

(September 21, 1861 - December 29, 1927)

author: Brother Joseph L R Belanger, 7 November 2002, taken from various sources.

François Adophe Louis Brochier was born in the city of Lyons, France, in 1861. His parents, Louis and Reine (Fuzier) Brochier, were devout Catholics, as were the majority of people in this conservative region of France, and they were happy to see him embrace the vocation of a Marist Brother. St. Marcellin Champagnat had founded these "Little Brothers of Mary" on 2 January 1817 at LaValla, some 45 kms SSW of Lyons. They were well known and loved in the region. Louis entered Postulancy in October 1876 and received the Marist Habit on 2 February 1877.

After the Novitiate in 1878 Louis was appointed cook, as was usual in those days. After that year, from 1879 to 1881 he was "enseignant auxiliaire," (any unspecified school function helping the educational process: prefect, proctor, substitute, economer...) in Quintenas, and from 1881 to 1888 "auxiliaire" again at Valbenoite, both in the diocese of Lyons. Presumably these positions gave him some opportunity to cultivate himself and do personal study. He loved literature. The "auxiliaire" appointments completed, he was named teacher at the Hermitage, headquarters of the Marist Brothers. At this time, he had acquired the "brevet complet" or "superieur" which certified him to teach all the classes in the primary. This was short-lived. His outstanding talent designated him for administrative work in the new Province of North America, recently founded in Iberville, Canada, in 1885 by Brother Cesidius.

After a year of intensive study of English in London, England, Bro. Zepheriny came to the New World to become the founder of the Brothers' new school in New York City. He had an ardent devotion to "la Bonne Sainte Anne" and after naming the new school in her honor, he acquired a bronze statue of St. Ann teaching the Virgin Mary and placed it in an outdoor niche overlooking Lexington Avenue and 77th Street. Such protective placements were common in his native France. In many places a statue of Notre Dame would be erected with the Latin phrase: "Posuerunt me custodiam, " "they have placed me as guardian." Zepheriny's energy and competence laid a solid base and made the Academy one of the premier schools of the city. He also gave the school its nickname, "the beehive," and wrote its motto, Non Scholae sed Vitae, "Not for school but for life." When St. Ann's Academy became Archbishop Molloy High School in Queens NYC in 1957 and the old school was sold and torn down, the statue of St. Ann and the Virgin Mary followed the students to Molloy where it still stands after more than 100 years.

An English-language school had been opened in Lewiston ME in 1886, followed by others in Manchester NH (1890), NYC (1892), and Lowell and Lawrence MA (1892). Many boys from these schools were drawn to religious life by these beloved teachers. At first they were sent to Iberville for training, but this soon proved impractical and a formation center was sought in the United States. The Provincial at that time, Brother Cesidius, entrusted this project to Bro. Zepheriny, who, in 1904, had become Vice-Provincial and "Visitor" or Superintendent of the Marist schools in North America. With the advice of the Jesuit Fathers at St.

Andrew's in Hyde Park and the financial help of his sister in France he bought the MacPherson Estate in the town of Poughkeepsie on 28 February 1905. Again, he immediately renamed the property St. Ann's Hermitage in honor of his favorite patron saint. In 1907 he was appointed Provincial of the North American province. Under his direction St. Ann's Novitiate was opened in 1908, the Brothers started teaching at St. Peter's in Poughkeepsie, and Camp St. Ann on Isle LaMotte VT was bought. Bro. Zepheriny developed serious heart problems which forced him to resign the Provincialate after two years for reasons of health. He then returned to Poughkeepsie as teacher.

When the separate English-language Province of St. Ann was established in 1911, he opted to remain in the United States. He became Master of Novices in 1919, but his heart problems re-surfaced in 1923 and he had to spend his remaining years in the infirmary. He died there on Thursday 29 December 1927. Two days before he died he composed his poem "Farewell," on the Marist cemetery in Poughkeepsie. He was buried on the feast of the founding of the Institute, 2 January 1928. Among the many mourners was a Mr. John McCann of Poughkeepsie.

Bro. Zepheriny's outstanding abilities as administrator and teacher were softened by a genuine humility and a sincere love for students and confreres, especially his former Postulants and Novices, who continued to seek his advice and prayers until he died.