

# The Present Moment

Volume 4 ~ Number 1

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- 2 From the Redaction
- 3 From the desk of the Director General
- 4 Stabilities
- 5 From the pen of Father Parent
- 7 News from here and there
- 10 Time line – Haïti
- 17 Jubilees
- 18 At the beginning ...
- 19 Celebrations
- 22 Witness of the Present Moment
- 26 Testimonies
- 27 Ordinations in 2002





# THREE IMPORTANT EVENTS ...

by Pierre J. Hubert

Greetings to my fellow members of the Voluntas Dei Institute.

With pleasure, I accepted to assume the redaction of the Present Moment. I hope to respond to your expectations.

Three important events marked 2002.

Firstly, in April there was the canonical elevation of Haiti to the status of a District, the second to become "a district officially erected." A number of articles recalls the presence of the Institute in "The pearl of the Antilles."

Then, there was the arrival of the Pope in Canada in July. This visit of the Holy Father to Canada occurred within the context of World Youth Day. The active presence of the members of the Institute is noted in this issue.

The third event was those activities marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Institute of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. A number of celebrations within the regions and districts marked not only the anniversary but also the contributions that our "big sisters" made to the founding of our own Institute. This issue recalls the various celebrations that were spread over a number of months.

"Peace is only as rich as the elements composing it. Peace is the fruit produced by the positive quality of your motives and the solidity of your fidelity to Christ, respect of your neighbour, your capacity for marveling and your dedication to serving others." *Aspirant's Guide*, 4.3

This issue of the *Present Moment* abounds in news related to these three events and more.

I thank the numerous collaborators who contributed to the content of this issue. Let us continue wherever we are to *be faithful to our apostolic objective of creating peace and fellowship in Jesus Christ.* ☩

## *The Present Moment*

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## BEARER OF HAPPINESS

by François Hamel



When I observe today's society, it seems to be filled with all sorts of new challenges.

Globalization can be a place of openness, new connections as well as a place of confusion, inconsistency and relativism. It seems to me that two aspects emerge consistently. I will express them by using two expressions. The first expression comes from Latin: *"hic et nunc"* which translates into here and now. The other expression is borrowed from the words of Shakespeare: "having a feeling" which means to experience feelings.

It appears to me that the young of today are caught up in "immediate" gratification. I believed that it was a North American phenomenon, but my visits to Asia, Central and South America push me to believe that this phenomenon is happening world wide.

How do we propose secular consecration to the youth of today? Does our word reach them? I stress often in my talks in order to bring forward consecrated life – and especially secular consecration – the connection

with prophetic dynamism. You know as well as I that the prophet is not generally popular. Prophets of the First Testament and the prophet, *par excellence*, Jesus, were set to the side since their word was disturbing.

Our secular consecration must be prophetic. It must orient our outlook and that of the men and women of our era with whom we daily live in the midst of existing realities.

It is necessary to propose a pastoral approach to vocations that seeks the youth where they are at in order to bring them toward a greater sense of being.

*"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"*

(Isaiah 43, 19)

For this, it is necessary first to believe firmly that our life of secular consecration has a meaning which embraces all of the dimensions of life. If am happy to be a Volunats Dei, if I am happy to live with the members of my team, if I live the present moment

and if I am positive, there might also be young people who would like to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

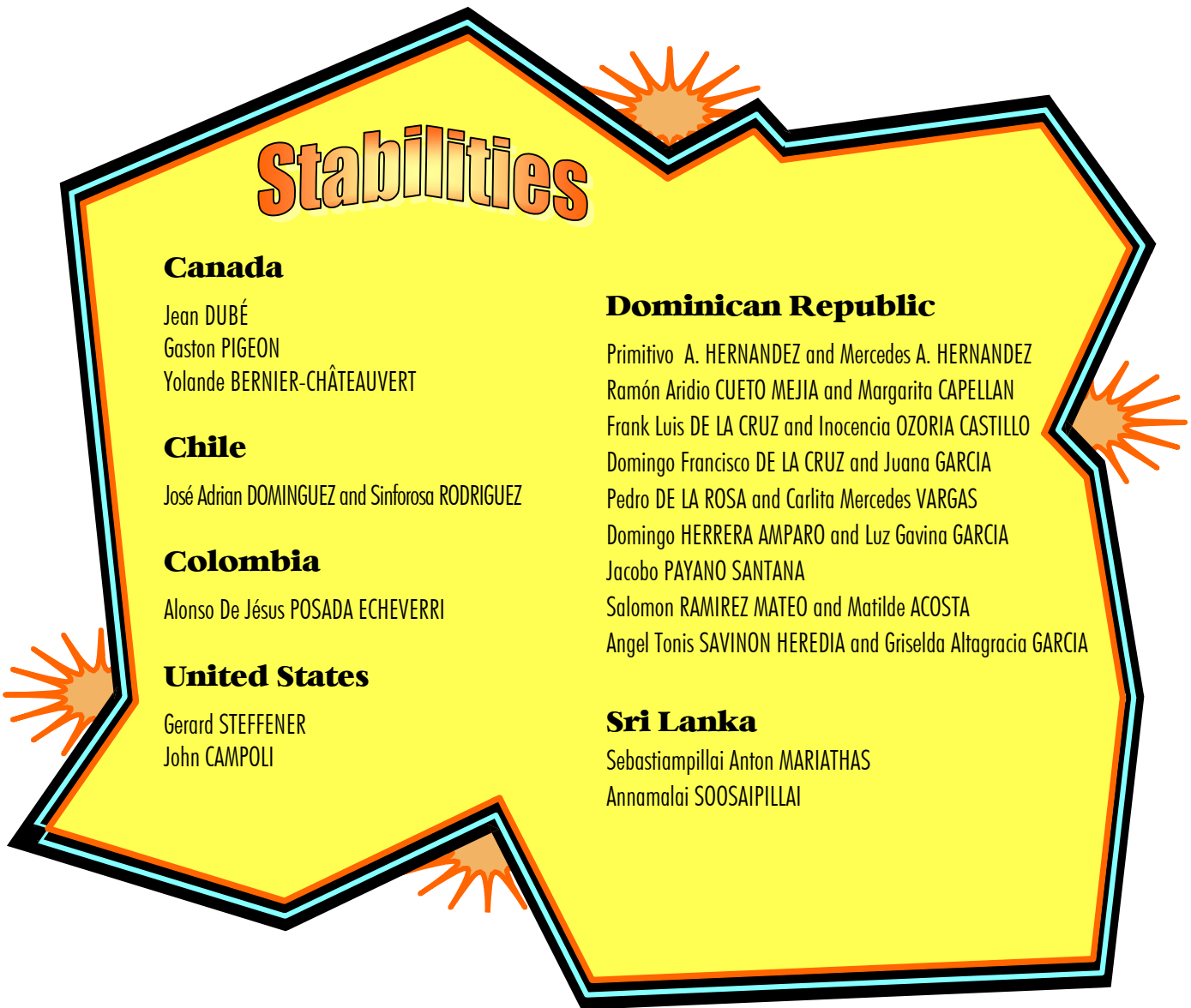
Today's world invites young people to excessive consumerism, to absolute freedom and into relationships with no tomorrow. Within this context, if we present chastity as a negation of sexuality, poverty as the negation of extreme poverty and obedience as the denial of self, it is certain that our discourse will lose itself like the echo which is lost among the mountains without changing the scenery. But, if we present chastity as the way of living human and sexual relations, poverty as a way of living within space and objects, and obedience as the way of living the times and human relationships, then we acknowledge that creation belongs to God and that we in sum are the ones called to make fruitful the talents received. There will be certain young people who will be touched by the positive words and more so by the witness provided.

