



Most hidden

Among the things that Mayet noted when Jean-Claude Colin spoke of his years at Cerdon was Colin's reference to those years as years of great grace. "Over a period of six years, I experienced extraordinary serenity when thinking of the Society, with a clear feeling that it was the work of God." One special grace seemed to be connected with this period of time, and later Colin spoke of it publicly. It was the only one to which he has made significant reference. He said, "When God speaks to a soul, He says a lot in a few words. That phrase for example, 'hidden and unknown in the world.'" For Colin, and for generations of Marists, this phrase, 'hidden and unknown in the world' has been a type of watch-word. In countless ways, Colin returned to the practical application of this approach as a way of being able to do an extraordinary amount of good in a world which was more and more allergic to the Church and the way it was perceived. Whether he was giving advice about a style of preaching, or an approach to sinners in confession, or a way of relating to diocesan priests and bishops, Colin could see that this was a sign of the extent to which Marists were seeking the interests of Jesus rather than their own interests, and it was at the same time, as he said, "the only way to do good".

Many Marists seemed to understand this from the start. In a rather beautiful sentence in one of his letters, one of the early Marists wrote: "Work in depth, even when nothing or very little is to be seen, for it is there that the essential is often to be found." Once when Arturo Toscanini was preparing his orchestra to play one of Beethoven's symphonies, he said, "Gentlemen, I am nothing; you are nothing; Beethoven is everything." He knew that his main task was to sink himself, and his orchestra, and let the music of Beethoven flow through. A similar idea was

expressed by Archbishop Romero in a speech he made at Louvain: "I am a shepherd who, with his people, has begun to learn a beautiful truth: our Christian faith requires that we submerge ourselves in this world." Mary's way of living the Gospel encourages us to ask, "What are the needs of this person? How can I help this woman to meet God? How can I help this young man to find his path to God, because he will find his path to God before I find his path to God". This is the meaning of the hidden way of life. Mary's transparency is such that we see through her to Christ. She is the signpost, pointing a way from herself to Christ, whose mission on earth is her only concern.

1848 On March 1 at lunch, Father Colin told us, "Gentlemen, let us remain small. I say that so that no one will ever think of changing our way of doing things." (By this I think Father meant our way of doing everything in an unassuming way). "This is the only way to do good, being small. The Society is called to do an enormous amount of good. It must be faithful to its vocation. To be small, 'hidden and unknown', the times call for that, we must accommodate ourselves to our times."

The Mayet Memoirs

Key formula

But what precisely was Mary's way of being in the midst of the new-born Church? Hidden and unknown. That is the key formula. The further I go, the more I am struck by the fact that Colin puts himself, and invites Marists to put themselves, in the shoes, in the skin of the other.

- Gaston Lessard, sm

Painting and canvas

If we look at a painting that has been produced on canvas, it is the painting we look at. The artist signs his name in the corner of the painting. No one knows who made the canvas, yet without the canvas there could be no painting. Let us suppose that the canvas and the picture were two persons. Someone would come along and speak to the "picture-person" but would not even look at the "canvas-person". Suppose the "canvas person" were to speak up and say, "How about me?" The admiring person would probably react this way and say, "Thank you for the picture." He would realise that the painting and the canvas formed a unit. *Brother Andrew, sm*

Prompt box

The Marist, in a certain sense, is like the man in a prompt box. What matters is the stage. On it you have the actors, the various protagonists playing the drama, and you have also someone that nobody sees, that nobody knows is in the prompt box. The prompt is there only to suggest at the last moment if the actor does not remember, or does not say what he is supposed to say, and he makes the dialogue easier. But nobody will look at him; and if he happened to go onto the stage himself he would spoil the drama. That in a certain sense is the Marist — the Marist in the prompt box only to help others, to help the soul and God to dialogue together.

Jean Coste, sm

Marist

One of my most unforgettable lessons about the Marist spirit was given to me by someone whom I thought I was teaching! I was giving a Retreat to some high school girls, and I was trying to explain how Marists model themselves on Mary, and how Mary related to Jesus. I used the image of the oil-burning lamps, and I explained how in the lamp there is the wick which burns the flame, and there is a glass covering to protect the light. The light shines through the glass, and if the glass is clean, people never even notice it is there. They see only the light. If the glass is covered with soot or other impurities, people notice the glass, not the flame. I explained that Mary was like the clean glass round the light. People saw right through her, as it were, to

Christ. A girl put up her hand and asked me, "Is that why you are called Marist?" I didn't know what she was getting at and could not follow her line of thought. "Well," she said, "it's easy. The word 'Marist' is composed of the first three letters of Mary's name, and the last three letters of Christ's name. You may begin by looking at Mary, but you always end up looking at Christ." I was reduced to silence.

The place of meeting

The principal concern of Marists is to prepare the meeting place between God and the soul. They do this especially by being sensitive to all obstacles which they themselves place to such a meeting, and also to the obstacles placed by our modern culture. They overcome the obstacle which is themselves by striving for hiddenness, by getting out of the way, and trusting that God will speak to a soul. They become acquainted with the obstacles placed by modern culture because they strive with great sensitivity to understand the deepest longings of modern men and women. They try not to criticise but to encourage, coax, beseech, and take all the means possible to help bring people into contact with their God. Like Mary of the Visitation, at Cana, and at the foot of the Cross, Marists are concerned about the place of meeting.

Albert Di Ianni, sm

As a Marist people, we are agents of compassion and change.

We ensure that God's longing for closeness is experienced by everyone, especially those outside or on the fringes of the Church.

Marists also break down and heal the divisions within the Church.

This sometimes means being its "loyal critics" loving and supporting it while seeking to mend its flaws.

American Marist Fathers

