

CHAPTER SIXOPPOSITION AND PROGRESS AT LAVALLA IN EARLY 1820s

Marcellin, as the year 1820 commenced, could look back on his previous three and a half years at Lavalla with satisfaction. He had won over the parishioners heart and soul and their faith had revived, piety flourished and the church sacraments were frequented. He had become renowned for his untiring efforts to attend to sick people, often going without meals himself if he thought the person might die before he arrived. (1) Many years later he confided to one of his closest friends, *"Many a step I have taken on these mountains, many a shirt I have soaked with sweat along these roads...but I have the comfort of knowing that I never arrived too late to administer the rites of the Church to any sick person. Thanks be to God! this is one of my greatest consolations today"*. (2)

A female parishioner, Jeanne Berne, had had one child, a boy, before marriage and a girl after marriage. Early in 1820, with the boy now nine years old, the woman had been left alone. Marcellin had met her during this winter and gave her both material and spiritual aid, but she died on 25th January. Marcellin decided to take charge of her son, an orphan. (3) He asked the Brothers to admit him to their school at Lavalla. However, this child, so accustomed to roaming about and doing whatever he willed, could not bear the restraints of school life and several times ran away. The Brothers, after taking him back several times to no avail, besought Marcellin to dismiss the boy. Fr. Champagnat replied, *"My friends...what is the use of casting him on the streets? If you abandon him, is there no fear that God will ask you an account of his soul?...We have adopted this child; we must not abandon him..."* (4)

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1. Br. Jean-Baptiste, Vie de Joseph-Benoît-Marcellin Champagnat, Lyons, 1856, Vol. 1, p. 64.
  2. Ibid, p. 66.
  3. Lecture by Br. Gabriel Michel, St. Chamond, January 1978.
  4. Br. Jean-Baptiste, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 343.

The Brothers changed their minds and, in time, the boy himself completely changed. He adjusted to school life and became quite a trustworthy student. In 1822 he actually asked to become a Brother. Marcellin accepted him and he proved to be a worthwhile recruit. He took religious vows (5) in 1829, but died the next year with Marcellin at his side. He was aged but nineteen. (6) Cases such as this helped reinforce within Marcellin and his Brothers the belief that the work they were doing was really worthwhile in the eyes of God.

On Monday, 15th May, 1820 Guillard, one of the two inspectors for the Lyons Academy, stopped at St. Genest-Malifaux on his way to Bourg-Argental. His main purpose was to check on any clandestine teaching of Latin in schools of the area, and he endeavoured to obtain such information from some of the influential people in the main town. (7) He was informed that Fr. Champagnat was conducting one such clandestine school teaching Latin. He noted in his report to the Rector, Abbé D'Régel:

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5. Marcellin had inaugurated the taking of religious vows by the Brothers in 1826. J-B Berne became Br. Nilammon Berne.

6. The relatively late age (18) at which Br. Nilammon made his vows, shows that Fr. Champagnat was acting prudently; for to pass from delinquency to religious profession would demand certain precautions. It is of interest to note that when, in January 1828, Champagnat made his second approach to the French Government for authorisation of his Institute, he added a supplementary objective for his Society: "to direct houses of providence or of refuge for youths brought back from a life of waywardness, or who are exposed to moral danger..." (Brouillon des Statuts de 1828, Archives of the Lyons Diocese, Lyons.) Br. Jean-Baptiste in his VIE gives an incorrect age of 21 years when he died. The death notice of his mother reads: "Death notice of Jeanne-Marie Berne; year 1820 25th January, 6 p.m., wife of Jean-Baptiste Berne...she was aged 32 years...Matricon, Mayor". Her son's birth is also listed in the Lavalla Council files: "Birth, 15th September 1811... Jean-Baptiste Berne, aged 60, presented a son...born yesterday at 10 a.m.... father unknown but to which child he requested the pre-name Jean-Baptiste be given...Matricon, Mayor".

7. Rapport de l'Inspecteur Guillard sur sa tournée de 1820, Archives départementales du Rhône, T - Vers. - XXV.

*"I had resolved to go there, that is to Lavalla where the curate runs a college, with several masters, in a house bought for that purpose; but it is very far from here; I would have to cross very high mountains, and the weather is uncertain. I have been told also that the pupils may have dispersed, as my visit to St. Chamond and St. Etienne would be known for certain to these clandestine teachers who cause very great harm to the real college in the area." (8)*

Besides, Guillard knew that Champagnat was in trouble with the Academy for his teaching of Latin, (9) and felt he must investigate the matter since all such teachers had to be authorised by the university. However, as he indicated above, he felt it inopportune to visit Lavalla in 1820, but he would do so in 1822 with surprising results, as we shall see later. This "college" at Lavalla, 1820 had nothing that could arouse the cupidity of the university since, as we know, it amounted but to a small house, a small garden and a corner of ground - rented in 1816, then bought in 1817 for 1,600 francs. The furniture consisted of a few old pieces that had mostly been donated and a few beds made out of planks by Marcellin himself. Linen, kitchen utensils and many other necessary objects were few and very poor. (10) As for the teaching staff, they had learned to read only in these last three years (Father Champagnat excepted).

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8. Ibid, St.-Genet-Malifaux, 15 mai. The harm was that such teachers were not paying the levy imposed by the Academy.

9. Archives Départementales du Rhône, Serie T, Versement de l'Université. Liasse XXV - Rapport de l'Inspecteur Guillard sur sa tournée de 1820.

10. Br. Avit, Abrégé des Annales (1789-1840), FMS Archives, Rome, 1972, p. 27. (Avit, died 1892, had written "annals" of all the Marist Brothers' houses up until 1884).

This "college" resembled more a "workshop". Jean-Baptiste Audras and Antoine Couturier would interrupt their efforts at reading, writing and religious study for periods of gardening, while Jean-Marie and Claude Audras would rest from nail-making to learn their letters and to handle a quill pen. The boys were taught "gratis", and the few boarders, as they were poor and abandoned, paid practically nothing. (11) The establishment could hardly be considered any threat to the legalised colleges in nearby towns. (12)

However, the fact that Guillard had not visited Champagnat's Lavalla "college" in 1820 did not stop the growing opposition to this new venture. It is unfortunate that, although it is obvious that this opposition became more and more intense during the years 1820 to 1823 inclusive, there is a serious lack of documents for this period. What is worse, the two only writers on this topic, Fr. Bourdin (about 1830) and Br. Jean-Baptiste (1856), have both made obvious errors in both the date and content of some items. (13) It seems now that events occurred as follows.

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11. P. Zind, "Contribution à une Reprise des Travaux sur les Origines des Petits Frères de Marie", Bulletin, No. 157, 1955. p.453.

12. At this time the Département de la Loire had but three colleges: at Roanne, St.-Etienne and St. Chamond. (Those enrolled in the latter two totalled only 129 in 1832.) Archives départementales du Rhône - T - XIII: "Rapport sur le travail dans les colleges de 1832 à 1842"). Since Champagnat was founding only primary schools in poor cantons, it is difficult to understand why there would be opposition from the colleges, i.e. secondary schools. Perhaps it shows their alarm at Marcellin's achievements so far.