I know a young man in Quebec. I have known Matthew for 12 years. I was his teacher. When he knew that I was a Voluntas Dei, he said to me: "I know Father

Parent, one day I want to be another Father Parent.” Today, he is 19 years of age and the last time that I met him, he was interested in becoming a Voluntas Dei. He is still discerning and journeying. He met a man who impressed him by his words and his witness. I don’t believe that he will be another Father Parent, but the witness and words of Father Parent oriented him toward Christ.

Throughout the Institute, it is necessary to direct our efforts toward a pastoral approach to vocations. I recognize that there is a risk involved but the time of formation is and always remains a time of discernment. Each district or region must make a quality plunge into promoting vocations. Each should pursue a solid Christian and spiritual formation

that will open up those who are formed to announce courageously the Word of the Lord. Formation should also be imbued with the missionary spirit since it is an essential part of the Institute. This will only bear fruit if each Voluntas Dei is a bearer of happiness and a prophet in his/her own setting. ✎



# Stabilities

## Canada

Jean DUBÉ  
Gaston PIGEON  
Yolande BERNIER-CHÂTEAUVERT

## Chile

José Adrian DOMINGUEZ and Sinfrosa RODRIGUEZ

## Colombia

Alonso De Jesús POSADA ECHEVERRI

## United States

Gerard STEFFENER  
John CAMPOLI

## Dominican Republic

Primitivo A. HERNANDEZ and Mercedes A. HERNANDEZ  
Ramón Aridio CUETO MEJIA and Margarita CAPELLAN  
Frank Luis DE LA CRUZ and Inocencia OZORIA CASTILLO  
Domingo Francisco DE LA CRUZ and Juana GARCIA  
Pedro DE LA ROSA and Carlita Mercedes VARGAS  
Domingo HERRERA AMPARO and Luz Gavina GARCIA  
Jacobo PAYANO SANTANA  
Salomon RAMIREZ MATEO and Matilde ACOSTA  
Angel Tonis SAVINON HEREDIA and Griselda Altgracia GARCIA

## Sri Lanka

Sebastiampillai Anton MARIATHAS  
Annamalai SOOSAIPIILLAI



# FIVE ESSENTIAL VALUES

by Father Louis-Marie Parent, o.m.i.



The members of the Institute have at their disposal the **instruments** to assess whether God is happy with their rendering, and these are the five essential values.

- 1- First, the willing and joyful acceptance of **our spirituality of the 5-5-5** which comprises the essential richness of the Institute.
- 2- **Love of the team** in order to live together this spirituality. The *Voluntas Dei* is no better than the love that he/she has for the team. A spirituality is not lived individually but in a group. If the team is sound, the vocation is healthy. A member brings to his/her team that which he/she wants to find there – wisdom, ardor, enthusiasm, affection, kindness and true fellowship.
- 3- Jesus defines Himself within the Gospels like this: “I am – this is the eternal present. The obstacles to perfection are past regrets and anxieties or doubts concerning the future. The present, freed from regrets and anxieties, is truly the heaven to be established on earth daily. Let’s not forget that **The Present Moment** is a gift from God. It is a *present, a gift* from God. The peacemaker is the one who lives intensely the *present moment*.”
- 4- The fourth essential value involves seeking constantly the **positive within yourself and in others**. We are seekers of God before being peacemakers. We find God regularly and especially in the qualities, talents and charisms of others. Others are the ways traced on the geographic map of God’s will to find there the true route to heaven.
- 5- To find in others the Goodness of God – when I state that I believe that the faults of others are only differences, I am then at the heart of my spirituality. Differences force me to adapt since faults by their very nature sow division, create separation, engender dissidence and activate destructive criticism and useless complaint. We are seekers of God by discovering in others that God has sown abundantly –**the positive**.
- 5- The fifth essential value – welcoming others by avoiding the negative and imitating Jesus in his love and mercy. Let’s look at Jesus with Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan, the woman caught in adultery, with Zacchaeus, the young rich man, Nicodemus, and the apostles after the resurrection. Mary, our mother, model, guide, counselor, and teacher is the first of Christians and the best success in the plan of God. She makes us participate in her perfection by forming us in her style and way – availability, total gift of the self, a woman supremely happy, strong *par excellence*, one who the Gospel summarizes by the words “*Ecce*” here I am, “*Fiat*” be it done according to your will, “*Magnificat*” bursting forth with gratitude, and then, “*Stabat Mater Dolorosa*,” a courageous woman at the foot of the cross.

The essential values are the instruments of the grace and the action of the Holy Spirit in each conscientious member of our Institute. We are called within God's plan to become saints. It is necessary to believe this for ourselves and others. We become what we want to be. A saint is a builder of peace – the head in the heavens through the presence of God – the Gospel in the hand

to serve and the feet firmly planted on the ground in the midst of the world while remaining human like Mary, and Joseph at Nazareth. – “Do it and you will live.” says Jesus to us. [✚](#)

Cap-de-la-Madeleine, 18 April 2001



**Central Council :**

François Hamel, Director General  
Réal Maltais, Assistant Director General  
Léo grégoire, Secretary General  
Michael Craig  
Jean-Paul Deschesnes  
Jacques Harvey  
Guillermo Pérez  
Yves Sévère  
Carmen Trudel-Deschesnes

**Follow-up Committee of the G.A. 1998 :**

Yves Sévère and Evens Francis

**Committee of Initial Formation :**

Cécile Davidson-Corneau, Jacques Harvey and Michel Villeneuve

**Committee of preparation of the General Assembly 2004 :**

Cécile Davidson – Roger Corneau – Luc Richer  
Danielle Cousineau – Laurier Albert

