 259]:*

Like blessed Paul the Apostle, who, to avoid being a burden to others, worked with his hands day and night to meet his own needs and those of his companions, our men, too, as far as possible, shall strive to be a burden to no one, but rather, as long as they have a roof and food, they shall offer their services in the missions and other ministries as a favor and without any payment, and although

they may accept what is spontaneously offered, they shall nevertheless refuse it if one day the Society has sufficient funds.

327

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the administration of goods. [AT V, C, 292]:*

In order to maintain poverty and remove all appearance of greed, let local superiors, if perchance they have superfluous income, not keep it themselves but send it to the provincial. Let the provincial, however, after paying the required contribution to the general subsidiary fund, deposit the rest in the provincial fund, to be used, with the advice of his councilors, to provide for the needs of the province, but first informing the superior general when there is question of a large sum.

328

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT V, C, 322]:*

[...] For love of poverty he must do nothing that might harm the Society, and his trust in God and in the protection of blessed Mary should be such that never, under any pretext, even that of the glory of God, ought he act motivated or influenced by greed or desire for gain. Let him take the greatest care that the Society's members never follow worldly ways, in their rooms, furnishings, dress, food, accommodation or anything else, so that everything in the Society may always and everywhere be determined in keeping with the highest standards of religious poverty. [...]

329

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the virtue of poverty. [AT V, C, 442]:*

Finally, the preserver of all virtues, and hence the true defense and guardian of the Society, is poverty. Since this virtue, in fact, fully uproots from our heart greed for temporal things and curtails all superfluous use of necessary goods, it preserves a religious soul in humility, in mortification, in contempt for transitory and worldly goods, in simple submission to God and filial trust in his providence; and thus in a wonderful way fosters interior recollection.

330

May 5-27, 1875. *Colin. Constitutions of the T.O.M. [AT, V, T, 24 = LM 395, 28]:*

It is especially to be avoided that any recompense ever be demanded of the Members or even that any agreements seem to be stipulated, as, for example, that money is to be spent on temporal things, gifts are to be offered, religious articles are to be bought, etc... When, nevertheless, the Members meet, collections may be taken up to take care of necessary expenses. Neither the Directors nor others, however, may demand anything for the exercise of the sacred ministry.

No to the lust for power

331

1823? Colin. *“On the manner of holding council in the Society”*: a fragment of the Cerdon rule. [AT I, g, 5]:

In council, the superior shall always express his opinion last, that is after all the others, and the opinion which has more votes shall prevail. The superior himself, however, shall propose subjects for the various offices or works of the Society; he may even say what he has it in him to say so that the councilors shall go along with these nominations. If the votes are equally divided among both sides, it is lawful for the superior to choose the side he wants, but he is invited and even beseeched, for the sake of humility, to choose the side which is contrary to his own. Mary always followed the will of others rather than her own.

332

February 8, 1823. Pierre and Jean-Claude Colin. *Letter to the Nuncio, Msg. Macchi*. [OM 82, 3]:

As for the article on the superior, which also presents some problems, in spite of our wishes we do not think we can make any modifications ourselves; but we are quite disposed, on this point of the rule as on the others, to make all the changes that his Holiness or our Lords the bishops will deem necessary.

333

February 7, 1833. Colin. *Letter to Bishop de Pins of Lyons*. [OM 264, 3f]:

[3] The Society of Mary will be similar to the Company of Jesus in several ways, but it will differ from it in its way of going about things. The Company of Jesus is in some way outside the episcopacy: it is independent. The Society of Mary, in its government, will march in concert and in a spirit of union with the bishops. Like the Company of Jesus, we will take on the running of colleges, home missions and foreign, but, more than the Jesuits, we will devote ourselves to all types of good works. We will be more dependent than they on the bishops: the Jesuits administer their revenues as they see fit; as for us, we will administer them in concert with the bishop of the place, especially the revenues of the diocesan establishments that will be confided to us.

[4] The Society of Mary will be at the same time, if I can so express myself, both universal and diocesan; it will be universal in the sense that it will have its own Superior General who will, on his own or through the Provincials, govern all the houses of the order, on whom will depend all the members of the Society, and who will place them everywhere according to need. It will be in a certain way diocesan, because the religious of particular houses, provided it does not go against the wishes of the Superior General, will be at the disposition of the bishop of the place for missions, retreats, etc... and even to replace provisionally the pastors of parishes who are sick or absent, etc.; because, if necessary, each diocese could have a novitiate; because the surplus revenues, especially of the diocesan establishments, in accord with the Superior General, can be turned over to the diocesan funds, etc., etc... The spirit of the society will be, then, a spirit of union and of good accord with the episcopacy, and the Superior General will have among his duties that of promoting good understanding with the bishop of each of the places where the establishments of the Society will be located.

334

About October 1838. Colin. Some collected comments. [Mayet 1, 180 = FS 11, 8]:

“When a missionary arrives in a parish, he should make himself small, very small. If I may be allowed to say so, the Marists, the little Marists, have already been the cause of one good thing. There were sometimes missionaries who arrived in a parish, took their place at the head of the table, said the *Benedicite*, and took first place. Now, in the diocese of Lyons and in this diocese of Belley, that is no longer done. Our example has contributed to that. Yes, Messieurs, a Marist missionary must submit himself to the parish priest, and take his advice. Let him preach, hear confessions, all well and good. That is where his business lies. But for the rest, let him not lay down the law.”

335

February 8, 1845. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 682 = FS 92, 16]:

He spoke again of preaching, “Let us be small, let us be humble. If in the pulpit we try to gain a victory and take him by storm, our man reacts against it and slips through our hands. *We must take him from beneath* [his very words]. By taking him from beneath I mean making ourselves so small, so very small [...]”

336

January-March 1845. Colin. Collected remarks. [Mayet 4, 599 = FS 99, 1]:

“Messieurs,” he said to us, “each century has its sickness. In the past there was faith but the heart was sick; now the malady has risen to the head. We live in a century of pride, of madness. We must cure this spirit by our simplicity, by our humility. In the pulpit let us not seem domineering, or else we shall alienate people. Man is more jealous than ever of his freedom and his independence.”

337

September 17, 1845. Colin. Talks on home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 419 = FS 102, 30]:

“The pastor of the parish should preside throughout, and let us show respect also for the curate. We must win the people’s confidence for them, and always show them honor in public. Even in the pulpit we should show deference, but without lapsing into flattery. Let us also leave the ceremonies to the pastors; I know that they are never displeased by it. It must not be said that we are grasping at his stole. We are only helpers. It is only through order that good can be done, the order established by God.”

338

September 17, 1845. Colin. Talks on home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 420 = FS 102, 33]:

“[...] We are living in an age when everything should be done in a modest fashion. The more modest we are, the more we shall be doing God’s work. Every age has had a certain arrogance, and ours has more than its share, an arrogance that has its source in unbelief. It is only by being unassuming that we can achieve success nowadays. We must win souls by submitting ourselves to them. [...]”

339

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 251 = FS 119, 10]:

Father Colin then spoke of the second article which is so dear to him: the Society’s attachment to and union with the bishops. “I am not speaking of the Holy See,” he said. “The Society is based on the Holy See. I have made attachment to the Holy See, to the Pope, one of the ends of the Society. As for the bishops, I want them to look upon our Society *as their own*. On the foreign missions, too, I have made those of our bishops who still wish to be Marists repositories of the authority of the Society, with the functions and powers of provincial. Messieurs, the Society is the only congregation which has done that. Moreover, I shall not conceal from you the fact that other religious have counseled me against it. But, in spite of their advice, I am not ready to change it yet. 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.”

340

September-November 1846. Mayet/Colin. Collected remarks on the council. [Mayet 5, 440f = FS 139]:

[1] Sometimes on important occasions, the council of the general house was perplexed. Prayers were said that the will of God be made manifest, and they used to meet often.

[2] Father Colin at that time was very fond of praying to God to make known his almighty will to the confreres on the council.

[3] He used to say that there was greater humility and purity of intention in this, than praying: “Lord, let me know your will.”

[4] He sometimes urged the members of the council to do the same: “Provided we attain a knowledge of God’s will, that is enough for us.”

341

December 29, 1847. Colin. To the abbé de Charbonnel. [Mayet 4, 460-463 = FS 150, 1-6]:

[1] On Wednesday December 29, 1847, Reverend Father Colin said to the abbé Charbonnel, “Nowadays, people will recognize neither hierarchy nor authority. That is why the societies now being established must make it clear that they are most submissive to the bishops. I may even add that none of the societies that preceded us, nor even those which exist today, neither the [Oblates of Mary] nor the [Religious of the Holy Heart of Mary] are, with regard to this point, what the Society of Mary must be. Our union must be such that the bishops can look upon the Society *as their own* [these are the very terms of the Rule]; [...]”

[2] “I have never laid down any condition with the bishops, except that they allow us to look upon them as our fathers and upon ourselves as their sons.

[3] “A confrère wrote to me for permission to accept a donation someone wanted to give us by private deed. I replied, ‘The Bishop must be informed and give his consent.’

[4] “If God gives me the leisure to concern myself with the Rule, as I hope he soon will, I intend to trace out the line of conduct concerning respect for the bishops and the union we must have with them. In the diocese the Society must not draw everything to itself, not work at its own undertaking, but at the common undertaking, that of the Church, of the bishop, and it must act in such a way as to give prominence to the bishop. In the past, perhaps, people thought it possible to do good in other ways. I am not concerned with that. Nowadays, however, it is inadvisable to act other than as I say, apart from the fact that we live in evil days where religious congregations are scarcely tolerated. After all, in the early days, the superiors of religious were the bishops; it was they who established and endowed them.

[5] I am having a difference of opinion at present with the Bishop of Amata. He wants a provincial alongside the bishop to safeguard the Marists, and I want it to be the bishop (it is a question here of a Marist bishop) who discharges these functions.

[6] “People say to me, ‘But what if a bishop were like Bishop Pompallier?...’ I answer, ‘Well...we would do what we have done for ten years, we would suffer.’ Besides, that would hardly happen in one of twenty cases.”

342

September 14, 1849. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 7, 726-728 = FS 175, 23]:

“What should be the dispositions of those called to the council? They should be free, indifferent to everything but the holy will of God, possessing a great purity of intention. No rigid ideas, especially not those which stem from their being self-opinionated. All human considerations must be put aside. When we go into council, we all go to find and do the will of God. In the council, therefore, let there be no desire to gain acceptance for our own opinion, but simply the desire to do the will of God. They must see the matter in all its ramifications. If they only look at it from one side, they will not be able to judge it or else the judgement will be rash. No undue haste. Let no one assume the role of a dictator. It is the superior who lays the matter before the council. He must not be interrupted. Only when he has finished putting forward his business should each give his reasons. You should do this with circumspection and not make hazardous statements. Otherwise, if the superior has any intelligence, he will see that your judgement is rash. Do not take long to give your advice. Above all, I repeat, no desire to have one opinion win the day rather than another. but simply a desire to do the will of God. If ever I do not feel completely free and at peace in my soul when there is a decision to be taken, I never take sides, and I do not push myself forward. I may speak, but as for acting, that is another question. There is always time to reach a decision, provided the thing is done properly, if the will of God is fulfilled. Once again, I say, I do not like to push myself forward. If I do so in words, I do not do so in action. The good Lord has blessed this approach in the Society, and I notice that in the council at the general house we always take the better side. Let us all, Messieurs, follow that line of conduct. Yes, nothing is more opposed to the will of God than to bring preconceived ideas to the council.”

343

1872. Colin. Constitutions, section on relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities. [AT V, C, 14]:

Let them be friendly and humble with everybody, especially parish priests, and give no occasion for anybody to blame or mistrust them, for the greater service of God. Let them hold other religious in high esteem, believing themselves in all truth to be inferior to them; they are to show them a sincere and heartfelt charity both in their manner of speaking and in their behaviour; indeed, let them beg graces from God for them, and truly rejoice with them when they prosper in the Church.

344

1872. Colin. Constitutions, section on the home missions. [AT V, C, 258]:

Let them be very humble and respectful towards parish priests, curates and other local clergy; they must not accept the parish priest's role or place in the church or at table, nor set about anything of importance without consulting the pastors, and meticulously avoid doing anything against their will.

345

1872. Colin. Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT V, C, 307]:

In all matters of major importance he is obliged to hear the assistants in council; and then, even though they do not have a deliberative vote except in cases specified in the Constitutions, and though the superior be left full freedom to choose whatever seems best to him in the Lord, nevertheless whenever a majority of the councillors take the opposing view, he is invited and even entreated to adopt that view out of humility, for Mary was always ready to follow the will of others rather than her own.

Provincials also shall conform themselves to this manner of proceeding.

346

1872. Colin. Constitutions, section on the superior general. [AT V, C, 334]:

The assistants shall be called in council as the need arises, and regularly once or twice a week. The ballot shall be secret when their consent is required, and also in other cases if one of the assistants requests it. Should there be a tie in the voting, the superior remains free; and even when all, or the majority of the assistants agree with what he proposes, it is still up to him to act or not, as he sees best in the Lord. But let the superior remember that when all or a majority of the assistants are of an opposed opinion, he is strongly invited, and indeed for the love of our most sweet Mother even entreated, if the irresolution persists, to follow the councilors' opinion rather than his own; for doubtless he will in this way gain great peace and special grace for himself.

347

May 9, 1880. Cozon. Postulatum to the 1880-84 general chapter. [LM 431, 28-31]:

[28] The pastor of a parish in Paris, in a talk I had with him, confided in me all the problems he had with the pious works established in his parish by the Daughters of Charity; then, while speaking of the Third Order of Mary, to which he belonged, he said to me: “In the mind of the founder, the Third Order was not supposed to be restricted the way it is today. The Very Reverend Father Founder would have wanted the parish’s congregations and associations to become part of it.” This testimony is all the more significant because this venerable pastor had gone to see the Very Reverend Father Founder in La Neylière.

[29] And then, if we were to go to pastors and say to them: “*One heart and one soul*,” how easy we would find it to propagate the work, for then it would no longer be a question of laboriously creating a nucleus of persons who would perforce necessarily be removed from existing works.

[30] It is easy to see in this Third Order, when thus understood, a perfect harmony with the Marists’ motto: *Let them appear unknown and hidden in this world*, and this is a harmony which should exist, for the founder’s thought was complete. From the Society, it should flow into the Third Order, as onto a branch which lives on the sap from the tree.

[31] There can be no doubt that there is a very special spirit in the Society, if only we meditate upon the admirable chapter of our constitutions entitled *The Spirit of the Society*. Well, if our exterior life should be the manifestation of our humility and our complete abnegation, we will manifest it admirably well with a Third Order thus understood. Hidden beneath the pastors’ actions, we will do good without attracting attention. Like Mary, who, after the ascension of her divine son, was the soul of the Church and yet the servant of the apostles, we, too, will consider ourselves as servants and not as masters, as helpers and not as the ones in charge.

No to the desire for attention

348

November 15, 1824. Chavoin. Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 118, 1 = CMJ 2, 1]:

[...] We have seen and most warmly appreciated the way traced out for us by your Lordship, of remaining hidden and unknown in the eyes of men. It is the way which we proposed to ourselves from the first moment that we thought of this work. We trust that Providence will make known to your Lordship the moment when it should be known and a little less hidden, especially as regards the men.

349

December 1833. Colin. “*Summarium Regularum S.M.*,” section on humility. [AT I, s, 32f]:

[32] After the example of Blessed Mary, let them strive to live hidden and as it were unknown in the world; with humility, let them avoid honors and positions of prestige. Any religious, no matter who he is, who is shown to have been ambitious for the position of superior, whether superior general or local superior, or to have said or done anything to try to obtain one or another position of this kind, is to be perpetually barred from that office which he dared to grasp at out of vanity or presumption.

[33] It is likewise completely forbidden to them to accept any dignity, whether in the church, such as the episcopal dignity or the position of vicar general, or in the secular order, should a ruler

wish to elevate any of them to some office; they should utterly reject and not accept at all such dignities, unless compelled otherwise by the urgent command of the Supreme Pontiff. However, those preachers who work in foreign lands among heathens may licitly accept the episcopal dignity and any other dignity offered them, to the greater glory of God and for the good of the mission.

350

1836. Colin. “*Regularum S.M. Epitomes*,” section on aids for achieving the ends of the Society. [AT II, e, 21]:

For the same reasons, and to remove all impediments to greater fruitfulness in the vineyard of the Lord, let them show themselves everywhere to be humble of heart, and everywhere act with prudence and especially modesty, giving no one occasion for criticism, that, following in the footsteps of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while they may and indeed ought to expend themselves in any ministries whatsoever for the salvation of souls, nevertheless may appear as if hidden and unknown in the world.

351

August 2-10, 1839. Colin. *Casual conversation at Belley*. [Mayet 1, 184f = FS 18, 1]:

“I can tell you, Messieurs, and I am pleased you should hear it, that I have been asked for information about the Society. I have not given it; I prefer us to remain hidden, in oblivion and obscurity. God forbid that the Marists should want to put on a show! Look at the Blessed Virgin: what did she do? Not that I condemn those who follow another way of making God loved, of working for his glory. They do right, because that is the spirit of their vocation, and each should conform himself to the spirit of his vocation. Not everyone is called to be a Marist: the Church would have good cause for complaint if it had only the little Marists to serve it! But the spirit of our Society is different. We must behave like our mother.”

352

1838-1839. Colin. *Conversation with the Fathers of the boarding school at La Capucinière*. [Mayet 1, 258-260 = FS 24]:

[1] “[...] Messieurs, let us not be among those who cannot bear to hear other congregations spoken of. Do we not all have the same purpose, the same goal? Do not all congregations belong to the Blessed Virgin, and more than we do? I should be very much afraid of that. I want us to pass unnoticed in the Church: *as if unknown*; unnoticed from every point of view. I should not even like us to be conspicuous by our piety. Let us have a simple, ordinary piety, with nothing remarkable about it.

[2] “As for modesty, too, nothing out of the ordinary. When the Jesuits arose, the Lutherans were crying out against the clergy and the times were very different from our own, as were the needs too. Many precautions were necessary. They — the Jesuits — had rules of modesty traced out for them which were very singular. Nowadays there are some who are attracted by that, but there are some who are repelled by it. And so I should not like our modesty to be other than well ordered and ordinary. Let us be no more conspicuous in that than in anything else: *as if unknown*.”

[3] “With the pupils’ parents there is a certain way of behaving: do not talk too much of piety. It puts them off. They say, ‘What is all that about?’ Often the most successful are those whose piety is the most simple and natural. People are less wary with them. Look at Monsieur ***: very often in one or two conversations he brings to confession a man who was very far from it.”

353

January-March 1842. Colin/Mayet. Remarks made while working on the Constitutions. [Mayet 1, 726f = FS 54, 3]:

“The third thing I want to urge is that the Marists not think so much about themselves. Let us not always be coming back upon ourselves, let us not look at ourselves so much. Really, what a spectacle! We are so fine! Rather, let us look to God, who is uncreated beauty. Let us walk in his presence. By always looking at him we shall become like him, we shall become perfect. How I pity those who are always caught up with themselves and who like to steep in their own juice.” As he said this, he laughed heartily. “Ah, yes,” he said, “we soil ourselves with our own company.” He added that a broader approach raises up the soul, makes it capable of great good, while those characters who are engrossed in themselves make no great progress, even in their own sanctification. “Let us laugh,” he said, “for God wants us to laugh—we shall weep on other occasions. Life is a mixture of laughing and weeping. Let us follow the path before us with our eyes fixed on the good Lord.”

354

December 29, 1844. Colin. Remarks in council. [Mayet 3, 410f = FS 85]:

[1] “[...] To make ourselves known, to impose ourselves on others, is alien to our spirit. It pleased the Lord to bring the Society to birth in the wilderness at the Hermitage, and in the wilderness at Belley — I call it a wilderness because grass grows in the streets of the town. Let us always remember that we are to do good in such a way that we appear *in this world unknown and indeed even hidden*. Before I die, I want to see to it that this is well rooted in the Society. Someone once said: ‘The Marist Fathers... there is no need to ask what their spirit is. Their name is a sufficient indication, if they understand it properly.’

[2] “Indeed, Messieurs, the Blessed Virgin (as the Church tells us) is the channel of graces, the Queen of Apostles, and what great good she did for souls. Yet in this world she was hidden and as it were unknown.”

355

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the Refectory. [Mayet 4, 250 = FS 119, 9]:

Then returning to the first article, *as unknown and hidden*, he said, “Really, in actual fact, Messieurs, it is the way to take over everything. It was the approach that the Church followed, and you know that we must have no other model than the early Church. The Society too is beginning with simple men, poor men, but see what the Church achieved later.” Fr. Eymard then said, “A man of great judgment told me, ‘Your Society is really beginning the way the Church did.’”

356

August 22, 1847. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 187 = FS 141, 18]:

“And our heavenly mother, she was the light, the counsel, the consolation of the newborn Church. And did she create a stir? The Gospel says little about her, very little, yet it was she who drew down graces from heaven upon the earth. Let us imitate these holy models in their zeal and their humility. Let us go everywhere, let us do all the good that we can, all the while remaining unassuming and hidden. But the Society, Messieurs, must also apply itself to learning, otherwise it would never attain its goal.”

357

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 452f = FS 146, 3f]:

[3] “As to the second point, we ought to have only one ambition, the ambition to do good, and in no way to make a show. Our first aim in entering the Society was our own sanctification, and the foundation stone of sanctification has always been humility. Without this virtue, the others are not virtues at all. Let us guard ourselves also against what you might call collective pride, which seems to me to be just as opposed to Christian humility as personal pride.

[4] “That, Messieurs, is one of the characteristics of the Society, the one by which it should be distinguished, in accordance with the particular spirit of its vocation, from the others which have preceded it, which others I neither judge nor condemn. The animosity which some of them encounter does not all stem, it seems to me, from hatred for religion. In several cases, the alienation could also come in part from the style these communities have adopted. I heard tell that at one time there were some bishops who as a matter of conscience and principle, supported certain religious congregations when, in actual fact, they would not have been sorry to see them leave their diocese. Let us take good note of this instance, and try to adopt a modest way of behaving, one which gives the least possible offense to those among whom we live and which is in conformity with our vocation and the spirit of the Blessed Virgin whose name we bear. One of our models is Saint Vincent de Paul. However, the Society of Mary should not exclude certain good works which this saint did not allow for his own men, for example, that they become writers. No, everything that the Jesuits have done, the Society will be able to do; writing and publication is not forbidden them. However, the Society of Mary must do these works in a different way from the Jesuits, according to the particular spirit of its vocation, with the spirit of Mary. If someone brings out a work, he will not try to attract public attention, neither for himself nor for the Society. Rather, aiming only at doing good, he will have no other ambition than that of remaining hidden. This is what the apostles did.”

358

December 22, 1847. Colin. Exhortation at table. [Mayet 4, 460 = FS 147, 12f]:

[12] He concluded saying that we must serve holy Church with all our strength.

[13] “For,” he said, “everything which the other congregations have done, in particular everything which the Jesuits have done, we must do, relying upon God and upon Mary, but always *unknown and indeed even hidden*, according to our calling.”

359

January 19, 1848. Colin. Statement in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 466f = OM 674 = FS 152, 1]:

“Messieurs, it is only later that you will understand a certain phrase in the rule: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. You could say that the whole spirit of the Society is there. Let us then keep within the limits of our vocation. Although we should not exclude any work of zeal in our ministry, we must always remain *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us not be concerned with our honor. If we do good, we shall have merit in the sight of God. Let us seek only the honor of God and for ourselves... *unknown*. Let us not look to what the societies that have preceded us have done, for, when a society comes to birth, it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (and here he assumed a solemn tone of voice) I am pleased to be able to repeat it here once again: *I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time*. These are the words which served us as a foundation and an encouragement at the very beginning of the society. They were always present to us. We have worked along that line, if I may so speak. We must admit that we are living in very bad times; humanity is really sick. At the end of time it will need a great deal of help, and the Blessed Virgin will be the one to give it. Messieurs, let us rejoice to belong to her Society and bear her name. The other communities coming to birth envy us our fine name.”

360

January 24, 1848. Colin. After announcing in the refectory the death of brother Blaise. [Mayet 7, 625f = FS 154, 4]:

“Messieurs, the times we live in are in some ways more difficult than those of the apostles: look at Europe, what confusion! How greatly we need the help of the Blessed Virgin. Let us imitate her, following the spirit of our vocation, let us hide ourselves so as to do good. The Rule says we should devote ourselves to all kinds of ministry, to all works of zeal. Nevertheless, we should behave so as to be *unknown and hidden*. I was saying to a gentleman yesterday that nowadays there is only one way to do good: to stay hidden. The good people are timid, the wicked have the upper hand. If someone tries to do good in a certain way, they are at once arrested and find themselves under the feet of the wicked, powerless. Did not the Blessed Virgin remain hidden all her life? She did good for the Church without showing herself. Our Lord himself buried himself for thirty years in oblivion. He showed himself for three years only, when the time came. But even then he knew how to withdraw and slip away in the mountains to be alone. He hid himself when they wanted to make him king, and even when they wished to stone him — his hour had not yet come — he made himself invisible and passed through the midst of his enemies. For the Society too, the time, the hour for making an appearance may come, when God wishes! ...One day too ... [he did not finish]. But as for us, let us be *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us do nothing to attract the honor of men to ourselves. What can man give us? Are we to work for the honor that human glory will bring?”

361

February 29, 1848. Colin. To the Puylata community. [Mayet 7, 601f = FS 157]:

On Tuesday February 29th, Father Colin told us, “We should remember our maxim: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Today this is the only way to do good, we should bear that in mind. Let us imitate our holy Mother who did so much good during her life and the apostolic life of her divine Son, but without anyone talking about it. Let us not be like those who are intent on *showing off* and on having people talk about them. I do not want the Society ever to have any mansions, and I repeat that so that everyone will understand it well;” (at that moment he turned to me and gave a significant look, which seemed to say: “If you sometimes note down what I say, note that”) “it is in the Rule. Then let us take our Lord Jesus Christ as our model. He was always surrounded by the poor: *the poor have the Gospel preached to them*. I should make one thing clear: I would like our men to preach well, certainly, but I would have you know that I do not want (at least at the moment) illustrious preachers like Father Lacordaire. If they come, I am not saying that I would refuse them, but that is not necessary for doing good. Look at the Society: it does a great deal for the glory of God, it gives many missions which are very successful. People ask for us on all sides, we arouse no animosity. Why all this? Because the Society is unassuming.”

362

March 1, 1848. Colin. To the community at Puylata. [Mayet 7, 602 =FS 158, 1]:

On March 1, at lunch, Father Colin told us, “Someone who is by no means hostile to the Capuchins, told me that the great house that they have built at La Guillotière — rather, it was not they, I know that they have nothing, someone built it for them — that this great house has done them more harm than good, even though they are very popular and in general very well liked. Messieurs, let us remain small. I say that so that no one will ever think of changing our way of doing things. [By this I think Father meant our way of doing everything in an unassuming way.] This is the only way to do good, being small. The Society is called to do an enormous amount of good. It must be faithful to its vocation. To be small, *unknown and hidden*. The times call for that, we must accommodate ourselves to our times.”

363

November 9, 1848. Colin. Remarks heard by Mayet. [Mayet 6, 718m = FS 167]:

On November 19, 1848, I myself heard Father Colin say, “A layman told us recently, ‘It is well known what the Marist Fathers do, but it is not talked about. It is seen that when preaching they do not concern themselves with politics, and in listening to their sermons people see that they do not concern themselves with the newspapers, and they find that edifying.’ That gave me great pleasure, Messieurs. We must always do the same. We must do good in a hidden way, take on all sorts of works, but always remaining *unknown and hidden*. That does not mean that I want us to preach badly, certainly not. Nor do I want us to be lacking in zeal, in eagerness, in energy for doing good, to restrict ourselves to a narrow circle. Did not our Lord burn with fiery zeal? Did not Mary feel that searing flame which sets afire all that it touches? What souls were more aflame than theirs?”

What a blaze of zeal! And yet Jesus remained hidden for thirty years until the hour came that his Father had determined, and Mary did so for the whole of her life.”

364

December 1, 1848. Colin. To the Puylata community. [Mayet 7, 659 = FS 168, 1]:

“Messieurs, this should make us very cautious. There are practicing Catholics in all shades of opinion. They say there are some among the original Republicans, some among the new ones, there are some in every class. Consequently we should keep out of politics. We are here to lead all the parties to heaven. Now, if ever, is the time to practice our maxim: *as unknown and indeed even hidden.*”

365

1867. Mayet. A remark of his own. [Mayet, B16, 121-123]:

May we be permitted to remark that Father did say unceasingly: *Unknown and hidden*, but not *dead*. It is the hidden life that he praised, not a useless, sterile life; it is the nothingness of humility, of self-contempt, of modesty, not the nothingness of the tomb. While he repeated without ceasing *Unknown and hidden*, he also repeated without ceasing that we are called, that we must offer ourselves, to do great things for God. More, he even made his *unknown and hidden* the true basis for great deeds. How wrong would be those who, being of a temperament that is soft and peaceful, or fearful and pessimistic, or cowardly and lazy, would want to shut themselves up in their shell under the pretext that we must lead a hidden life, and who would do nothing, or next to nothing, under the pretext that we must act *unknown and hidden*. That mistake would be even more prejudicial to good, and to souls, if it were made by a local superior. Nature is clever at self-justification. Corpses are also *unknown and hidden*; good-for-nothings are *unknown and hidden*, too. Yes, it is the hidden life that Father extols, and to which we are called after Mary’s example, but it is *Life*... We will make this remark only once; the thing is so obvious. But we do feel that we should make it at least once, because, on very rare occasions, we have seen some subjects, and even a superior, make a false application, at least in part, of this vital, productive principle *unknown and hidden*, which they made a principle of death, of sterility and even of sheer idleness.

