

(November 5, 1864 - June 13, 1940)

Author: Brother Joseph L R Belanger, taken from various sources, 6 November 2002

Pierre and Marguerite (Coulaud) Marthouret gave birth to a baby boy on 5 November 1864 in Toumon (Ardeche) and named him Lucien. He took the Marist Habit on 2 February 1879 at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, France, and in September of that year was appointed cook in Perigneux. The next year he went to cook again at St-Romain-en-Jarez. In April 1881 he is named "enseignant auxiliaire" (any unspecified school position helping the educational process: prefect, proctor, substitute, economer...) at Valbenoite until 1894, where he then comes on board as "enseignant" at what was arguably the most renowned Marist Brothers' school in France. At that time he had acquired the "brevet complet" or "superieur," certifying him to teach all classes at the primary level.

During these many years of "enseignant auxiliaire" he cultivates himself. He had a thirst for knowledge and was brilliant in math and science, all learned on his own. He makes Perpetual Profession on 15 August 1887. In December 1903 he goes to Dumfries, Scotland, for six months to study English, and in 1904 he takes over the direction of St, Ann's Academy in New York City from Bro. Zepheriny, now charged with looking for property on which to locate an English- language formation center. Bro Zepherinye buys the MacPherson Estate in the town of Poughkeepsie on 28 February 1905.

In 1909 Bro. Ptolemeus again succeeds Bro. Zepheriny, this time as Provincial of the North American province. In 1910 he decides to move the Scholasticate from St. Ann's Academy in New York City to St. Ann's Hermitage in Poughkeepsie and he appoints the 21-year-old Bro. Mary Florentius as Master of Scholastics. He also opens three schools in Montreal, another in St. Boniface, Manitoba, and a fifth in St-Jean-Deschaillon, Canada. When the United States becomes a separate province in 1911 under the patronage of St. Ann, Ptolemeus stays on as Provincial of the new Province and he establishes St. Ann's Hermitage as the Provincial House. His dream of another province in Western Canada leads him to found three more English- speaking schools in Manitoba, but these will all close within 10-15 years.

After his Provincialate Bro. Ptolemeus returns to teaching in Poughkeepsie at the Novitiate and Scholasticate from 1914-1920, after which he once again is asked to direct St. Ann's Academy in New York City, then St. Joseph's in Haverhill MA. From 1926 until his death in 1940 he is stationed at St. Ann's Hermitage in Poughkeepsie. He does whatever teaching and manual work his failing health allows him to do. The Student Brothers at Marist Normal School, chartered in 1929, treasure his intellectual and religious gifts as they interact with this awesome autodidact Brother. Bro. Ptolemeus dies on 13 June 1940. Father Beat Gmur, SSS, New York archdiocesan Spiritual Director and close friend of the Brothers since 1910, celebrates the funeral Mass on Wednesday June 12 at the Hermitage in Poughkeepsie.

Bro. Ptolemeus is remembered as a model religious, a visionary administrator, and a great educator. He filled with utmost zeal and unusual success various positions of responsibility, requiring tact and firmness. For over 30 years he was a member of the Provincial Council and in that capacity he effectively helped build up our Marist educational apostolates and solidly established the Marist Brothers' reputation for excellence in teaching tempered by family spirit. A stern exterior masked a paternal heart, but his brilliant mind and broad outlook brooked incompetence and sloppiness only with strenuous religious spirit and easy humor.