

Sharing the Marist Way

The general aim of the Society is to contribute in the best possible way, both by its prayers and its efforts, to the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just and to gather, so to speak, all the members of Christ, whatever their age, sex, or standing, under the protection of the Blessed Mary Immaculate, Mother of God... For this reason, entry to the Society is open to lay people living in the world ... " – Jean-Claude Colin, S.M. Founder of the Society of Mary

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is presented as an outline for those who want to learn-about Marist spirituality as understood by the Marist Fathers and Brothers, (the Society of Mary). The Marist Fathers and Brothers invite you to learn about their way of life.

To be fully Marist is to engage in a way of spiritual development that reflects upon the example of Mary as the rule of life. When as individuals or as groups we call ourselves "Marist," we express a desire to live in a certain way and to participate in a spiritual commitment as understood by Jean-Claude Colin (1790- 1875), founder of the Society of Mary.

In the following pages the reader will understand what is meant by living the Marist Way. There are core values and attitudes which are essential for one to bear the name of Marist. Those who call them-selves "Marist," whether religious or lay persons, live and share these essential values and attitudes. They recognize within them a special call or their own desire to follow Christ in the Marist Way = that is, to follow Christ as Mary did. They draw on these core values, attitudes and principles as the basis for living a Marist Way of life.

May Mary be your companion and guide as you make your way through this journey of understanding. You are invited to explore the Marist Way of living and take action by participating in the Marist lay movement worldwide. The prayers of the Marist Fathers and Brothers are with you always.

Author's note: This booklet is an adaptation of the Society of Mary/Marist Laity pamphlet entitled "The Work of Mary."

Opening Insights

"Here is what I want..."

Fundamental to the Marist movement is the conviction that it was Mary's initiative which called the Society of Mary into existence. She expressed her desire in these words: "Here is what I want ... a Society which will have my name, which will be called the Society of Mary, whose members will call themselves Marists." It is she who chose and called the first Marists by giving them her name.

"By Gracious Choice"

To be a Marist in this tradition is to have a sense of being chosen and called by Mary. We use the term "gracious choice" to describe this particular gift. Marists feel themselves in some mysterious way called to be not only followers of Christ (as all Christians are) but also called by Mary to bear her name and share in her concern for the Church, the world, and the whole human race. This grace is an invitation to participate in her spirit and in her desire to see the Gospel of Jesus take root in our contemporary world. The unity of all Marists lies in the name and spirit of Mary.

"A tree with several branches"

An image for the Society of Mary is that of a "tree, with several branches." Father Colin originally envisioned a multi-branched community with a missionary spirit which embraces all people: lay people as well as religious, brothers, sisters, and priests, all working for the same goal. It is an image that captured the imagination of the first Marists.

5 Branches of the Early Marists

Jean-Claude Colin Founder of the Society of Mary.

On April 29, 1836 the first branch was approved by Pope Gregory XVI. The group of aspiring Marist priests had now to select a leader, and begin their service as missionaries in the Church. At the death of the founder of the priests' branch, Jean-Claude Colin, 258 priests and religious were working in France, Oceania and London.

Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn

Foundress of the Marist Sisters, was convinced that her specific mission was to found a feminine branch of the Society of Mary, a supernatural insight dating back to her first meeting at Cerdon when the Marist project was explained to her. Within a year of its approval 16 young women from one small village had joined the sisters' group.

Saint Pierre Julien Eymard

Founder of the Third Order (Laity) appointed by Father Colin in 1845 over his first group of "Christian Maidens" a group of 14 Laywomen. Within a year he began to appoint other groups that by June of 1850 there were over 300 members. In 1850 the lay branch of the Marists was given official ecclesiastical approval as the Third Order of Mary.

Marcellin Champagnat

Founder of the Marist Brothers of the Schools, was the first of the founding people to succeed in forming a Marist group, and his company of Marist Brothers became the fastest growing and the most numerous of the branches.

Father Victor Poupinel

Founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, Poupinel entered the Society of Mary as a deacon in 1838, and was professed as a Marist in 1839. Colin immediately chose him to fulfill the task of Procurator to the Missions. He carried out this work for 20 years: from 1840 till 1857, and from 1871 till 1874. In the intervening 13 years (1857-1870) while based in Sydney he was the roving Visitor to the Missions, which meant he travelled constantly around the Pacific.

5 Modern Branches of the Marists

The Society of Mary (Marist Fathers and Brothers, S.M.)