**Identity Committee of the Districts and Regions :**

Guy Veer – Fernand Rajotte – Gaston Pigeon

**Material Affairs and Finances :**

René Désilets

**Study Committee on The Office of Vocation and Missions :**

Michael Craig – Léo Grégoire – George F. Hazler  
Andrew Sioletti

**Archives :**

Cécile Davidson-Corneau – Louise Tremblay

**Committee of the Journal, The Present Moment :**

Pierre Hubert – Léo Grégoire – Jacques Harvey  
Guillermo Pérez – Andrew P. Mayer

by Jacques Harvey



### Central Council

In January the Director General visited the members in Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia with a stop over in Lima Peru to meet the Oblates and persons interested in the Institute. In March, he was in Rome for a meeting of the Executive Council of the World Conference of Secular Institutes. In April, he was in Haiti for the proclamation of the new and officially erected district. He made a stop over in Guadeloupe to greet the colleagues of the Haiti district serving in the diocese of Pointe-A-Pitre and to meet the Bishop. In May, he participated in Montreal at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Continental Congress for Vocations to Ordained Ministries and Consecrated Life in North America. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, he participated, at Cap-de-la-Madeleine, in a meeting with the Oblates and the Volunteers of God, to pay tribute to Father Parent for his 65 years of ministerial priesthood. In August, he participated in the Canadian District Congress held in Amos (Abitibi). In October, he visited the members of the Institute in Western Canada.

Roger and Cecile Corneau submitted their resignations as general councillors for health reasons. They continue, however, to serve the central administration in areas which require less traveling. Roger and Cecile have enriched the Council by their opinions, understanding and experience of life.

*Thank you Roger and Cecile!*

Jean-Paul and Carmen Deschesnes from the Abitibi Region of Canada have joined the Central Council. They will complete the mandate of Cecile and Roger. Undoubtedly

their experience of the Institute and of life will make a precious contribution to the Central Council.

*Welcome Jean-Paul and Carmen!*

In June 2002, the Central Administration was happy to welcome Father Rene Desilets who will assume the title of Director of Administrative Services. Father Desilets returned to Canada after spending twenty years in the Dominican Republic.

*Welcome Rene!*

The Central Council marked in a special way on September 7<sup>th</sup> in Quebec the contribution of the Oblates to the beginnings of the Voluntas Dei Institute. Since our founding in 1958, and for a dozen years following, the Oblates adopted a stance of service toward the "young recruits" who constituted then an emerging institute. Their work involved teaching, housekeeping and sewing. About twenty Oblates, participants in this era, took part in these reunions which were most warm and welcoming.



## Bolivia

Two celibate laymen are interested in the Institute of whom one could be eventually available for the priesthood. This is to be followed up.

## Canada

For two years, the Canadian District has focused on rejuvenation. The average age of the Voluntas in this district is 56. It is becoming imperative to place priority on recruiting "young people." A poll has been taken to establish specific actions for recruiting young people and the means by which this can occur.

In July, the Pope came to Canada for World Youth Day. In Toronto, where the youth met the Holy Father, the Institute had a kiosk where thousands of young people passed by. Further, our kiosk was among the merchants, **in the midst of the world**. There was a constant interchange among the members of the Institute and the young people. Publications about our objectives, available in French, English and Spanish were generously distributed. The Voluntas Dei Team of Toronto was the most active in ensuring the presence of the Institute. It was assisted by the Volunteers of God and our sisters the Oblates.

The annual Congress, held in the month of August, had an excellent attendance. The theme, "Setting Out Into Deep Waters", inspired by Luke 5: 1-5, was made use of by a layperson involved in pastoral ministry, the mother of 3 adolescents. The four parts of her presentation were enriched by a total new understanding of the biblical passage employed. In this regard, she utilized the text, Luke 8: 22-25. Our colleague, Bishop Louis-Marie Ling, and even the Bishop of the area, Bishop Gerard Mainville, participated in the Congress.

The District is in the process of preparing for its District Assembly in May 2003. Each member of the District has had the opportunity to collaborate in the preparation of the documents that will be given to the delegates of this assembly. These collaborations focus on three areas: the formation of secular consecration; the recruitment of young members (actions and means); and a look at the accomplishments and non-accomplishments of the resolutions of the preceding Assembly in 1999. The theme of the 2003 Assembly will be, *"To Sow as We Love"*.

## Chili

There are 9 members comprising 4 couples which meet regularly in the region of Valparaiso; the other person is a celibate layman. Three other couples meet in the region of Linares with Hernan Gonzales, a priest and member of the Council. In the region of Chile, three couples meet also with a widow of a couple of the Voluntas Dei. Another priest is the pastor of a parish in the town of Serena and is assisted by the sole Voluntas Dei seminarian in Chile. The Bishop of this area is open to welcoming priests and seminarians of the Institute.

## Colombia/Ecuador

Colombia is a country in which the Institute has been present for a number of years. The life of the team there is very structured. The director of this district in formation lives there, (Jaime Alberto Heano Arroyave), who with Guillermo Perez, a priest and two celibate laymen and 5 couples meet as a Voluntas Dei team.

Michel Charbonneau of Ecuador, accompanies well our two seminarians in that part of the world. Maurice Roy, deceased in 1998, rests in peace in a cemetery in this country.



## United States

The year 2002 saw the United States marking its fourth year as a Region. In January, 9 members of the Jersey Lakes Team met with Fr. Louis-Marie Parent at Trois-Rivieres. Among the travelers was Fr. Anthony Ciorra who reported that the trip to Canada was truly memorable, gave him a new energy and enthusiasm for the team and for the Institute in the United States. *"It was a grace-filled time, a time that I will never forget."*

At the spring meeting, Fr. Jean-Paul Chiasson was invited to share the work of the Office of Vocations and Missions. At the annual summer congress, where some 50 people attended, the keynote speaker was Fr. Rene Desilets, a former Director General, and also a missionary in the Dominican Republic for over 20 years. *"His talk was very inspirational and his presence was an incredible witness of dedication and commitment to Voluntas Dei,"* reports Fr. George Hazler.

Membership in the Institute is increasing.

Summing up the year, Fr. Hazler, the Director of the U.S. Region, says: *"It has been a year of great blessings for the United States Region and we continue to trust in God's presence as we continue our journey as peacemakers in a world so desperately in need of God's peace."*

## Haiti

The District of Haiti which is now officially constituted comprises the entire country. It includes, as a mission country, Guadeloupe. Eddy Julien, as Director, sent there two young priests; they are connected to the local bishop. This District has 91 members. The dynamism of the District is revealed by virtue of the fact that there are also 23 persons who are journeying with the intention of joining the Institute. The District has taken the initiative to translate the *Constitutions* into Creole. The District intends to do likewise with the guides of formation. In the spring of 2003, they will live a District Assembly.

## Peru

It is also possible to found the Institute there; two Volunteer of God couples are interested already in joining us. They are being accompanied by an Oblate : Yolande Perron.