13. P. Zind seems almost certainly to be mistaken when he gives the date of 8th November 1822 for Champagnat's visit to Bochard, taking Br. Jean-Marie Granjon with him because, by 1822, Marcellin had had to put aside Jean-Marie because of his exaggerated piety, spending all of Holy Thursday night on his knees, etc. Bourdin wrote that Marcellin took Jean-Marie with him, but this means it must have been before 1822. (Pierre Zind deals with this affair: Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères Enseignants (1800-1830), Lyons, 1969, p. 214). Fr. Coste gives Easter 1821 (O.M. Vol. 1, p. 751 and it certainly was before Fr. Gauché (Chavanay) asked Marcellin, in 1822, for Brothers.

The Government's Regional Committee, set up by the University, had heard reports of Champagnat teaching Latin at Lavalla, (14) and since any such teaching should have been authorised by the university, it decided to act. As Fr. Bourdin later wrote, "*(It was decided) to denounce him to the University ... no, to the Archdiocese*". (15) This committee's chairman was Fr. Dervieux, Parish Priest of St. Chamond, and included Abbé Cathelin who was Principal of the new college at St. Chamond. Bourdin also wrote that one of Marcellin's friends, Fr. Benoît Journoux who was curate at Notre-Dame Church in St. Chamond, (16) and whose Parish Priest was on the above Committee and who had mentioned (perhaps at table) that the Committee was soon going to get rid of the Champagnat venture at Lavalla, immediately wrote to warn Marcellin. He suggested that Marcellin go immediately to Father Courbon, the senior Vicar-General, whom he felt was sympathetic. He then added that Marcellin must burn this letter. (17)

At this time the Diocese of Lyons had three Vicars-General, one of whom was Fr. Bochard who was in charge of all religious congregations. Hearing of Marcellin's group of Brothers and knowing that they existed without any diocesan authorisation, he decided to absorb them (since he had heard they were well-trained) into his own congregation of Brothers in a "Society of the Cross of Jesus" that he had founded in 1818-19. It is interesting to note that, at a time when to so many people Marcellin was proving himself to be a most humane, strong and courageous priest who was setting in motion something really worthwhile for unfortunate country children, many people - both lay and clergy - were opposing him. Br. Jean-Baptiste wrote that people would be saying such things as:

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14. We do know, from Brs. Jean-Baptiste and Avit that Marcellin had taught Latin to Br. François Rivat and Philippe Arnaud, at least : but he wisely stopped this practice either in 1820 or 1821.

15. A denunciation to the university would be worse than to the Bishop. Church approval was always to precede legal authorisation.

16. This church of Notre-Dame had been the chief meeting place of the local Jacobin Club members during the Revolution. (F. Gonon, Notre Vieux Saint-Chamond (La Paroisse Notre-Dame et son Histoire, Documents d'Archives), St. Etienne, 1945, p. 60.)

17. M. Bourdin, Notes du M. Bourdin, FMS Archives (Rome), written at Hermitage, St. Chamond, c.1830, p. 18.

*"How can he, without either money or talents, think of such an undertaking? He is guided only by pride, by vanity and the desire for applause. It is his silly ambition to be called the Founder of a religious congregation that urges him on to such folly. What will he make of these young men taken from the fields to try and study books? Conceited, worthless creatures who, after having passed their youth in idleness, will return home to be a burden to their families, and perhaps pests to society". (18)*

Opposition is something with which all true leaders have to contend; Marcellin's testing time was about to begin. Besides being charged with founding a college in opposition to that at St. Chamond, amongst the proliferation of other charges would be that he was forming a society of farming Brothers, or a community of hermits, or even a sect of Béguines. (19) Vicar-General Bochard summoned Champagnat to appear before him.

This first meeting with Bochard may have taken place shortly after Easter, 1820. (20) Marcellin wisely took Br. Jean-Marie with him since the presence of the Director of the Brothers would help allay suspicions that Marcellin himself wanted to be a Superior. (21) We should remember that Bochard had already founded his own society of Brothers and saw an opportunity to increase its numbers by absorbing those whom Champagnat had trained. He decided that he would try and make friends with Marcellin and then convince him that it would be best to join his Brothers to those of Bochard.

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18. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 132.

19. This accusation, as we noted in Chapter 2, at this time would have been one of the worst possible accusations levelled against Marcellin.

20. Unfortunately "le Registre des Délibérations du Conseil Archiépiscopal de Lyon Oct. 1818 - févr. 1824" have disappeared. 1820 has been chosen since we are told that when Bochard met Marcellin for a second time (probably in 1822) it was a most unfriendly meeting and Bochard's first act was to produce a map and indicate the cantons where Marcellin's Lavalla Brothers had set up schools. After mid-1820, only two schools will be founded before Easter 1822 - St. Sauveur and Bourg-Argental. If one were to place this meeting in 1821, having only one further school (Bourg-Argental) before the second meeting does not conform with what Bourdin wrote of the second meeting. (St. Sauveur school began in November 1820 and Bourg-Argental in January 1822).

21. Bourdin, op. cit., p.24.

Hence he began by gently outlining the charges raised against Marcellin's Institute and then sought Marcellin's views. *"It is true",* said Marcellin, *"that I have assembled a few young men to teach the children of Lavalla. They are eight in number and live in community; they spend their time in manual work or in study. Strictly speaking they have no religious habit, (22) neither have they contracted any religious engagements. They willingly remain there because they love retirement, study and teaching".* (23)

After some further friendly talk, Bochard told Marcellin to think things over very carefully and urged him to consider joining the Lavalla Brothers to those in Bochard's "Society of the Cross of Jesus". Future events lead us to believe that, in this first meeting, Bochard felt certain that Marcellin would soon find it impossible to continue his Institute and would then be only too happy to be able to join his Brothers with those of Bochard. Bochard could probably see a nice bonus addition to his own congregation being unwittingly prepared by Marcellin. (24) Marcellin, however, being convinced that he was doing something that God wished, returned to Lavalla with the determination to continue the work with his Brothers.

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22. i.e. a religious costume. The absence of any special religious features on their present uniform, such as a crucifix, was probably Marcellin's justification for this reply.

23. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, pp. 133, 134. Part only of the alleged conversation is reproduced here because Br. Jean-Baptiste gave an incorrect impression of the atmosphere at this meeting. He outlined a most unfriendly attack by Bochard. Such would be true for their next meeting, but this first meeting was a friendly one.

24. Being a Vicar-General, Bochard thought that all new religious groups of Brothers in the Diocese of Lyons should attach themselves to his group, which would become the main trunk. The bad financial state of an ex-Brother Grizard gave Bochard a simple means of absorbing one particular novitiate of teaching Brothers at Charlieu. He had also won over two former Marist aspirants to his own Society of Priests - Fathers Pousset and Verrier. Around this time he had also absorbed the few Brothers whom Fr. Courveille had brought together at Feurs. He now sought Champagnat's group.

In October and November 1820 Marcellin was busy in organising the founding of a new school, the Institute's fourth, at St. Sauveur. The mayor of St. Sauveur-en-Rue, Mr. Colomb de Gaste, had visited Coin (25) near Marlihes and was so impressed by the good behaviour in public of the students from the Brother's school that he had requested a similar school for his town. (26) This school, similar to those of Lavalla and Marlihes, was a complete success: but perhaps this success was in itself somewhat responsible for the growing opposition to Marcellin's work. However, up to this point, except for his exclusion of any Latin teaching, Marcellin was ignoring the opposition.