366

1869. Colin. Response to questions about the inspirations he received. [Jeantin, NHC 9]:

“When God speaks to a soul He says much in a few words. For instance, that phrase: *Unknown and hidden in the world.*”

367

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, section on the means to attain the Society's ends. [AT V, C, 8]:*

In the various ministries of zeal which they must undertake in obedience, let them behave with such modesty, self-forgetfulness, and self-denial that they seem to be really unknown and indeed even hidden in this world.

368

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, article on the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 50]:*

Therefore, following in the footsteps of their Mother, let them above all be entirely removed from the spirit of the world, from any greed for earthly goods, and be totally emptied of all self-concern; let them strive to deny themselves completely in all things, seeking not their own interests, but only those of Christ and Mary; considering themselves as exiles and pilgrims on earth, indeed as worthless servants and as the refuse of the world; using the things of this world as if not using them; sedulously avoiding in their buildings and living quarters, in their life style and in all their dealings with others, anything that might suggest display, ostentation, or a desire for attention; loving to be unknown and subject to all; without deceit or cunning; in a word, acting always with such great poverty, humility and modesty, simplicity of heart, and unconcern for vanity and worldly ambition, and moreover so combining a love of solitude and silence and the practice of hidden virtues with works of zeal, that even though they must undertake the various ministries helpful to the salvation of souls, they seem to be unknown and indeed even hidden in the world.

369

1872. *Colin. Words to the Chapter. [Minutes of the Chapter, p. 183.]:*

“ Let us always be *Unknown and hidden in the world*. If we hide in the midst of men we will draw them to us. But if, on the contrary, we put ourselves forward, they will resist us.”

The House of Mary and the Spirit of the Society

The earliest extant use of the word “spirit” in reference to the Society of Mary is found in fragment *h* of the Cerdon rule where it speaks of “the spirit of greed” that must be “expelled completely from the house of Mary.” Thus, from the very beginning the spirit of the Society was not thought of as wholly interior and ethereal, but is always concretized in actions, life-styles and even buildings. This dossier, consisting largely of constitutional texts, considers the link between the theme of the “house of Mary” (including the “family of Mary” in the sense of house or lineage, references to the houses or buildings of the Society, and building imagery used by Colin) and the spirit of the Society.

370

About 1823. Colin. “Supplement to the Rules of the Society of Mary,” section on penances. [AT I, h, 5]:

All must take extreme care lest the spirit of covetousness and the pursuit of profit should invade the house or hold sway, under whatever pretext. The superior or any of his councillors who should retain this spirit of covetousness for more than a quarter of an hour shall confess his fault before the whole council and say how long he persevered in that fault. Further, so that all means be taken to expel this covetousness completely from the house of blessed Mary, who always abhorred this spirit of covetousness throughout her life, should any of the religious likewise commit this fault, he shall confess it promptly before the whole council, which shall have been summoned, and, having said it, he shall withdraw with the permission of the superior.

371

After 1823?/after 1858. Chavoin. The manuscript of Sr. Saint-Jacques. [RMJ 241, 146]:

Mother often said to the sisters in the early days of the congregation that they should all regard themselves as the superior as far as the well-being, interest and order of the community were concerned, and as being the bursars of the house of the blessed Virgin.

372

December 1833. Colin. “Summarium Regularum S.M.,” section on poverty. [AT I, s, 21]:

Therefore let them love and cultivate poverty, so that, unimpeded by temporal goods, they may cling to God alone; let them take care lest, under any pretext whatsoever, that spirit of greed, so loathsome to God, should creep in among them: every means must be taken to drive this pestilence, namely greed, completely from the houses of blessed Mary, who throughout her entire life always abhorred this ruinous vice.

373

December 1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.," section on charity. [AT I, s, 31]:

They should look after each other with charity and Christian gentlemanliness and diligently preserve perfect harmony among themselves, as befits sons of the same family, whose head is the Mother of God; they should neglect nothing that could foster the greatest harmony among themselves; therefore, they are to pay no attention to what region the others come from and never speak ill of one another or of each other's country or family; and, if anyone injures another by word or in any other way, he should quickly ask forgiveness and humbly submit himself to the penance which the Superior will impose.

374

December 1833. Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.," section on the superior. [AT I, s, 70]:

The spirit of the Society is alien to greed and one's own convenience; let him nurture this spirit in himself and beget it in others; never under any pretext whatsoever should he act when led or spurred on by greed; in this he is to be most vigilant.

375

December 8, 1831. Professors and missionaries of the minor seminary of Belley. Consecration to the blessed Virgin. [APM 117 = OM 240]:

Holy Virgin, we are your children, you are our Mother. At your request, without considering our weakness or our unworthiness, your divine Son called us and brought us together in this refuge, the cradle of your society, to be the first members of a family whose special mistress you want to be, to which you give your name and which wants to devote itself entirely to your service because it is proud to belong to you. Holy Virgin, what shall we give you in return for such a signal favor, which we value more than any good or honor on earth? May the angels and saints join with us in rendering you the fair tribute of our gratitude. With your servant St. Ildephonse, we wish to proclaim everywhere your greatness and your privileges, especially that of your Immaculate Conception, to publish your deeds of kindness and mercy, to love you and to have others serve you as much as we can and as long as we shall live. Mother of God and of men, accept the homage of our total dependence and the offering we make of all that we are and all that we have; we sacrifice it to you irrevocably. We install you as the Mistress and Superior of this house, which is yours. This solemn day when we celebrate the feast of your Immaculate Conception will become for us the time when, each year, we renew our fervor and increase our zeal in serving you. Purest Virgin, we pledge ourselves to celebrate each year this feast with the greatest devotion possible, to defend and sustain the glorious privilege of your Immaculate Conception till our last breath and to spread your glory everywhere.

376

January 6, 1842. Colin. Letter to the Marists of Verdélais. [Mayet ND 1, 402f = LColin 420106.Ver, 2]:

[...] How sweet it is for us to think that we are the chosen children of the Mother of God, that we fight under her banner, that we have the honor of bearing her heavenly name, that we are the first stones of the building that her divine Son desires to raise in these last times to her glory, for our salvation and the salvation of many others!

377

February 6, 1842. Colin. *Community meeting at the college in Belley. [Mayet 1, 420f = FS 44, 6]:*

“But let us bless God, Messieurs, for I see with great pleasure that the spirit of the Society is alive at Belley. It is their unity and simplicity which make these two houses so dear to me. I am fond of all the houses of the Society, but especially these two. Take courage. You are the foundation stones. These must be dressed and properly laid. Then, on this foundation a building must arise, not for our honor, oh no, but for God, and it must be for his glory not only during our lifetime but after us. Then we shall look down from heaven with pleasure upon the edifice whose beginnings we have witnessed on earth.”

378

1842. Colin. *Constitutions (this number in the 1842 draft was taken over with slight alterations into the 1872 text). [AT II, a, 1 and V, C, 1]:*

This least congregation, which the Supreme Pontiff Gregory XVI graciously approved on April 29th, 1836, received from the very beginning the name SOCIETY OF MARY. This name indicates sufficiently the banner beneath which it desires to serve in fighting the battles of the Lord, and what its spirit should be. It is marked out by this tender name SOCIETY OF MARY:

1. so that all who are admitted into it, mindful of the family to which they belong, may understand they are to emulate the virtues of this loving Mother, as if living her life, above all in humility, obedience, [1872: self-denial], mutual charity and the love of God; [...]

379

1842. Colin. *Constitutions, section on the Superior General. [AT II, a, 224]:*

The truly special spirit of the Society consists in the fact that its members are far removed from all desire for earthly goods and especially from any worldly spirit, and are of such great poverty, humility, modesty, simplicity of heart, lack of interest in vanity and worldly ambition that, although they must apply themselves to all the ministries by which the salvation of souls can be furthered, yet they appear to be unknown and, as it were, hidden in the world. This spirit the General is to nourish in himself and to bring it to life and preserve it in others. For love of poverty he must do nothing whatsoever to the detriment of the Society, but his confidence in God and in the protection of blessed Mary must be such that he never, under any pretext and even that of the glory of God, acts under the influence or impulse of greed; he is likewise most carefully to beware lest the worldly spirit of recent entrants mar this little field or least Society of blessed Mary our mother and render it completely sterile in the fruits of salvation. In this let the Superior be most vigilant and severe.

380

1842. *Colin. Constitutions, section on preserving and increasing the Society. [AT II, a, 355 = AT V, C, 422]:*

Since it was God himself who, at the intercession of the Mother of God, laid the first foundations of this smallest Society, which, arrayed for battle, as it were, against the enemies of salvation, with the same Mother of God as leader and protector, must always be ready to fight on the side of the Lord, it is the divine mercy itself which will increase it, guide it, preserve it, and fill it with the Holy Spirit. But since the same divine mercy, by a wonderful and gentle disposition of things, expects effort and application on our part, nothing must be overlooked that would enable us to erect this Society upon the foundation of every solid virtue, and in the first place on the four unshakeable cornerstones: *humility, obedience, charity, and poverty*; so that what was once apparent in the house of Nazareth, where resided the Incarnate Word, the blessed Virgin and the Patriarch Joseph, may also be seen in this Society, for the greater glory of God and the honor of that same Virgin.

381

1855-1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters: "Spirit of the Institute" [AT VI, σ, 4-8]:*

[4] 1° The spirit of this modest Institute ought naturally to participate in that of the Mother of God whose name it bears, whom it takes as its model, and whom it has chosen as its first and perpetual Superior; it ought, then, to be essentially a spirit of humility, of union with God and of charity toward the neighbor.

[5] 2° The Religious of the Holy Name of Mary, then, will be penetrated and constantly animated by this threefold spirit, and in order to please God, they will strive in all their conduct to join modesty, the love of seclusion and the practice of solidly interior virtues with acts of the most heartfelt charity for the salvation of souls, in such a way that, without losing the spirit of prayer, they may, at the same time, engage in the exercise of zeal proper to their Institute, and may nevertheless appear, in some way, forgotten and unknown in the world.

[6] 3° In their furnishings, in the way they build their houses, in their manner of life, and even in their relations with their pupils, they should carefully avoid all that savors of a desire to impress and oversteps the boundary of true modesty, so that everything about them will breathe forth only the spirit of interior life, humility and religious simplicity.

[7] 4° The Institute may have some houses devoted solely to the exercise of this interior and hidden life, where the religious, cut off from all the preoccupations of teaching, will divide their time between prayer and manual work, and will strive, with the help of grace, to reproduce in themselves the virtues of Jesus and Mary in the home of Nazareth.

[8] 5° In the same spirit of humility and modesty they will make use of no titles of distinction in addressing each other, but will simply address one another as *Sister*. However, when speaking of Superiors or addressing them, out of respect they will use the title of *Very Reverend Mother* for the Superior General; *Honorable Mother* for the Vicar Superiors, and *Mother* for the local Superiors and the elderly sisters.

382

September 4, 1866. *Colin. Remarks at the Chapter. [Minutes of the Chapter, pp. 70-71]:*

[...] Very Reverend Father General explained to the members of the Chapter the rules of prudence which should guide the administration when there is question of giving permission for building or major repairs. [...]

Very Reverend Father Founder endorsed the remarks of Very Rev. Fr. General and insisted on the simplicity, the modesty and the poverty which should make our house a reflection of that of Nazareth. The words *unknown and hidden* of our Constitutions apply to buildings as well as to persons.

383

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, article on the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 49f]:*

[49] Let them always keep in mind that they belong by gracious choice to the family of blessed Mary, Mother of God, from whose name they are called Marists, and whom they have chosen from the beginning as their model and their first and perpetual superior. If therefore they are and wish to be true sons of this dear Mother, let them continually strive to draw upon her spirit and breathe it: a spirit of humility, self-denial, intimate union with God, and the most ardent love of neighbor; and so they must think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things, otherwise they will be unworthy and degenerate sons.

[50] Therefore, following in the footsteps of their Mother, let them above all be entirely removed from the spirit of the world, from any greed for earthly goods, and be totally emptied of all self-concern; let them strive to deny themselves completely in all things, seeking not their own interests, but only those of Christ and Mary; considering themselves as exiles and pilgrims on earth, indeed as worthless servants and as the refuse of the world; using the things of this world as if not using them; sedulously avoiding in their buildings and living quarters, in their life-style and in all their dealings with others, anything that might suggest display, ostentation, or a desire for attention; loving to be unknown and subject to all; without deceit or cunning; in a word, acting always with such great poverty, humility and modesty, simplicity of heart, and unconcern for vanity and worldly ambition, and moreover so combining a love of solitude and silence and the practice of hidden virtues with works of zeal, that even though they must undertake the various ministries helpful to the salvation of souls, they seem to be unknown and indeed even hidden in the world.

Let them all cling fast to this spirit in the knowledge that it is the very pivot and foundation of their whole Society.

384

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on dealing with outsiders. [AT V, C, 215]:*

Neither shall they visit their family except for a serious and urgent reason and with the permission of their superiors, nor shall they express the wish to stay with them, even for the purpose of a more rapid convalescence, but let them peacefully entrust themselves to the Society as to a mother, whose role it is to cherish and console her children with all possible care, especially those who are ill, and if need be let them eagerly choose to die in a house of Mary, their most sweet mother, and among their brother religious, whenever it pleases the Lord to call them.

385

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on things concerning the body. [AT V, C, 237]:*

In the houses of the Society only those games are to be allowed which are truly suited to religious priests vowed to a life that is poor and far removed from worldly spirit.

386

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on the Superior General. [AT V, C, 322]:*

Let him diligently nourish the proper spirit of the Society in himself and enkindle and maintain it in others. For love of poverty he must do nothing that might harm the Society, and his trust in God and in the protection of blessed Mary should be such that never, under any pretext, not even that of the glory of God, are his actions motivated or influenced by greed or desire for gain. Let him take the greatest care that the Society's members never follow worldly ways in their rooms, furnishings, dress, food, accommodation, or anything else, so that everything in the Society may always and everywhere be determined in keeping with the highest standards of religious poverty. Let him likewise most carefully ensure that the worldly spirit of those who have recently entered not ravage this little field of blessed Mary our Mother, namely this smallest Society, and render it completely barren of the fruits of salvation. On this point let the superior be most vigilant and severe.

387

1872. *Colin. Constitutions, on the "cornerstone" virtue of poverty. [AT V, C, 445]:*

Woe to the one, whoever he may be, who in such a grave and very necessary matter would be the cause whereby the Society as a whole or a single house fell into deplorable laxity! For if indeed they were to lose the spirit of poverty, Jesus and Mary would no longer recognize this congregation as their own, nor deign to live any more in its midst, and thus, abandoned to its own fragility, it would quickly and inevitably fall into total ruin.

388

1872. *Colin. Constitutions: other numbers mentioning the spirit of the Society. [AT V, C, 37, 75, 155, 262, 295, 303]:*

[37] [...] the spirit of piety [...] that truly interior life which ought to be the very hallmark of the Institute [...]

[75] [...] the spirit of the Society, which is a spirit of obedience and self-denial [...]

[155] [...] vow of stability [...] love of the Society and its spirit [...]

[262] [...] in accordance with the spirit of the Society, to evangelize the poor, the uneducated and country people.

[295] [...] The administration of the Society's goods [...] in keeping with the Institute's laws and spirit [...]

[303] [...] that [the Superior General] have made a very profound study of the Society's constitutions and its spirit [...] and that he be a most faithful custodian of its proper spirit and of the traditions and customs observed in it from the beginning [...]

BUGEY

In the mountains of Bugey the first Marist missionaries experienced the joy of proclaiming the Good News to forgotten people.

Like the first missionaries in Bugey Marists proclaim the Good News of God's mercy to those most in need.

—*Constitutions 1988*

Bugey: the Missions

This dossier contains various accounts and anecdotes about the missionary work of the first Marists in the Bugey mountains. The texts are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

The missions and the missionaries

389

1844. Déclas. Account of the origins of the Society. [Mayet 5, 393f = OM 591, 7]:

Fr. Déclas says: “I am the first, despite my unworthiness, to whom he made known his design. It was in 1815, on a Wednesday, a holiday. Both of us were at the major seminary of Lyons. He told me that he intended, when he became a priest, to do like St. Francis Regis and to go into the rural areas to help the poor people, who often have greater need of outside priests than people in the cities or large towns who have priests to choose from, whereas the former often have only one priest and are exposed to making bad confessions. He asked me whether I wanted to do like him. I said yes. He said no more at the time, and through the year he kept me with the same thought, telling me only: ‘We shall do like St. Francis Regis, and no more.’ But the day before we left for the holidays, he took me aside (until then, he had spoken to no one about this project) and told me: ‘You know, what I told you about during the year is something serious. An order will be set up which will be about the same as that of the Jesuits, except that its members will be called Marists instead of being called Jesuits.’ We promised that we would write during the summer, and we kept our word.”

390

January 16, 1825. Pierre Colin. Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 131]:

[1] Fr. Déclas and my brother have begun the retreat in La Balme, on the first Sunday after Epiphany. They are giving two instructions every day, one in the morning and the other in the evening; they also teach catechism to the children after dinner. I went up to La Balme myself twice this week. I also spoke to the people who are going to the retreat exercises eagerly and assiduously.

[2] Starting on the fourth and fifth days of the retreat, there was a general rush to go to confession. They think that almost everyone will approach the sacred tribunal, and already many people who had not gone in a long time have come forward.

[3] If this retreat is in any way successful, we can attribute this only to the prayers of your Excellency and to those of the brave souls who are praying for the conversion of sinners. The retreat in La Balme will end only on the 29th of this month. More and more, we feel how much we will need a fourth confrere.

[4] Our little community of young women is still going well; there are now fourteen of them in a very small house, and we want as much as they do for them to have larger quarters, for they cannot expand in Cerdon.

391

1844. *Déclas. Narrative on the origins of the Society. [Mayet 5, 395f = OM 591, 15-17]:*

[15] The division of the diocese of Lyons came about. From it another diocese was created, that of Belley. I happily left my rectory, and I went to join the Fathers Colin. Things happened within me that I cannot explain. My joy was complete. We began by giving Mary's habit to several young women who, like us, were waiting impatiently for this happy day.

[16] The missions began. Rev. Fr. Colin, presently Superior General, and I began in La Balme above Cerdon, where there was no pastor. Then we went to evangelize Corlier, Izenave, Vieu-d'Izenave, Aranc, Poncieux, Saint-Jérôme, etc. (They were residing in Cerdon, where the elder Fr. Colin was pastor.) All our missions were a marvellous success.

[17] Then we went to Belley. The Sisters left with us and settled at Bon Repos (in Belley). The bishop assigned as our residence the secondary school (the secondary school of Belley). God knows the problems we had there. The superior and I continued to go out on missions. Lacoux, Chaley, Innimont, Lompnaz, Montagnieux, Serrières, Briord, Ordonnax, Prémillieu, etc., were the parishes entrusted to us. All these missions were a marvelous success. Only one of them did not correspond perfectly to what we hoped for. The bishop wanted to send us to a certain parish despite the pastor; we made a few comments to him, pointing out that, even if the mission were to succeed, there would be no solid results in view of the fact there would be no one to sustain its good effects. He yielded to our wishes, and we went to the parish I mentioned where the pastor and the parishioners had asked for us. The thing did not go as well as we had hoped. I always regretted it; that shows more than ever that one is always sure of doing God's will when one follows the will of one's superiors.

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1869-1870. *Jeantin. Essay on the origins of the Society. [OM 819, 56-70]:*

[56] At that time, the Society as yet consisted only of the founder and his brother. The third member was Fr. Déclas, who was then pastor of a humble parish. When Fr. Colin asked Bishop Devie to have him, the bishop was surprised and said: "What will you do with Fr. Déclas. He does not have any talent." "That's true, your Excellency," Fr. Colin answered, "but he has good will." And he added, "We needed men like him, so that we might properly shape the spirit of the Society." Fr. Jallon was the fourth Marist but he left his rectory in Izenave only later, after the other confreres had settled in Belley.

[57] Such was the first nucleus; these were like the four cornerstones of the little Society of Mary. They were indeed the pebbles from the stream which Mary's hand used in order to overthrow Goliath. Well can we say: *Where is the wise man to be found? Where is the scribe? Where is the master of worldly argument? Has not God turned the wisdom of this world into folly? ... It pleased God to save those who believe through the absurdity of the preaching of the gospel.*

[58] We shall now look at the first works of these humble apostles. The places they evangelized were neither the large cities, nor even the large parishes in the country. A few poor parishes, a few poor outlying churches, which had been without priests since the great revolution — such were the first stages on which they appeared, the first lands they evangelized. "Never," Fr. Colin would say, "did we dream of doing grand things, of preaching missions in the cities; we only wanted to evangelize the countryside."

[59] The first mission was given in La Balme, near Cerdon, by Fr. Colin and Fr. Déclas. They slept in Cerdon and every day climbed up to La Balme on the steep road. Fr. Colin loves to remember how Fr. Déclas would climb up those difficult paths while reciting his breviary.

[60] The second mission was undertaken in Chatillon de Corneille by the same two Fathers. Since the inhabitants of that place were hostile to the voice of the missionaries, the latter took a little bell and went through the villages calling everybody to the mission. It was all useless; nobody answered their invitations. A woman in that parish was seriously ill; Fr. Colin went to visit her and offered her the help of his ministry. Alas! The good Father was extremely pained that he again failed with this poor sick woman; she refused the priest. When Fr. Colin talks about this, he softens this refusal with the reflection that this poor woman didn't want to see him because she did not know him.

[61] It also happened at the time of this mission that the two missionaries had to lodge at the inn; this inn had the pompous name of *Hôtel du nord*. But this "hotel" had only one bed to offer the travelers, and this bed was in the same room as the proprietors' bed. To leave the two missionaries more free when it was time to go to bed, the masters of the house left the room. At that point Fr. Colin locked them out and when they wanted to come back in Father answered them that he would not open the door and asked them to go sleep someplace else.

[62] In Corlier, a church dependent upon Izenave, where Fr. Jallon was pastor, Fr. Colin gave his third mission; he was helped by Fr. Jallon. An event which gives us a good idea of the modesty of these beginnings took place during this mission. One morning, Fr. Colin preached before an audience which consisted of a single person and Fr. Jallon. That evening, Fr. Jallon preached before the same audience and Fr. Colin. The latter told his confrere laughingly, "You are fortunate to be so nearsighted; you preach before a single person as you might before several; it's all the same to you. But I would really like to see you in my place."

[63] The fourth mission in Poncieux, succeeded very well. From there they returned to Chatillon de Corneille. The sick woman had died, and Fr. Colin wanted to preside at her funeral. His arrival made a most fortunate and most lively impression. A great many people came together for this ceremony. Word spread among this simple and credulous crowd. "There's the bishop! There's the bishop!" With great zeal, Father made good use of these fortunate dispositions. In the church, in front of the deceased woman's casket, he climbed into the pulpit and gave a vehement instruction. Everybody gave in and this poor parish, which shortly before had been so rebellious and so dead, filled the missionary with the sweetest consolation.

[64] Since, in this parish, there was no confessional for hearing women's confessions, the missionaries had to make one for each; this improvised confessional consisted of a chair with a back to which they attached a piece of loose grillwork which they had found in the debris in the sacristy.

[Addition:] During the mission in Innimont, they lodged in a house whose windows they had to block with straw.

Sometimes they slept two in the same bed; they would lie on the edges of the bed, sometimes with Fr. Déclas, at other times with Fr. Jallon; the latter had very bad breath; "That odor used to kill me."

[65] "I had," Fr. Colin exclaimed in a touching way, "the unusual pleasure of making things easier for these poor souls. I went through fire for them."

[66] Fr. Colin had been in Cerdon for nine years, and the first Marists had been active in the apostolic life for three or four years, without leaving their posts as pastor or curate in the diocese. Around 1826, they obtained permission to devote themselves exclusively to the missions; at first, they thought of getting established in Bourg, but they soon gave up that idea to choose Belley definitively.

[67] They were lodged in the minor seminary, in a few small rooms on the second floor on the north side. The pastor in Belley who visited them on New Year's Day in their cells, was extremely surprised and pained upon seeing that they had no heat in such a rigorous season and in such a cold place. He told the bishop about it and the latter consequently did something about it. A stove was

set up in the corridor; a partition was built; and that is where these poor missionaries came when the cold was too bitter.

[Addition:] When Fr. Jallon came to join them, Fr. Colin gave him his own room and moved to a room through which everybody had to pass.

[68] These rooms remained until recently; they were demolished in order to make a dormitory. Fr. Dulliand recently told me that a teacher who was staying in one of these rooms, before they were torn down, used to burn a load of wood every day during the winter without really overcoming the cold. They were iceboxes. The floor was made of cold and damp bricks, and the north wind penetrated through a thousand cracks in the door and the window.

[69] But these good Fathers were exposed not only to the rigors of winter, but even more to the criticisms and sarcasms of tongues. In this regard, things went so far that Fr. Founder one day thought he had to point out to a teacher that the latter was far overstepping the bounds of freedom and especially of decency toward them.

[70] For four years, that is from 1826 to 1829, our early Fathers gave various missions in the diocese. It was at that time that Fr. Pichat, the superior of the minor seminary after Fr. Guigard, joined up with Fr. Colin and entered the Society of Mary.

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December 1844. Jallon. Account of the first missions of the Marists. [Mayet 4, 431-434 = OM 587]:

[1] They went out on mission under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, carrying on their backs the bag containing what they needed during the mission. When they arrived at the edge of the parish where they were going, they would recite five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys* in honor of the holy guardian Angels and a *Miserere* for the conversion of sinners.

[2] Upon arriving, they would go straight to the Church to adore Jesus Christ and pray to him for the parishioners; they would also pray for the souls in purgatory. They would then go to the pastor's house, when there was one, and when there wasn't, to those who were charitable enough to receive them. They would begin their ministry by hearing the confessions of the children who had not made their first Communion, and ordinarily the adults would then come to confession.

[3] The first instruction was ordinarily a paternal invitation to come to the mission; then they would preach on the mercy of God awaiting poor sinners and, during the first week, they gave gentle instructions such as the explanation of the Apostles' Creed, etc. Then came the explanation of the commandments of God and of the Church. When a great many people had started to go to confession, they would preach on the malice of sin, on the injury it inflicts on God and on those who commit it. They would have a solemn service for all the deceased of the parish, preceded by a sermon on death and accompanied by a sermon on purgatory. After the Mass there was a procession to the cemetery; four of the leading parishioners carried the shroud ahead of the clergy. When there were two of them, they put one up as a banner. They would stop in front of the cemetery cross, and there they gave an instruction on death.

[4] Around the middle of the mission they gave an instruction on the kind of confidence one should have in the Blessed Virgin. They held a procession in which the statue of the mother of God was solemnly carried while people sang litanies and canticles in her honor. The next morning they would have all the little children come to Mass, at which an exhortation was made to the parents. After the instruction which followed the Mass, the pastor would put on a cope and come in front of the altar, accompanied by the missionaries and the neighboring priests who wanted to honor the ceremony by their presence. The preacher would ask the children if they wanted to choose the Blessed Virgin as their mother, their advocate and their protectress. He then told them that the Blessed Virgin wanted only docile children, and he had them ask pardon of their parents for all their acts of disobedience. After that he would ask the parents to retract all the curses and imprecations

which they had unfortunately pronounced against their children. Then he would invite the parents to extend their hands over their children, and the pastor and all the other priests, with their hands extended, would consecrate all these children to the Blessed Virgin, and the ceremony was concluded with benediction of the blessed Sacrament.

[5] When they explained the commandments of God and of the Church, they would insist more on those which were more often violated. They then went on to the sacraments, especially Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist, the institution of these sacraments, the dispositions one had to have in order to receive them worthily, the effects which they produced and the unhappiness of those who received them unworthily. A few days before the general communion, they would give an instruction on the promises of Baptism, and the obligations contracted thereby. After the sermon one of the missionaries would put on vestments as though to celebrate Mass; he would go up to the altar and sing the gospel *In the beginning...* and the Creed; then he would recite each article of the Apostles' Creed, and the one who was in the pulpit would explain them briefly and would ask the assembly if they believed this article, and each would answer "I believe," while lifting up the lighted candle which he held in his hand. The one who was at the altar would likewise recite the commandments of God and of the Church, and the one who was in the pulpit would also explain them briefly and would ask the assembly if they wanted to observe them. A preacher would pronounce the renewal of the baptismal promises, and the ceremony was concluded with benediction of the blessed Sacrament.

