

## 4. Instruments of divine mercy

*When Jean-Claude Colin and his confreres traversed the mountains of the Bugey to preach the home missions, they considered themselves 'instruments of divine mercy'. The way they addressed the parishioners, the way they dealt with problems and the way they heard confessions mirrored God's grace and mercy. The following words which strike these positive chords of mercy and encouragement are taken from one of the early mission sermons of Jean-Claude Colin.*

1825-1829? COLIN  
OPENING TALK FOR A MISSION

**May the grace and peace of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (Rom 1, 7) These are the words that the apostle St. Paul puts at the head of his letter to the Romans ... So too do we dare to address these same words to you on this the first time we appear in this pulpit in your midst. May grace and peace be with you, the grace that makes saints, the well-loved and friends of God; the peace of conscience, which is the fruit of grace and the germ of eternal peace: grace and peace be with you. Grace and peace, inestimable goods that the true Christian knows how to appreciate and seeks as his unique treasure on earth: we wish these for you at the beginning of these days of salvation which have been given to you for acquiring or augmenting these precious treasures of grace and peace. Yes, my very dear brothers, it is to help you, to encourage you to retain, to conserve, to augment this treasure of grace and peace, or to recover it if unhappily [you have lost it], that God gives you the extraordinary helps of a mission, that he sends us unto your parish to be the instruments, all unworthy though we be, of his mercy toward you. We will be happy if by our ministry we can concur in your welfare and contribute to strengthen you in the faith and the practice of virtue, or to lead you back to it should you have strayed.**

[APM 241.51, sermon 36, p. 3] E. Keel, p. 289

Perhaps it was merely a coincidence that the first Marists took their vows on the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy, on September 24, 1836. It is no coincidence, however, that the Hebrew word for 'mercy' is closely related to the mother-womb. Marists strive to portray the 'feminine features' of God and help to build a church perceived in terms of compassion, simplicity and mercy.