The Marist Sisters (S.M.)

The Marist Brothers of the Schools (F.M.S.)

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (S.M.S.M.)

The Third Order (Marist Laity)

No afterthought

One of Colin's early ideas – what he held on to and meant to leave to the Society – is that the Society essentially includes a branch for lay people "living in the world." ...The lay branch is part and parcel of the plan of the Society he presented in Rome in 1833. In 1837 he spoke of a world-wide Marist mission, saying that ...the congregation of the Blessed Virgin... will have several branches. It will be open to all kinds of people from which Mayet deduces: This applies above all to the Third Order.

The recurrent emblem of a multi-branched tree also serves as a reminder of how the lay branch is integral to the full Marist vision. The lay members were certainly given to understand in 1837 by their director, Pierre Colin, that they "belong to the order of the Marists." The point is this: The Laity are no mere afterthought; without them the Society of Mary would be truncated. Lay people belong in the Marist thrust.

RECOGNIZING THE PERSON OF MARY

When Marists look to Mary they always see her as a person, an individual in relationship with God the Father, with her Son Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit, as well as in relationship with the Church and with the contemporary world.

“To think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things.”

Marists take Mary as their model in all that they do. They come gradually to think, judge, feel, and act in a new way – Mary's way. This is an entire approach to life, and acquiring it, of course, flows from the action of the Holy Spirit at work in the Marist throughout a life-long process. It may seem paradoxical, but this new way calls for a deep, personal relationship with Mary, without, however, making her the central focus. The emphasis here is not on piety toward Mary or keeping her constantly in our spiritual life, but rather on living like Mary, adopting her faith, her point of view, her whole approach to life. In the most profound sense, this means to make Mary present to our world today.

“Woman, Mother, and Disciple”

Marists look to Mary as the first and best disciple of Jesus. As disciple, the focus of her attention was away from herself and always on Jesus. Although Scripture says very little about her, we know that she stood there in the community, among the first group of believers, as the Lord's disciple; she had been a disciple from the Annunciation. We could even correctly call her a “charter member” of the Church.

Luke the evangelist describes Mary as: one who hears the word of God and accepts it wholeheartedly (1:38); one who believes that what she has heard will be fulfilled (1:42, 45); one who treasures what she has been told and ponders it (2:19-51); one who hears the word of God, keeps it, and puts it into practice (8:19-21, 11:28); one who is with the disciples in the community, praying continuously, receiving the Holy Spirit, and witnessing to the Resurrection (Acts 1: 14). We learn a great deal about Mary when we reflect on her presence in the Church as woman, as mother, and as disciple.

“Here is what I want...a Society which will have my name, which will call itself the Society of Mary, whose members will call themselves Marists.”

As woman and as mother of the Lord and mother of the Church, Mary's one thought was for the health and growth of the Christian community. Marists see her in that early group as supporting, nourishing, encouraging others, especially its leaders, the apostles chosen by her Son. In these activities she truly acts like a mother, remaining unobtrusive, out of the spotlight, “hidden.” As disciple, Mary heard and welcomed the Word, pondered it, searched its meaning for her life, and then acted on it. Marists who live this way of life, will help a “disciple Church” to emerge: a Church that listens to, submits to, and acts upon the Word which has been

proclaimed. This will be a Church whose members strive to discover the Gospel together and to live it as Mary did.

Mary in Nazareth

Nazareth represents the first of two points of reference in Mary's life and in the life of the first Marists. The second is Pentecost. Nazareth is the setting, Mary's home, where Marists go in spirit to see things from the same vantage point that she saw them at Nazareth, Mary "stored up in her heart" and pondered the words of Jesus.

It is the place where slowly, silently, and unobtrusively Jesus grew in wisdom, age, and grace.

As long as we stand in our own place in the world, we run the risk of being caught up in our own interests and ulterior motives. But at Nazareth we, too, can learn the wisdom that comes from seeing things from God's point of view. Nazareth also serves as an approach to life, which simply means to "ponder the things of God" and treasure them in one's heart.

From Nazareth we can get a balanced perspective on life. It could even be called a place of the heart: it is a place of silence and faith, a center point of stillness and tranquility. Nazareth means openness and growth and waiting for the Spirit who is gradually, quietly, and imperceptibly changing us from within.

