

The Pledge of Fourvière – 23 July 1816



Such is the first step

On July 23, 1816, twelve seminarians, aged between 20 and 34, climbed the steep steps to the top of the hill of Fourvière, Lyons, and there, in the small chapel dedicated to Our Lady, they promised to work at beginning a new religious order in the Church: a group called “Mary-ists”, whose work in the church would resemble that of the Jesuits, but whose approach or style would be unlike anything that existed in the Church at that time. “Our ordination took place on the feast of St Mary Magdalene on July 22, 1816. On the following day we went up to Our Lady of Fourvière to place ourselves and our project under Mary’s special protection”... Etienne Terrailon.

Marists regard this event as a foundational moment in the birth of the Society of Mary.

We, striving to work together for the glory of God and the honour of Mary ... declare we will, as soon as possible, establish a most holy congregation of Marists.

We dedicate ourselves and all we have to the Society of the Blessed Virgin.

We do this not in the fervour of youth, not lightly, not from some purely human ambition, nor for the hope of material gain but maturely, after seeking advice, and after weighing everything before God.

We accept the hardships, toil, difficulties and extreme suffering since with the help of Jesus who gives us strength, there is nothing we cannot master.

*We pledge fidelity to our mother the Church and to our bishop
We will give ourselves and all we have for the salvation of souls in the name of the Virgin Mary and under her patronage.*

Prayer:

Holy Virgin of Fourvière,
you have smiled down
in love over the centuries
on your people
who have wended their pilgrim way
to your shrine.

As you looked with love
into the hearts
of the first Marists
look into our hearts

and awaken in us
a fresh sense of
our Marist calling.

May we be united more fully
to the heart of your Church
and to the people we serve.
We make our prayer as pilgrims with you,
Through Christ Our Lord,
who made their consecration,

Amen.



The chapel at Fourvière

Process:

1. Reflect on a time when you climbed a mountain or a long stairway to reach a place you wanted to visit. Or look at the picture. There are 600 steps in this journey up to Fourvière. What were your thoughts/feelings about what you had embarked on? You may like to share these briefly with the person next to you.
2. Read the background and the edited text of the Fourvière pledge the first Marists made.
3. Spend some time reflecting on what strikes you about this pledge, their goal, attitudes, on whom they will depend.
4. How does this relate to your present role in the Church, in a Marist school/community as a Board member, teacher, support staff?
5. Sharing with the whole group if you wish
6. Prayer together.

Sources:

- Larkin C. A Certain Way: An Exploration of Marist Spirituality.
<http://www.acertainway.info/origins/consider-the-rock/such-is-the-first-step/>
- Marist Sisters Constitutions
- Marist Sisters 2012 – Marian Prayers
- Photo – Sr Teri O'Brien sm