

Preface

The late Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, in a statement extolling the mission of the teaching brothers assured these men of his high esteem for encouraged them in educating young men. The emphasis the pontiff placed on their personal sanctity, their influence on the Catholic youth, their mission of training generations of men to serve their fellow men, generated a personal responsibility among these religious people which was overwhelming.

This responsibility has been the main concern of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools since its founding by Blessed Marcellin Champagnat in 1817. In the United States, these brothers tried to influence young men on all levels for the past seventy-four years. They have reached students from a cross-section of nationalities in this country as well as the youth in the Philippines and Japan.

The ranks of the Marist Brothers in the United States have grown but steadily. At this writing five hundred and fifty brothers are either teaching or preparing to do so. The thirteen thousand students their care are now among the thousands who have been influenced in the past years by four generations of Marist Brothers.

From the humblest beginnings at LaValla, France, Blessed Marcellin Champagnat, the founder, nurtured his new congregation in the nineteenth century into becoming an international teaching Institute; four years before his holy death, Blessed Champagnat sent his first missionaries to Polynesia to fulfill the divine command "Teach ye all nations." Fifty years later his Marist teachers reached the United States.

The beginnings of the present United States Provinces were developed as part of the North American Marist mission whose center of activity was in Iberville, Canada. A handful of brothers, and later other missionaries and numerous exiled brothers from France, bolstered the ranks -- thus helping the growth of the Institute in Canada (1885) and in the United States (1886).

The historical growth and development of the Marist Brothers in United States is traced in this paper through four stages. The first, THE PIONEERING PERIOD, 1886-1911, lasting twenty-five years, exposes the problems, and the successes achieved in the United States and Canada under the direction of superiors located in Iberville, Canada. The second stage, THE REORGANIZATION PERIOD, 1911-1931, begins with the creation of the United States Province in 1911 until the policies to consolidate the Province were abruptly challenged by the effects of the economic crash of 1929 and the depression that followed. The third, THE TRANSITION PERIOD, 1931-1953 beginning in 1931, altered the growth of the Province because of the increased employment of brothers in secondary schools rather than in grammar schools. During this period the Province expanded its facilities such as houses of studies, increasing the number of schools and personnel.

The fourth stage, THE EXPANSION PERIOD, 1953-Present, covers the historical growth of the Marists in the United States in recent years. There are now two provinces, an autonomous district and a mission territory under American Marist administration.

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