[6] Sometimes a day or two before this ceremony, an altar was set up in the middle of the Church. The blessed Sacrament was exposed on it. A sermon was given on mortal sin, after which all priests removed their surplices and, prostrate before the blessed Sacrament, offered honorable amends.

[7] They always recited three *Hail Marys* before beginning the instruction. If, at the end of two weeks, there was still a good number who had not come forward, they would announce from the pulpit that every evening at eight o'clock the church bell would be rung and that each family would recite five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys* for the conversion of sinners, and all this was done precisely as laid out. One of the missionaries who was in the Church would leave the confessional and recite these prayers aloud.

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1878-1881. *Lagniet. Draft on the missions at the origins of the Society. [OM 855, 9-21]:*

[9] But what means do they have to give missions?

[10] 1. They will get down to the work under the guidance of God, with the inspiration and protection of Mary, whom they have named their superior, whom they want to take as their model in everything, in Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, etc. Human means were not relied upon. St. Joseph will furnish what is necessary in poverty, not comfort, the easy life, or a pleasant lodging.

[11] 2. When they give short missions in poor country parishes, they will go, whenever possible, two by two under the direction of the bishop. His Excellency will prefer the most abandoned parishes, sometimes without a resident pastor or with the pastors very poorly housed and so poor that they will not be able to offer any stipends to the missionaries. This kind of payment is often imposed by the bishop on pastors who are not thinking about missions or fear them, whose spirit of faith and zeal leave something to be desired.

[12] But already the four poor priests have been tested — on their modesty, their love of poverty, their patience in accepting poor food as well as good and tiny and unfurnished lodging as well as some small comfort. On occasion they will be able to do without even *food* and *proper clothing*. There is only one poor bed for two; they will be able to separate the cloth mattress from the straw mattress and cover themselves with poor bedclothes. Such a lodging is not even a poor cell protected

from the cold winds. It will be in a corner on the ground floor, with only a poor attic above. — They will rejoice in accepting it laughingly. If anyone were to tell Fr. Jallon that the window doesn't have a casement and there is only a piece of furniture called a "wind" in order to cut off the cold air, Father would answer, "That's it. A 'wind' against the wind." The church is in ruins with barely decent vestments. "Ho! it was like this in Nazareth, Bethlehem and Egypt. Rest assured, Reverend Pastor, the mission will be all the better for it. Your poor parishioners for the most part do not have anything more." Etc.

[13] As for the ceremonies in the church, first of all, we will have few of them, we will do them without cost for the faithful. The bishop has given his authorization to be satisfied with what is strictly necessary. No sumptuous lighting; four candles, or even three, will be enough. No cope for benedictions; the Mass stole will be enough; not even a good surplice, provided that there is an alb for Mass, etc., etc.

[14] When the pastors see that they need so few things and that there is so little bother, they are reassured and spread the good news everywhere that the priests of Mary are not a burden and that it is good to live with them.

[15] Ordinarily, poor meals — soup, vegetables, milk if there is some, and meat as an extra; wine, however ordinary it may be, etc. With this, nobody dies of hunger.

[16] Other congregations had thought that it would be better if the missionary were received with show, and a costly one at that, in order to impress the people. This way made people believe that a mission was only for cities and rich parishes. Our first four fathers wanted to proceed only with modesty, patience and poverty. They did not want to preside either at the ceremonies in church or at the modest rectory's table. It is the pastor's role to preside at the ceremonies in church, to say the blessing at table, and to keep his own bedroom. He needs the small prestige of honor. For the missionary besides the Mass, there is the pulpit and his confessional, and if there isn't any suitable one, they will make do as they can, in accord with the bishop. They will preach from the altar, they will hear confessions in a corner, with an ill-fitting door between two of them, etc., etc. It's a little like being in a mission country.

[17] So will be the missionaries among the savages. They will think only of the good of souls.

[18] What good are precautions, costly preparations in poor parishes so long abandoned, in deserted churches in which there has not been any kind of ceremony and in which two candles added to the Mass candles are an *extra*. If there are only a few people attending an exercise or an old deaf woman, Fr. Jallon the missionary will give his instruction as though there were a thousand there. People talk about it, and soon the church is full.

[19] Such was the simplicity, the poverty, and the adaptability of our first missionary fathers from 1823 to 1836. There was hardly any need to recall that Very Reverend Fr. Colin was the soul and mover in all these things. For him, there was only God and his will. Jesus Christ with...

[20] We are happy to add that this spirit has persevered. Our fathers will bring much the same spirit to Lyons around 1830 to 1840, to Bordeaux between 1838 and the present, to Chartres in 1855, to Amettes. In some parishes of this diocese [of Bordeaux], between three and four, and sometimes even between five and six, parishes from before the revolution are now served as outlying churches where a single pastor comes to say an early Mass on Sundays in one outlying church after another, before returning around eleven o'clock or noon to celebrate the high Mass at the central church. I have seen our missionary fathers going to these outlying churches in turn during the week in order to say Mass and give an instruction at ten o'clock to often less than ten people, with the simplicity and poverty of those who were in Belley in 1824 — and it was thus that, around 1844, they were consoled in seeing an edifying audience grow little by little towards the end of the long missions. We say that they were long, sometimes they lasted from six to seven weeks. Archbishop Donnet, formerly a missionary in Lyons and in Touraine, always had the apostolic spirit to a high degree and thus he renewed his poor clergy, who were not very homogeneous, and his vast diocese which he has been evangelizing since 1837, and which is desolate because it has so few priests. He was the first, outside Lyons and Belley, to have called the Society, which is indebted to him for the example of the

best way for bringing back sinners, sometimes by encouragement, sometimes by stirring people from their lethargy and by going everywhere to attend the conclusions of the missions, in order to confirm the word of his missionary and the souls of the converts.

[21] The spirit, poverty, modesty, and prudent and devoted zeal which our early fathers brought with them produced their fruits in the missions — that spirit sustained them back at home.

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June 1844. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Mayet 3, 154-161 = OM 581]:

[1] “I have a very special desire that in the Society we should have some memories of our early beginnings, not for us to be talked about (for on the contrary I would not want the names of the first men ever to be pronounced and for that reason I have always been so repelled by taking notes), but so that later on others may conform to our way of doing things and of imitating that simplicity which God has blessed. Later on, when the Society will have grown larger and certain people will be inclined to reject this way of doing things, these written memories will be a rallying point.

[2] “At the beginning I had written out a few points of advice on prudence and on proper behavior when one is on mission, and I asked Fr. Pichat to be kind enough to give them to my confreres, without saying that they came from me. Fr. Pichat thought they were good, he was astonished at them, and brought them to the bishop of Belley who because of them felt only greater attachment for us. Perhaps I may yet get them back.

[3] “When the time for the mission came, we would go with our little black bags” [Addition: “In our little black bags was our treasure, I mean our sermons; this would not be a treasure for others, but well, it was for the missionary.”] “I still remember how one day I walked four leagues while I was suffering from violent attacks of colic.

[4] “We used to pray, and we had others pray; that is what I would like for us to remember well. If we should happen to forget the spirit of prayer, we will forget the very basis for success in the missions.

[5] “As soon as we set foot on the territory that we were coming to evangelize, we would kneel down; we would pray to the Blessed Virgin, we would say our three *Hail Marys*, we would pray for that place’s souls in purgatory, and we would get up while saying the *Memorare*.

[6] “We always began the mission with the little children. In the first mission we stirred up the whole parish by doing so, and I don’t believe that there was a single inhabitant left who was not won over. I kept the catechism for myself; I was always very much drawn to people that age! Then again, that is a task for which all are not suited. I explained to them what a missionary was by telling them that he was someone sent by God and by the bishop. I had them understand that the mission was a very special time of grace, and in order to have them understand this, I made use of familiar comparisons. ‘Every day,’ I told them, ‘when mealtime comes, your parents give you something to eat; it’s always about the same thing; but during the year, from time to time, aren’t there days when two or three additional dishes are set out; these are festive days, aren’t they?’ All their eyes were upon me. Then I would say to them, ‘Children, you too ought to be little missionaries.’ Then I would explain to them what I meant: little missionaries by being very good and by praying for their parents. I was very careful not to tell them to pray for the conversion of their parents; oh, no, because that could have irritated and put off their parents who might often be irreligious. But this is how I went about it. ‘My little friend,’ I would tell one of them, ‘your parents love you a lot, don’t they?’ ‘Yes, Father.’ ‘If you were to die, what would they want for you?’ The child would lower his head. I would tell him: ‘Paradise. And if your parents died, what would you want for them?’ ‘Paradise.’ ‘Then that is the best thing we can want for those whom we love.’ ‘Yes, Father.’ ‘Well, then, come on, children, you must pray to God so that your parents might go to paradise, and thus you will be little missionaries.’

[7] “Then we would hear their confessions, and hardly had we finished with what concerned them when the adults would arrive. Often as we heard their confessions, the parents would thank us for what we were doing for their children: ‘Oh, Father, how thankful the parish is for what you have done for our children!’ And, at the end of the mission, it happened that some fine people would say: ‘What’s going to happen to our children now that the missionaries are going away?’”

[8] “Then, on Sundays, ah! I didn’t overlook the children. After Mass I would teach catechism and we would keep the children from remote hamlets, those who could not come in the evening. The church, the sanctuary were filled. During these catechism lessons and those on weekdays, I did not dwell on a particular chapter, but I would go from one point to another and I stopped on the things about which I understood that people needed to be instructed. I would give an explanation with much goodness and I would really try to show how to practice what I was teaching, for example an integral confession, much easier than commonly thought. I could point out such a parish where these catechism lessons were the cause for the salvation of adults who, without that, would have remained in sin. In one place these instructions shed light on and furnished me with the means for remedying great misfortunes” [Addition: The pastor was a libertine and he had perverted all the men during their youth by persuading them that there was no harm in the infamous actions he was teaching them. Father’s instructions gave them doubts which they had never had; the whole parish woke up and came to fall down in the confessional, and they took the means to return to God.]

[9] He cited still other admirable incidents which occurred to him concerning guilty children whom he had absolved and who, at that tender age, had made such resolutions, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, that they had persevered.

[10] “We don’t know,” he said, “what there is to be gained with the children, other than that this practice is a great grace for the mission. That is what I would want written.”

[11] “Father,” I told him, “the one who speaks about missions during the retreats, when he speaks about children, always talks about the care to be given them if time permits. When I hear that phrase, ‘if time permits’, it always seems to me that that is not what you would want us to say.”

[12] He then testified what great displeasure this caused him as he paused a great deal on the good that one would do, and as he repeated to me what I just said about the grace which this practice attracts; then he expressed to me his tender love for people that age in a most touching manner.

[13] I said to him, “Father, someone, while consulting the curé of Ars” (he is a priest of the Lyons area, of eminent sanctity, who probably will be canonized one day) “at a time when he was deliberating whether to enter the Society of Mary, the curé answered him: ‘The Marists are men of God; they begin their missions by teaching catechism.’ It seems that he cited this point as the one way of recognizing the supernatural nature of the work.”

[14] These comments pleased Fr. Superior very much, and he also said to me that in Rome people were highly sympathetic toward the Society; that Fr. Dubreuil, who was in Rome for some time (1844), had written to him on this point; that he really wanted us to preserve this letter; and that it might well have a place in the history of the Society.

[15] When he talked to me about writing those things, he ordinarily added a few words which showed the repugnance he had. It was evident that he was always afraid that others would speak about him.

[16] Then he came back to talk to me about the way they gave missions in the early days of the Society.

[17] “During the mission we would recommend prayer. Every day, during Benediction of the blessed Sacrament, we would publicly say three *Our Fathers* and three *Hail Marys* for the conversion of sinners; each time we would repeat aloud ‘for the conversion of sinners.’ Before each instruction we were very careful to say the three *Hail Marys* to put ourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. During the first week we preached only on topics suitable to win people’s confidence. This is extremely important, and I want very much for this to be observed. It was only on the fourth day that we began to say something to shake people, then the harsh truths followed.

[18] “We would explain the obligations in detail only when just about all the people had come once to confession. Otherwise we would have scared them.” (Father Superior even said that he would sometimes hold up and even stop giving these detailed explanations when it was noticed that this agitated people, made them tremble, and dampened the joy of their hearts.)

[19] “At the end of the mission we never reproached people, never. One must always try to win everybody’s friendship, even of those who have not profited from the mission. In one parish where the middle class people had not come forward, though they did come to the setting up of the mission cross, Fr. Jallon, who was supposed to preach, reproached them tearfully, and this might have alienated them forever. I was very angry about this, but then I found the opportunity at the end to say a few words. I spoke with a great deal of esteem, attention, and respect about those who had not come forward. I even made a few compliments to them. Well, one of their leaders hid himself when I went to see him with the pastor, and before the year was up, he had gone to confession.

[20] “On such occasions,” he used to say, “you must excuse those who have not come forward, attribute that to their business affairs, etc. Otherwise you risk alienating them forever.” He greatly admired that prudent zeal of St. Francis Xavier, who, after having unsuccessfully made a thousand efforts to convert the king of Bongo in Japan, left him and said that he hoped that the word of God that he had heard would one day bear fruit and he expressed a thousand wishes for his happiness and showered all his friendship on him.

[21] Then he continued to talk to me about the missions.

[22] “We would do our own cooking. One day I was alone; my confrere had gone to offer the second Mass in Cerdon. I told him to put on the cooking pot and to prepare the fire so that we would only have to light it after the service. I then began to make the soup, but I didn’t know how; I couldn’t eat it, and so I began to eat bread. But we were never so happy.

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Spring 1842. Mayet. Synthesis on Déclas. [Mayet 1, 295-297 = OM 537, 7-13]:

[7] Father Déclas is a man of God, hard on himself, very mortified, full of faith and of the spirit of prayer, tireless at work, seeming not to have a body when he is on mission, and very zealous. Zeal is his distinctive virtue.

[8] He gave a lot of missions and he moved a great number of country people in the diocese of Belley.

[9] “In all the Society he is the one,” Fr. Colin used to say, “who will have the greatest number of souls around him on judgment day.”

[10] When winter began and with winter the time for going out on mission, Fr. Déclas was beaming with joy; his face, his comportment, his words, everything in him spoke of the apostolic man who is going to sow conquests for heaven.

[11] He used to commend most insistently the sinners whom he was going to evangelize.

[12] During the summer, he was often asked for on Sundays by some neighboring parish, and he always went there eagerly when obedience permitted it. He used to say, “Truly I would have some scruple about not answering the call. I never go out, almost never, without bringing some soul back to God.”

[13] Several times in these *Memoirs*, Fr. Déclas is, directly or indirectly, the one we are talking about.

Preaching

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1838-1839 (c. 1839). *Colin. Extract from an oral statement on the need to rely only on God when preaching. [Mayet 1, 249 = OM 468]:*

“Look at Fr. Déclas. In the early days, I could not listen to him without suffering a great deal, because every once in a while he said something incorrect or made an error. Afterwards, that didn’t bother me any more because I saw that God was blessing him. It even seemed to me that God blinded his listeners and that they did not hear what they shouldn’t hear, not to mention his errors in French; God blessed him.”

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1838-1839 (c. 1839). *Colin. Extract from an oral statement on the need to rely only on God when preaching. [Mayet 1, 257 = OM 469]:*

“At the beginning, people spoke to me against Fr. Déclas. They thought he had too little of the proper forms; what did they not say against him? The bishop of Belley himself; I myself, the first time I went on mission with him, I really suffered because of what he was saying from the pulpit. Well, I thought about it. I saw that God was blessing him; often the wisest men wanted to speak to him; there is perhaps no one in the Society who is surrounded by so many souls; so now I have given him free rein.”

[Addition:] Note by the copyist. — Prudence nevertheless did indeed govern Fr. Colin’s behavior. He did not let Fr. Déclas preach in the cities, in Belley, etc.; he forbade him to say Mass in public in Belley because he would say Mass in a ridiculous manner. He suffered a great deal from his manner. He sent him almost nowhere. He let him go only to places where he was known, Bugey, Valromey, (the upper Bugey)... etc., etc. It is important to see that Fr. Colin is consistent. (1846).

399

March 27-31, 1841. Colin. Account to the Belley confreres. [Mayet 1, 124-127 = OM 516]:

[1] “Ah! in the pulpit one must speak especially from the heart. Sometimes it happened that I did; not always; one is not always well-disposed. At such times, it seems that one does some good. Once, I was really inspired; I really didn’t know where I was getting all that I was saying; afterwards, I was angry that I had not written down all I had said. That’s how it is: one’s heart is touched, electrified. Yes, there is a kind of electricity for a missionary and one really feels it sometimes.

[2] “Once we were giving a mission in a parish whose pastor spoke in a very cold manner; all those souls were cold and apathetic. Ah! how I suffered there! All during that time, I had only one thought that I couldn’t get away from: what was needed was for somebody to take a whip and beat all those people; that’s the only way to give them a little life.” (As he said that, he laughed a lot and everybody laughed with him.)

[3] “I always remember how once, on a mission, Fr. Jallon made me shiver and suffer. I turned pale. It was about the sixth commandment; the most formal texts in holy scripture, he was translating them word for word, and so clearly! ... I was sweating... I didn’t say anything, because, well... there... A little later, we were giving a mission not far from there; I found a person who asked to make a general confession; she told me her faults. Ever since such and such a time there was a clean break and this soul was doing well. I asked her for an explanation. She told me, ‘On such and such a day, in such and such a parish, I heard a sermon that affected me a great deal.’ I calculated: that was precisely the same sermon that had caused me so much discomfort. That was what had affected her. We used to see that happen every day. [4] Messieurs,” he said laughing, “I am still happy with my confreres. Today, young priests are not so stiff, I believe, as they were twenty years ago when I left the seminary. Two of our missionaries went to a parish of fifteen hundred souls. They were helped by other confreres. Well, after ten days of retreat, twelve hundred received communion. Twelve hundred! After six days! In a parish of fifteen hundred! That’s just an approximation. Well, that really pleases me. [5] There is only one who wants the missions to come to an end. He’s a little tired and he’s a little rougher than the others. Come on, Messieurs, we are exposed to that. I remember once I was harassed; we were at the end of a mission. It was at the end of the day; I couldn’t go anymore. Someone came to get me; there was a problem about his confession. I said to him, ‘My dear friend, I can’t take you.’ He had barely gone out when I was devastated by it. It seemed to me that maybe I could have taken him; I prayed to God all night long, and I said, ‘God, send him to me if you think I could absolve him.’ The next day, he was there; I took care of him. [6] Ah! Messieurs, you must be good. And after all, what difference is there between them and us? They are our brothers. The only difference there is between them and us is that we speak and those poor people do not have the right to answer, I mean when we are in the pulpit; only we have a ministry to carry out.”

400

1844. Colin. Incident during a mission. [Mayet 3, 339f = OM 590]:

[1] “To have the key to the human heart is quite something,” he used to say. “Yes, you must win a man’s esteem and his heart in order to win him over.” On this point he cited the incident which, I believe, he had witnessed during a mission he had given.

[2] “‘My wife, give me a rosary,’ said a man who had no religion, as he was leaving after a sermon. ‘Today I cried; tomorrow I am going to confession.’ Yes,” Fr. Colin said, “a tear is not a conversion, but the supernatural follows. You have to know how to approach people.”

401

January 1845. Colin. *Advice on preaching.* [Mayet 4, 603 = OM 604 = FS 99, 6]:

“[...] Messieurs, I myself during four years of giving missions never preached without prior preparation, with a single exception, and then it was out of necessity, for the priest who was to give the talk did not turn up. I was in the confessional when they came to call me. There was no way out, and up I went.”

402

September 1845. Mayet. *Extract from an article.* [Mayet 5, 514 and 529 = OM 609, 1]:

Our oldest member, Fr. Jallon, who had been Fr. Superior's teacher, was in the habit of preaching long sermons; it happened that Fr. Superior, his former pupil, would say to him from below when the sermon lasted too long, “That's enough.” Fr. Jallon would stop short, would obey like a little child, without murmuring, without bitterness, and he would come down quietly, not even suspecting that he was practicing one of the most beautiful virtues of religion in a superhuman fashion.

403

April 1846. Colin. *Extract from an article on the necessity of instruction for Marists.* [Mayet 6, 655f = OM 626]:

[1] “When I was giving missions, before the approval of the Society, Fr. Pichat, superior of the minor seminary in Belley, commissioned us to give the retreat in that establishment. I got right down to composing sermons and instructions on the sacrament of penance. Everything was written down. I certainly would not have agreed to it without doing that. At the end of the retreat, I was supposed to give the instruction on the Blessed Virgin; I had not entirely finished it; for that reason, I did not want to preach, and I asked to have Fr. Déclas go into the pulpit in my place. Fr. Pichat did not want this. I can't understand how people can get up in public like that.”

[Addition:] It happened after that instruction that Fr. Pichat told him *that it was a masterpiece of argumentation.*

404

October 1, 1846. Mayet. *Article on an unfortunate sermon of Fr. Déclas during a mission.* [Mayet 5, 432f = OM 635]:

[1] During a mission, the irreligious and unbelieving people came to an exercise; they probably wanted that it be someone eminent who was preaching; it was someone else; he railed at them. That had a bad effect.

[2] (The pastor had wanted to see Fr. Colin, whose prudence was well known, get up into the pulpit; he did not name himself when he told us about that. The other missionary was Fr. Déclas.)

405

1848. *Mayet. Narrative based on words of Colin. [Mayet S2, 319-321 = OM 686, 2-9]:*

[2] In a certain parish they refused to receive the missionaries. One of the inhabitants was dying; Father went to see him and exhort him. The sick person answered him, "I don't need you." They went to the neighboring parish. After the sick person had died, someone came to get the missionaries to bury him (for there was no pastor there). Fr. Colin went and, since no one had witnessed that person's refusal to receive the sacraments, he went ahead with the burial ceremony.

[3] As all the people had come to the church for this ceremony, Fr. Colin said, "This time I have them; I must make use of the occasion to announce the eternal truths to them." At the cemetery he gave a second sermon. It was frightening; the whole parish was terrorized and filled with remorse. Then he returned to his post.

[4] Shortly afterward he fell sick and they sent him away. As he was going to Belley, he had to pass through the parish of the person who died. As soon as these good people saw him, they began to cry out, "There's the bishop, there's the bishop."

[5] They beat the drum; everybody came to church. He preached to them, heard confessions for part of the night, and left for Belley, to which the bishop had recalled him. The first thing Father did was to beg the bishop to let him go back to that parish. Oh, the justice of God! The bishop needed him, and so refused his request.

[6] But this seed was not lost. Soon afterwards there was a mission not far from there; the whole parish profited from it and was converted.

[7] It happened during these missions that the missionaries would take a handbell and go through the village, ringing it and calling to the instruction those who were not going there.

[8] Fr. Colin told us that he had noticed that all those who came to the instructions sooner or later ended up by coming forward, and with this remark, spoken in general terms, he encouraged our missionaries.

[9] Didn't St. Vincent de Paul also say to his men: "For anybody to make a retreat and not to be converted at it, that is a miracle."

406

About 1842. Mayet. Note reporting a reflection by Colin. [Mayet 1, 159fm = OM 723]:

During a mission when the mission cross was being set up, Fr. Colin gave a sermon on the cross which delighted the bishop of Belley. This was probably the occasion when Colin came to the notice of his bishop, and this was the reason for his appointment as superior of the minor seminary in Belley. "Since this place was the means that God wanted to use to begin the Society, it was really necessary that he should blind the bishop in my regard," Fr. Colin would say later.

407

1845-1846? Mayet. Note about Colin and Jallon on mission. [Mayet 3, 160m = OM 734]:

[1] Sometimes when Fr. Colin saw that the people were not well instructed, he would leave the confessional at the time of the instruction, would ask questions of Fr. Jallon without having warned him, saying, "Father Missionary, let me ask you a few questions." Then he would ask him questions

on the topics that he wanted the people to learn about. He knew about Fr. Jallon's strength and knowledge of doctrine.

[Addition:] He would not have done that with others, for example with Fr. Déclas.

408

1846? *Mayet. Note on the opinions of Frs. Seon and Déclas. [Mayet 4, 423m = OM 736]:*

[1] At that time, Fr. Seon admitted that for a long time he believed that the Society was supposed to preach only in the country, like the Lazarists; he also admitted that he had contributed to spreading this opinion among the public and that it was only recently that he became familiar with the intentions of Fr. Colin and of our rule on this point. Fr. Déclas had shared that same error; several of the early fathers too.

[2] I think that comes largely from the fact that most of them were incapable of preaching before a well-educated audience, for they were not men of letters, they made errors in French, etc., so through prudence and because of a healthy judgment, and especially through Fr. Superior's vigilant conduct, they did not go too far and confined their ministry within the circle of their ability.

409

August 20, 1887. *Jeantin. Extracts from a conference to the novices of Paignton. [APM 921.381.1, pp. 23f = OM 879, 1]:*

However, the missions continued and prospered. One characteristic out of a thousand, as related by Fr. Humbert, who had joined up with the missionaries shortly after their arrival in Belley, can be used to prove the point. "In one parish," said he, "where I was preaching with Rev. Fr. Founder, there was a very small church. However, everybody came to the sermon; they seated themselves as they could. Grace was mightily at work there; the whole parish came to the sacraments. — On the day of the closing so many people came from the neighboring villages that, with the church full, there were still more people outside than inside. How would all these people be able to hear? At the time for the sermon, Rev. Fr. Colin said to me, 'Go up to the choir loft and put yourself by that little window and repeat to the crowd who can't hear me some of the words that I am going to say from the pulpit.' I did as best I could, and those who were outside were as moved as those who were inside, so true is it that when God is with a man he needs very little to move hearts."

Hearing confessions

410

1838-1839. *Colin. Words to his confreres. [Mayet 1, 358-370 = OM 475]:*

[1] A mission was about to end. On the day before the closing, a man came to see Fr. Colin. He had already come to confession, but he had fallen back into the same sin and his female accomplice (hiding her sin) had just profaned the sacrament and received absolution.

[2] What to do? “What do you want me to do, my friend? I can’t give you absolution.”

[3] However, in order really to move that heart and to inspire him and at the same time test his contrition: “Are you willing to do the penance that I will give you?”

[4] “Yes, Father.” “Well, you will spend so much time tonight in prayer (a considerable length of time). You will go before your crucifix, and then you will say: ‘You who have created me, you who have redeemed me, have pity on me for I have crucified you...’ You will ceaselessly repeat these words and each time that you say them over again you will strike your breast... You will come back tomorrow.”

[5] The next day, that man came back. “Well, did you do what I told you to do?” “Yes, Father.” “Begin your confession.” “Father, I accuse myself...” He fainted; his cheeks were pale and colorless; he looked emaciated, so much had sorrow disfigured him...

[6] “Oh, may it not please God,” said he, “that we should ever be like those who say, ‘Let it go by,’ and who throw souls into hell by their softness in the confessional.”

411

1842. *Mayet. Article entitled “Fr. Colin’s Faults.” [Mayet S1, 111-113 = FA 235, 12-14]:*

[12] He told us a very funny thing that happened to him in the course of his ministry, which amused us much and made him laugh heartily himself.

[13] A man came to him for confession (on a mission, I think). He was one of those apathetic souls, lacking in energy, whom nothing can get through to. Father Colin, finding himself face to face with this solid mass, and not knowing what to do, in a *primo-primus* movement which overtook reflection, gave him a good cuff. Much astonished at what had suddenly befallen him, the man looked up in bewilderment and gazed at his confessor. But by now the latter had realized what he had just done and, smiling at his penitent, began to pat him. The poor man took the slap he had received from the confessor as a tap of affection, and everything turned out well between them.

[14] How we laughed at this story! If I recall this incident, it is not because I consider his action blameworthy in the sight of God; it was an imperfection in human nature rather than an act of the will. This little anecdote will amuse readers, as much as it amused us.

412

1845. *Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 601fm = OM 610]:*

[1] In 1845 he told us, “As I was traveling on the missions...” He checked himself and said, “that is, when I was a catechist in the villages, and a very poor catechist at that, the thought that preoccupied me the most was this: ‘It is because of a lack of instruction that these people are being lost.’”

[2] “It is true that, at that time, there were fewer priests than today; we had just come out of the revolution, etc., etc.

[3] “Things happened to me that prove this,” he would say to us.

[4] “Before giving absolution to country people, I would say to them, in order to stir up their contrition: ‘My friend, how many mortal sins do you need to have to go to hell?’ ‘Father, just one?’ ‘If you had died, where would you have gone?’ ‘I don’t know.’ ‘Have you committed any mortal sins?’ ‘Father, I don’t know.’

[5] “And there were some,” Fr. Colin also said to us, “who were covered with them from head to toe.

[6] “So I would say to them, ‘Haven’t you confessed such and such a sin?’ ‘Yes, Father.’ ‘Well, that’s serious. You’ve done it so many times per day, that makes so many times per week, so many times per month, so many times per year.’

[7] “Then, great sighs came from him, and I would say to myself, ‘People are being lost for lack of instruction and lack of remorse.’”

