

9. It is Mary

The name 'Society of Mary' which was given to the Society from its very beginnings, as well as similar expressions like 'the work of Mary', echo the conviction of the Society that it owes its name and its origin to Mary. On August 16, 1872, at the beginning of the session of the General Chapter in Lyons, a declaration was read in which Mary was recognized as foundress and first superior of the Society. On August 25 the declaration was signed by Fr. Colin, Fr. Favre and all the capitulants. The following text is an extract.

AUGUST 14-15, 1872

**DRAFT OF THE DECLARATION RECOGNIZING MARY
AS FOUNDRESS AND FIRST SUPERIOR OF THE SOCIETY.**

It is, in effect, Mary who inspired the project of this little Society and who gave it her name and her spirit. It is Mary who chose our venerated and well loved Fr. Colin as the instrument of all mercies toward us and indicated to him the first priests who were to lay the foundations of this humble religious congregation.

[OM 847, 3 (Jeantin)] E. Keel, p. 294

Marists know well that what they call 'the work of Mary' should never outshine the work of Christ. Mary does not start a work on her own, but rather is completely associated with the will of God. But even so, her participation in the work of salvation remains her own. As 'Icon' of God's presence she mirrors his merciful creativity. She is not simply a passive instrument in God's hand, but God's 'generous partner' (Lumen Gentium, 61). So it is not just a pious way of speaking to say that the Society is Mary's work, that she chose us and that she chose Fr. Colin to get her work underway.

