

The Story of the Society of Mary

20. Instructions to the Staff of the Seminary

As mentioned in the last episode, Fr. Jean-Claude Colin found himself assigned by his bishop to be the Rector of the minor seminary in Belley. Distasteful as this assignment was to him, he had to roll up his sleeves and get to work. Over the summer he read a classic book on education, Charles Rollin's *Treatise on Education*, and from it distilled important principles that he presented in a remarkable booklet, "Instructions to the Staff of the Minor Seminary of Belley," which ever since has been the cornerstone of the Marist approach to education. I would like to offer here some of the highlights.

First the goals of education:

"To educate a man, to form him, what a sublime task! But to educate him in a Christian way, what a heavenly work! Let us, gentlemen; be thoroughly convinced of the importance of the duties that are ours, and the excellence of this good work. Our position is a true apostolate, all the more fruitful for our having taken care to form our pupils according to the principles of the Gospel. It is God's children that are entrusted to us, and so it is towards God that we have to turn their hearts."

"It is of the utmost importance for us to have a true idea of our duties toward our students, of which the three principle ones are: we must make of them Christians, upright gentlemen, and lastly men of learning."

"We shall therefore work in the first place at giving them a sufficient knowledge of their faith, at stirring their wills to the accomplishment of duty through motives of conscience and the power of religion."

"Next we shall make it our chief concern to school our students in conduct and gentle, courteous, simple social manners, in good breeding, and a thoroughly Christian polite behavior."

"We shall then turn our attention to forming the minds of our students and to advance them in the different fields of learning."

Some other points addressed to the staff of the seminary:

"It would be a matter worthy of our zeal and charity to take part in the recreation of our pupils, to mix with them, to encourage them to enjoy themselves."





“We shall treat our pupils with kindness, gentleness, courtesy and firmness.”

“We shall try to assert authority over our pupils, both, that is to say, a certain ascendancy that inspires respect and commands obedience. Let us take careful note that it is neither age, nor height, nor tone of voice, nor threats that give this authority, but an even-tempered, firm, impartial stamp of mind, that is always in control of itself, that is guided simply by reason, that never acts on impulse, or through ill-humor or anger.”

“We shall love each other as brothers and honor each other with affectionate respect united to Christian politeness, so that our boys, having on this score nothing but good examples before them, will behave towards each other in the same way or at least with charity.”

It was providential that Fr. Colin was given this assignment to work in the field of the education of youth, and that he was endowed with the ability to grasp the essentials of education, because not many years later, education of youth would become a major Marist ministry.

To be continued...



Prayer for Vocations to the Society of Mary (Marists)

Lord Jesus

You gave the Church St Peter Chanel as an example to Marists and the people of Oceania of gentleness, compassion and love in action. Welcome many young men and women into the Marist Family, to work as Priests, Brothers and Sisters. Help us too, to share our charism with lay people throughout the world and to work in partnership with them in Mission for the good of your Church and our world. This prayer we make to the Father in your name and through the Holy Spirit. Amen

Mary Mother of the Church and our mother, choose more young people to follow Jesus your Son in religious life and priesthood and to bear your name as members of your Society.

(Please pray this prayer often.)