413

January 20, 1849. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 6, 693m-696m = FS 171, 1]:

On January 20, 1849, Fr. Colin said while chatting in the refectory, “Ah no indeed, I know of no greater pleasure, of nothing on earth which can be compared to the happiness of a priest who sees souls coming burdened with sins to cast themselves weeping at his feet, their hearts full of contrition, and then rising again intoxicated, wild with joy to the point of waiting for their confessor in the street and even kissing his feet in the mud — as happened to me once during a mission. I have known poor souls who had waited thirty-six years for my arrival although, apart from missing their Easter duties, they had not a single other sin to confess. Apart from these sins, I doubt if I could have found sufficient matter for absolution in the rest. Ah, what good our ministry does for souls! Messieurs, my sons [there were a dozen or so young priests present] there is not one of you listening to me now, not one, who is not called to save a great many souls — yes, a great many. May your hearts, then, quiver at the thought, and to prepare yourselves so as to be able to gather even more of them later on, devote yourselves wholeheartedly to your work now. The time you have been given for that now is most precious; you will only realize its real worth later.” [...]

414

January 22, 1848. Colin. Words to the confreres. [Mayet 6, 617m = OM 675]:

“Never say ‘I can’t see you; I can’t absolve you.’ Do not distrust grace. What do you know about what will happen? Since they come to you, that is a sign that they need something; that’s the beginning of good will. As for myself, I have never refused anybody while on mission; it would happen that I was exhausted, obliged to drag myself on all fours to get to the pulpit; I was in a damp confessional, where water was dripping. Well, even then, during those missions, I did not refuse anybody.”

The children

415

Autumn 1844. Bishop Epalle. Note to Fr. Mayet based on what Fr. Colin told him. [Mayet 3, 155fm = OM 583]:

[1] “During the mission we would hold a very touching ceremony; it was the one which Rev. Fr. Superior held most dear, and during which he preached himself, *the blessing of the children*. Every time he talked about it, he did so with an ineffable happiness, and he really desired that this practice, which he considered so useful, should be preserved in the Society.

[2] “All the fathers and mothers would arrive with their children; the preacher would go up into the pulpit, would speak to the children and to the parents, and, at the end, all the clergy from a place where they could be seen” (from the altar, I believe) “would all together bless the children.

[3] “Once, Fr. Colin said at the end of the sermon, ‘Before calling down graces from on high upon the children, the parents must retract the curses which their mouths may have spoken upon them while their hearts disavowed them, so that God’s blessing may rest upon their heads. Fathers and mothers, pardon your children.’

[4] “The parents did not understand what Fr. Colin was asking of them.

[5] “He stopped for a moment and said, ‘My children, God cannot bless you yet because your parents have not yet decided to pardon you. I am going to ask for pardon in your name a second time,’ and he repeated, ‘Fathers and mothers, forgive your poor children.’ Then cries and sobs broke out, and all cried out that they did forgive.”

416

1845-1848? Colin. Note by Mayet on the catechetical method used by Colin. [Mayet 3, 156fm = OM 733, 1]:

“When teaching catechism on a mission,” Fr. Colin used to say, “you must never upbraid the children, you must not tell them that they have not understood, never in the case of disagreeable things, speak as though you were on stage, nor have them do so either. For example, don’t say, ‘I have committed twenty mortal sins, I accuse myself of only nineteen;’ ‘you have committed twenty mortal sins, you accuse yourself of only nineteen.’ ... There are people who are so limited that they would believe that you, who are speaking, or that the child who is as if on the stage, that you have really committed those sins.”

Dealings and relationships

417

Academic year 1842-1843. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 206m = OM 560]:

[1] “I would consider that the Society was lost if I saw that spirit introduced among us.” He was speaking about the method of a certain group of missionaries who, for the missions, demanded that people go out to meet them in procession, who wanted to be the masters in the Church. “No, no, we must follow the counsel of Jesus Christ: *take the last place at table*. [2] One day we, along with Fr. Jallon, were supposed to give a mission in the Bugey. We knew that people wanted to come to meet us in procession; there was no way to voice any opposition to their doing so. So I said to Fr. Jallon, ‘Let’s go,’ and we arrived two hours before the time fixed for it. We found everybody there. We had only to put on a surplice and announce that the mission was open.”

418

About October 1838. Colin. Collected comments. [Mayet 1, 179-181 = FS 11, 7-9]:

[7] “I would very much like,” he said, “that our early days be committed to writing. People would see with what simplicity missions were conducted. I can see that it is the best way of getting to know the spirit of the Society. I tremble lest later on the spirit of complacency make its way into the Society.

[8] “When a missionary arrives in a parish, he should make himself small, very small. If I may be allowed to say so, the Marists, the little Marists, have already been the cause of one good thing. There were sometimes missionaries who arrived in a parish, took their place at the head of the table, said the *Bless us, O Lord*, and took first place. Now, in the diocese of Lyons and in this diocese of Belley, that is no longer done. Our example has contributed to that. Yes, Messieurs, A Marist missionary must submit himself to the parish priest, and take his advice. Let him preach, hear confessions, all well and good. That is where his business lies. But for the rest, let him not lay down the law.

[9] “Someone told me of a missionary — fortunately not a Marist — who arrived in a parish. At lunch there were more than two dishes. He summoned the maid and had her take away all the dishes on the table which he considered excessive. May no Marist ever do a thing like that! Moreover, there were several people present at this lunch to witness that. The parish priest was very irritated, as he had a right to be. It is quite all right for a missionary to say to the parish priest, ‘Monsieur, I beg you to carry on as usual; that will be quite sufficient for us. Please act as if we were not here.’ But if the parish priest does not take any notice and wants to honor his missionaries, they must abide by that.”

419

August 3, 1843. Colin. In council in Belley. [Mayet 2, 155f = OM 558]:

[1] “During one of the missions I was giving, the pastor, coming into the sacristy, found a host that had been cut” (it was probably the transversal line which many mark with the paten before the

sacrifice). “He got angry; he fussed at me. I excused myself, I think, by saying that I didn’t know who had done that. That was better than arguing.

[2] “Another time, when a churchwarden tolled the bell for some service or some other reason, the pastor thought that we had given the order, he made a terrific uproar. I had said nothing; I didn’t know that nobody else had said anything to the churchwarden either. At dinner the pastor began his harangue all over again. We simply said, ‘The churchwarden did not do his duty.’”

420

December 1847. Colin. Praise for Bishop Devie. [Mayet 7, 824-826 = OM 665, 3-5]:

[3] “The bishop of Belley,” he used to say, “is one of the finest models for a bishop that I know. He did an immense amount of good in his diocese. When he arrived it was an abandoned territory, as are almost all those which are located in the far corners of dioceses.” (Before 1823, the department of the Ain was part of the diocese of Lyons.) “He completely renewed it. Jesuits, Capuchins, Marists, missionaries from the diocese, missionaries from Lyons, Bernardines: he called on all of them to give missions. Each parish has been evangelized four or five times. Thus the department of the Ain, which formerly was one of those where there were more misdemeanors, has already several times been the one where are the fewest misdemeanors in all of France, as is proved in the annually published crime statistics.

[4] “Shortly after his arrival, when we began to give a few missions with Fathers Jallon and Déclas, he asked me to offer the mission to pastors whose parishes stood in the greatest need. This was a rather delicate commission. I wrote to the pastor that the bishop would look with great pleasure upon his asking for a mission. The pastor would ordinarily refuse because of the expenses. Immediately, the bishop would say that he would take care of the expense, and we went. It was so little... I remember that in one parish where we two missionaries lived for a month in the inn during a mission, all our expenses, which I noted down, amounted to 50 francs for everything. Ah, today people think...” said he.

[5] Coming back to the bishop of Belley: “He conducted himself,” he said, “with admirable prudence. When he arrived, he didn’t change anything. Acting too precipitously causes a commotion. He began by issuing some circulars. His ritual only came out when people’s dispositions had been prepared, and it has been favorably received. I know that it includes some rather bold propositions, where it extends a bit too much the rights of the bishops, but it is a book that nevertheless is quite useful. For the missions, you see how he began, not operating by means of authority, but acting in such a way that the pastors were obliged to ask for them. Formerly, there was a lot of opposition to these exercises, but today the pastors are the first to ask for them, to such an extent that it is impossible to satisfy all of them.”

421

End of 1844 - beginning of 1845. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 4, 594-597 = OM 595]:

[1] The cardinal of Lyons said to the Marist Fathers and to the Capuchin Fathers that he didn’t like the missions to be too short and that he would forbid his pastors to have them last less than four weeks. That was reported Fr. Colin. He answered, “If I had something to say to the cardinal, I would say to him, ‘Your Eminence, missions lasting five or six weeks are good only for making hypocrites, while when we don’t try to do the whole sowing by force, those who have not come over will come later.’”

[2] He told us, around the end of 1844 or the beginning of 1845, that during missions in the country he would not want the Marists to speak themselves about setting up a mission cross (unless

they were asked freely and spontaneously to do so), nor should they have people spend a lot for big ceremonies. His reason was that, even when the people seem well-disposed at the time, the memory of the expenses which the mission would have incurred, would later prevent them from wanting any more missions when their good dispositions would not be the same.

[3] “Formerly,” he said, “in the diocese of Lyons, the parishes had to give eighteen hundred francs to have a mission. The Society has already caused this good change, that things aren’t done that way anymore. Its example has changed the order of things and, in the diocese of Belley likewise, our way of doing things has been a model for the diocesan missionaries.”

[Addition:] (The Marists did and still do go about without inquiring as to whether they would be paid; they come back without asking for anything; they accept if they are given something. It has happened that they were not even reimbursed for their travel expenses.)

[4] On this point he told us that, at the time when he was giving missions in the diocese of Belley, there were some people in a parish who were saying, “The mission costs the parish so much.” Fr. Colin, one day while he was preaching, brought up this comment and attributed it to outsiders. (“That’s what you should always do,” he said, “so as not to alienate the parishioners whom one is evangelizing.”) After he had really aroused their attention, he cried out, “You outsiders, do you want me to tell you how much the mission is costing this parish, how much?...” All eyes were fixed on him, all ears were attentive... Then he told them that the mission wasn’t costing anything, and that, if gratitude urged the parishioners to offer them something, he would refuse it.

422

After 1850. Mayet. Note on the missions. [Mayet 1, 133m = OM 722]:

In the early days of the Society, after Rev. Fr. Founder and Fr. Déclas had given a mission, the pastor gave them a small amount of money (maybe 40 francs). They took what they needed for the trip and gave back the rest.

423

December 1847. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 5, 410m = OM 664]:

He didn’t want us to denounce the tavern-keepers. In December 1847 he told us, “When I was a missionary I was the friend of all the tavern-keepers. I’m the one who had their customers” (laughingly).

424

December 22, 1847. Colin. Conversation. [Mayet 4, 466 = OM 661 = FS 148, 3f]:

[3] Father Ducournau said to him, “Father, in one parish where I gave a mission there were some factories. The works manager prevented his workers from coming to our talks. What should we have done?”

[4] “Well, in that case,” Father Colin replied, “a little patience and balm, not speaking out, making excuses for them, expressing regret that the managers’ business did not allow them to arrange suitable times for the working people. If some should come, you should compliment them, speak to them kindly, show your gratitude to their masters... That happens several times and little by little

they all come. The managers are ashamed of their behavior. While I myself was giving missions, we went once to quite a large town where there were some factories. We adopted that approach and everyone followed the mission. It was at Tenay, near Belley.”

425

March 1, 1842. Mayet. Account of the diocesan missionaries of Belley. [Mayet 1, 724 = OM 533, 1]:

When he was in Rome for the first time, Fr. Convers wrote to him that diocesan missionaries had just been established in the diocese of Belley, and that this seemed to be a bit in opposition to the Society, which had already given a few missions in the diocese; we could also see in this action by the bishop of Belley, who up to that point had considerably tested the Society of Mary, a new kind of opposition on his part. When Fr. Colin read this letter, he was upset at first, but faith took over immediately and he said within his heart, “Blessed be God.” Later, he pointed out that what seemed to be in opposition was really providential, because, since the Society had few members at that time, it would have exhausted and weighed its members down with fatigue in order to do all the mission work.

Bugey: Missionary Life

The texts collected here concern the life of the missionaries aside from the actual missionary work itself: such external conditions like lodging and cooking and study, and the personal feelings and interior struggles that accompanied their missionary activity. The texts are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

Life on mission

426

1844. *Mayet. Note based on words of Colin. [Mayet 1, 401fm = OM 589]:*

[1] In the missions which Fr. Colin gave with Frs. Jallon and Déclas, all during dinner he would joke with them, not to make them uneasy, but to say something pleasant. He told us that he did so for two reasons: first, to relax their minds; and second, to keep them from saying unbecoming things before the servants. He added, "In my opinion, those who know how to get people to laugh without offending against charity have a great advantage which is often very useful."

[2] One day in 1844, at the motherhouse in Lyons, he was making pleasantries and, speaking about himself, he said to us, "When you get old, you need to be like a child. When I worked on important matters, I really liked having someone with whom I could exchange pleasantries; that loosens up your head and your nerves."

427

January 15, 1845. *Colin. Chatter after dinner. [Mayet 6, 55f = OM 597 = FS 87, 14]:*

[...] "Messieurs, in the early days of the Society, I was on the mission band with Fathers Déclas and Jallon for four years. We must have made each other suffer; that's part of life. God wills that men should have merit for charity. Even if there are only two or three together, it will always be the same. Besides, each has his way, which is as it should be. But, as I was saying, never, never during those years was there the slightest shadow of dissension among us."

428

February 26, 1845. *Colin. Conversation with Fathers Germain, Millot and Mayet. [Mayet 3, 161f = OM 605]:*

[1] On February 26, 1845, Fr. Colin told us that he had given missions in places where they were so badly nourished that they couldn't keep going anymore.

[2] On one of these missions, they had only one bed for two of them, and since out of modesty they lay as far apart as possible, they could neither move nor sleep. "Today," he told us, "I would

not let our Marists do that; instead, I would send one of the two. I suffered so much during that mission that I felt the effects for six months.”

[3] In one parish, there were no toilets and they had to go into the woods which was a quarter of an hour away from their residence.

[4] “It was our practice during our missions to laugh a lot during meals, but never in a way to hurt anybody.”

[5] They had had to bring the sacred linens for the holy sacrifice because sometimes they found some which were so dirty that they could not conscientiously use them. When that was the case they would take their own without anybody noticing.

[6] They sometimes gave a mission in parishes where the pastor had no faith (one could find sacred particles all over). Sometimes the pastor without faith would joke about matters of religion; when that happened they appeared not to understand and laughed with him. They were very polite and very reserved, but always appeared not to understand and they kept their own counsel; otherwise, they would not have done any good.

[7] “On those occasions,” Fr. Colin would say, “one must do what we did: a little battalion in square formation, impenetrable; we would give the word to each other; we were prudent, reserved. Let the superior always stand at the center of the battalion.”

429

November 21, 1846. Colin. Story told at table. [Mayet S2, 72-75 = OM 639]:

[1] “It was,” he said to us, “after the revolution. There were no priests; several churches had been abandoned; we were going into parishes where there were no pastors. Never were we so happy; never did we laugh so openheartedly. I still miss those times; they were good times. Messieurs, when you put up with something, nature suffers a little, but that is when you are happiest. Often we had to make our own soup. Once, we arrived in a parish where there had been no priests since the revolution. Nobody was living in the rectory. We were laughing as we went about sweeping as best we could. There were no panes in the windows, the ceiling was open; the cracks had been stuffed with straw. We went to bed. We were very cold, but we laughed.

[2] “Another time there were three of us; we found that there was only one bed in the parish. There was no rectory; we went to the inn and settled there; there were two of us, but there was only one bed. We didn’t sleep because we tried to keep apart from each other; we had already locked the door when the woman whose rooms we had taken came and knocked during the night. She was coming to bed. There was only one other bed, which was separated from ours by some planks. I did not want to answer, but nevertheless one of us went to the window and sent her away. ‘This room is ours.’ Ah! we certainly would not have wanted that creature to come in.”

[3] “We remained masters of the terrain.

[4] “Another time it was very cold and the door of the room or stable where we had gone to bed had an opening in it. Since there was only a winnowing-basket there, I told Fr. Jallon, ‘Fr. Jallon, put the winnow against the wind’; and indeed we tried to stop the wind from passing through with this windscreen. Never had we been so happy.

[5] “One day, as Fr. Jallon was going out in the morning, his feet sank down into a puddle that had been covered by the snow, and he quietly said to us, ‘there’s water there.’ Another time he got lost while coming back home and after wandering about in the countryside, he came back to us by another road. When the worry which we had had was over, we began to laugh. Sometimes we were very cold all night long, and when the day dawned, we preached anyhow.

[6] “Then we spent the whole day in the confessional and in the pulpit and, as we came back, we often still had to make our soup or else do without. Messieurs, we gave a lot of missions like that. When you suffer deprivation, you are happy. I admit, however, Messieurs, that I will never let

our missionaries give missions like that; no, I will not permit it. I even feel that my health would not have held up, and that is why, I think, after four years, God had me appointed by bishop Devie, the bishop of Belley, as superior of his minor seminary. I had stayed in damp confessionals and other damp places; I had some pain, some rheumatism.

[7] “Oh! Messieurs, the spirit of poverty, the spirit of obedience!”

430

December 22, 1847. Mayet. Stories told by Colin in the refectory at Puylata. [Mayet S2, 73-75m = OM 662]:

[1] It was in Innimont, near Belley. They stopped up the windows with hay; people also brought them a few rags. When they left, the poor people accompanied them, crying out “Long live the missionaries.” They had gone some distance, and the mountain still echoed with this acclamation. That’s where it happened, I believe, that in the middle of a group of men to whom he was giving signs of affection, Fr. Colin was surprised by a good peasant woman who, not knowing how to express her gratitude to him, grabbed him by the neck and kissed him. Another woman came up to do the same, but he withdrew.

[2] In that place they did not have a mattress; they slept on straw; and they had skirts to cover themselves during the night.

[3] There were some women who were so filled with joy after the mission that they even knelt down in the mud when Fr. Colin was going by and kissed his feet, and Father, who had been surprised and caught unawares, fled as fast as possible.

[4] Once, when he arrived in a parish to give a mission there, he came upon somebody who said to him, “Ah! Father, I’ve been waiting for you for ten years.”

Study

431

About 1839. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 55 = OM 462]:

“When I was coming back from a mission, I worked on my theology as much as I could; sometimes we would expound on it until eleven o’clock with Fr. Jallon, and I would say ‘I will not damn myself if I preach a little less well, but I will damn myself if I render a wrong decision.’”

432

1845. Mayet. Note reporting a detail furnished by Colin. [Mayet S2, 257 = OM 617]:

During the years when Fr. Colin gave missions (before the approval of the Society), every time when the work season had passed, he always went to make a retreat lasting four days at the Capuchins in Hyenne, a town in Savoy, two leagues away from Belley. Then he would take up his study of theology again, and thus his summer went by.

433

September 14, 1846. Colin. *To the professed of the Society at the time of the general retreat.* [Mayet 6, 727 = OM 629 = FS 109, 16]:

He said, "In the beginning, before the approbation, when Bishop Devie wanted us to give missions, he would have had us giving them even during the summer. I told him, 'My Lord, you must leave us the summer to ourselves, to work, otherwise it will be impossible for us to do as you wish.'"

Lodging at the minor seminary

434

January 1838. Chavoin. *Words spoken to Fr. Mayet.* [Mayet 1, 155-158 = OM 424, 6-8 = RMJ 100, 6-8]:

[6] Speaking of the beginnings of the Society, she added that these men had to put up with a great deal during the four years they spent as missionaries in the seminary at Belley. Several of the teachers made a laughing stock of them, as if they were fools or idiots, and those among the pupils who noticed did as they saw their masters doing. They would even have gone hungry (because of certain circumstances which Providence arranged) if the Marist Sisters had not been at Belley. As regards accommodation, we know they were lodged in a corridor. [7] "At last," said the Superior of Bon Repos, "I, who had seen all that, went to the Bishop of Belley and said, 'Ah, my Lord, will you leave the Blessed Virgin's Society in that condition?' and knowing how Fr. Pichat, a canon in Belley, loved the Blessed Virgin and how much he cherished the Society in his heart, I added: 'Couldn't you appoint Fr. Pichat to be superior of the college?' The Bishop answered: 'But you know that Fr. Pichat has very poor health.' 'My Lord, we shall pray. God will give him back his health.' [8] In the meantime one of my first companions, Sr. Saint Anne, fell ill. She thought she would die on a Friday, and after waiting for three weeks in vain, she was very sad on the evening of the third Friday. I asked her what was the matter, and she replied, 'I had always hoped that I would die today, but night has come, and I realize that this day is passing too.' I said what I could," continued the Superior, "to urge her to be resigned to God's will. But what I tell you shows you that she was truly an excellent soul. Well, a short while before she died, seeing that I was very much distressed, she said, 'Don't grieve so much. I will be more helpful to you in heaven than on earth.' 'Sister Saint Anne,' I replied, 'if you have any influence in heaven, you must get me three graces.' She died. Two weeks later I had obtained the three things I asked for. Fr. Pichat's appointment as superior of the college at Belley was the first. The other two were personal."

435

About 1838. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 151 = OM 465]:

[1] “Of all the trials the Society had to undergo, the one I consider to be the greatest is that of the minor seminary in Belley, where we had to live with fellow clerics who considered us as fools, who did not see things the same way we did, who opposed us. I kept an eye on the teachers even more than on the pupils.

[2] “Never was the minor seminary of Belley more flourishing than when we had the most crosses to bear, the greatest number of obstacles.”

436

End of 1840. Chavoin. Oral account given to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 730f = OM 513, 11f = RMJ 101, 11f]:

[11] “Bishop Devie wanted to make the fathers diocesan missionaries and he persecuted the younger Father Colin (at present the superior general). When the latter came out from an interview, he was in a state of indescribable distress and worry. Then Bishop Devie would complain, ‘Father Colin has his own ideas and holds fast to them. We cannot agree.’ That was because his Lordship was asking for things which God did not want.”

[12] (We can understand that it was a real agony for Father Colin to oppose a bishop he esteemed so highly, and not be able to adopt his views.) “What is more, in the junior seminary of Belley where these fathers were in residence, they would have gone hungry had it not been for us. Fr. Guigard, superior of the junior seminary, caused them very much trouble. They were made fun of. One day a lad who was taken care of by the fathers was punished very severely, and the elder Fr. Colin could not help remarking, ‘It is the ass which has to bear the burden,’ thinking that the affection he had for this child was the reason for this great severity. One day Fr. Colin had taken a dose of medicine. The sister in charge brought him a bowl of broth sufficient for the whole day, and then no one bothered any more about him than about a dog. In those days the elder Fr. Colin used to go every Sunday in all weathers to Bons, a village at an hour’s distance from Belley. He had much to put up with; he was acting parish priest there. Sometimes he had to go to the inn for his meals, at other times to the churchwarden, who gave him only a potato stew for his dinner.”

437

March 27 - April 9, 1841. Colin. Community meeting at the Belley college. [Mayet 1, 107f = OM 514, 4f = FS 39, 4f]:

[4] “We have put up with more than a little too, here in this house. Today I saw again the little corner we occupied when we first came. It was up on the third floor, in the corridor behind the glazed doors, next door to the chapel, and when I was asleep they used to wake me up early. Well, I just stopped sleeping, that was all. The one who suffered most was my brother, because he was in charge of the Sisters [the convent of Bon Repos]. While we went out on missions during the winter, he stayed all the time. Still, they were the best years of my life. Well, we were poor, four poor priests, nobody special. We had more than a few jibes directed at us, and they were right. What were we? We were fit only to be trampled underfoot, and they would gladly have spat upon us. Well, see how these poor men, these poor priests, soon changed position, rose to the head of the house, and the others were removed.

[5] “Ah, Messieurs, it is through the cross, through humiliations, that everything is accomplished.”

438

March 1842. *Mayet. Synthetic account of the origins of the Society.* [Mayet 1, 734-737 = OM 535, 21-30 = RMJ 145]:

[21] 14. Finally, Bishop Devie allowed the Marist Sisters to come and establish themselves in Belley. He also allowed Fr. Colin, Fr. Déclas (two of the four first companions) and the elder Fr. Colin, pastor of Cerdon, and Fr. Jallon, the pastor of Izenave, who had joined our holy father, to begin missions. His aim was to make use of their zeal, but not to allow them to form the Society of Mary. He was still thinking, I believe, of making them diocesan missionaries.

[22] 15. These fathers suffered a great deal in their missions. In one of them, at least I believe so, they slept in a stable, had to prepare their own meals, and protected themselves from the biting winter wind with a winnowing-basket which they set up against a door with a big hole in it, something which amused them a great deal. When Fr. Colin spoke about that period, he said laughingly, “That is still one of our best times.”

[23] 16. The bishop had lodged them in the college-seminary at Belley and this was a great cross for the Society. Some of the pupils, encouraged by certain masters, looked on them as fools and simpletons and made sport of them. The bishop did not know that their rooms were in a kind of corridor and that, at first, they had no fire in winter. The Superior of the Marist Sisters told me that, but for the Sisters they would not have had enough to eat. This state of affairs lasted four years and, added Fr. Colin laughing, “I consider these four years as good as any novitiate.”

[24] 17. “The clergy opposed the Marists, as well they should have,” Fr. Colin would say with humility. There were some who said, “This is the second volume of the Jesuits, bound in ass’s hide.” Others accused them of being *Jansenists*. They made fun of them and they felt no guilt in doing so.

[25] Fr. Ruivet, vicar general of the diocese of Belley, a man of great merit, a confessor of the faith during the French Revolution, and who had the greatest influence in the bishop’s council, was opposed to the Society; but he was a little taken by the faith and later by the success of this work.

[26] Fr. Greppod, another vicar general of Belley, who was very much concerned with learning, was also opposed to them. “He contrasted them with the men of genius and of high birth who began the institute of the Jesuits,” a young man from Belley said to me one day.

[27] I was told that in the major seminary of the diocese of Belley there were also some directors who were opposed to them.

[28] Fr. Perrodin himself, the superior of the major seminary, was not in favor of the Society. When Bishop Devie had changed the way he looked on the Society and Fr. Perrodin was entrusted with the task of announcing to the seminarians that the bishop would not oppose the vocation of those who wanted to enter it, he carried out this commission very sullenly, Fr. Maîtreperre told me, and he let clearly be seen that he had no taste for the matter, and he is one who could present very well and highlight messages which suited him. Fr. Perrodin is highly esteemed in the diocese of Belley.

[29] Thus we can see that God allowed good people to turn against this work so that it might be marked with the seal of the cross, a necessary character of all godly works. Instead of having unfavorable opinions of those whom we have just mentioned based on their opposition, let us lift our eyes higher; let us see God in all events and bless him for having used not only his enemies but his very friends to crucify, purify, and test our little Society. Moreover, let us observe in passing that prudence required caution, resistance and even the way of trials on the part of ecclesiastical superiors, because not every spirit must be believed lightly, because it is up to them to govern the Church of God, and since it is necessary that great works, like great saints, should pass through the crucible of humiliation and suffering. “It was necessary,” says the Gospel, “that Christ should suffer and so

enter into glory.” “Unless the grain of wheat,” said Jesus Christ himself, “fall to the ground and perish there, it remains alone and bears no fruit.”

[30] 18. The Superior of the Marist Sisters went to Bishop Devie and asked, “My Lord, are you going to leave the Society of Mary indefinitely in such wretched conditions?” “My dear child, what can I do about it?” “Be kind enough, my Lord, to name Fr. Pichat superior of the college-seminary.” (Fr. Pichat, canon of the cathedral, was a holy priest who loved the Marists.) “But Fr. Pichat has no health, he can’t fill that post.” “We’ll pray, my Lord, and God will restore his health.” They prayed and Fr. Pichat did in fact regain strength. He was named Superior and the fathers heaved a sigh of relief.

439

October 1, 1842. Colin. Words spoken to Frs. Eymard and Mayet. [Mayet 2, 250f = OM 547, 27f]:

[27] Then he spoke to us again about the Society. “When we wanted to establish ourselves (the Marist missionaries) in the city of Belley, I asked permission of the bishop. I did not ask him for a penny for that; everything was at our expense. He was opposed to this. However, we were allowed to do so. We bought a property; just as we were about to settle, the bishop forbade us to do so. But alas, I said to him, ‘Your Excellency, where will we stay?’ He said to me, ‘At the seminary.’ ‘But, your Excellency, there is no room at the seminary.’ ‘You will put two in the same room.’

[28] “I had to look for a place [in the seminary], and I had rooms made.”

440

1847. Mayet. Parallel between the beginnings of the Dominicans and those of the Marists. [Mayet 4, 286 = OM 669, 11]:

For twenty years, Fr. Colin and his companions suffered all sorts of affronts. At the secondary school in Belley, they were lodged in the corridor. Everywhere people called them fools, imbeciles; they made sport of them by calling them *Marionists*, as if to say *Marionnettes*; others accused them of being Jansenists. They called them asses. You would have blushed to be among them. People even attached rags to their clothing in derision. The children of the school where they were living made fun of them. The bishop of Belley made great efforts to smother this Society in the cradle.

