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SUB MARIENOMINE

JEAN CLAUDE COLIN

Michael P. Coveny

Marist School, Atlanta

Topic: Marist Laity – Then and Now

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*Marist Laity – Then and Now*  
*Michael P. Coveny, Marist School, Atlanta*

### Introduction

#### What is Marist Laity?

- The Marist laity is not so much an organization you join as an identity you take on.
- It is a school for the Spirit by which you gradually become the “work of Mary.”

(Like a Bridge, 169)

#### Origins of Marist Laity

- The original idea was to have a single society of Mary with various branches, including one primarily for lay people; and such was the plan presented to the Holy See in 1833.
- The plan was considered impractical.
- The branch composed mainly of lay people was, in fact, the first to receive the blessing of the Holy See with a grant of indulgences in 1834.
- The Fathers’ branch was next receiving papal approval in April 1836.

(Like A Bridge, 3)

#### Secular Society as Marist Laity

- The Marist project was meant to reach everywhere making the whole world Marist.
- The all-encompassing vision of the Marist project went beyond religious congregations of women and men to include people who “live in secular society.”

(Like A Bridge, 3)

#### The Diocesan Clergy as “Marist Laity”

- Diocesan clergy are invited to embrace the Marist spirit, too.
- In the 1833 early rule drawn up by Colin, special pious practices are recommended to the priest members of the lay movement.
- Diocesan priests, like Saint John-Marie Vianney, have become members.

(Like a Bridge, 3)

#### One Spirit

- The “confraternity” that Colin described would have a “uniformity in the Spirit, but not in the practices...Unity will be in the name and the spirit.”
- He meant simply the name of “Mary” and the “spirit of Mary.”

(Like a Bridge, 4)

### Laity Mission

- The reality for laity, conceived of as Marian and lived as such, may be expressed in phrases like the following: *service without notice, doing what others won't do or can't do, the primacy of living over talk, availability for collaboration with others, a simple and warm approach to people, a certain aptitude for working without too much insistence on personal success or consolation.*

(Like a Bridge, 60)

- Marist School in Atlanta has articulated and shared similar specific values to define "identity."
- <https://www.marist.com/page/spiritual-life/the-marist-way/core-values>

### An Invitation

- Marists throw open these values to others, invite them to share in a climate of life, to take on the Marist identity, but this only happens when personal witness and communication have made possible for others to see this Spirit, this climate, as a reality.
- This is why the lay Marists would form a group; to be a school for the spirit... (See attachment 1)

(Like A Bridge, 60)

## II. Marist Laity - Then

### Third Order or Confraternity

- In the earliest discussion of the project at the seminary in Lyons, France, inspiration was drawn from the medieval model of three orders for male religious, female religious and people living in secular society (the third order).
- So the name "Third Order of Mary" came to be used for this branch through August 1833; but when Colin made a summary of the Society of Mary's rules for formal presentation to the Holy See in December 1833, he called it the "confraternity of lay people living in the world."
- In August 1834, Blessings of indulgences were given by Pope Gregory XVI to the "Confraternity of the Faithful or Association under the Auspices of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Conversion of Sinners and the Perseverance of the Faithful."
- This is the name Colin will use when he sets up "lay constitutions" in 1874. (See attachment 2)

(Like a Bridge, 4-5)

### Group Formation

- In the early days, there were distinct groups for men.
- In Colin's mind, confraternities were to be established in places where there were no Marist religious.

(Like a Bridge, p. 171)

### **Julian Eymard Controversy**

- Julian Eymard a diocesan priest became a Marist in 1839.
- Colin appointed him to be Provincial in 1844.
- Colin appointed him, innocently, to lead a group of 14 women.
- He drew up a program to “honor and imitate the poor and hidden life of the Most Holy Virgin.”
- He instructed them with the following ideas: they were a kind of religious living in the world, the centrality of Nazareth, and they were to remain secret.
- Membership grew rapidly -- by 1850, he wrote he has “300 pious members.”
- Colin was unhappy with the Eymard as Provincial.
- He gave him the care of 14 women and turned it into a big movement. Eymard was more interested in pastoral work than administration

(The Marist Laity, Frank McKay p. 3-4)

### **Approval of Eymard’s Third Order**

- On September 8, 1850, a petition seeking approval of the Third Order was presented to Pope Pius IX.
- It claimed to express the wish of Father Colin, Superior General for the Society of Mary.
- There was a lack of correct information in the petition.
- On September 27, 1850 approval for the Third Order was granted.

(Marist Laity, 4)

### **Restrictions**

- Colin was disturbed by these events, and in time, what distressed Colin about the way in which the Third Order developed was that it was too “restricted.”
- In his day, its limitation to a certain form of membership, with a rule largely uniform for all its members, unduly curbed the universal extension that was part of his prophetic vision of the “whole world Marist.”

