

44. Shine out into the Church

This paragraph, from a much longer document, was written by Fr Alphonse Cozon. It is his postulatum to the 1880 session of the Marist Fathers' general chapter. Cozon had been chosen by Fr Colin, back in 1874, to articulate what the founder believed was the authentic vision for Marist Laity. Cozon developed a deep understanding of this vision, and he kept a diary of the conversations he had over the years. The result is this quintessential description of the process of becoming a lay Marist.

EXTRACT FROM FR COZON'S POSTULATUM TO THE 1880 GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE MARIST FATHERS

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 Society; we are not to retain it in our hands, but only let it pass through them. Thus, it is not a part of the mechanism in the Society's clockwork; it should not revolve around us, so to speak, like a planet around its constellation, but it should shine out into the Church. It is no longer a valuable way to help the Society by drawing the interest of the pious faithful to the Society, but rather, it is a means of extending the Society's action throughout the world, so that the same thrust, going forth from Mary, passing through the Fathers and the members of the Third Order, may spread out and lose itself in the Church, without any personal consideration.

LM Doc. 431, par. 20. (See E. Keel, p. 70)

In a difficult, but beautifully crafted paragraph,
Cozon has caught Colin's vision for the Marist Confraternity.
It speaks of going beyond rather than staying within.
Lay Marists are not people who provide the professed a "comfort zone".
Having received the spirit of the Society by a "gracious choice",
their role is to take it to the world.
There is a radical sense of liberation in the words written here,
of losing oneself in the world for the sake of the Kingdom.