Nothing illustrates this better than his decision to agree immediately to a request from Mr. de Pleyne, Mayor of Bourg-Argental (a town seven kilometres from St. Sauveur), for a Brothers' school to be established there. (27) It is worth noting that this is something that Marcellin would never have attempted if his first meeting with Vicar-General Bochart had been one in which he was reprimanded. More to the point, this signified a new venture for Marcellin's Institute because Bourg-Argental was really a town, not a village. (28) Br. Jean-Baptiste wrote at length on this 'town' establishment. This school opened on 2nd January, 1822 and soon had two hundred students in attendance. Br. Jean-Marie was this school's first Director, Marcellin having relieved him of his duties as Novice-Master at Lavalla. (29)

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25. Today it is named St. Regis-du-Coin.

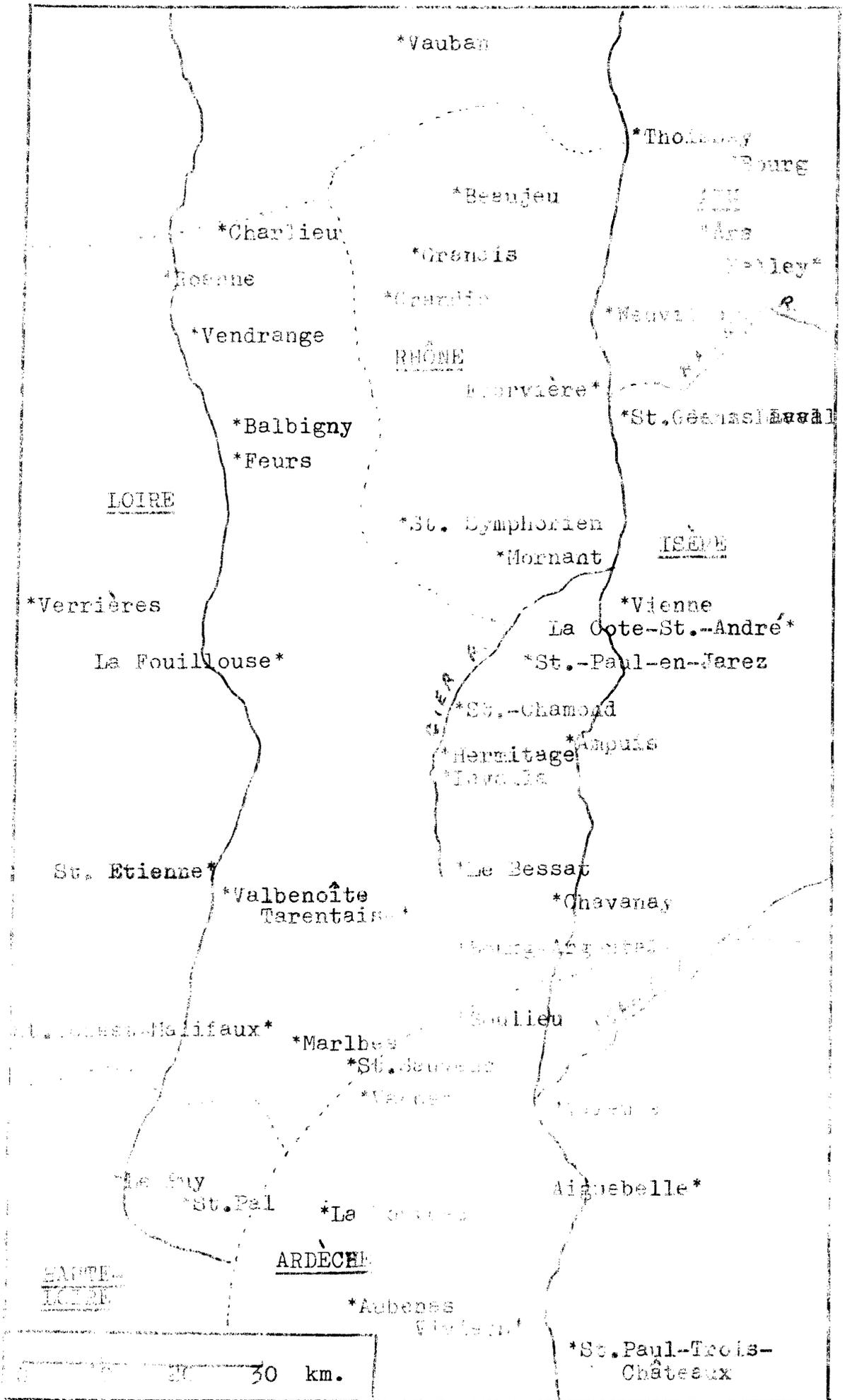
26. Abbé Chausse, Vie de Jean-Louis Duplay, Lyons, 1887. Vol. 1, p.275.

27. Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 275.

28. In population, Bourg-Argental was smaller than Marlihes or Lavalla, but it happened to be an administrative centre: also, at the time of the Estates-General, the deputies for the first-level elections met in Bourg-Argental which was "chef-lieu de bailliage" ("bailliage" being a subdivision of the Province). The stress given to it by Br. Jean-Baptiste indicates that this establishment caused great excitement amongst the Brothers. (Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, pp. 106-108)

29. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 108.

MAP SHOWING EARLY FOUNDATIONS OF CHAMPAGNAT'S INSTITUTE



Marcellin had found Jean-Marie inordinately obstinate in clinging to his own ideas of sanctity: (30) one, among many, was his habit of occasionally going at day-break to the church and giving away much of his own clothing to the poor. (31) The twenty-year-old Brother Louis, who had been Director at Marlies for two years, replaced him as Novice-Master, but "ne prit pas autant" - which may mean he had not as much influence as the older Br. Jean-Marie. (32) Marcellin had recently removed the Brothers from Marlies since Fr. Alliot refused to provide better lodgings for them and their students. When Alliot protested, Marcellin replied, "*Your house is in so wretched a condition that I could not, in conscience, leave either the Brothers or the children in it*". (33)

Marcellin had been happy to receive further recruits. Antoine Gratallon, an orphan from Izieux, had entered in November 1821 and later took the name of Brother Bernard. Claude Fayol, the tenth recruit, arrived on 12th February 1822. He came from St. Médard and would be of great support to Marcellin since he understood the weaving of cloth - an employment that would replace nail-making as a major means of support for the Institute. He took the name of Br. Stanislaus. (34) A further school, at Tarentaise, had also been opened with Br. Laurent (previously at Le Bessat) in charge. "His schoolhouse was a barn, his furniture primitive; but at least he had space and fresh air". (35)

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30. Some may think that since Champagnat had definite ideas of his own, why couldn't Jean-Marie? The essential difference is that members of a religious congregation bind themselves to co-operate with one another: they usually all wear the same religious costume, observe a definite set of rules, say many prayers in common, etc. Apparently Jean-Marie's conduct was upsetting the other Brothers.