Mary at Pentecost and in the Newborn Church

The mystery of the newborn Church following Pentecost, the image of Mary in the midst of the apostles and of the other first Christians, is the second major reference point for Marists. The Church came to birth in the Spirit's fire, and as a result believers, in communion of mind and heart, gave powerful witness to the Resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 2:1-4, 42-47)

We find here a rich figure of church: all believers from the very beginning until our own day, gathered around the apostles and Mary, and all living in harmony and unity. We picture Mary present in this group of her Son's followers, and we acknowledge how much she is able to contribute to the life of the Church, in her hidden way, through her faith and wisdom.

"I supported the church at her birth; I shall do so again at the end of time."

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Mary was present at Pentecost, the birth of the Church, and according to Marist insight, she was its support. One of the ways she wishes to be present in the Church and in the world again is through a family of believers who live her spirit and do her work of gathering the whole world to her Son and who, touched by God's mercy, become truly one, one in mind and heart. This family is a group of people whose task is to support the communion of the Church as it comes into being today in the same way that Mary supported it at the beginning.

Today there are so many places where the Church is being born or re-born, emerging or re-emerging, places in the center or at the edges where people search for community in which they can hear the Good News proclaimed to them.

ESSENTIAL CORE VALUES

“Hidden and Unknown in the World”

This phrase touches on the singular manner in which Marists live their lives, striving to bring the men and women of their time to Jesus Christ. Think of Mary in the early Christian community at Jerusalem. We know that she was vitally present, but with a presence at once quiet and unassuming.

Marists take this figure of Mary as their model in the way they evangelize. They adopt a low-profile approach, never pushy, always having great respect for others and understanding their weaknesses.

Marists will try to avoid anything which could get in the way of someone's quest to know Jesus. This includes shunning anything flamboyant or that makes a big show. To pattern oneself on Mary in this way does not imply to withdraw or hide from others. It means, rather, to be engaged fully in life, but in a simple, gentle, and humble way.

The Marist who lives by this maxim, "hidden and unknown in the world," will go personally unnoticed while yet doing great good for others.

Instruments of Divine Mercy

God's love for us in Jesus Christ lies at the very center of the Christian message. This love reaches out as mercy to everyone, especially to those who are alienated from God or from the Church.

In this context, Marists see Mary as the mother of Mercy who indeed cherishes humanity, especially those who are lost, or excluded, or neglected, and who suffer greatly as a result. Marists, after all, have themselves been first the recipients of this mercy and in turn want to be instruments of mercy to others.

Scripture describes God's relentless love and tireless search for sinners. So, when Marists hear the invitation to become "instruments of divine mercy," they accept the call and the challenge to portray this merciful face of God and to build a Church which is perceived not in terms of power, control, or competition, but rather in terms of community, compassion, simplicity and, above all, mercy.

For this reason Marists are to welcome and embrace all, to the exclusion of no one, and to have an open heart for all.

Tasting God and Trusting in God Alone

From their personal experience the first Marists believed that once a person had "tasted God" everything else would fall into place. "Tasting God" in prayer, it turns out, was to be a constantly repeated inner experience, even in the busiest moments of a Marist's life.

Through that same experience, we too can develop a willingness to put all our trust in God alone and to be shaped into the image and likeness of God. Then we can pull back from our many activities, concerns, and projects, and remain alone with God, who little by little forms in us the Word we are to make flesh for our world.

Whatever your situation in life, as a Marist you can be a prayerful person. What this means is not necessarily saying long prayers or many prayers, or spending hours at prayer, but it means living in God's presence, having a deep faith in God's love, and also interceding, in your prayer, for the whole world.

A Marist is concerned particularly with those who are lost, excluded, or neglected, those who seem far from God, and those who are searching. In Mary's gentle way, a Marist seeks to point people like this directly to Jesus Christ. There are, of course, a thousand ways to pray and care for people. What is essential for the Marist is to be prayerful and apostolic in the spirit of Mary.

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

Say "No" to Greed, Pride, and Power – The Spirit of the World

Marists are to take a stand against greed, pride, and power, that is, the spirit of the world which is opposed to the spirit of Mary. Father Colin declared this attitude one of the essential elements of the Marist way. He understood how easily and subtly the desire for money, prestige, and control can infiltrate a person's life and strangle it spiritually.

These three tendencies end up restricting the effectiveness of anyone who wishes to present the Gospel of Jesus. Therefore Fr. Colin invites Marists to follow in Mary's footsteps and keep their eyes focused on God alone and on the Kingdom, rejecting the crippling forces of greed, pride, and power.

