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P R E S E N T A T I O N

The canonisation of Marcellin Champagnat encourages us to take a look back at the highlights of the first half of the 19th century, and at the social mentality and religious spirituality of that period which left their mark on him. Even if his seminary formation did not leave obvious traces in his sparse writings, it strongly influenced him in the way he applied himself to his priestly ministry. His immediate successors were able to detect this influence in his conversations and personal example, and they have passed it on to us in their writings. Although it is secondhand testimony, we can still deepen our knowledge of it through a patient analysis already begun in previous issues of Marist Notebooks. We will continue to analyse it in this current edition. We present the following summary:

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MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT, MARIST FATHER

Bernard Bourtot, S.M.

On September 24, 1836 Marcellin Champagnat professed his religious vows in the Society of Mary, approved by Rome on March 11th of that same year. Here is how his first biographers, Brothers Jean Baptiste, Avit and Sylvester, express Marcellin's sentiments when this approval was announced¹.

"In that same period (1836), God granted Father Champagnat the greatest consolation he could have wished for, that is, the Holy See's authorisation of the Society of the Marist Fathers... There is no way to describe the joy, happiness and consolation felt by Father Champagnat, when he received this news."

"On learning that Gregory XVI had authorised the Society of the Marist Fathers, Father Champagnat, who had done so much for that Society, experienced extreme joy. He wrote immediately to Father Colin, asking to make his vows."

"I will say in passing that the revered Father was so joyful when he received that happy news that he immediately shared it with us with an immense heartfelt joy."

Let us now go back over the stages of Marcellin's relations with this religious society, over a span of twenty years, as the Congregation was establishing itself. To draw closer to the man, this Founder of the Marist Brothers, we will need to refer to other documents.

1. 1813-1816: AT THE SEMINARY OF ST IRENAEUS IN LYON

From the day he entered the major seminary, he went around in the company of Jean-Claude Colin, Étienne Déclas, Étienne Terraillon, Jean-Marie Vianney, ...and he would make the acquaintance of Jean-Claude Courveille the following year. He is one of the twelve companions to whom

¹ Life of Marcellin Champagnat, Spanish edition, pages 198 and 207; Avis, Leçon, Sentence, page 183. See Works Cited following this article. Note: all literary citations in these footnotes refer to Spanish editions.

Jean-Claude Courveille confides “his project for a Congregation of Marists.”² With this group, Champagnat signs a “document of membership” in 1816. That same year, he insists that there should be Brothers in the project, and he is told: “All right, you take care of that.”³ On July 23, 1816, he is at Fourvière with his companions, placing the group and its project under the special protection of Mary.⁴

2. 1816-1823: AT LA VALLA, CHAMPAGNAT, THE PARISH PRIEST, FOUNDS THE BROTHERS ON HIS OWN

Father Champagnat remains in contact with the initiator of the Marist project, Jean-Claude Courveille. Courveille is an assistant pastor in Verrières in 1816. In August 1817, he is transferred to Rive de Gier by Vicar General Bochard, who is not successful in recruiting him for his own project, the establishment of a diocesan society of priests.

In order to buy the house in which he has lodged his first two Brothers, Fr. Champagnat approaches Courveille in an effort to acquire it through joint ownership. Fr. Detours preserves an old tradition according to which Fr. Courveille often visited Fr. Champagnat in 1817 and acted as the leader, requiring people to call him Superior General of the Brothers of La Valla, and having representatives in Cerdon, Dauphiné, and other places.⁵

Beginning in 1820, Father Champagnat comes up against a number of problems revolving around his Teaching Brothers. These difficulties are brought on by an Inspector of the Academy, Guillard, and by contradictions arising from the parish priest of La Valla, quite apart from the campaign of complaints by Bochard. Champagnat will have a much easier time when Bishop de Pins arrives as administrator for the diocese of Lyon in February of 1824.

In a different vein, several witnesses emphasise the close ties that the first companions maintain among themselves through letters and meetings, including annual retreats.⁶

² The word “Marist” is in The Fourvière Pledge, found in a letter from Pierre Colin to Bishop Bigex, dated October 5, 1819, in *Forum Novum*, No. 4, page 85 (Marist Fathers, Rome, July 1997).

³ Refer to the study by Jean Coste: “The Directive Given to Marcellin Champagnat by his Companions in 1816” (*Roman Colloquium*, 1984).

⁴ Refer to *Origines Maristes*, Volume I: Life, pages 30-31 (OM II, doc. 757, 1-2); “News about Terraillon” (OM II, doc. 750 6).

⁵ “Detours” (OM III, doc. 872.19); “Report by Inspector Guillard” (OM I, doc. 75.13).

⁶ Life, page 33; Pierre Colin’s Letter quoted in *Forum Novum*, Volume IV, page 85; Déclas Account, OM II, doc. 591.10.

3. 1824-1826: FIRST COMMUNITY OF PRIESTS

One of the first Marist aspirants, Jean Baptiste Seyve, comes and helps Fr. Champagnat for a few months, from November 1823 to April 1824. But he is obliged to leave following some imprudent remarks he has made in regard to the parish priest.

Starting in March 1824, the Diocesan Council of Bishop de Pins encourages the work of Fr. Champagnat. On May 12th, it authorises Fr. Courveille to assist Fr. Champagnat at his centre for the "Brothers of the Schools." On the advice of the Rector of Saint Irenaeus Seminary, Father Gardette, Champagnat requests that Fr. Courveille be sent to La Valla.⁷ The following day, May 13th, Champagnat and Courveille jointly purchase the property of the Hermitage, which clearly shows Fr. Champagnat's trust in Jean-Claude Courveille. The priest at La Valla, left to himself, feels incapable of carrying out his project to its conclusion. No doubt he sees his being back together with the initiator of the project as a promising step in the development of the Society of Mary. The following year a third Marist aspirant, Étienne Terrailon, reluctantly accepts an appointment to live at the Hermitage, home to the Brothers since May.

But Frs. Champagnat and Courveille do not succeed in getting the Brothers to accept the organisation of authority that they have formulated. In the mind of the Brothers, Fr. Champagnat is their true Superior. Fr. Courveille sees himself constrained to withdraw in May 1826. Some months later, Fr. Terrailon, who has orchestrated the ouster of Fr. Courveille, also leaves the Hermitage.⁸ Fr. Champagnat once more finds himself alone: he has lost a comrade, and feels very much upset by the sudden departure of Fr. Terrailon.

4. 1826-28: FATHER CHAMPAGNAT HAS DOUBTS ABOUT HIMSELF AND THE SOCIETY OF MARY.

The preceding events raise certain questions. Fr. Champagnat opens his heart to Jean-Claude Colin, whose response is: "The designs of God are above human understanding; for the moment God wants us to be united in spirit and not in body... Let us not allow setbacks and contradictions

⁷ OM I, doc. 101, and doc. 286.2.

⁸ "He thought that everything had come to an end, and he asked for an assignment in the Diocese." (OM III, doc. 821.13). "To tell the truth, he didn't get along with the Brothers very well." (OM III, doc. 820.34).

to lessen our confidence; the works of God proceed slowly.”⁹ In May 1827, Champagnat wrote to the Vicar General: “I am alone, but in spite of that, I am not losing courage, knowing how powerful God is... I always have a firm belief that God wants this work at this time when unbelief is making great inroads; but perhaps He wants others to accomplish it...”¹⁰

On May 30th, at the request of Fr. Champagnat, the Diocesan Council sends Étienne Séon, 24 years old, to be his assistant. This young priest is excited about Marist plans for a society of priests “dedicated to evangelisation.” In the Fall, Fr. Champagnat confides to his assistant his doubts concerning the branch of the Fathers. “There is no need to think about it: I don’t believe there will be any other Society of Mary than that of the Brothers... Don’t give it any more thought.” Shocked, Fr. Séon goes off to speak with the Vicar General, in an effort to interest other priests in the Marist project.¹¹ In the summer of 1828, Antoine Bourdin takes up residence at the Hermitage. Fr. Champagnat’s hopes come alive once more. He is no longer concerned about the work of the Brothers, but the work of Mary – a broader project in the Church throughout the world. Thus he wrote to the Vicar General in December 1828:

“For fifteen years I have been working for the Society of Mary, whose growth is all her doing. I have never doubted that God wants this work in these times of unbelief. Please, either tell me that this work is not from God, or get behind it and support it more and more. The society of Brothers cannot stand alone as Mary’s work; rather it is only to be seen as a more recent branch to the Society itself.”¹²

5. 1828-1830: A COMMUNITY OF MISSIONARIES AT THE HERMITAGE

Fathers Champagnat and Bourdin are joined by Jean Baptiste Pompallier in September of 1829. Fr. Séon is now in Charlieu. Pompallier comes to help out, as much on the spiritual plane as on the material, and to help

⁹ Letter from Jean-Claude Colin, (OM I, doc. 169). This is the first of 43 letters extant from Colin to Champagnat, sent until 1840. Champagnat’s correspondence has been lost, except for one letter dated March 29, 1835.

¹⁰ Letter to the Vicar General, (OM I doc. 173.7.8).

¹¹ “The Testimony of Séon” (OM II, doc. 625.11). It seems that Champagnat’s doubts should not be taken literally, for he invites Séon to get involved in the task at hand: training the Brothers. In December 1828, he will say, “I’ve never been in doubt.” And Séon remains silent.

¹² Letter of December 18, 1828 from Father Cattet, the Vicar General (OM I, doc. 185.2).

in training the Brothers. Steadily, the community takes on a missionary character, recognised by the Archbishop.

The year 1830, filled with political events, testifies to the important links existing between the group of Marist priests in Belley and the one in Lyon, and the deep involvement of Fr. Champagnat in the organisation of the Society of Mary. We have five letters from Jean-Claude Colin to Fr. Champagnat. The Brothers of the Hermitage journey to Belley in January 1830. In October there is an assembly in Belley, insisted upon by Fr. Champagnat, to elect a Central Superior (Jean-Claude Colin). In December Fr. Champagnat is elected as the Provincial Superior of the group in Lyon. On December 18th, the Archbishop appoints Father Champagnat as "Superior of the Society of Mary," meaning that the Society and its name are now officially recognised in the diocese of Lyon.

6. 1831-1832: THE COMMUNITY OF MISSIONARIES MOVES TO VALBENOITE

December 1830 sees the arrival of a fourth priest, Jacques Fontbonne, who will remain at the Hermitage for nine months before rejoining Étienne Séon, assistant pastor at Valbenoite since January 1831. In September 1831, Antoine Bourdin leaves for Belley. These two departures are compensated for by the arrival of Jean Baptiste Chanut, and later, Jean Forrest.

The placing of Fathers Séon and Fontbonne at Valbenoite begins the process of Marist Fathers leaving the Hermitage to the Brothers. In November 1832, at the request of Jean-Claude Colin, the group in Valbenoite elects a different superior in the person of Fr. Séon. At the beginning of 1833, Fr. Champagnat finds himself with a single confrere, Catherin Servant, who will remain at the Hermitage until his departure for Oceania.

7. 1833-1836: TOWARDS APPROVAL OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY, VOWS, AND DEPARTURES FOR OCEANIA

In February 1832, Jean-Claude Colin proposes his idea of a "Corps of Brothers" made up of two groups: Marist Teaching Brothers, and "Joseph" Brothers, destined for manual tasks¹⁵. Champagnat's Brothers are opposed

¹⁵ Letter of February 3, 1832 (OM 1, doc. 242,3).

to this project, feeling that it calls into question the structure of their Institute, in which different assignments do not entail any form of discrimination. This question will often be taken up again in the letters of Jean-Claude Colin, suggesting that a lively exchange of views existed between him and Champagnat on this question.

Nevertheless Jean-Claude Colin keeps Fr. Champagnat informed of everything that is going on in the Society of Mary; he insists on the unity necessary between the groups in Lyon and Belley, and affirms his confidence in Champagnat. "I am inclined to think that it will be through you," Colin tells him, "that the Society will be built up in the Diocese of Lyon."¹⁴

We saw in the introduction Fr. Champagnat's elation over the news of the approval of the Society. He immediately asks to make his vows, and this eagerness edifies Jean-Claude Colin. On September 24th, 1836 on the occasion of the meeting for the election, the Marists present are placed by hierarchical order by age. Champagnat is seated between Colin and Terraillon. After the election, Fr. Champagnat addresses a few words to the newly elected Superior General. Then the vow ceremony takes place. Br Jean Baptiste points out that a number of Fathers have thought of proposing him as Superior General but he answers that he has more than enough work to do with the Brothers' branch of the Society.¹⁵

The following December 24th, the first mission band departs for Oceania; the three Brothers and two Fathers (Pompallier and Servant) have been trained by Fr. Champagnat. He himself ardently wants to be among the voyagers.

8. 1836-1840: MARIST FATHER

The day after the Profession of Vows, the community of the Hermitage consists of Frs. Champagnat, Jean Marie Matricon (who arrived in 1835), and Claude Besson (1836). Both men are still Marist aspirants. The correspondence between Jean-Claude Colin and Fr. Champagnat continues.¹⁶

¹⁴ Letter of January 23, 1836 (OM I, doc. 358.4).

¹⁵ Life, page 208, and also OM II, doc. 757.67. Concerning Champagnat's desire to go to Oceania: Life, page 209, and also OM II, doc. 757.69. Jean-Baptiste presents the opinions of the Brothers. As Superior, Colin imposed his will from 1830, even over the group in Valbenoite, which had distanced itself from Champagnat. In regard to Oceania, the desire is clear: the Brothers felt that they could not afford to lose his presence.

¹⁶ There are 14 Letters from Colin to Champagnat between November 1836 and April 1840.

- At the Marist retreat in September 1837, Fr. Champagnat resigns and places the branch of the Brothers in the hands of the Superior General. It seems that he has been asked to do so in order to show his total adherence to the Society of Mary, and thus his obedience. The Father General immediately reappoints him.¹⁷
- On August 9, 1837 Jean-Claude Colin pleads with Champagnat “as a friend and confrere to occupy himself much less with external matters than with the spiritual concerns of his community. His health would improve and also his spirit.”
- In the letters of Jean-Claude Colin, one can easily detect the reluctance of Fr. Champagnat to support Colin’s wish that Brothers be trained to serve the priests. Colin reproaches him for his lack of obedience in not sending Brothers to Verdélais. The retreat of 1839 ratifies the decision to separate the “Teaching Brothers and the “Coadjutor Brothers” into two distinct groups. At the same time Fr. Champagnat is named an assistant to the Father General.
- After this retreat, seeing the decline in Fr. Champagnat’s health, Jean-Claude Colin goes to the retreat of the Brothers at Hermitage and has Fr François elected as their Director. Fr. Champagnat accepts this, although he continues firm in his belief that the Brothers remain at the centre of a single Society. He states this in his Spiritual Testament.¹⁸

9. MAY 18, 1840: THE SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT¹⁹

“My very dear Brothers, ...Just as your wills are to be united with those of the Fathers of the Society of Mary in the will of one and the same Superior, so I desire that you be always united with them in Jesus and Mary. May the Fathers’ interests be yours. May it be your pleasure to come to their help as often as is required. May you be united to them as branch-

¹⁷ OM I, doc. 416; Maître-pierre’s Account in OM II, doc. 752.57. This is an important event. At last, The Society of Mary officially ratifies its composition and mission. The situation is no longer ambiguous. The Brothers are affiliated to the Society of Mary.

¹⁸ Life, Pages 224-226; Avis, Leçons, Sentence, pages 191-196.

¹⁹ Life, page 244; OM I, doc. 417.5; Writings of Brother Sylvester, page 176.

es of the same tree. May the same spirit and the same love keep you united, as one family, to Mary, the divine Mother. The Superior General of the Fathers, being also the Superior of the Brothers, is to be the centre of unity for all."

This text speaks for itself. It summarises what was for 24 years the project of Father Champagnat: a Society of Mary unique in the diversity of its branches. Let us conclude with Br Sylvester:

"According to tradition and what I have seen and heard about what Fr. Champagnat did for the Congregation of the Marist Fathers, I would not hesitate in the slightest to give him the title of Co-founder of that Society."²⁰

January 1998

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²⁰ The term is a bit of an overstatement. The Society of Mary, officially recognized in 1836, isn't everything that Champagnat dreamed it would be. One after another, he has seen Courveille, Terraillon, and the priests in Valbenoite drift off on their own.

16-23		M. CH.			
23-24	October	M. CH.	Seyve → 5/24 *		
12 May		M. CH.	Courveille		
24-25	* August	M. CH.	Courveille		
25	August	M. CH.	Courveille		
25-26	Oct. - May	M. CH.	Courveille → 5-26	Terraillon	
	June - Oct.	M. CH.		Terraillon	
26-27	Nov. - May	M. CH.		Terraillon	* 1 11 26
30	May	M. CH.	Séon		
27-28		M. CH.	Séon		
	Summer	M. CH.	Séon	Bourdin	
28-29		M. CH.	Séon	Bourdin	
		M. CH.	Séon	Bourdin	
29-30	September	M. CH.	Séon → 10-29	Bourdin	Pompallier
	November	M. CH.		Bourdin	Pompallier
	Jan. - Sep.	M. CH.		Bourdin	Pompallier
30-31		M. CH.		Bourdin	Pompallier
	December	M. CH.	Fontbonne	Bourdin	Pompallier
	Jan. - Sep.	M. CH.	Fontbonne → 9-31	Bourdin → 9-31	Pompallier
31-32	September	M. CH.	Chanut		Pompallier
	February	M. CH.	Chanut	Forest	Pompallier
	Feb. - Oct.	M. CH.	Chanut → 11-32	Forest	Pompallier → 11-32
32-33	December	M. CH.		Forest	
	January	M. CH.	Servant	Forest → 8 Feb. 33	
	Feb. - Sep.	M. CH.	Servant		
33-34	Oct. - Dec.	M. CH.	Servant		
	February	M. CH.	Servant		
34-35	Oct. - Dec.	M. CH.	Servant	Perra	
	January	M. CH.	Servant	Perra → final 34	
35-36	Oct. - Dec.	M. CH.	Servant	Fontbonne	Matricon
	Jan. - Aug.	M. CH.	Servant → 8-36	Fontbonne → 12-35	Matricon
36-37		M. CH.			Matricon
37-38	Autumn	M. CH.	Chanut → 7-38	Besson	Matricon
38-39		M. CH.		Besson	Matricon
39-40		M. CH.		Besson → 1846	Matricon → 1882

* → 5-24 means "present until May 1824"

THE MARIST APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT

Bro. Paul SESTER, fms

So many pages have already appeared on Marist apostolic spirituality that it may appear superfluous to add still more. It is true that we speak of it most often to develop a way of conceiving this spirituality for our times. Admittedly social sensitivities and mentalities have evolved in the past two hundred years almost since it came into being. We can ask ourselves, then, if the original conception is still recognizable in today's, if today's adaptation has remained faithful to the thought of the initiator. To judge if this is so, nothing better than to examine the conception in its original context by taking up again the texts which have transmitted it to us. This is the intent of the present study.

I must make it clear that this study is limited to the idea of a Marist Brother which Fr. Champagnat had in mind when he launched his project, without bothering with the application made in successive historical circumstances. Although Fr. Champagnat did not leave any nearly complete and explicit report on the subject, some passages in the letters to the Brothers and words reported by his listeners constitute enough material to give us an idea.

Its complexity requires that we view it from diverse but complementary angles, namely, the context in which the author conceived it; the contents of the conceptual stage, then its application; finally, the Marist characteristic which gives it its particular cachet.

WE NEED BROTHERS!

The starting point is the phrase so often repeated, it seems, by Fr. Champagnat: "We need Brothers." Without having any precision on the date of the first appearance of this concern in his mind, because his biographers do not agree on this detail, we know nonetheless that he explicitly mentioned it in the major seminary of Lyons, during the more or less secret meetings of a group of seminarians discussing a project to found a

society according to the schema of the Society of Jesus. In this new society Mary would take the place of Jesus, it would be the Society of Mary, the name revealed by the Virgin herself to Fr. Courville: "In these end-times of impiety and incredulity...I want a society consecrated to me, which bears my name and is called the Society of Mary...to fight against hell..."²¹ The means foreseen for the realization of this project would be everything that would have the Christian religion reflourish in the heart of a population dechristianized by the revolution: preaching during missions, teaching, all strongly accentuated by Mariology. The project pleased Fr. Champagnat, but in spite of the fact that three branches were foreseen in this society—priests, coadjutor brothers, sisters—he saw an important lack. The Fathers will be busy with the pastoral side by preaching missions. For the teaching of youth, like the Jesuits they will be more interested in those who already have some elementary knowledge, and they will scarcely be able to take care of the little ones who still don't know how to read or write. Now, it's with them that we have to start, because it's from early childhood that we have to lay the foundations of religion if we want it to impregnate the soul and constitute the base on which personality can be built. For such a task, "We need Brothers, we need Brothers," he insisted, "to teach catechism, to help missionaries, to teach schoolchildren."²²

This thought of having Brothers certainly did not arise in the mind of Fr. Champagnat just at that moment, but, since there was talk of founding a society, it was a good occasion for him to add the Brothers he was thinking of, which made the task easier for him and which dispensed him from appearing as the founder. There remains, nevertheless, the question as to when the idea began to torment him, as well as the reason which gave rise to it. Nothing allows us to answer this with any precision. Fr. Bourdin says that "the Brothers were a branch foreseen way back by Fr. Champagnat, then entrusted to him at the major seminary."²³ Fr. Colin is more precise: "The idea of this institute was his [Champagnat] own. It was he who, marked by the trouble he had had in his studies, said to his confreres in the major seminary: We will also have to found teaching Brothers."²⁴ Fr. Maitrepierre for his part relates: "Fr. Champagnat, while joining the first

²¹ O.M. 2, doc. 718, page 581 (Note: all source material and pages in these footnotes refer to French editions.)

²² *Life*, 1989 edition, page 31

²³ Notes of Father Bourdin, O.M. 2, doc. 754, page 741

²⁴ O.M. 3, doc. 819, page 223

founders, told them: I have always felt in me a special calling for the establishment of Brothers; I willingly join you and, if you judge it proper, I will take charge of that part. And he was given charge. My first education, he used to say, was missed; I would be happy to contribute to obtain for others advantages which I myself was deprived of."²⁵ We see the beginnings here of the reason why he so strongly cared about Brothers, a reason which, moreover, he repeats in several of his letters, notably on 28 January 1834, to King Louis-Philippe: "Born in the canton of Saint-Genest-Malifaux, in the Loire Department, I learned to read and write only with infinite trouble, for lack of capable teachers; from that moment on I understood the urgent necessity of an institution which could at less cost procure for country children the fine education which the Brothers of the Christian Schools procure for the poor in the city. Ordained a priest in 1816, I was sent to a rural parish as assistant pastor; what I saw there with my own eyes made me sense more acutely the importance of executing without delay the project I had long had in mind."²⁶

These documents inform us that the motive which aroused in him the idea of having Brothers was his own difficulty in studies; but the time when he got that idea is imprecise. However, in this context nothing prevents us from thinking that the expression, "for a long time," indicates a period anterior to meeting the future founders of the Society of Mary. That's evidently what the testimonies of the Fathers, cited above, seem to let us think. Insofar as this may be true, a distance is created between the first impulse of the seminarians gathered together by Fr. Courveille and the impulse of Fr. Champagnat. The two are, therefore, independent of each other, thus showing the original character of the second one, whose paternity is entirely Fr. Champagnat's.

The Marial context in which they insisted on placing the new society did not hinder him; on the very contrary, he saw therein a second opportunity. For, far from being a simple mantle, the patronage of the Blessed Virgin had, in the eyes of the founders, a primordial significance. They saw the future society as the visible presence of the Mother of Jesus in the Church until the end of time, which Fr. Colin thought was near because of the great upheavals in the world and the dechristianization of

²⁵ O.M. 2, doc. 752, pages 717-718

²⁶ C.M.C. Vol I, doc. 31, pages 99-100

the people. "The human race appears to me today like a used old trunk which a worm has gnawed away at its roots...",²⁷ he used to say. As for Fr. Champagnat, without sharing these pessimistic views, and no less fervent in his Marial devotion, he understood that the Brothers would find in the Mother of Jesus the maternal support and at the same time the model educator, opening, like Mary, the path to salvation.

WHAT IS A BROTHER?

Through his concern to go to the help of the young, Fr. Champagnat, endowed with practical sense, already foresaw the means needed to solve the problem. Only a Brother, according to him, could satisfy all his requirements. The first was to be religious, that is to say entirely available by putting his life totally at God's disposal. Surely, that's the case likewise for a priest, even a religious priest, for the Fathers and coadjutor Brothers already foreseen in the foundation project. But both have a different specific task which does not allow them to devote all the time necessary to the religious instruction of youth. The Father, even if he teaches, is not going to limit himself, given the studies he has done, to primary education, not to mention his other obligations as a priest. There is, then, another gap which only the Brother will be able to fill, but on condition that he be a true apostle. For, says Fr. Champagnat, "The education of youth is not a trade, it's a religious ministry and a real apostolate."²⁸ Consequently, the Brother must be a religious, detached from the cares of a family, entirely at the service of God in the work of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world. "To raise children," he says elsewhere, "is a work of zeal, devotedness, and sacrifice. To worthily fulfill this work, which is a participation in the mission of Jesus Christ, one must have the spirit of the divine Savior and, like Him, be ready to give one's blood and life for children."²⁹

The Brother, as Fr. Champagnat imagined him, will not be a simple school teacher; he must be an educator. Not satisfied with instructing the children, he will have as principal concern the goal of forming them, of making them adult in the full sense of the word and Christians faithful to

²⁷ O.M. 2, doc. 631, page 466

²⁸ *Life*, page 558

²⁹ *Ibidem*

the Gospel. "If it were only a matter of teaching the children human sciences," he used to say, "Brothers would not be needed, because school teachers would be sufficient for that work. If we intended to give only religious instruction, we would be content to be simple catechists, to gather the children one hour a day and have them repeat Christian truths. But our goal is to do better than that; we want to bring the children up, that is to say to instruct them in their duties, to teach them to practice them, to instill in them a Christian spirit and sentiments, religious habits, the virtues of a Christian and a good citizen."³⁰ This does not mean, however, that secular instruction is not needed, on the very contrary; to form adults we must develop the essential faculties of the human being: intelligence and reason.

What he means to say is that we mustn't stop at that. What is a person who, as the saying goes, "doesn't know how to live?" Now, that person will know only by learning how to live. To learn that, books are not enough, especially for the young; example is needed. That's why the text just quoted continues: "That's why we must be teachers, we must live in the midst of the children, and they have to spend lots of time with us."³¹ It is, therefore, a demanding task which Fr. Champagnat proposes to the Brothers. Constantly being sized up by their students, they will always have to have an imitable conduct, live unequivocally, with simplicity, familiarity, love, and respect. For, Fr. Champagnat continues: "We must earn the respect of the child. Now, the titles the child recognizes and understands best are the virtue, the good example, the paternal capacity, and the affection we show him."³²

Thus presented in its overall character, this picture of the Brother can appear too ideal. Nevertheless, this is indeed the way Fr. Champagnat saw it. Since he himself practiced it, he did not think it impossible for others to do the same, knowing full well the efforts that would require. Furthermore, he was up front about it, as is proved by the formation he wanted to give his disciples.

³⁰ Ibidem, page 547

³¹ Ibidem

³² Ibidem, page 550

FORMATION OF THE BROTHERS

To devote one's entire life to the education of youth, in this case to the very young, especially those in rural districts and destitute, is surely not a shining prospect. Fr. Champagnat knew that so well that he never ceased recommending the virtue of humility to his Brothers. Even in the seminary, his position as future priest, with all the consideration that represents in the eyes of Christians, made him clearly realize that he was asking them to stay at a lower rank on the social ladder. A spontaneous reaction of one of the Brothers made him see this clearly. One day, seeing a person in cassock whom he took to be a priest come towards him, this Brother asked, "Who's this priest coming towards us?" "It's not a priest," he was told, "it's only a Brother."³³ Reacting sharply, Fr. Champagnat explained to his interlocutors the greatness of the Brother's vocation. The fact remains that his reaction itself shows he was aware of the attitude. In a letter to Mr. Devaux de Pleyne, mayor of Bourg-Argental, who was asking to cut the Brothers' salary, Fr. Champagnat goes him one better, exaggerating for the sake of effect: "To cut it even more is, it seems to me, to snatch away not just the meager salary of the most thankless and arduous job of a citizen, but even their poor and disgusting food."³⁴ Nothing astounding, consequently, that he insists on humility, the primary virtue, according to him, of a Little Brother of Mary. Indeed, it is considered the characteristic virtue of the entire Society of Mary, which would already justify the Founder's demand that it be cherished and practiced. Furthermore, the Brothers have a supplementary reason to be humble in order to accept to place themselves at the level of the small children, to be content to sow the seed while renouncing the hope of then seeing it blossom through the intervention of subsequent teachers. What ambition can he nourish who has pledged himself to spend his entire life in a class of children, limiting himself to teaching them the basics of knowledge and religion? Furthermore even, in order to be all to all, he will have to put himself at the lowest level, that of the ignorant. Reprimanding a Brother who wanted to dazzle his listeners, Fr. Champagnat told him: "If you had the spirit of your state, if you were humble and modest, instead of letting yourself give in to the inspirations of vanity, instead of big

³³ Life, page 476

³⁴ C.M.C. Vol I, doc. 8, pages 62-63

sentences, you would talk simply in order to be understood by the youngest and most ignorant children."³⁵

Nonetheless, human nature is so made that such self-denial calls for compensation under some form or other of satisfaction. The educator, if he knows how to get down to work wholeheartedly, finds satisfaction in the joy of awakening his neighbor to the beauties of life in an exchange of true love. Hence Fr. Champagnat's insistence, no less strong, on loving the child for the love of God. "To raise children properly we have to love them and love them all equally,... we must devote ourselves entirely to their instruction and take all the means...to form them in virtue and piety."³⁶ This means that this love will be spiritually paternal, developing in the child the moral and religious personality latent in him. The Brother's merit will be, not in having nurtured another person in his image, but in having put him and guided him on the path to his personal development in order to realize his own growth and the blossoming of the richness of his being.

As one can see, this love is self-denial, sacrifice of self-love, of one's dearest possession. "If we want to win children to God, if we want to cooperate with Jesus Christ in their salvation, we must, after the example of the Divine Savior, sacrifice our work, our cares, our strength, our health, and, if needed, our life itself."³⁷ These words of Fr. Champagnat can seem exaggerated, even impossible to put into practice if we forget that, in the final analysis, only the love of God makes us able to set out on such a path. Hence this phrase as a sort of conclusion: "To bring children up properly, we must love God ardently."³⁸ This is the base on which the Founder places the vocation of a Brother, because, says his biographer, "Everything they need to worthily fulfill their functions depends on this virtue as its principle and source. In fact, my Brothers, love Jesus and you will have all the virtues and all the qualities of a perfect teacher."³⁹

These are not, on the part of Fr. Champagnat, mere pious words or the expression of an inaccessible ideal which, as such, would be an excuse for practicing it only from a distance. On the contrary, it is a conviction

³⁵ Life, page 410

³⁶ Ibidem, page 550

³⁷ Ibidem, page 513

³⁸ Ibidem, page 556

³⁹ Ibidem, page 556

which guided him in handling his disciples. We see, in fact, that he sends Brothers into the apostolate after a few months, nay, after a few days only of stay in the novitiate. Bro. Louis-Marie went to teach at La Cote-Saint-André the day after taking the Habit, whereas the Founder keeps Bro. Sylvestre at the Hermitage more than a year. Yes, the former, coming from the seminary, had a solid intellectual baggage, but that wasn't what counted initially with Fr. Champagnat, who wanted to see, before all else, in his disciple a bright enough apostolic flame grafted on a love of God sufficiently intense to make him capable of a total abandonment of self. According to him, "A Brother is a man totally and forever devoted and applied to the service of God." So notes Bro. Jean-Baptiste.⁴⁰

The teaching of religion, both theoretical and practical, constitutes the essence of this service. "To love God and work to make Him known and loved, that's what the life of a Brother must be."⁴¹ That is really the *raison d'être* of a Brother, the motive determining the founding of the Institute. The school is only the setting, the most adequate at that time, in which the realization of this goal is possible, so much so that, should this setting no longer serve to fill this role, other solutions, equally valid, could be adopted, provided education in faith be safeguarded.

That this is truly the core of Fr. Champagnat's conception of the mission of the brother is brought home by the insistence he puts on the teaching of catechism or religion. This teaching, as we have seen, is not purely book-learning; it must result in the practice of the Christian life by the exercise of virtue, because salvation does not depend on one's knowledge but on one's moral and spiritual stature, acquired by action. In fact, this is what BB. Jean-Baptiste and François, who recorded the thought of the Founder, retained on this particular point. What they have transmitted deals principally with the Christian formation of the child, the righting of his bad inclinations, the correction of his social relations by self-discipline and self-knowledge.

According to them, the total understanding of Fr. Champagnat's thinking can be stated by a three-part analysis. First of all, true education cannot be done outside a Christian context. For, to educate is to develop the good

⁴⁰ Sentences, Spiritual Teachings, 1989 Edition, page 14

⁴¹ Life, page 502

dispositions which the Creator has placed in the child's nature. These dispositions will be realized, developed, only in the sense of the structure the Creator has given them. Consequently, an authentic development of the person is unthinkable without God.

Moreover, Baptism confers on the human person a supernatural dimension which takes part in its development in two ways, we can say: by growing with the person which it, in turn, makes grow. Now, in this domain, God's grace alone can act effectively. Consequently, the educator is only the instrument which, to exercise its function, must be in constant relation with God through prayer. Whence Fr. Champagnat's conviction "that prayer is for a religious the most apt means for acquiring the virtues of his state, for working at his sanctification and that of the people entrusted to him."⁴² Which is why, says his biographer, he prescribed so many prayers for his Brothers. But, although he wasn't chary of vocal prayers, in fact, and had novena upon novena said, Mass and mystical union with God far and away were preferred to all others, because they place us in a more personal relation with the Lord. Saying formulas is the means of keeping oneself in the presence of God. Mystical union and the Eucharist are more intimate contacts with Him, recharges of divine energy which allow us afterwards to do everything in a spirit of prayer and to grasp the spiritual dimension of the children under divine inspiration. It is with that thought in mind that Champagnat declares: "A Brother who is satisfied with instructing his children does only half his duty; if he wants to do all his job, he must continually pray for them."⁴³ Without prayer, "he is incapable of doing good, because he doesn't have the means to do so."⁴⁴

Finally, a person cannot develop properly like a tree in an open field. He needs the intermediary of an educator for the proper growth of his latent potential. This educator, while transmitting knowledge, without a doubt necessary, as we have seen, must teach the child how to behave, because development takes place only through action. The most effective means is example. Whence the necessity stated by Fr. Champagnat of living

⁴² Ibidem, page 310

⁴³ Life, page 312

⁴⁴ Ibidem, page 314

a long time with the children, yes, to prevent them from going to ruin by hanging around the streets, but especially to give them a model to copy which attracts them and which they like. It is, neither more nor less, to reproduce the primordial form of parental education in the family.

MARIST SPIRITUALITY

There is one family ambiance which holds a special place in Fr. Champagnat's spirituality, that of Nazareth. For him, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, by her manner of raising the Divine Child, represents the model educator. As he had, anyway, a very deep devotion to Her, this coincidence only served to strengthen him in his conception of the educator-apostle. This is why, in order to grasp Marist spirituality in all its nuances, it is advisable to examine this aspect in detail.

His biographer wrote that he "had sucked this devotion at the breast, because his mother and his pious aunt...had applied themselves to inspiring it in him,"⁴⁵ very intelligently no doubt since he kept it all his life. But, Bro. Jean-Baptiste again writes, it developed in the seminary in the sense of an increase in practices in order to earn the protection of Mary. His devotion consisted then at first in a series of prayers and concrete gestures, like taking particular care of everything which recalled Mary. However, the justification which he gives for this later on is more profound, in the very heart of his Marial piety: he looked upon "the Blessed Virgin as his Mother and as the way which would lead him to Jesus," so much so that he held this devotion "as a mark of predestination."⁴⁶ In the light of the examples he then gives as proof, we can believe him, but when he adds: "It was in one of his frequent visits to the Blessed Virgin that he got the idea of founding a congregation of pious teachers," it is all the more difficult to follow him because he doesn't specify the time when that could have happened. Nevertheless, there is no hesitation possible about Fr. Champagnat's will to put the Blessed Virgin at the head of his undertaking.

However, more than bursts of fervor, it was events which led

⁴⁵ Ibidem, page 341

⁴⁶ Ibidem, page 343

him to place everything under the dependence of Mary. At the end of 1821, when the Institute seemed to die out "like a lamp without oil," he turned towards her saying, "If you don't come to our help, we will perish,... but if this work dies it is not our work that dies but yours."⁴⁷ And behold, in the Spring of the following year a group of eight postulants came to surprise him. Hesitating at first to admit these young people who had been tricked into coming, he ends by realizing that it is Mary who is sending them; then and there, all were admitted in spite of the fact that there was no place to lodge them. From then on, he no longer doubted that Mary was taking his work in hand, so much so that he could tell Bishop de Pins later: "I don't dare refuse those who show up, I consider them as brought by Mary herself."⁴⁸ He is firmly convinced, then, that he is the instrument Mary is using to establish the whole enterprise of the Brothers. She manifested it no less clearly when he called for help and She saved him from perishing in a snowstorm.⁴⁹

His Marial devotion, then, went way beyond a matter of feeling, even beyond a consoling refuge in difficult times. He believed Mary was constantly at his side, since She was always there when obstacles became insurmountable or situations desperate. But he was no less convinced that She could not intervene without being invited to by prayer and without humility making room for Her.

He used to justify the role he attributed to the Mother of Jesus by the following reasoning: If we've been able to say: "Salvation comes from the Jews,"⁵⁰ we can say with much more truth, "Salvation comes from Mary, (because) it's through Her that Jesus wants to grant us His graces and apply the merits of His death and cross to us."⁵¹ Therefore, we can say, spelling out his thought and in accord with the teaching of the Church: After committing Herself totally to the work of redemption by giving birth to the Redeemer, then by giving Him the means to grow into adulthood, Mary had to continue Her collaboration as long as this work continued. Consequently, the foundation of a society destined to have the redemption of Her Son accept-

⁴⁷ Ibidem, page 97

⁴⁸ C.M.C. Vol I, doc. 56, pages 168-189

⁴⁹ Life, pages 352-354

⁵⁰ John, 4,22

⁵¹ Life, page 348

ed, especially in Her name, through the education of youth, touches Her directly. Whence the Brother, Marist by the name he wanted to give him, is all the more so by his engagement in the work of Mary. His vocation, as we have seen, comes from Mary Who "having planted him in Her garden, makes sure that he lacks nothing."⁵² Given Her interventions throughout history, we cannot doubt the reality of such an affirmation, any more than this other, repeated several times by Fr. Champagnat: "Mary has done everything for us."

In such a context, how can we doubt that he wanted to mark his spirituality with a Marial character? If the Virgin was truly present in the establishment of the Institute, surely She will continue to be so in the activity of each Brother. He assures one of them, Bro. Marie-Laurent, in these words: "Never despair of your salvation, it is in good hands: Mary's. Isn't Mary your refuge and good Mother? The greater your needs the more She is interested in flying to your help."⁵³

Ever present at the Founder's side, likewise is She surely at the side of his disciples, as Fr. Champagnat suggests, when, to console a young Brother, has somebody tell him, "Mary, our common Mother, will lend you a hand."⁵⁴ Nonetheless, three conditions are required for Her intervention to be possible, respecting each one's liberty. First of all, the Brother must be convinced of the loving presence of Mary, desirous and capable of helping him in his apostolic work. And there we have the first aspect of his Marial spirituality: to put oneself effectivemement at the service of Mary with the intimate assurance that She is there to sustain his work and make it thrive. It is with this conviction that Her Founder doesn't hesitate to prod Brother Antoine by writing in one of his letters: "Interest Her [Mary] in your favor; tell Her, after you've done everything you could, too bad for Her if Her affairs don't prosper."⁵⁵ That supposes an equal familiarity, not only of language but also of heart, with the one he considers his Mother and "Ordinary Resource."

In other words, and this is the second condition, a Marist Brother

⁵² C.M.C. Vol I, doc. 10, page 66

⁵³ Ibidem, doc. 249, pages 521-522

⁵⁴ Ibidem, Vol I, doc. 53, page 160

⁵⁵ Ibidem, doc. 20, page 86

is inconceivable without a profound Marial devotion maintained daily by special prayers prescribed "to honor Mary and merit Her protection," says Brother Jean-Baptiste.⁵⁶ Let us understand these words in their right meaning and not confound the flower with the plant, the consequence with the *raison d'être*. "To honor Mary" is more than a duty; it is the natural reaction of a filial attachment, of a cordial intimacy in the gift of oneself to others. "To merit Her protection" implies more than a sense of reward; it is first of all an opening up, an abandonment of oneself to let Her act in all freedom with our humble and faithful collaboration. The Marial devotion of the Marist Brother, following the example of his Founder, while manifesting itself exteriorly by feelings of praise for the privileges and grandeur of Mary, is lived in depth in the intimate conviction that the effectiveness of efforts aimed at bringing youth to live the Gospel fully comes from Her by virtue of Her maternal love for humankind, recommended by Her Son dying on the cross.

The third condition follows from there. The students, directly involved in the affair since it is a matter of their own becoming, have to be drawn into this salvific activity of Mary by a solid devotion which the Brothers have the duty to communicate to them. "May the Brothers consider themselves as particularly obliged to make Her known, make Her loved, to spread Her cult, and to inspire the children with devotion to Her."⁵⁷ In his letters to the Brothers Fr. Champagnat insisted strongly on this point, which was of great importance to him. "Never stop telling your children that they are the friends of the saints in heaven, of the Blessed Virgin, and in particular of Jesus Christ, that they envy their young hearts,... Inscribe on the books of all your children: 'Mary was conceived without sin.'"⁵⁸ "If you have the happiness of instilling this precious devotion in the heart of your children, you will have saved them."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Life, page 346

⁵⁷ Ibidem, pages 347-348

⁵⁸ C.M.C. Vol I, doc. 24, pages 95-96

⁵⁹ Life, page 348

The role of Mary which Fr. Champagnat wants to see recognized by his Brothers doesn't stop there. Looking upon Her as their Mother, their "Ordinary Resource," their "First Superior," they must also take Her as their model. Now, for the Marist educator, the imitation of Mary connotes a particular nuance, namely to fulfill his task the way the Virgin of Nazareth did with regard to Her Son. The rapport of dignity of the divine person subject to the human person is not to be set aside, but is to be translated by the respect of the educator vis-à-vis the child recognized in his dignity as a person, particularly dear to Christ Who "ordered His disciples to let the children draw near to His divine person."⁶⁰ Again, Father recalls to Brother Barthelemy, "You have in your hands the reward of the blood of Jesus Christ."⁶¹ This respect certainly did not prevent Mary from having with Her Son the natural and simple relation of a mother towards her child, which is translated for the Marist Brother into a friendly dialogue with his student. Such an attitude, though, to be authentic, must rest on a base of humility which, according to spiritual writers, and Fr. Champagnat in particular, constitutes the principal characteristic of the Mother of God. "As the Blessed Virgin...distinguished herself particularly by Her humility and, besides, since the position of teacher of young children is in itself a humble task, (Father Champagnat) wanted humility, simplicity and modesty to be the distinctive character of this new Institute."⁶² Surely, in imitation of every member of the Society of Mary, who must live humble and hidden, without promoting himself in any way, the Marist Brother must behave likewise. But in the spirit of Fr. Champagnat, as we saw above, his humility will be first of all the joyful acceptance of staying the teacher of the little ones, among the little people of the countryside. He will be all the more at ease by realizing thus his desire to be totally at the service of God, keeping nothing for himself in the matter of honors, comfort, and pleasure, following the example of his Founder. He does not attribute his worth to his possessions but to his being which he holds entirely from God. No doubt he will then feel himself, in the measure of his sincerity, interiorly free, in an easy state of life, satisfied with himself and everything else. For,

⁶⁰ C.M.C. Vol I. doc. 20, page 86

⁶¹ Ibidem, doc. 19, pages 84-85

⁶² Life, page 408

humility is not that degrading constraint; it gives rise to that acquiescence which sings out the Magnificat.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this report, some may feel frustrated by not seeing how Marist apostolic spirituality is specific. In fact, other congregations whose purpose is teaching, without hoisting the Marist label, yet practicing Marial devotion, base themselves on the same spiritual principles, the same conception of the apostolate of youth. We know that Champagnat wanted humility to be our characteristic virtue, but Fr. Colin wanted it just as much for the entire Society of Mary.⁶³ Besides, are we sure we have really distinguished ourselves by this virtue? Other institutes, without posting it under their name, practice it perhaps even more. Humility, poverty, Marial devotion, what founder of any apostolic group has not put these virtues in his program?

The specificity resides rather in the nuances, in the manner of practicing them, according to the example given by the founder, according to his personal cachet unconsciously transferred in the conduct of his disciples. Thus we have kept from our Founder and our origins a certain simple and familiar conduct which has our contemporaries admit that we are people without fanfare or ostentation, placing ourselves squarely among the school population, active and ready to serve with amiability, doing our job in conditions sometimes very precarious. This, at least, is what comes out of the accounts given in the annals of the life of the Brothers in the schools in the early years.