31. M. Bourdin, *Notes de M. Bourdin*, FMS Archives, Rome: c. 1830, p.12.

32. "... Louis maître des novices, le remplace, plus instruit, ne prit pas autant". (Bourdin, op. cit., p.13)

33. Br. Jean-Baptiste, *VIE*, p.90. This school was reopened in 1832 under the new Parish Priest, Father Duplay. He was the brother of John Louis Duplay, a fellow-student of Marcellin at Verrières, and a life-time supporter of Marcellin and his work.

34. Br. G. Michel, "Histoire Mariste", *Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 209, July 1969, p.265.

35. Br. Jean-Baptiste, *VIE*, p. 105. It continues, "He had no special residence. He slept in the dormitory occupied by the pupils kept by the Parish Priest and, as he had done at Le Bessat, prepared his own meals at the presbytery."

This school, soon to have 60 students and two Brothers, was the second-smallest (36) of the first eleven schools that Marcellin was to have founded by 1825. (37)

At the beginning of 1822, Marcellin's eight Brothers were distributed as follows:

Lavalla: Brs. Louis, François (plus the postulant Antoine Grattallon and, in February, Claude Fayol)

St. Sauveur: Brs. Bartholomew, Jean-François.

Tarentaise: Br. Laurence

Bourg-Argental: Brs. Jean-Marie Granjon, Antoine Couturier, Jean-Pierre Martinol. (38)

Perhaps the event that capped everything during this unpredictable era occurred next month, March. A young man came to Marcellin asking to be admitted. For some reason, Marcellin was not impressed by him, but questioned him further about his motives. Only then did he discover that this lad, after six years with the De La Salle Brothers, had been sent away because of moral lapses. Since he belonged to a family well known for their affluence and piety, he resolved not to go home but, having heard of Marcellin's congregation whilst with the De La Salle Brothers at St. Chamond, resolved to try and be accepted there. Marcellin, marvelling at the young man's insistence to be received, told him he could stay for a few days on trial. During one community talk on vocations he talked at length about the numerous vocations obtained in his native area by the De La Salle Brothers. When Marcellin still refused to receive him after three day's trial, he said, *"Will you receive me if I bring you half-a-dozen good recruits?"* Marcellin, no doubt thinking that only with God's help could such occur, replied, *"Yes, after you've had the good luck to find them".* *"Well, give me a letter of obedience (39) that I may be authorised"*.

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36. Le Bessat, with 30 students, was the smallest.

37. Br. Louis-Laurent, "Contribution à une reprise des travaux sur les origines des petits frères de Marie", Bulletin, Vol. XXII, No. 162, April 1956, p. 161.

38. Br. G. Michel, "Histoire Mariste", Bulletin, Vol. XXVIII, No. 209, January 1969, p. 264.

39. In Catholic religious congregations, a letter of obedience is an explicit order to a subject from his Superior which, if a vow of obedience has been taken, would be considered to have a very strong binding power before God.

Marcellin wrote such a letter, couched it in very guarded language, and gave it to him, saying, *"Go home to your parents and remain with them; or, what is better still, seek another trial with the De La Salles; as for us, our mode of life does not suit you."* (40)

To his home region, St. Pal-en-Chalençon, and back again meant a distance of 120kms on foot; yet, in less than eight days this young man managed to recruit eight young men to go back with him to seek reception by Fr. Champagnat. It is of interest to note that one of these eight was Br. Jean-Baptiste, who later recorded this event in his Vie de Joseph-Benoît-Marcellin Champagnat, which he published in 1856. It seems that they had all thought they were about to enter the De La Salle novitiate at Lyons. Their leader tricked them by saying that they had first to stay a few days at another De La Salle novitiate at Lavalla.

Marcellin, working in the garden when they arrived, could hardly believe his eyes. He spoke to them and was impressed by them; but not knowing them sufficiently, he decided to refuse them entry. Also, he knew that his house could not hold such additional numbers. Nevertheless, Marcellin had made such an impression on them that they all urged him to change his mind. Marcellin eventually decided that the decision should be made by the Brothers themselves. So, at Easter, he assembled all the principal Brothers, including those of Bourg-Argental and St. Sauveur, told them of the whole affair and requested their decision; after explaining that, in his opinion, it seemed providential. The Brothers agreed that all should be accepted, but that they should all be submitted to exceptional trials to test their vocation. (41) Br. Jean-Baptiste later wrote that they all passed these trials, but research into the documents of the period gives a different story. Their leader left after a fortnight; two others had left almost immediately after they had been accepted, whilst two others departed a short time later. Of the others: Br. Jean-Claude Aubert (17 years old) remained till

40. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, p. 112.

41. Br. Jean-Baptiste, op. cit., p. 100.

1826; Br. Regis Civier, from St. Bonnett, remained until 1833. As for the remaining two: Br. Joseph Poncet, 25, spent a useful life in the Institute before meeting a tragic death in 1863, whilst Br. Jean-Baptiste Furet, fifteen years old in 1822 and who had come from St. Pal-en-Chalençon, persevered and became a leader of the Institute. (42) This Br. Jean-Baptiste claimed that the progress of the Institute dates from this event. Up till this time it had been known only in the Lavalla area and its near neighbourhood, but these men had come from further afield. Marcellin soon sent a Brother into Haute-Loire, whence they had come, and others were induced to follow them. Before six months had elapsed, the Institute had gained some twenty-odd recruits from this area. (43) Father Champagnat always claimed that "*it was Our Lady of Le Puy who had sent them*", since it seems that the sudden influx was so unexpected by him. (44)

This influx of new recruits, so joyous for Marcellin, was soon to be counter-balanced by opposition to his Institute from all sides. Up till this time his main opponent had been Parish Priest Rebod. Nevertheless, he thought that Vicar-General Bochart wanted Marcellin's Institute to be able to prove its strength before it would be granted diocesan approval. However, in 1822, alarmingly powerful opposition arose elsewhere. On 26th April, 1822, a Friday, Inspector Guillard arrived unannounced at Lavalla and went straight to Fr. Rebod. His report reads:

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42. He became Assistant-General and wrote his book on Father Champagnat in 1856 - a book that has been the standard version until the present day, but which, unfortunately, omits a great deal and, worse, altered the meanings of several documents. It is as much a book on how Br. Jean-Baptiste thought Brothers should think and behave as a history of the life of Father Champagnat.

43. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, p. 119.

44. The French Brother, Br. Gabriel Michel, when commenting on Champagnat's claim that Our Lady had been responsible, added that without some such altogether unforeseeable occurrence, it is difficult to see where Marcellin would have found new recruits for his work. (Br. G. Michel, "L'Episode des 8 Postulants", Bulletin, Vol. XXVIII, No. 209, July 1969, p. 280.) Some would say of course, that Marcellin's reputation makes it very natural. Obviously, each one must make his own judgment on such an event. It is of interest to note that the town of St. Pal-en-Chalençon asked for Brothers only in 1853. Br. Avit wrote, "This town had at first only travelling teachers coming from Brianconnais just like the majority of the rural districts in our region at that time". (Annales du Frère Avit, Lavalla). Up till 1853 it had only one teacher, and yet when the Brothers took over the school, they soon had 118 pupils in their classes.