Marists are those who lose their lives for the sake of the Kingdom, develop the inner freedom to be faithful disciples of Jesus in the manner of Mary, and build up the Church to reflect the features of the woman who is mother and disciple.

MARIST SPIRIT IN ACTION

"The Work of Mary" a Missionary Spirit

When the early Marists, in the last century, spoke of the enterprise they were engaged in, they often used the expression, "the work of Mary," indicating by this what Mary wanted done, at that time, by them. (Recall the phrase, "Here is what I want ...")

For us, too, at this particular turning point in our history, a time of great change when a new world is being born, we believe that Mary maintains a special interest in bringing the women and men of our time into contact with her Son, Jesus.

Marists feel called to share in this concern of Mary's and to become part of her family to work on her behalf. The term "work of Mary" covers both the whole breadth of the Society of Mary, including all its branches, as well as denoting that the conditions under which Marists work are not set by themselves but by Mary. It is, to be sure, her work, done on her terms.

Marists embrace this missionary spirit, essentially open to all people. It excludes no one and would like to see a brotherhood and sister-hood of everyone united in Jesus Christ.

A Church with Mary's Features

Here is a useful way to describe the work of the Marist enterprise: to enable the Church to grow and develop. The Church is made up of weak human beings and is in constant need of reform. Inasmuch as we are members of the Church, the way we live affects it.

As Marists we want to live in such a way that the Church is ever more clearly a church of mercy and compassion, and a church where the Gospel is lived according to the manner of Mary, always reflecting Christ's great love for the world.

We want the Church to be a place where everyone can grow in the life of Christ, a place characterized by compassion and relationship. A church with "the face of Mary" would make a choice for compassion over competition, an option for relationship over dogmatism, for humility over power, for service over control. A church in which Mary is present will open its doors to welcome all people to Jesus Christ rather than issuing strict regulations so as to admit only some specially chosen souls.

This goal of a church with a Marian face does not refer to promoting one or another special devotion to the Mother of Jesus, but it points, rather, to Christ's love and Mary's presence in the Church community in such a way as to transform it into a more loving, more open, more inclusive, and more merciful church.

"Seek the Interests; of Christ and Mary" Be useful Instruments

From the experience of early Marist days, Fr. Colin was convinced that it is not necessary to have great talent, or learning, or even great holiness to become a Marist. What is needed are individuals who can be useful instruments of God's mercy, people who are free to set aside

their own interests and plans in favor of those of Jesus and Mary, and who can put themselves in the shoes of the other person.

Father Colin is challenging us in a sense to submit ourselves to others rather than impose ourselves on them. This allows the other person to hear more clearly not us, but the Good News of Jesus Christ. Thus does Fr. Colin call us to approach the people of our time with delicacy and sensitivity.

A SUMMARY OF MARIST BEGINNINGS

August 15, 1812. The Cathedral of Le Puy, France.

Above the main altar a famous and widely venerated black cedar statue of Mary holding Jesus had attracted pilgrims for centuries. At the height of the anti-religious fury of the French Revolution, on June 8, 1794, this statue was publicly desecrated and burned. In 1801 the faithful restored the shrine and installed a replica of the original "Black Virgin."

Among her many pilgrims was Jean Claude Courveille, a young man contemplating a vocation to the priesthood. In 1809, he is cured of blindness while praying before the statue and touching his eyes with a little oil his fingers picked up from rubbing the lamps that burned there. He attributes the cure to Mary's intercession and returns periodically to the shrine to pray to her.

On the feast of the Assumption in 1812, the 25-year old Courveille, is again praying before the statue of Our Lady of Le Puy. He has a spiritual experience of Mary speaking to him ("Here is what I want", which marks the beginning of the Marist project.

Three years later he would be a seminarian in Lyons with Jean-Claude Colin, Marcellin Champagnat and others, and tell them about the Le Puy inspiration. Besides Courveille, up to fifteen other seminarians and one priest faculty member show interest in the plan to establish the Society of Mary. They will meet regularly during the school year to exchange ideas and dreams about fulfilling Mary's wishes in the future.

July 25, 1816. The Marian Shrine of Fourvière in Lyons, France.

Eight of the seminarians are ordained to the priesthood on July 22, 1816, in the chapel of St. Irenaeus, the major seminary of Lyons. The ordaining bishop is the Sulpician, William Louis DuBourg, who had recently been ordained in Rome to be the second bishop of New Orleans and is now making a tour through France to recruit personnel and funds for his mostly missionary diocese.