We can congratulate ourselves if the stamp of our Founder is still visible in us, if our lifestyle retraces his. Now, what characterizes it is certainly the gift of self without reserve to one's work, with a view to enabling the young to expand their personality through a social and religious formation. This devotedness in which he put all his talents, all he had and all he was, with the ease of one who has stripped himself of all with a heart impassioned with love, is certainly the most relevant aspect of his portrait. Among the complementary traits we must high-

⁶³ O.M. 2, doc. 632, page 466

light his humble attitude, his comprehensive goodness, blended with humor, towards those around him. Finally, everything bathed in an ambiance of familiar relations with Mary, his "Good Mother," and of an intimacy no less close with Her Son Jesus. It is therein that he drew that unshakable trust in all trials and that serene courage which, both equally, won him the love of his Brothers and their admiration.

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FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO “AVIS, LEÇONS, SENTENCES” ON THE THEME OF PRAYER AND PRAYING

André LANFREY, fms

The archives of the congregation in Rome preserve numerous manuscripts of Brs François and Jean-Baptiste containing hundreds of instructions which up to now have hardly been studied. The main ones are:

For Br Jean-Baptiste:⁶⁴

Ecrits 1 : Meditations on the great truths

Ecrits 2 : Considerations on various subjects

Ecrits 3 and Ecrits 4: A collection of instructions and examinations of conscience, sometimes arranged in series. A certain number of these instructions are repeated with minimal variations.

Ecrits 5 or A.D.F.M. (Apostolate of a Marist Brother): consisting of two treatises on education.

For Br François:

Notebooks 307-308-309 containing instructions and outlines of instructions.⁶⁵

An attentive reading has allowed us to see that many of these instructions are to be found, in whole or in part, in the various books of the Institute: the ‘Life of Fr Champagnat’, the ‘Biographies of several Brothers’, the ‘Rule’ of 1852, the ‘Avis, Leçons, Sentences’, the ‘School Guide’... We have here an indication that the manuscripts include notes taken down by the Brothers at the time the Founder was teaching them. After his death they have been brought together, then used in oral instructions, in the course of which they have been more or less adapted and completed. Eventually they have contributed to the editing of the books of the Institute. So we have been wrong in attributing to Brs Jean-Baptiste and François a certain number of texts which, in fact, go back to the Founder. If we

⁶⁴ We do not think it useful to give here their exact classification.

⁶⁵ We are leaving out the numerous notebooks with retreat notes or later instructions.

succeed in identifying in these numerous handwritten pages what comes to us from Fr Champagnat from what comes later, we will be making great progress in the knowledge of the original Marist spirituality.

In an earlier article (Marist Notebooks No. 12), we thought to demonstrate that two instructions on the 'aims of the Institute' are essentially the Founder's work. In this case we have chosen a second example, based on the theme of prayer, meditation, praying.

PART 1: THE THEME OF PRAYER

Here are the texts which treat about it and which, for the most part, have a common link by their plan, their text, or their ideas. Since we cannot take them all into account, we will make use of the most significant (indicated in **bold print**) to evaluate to what degree and how they go back to the Founder.

1. FOR THE MANUSCRIPTS AND WORKS ATTRIBUTED TO BR JEAN-BAPTISTE:

- E2 9th consideration: 'Piety. Esteem we ought to have for piety'
- 10th consideration: 'On the necessity of prayer'
- 11th - 13th considerations: 'The fruits of prayer'
- 19th - 21st considerations: 'Obstacles to prayer', especially distractions
- 22nd consideration: 'Means we should take to acquire the spirit of prayer and the gift of piety'

E3 p.185 and 272: Considerations on prayers

E3 p.85: 'Necessity of prayer in general'

E4 p.37-38: 'The spirit of prayer' (collection of quotations)

E4 p.11: 'What do you think of a brother who is not pious?'

E4 p.272-277: 'Necessity of piety, of the spirit of prayer for a religious'⁶⁶

E4 p.299-316: 'Necessity of prayer and meditation'

⁶⁶ This situation merits special attention. We will consider it more in detail further on in this article.

Rule of 1852: 1st Part, chapter 2 p.4: 'On the exercises of piety'

Life of Fr Champagnat: 2nd Part, chapter IV p.309-320: 'His love of prayer. With what care he formed his brothers in this holy exercise.

Avis, lecons, sentences: ch. XIII: 'Necessity of meditation and prayer'

ch. XIV: 'The five types of devotion or piety'

A.D.F.M., chapters 13-14: prayer: a means of winning children to God

I. FOR THE MANUSCRIPTS OF BR FRANCOIS:

Notebook 307 p.261-269: 'mental prayer'

p.270-277: 'office'

Notebook 308: p.826-833: 'Prayer: necessity'

p.834: 'Efficacy of prayer'

p.839: 'Conditions for prayer'

p.852: 'Way to pray'

The reader, then, will be aware that our study is merely scraping the surface of a very rich mine and covers only a very small part of an extremely vast collection of manuscripts and printed works.

PART 2: THE DOCUMENTS: THREE VERY SIMILAR INSTRUCTIONS⁶⁷

I. NOTEBOOK 307 P.261 MENTAL PRAYER

1. The life of the Religious is a life of prayer. It is difficult, let us say even morally impossible, for a Religious who does not pray, who does not love prayer, to ever become a good Religious. If you see a lukewarm Religious, say: He is not paying attention to his prayer, and you will never be wrong, says St Liguori. **The devil does everything to put the Religious off his prayer. Once he succeeds on this point, he will soon succeed on all the others. A Religious without prayer is a Religious without reason, says St Philip Neri. St Liguori adds: He is no longer a Religious but the corpse of a Religious;** he is a phantom. **Without prayer, one is blind, one has no light.** The man who

⁶⁷ The passage in bold print corresponds to at least one of the other two instructions.

keeps his eyes closed cannot see the way which leads to his homeland, says St Augustine. **But let us go to God and we will be enlightened (Ps 33).** Let us be ready dressed and carry lighted lamps in our hands (Luke 12, 35). These lamps are precisely meditation, says **St Bonaventure. God speaks to us in prayer, he shows us the way of salvation.** Your word, Lord, says the Psalmist, is the lamp which lights my path (Ps 108).

- **Prayer is like a mirror** which shows us clearly the blemishes on our soul (St Nilus, St Bonaventure) **The man who does not pray does not know his faults and does not detest them, says St Bernard. He does not know either the dangers to which his salvation is exposed,** continues St Liguori, **and so he does not think of avoiding them.**

- Prayer is necessary to a Religious to keep him in the spirit of his state [262]. **just as the heat of the stomach to keep life in the body. What the sun does externally in the world, prayer does interiorly in the soul, says St Chrysostom. The sun shines, gives warmth, rejoices, gives life, and pours torrents of light on our understanding. (Prayer) warms virtue, spreads joy in our hearts, invigorates our soul by the graces it obtains for us. If you took away the sun from the earth, there would be nothing but darkness, cold, sadness and death. It is the same with a Religious who does not pray. His spirit is full of shadows and obscurity, his will (of) apathy, his heart, bitterness; his soul is dead or near death.** (Judde, Religious Retreat. IV day, 1st Consid, Vol III)

II. Prayer is the root of all good, mother of all virtues, remedy for all our evils. If we are tempted, if we are lukewarm, if we have become slack in the observance of our Rules, if we feel our zeal weakening, let us turn to prayer and by God's grace we will find there a prompt and infallible remedy in every case. If we fall into relaxation in prayer itself, it is still to prayer we must return. That is what will reinstate us in our first state of fervour. It has the remedies for the very failings which are committed in prayer (Rodriguez).

Prayer is to the spiritual life what the hand is to the body. The hand serves as an instrument for the whole body and works for itself. For if the body is sick, it is the hand which applies the dressing; if the body is dirty, it is the hand [263] which washes it; if the body is cold, it is the hand that warms it. In a word, it is the hands that do everything. It is the same with prayer.

III. Without prayer, we have not the strength to resist temptation, nor to practise the Christian virtues. A soul which neglects prayer

is like a paralysed and crippled body. Although it has hands and feet, it makes no use of them (St Theresa). **Prayer is for the soul what fire is for iron. When it is cold, it is extremely hard and cannot be worked at all, but fire softens it and makes it pliable, able to be bent to the will of the smith.** - To observe the precepts and counsels one must have a heart tender and flexible, and it is prayer which makes it so. Without prayer, it is sad, hard, stubborn, disobedient, and cannot avoid being lost (Barthelemy des martyrs).

- **The Religious who gives up prayer has no need of demons to plunge him into hell; he does it himself with his own hands (St Teresa). The person who does not pray soon becomes animal or demon. - It is morally impossible for one who does not meditate to live free from sin (Bellarmine). But one who applies himself to mental prayer cannot at the same time give in to sin; either he abandons prayer or he renounces sin (St Liguori). Prayer and sin cannot dwell together.** Experience proves that those who pray rarely fall into sin, and if, by chance, they do fall, they soon think better of it by continuing to pray. **Let a soul be as lax as can be imagined, says St Teresa, if she perseveres in prayer, the Lord will lead her to the gate of salvation.**

[264] St Vincent de Paul used to say that it would be a miracle to see a sinner unconverted after following the exercises of a retreat. It would be a miracle more astonishing still if one saw a man saying prayers, praying, meditating, and living in sin. - Why is there no time the devil makes war on us more than in the time of prayer? someone asked a great servant of God. Because, he replied, there is no other exercise the devil desires so much we do badly, and there is no other which gains more graces for us.

IV. The one who is always praying will soon be an angel. A man of prayer can do anything. That is why it is very important for those who work for the salvation of souls to apply themselves well to this exercise. Without it they will bear no fruit or very little, while by praying they render themselves more skilful at moving hearts than if they were very learned or had extraordinary talents (St Vincent de Paul), (Fr Judde, Vol V p...).

- **A man of prayer is like a tree planted by the side of the stream which gives its fruit in due time (Ps 1) and everything he does will find success in God's eyes. Notice that word 'in due time'; that is, at the moment of practising a virtue, of resisting a temptation, of making a sacrifice.**

- **St Chrysostom used to compare prayer to a fountain flowing in the middle of a garden. This garden, constantly watered, is always**

green and flourishing. Such is a prayerful soul. One can see it continually growing in good desires and in the fruits of salvation. But should the water come [265] to fail in this garden, the flowers, plants, fruit: everything promptly dries up. Everything withers and little by little dies. Why? Because the source has dried up.

- When he prayed, the Brother was humble, modest, pious, mortified, obedient, attached to his vocation. But since he abandoned this holy exercise, since he does it carelessly, he has become careless in speech, proud, disobedient, dissipated, restless. It is evident from his face that he is not happy. One knows he is losing his balance, that his passions govern him. When the soul abandons prayer, not only do I regard it as ill, but as dead, says St Chrysostom. One who does not meditate cannot live as a Christian without a miracle. The devil knows that the souls who persevere in trying to pray are lost to him (St Teresa).

- The shortest way to reach perfection is the practice of prayer, says St Ignatius. **The one who does not pray much will never achieve a high degree of virtue (St Aloysius Gonzaga).** One can readily see, after that, **why the saints thought so much of this holy exercise.** Suarez, the most learned man of his generation, used to say that he would prefer to lose all his knowledge than to lose a mere hour of his prayer. **This great man devoted eight hours a day to it. - St Francis Borgia consecrated the same time to it.** And when these eight hours were completed, he asked as a favour if he could spend a few more minutes on it. - St Anthony passed whole nights in prayer, and when the sun rose, the signal for the end of his prayer, he complained that it came too soon to disturb his rest and his agreeable communing with God.

[266] V. The usefulness of mental prayer consists less in the meditation than in the affections, the prayers and the resolutions. The profit in prayer is not thinking much about God but loving him much, says St Chrysostom. No-one will ever pray well if he does not know his needs. It is useless to talk a lot, to have beautiful thoughts in prayer; the important thing is to experience one's needs and expose them to God. - For the forty years I have tried my best to pray, said a saint, I have found no better way of doing it than to present myself before God like a child or a poor blind man, naked, abandoned (Gerson; Rodriguez, /Chr Perf I.P. V Tr, CXIX).

The learned man Seigneri wept as he said: All the time I was studying theology, I spent an hour of my prayer in making many reflections and considerations in order to arouse within me some holy feelings. I hardly ever recommended myself to God in those days. Finally, the Lord conde-

scended to enlighten me. Now I do hardly anything else than recommend myself to God and make different acts. I find this very good. If it has produced some change in me and [if] I have been of some help to others, it seems to me that I owe it to this exercise.

The Fathers of the spiritual life say on the subject of prayer that meditation is like a needle which draws after it a thread of gold consisting of affection, prayers, and resolutions. – A great Saint used to say that prayer is the breathing of the soul. Just as when one breathes, inhaling and then exhaling, so the soul by prayer breathes in the grace which is its life, its strength and its defence, like the hands and the spirit in the natural order [267] of God, and by its acts of offering and love, delivers itself entirely to God. Prayer purifies our heart and unites us to the only true and sovereign good (Br Francis).

VI. There is one thing which is a big trial for people who pray, and that is distractions. Distractions come sometimes from lack of control of the senses, sometimes from the inability to stay long with the same subject, and frequently too God permits them to test his servants. But what is to be done when one finds oneself distracted?

1st accept this humiliation with humility and patience;

2nd reject the distractions with courage, constancy, and fidelity, without being anxious or agitated.

The time spent thus will not be wasted. - Such prayer is often more of an advantage than so many others made with inclination and feeling. For all the acts one makes to chase away and put up with distractions with the intention of not displeasing God are accompanied by acts of love of God.

A great servant of God had been faithful to prayer for forty years without ever experiencing any interior consolation; and this exercise had been very useful to him all the same. I rejoice and bless God, he said, for having served him in some way at my expense.

Souls who are not solidly established in piety, go along well and are happy when God gives them consolation during prayer. But if it happens he deprives them of this, they are unhappy, become unsettled, just like little children who are grateful to their mother when she gives them sweets and who cry when she takes them away, because they do not know that sweets taken in large quantities [268] are not good for them and cause worms. Sensible consolations ordinarily give rise to the worm of complacency, from which is born pride, the ruin of the soul.

God gives us consolations when we enter on the way to piety in order to draw us to it. But eventually he deprives us of them because if

we keep on experiencing them they would be harmful to us. Thus, he deserves far more thanks when he takes them away than when he gives us them, says St Francis de Sales. – I desire no other prayer than that which makes me grow in virtue, and I regard as such prayer made with much aridity and temptation, because it makes me more humble (St Teresa).

It is an excellent prayer to offer to God one's trials and to submit oneself to his will. That is to pray much better than when one occupies the mind with making reflections or producing affections, convinced that that way one will be praying well. What do you do when you experience aridity, Blessed Berchmans was asked one day. I pray, he answered; I practise patience, I do everything to keep myself busy. - St Francis de Sales was not worried by desolation, aridity, or interior feelings of abandonment. I am not in the habit of reflecting whether I have consolation or desolation, he said, when the Lord sends me good sentiments. I accept them with great love and simplicity, and if he does not send me any, I am not alarmed. I keep myself always before him with great confidence like a little loving child.

St Philip Neri used to say [269] that in time of dryness or desolation it is very useful to imagine oneself as a beggar in the presence of God and the saints, and to keep on asking for spiritual alms, sometimes of Jesus Christ, sometimes of the Blessed Virgin, of one's guardian angel, sometimes of such and such a Saint to whom one has particular devotion, acting like the poor who ask for material alms from those they know can give them it.

Blessed Angela de Foligno says that the prayer most favoured by God is that which is made as if under constraint. That is to say, we pray not from a taste or inclination for it, but by struggling against the aridity our heart may find itself in.

In fact, when our will behaves thus in the service of God by overcoming its repugnance, it gives witness to more strength and constancy than in times of sensible consolation. The love and affection we have for someone shows itself especially in the trouble we take to serve him and be pleasing to him. In serving God without consolation, we show that it is not the consolations of God we are seeking, but the God of consolations, whom we love the more completely as the more purely. And the less part our self interest plays, the greater the purity (St Francis de Sales, *Intro to the devout Life*, IV P, Ch XIV).

In prayer, we speak of God, we listen to him, and we converse with others, as though we were living the life of angels. Much is gained by prayer. It is the grace of graces (St Francis). **It is the key of heaven**

(Augustine) – It opens all the doors and all the chests of the heavenly treasures (Rodriguez).

I. NOTEBOOK 308 P 826: I/PRAYER. NECESSITY OF PRAYER

(1st, Necessity; 2nd efficaciousness; 3rd conditions; 4th method of prayer)

I – God wishes to save all mankind, says St Paul (Timoth.2). If he does not wish anyone's death (Ezek.33), he exercises his patience towards us, not willing that anyone perish, but that [they] return to him by penance (2 Peter, 3). It is right, says St Leo, that the God who gives us the strength to observe them, demands exact obedience to his commandments. Grace is never wanting to anyone, continues St Teresa, considering that God gives it to all and so provides each one with the help necessary for salvation; provided that man for his part puts no obstacle in its way. But God gives this help only to the one who asks him for it for, says St Augustine, with the exception of the first graces of vocation to the faith or of penitence, all the others, especially the grace of perseverance, are accorded only to prayer. God wishes to give, this Father adds, but he gives only to those who ask. Prayer therefore is necessary to adults as a means of salvation. That is to say, without prayer it is impossible for them to be saved. That is the opinion of the theologians, of St Basil and St Chrysostom, of St Augustine and St Clement of Alexandria, and of many other lights of the church. That is also the meaning of those urgent exhortations in Sacred Scripture: one must pray always (Luke 18). Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you (Matt 7, 21; Mark 6, 11; Luke, 11). Ask and you will receive. Anything you ask the Father in my name, he will grant you (John 14, 15, 16). Pray without ceasing (1 Thess, 5). The reason for this is that without prayer we cannot obtain the help we need to keep the divine law. **[827] St Chrysostom says that without water trees become dried up, without prayer man cannot claim to be alive.** The one who asks, obtains, says Jesus Christ (Ib). But, adds St Teresa, the one who does not ask, does not obtain; according to what St James writes: you do not have because you do not ask (James 4). St Chrysostom further says that prayer is a powerful weapon necessary to fight all our enemies. He who fortifies himself with the help of prayer, says St Ephrem, defends his soul against the attacks of sin. I have called on the Lord, says David, I will be delivered from my enemies (Ps.17). If then we wish to live as Christians and effect our salvation, we

must know how to pray. One who knows how to pray well, knows how to live well, says St Augustine. Speaking of the importance of prayer, Pope Celestine says, "I know of nothing better to tell you than what my predecessor Zosimus has told you: is there any time when we do not need God's help? That is why in every sort of encounter or business we should always have recourse to his protection. For it would be overweening pride for a man to dare presume something of his own strength.

II - To prove the necessity of prayer, St Thomas offers a very essential reason, drawn from the teaching of the holy Fathers and which is based simply on the understanding that anything God has ordained from all eternity to give to mankind, he gives in time by means of prayer. Just as it is according to the order and arrangement of Providence that the earth becomes fertile from the care taken to cultivate it, that one becomes adept in the sciences and arts by study and practice, and that with the appropriate materials workers erect buildings, so it is in the order and disposition of Providence that by means of prayer we obtain so many graces and inspirations. Prayer is the channel by which Our Lord communicates his favours to us, assists us in our needs and enriches us [828] with his goods. Some Saints say that it is a golden chain attached to heaven and hanging down to earth, by which graces come down to us, and by which we should raise ourselves to God. One can say further that it is the ladder of Jacob which joins earth to heaven along which the Angels ascend and descend without cease carrying our requests to God and bringing back his blessings. **St Augustine calls it the key to heaven; it is in fact a key which opens all doors and by which all the coffers of the heavenly treasures are opened.** He also says that as physical foods nourish the body, so the word of God and prayer sustain and nourish the inner man. A Religious, says St Francis, should desire nothing more than to have the grace of prayer, for without it one cannot hope to make any progress in the service of God, and with it there is nothing one may not promise oneself. **The life of a Religious ought to be a life of prayer,** says St Liguori. Prayer is like the breathing of the soul: it is by prayer that it draws down the favours of heaven and gives itself and raises itself to God. **When a religious does not love prayer, the exercises of piety, it is difficult, it is morally impossible for him to be a good religious.** Those who pray are saved; those who do not pray are damned (Ib.). **A Religious without prayer is a religious without reason, says St Philip Neri. He is no longer a Religious, adds St Liguori, he is the corpse of a Religious.** Prayer is to the spiritual life what the senses and the organs are to the

life of the body. Thus **as much as the eyes are necessary for seeing**, the ears for hearing, the tongue for speaking, **so much need of prayer have we for seeing**, for hearing the things of salvation, and speaking about them in an effective and salutary manner. **For of ourselves we are blind**, deaf and dumb (Juddle: Instructions on Prayer: chap II T.V.p 198). And the man [829] animal and fleshly conceives nothing of the things which belong to the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2). **Come close to God and you will be enlightened, says the Psalmist (Ps.33). God speaks to us in prayer, says St Bonaventure, and he enlightens us in the way of salvation.** And **St Thomas of Villanova adds that prayer is to the soul what natural heat is to the stomach.** Just as without this benign heat [it is] impossible for food to benefit a man, or even for him to live, and with it the food is converted into nourishing juices which are then distributed to all parts of the body to help it function, so the spiritual life cannot survive without prayer. **St Chrysostom compares prayer to a fountain in the middle of a garden. How constantly green and flourishing this garden is, always irrigated by its pure waters! Such is the prayerful soul. One sees it growing ceaselessly in good desires and in flowers of virtue. But should the water fail in this garden, then everything soon dries up. So it is by prayer that are sustained always in beauty and in perpetual freshness the holy plants of obedience, humility, patience, mortification, silence, recollection, and all the other virtues. But when the soul abandons prayer, continues the same holy Doctor, I regard it as very ill and even dead. What the root is to the tree, he goes on to add, prayer, praying is to virtue. It is the root which nourishes the tree, which makes it grow and prevents it from falling. Likewise, it is prayer which sustains, increases and strengthens the virtues in us. A prayerful soul is like a tree planted beside a calm stream, which yields its fruit in due season, as the Royal Psalmist says, and all his actions prosper before God (Ps.1). Prayer is the aqueduct and the canal by which our soul receives the waters of grace. Now, just as an enemy, in order to take a fortified town, tries to cut off (Rodriguez. Chris. Perf. 1st Part, 5th Treat.)[830] its water and supplies, so the devil, in order to achieve mastery over our soul, tries to prevent it from praying and to turn it from prayer, so as to weaken it and cause it to fall into sin. If then, despite the wiles and efforts of the enemy of our salvation, we persevere in prayer, not only do we repel the enemy and win glorious victories, but we grow stronger and stronger in good and in the practice of virtue.**

III- Continual prayer is to the soul what the nerves are to the body. This shows the necessity of prayer. For as it is by the nerves that all parts of the body are successfully joined and linked together, and as they are what give them movement and feeling, so it is by the force of continual prayer that the soul is sustained in the spiritual life and that it renders itself prompt and vigorous in the exercise of the greatest virtues. This comparison is also from St John Chrysostom. **It is prayer which gives us the strength to satisfy all the obligations of our profession.** This is what lets us easily put up with everything, this is what makes everything easy and even pleasant, and there is nothing from which the soul does not know how to gain a profit. Finally, if we make good use of prayer and praying we will find in it an unfailing remedy for all our faults and a guaranteed means of keeping ourselves in virtue and in the purity of faith. **That is why the Saints tell us that on that depends the whole conduct of our life and whether it is well or badly regulated, depending on whether we do it well or badly. As without prayer it is impossible to live well, so it is impossible for anyone who prays conscientiously to fall into sin, for when the demons see us at prayer they cease tempting us, and despair or overcoming us (St Augustine, St Chrysostom). But the man without prayer is like Samson without his hair.** (Louis of Grenada).

[831] Prayer is the mirror of our life, so that if we want to know how we live, we have only to examine how we pray. Prayer is like the pulse of the soul which lets us know the state of our health and the seriousness of its sickness. It is the barometer and thermometer of virtue, of vocation, and of perfection, the compass, cable and anchor during a storm. Because it is in prayer, and from the way one prays, that one can observe the degree of fervour, peace, or disturbance and agitation, one finds oneself in, and what are the effects. It is in prayer that one will recognize if one is cold or warm, if one is strong or weak. So then such a prayer, such a life, such a life, such a death, such a death, such an eternity. Let us be readily convinced, **says St Liguori, that all our good depends on prayer. On prayer depends the change of life, victory over temptations, etc.** By prayer are obtained the divine love, perfection, perseverance and salvation. **What the sun does exteriorly in the world, says St Chrysostom, prayer does interiorly in the soul. The sun enlightens, warms, rejoices, strengthens; prayer enlightens our understanding, inflames our will, spreads the feelings of pure joy in our hearts, vivifies our**

souls by the grace it obtains for us. If you took the sun from the earth, there would be nothing but darkness, cold, sadness and death. It is the same with the man who does not keep to prayer. His spirit is full of shadow, his will of apathy, his heart of bitterness; his soul is dead or very close to dying.

Prayer is the root of all good, the mother of all virtue. It carries at its breast the souls who apply themselves to it, nourishes them, enlightens them, gives them the strength to act [832], it alleviates their pains and leads them to perfection. **All the Saints have shown a great liking for this exercise. St Francis Borgia and St Cajetan used to spend eight hours a day at it...** St Margaret, Queen of Scotland, and St Stephen, King of Hungary, would spend almost all night in prayer. St Francis gave to prayer all the time the obligations of his state left free. St Aloysius Gonzaga, while he was still very young, devoted an hour and sometimes two hours to prayer. One can say that St Magdalen de Pazzi lived by prayer. There have been Saints, like St Philip Neri and St Francis de Sales, who were always at prayer and of whom one could say they were praying even when they were occupied with serious affairs. The first hermits sought rest from work in prayer and prepared for prayer by work. In fact, one finds ease, blessing and merit in work, when one supports it with continual prayer, and one finds support and consolation in prayer because one has worked in a spirit of penitence. As the heart is in continual motion, never stopping at any time nor in any place, while the arm only moves at intervals, so we ought likewise to sometimes take respite from our external labours, but whatever our dispositions and whatever happens, we should persevere constantly in prayer and the care of spiritual things. The heart gives life, strength and motion to the arms by the vital impulses it imparts to it, otherwise the arm would be inactive and without strength. In the same way communication with God endows exterior occupations with the inspirations, the holy affections, and the great assistance the soul receives. It makes us act more efficaciously with men, but without it [833] our relations with them are full of imperfections, superficial rather than fruitful. St Francis de Sales called the centre of his soul God's sanctuary. It was his place of retreat and ordinary rest. From that came his great purity, his admirable simplicity, his deep humility, and his continual union with God. **St Francis Borgia was a real man of prayer. After whole hours of prayer it seemed to him he had been conversing with God only for a few moments.** As soon as he mounted the pulpit to announce the divine word, many of his hearers were moved to tears and then noted sinners

might be seen retiring from the church moved by feelings of genuine penitence. ...

3. MANUSCRIPT E4 P.299-316 (BR JEAN-BAPTISTE) NECESSITY OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

Meditation, prayer, are necessary:

1st to enlighten our spirit _____

We can only be saved by serving God; we cannot serve him without loving him; we cannot love him with our whole heart if we do not have much esteem for him; and we will never have a high idea of him if we do not have sufficient knowledge of his perfections. Now how can we acquire this knowledge without profound meditation. That is why God himself tells us: See and understand that I am your God. If God is so badly served; better let us say, if we ourselves serve God so badly, it is because we do not know him. Father, said Jesus Christ, the world has not known you (John 17, 25), and that is why it has not loved you. The source of all sins and of all disorder in the world, says Hosea, is that the truth, the knowledge of God, has departed from the earth.

It is not enough to know God well to be saved, it is also necessary for one to know oneself well. So St Augustine prayed continually: My God, let me know you and let me know myself. Let me know myself so as to distrust myself, hate myself, and let me know you so as to esteem you and to love you. In fact, to work effectively at our salvation, we have to know:

1st the depth of corruption in us in order to humble ourselves and distrust ourselves;

2nd the violent inclination we have towards evil in order to repress it; our powerlessness to do any good, in order that we may never rely on ourselves [300] and put all our trust in God;

3rd our controlling passion, in order to fight it and all our faults, so as to correct them;

4th our sins, in order to grieve over them and wipe them away with our tears. Now we cannot acquire this knowledge of ourselves except by daily reflection and meditation.

To achieve salvation one must know perfectly one's obligations and duties, that is to say, God's law, and his commandments. Now it is only by studying, by meditating often and assiduously on this holy law

that we are able to know it and observe it. You will place my commandments in your heart, you will meditate on them continually, in your house, in the fields, morning and evening. You will tie them to your arms, you will have them before your eyes, you will inscribe them at the entrance to your house, on the doorstep, so they will never be out of your sight (Deut. Ch.6).

It is not sufficient to know the law of God, it is also necessary to love it. Now in order to love it and keep it, one must know the beauty, equity, advantages, compensations attached to its practice, and the menaces, pains, punishments inflicted on those who break it. That is why God, after giving his law to the Israelites, listed for them on one side all the blessings and all the rewards which would be granted those who kept it, and on the other put before their eyes all the misfortunes, all the punishments God would heap on those who broke it. If one were to ask the Christians in hell why they are there, they would all reply that it was for forgetting God's law and not thinking of the rewards attached [301] to its observance and the punishments tied to its transgression. The earth is filled with crimes and desolation because no-one reflects in his heart (Hosea). Without meditation there is no light, i.e. no knowledge of God, of ourselves, of our duties and our destinies, and consequently no salvation. **The one who keeps his eyes closed cannot see the road which leads to his homeland (St Augustine). Come close to God; meditate on his law and you will be enlightened (Ps. 33, 6). Let your loins be girt and carry lighted lamps in your hands (Luke 12, 35). These lamps are meditation (Liguori). Your word is a lamp which guides my steps (Ps. 118, 105). What the sun does exteriorly in the world, meditation does interiorly in souls. The sun gives light, warmth, rejoicing, vigour. Prayer pours torrents of light on the understanding, inflames our will, spreads joy and happiness in our hearts, invigorates our souls with the graces it obtains for us. Take the sun from the earth and you will have nothing but darkness, ice, sadness, death. Take meditation from a man, his spirit will be filled with shadow, with ignorance, his will with apathy, his heart with stubbornness, with bitterness, and his soul will die (St Chrysostom). The first thing the Philistines did to Samson when they had captured him was to shave off his hair. Similarly, that is the first thing the devil does to a soul when he has mastered it, that is, he prevents it from meditating, from praying.**

No-one deserves the name of religious unless he is faithful

to the practice of prayer; for as one cannot achieve the effect without its cause, so one cannot have light without reflection, grace without [302] prayer and, in a word, religion without praying (St Thomas).

*2nd To fortify our heart and make our will docile.*_____

Of itself our heart is hard, restive, disobedient, unfeeling, cold and bad; therefore it cannot avoid being lost, for the Holy Spirit assures us that the hard heart will end badly (Eccl. 3, 27). But what is a hard heart? A hard heart is one not moved by compunction, by sorrow for its sins, which is not softened by piety, does not love God and is full of ingratitude for his benefits, one which is not touched by prayers nor shaken by threats and which punishments have no effect upon, one which is not ashamed by its crimes, which forgets the past, neglects the present and spares no thought for the future; one, in a word, which has no zeal for its salvation and no fear of God (Saint Bernard). **This hardness of heart can only be cured by prayer. To keep the divine precepts and counsels, one must have a tender heart, that is say, ready to receive the inspirations of grace and put them into practice. And it is prayer which produces this goodness and docility of heart** (Barthelemy of the martyrs).

Prayer is for the soul what the fire is for iron. When it is cold it is extremely hard and cannot be worked at all. But fire softens it and makes it pliable to the will of the blacksmith. The same way, prayer warms the heart, softens it, and brings it to fervently embrace the practice of the virtues (St Liguori). Solomon said to God: give your servant a docile heart (3 Kings 3, 9). The apostle says [303] that to make us practice virtue, God gives us the feelings, the heart of a son, and that the Holy Spirit causes us to cry without ceasing, Father, Father.

However good a piece of land might be, if it is to be made truly fertile, it must be watered by the rain not once but many times. Likewise, our heart must be often watered by prayer if we want to bear the fruits of virtue and sanctity (St J Chrysostom). My heart has become dry, says the prophet King, I have become like withered grass because I have forgotten to eat my bread. What bread? The bread of meditation and prayer, reply all the holy Fathers.

Without meditation and prayer we will never have the strength to resist the devil's temptations nor to practise virtue (Liguori). How did the martyrs have enough strength to resist tyrants if it was not prayer which made them strong enough to conquer torture and death

(idem). **Prayer is the gate through which the Lord sends us his graces of light and strength.** If this gate remains closed, what will become of us? (St Teresa). St Theodotus suffered great torment on baking cups of clay. When he felt the pain increasing and penetrating to the marrow of his being he could no longer bear it and called loudly on God to come to his help. As a result he obtained such grace that he joyfully put up with it to death. On the other hand, many Christians, tried by suffering, have denied the faith because of neglecting to recommend themselves to God. [304] I have seen with great sadness, strong and generous men, ready to receive the crown after long sufferings for confessing the faith, who have eventually unfortunately denied the one they had confessed so constantly. Why did they fall? It is because they took their eyes off the one who gives strength to the weak; it is because, in a word, they abandoned prayer (St Cyprian)

In Japan, an old man, condemned to be sawn to death extremely slowly by a reed, was strong enough to put up with the pain for a long period of time. But before yielding up his soul he ceased recommending himself to God, denied the faith, and immediately died. This example shows us that prayer alone can obtain for us the strength and constancy to resist temptation (Liguori). In the formidable combats to which the holy martyrs were delivered one occasionally sees men grow pale and deny the faith. But there is no reference to a single young virgin trembling, or at least, who died an apostate, convincing and striking proof that it was grace alone which sustained the martyrs, grace which they only obtained by persevering prayer (Gaume 3, 2 v.p. 190).

*3rd To make us avoid sin and preserve the life of grace.*_____

Without meditation and without prayer, it is absolutely impossible to live well, as it is also impossible for one who prays conscientiously to fall into sin (St John Chrysostom). [305] The man who leaves prayer soon becomes beast or demon (Abbot Diocles). He becomes both one and the other, beast by his ignorance, demon by his malice, his wickedness and his obduracy.

A religious without prayer is a religious without reason (St Philip Neri). A man without reason is unable to take any part in civil life; he cannot even control himself, he needs to be put away. A religious without prayer is absolutely incapable of any of the functions of the spiritual life, he understands nothing; **he is a man of no value for virtue.**

The religious who does not pray is not only wretched and useless but moreover brings before God **a dead soul** in a living body (St Bonaventure).

The religious who neglects meditation, neglects his salvation and marches to his ruin. He is like a soldier who throws away his weapons in the heat of the battle, like a man overboard who lets himself be carried away by the current instead of taking hold of the rope thrown to him. He is like a sick man who refuses and rejects the only remedy that can cure him, a starving man who refuses to take food; his loss is therefore certain (Fr de Rance).

It is morally impossible for one who does not meditate to live free from mortal sin (Bellarmine). He who does not meditate can live as a Christian only by a miracle (Gerson). The religious who gives up prayer, I regard not only as ill, but even as dead (St J Chrysostom). **The religious who does not meditate is only the corpse of a religious (Liguori).**

The religious who leaves mental prayer has no need of the devil to carry him to hell, for [306] he throws himself in (St Teresa).

Prayer is to the soul what wings are to a bird, walls to a town, sap to a plant, breathing to animals. we judge that a body is dead when it no longer breathes, and we should believe and hold for certain that a soul is dead when it no longer prays (St Chrysostom).

Understand that to deprive a religious of prayer is like depriving a fish of water, for water is no more necessary to fish than prayer is to the soul (idem).

Mental prayer and sin cannot dwell together. Those who pray rarely fall and if they fall they rise again promptly (Liguori). One can hold as certain that a soul which perseveres in the exercise of prayer, however great and numerous its falls, however vivid and frequent the temptations the devil besieges it with, sooner or later God will deliver it from peril and lead it to heaven (St Teresa). Prayer is the aqueduct and the canal by which our soul receives the waters of grace, the help and the strength to avoid sin. The devil does all he can to wreck it and make it useless, for he knows that souls who apply themselves to prayer are lost to him (idem. Rodriguez).

The most deadly and most dangerous of all temptations is therefore the one that leads us to neglect, to abandon prayer. The most horrible deceit the devil used for me, writes St Teresa, was to make me give up prayer. I have never noticed, she adds, any ruse of the devil as harmful as that.

[307] **One of the tricks the devil most commonly employs is to divert the Christian from drawing strength from prayer.** The reason for this is that in this way he is sure of deceiving it and making it his slave, since the abandonment of prayer means the triumph of temptation (St Peter Chrysologos). St Jerome comments on these words: Though all may be scandalised in your regard, I will never abandon you; it was faith and love for Jesus that inspired St Peter with this reply. But the apostle linked to this faith such confidence in his own strength that he believed he had no need of outside help, and in this he greatly deceived himself. And so, St Jerome graciously adds, there we have a scatter-brained bird who tries to fly without having the wing of help from on high and his fall will be the more grievous the bolder his attempt (St Jerome).

The man who is not assisted by grace becomes what Peter himself became when he swore to die for Jesus without, however, imploring his support (St Augustine).

4th To correct our faults.

On prayer depends the whole conduct of our life. It is well or badly regulated according to whether we pray well or badly (Rodriguez). If then you see a lax religious, unmortified, vain, disobedient, slack in observing the rule, hot-headed, quarrelsome, say he does not pray and you will not be wrong (Liguori).

One who does not pray does not know his faults and will be unable to correct them. He will not see [308] the snares of the devil and will let himself be caught. He will not know the dangers his salvation runs and will not even think of avoiding them (St Bernard).

Meditation enlightens and purifies the soul, regulates our inclinations, directs our actions, corrects our faults, softens our manners, and puts order into our whole conduct of life (idem). It is by daily prayer and meditation that the soul purifies itself of its sins and corrects its faults. It is by prayer that the virtues are brought to perfection, that temptations are overcome, that the senses acquire the habit of recollection, that slackness is banished and the blight of the vices disappears entirely. In a word, the excellence of prayer is immense and its privileges cannot be appreciated (St Lawrence Justinian). **Meditation teaches us to know ourselves and shows us our faults.** Prayer gives us the grace of overcoming ourselves and correcting ourselves. Meditation lets us see the virtues we lack; prayer obtains them for us. Meditation

shows us the way which leads to heaven; prayer makes us march there surely and diligently. Meditation makes us aware of the perils that surround us, the enemies we have to fight. Prayer makes us avoid those perils and gives us strength to fight and defeat our enemies.

So meditation and prayer are equally necessary (St Bernard). **Without prayer a person ceases to be reasonable**, allowing himself to be deluded by the devil and dominated by his passions. Without prayer there is [309] nothing but ignorance in the spirit, weakness in the heart, infidelity in the will (St Bonaventure). That means, without prayer life is a series of sins and a **total void of virtues**.

Prayer weakens the power of the devil and brings ruin to his empire (Saint Ignatius, martyr). Prayer puts the devil to flight and is a **sovereign remedy for all the ills of the soul** (St Basil). Doctors treat each illness of the body with special remedies and frequently they even apply several to cure a single one, because all their remedies are weak and have only a very limited efficacy. But prayer is a **universal and infallible remedy** for all sorts of needs, to correct all types of fault, to repel all the attacks of the devil, to acquire all sorts of virtues, because it applies to all evils of the soul an infinite good, that is God from which it derives all its strength, and so it is called all-powerful (Theodore).

Prayer is that tower of David hung around with a thousand shields to defend us from our enemies, a city of refuge where we are protected from the attacks of hell; an antidote which cures us of the deadly poison of sin and the venom of our faults, a brilliant lighthouse which enlightens us, shows us the way, and lets us see the snares of our enemies (Bellecus).

Prayer is to the soul what the hand is to the body. The hand serves as an instrument to all the body in general and to itself in particular. It works for the food, for the clothing, for all the other needs of the body, and it also works for itself [310]. For if the body is sick, it is the hand which dresses it, if the body is dirty, it is the hand which washes it, if the body is cold, it is the hand which warms it. In a word, it is the hands which do everything, and it is the same with prayer. Father, a young religious asked an old desert father, what must I do in order not to give in to the bad thoughts which afflict me? Pray, my brother. And to subdue the garrulousness of my tongue? Pray. And so as not to give in to the suggestions of my enemy which prompt me to leave my cell and waste my time with my brothers? Pray. And to obtain the charity, humility, and the mortification I lack? Pray. Why, father, do you give me only one method to do so many

different things? For two reasons, brother:

1st because this method is a universal and effective method for obtaining everything;

2nd because it includes and can substitute for all the others (Life of the Fathers).

*5th To practise the virtues and live as a true religious.*_____

The soul has received the ability, with God's help, to cultivate itself and to be able by prayerful work to obtain all the virtues and all the gifts to deliver it from the ignorance which blinds it and from the concupiscence which inclines it to evil. And this ability is the power and the grace of prayer. And so it follows that damnation comes only from neglect of prayer (Saint Augustine). As one cannot obtain the effect without the cause, nor the end without the means, so it is impossible to practise the virtues without mental prayer. **Thus, the man who does not pray cannot be called religious** (Cardinal Cajetan). That man speaks truly who maintains that prayer is the cause of virtue and sanctity and that not one of the things [311] necessary to sanctity will find entry into a soul which fails to communicate with God by prayer (St J. Chrysostom). We attempt in vain to win a victory over the vices and our failings, to build the house of the virtues and of perfection in our soul, if grace is not attracted to us by fervent and continual prayer (Pope Innocent 1st). Hold for sure that no grace comes down from heaven into the soul and no virtue can be had except by prayer and mortification, said the Blessed Virgin to Saint Elisabeth (St Bonaventure).

One who does not eat or sleep cannot live, work, or put up with the difficulties of the journey, and falls in the middle of the road. **One who does not pray will have no strength, no energy, to practise the virtues and avoid sin.** (Liguori). **It is difficult, or rather, we may say, it is morally impossible for a religious who does not love prayer ever to be a good religious, that is, to have the virtues of his state** (idem). On the contrary, **a prayerful soul is like a tree planted by running water which yields its fruit in due season; all its activities prosper before God (Ps. 1, 3). Notice the words, in due season, which mean when the religious is patient, obedient, humble, regular, pious, zealous, mortified (St Liguori). Prayer is the mother and the source of virtues (St John Climacus). All the saints became saints by mental prayer;** it is the blessed furnace where the soul is embraced by God's love. In this way Saint Peter of Alcantara felt

such ardour that on one occasion having jumped into a frozen pond in order to

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[313] cool down, the water began to boil as if it had been in a pot over the fire. St Aloysius Gonzaga felt such love of God in prayer that his face seemed enflamed and his heart beat so powerfully that one would say it wanted to burst out of his breast. Prayer banishes sadness, rouses fervour, rekindles all the virtues, increases the love of God and the zeal for perfection (St Lawrence Justinian).

When God enters into a soul by means of prayer he gives it all the virtues (St J. Chrysostom). What must one do to become a man of solid virtue?, someone asked St John of Avila. For that, replied the saintly man, regular and prolonged prayer is necessary (Fr D. Pont). **St Aloysius Gonzaga used to say that someone who did not pray much would never reach a high degree of virtue.** All the soul's profit comes from mental prayer (Ruffin). **When water, humidity, is lacking to a plant, flowers, fruit, leaves, branches, everything, in a word, withers, dries up and dies. When prayer is lacking to a religious, his good desires, his devotion, his fervour, his virtues, everything, in a word, is lost and disappears. Yes, this religious when he prayed regularly and fervently was humble, modest, mortified, detached from the world, devoted to his work. But since then he has become loose in his speech, wandering in his gaze, full of vanity, negligent [314] in his work, impatient, irregular, without mortification, filled with the spirit of the world and is no longer a religious except in dress.**

6th *To persevere in our vocation and in our aim.*_____

Prayer supports, nourishes, and assures the grace of vocation. How can charity subsist if God does not give us perseverance? How will God give us perseverance if we do not ask him for it? And how can we ask without praying? Without prayer there is no way of staying in virtue and persevering (Bishop de la Palafosse).

One should consider among the effects of meditation, perseverance in one's vocation, success in the offices one is responsible for, victory in temptation, returning to God after a fall, and final perseverance (St Vincent de Paul).

One can answer for the virtue of a religious, to whatever danger it may be exposed, if he is assiduous at prayer, at the examination of

conscience, and in the reception of the sacraments. On the other hand, if he neglects these exercises, were he a saint today, he would never maintain that state if he neglects his exercises; and if he were imperfect, he would soon come to despise his most essential obligations (Judde).