*"The Parish Priest (of halting speech) is very discontented with his curate who has not really any Latin pupils, but some 12 or 15 young peasants whom he is forming in the way of the Brothers, to spread them through the parishes. The Parish Priest adds that he agrees with his curate under every other aspect; but he carries his zeal too far in wishing to set himself up as superior of a congregation without being legally authorised to do so, and in making these young people give him their inheritance; they could suffer thereby if the congregation should not survive. Already the curate is in debt for the house he bought and repaired; while devoting himself entirely to the care of his establishment, he neglects that of his minority". (45)*

It is quite evident that the Inspector was disappointed to find no pupils there, for they attended school only from 1st November (Catholic Church's Feast of All Saints) until Easter. He had expected to find Latin pupils, but instead he saw only the young lads recently brought in as new recruits by the ex-De La Salle Brother and a few other young Brothers, who were busily engaged in building extensions to their house.

As Fr. Rebod was adding further criticism of his curate, Marcellin entered. The inspector's account continued:

*"The curate who came in just then declared that he was waiting, before seeking legal authorisation, for the tree he had planted only 4 or 5 years ago, to take root. Nevertheless, he desires that his Brothers be exempted from military service. (46)*

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45. Archives Départementales du Rhône, Série T - Versement de l'Université, Liasse XXV: "Enseignement Primaire 1819 à 1841 - Rapport de l'Inspecteur Guillard sur sa tournée en 1822".

46. Which was then a seven year period. (Archives Départementales du Rhône, T - Vers. XXV.)

*I gave him to understand to what danger he was exposing himself and his young men, if he did not put himself in order as regards the University and his ecclesiastical superiors. He was unaware that the De La Salle Brothers were with the University". (47)*

Of course, Marcellin knew that he had to prove that his Institute would grow before Bochart could be asked to have the Diocese apply, on Marcellin's behalf, for government authorisation of his Institute. (48)

Inspector Guillard then made an inspection of the building that Champagnat and his Brothers were using. It must be remembered that the sudden increase in personnel must have been a severe financial strain for Marcellin. We do know that he had graciously received a gift of 220 francs from the widow Oriol around this time, (49) but the only items not rationed at table were rye bread and water. (50) In the basement were two cellars, one used as a kitchen, the other as a refectory. The barn was being used as a dormitory. As they were in the process of building a new refectory, and also making alterations to the barn for a better dormitory, all was in disorder and in a rather untidy state. It was not surprising that Guillard concluded:

*"We visited the home of the congregation;  
everything there bespoke poverty, even uncleanness".*

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47. A. D. du R. - Serie T - Versement de l'Université, Cf. 31. It is obvious, however, that Fr. Champagnat would have been surprised to learn that the De La Salle Brothers were with the University, since any such move had been strongly attacked by a good section of Catholic opinion. (P. Zind, "Contribution à une reprise des travaux sur les origines des Petits Frères de Marie", Bulletin, Vol XXI, No. 157, January 1955, p.451.)

48. Though his meeting with Bochart had been friendly, he knew that Bochart doubted his Institute's survival since Bochart had strongly urged Marcellin to consider joining his Lavalla Brothers to those of Bochart if things became difficult.

49. Br. Avit, Annales de Lavalla, Archives Généralises de la Maison-Mère, Rome.

50. Br. Laurent, Notes du Fr. Laurent sur le P. Champagnat, FMS Archives, Rome, c. 1842, p. 8.

It was not surprising that next month, May of 1822, when about ten well-dressed young men of good education visited Lavalla intending to join Champagnat's society, they quickly departed after a short inspection. These were members of a congregation of teaching Brothers recently founded by Father Rouchon at Valbenoîte. (51) He had brought this group to Lavalla himself, but when they saw the poverty-stricken state of the Lavalla congregation they left without mentioning to Marcellin the object of their visit. For them, who "appeared to be well-instructed, were rather well-dressed, had an air of refinement, and all the manners of good society", (52) living at Lavalla was unthinkable. Yet five years later, bereft of any Brothers, Fr. Rouchon asked Fr. Champagnat to send Brothers to his school at Valbenoîte. This was done, with Rouchon paying all the expenses of the foundation. (53)

Let us return now to the very strong opposition to Marcellin. Vicar-General Bochard eventually realised that Marcellin was having no real difficulty in maintaining his Institute; rather, it was expanding beyond belief. His only chance now of gaining Marcellin's Brothers would be, he knew, by using the powers he possessed as Vicar-General. Bourdin later wrote that Bochard sent a letter to Rebod, threatening to put Champagnat under interdict. (54) Rebod, it seems, was 'at the end of his tether' with Marcellin. He knew of the arrival of the eight postulants, plus some others a few weeks later; and he became alarmed with the thought of 'how on earth was Marcellin going to cover their expenses'? When he posed the question to Marcellin and was told that he, Champagnat, had sent someone to ask their parents for money - and that at times the parents would give, at their son's request, a "lifetime amount" (similar to a marriage dowry), Rebod was aghast!

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51. Jean-Baptiste Rouchon, 1761-1844; priest 1785; refused the oath; fled to Italy; Rome; returned 1797 and carried on a secret ministry, taking refuge when necessary in the Duplay family home at Jonzieux, near Marthes. Appointed to Valbenoîte in February 1803. Bought the old (1182) Cistercian abbey and church, 42,750 fr. in June 1817. He brought Sisters of St. Joseph to conduct a school for girls; likewise he wished a school for boys. He gathered seven young men to form the new community. His group grew, but not being a happy group he brought them to Lavalla in 1822 with the intention of joining them to Champagnat's group.

52. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, p. 190.

53. It was said that his own group had disagreed among themselves, had left their schools and dispersed. (Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1 p.190.)

54. An interdict, suspending a priest from all his priestly functions, is the most serious penalty the Church may impose upon a priest. It must be preceded by three warnings.

What if Champagnat's Institute fails and these lads are then left without money! To Rebod, the whole affair lacked prudence, was without charity and, obviously, Marcellin was a fool! Hence Rebod wrote to Bochart and listed his complaints. Bochart's reply told him to warn Champagnat that "*I may interdict him!*" Marcellin was never shown this letter, (55) so Rebod was thus able even to increase the threat by telling Marcellin, "*If I could show you what else is in this letter.....*"

However, when Rebod did outline to Marcellin some of the complaints mentioned in the letter, Marcellin quickly saw the falseness of many of the accusations. It became obvious that Rebod had complained to Bochart of many collections (56) that Marcellin had organised and had claimed that all the money from these went to the poor orphans with Marcellin, whilst nothing went to the destitute orphans for whom the Sisters cared. Marcellin later on was to remark, "*It was so much the better that I had given preference to the boys. If I had done the contrary they would have imagined worse things of me*". (57) He told Rebod that his successful collection of items for his orphans did not lead to the selling of any of them, but that he actually "gave them out" to his orphan boys. Prudently, he decided not to tell Rebod that he occasionally had meetings of females during which they mended clothes and would organise the preparation of food and the giving of any special help needed for any of his sick orphans. Marcellin prayed, "*My God, let it be (ended) if it is not from You!*" Later he remarked that this letter from Bochart had made him more determined than ever to go ahead and succeed. He decided he would go and see Bochart again. (58)

When they met, one of the first things Bochart did was to indicate on a map various towns (such as Marllhes, St. Sauveur, Bourg-Argental) in which he had been informed that the Lavalla Brothers were conducting schools. Since their Institute lacked legal authorisation Marcellin should

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55. Bourdin, op. cit., p. 16

56. "In the plural, as always do those who want to discredit people". (Br. G. Michel in letter to the author, 1981)

57. Bourdin, op. cit., p. 17.

58. This second meeting with Bochart may have occurred on 8th November 1822. Archives de Saint-Sulpice, fonds de Lyon, registre 4, année 1822: 8 novembre payé 10 Fr. de pension au Grand Séminaire par M. Champagnat.

immediately join them to Bochard's Society of the Cross of Jesus which had gained such qualification. In reply, Marcellin remarked that on three occasions he had been on his way to explain his expansion but on each occasion had changed his mind, feeling that the time was not yet ripe to disclose all his work. (59) Regarding the union of his Brothers with those of Bochard's, Marcellin, without directly rejecting the proposal, prudently evaded the main issue and, as soon as occasion offered, took leave of Bochard in the full conviction that this Vicar-General would be sure to soon raise great difficulties for his Institute of Marist Brothers.

