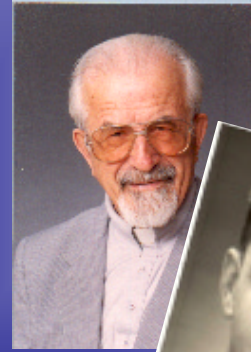


# The Present Moment

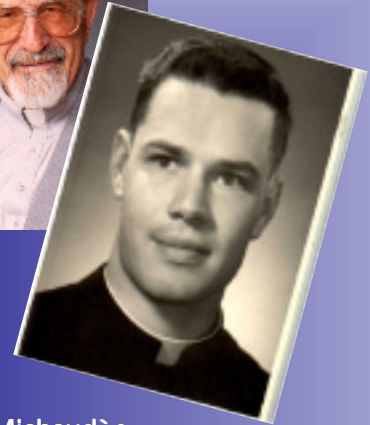
Volume 1 - Number 11

May 2000

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Father Parent  
(page 4)



Gérald Michaud`s  
Testimony  
(page 10)

"Fill me with your kidness, that  
my eyes refect a bit of your  
love, that my face,  
like Mary's countenance,  
reveal our graces.  
Lord, let your Spirit  
overrun me."



An important visit to Rome (page 6)

# The Present Moment

## For the Life of the Institute

Stéphane Abran, i.v.Dei



In July, 1998 the delegates to the Assembly general determined that have an effective communication tool would bring some vitality to our Institute.

François Hamel, the Director General and his council have acted on this recommendation and delegated Cécile Corneau to the task of developing an in-house newsletter. Since then, several people have joined together as a team to bring this project to term. This newsletter will be published in French, English, and Spanish. In this way we hope to reach as many of you as possible.

The "new-born child," our newsletter is first and foremost your newsletter, and it is yours to make it as interesting as possible by submitting your comments, suggestions for subjects and articles, pictures and photos, etc.

As you can see, our newsletter is divided under several headings with as many writers whom I shall have the pleasure to introduce in our next issue.

I hope that you find our newsletter worthwhile and interesting. I can assure you that we have had much pleasure in creating it. Enjoy reading our

little paper, *The Present Moment*.

### His Presence

My child,

Take notice of my presence.  
I am more present to you  
Than dawn is to the day,  
Than water is to the ocean,  
Than the sun is to light,  
Than the sap is to the tree,  
Than the blood is to life,  
Than a thought is to the mind,  
Than love is to the heart,  
Than hunger is to food  
And thirst is to drink.  
I am in you for you.  
I mark you, in etch myself in you,  
I stamp myself in your being.  
You are an image of me,  
And nothing can split us apart

- Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.

### The Present Moment

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## In the present moment... Let us be proud of being secular consecrated.

François Hamel, i.v.Dei

At the 1998 Assembly General the president of the assembly, Guy Veer (Canada) took pleasure in reminding the delegates of the Latin proverb, *Tempus fugit*, "Time flies." This was a reality, at the Assembly... and, I must admit, it is still so today.

All eyes are fixed on the year 2000 to the extent that we are forgetting to live and experience the end of our century. It is safe to surmise that in a few months people will look back to 1999 to see how the last millennium ended. Shall we be among those who have remained faithful to the foundation charism of our Institute and to its spiritual heritage which invites us to live the present moment? It is each day that we must listen to the Holy Spirit so that the seeds of holiness deposited within us by our consecrated life may bear fruit not only for us personally but also for our Church and our times.

This is why I am sending a vocation leaflet to all districts and regions of the Institute. The leaflet in entitled *Speak, Lord, Your Servant Is Listening* and addresses vocations to secular consecration. I invite you to make this leaflet the object of your first three team meetings in the year 2000, with a special prayer intention for vocations. Throughout the Institute throughout the world, let us attune ourselves to this wave length, and not

be afraid to challenge others to join us in the Institute. Basically, it is God who calls to the consecrated life, but He uses us to challenge and invite others. Let us allow ourselves to be His instruments for this.