All those who are weary of their state, all those who lose their vocation or who by their unedifying behaviour deserve to be regarded and treated as useless people, are lost, taking matters at their origin, only because they have neglected their exercises of piety (idem). All religious who fall into serious sin, who desert [315] their holy state, who give scandal to the Church and the faithful, have come to this because they have abandoned prayer or have performed it only with carelessness and to keep up appearances (Bellecus). Further, it is sufficient that meditation has become slack for a house and even a whole order of religious to lose the fervour of its primitive regularity and to end up by becoming extinct (St Bonaventure). I dare you to show me a religious attentive to his exercises and especially to prayer, who is not happy in his state, who does not love his vocation, and who does not possess the virtues of his vocation (Judde).

A religious can say of prayer what Solomon said of wisdom: all good things came to me together with her. You ask me: is meditation really necessary? I ask you in my turn: is it really necessary to know God and to love him, to know yourself, to dominate your passions and correct your faults, to keep yourself from sin and maintain yourself in the state of grace, to know the obligations of your state, of your employment, and fulfil them; in a word, is it really necessary to make certain of your salvation, to save your soul, to avoid hell, to gain heaven? If you tell me that all that is necessary, I will answer you that meditation and prayer are even more so, because it is by praying that you will have and do all the rest (Bourdalué).

Oh, how many souls sin, wallow in sin, eventually are lost and fall into hell, because they do not meditate or pray (St Liguori).

Christians! Religious! Pray, pray, pray, and never stop praying, for if you pray, your salvation is certain, but if you do not pray, your loss is certain (idem).

Let us be well convinced then that to pray is the condition of man. It is the first duty of man, it is the great need of man. [316] It is man's unique resource, it is all his consolation; it is the whole of man (Massillon).

Mental prayer, **prayer is the easiest and shortest way to go to God** (Cardinal Bonas, St Ignatius, **St Bonaventure**).

Obedience apart, a religious can do nothing more useful and more advantageous whether for himself or for the good of religion in general than to devote himself to prayer (Gerson).

The learned Suarez would have preferred to lose all his learning than to sacrifice one of the seven hours he was accustomed to consecrate every day to meditation. Daniel preferred to be thrown into the lions' den than to cease his exercises of piety (Bellecius).

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PART 3 COMMENTARY

Even a rapid reading of the documents above brings the conviction that they have a common origin but that they have been adapted. To make this impression precise we will draw up a comparative table using as basis instruction E4 which is the longest. We have chosen to follow this idea by idea and indicate the parallels in instructions 307 and 308 by marking by a number the order in which this idea appears. For example, idea No. 4 in E4 which quotes Psalm 33 is found again in 5th position in instruction 307 and in the 11th in 308. We hope thus to show if the plans of the three instructions blend. The lines in grey* indicate passages in E4 which have no parallels in the other two texts and which have then probably been added.

I. COMPARISON OF PLANS

E 4 p.299 : Necessity of Prayer	307	308
1. To enlighten our spirit		
1/ One cannot revive God without knowing him, oneself, one's obligations		
2/ Without meditation no light (Hosea)		

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO "AVIS, LECONS, SENTENCES"

3/ One cannot see the way (St Augustine)	5	
4/ Come close to God (Ps.33.6)	6	11
5/ Let your loins be girt (Luke 12.35)	7	
6/ These lamps are meditation (Liguori)	8	12
	S. Buenaventura	S. Buenaventura
7/ Your word is the lamp for my steps (Ps.118, 105)	9	
8/ What the sun does for the world, prayer does for the soul : it enlightens, warms...	13	34
9/ Without prayer : darkness, cold (Chrysostom)	14	35
10/ For that reason the Philistines blinded Samson		27
11/ The same way the devil prevents the soul from praying	3	19
12/ To deserve the name of religious one must pray	1	5
13/ No light without meditation (St Thomas)		
2. To fortify our heart and make our will docile		
14/ Our heart is hard by nature (Eccl. 3, 27)	22	
15/ but what is a hard heart? (St Bernard)		
16/ Prayer produces a tender heart (Barthelemy of the martyrs)	22	
17/ Prayer is for the soul what iron is for the fire (Liguori), (3 Kings 3, 9) (St Paul)	21	
18/ To be fertile, a field needs rain		
19/ Without prayer the heart is dry (David)		
20/ Without prayer no strength to resist temptation nor to practise virtue (Liguori)	20	32
21/ The martyrs resisted tyrants through prayer (Liguori)		
22/ Prayer is the gate of grace (St Teresa)		18
23/ Example of St Theodotus, martyr		
24/ Apostates fell for lack of prayer (St Cyprian)		
25/ In Japan an old man apostatised at the last moment (Gaume)		
3. To make us avoid sin		
26/ Without sin it is impossible to live well (Chrysostom)		25
27/ Without prayer one becomes beast or devil (Diocles)	24	
28/ A religious without prayer is without reason (Philip Neri)	7	7
29/ He is incapable of the offices of civil life		
30/ He has to be locked away		
31/ He is incapable of the offices of the spiritual life	7	7
32/ He is a man of no value for virtue		
33/ Without prayer : a dead soul (St Bonaventure)	4	8
34/ Without prayer the religious marches to his doom : a soldier who throws away his weapons (Rancé)		

35/ He who does not meditate cannot live free from mortal sin (Bellarmine)	25	
36/ Without a miracle he cannot live as a Christian (Gerson)	28	
37/ The religious who abandons prayer is dead (Chrysostom)	38	
38/ He is only the corpse of a religious (Liguori)	4	8
39/ He throws himself into hell (St Teresa)	23	
40/ Prayer is like the wings of a bird, the sap of plants, the wall of a town...		
41/ A soul is dead when it no longer prays (Chrysostom)	37	
42/ Prayer is for the religious as water for fish (Chrysostom)		
43/ Prayer and sin cannot dwell together (Liguori)	26	
44/ He who perseveres in prayer sooner or later attains salvation (St Teresa)	27	
45/ Prayer is the channel of grace. The devil tries to destroy it (Rodriguez)		18, 19
46/ Abandonment of prayer is the most harmful temptation of the devil (St Teresa)		
47/ Same idea (St Peter Chrysologos)		
48/ Peter's betrayal commented on by St Jerome		
4. To correct our faults		
49/ On prayer depends our whole conduct of life (Rodriguez)		25
50/ A lax religious does not pray (Lig.)	1	5
51/ The lax religious does not pray (Lig.)		
52/ Without prayer one cannot see one's faults and correct them (St Bernard)	11	29
52/ Meditation enlightens, purifies, corrects, puts the soul in order (St Bernard)	21, 22, 33, 37, 38	13, 34
53/ Same idea in St Laurence Justinian		
54/ Meditation makes us know ourselves, correct our faults, march towards salvation, avoid the snares of the devil		
55/ Meditation and prayer are equally necessary (St Bernard)		
56/ Without prayer one ceases to be reasonable : ignorance of spirit, feebleness of will (St Bonaventure)	15	36
57/ Without prayer life is entirely without virtue		
58/ Prayer ruins the devil's empire (Ignatius)		
59/ Prayer the sovereign remedy for the maladies of the soul (St Basil) (Theodoret)	17	24
60/ Prayer is like the tower of David		

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO "AVIS, LECONS, SENTENCES"

61/ An antidote against sin's poison (Bellecus)		
62/ What the hand is for the body	19	
63/ Advice of a desert Father for a young monk pray always (Life of the Fathers)		
5. To practise the virtues and live as a true religious		
64/ Man frees himself from ignorance and concupiscence by prayer (St Augustine)		
65/ One who does not pray cannot be called religious (Cajetan)	1	5
66/ Prayer is the cause of sanctity (Chrysostom)		
67/ No victory over vice without prayer (Innocent 1 st)		
68/ No grace without prayer and mortification (St Bonaventure)		
69/ Without prayer no strength for virtue and the fight against sin (Liguori)	20	32
70/ No-one can be a good religious without prayer (Liguori)		
71/ The prayerful soul is like a tree planted beside running waters (Ps.1, 3)	33	17
72/ Prayer is the mother and source of the virtues (John Climacus)	16	37
73/ All the saints became saints by praying	42	39
74/ Story about St Peter of Alcantara		
75/ About St Aloysius Gonzaga		
76/ Prayer banishes sadness, arouses fervour, reanimates virtue... (St Laurence Justinian)		
77/ When God enters the soul he gives it all the virtues (Chrysostom)		
78/ To become solidly virtuous one must pray regularly and often (John of Avila, Fr Du Pont)		
79/ Without prayer no high degree of virtue (Aloysius Gonzaga)	41	
80/ When water is lacking everything dries up; without prayer the religious becomes bad	34	15
6. To persevere in our vocation and aim		
81/ Prayer assures vocation. Without it no perseverance (Bishop de la Palafosse)		
82/ Perseverance, success in offices... : effects of prayer (St V. de Paul)		
83/ Those who lose their vocation have given up prayer (V. de Paul, Bellecus)		
84/ Laxity in prayer is the end of religious orders (St Bonaventure)		

85/ A conscientious religious is happy in his state (Fr Judde)		
86/ All good things came to me together with her (Solomon)		
87/ Meditation is indispensable (Bourdaluoe)		
88/ Souls are lost because they do not pray (Liguori)		
89/ If one prays salvation is certain (Liguori)		
90/ Prayer is the duty, need, resource of man (Massillon)		
91/ Prayer is the shortest way to go to God (Card. Bona, Ignatius, Bonaventure)	40	
92/ Nothing more useful than prayer (Gerson)		
93/ Suarez preferred prayer to his learning. He prayed seven hours a day. Daniel preferred the lions' den.	43	

It seems to us that in this comparison there is a strong resemblance between the plan of E4 and that of 307. Thus, the first five parts of E4 seem close to 307. If we allow E4/4 to be placed at E4/2 we are quite close to the order of ideas of 307. It seems, therefore, that E4, obviously later than 307, shows us the original plan of the instruction slightly adapted.

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO "AVIS, LECONS, SENTENCES"

E4	307
1/ To enlighten our spirit	
Ideas No 1-13	Ideas No. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 3, 1
2/ To fortify our heart and make our will docile	
Ideas No. 14-25	Ideas No. 22, 21, 20
3/ To make us avoid sin	
Ideas No. 26-48	Ideas No. 24, 7, 7, 4, 25, 28, 38, 4, 23, 37, 26, 27
4/ To correct our faults	
Ideas No. 49-63	Ideas No. 1, 11, 21, 22, 33, 37, 38, 15, 17, 19
5/ To practise the virtues and live as a true religious	
Ideas No. 64-80	Ideas No. 1, 20, 33, 16, 42, 41, 34

2. PARAGRAPHS 3, 4, 5 OF E4 APPEAR EACH TIME TO TAKE UP AGAIN THE BEGINNING OF THE INSTRUCTION

We have also seen that certain ideas of 307 appear in several places in the plan of E4. These repetitions suggest to us that Br Jean-Baptiste has again adopted several times the plan of the instruction in paragraphs 3, 4, 5. The table below gives us an idea of what happens when the three successive paragraphs are placed in parallel. One will also observe how close the three titles are to one another, practically interchangeable.

E4/3	E4/4	E4/5
3. To make us avoid sin	4. To correct our faults	5. To practise virtue and live as true religious
26/ Without prayer impossible to live well (Chrysostom)	49/ On prayer depends the whole conduct of life (Rodriguez)	64/ Man frees himself from ignorance and concupiscence by prayer (St Augustin)
27/ Without prayer one becomes beast or devil (Diocles)	50/ A lax religious does not pray (Liguori)	65/ One who does not pray cannot be called religious (Cajetan)
28/ A religious without prayer is without reason (Philip Neri)	51/ Without prayer one cannot see one's faults and correct them (St Bernard)	66/ Prayer is the cause of sanctity (Chrys.)
29/ He is incapable of the offices of civil life	52/ Meditation enlightens, purifies, corrects, sets the soul in order (St Bernard)	67/ No victory over vice without prayer (Innocent 1)
30/ He must be locked away	53/ Same idea of St Laurence Justinian	68/ No grace without prayer and mortification (St Bonaventure)
31/ Incapable of the offices of the spiritual life	54/ Meditation makes us know ourselves, correct our faults, march towards salvation, avoid the snares of the devil	69/ Without prayer no strength for virtue and the fight against sin (Liguori)
32/ 'He is a man of no value for virtue'	55/ Meditation and prayer are equally necessary (St Bernard)	70/ No-one can be a good religious without prayer (Liguori)
33/ Without prayer dead soul (St Bonaventure)	56/ Without prayer one ceases to be reasonable : ignorance of spirit, feebleness of will (St Bonaventure)	71/ The prayerful soul is like a tree planted near running water (Ps. 1, 3)
34/ Without prayer the religious marches to his doom, a soldier who throws away his weapons (Rancé)	57/ 'Without prayer life is entirely devoid of virtue.'	72/ Prayer is the mother and source of virtues (John Climacus)
35/ One who does not meditate cannot live free from mortal sin. (Bellarmine)	58/ Prayer ruins the empire of the devil (Ignatius)	73/ All the saints became saints by prayer.
36/ Without a miracle he cannot live as a Christian (Gerson)	59/ Prayer the sovereign remedy for the maladies of the soul (St Basil) (Theodoret)	74/ Story of St Peter of Alcantara
37/ The religious who abandons prayer is dead (Chrysostom)	60/ Prayer is like the tower of David	75/ Of St Aloysius Gonzaga
38/ He is only the corpse of a religious (Liguori)	61/ An antidote against sin's poison (Bellecuis)	76/ Sin drives away sadness, arouses fervour, reanimates virtue... (St Laurence)
39/ He throws himself into hell (St Teresa)	62/ What the hand is to the body	77/ When God enters the soul he gives it all the virtues (Chrysostom)

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO "AVIS, LECONS, SENTENCES"

40/ Prayer is like the wings of a bird, the sap of plants, the city wall, the breathing of animals.	63/ Advice of a desert Father to a young monk: pray always (Life of the Father)	78/ To become solidly virtuous regular and long prayer is necessary (John of Avila, Fr Du Pont)
41/ A soul is dead when it no longer prays (Chrysostom)		79/ Without prayer no high degree of virtue (Aloysius Gonzaga)
42/ Prayer is for the religious as water for fish (Chrysostom)		80/ When water is lacking, everything dries up; without prayer the religious becomes bad
43/ Prayer and sin cannot dwell together (Liguori)		
44/ He who perseveres in prayer sooner or later attains salvation (St Teresa)		
45/ Prayer is the channel of grace. The devil tries to wreck it (Rodriguez)		
46/ Abandoning prayer is the most harmful temptation of the devil (St Teresa)		
47/ Same idea (St Peter Chrysologos)		
48/ Peter's betrayal commented on by St Jerome		

Each paragraph is based on the contrast between the pious religious and the religious who does not pray (the latter in grey on the table). But one is also struck by the repetition of ideas affirming that it is impossible without prayer to be a good religious and live well. One of them is particularly characteristic : **‘Without prayer life is entirely devoid of virtue’** (E4/4 No. 57) and E4/3 No. 32. **‘He is a man of no value for virtue.’** However, each paragraph focuses on a particular idea : E4/3 which concentrates on avoiding sin is almost entirely negative, multiplying quotations showing the impossibility of being saved without prayer. E4/4 is more optimistic : it takes up the image of prayer as remedy, antidote. It suggests the image of the mirror which lets faults be known, and takes up that of the hand looking after the body. Finally, E4/5 insists on the perfection and apostolic fruitfulness of one who perseveres in prayer after the example of the saints. It picks up the comparison of the tree planted beside the waters and that of the fountain. Was this procedure adopted to make each paragraph capable of constituting an independent instruction? It is diffi-

cult to say. Nevertheless, it is clear that Br Jean-Baptiste has made fresh use, in a reasonably faithful way and according to the plan and terms, of what is contained in instruction 307 which, we should recall, is not among his papers but in those of Br François. We arrive then at the following conclusion: Br Jean-Baptiste's instruction appears more faithful to the plan of the original instruction than Br François', but the latter contributes fewer quotations and new ideas.

2. RECOVER THE ORIGINAL PLAN ?

We are struck by the profound unity of these three instructions which are all based on the contrast between darkness and light, between life and death, between heat and cold. Each part offers then a twofold vision: the religious who does not pray, and the one who perseveres in prayer. The plan of instruction 307, largely taken up again in E4 and partially in 308, seems to us the closest to the original instruction which seems to have been close to the following reconstruction:

- 1/ Without prayer there is no knowledge of God and so none of salvation (quotations from Hosea, Jeremiah, the saints) (E4)
 - 2/ Also the religious without prayer is reduced to the state of a beast, of a blindman, of a corpse (quotations from the saints) (E4) With prayer he is enlightened, invigorated (comparisons of the lamp, the mirror, the sun, the stomach) (quotations from Scripture)
 - 3/ Prayer is the remedy for all our ills:
 - remedy for laxity (comparison of the hand caring for the body)
 - remedy for hardness of heart (comparison of the iron and the fire)
 - victory over temptations (quotations of the saints)
 - 4/ Prayer is the root and mother of virtues⁶⁸ The guarantee of rapid progress in perfection
 - It provides apostolic fruitfulness (comparison of the tree planted besides the waters, of the fountain irrigating everything)
 - It is the way the saints have acquired sanctity (quotations and examples of the saints)
- Practical conclusion: it is necessary to persevere in prayer for this is the condition for perseverance in vocation and apostolic fruitfulness (E4 and 308)

⁶⁸ Instruction 307 places this idea before the topic of intercessory prayer, but it is not developed at all in this section. On the contrary, instruction E4 is found at the conclusion, which concerns the example of the Saints. We think that this is more in keeping with a logical development of the theme.

The contribution of Brothers Jean-Baptiste and François appears to have been especially the provision of an introduction and of numerous quotations and complementary comparisons.

4TH PART : THE TEXT 'MENTAL PRAYER' IS IT THE EARLIEST?

We have seen that the three texts are all faithful to the same twofold development and offer numerous passages showing similarity. However, it is 307 which appears the most restrained, and this invites us to think it is the one which has been least modified. Let us verify this.

// 'MENTAL PRAYER': THE MOST ANCIENT TEXT?

The first important difference between the text of Notebook 307 and the two others⁶⁹ is in the number of quotations from the Bible and the saints.

Quotations	307 p. 261	E4 p. 299	308 p. 826
From the saints and spiritual writers	45	76	45
From the Bible	4 (3 from psalms)	11 (3 from psalms)	11 (3 from psalms)
Total	49	87	58

Text 307 then is not so rich in references, in Biblical references especially. In addition, some of the latter are vague. For example, in paragraph 5 we are quoted 'a great saint' and in paragraph 6 'a great servant of God'. Often enough there is a quotation without any mention of the author. For example, we are told that prayer is for the soul what iron is for the fire, without citing Saint Liguori, while E4 (3 p.505), is attributed to Gerson.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ We leave aside for the moment the text of E4p.272-277 which has few links with 307.
⁷⁰ There is very likely a mistake in the manuscript where 'Person' is written instead of Gerson.

Certain quotations from the psalms are erroneous in 307 and correct in E4. For example: 'Your word is the light for my steps, says the psalmist' (307 p.261, 1) is referred to Psalm 108. On the other hand E4 p.301 refers the same quotation to Psalm 118, 105. And in fact it can be found in the interminable psalm 119 (118) at verse 105. 'A lamp for my steps, your word, a light your word.' The citation from 307 then is faulty while that of E4 is correct.⁷¹

These few indications allow me to think that the text of notebook 307 is less controlled than the others and probably more ancient.

2/ TRACES OF A COPY OF AN EARLIER MANUSCRIPT AND LATER ADDITIONS

Another subject for reflection : text 307 has a somewhat fluid plan and its logical development has to put up with breaks which leads one to think that there is question here of transcription from the living voice. Moreover, if the text of 307 is without erasures in the original, it presents a certain number of crossings out at the end of paragraphs⁷² which show that Br Francois has copied a continuous text and that, for clarity of form, he has created paragraphs which were not in the original. Thus, in paragraph 1 he writes:

'Nor does he know the dangers to which his salvation is exposed, continues St Liguori, and so he does not dream of avoiding them.' (*There follows a crossing out where one can still divine: "St Liguori"*⁷³)

In paragraph 5 he cites 'a saint' who recommends making a prayer of abandonment and he finishes by referring to Gerson and Rodriguez. At the end of the line we see marks of a crossing out where we recognise the first words of the following paragraph: '*The learned*'.

And indeed this paragraph begins : 'The learned Seigneri would say weeping' ...

Most often, however, Br Francois has separated the ideas by dashes

⁷¹ My references are taken from the Jerusalem Bible. The error in manuscript 307 could have come from a faulty copy belonging to Br Francois.

⁷² Those crossings out are found in quite a number of instructions.

⁷³ Br Francois seems to have seen, on rereading, that he had made a repetition.

without returning to the line, probably because in rereading his text he has judged it useful to mark in the separations he had ignored in recopying.⁷⁴

Let us take an example in paragraph 1:

'Your word, Lord, says the psalmist, is the light guiding **my steps (Ps.108) - Prayer**⁷⁵ is like a mirror which shows us clearly the stains on our soul' ...

Finally, it is appropriate to observe that the end of instruction 307 obviously includes an additional passage formed from a series of examples and quotations of the saints. We see this quite well from the fact that the pen used has a finer point and produces narrower strokes. It cannot be supposed that an accidental change of pen is involved here, for numerous instructions present the same characteristic : a complement of quotations of the saints in clearer handwriting.

The following extract, using bold characters, then italic will give an idea of the contrast noticed by the reader of the original :

'St Philip Neri used to say it is very useful, at times of interior dryness and desolation, to picture oneself as a beggar in the presence of God and the saints, and to persist in asking for spiritual alms sometimes of Jesus Christ, sometimes of the Blessed Virgin, of one's guardian Angel, at other times of such and such a Saint for whom one has a special devotion, acting very much like the poor asking for material alms from those they know can give them some.'

*'Blessed Angela of Foligni (sic) says that the prayer most pleasing to God is that made as it were under constraint : that is, we pray not from liking or inclination but in struggling with ourselves over the dryness of our heart (in order to) recover our position'*⁷⁶ ...

⁷⁴ Frequently these dashes occupy a reduced space apparently reserved at the beginning for a simple full-stop.

⁷⁵ We have freely paid no respect to the normal spacing to give an idea of the way in which the layout of the manuscript is presented.

⁷⁶ This apparently incorrect sentence seems to have a word missing.

307, 5 p.266	Rodriguez, Christian Perfection, Vol. 1, 5th treatise, chapter XIX : 'On several other ways of doing mental prayer'
"During the forty years I have done my best to pray, said a saint, I have found no better way to do it well than to present myself before God, like a child or like a poor man , blind, naked, abandoned' (Gerson, Rodriguez, Chris. Perf. 1st Part, 5th treatise, Ch. XIX)	"...Gerson mentions a servant of God who was accustomed to say that, during the forty years he had given himself to praying with all possible care, he had never found a shorter or easier way to say a good prayer than to present himself before God like a child or like a man weighed down by misfortune, blind, deprived of everything and abandoned by everyone."

But the quotation from Philip Neri, which was copied in the original text, poses a problem for us for it is very similar to another written higher up and attributed to Gerson and Rodriguez. So it adds nothing to what has already been said. But the reference is an exact one.

It seems to us then that the final quotations, in instruction 307, may have been put in at two times : certain added before the notebook was edited, such as the one from Philip Neri, and the other after its editing. That would not be surprising, since the writings of Brs Francois and Jean-Baptiste abound in quotations, as if there were never enough to prove the ideas they want to illustrate. Then again, Br Francois much more so than Br Jean-Baptiste, is careful of citing his sources and one can presume he rediscovered in Rodriguez a quotation that the copied original had probably not mentioned. The fact that the mention of Gerson and Rodriguez is at the end of the paragraph and completes the line leads us to think that having the necessary space Br Francois was able to include it without overloading his text. There exist as well numerous other passages from Rodriguez which have no reference, probably because there is no place to put them.

Finally let us give some examples of a break in logic in the text. Thus, paragraph II begins: "Prayer is the root of all good, the mother of all virtues, the remedy for all our ills." We expect then that these three points would be developed in succession. Now the text leads directly into

the third : 'If we are tempted, if we are lax, if we come to slackness in the observance of our Rules [...] let us run to prayer [...] we will find there a prompt and unfailing remedy in every case'⁷⁷. We find only in part what the title sentence announces. This paragraph besides is abnormally short : eleven lines only⁷⁸ while the other sections include at least twenty two. One receives the impression then that the hearer of the instruction copied only a part of what was said or put the content in another place.

Another interruption of logic is found at the beginning of paragraph IV: 'He who prays continually will soon be an angel. A man of prayer is capable of anything. 'We have then not one, but two title sentences.

Let us finish with a sub-section of the same paragraph IV which tells us : 'The shortest way to reach perfection is the practice of prayer, says St Ignatius.' One expects the development of this idea but what follows immediately is a quotation from St Aloysius Gonzaga which takes up the same idea in a completely negative sense, confusing the reader : 'He who does not pray much will never reach a high degree of virtue.'

We will recapitulate then : the instruction on mental prayer contained in notebook 307 p.261-269 appears to us to have been recopied by Br Francois from an earlier text written without much attention to divisions or logical connections, for it was probably taken from an oral presentation. He has improved on the original in part by setting it out in paragraphs in the course of the copying at the expense of crossings out and by putting in dashes, either immediately or, more often, on reading it over. He has in addition added later and at the end quotations and examples from the saints corresponding to the subject treated. It is also likely that he has placed here and there references to some of the authors when he had the space needed, as in the following example :

'His spirit (the bad religious) is full of darkness, his will of apathy, his heart...; his soul is dead or close to dying. (Judde. Religious Retreat. IVth day. 1st consideration. Vol III)' (End of line)

⁷⁷ Let us note that this passage echoes Chap II of the 1852 Rule, article 11, which requires the brothers be given leave to spend some days in retreat in order to become renewed in piety and the spirit of prayer 'for without that a Brother will never be a good religious'.

⁷⁸ In the preliminary copy

3/ THE FORM OF TEXT 308 IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT

In this we find fewer and longer paragraphs divided by numerous dashes, for the most part thicker and longer than in manuscript 307. Because they contrast with a fine handwriting it is almost certain they were added later. On the other hand, it does not appear there have been erasures.⁷⁹ The end of the instruction is not in a different handwriting. Still one passage seems to be an addition, for a conclusion is sketched, asking listeners to know how sometimes to take respite in their work so as to remain constant in things spiritual. It is followed by a series of quotations and examples from St Francis de Sales, Francis Borgia, Louis of Grenada, Ignatius Loyola and finally Fr Judde, which could well have been pieces inserted in the original instruction but already integrated in a later text. The addition is the more probable in that, just before, the text makes allusion to the spirit of prayer of Francis Borgia and St Francois of Sales. These indications lead us to think it is later than the one in notebook 307. The succession of ideas, especially, appears much more coherent than in 307. There is question there, it seems, of an edited instruction and not taking notes during one.

In addition, the last lines of 307 contain a quotation from St Augustine which has obviously been added much later. Now this same quotation is situated in the body of instruction 308, which suggests the elaboration was made in three stages : 1st copy of text 307; 2nd the quotations added at the end of this text; 3rd this text taken up in a new instruction which integrates the two successive contributions.

This analysis leads to the marked impression, but not certainty, that text 307 is more primitive and comes from an instruction taken down by a listener, while 308 is a new elaboration.

4/ AN INSTRUCTION SHORTER BUT MORE COMPREHENSIVE

A line count of each section of instructions 307, 308 and E4 gives us the following results:

⁷⁹ Having photocopies and not the original at our disposal, we hesitate to be dogmatic.

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO "AVIS, LECONS, SENTENCES"

307	308	E4
1/25 lines	1/30 lines	1/69 lines
2/11	2/53	2/59
3/23	3/53	3/55
4/30		4/53
5/22		5/46
6/40		6/47
Additions : 14 ⁸⁰⁾	Additions : 20	
Total: 165	156	339

Instructions 307 and 308 are therefore of similar length, while E4 is much longer.⁸¹ But it is also necessary to take into consideration the content: paragraphs V and VI of 307, which treat of the affections and distractions in prayer, are not at all taken into account by the other instructions. So text 307 is much more complete with regard to substance even if, in form, it is short. This confirms us in the notion that it is a question of notes related more to a summary of an oral instruction than to an edited text.

5/ 307 AN INSTRUCTION MORE SPIRITUAL

If instructions E4 and 308 are in content more theoretical on the necessity of prayer and therefore aim at persuading, instruction 307 goes beyond in calling to mind the practice of prayer and the difficulties associated with it. Paragraph V, by affirming that 'the usefulness of mental prayer consists less in the meditation than in the feelings, prayers, resolutions,' introduces a distinction between meditation properly so-called and prayer itself. The examples chosen here are strongly coherent with the title. Thus 'a saint' is invited to present himself before God 'as a child or poor man blind, naked, abandoned.'⁸² The learned Seigneri regretted having spent so much of his prayer time in reflections and considerations.

Paragraph VI which treats of distractions and dryness in prayer recalls classical spiritual doctrine :

⁸⁰ These are the quotations of the saints at the end of the text.

⁸¹ But the manuscripts and copies of instructions of Br Jean-Baptiste have been copied in larger characters.

⁸² This vague quotation is followed by the reference to Gerson and Rodriguez which obviously seems an addition for if these authors had been referred to in the course of the instruction the listener would not have said 'a saint'. Br Francois seems therefore to have later found similar ideas in Gerson and Rodriguez.

`Souls which are not solidly established in piety find the going easy and are happy when God gives them consolation during prayer. But if it happens that he deprives them of these, they are unhappy, lose their assurance, like little children who thank their mother when she gives them sweets and cry when she takes them away, because they are children who do not know that sweets taken in too great quantity are harmful to them and cause worms. Sensible consolations usually engender the worm of complacency which gives birth to pride, the cause of ruin in the soul.

God gives us spiritual consolations when we have entered on the way of piety in order to attract us to him. But then he deprives us of them because if we stop testing them they would be harmful to us'...

In the instructions on prayer, there is no equivalent for these paragraphs, more spiritual than ascetic. On the other hand, manuscript 308 p.899-922 includes a long instruction, remarkably structured and without many quotations, on 'Dryness, afflictions, interior desolation' which treats exactly of the same theme as paragraph VI, but without any obvious link. Likewise, the instructions on 'The normal causes of discouragement' (308 p.861) uses the image of the relationship between mother and child to show how God proceeds with the soul by withdrawing consolations from it, but we cannot establish a certain connection with our instructions on prayer either.

This fact reinforces us in the notion that the collection of instructions of Br Francois probably comprise three separate layers : reports of the Founder's instructions (this could be the case with instruction 307); instructions strongly inspired by the Founder (instruction 308); instructions independent of his teaching. We are also inclined to think that this instruction 307 is in fact a series of two or three instructions, which a Brother has copied as a continuity and has given as such to Br Francois.

5TH PART THE SAME INSTRUCTION IN E4 P.299 AND A.L.S. (CHAPTER XIII)

In an attempt to continue our investigation, we are going to have to return now to E4 p.299-316 on the 'Necessity of prayer and meditation' attributed to Br Jean-Baptiste, which we have discovered was a rearrangement of 307 : 'Mental prayer'. Now we find it rewritten almos

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FR. CHAMPAGNAT TO "AVIS, LECONS, SENTENCES"

word for word in chapter XIII of 'Avis, Lecons, Sentences'.

I/ THE PLANS AND TITLES ARE TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES IDENTICAL

A.L.S. Chapter XIII	E4 p. 299
Necessity of prayer and meditation	Necessity of prayer and meditation
Quotation of Fr Champagnat taken from the Life p.316 on the necessity of meditation. The following instruction will be an explanation.	Meditation, prayer, is necessary :
1/ To enlighten our spirit	1/ To enlighten our spirit
2/ To fortify our heart	2/ To fortify our heart and make our will docile
3/ To avoid sin and preserve the life of grace	3/ To avoid sin and preserve the life of grace
4/ To correct our faults	4/ To correct our faults
5/ To practise virtue to an excellent degree and live as a good and fervent religious	5/ To practise the virtues and live as a true religious
6/ To persevere in our vocation and to accomplish the goal	6/ To persevere in our vocation and in our aim

2/ AN EXAMPLE OF THE CLOSE PROXIMITY OF THE TEXTS

We chose a long extract from the first part of the two instructions in which we will show the differences of detail against a base of similarity. **What is proper to A.L.S. will be in bold letters ; what is contained only in manuscript E4 will be in italics.** What is identical will be in 'normal' print.⁸³ Variations are in brackets.

⁸³ Garamond

Meditation, prayer is necessary :

1st to enlighten our spirit

We can only save ourselves by serving God. We can serve him⁸⁴ only by loving him. We cannot love him with our whole heart if we do not esteem him greatly, and we will never have a high estimation if we do not know his perfections sufficiently. Now how *can we* acquire this knowledge except by *deep* meditation.⁸⁵ *That is why God himself tells us: See and understand properly that I am your God.* If God is so badly served; let us better say, if we ourselves serve him so badly, it is because we do not know him. Father, said J.C., the world has not known you (John 17, 25); *that is why it has not loved you.* The source of all sin and all disorder in the world, says *the prophet* Hosea, is that truth, *that*⁸⁶ the knowledge of God has departed from the earth.

It is not enough to know God to be saved.⁸⁷ It is also necessary to know oneself *well*. So, **convinced of this truth**, St Augustine **continually**⁸⁸ offered this prayer: My God, let me know you and let me know myself. Let me know myself to distrust myself, **to** (and) hate myself, and let me know you to esteem you and to love you. In fact, to work effectively at our salvation (**perfection**) it is necessary to know :

1st The depth (**depths**) of corruption which is in us in order to humble ourselves and distrust ourselves;

2nd The violent inclination we have towards evil, to repress it; our lack of power to do any good in order never to count [300] on ourselves and to place all our trust in God;

3rd Our dominant passion, so as to fight it, and all our faults, so as to correct them;

4th Our sins, to weep for them and to wash them away by our tears. Now, *we can* acquire⁸⁹ this knowledge of ourselves *only by* daily reflection and meditation.

*To achieve one's salvation it is necessary as well to know perfectly one's obligations and duties, that is, the law of God, his commandments.*⁹⁰ Now

⁸⁴ variant in S.L.S. : 'serve God'

⁸⁵ Var. A.L.S. : 'daily meditation'

⁸⁶ Var. A.L.S. : 'and'

⁸⁷ Var. A.L.S. : 'to obtain salvation it is not enough to know God well'

⁸⁸ Var. A.L.S. : 'daily'

it is only by studying, **(and)**, *by* meditating frequently and attentively on *this holy (the)* law that we can **(would be able to)** know *it (them)* and keep *it (them)*. **From this comes the precept God himself has given us.** You will place my commandments in your heart, you will meditate on them continually **(every day)** in your house, in the field **(the fields)**; **you will meditate on them** in the morning, in the evening; *you will meditate on them* for fear **(for fearfulness)** of forgetting them; you will fasten them on your arm, *you will have them before your eyes*,⁹¹ you will inscribe them at the entrance to your house, on the threshold of your door; *finally you will never lose sight of them* (Deut. Chap 6)

It does not suffice *to know (to be instructed in)* the law of God. It is also necessary to love it **and observe it**. Now **(but)** to love it and observe it it is necessary to know the beauty, equitableness, advantages, rewards associated with its practice, and the threats, hardships, punishments inflicted on those who break it. That is why God, after giving his law to the Israelites, enumerated for them on the one hand all the blessings and all the rewards which would be granted to those who kept it; and on the other, put **(had put)** before **(their)** eyes all the misfortunes, all the punishments *God (he)* would heap on those who broke it. *If one asked*⁹² the Christians who are in hell *why they are there*,⁹³ they would all reply *that it was for having forgotten the law of God and for not having thought of*⁹⁴ the rewards attached [301] to its observance and the punishments attached to **(attracted by)** its transgression.

It is only a question then of corrections of detail which aim at giving the text of A.L.S. a better literary style, and this shows as well that the latter is later than the manuscript.

3/ DISPLACEMENT OF TEXTS

It frequently happens that certain passages almost identical are displaced.

⁸⁹ Var.: "it is quite clear that to acquire this knowledge of ourselves we absolutely need daily reflection and meditation"

⁹⁰ Var.: "Moreover it is necessary in order to obtain salvation to be familiar with our duties of state, our Christian duties and our Religious duties."

⁹¹ Var.: "and so as to have them always under your eyes and never lose sight of them"

⁹² Var.: "If it were given us to be able to ask"...

⁹³ Var.: "the cause of their damnation"

⁹⁴ Var.: "that it was none other than forgetfulness of God, of his holy law, of the rewards..."

The example below provides an illustration. We are using the same code while underlining the displaced passages.

The earth is filled with crimes and desolation because no-one reflects in his heart (Hosea). Without meditation there is no light, that is to say, no knowledge of God, of ourselves, of our duties and our destinies and consequently no **security for** salvation. The one, **says Saint Augustine**, who keeps his eyes closed cannot see the road which leads to his homeland **and will never arrive there** (St Augustine).

The first thing the Philistines did to Samson when they captured him, was to put out his eyes. That is like what the devil does to a soul; when he has mastered it he blinds it and prevents it from meditating and praying.⁹⁵

The Holy Spirit, who desires the salvation of souls, cries to them ceaselessly : Come close to God; meditate on his **holy** law and you will be enlightened (Ps 36, 6). *Let your loins be girt and carry burning lamps in your hands (Luke 12, 35); these lamps are meditation (Liguori).* *Your word is a lamp which guides my steps (Ps. 118, 105).* What the sun does exteriorly in the world, meditation does interiorly in the soul. The sun gives light, warmth, joy, vitality. Prayer sheds torrents of light on the understanding, inflames **and strengthens our will**, spreads joy and contentment in our hearts, vivifies **and nourishes** our souls by the graces it obtains for us. Take away the sun from the earth, you will have nothing but darkness, cold, sadness, death. Take away meditation from a man, his spirit will be filled with darkness **and** ignorance, his will, **with weakness and** apathy, his heart with hardness, bitterness and **anguish**; his soul will perish **from starvation says** (St Chrysostom). *The first thing the Philistines did to Samson when they captured him was to put out his eyes. Likewise, that is the first thing the devil does to a soul when he has mastered it, that is to say, he prevents it from meditating, from praying.*

So we note that the passage about Samson is situated, in E4, a little lower down than in A.L.S. We could easily multiply similar examples.

⁹⁵ This passage is located lower down in the text of E4

4/ DIFFERENCES SOMETIMES MORE IMPORTANT

The 3rd part of the instruction in which there is question of avoiding sin and preserving grace seems to have been extensively re-arranged to feature in the A.L.S. An attentive reading is necessary to perceive that the foundation is almost identical.

E4	A.L.S.
<p>3 /To make us avoid sin and preserve the life of grace.</p> <p>Without meditation and without prayer it is absolutely impossible to live well; so also it is impossible for someone who prays conscientiously to fall into sin (St John Chrysostom).</p> <p>[305]He who abandons prayer soon becomes beast or devil (Abbot Diocles). He becomes both one and the other; he becomes beast by his ignorance, devil by his malice, his ill-will and his hard-heartedness.</p> <p>A religious without prayer is a religious without reason (St Philip Neri). A man without reason is not capable of any office in civil life; he cannot even control himself; he must be shut away. A religious without prayer is absolutely incapable of the offices of spiritual life; he understands nothing; he is a man worth nothing as far as virtue is concerned.</p> <p>The religious who does not pray is not only miserable and</p>	<p>3/To avoid sin and preserve the life of grace.</p> <p>Prayer is as necessary to our soul in order to preserve the life of Grace as food is indispensable to our body to preserve health and natural life. A man who would refuse all nourishment, would infallibly die; in the same way, he who abandons prayer and meditation, which are the food of the soul, will lose the life of grace and end by falling into mortal sin, the death of the soul. The saints and Fathers of the spiritual life are unanimous in affirming this truth. Saint Chrysostom is not afraid to say repeatedly: I consider the Religious who abandons prayer not only sick but even dead. For in the same way we judge that a body is dead when it no longer breathes; so we can hold for certain that a soul is dead when it no longer prays.</p> <p>Saint Bonaventure attests that the Religious who abandons prayer is not only miserable and useless, but more, that he brings</p>

useless; but he brings before God as well a dead soul in a living body (St Bonaventure).

The religious who neglects meditation, neglects his salvation and marches to his ruin; he is like a soldier who throws away his weapons in the heat of the battle, a shipwrecked man who, instead of taking hold of the rope held out to him, lets himself be carried away by the current; a sick man who refuses and rejects the only remedy that can cure him, a starving man who refuses to take food; so his loss is assured (M. de Rance).

It is morally impossible for one who does not meditate to live free from mortal sin (Bellarmine). He who does not meditate can live as a Christian only by a miracle (Person). The religious who abandons prayer I consider not only sick but even dead (St. J. Chrysostom). The religious who does not meditate is no more than the corpse of a religious (Liguori).

The religious who abandons mental prayer has no need of the devil to carry him to hell, for [307] he throws himself in (St. Theresa). Prayer is to the soul what wings are to a bird, walls to a town, sap to plants, breathing to animals. We judge that a body is dead when

before God a dead soul in a living body.

In Saint Liguori's opinion, the Religious who does not meditate on the eternal truths and who abandons prayer, is no more than the corpse of a Religious.

According to Saint Teresa, the Religious who abandons mental prayer has no need of the devil to lead him to hell, for he heads in that direction and throws himself in of his own accord.

The holy Fr de Rance, reformer of the Trappists, affirms that a Religious who neglects meditation neglects his salvation and marches to his ruin. Such a man, he adds, is like a soldier who throws away his weapons in the heat of the battle, a shipwrecked man who, instead of taking hold of the rope held out to him, lets himself be carried away by the current; a sick man who refuses the only remedy that can cure him; a starving man who refuses to take food. These unfortunates are certainly lost. It is the same with one who does not pray.

It is morally impossible, says Bellarmine, for one who does not meditate to live free from mortal sin. He who does not meditate cannot live as a Christian without a miracle, adds Person⁹⁶ (sic).

Abbot Diocles regarded medita-

<p>it no longer breathes; and we should believe and hold for certain that a soul is dead when it no longer prays (St Chrysostom).</p>	<p>tion as so necessary to a religious that he used to say that one who abandons prayer soon becomes either brute or devil, or rather that he becomes both; he becomes a brute by his ignorance, a devil by his malice, wickedness and hard-heartedness.</p> <p>Almost the whole text of A.L.S. (bold print) can be found therefore in E4 but much more formally structured.</p>
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5/ A SIGNIFICANT COMPLEMENT TO E4

In studying the notebooks of Br Francois we have been accustomed to noting that at the end of the instructions he multiplies quotations relating to the subject which are the fruit of later reading. Br Jean-Baptiste appears to have followed the same procedure with E4 which contains in its last lines the following quotations he has not kept in A.L.S. but which feature in other instructions, notably in instruction 307.

‘Mental prayer, prayer is the easiest and shortest way to go to God (Cardinal Bonas, St Ignatius, St Bonaventure).

Obedience apart, a religious can, then, do nothing more useful or of more advantage to himself or to religion in general than to give himself to prayer (Gerson).

The learned Suarez would have preferred to lose all his learning than to sacrifice one of the seven hours he was accustomed to consecrate every day to meditation. Daniel preferred to be thrown into the lions’ den than to give up his exercises of piety (Bellecius).’

We see, therefore, how Br Jean-Baptiste has proceeded. He has drawn on an old source of instructions and particularly on a copy of instruction

⁹⁶ We should probably read : Gerson

307 to compose an instruction which his manuscript E4 has preserved for us. Then he has improved his text to compose Chapter XIII of A.L.S.

6/ TWO DIFFERENT CONTRIBUTIONS

But there are two important passages which do not obviously come from the instruction of meditation. First of all there is the introduction to chapter XIII of A.L.S. taken from the Life p.316 (2nd part, ch.4) with some modifications.⁹⁷ The variants are in bold print.

Life p. 316	A.L.S. ch. XIII
‘Meditation, prayer, actual grace, habitual grace, perseverance in vocation and eternal salvation are six things linked together and mutually dependent. Without meditation there is no prayer ; without prayer there is no actual grace; without actual grace it is impossible to resist temptations, to preserve habitual grace and therefore even vocation : for mortal sin, in giving the deathblow to the soul, kills vocation at the same time, and brings the great affair of salvation down to ruin at its very foundations.’	‘Meditation, prayer, actual grace, habitual grace, perseverance in charity and in vocation, and eternal salvation are six things linked together and mutually dependent, said Father Champagnat. In the ordinary order , without praying or prayer there is no actual grace, without abundant actual grace it is impossible to resist temptations, to preserve habitual grace and therefore even vocation : for mortal sin, in giving the deathblow to the soul, kills vocation at the same time and brings the great affair of salvation down to ruin at its very foundations.

At the end of chapter XIII another passage comes from an instruction in manuscript 307 p.137-158 entitled : “Vocation”.

This last comparison is interesting, for Br Jean-Baptiste uses a text contained in the notebooks of Br Francois. We can certainly suppose that the latter has communicated to his assistant the text of one of his instructions. But it is much more likely that this passage comes from an instruction of Fr Champagnat which Br Jean-Baptiste was familiar with from another

⁹⁷ We see that Br Jean-Baptiste is not too concerned about respect for the original text or for the exact words of the Founder.