## Dominican Republic

The District will live also a District Assembly, July 28-31, 2003.

## Other

The Institute at present has 3 members in Rome. These members are seeking to establish the Institute there and to become more acquainted with our spirituality.

In Cuba, Juan Carlos Borrero Simon made his first profession of vows. 

1958 - 2003

"We are grouped together in the Institute in order to increase as much as possible our interior life so that it will permeate our apostolate"

*Louis-Marie Parent, o.m.i.*

This year, the Institute celebrates its 45<sup>th</sup> year of founding!  
Thank you Father Parent !



# THE VOLUNTAS DEI IN HAÏTI

## *Genesis of the Institute in Haïti*

**A** In the early 1960's, the Catholic Church of Haiti faced a crisis that threatened to shatter its foundations. The Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, the Bishop of Gonaives and a number of influential missionaries were expelled from the country by the Government of the Republic. Then, it was the turn for the Primary Haitian Bishop, Bishop Remy Augustin, a great man of God who would never be himself again. Unfortunately, this wasn't the end of it.

Indeed, toward the end of February, 1964, the major seminary, Notre-Dame of Haiti was closed by the authorities of the country. All of the Jesuit priests who worked there in Haiti were required to leave the country. All of the seminarians were placed in a supervised residence in their parish of origin. After a while, a number of them began to defect. The future of the Haitian Catholic clergy was humanly jeopardized. There wasn't any faint light of hope on the horizon. But the plans of God are unfathomable. "All works out well for those who love the Lord," says the Apostle Paul.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, Father Louis-Marie Parent, the founder of the Voluntas Dei Institute, visited Haiti during these difficult times. He was warmly welcomed by those in charge of the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince, in particular, Msgr. Pierre Alexandre, Vicar General, Father Emmanuel Constant, the Chancellor who is now the Bishop of Gonaives and Fr. Rodrigue Anguste, Vice Chancellor, now deceased and lovingly remembered.

Immediately, together, they embarked on searching for a solution to the problem of the seminarians dispersed throughout the country. They recognized well that a Church cannot function without priests. Let us say in passing that Father Parent is a providential, charismatic, special and dynamic man. His charity is legendary. He is the sign and presence of God

in the midst of people. Similar to St. Francis Xavier, he is a first class missionary. All the dimensions of humanity interest him. **He is one of a kind**, as the Americans say. Without hesitation, he proposed to open the doors of the Institute to the Haitian seminarians in difficulty. But, it was necessary to negotiate with the authorities of the country to allow the seminarians to depart. The Spirit of God moved him to go and meet certain influential members of the government apparently hostile to Catholic clerics.

At last, the many steps taken were successful. Many of the seminarians were authorized to leave the country to continue their philosophical and theological studies with the Voluntas Dei Institute and other places.

During this time, the very dynamic Father Claude Lacaille, one of the first members of the Institute, was sent to Haiti to lay the foundation of this religious family. He was appointed Vicar of the parish of Saint Bernadette, Martissant, the cradle of the Institute in Haiti. He was a devoted, tireless and zealous missionary. He picked up Creole, the national language of Haiti, very quickly and traveled a bit everywhere throughout the country to make the Institute known. He and Father Rodrigue Auguste, a great friend of the Institute, recruited many young people who manifested the desire to participate in this religious organization.

Then, arrived the event so much talked about: On Saturday, June 11, 1966, the feast of St. Barnabas, the first four Haitian priests of the Institute were ordained in the Basilica of Notre-Dame-du-Cap in Cape-de-la-Madeleine in the province of Quebec by Bishop Roméo Gagnon, Bishop of Edmunston, New Brunswick. These priests happened to be Fathers Yves Belizaire, Max Callixte, Andre Gibbs and Smith Jeannot, your humble servant. Two Quebecois, one of whom was Gaston Laroche, a very friendly person, were ordained as priests at the same time as we.


I must mention in passing that when I left Haiti, I had a scholarship with Laval University or with the Institute. Consequently, it was not a question for me to become a member of this religious association. But, my contacts with Father Parent and the warm welcome received from the members of the Institute made me change my mind.



One month after my ordination, I returned to Port-au-Prince, thus becoming the first Haitian Voluntas Dei priest to tread the soil of Haiti. Immediately, I began to collaborate with Claude Lacaille in view of setting up the Institute in Haiti. Then, Father Eddy Julien returned to the country. He was to be ordained at Jeremie in January 1967 by Bishop Claudius Angenor, Bishop of Les Cayes.

The first team comprised Claude Lacaille, Smith Jeannot, Eddy Julien and Leo Deshaies, a celibate layman, seriously dedicated to realizing in Haiti the reign of God, a reign of love, peace, justice and truth. This was a very beautiful experience.

There, that's the origin of the Institute in Haiti! It is not a secret to anyone who now plays a very precious role in this country otherwise called the "Pearl of the Antilles."

May God bless Haiti and the members of the Voluntas Dei family. 

*Mgr Smith Jeannot*

Vicar General of the Diocese of Jacmel, South East (Haiti)  
June 2002

We would like to express our total gratitude for being allowed to serve our Institute as Councillors on the Central Council for ten years.

It is true that we devoted to it many hours of travel, work, worry and fatigue, but the experience of our colleagues of the last two councils and the real life invigorating the different districts and regions of the Institute around the globe brought to us so much human and spiritual richness by which we were deeply touched and transformed. At each of our meetings, we perceived there the real spirit of the Institute and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have desired to follow together the tracks of our founder.

Thank you to the Institute for allowing associated members to follow the way of the 5-5-5 and for having welcomed us around the table of governance. We love you deeply.

*Cécile and Roger Corneau*



**ADDRESS OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL**  
at the time of the declaration  
of the district of Haïti ~ 7 avril 2002

*To the Members of the Voluntas Dei Institute in Haïti,  
Father Eddy Julien and his Council,  
Bishop Willy Romélus*

Today is a day of great joy. *Magnum Gaudium*. You are becoming the second officially erected district of the Voluntas Dei Institute. It is a joy, an honour, but also a responsibility, as much for the Institute as for the Church.

I take this occasion to pay tribute to Bishop Romelus. For a number of years, you have been the protector of the Institute in Haiti. In addition to that, you have been a spiritual father. The Institute has always maintained with you relations of collaboration and mutual assistance.