God's call to live consecrated secularity is rooted in our baptism. We accept to bind ourselves to follow-

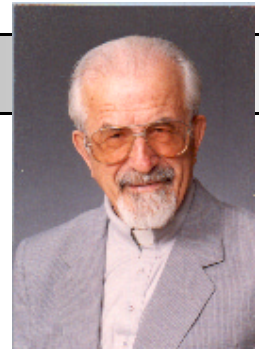
**"It is each day  
that we must listen to  
the Holy Spirit  
so that the seeds  
of holiness deposited  
within us by our  
consecrated life may  
bear fruit..."**

ing Christ more radically because of our desire to live our baptismal commitment in a more radical way. And this experience is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ. By attaching ourselves to this mystery we believe that life is stronger than death, that love is more forceful than hatred. I would

dare say that we experience our own humanity by sharing in the divinity of Christ.

This does not happen alone. There can be no such entity as an isolated *Voluntas Dei* alone in his or her corner. You know that team life is basic for our form of consecrated life. It is the most important place of our initial as well as ongoing formation. It is also the place where discernment of God's Will for our lives takes place. Our being members of a team is indicative to a certain degree of the extent of our belonging to the Church. I want to stress this latter statement to point out the supreme importance of the ties we must have with our bishops: they are the shepherds given to us by the Church, hence we must develop with them a relationship of knowledge and service. Let us not be shy about making ourselves know to others. Let us take pride in our consecrated secularity as members of the *Voluntas Dei* Institute.

François Hamel, I.V.Dei



# At the Culmination of

DEAR VOLUNTAS DEI,

The culmination of life is not the moment of our greatest success but rather old age, a period of divesting oneself, of stripping oneself at a time when the Lord comes to claim us part by part. We gradually take longer to understand, our vision fades, words come out less fluently, memory suffers its lapses, names take longer to make it to the tongue, the heart gets lazy or runs off in a panic of rapid beating, frustration sharpens sensitivities, legs often require the support of a cane, resting against the wall is more frequent, stairs become major hurdles...

All of these obstacles have been envisioned by God as His way of telling us that He has new expectations for us. Our lot is to accept it all, to empty our suitcases of everything that is not considered useful in heaven, where the lifestyle will be transformed. No need for defense mechanisms, in heaven, since all is love. When it is understood correctly, old age is a gift of God, a herald of the happiness so long dreamed of, a happiness that cannot be described because its components are divine and beyond our comprehension. Life everlasting is really God's business, and it is good that all is freely given by Him, that His generosity is limitless, and that He loves us uncondition-

ally. A simple acceptance on our part, a simple smile suffices for Him to smother us with love for all eternity.

Dear Voluntas Deis, at the summit of life, in this period of great uprooting, of the final move, my wish is that you really taste the love of God who loves us so deeply. His patience, his abounding or gradually unfolding mercy are no less for all our distractions, curiosities, hare-brained schemes and astonishing escapades : nothing stands in the way of Jesus our Redeemer, our Saviour who seeks our love daily and animates us with the charisms he has given the each one of us.

Let us ask him to stir up our hunger for prayer, for a spiritual appetite. Let us come to his table, symbolised by the first

"5" (our spiritual exercises : the daily menu). And when we have reached old age, we shall realise that prayer is the most constant respiration, the one which is most beneficial for old age. Prayer pacifies, protects, illumines and, besides, it crushes all anxieties. God welcomes our activities just as He welcomes us. Where there is life, there is breathing. The same holds true for prayer. Let us be zealous for the Eucharist, specialists of inner silence, and may the time we dedicate to prayer never be conditioned by made-up activity or not dictated by love.

God loves us : that is the whole of our motivation. Let us live Evangelisation 2000 in the Spirit of God which draws us.

With the wearing away of old age, let us repeat with Saint John (1 Jn 2 : 8), "... darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."