A.L.S, ch.XIII, 6 th part	Notebook 307 p.137-8
<p>No-one keeps a thing he despises or takes no account of. To preserve one's vocation, therefore, it is necessary to appreciate it, to esteem it as a thing of great value. For that, we must meditate frequently on its excellence, the advantages, graces it is the source of, the dangers from which it preserves us, the consoling and virtuous life it gains for us, the shame and miseries it delivers us from. A religious does not lose his vocation all of a sudden. It is step by step and by degrees that he reaches infidelity, apostasy. It is first of all by saying his prayers badly, by shortening them, then by abandoning them altogether. The beginnings of this sad eclipse, in which God is entirely hidden from us, are like those of eclipses of the sun : almost unnoticeable at first, it ends by leaving the soul in a dark night. To ward off such a misfortune, it is necessary to meditate on the great truths and never lose sight of the great affair of salvation.</p>	<p>Esteem one's vocation. By meditating often on its excellence and advantages. To consider, examine the graces it is the source of, the dangers it preserves us from, the consoling, holy and quiet life it gains for us, the shame and miseries it delivers us from, etc. [...]</p> <p>One does not lose one's vocation all of a sudden, but little by little. Thus, one enters into temptation; one moves forward step by step, until one unfortunately consents to it. That is why it is necessary to be very attentive, and ward off this misfortune by meditation on the great truths of religion and the advantages of the religious life so as to attach us to it and make us faithful to it.</p>

er source. This would explain the differences between the texts.

We see, then, how Br Jean-Baptiste works as author. He does not inconvenience himself to practise what we today call : 'copy pasting' of texts composed by himself or others.

7/ THE A.L.S. ALLOWS VERIFICATION OF THE DEGREE OF AUTHENTICITY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

Thanks to our critical work we think, therefore, that the instruction of E4 on prayer and meditation, taken up again in chapter XIII of A.L.S. is not directly from Fr Champagnat, even if numerous passages of his teaching are preserved there. This hypothesis is strengthened by the comments of Br Jean-Baptiste himself. Thus, in a note on page 1 of A.L.S. he says in connection with the contents of the work.

‘What is between inverted commas is his thought as far as the sense goes. The rest is from the author, but frequently his explanations are merely an analysis of the instructions of the pious Founder.’

That is exactly what we have found in chapter XIII, where the introduction taken from the Life is between inverted commas and what follows begins thus :

‘In explaining this sentence of our venerated Father, we will show that prayer [...] is necessary...’

He tells us very clearly then that this chapter is not directly from the Founder, except for the introduction, but a commentary on his thought, constructed on the ‘analysis’ of his instructions. That is what we have found with numerous extracts of the instruction on ‘mental prayer’ in notebook 307 and a passage of another instruction on vocation. We are therefore morally certain, because we have reached the same result by two different ways, that Br Jean-Baptiste has indeed followed the procedure we outlined earlier: exploiting and recomposing the teaching of the Founder in instructions, first spoken, then written.

6TH PART: THE LIFE OF FR CHAMPAGNAT AND THE RULE OF 1852

II THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE LIFE OF FR CHAMPAGNAT

If our hypothesis is sound one expects to find in the Life of Fr Champagnat echoes of the instructions we have studied, and in fact they are there. Let us begin with the shortest, the quotations from the saints. For example, chapter IV treating of Fr Champagnat’s love of prayer begins with a quotation from Francis of Assisi which we rediscover in E4. Treating of meditation (Life p.316) Br Jean-Baptiste tells us:

‘Meditation appeared to him so necessary that he did not believe a religious could persevere in his vocation if he neglected it. Here is how he expressed himself on this important point: **‘If the earth, according to the prophet’s expression, is filled with desolation and crime, because men do not meditate on God’s law, it is also because there are few men of prayer in the communities that there is so much**

abuse, so many faults, and that so little solid virtue can be found.'

This passage refers to Rodriguez quoting Jeremiah⁹⁸ **but also to E4 p.299 and 301 which tells us (p.299): 'The source of all sins and of all disorder in the world, says Hosea, is that truth, the knowledge of God, has withdrawn from the earth.'** And he reinforces it on p.301: **'the earth is full of crime and desolation because no-one reflects in his heart (Hosea). Without meditation there is no light, that is to say, no knowledge of God, of ourselves, of our duties and destinies, and therefore no salvation.'**⁹⁹

Br Avit, in the Annals of the Institute,¹⁰⁰ **places this instruction about 1835 and gives us an extract from it:**

'How can you be happy, how can you have peace when you have abandoned your exercises of piety? [...]'¹⁰¹ **If the earth, according to the prophet's expression, is full of desolation and crime, because men do not meditate on God's law, it is also because there are few men of prayer in the communities that there is so much abuse, so many faults, and that so little solid virtue can be found. If you are faithful to making your meditation, I answer for your salvation and I assure you that sooner or later you will become good religious...'**

On page 317 of the Life we find a quotation from Liguori and another from St Teresa which are found almost identical in E4 p.306 and 307 p.263:

'Mental prayer and sin cannot remain together. Those who pray fall rarely and if they fall they rise promptly (Liguori). One can take as certain that a soul which perseveres in the exercise of prayer, however many and great its falls, however vivid and frequent the temptations with which the

⁹⁸ Practice of Christian Perfection, treatise 5, Ch.8

⁹⁹ Rodriguez refers to Jeremiah XII, 11, which says: 'They have made (of Israel) a desert sad and desolate before me. The whole land has been devastated and no-one takes it to heart.' In Hosea (IV, 7) one finds: 'My people perish for lack of knowledge.' In fact, the exegesis in Rodriguez and the instruction refers more to the general tone of the books of Jeremiah and Hosea than to particular verses. That is why one can attribute this quotation to either one. Besides the two extracts complement each other, the one speaking of desolation, the other of knowledge. In simply referring to 'the prophet', Br Jean-Baptiste has perhaps seen the difficulty.

¹⁰⁰ Volume 1 p.151-2

¹⁰¹ This extract is found in the Life p.314

devil besieges it, sooner or later God will deliver it from peril and lead it to heaven (St Teresa).'¹⁰²

A little higher on the same page 317 a sentence presented as coming from Fr Champagnat seems to be a summary of instructions 307, 308 and especially E4 p.299.

‘Prayer obtains for him (the religious) abundant actual grace by means of which he resists temptation, avoids sin, maintains himself in the state of grace, preserves his vocation, practises virtue, assures his perseverance in good and operates his salvation.’¹⁰³

There would also be much to say about page 313 of the Life which gives Fr Champagnat's main ideas on piety. We content ourselves with underlining this passage:

‘Long experience has taught me that a Brother without piety is a **man fit for nothing**; nowhere does he fit in; he is an embarrassment to everyone.’

E4, 3 tells us:

‘A man without reason is incapable of taking any part in civil life; he cannot even control himself; he must be shut away. A religious without prayer is absolutely incapable of the functions of the spiritual life; he understands nothing; he is **a man of no value for virtue**.’

And, 4 goes further: ‘Without prayer, life is a series of sins and **totally devoid of virtue**.’

The Life, the echo of Fr Champagnat's instructions, is therefore not without connections to the instructions studied.

Let us finish with a last passage to be found at the beginning of chapter V of the Life on the exercise of the presence of God (p.321) which tells us that this exercise is ‘the shortest and most effective for reaching perfection’. Now, a subtitle of instruction 307 (4 p.265) tells us precisely: ‘The shortest way to reach perfection is the practice of prayer (St Ignatius).’

¹⁰² We have chosen to copy the text of E4

¹⁰³ See also E4 p.308

2/ THE INSTRUCTIONS AND THE RULE OF 1852

If one believes what the members of the chapter of 1852 tell us in the introduction to this rule:

'All (the rules) have not been written by the hand of our pious founder, but they are all his; for **we have either heard them from his lips or gathered them from his writings** and from the customs he had established among us [...] Those of you who have been fortunate to live with him and to be present at the frequent instructions he gave us, will discover again, particularly in the last two parts, the summary, of all **his teachings and frequently his own expressions.**'

Now, here is what article 2 of chapter II says speaking about 'the exercises of piety':

'They should **desire nothing more than the spirit of prayer** and the gift of praying; for *he who knows how to pray well knows how to live well*, says Saint Augustine. On this important point depends the conduct of their life: it will be well or badly regulated according to whether they perform their exercises of piety well or badly.'

We find this passage in 308 p.830 which tells us that prayer is 'an infallible remedy for all our faults' and that 'the saints tell us that on this depends the whole conduct of our life and that it is well or badly regulated according to whether we perform it (i.e. prayer) well or badly.' But this article may also be inspired by 5 of the instruction on the necessity of prayer¹⁰⁴ (E4 p.275) entitled '**The gift of piety, the spirit of prayer is the principle of all good and the infallible means of obtaining everything good from God.**' Here are the most significant passages from it and those which seem to me to have been kept in the rule:

'A religious should **desire nothing so much as to have the spirit of prayer**, for without that one cannot hope to make any progress in the service of God; and with that there is nothing one may not promise

¹⁰⁴ Of which we have spoken very little. See the first table in this article.

oneself¹⁰⁵, [...] **I might provide proof from Scripture to support what I say. I will be content,**¹⁰⁶ **and this will be a conclusive enough argument, to remind you of what we see every day, namely: [...] ‘One who knows how to pray well, knows how to live well (Saint Augustine).’**

Article 1 is also quite significant:

‘The Brothers will consider the exercises of piety as the most appropriate and efficacious means of **correcting their faults, of acquiring virtue and the perfection of their state and for doing all things well**, following this word of the Apostle: *Piety is useful for everything* (Tim. 4, 8)

We come across there a good number of the title sentences of the instructions in E4 and the A.L.S. The quotation from St Paul is used in the instruction E4 p.272 on the necessity of prayer¹⁰⁷ **and in the Life in Chap. IV p.313.**

Article 6 tells us too :

‘To acquire **purity of soul and that sound knowledge of oneself which is so necessary to correct one’s faults and to work at one’s perfection**, they will make every day ten minutes of particular examen.’

Now, the theme of knowledge of self is mainly developed in the first part of E4 p.299 and of A.L.S. chapter XIII. Correction of faults is the theme of the 4th part of the same instruction and the work for acquiring perfection appears to correspond to the 5th: ‘To practise the virtues and live as a true religious.’ As for ‘acquiring purity of soul’ that seems to be related to the 3rd: ‘To make us avoid sin and preserve the life of grace.’

Thus, articles 1, 2, 6 and 11 of a chapter of the rule are a synthesis of several instructions, especially E4 p.299 and A.L.S. chapter XIII, which seem to be the copy or more probably the adaptation of it.

In fact, without forgetting that the rule of 1852 precedes A.L.S. by sixteen

¹⁰⁵ The manuscript indicates that this quotation comes from St Francis of Assisi. See 308 p.828 which also gives this quote.

¹⁰⁶ The use of the first person shows that the instruction in question is certainly one given by a person of authority. This is the more remarkable in that the use of the first person is rare in the instructions.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Piety is useful for everything. It holds the promises of the present life and those of the future life.’ (St Paul to Timothy) ũ 6 p.277.

years, we think that the instruction E4 could have been composed by Br Jean-Baptiste before 1852 based on an early instruction of Fr Champagnat. Instruction 307 gives us a report of the latter and instruction 308 an adaptation. This instruction could have been used by Br Jean-Baptiste to compose the chapter of the rule on piety. Later he takes this instruction up again in the A.L.S.

3/ BR JEAN-BAPTISTE AS LEGISLATOR

These observations suggest that Br Jean-Baptiste was not satisfied with collecting the thought of the Founder but that he rearranged it in a new synthesis which served as the basis of the legislative and spiritual texts of the Institute. We certainly find the Founder there, but interpreted, translated, and completed. Is not this exactly what Br Louis-Marie tells us in the circular of 8 April 1872,¹⁰⁸ **Br Jean-Baptiste's funeral eulogy?**

"It is to this reflective spirit, this solid spiritual nourishment, [that] Fr Champagnat owes the fact that he survived, so to speak, for thirty two years in an Assistant who continued his work and brought it to perfection, without ever incorporating a false idea or a relaxed principle. [...] Is he not for us something of a second founder?"

Knowing the manner in which the Institute's doctrine has been composed concerning the subject of prayer, one can only subscribe to this ambiguous statement affirming at one and the same time that the disciple has been perfectly faithful to the origins and that he has nonetheless worked a refoundation. The contrary, moreover, would be surprising, for experience teaches us that every disciple must reinterpret the message received from the master in terms of his personality, his times, and his function. That is what Br Jean-Baptiste did and he did it very well. For ourselves, preoccupied with refoundation, we can see in him a model. Still, we ought to be aware that the spirituality formulated in the middle of the XIXth century, in great part by Br Jean-Baptiste, is already a reinterpretation of the Founder. That is why it seems to us so important to try to distinguish in the manuscripts remaining to us, what is properly the Founder's and what is already a recomposition. It would be a godsend, not apparently beyond our grasp, to add to the corpus of what is surely from the Founder and has already been studied, a second group of texts, of lesser value certainly but reliable enough for us to be able to reasonably consider them as expressing the primitive teaching. It would be important as well to observe in what sens-

¹⁰⁸ Circulars Vol.4, p 250

es the recompositions and reinterpretations have been operated, not only Br Jean-Baptiste's but Br François' as well. We could then conceive a more complex Marist spirituality which, on a unified base, allows for variations and evolution according to the times and the people who live them.

But this conclusion does not close our study for these documents whether they are from the Founder or from the first superiors are themselves inspired by more ancient writers, notably Rodriguez and Saint-Jure.

7TH PART THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREAT SPIRITUAL WRITERS

In attempting to go back to the Founder it is not enough to have at our disposal a general view of Marist literature. It is also necessary to think of the great spiritual writers who have marked European spirituality since the XVIth century. A rapid survey permits us to distinguish two: Rodriguez and Saint-Jure.

// RODRIGUEZ

Born at Valladolid in 1526, Rodriguez entered the Jesuits at the age of 20. For thirty years he exercised the office of master of novices for the province of Andulasia. From his experience he drew up the 'Practice of Christian Perfection' which appeared in Seville in 1615. The work was translated into French in 1624. At the end of the XVIIth century Fr Regnier Desmarais made another translation continually republished until the XIXth century. The 'Christian Perfection' will then be the great manual, ascetic rather than spiritual, of the religious orders and congregations.

Some quotations from Rodriguez in the manuscripts have suggested to us that his influence would be strong. We know as well that Fr Champagnat made use of him, as well as Br Jean-Baptiste and Br Francois.¹⁰⁹ **An examination of the 5th treatise of the first volume of the 'Practice of Christian Perfection'**¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Life p.498: 'Sometimes instead of the conference on the rule he would have readings from Rodriguez or Saint Jure from the chapters they had written treating of the rules.' A quick noting of the quotations in notebooks 301, 302, 307, 308, 312 of Br Francois has let me locate 97 quotes, which places Rodriguez in the second place of references, after the 'Life of the Eastern Desert Fathers of Fr Michel Ange Marin. The manuscript 'Apostolate of a Marist Brother' of Br Jean-Baptiste contains at least 60 quotations from Rodriguez.

¹¹⁰ We are using a recent undated edition, probably from the end of the XIXth century, translated from the Spanish by Fr Regnier-Desmarais at the end of the XVIIIth century.

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[illegible]

¹¹¹ The story includes two variants : it is not question of putting out Samson's eyes but of cutting his hair; the quotation is referred to Louis of Granada

Ch.11 : Prayer does not consist in having good thoughts but in arousing oneself to virtue and its practice. It is not the needle which sews but the thread.	p. 266			
Ch.14 : However hard the iron fire softens it. So prayer softens the heart.	p. 266 p. 263		p. 302	p. 302
Ch.15 : St Chrysostom : prayer is like a fountain in the middle of a garden... without it everything dries up. - Chrysostom : however good the soil it has to receive rain.	p. 264	p. 276	p. 311, 313	p. 829
Ch.19 : Gerson : a servant of God after 40 years experience presents himself at prayer like a child or a beggar	p.266		p. 303	
Ch.21 : Distraction comes from three causes : - from dissipation - from the devil's malice - from man's natural weakness	p.267			

entitled 'On prayer' and consisting of XXVIII chapters shows that it has obviously served the author or authors of the instructions, as the following table indicates:

2/ ONE PASSAGE ESPECIALLY UTILISED

Among all these texts from Rodriguez there is one, in chapter XV, which is often repeated in the instructions. It is the one taken from St John Chrysostom comparing prayer with a fountain in the middle of a garden.

St Chrysostom says that prayer is like a fountain in the middle of a garden. Without it everything would be dry and sterile, and because of it everything flourishes, and all is fresh and delightful. The same way, prayer maintains in perpetual beauty and freshness the holy plants of obedience, humility, patience, mortification, silence, recollection, and all the other virtues. But as, in a garden, there is usually some plant or flower which is cultivated with greater care than the others and for which one always finds time and water to spare when there is none for all the others, so, in

the spiritual garden of our soul, where all must be irrigated by the salutary waters of prayer, there must always be something to keep a particular eye on and for which one must never lack time. I mean that it is necessary to know which is the virtue one has most need of and to apply oneself to that more than all the rest.'

In Br Francois' notebook on mental prayer¹¹² **which, we have said, appears to us the earliest instruction, the idea is also picked up again:**

'St Chrysostom compared prayer to a fountain flowing in the middle of a garden. This garden constantly watered is always green and full of flowers. Such is a prayerful soul; one sees it growing ceaselessly in good desires and in the fruits of salvation. But should the water fail in this garden, flowers, plants, fruit, everything promptly dries up, everything withers and gradually dies. Why? Because the source has dried up.

When he prayed, the brother was humble, modest, pious, mortified, obedient, attached to his vocation. But since he abandoned this holy exercise, since he does it carelessly, he has become disorderly in his speech, proud, disobedient, dissipated, restless. One sees by his face that he is not happy; one knows that he is faltering, that his passions dominate him. When the soul abandons prayer, not only do I regard it as sick, but as dead, says St Chrysostom.'

We appear to witness a change of sense of the quotation from Rodriguez, for he uses the comparison to invite the man of prayer not to disperse but to concentrate his efforts on a particular point. On the contrary, text 307 seems much more ambivalent: it pictures especially what happens when the fountain of prayer does not flow. And the description of the brother having abandoned prayer seems an original composition in the instruction, probably from the Founder.

In text 308 Br Francois simply says: 'St Chrysostom says that as trees dry up without water, man cannot aspire to life without prayer.'

Instruction E4 p.312-313 gives almost the same thing (p.313) :

'On the contrary a prayerful soul is like a tree planted beside running waters which yields its fruit in due season; all his activities prosper before

¹¹² Notebook 307 p.265

God (Ps.1, 3). Note those words, in due season : that means when the religious is patient, obedient, humble, regular, pious, zealous mortified (St Liguori). [...] When water, moisture, is lacking to a plant, the flowers, fruit, leaves, branches, everything, in a word, withers, dries up and dies. When prayer is lacking to a religious, his good desires, devotion, fervour, virtues, everything, in a word, is lost and disappears. Yes, when this religious prayed regularly and fervently, he was humble, modest, mortified, detached from the world, devoted to his work; but since he has become unguarded in his speech, without restraint in his regard, full of vanity, negligent in his work, impatient, undisciplined, filled with the spirit of the world, he is only religious in his dress.'

In A.L.S. (ch.XIII, 5) Br Jean-Baptiste has taken up this passage again and abridged it :

'On the contrary, a prayerful soul is like a tree planted beside running waters which yields its fruit in due season. All his activities prosper before God (Ps. 1, 3). Notice that "in due season"¹¹³; **that means at the time: this religious is patient, obedient, humble, regular, modest, charitable, zealous and mortified**¹¹⁴. According to saint Chrysostom, prayer is to the soul what a copious fountain is in the middle of a garden; without it everything is dry and sterile, everything dies, while with it everything prospers, everything is fresh and delightful, every plant produces good fruit...'

Manuscript E3 p.13 is similar:

'What do you think of the brother who is not pious [...]?

I think he is like the plant, the tree which lacks water, moisture; he dries up, withers, perishes, he dies. This religious, when he was praying, when he was pious, was humble, modest, mortified, obedient, regular, cheerful, contented, happy, amiable. Now he does not pray any more, he is proud, opinionated, disobedient, disorderly, dissipated, irresponsible, selfish, without zeal or devotion to his work, difficult with his brothers, not wanting to support anyone, discontented, restless, bored, disgusted with his state, full of faults, without virtue. finally, he is a man who is good for nothing and who, in losing piety, has lost everything.'

¹¹³ See the 1927 edition which has improved the punctuation to make the original text more comprehensible.

¹¹⁴ Rather clumsy phrasing

Another passage of E4 (p.313) gives us the same impression of reinvestment:

‘When water, when moisture, is lacking to a plant, the flowers, fruit, foliage, branches, everything, in a word, withers, dries up and dies. When prayer is lacking to a religious, his good desires, his devotion, fervour, virtues, everything, in a word, is lost and disappears. Yes, when this religious prayed regularly and fervently, he was humble, modest, mortified, detached from the world, devoted to his work; but since then he has become unguarded in his speech, without restraint in his regard, full of vanity, negligent in his work, impatient, irregular, undisciplined, filled with the spirit of the world and is a religious only in his dress.’

Finally, we have, perhaps, an echo of this text in the Life of the Founder (p.316):

‘The one who does not meditate will never know the value of this treasure (of vocation). He will make nothing of it, and counting it as worthless, at the first difficulty, the first temptation that comes along, he will abandon the field of religious life enclosing him.’

We see then a process of doctrinal composition working on several levels. The Founder starts with a recognised authority, St John Chrysostom in the present case, which he has found not in the works of this Father of the Church but in Rodriguez. He changes the sense of his quotation by insisting on what he has at heart: the danger of not praying. In this way he creates an independent teaching around the quotation which is then taken up by the superiors. Less interested in what John Chrysostom was saying than in the interpretation given by the Founder, they have supported it as well by means of new quotations. We end up with the following doctrine: if you do not pray you will not persevere in your vocation, something the Founder¹¹⁵ **merely suggested and John Chrysostom did not say.**

Thus, because this passage is often repeated in the Marist written and printed records, we think that there is question here of an original speech of the Founder perhaps given written form the first time in instruction 307 and picked up again several times by the superiors.

¹¹⁵ It is, however, possible that the instruction uses the same quotation from Chrysostom taken from an author who interpreted it differently from Rodriguez.

3/ THE INFLUENCE OF SAINT JURE

This French Jesuit (1588-1657) wrote the treatise entitled: 'On the knowledge and love of the Son of God Our Lord Jesus Christ,' published for the first time in 1633. It was republished a number of times, notably by Perisse¹¹⁶ in Lyon in 1823. Chapter VI of book 3 entitled 'The love of Jesus Christ makes us love prayer' has also inspired our instructions. From these are drawn the passages telling us of Francis Borgia consecrating five or six hours daily to prayer (p.220), of the learned Fr Suarez who would have preferred losing all his learning rather than a single hour of prayer (p.223). He takes up again the comparison, for prayer, of the golden chain and Jacob's ladder between heaven and earth... Above all (p.224) a long extract can be found in E4 p.301, 308 p.831 and in part in 307 p.262:

'What the sun does exteriorly in the world, says saint Chrysostom, prayer does interiorly in the soul. The sun enlightens, warms, rejoices, vivifies : prayer pours torrents of light on our understanding, inflames our will, spreads in our hearts feelings of pure joy, gives vitality to our souls by the grace it obtains for us. If you took away the sun from the earth there would be nothing but darkness, cold, sadness and death. It is the same with the man who does not pray. His spirit is full of shadow, his will of apathy, his heart of bitterness: his soul is dead or very close to dying. Prayer is the root of all good, the mother of all virtue. She carries at her breast souls who apply themselves to it, nourishes them, raises them, she gives them the strength to act, she mitigates their difficulties, she leads them to perfection.'

8TH PART SOME REINVESTMENTS OF RODRIGUEZ

II EXISTENTIAL REINVESTMENTS

The reading of the treatise on prayer in Rodriguez appears to show that the assiduous reading of the latter brought about specific ways of behaving in the Founder and the brothers. Although we are a little outside our subject, we cannot resist the desire to comment, in light of Rodriguez,

¹¹⁶ This is the edition we are using

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on a passage of the Life, the chapter treating on Fr Champagnat's humility (Life, 2nd Part, Ch.XII, p.407):

'Another time, returning from retreat with the same Fathers (Marist Fathers), several of whom were getting ready to depart for the foreign missions, he took their bags, with the words: "Let me carry that. I will have at least some part in the good you will do." And as the Fathers objected: "Let me do it," he continued. "I am a countryman accustomed to hard work." At the same time he took their bags, put them over his shoulders, and carried them for quite a long time with great satisfaction.'

It seems to us that Fr Champagnat's conduct is inspired by a passage contained in chapter XIX of the treatise on prayer where Rodriguez informs us that Saint Ignatius and his companions were travelling on foot in the direction of Barcelona 'each with his bag on his back'. They encountered a peasant who 'urged them so forcefully to give him their belongings to carry, because he was strong and healthy, that, after refusing for a long time, they did what he wished.'

From contact with them he acquires the habit of praying. One day the Jesuits ask him what he is doing. He replies: "I am not doing anything [...] except saying : Lord, these people are saints and I am their beast of burden. What they do, I want to do too. And that is what I offer to God."

The connections between the two narratives are so obvious that it seems to me almost certain that Fr Champagnat, nourished on Rodriguez, was aware of putting into practice an ancient gesture. It is probable as well that the other Marist Fathers, who also knew this episode, gave him their bags because they themselves were conscious that their companion was carrying out in this way both a game and a rite of companionship, a missionary and spiritual one rather than one of mortification.

A second passage has this time for hero, Br Lawrence. It is reported to us in the Life, at the end of chapter IV which treats of prayer. When Fr Champagnat asked him what he had done during his prayer he replied that he had forgotten his subject.

'However, to use my time profitably, I pictured to myself saint Francis Regis spending entire nights prostrate at church doors in order to adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I looked at this great saint all the time

in this posture. 'There is someone, I said to myself, who did not forget the subject of his meditation. He had it for a whole night, while for my part, I can spend only a few moments.'

In acting this way, Br Lawrence seems to have followed the advice of Rodriguez (Chap. XIX : 'On several other ways to do mental prayer well') :

'That being so, it will be a very pious and very useful reflection, when we find ourselves lukewarm in prayer, to consider how many servants of God are at prayer, putting into it, perhaps, blood and tears, and to join them in spirit, and not only them, but the angels too, in the purpose of loving and praising God, thus making up for what we cannot do ourselves'...

2/ THE RULE OF 1852 TAKES UP RODRIGUEZ AND INSTRUCTION 307

Finally, the rule of 1852 is itself influenced by him. Article 11 of chapter II (p.5), which treats of prayer, reminds the Brothers:

'Finally, they will often ask of God the spirit of prayer, and will take all means to acquire and preserve it. **If it should happen that they become lax in this essential article (prayer) they should ask to spend some days in retreat, in order to renew themselves in piety and the spirit of prayer;** for without this a Brother will never be a good religious.'

We ask ourselves if this article does not come from Rodriguez relayed through instruction 307.

Rodriguez, Treatise 5, Ch.2	307 • 2 p.262
<p>'If you have not been faithful to the observation of the rule of your institute; if you have freed yourself from it in something; finally, if you feel that the passions, which were as it were asleep in you, are awakening, have immediate recourse to prayer and, with God's grace, you will find in it a prompt and salutary remedy in every case. What if you fall into laxity and lukewarmness during prayer itself, it is still to prayer that you should have recourse. It is that that will restore you to the first state of fervour you were in. It has remedies suitable for all sorts of ills, even for faults committed in prayer. That is why those make a very just comparison who say that prayer is with regard to the spiritual life what the hand is with regard to the body. The hand serves as an instrument of the whole body in general, and for itself in particular. It works for the food, clothing and the other needs of the body, and also works for itself. For if the hand is sick, it is the hand which dresses it, if the hand is dirty, it is the hand which washes it, if the hand is cold it is the hand which warms it. Finally, it is the hands which do everything, and it is the same with prayer.'</p>	<p>'If we are tempted, if we are lukewarm, if we come to be lax in the observance of our Rules, if we feel our zeal weakening, let us turn to prayer and, by God's grace, we will find in it a prompt and unfailing remedy in every case. What if we fall into laxity in prayer itself; it is still to prayer that you should have recourse. It is that that will restore us to our first state of fervour. It has remedies for failings even if they were committed in prayer (Rodriguez).</p> <p>Prayer is with regard to the spiritual life what the hand is with regard to the body. The hand serves as an instrument for the whole body and works for itself. For if the hand is sick, it is the hand which dresses it, if the hand is dirty, it is the hand which washes it, if the hand is cold, it is the hand which warms it. Finally, it is the hands which do everything. It is the same with prayer.</p>

The rule of 1852 then is for us another reason for thinking that instruction 307 has certainly come to us from the Founder for the former, whose purpose was to codify his teaching has done it in this article, which after all seems to have been not very practical or put into practice.

CONCLUSION

The reader will no doubt have had some difficulty following an argument which seems to juggle with the texts in such a way as to confuse him a little more. Let him remember, however, that we have treated only part of a much richer corpus and that this complicated exposé is already an attempt at clarification. If we have not been able to be more clear it is because we have not yet mastered sufficiently the main axes for working out Marist spiritual literature. It seems to us, however, we have succeeded in drawing out some gains. First of all, that the Marist literature, at least as concerns the teaching on prayer and praying was built up according to the following process : beginning with the Founder's oral instructions, strongly inspired by the great spiritual writers, copied down by listeners then given to the superiors after Fr Champagnat's death. These are then used orally in new instructions which keep the substance while relying on recomposition and complementing. Finally, this tradition is fixed in written works.

The instructions we have made use of seem to witness to diverse phases of this history. Instruction 307 seems to us very close to the actual words of the Founder. In our view it is the earliest and probably a direct copy, but we cannot exclude the possibility it is already the fruit of a work of copying and re-appropriating. 308 appears to correspond to an improvement by Br Francois. E4 does not seem to be based on documents 307 and 308 but on other copies of the same instruction. Finally, the Life, the rule of 1852, the A.L.S. offer us the official expression of the primitive doctrine, faithful overall, on the whole, to the original teaching.

But this study also serves us to test a method of investigation allowing us to discern, in the thousands of handwritten passages we possess, what is closest to the origins and what appears to be more of a reconstruction. We have therefore chosen to isolate a particular theme, then to find in the manuscripts and printed works we possess, texts which have obvious connections with one another. Then one can try to classify them chronologically, starting from the notion that the most coherent text, the longest, which includes most quotations and references to authors, is the most recent. Obviously, if extracts from the manuscripts feature in the official books duly attributed to the Founder, we are certain of their origin, but that does not signify necessarily that every instruction in which they are found is authentic. When they are not explicitly attributed to Fr Champagnat,

their frequency, their place in the official texts are important indices of their original value. Obviously, the texts found in Br Francois and Br Jean-Baptiste offer a very special presumption of original authenticity.

We can say then that an instruction presented in the manuscripts of Brs Francois and Jean-Baptiste, passages from which are repeated in the official books which attribute then explicitly to the Founder, offer almost certain guaranties of authenticity. In inverse proportion, a text from Br Jean-Baptiste or from Br Francois which has no obvious correspondence in the other superiors' writings, nor in the books of the congregation should be excluded. As most of the manuscript texts are situated between these two extremes we ought to establish a scale of connections to the origins outlined by the above study : texts having evident parallels with others, but also important differences, should be situated as adaptations of the original discourse. So we reach a typology on three levels :

- Texts directly emerging from the oral instructions of the Founder
- Documents of recomposition beginning from reports of these primitive instructions, which seem the most numerous.
- Compositions of the superiors, independent of the Founder, emerging from their reading, their preoccupations, the needs of the congregation, from their own spiritual experience.¹¹⁷

But this schema is too simplistic, for it is certain that the Founder approached the same theme a number of times and it is therefore often repeated. Likewise, it is not impossible that text 308, which we interpret as a re-elaboration of a primitive text of the Founder may itself be an original instruction given in different circumstances. Neither can one exclude the subjectivity of the Brothers who took the notes. Some restricted themselves to outlines more or less elaborate, others wrote down almost everything, others still kept only what interested them... In the same way, the fact that certain texts are in the manuscripts of Br Jean-Baptiste and others in those of Br Francois leads us to enquire how they got there : is it a question of notes taken by the superiors themselves, or of notes confided to them? And why not both? Why would certain Brothers have confided their notes to one and not the other? And for themselves, did they set up a common resource? In brief, we are faced with multiple questions

¹¹⁷ For example, Br Francois has abundant quotes from Fr Judde. It is not certain that the Founder had the same respect for this Jesuit author.

which lead into one another like the passages of a labyrinth. It is the image of a labyrinth which appears to us the most suitable for best defining the tangle of texts we must explore if we want to distinguish the original Marist spirituality from what follows. For if Br Jean-Baptiste and Br François are rightly believed to have transmitted the pure doctrine of the Founder, it is clear to us (but perhaps not to them) that in selecting, completing, recomposing the original teachings, they have themselves created a Marist spirituality, profoundly linked with the Founder's, but with nuances a better selection of texts would allow us to discover.

21 December 1998

BROTHER FRANÇOIS: RETREAT NOTES

Br Paul Sester f.m.s.

Very soon, Brother François began to revive regularly the thoughts which filled his mind during the annual Retreats which he made from 1819 to 1880, except for the years 1820, 1821, 1846, 1876, 1877, and 1878. These notes are contained in four notebooks 13.5 by 9.5 cm in size. They are notebook 302, Retreats of 1819 to 1831, pages 1 to 310; notebook 303, Retreats from 1832 to 1850, pages 167 to 786; notebook 304, from 1850 to 1869, pages 785 to 1684; notebook 305, from 1872 to 1880, pages 198 to 232, the first pages of this particular notebook containing the "Voyage from Rome in 1858 and diverse matters of information concerning Rome and the organisation of the Church.

The number of pages concerning each year varies very much. Certain years hold fewer than five pages, notably the first and last years, while others surpass 100 pages, and the year 1858 fills no fewer than 318 manuscript pages containing, almost solely, quotations from the Old Testament.

THE FORM

Putting aside this special case, the notes are resolutions but, in the first years only, they are personal reflections, sometimes supported by references to different books, and quotations drawn from these same sources. In view of the multitude and diversity of the authors quoted in the same year, these notes must have spread well beyond the period of the Retreat and be extended over twelve months, a concept which is supported by the dates on which we meet up with him in different places. On the other hand, it is scarcely believable that Brother François had readily available all these works in order to transcribe passages from them. It seems that he must have taken some of them from the words of the Retreat preacher; others are perhaps quotations drawn at second hand from spiritual books, which were not lacking in such quotations.

Whatever may be the source, these notes are taken for the thought content, for the sentiment which they express and for their capacity to nourish the spiritual life of the moment. As a consequence, the list of authors and of the books used are not lacking in significance. Putting aside the numerous quotations from Sacred Scripture, all of them that are invoked are apt representatives of the epoch, whose spirituality they evoke. They are given below, in the order of the importance which is given to them. There is The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection by Father Alphonsus Rodriguez, to which Brother François turns in nearly every Retreat, just as he does to The Lives of the Fathers of the Deserts of the East by Marie-Ange Marin, which book provides an inexhaustible mine for the anxious spirit to profit from daily, in the model which the hagiography puts before the reader. There is also The Lives of the Saints by Godescart, but it is far from being the object of the same avidity. As a contrast, The Life of St Francis de Sales by Hamon holds next place, although it is not quoted until the beginning from 1831, but then with such an abundance (66 times) that we cannot doubt about its having been read in the course of that particular year. The Imitation of Jesus Christ comes immediately after, followed by the works of Father Judde, Great Retreat and Religious Retreats, then by Considerations, by Grasset. Others are quoted during successive periods, such as The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi, by Chalippe, The Sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by Father Thomas de Jesus, Life of Saint Francis Xavier, by de Bouhours, Life of Saint Vincent de Paul, by Collet, The Greatness of Jesus Christ, by D'Argentan, Guidance of Sinners, by Louis de Grenade, Introduction to the Devout Life, by Saint Francis de Sales, Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ and The Religious Man, by Father Saint-Jure, Instructions on Mental Prayer, by de Courbon; Catechism of Perseverance, by Bishop Gaume, Meditations, by Guilloiré, Particular Examen, by Tronson, Twelve Virtues of the Perfect Educator, by Brother Agathon, not to speak of other incidental quotations.

The personal reflections and quotations are generally intermingled, without connection and they are not ordered according to a particular theme. So that we can make a judgement about this matter, let us give, by way of example, the summary of the Retreat of 1834:

1. My dwelling is in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. How would a saint, a soul from Purgatory, a reprobate make the Retreat?
2. I am a thief, a sacrilegious person. Ingratitude consists in forgetting benefits received. Empty world; uneasy world. All things ... exhort me to love you, Lord.
3. If I perform something only to please God ...
4. The sinner, at Judgement, sees, above him, an irritated Judge.
5. I can do nothing more perfect than what I do according to the Rule.
6. Like the body, the soul has five senses.
7. To receive Jesus Christ ...
8. You must not be astonished.... temptations ... When you allow yourself to go along with the current ... The devil is a lion, a giant for those who fear him ...
9. Motto: I wish to save my soul and carry out my duty ... You have multiplied the people, Lord ... (Isaiah; The Mind of Saint de Sales ...)
10. The love of Jesus has prepared the victim,...
11. We act only for God ... (Father Saint- Jure)
12. You are a religious and not a doctor ...
13. The body shares in what you want it to be and accustoms itself to everything ... When the soul cannot pray through reflection nor through the affections ...

Sometimes, however, the thoughts are grouped around the same theme, without their always being in a logical order, as in the Retreat of 1833 on the subject of humility. Likewise, in the 105 pages of the Retreat of 1852, we find quotations on the same theme, which follow one another over several pages, albeit without logical order. They concern the subject of the Cross, being set out under titles: Scruples, Remedies against temptations of the flesh, Remedies against habitual falls, Rules to follow in regard to certain hidden temptations, Rules to follow in consolations and in tender devotions, Rules to be observed in the time of spiritual desolation, Conduct of the director of pious souls who aspire to great perfection.

The quotations are of three different kinds: whether they are transcriptions from texts, or sentences taken from different sources and gathered together, or adapted texts, of which some examples are given here.

Finally, instances are not lacking where the reference does not indicate an extract from some work, but only makes the reader go off to find in some work a confirmation of the idea which has just

been expressed.

These quotations are chosen, as you may suppose, because of correspondence with the truth that they contain or because of resonance with the sentiment which they convey, but here, very often, you have the impression that the balance, the gathering together of

<p>Rodriguez The third means of doing things well is to do each one separately, as if you had nothing else to do. (Vol. 1, Treatise 3, Chpt. 4)</p> <p>Imitation of Jesus Christ A man is only what he is in your eyes and he is nothing more, thus says the humble Saint Francis. (Chpt. 50, *8)</p> <p>If you seek only to please God and to serve your brothers, you will enjoy an interior and spiritual liberty. (Imit. L. 2, Ch. 4.)</p>	<p>François In order not to be distracted I shall think only of what I am doing at the present moment, as if I had only that to do; and, in order to act with more perfection, I shall not divide my ideas. (Rodrig. P., T.3, Chpt. 15). <i>(You will notice here an error in the reference.)</i></p> <p>François Man is truly only what he is before you, O my Lord and my God, whatever men may say about it. (St François; Imit. L.3, Ch. 50.)</p> <p>If you propose to yourself, and if you seek only the will of God and the good of your neighbour, you will enjoy interior freedom. (Imit. L. 2, Ch. 4, trad. Gonnellieu)</p>
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the expressions is not without influence on the choice. For example, the sentences where the grouping of the terms goes in threes, sometime in fours, bear a particular grace. Numerous are the quotations, of which the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* presents a vast number of examples, such as the following:

The Cross, sorrows, difficulties are the lot of man, the sign of the Christian, the mark of privileged souls, according to which they are accepted, supported, loved ... Happy the one who awaits them with resignation,

receives them with love, supports them with joy, in order to obey, please and unite oneself to God. (Imit. L. 1, Ch. 12 - Retreat of 1847.)

Jesus is the example, the strength and the crown of martyrs; Mary is the mother of the sorrowful, the Queen of martyrs, the comforter of the afflicted. Man is culpable, the Christian is penitent and the religious a martyr. (Retreat 1847)

To be entirely yours, I renounce the devil and his works, the world and its pomps, the flesh and its evil inclinations, heresy and its errors.

I consecrate to you my thoughts, my words, my actions and my sufferings so that I may think of you, that I may speak about you, that I may act according to you and that I may suffer for you. (Retreat of 1850)

And there are two entire pages filled with maxims of this last-mentioned style which resonate like the hoofbeats of a horse.

THE DEPTH

After what we have just seen, we can say, without being mistaken (especially not through exaggeration), that more than half of these notes are extracts from authors. But, as they have been chosen for their consonance with the state of soul at a particular moment, their witness value concerning the personality of Brother François is scarcely less than that of the personal notes with which they are mixed. Therefore, without making distinction, either too little on one hand or too much on the other, between acknowledged notes and those borrowed notes whose source is not indicated, I can allow myself to consider these writings in their entirety to try to extract the personality of the man who put them together.

That is not to go as far as to say, however, that the task has been facilitated. For we must remember that, so often during the course of a Retreat or during a period of spiritual reading, we inevitably find ourselves in a disposition of recollection or in a serious attitude that has nothing spontaneous about it. Moreover, it is scarcely possible to make a synthesis of each Retreat, in view of the number of different ideas accumulated, most often, as I have

stated above, without apparent order. Each year all the principal themes of the spiritual life are raised, but, nevertheless, with more or less substantial nuances.

These variations throw into the light, during the course of sixty years, certain periods which allow the evolution of a personality to be seen. I distinguish four of these: the periods from 1819 to 1829; from 1829 to 1839; from 1840 to 1860; and from 1861 to 1875. I shall take them in their totality, although it may mean showing the evolution that is already discernible in the very interior of these periods.

1819-1829: ADOLESCENCE

The first of these periods covers the first decade of the religious life of Brother François. Father Champagnat took this child of ten years into his charge. Doubtlessly, there was scarcely any need of him for the farm work, from which he seems to have been kept at a distance up to that time, perhaps through the desire of his mother to see one of her children place himself at the service of the Lord. It is she indeed, who, having offered him to the Blessed Virgin when she was passing by the church, brought him to the parish curate. Father Champagnat, in no hurry to make a Little Brother of him, gave him Latin lessons to allow him to choose, later on, between the priesthood and the religious life. While waiting, François followed the life of the little community. The choice did not require a long period of waiting before it was made. On 8 September 1819 François put on the habit of the Brothers and participated in the annual Retreat organised by the Founder.

According to the few notes, this first Retreat appears to have been a light one. Only two themes seem to have been recorded: the presence of God and the education of children. The following seven Retreats are organised according to the habitual method - by presenting from the beginning the Last Things and Sin, which determines these Last Things.

The notes of 1824, which are very abundant, present a significant particularity in regard to the date of composition. On one hand, they are divided into three distinct parts. On the other hand, these parts do not follow one another in the notebook. The first, in its

normal position, is entitled *1824 - Rule*. The second is *Maxims from the Retreat of 1824*; and the third *Retreat Resolutions of 1824* are to be found after the *Retreat of 1825*. Moreover, the commentary on the Parable of the Prodigal Son, from the second part, is spread among other pages of even earlier composition; and the third part contains very many things beyond the resolutions indicated by the title.

The year 1825 is characterised by enclosed pages which, in other respects, have no special quality at all which merits this positioning. The year 1826, on the contrary, clearly oriented towards preparation for the profession of Perpetual Vows, adopts a regular format which accords to that which the following years will present - with the exception of 1828 and 1829.

Indeed, the notes of 1828, as also those of 1829, are presented under three different headings. For 1828 they follow in their normal place: 1828 (Father Champagnat) and 4 April 1828, followed by: 1929 and Retreat of 1929, after which we come back to: The 2nd September 1828, and finally: Retreat of 1829.

Faced with that, we have two possible hypotheses: These notes have been transcribed after the years indicated. But, then, how can we justify their disorder? Otherwise, supplementary notes added to those of the Retreat, properly so called, have been inserted on pages left blank. This last theory, for want of others, seems the most plausible, given the writing and the manner of presentation of the first years.

Whatever it may be, what stands out in this whole period is a rather heavy impression. It is not the enthusiasm of a young man who throws himself into a career joyously embraced, but rather the apprehension of one who is not in a position to be able to pursue it without encumbrances, without struggles: "I should remember that, having quit the world with all its encumbrances, I should be more guilty than the people of the world if I were not serving the good Lord well." (1824, Resolutions).

Thus, the fear of hell is perhaps the dominant sentiment which is to be found spread through the numerous mentions of sin, of death being capable of surprising us unexpectedly, of temptation always menacing, etc. ...It is still this fear which commands sacrifice, morti-

fication, mistrust of self, the refusal of all forms of softness. "The thought of Hell will be for me a powerful goad to penance, to mortification, to the love of being held in contempt and to mistrust of self." (1823) In order to avoid Hell, he must from now onwards take the counter-steps of his promises: "I should be sacrificed to the anger of God. I shall sacrifice my very self to His love. My tongue would have cursed him; now it will bless him eternally. My body would have burnt without ever being consumed; now it will consume itself slowly in His service. I no longer count it as being anything. May it wither; may it dry up; may it even die, if that is necessary." (ibid).