However, Marcellin had not forgotten Journoux' advice during earlier trouble; so, at the first opportunity, he hurried to meet Vicar-General Courbon. "*M. le Vicaire-Général*", said Marcellin, "*you know my project and all I have hitherto done for it; kindly give me your candid opinion of it. I am ready to abandon it if you wish me to do so; I desire only the will of God, to which I will submit as soon as it is made known to me*". Courbon answered, "*I don't see why they should annoy you in this way. You are doing very useful work in training good teachers for our schools. Go on as usual; don't mind what people say*". (60) Marcellin, now very happy, decided to call also upon Fr. Gardette, Superior of the Grand Seminary in Lyons, who, for some years now, had been acting as an advisor to Marcellin. After hearing everything, Gardette encouraged Marcellin to continue his work and to avoid joining his Brothers with those of Bochard. The relieved Marcellin returned to Lavalla more determined than ever to continue his project. It should be mentioned that he also, around this time, often went to the seminary at Lyons to discuss things with M. l'abbé Duplay, whom he had also as a firm friend and counsellor. (61)

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59. "Three times I made the journey to do so, but never dared."  
(Bourdin, op. cit., p. 24)

60. Bourdin, op.cit., p.25

61. Chausse, op.cit., Vol. 1, p.275

Fr. Gauché, Parish Priest of Chavanay, came to Lavalla about this time in 1822 seeking Brothers for a school. He had been interested in Bochard's Brothers of the Cross of Jesus, but apparently lost faith in them. He had a school for girls at Chavanay and now sought one for boys. Marcellin told him that it would be inopportune for him to supply Brothers at once since he was under censure from Bochard. This occasioned the significant remark from Gauché, "*Oh! Bochard again; nothing without Bochard!*" (62) As we shall see, he received Brothers in November 1824 after Bochard had left the scene.

The following year, 1823, saw the struggle between Bochard and Champagnat reach its climax. However, before dealing with that it would help us to gain a deeper appreciation of Marcellin's character if brief mention is made of a particular event that took place in February 1823. (63) The young Br. Jean-Baptiste, aged 16, was struck with a serious illness during his work while teaching in the school at Bourg-Argental. As soon as Marcellin heard of this Brother's sickness, he set out immediately for Bourg-Argental which was over 20 kms away across a very rugged terrain. Br. Stanislaus went with him, but on their return journey they lost their way in the heavily timbered area at the height of a snow-storm. Both were young and strong, Marcellin being 34 and Stanislaus 22, but human strength has its limits. After some hours of walking in various directions on the slopes of the Pilat range, darkness overtook them and death in the severe cold seemed a distinct possibility. After a while, young Stanislaus had to be helped along by Marcellin, but eventually even he tired and had to stop. "*We are doomed*", he said, "*if the Blessed Virgin does not come to our assistance*". Together in the snow and high wind they recited the "*Memorare*", a prayer used throughout the centuries by Christians seeking Our Lady's help in desperate situations. Shortly after terminating their prayer they observed a lamplight not far away up one of the nearby slopes. (64)

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62. Bourdin, op. cit., p.25.

63. Br. G. Michel, Chronologie Mariste, Rome, 1976, p.37.

64. This house in the hamlet of La Chaperie near Graix was a typical rural house where living quarters, loft, barn and stables were adjoining. On this night the Donnet family received the Priest and Brother with great kindness, warmed and comforted them. The family went to sleep in the barn, leaving the travellers the comfort of the beds in the kitchen.



The house of the Donnet family in the hamlet of La Chaperie near Graix, where living quarters, barn and stables are adjoining. The sight of the lamplight near this building might well have saved the lives of Fr Champagnat and Br Stanislaus in February 1823 when they became lost one night in the snow.



This shows the terrain over which Fr Champagnat and Br Stanislaus were travelling that cold night when they became lost. The Donnet house is a little further uphill to the left of the photo. Bourg-Argental, from whence they were coming after having visited the sick Br Jean-Baptiste, is to the right of the above photo.

The light came from the house of the Donnet family: father, mother and young daughter of five years. Later Mr. Donnet claimed that it was most unusual for him to have gone outside to reach the stable by the outer door when he normally kept inside and used an inner-door entrance to the stable. He said that the stormy weather outside would have normally been a further reason for not venturing outside on such a night. Naturally, Marcellin and his Brothers were to always regard this event as providential. Also, it is likely that it inspired Marcellin to continue to resist Bochard; a struggle in which real fortitude would be needed since the crisis was near.

In August 1823, at the close of the priests' Retreat, Bochard threatened Marcellin with the closure of his house and with ecclesiastical censures, including his removal from Lavalla, if he did not consent that his congregation of Brothers be absorbed into Bochard's diocesan project. Marcellin again evaded giving a direct answer, but immediately afterwards went and talked the matter over again with Vicar-General Courbon and then with Marcellin's friendly Seminary Superior, Gardette. Both of them urged him to continue to resist. (65)

But meanwhile, Bochard had written to Dean Dervieux, Parish Priest of St. Chamond, and suggested he might try and put some sense into Marcellin's head. (66) Dervieux sent for Marcellin and scolded him, *"What! You, a poor country curate, pretend to found a congregation! You have neither funds nor talents, and you go contrary to the advice of your Superiors... If you have no concern for yourself, at least pity those young men whom you place in so awkward a position; for, sooner or later, your house will be closed, and thus they will be left without means of support"*. (67)

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65. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 134.

66. Dervieux, Chairman of the Diocesan Regional Committee, had earlier been concerned about reports of Latin teaching at Lavalla (see above). The Latin teaching had ceased, but it would have been natural for Dervieux to comply, as far as he could, with any request from a Vicar-General.

67. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 135.

On returning to Lavalla, Marcellin met renewed and very strong opposition from the Parish Priest. Fr. Rebod, no doubt encouraged by Bochart's earlier letter, attempted publicly to humiliate Marcellin. Rebod saw the Brothers and offered to employ them himself or to procure their admission into other religious communities if they would forsake Champagnat. He would intrude into Marcellin's catechism lessons and often abused Marcellin in front of both children and parents. For instance, Marcellin once mentioned that the sacrament of Confirmation is administered by a Bishop: Rebod suddenly called out loudly, "*Priests also, my brethren, may with permission administer this sacrament*". (68) Perhaps Marcellin's greatest trial was when his own confessor (69) declined to act as such any longer. (70) Marcellin asked this priest would he still be prepared to give spiritual advice to him, but the reply was negative: Marcellin had to seek another confessor.