Very early in its history, there were Haitians in the Institute. You were a part of the history of the Institute. Since the beginning, you have welcomed the spirituality of the 5-5-5 as being a spirituality suitable to your reality. We know the speeches of Father Parent here. As he says it often these days: he welcomed the presence of the Spirit dwelling within him. Then, he accepted to be the servant of God by making himself His mailman, the mailman of the Good God. He delivered to you the spiritual mail, the letter of God which invited you to:

**Presence of God**  
**Absence of Destructive Criticism**  
**Absence of Useless Complaint**  
**To Be of Service**  
**Peacemaker**

Father Parent played the role which devolved to him. If the spirituality of the three "5's" is the soul of the Institute, we can say that Father Parent is its spirit, its heart. My contacts with him are a privilege, and I can assure you that, even today, at almost 92 years of age, he is up to date on everything that happens within the Institute. No ordination or important decision takes place without him knowing it and bringing it to prayer. I ask you also to pray for him.

I mentioned that you were at the beginning of the history of the Institute. Today, we have a new page of history, probably an important page, not only because you are achieving a new juridic status, but moreover, because this is the page of the present moment. Let's take a clear look at the District of Haiti. You are 91 members.

**30 priests**  
**2 celibate laymen**  
**15 seminarians**  
**22 couples**

Today, two of yours have been ordained as priests for the service of the Church and the Institute. Like others before you, they have agreed to give themselves completely. I am very delighted to see the vitality of the Institute at this level. One of my great joys as Director General is to call to Holy Orders men who wish to serve the Church following Christ the Priest. They want to act *in persona Christi*, by celebrating the sacraments, teaching the faith and guiding the Christian community.

The life of a priest is not always easy, but priests are the first witnesses to incite young men to follow them. Each priest has the duty to say as Christ did, "Come, follow me." It is the responsibility of the whole Christian community to call young men to a life of priesthood, but I would say that all priests have the duty to be a model that invites and animates.

Celibate laymen are not numerous in Haiti. It is advisable to examine this reality and ask if there are actions that should be set up in this regard. The secular consecration of the celibate layman allows for the transformation of the world.



For a few years, the District of Haiti has focused on the presence of married couples. One of the rich aspects of our secular consecration in the Voluntas Dei Institute is the sharing which exists among priests, celibate laymen and couples. Each enriches the experience of the other.

To look at clearly here means also to look at the shining forth of Haitians. You live in a country where the sun is around you everyday. You know better than I about the sun that shines forth. You are also suns since you shine forth. I wish to mention here in a special way your commitment in Guadeloupe and the Dominican Republic. For a number of years, Bishop Cabo de Pointe-a-Pitre has expressed the desire to welcome Voluntas Dei into his diocese. When I was elected Director General, I asked your Director, Father Eddy Julien to follow up on this. Today, two of your own work in Guadeloupe. This is the beginning of a new founding which I hope will be fruitful in vocations to secular consecration within the Voluntas Dei Institute.

To that, it is necessary to add your shining forth toward your neighbors in the Dominican Republic. A few of you took a vocational training period there. You were enriched by the experience, and I am convinced, you enriched also the Dominicans with your experience. The proof that you have enriched them is the fact that the Director of the District in formation, Altagracia, asks again for Haitians to aid his district.

I also know the availability of those who are ready to go to Cuba to help Father Nestor and others there. The fact that there are not yet Haitians in Cuba is not the result of a lack of availability but due to certain administrative red tape.

I wish to underline the availability of colleagues who agree to work elsewhere. I think of Ducasse Francois who agreed to serve the Haitian community in Florida. I think also of others who have agreed (or accepted in the past) to go and study in the United States in order to return with a different formation and serve here: Marc-Arthur Francois and Calonge Lemaine. I think also of Mathieu Beauvin who lives in Ecuador.

In order to radiate outwards, you shine forth. Your shining forth is so great that it attracts even people on the outside. I think of Guillaume Mabilu who left his birthplace, the Congo, to come to improve his formation here. Please note, that it is I who entrusted him to you since I know that here you have a solid formation in our spirituality. But do not keep him for yourselves since he must return home, and I hope establish the first cell of the Voluntas Dei in Africa.

All this shining forth was taken into account by the Central Council when your District Council requested that your district be officially erected. We also recognized your capacity for self financing. For a few years, Father Eddy and his Council kept a strict accounting which permitted your district to exit its slump in spite of the economic crisis rife here. I think here of the establishment by your Council of an Office of Vocations and Missions (OVM), a Haiti section, which will solicit help from Haitians living in the United States. This organization will allow you to seek what the Central Administration cannot provide you.

**To each one of you**, I say you are important to the Institute. Your personal witness of living the spirituality of the three "5's" is a pledge for the future. It will incite young people to follow in your footsteps as you have followed in the footsteps of Jesus. Your witness will also incite bishops to want Voluntas Dei in greater numbers in their dioceses in order to sanctify them through our secular consecration. Your team meetings are the principal avenue for continuing formation. "No one is an island," said Thomas Merton. No one is a Voluntas Dei alone. Be faithful to your team.

In closing, I wish to thank:

*Eddy Julien* who knows how to animate his district with enthusiasm and an extraordinary clear-sightedness. I recognize always within him the man that I knew at the end of the 70's and whose spiritual life and deep commitment to the Church I have always admired.

Thank you also *to the members of the District Council*, Philippe Desire, Madelon Eustache, Paul-Emile Larocque and Bernard Nemorin. Thank you for all of the work that you do to serve better your brothers and sisters and for all of the support given to your District Director.

I don't want to end without acknowledging the relations maintained with our big sisters, the **Oblates**. They are celebrating this year their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding. They share with us the same spirituality and it is good to recognize them throughout the world since they have supported us tremendously. I invite you to include them in your

feast celebrating the change in your juridic status, and to mark in some adequate way their anniversary. I implore for each one of you the blessing of God and the tenderness of our Mother in heaven. ☩

Francois Hamel, I. V. Dei  
Director General

## A PROJECT IN INDIA ...



*The chapel – Centre of formation  
Aluva, Ernakulam district, Kerala, India*

Following a significant growth in the number of major seminarians, Father Joseph Thannikkot, Director and his Council have decided to undertake as soon as possible the construction of the Centre of Formation at Aluva, Ernakulam district, Kerala.

They have already received in this regard the authorization of Bishop Daniel Acharuparambil, Archbishop of Verapoly.

Even if a number of requests for assistance have been carried out with a variety of organizations, there remains still that the Institute in India at the level of the Central Administration through its members still requires a generous contribution toward the realization of its project.

Once finished, the Centre of Formation will be able to welcome at least forty (40) major seminarians. In the first place, it will receive our students of Theology since the Centre of Formation at Bethel, Trivandrum, Kerala, will continue to receive students of Philosophy.

We ask for your prayers and your support to ensure the realization of this project in India, a door opened to all of Asia . . .