This fear is so much more justified, since our body, with its evil tendencies and its passions pushes us towards the fire even when our desires are directed only towards the happiness of heaven. Now, in order to come by heaven, we have no other way than that traced out by Jesus Christ suffering and dying for our salvation. According to his own words: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him renounce himself, carry his cross every day of his life, and follow me." (Luke 9, Retreat, 1825). "Sufferings have been for me a sharing with Jesus, the well-beloved son of God the Father, and there are glory and happiness in being treated like Him and in suffering for Him, for, beyond the precious advantages which one finds in doing this in the present life, it is a consoling guarantee of eternal happiness." (Jude, Gde. Retreat, 3rd part. T. 2, p.373; 4th part. p. 500, Retreat, 1826).

The virtue which comes to graft itself on the person mentioned above is humility, mentioned in each of the Retreats in quotations which are more or less long and numerous. A God comes to us by the path of humility and mortification. Let us go to Him by the same path. (Champagnat1, 1828)

This atmosphere, already meagre in sunlight, is darkened by a cloud which, as we shall see, is stretched across these notes through sporadic allusions; it is the cloud of scrupulosity. The following paragraph, from 1824, seems to me to be significant: "If I have an extreme horror of sin, even venial sin, if I fear, even in its very shadow, the approach of the temptation to sin, whatever form it may take, if I avoid it with care, and if I be helped by grace, I have to hope that I shall never give myself over to sin. I have also to hope that I may avoid sin that has the appearance of good by becoming

aware of the falsity of this seeming goodness. This is what assures a timorous, scrupulous soul and, at the same time, it is the surest and most salutary remedy against scrupulosity. We rarely have scruples when we are strongly determined never to allow ourselves anything that displeases God. But whoever has not this firm determination must often be in a state of strange alarms and great apprehensions. Oh! How terrible are these worries at death. My God! Death rather than sin! May your love accompany death!" (1824, Règlement)

At times the atmosphere or mood becomes more serene through flights of soul towards God, like those which the Psalms suggest, these doubtlessly recommended by the preacher of the Retreat: "I have always the Lord present before me, for he is at my right hand for fear that I be shaken." (Psalm 15). "My God is my support and I shall hope in Him; he is my protector; He is the force which saves me; it is He who takes up my defence. I shall praise the Lord and I shall invoke Him and I shall be delivered from my enemies." (Psalm 17, 1827) In the same way, the Virgin Mary is not passed over in silence in any of the Retreats. Could a child forget its mother? "O, most tender of mothers, pray for us each day. Deign to carry our prayers to the feet of the throne of the Eternal. See your children kneeling before you; they implore your assistance and trust in your bounty." (1828)

It is from this period, in 1824, that the work of Brother Agathon, *The Twelve Virtues of a Good Master*, is mentioned on two occasions. On the first occasion there is only a short enumeration, placed in the first part of 1824, Rules while in the third part, Resolutions of Retreat, 1824 we find a development covering five pages. The concern of the moment for this particular matter shows, unquestionably, his engagement in apostolate work in some establishment or other.

1829 – 1839: FIRST RESPONSIBILITIES

In the paragraph entitled Retreat of 1829 we find, among short reflections on many different subjects, these two little sentences: The Lord has charged me with a very heavy cross. I must carry it for the love of God - with courage, firmness, and constancy - and for the salvation of my confrères. (Conf. 7 September) This leads us to think that, in the holidays of 1929, Father Champagnat called on

Brother François to undertake the formation of the novices, for, two pages earlier, in the section carrying the title 1829, François writes, A Master of Novices must enter into the mind of the novices, being forward-looking in trying to know their difficulties, their sources of uneasiness, etc., whether arising from the Rule or from the subject of their vocation. This is not the place to resolve the difficult problem of date posed so much by Brother Jean-Baptiste (cf. *Biographies of Some Brothers*, pp. 87-88) and by Brother Avit who, in speaking on the subject of Brother Bonaventure, wrote: "He made profession in October, 1831 and replaced Brother Louis as Master of Novices." (Annals of the Institute, Vol. 1 The Rough Climb, p.98.) The fact is that responsibilities were confided to him, be they as Master of Novices or as Superior of the Novitiate House at the Hermitage. We know, in another connection, that he was in process of assuming the function of secretary to the Founder and, according to his own words, also the job of infirmarian: "It is a great honour, a real grace that the House calls me to serve Jesus in the person of my sick Confrères." (Retreat, 1833). He will confirm this later on by noting: "What a good fortune it is to send souls to see God, to love Him, to bless Him, to pray to Him for me in heaven while waiting for me to join them there. "(Retreat, 1838).

In addition, the group of notes from this period gives the impression of maturity, of a person assuming responsibilities. From the *Life of St Francis Xavier* as from *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection* of Father Rodriguez he draws out long passages concerning the authority of the Superior. "Always treat the Brothers of the Society with gentleness and honour,... Having in view only the good of those subject to you, you will punish them only in as much as will be necessary for their amendment. ..." (St Francis Xavier, Life, L. VII, T. II, p.163). "You have been given authority; do not be exultant about it, but be amongst others as one of them." (ibid). "In carrying out your charge do things as if it were God and not men whom you are serving." (Rodriguez, Retreat, 1831.) Under the year 1832 this enigmatic sentence still appears: "What am I doing on this throne where have sat so many religious saints, pious missionaries and, especially, our venerated Founder? Finally, in the following year, there is the same reminder of the manner of acting vis à vis others: We must cherish our equals and our subjects; we must truly and warmly take an interest in their different situations; we must

be concerned about their illness; we must rejoice in their cure; and we must take part in everything that happens to them.” (Retreat, 1833).

In this same perspective are classified the following notes on the manner of comporting oneself before confrères: “A state of calm and tranquillity in everything.” (Retreat, 1830). “Suspend the conference in order to raise the heart to God and, while talking, invoke the Guardian Angel. To see everything, to hear everything, to keep a low profile, to punish little - there is the true means of governing a house well. Instruction, gravity, gentleness, firmness.” (Retreat, 1833).

As for the shape of the totality of the notes of this decade, first of all, it follows an ascending curve which culminates in 1831-1832. Then it descends rapidly, emphasised by the word sickness in 1838. It is not necessary, however, to pause on the number of pages which make up each year, pages which were particularly numerous (about fifty) in 1833, for it clearly appears that only the first four or five pages correspond to the Retreat, properly so called, the remainder having been added, without doubt, during the course of the year. From the sixth page, in fact, we read: “I am the voice of one who cries out ... The splendid model (John, 1) of humility, obedience, zeal of Saint John-Baptist preaching in the desert!” This places us in the season of Advent. Moreover, the following pages contain a long series of extracts drawn from the same works, but treating different subjects, thus showing that these works had been read successively in spiritual reading. While accepting that these readings were made during the course of the year indicated, all the same, we would have the customary way of life continuing.

But at the end of this period there is the peculiarity of the absence of quotations for the years 1835 to 1838. Only some references send the reader back to one or other of the habitual works, especially to the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. Seeing that this situation is not repeated in any other place, how can we not pose the question of the reason for this? Would the reply be found in the word sickness, which accompanies the inscription of the year 1838? We notice, in fact, that it is a matter of the sickness of the year 1833, indeed, made in terms which cause it to be taken back further. “The

Lord, through sickness, has closed to me the door and the window of the sciences, but I have books which are always open to me, in which I find lessons and models to sanctify my state ... Not to be able to be with my Brothers in the regular exercises is one of my most painful remedies." (Retreat, 1833). But, in fact, this state of sickness is so little known that it is difficult to see in it the sole cause of the situation we are dealing with. What we can say is that the sickness is certainly not without influence on the maturity which, as we said above, characterises this period.

What cannot fail to astonish us is that, exactly in these years 1835 to 1838 the Virgin Mary is never mentioned, while the Guardian Angel, for example, is mentioned several times. Certainly, we must say that, during this period, the notes are reduced to a few scraps of sentences and some numberings, as if for some simple framework. But that certainly does not justify this absence of Mary, Comforter in the painful hours of illness. The fact is much less explicable in that, in the whole of the writings of Brother François, Mary holds a considerable place and rarely does he address letters to the Brothers in which at least the name of Mary does not feature.

On the other hand, the notes put strong emphasis on prayer, seen especially under the aspect of an intimate relationship with the Lord. Courbon's work *Instruction on Prayer*, widely quoted, seems to have found accord with the contemplative soul of Brother François. "It is a matter of propriety to put at least as much time in listening to Our Saviour as in speaking to Him.. With a single glance from our soul, with a little sign from our will we make God hear all that we wish to tell Him and we thus remain in His presence." (Retreat, 1831)

Certainly, insistence on humility is not weaker than that on prayer, as was already the situation in the preceding period. But here this virtue follows the same tendency towards intimacy. Rather than load oneself with humiliations, it is much better, first of all, to accept one's weaknesses and miseries: "What am I without your grace, O my God! What a thoroughly dry piece of wood and a useless trunk which has no further good other than to be thrown into the fire!" (Retreat, 1831). "To throw myself into the arms of God like a child. To seek God in everything and to put myself aside." (cf. Imit. 3, 17; 56. (Retreat, 1837).

May one presume that this form of humility suited the character of Brother François? On one side, it is true that his personality effaced itself under the influence of Father Champagnat. The latter, before taking his leave, often in order to visit the houses, appointed Brother François to replace him, as is set out in Champagnat's letter of 27 May 1838 to Bishop Pompallier. (See L.M.C., Vol. 1, pp. 391 ss). Now, In *Brother Sylvester Relates* (pp. 302-303) there is brought up the episode of the Brothers taking a festive outing in a field at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage in the absence of the Founder. Brother François intervened and brought it to a stop, but, instead of finishing the matter there and then, he went and reported it to the Superior. Timidity prevented him from assuming responsibility to end the affair. Very much later, recalling the memory of the Founder, he wrote: "We had all trembled at the very sound of his voice, at a single glance from him! On the other hand, however, subsequent events will show that François had to suppress outbreaks of temperament. Of his own volition, therefore, he wanted to efface himself, to live more interiorly, which procedure did not less prepare him for the future task, for God has chosen the less wise, the most despicable in the eyes of the world." (Retreat, 1837).

1839 – 1860: GENERALATE

From what has just been said, the choice of the successor to Father Champagnat did not fall upon a man at the height of his powers. Nevertheless, nowhere is it flung back at him that he had displayed reticence. He would therefore have accepted this responsibility in a spirit of obedience to the will of God manifested through the vote of his confrères. So many of the notes of 1839, as well as those of 1840, give testimony to this, whether or not they are highlighted by addition (without doubt a later addition, and in parentheses) of the word *election* to the title *Retreat of 1839*. Later, however, in several passages he makes allusion to this matter, as in the following: "Perhaps God has permitted my election in order to correct me in all my faults" (St François de Sales, Retreat, 1841); "Be the Vicar-General of the Holy Virgin, the Superior." (Retreat, 1840).

In contrast, certain prominent points are very significant in the notes of this period. Among the relatively rare notes of the first

years - from 1840 to 1844 (with an exception made for 1842) - what surprises us in the notes of 1840 are the quotations from French literature, where the following appear: Voltaire (twice), Vauvenargues, Racine, Rousseau, Châteaubriand. Moreover, in the notes of this same year (1840), two instances are significant. First of all, there is this laconic note: "Amputation of a tumour of the tongue" (Fredet). We know that Mr Fredet was the doctor accredited to Notre Dame de l'Hermitage in the time of Father Champagnat (L.M.C., Vol. 2, p.233), but we can only suppose that it refers to Brother François himself. This supposition, however, is not quite gratuitous, seeing that no other name has been indicated, which would doubtless be the case if it had concerned another Brother. Even more enigmatic are the several sentences which follow, namely:

"What a sorrow to learn of the spiritual death of Brothers who are dear to me! And a death so tragic, so disastrous, so terrifying! To see the frightful double-edged sword still smoking with their blood, the atrocious instrument used by the enemy who will perhaps murder several others! Can we think of this without trembling? Ah, if at least the good Lord had withdrawn me, taken me out of this world, before this horrible murder! In this is one of my most terrible trials in carrying out the obligatory exercise of the demanding functions of my weighty charge! Terrible memory, horrible ignominy, stinging remorse, withered reputation, dangerous business, odious presence ... The physical and the moral are affected; a contagious virus spreads out in the body and the soul." What scandal does this concern? Since they carefully guarded against divulging affairs of this nature, it is difficult to know more about it. Must we link this matter with that other affair which Brother Avit in the Annals of the Institute (Vol. 2, The expansion, 21) allows us to guess at through the sending away of a Brother? Nothing, however, permits us to do this. We can only remain astonished by the intensity of the impression made on the Superior, and all the more so since in no other part of his writings does he manifest an emotion of such intensity.

The year 1842 cuts across the preceding two years and the following two years by the restoration of abundant quotations, of which the most numerous are shared between two authors who have scarcely been quoted up to this time, that is to say, Crasset, *Christian Considerations* and Tronson, *Ecclesiastical Retreats*. In addition,

we also find in the notes quotations from Bishop de Bonald, Bishop Devie, and Bishop De la Mothe, all of which show a certain openness on François part.

What may also surprise us is the total absence of the year 1846. Perhaps we can find the explanation of this in his letter to the longest-serving Brothers, dated in the month of August of this year, 1846, a letter in which Brother François shows his state of weakness in health and an exhaustion of his strength which obliged him to unload a little of the exterior administration and of the general government of the Society ... (Ponty, *Brother François*, p.149) This state of bad health does not, moreover, date from this year, for in 1840 he avows in a letter: "Habitual indispositions do not allow me to travel." (Avit, *Annals of the Institute*, Vol. 2, p.5) It is therefore an aggravation of his state of ill health which would have prevented him from taking part in the Retreat of that year. This illness has probably dogged him, for, starting from this period, his notes are less pessimistic and give witness of a more tranquil abandonment to God.

It seems that in 1850, when François was more at ease, his particularly abundant notes indicate in some way that the summit of what we would be tempted to call his period of overweening verbosity was reached. He takes pleasure in resurrecting, among his favourite authors, sentences or similar forms of expression which follow one another three or four times - nay, sometimes without truly logical necessity. We could quote entire sentences of the same mode as the following examples: "Vain thoughts in reflection, vain phantoms in meditation; vain scruples in action." "Lord, make me prudent in undertakings, courageous in dangers, patient in oppositions, humble in success." In this stylistic contrivance is he searching for a way of convincing more effectively, or is he pleasing himself with the rhythmic balance which gives to the sentence a more or less poetic charm? What there is not doubt about is that he experiences a real joy in this type of sentence, with which spiritual literature, notably the Bible and the Imitation of Christ, provides him with multiple examples, and through which he is dispensed from racking his brains beyond what his memory can easily retain. It is, moreover, to be noted that here the notes dwell less on the personal spiritual life and the salvation of the soul than on day-to-day social life and the activity of a person responsible for a body of religious.

Quite otherwise is the picture which the notes of 1852 present. Most of the pages are full of short treatises on various subjects, such as scrupulosity, remedies against temptations, the exercise of a devout and truly Christian life, remedies against temptations of the flesh, remedies against habitual temptations, rules to be followed in regard to certain secret temptations, rules to be followed during periods of consolation and emotionally-fulfilling devotion, rules to be observed in times of spiritual desolation, etc. Manifestly, here we are no longer in the framework of a Retreat. But nothing, however, in the composition of these notes, leads us to believe that we have here the texts of conferences. Their appearance is rather that of an assembly of reflections for ones personal conduct. A comparison of the first of these texts (on scrupulosity) with another on the same subject which is contained in a notebook of instructions, makes us realise that they have nothing in common in regard to the composition. Must we deduce that Brother François was feeling the need of calming himself on those matters which would have been worrying him? The frequency of allusions, as much to scrupulosity as to temptations, throughout his Retreat notes prompts us, all the same, not to set aside immediately this hypothesis. On the contrary, it is significant that, about the General Chapter, whose first session was held several months before, no allusion was made, although it had dealt with the important affair of the establishment of the Rules which, without any doubt, must have caused quite a few anxieties to the Superiors.

The notes of 1858, of an entirely different kind, are not less astonishing. Apart from several quotations from authors at the beginning, the 138 pages are full of extracts from the Old Testament, commencing with the Book of Psalms and finishing with the Book of Malachy, and this after having run through all the intermediary books, following the order in which they are given in the Bible. Through the indication Rome added to the title, Brother François leads us to understand that he made this Retreat during his sojourn in the Eternal City, or at least that he profited from his leisure time during his stay there in order to fill up all these pages. From this fact we understand that he brought away only the single Bible. The edition which he used, however, must have been that of Father De Carrières, in six Volumes. Did he bring away all of them in his travelling bag or did he borrow them at his place of residence in Rome?

Since it is question of his being in a foreign country, we can accept either the one or the other hypothesis without difficulty. The question which touches us most is - why? What interest did he see in copying out the Bible? It is true that he has taken out only those passages which directly concerned the spiritual life without his fearing, in so doing, to slip into them some little changes in order to make them better suited to himself. That shows that he believed that no effort was too great in order to nourish his spiritual life.

The important thing for the moment is to be able to work out this matter in spite of the lack of answers to all these questions. To start with the most explicit, let us turn our attention first of all to the concept which Brother François has of himself as Superior. Some scattered notes across this period gives us a sufficiently clear idea of it.

Above all, he considered himself as the representative of the divine authority and of Mary, sole source of all sovereignty over people. A Superior must represent the incarnate God, of whom he is the image, standing always with Him, listening to Him, and consulting Him concerning the living of his life. (Retreat, 1848)

In his very being, the Superior must be distinguished by humility. Following the example of all other people of this virtue, he must, like a weak and fallible person, be humble before God, without revealing in the rank which his responsibility confers on him. He must be like the servant submissive to the Master's will, manifested principally in the Rule. He must be humble also before the Brothers, whose personal value is perhaps superior to his own and whom he must love, especially since he represents before them the God of love. "However great may be those things which it pleases God to work through my ministry, I must not believe myself to be any better for that reason nor attribute to myself the glory of things accomplished. The human instrument is, in itself, sometimes but little suitable compared to what is done through him, and the accomplishment draws all its value from the power of the One who puts it into operation," (Retreat, 1843). But he cannot, for all that, cease to have himself respected as much as he can cease to have himself loved. "In order to preserve his authority he must show it." (Retreat, 1840). To this end his exterior attitude, his relationship with others, his

self-mastery must be commensurate. "For a Superior to be in the situation which is fitting for him he must be grave in his actions, serious in his words and gracious in his demeanour." (Retreat, 1850). All this supposes, finally, that he be a man of prayer, in permanent contact with God. "The Superior must converse with, act with, be associated with - for thus to speak with - the Holy and adorable Trinity and the Mother of the Word incarnate so that he may conduct himself and the Institute according to the Rule, following the plans of Divine Providence," (Retreat, 1850).

As for his actions, they must be marked by certain qualities, of which the most necessary, according to the number of times that they are quoted, are gentleness and charity. "A superior must show himself to be a father through a tender solicitude, a friend through love and through very cordial affection." (Retreat, 1850). But, almost equal to these qualities, emphasis must also be placed on firmness, constancy and vigilance. "It is necessary that the Superior be firm in his will in order not to give scope for insubordination and arrogance." (Retreat, 1852). And, moreover, if he is wise, he will know how to inspire confidence, he will not be seeking to do everything himself, so that he is thus able to face up to all that comes his way. At the same time, "example is always the most powerful government: no one says a word and each one knows what is required." "To lead men to virtue, the way of precepts is long, but that of example is the shortest and the easiest. You teach something much better by works than by discourse, for example is always more powerful than words." (Retreat, 1856).

Brother François certainly forced himself to put into practice what he proposed in his notes. At the beginning, perhaps, he showed himself to be a little bit tense, as witnessed by the following prayer: "My God, by your Grace, grant that I may become a Brother Superior according to your heart, dedicated to all my duties, solely occupied with my employment, groaning under the weight of my charge, carrying it with courage as if I were faced with giving an account of it, with my eyes only on you, seeking only you, hoping only in you, fearing only you ..." (Retreat, 1842). Some years later, experience having made him wiser, he compares himself, with a half-smile at the corners of his lips, to a holy-water sprinkler, "which is filled with blessed water from the holy water basin, water which is scat-

tered in all directions through the mediation of the one who holds it.” (Retreat, 1856).

Moreover, this evolution may be noticed in his spiritual life as a whole, and more particularly in the period of his Generalate. Following on from the preceding period, the first years of this next period are still marked by complaints and groans about weaknesses, temptations and spiritual and bodily difficulties: “Lord, my soul is sick with a paralysis from which it suffers greatly ... Jesus, condemned to death, carries his cross to Calvary and dies there. The man condemned to death must carry his cross every day until his death.” (Retreat, 1845)” And fifteen years later, in 1859, calm and resigned, he finds that Psalm 138 suggests to him the following observation: “Lord, you see me and you know me perfectly. You know from all eternity and throughout all eternity what I have been, what I am, what I shall be, according to my fidelity or my infidelity.” (Retreat, 1859) The themes of suffering and of the cross become rarer and less vehement, while those of confidence and the love of God occupy more space, giving the impression of a journey towards peaceful contemplation. We notice, indeed, that the quotations from Holy Scripture are more abundant and that those concerning spirituality based on mortification are eclipsed by those of a Father Crasset fully oriented towards prayer.

The humility in which Brother François did not cease to take refuge finished up by drawing him less towards retiring within himself than towards opening himself to God. Pride is the principle of all moral decadence, because it is man pulling himself away from God and returning to himself. Humility, on the contrary, is the principle of all moral progress, because it is man coming out of himself in order to return to God. (Père Félix, *Conference de Notre Dame de Paris*, 1858) (Retreat, 1857).

This humility supposes prayer, a loving relationship with God. That Brother François found himself engaged in this way of life can be deduced from the fact that, of the 39 thoughts of the year 1859, twenty have bearing, more or less directly on God, while topics such as sin and temptation are scarcely mentioned. The interest is more turned towards people who, by an abandonment of full confidence in God, made themselves conquerors of all obstacles. In admiring

them, Brother François showed at least his desire to follow their example. We also feel that he is more inclined, in his notes, to admiration, praise and thanksgiving. Thus his spiritual life becomes more simple and his prayer progresses towards contemplation, as this following reflection allows us to understand: By the single action of putting oneself and keeping oneself on our knees in the presence of God, we make an act of adoration, of faith, of hope, of charity, of thanksgiving, of offering, of union, of petition, of praise and of blessing. (Retreat, 1859).

1860-1880: RETIREMENT

In his circular of 2nd July 1860, Brother François made this known to the Brothers: "The Institute, through the mercy of God and the protection of the august Virgin Mary, has ceaselessly enjoyed new growth, and my task has correspondingly become more and more difficult; and I must add that my steadily increasing infirmities make the task almost impossible for me... We have resolved to unite in a Capitular assembly the Brothers who have made profession of the four vows... The Brothers who have made the vow of Stability will take themselves to our Mother House of Notre Dame de Saint-Genis on the 14th July; the Chapter will open on the 16th of the same month." (Circular of Superiors General, Volume 2, pp. 400-401). On the 21st July following, in a new circular, Brother François gives an account of the works of the Chapter which, he says has entrusted the government of the Institute to dear Brother Louis-Marie, First Assistant, and has given him, for the good of all and for the greatest advantage of the Congregation, the authority and all the responsibility of which I have just discharged myself. (ibid. p. 403) While Brother François still remained juridically the Superior General, his deputy confided to him the direction of the house of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage. It is in this capacity that, as a retired man, he will live, as he says, the last stage of his life, during which he will faithfully continue to copy out his personal notes.

It turns out, however, that he does it with less verbosity than in the preceding years, scarcely surpassing 30 manuscript pages of his notebook, of format 13.5 by 9.5 cm. Moreover, the number of quotations drawn from his favourite authors, like Rodriguez, Judde,

Saint-Jure and even Marie-Ange Marin, diminishes noticeably, while the personal reflections become relatively more numerous.

According to the contents of the collection of these notes, we can distinguish two periods in this last stage.

The first stretches from 1860 to 1872. It is characterised by the most frequent mention of the love of God. Even if suffering is a theme which always keeps returning, it is so mentioned in order to state that suffering is eased by the fruits of sanctity, which fruits themselves are brought about by suffering. All this contributes to the general atmosphere of calm serenity. What dominates this period is the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales, whose *Life*, by Hamon, furnishes the greatest part of the notes of the year 1863. As a consequence, we may sense in them gentleness in relationship with people and simplicity in relationship with God, everything being permeated with good common sense. In 1866 there are, at the beginning of the personal notes, numbers, sometimes exclamations consisting of single words, or expressions rather than sentences, as, for example: "The love of Jesus and Mary for me, before and after my First Communion, before and after my religious profession! ... How happy we are in loving the good God! ... How happy we are with those who love the good God! ... How happy we are in seeking to have the good God loved!" (Retreat, 1866, No. 7). Then we find a series of extracts from authors: *The Life of Saint Marie-Madeleine de Pazzi*, Saint Jure, d'Argentan, de Godescard, de Rodriguez. The following year, 1867, presents a new distinctive feature. The Retreat is preached by Father Valuy, a Jesuit, following the least original of plans. Nevertheless, the notes reflect it faithfully. The days are marked, except for the fourth, by the indication of a theme each time, except for the second day. The first one is designated "Purgative life", the third "Illuminative life" and the fifth "Unitive life". The themes which the notes throw up are, however, only a faint echo of the Retreat, as we can see by this resumé: First day "Spiritual good fortune of our vocation"; second "Sin"; third "Mortification, vices, temptations"; fourth: "Chastity, tending to perfection"; fifth "Contemplation of the events of the life of Jesus, means of enjoying peace". As for the year 1871, three-thirds of the notes contain quotations from the life of the Curé d'Ars, marking a return to the topics of sufferings, the assaults of evil, which procedure seems like a turning towards the second stage.

The latter is distinguished by the small number of notes in each year, of which several, moreover, are repeated from years preceding the second period, although with a form a little different. At the beginning, notably in the years 1873-1874, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus set the tone. As a consequence, the sufferings and the Cross of Jesus again take up the top position of his anxieties, as in the dark years, but, it is true, in a spirit more oriented towards love. "It is necessary that you live totally abandoned to the mercy of Divine Providence, receiving with indifference joy and suffering, peace and trouble, health and sickness, and holding yourself always ready to suffer all in accordance with His holy will." (Retreat, 1874). Nevertheless, in the last years which follow, the accent bears rather on the accomplishment of the will of God, the gift of oneself and thanksgiving for gifts received, notably for one's vocation.

The image which Brother François presents in the days of his physical decline is that of a man visited by physical troubles, but a man calm and resigned, careful to keep himself always in the presence of God, nay, in intimacy with God through love, for God's glory and for François' own salvation. His line of conduct is that traced out for him by the Rule and the practice of the vows of religion. These matters are the goals that he must pursue on his life's journey so that, after he has been made capable of doing good among his confrères in the Institute for the extension of the Church, he may be led to eternal happiness. "My perfection consists in the exact observance of the Rule. With it go glory to God, salvation of souls, good of the Institute." (Retreat, 1874)

CONCLUSION

At the end of this account of the life of Brother François, I can make out for myself a feeble concept of his personality. In view of the functions that he had to fulfil we will doubtlessly find somewhat tarnished the image which arises from a reading of the notes which he made throughout the whole course of his life. It is evident that there is nothing about him of the general leading his troops with drums beating, stirring them to battle by inflammatory speeches. His style is just the opposite.

Recruited by Father Champagnat when he was quite young, formed by Champagnat during all his youth, François remained in the Founder's wake; we can even say in his shadow. His years of apostolate in the schools have not been brought to the fore after the fashion of a Brother Louis- Marie, of a Brother Jean-Baptiste, and others still. Alongside the Founder in the administration of the Institute, he scarcely emerged from anonymity in his activities. Never was his authority imposed. To do so would tear away the veil behind which he hid his natural timidity; it would exact the price of doing violence to his personality. In reading through the course of his notes, we can guess at the jolts or convulsive movements being registered just beneath the surface. During his Generalate rare are the memorable actions which history has recorded. One of these would perhaps be his very strong intervention against a Brother who, hurt in his self-love, violated the rules concerning the election of capitulants. Certainly, in his defence, it must be maintained that he bore a state of sickness throughout his life.

By this sketch we can, without difficulty, recognise a roughed-out picture as a consequence of our reading of the so-called Retreat notes. But it is important to go further, to dig more deeply beneath the visible characteristics. The first thing that we then discover is that the choice of such a man as successor to the Founder was providential. To be the living portrait of his predecessor and to employ all his resources to become such is certainly not the resolution of a man who seeks to shy away from the sheer difficulties of responsibility, who is the last person to seek exterior glory only. Rather the resolution is the action of a man with a will determined to sacrifice his own personality in order not spoil the spirit, the élan, given by the initiator.

That supposes real humility, well beyond the fine discourses which we can compose about it - sometimes to convince ourselves that we are practising it. Now, after examining the notes, we can convince ourselves that François has forced himself to fulfil his programme, even if at times, by way of contrast, the temptation to show his own originality has certainly not failed to raise its head. Among the notes of 1852 this one appears significant to me: "God wants me to walk in the way of abjection and humiliation, to devote myself to the practice of the little virtues which grow at the foot of

the cross. ...I consent to this, I want it, I undertake it with happiness" and, in parentheses, he adds: "(12 October, anniversary)", which is none other than the date of his election as Director General. There is no doubt that that resolution, so valuable and worthwhile for the past 13 years is equally as much for the years that are going to follow.

The result of such conduct is astonishing and perfectly conformable to the saying of St Paul: When I am weak, it is then that I am strong. During the 20 years of his government the number of Brothers went from 280 to 1,445 and the number of establishments from 48 to 379. And that allows only the external level to be seen. On a more interior level, in as much as the notes express his spiritual itinerary, it is to be noted that, instead of making a display of his own thoughts, of his personal experience, he shows scarcely anything but the wisdom drawn from the authors and the saints whom he considered as models for conduct and as masters for doctrine. He asserts that to form the judgement we must read and study solid and serious books, written by men who are judicious and wise, books which provide thoughts and reflections that are just, correct and solid, or that give examples of virtue that is sincere, strong, and constant. (Retreat, 1854).

We see that this humility has nothing of abasement for a man; quite the contrary. It enriches him, conferring on him that extra dimension of being, which he can find only in what he has not yet become. Humility is especially required, since, if man is going to look for the dimension that is lacking to him, he will do so through a life of prayer and of intense contemplation of him who stands close to us as the Essential Being, God. It is from here that the humility of Brother François emerges - he who in his notes did not cease to speak of praying and of prayer, of recommending to himself to act always in the Divine Presence. Thus he requests in the last prayer in the notes: "Come, therefore, O loving Master, reign over my spirit, over my memory, over my imagination, over my heart; come and reign over my thoughts, my judgements, my affections, and make me a partaker of the perfection of which you are the model and the principle. And for that I wish to force myself to live in recollection, to recall myself often to the presence of God, to preserve myself in calm and in peace."

THE OLD BOYS AND THE MARIST CHAMPAGNAT FAMILY MOVEMENT

by Brother Alexander LEFEBRE fms

"The Marist Family Movement is made up of those people who want to live their Christian life according to Marcellin Champagnat's spirit, and who commit themselves to keep the Movement's rules."¹¹⁸

In 1985 the 18th General Chapter of the Marist Brothers agreed to accept a request that had been made to the preceding General Chapter (1976) and voted on the above proposition. (The request had been made by the World Union of the Marist Old Boys.) The 1985 Chapter's decision on the motion has been recorded in our Constitutions and statutes as follows:

Statute 164.4

"The Marist Family is an extension of our Institute: it is a movement for people who find themselves attracted to the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, helpers, former students and friends are gathered together."

The same statute, No. 164.4, (from the Constitutions and Statutes of the Little Brothers of Mary, or Marist Brothers), goes on to specify that the Institute is to animate and co-ordinate the Movement's activities by putting appropriate structures in place.

The inauguration of the Marist Family Movement, (later on given the more specific name, the "Marist Champagnat Family Movement"), was largely the result of the initiative of our Old Boys. My purpose in this article is to delineate these efforts and also make known the key role that Brother Virgilio León Herrero played in establishing the Marist Champagnat Family Movement. In my opinion, he has been its visionary, prophet, and chief architect.

¹¹⁸ 18th General Chapter – Proposition 1, on former students.

I will start off by discussing the development of the Old Boys' movement. In examining the course of its history I will endeavour to show especially the kind of relationship that has existed between the Brothers and their former pupils, and how the Marist spirit developed among these same former pupils until it reached the stage where they asked to be allowed to share and live the Marist spirituality-even though they lived as lay people.

My main sources have been –

- The archives of the French Federation of Marist Old Boys, kept meticulously by Francis Jacquier of Marseilles (Secretary General of the F.F.M.O.B. 1958 – 1985)
- The outstanding work of Brother Antonio Martinez Estaun
- The 1535 pages written by Brother Virgilio León (the 'Marist Maverick')
- The archives of the former Beaucamp Marist Province
- The various articles – prescriptive and historical – published in the Bulletins of the Marist Brothers Institute
- Brother A. Lanfrey's thesis, 'French Catholics and the Schools' (1990)

(Most of my notes name the source document, mostly using just a number referring to the particular section of the F.F.M.O.B. archives. I started using this system of classification while preparing a more in-depth study on the topic - 'The Marist Champagnat Movement and Its Origins' Brother A. Lefebvre 1998)

TURNING POINT DATES/PERIODS:

I have taken six key dates from the 120years history, 1865 – 1985, of the Old Boys movement. These dates set the beginnings of periods that I will deal with in this article: -

- 1865 The founding of the first Marist Association in Beaucamps The Family Spirit
- 1955 The founding of the World Union of Old Boys at the time of the beatification of our Blessed Founder. (National Federations of Old Boys associations were also founded in a number of countries.)
Marist Spirit
- 1967 – 1968 - The Marist Brothers' 16th General Chapter
The period of change engendered by Vatican Council II The 16th Chapter

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initiated a complete turn-around in the Brothers' relations with lay people and, more especially, with their Old Boys

A Turning-Point

- 1974 The World Congress of Marist Old Boys held in Lyons
Under the initiative and urging of Brother Virgilio León, the Old Boys decided to make a written submission to the 17th General Chapter, which was to be held in 1976. This submission was made up of several motions concerning the Marist Family.

The Marist Family

- 1976 The 17th General Chapter – the Chapter asked the Old Boys to continue with their experimentation and reflection

The Extended Marist Family

- 1985 The 18th General Chapter which decided on making the Marist Family a priority for us all.

The Marist Family Movement

The Marist Family as an extension of the Institute

Abbreviations: - O.B. - Old Boys

M.F. – Marist Family

M.O.B. - Marist Old Boys

F.F.M.O.B. – French Federation of Marist Old Boys

I. 1865 – 1955 THE OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION – THE FAMILY SPIRIT

A. Foundation & Development

As far as I know, the first Marist Old Boys Association was the one founded at our Boarding School at Beaucamps, northern France, on 20th June, 1865.¹¹⁹ Others were founded over the course of the years – first in France, then in other countries where the Brothers established themselves. So it was, then, that Brother Jules Victorin, the Institute's first archivist, was able to write in 1950 – "In almost all the Provinces of the Institute, Old Boys Associations have been formed by now, or are in the process of being formed."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Annals of the Beaucamp community, page 89.

¹²⁰ Bulletin of the Institute, No. 138.

B. The Association's Aim

The first association –the one at the Beaucamps boarding school –was organised on the initiative of the then Brother Director, for a specific purpose – “to maintain the bonds formed between teachers and pupils, and those formed amongst the pupils themselves”, by bringing together “those past pupils who are happy to take part in a family-like get-together, held just as much for their enjoyment as for the school's advantage.”

So, we can say that the main purposes of the Associations are – as their very name, (AMICALE, in French), indicates –

- i. that the groups meet to maintain/develop friendships and a family-like spirit;
- ii. that they should work for the “formation” of their members;
- iii. that they be willing to help the members' old schools

Note: The associations aim at helping their members grow and persevere in their faith.

This is why the General Chapter listed the Old Boys Association as one of the Brothers' apostolic activities; also, this aim is found in the Rules of most of the Associations. And it is also found, most explicitly, in the writings of our Brothers Superior General.

The Brothers teaching in parish schools have been able to practise this form of their apostolate because their former pupils can easily keep in contact with them in the parish where the Old Boys Association, to some extent, acts as a kind of Parish Youth Club.

The Old Boys Association has been very much – “a strong source of support for the Brothers' school”, and for the Catholic school system in general. There can be no doubt at all of the help the Old Boys have given their schools: this help has been their chief support. Overall, but especially during certain periods, the history of Catholic education has shown that its very existence has been most precarious. The majority of the Brothers' schools in France – and in some other countries, too – have been small parish schools: the Old Boys Associations have played a leading role in keeping these schools going – in fact, in ensuring their survival.

C. The Brothers and their Old Boys

To start with, our superiors were somewhat hesitant about starting Old Boys Associations because they saw them as an extra burden on the Brothers and, also, they were afraid that this work might interfere with the Brothers' religious life, but they soon started to encourage the Associations

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when they found them to be a useful apostolic activity.

All the same, it was not until 1922 that mention was made in our Common Rules of the Old Boys – and that was just a brief mention – “to encourage the Associations”. Only in 1947 were the Old Boys Associations given explicit mention in the Common Rules and support given to this form of the apostolate that had been going on in our Provinces for nearly 80 years. The Associations were seen as – “a necessary complement to a Christian school”, in the same category as – “other means of perseverance”. (Art. 230). Still, the 13th General Chapter, in 1932, had given the opinion that – “the Old Boys Associations produce excellent results, both religiously and socially”.

D. *MARIST’ Old Boys Associations*

Be that as it may, relations between the Brothers and their Old Boys have always been characterised by great simplicity and an evident family spirit. Simplicity, a family spirit, and an especial love of Mary – the three chief characteristics of Marist spirituality – are found, time and again, in the Old Boys Associations’ publications.

II. 1955 – 1967 THE WORLD UNION FEDERATIONS AND CONFEDERATIONS – MARIST SPIRIT

A. Foundation & Development

1955 is a most significant year for both the Old Boys and the Brothers. It was the year in which Marcellin Champagnat was beatified, and a very large number of Old Boys, from all over the world, gathered in Rome for the celebration. The following day the very first International Meeting of Marist Old Boys was held at the College of San Leone Magno. It had been organised by the Italian Federation, and it laid the foundations for what was to become the World Union of Old Boys. This Union was founded at that meeting and the Old Boys present agreed to meet again in 1957 to finalise and adopt the Union’s rules. The organising of this second Congress was entrusted to the Spanish Federation. It was held in Madrid in 1957: it discussed and adopted the proposed rules, and elected Mr Aunos as President, (replacing Ugo Bombelli, of Italy). His term of office was to run until the next World Union Congress. Already, the Old Boys Associations in several countries – Belgium, Argentina, Italy, Spain and France – had formed National Federations, and many other federations or Confederations were

founded subsequent to the founding of the world Union. Within ten years of that, Marist Old Boys Associations around the world had organised themselves into some form of federation at Provincial, National, International and World levels, and a number of reunions and congresses had been held.

Also in 1955 the Brothers held the 15th General Chapter, electing Brother Charles-Raphael to succeed Brother Leonida as Superior General.

B. The Aims of the World Union: Some Spiritual Objectives _____

The World Union had the same aims as the Associations – viz. to help the Old Boys persevere as practising Christians, and to support the Brothers' schools and Christian education in general.

These were set out clearly in the rules adopted at the Madrid Congress and in its Charter, promulgated two years after it. The most noticeable feature was the emphasis put on the 'spiritual objectives': these were continually reiterated by successive Presidents and World Congresses – "the primary aim of the Association is to promote the Christian life of our Old Boys, and our Rules must be very explicit on this point."¹²¹ The apostolic dimension of the Christian life was also plainly declared. Mr Monette, the 4th President of the World Union, had been a disciple of Cardinal Cardijn: the plan of action he proposed started off with the apostolate¹²² – "It is up to us lay people to continue the Brothers' work in respect of the Old Boys."

The Brothers followed the Superiors' example and supported the move to federate branches of the Old Boys Association. Our Superior General, Brother Leonida, was very keen to attend the Foundation Assembly of Old Boys in 1955. The 15th General Chapter in 1958 stated that – "after the schools, work with the Old Boys Associations should have preference over all other activities." The Chapter went further than that: it said that each (Old Boy) group should have a Brother appointed to be its Adviser – "it is indispensable that each group should have attached to it a Brother competent to act as an adviser: the adviser to the World Union would be one of the Assistants General, and its President could count on having a Brother as the Union's secretary General." I believe that the influence of the Brothers carrying out this responsibility plus that of the successive Presidents, (all men of outstanding calibre), have been decisive factors in the progress of the World Union.

¹²¹ Resolution of the Mar del Plata Congress.

¹²² 26.10.21.03.

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Amongst the other deliberations of the same General Chapter, reference was made to – “Marist Co-Workers,” i.e., lay people chosen to help in our Institute’s work, having their own special obligations and privileges –being a kind of Third Order of our Institute.¹²³ But nothing further came of this idea.

C. The Marist Spirit “Associations that are unmistakably Marist, permeated by Christian spirituality.”¹²⁴

From this we can see that the World Union’s intention was that the Old Boys Associations were to have a spiritual purpose. The new element here was that they wanted this spirituality to be derived from that of the Brothers – “the Marist Old Boys’ spirituality is modelled on that of the Marist Brothers’ Institute.”¹²⁵

“The Old Boys are the spiritual sons of the Marist Brothers, and their way of living and acting will bear the stamp of the Marist Brothers’ Institute.”¹²⁶ The term – ‘Marist Spirit’ recurs again and again in the Old Boys’ writings where it is given a most explicit meaning – “Our outstanding characteristic must be a spirit that is essentially Marist –i.e. one that is grounded in devotion to the most Blessed Virgin and in the practise of those virtues so meaningfully represented by the Three Violets badge.”¹²⁷

“We must always remember that the Marist Brothers’ Institute was founded by Marcellin Champagnat, (whose beatification we have just celebrated). Devotion to him must have a special place of honour among us. the ‘Hermitage’ and the other places significant in Marcellin’s life must also be places of pilgrimage to us, so that we can better get to know Marcellin, his life, virtues and accomplishments, and so acquire and live his spirit.”

III. 1967 –1972 AGGIORNAMENTO

A. The Brothers’ Renewal

The two years, 1967-68, were a decisive time for the Institute of the Marist Brothers. At Vatican II, which had just finished, the Church had

¹²³ RCirculars of the Superior General 1958, Volume 22, page 291.

¹²⁴ M. Nolasco, 1957.

¹²⁵ Internal Regulations, Article 17

¹²⁶ Letter

¹²⁷ The Congress of Lima.

asked that each Religious Order and Congregation should hold an extraordinary General Chapter – “so as to implement the changes and updating that our present times require us to make – in teaching and in other areas that the council Documents list.”¹²⁸ We Marist Brothers – “tried to respond to this challenge” – at our 16th General Chapter held in 1967. This Chapter had a most profound effect on our Institute and, as an indirect consequence, on the relations between the Brothers and their Old Boys. According to the title of Brother Basilio’s 1968 Circular, this chapter had to be – “a Chapter for Today’s World.” Following the example given by the Church in the Council, we had to view people and the world in a very different light. No longer were lay people to be seen as “people of the world”, whom we were to mistrust and be on our guard against: in today’s world – “our community must be open to the wider community” which “will derive its own enrichment from this contact,” and we must also be open to the lay people we work with on a basis of equality.

So, in this same way, our Old Boys Associations were invited to collaborate with us, in an effective way, in the work of Marist school education. “Since they are living in the midst of the world and its problems, they can play a dynamic role in giving youth a fully rounded education.”¹²⁹

B. The Old Boys' Aggiornamento

Even before the Brothers’ ‘renewal’ General Chapter in 1967, the Old Boys had already accepted the need for updating: the World Union Congress held in Mar del Plata in 1964, called itself the ‘Counciliar’ Congress and, as a consequence, started to align itself with the ideas being expressed at Vatican II. Over the following years, statements made by the Union’s office-holders and in numerous articles in various reviews, all insisted on the Old Boys’ obligation to move with the Church on the path of updating and renewal. Proof of this can be adduced from checking through various issues of ‘UNITAS’, (the Union’s publication), covering these years, e.g., “in preparing these pages we have one, sole purpose –to help the members of the Old Boys Associations co-operate wholeheartedly in the renewal process that the Holy Spirit has introduced into our present-day world through the medium of the Second Vatican Council (1965).”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Constitutions of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, 1986. Presentation.

¹²⁹ Document of Apostolic Life, Article 4.

¹³⁰ 10,24,01.