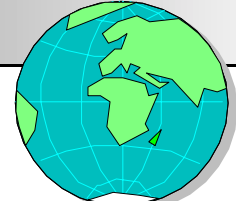
We are all, or just about, athletes of a new millennium, of a new training course for eternity. Let us watch over our prayer life, let us be convinced of its superiority over action, since prayer is breath and soul. Let us read over our Constitutions and breathe life into our first "5"; in doing so we shall have people who are happier, more lively teams, members who are more committed to their Institute, a healthy Institute with a bright future, and the unhesitating assurance of being loved by God..

**" On earth,  
Jesus speaks to us  
about the hundredfold;  
in heaven,  
he talks of fullness,  
of eternal happiness.  
There is therefore no  
measure,  
all is all "**

May the Hearts of Jesus and Mary that hold our fate in their hands make us saints, apostles of the year 2000 and beyond. Let us say with the prophet David : "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise" (Ps 50 : 17).

You are in my prayers, my thoughts, and my heart, and I repeat once again that I love you. Are we not on the same wave length, wherever we are and wherever we labour ? May God keep us all in His loving embrace..

Louis-Marie Parent, omi



## At Sri Lanka...



**Area:** 65 610 sq. Km.

**Capital:** Colombo; Important Cities : Jaffna, Kandy, Galle

**Climate:** Equatorial: hot (30°C.) and humid (90%)

**Languages:** Singhalese (official), Tamil, English

**Religions:** Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity

**Presence in the Institute:**

The Voluntas Dei Institute has been present in Sri Lanka since around 1963

**Membership : 70**

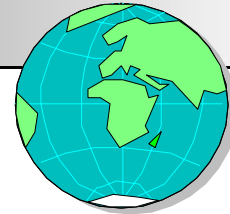
**D**uring the nineteen-fifties, while on a trip to Rome, Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. met Bishop Emilianuspillai of Jaffna, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). The bishop invited Father Parent to establish the Voluntas Dei Institute in his country. In 1963, a few laymen and seminarians came to Canada for training, among them *Florentine Rajaratnam* who was ordained a priest in 1969. In 1966, a second group came to Canada, among whom being *Patrick Gnanapragasam*, ordained in 1973 at Jaffna. Gradually, lay people and celibate laymen joined the Institute.

The first parishes given to the Institute in Sri Lanka were those of Saint John, Saint James, and St. Theresa in Jaffna. At the request of Bishop Deogupillai, the town of Mahumalai was chosen to be the permanent address of the Voluntas Dei Institute. Father Parent visited the Sri Lanka region three times and on his last visit, May 25, 1976, he lay the foundations of the Institute's house known as Parent Illam. Some time later, eight couples, teachers, fishers, farmers, and businesspeople joined the Institute.

For many years India and Sri Lanka formed but one district-in-formation, then in 1989 each country became a region of the Institute. To ensure its financial autonomy, the region acquired a 40-acre coconut plantation, but civil war forced the Institute to sell the property.

Each year during Holy Week there is a meeting of the Institute. Members renew their vows and commitments September 8, each year, date of the Mahumalai Shrine patronal feast. This shrine has become a parish and has been turned over to the diocese, in response to diocesan policy.





### Rome...

**A**t the 1998 Assembly General, a number of request were tabled for submission to Rome in the course of the year, and nearly one year after the conclusion of the Assembly we have been given answers to these petitions.

would be incardinated in the Institute. I wrote to 38 diocesan bishops where we have *Voluntas Dei* priest and seminarians, seeking their support in this matter. Their positive response was of great help to us, and seventeen of them gave favourable replies and used this opportunity to voice their appreciation for the work

continue to make yourselves known to the bishops and priest with whom you minister, and continue especially to make yourselves known as *Voluntas Deis*. Three bishops decided against supporting our request, and one was hesitant. Seventeen bishops failed to respond.

services. Article 181 of the 1988 Constitutions requires that these charges be filled by professed members. The Assembly General asked that the positions be filled by either professed or committed members. In a letter dated August 28 of this year, I learned that the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life accepts that the director of administrative services be a committed member, but not the secretary general. The Congregation suggests that Article 181 be amended to read: "The secretary general, who may or may not be a member of the council, is appointed by the director and his council from among the professed members. The director of administrative services, who may or may not be a member of the council, is appointed by the director general and his council from among the professed or committed members."