*René Désilets*

# Juridic status

Reverend Father Francois Hamel, Director General of the Secular Institute Voluntas Dei,

*Considering* the evolution, in the course of the last years, of the process directed toward finding a new juridic status for the district in formation of Haiti that is more suitable to the present reality;

*Considering* the growing number of members in Haiti related to a good promotion of vocations;

*Considering* the vitality of the sectors and teams in Haiti;

*Considering* the hope of development and in a particular way taking into account the responsibility taken by Haiti for a founding in Guadeloupe;

*Considering* a certain capacity for self financing, and in a special way, the putting into place of an organization of benefactors among Haitians living in diaspora;

*Considering* also the capacity for self management of the present Council and the moral guarantees for the future;

*After having consulted* the members of the Central Council of the Secular Institute Voluntas Dei at the meeting of July 31, 2001, concerning the request of the Council of the district in formation of Haiti to acquire a new juridic status,

*Decrees*

**THE CANONICAL ERECTION**  
Commencing April 7, 2002 of  
**THE DISTRICT OF HAITI**

With all rights and privileges provided by the *Constitutions* (articles 189-200) of the Secular Institute Voluntas Dei.

Given at Port-au-Prince  
April 7, 2002

*François Hamel*, I.V. Dei  
Director general

**ADDRESS OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR  
FATHER EDDY JULIEN  
AT THE DECLARATION OF THE ERECTED DISTRICT OF HAÏTI  
7 APRIL 2002  
(excerpt)**

In this Octave of Easter where the Light of the Resurrection still shines in all its splendor, the district in formation of the Voluntas Dei Institute in Haiti exults with joy and rejoicing. A myriad of reasons, some more important than others, explains this jubilation, this rapture.

**The first reason** is without contest since it involves the erection of the District in formation of Haiti to the status of a District officially erected. As you have just heard, the Director General of the Voluntas Dei Institute, Father Francois Hamel, has read the decree coming from the Central Council of Canada, a decree which accords the District in formation of Haiti with the title of officially erected District.

For those who would not know, the Voluntas Dei Institute comprises various geographic divisions: sectors, regions, districts in formation and officially erected districts. Haiti, which was at the stage of a district in formation, has just been elevated to the status of an officially erected district. According to the *Constitutions* of the Voluntas Dei Institute (art. 204), an officially erected district is a district which presents a viable structure, a suitable size, a certain number of teams and sectors sufficiently significant, a hope for growth and a certain capability for self financing and governance. The Central Administration in Canada considers that the District in formation of Haiti, even though it does not meet absolutely all of the criteria demanded by the *Constitutions* to pass to the status of an officially erected District, acknowledges a remarkable development which makes it worthy of this designation.

The District of Haiti delights absolutely in the participation of Bishop Romelus in this joyous celebration since he has been always, is, and remains the spiritual father of the Voluntas Dei Institute in Haiti. Bishop Romelus, your presence in the midst of us in this circumstance takes on a particular importance. You have always had confidence in and stimulated our search for the will of God. At this time you ought to be at the closing of the Charismatic Congress. You made the sacrifice to be with us today and to confer the priesthood on two of our members. The whole district is eternally grateful and takes advantage of this joyful occasion to reiterate the expression of our highest esteem for you. A thousand thank you's, Bishop.

**The second event** which explains the happiness felt by the District of Haiti today is the unquestionable ordination to priesthood of two of its members: Irilan and Evynx. In his great goodness, the Lord has made them priests for ever, priests to the service of their sisters and brothers, priests to carry the Good News wherever Christ has His rights.

**The third reason** which explains our overwhelming joy is the presence among us of our Director General, Father Francois Hamel, a visit very comfortable and stimulating for the whole District, but a visit which sadly comes to an end tomorrow morning.

On behalf of the District of Haiti, I extend to you, my dear Francois, a cordial and warm THANK YOU for all that you are for us : a sincere friend, a brother in solidarity with our difficulties, a brother who encourages us to set



out into deep waters in search for the will of God and in the very depths of our identity . . . Do not forget to pass onto the Central Council our firm attachment to the Institute.

Joining us in our celebration of great joy are our Voluntas colleagues from the Dominican Republic, specially, Father Ramon Antonio Araujo Tejada, Director of the District of Altagracia. A thousand thank you's for your eloquent witness of friendship and fellowship! From the depths of our hearts, we wish sincerely that the District of Altagracia itself become officially erected, and in the not too distant future.

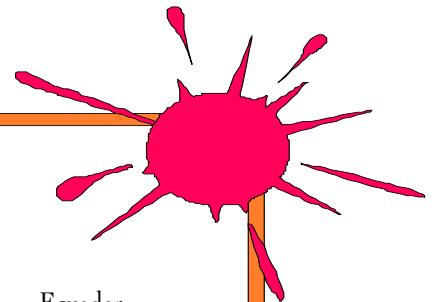
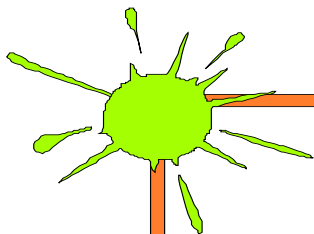
Now is the time to cede the place to the newly ordained for the customary acknowledgments and thank you's. I end by wishing A GOOD

CELEBRATION to all of the Voluntas Dei, to their parents, acquaintances and to those invited, and I extend to you this call that Pope John Paul himself addressed to the Bishops of Haiti during the *ad limina* visit to Rome September 14, 2001:

*I encourage you to invent new ways so the Church in Haiti might become a house and school of communion.*

Voluntas Dei of the newly erected District we have there a complete program of life. Let us live the communion throughout our teams. Let us build peace and fellowship and the Resurrected Jesus will always be with us on our pathways of life and will make of us witnesses of hope in the midst of a world totally in disarray. Thank You! ☪

Cathedral of Port-au-Prince



## Jubilees

### 25 years of priesthood

Beauvin MATHIEU

Ecuador

### 25 years of marriage

Sylvie and Alain BISSON

Canada

Mary and Santiagu AMALADASS

India

Alicia and Maximiliano GUZMAN ROA

Colombia

Reeta and David THEVATHIRAVIAM

Sri Lanka

Magdelene and James P.A. NELSON

India

Lise and Jacques LAVACK

Canada

Jacob and Joseph George EDWARD PIERIS

Sri Lanka

Jeya and Ratnam SELVARATNAM

Sri Lanka

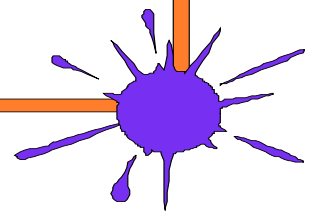
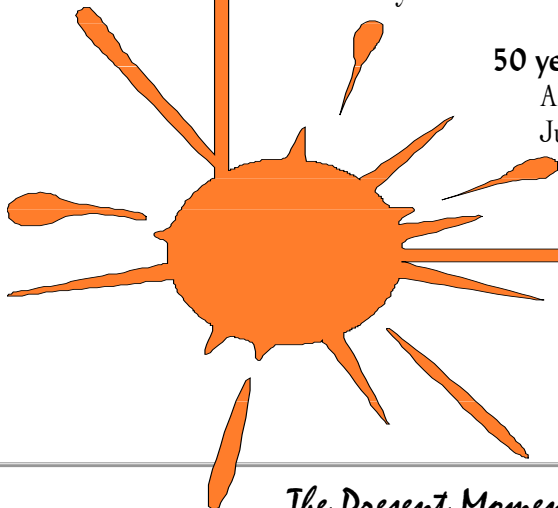
### 50 years of marriage

Alphonsine and Lorenzo Lamontagne

Canada

Juliette and Guy Veer

Canada





## Coat of arms (escutcheon) *Voluntas Dei*

A number of members of the Institute wear proudly the medallion proper to the Institute. It is a cross planted in the world on a blue background.