When Mr Monette opened the Brussels Congress of the World Union, he stated that its 'paramount objective' was renewal and updating – "The time has come for the Marist Old Boys to look anew at the aims of their Associations, to get into step with today's world... to breathe new life into their Associations by adopting the new perspectives of Vatican II."¹³¹

The Old Boys' leaders believed that this updating must be just as much in a Marist spirit as had been the Associations' previous conduct. (It is very surprising that the General Chapter, when giving directives for the Old Boys, said nothing at all about the 'Marist Spirit', nor about the 'Marist Family'.) However, in his message to the Rio Congress in 1973, Brother Basilio, the Superior General, returned to these elements in the World Union's Rules, emphasising that they are essential and exactly what gives the Associations extra dimensions – "the renewal must be achieved by basing it on key human values, ones that are Christian values, too, as well as on a spirit that is typically Marist."

The Rio Congress went on to revise the World Union's Rules so as to bring them into line with the new directions and emphases of both the Council and the Chapter ... This Congress's inspiration was distinctly more 'MARIST' than that of previous Congresses – as can be seen in the introduction to its revised Rules: "So as to ensure a complete fidelity to the Marist spirit the World Union will remain closely united with the Marist Brothers. We recognise their Superior General as our First Superior, we place ourselves under Mary's protection and the patronage of Blessed Marcellin Champagnat." And, a little further on – "The Old Boys will wear the THREE VIOLETS badge which symbolises the virtues of Humility, Simplicity and Modesty that Blessed Marcellin chose to be the special characteristics of his disciples ... a filial devotion to the most Blessed Virgin will be our distinctive spiritual feature."

Even more thought was given to the necessary renewal. The Union's publication, 'UNITAS', printed some articles by Alain Planet on this new mystique which –

- i) should revivify the Old Boys Associations; and
- ii) should find its life-giving food

a)first of all, in the post-Conciliar Church, but also

b)in the spirituality special to the Institute that we are all part of.

¹³¹ 10,26,17.

IV. BROTHER VIRGILIO LEÓN HERRERO

Brother Paul Sester, Assistant General, was the Brother Superior General's delegate to the European Old Boys Congress held in Seville in 1981. Part of his opening address was as follows - "We are here under the aegis of the Marist Family. This movement originated in Spain, but is now spreading elsewhere. We should be sufficiently well motivated to do all we can to see it succeed."

There can be no disputing the fact that the Marist Family originated in Spain: that is undeniable. I was daring enough to go even further when speaking at the European Colloquium of the Champagnat Movement held in Francheville in 1986. I said, "The idea of the Marist Family is the brain-child of Brother Virgilio León." A few months later, when Brother Virgilio died in Barcelona, 6th September 1986, someone wrote in the bulletin of the Spanish National Federation of Old Boys - "Brother Virgilio can be honoured as being the promoter of the Marist Family idea ... thanks to his persistence, this concept was accepted by the majority of delegates at the 17th General chapter in 1976."

A. 'SPARKS' – A Man Ahead of His Time

Brother Virgilio León was a member of the Province of Catalonia. After he had completed his religious and university studies, he held a number of positions before becoming Provincial (1966 – 1972). Because of his liveliness and dynamism the Catalan Brothers nicknamed him - "LIVEWIRE". And he himself, at the time he made the vow of stability, described himself as "THE MARIST MAVERICK". He defended his ideas of a 'Better Marist World' and of the 'Marist Family' and promoted them at every opportunity. The Marist Family was a spiritual concept that he tried increasingly to deepen and clarify by meditation, prayer and action. Having done that, he then made efforts to get it established among various groups he was involved with – communities of Brothers, school staffs, and Old Boys associations.

Right at the very start of his time as Provincial, he founded a magazine for the Province – the 'Marist Family' – and wrote an article for it on the Marist Family idea. He called this article his 'Profession of Faith' and in it showed that the concept of a Marist Family could be given a firm theological base.

The Marist Family draws into unity all the various kinds of people who are in contact with the Brothers –especially the people involved with

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our schools. The bonds joining all the members of this family are much stronger than those of a mere relationship based on friendship, because they are bonds of brothership-in-Christ and Christian faith. But these fraternal bonds need to be strengthened by action – by a whole series of activities which draw us closer together, which unite us, which produce greater solidarity with one another, which make us closer and more of a family. All these activities should also make more visible and tangible the bonds which join us together. These activities should clearly create a network of relationships which nourish our appreciation, our love and a distinct awareness of our belonging to the same family – God's family. But it is Mary's wider family too, and Blessed Marcellin's family as well – with Mary as mother and Marcellin as father. This family had its origin in the first community at La Valla, whose style was that of Marcellin himself – "its style was that of a family, full of kindness, communicative and sensitive ... containing all those good qualities which go to make up what we call a "true family spirit"."

Brother Virgilio attended the 16th General Chapter (1967 – 1968) in his capacity of Provincial. He made known to the other delegates his concern for the Old Boys with whom he had been associated for many years at various levels of co-operation. At the Chapter, also, he experienced the reality of the larger Marist Family, living and working with delegates from all over the world. He became more aware of the fact that the basic charism of our Institute, the solid foundation on which it is built, is that we are all conscious of being part of a large family – the Marist Family.¹³²

B. Adviser to The Spanish Old Boys Federation 1972 – 1976 "We are all one Family."¹³³

When his term as Provincial finished in 1972, Brother Virgilio was appointed to the task of adviser to the Spanish Federation of Marist Old Boys. It was while he was in this position that he played a key role in the development of the Marist Family idea – right through until it reached world-wide level in our Institute.

When Brother Virgilio took up this work with the Marist Old Boys Associations, many of them were blaming the changes that had occurred in society and in the Church for the crises facing those institutions that were obliged to make changes. Brother Virgilio gave them something else to focus on – something that would be spiritually live-giving for the World

¹³² Brother A. Martinez, page 552.

¹³³ Brother A. Martinez, page 792. Marist Family, No. 42, March 1973.

Union as well as for the Old Boys Associations in Spain: this 'something' was the 'Marist Family' which was then being spoken of at length at the many Old Boys meetings he attended in his capacity of national Adviser – meetings of the Spanish Federation, meetings of the world Union in both Europe and the Americas, and at various gatherings of the Brothers.

V. THE LYONS CONGRESS – THE MARIST FAMILY

At the Rio Congress in 1970, the presidency of the World Union was passed on to the French Federation of Old Boys: they were given the task of preparing and organising the next Congress which was to be held in Lyons in 1974. A committee was set up to attend to that, and it started work straightaway.

A. The General Assembly of the Spanish Old Boys Associations in March 1973¹³⁴ "To Create a Real Family"

The Spanish Federation held a General Assembly in March 1973, at which they renewed their Rules and elected new office bearers. These new directors took as the main objective of their term in office the creation of a real, a genuine, 'Marist Family' which would be made up of the Brothers, Old Boys, pupils' parents, lay teachers and pupils in each school, in each Province, throughout the entire country.

B. Toulouse – June 1973¹³⁵

In this year the Council of the Lyons Federation held its meeting in Toulouse. Two members of the Spanish Federation and Brother Virgilio (their Adviser), attended it and shared with its members their resolution – taken three months previously – to form a real 'Marist Family'. The French were enamoured of this idea and, at the conclusion of their meeting, took the following three resolutions: -

that the Spanish Federation should make an in-depth study of the 'Marist Family' project, then send their findings first to the Very Reverend Brother Superior General, and then to the other Old Boys Federations:

that an article on the 'Marist Family' should be published in 'Unitas' in the five main languages:

¹³⁴ Brother A. Martincz, page 807.

¹³⁵ 10.41.18.

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that the World Union's administration should address a request to the Very Reverend Brother Superior General, asking that Old Boys' representatives be permitted to attend the next General Chapter so that they could have a voice in matters that concern them.

C. The 'Unitas' Article on the 'Marist Family'

This article was written by Alain Planet (delegate of the Young European Old Boys)¹³⁶ and appeared in issue No. 41 of 'Unitas' in December 1973. Its title was – "Actualising the Greater Family" – and it was an extremely accurate re-statement of Brother Virgilio's ideas. It concerned Marist schools – "Since Marist schools are the 'raison d'être' of the Old Boys Associations, they should make up educative communities, formed of Brothers, lay teachers, parents, pupils and – very importantly – Old Boys; these latter should be members so that the others could see the 'finished product' of a Marist school ... Since this larger Marist Family is an extension of the Marist school community, it must live a common spirit – the Marist spirit! Of course it is the Brothers who are the heirs, possessors and guardians of this spirit, and it is their task to make it the spirit that vivifies the larger Marist Family community: the Old Boys' support of the Brothers is vital in achieving this task. What we are starting is a huge initiative, and no one can know what it will develop into in the future – but we can imagine! Perhaps in the future each school will be an authentic base community ... perhaps in each of these communities its members will exercise a mutual evangelising effect on one another ... perhaps our Marist schools will radiate the Marist spirit throughout each of these communities ..."

D. The 7th World Congress –Lyons, 1974¹³⁷

The Old Boys 7th World Congress opened in Lyons in August, 1974. Under Brother Virgilio's leadership, the Spanish had prepared a working paper on the project of the Marist Family. This paper was set out in four sections

- Marist Spirit
- Marist Family
- the Marist Brothers
- the Marist Family in Education

¹³⁶ 10.41.14.

¹³⁷ 10.42.04. Sections 06 and 07.

The paper had a 14-points conclusion, but only the first five of these were passed by the Congress in general assembly, and it was decided that the Spanish Federation should continue their study of the final points relating to the Marist Family.

Accordingly, a meeting was held in 1985 in Badalona, near Barcelona, and the European Federations were invited to send delegates to it. It had at first been envisaged as a study meeting, but there were so many representatives from national Federations—Belgium, France, Great Britain, Ireland and Spain – that it finished up as an official international meeting.

The main aim of the working sessions was 'to reach accord on the proposals set down in the final part of the study on the Marist Family' in the document that had been tabled at the Lyons Congress. Discussion went on for a long time but, eventually, the delegates unanimously approved a final draft. (This final document comes further on in this essay.)

VI. 1976 THE 17TH GENERAL CHAPTER

***The Extended Marist Family*¹³⁸**

This General Chapter opened in Rome in October 1976. Mr Rahilly, the World Union President, had sent to the preparatory commission, in good time, the report and conclusions of the Old Boys on the extended Marist Family project. The General Chapter set up a sub-committee of delegates to make an exhaustive study of the Old Boys' submission. Brother Virgilio was a member of this sub-committee.

As well as sending in this report and its resolutions, the Old Boys followed up on their decision – taken at their Toulouse meeting in 1973 – to send – "a letter to the Reverend Brother Superior General asking that some Old Boys' delegates might, at the next General Chapter, attend those sessions discussing matters that concern the Old Boys." This request was granted, and a Chapter sub-committee had a meeting with some Old Boys.

***A. Old Boys' Suggestions concerning the Marist Family*¹³⁹**

The following were the recommendations passed at the Badalona meeting: -

¹³⁸ 09.04.

¹³⁹ 10.45.05.

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- The Marist Family comprises a community of people united by the same ideal, the same spirituality, and whose way of acting is inspired by the Marist spirit and directed by the desire to accomplish the same aim – i.e. to work actively, guided by Blessed Marcellin's charism, for the good of the Church and the good of society.
- This spirit of Blessed Marcellin imbues and animates the Brothers' apostolate, and can be seen in it. Old Boys who feel attracted to being this kind of person, to feeling and acting this way, may want to become members of the Marist Family. They may feel they have the right to be members because they are Old Boys, but a far stronger claim to do so is the fact that they are actively helping in the Institute's work.
- The Confederation, (N.B. this is on the part of the European Federation), wishes to have a much closer spiritual attachment to the Marist Institute, and develop an active, mutual alliance of the Brothers, the Old Boys, the lay teachers and the children's parents – and that this mutual understanding be fostered by frequent meetings of all concerned. We believe that this wish to have a deeper mutual understanding and an active exchange of viewpoints in co-operation is a wonderful thing, and that it answers a real need of our times. It is something that we must maintain, no matter what the circumstances.
- So that this incorporation in the Marist Family may be fruitful and efficacious, the Marist authorities are asked -
 - a) to make a study, in collaboration with the Old Boys, of possible ways of participating that would fit in with the specific aims of the Institute;
 - b) for a deepening of the mystique and spirituality that should be lived by those lay people who are in close relationship with the Brothers;
 - c) that a study be made of how best to lead to a Christian maturity in the active relationships those Old Boys will engage in.
- We ask the General Chapter to deal with this project, however they may feel is appropriate, but – at the same time – leave the Federations free to discover the best base possible for the stance and direction the Marist Family should take.
- That the Chapter also study ways of forming closer links between lay people and the Institute, but leave each Federation free to choose the

connections that most suit it.

B. The Meeting of the Sub-Commission and the Group of Old Boys

The Old Boys' request that they be allowed to take part in the General Chapter on matters that involved them was acceded to when, on 23rd October, the relevant sub-commission held a meeting with five Old Boys representatives: these were three National Presidents --Mr R Ronconi (Italy), Mr G Tron (France), and Mr McGrath (Great Britain), as well as two other members of the Italian Federation – Messrs Baldi and d'Antonio. The meeting was frank, but courteous, and its main results were: -

The first two points caused no problems since they were just stated general principles that all accepted. But the matter of relations between the Old Boys and the other groups making up the Marist Family – in particular, the Association of Pupils' Parents – were more complex. The Old Boys were a little afraid of – “being lost among all the others”, and wanted to keep their separate identity.

There were also problems with the relationship between the Old Boys and the Brothers. Despite what the Constitutions had to say, despite the Statutes of previous General Chapters, and despite the directives of Superiors, there were many Brothers who were not interested in Old Boys Associations. They had so much to do with their many duties that they hardly believed in such Associations. It seemed, though, that the main reasons for this were a lack of information and discussion. On the Old Boys' side, they needed to get away from dependence on the Brothers, to become genuinely autonomous and –as well – to become well acquainted with the Marist spirituality they were wanting to live.

Because of the declining number of Brothers, it was necessary to encourage the formation of a devoted group of lay collaborators, including not only the usual sections found in the Marist Family but also bringing into it all the friends of the Brothers, forming them all into a permanent ‘hard core’. (This measure was proposed by Brother Virgilio.)

After all the discussion, it was decided that the best way of putting the idea of the extended Marist Family into practice was to start from wherever there were hearts and minds ready to enter into this form of complete collaboration.

The sub-committee asked the General Chapter to accept the ‘resolutions’ on the Marist Family as a working document – as the World Union had suggested.

C. Brother Virgilio's Contribution to the 17th General Chapter

When Brother Virgilio arrived at the General Chapter, he was completely tired out. He took an active part in all the Chapter work, but he also made sure that he rested as well. "My health is amazing! Thanks to having regular sleep, a half-hour of exercise each morning when I get up, and spending time on sport and swimming on Wednesdays and Sundays, I feel really renewed!"¹⁴⁰ Two days after having been involved in the discussions with the Old Boys – that is, five days before the end of the Chapter – he distributed to the Capitulants an 18-page report on the Marist Family – "my only purpose in doing this was to offer them a tangible result of my thinking and reflecting on this topic. I had started considering it long before the Chapter began, and this report includes what we have shared during it."

This long report was a detailed, in-depth support of the suggestions proposed by the Old Boys to the General Chapter. We shall now try to sift out the report's main elements about the Marist Family – as Brother Virgilio saw them.

C.1 The First Element: Development of the Pluralistic Dynamism of the Institute's Charism in Planning the Future¹⁴¹ – Revitalising our Schools and Colleges

In his introduction, Brother Virgilio defined how he saw the problem: - "At the beginning of the Chapter and in preliminary discussions with Brothers coming from widely different countries and continents, I have been greatly surprised to find these delegates expressing views that are so much in agreement with what I am putting forward in this paper. Also, I see that – though perhaps starting from a different premise – the delegates are on the way to find new and courageous solutions to the difficulties we are experiencing in preserving our schools and colleges, and putting new life into them."

a) Notes & Conclusions

Throughout all our Provinces we have to be realistic and acknowledge:

- i) a staggering decrease in our number of Brothers,
- ii) an increase in the average age of those still with us,

¹⁴⁰ Brother A. Martinez, page 916.

¹⁴¹ 10.46.07.

iii) and a noticeable increase in the number of pupils in our schools
Three consequences of this are –

i) that we have had to employ many more lay teachers,

ii) that in each such case our small 'community of Brothers' finds itself in danger of being overwhelmed by the much larger number of lay teaching staff,

iii) that there is some threat to the viability of our community life.

We can easily see the results –

i) the enormous diminution of the 'Marist Community's' influence in the 'school staff community', especially in the area of Christian formation, and

ii) a concomitant lessening of the impact of the relatively few Brothers' 'witness of the consecrated life' when they are 'lost' in a crowd of 60, 80 or 100 lay teachers.

"Brothers, this situation makes us ask ourselves questions. The most pertinent are –

Is it fair for us to continue to be unwilling to have confidence in our lay teachers? and

Once they have been well trained and prepared, should we not willingly entrust to them some of the tasks that we are no longer able to do ourselves?

b) Bold Enough to try New Ways : the Marist Educative Community

In this situation our first step must be to re-examine our school apostolate, which must continue to be our preferred apostolic field. Above all, we must aim at "increasing our competent human resources, trying to achieve strong bonds among the diverse sections involved in running the college ...the educative community is one of the most important elements in up-to-date education". The Brothers' community has its own special role in the educative community – "that of forming in it a truly dynamic unity", and of being in it "a leaven of committed lay people".

As well as that, "we Marist Brothers must open up new initiatives ... be able to cross former barriers, so that the educative community can definitively form itself into a nucleus of dedicated lay people that can give itself a new persona by sharing, and making its own our specific aim in education and our particular spirituality."

c) New Horizons for Marcellin's Charism

"If Marcellin were alive today and saw the present circumstances of Catholic schools, he would repeat his saying, "We must have Brothers",

but he would add to it, "And we also need dedicated lay people!" Today's Church asks for a re-commitment of ourselves – "Religious should give a great deal of attention to 'animating' the laity: they should 'consecrate' themselves to forming dedicated lay people by inspiring them with the spirit and standards of their own Religious Congregations." But, in working for these aims, we Religious must not develop ways that would, in anyway, lessen our significant presence in Catholic schools.

So, then, the Marist Family should have the school as its base. The school and the 'educative community' is the Marist Family's nucleus, and it is there that it will truly develop into maturity and, at the same time, attain its aim. "As for us Brothers, we must live a spirituality that is more in line with our present times since our vocation is to be present-day apostles: this spirituality must be more open and more easily shared, in its aspects of poverty and Gospel simplicity, with all the members of the Marist Family ... While staying on close to our schools, it is absolutely necessary that at every possible time we act conjointly in our evangelising apostolate with those groups of lay people who have been attracted by the essence of our charism, who are dedicated workers in the same apostolate, and who share our spirituality – especially its marial and fraternal dimensions ..."

Br Virgilio summed up his ideas as follows: -

- "It is possible to achieve, in a structural way and in an acceptable fashion, an efficient integration of lay people in the Marist Family. Fitting in with our basic objective of evangelisation and into the scheme of our charism, these people can share in our spirituality, adapting it to their situation as lay people."
- When looking for foundations on which to base the Marist Family, we should remember that we Brothers are a part of the Marist 'tree' which has grown into different marial congregations – the Fathers, we Brothers, the Marist Sisters, the Marist Missionary Sisters and the Marist Third Order. Let us also remember that not only is there no obstacle to our particular charism putting forth a branch of its own, but we can show three good reasons why this can happen -

i) First of all, one important part of our apostolate is to animate lay people. What Vatican II asks of us, the new ideologies now plaguing mankind, and our considerable number of lay associates, all make the development of this branch very necessary.

ii) Secondly, the institutional charism manifested by the Brothers in their apostolic work and witness can also incarnate itself in chosen souls who – without being called to celibacy – have passed through our schools

or have, in some way or another, had close contact with us and so have acquired our spirit and an understanding of our objectives.

iii) Finally, in order to gather these people together, to teach them, and to nurture their attraction to our charism, we need to have a structure that will provide stability for the future, but yet leave itself open to any adaptation that is necessary."

All this, of course, implies that changes have to be made – both by the Brothers, and by our lay associates. Our Institute must undergo a radical change in outlook, of perspective – and then change quite a number of things. We have to find a suitable definition for "dedicated" lay people: we have to give them a "mystique" similar to our own, but adapted to their lay status: we have to establish what are their duties and privileges in regard to our Institute and our undertakings: we have to get going a means which, easily and freely, will prompt dialogue, sharing, for short or longer periods, community life – all this so that we can share our "spiritual possessions" with them ... We must also give thought to the formation of these dedicated people – especially their Christian and catechetical formation.

C.2 Second Part – New Perspectives for the Pluralistic Dynamism of our Institute's Charism

This second part of Brother Virgilio's report deals with ways of putting into practice the principles contained in the first section.

a) The Domain of Education

We get many calls from the Church, from society, and from those close to us to help them in the work of evangelisation –especially to help with young people. Many of these requests come from the lay teachers in our schools, and from our Old Boys. There are many ways in which we can respond to their entreaties, but a very new way is to train our lay teachers – in particular, those who are committed Christians – in catechetics and, also, to help them understand our spirituality so that they can share it.

b) The Marist Family – A Marist Spirituality for Lay People

In his second paragraph, Brother Virgilio gives us glimpses of the composition of the Marist Family, of the dispositions needed by lay people who want to become part of it, and of the implications that it has for our Institute. Lay people who want to become members of the Marist Family must prepare for it by a deepening of their Christian life, a greater commitment to Christian values in education, and a more serious Christian and

marial formation. On its side, our Institute must involve itself in this preparation and formation in all sorts of ways, but especially by opening our communities to the candidates: this is necessary so that these dedicated lay people can share in the essential characteristics of our apostolic spirituality, and experience in depth how we live the essential Gospel values. What now remains is how to make specific this 'Marist spirituality for lay people.'

Brother Virgilio, looking to the future, puts forward a number of ideas. The following are some of what he thinks will happen –

- As concerns the Brothers – we must set about developing a wholesome openness which will lead us to share, reasonably and fairly, all our spiritual and intellectual goods, our family spirit, and even our material goods, with those who have committed themselves to being members of the Marist Family. As members, they have the right to share in the Institute's goods.
- As regards the Old Boys – they have to revitalise the part that Christian life plays in their associations by forming groups that will do in-depth work on the Faith, that will help one another by sharing their faith experiences, that will enable them to make their own specific elements of our particular Marist spirituality. Each Association should form a group that, through their close attachment to it, can integrate themselves in the Marist Family.
- The Lay Teachers – for their part, they should try to align themselves, both affectively and effectively, with the principles that form the foundations of Marist pedagogy.

D. The General Chapter's Decisions

The 29th of October was to be the closing day of the Chapter, so on the 27th the delegates dealt with the question of the Old Boys Associations and the concomitant project of the Marist Family. These topics were presented by Brother René Gilbert Joos, the General Councillor attached to the Old Boys. He told the delegates that "because of shortage of time, the working party had been able to make only a preliminary approach to these matters. Accordingly, the General Council would have to study them in more detail after the Chapter."

Going back to the sub-committee's meeting with the Old Boys' delegates, Brother Joos reported that the main point that came out of their discussions was how best to bring into existence the proposed extended Marist Family. It was thought that the movement should go back to its

base, and start with collaborators who had the necessary spirit and ideals.

Finally, the following suggestions were proposed to the Chapter in general assembly:

i) that the General Chapter accept all the general principles and recommendations, except the proposal that one of the General Councillors should be overall General Adviser;

ii) that the General Council should, as soon as it could, appoint a Brother as Adviser to the world Union of Old Boys;

iii) **that the General Chapter should send a message of appreciation and encouragement to the Old Boys.

The General Chapter approved of these suggestions in its meeting the following day, and we quote below the most important passages from the message to the Old Boys. In the first passage the Chapter accepted the definition of the Marist family that had been drawn up at Badalona, and then sent on to the preparatory commission: in the second, the Old Boys are urged to continue to develop their thoughts and practical experimentations on the Marist Family project.

**** The Message –**

The Members of the 17th General Chapter of the Marist Brothers to their Old Boys.

Rome, 30 October 1976

Dear Friends,

The idea of the extended Marist Family conceived as a community of all the people who can lay claim to the same ideal, to the same spirituality, to acting in the same Marist way that Marcellin Champagnat inspires, appears to us, members of the Chapter, not only as worthwhile and thought-provoking, but also as highly desirable.

The Chapter recognises the need for both you and us to look deeper into our shared objectives of a more thorough spiritual approachment, and a more intimate collaboration among the members of this extended Marist Family.

We, the Chapter, encourage each Federation, each Association, to continue looking into all aspects of the project, to share their experiences and the practical things they have been able to do – no matter how small-scale they may be – which bring about a deeper appreciation of mystique and spirituality that their various groups and dedicated lay people closely associated with the Marist Family should live.

For all the members of the 17th General Chapter,

THE OLD BOYS AND THE MARIST CHAMPAGNAT FAMILY MOVEMENT

Brother Basilio Rueda, Superior General
Brother René Gilbert Joos, General Adviser

We can see from this that the Institute did not commit itself to going any further at this stage: it was not until the General Chapter of 1985, (9 years later), that it did so. It is obvious that in this 1976 Chapter, the Marist Family project aroused very little interest among the delegates and very few of them were inclined to take up the challenge. (Six months after the Chapter, Brother Virgilio sent out to its capitulants a questionnaire on the project: many of the replies he received showed, unmistakably, this lack of interest.)

VII. 1976 – 1985 THE FINAL STAGE – ANOTHER FORM OF IDENTITY

This period could be called the ‘home straight’ though it led, not to a ‘finish line’ but rather to the 18th General Chapter of 1985 where the Institute, at last, assumed responsibility for the Marist Family. The 17th General Chapter had given some directives for this 9-year inter-Chapter period. It was to be a time of serious, prayerful thought and, especially, a time during which ‘actual, definite action – even though it may be only small-scale’. It was to be a time during which the Marist Family was to chart its course towards its future: and this time, 1976 – 1985, was truly rich in initiatives and serious reflection that was shared by all. Specifically, during this time, two World Union Congresses were held, and quite a number of others at Federation and Confederation level. 1980 was a very special year: it was the 25th anniversary of Father Champagnat’s beatification and, also, the same anniversary of the founding of the World Union. Office holders saw this as an ideal time for holding meetings such as those just mentioned.

But, first of all, how was the extremely cagey position taken by the 17th General Chapter to be regarded? And especially since the Old Boys had held such high hopes for a favourable answer to their request!

A. A Notable Change

Mr Rahilly of Australia finished his term as President of the World Union at the Congress held in Melbourne in 1978. In his concluding presidential report he stated – “During our term in office here has been a considerable change of emphasis in the Marist world, and I believe we have seen signs of a growth towards maturity in the Marist Family. Existing

groups have begun to form a new identity through practical and theoretical development. I have been greatly encouraged by the fact that the General Chapter of the Institute in 1976 examined and accepted our discussion paper on the Marist Family: I believe that the future work of the World Union will be to promote the principles enunciated in our report. I also believe that the World Union will provide the forum for debate and development of the extended Marist Family in the Marist World. As Brother Basilio has told us in his letter of 30 October 1976, each Association and Federation must let the others know of their experiences – no matter how small and insignificant these may seem, they will encourage a deeper study of appropriate forms of spirituality which will be more helpful to those devout lay people wanting to lead a more active life in the Marist Family.” Mr Rahilly went on to say – “Not all our member Federations share these views. Some of them have suggested that the world Union should play a more active role as initiators, as voices of inspiration. I believe that it is for this Congress to discuss these opinions, and then give directions to the incoming executive as to what measures they should implement.”¹⁴²

Brother Eusebio Mora, who was at that time our Adviser to the World Union, wrote a long article on the Marist Family. Here is an extract from it – “The idea (of the Marist Family) has taken shape at different meetings of the Old Boys. It has grown from these beginnings until now – having been approved by the 17th General Chapter in Rome 1976 – it has the right to be established anywhere at all. There were 160 Marist Brothers from all parts of the world at that Chapter, and they gave it, (the Marist Family), official definition and urged its members to look more clearly into both the movement and its objectives, to plot its forward progress, to harness and channel all its energies so as to get very firmly established.”

From this it is plain that the Old Boys took the General Chapter’s message as a real recognition of a long and deeply debated project. They received this acceptance happily and joyfully, feeling that it conferred on them full membership of the extended Marist Family, and they felt then that it was their duty to work for its spread and development – “Could there be any better way of showing our gratitude to those visionary idealists who began our movement?”

B. Brother Virgilio’s Reactions

By this time Brother Virgilio had been appointed to work in Formation – specifically as Director of the Spanish language second Novitiate. Nevertheless,

¹⁴² 10.47.22.

he continued to follow the Marist Family's growth and to help its progress in one way or another. His chief contribution was in developing a theological/ecclesial base for it. In an article he wrote for 'Enlace', (the publication of the Marist Family in Spain), commenting on the Chapter's position, he gave a most valuable glimpse of his then interior attitude, and how he had reached it. Here are some of his main thoughts: -

*THE GENERAL CHAPTER – Its Message to the Old Boys and how it sees the future for them¹⁴³

"1. How the Idea was able to get going:

Never before in their existence did the Old Boys put such hope in a General Chapter! And that for two reasons: first, for three years now we have been slogging along –discussing, dialoguing, sharing and exchanging views – and making headway at various levels; and, second, we all could see the stage we had reached: the Marist Institute, in a situation just as important as the Chapter itself, was at last getting some idea of what had been accomplished (by the Old Boys), and some idea that it could be failing to grasp this project as one of the best ways of bringing about the reconversion, the in-depth re-organisation that all community-based societies need to make in the light of current happenings and new perspectives for the future.

On the other hand, we have all become aware that we are faced with a real quandary –either, we find the new formula we are looking for as regards the relationship of the Marist Old Boys and the Marist Brothers' Institute, or, perhaps the Old Boys movement is going to come to the most critical stage of its very existence –a kind of 'the beginning of the end', the end of the road for all those wishes and hopes contained in the expression, 'THE MARIST FAMILY. We all understand that well enough ..."

Brother Virgilio then gave a resumé of the stages of the project so far. He followed this with a question –

"2. Are we mature enough to put these facts and aspirations into concrete form?"

He puts the question to the Brothers first of all – "Do we Brothers accept as one of the commitments which radically define our place in today's Church the obligation to be 'animators of groups of lay people dedicated to working in Christian education?'... and this not merely theo-

¹⁴³ Enlace Magazine, No. 67, pages 8-10.

retically! Are we ready to let these chosen groups work with us? And are we ready to open up our Institute to these people in all the ways necessary to make this co-operation truly viable?

As well, what has the Marist Institute itself to say – and particularly to DO – in order to bring to fruition the Christian dimensions of this undertaking they are sharing in? Or, are we waiting for help to drop down on us from Heaven! Is it time indeed for both groups – the lay people and us – to get together and implement a plan that will provide a base, a framework of rights and obligations that will be enjoyed and fulfilled by committed members?”

We see in this that, though he was somewhat disappointed, Brother Virgilio accepted the General Chapter's decision positively. In fact, he used it as a justifying base for re-launching his concept of the Marist Family, and to define it again a little more exactly.

C. The Athens Congress – 1977¹⁴⁴ – Brother Virgilio's Contribution

Because of his poor health, Brother Virgilio had decided not to attend this Congress, but he made his presence felt there by contributing a paper – “The Marist Family – A Contribution to the Athens European Congress.” As well, six months before the General Chapter, he sent a questionnaire on the subject of the Marist Family to the Capitulants of the previous Chapter. His Athens paper contained much the same material that he had presented to the 17th General Chapter (and which I have given an outline of earlier on), but he changed the headings a little. For the Athens Congress they were:

- An Audacious Idea for the Future
- New Vistas for the Future

Forty former Capitulants from various Provinces sent in answers to Brother Virgilio's questionnaire.¹⁴⁵ All these replies were interesting because each one emphasised some particular aspect of how the Marist Family idea had developed in the Marist world, and – taken all together – they gave a very good indication of the diverse opinions in the Provinces. Here is just a brief outline.

Question 1: – Now, five months later, what memories do you have of the importance of the discussions we had at the General Chapter on the topic of the Marist Family?

¹⁴⁴ 10.46.03. And 18.05.

¹⁴⁵ 18.05.04; page 29.

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Answer: The answer was quite clear – “It is true that there was a special sub-committee appointed to examine the subject, but it was not able to get very far with the proposals because of lack of time. The project was approved after almost no discussion.” And again, “The Chapter showed only relative –even merely lukewarm – interest.” But the opinion of one Brother was – “The Marist Family idea, which had seemed rather far-fetched when it was broached at Lyons, appeared to be gaining ground.”

Question 3: – “What do you think the Institute’s opinion of the project should be? What should the Brothers do to translate it into something concrete?”

Answer: There were quite a number of answers to this third question, and they were relatively unanimous. As to the attitude the Institute should adopt, I think the answers could be well summed up in this reply – “I think that our Institute should be attentive, open and friendly. It should be encouraging – not authoritarian ...” And as regards the Brothers – “We must prepare ourselves well for a time of great change. We must be open to change – not afraid of it.” But this requires a radical change in our way of thinking. “It will be a difficult task. Are the Brothers ready to make a change in their thinking ...?”

Question 5: – “Point out three matters that the Brothers and communities will have to make if this excellent idea is to succeed and be implemented.”

Answer: “The changes listed in the replies were, above all, interior ones – “We must believe in the worth of our Marist Institute. And we must be willing to change and be creative in both our lives and in our work ... We must love our spirituality ... practise it, live it, devote ourselves to making it known, and to spread it ... and to making it more deeply a part of ourselves: we must re-identify ourselves as Christians and re-define ourselves as members of the Marist Family ... We must give witness in our lives as being truly Marist ... The idea of the Marist Family will be able to become a reality only if we share thoroughly, radically, our apostolic mission and our Marist spirituality.”

Brother Virgilio’s survey was wide-ranging, and the answers to it brought together a great number of ideas on the Marist Family and on how to spread it throughout the whole Marist world. As well – and I think this was even more evident – this survey served to bring the Brothers’ attention back to this question. (We have already seen that at the 17th General Chapter this plan was given only a cursory examination: in fact, we could say it “was swept under the mat”.)

*D. The Melbourne World Congress - 1978*¹⁴⁶

The World Union administration also sent out a questionnaire¹⁴⁷ in the year after the General Chapter. It did this for two reasons –

- i) to follow the directives given by the Chapter; and
- ii) because of the 8th World Congress to be held in 1978.

But, naturally enough, this questionnaire was addressed to the Old Boys: it was sent to them and their Federations through the intermediary of 45 Province offices of the Brothers. The questionnaire had two sections to it –

- a) questions about the World Union itself
- b) questions about the Marist Family project

174 replies were received. Some answers queried the very existence of the World Body, suggesting that it be abolished and

- i) be replaced by some form of regionalisation of the Provincial and/or National Associations; or
- ii) that it be replaced by developing the Marist Family.

Others even thought that Associations of Old Boys liaising with their local schools were sufficient, and that they be left to change themselves, slowly, into Marist Family Groups. More than 50% of the replies favoured these ideas, and many thought that the world body was top-heavy and ineffective.

Following on the growing interest in the development of the Marist Family project shown by the Brothers and the Old Boys alike, the questionnaire wanted some feedback on what the Old Boys thought should be the nature of the Marist Family and the possible ways in which it could be organised. All the replies were interesting, but we will look only at some of the salient features.

It should not be too quickly constructed: instead, it should first of all be allowed to grow and evolve into nuclear groups. This would permit it to acquire its own identity as it developed. There were even some who thought that a highly organised Marist Family with a formation programme for its members, and a centralised controlling body, would be too much like a 'Third Order', and that that could lead to a loss of members' identity as 'Old Boys'.

As for the matter of mission – "close contact with dedicated lay people in the Marist Family setting would be the most effective way for the Brothers

¹⁴⁶ 10.47.28.

¹⁴⁷ 10.47.26.

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to respond to the needs of their milieu.” As well as that, being members of Marist Family groups would offer interested Old Boys opportunities of “continuing a Marist influence in places where the Brothers were no longer involved in the schools.” A Marist Family of this kind would not be seen as any sort of threat to the Old Boy Associations or Federations.

All these opinions were really interesting and they heralded the findings that the next General Chapter was to decide on in 1985, and were portents of what the Champagnat Movement was to become throughout the world.

E. Three Meetings in Europe

i) Viterbo – 1978¹⁴⁸

This meeting took place two months after the Melbourne World Congress. It was organised by the Italian Federation at the suggestion of Mr Georges Tron, the President of the French Federation. Its purpose was to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the European Confederation, and it was attended by delegates from Spain, England, Scotland, Ireland, Greece, Germany, France, Belgium and Italy. Many Marist Brothers were also there and the gathering was honoured by the presence of Brother Basilio, the Superior General.

When he addressed the meeting, Brother Basilio stressed again that if the various organisations of Old Boys wanted to survive and have a significant influence, they had to be imbued with an authentic mystique. The Brother Provincial of Italy reminded the delegates of the Old Boys’ expressed desire to radiate the Marist charism.

ii) Glasgow – 1979¹⁴⁹

At the Athens Congress in the summer of 1977, the younger Old Boys of the British delegation had suggested that a special congress should be held for the younger Old Boys – “We have realised that we have become more and more enthusiastic about the idea of the extended Marist Family”, they wrote in their invitation letter, “and we want to get together and work on it.” (A first Youth Congress had been held at the Hermitage in 1970.) Some 100 younger Old Boys took part in this one in Glasgow in 1979.

Let us recall that the idea of the Marist Family started first, taking its initial steps, in the very close collaboration of Brothers, lay teachers, pupils

¹⁴⁸ 19.01.

¹⁴⁹ 23.05.02.

and Old Boys. Then, more and more, there was among them a desire that Blessed Marcellin's life and spirituality become better known and appreciated. Through this development, the Marist Family became increasingly seen as a spiritual movement, and that clearly distinguished it from the Old Boys Movement. This, too, is the sense of the letter that the General Council sent to this Glasgow meeting of the younger Old Boys. In it, the Council congratulated them on their good spirit, their enthusiasm and the efforts they were making to translate the idea into a concrete reality. The Council also encouraged them to continue along their way of reflection and discussion because this would lead to a renewed concept of the Old Boys Association. The Glasgow Congress fitted in perfectly with the Marist 'spiritual current' which had been the motivating force of the Old boys Associations for so many years. But how was this force going to operate at the new level that was now being asked of the Old Boys?

iii) Cham – 1980¹⁵⁰

The congress at Cham, in Bavaria, in 1980 was a special one, held to mark the 25th anniversary of Marcellin's beatification and of the founding of the World Union of Old Boys. It was the first Marist international meeting ever held in Germany, and also the first combined meeting of pupils from our various German schools. The invitation for it stated – "During this meeting we are going to find ways and means to establish the best possible contacts between the Marist families and the Old Boys Associations throughout Europe." And, actually, the Marist Family theme was prominent in all the speeches and discussions, and in the minds of all present at the congress.

Brother Othmar Grehl, in his speech on the first day, made reference to the Brother Superior General's message, and emphasised the Brothers' obligation to be authentic witnesses to the Marist spirit, to make their communities open, welcoming centres, and to put their talents at the service of the Marist Family. He saw it as highly desirable that all Old Boys – and all others wanting it – should have numerous contacts with the Brothers so that they might learn the brothers' ways of thinking and acting, and so be able to make the Marist ideal a real factor in their own lives and ways of acting. It was suggested that one way of achieving these ends would be to hold spiritual conferences and retreats at Marist centres.

The discussions and exchanges of ideas in the various language groups were especially fruitful: often these sessions went well over time as their members looked for ways to pass on the Marist spirit to teachers

¹⁵⁰ 119.02.

and the parents of pupils so that they could be incorporated in the Marist Family. If this could be done, the Marist spirit would remain in the schools even though the Brothers' community might be reduced in numbers – or even be withdrawn. However, we could say that even though the Marist Family project was making progress, it had hardly yet become a reality.

There were many Spanish delegates at this congress, and Brother Virgilio was among them. He was, surely, very pleased to see how his idea of the Marist Family was gaining acceptance and was close to becoming a reality among European Marists.

F. The General Meeting of Provincials and District Superiors in Rome – (1 – 14 October 1979)¹⁵¹

This normal conference of Superiors from all parts of the world was held at the General House in Rome three years after the General Chapter. One of the matters discussed was the Marist Family project. The Brothers considered the original proposal and the new ideas about it that had surfaced – especially the need to keep it separate from Old Boys Associations.

The Assembly proposed that the General Council, by means of discussions, experiences, and the dissemination of reflection papers, should clarify the whole concept of the 'Marist Family'.

VIII. MARIST FAMILY OR OLD BOYS ? - THE WORLD UNION IN PERIL?

The 18th General Chapter in 1985 was to institute the Champagnat Movement: the years 1981 – 1985 were the final stage preceding that. The Old Boys – as they had also done before the 17th General chapter – requested that the 18th Chapter make a decision on the status of the World Union, and give a ruling on the Marist Family.

What would the Institute do ?

The attitude and remarks of certain Brothers in regard to the Old Boys gave rise to fears of a loss of interest in the Old Boys. As well, exchanges of opinion were becoming somewhat heated, some 'experiments' were tried out, positions were being taken up, a petition was being drawn up ... Almost everywhere, Federation or Confederation congresses/meetings/gatherings were being held ... Some Old Boys had a very clear impression that their organisations had little chance of survival.

¹⁵¹ Brother A. Martinez., page 1174.

Delegates from seven countries attended this congress. A major worry to them all was the future of the Old Boys Associations in the face of the growth of the Marist Family project. This produced Resolution No. 8 in the Congress's final statement – we wish that the Old Boys, insofar as they can, should continue to learn and reflect on the life of Blessed Marcellin since this is offered to them and it is this shared knowledge which incorporates them into an authentic family.

'Enlace', the official publication of the Marist Family in Spain, gave considerable space in its No.73 issue to coverage of the Seville Congress. On pages 51 --53 they reported a long interview with Brother Antonio Martinez which touched on relations between the Marist Family and the Old Boys. His final remarks are quite noteworthy: here are some of the more significant of them :

- The Marist spirit is to be found in both the Marist Old Boys and the Marist Family, but there is greater scope for it in the latter. In my opinion, the Marist Family offers all possibilities for a Marist commitment.
- The future path of the Old Boys' Movement is tied to that of the Marist Family. I believe that if the Old Boys' Associations – and more especially, the individual Old Boys – take for themselves the Marist Family's mystique, and decide to live each day according to its values and requirements, they will find there real answers, (sometimes even definitive answers), to whatever problems might arise in the future – whether those problems be at the personal or Association level.
- The Marist Associations should foster Marist spirituality among young people, because it has more dynamism to make them enthusiastic about leading spiritual lives than any other. The sense of family life inspired by the Holy Family of Nazareth, simplicity of life, love of work as an expression of creativity, concern for the poor ... these are the values that truly appeal to young people.
- A definition of the Marist Family : "People, or groups, who, according to their own level of ability and opportunity, are moved by, work and live by, the ideal that Marcellin Champagnat had, and expressed in his

¹⁵² 19.03.04 – 10.53. And Enlace Magazine, No. 73.

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own person and in the Institution he founded to work for young people, as a Christian and social mission.”¹⁵³

*B. The European Meeting at Badalona – (5 – 7 March 1982); World Union at Risk*¹⁵⁴

This seemed to be merely a harmless gathering, but it set in motion a process that would, three years later, culminate in the ‘adjournment sine die’ of the World Union. Delegates from Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Great Britain and Italy attended this meeting, whose main purpose was to decide which Federation would take over the World Union presidency after the Santiago Conference later that same year.

This question ran into an unexpected and serious problem at the very first session when Mr Swaddle, the incoming President (he was the then current President of the Great Britain Federation) announced that his Federation would not be able to accept the presidency “because it would not be able to rely on the support of the Brother Provincial and communities in their countries”. This announcement produced dismayed astonishment! No-one could understand such an attitude from the Marist Institute, and the delegates challenged the Brothers very bitterly – “Although the Marist Brothers’ administration avows that the Old Boys project is a most special one of the Institute, in reality that is far from true ... We get the impression that this lack of collaboration is not confined only to Great Britain: actually, we have reason to think that it is also the case in all the European countries, and that the Brothers’ communities give more support to Parents’ Associations.”

The meeting’s discussions ended with the delegates passing a resolution to seek an interview with the Brother Superior General, with the aim of asking him to clarify the Institute’s attitude towards the Old Boys.

*C. The Meeting with the Reverend Brother Superior General – Rome (25th March 1982)*¹⁵⁵

All the Presidents of the European National Federations (except the President from Great Britain) had a meeting with Brother Basilio S.G., Brother Quentin Duffy, his Vicar General, and Brother Paul Sester, one of the Councillors General on 25th March 1982. Their discussions were frank and without ulterior motives.

¹⁵³ Interview with Brother A. Martinez, Province Councilor in Catalonia and author of the work on Brother Virgilio.

¹⁵⁴ 19,06,02.

¹⁵⁵ 23,03,01.

Mr Caballeria (of Spain) asked the Superior General to tell them whether or not the Institute supported the Old Boys' project. Brother Basilio stated categorically that it did, and that the Old Boys should have no doubts of the Brothers' love and attachment: but that they must also understand the complexity of the then situation of the Marist Institute – a shortage of Brothers, their increasing workloads, the age of the Brothers, etc – and to take all these factors into account.