441

May - October 1853. Maître-pierre. On the origins of the Society. [OM 752, 22-25]:

[22] From 1825 to 1836 the Society was generally hidden; it seemed very unsure in the eyes of those who knew about its existence. Its members gave many missions, especially in small localities. At that time many parishes were ill served in spiritual matters. Many had been without priests for a long time; a few were still without them. Others had old, sickly, negligent, or even scandalous priests. Faith had lost its vigor; ignorance was profound; disorders were fashionable and religious practices were neglected or abandoned. The missionaries effectively supported the zeal of their bishop, who finally succeeded in dispelling those clouds and in having religion flourish. Other confreres devoted themselves usefully to the education of youth, at the seminary and at the Capuchin house where they had established a boarding school. They began a bit to form candidates in the religious life, to establish a few language and theology classes. Those in the language and philosophy

classes went to attend classes at the seminary; theology was taught at the Capuchin house. For a few years, the theology class was made up of one student, two, three, and a larger number. And finally, out of five or six, two or three persevered. Even among the professors at the seminary and at the boarding school, the rate of perseverance was often no better. Some, after they had declared themselves as aspirants, made a contrary declaration and were ashamed for having come forward. This was no small trial for the perseverance of the founder, but his courage, reinforced by Mary's protection, did not fail at all. Fr. Bret, frightened by these defections, was talking with him one day. Fr. Superior was trying to reassure him when he said to him, "But what if everybody withdrew?" Father answered suddenly and forcefully, "If everybody withdrew, I would sing the *Te Deum*, and I would begin again!"

[23] That was only one trial among a thousand; they were many, they were painful, but they were humble like the Society. At first, these good Fathers were thrown to the top floor of the seminary, into rooms that were cold, without fireplaces, without heat, in coldest winter. When Fr. Guillaumot, pastor of Belley, a man of firm character, had paid them a visit, he was indignant to find them in such an abandoned state; he went to the bishop and said to him, "Your missionaries have been thrown up there onto the third floor, without a stove, without a fireplace, and consequently without heat; it is shameful, in such a cold winter as this." The bishop gave orders; but the only thing done amounted to placing a stove in the corridor which separated their bedrooms; aside from that, no one bothered with them, and they did not complain about anybody or about anything. They often had the opportunity to practice the spiritual counsel, *love to be unknown and to be considered as nothing*. They were considered as useless, supernumerary, ignorant men, without any ability, etc...

[24] In 1826, Fr. Pichat, a canon of Belley, a priest distinguished by his tender piety and the solidity of his virtues, was offered the post of superior at the secondary school. He refused because of his bad health which had caused him to leave an ecclesiastical school which he had been directing very well in Lyons. The bishop ordered him to pray for thirty days in succession at the tomb of St. Anthelme, bishop and protector of the diocese of Belley, so as to obtain sufficient health to take on this responsibility. Fr. Pichat prayed, was healed, and was named superior. He was a Marist himself. Then things changed in favor of the missionaries. But nevertheless people did not stop molesting them. They were reproached for accusing the professors to the superior. One of the professors said one day to the elder Fr. Colin, "You should know, Father, that the professors are accusing you of reporting what they do to Fr. Superior." "Tell them on my behalf," answered Fr. Colin, "that I am quite happy that they think so and that they say so, and that I invite them to live with a great spirit of union among them, and when they notice that someone has spoken about them to Fr. Superior, let them not suspect each other, but let them say, 'Fr. Colin is the one who reported everything.'" They stopped talking on this topic. But all had not been said; people made fun of them in letters sent to pastors and to professors; these letters circulated in the diocese and perhaps outside the diocese. Obedience and respect ceased for about a year, at least on the part of the professors; the pupils tended toward open revolt. These unseemly things were carried out even as far as the theater, in plays given or declaimed at the awards ceremonies. Fr. Ruivet, a vicar general, who did not like religious in general, barely put up with the Marists and underhandedly thwarted them. Fr. Perrodin, a vicar general and the superior of the major seminary, did as much.

[25] However, since these simple, enduring and devoted priests carried out their duties with constant zeal, others could not help but appreciate their services; Bishop Devie held them in esteem, employed them, and consulted them. Then, through one of those inconsistencies common enough to heated feelings, people began to consider them as men who did everything, who ran the bishop and the diocese, and what was said could be summarized in these often repeated words, "Now, to obtain something you have to bow and scrape before the Marists." The bishop named Fr. Superior an honorary canon and he would have liked to have invested him himself, but that wasn't easy; this new canon felt such repugnance toward everything that men call honor that he kept finding a way to get out of it. One day the bishop asked him to bring him the canon's capes which he had inherited from Fr. Pichat; Fr. Colin understood that this was so that he might invest him with it himself; he

sent them over with someone else. Then the bishop gave a definite order and he submitted. He also gave him verbally the powers of vicar general, but he never used them, and still less did he boast about them.

Colin: inner struggles

442

November 1838. Colin. Advice to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 1, 328f = OM 433]:

[1] “When we have something to do not to our liking, oh! then let’s get to it eagerly, let us bring all our strength to bear on it... That is an opportunity to mortify nature; let us embrace it joyfully. As for me, for the past twenty years I have only acted against my inclinations. I wanted a Society very much. Why? In order to be alone with God alone, in order to be able to converse with him, to lead a hidden life; that was what I was drawn to. And all the while I have always had to be on the move. [2] The first time we had to go out on a mission (there were only two of us; I had to put myself into it, since we were beginning with the missions), I experienced the most violent crisis; and then later I had to accept the post of superior at the minor seminary in Belley. Nobody knows what I have suffered even today in taking it up again.”

443

March 26, 1844. Colin. Spoken in council in Belley. [Mayet 5, 386 = OM 577]:

“How often I have personally experienced the effectiveness of prayer in difficult situations, in decisions which present the greatest problems, in the holy tribunal! Once when I was on a mission with Fr. Déclas and Fr. Jallon, I consulted with them on certain cases, and I found that they were rather severe; nevertheless, since I was the youngest one, I followed their decision, mistrustful of myself, although deep inside my opinion was different from theirs. Later on I recognized that, in those cases, we paid too much attention to the law and not enough to the fragility of human nature, and this has made me change a great deal my conduct in regard to several cases.”

444

About 1839. Colin. Spoken to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet 1, 349f = OM 473]:

“As for myself, I am persuaded that in the world there are many people who are sick only because they take too much care of themselves, because they pause over a little nothing. Once, I couldn’t go anymore; I was supposed to go out on a mission; Fr. Pichat drove me to the bishop’s residence; the bishop said to me, ‘Do you have chest pains?’ I said, ‘No.’ He said to me, ‘Well, go, give your mission.’ God gave me the grace not to experience the least difficulty in obeying; I gave the mission. How many times I went up into the pulpit when I couldn’t go any more, and I came down healed.”

445

November 21, 1846. Colin. Story told at table. [Mayet 5, 434f = OM 640]:

[1] On November 21, 1846, in the course of the same conversation in which Father spoke to us so strongly about poverty, he said to us:

[2] “The spirit of obedience, Messieurs, the spirit of obedience. I’m going to tell you a story about something that happened to me.” (We were at table in the dining room.) “When we were giving missions in Belley, before the approbation of the Society, it happened one year that I was very tired, and the bishop of Belley wanted us to give the mission exercises in a parish. Since I was sick, Fr. Pichat, the superior of the Belley minor seminary where we were staying during the summer, had me get into a carriage and drove me to the bishop’s house which, as you know, is only ten minutes away. Yes, I had not told him that I was sick.

[3] “He went in first to see the bishop, explained to him my condition, asked him not to send me, then I was ushered in. The bishop asked me a single question, ‘Do you have chest pains?’ ‘No, your Excellency.’ ‘Leave.’ I bowed respectfully as a sign of submission and then I got back into the carriage in order to return to the minor seminary. There, as I was going up the stairs to get to my room, I was suddenly cured, and I no longer felt indisposed.

[4] “Ah! Messieurs,” he said to us, “nobody knows, no, nobody knows the strength of obedience: *The obedient man speaks of victories.*

[5] “Several times on the missions I was dragging myself on all fours to get up into the pulpit and, when I came down, I was cured.”

446

Autumn 1846. Colin. Story; no context indicated. [Mayet S2, 111m = OM 651]:

[1] “There were certain missions which were so hard and in which everything was so lacking that I felt I had to make all my remarks to Fr. Pichat before going, because my health couldn’t possibly hold up. I told him everything, but then I obeyed; he was my superior.

[2] “After one of these missions I was sick for five or six months. And indeed, Messieurs, how could anybody hold up under forced labor, without food or lodging? I obeyed, but I do not want others ever to give missions of that kind.”

447

1842-1843? Favre. Note. [Mayet 1, 162m = OM 724]:

It happened during the mission in Ruffieu that Fr. Colin received his appointment as superior of the minor seminary in Belley. He was tired during this mission and was on his last legs. But he had himself carried up to the pulpit, like a Francis Regis; he always came down feeling better. They had pity on him; they called him the poor old man, and he was barely forty-two years old.

448

1881-1883. *Jeantin*. Extract from the fifth memoir. [APM 921.331.2, ff. 3f = *Jeantin* 1, 145 = OM 877]:

The holy founder kept up his languishing and exhausted strength only with the help of violent means which he told others about later. In order to overcome a little the exhaustion which was crushing him and to find the strength he would need in order to be understood from the pulpit, he would wear a hard and crude leather belt, and since the belt was not enough, he would add a book to make it tighter. Thanks to this apparatus, he could hold up for some time, but even with these violent efforts, nature could not go very far, and it was evident that the ministry of preaching missions was no longer possible for a man who could hold up only with the help of such procedures.

449

Academic year 1842-1843. *Colin*. No context indicated. [Mayet S1, 41f = OM 568]:

“Ah! I remember well the pastor who first called me *Father Superior of the Mission* during one of our trips at the beginning of the Society. Even if he had used a lance to make my heart bleed, he would not have made it bleed any more. And then at the same time, I felt that I was losing my freedom and that I could no longer be foolish with that folly that comes from being apostolic. A superior cannot act that way; he must not compromise the missionaries who come after him.”

450

1848. *Mayet*. Article. [Mayet S2, 321f = OM 687]:

[1] During the first four or five missions, Frs. Colin, Déclas and Jallon did not have a superior at all. Nevertheless, the greatest peace and the greatest union reigned among them. But, either because Fr. Montagny, who had given a mission with them, told the bishop about that, or because Frs. Jallon and Déclas had asked Bishop Devie to give them Fr. Colin as their head, it happened at Vieu-d’Izenave that he received the letter from his Excellency by which the bishop appointed him superior of the missionaries.

[2] He was humiliated.

[3] The first time that anyone addressed him with this title, *Father Superior*, he didn’t know where to hide. He said that he would never forget the place and the occasion, so confused was he.

[4] As he received this appointment to be superior, he felt at the same time that he was losing his apostolic freedom, and this only goes to prove his good sense and his prudence. Indeed, the superior is a moderator, but he cannot commit himself; he sets everything in motion, but he can hardly go to the fire. Bonaparte used to say, “Nowadays, battles are no longer won with courage.” Let us apply that to the superior of the missions. He is entrusted with the strategy. Well did Father sense this when he was appointed.

Acknowledgments

451

February 6, 1872. *Colin*. At the chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 846, 33]:

“You are all reasonable enough to understand that a man like me could not have done all that has been done. I hereby declare that I recognize the intervention of the holy Virgin. Only she is Foundress. It is because I was the most unworthy of all that she made use of me. Look at our first confreres, Frs. Déclas, Humbert and Jallon. They were humble, straight and simple souls. Oh! how God blessed them! Everything was poor in their lives. We would eat with the peasants, we would sleep together. Everything was simple in their sermons, and the people *fell*. We were overwhelmed in the confessional.”

452

August 24, 1832(?). Fr. Vianney, Curé of Ars. Words spoken to Fr. Mayet. [Mayet, Personal notes, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 120-122 = OM 419, 3f]:

[3] “The Marists, that is a work according to the heart of God, because there is humility, simplicity, and contradictions; they go along very simply, they begin their missions with catechism and first communions.

[4] “If I had to choose between the Jesuits and the Marists, I would still prefer the Marists because the Jesuits have too high a profile and as a Marist one is hidden. Another good thing is that among the Marists, the superior does not accept brilliant minds, etc. If I had more means I would have become a Marist.” (the Curé of Ars)

Mercy

The Marist missionaries announced themselves as “instruments of God’s mercy,” and they would extol Mary’s mercy and how she is “the assured gate of salvation, always open, in which the sinner finds mercy.” Colin’s concern was that Marists, by prayer, by living their vows and by growing in virtue, might become “suitable instruments of the divine mercies,” and sought to establish mercy as a basic principle of Marists’ theological training and pastoral practice. Gathered here are texts on the theme of mercy. Included also is a set of texts, arranged thematically rather than chronologically, on a theme related to that of mercy: Mary’s open bosom or open embrace as image for a way of being and acting for the Society of Mary and for a Marian Church.

“Mother of Mercy”

453

1825-1829? Colin. *Sermon for consecration to Mary; written in Colin’s hand; it is uncertain whether it is Colin’s own composition, or copied from other sources as per contemporary usage. [APM 242.41, sermon 28, pp. 13f]:*

[...] She is the master work of the hands of God, the prodigy of his power, the miracle of his wisdom and of his mercy; [...] On earth she is the glory, the honor, the reparatrix, the asylum of the human race. She is the refuge, the defense, the support, the advocate, the light, the strength, the resource of the church militant. [...] She is that assured gate of salvation, always open, in which the soul, agitated by waves of tribulations, finds calm; the despairing, confidence; the afflicted soul, peace; the sinner, mercy; the just, a shelter against all the tempests that might threaten his virtue. [...] Finally she is the mother who in her tenderness is more of a mother than all mothers on earth, the mother of all Christians, for whom she underwent on Calvary all the pains of childbearing, whose motherly heart is forever open to all and whose boundless charity embraces all the ages of the new covenant, all nations and all peoples, comforts all miseries, meets all needs, grants all prayers. [...] Ought we be astounded to see all Christians unite their voices to proclaim her goodness, her tenderness, her mercy, and that never has anyone sought her help in vain; [...]

454

September 8, 1831. *The Marist aspirants. Consecration to the blessed Virgin at the close of the retreat at Belley. [APM 117 = OM 236]:*

[...] Blessed Virgin, be for us always a most tender and compassionate Mother; be our advocate and protector before God. [...]

455

December 8, 1831. Professors and missionaries of the minor seminary of Belley. Consecration to the blessed Virgin. [APM 117 = OM 240]:

[...] With your servant St. Ildephonse, we wish to proclaim everywhere your greatness and your privileges, especially that of your Immaculate Conception, to publish your deeds of kindness and mercy, to love you and to have others serve you as much as we can and as long as we shall live. [...]

456

1836/1840-42. Terrailon. Account of the founding of the S.M. [APM 123 = OM 750, 13]:

[...] Finally our definitive approbation arrived from Rome in 1836. We gathered at Belley for the election of the superior general on September 24, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy. [...]

457

Late December 1837. Colin. Response to Mayet, with an additional remark of Mayet. [Mayet 1, 5 = OM 421 = FS 2 = LM 41]:

[1] Someone reminded him that he had said the whole world must be Marist. He said, “Yes, God the Father has appointed our Lord as judge of the living and the dead. The body of Jesus is a simple body. With the Jesuits you must have talents and many other things.

[2] “In the congregation of the blessed Virgin, it is not so. She is the mother of mercy. Her body will have several branches. She will be open to all kinds of people.”

[3] [Mayet:] This applies especially to the third order. Because, for the priests, although the rule admits more easily than others, nevertheless it demands a discernment in the choice and admission of subjects.

458

About July 16, 1839. Mayet. Summary of Colin’s words. [Mayet 1, 517 = FA 195, 1 and 6]:

[1] He went on to extol Mary’s mercies.

[...]

[6] Then, without wishing to say in any way that good faith could gain these indulgences without the required conditions, he said that the blessed Virgin does take good note of the heart and he cited the case of somebody who had told him that they had been saved by the scapular, although they had assumed it of themselves and put it round their neck, without being enrolled with any of the prescribed formalities.

459

August-December 1857. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., first edition. [Manual, p. 22 = LM 284, 3]:

Would it be presumptuous to think that the Third Order of Mary, born in our time and approved in our day by the Church, should naturally be more suited to our needs and ways? It has often been said already that our age is the age of Mary! Heaven is pleased to glorify her on earth; the Church proclaims the most beautiful of her privileges; the confidence and veneration of people shine forth in touching demonstrations; and never have the power, goodness, and mercy of the august Queen of Heaven been more visibly manifest or more piously implored by the devotion of the faithful.

460

1859. Jacquet. Manual of the T.O.M., second edition. [Manual, pp. 11f = LM 284, footnote 5]:

Your privileges include being able to count on the special protection of Mary, who is so powerful. By permitting her name to become your name, she also wants to see you bear it with honor; she will help you. By calling you to belong to the new family which she has given to herself, she wishes to become your Mother by a special title; it is also your right to call yourselves her children. Consider, therefore, all that you may henceforward expect from the goodness and mercy of Mary, both for yourselves and for all those whom you may recommend to her.

“My bosom will be open to all”

Bosom of Mary

461

c. 1837. Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 1, 11 = OM 422 = FS 4, 1 = LM 42, 1]:

“The blessed Virgin said: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I will be so at the end of time; my bosom will be open to all those who wish to enter there.’”

462

September 17, 1849. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 7, 731 = FS 176, 4]:

“[...] In my troubles, in my difficulties, I shall say to her, ‘Blessed Virgin, help me, I falter. I cast myself into the bosom of your mercy; help me to find my way again.’”

463

September 18, 1849. *Marist retreatants. Act of consecration at the closing ceremony of the retreat.*
[*Jeantin 5, 419*]:

O tender Mother, we are your most unworthy servants, but mercifully marked with your name; we take refuge in your heart with full confidence and beset everywhere by the enemies of salvation, we cry out to you: tender Mother, open your heart to us; hide us in the bosom of your mercy and under the wings of your protection. Do not allow any one of us, the undersigned, to perish in eternity. O clement Virgin, we choose you today as our Superior and as Superior of your whole Society, and also as our Mother and Advocate; tender Mother, accept us as your true sons; keep us united in charity and save us in eternity. Amen.

464

September 26, 1846. *Colin. No context indicated.* [*Mayet 4, 219 = FS 118, 2*]:

“[...] the blessed Virgin is going to redouble her efforts at the end of time to gather together the elect.”

465

c. 1838. *Colin. Context not indicated.* [*Mayet 1, 11f = OM 450, 1 and addition b*]:

[1] One day he said: “I don’t think that the Society ought to last a long time: it has too many branches and is too composite a body. If it were to last a rather long time, I think that this body would be simpler.”

[b] Let us compare these words with those where he says that the Blessed Virgin will open her bosom at the end of time, in reference to the Society.

466

1868. *Mayet. Paraphrase of Colin within a comparison of the foundations of the Jesuits and of the Marists.* [*Mayet C4, 2735-2737*]:

When at Rome Fr. Colin presented to Cardinal Castracane, who was given charge of this business, the plan of the Society of Mary, with all its branches, saying that the Blessed Virgin had been the support of the newborn Church and that at the end of time she would open her bosom to all to gather the elect, the Cardinal responded: “So then, the whole world will be Marist?” Fr. Colin, smiling, answered him: “Yes, Eminence, Your Eminence too, and the Pope at the head.”

467

May-October 1853. *Maitrepierre*. Extract from his "Overview of the origin of the S.M. and its status in 1853." [APM 125, 50 = LM 226, 67]:

[...] In the Third Order, Mary extends her arms to every age, sex, condition, degree, shade of meaning which can be found in souls. [...]

Bosom of the Society of Mary

468

c. 1872. *Colin*. Dictated note on the TOM. [APM 242.15 and 242.54 = LM 332, 3]:

And since she is the mother of all God's children, and since she wants to save them all, her Society ought to open its bosom to all her children who want to be saved and lay claim to her help. That is why the Society takes all kinds of people into association with itself through a Third Order, under the name of Confraternity of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners and the Perseverance of the Just. These are divided into several categories: [...]

469

September 27, 1846. *Colin*. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 5, 429 = OM 632, 1 = FS 120, 1 = LM 114]:

"Let us take courage and work hard, but always *unknown and hidden*. Let us keep away from those who rely on a merely human eloquence. The Society must begin a new Church over again. I do not mean that in a literal sense, that would be blasphemy. But still, in a certain sense, yes, we must begin a new Church. The Society of Mary, like the Church, began with simple, poorly-educated men, but since then, the Church has developed and encompassed everything. We too must gather together everyone through the Third Order — heretics alone may not belong to it."

470

1839. *Colin*. Casual conversation. [Mayet 1, 15 = OM 452, 4]:

"[...] the Society, with its three branches and its Third Order, embraces all. [...]"

471

1833-1834. Colin. *Memorandum on the S.M.* [OM 299, 6 = LM 11, 6]:

The Society of Mary in a way even opens its bosom to the faithful who live in the world, and with whom it shares all its spiritual benefits by means of a confraternity formed for their benefit. [...]

Bosom of the Third Order of Mary

472

August-December 1857. Jacquet. *Manual of the T.O.M., first edition.* [Manual, pp. 24-26 = LM 284, 6 & 8]:

[6] The Third Order of Mary offers still one more advantage which will be appreciated particularly by the pious and zealous members of Christian families, and that is the ability to have all those people who are dear to them admitted into its bosom, or at least to have them participate in the spiritual riches which flow from being there.

[8] Finally, even those to whom the Third Order cannot open its bosom, because they would not want or could not enter it — even to them, the Third Order shows at least its concern and its zeal. It is particularly interested in sinners and in children before their birth, for it wishes that the former should receive the grace of conversion and the latter, the grace of holy Baptism. For either, one can ask for and obtain that the person be enrolled in the *book of prayers*, and then the favor, in all our meetings, of being especially recommended to the tender care and powerful mediation of the Queen of mercies.

473

1859. Jacquet. *Manual of the T.O.M., second edition.* [Manual, pp. 12f = LM 284, footnote 7]:

Do not fear that in return for such rich advantages, the Third Order exacts from its members onerous practices and great sacrifices. No, the Third Order of Mary, whether for the sake of honoring the pious simplicity of its august protectress, or out of consideration for the actual dispositions of many persons, the duties of their state and their position in secular society, proposes to its members only simple and easy practices. It does not oblige them to any particular work of zeal but prefers to leave the choice to the liberty and inclination of each one. The only penance it imposes is the voluntary sacrifice of the vanities and dangerous pleasures of secular society. And finally, it prescribes only a few vocal prayers, only a few exercises of outwardly visible piety; but it constantly urges its members to acquire those interior virtues, the practice of which goes with every position in society and with every age in life. Therefore, it becomes easy to be admitted and to live within its bosom. Husband or wife, an older person or a child, a young man or a young maiden, each one, without changing anything in their occupations or in the externals of Christian living, can make the commitment, follow its rule, and share in all its advantages.

474

May 6, 1874. Mayet. *From a letter to Colin: the second "key idea" of Colin on the TOM. [APM 921.142 = LM 376, 5]:*

Secondly, the Third Order of Mary will be able to open its bosom to all (heretics excepted), even to sinners and to children before their birth, in an indirect way. [...]

Bosom of the Church

475

July 23, 1816. *The first Marist aspirants. Formula of commitment at Fourvière. [OM 50]:*

[...] We pledge ourselves to accept all sufferings, trials, inconveniences and, if needs be, torture, because we can do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthens us and to whom we hereby promise fidelity in the bosom of our holy mother the Roman Catholic Church, cleaving with all our strength to its supreme head the Roman pontiff and to our most reverend bishop, the ordinary, that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished with the words of faith and of the wholesome teaching which by his grace we have received. [...]

476

December 1845. Colin. *Conference to scholastics preparing for profession; items recorded by one of them. [Mayet 5, 6942]:*

“Jesus left his mother with his newborn Church to form it in its cradle. She reappears at the end of time to call in those who have not yet entered its bosom and to lead back to it those who have left.”

477

December 1833. Colin. *“Summarium Regularum S.M.”: the first paragraph on the lay confraternity. [AT I, s, 109 = LM 9, 109]:*

The general aim of the Society is to contribute in the best possible way, [...] to gather, so to speak, all the members of Christ, [...] so that at the end of time as at the beginning, all the faithful may with God’s help be *one heart and one soul* 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 into the Society is open even to laypersons living in the world in the Confraternity or Third Order of Blessed Mary.

“Instruments of the divine mercies”

478

1825-1829? Colin. *Opening talk for a mission. [APM 241.51, sermon 36, p. 3]:*

“*May the grace and peace of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you* (Rom 1, 7).

“These are the words that the apostle St. Paul puts at the head of his letter to the Romans and of almost all the other letters addressed to the faithful of the early Church. It is thus that the great apostle showed the faithful the purity of his zeal and of his charity and announced to them the goal and end of his preaching: *grace and peace be with you*. So too do we dare to address these same words to you on this the first time we appear in this pulpit in your midst. May grace and peace be with you, the grace that makes saints, the well-loved and friends of God; the peace of conscience, which is the fruit of grace and the germ of eternal peace: *grace and peace be with you*. Grace and peace, inestimable goods that the true Christian knows how to appreciate and seeks as his unique treasure on earth: we wish these for you at the beginning of these days of salvation which have been given to you for acquiring or augmenting these precious treasures of grace and peace. Yes, my very dear brothers, it is to help you, to encourage you to retain, to conserve, to augment this treasure of grace and peace, or to recover it if unhappily [you have lost it], that God gives you the extraordinary helps of a mission, that he sends us into your parish to be the instruments, all unworthy though we be, of his mercy toward you. We will be happy if by our ministry we can concur in your welfare and contribute to strengthen you in the faith and the practice of virtue, or to lead you back to it should you have strayed.”

479

December 1833. Colin. “*Summarium Regularum S.M.*”: *section on the home missions. [AT I, s, 43]:*

Missionaries are to take care to become, through solid virtues, suitable instruments of the divine mercies, and thus will they bear fruit in the vineyard of the Lord; they should not trust in themselves or in their own knowledge, nor should they rise to preach without having beforehand prepared what they are going to say; all, and especially the younger men, should present the sermons they have prepared to be read by those whom the superior has designated, so that whatever might be inaccurate or smack of vanity can be corrected.

480

1842. Colin. *Constitutions: introductory number on the vows. [AT II, a, 106 = Constitutions of 1872, AT V, C, 118]:*

Since those who are enrolled in this least Society offer themselves and their possessions of their own accord to the Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, in order to dedicate more fruitfully their whole life, — with her as leader and protector — to the service of God and the salvation of souls in whatever part of the world to which obedience may send them, they must be truly convinced that nothing contribute more effectively to this noble aim than that, following in the footsteps of the Virgin, they commit themselves to the practice of every virtue and, especially, hold fast to their

promises. For, while they strive through faithful observance of the vows to strip themselves of all earthly and other inordinate attachments, they will doubtless become at once more prompt in obeying God's will, freer to take up for the greater glory of God whatever task in any part of the world, and more fruitful instruments of the divine mercies for the sake of their neighbor. Let them understand, therefore, with what application and fervor they should observe the vows, which are now to be discussed individually.

481

1842. *Colin. Constitutions: on the virtue of humility. [AT II, a, 358 = Constitutions of 1872, AT V, C, 428]:*

Let them understand from all this how highly this virtue is to be prized and with what intense application it is to be sought by all, as it clearly befits everyone, so much the more those in authority. Let them spur themselves on to acquire it perfectly by the example of blessed Mary, who, though filled with heavenly gifts, says nothing about herself except: *God looked on the humility of his handmaid* (Lk 1:48); *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Lk 1:38); and above all by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave* (Ph 2:6-7); who *came not to be served but to serve* (Mt 20:28), so that as he did we too may do. Let them strive with every fiber of their being to emulate these wonderful examples of humility as much as grace will allow, so that, completely empty of self and of all vainglory, they may be filled with grace and become, in God's hands, suitable instruments of the divine mercies towards their neighbor; and also so that the Society itself, firmly set upon this sure and solid foundation, may continually increase in the sight of the Lord and resist to the end the winds of perverse desires.

482

April 1, 1842. *Colin. Circular letter to all at a crucial moment for the Society. [LColin 420401.Cir, 7f]:*

[7] By state of life and by duty we are followers of Jesus Christ and of his divine Mother; our every thought, every stirring of our heart, our every step must be worthy of our august models. Let us live out of their life, let us think as they thought, judge things as they do. Our union with them through prayer must be such that we never lose sight of them and that the world, with its deceitful glory, be for us what it was for the great apostle: *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.*

[8] Only in that way, very honored confreres, shall we accomplish the work of God, become in his hands instruments of his divine mercy toward others and carry out the great work of our perfection. Only through holy eagerness for the Lord's gifts shall we deserve to be filled with them, according to the words of the tender mother of us all: *He has filled the hungry with good things.* It is only by the practice of a supernatural direction in our thoughts and in our intentions, by the pious groans and the holy enthusiasms of our heart toward God that we will fulfill the merciful designs of Providence upon us, and that we will see the Society of Mary send down deep roots and, like a tree planted at the edge of the water, stretch forth its humble and fertile branches in every sort of blessing: *and he will be like a tree planted beside running streams, that will give its fruit in due time. And its leaves will not fall, and everything he does will prosper.*

483

December 17, 1844. Colin. Letter to Fr. Lagniet at Verdélais. [LColin 441217.Lag, 1]:

I look forward to receiving news of yourself and of your missionaries. So it was with the greatest pleasure that I read your letter in which you tell me a word about each of them. I thank the Lord for the success that he has given to your works in your last mission. Continue to bring among the people you evangelize the true spirit of God, the spirit of the Society of Mary, a spirit at once of zeal and of moderation, of courage and of modesty, of prudence and of simplicity, of charity and of self-abnegation, and God will continue to bless your efforts. Look only to the glory of God, the honor of Mary and the salvation of souls. Then, freed from slavery to self-love and self-interest, you will become instruments of the great mercies of God toward sinners.