At the very beginning of the Institute, Laurent-Paul Gendron had proposed a coat of arms which would tell who we are, which would identify us. That is the reason why the members of the Institute at the beginning wore on their coat or on the waistband of their soutanes this coat of arms. This coat of arms was simple: a cross planted on a world globe: sign of the commitment of the members to carry Christ "wherever he

has His rights" according to the expression of Father Parent. To be where God sends us, "to be the instrument of Christ". To be a missionary carrying Christ, reflecting his image to all.

The cross was planted in a "M" for Mary. It is Mary who is our model: "Voluntas Dei per Mariam Immaculatam." Mary brought Jesus to the world. She responded "yes" in faith: "Do unto to me according to your word." In her visit to Elizabeth, she carried the presence of Jesus to the world. The *Magnificat* calls us to recognize the action of God in the world and to praise God.

Arriving at Notre Dame de la Salette at Trois-Rivieres, July 1, 1958, the first members of the Institute discovered in the small chapel constructed by Msgr. Moreau and entrusted to Father Parent for the founding of the Institute, the cornerstone of the chapel. What

a surprise it was for us to notice that the cornerstone was exactly like the coat of arms that was conceived by Laurent-Paul Gendron. Filled with wonder, Father Parent and the first members of the Institute saw it as a sign from God confirming the founding of the *Voluntas Dei* Institute.

Very soon, the coat of arms of the Institute was modified. The "M" which was a part of the cross and which referred to Mary disappeared in order to signify the priority of the cross. The reference to Mary is accentuated through the blue background of the present coat of arms.

The cornerstone found in 1958 found itself within a few years in the archives of the Oblates Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. On August 29, 2002, in the name of the Central Council, the Director General, Francois Hamel, made a request to the Executive Council of the Oblates that the cornerstone be returned to the *Voluntas Dei* Institute. It was with great joy that on September 20, 2002, the President-Director General of the Oblates, Ms. Simone Huneault, wrote: "The members of the Council are happy to know that this cornerstone is a part of the history of the *Voluntas Dei* Institute and they return it to you with great pleasure."



time of their celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding. May the Lord bless them! ☩

*Gerald Michaud*



# 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE OBLATES

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In addition to the recognition and gratitude that the Central Council expressed to the Oblates, there were celebrations in districts and regions of the Institute to mark this event.

## HAITI



Five Voluntas Dei priests celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving with the Oblates at Port-au-Prince. Afterwards, there was a celebration.

The inscription on the banner read :  
LET'S CELEBRATE OUR 50 YEARS

## CANADA

(Excerpt from the speech of Marc-Andre Lafreniere during the great celebration at the Mother House of the Oblates on July 6, 2002).

"The Voluntas Dei of the Canadian District remember "by heart" that without the presence of the Oblates, their Institute would not exist!

To remember the Oblates is for us at first to remember some of the beginnings of our own foundation, i.e., 'to think about the people who lived a life of total simplicity and poverty, devoted, often in the background, without stipulations but with Love and Joy ...' (Yvon Carpentier). One could already at that time describes them as women imbued with a joyful character and full of hope, living their vow of poverty in a style of life that united simplicity and trust in God with an attitude which liberated the heart! With Father Parent, the Oblates laid the first stones of our foundation!

## INDIA

In October, the Voluntas Dei and the Oblates of India celebrated together the Eucharist and shared together their respective sense of belonging. The priests, seminarians and married couples benefitted from this sharing which was very enlightening.

## U.S.A.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was marked by a special conference and Mass at Mount Saint Rita Health Center Chapel in Cumberland, Rhode Island. The principal celebrant and homilist of the Mass was Father George Hazler, Director of the U.S. Region of the Voluntas Dei Institute.

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

(Excerpt from a long memorandum sent by Andres Solano Sosa to the editor.)



“On Saturday, October 19, 2002, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Oblates. His Eminence, Bishop Nicolas de Jesus Lopes Rodriguez, Metropolitan Archbishop of Santo Domingo, agreed to preside at the Eucharist. There was truly an ambiance of celebration, joy and fraternal love. When a member of a family is having a celebration, the whole family is also celebrating.

Among the 70 invited guests who were present at this ceremony, there were also friends and religious. There was in addition the presence of a dear great person who is important to mention: Simone Huneault, President and Director General of the Secular Institute, O.M.M.I. A few minutes before the celebration, Ms. Huneault gave a brief

introduction on the history of the two institutes and read to us short and significant sentences of Father Parent to the Oblates as a symbolic sign of his deepest solidarity in this circumstance.

The celebrant, Bishop Nicolas de Jesus, focused his reflection on two areas. In the first part of his homily, he helped the Oblates to figure out the deep meaning of these texts. In the second half, he talked about the history of the acceptance and importance of Secular Institutes in the midst of the Church while referring always to our two institutes. In the second reading taken from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, the Cardinal made us note the importance that the call to holiness has for us and how important it is to desire to work flat out for its attainment. For that, together with the Oblates, he gave thanks to God for all of the gifts received. Throughout his homily he said that it was an opportunity for us to see the future of the Institute during these 50 years and exhorted us to strengthen ourselves and never falter in the face of the challenges and lack of understanding of this world.


At the end of the celebration there was a moment for thank you's, and in a special way, thank you's to the Cardinal for his wonderful availability to celebrate the Mass. A few minutes later, everyone was invited to go to the diningroom of the diocesan seminarians for a grand reception. We took advantage of this situation to take some souvenir photographs and all turned out fine.



## Peru

In the mid part of January, we had the nice surprise of welcoming two priests of the Voluntas Dei Institute: Father Francois Hamel, Director General and Father Guillermo Perez, member of the Central Council. They were just passing through. It was a short visit of only 40 hours.