As regards the presidency of the World Union, it seemed that the Brother Provincial (of Great Britain) had been afraid that all the work involved would fall on the Brothers, most of whom were already retired. A lengthy discussion then took place, with various solutions being put forward. Finally, Mr Schmitz (President of the Belgium Federation) suggested that his Federation could take up the World presidency, but that he would have to consult his council and the Brother Provincial of Belgium before accepting the task. Mr Caballeria renewed the offer he had made at Badalona, that he would accept the presidency if no other solution could be found. He believed that postponing the change of presidency any longer could kill the World Union, and that would greatly damage the Old Boys project. The meeting then concluded, and the worst was avoided.

*D. The 9th World Congress – Santiago, Chile (11 – 17 November 1982)*¹⁵⁶

The Old Boys Future - The Marist Family's Future

Some 183 delegates attended this Congress, representing 16 countries – Germany, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, France, Italy, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Zaire. (Brother Virgilio was there, representing Paraguay)

The main thing achieved by this Congress was the election of a new President for the World Union. Although it had had its turn fulfilling this office during the years 1967 – 1970, the Belgium Federation agreed to take it on again.¹⁵⁷ In doing so, it had the full support of the Marist authorities in Belgium. Accordingly, Mr Roger J Schmitz became the new President of the World Union. His election avoided what would otherwise have been a serious difficulty, and it looked as though the Union would continue for at least another four years. Unfortunately, this did not actually happen.

¹⁵⁶ 08.04 – 10.55. FMS MESSAGE. No. 1, 1987.

¹⁵⁷ 09.01.02.

E. Brother Virgilio at the Santiago Congress

The Marist Family Movement an extension of Marcellin¹⁵⁸

As we have already seen, Brother Virgilio had already developed his ideas on the Marist Family, and spoken of them at length: now he had the opportunity of doing this in South America, too. (Paraguay is the 'over-seas mission' of the Province of Catalonia, and Brother Virgilio was there as the District Superior.) He knew that this would be the last congress before the 18th General Chapter: in speaking to the delegates, he did so with all his usual conviction and enthusiasm. He exhorted them all to understand their obligations, and the importance of this topic. As well as what he had presented to previous meetings in Europe, he added some new material to his address. Here are some extracts:

"I think that, first, we must all, Brothers and Old Boys, listen to one another so that we can come to a consensual position. we must dismiss the idea that all this is merely an unrealisable, utopian dream that gives us an excuse for jaunting from time to time from one country to another for meetings. (South America is now the third continent that we have had meetings in!) ... It is as though we feel powerless in the face of an historical challenge that we do not dare accept ..."

All of this led to the congress adopting some practical conclusions concerning the Brothers and lay people.

The Brothers:

Brother Virgilio challenged all present – the lay people, the Brothers and the Superiors: "I believe that we should share our thoughts simply and genuinely. First of all, I think that we need to change our interior attitudes, especially the attitude of being passive observers who contribute nothing but criticism. We need people who will participate, who will help, so that our efforts will grow, increase, and produce fruit.

It would be helpful for us to look at this project with more than curiosity. I believe that the time has come for all the Brothers – in the communities, in the Provinces, in the whole Institute –to give sympathetic interest and attention to this project.

The Lay People:

Brother Virgilio addressed the Union first of all, suggesting that it start by ridding itself of its former, triumphalistic criteria which, in the

¹⁵⁸ 10,55,08 – November 1982.

majority of cases, rely on statistics, figures and showy, selective actions ... He again urged it to encourage its members to make practical experiments along the lines of the Marist Family, and then study how these have fared, so that we can form a worthwhile synthesis of the 'Maristness' which lay people and committed families can live by ... Again, "From now on, the World Union should take as its No.1 task being concerned with groups of young people –giving them a new understanding of our Associations, and, in a special way, developing among them a new knowledge and appreciation of the Marist mystique and spirituality. This new approach can become the base on which to re-build our associations in a promise-filled new way."

"It is also necessary to persevere with efforts for mutual collaboration on the part of Brothers and lay teachers within our educative communities ... It maybe that the Brothers take the initiative in this, but they also need to be supported by the reflection and experience of the lay teachers. All this should then lead on to times of sharing with our own Brothers' communities – sharing experiences we have in common concerning our faith, of continuing formation, and of suitable programmes."

The Congress's resolution about the Marist Family was that the next General Chapter should study this matter by following up on the theme put forward in the presidency's pilot scheme.

F.The Presidency of Mr Schmitz (of Belgium) – 1982 – 1986

The beginnings of this presidency were especially difficult. Nevertheless, the Marist Family project remained at the centre of all the concerns of the President and his Council. There was also quite a deal of disquiet about the future of the world Union. In the September 1985¹⁵⁹ issue of their bulletin (immediately before the General Chapter), the Brother Provincial of Belgium wrote a very realistic editorial in which he did not ignore the current problems. This editorial had an evocative title – "A Quiet Anniversary".

"Thirty years on, but no celebrations have marked the occasion. Realism takes over from enthusiasm. What will the future be? There is no doubt that the Marist Brothers' General Chapter (due to start on 1st September) will ask the same question. Do idealism and effectiveness always work on the same level?"

However, the Brother Provincial concluded on a much more optimistic note. He spoke of the unchanged position of the Institute as regards

¹⁵⁹ 10,59.

the Old Boys, and of his own conviction: "It is certain that the brothers see their work with the Old Boys as a privileged apostolate in which they feel they are doing their best work because, in it, they can see the Marist spirit continuing to flourish."

G. The European Congress – Cham (5 –10 August 1985)

To live as the Marist Family, together, in all simplicity¹⁶⁰

This 8th European Congress was held in Cham, in Germany, immediately prior to the 18th General Chapter. In his welcoming speech, the Provincial of the German Province alluded to the coming Chapter and to his intention of "attending attentively to this (Cham) Congress so that, together with the other Capitulants here present, I can present its findings and results to the General Chapter that opens in Rome at the end of this month. ... The stakes are high, since the Chapter is going to make new decisions on the future of the Old Boys movement and the destiny of the Marist Family."

The entire educative community of the Cham college were involved in organising the welcome to the Congress delegates – the Brothers, the teachers, the pupils, various other members of staff, and – in the forefront – the members of the Old Boys Association. Their President also gave a welcoming speech, defining the purpose of this European Congress – "Subsequent to the Badalona 'Manifest' in 1975, a new idea has seen the light of day. Instead of working in individual Old Boys Associations, it has become desirable that we spread out wider and organise ourselves into the Marist Family. We see this 8th Congress as we have seen each of the previous ones, viz. as a step forward towards the ideal of the Marist Family: that is why we have invited you here ..."¹⁶¹

Mr Alfred Urban followed on, speaking specifically to the Brothers – "We are begging the Brothers to give us witness of their Marist lives, to open to us the way to the Institute, to speak boldly to us about their vocation, and to play an active part in the apostolate with Marist Family groups. We ask the other members of the Marist Family to increase their contacts and relations with the Brothers, to discover real Marist attitudes so that they can appreciate them more, to make them really their own, and to let them be seen in their everyday life and in their workplaces too: defining

¹⁶⁰ 20,02; 03;04.

¹⁶¹ 20,02,01

the Marist Family is quite difficult: living it is more important.” During the Congress “reflection on the Marist spirit and on Blessed Marcellin’s charism were the dominant occupations.”¹⁶²

Because 1989 would be the bi-centenary of Father Champagnat’s birth, the presidency of the European Confederation was entrusted to the French for 1985 – 1989: later in 1989, the Irish Federation (which held the vice-presidency) would take over from the French Federation.¹⁶³

IX. THE 18TH GENERAL CHAPTER – THE INSTITUTE TAKES THE STEP

This Chapter started at the beginning of September 1985. Amongst other things, it would have to decide on what were the inter-connected questions of the Old Boys and the Marist Family. We shall deal first of all with the Marist Family: it was undoubtedly the more important of the two, and the Old Boys’ Movement would have to find a place for itself, only through its connection with the Marist Family.

A. The Marist Family at the Time of the 18th General Chapter

When we speak of the Marist Family, what are we actually talking about? Well, first of all, it was, and had been for a number of years, a REALITY, something that had been lived. This is obvious in the case of the Brothers, but- more and more – it had also been an actual experience for people in contact with the Brothers, most especially for the Old Boys who had always spoken of it in their meetings, congresses and publications.

And then, of course, there is Brother Virgilio Leon Herrero. For him, the Marist Family had been an ‘idée fixe’, an obsession, essentially, his personal charism. He had worked unremittingly to have it accepted and adopted in our communities, our Marist schools and by groups of Marist Old Boys. He had given it a theological base – our Founder’s charism is ‘pluralist’ and ‘dynamic’: Brother Virgilio had invited chosen lay people to live it and to use it to animate their Christian lives. He had presented these ideas to the Old Boys in Spain (while he was Adviser to their National Federation) and then to the World Union on various occasions. Their office-holders had been enchanted by the project and were going to ask the Institute to recognise and take over this plan for an extended Marist Family – extended, that is, to include lay people.

¹⁶² Report of Brother Paul Sester, 20.04.16.

¹⁶³ 32.01.05.

THE OLD BOYS AND THE MARIST CHAMPAGNAT FAMILY MOVEMENT

At the time of the 18th General Chapter, Brother José Ordas was Adviser to the Spanish Federation, and he had been chosen to be a member of the Chapter. The Marist Family project was very dear to his heart, too, and he had spoken in favour of it at the 1976 Chapter. He asked Brother Virgilio and Brother Antonio Martinez to write up a synthesis of the ideas on the Marist Family that had developed since 1976 so that the Chapter capitulants from Spain could study it, and then table it at the General Chapter. "This request once again enkindled Brother Virgilio's personal dynamism", and he set to work immediately – "his theme was 'Perspectives Derived From Marcellin's Charism'. With Brother Antonio's help, he wrote an up-to-date account and summarised it in preparation for being presented to the General Chapter. Here is an extensive extract from their paper:

B. "The Marist Family Today"¹⁶⁴ – The Marist Family and Father Champagnat's Charism

The Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary, having been charged by the Church with preserving and fostering the growth of the institutional gift that God entrusted to Marcellin, has decided to reflect on the fruitfulness of our Institute in the Church and to discern the possibilities of publicising new ways of serving the Church – ways that are inspired and vivified by our Founder's charism."

I. A Fruitful Family:

a) The Richness of the Marist Charism –

The charism which our Marist Congregation received through Marcellin Champagnat is a gift that has its expression in a definite and special way of being, of consciousness and of acting, which the Church recognises and which is consonant with the Founder's mission, and which it is our duty to continue.

The Marist Congregation has been a living expression of this spirit throughout its existence: it has had to make changes but, despite them, it has never lost its identity. Remaining faithful to its initial inspiration, it continues its work today.

b) A Heritage Faithfully Handed On –

The spiritual richness of this gift was born in its own time, in its own historical setting and circumstances, and had its first expression in a new

¹⁶⁴ Brother A. Martinez, page 1394.

Congregation. But it has continued on past its Founder's lifetime, and past the way in which our first communities lived it. Different times, and even individual Brothers, have continued to enrich it in slightly different ways.

The witness to fidelity on the part of individual Brothers and communities, their generous response to the calls of the Holy Spirit, and the quality of their apostolic zeal have stirred other people with the desire to support, and be a part of, this project of Blessed Marcellin. This desire of theirs is something new, and it opens up new horizons to us.

c) Enriched by New Ways of Life –

Through fidelity to the Holy Spirit, the Institute's members must reform themselves to a way of living that is adapted to the needs of today's Church. They must also be willing to foster and help initiatives that the same Holy Spirit will want to arouse through the intermediary action of some Brothers, so as to enrich the Institute with forms of life.

d) Nowadays, Lay People are Called –

Many people who have had experience of the Brothers and have lived in close contact with them feel themselves called and attracted by the Marist spirit. Drawn by ties of affection, they have gathered around our Marist communities and found ways in which they can express their attachment – ways which embellish our Institute with finishing touches.

It is to this group of people, associated with us in all sorts of ways, that we give the name MARIST FAMILY."

2. The Marist Family's Identity:

The Marist Family is a community of people bound together by shared feelings of esteem towards the person and the work of Marcellin Champagnat whom they recognise as a father who has brought to life in the Church a style of living characterised by ... "Here are listed the essential, traditional qualities of the Marist spirit – love of Mary, family life, Christian education according to the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth and simplicity – all expressed concretely."

3. Membership of the Marist Family:

Becoming a member of the Marist Family is a gradual process. "A candidate needs to be accompanied by a Marist community, and given formation by it."

4. Stages of Identification with the Marist Family:

The text details the degrees of identification with the Marist Family

THE OLD BOYS AND THE MARIST CHAMPAGNAT FAMILY MOVEMENT

and repeats the criteria for those called to be part of it – “in short, all those who have been connected with the Brothers or their work, have been touched by Marcellin’s charism, and are suited to work for the growth of the Marist Family”.

5. Future Urgent Tasks:

As we face the future, we have some especially urgent tasks –

- To reflect on how the Institute will respond to the wish of Vatican II “that Religious do not neglect the work of animating lay people, devoting themselves voluntarily to the task of promoting the work of getting lay people committed to the apostolate –according to the norms of each Congregation.”¹⁶⁵
- To welcome and value all the initiatives and experiments that spring up as expressions of the Marist charism.
- Give great support to both the Marist Institute and the Marist Family: without that, nothing valuable and lasting will be established.
- While faced with a proliferation of experiments (some perhaps a little anarchic in form), we must clearly define -
 - i) the obligations and rights of each party,
 - ii) the identity of the Marist Family as clearly as possible.

The pressing question in the whole Institute just now is the Marist Family. We have to wait and see what position the 18th General Chapter will take.

C. What about the Old Boys' Movement ? _____

The World Union presented a motion to the 1976 Chapter (ch.vi), but it has not done so for the 1985 Chapter – at least I have not found any trace of one in the 1984 – 1986 issues of ‘Unitas’, nor in any other publication. In some quarters there are those who are upset by its lack of activity, and some of them are going to ask the Marist Superiors to intervene.¹⁶⁶ There are some Old Boys who are worried about the very future of the World Union.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Apostolicam Actuositatem, No. 25. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

¹⁶⁶ 09,01.

¹⁶⁷ Previously 8 F 10,59,02.

Faced with this (seeming) incompetency, several Federations have acted on their own: in 1984, the chairman of the French Federation sent an official letter (dated 14 August) to the Brother Vicar General –“asking that representatives of their Federation might be permitted to take part in the coming General Chapter –at least during discussion time about the Old Boys organisation and the Marist Family.”¹⁶⁸

Also, the Spanish Federation sent an open letter to the Chapter delegates from the Spanish Provinces. It concerned these same two matters – the Old Boys and the Marist Family. The Federation voiced its astonishment at the Constitutions pilot project’s silence on the question of the Old Boys, and insisted on the Capitulants giving it some attention. It also expressed a wish that the document on ‘Apostolic Life’ (from the 16th General Chapter) be strengthened in what it stated about the Old Boys Associations, and also in its section on Youth. The letter finished with a wish for the Marist Family – “May God grant that some day this General Chapter may be known as the ‘Marist Family General Chapter’ because it will have produced a document on the Marist Family comparable to that on ‘The Marist Brother Today’. We hope that this document (yet to be produced!) will help us to understand better and act according to our ‘moral ties to the Brothers’ Institute’ ... We re-affirm our willingness to help establish the extended Marist Family because we already feel we are members of it ...”

The Chilean Federation also sent in a request that supported those already mentioned, but they sent it directly to the chapter delegates.

D. The Decisions of the 18th General Chapter – 1985

The Marist Family- the Old Boys:

“The question that kept coming up throughout the whole 67 days of the Chapter was – What connection is there between the Old Boys Associations and the Marist Family?”¹⁶⁹ This was the opening sentence of Brother Jean Dumortier’s talk on ‘The Marist Old Boys Associations and the Marist Family’ which he gave to the general Meeting of the French O.B. Federation held at Vallbenoite on 23 –24 November 1985. He went on – “This matter was handed over to a sub-committee of Chapter delegates: there were 2 Brazilians, 1 Argentine, 1 Spaniard, 2 Frenchmen and some others.”¹⁷⁰ Their task was

¹⁶⁸ 09,01.

¹⁶⁹ 09,01. A. G., of the French Federation that took place at Vallbenoite November 23-24, 1987. Exposition of Brother J. Dumontier

¹⁷⁰ Document of the 17th General Chapter.

to compose a definitive statement on the Marist Family that could be included in the Marist Brothers' constitutions.

In what concerned the Marist Family and the Old Boys, this special sub-committee took an overall view of the ways in which both the Old Boys organisation and the fledgling Marist Family existed and fitted into the Marist World. They proved to be very different.

How could all these differences be reconciled so as to make a synthesis that would provide a definitive statement for the whole Institute? And, even as a first question, which would be the best chapter to fit it into – to that on the apostolate, as something to do with the Old Boys?¹⁷¹ No, because the concept of the Marist Family implies something much greater than that – something much more basic than that. Eventually, the sub-committee decided that the chapter on 'The Vitality of the Institute' was the most suitable one in which to include it. This choice makes it clear that "the idea of the Marist Family is an essential element for the actual vitality of the Institute and for the development of the Champagnat spirit". The defining text was adopted unanimously by a plenary session of the Chapter.¹⁷²

D.1 The Text in the 'Constitutions & Statutes'

The new Constitutions gave official recognition to the Marist Family Movement by including it in Chapter 11, on 'The Vitality of the Institute', as Statute 164.4. Here is its text –

"The Marist Family is an extension of our Institute: it is a movement for people who find themselves attracted to the spirituality of Marcellin Champagnat. In this movement, affiliated members, young people, parents, helpers, former students, and friends deepen within themselves the spirit of our Founder so that they can live it and let it shine forth. The Institute animates and co-ordinates the activities of this movement by setting up suitable structures."¹⁷³

This definition has become the basic text of the Movement, giving a perfect definition of its identity. It fits very well with the main elements of the Movement that have been observed over the course of a number of

¹⁷¹ Constitutions and Statutes of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, 1986, Article 88.

¹⁷² 09.01. Exposition of Brother P. Rousset about the General Chapter and the Marist Family, 09.01. Letter of Brother B. Arbues, Vicar General, to Brother P. Rousset, Provincial of the Hermitage, Acts of the 18th General Chapter: Listening to the 18th General Chapter.

¹⁷³ Statute 164.4.

years in the lives of lay people called to live the spirit and charism of the Founder. But there is no mention at all of a special, committed involvement in the Brothers' schools: the only commitment mentioned is "to live a Marist Christian life". However, like the Old Boys Movement, the Marist Family will have Rules that its members will "commit themselves to follow".

D.2 The Six Propositions

The sub-committee had also worked on the question of relations between the Marist Family and the Old Boys Movement. As we already know (Ch.9.C.), the Old Boys had asked that a group of them should be allowed to take part in the Chapter's discussions on their movement and the Marist Family –just as they had done at the 1976 Chapter. They had only a few delegates, and the meeting was only a short one. There were only four Old Boy delegates who met with Brother Basilio Rueda (Superior General), and eight other Brothers.¹⁷⁴ The meeting took place on 8th October, in the middle of the Chapter, and its purpose was – "to wind up discussion on the subject".)

The work of the sub-committee produced these six propositions which were presented to a plenary session of the Chapter.

1. The General Chapter gives official recognition to the Marist Family. This Family is made up of those people who want to live their Christian life according to Marcellin Champagnat's spirit and who commit themselves to follow the Movement's Statutes.
2. Our schools' Old Boys are invited to join this Movement. They do this individually, each of his own free will, and by accepting the Rules of the Movement. The Associations and local Old Boys organisations are encouraged to continue their activities, even though they are not incorporated within the Movement.
3. The structures of the existing Federations will continue to exist in accordance with their Rules: however, they will be prepared to adapt to the new circumstances occasioned by the integration in their Federations of members of the Marist Family and by the need to adjust to the Movement's Rules.
4. The principle of the World Union will be continued, in concrete form, by a permanent secretariat. A Brother, named by the General Council, will be in charge of the secretariat, and the General Council will also

¹⁷⁴ 09.01

decide the location of the secretariat.

5. The General Chapter asks that the General Council appoint a commission of Brothers chosen from the various countries in which our Institute is established: this commission is to be charged with the task of drawing up the Rules of the Marist Family Movement.

6. After having made the initial rough draft, the commission will consult certain members of the Movement and of the Old Boys so as to obtain their opinions and, perhaps, if that is possible, their collaboration. Once they have been re-drafted, these rules will be submitted to the General Council for its approval.

So, of the six proposals, three of them (Nos.1, 5 & 6) concerned the Marist Family Movement, while the other three, (Nos.2, 3 & 4) were about the Old Boys. Five of these were adopted by the Chapter: only one was rejected. The rejected one was No.4, about the World Union. The Old Boys had been hoping that the Union would continue – actually, that the Institute would assume responsibility for it by appointing a Brother as its Executive Officer (Proposition No.4).

“There was quite a lengthy discussion on this proposal, but there was no possibility of the plenary session reaching unanimity on it.¹⁷⁵ The proposal did not obtain an absolute majority of votes: consequently, the General Chapter did not accept it. It was clear that the General Chapter did not want to commit the Institute, through the intermediary of the General Council, to what was involved in this proposition.”¹⁷⁶

So, the Institute decided to no longer involve itself in directing the World Union: that was to be a task for the Old Boys themselves. In fact, when the delegates compiled a list of PRIORITIES at the end of the Chapter, one of them was – “to encourage the Marist Family in the future.”¹⁷⁷

X. 1985 - 1987 – AFTER THE CHAPTER

A. The World Union of Old Boys

Its Activities suspended ‘sine die’.

The General Chapter’s decision on the World Union came as a shock to the Old Boys, at least to ‘the management’. They saw it as the Institute

¹⁷⁵ Yes (with reservations).

¹⁷⁶ 09.01.03.

¹⁷⁷ French-speaking group: Listening to the 18th General Chapter, page 144.

abandoning them and their movement: and this all the more so, as there was no longer in this 1985 Chapter's documents the references to them that there had been in the documents of previous Chapters.

In 1968 the Brothers' Directory had stated – "All the Brothers are to see the work of the Old Boys as a work of the Institute: accordingly, it is to be included as an integral part of our apostolic activity."¹⁷⁸ And again – "We must establish an Old Boys Association in every one of our schools that does not already have one."¹⁷⁹ And, as a final quote – "The Associations, as well as their various Federations, will have Brothers as Advisers to them. These Brothers will not direct the Associations, but will act as animators to them."¹⁸⁰

The new Constitutions and Statutes of the 1985 Chapter were content to state no more than – "We continue to remain closely linked by affection and prayer to our Old Boys."¹⁸¹ We are happy to have their co-operation in running our schools. When opportune, we will give them advice and we will encourage them to commit themselves to the service of the church and the world."¹⁸² On the other hand, in the very same article, it states – "We favour Parents' Associations." Nothing about Old Boys Associations! We get the distinct impression that things are now different: that now, the accent is on the pupils' parents.

As well as that, we have already seen that this Chapter invites the Old Boys – "to become members of the new movement, on the same footing as all the other members." (Proposition No.2). And, as for the existing Federations, – "they will continue to exist in accordance with their rules: however, they will be prepared to adapt to the new circumstances occasioned by the integration in their Federations of members of the Marist Family ..." (Proposition No.3)

In March 1986, Brother Charles Howard (Superior General) wrote to the President of the World Union of Old Boys, explaining these decisions of the Chapter.¹⁸³ I have not found this letter, but I believe its contents were much the same as those of a letter Brother Benito Arbues (Vicar General) wrote to Brother P. Rousset, the then Provincial of the Hermitage, on 19th April of the same year. Brother Benito's letter was written in order to correct an erroneous interpretation of the Chapter decision on the part

¹⁷⁸ Directory of the Marist Brothers.

¹⁷⁹ *Id.*

¹⁸⁰ *Id.*

¹⁸¹ *Gravissimum Educationis Momentum* 8,3.

¹⁸² Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers, Article 88.

¹⁸³ 10,61,10.

of some Old Boy office-holders. First of all he went over again the text of the six propositions, and gave the Chapter's voting on each of them: then he went on to explain the voting on the 4th proposition, - "Contrary to the other (propositions), the voting for No.4 needed some explanation. There was quite a lengthy discussion on this proposal, but no possibility of the plenary session reaching a unanimous decision on it. Finally, the proposition was not accepted by the General Chapter. It was clear that the Chapter delegates did not want to commit the Institute to what the proposal suggested." In conclusion, Brother Benito quoted a section of the letter of the Brother Superior General to the World Union President - "the General Chapter did not believe that it should accept the request that the Brother Superior General and his Council should appoint a Brother to be in charge of the permanent secretariat of the World Union, as had been the case during the first years of its existence."¹⁸⁴

Mr Schmitz wrote the editorial in the No.61 issue of 'Unitas' in February 1987.¹⁸⁵ In it he told of his feelings in regard to these decisions of the General chapter: with some sadness he announced and explained the important decision that the World Union's executive committee was having to make - I find it particularly difficult to take up my pen today to write to you now in what will be - at least for the time being - the last issue of 'Unitas'. I am not going to complain: rather, I am writing to give you a plain picture of the present situation." He outlined the history of the Union since its foundation in 1955, and went on - "I have had a grandstand seat from its very beginnings until now, and I have observed an enormous change in how the Union has been perceived." Then he went on to relate the difficulties encountered in getting 'Unitas' established - "a touristy publication, or one reflecting the simple, national prestige involved in staging a Congress ...?" Practically, though, "it provided opportunities for deep reflection ..."

Now, though, "there is very little enthusiasm to ensure continuity of administration. We have come to the end of our time in office, and have been in contact with the Australian Federation whose turn it is to succeed us - but they have told us that they cannot take on the leadership. Following the wishes of the Brother Superior General, we have been advised to suspend 'sine die', the Union's activities ... That is why, at this last meeting, the World Union's executive committee has decided to go into recess as from 31 December 1986."

¹⁸⁴ 09.01.03.

¹⁸⁵ 10.61.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Schmitz said – “Times and ways of thinking have changed over these past thirty years. It seems that the way the World Union has been structured no longer answers the challenge of a world that looks for new forms of solidarity.” Then, generously, he wished that, in some way or another, the Marist Family would be able to take the place of the Old Boys Movement – “May the Marist Family become the effective replacement of our associations in supporting the Faith in our schools. Nevertheless, I will always be proud to be ‘an Old Boy of the Marist Brothers’.”

In replying to Mr Schmitz, the Brother Provincial expressed the same wish concerning the Marist Family – “We believe that our decision will bring into being a much richer Marist association, one that will be more able to cater for the spiritual and social interests of a much greater number of friends, fellow workers and Old Boys whom it will gather together under the name of the Marist Family.”

The European Federation held its congress at the Hermitage on 23 – 25 October 1987 and, not surprisingly, took this same subject up again. In his message to them, the Brother Superior General also returned to it, and in the same sense as previously – “... Also, I want to speak about the World Union so that we shall all be quite clear about it. You know, that over these past few years, there have been difficulties about its continued existence. Some of these have come from the highest authority in our Institute, the General Chapter, which rejected the proposal to bring back a Brother to the position of permanent secretary of the World Union.” He then moved on to speak of the Marist Family Movement which the Chapter “wished to encourage in a very special way”, and he added on this point – “it answers one of your expectations. You know how easily the proposal that a certain Federation should assume responsibility for running the Union was turned down. This was the obstacle that Mr Schmitz had to face last year, and he asked for our opinion on the problem. We gave him a very clear answer in our letter in March 1986, and he came to Rome to discuss the matter with us. He met those Brothers (members of the General Council) who constituted the Marist Family sub-committee, and obtained their support.”

“According to the Statutes, the Brother Superior General and his Council have no executive authority in the World Union, but Mr Schmitz was anxious to act in complete agreement with us – and he did just that in suspending, ‘sine die’, the activities of the World Union.” And the Superior General added – “We offer him our most heartfelt thanks for his dedication, his straightforwardness and his attachment to the Institute.”

THE OLD BOYS AND THE MARIST CHAMPAGNAT FAMILY MOVEMENT

After long discussion of these events, the congress concluded by passing the following resolution:¹⁸⁶

“The Presidents of the European Federations, gathered together at the Hermitage, 23 October 1987, in association with the Brother Provincial of the Province of Notre Dame de l’Hermitage, and their respective Brothers Advisers, have studied the question of the World Union.

They noted, regretfully, the suspension, ‘sine die’, of its activities. They hope that, some day, circumstances will permit the re-activation of the Union.”
signed: the representatives of Spain, Germany, Belgium & France

B. The Marist Family – A Priority of the Institute

In response to the General Chapter’s wish of “encouraging the launching and developing, from the end of the Chapter onwards, of the Marist Family Movement”, the General Council wasted no time in trying to get it started. Brother Benito, the Vicar General, wrote this letter on the subject to the Brothers Provincial on 19th April 1986.¹⁸⁷

“During our first time of plenary sessions we began reflecting on the best way to see through to a successful conclusion the mandate confided to us by the General Chapter’s acceptance of proposals, Nos.5 and 6, about the Marist Family.

We will do all we can, and as quickly as we can, to ensure that the Marist Family increases and fulfils as fully as it can, the definition given it in the Constitutions.”¹⁸⁸

The Chapter had asked that the first thing the Council did would be to draft statutes for the Movement (proposals Nos.5 and 6). These would define the form the Movement should have in order to “comply fully with its definition as stated in the Constitutions – i.e. “to be an organisation which would provide for people who were attracted to Marcellin Champagnat’s spirituality ... and wanted to deepen within themselves our Founder’s spirit, so that they could live it and let it shine forth.”

Acting in the way indicated by the Chapter, the General Council appointed “a committee of Brothers chosen from the various countries in which our Institute is established, charged with drawing up Rules.” (Proposal No.5) They proceeded to carry out this charge and, in November 1986,

¹⁸⁶ 09.01. 18th General Chapter. And 32.05.01 to 05.

¹⁸⁷ 09.01.03.

¹⁸⁸ 09.01.03.

submitted their draft to interested lay people throughout the Marist World for their comments and suggestions. After a time of careful study and reflection, the committee issued a 'Statutes Plan': in 1987 this became a 'Life Plan', and three years later Brother Charles Howard, the Superior General, presented the 'Life Plan' to the whole Institute, on 16 July 1990. It was named a 'Life Plan' in order to emphasise its meaning. It was not a code of juridical laws for an organisation, nor even a set of administrative rules for a group: far more than that: it detailed a way of life! a way of life, (a Champagnat way of life), for those attracted to following in Marcellin's steps. This was stressed by the Superior General in the concluding part of his introduction – "You are very welcome in 'your' Marist home. For quite some time you have already been living in it by your way of being who you are, your way of feeling and acting. You have now chosen to live much more intensely your faith and apostolate, becoming 'Champagnats', first of all in your own homes, and then in your milieu.

"So, you are welcome, very welcome! Now, at the end of the Champagnat year, I receive you into our Institute as a present from our Good Mother, and I bless you with all my heart. May you have life, and have it in abundance!"¹⁸⁹

Then the Brother Superior added, "We have kept the text (of the Life Plan) relatively simple, containing just the essentials, so that you may be free to build on these principles in the light of your own experience and your own particular circumstances." Further, he said – "At the same time, we think that the final document must come from your heart, from your faith, from your experience, from your practice of Champagnat spirituality and your familiarity with it."

Because of these intentions, the Life Plan document is a very open text. So, how is it going to be put into practice? How, during these first ten years of its existence, has it been translated from theory into concrete reality in the groups that have been founded? How has it developed over these same ten years? What are its hopes for the future? And, speaking more broadly, apart from Marist Family people, what place in our Institute do lay people now have? More precisely, what place has Marist spirituality now got in the lives of lay people, in the Church itself? The coming canonisation of our Founder will surely give us an opportunity to reflect on this and to examine it more widely and deeply.

¹⁸⁹ Project of Life of the Champagnat Movement 1990. Presentation

C. Brother Virgilio Leon – *Mission accomplished, he has quietly left us*_____

Brother Virgilio led a very busy life. This was because of his lively temperament, his fervent faith, his total, passionate commitment to serving God, our Blessed Mother, his confreres and the younger members of his religious family. But his health was risky. "Brother Virgilio was always ready to volunteer, and he committed himself wholeheartedly to whatever he took on –but all this had a price. His physical strength had its limits, but he spent himself prodigally."¹⁹⁰

When he was young, he had to leave the Juniorate and spend some weeks resting at home because of some pulmonary trouble. Because of this he was not allowed to go to the Missions, but had to stay in Spain, in the Marist Province of Catalonia.¹⁹¹

When he was 41 he was a member of a General Chapter, being the Provincial of Catalonia, but he had to leave the Chapter because of ill health: he was completely run down. He rested in Rome for three weeks, but that was not sufficient time for him to recover. He had to go back to Spain, and it was some weeks before he was on his feet again. Despite his state of health, he was nominated for a second three year term as Provincial.¹⁹²

Three years later – a new alarm. But he recovered and resumed his many activities. Then something quite unexpected – his doctor discovered he had had a coronary attack. But Brother Virgilio continued his many activities. Seven years later he went to Paraguay as Visitor for that Marist District. (Paraguay was the Mission country for the Catalan Province.) Again his health deteriorated dangerously; again, he did not "slow down". He had another heart attack, and it was thought he would die. However, he recovered again, but he had to have a pacemaker. He needed an operation in 1983 and went back to Barcelona to have it done there.

After his operation, he went to convalesce at Las Avellanas. Even in this enforced retirement he continued to be interested in the pastoral activities of the Province and its District. There in Las Avellanas he helped a little in animation work in the novitiate. At the end of 1984 he wrote his Spiritual Testament for his Brothers in Paraguay, and in 1985 he helped, by his reflections, with the preparations for the 18th General Chapter.¹⁹³ It

¹⁹⁰ Brother A. Martinez, page 815.

¹⁹¹ Id. Page 75,ff.

¹⁹² Id. Page 603.

¹⁹³ Brother A. Martinez, page 976.

was in this way that he collaborated with Brother Antonio Martinez in writing his last paper on the Marist Family.

He continued doing some work, but his long hours of enforced rest gave him time to live more intensely with God. The results of this are very obvious in statements and various articles, and in his letters to some Brothers and to his family – especially to his sister Emily. “I am asking God that during this season of Lent that started yesterday, He may give me the gift of loving His will with all my heart: to exchange my own boat and fishing nets for the rosary, my times of quiet prayer, and for my poor good example. Pray that, from now on, I may follow generously the hidden way that He wants me to travel ...”¹⁹⁴

Shortly before he died, his last words to Brother Antonio were – “Courage, and carry on! The Holy Spirit has his ways ... We must stay faithful to Him. We have to be bold in our lives – as Marcellin was, and Brother Basilio, too. God is faithful: he never lets us down. Mary trusted in God. As far as we are concerned, all we have to do is to be humbly accepting, and to say – “Father, I put myself in your hands ... do with me whatever You want. You know, Lord, ...”¹⁹⁵

But his health kept on becoming weaker. – “I feel that my life is coming to its end”, he said one day to his friend, Brother Henry. That very same evening he was taken by ambulance to Barcelona. He died on 9th September 1986. Just one year before, the General Chapter had launched the Marist Family Movement throughout the world. As we know, this project had its origin in one of Brother Virgilio's major spiritual intuitions.

“His ‘being ahead of his times’ and his ‘prophetic sense’ were providential. He was not a visionary: he was a prophet ...” Brother Luis Serra said in his homily. “He was appreciative of friendship and family values, and so he was forceful in promoting the idea of the Marist Family ... We still have time to deepen his intuitions ... This is not a time for resting on our laurels.”¹⁹⁶

In taking note of how far the Institute has travelled in welcoming lay people since then, it seems that both Brothers and lay people have truly deepened this most important inspiration of our Brother Virgilio. But we, too, must take care in our time that we “do not rest on our laurels”.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Id. Page 1435. Letter of 13-02-1986 in the Archives at Las Avellanas.

¹⁹⁵ Id. Page 1460.

¹⁹⁶ Id. Page 1462.

¹⁹⁷ Id. Page 1463.

CONCLUSION:

The General Chapter defined the Marist Family as a Movement –“The Movement of the Marist Family is made up of ...” The use of this name gave rise to lengthy discussions within the commission charged with drafting the statutes for the Marist Family, because that very name is used for an entity very, very much larger. Finally, so as to specify more precisely the new movement of lay people expressly attached to the charism of Father Champagnat, the committee fixed on the name –

THE MARIST CHAMPAGNAT FAMILY MOVEMENT.

It is now thirteen years since the launching of this Movement, yet very few Brothers or ‘lay Marists’ know of the role played by the Old Boys and Brother Virgilio León in its institution. Perhaps this essay will help to make their contributions better known. Anyway, I would be content if it simply adds one further little stone to the “Institute’s memory”. Writing this essay has already done something like that for me: it has given me an opportunity to remember the face and person of my friend, Brother Virgilio León. Also, I consider myself fortunate to have finished this work at the beginning of the blessed year of the canonisation of our Founder, Marcellin Champagnat.

Mulhouse 2nd January 1999

BR. FRANÇOIS, HIS CONCEPT OF THE SUPERIOR

For want of being able to publish all of the writings of Brother François, three-quarters of which are quotes from the various authors, what will appear in MARIST NOTEBOOKS will be excerpts selected according to various themes within the framework of the research being presented. Thus, in this issue we find quotes from "Retreat Notes", all of which deal with the role of the superior. They appear in chronological order with references to the year they were written. This allows the reader to situate the quote as it appears during the life of Brother François.

What is interesting is that he seems to centre upon this theme as early as 1831 although for all practical purposes, he had been Superior General only from 1839 to 1860. This supports what was alluded to in "Retreat Notes", that in 1831 there came about an appointment of significant importance. Research on the question up to the present time has not provided a definitive answer as to whether the appointment was as Master of Novices or as Director of Our Lady of the Hermitage community.

Whatever the case may be, three various phases are to be considered when looking at the quotes as a whole. The first extends from 1831 to 1839 (no. 1-14); the second, that dealing with the Generalate, from 1840 to 1859 (no. 15-120); and the third, his retirement at Our Lady of the Hermitage, from 1860 to 1874 (no. 121-156).

For all practical purposes, these distinct categories can be observed in the writings and they are as follows:

1ST PHASE: FROM 1831-1839

The first reference is no doubt taken from an exhortation by Father Matricon who is not yet chaplain at Notre Dame de l'Hermitage in which he sets the stage: "Mary's little boat has been confided to him". It is a task which brings responsibility along with it, being of service to the Brothers by listening to them, counselling them, and guiding them; in a word, being attentive to each of them while being forgetful

of self. If this attentiveness were to apply to persons in a physical sense, it applies all the more in the realm of the spiritual, from which emanates the basic need for supernatural help, being grounded in God through prayer and meditation. "When doing your task, do so as if it were God that you are serving, and not man..." (11). Furthermore, as the role of superior implies a basic gift of self, "...the more...he makes progress in the religious life, the more he makes himself useful to those whom God has confided to his care and to his guidance." (14). Among all of the virtues, humility must be foremost in the superior, for those under his care are of no less value than himself; and they deserve no less respect than does himself. The director has no more authority than has been delegated to him by God to be used for the good of the Brothers; and it is not for him to use to lord it over them. That is why personal example is the means most often used, for it is also the most effective. As far as love is concerned, Brother Francois makes reference to it only once, and that is within the context of Saint Bernard who notes that: "...a superior must exercise his authority more as a father than as a teacher" (13).

Furthermore, as can be seen, these notes cover only a three-year period. From the years 1836 to 1839, the theme does not enter into play, no doubt because between these years, his main role is relegated to his work at the Secretariate.

2ND PHASE: FROM 1839-1859

On the other hand, during the next phase, he does not fail to reveal in his writings a certain concern for his role as superior. It is normal that he should in fact be concerned with various aspects of his role as superior. One can even observe a certain evolution, be it as little as a change in perspective at the beginning of the year 1850. The emphasis, which he had placed on the need for authority shifts during the second phase to an emphasis on the importance of having recourse to God. It is a known fact that "Following the death of Father Champagnat, many had reservations about the future and the permanence of his endeavor. Would the Brother appointed to succeed him be equal to the task? Would the Brothers readily accept his authority?" (Vie, P.258). In fact, one has the impression that Brother Francois himself actually goes along with this perception. Francois, not feeling up to the task of being a leader of the stature of Brother Louis-Marie, (perhaps as much due to his tempera-

ment as to the tenuous state of his health), seems to go out of his way to demonstrate that he is self-possessed, and that he is capable of exercising his authority by being faithful to the mission which had been confided to him. His prayer in no. 31 is noteworthy: "Dear Lord, grant that through your grace I may become the kind of superior you would wish me to be, diligently carrying out my duty". Further on, he characterises his duty with the following observation: "As he carries out his ministry, the superior must always have the tenderness of a father, the respect of a teacher and the ability to focus of a musical conductor. He must possess an active and tender piety, and an ardent zeal, possess wisdom and a certain demeanour which reflects at once firmness and gentleness." (36). Later on, no doubt because of his personal experience, he no longer stresses the importance of projecting an image of authority. He had succeeded in doing this. He now stresses the importance of relying on the help of God. "The superior must be convinced", he notes, "that his role is a very important and difficult one, and that if he is to be effective according to the Rules of the Society, his personal initiative amounts to nothing if God is not enlightening him and leading him by His grace." (89).

Consequently, the exercise of authority is to be characterized all the more by humility and paternal love. "The superior must rule with the gentleness of a lamb while striving to be humble with the strength of a lion." (45). Thus in contrast to the image he projected in the first phase, he now stresses the importance of love: "to love those we are leading, and to be loved by them so that we can more easily be obeyed". This kind of relationship promotes trust. The superior must avoid the tendency of trying to do everything by himself. He must involve others in the work at hand, for it may happen that others can do the work even better than he can. "The art of leadership consists in knowing how to call forth particular gifts and talents, and then making the most of it." (113). Nevertheless, one need not completely subscribe to what is observed in no. 95 when Brother Francois sees himself as a little child as compared to Father Champagnat.

3RD PHASE: FROM 1860-1874

What is revealed in the above-mentioned text is nothing less than a glimpse into the personality of Brother Francois.

Furthermore, it helps us to understand the circumstances which led to the convocation of the General Chapter of 1860. While still keeping the title of Superior General, he passes on the administration of his mandate to the Vicar General and he withdraws to Our Lady of the Hermitage where he is responsible for directing the community. However, this time it is a question of directing a community of retired Brothers, the sick and the handicapped, Brothers involved in manual work and young Brothers in formation. He is less concerned now about the manner of exercising his authority. Rather, he tries to be of service to the Brothers by guiding and accompanying them along the way of the religious life until they are ready to meet their Maker. While conscientious about being in touch with God through prayer, and without compromising principles, he must nevertheless know how to listen and provide for their needs. "The superior must be as prudent as he is enlightened; as solicitous as he is just; as gentle as he is firm; and as kind as he is deserving of respect" (131). Reflecting the image of Christ as he does in community, he must be an imitator of Christ. "... to make obedience easy, welcomed and spirited among the Brothers. To always listen to motives, insights, points of view, excuses. Never to be sharp, confrontational, denigrating, hurtful. Rather, to be open, honest, respectful, kind, approachable to all. To always remember that we are to reflect the Presence of God and that obedience is man's greatest sacrifice." (134).

There could be no more fitting conclusion than this last reflection for it also clearly demonstrates the gradual unfolding of Brother Francois' understanding along the long road of becoming a superior. From humble submission under the mandate of Father Champagnat, he comes to experience many trials and tribulations of all kinds; he succeeds in eventually acquiring a certain wisdom which through his bigness of heart and acquired humility, he had kept hidden. However, it is possible for us to recapture much of this by reading the excerpts, which are to follow.

Brother Francois: How he perceives the role of superior: excerpts from Retreat Journals.

1831

1. To beg the Mother of God, the Star of the Sea, and my Good Mother

to herself steer the ship which she has confided to me and to safely bring it to port." (Confess. P. Matricon)

2. Saint Gelasius, elected to the highest position as pope, looked upon it as the heaviest of burdens and a real form of slavery, which made him accountable to everyone. (Henrion, *Hist. Génér. De l'Egl.* T.II L.XVII)

3. The highest honours become pedestals, great burdens, real forms of slavery, veritable forms of torture, promotions, which lessen a man not up to the task. We only become what we are. These stately homes become nothing but beautiful prisons (Mainard). A diamond which has fallen into manure is not less precious, and a speck of dust swept up to the heavens is nevertheless nothing but a speck of dust...

4. Those who rule are like so many celestial bodies. They glow without ever being able to rest. (Blanchard: *Ecole des moeurs.* T. III, p.329)

5. There is yet so much to read, to say, to write, to explore... I can neither study nor write, neither speak nor meditate. Lord, inspire me, instruct me, direct me, and change me, cure me, transform me. Prayer for the Most Rev. Archbishop (Heures de Lyon), as applied to the superior.