(Like a Bridge, p. 171-172)

### **Alphonse Cozon**

- Much later, in 1874, Colin spoke of his ideas for laity to a young Marist, Alphonse Cozon.
- Cozon made it his life’s work to keep reminding Marist priests of Colin’s understanding of this branch of the Marist project
- Cozon’s way of describing Colin’s view of the lay branch of the Marist plan is still a blueprint for today. (A Certain Way, p. 97)

### Cozon's Blueprint

"In the mind of the Founder, the Third Order ought not to be confined within the limits of the Society. It ought to be, in a sense, a work outside the Society, to which the Society ought to communicate its own spirit, which is the spirit of the Blessed Virgin. Its development, therefore, ought not to be restricted to the proportions of the Society; we are not to retain it in our hands, but only let it pass through them. Thus, it is not a piece of the mechanism in the Society's clockwork, it should not revolve around us, so to speak, like a planet around a constellation, but it should shine into the Church. Thus it is no longer a precious way to help the Society by drawing pious faithful to the Society, but rather it is a way to extend the Society's action over the world in such a way that the same thrust, going forth from Mary, passing through the Fathers and the members of the Third Order, might go forth and lose itself in the Church without any personal consideration."

(A Certain Way, p. 97 -- Marist Laity, p. 50)

### III. Marist Laity – Now

#### Confraternity

- In 1874, Colin also said it is "not a third order; we are not an order, so we cannot have a third order. It is a confraternity; a society."
- The name Third Order is not quite suitable not only because Marist congregations are not "orders" - they make simple vows, not solemn vows – but also because the Marist "confraternity" aims to be more than the traditional third orders.
- In the latter half of the twentieth century, other names such as Marist Fraternities, Marian Apostolate and Marist Way have come to be used.

(Like a Bridge, 5)

#### Sharing Identity

- To those who want to draw new people into the Marist family, Marists would say: seek to involve those who are already most active.
- Do not restrict the development of the Marist laity by insisting on one form only.
- If your Marist identity is of value to you, share it; invite new people to become "Marists," but invite in a warmhearted way; never badger like an obnoxiously desperate salesman.

(Like a Bridge, 169, 171)

### International Movement

- Marist Laity is an international movement.
- [http://www.maristfathers.ie/images/uploads/docs/Marist\\_Laity\\_International\\_News\\_Issue\\_1\\_Advent\\_2015.PDF](http://www.maristfathers.ie/images/uploads/docs/Marist_Laity_International_News_Issue_1_Advent_2015.PDF)
- [http://www.maristfathers.ie/images/uploads/docs/May\\_2016.pdf](http://www.maristfathers.ie/images/uploads/docs/May_2016.pdf)

### Marist Schools Atlanta: Marist Laity?

- Opportunities abound for parents to get involved in “spiritual activities and community service” at Marist School.
- <https://www.marist.com/page/spiritual-life/parents-and-spirituality->
- Question: Are these Marist Laity? Are these participants “lay Marists?”
- Our sister school, Notre Dame Academy, started its parent spirituality at the “next step.”
- Adults claimed and called themselves “lay Marists” at the very beginning of their enterprise.

## IV. Marist Laity – Future

### “Creative Fidelity” to Tradition

- Marists will certainly create ways of doing and associating that meet the needs of our time and local cultures (Fr. Bernard Ryan, former Superior General of the Marists)
- There is “creative power in a tradition to which we strive to be faithful.”
- “Fidelity to a tradition gives us a creativity which far surpasses any creativity we would have were we to start from scratch rather than work out of a tradition.”

(Like A Bridge, 103)

### Schools Takeaway and Laity

- What Tradition or Values do you cherish as “Marist?”
- Do you ever consider the following proposition:

**“My school will not remain Marist without a stable Marist community.”**

Sources:

Laurence Duffy, S.M., Charles Girard, S.M., *Like A Bridge: The People of God and the Work of Mary*. Rome, 1994.

Frank McKay, S.M., *The Marist Laity: Finding the Way Envisaged by Father Colin*. Rome, Center for Marist studies, 1991 (part of the Maristica series)

Craig Larkin, S.M., *A Certain Way: An exploration of Marist spirituality*. Rome, Center for Marist Studies, 1995. (pages 94-97)

Attachments:

1. *Constitutions of the Society of Mary*, 1987. Rome, 1988 (paragraphs 30, 31, 32)
2. Charles M. Girard, S.M., *Lay Marists: Anthology of Historical Sources*. Rome 1993 (document 395)