Before leaving for Rome, I had sent request to Bishop Dorronsoro, under-secretary for secular institutes. When we finally met, I was able to better explain our situation to him. He is well acquainted with our Institute. He asked me not to submit our request to the Congresso, the decision-making arm of the Congregation, at this time. He advised us to wait a while and to present it later. This is a disappointment, but we must also realise that his answer is not a refusal but only a delay. In the meantime, we must trust the Holy Spirit to guide this undertaking, so that God's will and not ours be done, in this matter.

A second request concerned the status of the secretary general and the director of administrative



At his Rome visit, François Hamel met Pope Jean-Paul II.

From April 11 to 25, I was in the Eternal City to present the Assembly General's three requests to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. The first of these concerned granting the Institute an indult for the director general to be allowed to call those candidates to holy orders who

done by *Voluntas Dei* priest in their dioceses, as well as for the serious and suitable training given to our candidates to sacred orders. I take this opportunity to say **THANK YOU** to our priest for their availability and the witness of their secular consecrated life. Continue your priestly minister,



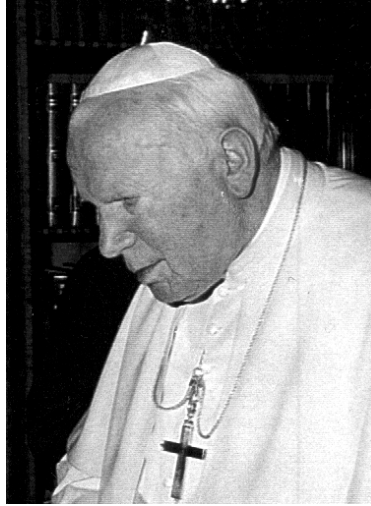
**At its  
b e r  
meet-  
the Central Council accepted this  
change and I therefore ask you to  
correct Article 181 of the Constitu-  
tions accordingly.**

A third request concerned the direction of sectors by committed associate members, in those areas where there are no professed members. This is a problem to us because there are several sectors composed exclusively of associate members, the professed members having either moved away or been given other tasks by their bishops. The same situation existed also in the case of new foundations. The Congregation has refused to allow committed associate members to

be sector animators or facilitators.

My reading of this decision is that the Institute is composed of professed and of associate members; hence the importance that both these modes of belonging always be represented. We must also come to terms with the fact that the exercise of authority in the Institute must be discharged by a professed member.

**Octo-  
2 3** Just as I urged you above to listen to the Spirit, I believe that we must do as much, regarding this third request. We may be very disappointed with the response to our petition, but we




must acknowledge that God's Will is made known to us through the Roman authorities too. This does not mean, however, that we must remain at a standstill. The present moment must be lived with its own reality. Another assembly at another time might once again raise the issue... but not for now.

I shall be returning to Rome next summer for the World Congress of Secular Institutes, and I shall avail myself of the occasion to return to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. It is important that we make ourselves known and WELL known to the Church authorities, and this holds true at the local as well as universal levels.

François Hamel, I.V.Dei

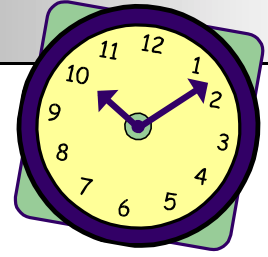
**In memoriam -**

**1999**



January 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Sébamalaiamma Alfred</b> (stability) wife of <b>Anthonipillai Alfred</b> , who died at Jafna, Sri Lanka.
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Martin Humberto Vergera Henao</b> , celibate, who died in Columbia
September 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Yacobu Sebastampillai</b> , husband of <b>Pushparany Sabastiampillai</b> , who died in Sri Lanka.