6. Has a role of leadership been entrusted to you? Seek not to lord over others. Rather, seek to be as one of them. Recall to mind the pains you endured in the past. Recall that things have not changed up to the present, and that therefore you are not to avoid them. (Rodriguez, *Prat. Perf. Chrét.*, L.XI, c.VIII p. 98)

7. Be, as it were, a tree always in blossom in the field of the Lord. Bear and offer Him the fruits of your virtues so that He may bless you in time and in eternity. (id. p.103).

8. Judge your neighbour as you yourself would like to be judged, says the Wise Man. (Si. 30) May everyone be on their guard. Our neighbour is a man like us. (1è P. 4è Tté, Ch IX).

9. If the superior wishes that a correction which he is about to make be received in good spirit, and that it will be of benefit to the person receiving that admonition, he should reflect seriously about the matter beforehand. He should carefully choose the words he is to use and the manner in which he will deliver them. He cannot be too careful. (Rodriguez, 1è P. 4è Tté, Ch XI).

10. Although you may be so busy that you cannot pay attention to all that is required of you, that is not sufficient grounds to deal with your Brother in a rude manner. Quite the contrary. That is precisely the time when you should be particularly solicitous. It is then that you should convey the idea that you would be delighted to be able to comply to

his request; that nothing would please you more than to be able to satisfy his need, and that this can best be done when you are free to do so. (Rodriguez, *Perf. Chrét.* 1^è P, 2^è Tté, Ch XII, p 412) *Le meilleur gouvernement* 4.

11. In the discharge of your duty, do so as if it were God that you are serving and not man. Receive the help a Brother may be offering you in the same spirit a servant would receive the help of his Master. (Id, *Ibid.*, p 409).

12. A role of this importance requires a director who is virtuous, capable, and experienced; he is gentle but not timid, firm without being harsh, vigilant without being paranoid, humble without surrendering his principles, being able to assist the man who is having difficulty without compromising the Rules. He is strengthening the flock as much by his example as through his words, being able to know the difference between what is real and true from what is only sham and false, and most of all, he must to a great degree possess the art of discerning spirits. (P. Collet-Vie Ausart, *Esprit St Vincent* Ch 36).

1833

13. A superior must act like a father and perform like a teacher, observes St. Bernard. He is to be wise with the wisdom only Christianity can bring, he must have the ability to speak of sacred things eloquently, and to be refreshingly religious.

14. The bigger a tree becomes, the more it produces fruit which is useful to its master. Similarly, the more a superior advances in virtue, the more helpful he becomes to those God has confided to his care. Jesus Christ gives us the example. He practiced for thirty years what he would teach in three years. St. Thomas of Villanova had the habit of often saying and repeating: How can a cold heart produce words that others can accept? Also, Plato would say that just as steel grasped by a flaming heart attracts more steel, so also a man touched by God attracts other men. Teaching Brothers who have nothing in their arsenal but words are like pieces of artillery that are fired without any bullets. The final outcome is nothing but a lot of noise. (Rodr, *P.C.*, L3, T 1, Ch 8).

15. The respect, charity and attentiveness of a superior.

16. The Blessed Virgin (and this applies to Jesus as well) takes on the responsibility of directing the Brothers and chooses the means which are the weakest (the body), the most helpless (the soul) and the most unworthy (sinfulness) to accomplish tasks which

**are the most far-reaching, the most important, the most difficult
(St. Francis Borgia, Sup. Society of Jesus).**

1840

17. To maintain a sense of authority one need not continually draw attention to it.
18. Exercising one's authority is somewhat like teaching: one should not say: "I insist that you..." unless one is quite certain about oneself. Should one actually use this approach, one should follow through on it. (Med. 24).
19. Become the vicar-general of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our superior.
20. Respect due to authority is ambivalent. It is never quite what it appears to be.
21. The higher one climbs, the easier it is for one's head to go spinning around unhindered. (superiors beware!)
22. Saint Augustine observes that God looks upon you the same way a general looks upon his troops in battle. He keeps account of what means are at his disposal to come to your rescue as soon as you need it, while also keeping account of what reward he will confer upon you after you have won the battle against his enemies and yours. (Exer. Prés. de Dieu, ch. 2).

1841

23. There is a kind of gentle strength which makes one think of a steel bar which has been wrapped in velvet. It deters and supports yet it neither bends nor inflicts serious blows.
24. A superior must be like Jesus Christ. He must be father, mother, teacher, saviour, lawyer, judge, doctor, and victim for those he serves. (Le meilleur gouvernement).
25. A superior is the servant of all those for whom he will have to answer to God. Happy will he be if he has been faithful in his task. One must give up comfort, rest, health and life itself to accomplish this.
26. Ivory is soft and smooth, a symbol of authority.

1842

27. To act like a commissioned officer of Our Blessed Lady.
28. To be watchful without anyone taking notice of it!

29. Before bringing others to task, when duty requires it, to recall that basically in many of my dealings, I may be more blameworthy than they are (*Miroir fidèle*, *Consid.*5).

30. To thank God and to be happy about the state and condition to which I have been called; to plead for His help that I may know and be able to accomplish all of the tasks that have been confided to me; to ensure that His will may be fully done in me.

31. Dear Lord, grant that by your grace, I may become a religious superior according to your heart and mind, conscientious about my tasks, centered on my work, awed by the responsibility that has been confided in me, bearing it with courage as if I were soon to give You an account of it, looking only for You, seeking but you, hoping only in you, in awe of no one but you... Give me willing helpers, send me good labourers to work in your vineyard at your harvest. Grant me the spirit of discernment to choose wisely, the spirit of piety that I may form them well, the spirit of wisdom so that I may know best how to direct them, the spirit of watchfulness and goodness so that I may know how to govern them. Bless them, keep them, sanctify them, make them men according to your heart, full of your spirit and always committed to their ministry.

1843

32. No matter how successful the endeavors may be that the Good Lord may bring about through my ministry, I must not consider myself better for it, nor take any credit for what may have been accomplished. The instrument can at times be ill suited for the work at hand. It is then that it depends all the more upon the One who fashioned it. (*St. Ignatius*).

33. Every superior should look upon himself as carrying out, as it were, an order bestowed upon him as a commissioned officer of Jesus Christ, and in doing so, being faithful to carrying out his duty knowing that, one day, he will have to render an account. Alas, there are very few who have the enlightenment, the courage, the love and the zeal which their rank requires. Some act as if their sole responsibility in life is their personal salvation; others, because of sloth, laziness or timidity, shirk the various duties for which they are responsible. They will not easily be dismissed when they come before their sovereign judge, no matter how carefully they have cultivated their own garden and neglected the thorns and thistles which have grown in the vineyard confided to them by the Lord.. Every superior is like a father. He has a father's authori-

ty, a father's responsibilities and obligations. He must also have the heart of a father. (Godescard, 2 août, Vie de st. François d'Assise, L.6, T.2, p.360).

1844

34. A superior must continually be in dialogue with God, with his colleagues and be congruent himself, and this for the good of the community.

1845

35. A superior must govern less by the authority of his position than by the holiness of his life.

36. In carrying out his ministry, the superior must always have the tenderness of a father, the discipline of a teacher, the ability to focus of a musical conductor, a piety which is both gentle and active, a zeal which is ablaze and enlightened, and a manner of acting which is gentle and firm.

37. There should be nothing rude in the manner in which the superior exercises his authority, nor should there be anything lax. What should be found are both the authority of a father and the tenderness of a mother.

38. The superior should possess the awe which comes with the exercise of authority and the moral authority which comes with holiness, piety, firmness, charity, good example, watchfulness, prudence. (Le meilleur gouvernement).

39. The superior should talk to God about everything he knows and everything he hopes to settle, confiding in him those areas which need his help and attention, and asking him for his help. (Guide des Supérieurs).

40. The superior must have the love of a father, the skill of a doctor, the discretion of a judge.

41. The superior must always speak and act with charity, humility and authority.

42. It is always very important to be continually watchful of those for whom we are responsible, always treating them with deference, patience, charity. We gradually try to see things from their point of view and to some extent to become one with them in order to gain their trust, so that in leading and directing their whole being, moral, physical, intellectual, we can care for them before God, body, soul and spirit.

43. Always thinking, speaking and acting with spontaneous trust and confidence in God the Father, his Son, Our Lord, and in our Holy Mother, who act in me, with me and for me.

44. A superior should have the same attitude wherever he goes. Whatever the situation might be, his response should be the same. After a decision has been made with sufficient deliberation and reflection, he should be willing to suffer any amount of pain in overcoming all difficulties knowing that he is doing so for the glory of God and for the good of the Congregation. In virtue of his profession, the superior must observe the rules and encourage others to do the same. His example should lead others to want to follow the rules and respect authority.

45. A superior must govern with the gentleness of a lamb and he must strive to be humble with the strength of a lion.

46. A good superior is never at rest, he is always busy and active so that those who are experiencing pain and anxiety may find their peace and comfort in his care and concern. He must, in a way, act like a mother hen. (*Le meilleur gouvernement*).

47. Under a kind abbot, a monastery can become a paradise on earth where angels and archangels come and go. On the other hand, should the leadership be harsh and severe, it can become a real purgatory full of suffering souls.

48. He who would govern well must do so praying lovingly rather than ruling imperiously. (St. Bernard). Obedience knows no limits when gentleness is commanding. (*Le meilleur gouvernement*, ch. 4, p.72, no. 4).

49. Government, gentle and effective, settling everything peacefully and energetically:

- Never to command precipitously, confrontationally, haphazardly through passion, when troubled, when excited, when annoyed;
- Never to contest sharply, but rather giving the other person time to assimilate, come to terms and move on;
- Refusing only reluctantly and by necessity granting permissions willingly and without fanfare;
- Being well-liked and respected by loving sincerely and paternally, and treating others as being superior both by way of virtue and by merit;
- After a fault has been corrected, to act as if nothing had ever happened. (*Le meilleur gouvernement*, ch.4, p.84, n°19).

50. Personal example is always the most powerful form of leadership; no word need be spoken and everyone does what he must do. There

are no problems when it can be seen that the one giving the orders has already observed the command with the good-heartedness of an angel, and the toughness of a real man. (ibid. ch.II, no.12, pp.40-41).

51. The superior must be a tender father, a devoted friend, an enlightened counselor, a good shepherd.

52. A superior must use every means at his disposal to be known and loved by others. He must be all to all in order to win them all over to Christ, earning their trust so that they can share with him those things which they feel deeply. In such graced moments, he must console them with the tenderness of a father, support them like a good friend while still having the good judgement of a mentor who is tutoring them.

53. Prayer, sound instruction and good example must ever be found in the superior.

1848

54. To pray, to speak and to act with intensity, ardor, gentleness, - that is the role, duty and life of a superior.

55. One of the great defects of someone who is responsible for others is to be too busy, going here and there throughout the house or elsewhere, and to be preoccupied with extraneous things which others are quite capable of doing.

56. It is so often up to the Brothers to form kind and loving superiors. One is often treated the way one treats others. The Lord is the one who rewards or punishes. (St. Jure, Conn. de J.C. T. 3, p. 320).

57. The faults which superiors have are part of God's plan. He wished thereby to provide us with opportunities to test our faith and our patience. Furthermore, these faults and failings are often found only in our imagination and grounded in our own imperfections. Those things which should make them loved, esteemed and respected are almost always those very things which we lack in ourselves. (Rodriguez).

58. A superior sins through weakness when he permits others to fail in carrying out valid demands and acts in a manner which conveys an attitude of passivity and indifference, failing to indicate thereby that he really expects his wishes to be carried out. He should not initiate expectations without accountability. (Fr. Agathon, 12 vertus d'un bon maître, Douceur, p.105).

59. The superior exists for the good of his subordinates and not the other way around.

60. A superior represents God Incarnate whom he is to depict. He there-

fore should be in constant dialogue with Him, listening to His words and to His advice so that he can breathe of His Spirit.

61. The control which a mother has over her little child can be looked upon both as the greatest form of influence while at the same time the greatest form of servitude. Such should be the way a superior exercises his authority. He exists, not to be served but to serve and to give of himself. (P.Ligny, L.2, ch.49).

1849

62. While it is true that God wishes all men to be saved and that he has prepared a place for them in heaven, it is also true that in themselves they are not worthy; if they refuse freely and voluntarily, he can condemn them to be excluded and can cast them into the darkness where there will be tears and the gnashing of teeth and where they will be eternally separated from him and remain in a fire which will not be quenched. Similarly, a superior may cast away from the community someone he may have wished to keep but who has made himself unworthy.

63. A superior must be like a man at the helm of a ship. He should always be looking ahead so that he will be on course, avoiding the dangers which may lie there.

64. Duties of a superior: prayer, instruction, direction.

1850

65. The superior who maintains that he is happy giving direction to those who respond well to him but affirms that he cannot tolerate those who do not, is a man who will never be a good superior. He is like a captain who can only guide his ship when the winds are favorable. (Le meilleur gouvernement, L.8, n°18).

66. The prosperity of a society, of a religious house can be summarized in two words: authority and respect. These two words are interrelated and can be reduced to one idea, mutual self-giving; that is to say, the superior gives of himself wholeheartedly for the good of others, while the others in turn respond with respect. He exercises his authority well, St. Gregory notes, who knows how to keep it in check. In order to maintain one's authority, one should not allow others to diminish it, nor should one over-extend its limits. The superior should be aware of everything without trying to do everything himself. (Père Bourdin, Vie du Père Chanel, L.3, ch.13).

67. What Saint Francis de Sales said of bishops and pastors can be said of superiors and their charges. If he took so much care in forming good spiritual leaders for the parishes, he once said, it is because good pastors are no less important than are good bishops. Bishops would work in vain for the salvation of the souls confided to their care if they were not supported by outstanding holy and well-prepared priests. They are not the ones who walk directly in front of their sheep showing them the way to heaven. Experience teaches us that as the pastor goes, so goes the parish. If the faithful are guided by a priest who is well prepared and who is edifying, they will easily be inclined to virtue. However, the opposite can occur if the priest is remiss in his duty and fails to provide proper instruction and good example. (Hamon, *Vie du St. L.* 4, ch.2, T.1, p.455).

68. As representative of the Blessed Virgin, vicar of Jesus-Christ, and the Image of God the superior directs all with unfathomable wisdom, ultimate power, infinite goodness, and peace without compare. Both by himself and with his creatures, he must relate, act and identify himself with the holy and adorable Trinity and with the Mother of the Word Incarnate, so that he may direct himself and the Institute according to the Rules, following the design of Divine Providence, for the glory and the service of God and the well being of the entire Church. Under this rubric, he must see to it that others can freely acknowledge the honour and great dignity which is his.

69. A superior must observe everything, which is not to say that he must admire everything.

70. Lord, change me; yes, change me. I cannot remain as I am. Help me to become what I ought to be. Remove this burden from me, or give me the qualities necessary to carry it.

71. Twelve qualities of a superior: 1) union with God, 2) charity and humility in dealing with others, 3) ability and experience, 4) control of passions and irregular affections, 5) great discretion, 6) gentle strength, 7) strength of spirit, wholeheartedness, 8) good judgement, 9) profound discernment, 10) prudence, 11) watchfulness, 12) adequate knowledge. (Const. 1^{ère} P. ch.3).

72. Should someone for whom the superior is responsible fail or fall short in the practice of virtue, both are penalized just as the superior will be rewarded in proportion to the virtues he has developed and the faults he has prevented.

73. A superior comes to be loved because of his goodness, respected because of his virtue and his observation of the Rule and obeyed because

of his vigilance and firmness.

74. A superior must be like a father through his tender loving care and concern, a friend through his love and sincere affection, a servant through his sincere and gentle humility, a guide through his deep wisdom, a master teacher through his firm and enlightened guidance.

75. For a superior to be highly regarded, he must be dignified in his actions, serious in his speech and gracious in his demeanour. (St Bernard).

76. The one who commands has serious obligations to fulfill and great pains to undergo before being successful. Few are the superiors who achieve their goal while still in office. A lack of perception, courage and zeal will be the downfall of some, while the love of this world and love of self will be the downfall of an even greater number of others when an account is to be given to God. (Godescard, Vie des SS. 2 août).

77. The tender love and care of a superior never fails to question the past, cautiously observe the present and prepare for the future.

78. St. Chantal noted when she was made superior: "If a block of dry wood were able to prostrate and immolate itself before God and were then chosen as a leader, Our Sovereign Majesty would give this block of wood adequate intelligence before allowing it to govern poorly."

79. One of the great skills of a leader consists in winning the heart and mind of the people he deals with, making himself loved and respected and winning their trust. He cannot achieve this without himself showing the example of reverence, affection and trust. This is how men are. It is up to the superior to initiate the process. He must begin by giving them what he would wish to receive and they in turn come to the point of pleasing him in what they do. He can never encourage his colleagues sufficiently. He is the one who is to point out to each individual their various roles and how they can best be carried out. His attentiveness must be continuous and sustained so that he can recognize what is done well, correct what is left to be desired, add to what is lacking, and ward off all forms of negligence, all forgetfulness and abuse. This vigilance must be extended to all levels of government and administration. It includes areas of devotion, discipline, studies, finances, etc. In an institution of learning the superior should especially be aware that good order is not easily sustained and that only the most intelligent and firm surveillance can prevent its decay. However, let us not forget that without the Lord, we work in vain. (Ps. 126).

80. No instruction is effective without good example. No authority can be tolerated without the soothing effect of good example. Therefore, begin first of all by doing, and then your words will make an impres-

sion. Action is what influences; words alone merely verify what already exists. (Fénelon).

81. Suffer: it is only by the cross that we receive the spirit of Jesus Christ and his ability to win souls. superiors without the cross are barren when it comes to bringing forth children of grace. A cross which has courageously borne much suffering has an extraordinary power, and it sanctifies everything we do. (Fénelon).

82. The superior is the servant of those he seems to lead. He exists for them. He owes everything to them. He is responsible for all of their needs. He is the go-getter for those he governs and for each person in particular. He must adapt himself to their weaknesses, he must correct their faults like a father, he must make them wise, good and happy. The authority which he seems to have is not his own; he should do nothing for his own renown and his own pleasure. He is the man of the house who is the least free and the least tranquil. He is the servant who must sacrifice his rest, his freedom for the good and well-being of all. He comes forth wherever there are needs to be met. He must give of himself to the young, while also supporting the elderly. He must also encourage those who are tempted. He must not only be a man of God, but he must also be a source of support for all those he leads. He must be forgetful of self, never looking for himself. He forfeits freedom to become, through love, the slave and the pauper of his brothers. In a word, he must be all to all in order to gain all.

83. One of the greatest faults a superior of a large house can fall into is paying too much attention to details. A superior must lead by choosing, forming and directing those who work with him. He should be made aware of what is taking place and have enough information to be able to undertake a sound process of discernment. One of the marvels of good leadership is the ability to choose and to make use of the talents of those we work with. The superior and the best form of government consist in overseeing those who take care of all of the details. What is necessary is to observe them, test them out, keep them in check, correct them, animate them, sustain them, encourage them, at times find a better situation to use their particular talents, always keeping them busy while leading them. Wishing to examine all of the minutiae by oneself is not only brazen, it is also petty. One thereby squanders the time and the freedom of spirit which could be used to undertake greater things related to leadership. What is necessary to draw up good plans for the future is to have a clear mind and a relaxed attitude. Our best thoughts come when we are at ease and when thorny issues can be put aside. A man

who is crushed by his work is like the dregs which remain in a wine vat for too long; it has no strength and it has no taste. Those who lead by paying too much attention to details find themselves always relegated to the present. They are the opportunity of looking at the horizon to see the long-range effect of things. They are always relegated to immediate concerns, and this being their only preoccupation, they become too nearsighted and as a result their effectiveness is limited. One can only judge things clearly when they are seen globally and when they can be arranged in order of priority so that each can be seen in terms of how it relates to the other data and how it best can be pursued and followed up. In order to really be effective, it is important that a worker have the breadth of vision which permits him to see the final outcome of his work. superiors who are overly busy , who rush through things, who attend to a myriad of details are those who are the least effective; they do the work others should be doing, and pay no attention to what they should be doing. As a result, what really matters never gets done.

84. A real superior is the one who gives others the impression that he has nothing to do because everything has been taken care of. He is the one who thinks things through, who is inventive, who can look into the future, who can reflect over the past, who makes comparisons, reconciles differences, selects, establishes priorities. He is involved in long range planning, he braces himself to struggle against difficulties, is vigilant night and day, so that nothing is allowed to slip because of negligence by those who are responsible. In a word, a real superior should do only those things which no one else can do without him. He must observe everything, however he should direct his energy only to those things which really matter. Performance reflects what a man is, it strengthens character, enlightens the mind and adds to experience. However the workload which one takes on should not be excessive or crushing.

1851

85. The superior must pass on the religious spirit to those with whom he works with much like a tree trunk which passes on its sap to its branches; like the heart which pumps blood to the various parts of the body. Signals for passing on the religious spirit come from the top.

1852

86. To love and to be loved, to always encourage others, never to be

discouraged, to give strong and enlightened direction, to pray and to constantly suffer, that is what being a director is all about.

87. Superiors must be forgetful of self for the good of others. They must be willing to forego their rest, neglect their health and take better care of their Brothers than they do of themselves. Also, they should be prepared to live a life of isolation, to lament out of compassion for the ills which befall others if they are really going to accomplish the task confided to them. Whispers and aversions may often be the only thanks they receive. Furthermore, they will have to bear the failures of those for whom they are responsible before God, also their imperfections, accountable not only for the evil they have done, but also for the good which they should have done and failed to do. However, they should not be overly concerned about this accountability. They should, rather than become indignant, be attentive to the movement of grace in their lives and pray, encourage, support and be compassionate thereby imitating the example of Divine Providence. Prayer is the principal means of effective leadership, and it is prayer which will bring meaning to everything else. That superior will meet with the greatest success in carrying out his duty who knew best how to turn to God even if he be a superior of only average ability. (Father Balthasar).

88. If the superior places too much emphasis on obedience to little things, or if he corrects others too often, his style of leadership will be harsh and ineffective. Furthermore, when it comes to compliance in matters which are really critical, his corrections will fail to receive the attention they deserve. It can be said of reproofs what is said of pills and medication: if they are used too frequently, they lose their impact. Should it happen that someone being corrected resents a reproach made by the superior, the latter must show restraint and compassion giving the person time to overcome the evil spirit which has befallen him. Should the superior fail to do so, he could become the cause of the loss of a soul for which the Lord paid dearly. (Ib.) When a person moves up a notch (when a person becomes a superior), one takes on the greatest of responsibilities. When one assumes a throne, one is sheltered from that dark space where the down-to-earth struggles of personality and personal interests take place. However, we will have as our basic motivation and final judge God Himself, our conscience, and what history will remember about us. (Napoléon III).

89. The superior must be convinced that his task is a very important and difficult one, and that to lead others to live according to the rules of the Society, his personal initiative counts for nothing unless the Lord

enlightens him and leads him by His grace. In fact, what could be more difficult than to lead so many men with such a wide range of dispositions and attitudes, and to bring them together in a common effort by bearing the same yoke.

90. No, this is not the work of man, for God Himself must be involved. He is the only one who can lead us. The Lord is my refuge and my stronghold, my liberator, says the prophet. He is my protector and I place my trust in Him. It is He who leads my people, (Ps. 143). That superior, therefore, will be the most successful in his mission who best communes with God, even though he may have very ordinary gifts. If he wants to gain the support of all, what is important is that others see him as one who loves them and enjoys being with them. While requiring others to have a sense of discipline, he must not be too harsh or demanding as he goes about his task. He should, on the contrary, go about gently and humbly, and correcting abuses where they exist, gradually bringing those for whom he is responsible to full compliance to the Rules; he acts like a father in speaking collaboratively, saying such things as: "Don't you think that such and such a practice is an abuse of the Rules?" "Isn't that form of behaving bringing about negative results?" and so forth. What is certain is that this kind of gentle approach will produce far better and more lasting results than would a more direct and confrontational approach. If nothing else, simple prudence would dictate that such an approach be preferred. This is not to say that the superior should not be strong, otherwise it would only encourage arrogance and insubordination. While demanding obedience, he must show compassion so that his gentle approach supports his basic position. What is required is an enlightened discretion. This kind of an approach produces good effects and avoids that abrasiveness which inflicts pain and makes obedience difficult. Confidence works wonders! In general, it is a good idea for the superior to convey to those he is working with that he has a good opinion of them, and that he occasionally let them know that he is proud of them. Such an approach makes life easier for everyone, and avoids making the practice of obedience a burden. (P. Balthasar Alvarez; St. Jure, Conn. De J.C. L.3 C.14, § 24).

91. The authority of the superior is to the society what the cause is to the effect, what the foundation is to the building, what the roots are to the tree. Remove the cause, and there can be no effect. Remove the foundation, and the building crumbles. Remove the root, and the tree withers. Are those of you who are called to lead fully aware of who you are? Do you realize the depth of meaning, the far reaching effects

and the impact the sacred obligations which were conferred upon you? Do you see God at work behind the scenes as the universe unfolds? Such power of organization is always enlightened, always benevolent. It always achieves its goal, powerfully and gently. Observe the authority of Jesus Christ. It is based upon self-denial and self-sacrifice. Its only reason for being is to act justly and to love tenderly. It is through the wonders of forgiveness that it achieves its victory over every obstacle. If at times it seems to have reached its limit, it is so only that we can rediscover the gifts and graces which are lavished upon us each day from the immense flow of God's goodness towards us. The authority which has been confided to you is nothing short of a collaboration with the authority which was given to Jesus Christ. It expects and presupposes that you are willing to catch its flame and spread its fire wherever you may go. Never make use of this power to satisfy your own desires, to make others think more highly of you, or for personal gain. Always use it as a means of combating evil in the struggle for truth, justice and goodness. Therefore, know that the feelings of love, respect and veneration which you will experience will find an echo in the hearts and minds of your Brothers and all those around you. You will have worked gloriously in union with Jesus Christ for the well being of the Society. Do not say that you cannot do it, that the task is too difficult, that your efforts are in vain. You are not alone. Jesus Christ is walking ahead of you. He shelters you with his protection and with his cross. He strengthens you by His grace. He shows you where He wishes you to go. He is counting on you. He is already keeping a record of your victories in the book of life, day by day, hour by hour. Isn't it true that the only glory is to be found in working in union with Jesus Christ and for his Church for the salvation of souls? You are looking for happiness. Isn't it true that when we perform good deeds, the pleasure we experience deep within cannot be compared to other kinds of pleasures? You want to be rewarded! Isn't it true that a good conscience anticipates the rewards which are yet to come. The same holds true for the good opinion others have of you. Rewards go hand in hand with undying faith. (Mgr l'Evêque de St. Claude Mandou, 1853).

92. As superior or shepherd of souls, he can neither lose his way nor save himself. Either he is a flaming torch emanating from the hand of God for the undoing of his Brothers, or he is a gift from heaven for their temporal and eternal well-being. It follows that the souls which have been confided to his care become either his perdition or his glory; his perdition if they have been lost due to his negligence, his glory and

crown if they have been saved because of his ministry. (Msgr. Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble).

93. A superior should be able to say as did the Apostle: Be imitators of me as I am of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 11, 1). Put into practice what you have learned from me and what you have received from me, what you have heard me say, what you have seen in me, and the God of peace will be in you, (Phil. 4). (Imitation of Jesus Christ, Book III, Ch. 15, 16, 17) (Conference of Sept 17th) I will send you my angel, the Lord said, who will walk before you, he will guard you and lead you; hearken to him and listen to his voice, my spirit is in him." (Exodus 23, 20-21).

1854

94. The superior is the link to his assistants who are bound to the directors, and these in turn are linked to the Brothers and the children. Together, all make their way to heaven through obedience to the rules and to the commandments.

95. My Lord and my God, you have made me into a king, a superior, acting in the place of Father Champagnat, our Founder. However, I am still but a child, needing guidance and direction. Yet, I am your servant, your child, in the midst of the servants and children you have given to Mary, our mother, and mother to so many more. I beg you to give me a heart which is responsive to the lessons of your divine wisdom so that I can lead your chosen people, your privileged children. Help me to know the difference between good and evil so that I may recognize and promote what is good, and avoid and struggle against what is evil every day of my life.

1855

96. A superior is like a pretty face, the prettier it is, the more each blemish becomes all the more conspicuous. (Nicholas, Patriarch of Constantinople).

97. The superior must be vigilant so that no one becomes unruly, and everything is done in order and according to the Rules.

98. The superior of a community must be able to say like the Psalmist: I will sing Your praises on the harp, O my God (Ps. 12). What is understood by this is this, I will organize and direct my Brothers in such a way that they will be in harmony with the great concert singing your divine praises. Each will play according to the instrument given to him,

according to his particular contribution to the composition which are the Rules and principles of the religious life, in harmony with their particular state in life and for the good of the Society.

99. The superior, the director, often leads others who are greater than he. He must do so with humility through obedience.

100. Those who command must above all be like unto God, for it is He whom they represent. In exercising their role as leader, they should make use of whatever is most appealing about goodness and virtue, avoiding everything that is repugnant, harsh, and constraining. Nothing is more powerful for promoting good than the example of a good superior. However, the opposite is also true. When the only thing to be seen in him is an obsession for justice without gentleness or the desire to please, those working with him will fail to hold him in high regard, and will soon move on from this attitude to one of scorn and a neglect of religious obedience. Therefore, the superior must never forget to offer all things to God, looking upon himself as one who promotes his goodness and design. He should not look upon himself as if he were the custodian of power and authority to be used at the expense of his subordinates. It would be deplorable and a big mistake for him who is to command to look upon the exercise of his authority as if it were something which belongs to him and to him alone, and not look upon it as a form of obedience which he owes to God. Having been raised above the others and placed, as it were, between heaven and earth, look upon yourselves rather as a servant of God rather than as a superior of men. Those who are above others, unless they be very careful, fall prey to the mistake of looking upon themselves as being the centre of all activity, wishing to receive credit for everything that has been done, at times believing that they are being deprived of the honor that they deserve and take offence when they seem to be neglected. As a result, they fail to listen to the advice which is given to them, or receive it poorly for they consider it to be a rejection of their vigilance and insights. As a result, they become reluctant to be involved with plans and projects which are not their own. If in carrying out their duty they were to seek nothing but to serve God and to do his will, they would joyfully listen to all the good advice which is offered to them, regardless of where it comes from, and would prefer being helped rather than being preoccupied with the feeling of being loved by everyone. (10 Souff. de J.C.).

101. Compassion, the hallmark of a superior, and mercy, which is the main attribute of God, form a powerful alliance when used in conjunction with authority. When misfortune strikes, the most noble quality of

strength is the ability to render assistance.

102. The superior who seeks to retain a candidate who has no religious vocation creates difficulties, and as a result, it is the Institute that suffers.

103. Superiors should exercise their authority with gentleness and humility in imitation of St. Joseph. They should anticipate what they see as being God's will, for He is the source of their authority.

104. A superior must speak gently and extend welcomes warmly. He must be self-possessed, professional and modest about his achievements.

105. A superior must be like a digestive system, always at work for the good of the other members. He must be like the crankshaft of an automobile, constantly turning, but hidden and unknown.

1856

106. The religious life with its self-denial, its apostolic works, its joys and its consolations is above and beyond human weakness. Who can understand the life of a superior? Not only must he overcome his own inclinations, he must also deal with the personal inclinations of others. He must sustain and animate those for whom he is responsible, leading them along the path of the spiritual life, making it possible for them to know what mortification is and why it should be encouraged. He must help them understand the importance of humility and self-denial, encouraging them to be kind, and teaching them to prefer those things which are most repugnant to nature, teaching them to keep a sense of humor in spite of the difficulties they may encounter. The superior then is the driving force, the heart and soul of the community. He encourages, comforts, animates and energizes all of its members.

107. It is necessary for a superior to conduct himself in such a manner that it could be said of him what the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon: Happy are they who are yours! Happy your servants who are ever before you, who listen to your voice. Blessed be the Lord your God who has raised you up and made you king so that you may represent him. As God loves Israel and will sustain him forever, so has he established you to rule and to bring forth a harvest of justice. (II Paral.9)

108. The superior should refer all things back to the person in charge without wishing to resolve everything by himself. In spite of Ananias' initial reluctance, Jesus sends him to encounter St. Paul. The angel tells Cornelius to have St. Peter come forth. (Acts 9;10).

109. When guiding men along the path of virtue, the longest way is to

have them follow laws and regulations, the shortest way is to set a good example, for men tend to believe more what they see than what they hear. (Seneca). One learns better and more quickly through observation than by explanations, for actions speak louder than words. (St. Jure Comm. J.C. L.2, C.3, S 28, n°10) (Rodriguez III p. C. VIII, T.V. p.84).

110. Superiors are unfortunate. They are almost always offered what is best and what is most useful. They must constantly be on their guard not to offend anyone or bring dishonor to the observance of religious poverty.

111. The superior must accept nothing for himself and refer all things back to God, hence the motto: All to God through the superior, all to the superior for God. A superior is much like a sprinkler used to distribute holy water during a blessing: it takes in holy water from the font and scatters it everywhere thanks to the hand which holds it.

112. Before reprimanding or correcting a Brother, see to it that there is peace in your own heart so that the process of correction can take place in keeping with the demands of prudence and humility thereby bringing about healing in the individual through all the love and compassion which he deserves, for he has been created in the image of God, he is a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, an indwelling of the Holy Spirit which Satan has sought to seduce and defile. If a Brother is convinced of the love and high regard you have for him, chances are he will be well disposed to receive the correction you are about to make, and he will acknowledge the blindness and error of his ways. Having come to terms with the problem and achieved peace in your own heart, you are now in a position to share that peace with him. (Doctrine spirit. De St. Dorothée, V.P. L.7; C.31, T.6 Avis sur la manière de gouverner et d'obéir).

1857

113. The wonderful art of leading consists in recognizing the gifts which are before us, and making use of them.

114. A famous emperor once said that in order to assess the present and the future of a city, all he had to do was to look at three key public servants, the judge, the teacher and the pastor. The same could be said of a superior, a director, or a teacher in relation to his community, his house or his classroom. As the leader goes, so goes the city. (Si. 10). When those responsible for the maintenance of law and order, those responsible for intellectual formation, and those responsible for the

development of conscience do their work, everything goes well, or it soon will go well.

1858

115. Those superiors who must make use of only the best things on earth in carrying out their mandate run the risk of not having the best of things in heaven.

116. Superiors ordinarily receive no particular talent when they assume their responsibilities, however they have the appreciable advantage of being able to use the gifts and talents of others.

1859

117. The superior and those in charge of the general administration of the Institute, or those responsible for the governing of a Province, are not excused from attending the ordinary activities and exercises of the community. (P. Favre, Rome 12 janvier 1850).

118. The supreme art of governing consists in helping people welcome their mandates of the person who is commanding. The great secret of successful government consists in having people enjoy being governed because of the truth and justice they experience. However, to achieve this end, what is required is a devotedness which knows no limits, one which earns love, respect and obedience. (P. Félix, conférence, 1850).

119. The chief preoccupation of a superior should be to come to understand the principles of sound administration and to put it into practice, leaving minor details to his collaborators.

120. Each year, there are eclipses of the sun and the moon, some of which are visible, and others which are invisible; this does not prevent them from following their course and to fulfill the end for which they were created. The same holds true for the various styles of leadership which are in existence, as well as for those who collaborate with them.

1860

121. The leader of a community or house should be virtuous and experienced, gentle but not timid, firm but not harsh, watchful but not paranoid, willing to bring others to task without humiliating them, able to encourage those who are having difficulties without compromising the Rules, supporting his Brothers as much by his good example as by the

soothing effect of his words, able to distinguish what is true and enduring from what is but a sham, and especially to possess to a high degree the art of discerning spirits.

122. An enlightened conformity to what is most authentic about public opinion is an indication of the competence of the man in charge, and candour in dealing with circumstances and situations is the hallmark of a man who has character. Such an attitude inspires confidence, and promotes honest and candid exchanges between the superior and those with whom he works.

123. The captain of a ship, or the driver of a vehicle know that there may well be in the ship or vehicle some who may be better informed, wealthier, more influential and more celebrated than he. This does not prevent him from carrying out his duty for he is the one who is responsible. However, he does so by treating others with the greatest possible care, deference and high regard. A superior must act in a similar fashion.

124. Superiors are made strong so that they may be untiring. They play the role of master teacher so that they can be fatherly. They act as pathfinders to show others the way to heaven.

125. The rank and prestige of being superior does not negate the weakness of human nature, just as the weakness of human nature does not deter from the authority which comes with being a superior. Similarly, the lowliness of the human estate denies nothing of the greatness of Christ's divinity. The splendour of the Word Incarnate surrenders nothing because it has undertaken to become bound to our humanity in order to save us. Other than through grace however, the exercise of authority finds its true base only in love. With love, everything can be articulated, everything can be done, everything can be corrected, everything can be required, everything can be won. (Msgr Plantaier, Bishop of Nîmes 1859).

126. A superior must avoid making two big mistakes. The first is to do nothing, (or to try to do everything), and the second is to take charge of nothing or to try to take charge of everything. In both cases he either disqualifies himself or he disqualifies everyone else.

1861

127. The superior is fastened to the cross by three nails: his own suffering, those of his Brothers and the demands placed on him by the Institute or by the local house.

128. Happy is that superior who can say what Jesus, the Good Shepherd once said: "I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." (John 10).

Happy is that Little Brother of Mary who can say: I know my superior and my superior knows me. My superior thinks, speaks and acts in me, for I do all things as he would have me do them.

129. A superior must attend to others like a master teacher and speak like a father. (Ib.)

1863

130. A superior must hold those for whom he is responsible neither too closely nor too much at a distance. If he holds them too closely, it is difficult for them to leave. If he holds them too much at a distance, they fail to grow and develop. (St. Francis de Sales Ib.).

131. A superior must be as prudent as he is enlightened, as caring as he is just, as gentle as he is firm, and as lovable as he is respected.

132. A superior must have his authority respected. More precisely, he must have God's authority respected even by those who perform the most menial of tasks, for they are more likely to be ignored and not listened to. The father of a family spends more time attending to the needs of the youngest members of the family because they are more fragile and more vulnerable. For the same reason, a teacher may punish his students more severely for disobeying someone who substitutes for him than he would if he had been present and they had disobeyed him.

133. A superior must constantly be in the process of being accountable for his actions before God, before men and before his conscience. (Mgr. Felinski, Bishop of Warsaw).

1864

134. Always trying to make obedience easier, more pleasant, more agreeable for those with whom we work; listening to explanations, observations, opinions, excuses; never to be sharp, abrasive, speaking ill of others, or harmful; rather, being thoughtful, sincere, courteous, friendly, helpful. Recalling always that it is God who radiates through us and that obedience is the greatest sacrifice we can make.

135. In order to avoid arguments developing in a community, those in charge should be sensible and conduct themselves in a spirit of faith and understanding.

136. Once expressed, an idea takes on a life of its own, that is to say it brings about good or evil depending upon how it is accepted in the Church, in a community - something superiors should seriously consider.

137. The superior must be down to earth when dealing with spiritual matters and all aglow with the Spirit when dealing with the mundane.

138. Similarly, one may rightfully blame the grower when a field is full of thorns and thistles, not because he planted them, but because he made it possible for them to thrive by neglecting what he planted. The same holds true for the superior or the director who fails to curb abuses and violations of the Rule in his community and fails to foster a spirit of enthusiasm and zeal for religious observance.

1865

139. The bigger the balloon, the more likely it will burst. The ability to deal with a multiplicity of issues is often a blueprint which leads to the biggest form of slavery. superiors should therefore know how to fall under the umbrella of the power of God and the condescension of God, bearing the yoke of authority with humility.

1866

140. Superiors are elected in order to bring about 1) the greater glory of God, 2) the highest possible degree of holiness in the souls confided to their care, 3) their own personal sanctification . Because the superior is the recipient of divine authority, his conduct must not betray his trust, otherwise, he becomes a scandal and a terrible burden to those with whom he must work.

141. The prevalence of good spirit or of bad spirit in a house or in a community, (this applies to the individual religious as well), is the victory of justice or of injustice, of integrity or of a lack of integrity, of goodness or of evil. Methods: confession, Veni Creator, Salve Regina, Be still. Offer your afflictions to God. Destroy illusions. Let us pray for one another and for our Brothers.

142. Imitation of Jesus Christ must be evident in those responsible for teaching about it. A master painter must be more accomplished than those he directs. The religious must reflect especially the Passion of Jesus Christ in his own life. Gentleness is the triumph of the soul over one's compulsions. A superior who is gentle and humble is always self possessed and draws others to himself.

143. Keeping silent, paying attention to the tone of one's voice, prudence and discretion, these are skills which many superiors can improve upon. They should be cautious for their own sake and for the sake of others.

A house where silence is observed is a powerful homily for all to listen to. The great temptation of superiors is to believe that when a community achieves something which is good, it is to be used to further their reputation and guarantee its success.

1867

144. A superior may have reason to doubt and be suspicious of persons confided to their care, however he must never judge or censure others without first listening to their side of the story and being convinced of their guilt. (Father Valuy, Jesuit).

1868

145. Superiors should rarely intervene when associates issue directives contrary to their liking, otherwise they reduce the role of their colleagues to merely following their orders. (St. Ignatius). There are several reasons why this is so. Here are some of them: When a person receives a responsibility, the Lord generally bestows on him the graces necessary to carry it out. 2) When it can be seen that the superior wants to do everything by himself, others have less interest and dedication to a task than they would otherwise. 3) All things being equal, the person responsible for a particular task has more practical knowledge and skill with the matter at hand than does the superior with all of his pondering and theorizing. 4) It sometimes happens that it becomes difficult to resolve a particular problem without knowing all of the circumstances involved. The person who normally does the work is often in a better position to know all of the extenuating circumstances. 5) Finally, it would be better for the superior to make minor suggestions after the work has been completed rather than cause a real blunder by rushing in where angels fear to tread. (Bartholi. Vie de St. Ignace, L.4 C.9 T.2 p.296).

146. The Lord provides a great deal of esteem and affection to his ministers and to superiors when he confides souls to their care. In a most sublime manner, this affection joins what is strongest about paternal love to what is most tender in the love of a mother. This kind of love is the most perfect reflection of the love God has for us. (Mgr. Plantier, Evêque de Nîmes).

1869

147. He who looks out on the world from a belfry has a greater hori-

zon and sees more things than he who is below and sees only the entrance. The same can be said of the superior and those who are not in that position.

1870

148. The three great approaches which can be used to lead men are conscience, reason and the heart; the great means of achieving success are goodness, personal example, and self-discipline. However what includes all of them, both for the one who leads and for those for whom he is responsible is the spirit of prayer. When it is present, everything runs smoothly. When it is lacking, nothing goes right. (*Le bon supérieur*).

149. In order to make a good decision, thought must be used, and all thinking begins with God; Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. It is important therefore that the superior be attentive to his prayer life. St. Bernard, St. Francis and St. Ignatius all spent a great deal of time in prayer in order to obtain his understanding and his help. (St. Jure, *Conn. amour de J.C.* L.3 C.14 24 T.3 p.357). All of their actions were begun in prayer, supported by prayer and ended in prayer.

150. The subordinate will have a higher place in heaven than the superior, provided that he is humble. This should be a sobering thought for those confided with the care of Brothers and of children.

1871

151. Of all the tasks required of man on earth, none is more fragile or more exalted than being responsible for the care of souls. Earthly princes command realms, but they do not command souls. It is more repulsive to require compliance when it is not freely given than it is to impose the burden of slavery. This way of thinking seems to be in line with that of St. John Chrysostom who saw the responsibility of caring for souls more in terms of fatherly affection rather than an approach based upon compliance to regulations. (M. Monnin ; *Vie du C. D'Ars* L.2 C.2).

152. In order for interventions to be successful, the repugnance for the fault must never exceed the love one has for the sinner; let the superior raise up the fallen; let him show compassion for every fault; let there be the milk of human kindness in rooting out evil; let him use more of the carrot in his approach and less of the stick, for a heart cannot be healed by coercion. I don't ever remember being angry with

a parishioner, the Cure of Ars said to me, I don't even remember having admonished them. Yet what a collapse of mores he had to deal with! His record stands for itself. (Ib. P.196, C.4).

153. As much as possible, the superior must constantly be in touch with God so that drawing his strength from the source of all that is good, he can become a channel of God's blessings for those with whom he works. His humility should draw the Lord's blessings upon him and make him well liked by all. May nothing be found in him, not even an idle word, which does not promote the common good. (Ibid. L.3 X.13).

154. The life and well being of a religious house can be summed up in two words: authority and respect. These two words in turn can be reduced to one basic idea, mutual self-giving. What is involved is the devotedness of a father on the part of one for the good of all, and of the compliance of the many for the well being of the one. Without this kind of interaction, no community can endure.

155. He knows best how to exercise authority who knows best how to limit its use. (St. Gregory). It must be restrained from the inside, and upheld from the outside by the Rules. (Ibid.)

1874

156. A director, and even more so a superior, must be devout, virtuous, capable, and experienced; he should be gentle but not timid, firm but not harsh, watchful but not paranoid, willing to bring others to task without humiliating them; he is able to encourage those who are having difficulties without compromising the Rules; he supports his Brothers as much by his good example as by the soothing effects of his words, able to distinguish what is true and enduring from what is but a sham. And especially he possess to a high degree the art of discerning spirits. (Vie de S. Vincent de Paul, L.2,p.153).