484

November 29, 1846. Colin. Letter to the novices who had written to him at the time of some public calamity, expressing a desire to eat less well. [LColin 461129.Nov, 2]:

Nevertheless, I could no longer delay expressing how edified and consoled I have been upon reading your letter. Your sentiments of charity toward the neighbor, your desire to share in something of the public misery, are worthy of your piety and of your character as children of Mary. I bless the Lord who inspires them in you, and I invite you, Messieurs, to nourish them and conserve them carefully in your heart. Continue to grow in virtue and in learning, so that you might be able one day to become the glory of the Society and worthy instruments of the mercies of heaven toward sinners. Grow above all in obedience, in simplicity and humility, in love for Jesus and Mary, in such a way that you might be able to say that you live from the life itself of her whose name you wish to bear.

485

August 14-15, 1872. Jeantin. Draft of the declaration recognizing Mary as foundress and first superior of the Society. [OM 847, 3]:

It is, in effect, Mary who inspired the project of this little Society and who gave it her name and her spirit. It is Mary who chose our venerated and well loved Fr. Colin as the instrument of all mercies toward us and indicated to him the first priests who were to lay the foundations of this humble religious congregation. [...]

486

August 16, 1872. Colin. Discourse at the general chapter. [Minutes of the chapter = OM 848, 6]:

“[...] This title of superior, applied to Mary, touches my heart! It teaches us that in all things we ought to have our eyes fixed on her, consult her and abandon ourselves with confidence and docility to her maternal direction. It was once my great good fortune to feel that I was only her humble vicar. It is also the consolation and the strength of your venerated superior. By communicating her authority to him, Mary makes him the instrument of her mercies towards you, and by him as by a canal, that same grace is lavished on the provincials and on all the superiors. You ought then to see

in them and especially in the one whom she has charged with the general government of her family, only the representatives of your Mother and render to them, as to Mary herself, the homage of your respect, of your love and of your obedience.”

“Giving greatest play to the mercy of God”

487

1838-1839. *Colin. Spiritual direction to Mayet: on going against nature. [Mayet 1, 320 = FS 26, 2]:*

[...] if you hear the confessions of influential people, you must stand by your duty in conscience. Always show mercy to sinners, certainly, but when you cannot give absolution let them ask in vain: you must not give way. Well, then, all that goes against nature; surely, nature must die.

488

1838-1839. *Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet S1, 65 = FS 37]:*

[1] His Lordship the Bishop of Belley has been of great help to me for theology, cases of conscience, ways of dealing with things in the confessional. My way of doing things is very close to his. They even say I am more broad-minded than he is.

[2] In the Society we shall profess all those opinions which give greatest play to the mercy of God, on account of the great weakness of poor human nature, without however falling into a laxist theology.

489

1838-1839. *Colin. Words to spoken to Mayet. [Mayet S1, 37f = OM 506, 3]:*

“[...] For about 9 years I never left the confessional without throwing myself at Mary’s feet and telling her: ‘What ministry have you given me there? O my good Mother, what have you exposed me to?’ My confessional was in the chapel of the blessed Virgin. Confessional ministry is a terrifying ministry; I never went there without trembling. Be good, because you take the place of our Lord; be just, you are a judge and you must weigh things fairly. However, the scale must lean a little on the side of mercy. Nonetheless, let’s go to the confessional just the same with confidence in God.”

490

1839. *Mayet/Colin. Occasional remarks on education gathered by Mayet. [Mayet 1, 570-573 = FA 206, 3-12]:*

[3] The children allege that they prefer to be sent for punishment to the Superior [i.e. to Colin] rather than to others, because, they say, the Superior, although he comes down heavily upon them, afterwards encourages them, whereas the others leave them crushed. “That they should never do,” the Superior told me, “otherwise the punishment loses its full effect.

[4] “We must not extinguish the still smoldering wick. The kinder we are, the nearer we come to the spirit of Christ, who was mercy itself. Punishment that has no medicinal effect is of no use; in administering punishment, the best interest of the child must be served.

[5] “I once asked God’s guidance as to whether I should expel a pupil, with the thought at the back of my mind that we shall achieve good by imitating God’s forbearance — provided that such children do not present too much of a danger to the others — and that by so doing we avoid their committing hundreds of mortal sins. I do not know what transpires in schools where a child is expelled on the slightest suspicion. It is greatly to be feared that these children may have anxieties in the face of confession, and that they make sacrilegious confessions and communions.

[6] “We are not out for the healthy, but the sick.

[7] “Another time, as I was praying for these children, one of the thoughts that came into my mind and greatly consoled me was that most of these children would owe their salvation to us.”

[8] Speaking to me one day about a pupil whose behavior had been such that he deserved to be expelled, a child, moreover, whose character and lack of mature reasoning gave little hope of mending his ways, he urged me to pray, saying that we had to pray all the more and have an even greater confidence, that our hope was not founded on anything human.

[9] “Ah!” he said to me, “how I long for this notion of mercy to take root in all our men! Oh! how much easier it is to get rid of dangerous elements than to convert them. It is not zeal to send away straight off what stands in the way of good. If so, the matter would be quickly settled. Our Lord did not take that line. Look at St. Francis de Sales. Such would not be the spirit of God. We must do all we can, try every means, pray, and it is only as a last resort that we lop off the branch.

[10] “Personally, I pardon two, three times, and I am not afraid of doing this, because I say to the good Lord, ‘My God, this is the way you act.’

[11] “I have often exercised mercy, and I have been glad afterwards. In the sacred ministry there are many priests doing much good, whom I would have had to send away if I had been harsh — when I was the superior of the College in Belley. Younger men just starting out are generally strict, sharp, quick to expel. Theirs is a youthful zeal without great enlightenment. It is not true zeal.”

[12] There was a pupil whom he had made up his mind to expel. When the moment came for writing the letter, he still bided his time.

491

February 1845. *Mayet/Colin. Context not indicated. [Mayet 6, 614f = FS 95]:*

[1] One day (it would be about February 1845), Father General began to speak a great deal of the goodness of God towards sinners.

[2] He told us that the *Revelations* of St. Bridget had been very useful to him in forming a true idea of the mercy of God. She had seen souls who, when accused before the judgment seat of the Lord by the devil, had merely replied, “It is true that I committed that sin, but I confessed it.”

[3] “Yes,” he said, “someone who makes his confession with sincerity is not far from conversion. For myself, I am a Roman, and in the confessional I follow the same approach as they, the Romans, do. I am very fond of those principles: *All for souls* and *Salvation before law*.”

492

September 21, 1846. Colin. Concluding recommendations for the retreatants. [Mayet 6, 683f = FS 116, 11]:

“Finally, Messieurs, show great kindness to sinners who come to you in the confessional. Do not rebuff them, or appear surprised by their crimes, however great they are: that would be a great imprudence and very harmful to souls. Instead, remember that you hold the place of Jesus Christ, and our Lord Jesus Christ knew the profound depths of the human heart, he welcomed all sinners with gentleness. Messieurs, there are two infinities: the infinity of goodness, mercy and holiness, which is God; and the infinity of misery, baseness and sin, which is man. Listen, then, to these poor sinners quietly and with kindness. Do not frighten them by too severe a sermon, especially the first time. They are not always strong enough to take it. During missions, you should not enter into great detail about obligations at the beginning. That would spoil everything. Wait until the confessions are well under way. The missionary must have a great knowledge of the human heart. Grace does not find entry there straightaway, preparation is necessary: ‘*I have much more to tell you but you cannot bear it now,*’ said Jesus Christ. Let us imitate him, first of all gaining their confidence.”

493

September 1848. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 7, 834-835 = FS 163]:

[1] “Let us have compassion on poor sinners, let us not ask of them more enlightenment than they could be expected to have. Let us form a true idea of their position, and then we will absolve them more readily. Take a man standing at the entrance to a tunnel: light is already faint; he takes a few steps, darkness engulfs him; he walks further on, it is pitch black and he gropes in the dark. So it is with a soul which has forgotten God. The first mortal sin is like the entrance to the tunnel, where daylight is failing. The second mortal sin drives him further forward, then finally, as mortal sins succeed one another, the guilty soul finds itself in pitch darkness. When grace seeks it out and good will responds, it is like a little glimmer of light in the depths. It is impossible that the poor sinner who is at such a depth could enjoy the same enlightenment as you. Do not rebuff him, receive him back into grace, ask little of him, and grace will do the rest. Little by little day will dawn upon him as he goes forward. He did not fall into darkness suddenly, and he will return imperceptibly to the light. Messieurs, let us educate ourselves. The more learned a man is, the more he broadens the outlook of the one who consults him. If he is only half-learned he puts a spoke in your wheel and prevents your going further.

[2] “Rome was very useful to me on this point. It was there that I learned the maxim: ‘*Law was made for man.*’ *If I cannot save him with the law, I shall try to save him without it.*”

494

January 28, 1851. Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 6, 617fm = OM 711 = FA 385]:

[1] On January 28th, 1851, he said to us, “When I used to hear confessions and I was perplexed, I used to say, ‘O my Savior, what would you do if you were in my place?’ Then I would feel the scales of mercy shift... ‘O my God, I can feel it, you would change this heart. Well, go ahead and change it this very moment.’ And I would finish up by giving absolution. If the Lord reproached me for it, I would reply, ‘My God, this is the kingdom of mercy.’”

[2] He told us on January 28th, 1851, “This is the kingdom of mercy; mercy here is boundless. Justice will take its course in the next world.”

An echo

495

November 12, 1925. Fr. Pierre Jouny. Extract from a letter, written in English from Niua Foou, Tonga, to a “confrere,” a scholastic in Washington, who is identified in the letter as the nephew of Fr. Edward Tremblay; this would be Fr. Louis Beauchemin; the latter has apparently written to Jouny about his plans to come to Oceania as a missionary. [Washington Province Archives. Paragraphs 6-10]:

[6] The book of books: *Avec Jésus formant en nous son prêtre* by Fr. Grimal. No doubt you will use it for your meditation during the Scholasticate. Ever since I have had this book, I have become a scholastic anew, in order to prepare myself for death. After my daily meditation, I say to myself: had I possessed this treasure at Ste-Foy-lès-Lyons and at Belley, I might have done more good among the Isles and waters of the Pacific. Do better than I did with this book, full as it is of the Marist and priestly life and spirit, that very spirit of the Ven. Father Founder, whom I saw and knew.

[7] Yes, I was privileged to know that Marist of Marists, of whom the Holy Curé of Ars loved to say: “Oh! How he does love the Blessed Virgin that founder of the Society of Mary!” And remember that this saintly pastor of Ars wished to die a Marist, by becoming a member of the Third Order through another saint, Bl. Father Eymard. This fact ought to incite us to love our little Society, and to cling to Mary, as children to their mother.

[8] Twice I had the occasion to see and hear Fr. Colin. The first time at the Novitiate of Ste. Foy during the general chapter which was being held there. Fr. Colin had been brought from La Neylière almost through force. He was then old and almost blind. To us, his loved ones (“mioches”) of the novitiate he deigned to give an interview and a “special blessing”: “Benedictio super mioches meos...,” and he wept, while we, his little ones, could not restrain our emotions. You ask a few words heard from the lips of Rev. Fr. Colin. Here are some, well-known to all Marists, and which I heard with my own ears at the last general chapter at which he assisted. He loved to repeat them: “All true Marists can be assured that their death will be a good one; let them always nestle fondly to her (Mary’s) mantle.” It is this word that I have brought with me to Oceania, even here on the top of this volcano (my dwelling place) and despite all my infidelities, at 80 years of age, I still hope to cling to Mary’s mantle.

[9] I had the happiness of seeing Fr. Colin once again. After my novitiate, I had stayed with Fr. David, master of novices at Ste. Foy. During vacation that year, Fr. Epalle, superior of the novitiate

at Ste. Foy, told me one day: “Fr. Jouny, we will take our vacation: we will go to La Neylière to see Rev. Fr. Founder.” My heart throbbed with joy. Two weeks of paradise to be spent near V. R. Fr. Colin! He had become altogether blind. He was led to church every morning by a brother; there, he assisted at Holy Mass and received Holy Communion. Often, on receiving His Lord, He was unable to restrain his emotions.

[10] During the day, seeing him under the porch in his couch, alone with his beads which never left him, I approached quietly and asked him to recite the rosary with him. Never a refusal! I know not who of us was the happier. He let me recite the beads, while he answered the Aves with such an expression of faith, piety, and love, that one might have thought he saw Mary, Mother of Mercy. When we had finished reciting the beads, Rev. Fr. Colin asked me news of Fr. David, made me talk of Brittany, questioned me about my mother and sisters, wishing to assure himself that they loved the Blessed Virgin. On receiving a satisfactory answer, he raised both hands towards heaven saying: “Benedictio super miochos et super miochas meas.” Oh yes indeed, it does one good to see and approach saints here below. I have always loved to recall those two weeks spent at La Neylière with Rev. Fr. Founder; this souvenir has been helpful to me on my volcano, especially in time of trouble.

Communion for Mission

A principal goal of the mission of the Society, according to Colin, is to further ecclesial communion: *to gather all into one heart and one soul in the bosom of the Church*. Thus chapter III of the 1988 Constitutions, which braids the several strands of Marist life (vows, prayer, common life, apostolate), is entitled *Forming a Communion for Mission*. Gathered here are a number of texts about the quality of our being together as Marists for the sake of our common mission.

496

October 29, 1824. *Pierre Colin. Letter to Bishop Devie. [OM 114, 1]:*

It is today that the little Society of Mary begins. Fr. Déclas has arrived at Cerdon. I dare pray you, My Lord, to be so kind as to give him the powers necessary for the functions of the sacred ministry. Again I dare to beg Your Excellency not to give him the title of pastor of any neighboring parish, at least for a while, for reasons that appear to us very solid and that we will have the honor of submitting to Your Excellency in person, one or another of us, perhaps within the next two weeks, if possible.

497

1829. *Colin. "Instructions to the Staff of the Minor Seminary of Belley." [AT I, b, 84]:*

We shall love each other as brothers and honor each other with affectionate respect united to Christian politeness, so that our boys having on this score nothing but good examples before them, will behave towards each other in the same way or at least with charity.

498

1833. *Colin. "Summarium Regularum S.M.": common rules, on charity. [AT I, s, 31]:*

Let them look after each other with charity and Christian gentlemanliness and diligently preserve perfect harmony among themselves, as befits sons of the same family, whose head is the Mother of God; let them neglect nothing that could foster the greatest harmony among themselves; therefore, they are to pay no attention to what part of the country they come from and never speak ill of one another or of each other's family or birthplace; and, if anyone injures another by word or in any other way, he should quickly ask forgiveness and humbly submit himself to the penance which the Superior will impose.

499

1833. Colin. "*Summarium Regularum S.M.*": on the superior general. [AT I, s, 114]:

[...] Let them rouse themselves to virtue by mutual counsel, prayers and efforts; [...]

500

November 1840. Colin. *Circular letter to missionaries*. [LColin 401121.Mis, 9f]:

[9] If fraternal charity ought to reign among Christians, if it ought to be even stronger among religious, it seems to me that it is a severe obligation for you, dear children — for you who are so far from the one whose honor it is to be called your father because this word indicates his sentiments and his duties, the feelings of a father, paternal solicitude — it is a severe obligation for you, often separated one from another, to be in solidarity with one another; the Lord will demand of you an account for the weakening of the religious virtues in one of your confreres; I myself, I would complain quite bitterly about the ruin of a child who would perish under the indifferent eyes of his brother; acting, then, in concert, take all the means of strengthening yourselves in virtue. [10] See whether all or most of you could not meet for several days' retreat if you spot an opportunity, propose the opportunity you perceive to the bishop and beg him to gather you around himself; there you can examine together how you understand the rule, how you can observe it in the works of the apostolate, how you will observe it in actual fact. There you can examine together the dangers of your situation, the means for diminishing them or of destroying them, the necessity perhaps of abandoning the post... There you can strengthen the bonds that unite so harmoniously and so usefully the hearts of true religious. You can communicate to one another that spiritual force which results from the union of vision, from the union of means, from the effects that the Holy Spirit is pleased to produce in those who unite themselves together under his impulse.

501

February 6, 1842. Colin. *At a community meeting at the College in Belley*. [Mayet 1, 416f = FS 44, 1]:

[...] "Messieurs, I have gathered you here to make a very important announcement. The Visitor, Father Maître-pierre, will arrive shortly. I tell you so that you can prepare yourselves well for his visit and for opening your heart to him. You ought to rejoice at the news, for here is a friend, a brother, a confrère, a father, whom God is sending you — and also, certainly, a superior. These visits, Messieurs, are arranged for you by the Society, and you should regard them as a sign of her tenderness and care for her sons. A man travelling alone along a difficult path finds the going hard, he is afraid of falling down the precipice, and if he has to cross a forest at night he is seized by fear, he is scared of the wild beasts. Even when there is no cause for fear, his imagination gives him many a fright. But if he has a companion, he is not afraid and he steps out confidently. This is what the rule provides for by recommending to all members of the Society to open their heart from time to time to the superior — which applies to whoever the superior designates for that, since he cannot cope with everything himself. This opening of the heart is of the greatest importance. In the Rule it says, or rather it will say, *it is the safest way of not losing one's way and of preserving peace*, [...]"

502

May 7, 1842. *Garin (Provincial of Oceania). Letter to Colin. [APM Z 208]:*

[...] Oh! Yes, I find that there are dangers indeed in leaving a priest live alone, he has no one to challenge him but himself, there is no one at all to witness his conduct, there are no examples to spur him on, he would need to be encouraged, to be admonished, to be forewarned, and nothing can replace all of that but virtue tried and true. [...]

503

After October 1843. *Mayet and others. Observations about the theology house at Belley, the Capucinière. [Mayet 2, 134m]:*

[1] “How do you expect us to be bored here,” said the newcomers in October 1843: “it is family; we are brothers.”

[2] “Oh! how happy I am,” said one of them, already a bit older! “How pleasant are this simple, easy-going manner, this spontaneity.”

[3] “It is so much nicer to obey than to command,” said a former professor.

[4] There were in the house 6 former professors who were as simple and cheerful as little children.

504

After October 1843. *Mayet and others. Observations about the theology house in Belley, the Capucinière. [Mayet 5, 220-223]:*

[1] What particularly enraptured the newcomers was this spirit of family, of friendship, of brotherhood.

[2] An ecclesiastic from Viviers, recently entered into the Society, was witness to this and, carried away as he was, he said: “No, I don’t think there would be a single house where this brotherly spirit exists.”

[3] A novice who had remained a long time in the world, devoted to teaching and education, said: “Oh! how happy I am here, I am always sure that I am doing God’s will.”

[4] When one of those who had been there for a while spoke to him about the custom of monitions that was practiced once a week, he so admired that institution and was so touched by it that he immediately chose a monitor the one who had told him about such a good thing.

[5] They also told him that a provincial was there making the visitation and that each was opening his heart to him. This caring manner of the superiors gave him a great sense of gratitude.

[6] “I was on the verge of tears during the retreat,” said another, “when they told us about Fr. Colin’s tenderness and care for us, when I saw how they recommended everything that could be useful for our health.”

[7] Then, noting the care of the superior of the house for them, he said: “The good father! Ah! how willing I am now to say, ‘*My father,*’ I who lost my own 18 years ago.”

[8] At a time when the house was completely full: “Let the new ones come,” said those who had been there for a while as well as the newcomers themselves; “Let them come! It will be a pleasure for us to sleep in the attic. Besides, can’t we squeeze in a bit?”

[9] A former ecclesiastical professor offered to leave his room and go sleep in the dormitory. “I left 3 or 4 brothers at home; but here I find a house full of them,” someone said. Their detachment

from their relations was quite edifying. One of them who had had some terrible hindrances said: “When you can’t knock the obstacles down, you jump over them.”

[10] In October 1843, several came who had many talents; but they only let them appear when they could not do otherwise, i.e. in class. Everywhere else they were unnoticed. I heard one of those who had been there for a while rejoicing very much over these new arrivals, and he said to me with joy painted on his face: “Those here longer aren’t brilliant,” and he added high praises for the modesty that the new arrivals joined to their talents.

[11] You couldn’t make them happier than by telling them the history and the beginnings of the Society. They made inquiries of those who were well informed about these things and listened to them and questioned them with the greatest interest.

[12] You had but to indicate to them something good and they went and did it.

505

September 21, 1846. Colin. Concluding retreat talk. [Mayet 6, 300 = FS 115, 5]:

“My dear confreres, may the closest bonds of charity unite us always, may we truly be but one heart and one soul. The Society of Mary must make present once again the first times of the Church.”

506

June 29, 1847. Grosselin/Colin. Exhortation to the novices at La Favorite. [Mayet 5, 704 = FS 140, 14]:

When we fell to our knees for his blessing he said, “My sons, I cannot help regarding you as a chosen flock, but sheltered from dangers. There is a need for secular priests in the ministry, but they need great virtue to persevere. In the religious life you are less exposed, and if you do happen to go astray or fall, you are surrounded by brothers whose prayers, good example, and charitable advice help you to pick yourself up again. [...]”

507

September 1849. Colin. Words at dinner after the closure of the retreat. [Mayet 7, 747f]:

[1] After dinner, father went between the two dining rooms and said:

[2] “Messieurs, you have all tasted the happiness to be experienced at finding ourselves together. You have grasped all the truth of those words of the psalm: ‘Oh! how good it is, how pleasant, for brothers to be together!...’ Now we are about to go each to the place obedience will indicate to us; but we will not be separate for all that, remaining united by bonds of one same spirit and one same charity. We are about to depart like apostles after their retreat in the cenacle, and are going to continue their work. [...]”

508

September 4-11, 1850. Colin and Epalle. Remarks during conferences on education. [Mayet 5, 444m = FS 181, 1-3]:

[1] During the great conferences held at Puylata in September 1850, Father Colin said on September 4th, “One very important point for unity is to respect one another. We are all men, we must show each other consideration, and have regard for one another.”

[2] Father Epalle, the superior of the major seminary at Moulins whispered to me, “I have closely examined the greatest cause of all the little troubles in our houses. It is a lack of regard for one another.”

[3] On September 11th, at the general retreat which followed, Father said, “Let us show one another not only charity, but also civility and respect. Let us respect and honor one another. [...]”

Missions to Sinners and Unbelievers

“Which ministries are appropriate for Marists?” seems a perennial question, and perhaps an unanswerable one. Colin says on the one hand that “the Society will not shrink from any ministry, any work,” and on the other he reacts ferociously against the suggestion that the Society take responsibility for a parish. Perhaps we are asking the wrong question. In Colin’s view, Marists are missionaries, so perhaps the real question is: “To whom are we sent?” Here are some texts that might throw light on the issue.

The vision from the beginning

509

December 1845. Colin. Conference to scholastics preparing for profession; items recorded by one of them. [Mayet 5, 6942-695]:

“Jesus left his mother with his newborn Church to form it in its cradle. She reappears at the end of time to call in those who have not yet entered its bosom and to lead back to it those who have left.”

510

January 25, 1822. The Marist aspirants. Letter to Pope Pius VII. [OM 69, 3]:

In the meantime, however, we presume to recall to the memory of Your Holiness the object of the Society which will be established, if it pleases your Holiness. Its purpose is to expend everything for the greater glory of God, for the honor of Mary the Mother of God and for the service of the Roman Church. To work for the salvation of their own souls and those of their neighbor through missions to believers and unbelievers in whatever part of the world the Apostolic See might wish to send us; to catechize the uneducated and ignorant; to train youth in every way to knowledge and virtue; to visit those in prison and the sick in hospitals; such are our projects as they are set out for us in constitutions already composed.

511

December 1833. Colin. “Summarium Regularum”: rules for missionaries. [AT I, s, 42]:

Our vocation is to go from place to place, and to devote ourselves to the salvation of our neighbors, by preaching the word of God, hearing confessions, catechizing children and the poor, and fulfilling other similar duties. Therefore, we are to be prepared to perform these works by going to any part of the world out of obedience, with the help of God and under the kindly patronage of Blessed Mary, and for as long as the Superior desires.

“We should devote ourselves to all the works of zeal”

512

February 7, 1833. Colin. Letter to Bishop de Pins of Lyons. [OM 264, 3]:

[3] The Society of Mary will be similar to the Company of Jesus in several ways, but it will differ from it in its way of going about things. The Company of Jesus is in some way outside the episcopacy: it is independent. The Society of Mary, in its government, will march in concert and in a spirit of union with the bishops. Like the Company of Jesus, we will take on the running of colleges, home missions and foreign, but, more than the Jesuits, we will devote ourselves to all types of good works. [...]

513

November 20-22, 1837. Colin. Remarks to Mayet. [Mayet 1, 276 = FS 1, 2]:

“Our congregation is for doing what the others cannot: merely that. [...]”

514

1838-1839. Colin. Some collected comments. [Mayet 1, 17 = FS 19, 1]:

Father Colin said to us one day, “I told the Bishop of Belley one day, ‘My Lord, we are for doing what others cannot or will not do.’ That pleased him.”

515

September 27, 1846. Colin. Conversation in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 249 = FS 119, 7]:

“[...] it says in the Rule that although the Society intends to devote itself to all good works, whatever they may be, and to make use without exception of all means available for the good of the Church and of souls, *in every way*, Marists must behave nevertheless in all things in such a way that *they may appear as if unknown and hidden in this world*. [...]”

516

August 22, 1847. Colin. Conference at the retreat. [Mayet 7, 187f = FS 141, 19]:

“Messieurs, let us understand that goal properly. There are those who think the Marists must devote themselves only to works that are hidden, unknown, neglected... Messieurs, the Society does not refuse them, it greatly prefers them, and those who feel attracted to such works may engage in them if obedience permits. But the Society will not shrink from any ministry, from any task. It is called to do anything, it is like a soldier who goes wherever there is danger, wherever there is need of his services. And so, Messieurs, we must have learning, and we must take all means to acquire it.”

517

December 4, 1847. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 449-452 = FS 146, 1]:

[...] although the Society must take up without exception all ministries compatible with the religious life, its members must be *as if unknown and hidden* in this world.

518

December 22, 1847. Colin. Exhortation at table. [Mayet 4, 460 = FS 147, 13]:

“For,” he said, “everything which the other congregations have done, in particular everything which the Jesuits have done, we must do, relying upon God and upon Mary, but always *unknown and indeed even hidden*, according to our vocation.”

519

January 19, 1848. Colin. Statement in the refectory. [Mayet 4, 466f = OM 674 = FS 152, 1]:

“Messieurs, it is only later that you will understand a certain phrase in the rule: *unknown and indeed even hidden*. You could say that the whole spirit of the Society is there. Let us then keep within the limits of our vocation. Although we should not exclude any work of zeal in our ministry, we must always remain *unknown and indeed even hidden*. Let us not be concerned with our honor. If we do good, we shall have merit in the sight of God. Let us seek only the honor of God and for ourselves... *unknown*. Let us not look to what the societies that have preceded us have done, for, when a society comes to birth, it is for a particular need. Yes, Messieurs (and here he assumed a solemn tone of voice) I am pleased to be able to repeat it here once again: *I supported the Church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time*. These are the words which served us as a foundation and an encouragement at the very beginning of the Society. They were always present to us. We have worked along that line, if I may so speak. We must admit that we are living in very bad times; humanity is really sick. At the end of time it will need a great deal of help, and the blessed Virgin will be the one to give it. Messieurs, let us rejoice to belong to her Society and bear her name. The other communities coming to birth envy us our fine name.”

520

January 24, 1848. Colin. After announcing in the refectory the death of brother Blaise. [Mayet 7, 625f = FS 154, 4]:

“Messieurs, the times we live in are in some ways more difficult than those of the apostles: look at Europe, what confusion! How greatly we need the help of the blessed Virgin. Let us imitate her, following the spirit of our vocation, let us hide ourselves so as to do good. The Rule says we should devote ourselves to all kinds of ministry, to all works of zeal. Nevertheless, we should behave so as to be *unknown and hidden*. [...]”