The next day, July 23, a dozen aspiring Marists go to the ancient shrine of Our Lady of Fourviere, which overlooks the city from its prominent position on a bluff that rises above Lyons. They have signed a pledge dedicating themselves to work toward founding the Society of

Mary. Jean-Claude Courveille celebrates his first Mass and places the pledge on the altar under the corporal. The others attend the Mass and receive Communion from Courveille.

At the end of Mass the pledge is read out. Those who have just been ordained will now move on to various ministry assignments scattered through-out the diocese.

1816-1825. Cerdon, France.

Jean-Claude Colin's first assignment after ordination is as parochial vicar at Cerdon, a village in the remote hill country of southeast-ern France not far from the Swiss border. The town has one church, St. John the Baptist, where by coincidence Jean-Claude's older brother Pierre, also a diocesan priest, is pastor.

During the years 1816-1825, Jean-Claude receives numerous graces, including inspirations and insights regarding the Society of Mary. He would later describe these experiences as tasting God, tangible consolation, trust, assurance and confidence in God. But he also undergoes trials and feelings of reluctance or unworthiness at presuming any leadership in the Marist project. (It was, after all, Courveille who had the original inspiration and idea to bring about the Society of Mary.)

At Cerdon, Colin writes a first draft of constitutions (for the priests' branch) and fills notebooks with other ideas and plans for the Society, including thoughts regarding the laity branch. Historical records show that a group of about 30 men meets occasionally in the rectory with the two priests, possibly forming the prototype of a lay fraternity. Already in 1817 there have formed communities of Marist Brothers under Marcellin Champagnat's guidance and of Marist Sisters under Mother Saint Joseph.

1825-1829. Belley and the Bugey District, France.

The boundary lines of the Lyons diocese have been redrawn, and the Colin brothers now belong to the diocese of Belley, a town of under 5,000 people about 60 miles east of Lyons and 30 miles from Cerdon. In 1825 Bishop Alexandre-Raymond Devie calls the two brothers along with two other diocesan priests who aspire to be Marists to come to Belley and live at the minor seminary.

The first missionary work of the Society of Mary begins.

The bishop asks the priests, as Marists, to evangelize and re-Christianize the diocese which is still suffering the effects of the French Revolution. This they do in remote mountain towns and villages in an area called the Bugey, preaching parish renewals, teaching catechism, and inviting people back to the Church and preparing them for the sacraments.

In this difficult and sometimes seemingly unsuccessful work, they experience firsthand what the noble ideal of being "instruments of divine mercy" means as they hear confessions, baptize, and revive the faith of so many people.

By coincidence, about 45 miles to the west, Jean-Baptiste Marie Vianney is himself reviving the faith in the farming town of Ars. It was in the seminary in Lyons that he had become friends with Jean-Claude Colin and Marcellin Champagnat, and he would later become a member of the Third Order of Mary in 1846 and, after his canonization in 1925, its special patron saint.

The Cure of Ars certainly knew about the Marist missionary efforts in the Bugey mountains, and once commented with admiration, "The Marists is a work after God's heart because it has humility, simplicity, and trials."

"Let them always bear in mind that they belong by a gracious choice to the family of Mary... Let them try constantly to breathe her spirit: a spirit of humility, self-denial, intimate union with God and the most ardent love of neighbor. So they must think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things."

– Fr Jean Claude Colin

1829-1833. Minor Seminary, Belley, France.

Bishop Devie, obviously pleased with Jean-Claude Colin's ministry in the diocese, names him an honorary canon and appoints him superior of the seminary/college of Belley. Marists are now engaged in another traditional work of the Society, educating youth. Among those who will become teachers at the seminary in Belley are the future saints Peter Chanel and Peter Julian Eymard.

Father Colin develops organizational and leadership skills as he continues to guide the Marist project, leading and encouraging the men, writing, and preparing the documents necessary for a religious order, and seeking the bishop's help for official recognition as a religious congregation.

Some of the aspiring Marist priests in Belley are taking care of "associates of the Third Order" with the help of the Marist Sisters. One example is a retreat for ten ladies held in the Sisters' chapel during Lent of 1833. Moreover, in Lyons a group of Tertiary Brothers, comprising at one point as many as 13 laymen, comes into existence in 1832 and runs a boarding school.

