

COLIN'S THREE GREAT PERIODS OF CENTRAL MARIST IDEAS

THE BEGINNINGS: 1816 – 1836

1. This was a time for dreaming, the time of vision
2. Colin's conviction was that Mary wanted a Society dedicated to her and her work.
"Thus he is going to refer Marists to Mary." (Coste, MARIAN VISION p. 306)
3. Sources of inspiration
 - a) Mary of Agreda's THE MYSTICAL CITY OF GOD:
 - its "great intuition: Mary in the nascent Church." (Coste, M.V p.312)
 - "what Colin found: the possibility of going beyond a defensive [Counter-Reformation] theology" (Coste, MV p. 316).
4. Typical themes:
 - a) "**the whole world Marist**" (An image of our Mission)
 - b) "Mary the support of the Church at its birth and again at the end of time"
 - c) "the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the faithful"
 - d) "instruments of divine mercy"
 - e) The Three No's.
 - f) "one heart and one mind"

COLIN'S GENERALATE: 1835 – 1854

1. Rome has now approved the Society of Mary.
 - a) Jean Claude Colin has been elected superior general and is in a position of authority. He now has to cope with the demanding constraints of organizing and administering the Society in a time of rapid expansion.
 - b) "Colin will now be a great realist, a great pragmatist: he knows that he is responsible for the Society and for its members before bishops and civil authorities" (Coste, MV p. 346). He will be the prudent Colin.
2. "Colin refers to the model of the primitive Church with the apostles and Mary, but they are not pictured as in the Pentecost scene. ... Thus, Colin invokes an idealized past, that of the primitive Church with the apostles and Mary, and he projects this model into the future" (Coste, MV. p.364).
3. Typical themes:
 - a) the nascent Church: **Mary in the midst the apostles** (An image of our Mode of Action)
 - b) applications of the No's e.g. no "currying of favour" & the superior defers to the opinion not his own (No to power emphasized especially)
 - c) hidden and unknown in the world

3. COLIN'S POST-RESIGNATION: 1854 - 1875

1. The situation:
 - a) "Colin resigned for various reasons: his age, he was already 64; fatigue; disenchantment in regard to –among other matters– the Oceania missions. There was also his old tendency to live a hidden life, to withdraw, to want to be left in peace. All that is bound up with a project, as it often happens, especially with a man as active as Colin: the alternative Eucharistic foundation at La Neyliere" (Coste, MV. p.392).

- b) “Things have to get organized; people cannot always be living according to the two or three rules or little customs they had at the beginning. A mindset settles in: the time has to gather in, to organize, to legislate, to get into working order” (Coste, MV. p.396).
- c) “Colin no longer had any direct responsibilities. A man of action and a charismatic leader [he is] no longer entrusted with the governance of the Society [and] he felt all the more that he was the guardian of its primitive spirit” (Coste, MV. p.402).

2. Sources of inspiration

- a) a rediscovered copy of the “Constitutions” of 1842.

3. Typical themes:

- a) **Nazareth** (A principle of authenticity)
- b) the early ideas

Summary

“We have gone back over the three major stages in Colin’s life and have looked for images which best expressed what is essential.

There was a time for dreaming, the time of the period of the beginnings, with the great dream of a people of God in the last days, gathered around the mother of mercy.

There was a time for bringing into reality a Marist apostolic community on the model of the early Church enlivened by Mary, and for getting it under way.

There was also a time for taking in the sails, a time for drawing to a close, for getting to Nazareth; and there, before God alone, face to face with God, face to face with what one is, there was a time for measuring things out according to their true weight.

These were basically the three ways of expressing the single mystery of the hidden life. Insofar as Colin is concerned, there is no phrase better known than the formula tied to his name: “Unknown and hidden in the world” which moreover is itself an image.” (Coste, MV. p.439 – 40)

A Spirituality

“The first image offers the dream of the whole world as Marist: the Society of Mary will disappear one day by blending into the Church of the last days. The second image gives life to an apostolic society which is going to step aside the way Mary was able to do in the Church. They will thus discover a way of going out to people with respect, modesty, and patience, and this will allow for a proclamation of the word of God in a way adapted to our times. The third image calls for a profound stripping which has the effect that, when we place ourselves alone before God, before what counts, then we become capable of truly judging what we are doing and turning it in the direction of what is essential. It is only then that Colin’s message becomes a spirituality. Until that point, it might have been feared that his message would remain a grand utopian vision or a finely tuned pastoral strategy. That was not what happened; it was already a spirituality Marists were living.” (Coste, MV p.432)

Source: Jean Coste, A MARIAN VISION OF THE CHURCH, pp. 302ff