Thinking everything might collapse around him, Marcellin thought of becoming a missionary and going to America; but the Brothers, on hearing of this, all went in a body to let him know that they were all determined to stay with him and that if he left Lavalla they all wished to go with him to anywhere he went. Marcellin then told them in detail of the whole affair, and decisions were made. It was decided that special prayers would be said each day, plus some acts of mortification regarding food. (71) Marcellin, as he had formerly done in times of great crisis, made a pilgrimage to the tomb of his favourite saint, John Francis Regis at La Louvesc.

Coinciding with Marcellin's renewed determination to resist Bochart was the death of Pope Pius VII and the election of Pope Leo XII. The clergy knew that there would soon be changes in the diocese of Lyons. Apprehensive of these changes, Bochart made further attempts to break down Champagnat's resistance, being quite severe in his methods. (72)

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68. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 137.

69. A confessor for Catholics is the priest to whom a person confesses his sins before God.

70. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 138.

71. According to Br. Jean-Baptiste, a special nine-day schedule (a novena) of fasts on bread and water was carried out. (Ibid, p. 135)

72. "After the most terrible menaces for a priest which would take away all his powers", Father Champagnat wrote these words in a letter to Fr. Cholleton in August 1833. ("Lettre de M. Champagnat à Vicaire Général (Cholleton)", FMS Archives, Rome, A CCH 3bis. p. 11-13; SI.49.)

Supporting Bochard against Champagnat were Fathers Dervieux and Rebod plus the University of Lyons with which all schools had to be registered. However, Champagnat had the two other Vicars-General (Bochard being the second of three) supporting him - they being Courbon and Cholleton. (73) In addition, his other strongest supporters in the clergy were Gardette of the Seminary, Duplay (Professor and Bursar at the Seminary), and Donnet (74) who had been with Bochard and had even helped him with the Society of the Cross of Jesus from 1818 till 1821, but later he was to claim that he helped restrain Bochard and particularly Dervieux in their proposed actions against Champagnat. Other strong supporters of Champagnat were the curates Journoux, Brut and Durbise. It is significant that regardless of the trouble with Bochard, Marcellin opened three schools during this year: at Boulieu, Vanosc and St. Symphorien. (75) He must have now felt confident that his Institute was doing such good work and had such strong support that not even Bochard would be able to stop it.

However, Bochard had also opened schools during this year, 1823, with his own Society of Brothers. (76) Bochard was still threatening Champagnat with a possible interdict unless he quickly joined his Brothers to Bochard's group. (77) It was obvious that the more schools Bochard

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73. Until the enthronement of Archbishop de Pins in Lyons in February 1824, the three Vicars-General were Courbon, Bochard and Reynaud. Courbon died 8th February 1824; Reynaud retired quietly, whilst Bochard retired and left the Diocese after protesting against the new Archbishop. Then came V.G. Barou and Recorbet who died 6th October 1825 and was replaced by Fr. Cattet as V.G. Fr. Cholleton was 3rd Vicar-General during 1825 and became 2nd V.G. on the death of Fr. Recorbet.

74. Cardinal Donnet: born at Bourg-Argental 1795; was at Major Seminary with Champagnat; ordained 1819, worked with Bochard till 1821; was absent from Diocese of Lyons 1822-27; Bishop of Bordeaux 1836-82; wrote long letter to Br. Jean-Baptiste in 1864 after reading this Brother's book on Champagnat. In his letter he claimed to have greatly helped Champagnat's cause during the struggle with Bochard, etc. However, although he obviously had great regard for Champagnat in 1830's, some of the help he claimed to have given in the 1820's is doubtful. (See Fr. Coste's comments in O.M., Vol. 2, p.989.)

75. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p.130.

76. Bochard's schools were established at Feurs and at Panissières, whilst his novitiate was at Chartreux. Bochard had earlier set up his novitiate at Charlieu under an ex-De La Salle Brother, Grizard. Grizard had contracted debts at Charlieu that the Academy Inspector Poupar had considered unworthy, but which Bochard paid. The novitiate was moved to Chartreux. ("Note de l'Inspecteur d'Académie Poupar sur sa visite à Feurs", Extrait du Rapport de 1823, Archives Départementales du Rhône, Serie T, Vers. de l'Univ., liasse XXV, April 1823).

77. Bourdin, op cit., p. 25.

opened, the greater his hostility to Champagnat would become. Suddenly, however, on 23rd December 1823, everything changed with the appointment of Bishop de Pins as Apostolic Administrator to Lyons. (78) On hearing the great news, Marcellin wrote two letters, one for the Bishop and the other to Gardette, sending them both to Gardette, asking him to peruse the letter to the Bishop and to pass it on if it was suitable. Gardette burnt Marcellin's letter to the Bishop, but then wrote his own letter to this same Bishop in which he strongly supported and greatly praised Marcellin's work. (79)

As a result, Bishop de Pins wrote to Marcellin on 3rd March 1824 and asked him to meet him; then he added that he wished Marcellin to become Parish Priest of Lavalla. This letter must have been extremely welcome to Marcellin; but, since he wished to devote all his time to his Brothers, he decided he would refuse the offer to become Parish Priest. He went to Lyons to meet Bishop de Pins later in March and there, in the presence of his clerical friends and supporters, with the one exception of Vicar-General Courbon who had just died, (80) but including Vicars-General Barou and Cholleton (81) with Seminary Superior Gardette, Bishop de Pins officially presented Marcellin with Diocesan blessing, encouragement and financial aid to develop his work. (82) It was Marcellin's moment of triumph and he "went to Notre Dame de Fourvière (the chapel where the first Marists had pledged their lives to Mary) and spent a long time at Mary's altar....utterly overcome". (83)

Since the new Pope had, in November of 1823, suspended the administration of Cardinal Fesch, Bochard, a real Gallican, opposed the Pope's appointment of Bishop de Pins. In a plenary session of the clergy he

78. His nomination was dated 22nd December 1823, was announced publicly on 27th December, and so became known in the Diocese "about Christmas". (J. Coste & G. Lessard, Origines Maristes, Vol 2, Rome, 1961, p. 753).

79. Bourdin, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

80. He died on 8th February 1824.

81. Cholleton would have been present on that occasion as (a) friend of Marcellin, (b) adviser and counsellor of the Marist project, (c) as Director of the Major Seminary (after Fr. De la Croix went to the new diocese of Belley)

82. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 140.

83. P. Zind, Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830, Lyons, 1969, p. 221.

protested vehemently. He refused to have any connection with the new Administration, destroyed official diocesan documents, including the financial registers of the archdiocese and of the minor seminaries of Alix, l'Argentière and Verrières. (84) Badly impressed by such conduct and suspicious of the double vow of obedience (85) that the thirty Fathers of the Cross of Jesus had made to Cardinal Fesch, Bishop de Pins hastened to cancel these vows, whilst Bochard departed the Diocese of his own volition and went to the Diocese of Belley, (86) whose Bishop was friendly to him.(87)

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84. Ibid, p. 219. Bochard was to continue to cause trouble to the Diocese of Lyons and was accused of stirring up schism. (P. Zind, "Le Bienheureux Père Champagnat, M.Courveille et M. Bochard", Bulletin, Vol XXII, No. 159, July 1955, p. 601.)