Home missions: “sent to sinners”

521

1815/1844. Déclas. Written account of the origins of the Society. [Mayet 5, 393f = OM 591, 7]:

Fr. Déclas says: “I am the first, despite my unworthiness, to whom he made known his design. It was in 1815, on a Wednesday, a holiday. Both of us were at the major seminary of Lyons. He told me that he intended, when he became a priest, to do like St. Francis Regis and to go into the rural areas to help the poor people, who often have greater need of outside priests than people in the cities or large towns who have priests to choose from, whereas the former often have only one priest and are exposed to making bad confessions. He asked me whether I wanted to do like him. I said yes. He said no more at the time, and through the year he kept me with the same thought, telling me only: ‘We shall do like St. Francis Regis, and no more.’ But the day before we left for the holidays, he took me aside (until then, he had spoken to no one about this project) and told me: ‘You know, what I told you about during the year is something serious. An order will be set up which will be about the same as that of the Jesuits, except that its members will be called Marists instead of being called Jesuits.’ We promised that we would write during the summer, and we kept our word.”

522

About October 1838. Colin. Remarks collected by Mayet. [Mayet 1, 179f = FS 11, 7]:

“I would very much like,” he said, “that our early days be committed to writing. People would see with what simplicity missions were conducted. I can see that it is the best way of getting to know the spirit of the Society. I tremble lest later on the spirit of complacency make its way into the Society.”

523

September 15-18, 1845. Colin. Talk during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 415f = FS 102, 23]:

At this point Father's voice softened and took on a note of brightness. Then, like a man deeply moved, he said, "And now, Messieurs, we come to the little children. It is with them that the mission should begin. The first missionaries, [he corrected himself and said:] the first catechists of the Society [this was the name by which he referred to himself when speaking of the missions he had given for four years at the very beginning of the Society], the first catechists of the Society always did so, and I very much wish the practice to continue. At the end of the sermon, if, as I suppose, it is a Sunday, the announcement is made that on Monday there will be catechism class and confessions for the children. This class should be entrusted to someone who is fond of children and who can get them to listen. Through the children you gain an entry into every family. If the children are pleased the whole parish is immediately roused and each missionary can clearly see that he has coming to him in the confessional all the parents of the children whose confessions he has heard. I shall not dwell at length on this subject but I place great store by it. Apart from the beginning of the mission, it would be highly desirable to continue the catechism classes from time to time. It should be done in public before the whole parish on a Sunday, especially round about the middle of the mission. This provides an excellent opportunity for giving the parishioners instruction on the sacraments without humiliating them. You question the children, and have them solve cases of conscience. You also try to show a fatherly kindness, to open up their hearts, to show how moved a confessor is when a penitent confesses his sins, and that nothing surprises him. You try, too, to let them see how easy it is to return to God's favor. [...]"

524

November 24, 1836. Colin. Remarks in the refectory. [Mayet 6, 694f = FS 132, 20-22]:

[20] "Messieurs, when you are giving a mission, pay great attention to what I am going to tell you.

[21] "If a great sinner comes to you, be full of charity and patience with him. Yes, even if you have to stay all day to console and encourage him and bring him back to the fold. Do not begrudge your time. That is what the Rule tells us, that is the work of a missionary: the conversion of sinners. If a soul comes who is already on the right path, then, you can be brief: after confession, a few words to encourage them to persevere, and then it is finished.

[22] "We are not sent to that kind of person. Marists may say what the Lord said of himself: *I did not come to call the just, but sinners.*"

Foreign missions: “Mary, it was you who sent me”

525

February 6, 1842. Colin. A community meeting at the college at Belley. [Mayet 1, 421-423 = FS 44, 8]:

“Messieurs, before I finish, I have one small thought for you: it concerns the foreign missions. Doubtless it is praiseworthy to have zealous intentions, but we must also take care not to let ourselves build castles in Spain, as they say, and to neglect our duties here. You want to exercise your zeal in a wider arena... but you must test yourselves and carefully set aside all human motives. You must contain your desire and then see whether it lasts. About six years ago, Fr. Séon, then bursar at the minor seminary in Belley, pleaded with me to send him on the foreign missions. Finally, one day he came to me and said, ‘I no longer feel an attraction for my work.’ ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘so you no longer feel an attraction for your work! Well, you are not going.’ He set off last year, but do you know, by then he no longer felt any great compulsion. I placed him in charge of the band of missionaries I was sending to Oceania as their superior. He worked wonders. [...] Messieurs, I will tell you something of my secret, and how I go about choosing men for the foreign missions, when the time comes. If I notice a certain impetuosity in those who apply, a certain over-keenness, they are not the ones I choose. If, on the other hand, I see in them a desire that is calm and tranquil and humble, then I make my choice. If a man wishes to go on the missions he should say, ‘Lord, who am I that you should think of using me? What would you do with this little speck of dust? What can I do, Lord, and yet you, my God, can do all things yourself. I offer myself to you, Lord, despite all my failings.’ Messieurs, when a man arrives at the point where he scarcely dare offer himself to God, because he sees himself as unworthy and incapable, that is the time when he is ready for the missions. [...]”

526

April 17-24, 1842. Colin. To the members of the general chapter. [Mayet 1, 693f = FS 56, 5]:

“[...] Messieurs, you must go to the missions with the purest of motives, nothing merely human. You must go only from motives of faith, to win souls for God, to extend the reign of Jesus and Mary. [...]”

527

August 7, 1843. Colin. To the Marists of Belley. [Mayet 2, 310f = FS 66, 1]:

“Do you know,” he said on August 7, 1843, “whom it gives me the greatest joy to see depart for the foreign missions? Those who have felt drawn to the missions for a long time and who have mastered that feeling, tried to overcome it even, and eventually becoming indifferent to it have placed themselves in the hands of their superior, in a great spirit of mistrust of themselves, and of reluctance, because of their own weakness, to follow that course by themselves. These do great good; they are at ease; nothing troubles them. For the missions, Messieurs, one must be entirely dead to self, and have an unflinching gentleness and patience. Those, on the other hand, who give way to their desires and who have been carried away by grand ideas of the missions, who have been entirely set on going,

they are the ones who are soon disillusioned. They are soon downhearted and a good number would now rather be sitting here.” [We were in his room.]

528

September 16, 1846. Colin. Exhortation to the young priests. [Mayet 5, 534 = FS 110, 5]:

“[...] You young men who feel a noble attraction towards these fine missions, take care not to stifle it. Tell everything to your superiors, but submit yourselves and wait patiently upon Providence, without browbeating your superiors.” [...]

529

September 23, 1846. Colin. Table talk. [Mayet 4, 523-525 = FS 117, 7f]:

[7] “[...] One of our missionaries in Oceania wrote to me that in really critical moments he said to Mary, ‘Blessed Virgin, it is not by my will that I am here, it was you who sent me, so help me in this danger: you have to do it,’ and Mary did not leave his appeal unheeded. Let us always abandon ourselves to Mary in this way. It will be our greatest consolation.

[8] “Those of you, Messieurs, who are thinking of the foreign missions, and who feel a desire to devote themselves to these distant mission fields, let them carefully preserve this attraction in their heart. It is a gift from God. Anyone who would put someone off the foreign missions would not have the spirit of faith. We should always have our eyes fixed on Jesus crucified. Then again, let those who have this desire make it known to their superior. Ah, certainly, I will never be the one to come along and say to someone, ‘Do you want to go? Go then.’ No, indeed, that must come from God. Take Saint Francis Regis for your model: when you have made known your desires, stay calm and abandon yourself to your superiors. Those whom God is calling, despite my procrastination and my discouraging them, as the Rule says, they always come back. [...] There is no need to go to Oceania to find suffering and danger. Are the majority of Frenchmen any better than the natives of Oceania? Have they any more faith? Better morals? Those of you who have traveled through France know well enough. Let us work then, all of us, Messieurs, with new zeal, some in France, others abroad. [...]”

“The Society’s first aim is teaching”

530

January 31, 1849. Colin. Outburst in the refectory. [Mayet 7, 649f = FS 172, 19]:

“As long as I am superior, I shall never allow anyone to pour scorn or discredit upon one of the aims of the Society, and if I may say so, the principal aim of the Society. At a time when the Church, whether in Germany or in France, or anywhere, seeks as the sole means of regeneration to gain hold of the young, to instill Christian principles in their hearts, we see some young priests pour scorn on

these noble and holy works! To what have all the efforts of our French bishops been directed since the Revolution? Surely, the reconquest of education so as to save the faith? Is not that the significance of all these struggles of the episcopate against the University? Is that not why the Church is increasing more than ever the teaching congregations, Brothers, Sisters, all those religious who devote themselves to education, to children? The little Society of Mary too comes along with its different branches, all of which devote themselves to teaching. There are among us some whose hearts beat only for children. Like the bishops, like the Church, they believe and say that the rest of the world is like spoilt fruit, like a rotten trunk, that there is only one way to save the plant, that is to care for the roots... and these young priests are so bold, so lacking in zeal and judgment as to deliver themselves of opinions to the contrary. Yes, I said it is a lack of judgment, and I repeat, so that those who are not checked by obedience and religious spirit may be checked by that thought... And what do you think you are going to do then? Go on the foreign missions? I think a hundred times more highly of the education of youth in our own countries, which are also pagan, than I do of the foreign missions. Did not the Holy Spirit say that we should first of all care for those whom he called *members of the household of the faith?*”

531

January 31, 1849. Colin. Outburst in the refectory. [Mayet 7, 651f = OM 690 = FS 172, 23]:

“Messieurs, 15 centuries after the preaching of the Gospel, there appears all of a sudden a body of apostolic men. The name of Jesus has been reserved for them, and accordingly they imitate Him. Like Him, they prepare themselves in retirement; like Jesus, who only initiated His ministry at the age of thirty, they are ordained priests only at the age of thirty. It is the society which has done most good in the Church. And I dare say that their superiority comes from the fact that they oriented themselves towards teaching; that is the source of all the good which the Jesuits have done. In its turn also, 19 centuries after the founding of the Church, there comes a small society. The name of Mary has been held in store for it, as it were, and given to it by God. The blessed Virgin has said to it: ‘I was the support of the newborn Church; I shall be the support of the Church at the end of time.’ We must also follow the path of the Jesuits. My greatest ambition, one of the first ideas in establishing the Society, its first aim, is teaching. I have no hope in its future, I consider it as lost, if it does no teaching.”

532

September 11, 1853. Colin. To the retreatants. [Mayet 8, 697-699 = FS 188, 13f]:

[13] “When I see any tendency to make ourselves known, when I hear people talking about taking on colleges on a grandiose scale, when I see and hear them say that they would like to make a greater impression, see them set store only by their own abilities, making comparisons with others, nothing so cuts me to the heart. Are these the kind of attitudes that the sons of Mary should have? Did not our Lord choose poor men to be his apostles? If I may say so, I shall set myself against such a spirit like a wall of bronze, and I ask your permission to inflict severe punishment upon anyone moved by such a spirit, anyone who is ashamed of our life hidden and unknown. What is the use of consecrating ourselves to Mary if we intend to be spoken about and push ourselves to the fore?”

[14] “The spirit of the Society leads us to choose the poorest foundations, because it is in these places that we can do most good in a hidden way; there is more good to be done there and with greater certainty.”

“I feel impelled toward the poor classes”

533

January 1839. Colin. Conversation in Belley. [Mayet 1, 230f = FA 193, 1f]:

[1] Speaking about the Marists in Lyons who were visiting the prisons and doing much good, he said, “Ah! as long as they achieve equal good while raising no commotion, I shall be calm and contented.

[2] “The more I have to do, the less I fret. God is able to raise up children of Abraham from among stones. M. Cholleton has offered our confreres in Lyons the office and title of chaplain to the workhouse. They raised objections, being keen to accept the duties but not the title of chaplain nor the stipend. M. Cholleton spoke to me about it, and I told him that the answer given by these gentlemen was a great consolation to me; that in fact nothing is dearer to me than such abandoned works — the prisons and workhouses, for example — but that I was in complete agreement with my confreres. [...]”

534

August 2-10, 1839. Colin. A casual conversation at Belley. [Mayet 1, 185 = FS 18, 3]:

“How I hope they will always continue as they are at Lyons. They work among the masons, which is a humble work. They go into the prisons, they serve the workhouse... Those are the tasks I like to see the Marists employed in. These at any rate are the works which bring vocations. People say, ‘The Marists go into the prisons, look after the poor... Yes, that is what must be done; that is truly a work of God.’ They request admission to the Society, and it is that which has won their affection. Let us not be numbered among those who only want to preach in the towns, to give fine sermons...”

535

1838-1839. Colin. Collected remarks. [Mayet 1, 239 = FS 23]:

Speaking one day about care for the poor, about preaching in the prisons, in the workhouse, etc. he said, “How I want the sons of the blessed Virgin to be known like our Lord by that mark: *The poor have the Gospel preached to them.*” He laid great insistence upon this, saying, “I love the abandoned works, hidden and secret, I love the poor.” One day I asked him, “Monsieur, will the Society also take on minor seminaries when the bishops call upon it?” “Do you think,” he said with feeling, “that we should educate and love only the rich? Yes indeed, the Society will educate the poor, the friends of our Lord.”

536

1838-1839. Mayet. Narrative of an incident. [Mayet 1, 404f = OM 477]:

He [Colin] esteemed simplicity so highly that when a priest who was thinking of entering the Society appeared a bit shocked at the lowliness of our work and spoke to one of our confreres about what could be done to relieve the situation a bit, [Colin] approved very much the fact that the confrere, instead of responding to these objections and destroying them, on the contrary took a strong stand on the profession that we make in the Society to seek out the lowly things, the small, the abandoned works, to flee showiness, not to maneuver for money, to love poverty, to trust in God, who has never failed us, etc. — [Colin] said confidentially to someone: “That priest is not fit for the Society; I don’t think I will accept him.”

537

October 19, 1842. Colin. Conversation at La Capucinière. [Mayet 1, 670 = FS 61, 9f]:

[9] “I feel impelled towards the poor classes, towards country missions, towards the poor of Lyons. To seek out outcasts, give catechism instructions, to help the beggars... These are the thoughts that pursue me.

[10] “[...] Come, pray; let us pray. I must have a Francis Regis for the poor classes.”

538

December 22, 1847. Colin. Conversation. [Mayet 4, 464f = FS 148, 1f]:

[1] “Messieurs, we must imitate our Lord who, if I may be permitted to use such an expression, was a man of the people. He was always with the poor, he loved the poor, the ordinary people, and he was constantly surrounded by them. Let him be our model. If the rich come, do not spurn them but receive them well and show them great consideration. Because of their standing, their education, their refinement, their pride and their strong emotions, we must take far greater precautions with them, for we have to save them. How difficult they are to deal with! Do not let them know at first what you will have to ask of them, otherwise you will risk turning them away from their own salvation.

[2] “How much more consoling it is to have to do with the poor! You can say anything to them, be straightforward, not waste any time, and have the joy of seeing your ministry bear great fruit. Nevertheless, Messieurs, I have never dared to say from the pulpit ‘*woe to you rich*’. In small parishes you could not as it were utter these words without giving wounding practical examples. In the cities there would be less difficulty, but nevertheless, I would be afraid of humiliating, irritating, and alienating people. Messieurs, let us learn to understand the human heart. Let us put ourselves in the place of those we are speaking to. Would outbursts of invective against us win *our* hearts? [...]”

Parishes: “That is not our mission.”

539

November 18, 1846. Colin. Tirade in the council. [Mayet 6, 403-413 = FS 129]:

[1] On November 18th, Very Reverend Father General called a meeting of his council at the Mother House in Lyons. There was question of sending someone to Valbenoîte to deal with a matter concerning the house which the Society owns at St. Etienne.

[2] Things were extremely muddled, and Cardinal de Bonald, the Archbishop of Lyons, who was due to visit the town had asked that someone from the Society be there during his visit. My aim is not to recount here all that happened in this affair, but simply to recall a very remarkable incident.

[3] Father Terraillon was to be the one to go. He said in council, “For example, if Cardinal de Bonald proposed that the difficulties be settled by the Society’s taking over the parish, as it did when Monsieur Rouchon was parish priest, I would not be opposed to seeing the Society accept the suggestion. I even think it would be a way of settling everything.”

[4] Very Reverend Father Superior was astonished at this, and stopped short for a moment, as if staggered. Suddenly he cried vehemently:

[5] “Messieurs, Messieurs, I am going away [he was about to leave for Rome]. Remember what I am going to say to you. If ever you start deliberating the fundamentals of the Society, the Society is lost.” Father Terraillon said, “But, Father, in council you call upon us for our opinion.”

[6] Father Colin replied with extraordinary vigor, “Monsieur Terraillon. Yes, your opinion on particular points, but not on the foundations of the Society. You are free to express your opinion before the council on whatever is under discussion, but not to call into question the fundamentals of the Society. Messieurs, Messieurs, if ever you start calling into question the fundamentals of the Society, the Society is lost. Ah! May that never happen again, never, never.”

[7] He stood up, waved his arms, paced up and down. I have rarely seen him so worked up. For three quarters of an hour he interrupted the business in hand, speaking of nothing but this incident, and with a tone of indescribable authority.

[8] As Father Terraillon is one of the oldest members of the Society, I think Father Colin intended to wipe out any impression at all that his words might have made, coming from the lips of an otherwise admirable man, words which in any case had found no echo among the other members of the council.

[9] “Messieurs,” he said, “if you want Marists to be parish priests, here and now I resign and I will begin again. If the Society can do good only by accepting parishes, it must come to an end, it must be wiped out, because it has no goal, no longer anything to do in the Church. There are already parish priests in the Church: that is not our mission.

[10] “Oh, Messieurs, let no one ever, ever shake the foundations, the basis of the Society here in council. St. Ignatius did not even leave the general congregations of the Order the right to debate certain fundamental points.

[11] “Marists parish priests? Never! If we are asked to run a parish for a fortnight, for three weeks, all to the good. But regularly, never. If abroad, in Sydney for example, I were asked to staff a parish, well and good, I might perhaps accept. The Jesuits have done that; these are missions. But in our own countries, ha! never, Messieurs, let anyone speak of that again.

[12] “It is true, I made an exception for Verdelaïs, because of the pilgrimage, because of the small number of parishioners [500 or 600]. Then again, it was the Society’s first foundation. Has not even that brought us a lot of trouble? Perhaps today I would not do it again. I would even say that if at the time I had seen the place I would not, perhaps, have accepted this foundation. But after all it is only a question of five or six hundred souls. But to accept, Messieurs, a parish like Valbenoîte

with five thousand souls! Oh! Messieurs, and then our men would compromise themselves, their virtue would weaken, they would spend their time hearing the confessions of the pious few, they would not apply themselves to study. Messieurs, I did not leave a parish to become a parish priest. In that case I had no need to come into the Society.

[13] “Messieurs, I would even say to you that any man I put in charge of a parish, would have the right to refuse me; that does not come within the vows.

[14] “Those who become Marists do not come to be parish priests. Yes, even at Verdelaï! The man I sent as a parish priest would have the right to refuse me.

[15] “Messieurs, Messieurs, Messieurs, remember well what I tell you. In any case, I shall take steps to see that no one ever goes back on that after my death.”

[16] Father Terraillon had said that accepting this parish would be an exception. “Ah, yes indeed!” he said, “and if ever I make such an exception during my life, if I ever give an example like that, that is to say, if during my lifetime I give the example of overturning one of the principal foundations of the Society, of falling short of the very basis of the Society, the Society is lost.

[17] “Messieurs,” he repeated, “that article has been carefully considered; it is one of the basic principles.”

[18] Father Terraillon, who is an extremely virtuous man, did not utter another word, not even a whisper, and Father Colin carried on in the same vein.

[19] Then Father told us that the Archbishop of Bordeaux wished the Marists of Verdelaï to attend the ecclesiastical conferences for their area, and was very insistent upon it. Eventually the Superior of Verdelaï had been obliged to show him Father General’s letter. I think he said in it that if his Grace could not exempt the Marists from these ecclesiastical conferences, this would perhaps be a sign that Providence did not wish to make use of the Marists in that diocese. “Yes,” said Father Colin. “I would rather have seen that house fall! Yes, just imagine me sending my young priests! My priests to those meetings! I know only too well what often happens there, what they talk about. They spend their time criticizing the administration. Have I any need for my priests to learn that kind of thing?

[20] “Messieurs, never let anyone speak again of parishes for Marists!”

[21] He set forth in support of his decision, apart from reasons concerning the reputation, virtue and learning of the Society, a great number of others that I cannot recall, including difficulties with the parish council, the local authorities, and letters with the bishops.

[22] Parishes would never be satisfied with the subjects sent by the Superior; the parish priest would complain to the General, would complain about the General to the bishop, and for the slightest reason the bishop would be writing to the Superior General. The Society would be accused of amassing wealth, the dedication of the religious would be of no account, and the parish priest would be hindered in his administration of the parish by his vows. He would not be able to pay gifts into the parish unless the donor made it clear, etc. etc. Then the ravages of the pious few, as Father used to say. By that he meant the abuse that some confessors and penitents fall into of wasting time in the confessional, and the danger of all those regular confessions made not entirely under the inspiration of grace ...where human nature is mixed in with faith, and where starting with the spiritual, they end up with the natural...

[23] “Ah! Messieurs, I know the problems arising from that situation too well for there ever to be any question of that in the Society.

[24] “I have had a lot to put up with, Messieurs, during these few years that the Marists have run that parish. Do you think I was unconcerned for the Marists I was obliged to post there? But I used to say: ‘We must wait until Monsieur Rouchon [the parish priest who gave his house to the Society on condition that it provided him with curates] dies, so as not to hurt him. When he is no longer there we will leave that work.’ — And we did.

[25] “Messieurs, if I speak so forcefully it is so that you will remember. Ha! If I appointed parish priests I would no longer be a Superior General — I would be a bishop.

[26] “Monsieur Terraillon, if you are still of that opinion, if you are going to equivocate with the Cardinal at St. Etienne on this matter, say so, because in that case I shall not send you.”

[27] Father Terraillon made no reply, not wishing to say anything against the wishes of Father Colin. As soon as the latter spoke he held his peace. Very Reverend Father General sent him to Valbenoîte almost immediately and Father Terraillon carried out his wishes perfectly. Father Colin repeated perhaps half a dozen times during the conversation, “If the Society is to provide parish priests, I resign here and now, here and now. I express myself so forcibly because I am going away shortly. It is one of our basic principles.”

Joy

The 1988 Constitutions state that Marist spirituality is “characterized by spontaneity and joy” (no. 117). This is not surprising for a congregation that bears the name of her whose experience of vocation began with the invitation to rejoice, and who testifies: “My spirit rejoices in God my savior.” Joy, spontaneity, breadth of spirit are important features of Marist life for Colin (the Mayet index lists 140 references to laughter), although he never seems to link them explicitly to the Marian sources of our spirituality.

540

1838. Mayet and others. Observations. [Mayet 1, 400f = FA 192]:

[1] In 1838, some Marists coming back to Belley said to the Superior, “Oh! Monsieur, how cheerful things are in Belley! We have been in other houses where they seemed in the dining room to be somewhat on the watch, a bit on their guard and at recreation they appear under some restraint, rather stiff, somehow reticent.”

[2] If this way of things had existed in our houses, it would have greatly distressed him, and he several times enlarged on the matter to that effect. He wanted recollection, but he was equally anxious to have freedom of spirit, a good cheerful, brotherly way of living, a certain abandonment, a free-and-easy manner. At Belley, he himself fostered such an approach as much as he could, by his way of doing things and his conversations, and he had succeeded; and so he could say that for that reason he was delighted to come back to Belley after his journeys. He did not call the other sort of approach by the name of piety.

541

About 1839. Mayet/Colin. No context indicated. [Mayet 1, 411]:

He recommended the spirit of simplicity, of gaiety, of abandon in recreation: he said that he enjoyed coming to Belley because of this spirit: he did not like stiff, narrow, affected ways at all, and especially in recreation.

542

March 27 - April 9, 1841. Colin. Community gathering at the college in Belley. [Mayet 1, 121 = FS 39, 45]:

He then spoke a few joyful words to us. He had previously recommended gaiety and joy, showing how good it was for the soul. He had told us, however, to avoid buffoonery in our little jokes, and he wanted them to be such that what we said in private we could say in front of anyone.

543

Spring 1841. Colin. Remark to the Marists of Belley. [Mayet 1, 412f = FS 43]:

“How happy I am to see that the Marists have a certain breadth of virtue, a certain ease, full of abandonment. I encourage and establish this approach as far as I am able. When I say *I establish*, I do not mean I talk about it but I establish it by my ways of doing things. At one time in a certain house they were rather stilted and strained, but now that has all changed. They are more magnanimous, they conduct themselves in a simple and happy fashion. Ah! If we did not always have a certain joy in our soul like this, a certain liberty, where would be the charm in our life? I do not like those who always have their hands joined, those whose devotion is narrow.”

544

February 21, 1842. Colin. Advice to Eymard. [Mayet 1, 650 = FS 45, 3]:

“You must meet everyone with peace of soul, making yourself all things to all men, bringing joy to the hearts of others. When to do that costs you something, well then, we must make a sacrifice to the good Lord and then we must really die to ourselves. Love contempt, read Franchi [author of *The Love of Self-contempt*] often, you will find in it the philosophers’ stone. What a gold mine! He who finds it has found a treasure of peace, a peace that can never be disturbed. Always be joyful: *rejoice in the Lord always*. To be calm in spirit is a great virtue.”

545

January-March 1842 (?). Colin. Remark made to Father Fournier. [Mayet 1, 401m = FS 50]:

He said one day to Father Fournier, “Allow yourself to be possessed by joy. Joy is of benefit when it comes from God and when it is kept within the proper limits. Dance a little. Cheerfulness brings a little relief to nature. Very often there are little vapors rising in our soul. Cheerfulness gives them an outlet and dispels our little moods.”

546

January-March 1842. Colin. Remarks made while working on the Constitutions. [Mayet 1, 726f = FS 54, 3]:

“The third thing I want to urge is that the Marists not think so much about themselves. Let us not always be coming back upon ourselves, let us not look at ourselves so much. Really, what a spectacle! We are so fine! Rather, let us look to God, who is uncreated beauty. Let us walk in his presence. By always looking at him we shall become like him, we shall become perfect. How I pity those who are always caught up with themselves and who like to steep in their own juice.” As he said this, he laughed heartily. “Ah, yes,” he said, “we soil ourselves with our own company.” He added that a broader approach raises up the soul, makes it capable of great good, while those characters who are engrossed in themselves make no progress, even in their own sanctification. “Let us laugh,” he said, “for God wants us to laugh — we shall weep on other occasions. Life is a mixture of laughing and weeping. Let us follow the path before us with our eyes fixed on the good Lord”.

547

September 27, 1842. Colin. Conference during the general retreat. [Mayet 4, 149 = FS 60, 20f]:

[20] “Messieurs, when someone is afraid of being criticized, of being judged, I would say that his virtue is not something solid.”

[21] He then enjoined upon us, on the strength of some remarks which had been made to him, a certain cheerfulness, a holy cheerfulness, but at the same time a dignified cheerfulness.

548

Academic year 1842-1843. Colin. Counsel to Mayet about the care of novices. [Mayet 1, 679f = FS 64, 10]:

“Maintain among the young men a holy freedom, a holy liberty, a holy cheerfulness. Anything that is strained is not genuine, not even solid. Devotions that are strained and unnatural do not last.”

549

September 15-18, 1845. Colin. Talks on the home missions during the general retreat. [Mayet 5, 414 = FS 102, 17]:

“[...] Messieurs, it is not for money that we are working, but for the salvation of souls, and we can count ourselves far richer, more highly honored and fortunate to be the instruments of salvation and to be called to spread peace and joy in the souls of men.”

550

August 25, 1847. Colin. To the retreatants, on giving missions. [Mayet 7, 208 = FS 142, 7]:

“Prudence too at table. Let us be full of respect for the local pastor. An easy manner, a certain holy cheerfulness, but always mingled with a certain seriousness. Let us weigh our words, let us learn how to joke without hurting anyone. [...]”

Nazareth

Colin emphasized the theme of Nazareth particularly during the latter part of his life, after his resignation from the office of superior general. It seems to have symbolized for him an entire set of attitudes that had to be integrated into a life of apostolic activity. Thus he could tell Marists active in the apostolate that, "I find the spirit of the Society entirely in the home of Nazareth." This dossier is placed at the end, then, for it represents the need for integration in our spiritual life. Reproduced here is the dossier collected by Fr. Coste when he wrote his study on this theme for *Acta Societatis Mariae*, vol. VI, no. 31, pp. 385-398.

551

1833-1834. Colin. *Memorandum on the S.M. [Coste T1 = OM 299, 7 = LM 11, 7]:*

One of the main duties of the members of the confraternity and of the other members of the Society of Mary is to contribute, by their prayers, their good advice and all other possible means towards the conversion of sinners; and it is in order that we may rejoice in their conversion, after the example of the Good Shepherd, and give thanks for their return to the Lord, that we request permission to celebrate in all the houses of the Society the feast of the return of Mary, our Mother, to Nazareth from the land of Egypt, and have it on the first Sunday of May, since, coming after Easter, this is the most opportune time to congratulate sinners on their return to spend the month of May, which is consecrated to Mary in a holy manner. This could be the principal feast of the confraternity.

