



Power bursting forth

It is hardly surprising that people were confused about what Colin had in mind when he spoke of the broad Marist enterprise. The whole idea was something new, something that had not been seen before, something that really didn't quite fit into the Church's Canon Law or theology of the time; which explains why neither cardinal Castracane in Rome nor many of the early Marists themselves could grasp the full implications of the original plan. And yet, something in the project immediately attracted people. What else could explain the extraordinary spread of the movement in such a short time, drawing so many men and women to live as priests, brothers, sisters, or lay people in the Marist family? The idea of being in the Church in a Marian way gave energy to those who joined the Marist enterprise. But it is our own age that can give an even fuller meaning to the Marist insight and translate it into practice.

The Church's understanding of itself and its place in the world today enables the richness and diversity of the Marist project to break open. The Church today sees itself as a body of people united in mind and heart, on pilgrimage together in faith. "Church" is a communion, where the dynamic energy of the Spirit is stirred up. "Church" is men and women filled with the power of Pentecost. "Church" is people discovering the Gospel together and living it out in service of others. "Church" is where Mary is found as a believer hidden among the believers, guiding, reminding, encouraging others by her closeness to God and her care to carry out the mission of Jesus to the ends of the earth. When Colin said on one occasion that "the time has come when we must make her power burst forth" his listeners knew that this was part of the mission entrusted to them and that it was to be done with urgency.

Recently, a teenager wrote: "May be some day I'll find something worthwhile to do with my life; something I could really put my whole self into and enjoy; something worthwhile I could accomplish in the face of so vast a world. I admire so much somebody I find doing what he or she really wants to do, and who thinks it worthwhile doing. Surely there are many, but I don't think I know more than a dozen." One suspects that if this person had lived in the time of the Marist pioneers he would have found among them more than a dozen such people, and they probably would have invited him to join them. And he may have gone to the margins of the Church and the world, as they did, for the sake of the Gospel.

The Mayet Memoirs

On January 2, 1842 Father Colin brought Fathers Jallon, Favre, Dussurgey, Lagniei and Eymard together...and spoke to them; in words burning with zeal, saying to them that zeal is the essential quality of priests, or Marists; that Marists must be like the apostles; that the apostles were only 12 in number and that they had converted the world, and we Gentlemen, we already number 40!

Rediscovery

For myself I find the "rediscovered" concept of the laity within the Society of Mary an exciting prospect. That the rediscovery of our "roots" should come at a time within

the Church when people are seeking new and more vibrant forms of community life is exhilarating.

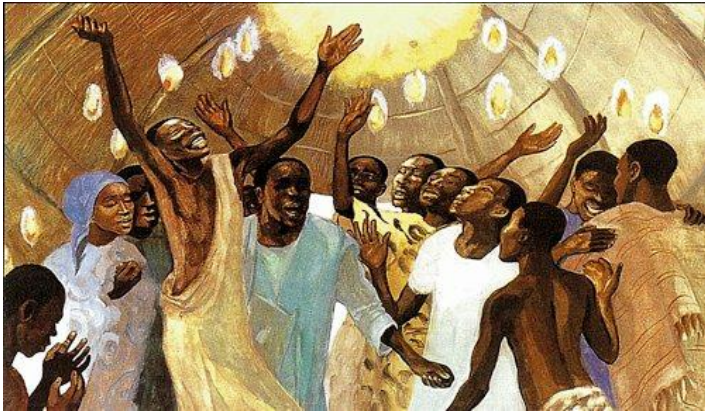
– Patrick Brophy, *sm*

The difference

What difference does this notion of “communion” make? To call the Church first and foremost a “communion” is to place the accent upon the creation of a bond of love and service among all of its members. One cannot close in on oneself in spiritual isolation from the rest of the community. Each must take up the task of forming this communion, a reflection of the Trinity on earth, even though his or her role may be different. The priest will lead especially through his role in Word and Sacrament, and the laity primarily through taking an active role in witnessing to the Gospel by word and example in the various areas of human culture, in business, art, in law and politics, in the media, etc. But both priest and laity are to be concerned about all aspects of the Church and its worship, of the world and its works. The Church as “communion” means that laity and clergy are bound together in one work and one mission, the evangelisation of the world. – Frank McKay, *sm*

Fire of Zeal

Those of us who have been used to a more static representation of the events of Pentecost may find



this artist’s interpretation surprising. And yet, it could be close to the reality of the Pentecost event which so affected the disciples that people thought they were drunk with wine. (Acts.2:13) Mary, whose prayer hastened the coming of the Spirit, is seen as the hidden missionary force in the Church at its beginning. Something of that same zeal and urgency was felt by the early Marists. Jeanne-Marie Chavoin reminded her sisters: “We must have confidence. God is not dead!” Marcellin Champagnat’s zeal led him to admit: “I cannot see

a child without telling him how much God loves him.” And Jean-Claude Colin said even at the end of his life: “I have a great ambition – to seize the whole world under the wings of Mary He also wanted the Third Order “to cover the earth”.

Living intensely

The Church cannot live today at a normal, tranquil, slow. The world needs you, the world is waiting for you. Even and peaceful tempo.... It is from these times that the call in its opposition, the world proclaims its hunger for truth, comes to us: it is necessary to be present with one’s whole soul; it is necessary to be present with an effort and an awareness of full and generous correspondence. We cannot be creatures of habit, half-hearted collaborators. We must live intensely.

The world needs you, the world is waiting for you. Even in its opposition, the world proclaims its hunger for truth, justice, renewal, which only your ministry can satisfy. Listen to the groans of the poor, the candid voice of youth, the complaint of the worker, the sighs of the suffering, the criticism of the thinker. But don’t be afraid.... The Lord is with you. – Pope Paul VI
