

8. Like a bridge

Father Colin had a presentiment of a new Church emerging, but he himself did not have the language or theology to even put it clearly into words, much less develop a practical strategy for it. Toward the end of his life, on February 6, 1872, at the age of 81, Colin addressed the General Chapter to remind his confreres for the last time of his vision, using a prophetic rather than an administrative language.

FEBRUARY 6, 1872
COLIN – TO THE CHAPTER

You will be astonished to hear that I have a great ambition: to seize hold of the whole universe, under the wings of Mary by means of the Third Order. The Third Order is not an essential part of your congregation; but the blessed Virgin entrusts it to you like a bridge (the expression is not my own) to go to souls, to sinners. Never have the nations shown such eagerness to turn to the blessed Virgin, and at the end of time there will be only one kingdom, the kingdom of the blessed Virgin.

[OM 846, 36] E. Keel, p. 45

This text can inspire Marists to use their energy as a support and resource for the development and the full participation of the laity in the life and the mission of the Church. Most clergy have long thought and acted as if it were the role of the laity to assist the clergy in their mission, whereas it is really the task of the clergy to assist the laity in the mission of the whole people of God: to witness to the Word in the world. Colin was beginning to think in this direction when he spoke of the laity as the 'bridge to souls', as those through whom the Church could reach sinners.