552

September 10-17, 1838. Colin. *To the Marist retreatants at Meximieux. [Coste T2 = Mayet 1, 48f = FS 8, 1 = Jeantin 2, 267 (altered text)]:*

"Ah!" he said to us, "when I go to the Hermitage and am in the midst of the Marist Brothers, I often tell them: 'My children, I envy you your happiness.' They do in the Society what Jesus and Mary did at Nazareth. What would we do without them, gentlemen? They have the happiness of serving others. For me, gentlemen, you will pardon me for saying this [he was speaking to the Marist Fathers on retreat at Meximieux in 1838], but I must confess that it gives me more pleasure to spend the recreation with a Brother than with you." Then, speaking of the poor: "Our century," he said, "is a century which has no love for the poor. It cannot even bear to see them; that is why it has invented those prisons where they are locked away to keep them out of sight" [he was speaking of the work-houses].

553

September 17, 1838. Colin. Reflection. [Coste T3 = Mayet 1, 9 = OM 430 = FS 10]:

Belley, the Nazareth of the Society

On his return from that retreat, he said: "However, it is to Belley, that little corner, that the most important letters come from Rome and elsewhere; it is from that little spot in the mountains that they go out. Who would have believed it? Who could have believed that this Society should come into being in that corner?" Somebody said: "No Order has ever begun like this in a small town." He answered: "Yes, there was one, but only one. It is the Order of the Church. Nazareth was its cradle. Jesus, Mary, Joseph: there you have the Church coming into being. It began there."

554

1842. Colin. Constitutions, section on preserving and increasing the Society. [Coste T4 = AT II, a, 355 = AT V, C, 422]:

[...] nothing must be overlooked that would enable us to erect this Society upon the foundation of every solid virtue, and in the first place on the four unshakeable cornerstones: *humility, obedience, charity, and poverty*; so that what was once apparent in the house of Nazareth, where resided the Incarnate Word, the blessed Virgin and the Patriarch Joseph, may also be seen in this Society, for the greater glory of God and the honor of that same Virgin.

555

January 6, 1842. Colin. Letter to the Marists at Verdélais. [Coste T5 = Mayet ND 1, 403f = LColin 420106.Ver, 4f]:

Let us then be faithful, my dear confreres, to the grace of this vocation; it is only through such fidelity that we shall succeed in acquiring the perfection God asks of us. Let us love the Society of Mary; let us look on it as a harbor of safety for us. Away from that harbor, we should probably have been shipwrecked. Let us reproduce in it what the angels once saw with admiration in the home of Nazareth, that peace, that union, that humility, that dependence, that mortification, that disregard for the world; in a word, those virtues of which our models give us such a beautiful example.

556

February 6, 1842. Colin. Talk to the Marists at the college of Belley. [Coste T6 = Mayet 1, 419 = FS 44, 3 = Jeantin 5, 94 (altered text) = DS 346]:

"[...] by spirit of prayer I mean that one should be in continual dependence on the will of God, that one should be like a child at its father's side: for the child is content to know that it is by its father's side; and in a word, to want nothing but the holy will of God. See how Our Divine Lord advanced through all the stages of childhood, adolescence, maturity, and all the while occupied Himself with manual tasks in the home of Nazareth. Somebody could have told Him: you must go and preach. But no, Christ's whole business, it may be said, was to do the will of His Father. He would remain in Nazareth as long as it pleased God. Let us do likewise, gentlemen, putting nothing

before us but the holy will of God. Happy the man who does this! What happiness, what joy! Attachment to the will of God, it is heaven on earth.”

557

1842. Colin. *Talk to Marists engaged in education of the young.* [Coste T7 = Mayet 1, 384 = FS 49, 1 = Jeantin 4, 130 = DS 56]:

“I wish all Marists were like burning lamps. Prepare yourselves well in your solitude. The fire of charity must be drawn from the heart of Jesus, from the heart of Mary. In your seclusion, you are like Jesus Christ preparing Himself for His preaching during the thirty years in Nazareth. Think of yourselves also as the apostles making their novitiate with Jesus for three years: during that time they were, indeed, still imperfect, and yet how much they accomplished afterwards!”

558

April 14, 1842. Colin. *Letter to five students of the college at Belley who asked that they might enter the Society.* [Coste T8 = Mayet 1, 741]:

[...] I was edified by your good dispositions towards virtue. I cannot thank the Lord enough for them or pray enough that He bless you more and more, that He defend you against the enemy of salvation, and increase in you the grace of His holy love. Think of yourselves, my dear friends, as being in the home of Nazareth; look on Mary as your mother, the sweet Jesus as your brother, the glorious patriarch, St. Joseph, as the protector of your innocence. Strive to copy those august models. Go to Jesus through Mary, to Mary through Joseph; all for the greater glory of God, all for the honor of Mary and Joseph.

559

May 30, 1842. Poupinel/Colin. *Account of the journey to Rome.* [Coste T9 = Mayet 4, 3 = Jeantin 6, 12 (summarized)]:

On the 30th May we went to the Capuchin Fathers for confession and to say Mass; Father was really pleased at the simplicity and cleanliness of their chapel. At four in the afternoon we were on board the *Mongibello*; at five we left the port. We were in second class; but when Father saw the style of our quarters he showed painful surprise. Then he reminded me of how much more he preferred the little merchant vessel which brought him to Rome the first time, for he had slept on ropes, and everything breathed forth the poverty of Nazareth.

560

December 31, 1843. Colin. *Talk to scholastics gathered in his room.* [Coste T10 = Mayet 5, 660f = FS 74, 2 = Jeantin 2, 244 (altered text)]:

“Yes, my children, when I present you to God, I like to think that many of you will one day be apostles. You are not called to that at the moment; you are not called to work in the missions, to preach. You are what Our Divine Lord was at Nazareth for thirty years; you are in seclusion. What

are you to do? Simply what Our Divine Lord did during His hidden life: *And He was subject to them*, that is all the scripture has to tell us of Him. Following His example, you should practice perfect obedience; yes, obedience, humility, great humility. Ah, my children, I can say this because I know to whom I am speaking: we are gathered here within narrow walls indeed; well, then, you should rejoice in the smallness and poverty of the place; it reminds us of the house of Nazareth where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived; and at Bethlehem the Savior had only a stable.”

561

November 25, 1844. Colin. Address to the scholastics of Belley. [Coste T11 = Mayet 5, 705 = FS 79, 1 = Jeantin 4, 44f (beginning summarized)]:

“Here, gentlemen, you are in a place of retreat in order to imitate Jesus Christ at Nazareth, to prepare yourselves for your ministry, to practice before you preach: *Jesus began to do miracles and to teach*. When you begin your apostolic career you must be saints, and for that you must become saints now. You will be then what you become during the noviciate. If you are humble, obedient, mortified, you will continue to practice those virtues; otherwise you will find it extremely difficult. So exert yourselves in those virtues lay good foundations. Humility. Be little in your own eyes. Often say to God, like St. Augustine: *May I know myself, may I know you.*”

562

June 29, 1845. Colin. To the council. [Coste T12 = Mayet 1, 9m = OM 607]:

On the 29th June 1845, Fr. Colin, speaking of new foundations to be made, said to us: “Gentlemen, Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, the Blessed Virgin was born in Nazareth. The Society of Mary came to life in the small town of Belley (unknown spot) and in the little hermitage near Saint-Chamond, in isolation and solitude. Let us remember our origin; let us begin without noise. It is not necessary to make noise in order to do good; and afterwards, when the time comes, then. ...”

563

September 16, 1845. Colin. Words to Eymard. [Coste T13 = Mayet 5, 725f = Jeantin 2, 165 (altered text)]:

Reverend Father Superior, speaking of the foundation of La Seyne, near Toulon, on the 16th September 1845, said these striking words to Fr. Eymard:

“I am afraid lest this foundation should not succeed.”

“And why, Father?”

“Because it is not beginning like the others. It is off to too good a start... A fine house, with income... The other foundations did not begin like that; they all began in a small way, on the model of Nazareth. That is why God blessed them. When the Society makes foundations which are poor, the members who are there are led to have more confidence in and abandonment to Providence; when nothing is lacking, they never think of Providence. Besides, a house founded by the Society itself is more independent. These thoughts worry me; I am going to prescribe some prayers.”

564

September 19, 1845. Colin. Prayer improvised at closing of the retreat. [Coste T14 = Mayet 6, 130 = Jeantin 5, 421 = DS 531]:

O Blessed Virgin, O my good Mother, only St. Joseph is worthy to take your place. It was to him, in your humble home of Nazareth, that Providence wished to entrust the interests of Jesus and those of yourself. It was he who was obeyed in Nazareth. I trust, O Mary that he takes an interest in this little Society.

565

June 29, 1847. Colin. To the novices. [Coste T15 = Mayet 5, 701f = FS 140, 1 and 4 = Jeantin 4, 17f]:

[1] The novices went to pay their respects to the Reverend Father Superior General at the Mother House at Puylata on his return from Rome, where he had gone for the fourth time. He told them:

[4] “One gets bored too doing nothing, because we are made for action, we feel the need to be up and doing... But consider our Mother after the Divine Master’s Ascension. She was the support, the directress of the newborn Church; she is called *Queen of Apostles*. And yet she seemed to be doing nothing; but she accomplished more by her prayers than the apostles did by their preaching. Consider also Our Lord Jesus Christ during the thirty years in Nazareth: there are your models.”

566

December 4, 1848. Colin. To the young priests studying at Puylata. [Coste T16 = Mayet 1, 534fm = Jeantin 4, 109f (altered text) = DS 559]:

On the 4th December 1848, Fr. Colin, with great feeling and ardor, said to the young priests who were perfecting their learning at the Mother House:

“Young men, my children, the spirit of the priesthood is the very spirit of zeal. May this zeal lead you to work earnestly now at your studies, as it will lead you later to work night and day for the salvation of souls. Oh! how beautiful is the priest’s ministry! Three words: *I absolve you*, and he has wiped out a whole life of sin; at his command, grace drowns it all, just as the waters swallowed up the Egyptians at the mere signal of Moses. Make good use, then, of the time which has been given to you. Imitate Our Lord, who remained shut up in Nazareth for thirty years; when the time for the apostolate comes you will follow Him in the conquest of souls.”

567

September 11, 1853. Colin. Conference at the general retreat following a discourse on *La Neylière and the Eucharist*. [Coste T17 = Mayet 8, 697 = FS 188, 11f = Jeantin 5, 457 = DS 559 = *L’âme du P. Colin*, p. 186]:

“Oh! my dear confreres, let us ask Our Lord to give us all a tender devotion to the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist.”

Then, speaking of the spirit of the Society, Father said these striking words:

“Our spirit, the spirit of the Society, do you know where you can find it? For me, I find it entirely in the home of Nazareth. Did Jesus try to put Himself forward before the time fixed by His Father?”

568

January 15, 1854. Colin. Letter to Eymard, superior of the college of La Seyne. [Coste T18]:

My dear Confrere,

[1] The rarer your letters, the more precious they become; but if your hand is slow to take up the pen, I know your heart is not at fault, and that is enough for me. Rest assured that your prayers and New Year wishes are very welcome to me, as I know that they are not mere words on your part, and they will obtain for me from God the graces which I so badly need. For you, for your confreres and your pupils, I wish you the happiness of shutting yourselves up in the home of Nazareth, and remaining there with the Holy Family; nowhere could you be in better company, and it would be difficult for you to be seriously there for any length of time without acquiring the sentiments of Mary and Joseph towards the holy Infant Jesus. Then all of you would soon become small and humble in your own eyes, full of charity towards one another, full of love for Jesus and of zeal for His glory. You have Him in your midst, this divine Savior, in the holy Eucharist, as really present as He was in the home of Nazareth; go to Him, then, in all your needs, and may your hearts be like the holy hearts of Mary and Joseph; may they be adorned with every virtue. Such are my wishes for each one of you; I could not wish you anything better in this world.

[2] Tell your boys that it gives me the greatest pleasure to hear that they are good, obedient and hard-working, that they love with all their heart the holy Infant Jesus, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. I would ask them to grow more and more in this love, which alone can make them happy in this life and in the next. They will allow me to join my heart with theirs, and I ask them to present it with theirs to the Divine Savior, to the Blessed Virgin and to St. Joseph, through the hands of St. Victorinus.

569

May 7, 1854. Colin. To the general chapter. [Coste T19 = Mayet ND 3, 40f = Jeantin 6, 75f (altered text) = L'âme du P. Colin, p. 174]:

“It is true, when a work commences, people examine, calculate, consider the one who takes charge, they pass judgment on things and men; but those judgments are human judgments. That is all wrong; one must see things in God, and see men as in the hands of God who moves them. Let us not worry about what men may say or do. God will take care of everything in His own time. Our Lord Jesus Christ remained for thirty years in the obscurity of Nazareth. Then, when He came to choose apostles to convert the world, He did not look for scholars. He took humble, unknown men. It was necessary too that the Society should remain hidden and unknown. Yes, my dear confreres, if you want to find your spirit, look for it in the house of Nazareth, as I told you at the last retreat. Heaven was there in Nazareth: the Blessed Virgin, the Infant Jesus, St. Joseph; as it is here, in your midst [he added, pointing with his hand to the little altar in the Chapter-room, then]: I leave you” [and he left the meeting].

570

May 21, 1854. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse (Dubouché). [Coste T20]:

[1] The joy which I feel at being relieved of a burden I could no longer bear is such that I would ask you to join me in thanking the Lord. From now on I can follow my attraction for the retired life, for the eucharistic work, and prepare for death in the shadow of the altar. The feeling that I have done the will of God in resigning, and that my confreres have done it in appointing a successor, fills me with consolation. Now I long to live only for Jesus in the Eucharist, only to offer Him unceasingly the adoration He received from Mary and Joseph when, alone, they adored Him in the silence of the home of Nazareth.

[2] I do not know what God asks of me, Reverend Mother; but I cannot tell you how much I long to help in finding adorers in spirit and in truth for Our Lord in the Eucharist. I don't want a work that will dazzle, but one that will be in miniature the continuation of the work of Nazareth. I can expect nothing of myself, but I expect everything from God. I feel strongly moved to ask Him to form around the holy altars first a nucleus of priests, completely self-forgetful and filled with the spirit of Mary and Joseph, who by word and example, in their own church, will strive to arouse in souls the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. [...]

[3] That something lasting and solid be accomplished, I think it is necessary that the priests who offer themselves and the young men who have finished their preparatory studies and intend to go on for the priesthood in the eucharistic work, should come and do their novitiate at La Neylière, and that this house should become like the house of Nazareth, where they will acquire the spirit of the work, and whence they will set out two by two for the big cities to begin houses of adorers. That is the course which seems to me to be in the designs of Providence, and I would ask you to let me know what you think of it.

571

September 3-10, 1854. Colin. Words at the general retreat. [Coste T21 = Mayet ND 1, 56f = FS 190]:

[1] "We must hold strongly, my dear confreres, to the spirit which prevailed at the beginnings of the Society. Study it more and more each day. You will be good Marists only to the extent that you practice it well. And what is that spirit? It is the spirit of the Blessed Virgin. A Spirit of modesty, of humility, of prudence, of simplicity, of discretion.

[2] "Let us not get mixed up with others and their affairs; let us not criticize them, let us say nothing that would smack of fault-finding or hurt even the most sensitive. Let us not parade each other's merits, while at the same time not belittling each other. Those who run down their Society do wrong, it is no proof that they are good religious and strong in their vocation. It could be said that by their criticism they wish to justify their distaste. Let us look to Mary in everything, imitate her life at Nazareth. She did more than the apostles for the newborn Church; she is the Queen of the apostles; but she did it all without noise, she did it especially by her prayer.

[3] "Oh! I would recommend that you would indeed maintain this spirit of Mary in your midst, without worrying about other societies; that has nothing to do with us. When I hear that kind of talk, I say: ours must be a different spirit, the spirit of the humble and hidden Mary. I was saying that she did more than the apostles by her prayers; let us combine then silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary wants us, her children, to be missionaries of action and missionaries of prayer."

572

January 19, 1855. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T22]:

My attitude towards the eucharistic work is till the same; I want this work as much, perhaps, as you do, and, like you, I want it in the spirit of Nazareth. No other way of establishing it would suit me. I admit that this particular manner will suit few people, and hence in the beginning there will be a certain opposition from the world and those who have the worldly spirit. But do not let that upset you; place your trust in God alone.

573

February 1855. Mother Marie Thérèse/Colin. Letter of Mother Marie-Thérèse to Mgr Luquet. [Coste T23]:

[...] Since the new Superior General of the Marists is formally opposed to the holy undertaking at La Neylière, the good and very saintly Founder of the Society of Mary, in an admirable spirit of peace and humility, submits to halting the most cherished of his desires. [...] Everything pleased him here; having visited the house and heard the explanation of all our customs, he said with deep conviction: “God has done all that; the Work has been established; oh! how happy I would be to see the same thing established for men! While not being with them exteriorly, my heart would dwell in that heavenly Nazareth.”

574

January 12, 1856. Colin. Letter to Mother Agnes of St. Joseph, superior of the Adoration Réparatrice in Lyons. [Coste T24]:

The happiness that is yours in being chosen, by a grace of predilection, to set up on earth the court of the King of kings at the feet of the holy altars, seems to me to compare in many ways with that of Our Lady and St. Joseph themselves in the home of Nazareth. To enable you to live up to your sublime and seraphic vocation, I wish you a share in the spirit of Mary and Joseph, in their lively faith, their deep humility, their profound respect and ardent love for the God-Man, their unshakable patience in privation, their detachment from creatures; and all this in such a way that your mind will see only Jesus in the Host, your hearts will beat only for Jesus in the Host, that Jesus will be your life, your All. Such are my wishes for you and for your whole community. Love and serve Jesus in the Host as Mary loved and served the Child Jesus.

575

1856. Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. [Coste T25 = AT VI, σ, 7]:

The Institute may have certain houses consecrated solely to the exercise of this interior and hidden life, where the Sisters, free from all the cares involved in the education of children, will divide their time between prayer and manual labor, and with the help of grace will strive to reproduce in themselves the virtues of Jesus and Mary in the house of Nazareth.

576

1856. *Colin. Constitutions of the Marist Sisters. [Coste T26 = AT VI, σ, 195]:*

Cult of imitation: This is the principal cult they must endeavor to pay to the Most Blessed Virgin. It is this cult she particularly desires and expects from each one of them. Only by striving to walk in the footsteps of Mary can they prove themselves her true daughters and servants, only thus can they make themselves agreeable to her, and draw down on themselves individually and on the congregation as a whole, the merciful benefits of her maternal protection. They bound themselves to this by entering her Society, since they chose her as model and since the first and basic aim of the Institute is to serve the Lord with straightforwardness and simplicity of heart, in striving each day with love to bring their interior and all their actions more into conformity with the interior and action of Her whom God has given them for mother and patron, and since, too, their entire Constitutions are in a way based on that imitation. Let them, then, fix their gaze unceasingly on that mirror of all virtue, in order to reproduce some of her features in their conduct, so that after the example of this perfect model, they will love and practice obedience, poverty, purity, humility, meekness, charity, modesty, abandonment and submission to God's will in everything; so that they will strive to form their interior in the likeness of the interior of their good and tender Mother; so that each of their communities may resemble in some way what was at one time to be found in the home of Nazareth where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived together. Then they can truly be called children of Mary, then will Mary recognize them as her children, surround them with her mercy, and have heaven shower down the abundant graces and blessings which they seek for themselves and for their Congregation.

577

May 24, 1858. *Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T27]:*

[1] It is only too true, Reverend Mother, that few people, even among the devout, understand the life of Nazareth, the mysteries of the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ; there are even less who wish to live consistently that heavenly life known only to God. It is a special grace of God that He has given you a taste for this life; and He has given you this grace so that you will communicate the taste to others and have the advantages of this life appreciated by the little flock of chosen souls of whom He made you mother and guardian and whom you must lead to the pastures of Nazareth and nourish with the mysterious bread of Nazareth.

[2] Do not be surprised to find few who share your attraction. For thirty years Our Savior Jesus Christ found only Mary and Joseph in the house of Nazareth; and when He decided to leave it to communicate the hidden treasure of His graces to the world, the world rejected Him, crucified Him... Only after He had hung from the cross did He draw all to Him. Such too, in proportion, will be the case with your work founded on the hidden life of Nazareth. After it has been thrown back, purified by contradiction, by difficulties, it will triumph over all; and those who are against it now will admire it and wish to join it. All you have to do, in the midst of interior and exterior trials, is to remain small in the presence of God, submissive to His divine will in suffering as in consolation, always meek towards everybody, but at the same time forever clinging to the work of Nazareth.

578

June 6, 1859. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T28]:

Yes, Reverend Mother, your eucharistic work has always been an object of special affection for me; I have always admired the spirit which you have tried to inject into this work. May the spirit of Nazareth always remain in your congregation; may your daughters preserve it and understand well its eloquence and its full range, and then they will really be a gathering of saints.

579

March 19, 1860. Colin. Letter to Mother Marie-Thérèse. [Coste T29]:

You should thank the Lord very much for having given you a guide according to His heart who will lead you in peace and in the way of Nazareth; for that is your path, and if you leave it you will find only uneasiness, anxiety and darkness.

580

September 4, 1866. Favre and Colin. At the general chapter. [Coste T30 = Minutes of the chapter, pp. 70f.]:

[...] Very Reverend Father General explained to the members of the Chapter the rules of prudence which should guide the administration when there is question of giving permission for building or major repairs. [...]

Very Reverend Father Founder endorsed the remarks of Very Rev. Fr. General and insisted on the simplicity, the modesty and the poverty which should make our house a reflection of that of Nazareth. The words *unknown and hidden* of our Constitutions apply to buildings as well as to persons.

581

September 4, 1866. Colin. At the general chapter. [Coste T31 = Minutes of the chapter, pp. 72f = Jeantin 6, 132 (altered text)]:

Very Reverend Father Founder took the floor at this stage, and returned to the idea closest to his heart. [...]

In a tone of deep conviction he recommended us to shun the spirit of the world, “of which yours should be at the very opposite pole,” he said; he recommended us to keep far away from all that shines and to take for ourselves whatever breathes forth Bethlehem and Nazareth, to prefer always humility to learning. “I do not want,” he said forcefully, “I do not want scholars who are not humble. I need learned men, yes but learned men who in a sense are not aware of their learning and who love to be thought little of rather than seek to put themselves forward.”

582

July 18, 1867. Colin. Words spoken to Mayet. [Coste T32 = Mayet ND 2, 14 = Jeantin 5, 204 (altered text) = DS 434]:

- [1] "If the Society has not its original spirit, I would prefer that it did not exist.
- [2] "Without its own spirit, it no longer has any raison d'être.
- [3] "The Society's first intention was to imitate the life of Nazareth, the life of the apostles.
- [4] "The spirit of poverty should animate us." [Follows a development on poverty.]

583

Autumn 1868 (end of August - beginning of September). Colin. Notes taken by Fr. Jeantin during his retreat at La Neylière, fifth day. [Coste T33]:

[1] Father Founder constantly recommends the life of Nazareth: "That is what we need," he says, "we have not yet entered Nazareth." Then: "mistrust of self, trust in God, in the Blessed Virgin."

[It was probably this same sentence of Fr. Colin which Fr. Jeantin used in the Notes explicatives to comment on the "*Quidquid in aedificiis...*" Text published in Ant. textus, fasc. 6, p. 169]:

[2] This is one of the points which Very Rev. Fr. Founder seems to have most at heart. He wishes that our houses have nothing that would attract the attention of the world. Luxury in living quarters causes him a kind of martyrdom. "Alas!" he exclaims, "I see indeed that we have not yet entered Nazareth." He even wishes that our chapels should be somewhat similar to those of the Capuchins.

[It is from this latter text that the two passages in Jeantin 5, 446 and 6, 192 come.]

584

October 4, 1868. Colin. Constitutions. [Coste T34 = AT IV, n, 212 = AT V, C, 205]:

After blessed Mary, let them have a warm devotion to Saint Joseph. Let them all regard him, who was head of the Family of Nazareth, as the protector of this smallest Society and as its bursar, as it were, in temporal matters. Thus, they will resort to him with confidence in all their needs, celebrate his feasts with joy and do all they can to increase his cult in the Church.

585

Spring 1869. Colin. Extract from "Account of the origin and foundation of the Society of Mary," drawn up by Fr. Jeantin on the basis of reminiscences of Fr. Colin. [Coste T35 = OM 819, 40 and 827, 6 = Jeantin 1, 66]:

From his arrival in Cerdon until 1821, he was busy drawing up the Constitutions of the Society of Mary. For this work, he had no other help than what the Gospel has left us on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth and on the first missions of the apostles.

586

1870. Colin. *Explanatory Notes on the Constitutions, given orally and recorded by secretaries, Frs. Jeantin and David: commentary on no. 142 (= no. 147 of the 1872 Constitutions). [Coste T36 = AT VI, p. 176 = Jeantin 6, 176]:*

These practices of humility and of poverty are in use in all Orders that are truly religious. Marists should not be marked off from others except by greater humility and modesty. If we look at how Mary behaved at Nazareth, we shall not find these practices either too finicky or too severe.

587

July 25, 1870. Colin. *Extract from notes of Fr. Jeantin taken during the preparation with Fr. Colin of the memorandum in reply to the observations of Fr. Maître pierre. [Coste T37 = OM 839, 37-39 = Jeantin 5, 315 (altered text) = DS 500 = L'âme du P. Colin, p. 171]:*

When ministering to a sick man one day, the latter spat out the host. He (Fr. Colin) asked for a scissors and cut the portion of the sheet containing the Sacred Host. Having taken it to the parochial house, he wanted to swallow it, but his brother prevented him. "He did well, because I would have vomited it all."

"I place myself in the home of Nazareth and from there I see all that I have to do."

— Did you ask the Blessed Virgin [*this was crossed out immediately*].

When he got the idea of a Society of Mary, he saw it as a society which he wanted very much; he did not understand that he would be the founder.

588

August 5, 1870. Colin. *Extract from words of Fr. Colin to the preparatory meeting of the first session of the General Chapter, according to notes taken at the time by Fr. Gautheron and the account to be found in the minutes of the general meetings. [Coste T38 = OM 841, 4-6 and 842, 14f = Jeantin 6, 214]:*

[Fr. Gautheron's notes]:

[1] Model, house of Nazareth. See only God. Innovations. Society of Jesus. Chapter changes nothing. Commission submitting to Fr. Jeantin — presented to Very Rev. Fr. General. Freedom to speak against everybody unfortunate. Residence at Sainte-Foy. Pilata. Spirit of Nazareth. Not proprio motu.

[Account in the minutes]:

[2] "It was my duty to give you the first ideas of the Society, ideas which are not mine; I leave them to you, but I do not impose them on you. — But be on your guard against the spirit of innovation. Once you begin changing there will be no stopping. — St. Ignatius published no rule during his life. After his death twelve copies of it were found. The Chapter accepted, without making any alterations in it, what it believed to be the most faithful expression of the Founder's thought. All of you should have but one spirit, that of the home of Nazareth."

589

February 9, 1872. Colin. Extracts from advice given by Fr. Colin to Fr. Alphonsus Cozon, according to autograph notebook of the latter, pp. 125-127. [Coste T39 = LM 335, 7 & 9]:

[1] “The Brothers are not domestic servants; they must not be looked upon as domestics. Personally, I feel it very much when they are not allowed to come to recreation with the Fathers. Why? Why should they be put off like that? Do you want two bodies in one? Are the less noble parts of the body cut off from the rest of your body; do you not always have them with you? Look at St. Joseph in the home of Nazareth; it was his business to look after externals as the Brothers do in our houses; did he not mix with the Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin? Oh! what union among those three people! There the blessed Virgin obeyed, the Child Jesus obeyed. Our Lady was very careful not to make much of herself. There are Fathers who look upon the Brothers as hired labor, who do not go near them; they are ashamed of all that. Well, then, that is essentially contrary to the spirit of the Society.”

[...]

[2] “They should be left the initiative in their work. When at Belley, I used to go to the refectory and ask them: ‘What have you done today? And what will you do tomorrow?’ The Superior should know what is going on in his house. Such a thing is more urgent; it should be taken care of first. Besides, in the home of Nazareth Our Lord was the master; He was God, and yet in some ways He depended on St. Joseph. You tell them: such a thing needs doing, it is urgent. But they will tell you that something else is still more pressing. They should be listened to, because I see that they often know better what needs doing. I would even say that they always know. Better than the bursar. I noticed at La Neylière, when we had no bursar there was a fine garden; now that we have one who wants to run everything, there is nothing any more. You say that such a thing is more pressing; well then, go ahead and do it.”

590

October 25, 1872. Colin. Declarations noted by an unidentified Father. [Coste T40]:

“ There are some Marists who seek too much to show themselves; that is not our spirit. Hidden life, life of simplicity, the life of Nazareth.

“ There are those who want to ape the Jesuits. That is not our spirit. We, as little brothers of Jesus, should be humble and well hidden.”

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1875. Colin. Third Order Constitutions. [Coste T41 = AT V, T, 10 = LM 395, 14]:

They should, insofar as they can with the help of grace, direct their efforts to imitating the Holy Family of Nazareth, especially in humility, modesty, simplicity of heart, mutual charity and the love of God. They should use the things of this world as if they were not using them; in their clothing, food, dwelling, and in all their dealings with other people, they should carefully avoid whatever appears to be arrogant, ostentatious, or looking for human consideration.

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