Having search the Will of God, Having loved it and accomplished it, may they enter in



# At the beginning...

Cécile Corneau, i.v.Dei

**O**n July 2, 1958 – over 40 years ago- ten or so young men gathered together with Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., in the chapel of Our Lady of LaSalette in suburban Trois-Rivières, to found the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute. A new adventure was beginning amidst enthusiasm, faith, and poverty. Even after four decades the history of the Institute is rich in accomplishments and full of promise.



The possibility of a foundation had been conceived a few months earlier at Saint-Boniface, Manitoba, the Tuesday after Easter, April 8, 1958, when Father Parent met a few philosophy and theology students interested in forming a secular institute for priest and laymen. As other vocations were added to the original group it was decided to postpone the official beginning of the Institute to the summer, following the requisite permissions from ecclesiastical authorities.

The foundation was granted its first canonical status of pious union by Bishop Henri Routhier, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Grouard, Alberta.

Shortly thereafter, in July, one priest and three seminarians made their first profession: Father J. Roland Blais, Maurice Roy, Daniel O'Rourke, and Paul Coutu. Five other seminarians joined the burgeoning team: Laurent-Paul Gendron, Mario La-roche, Gerald Michaud, and Marcel Forest.

During this first summer Father Parent gave regular conferences on secular consecration and on the spiritual attitudes of "the Three Fives". There was already talk of formation in action because lodging had to be provided, a study curriculum set up, and many newcomers welcome. Several among the group were interested in the mission field, among them being Michel Laroche, who was a student, at the time.

The Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate helped the fledgling institute financially as well as



with personnel and many basic services.



## On the Time Line... (continued)



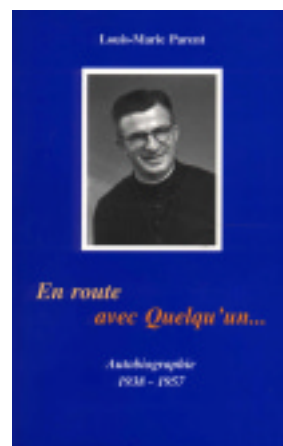
We are most grateful to them.

Before long the Institute had students in a number of major seminaries in Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta.

Laymen joined the Institute and were mostly employed in the material organisation necessary. Construction was undertaken to house a minor and philosophy seminary at Red Rapids, New Brunswick.

In September 1959, two confreres left for Laos. Ordinations to the priesthood were also celebrated: The first ordained was Daniel O'Rourke, in 1961; six were ordained in 1962, and three in 1963. Job offers came quickly in the field of education either at Trois-Rivières or Red Rapids. One of our newly-ordained headed for Roberval, Québec, with a team of confreres to work with troubled and handicapped youth, and two others were drawn to pastoral work in a parish at Iles-de-la-

## Between two lines



### GOD RUNS ME WHERE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE

Gérald Michaud, i.v.Dei

**I**t is truly a gift to reflect on the story of one's vocation. When did it start? When did I receive the call to the priesthood, the call to the Voluntas Dei Institute?

I believe that in the heart of God and in the heart of my mother, there was already a call and a response. And I am firmly convinced that God comes to get us and leads us where he wants us. I am fully aware that I have been held in the hand of a loving God and that He has led me.

I was born and I raised in an atmosphere of faith, in a small village on the prairies of western Canada. The life of the community was mainly centered around the church: Sunday mass, Way of the cross, Holy Hours, blessing of the seeds for the sowing, confessions, funerals, weddings, and Christian education at school. At home, we prayed the rosary every evening, and we participated faithfully in what went on at Church.

In Delmas where I was born and raised, it was the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who lead the parish. They ran the residential school for native children. The missionary that visited the different reservations also stayed in Delmas. As a mass servant, I had a chance to know these missionaries. On certain weekends, one of the missionaries invited us to join him as he went to the different reservations. In winter it was often in an open sleigh pulled by horses. I loved the

adventure and my heart became open to missionary life.