September 28, 1833. Papal Residence at the Quirinal Rome, Italy.

The diocesan priests who are hoping to become Marists are now divided between the dioceses of Lyons and Belley. There are indications that the two bishops consider the Marists their own personal diocesan congregation. Since the Society of Mary does not yet have canonical recognition from Rome, each aspirant is technically a diocesan priest and owes obedience to his bishop.

For this reason, Jean-Claude Colin begins in earnest to seek pontifical authorization for the Society to become a religious congregation in the Church. His request will include a special petition for approval of the branch of faithful "who live in the world," that is lay people. An audience in Rome with Pope Gregory XVI is arranged. Father Colin travels to Italy with Peter Chanel (representing the Belley group) and Jean-Antoine Bourdin (representing the Lyons group) in late summer 1833.

On September 28, Pope Gregory receives them warmly in the Quirinal Palace, the papal residence at the time. Despite the cordiality of the audience, the pope indicates that official approbation will take time and require the recommendation of various cardinals and other church officials, and will presume a thorough study of the documentation presented so far.

After reading Fr. Colin's submission to the Holy See, one of the cardinals raises a major objection to the idea of three branches of religious, namely priests, brothers, and sisters, as well as a confraternity of lay people, having only one superior and, therefore, conceivably being thought of as one single religious order.

Father Colin is asked to re-think the organizational structure. While this objection is still pending, nevertheless in August 1834 the pope issues three decrees granting indulgences and other spiritual privileges to the lay fraternity in Belley, an event which could be interpreted as indirect approval of the Marist lay branch.

September 24, 1836. La Capucinière, Belley, France.

During the course of 1835, the section of the Church's bureaucracy responsible for missionary outreach, referred to frequently by its Latin name *Propaganda Fidei*, becomes more aware of a vast area in the South Pacific in need of evangelization. The structures of the Church need to be established there, and Propaganda is eager to find a religious order that would take on the pastoral care of the entire region.

Events begin to unfold providentially in Rome and Belley to the mutual benefit of the universal Church and the Society of Mary. In the summer of 1835 Pope Gregory XVI establishes the Vicariate Apostolic (missionary diocese) of Western Oceania, but without naming a bishop.

Through a series of coincidences, *Propaganda Fidei* learns of Jean Baptiste Pompallier, one of the aspiring Marists in Lyons, whom it chooses to be vicar apostolic (bishop) of the new Oceania mission. Father Colin agrees to Pompallier's nomination and lets Rome know that Marists would be willing to staff the mission.

Consequently, the Holy See will officially approve the priests' branch, since it has to be a canonically established congregation before the mission can be entrusted to it. On January 10, 1836 Pope Gregory XVI ratifies the decision to confide the mission area of Western Oceania to the Society of Mary.

On April 29, 1836 the pope publishes "Unium Gentium" granting pontifical approval to the priests' branch of the Society of Mary. They are now authorized to elect a superior general, profess the customary religious vows, and become a religious congregation in the Catholic Church.

A convent stands in the town of Belley that was once a friary of Capuchin Franciscans (hence the name of the building in French: La Capucinière). This is the first house the Marists own, given to them by Bishop Devie in 1832. It is here that 20 priests gather on September 20, 1836 to begin a retreat preceding the event that will mark the official birth of the Society of Mary.

Of the 20, four of the participants were among the twelve who signed the Fourviere pledge. On September 24, the feast of Our Lady of Ransom (sometimes called Our Lady of Mercy), the group begins a long prayerful preparation at 5:30 a.m. This starts with an hour's meditation, then divine office, Mass, various Marian prayers, plus a half hour of silent prayer, and culminates in the election of Jean-Claude Colin as superior general. He then professes his own vows directly to God and subsequently witnesses the vows of the other 19 in order of seniority, beginning with Marcellin Champagnat.

December 8, 1850. Archdiocesan Headquarters, Lyons, France.

The Archbishop of Lyons, Cardinal Louis-Jacques-Maurice de Bonald, is authorized by the Holy See, in a document dated September 8, 1850, to canonically establish the Third Order of Mary. Accordingly, the cardinal publishes a decree dated December 5, 1850 officially approving the Third Order, and indicating indulgences, who may admit members, and the provisional nature of the rule. This decree is to take effect, and thus the Third Order will be canonically instituted, on the following Sunday, December 8, 1850.

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

– Fr Jean Claude Colin