85. They made a double vow - obedience to the Cardinal and to their congregation. (P. Zind "Contribution à une Reprise des travaux sur les Origines des Petites Frères de Marie", Bulletin, No. 159, July 1955, p. 595.)

86. His property was there at Menestruel (AIN) in the Diocese of Belley. His best friend there was Fr. De La Croix to whom Bishop Devie entrusted the hearing of the case for Rome.

87. The Brothers of the Cross tried to organise themselves at Menestruel. In a note from the Mayor of Panissière to the Prefect, 18th June 1827, "We have at Panissière two Brothers who teach the boys ... they had been supplied by Father Bochard; since the departure of this latter, the establishment collapsed, and now our two Brothers do not belong to any Order". (Archives Départementales Loire, Série IT, Liasse 69, p. 23.) Thus it was that in the matter of a few days only, the three sections of Bochard's society folded up, leaving two fragments to function as best they could. As for Charlieu, it would be saved by the arrival there of the Brothers of Father Champagnat. A final word on Father Jean-Claude Bochard. It has been noted that in February 1824 this former Vicar-General of Cardinal Fesch retired to his property in AIN on the arrival of Bishop Gaston de Pins, apostolic administrator of the diocese of Lyons. In the Diocese of Belley, under Bishop Devie, Bochard's Brothers of the Holy Cross increased their numbers, so that in 1826 they had ten primary schools. The disputes held by the old Gallican Bochard regarding the legality of the powers held by Bishop de Pins provoked an inquiry from Rome. Pope Leo XII accused him of "gathering a good many proselytes into whom he was instilling ... the errors of his sect", and of spreading abroad "a great number of writings ... exciting people to heresy and schism". He died in 1834, aged 75, leaving some Priests, Sisters and Brothers. The Sisters were made autonomous against their will, survived the 1903 French persecution by working as nurses. The priests were dispersed among the parishes. The Brothers, left to their own devices, were in a deplorable financial state ... they re-established themselves and paid their debts. The 1903 persecution drove them to Canada. Their new wooden house there was burnt down in 1916, and in 1920 they were dissolved, the remaining members being directed to join the Clerks of St. Viateur. (Br. Louis-Laurent, Article No. 6 of "Contribution à une Reprise des Travaux sur les Origines des Petits Frères de Marie", Bulletin, Vol. XXIII, No. 163, 1956.)

Marcellin's meeting with de Pins in March 1824 would be the foundation upon which fantastic expansion of the young curate's congregation of Brothers would soon occur. Firstly, however, let us recall the immediate aftermath. Marcellin returned jubilant to Lavalla, but was confronted by a Parish in commotion. Br. Jean-Baptiste's account of these parish events, written in 1856, was strongly criticised by Fr. Bedoin (P.P. at Lavalla 1824-64) in his Critique de la Vie du P. Champagnat (88); but more recently, Pierre Zind has done research in the official Diocesan files and has given an account in his Les Nouvelles Congrègations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830 which largely supports Jean-Baptiste's account although there are still some differences not resolved. This thesis will give a different account to all three writers above: on matters unsupported by documents the author describes what in his opinion, after the latest research into available evidence, probably occurred.

Archbishop de Pins had expressed the desire to speak to Father Champagnat further concerning Marcellin's project during the Easter of 1824. (89) Consequently Marcellin had asked Father Seyve, a former fellow-Seminarian, to assist the sickly Father Rebod with the Easter ceremonies at Lavalla. (90) Seyve, being one of the original Marist aspirants at Fourvière in 1816, decided to crush to extinction one of the obstacles in the way of Father Champagnat, the opposition of Fr. Rebod. He stirred up the parishioners against the alcoholic Parish Priest and had them draw up a petition to be signed by them and sent to the Diocesan Administrator. (91)

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88. Fr. R. Bedoin, Critique de la Vie du P. Champagnat, Lyons, 1860. Bedoin wrote this following Br. Jean-Baptiste's VIE being published. It seems to have been circulated among a very limited number of his priest-friends: it being many years before the Brothers themselves managed to get a look at it. A copy exists in FMS archives at Rome, whilst an incomplete copy (covering 6 quarto pages typed in French) exists at the Hermitage.

89. Easter in 1824 fell on 18th April.

90. Bedoin, op. cit., Ch. 11. Seyve, born near Marlies in same year as Fr. Champagnat and was ordained with him. He had then been mostly at Tarentaise, and for a short time had been with Fr. Courveille at Feurs. (P. Zind, "Le Bienheureux Père Champagnat, M. Courveille et M. Bochard", Bulletin, Vol XXII, No. 161, January 1956, p.87).

91. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 141.

When Marcellin returned after Easter and learnt of this, he talked with the parish leaders and persuaded them to withdraw their names from the petition. Marcellin felt obliged to rebuke both the parish leaders and his now unfortunate confrère Seyve, especially when he discovered that Seyve had been planning to have himself made the new Parish Priest of Lavalla. (92) However, so many complaints had already reached the Diocesan authorities concerning Rebod that, after Champagnat had declined Bishop de Pin's offer to become Parish Priest, the authorities planned to replace Rebod with Fr. Bedoin. (93) This unruly conduct of Father Seyve had deprived Marcellin of a collaborator; but there was a great need for one. Hence, on the advice of Father Gardette, Marcellin would later seek help of Father Courveille; and this, as we shall see later, was granted. (94)

Looking back to the uncertain, hazardous foundation of 1817, it seemed that the years of poverty, opposition and incredible hardship for Marcellin's congregation of Brothers were about to end. Of course, Marcellin well knew that his Institute still lacked government authority for its schools, but now with Diocesan support it seemed the future would surely be pleasant and fulfilling. Yet, as Brothers were to say later, "*Thank God for Champagnat!*", because the years of trial, unfortunately, were not yet finished. Although soon expansion occurred immediately, the darkest days for the Institute still lay ahead: with 1826, no doubt, being its worst-ever year.

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92. P. Zind, op. cit. in Bulletin, Vol. XXII, No. 161, n. 98.

93. "Registre des Délibérations du Conseil Archidiaconal (1824-1827)", Archives de l'Archevêché de Lyon. Things went so far that on 11 May 1824, Seyve was sent to Bourg-Argenteau. "Father Seyve, formerly serving at Arthun and now at Lavalla, is named Curate at Burdigues". Whilst on 19th May the same council recorded, obviously with relief, that its order had been obeyed: "Father Seyve, appointed to Burdigues, has finally reached there".

Five days later Rebod was called upon to retire from the Parish of Lavalla: "24th May; complaints against Father Rebod are received unceasingly; Father Bedoin... is appointed Priest in charge at Lavalla".

On 28th May Rebod signed the Parish Register for the first time. (Registres paroissiaux de Lavalla) He died the following January though still in his 40's.

94. "12th May 1824: since Epercieux is not very far away and is within reach of nearby parishes, Fr. Courveille... is authorised to go and help Fr. Champagnat in establishing the Brothers in the schools". (Ibid.)