

Unknown and, as it were, hidden in the world

The model of Mary's presence inspired Jean-Claude Colin to give special prominence to one of the most beautiful yet subtlest facets of the Marist charism: to be 'hidden and unknown' in the world.

'The hidden life of the Society should be one of its characteristics, the one by which it should be recognised.'

Instruments of divine mercy

In contrast to the moral rigorism of his day, Jean-Claude Colin urged Marists to bring the mercy of the Lord to bear on their dealings with God's people. This was to be essential in their pastoral approach to the Sacrament of Penance.

'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... Such would not be the spirit of God'

Mary at the beginning, Mary at the end Despite the oppressive turmoil and anti-religious culture of his times, Jean-Claude Colin was con-vinced that just as Mary was present at the birth of



the Church, so she would be present at the end of time.

'I do not mind repeating: the words "I was the mainstay of the new-born Church; I shall be again at the end of time" served us in the very earliest days of the Society as a foundation and an encouragement... At the end of time humanity will need a great deal of help, and the Blessed Virgin will be the one to give it.'

A new Church!

Inspired by the vision of Mary in the early Church and the life of the apostolic community, Jean-Claude Colin saw the Marists as called to renew and rebuild the Church of his day according to this model. From the first moments of the Bugey missions he set about this quest.

'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.'

At the service of the bishop

Jean-Claude Colin saw the Society of Mary as being of service to the local church, insisting that Marists have a true deference and respect to their local bishop who would truly see them as his co-workers.

'Let them behave everywhere with such prudence and deference that the bishops love, care for and protect the Society as if it were their own.'



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THE MARIST WAY



From the constitutions of the Society of Mary, the many letters, retreat conferences and conversations of Marist Founder, **Jean-Claude Colin**, we know much about the Marist way...

Bearing Mary's name

From the very beginning of the Marist venture, Jean-Claude Colin was convinced that the Blessed Virgin Mary wished to have a new family bearing her name: 'Marist'

'I reflect on the name I bear, what a source of hope, of reassurance!' 'The name of Mary that we bear was not given us by men; it came to us from heaven.'

Mary at the birth of the Church

Fr Colin would have all Marists share his deep conviction that Mary was present at the foundation of the Church and will also be there at the end of history. Those who bear her name are to imitate her.

'Gentleman, that our Lord left the Blessed Virgin behind on earth after his Ascension is without doubt a great mystery. The apostles needed her to guide them, and to be in a sense the foundress of the Church. At the end of time her protection will shine forth in an even greater way....'

Mary at Nazareth

For Jean-Claude Colin, Nazareth was the place to meet Mary and Jesus, to renew one's energy and enthusiasm. From within the house at Nazareth Marists can look out onto the world and see more clearly all those places in the world that need them.



'In all things let us look to Mary, let us imitate her life at Nazareth... Let us unite silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary desires that we, her children, should be missionaries of action and missionaries of prayer.'

One heart, one soul

Jean-Claude Colin often returned to the image of the early Church as a model for Marist life: Mary surrounded by the apostles and other disciples, forming one family group.

'As for ourselves, we do not take any congregation for our model; we have no other model than the newborn Church... We must be like the apostles and those who joined them: one heart and one soul. They loved each other like brothers. And then, ah! no-one knows what devotion, what tenderness the apostles had for this divine mother!... Let us imitate them.'

Tasting God

While saints, mystics and spiritual writers have described the experience of encountering God in many ways, Jean-Claude Colin is one of the very few who speak of 'tasting God', a rich image and uniquely appropriate for the Marist experience.

'If I were in charge of the novices I would try simply to unite them to God, to bring them to a spirit of prayer. When the good Lord dwells in the heart, it is he who sets everything in motion. Having once tasted God, a novice will turn to him again and again.'

Like Mary

Convinced that Marists were chosen to be members of Mary's family, Jean-Claude Colin saw them as truly identified with her and an extension of her presence in the world.

'Let them always bear in mind that they belong by a gracious



choice to the family of Mary... Let them try constantly to breathe her spirit: a spirit of humility, self-denial, intimate union with God and the most ardent love of neighbour. So they must think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things.'

Say 'No'

From his boyhood days Jean-Claude Colin resisted any form of greed or self-seeking. He challenged Marists to be free in all their choices, especially to be free to say "no" whenever appropriate. He had three particular "no's": to ambition, covetousness and the lust for power.

'Let them hold all covetousness in horror. Yes, indeed, may we abhor this spirit. ...I say that confidence placed in a creature, whoever it may be, is always to the detriment of the creator.'