It is only when I went to Gravelbourg college, directed by the same community of Oblates, that I seriously considered my vocation. There were many choices before me but that of being a missionary always came back to me.

In "Rhetorique" which is



considered as the second year of university, a young man, Lionel, from Quebec came to study in Gravelbourg. He had previously spent time in Prince Albert and knew Maurice Roy, Laurent Paul Gendron, Mario Laroche, Father Roland Blais, and other seminarians. That is where he heard about Fr. Parent and about his project to form an Institute for men: that is, for priest and celibate men. He spoke to me about the project with great interest and conviction. Already he

had committed himself to be among those who would come together in Trois-Rivières, Québec, on the second of July the same year., It was in April 1958.

Up to that time, I had been thinking mainly of the Oblates. They were the priest of my parish and of the college and I knew them the most. My desire was to be a

missionary. My friendship with Lionel and the invitation to participate in the foundation of an institute which was to be missionary, interested me immensely. Many young men at the college had made their decision regarding their future; I did the same.

I did not know much about missionary life or God except what I had



## Witness of the Present Moment (continued)

learned in school and at college, however it felt right and I went with that.

I made known my decision to my parents. I do not remember their reaction but they did not object to my desire. So I left, hitchhiking, because my parents did not have much money.

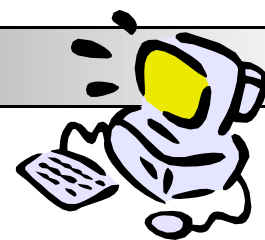
In Longlac, in northern Ontario there was so many people hitchhiking that the local priest sug-

gested I take the train to get out of there. I then resumed my hitchhiking to find myself at Cap-de-la-Madeleine. That is where I met Fr. Parent who was doing spiritual direction for the Oblates. From there we went to what was called the "Rochon" by the local people. We came to a humble little chapel: Our Lady of LaSalette. It is there that we met others who had come to participate in the beginnings of the Institute. The great adventure

of the Voluntas Dei Institute was launched. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1958.

Gérald Michaud, I.V.Dei

## ON THE PART OF THE NEW MILLENIUM



### AN INTERNET SITE ON THE BIBLE

By Gilles Leblanc priest  
Director of the journal: "Oratoire" Montréal

**I**n february this year, Catholic Biblical scholars will inaugurate a French Internet site. The Interbible site ([www.interbible.org](http://www.interbible.org)) responds to the hopes of many believers anxious to find answers to their questions or to consult the best sources in matters concerning the **Bible**. The inter-diocesan team regarding biblical matters of the region of Montreal is at the origin of this audacious project.

**SOCABI** is also a partner of the site where one finds extracts of the pamphlets: "Parabole".

The new site has three dimensions:

- A possibility to dialogue with public by means of questions directed to specialists,
- A resource of tools helpful to make the Bible more accessible,
- The presentation of the Bible for

the use of the community.

The main menu has nine (9) sections (identified here in capitol letters) which give access to the site.

For the more recent information one clicks on the "**GUIDE**".

The "**SOURCE**" of living waters opens another section:

To communicate at "**DECOUVERTE**" of the Biblical World

You will find tools which will help you read the Bible.

You prepare a Liturgy by clicking on "**CITHARE**".

Biblical texts such as the **Gospel** with commentaries from ACEBAC are found by clicking "**ECRITURE**".

You then go to "**CARREFOUR**" for a list of ressources available on Internet. You will find screen photos

(pictures of the Holy Land), lexicon for working with different texts, software are available at "**CARAVANE**".

The "**SCRIPTORIUM**" (place where one writes) and the list of "**ARTISANS**" completes it all.

"We have chosen not to remain silent and in-active with the growth of Internet explains Yves Guillemette, editor of the site Interbible and director of the Biblical Center In Montreal.

Welcome to the new site **Interbible**, original, well illustrated, interactive and truly exciting.

Congratulations and cheers for this accomplishment.