In a short period of time, things livened up, I can assure you. The central event of this meeting was truly the Eucharistic celebration in our house for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of our Institute. We were about 40 persons: Voluntas Dei, Oblates, Volunteers of God and young people discerning a vocation. This was a wonderful meeting of the family with the Immaculate Virgin.

On this occasion, we reflected for a long time on the possibility of forming in Peru a group of Voluntas Dei. The Voluntas Dei Institute was founded by Father Parent in 1958. This Institute is in many ways the male counterpart of the Oblate Institute. I entrust to your prayers this project which is at the centre of our hearts and to which we are in no little way committed. For the moment, we will try to seize every opportunity to make known this Institute and we will be attentive to discovering potential candidates. This is a very fragile mission, but I am confident. We want "to be in the forefront and welcome what the Lord would wish to have flourish from what we have sown" with full hands. 

## PROJECT FOR KANDY, SRI LANKA

Despite all kinds of difficulties and the civil war present for more than twenty (20) years in Sri Lanka, the Institute has maintained well its presence there during these difficult times. Unfortunately, our houses of Parent Iliam and Thiruvady, Columbuturai situated close to Jaffna have been damaged, destroyed for the most part, and occupied by the army. Despite these difficulties, the members of the Region of Sri Lanka have persevered and maintained the living flame that animates them.

Taking into account that over the last few months the political situation has improved greatly, Father Shanthikumar and his Council, after obtaining the authorization of Bishop Joseph Vianney Fernando, the Bishop of Kandy, have decided to effect an enlargement and re-development of the house of formation of Kandy. Our seminarians of philosophy and of theology have surrendered to following the courses of the National Seminary situated not too far away.

In the Centre of Formation, under the direction of Father Anthony Philip, Rector, we have present five (5) major seminarians of whom three (3) come from Kerala, India. Since in Sri Lanka, we have a number of minor seminarians, we think that we will receive 2 or 3 candidates each year. For this reason, the Centre of Formation of Kandy must be in time prepared to receive, once studies have been completed, about 15 major seminarians who must in a number of years find themselves reunited to make their studies there and prepare themselves for pastoral work which the Church and the Institute await.

We request the help of your prayers and your support to make this project realizable.

*René Désilets*



# Story of my vocation

by Eddy Julien

**B**iblically, all vocations are defined as a personal call from God to someone, and demands a personal response, the call and the response come together for a specific mission. The Bible is full of these examples where God seeks whom He wants and when He wants. So, where did God dig up someone as vulnerable as me to consecrate to the service of His children?<sup>1</sup> A response will appear perhaps within the reading of these few lines written on the run, but I guarantee nothing. I like the majority of my fellow beings, my origins are very modest.

I was born in the country-side of humble parents, average peasants, farmers by profession.

**The family: the first school of faith -** My parents were fervent Christians. My father was even the “Director of the Chapel” (President of the Assembly), the chapel of which the land had been given as a gift to the Church by my maternal grandmother. The first rudiments of faith had been inculcated in me by my parents, catechists full of convictions. I still

have the memory of unending prayers in the evening as a family which were truly Catholic, i.e., universal since all of the problems and needs of humanity happened there even if sleep came over my eyelids during the second decade of the rosary.

**Elementary school -** I had the good luck of going to elementary school in Jeremie with the Christian Brothers. As my parents lived in the country-side, I lodged with an aunt, a “Controlling Woman” with a firm grip of iron who inculcated in me many principles that assist me even today.

**The school of St. Exupery -** After my Certificate of Elementary Studies, I enrolled into the only mixed high school of the village where I remained two years. During this sojourn, the Lord placed in my path an excellent friend who was much older than I, but knew how to relate to me at my level. He was of a sort passionate with Christ, full of ideals, but could not become a priest. It was he, although an unbeliever, who introduced me to the philosophy of St. Exupery, the love of the desert as Charles de Foucauld,

this philosophy eminently concerned with the edification of the human person. The works of St. Exupery profoundly affected me, especially, the *Citadelle* where is exalted the grandeur of the human person: “*It is advisable continuously to awaken in the human person that which is great and to convert it into its own grandeur.*”<sup>1</sup>

It is from my encounter with St. Exupery that I began to feel at the core of my being a call to give myself to someone greater than I in order to serve my sisters and brothers. Today, I thank the Lord for having used this friend to call me to his service.

**The minor seminary -** In those days being open to my Pastor (a Breton missionary), I allowed myself to be sent to Mazenod, to the minor seminary of the Oblates of the diocese. The week of my arrival, hurricane Hazel (1954) ravaged the whole southern part of the country. At the time, I said to the Lord, “*If this is the way that you welcome people called to your service, you will not have many vocations.*”

To go from secondary school, generally reputed in Haiti for being a place of freedom<sup>2</sup>, to the Minor Seminary where reigned a severe discipline, was not an easy thing for me to do. I was given a spiritual director charged not only with getting rid of highschool out of me but also and especially with helping me to model my soul and personality on that of Jesus. If hurricane Hazel taught us to share, my spiritual director taught me the virtue of poverty. The emptiness of his room was striking. He prepared his courses on used envelopes which he never threw out. It was he who taught me to be happy with what I have and fight against every form of waste.

I was far from thinking that the Oblates would be one day my "uncles." Accordingly, my uncles imbued in me the foundations of the spirituality of the Voluntas Dei Institute which nourishes me today.

**The major seminary** - In 1959, I went to the inter-diocesan Major Seminary of Port-au-Prince, passing thus from the guidance of the Oblates to the rule of the Jesuits. Bishop of Mazonod and Ignatius of Loyola, in a certain way, were responsables for my meeting with Father Louis-Marie Parent.

**Closing of the Major Seminary** - In 1964, one of the cruelest dictators of Latin America, Francois Duvalier, commonly called Papa Doc, decided to close the Major Seminary, Notre

Dame, perceived by him to be a subversive place engaged in stirring up revolution. Subversive and Jesuit, should they be synonymous?

The plotters against the security of the state, Canadian Jesuits and diocesan seminarians, were the ones expelled to their country, and the others were sent back to their respective dioceses. In fact, all of the seminarians in cassocks had to go to the commissioner of police and attest to the fact that each was present in his village. The idea of Papa Doc was to prevent the inevitable meetings among those stirring up troubles.

**Pastoral training before the letter** - Holy Week, (the week of deliverance) arrived. A priest, a friend of the family, a country pastor, obtained no without difficulty from the commandant in charge of Jeremie, the authorization to take me into his parish for Holy Week, a week when there is, as he explained, so much to do in parishes. It started off as a week, but I remained a whole year in this parish where I did my pastoral training before the letter. There I learned an enormous number of things, among which was how to live with a pastor (the one there being a wonderful priest). This is not always easy. The farmers literally evangelized me. They taught me patience, simplicity and perseverance. In addition, there, I discovered the system of exploitation in regard to peasant people and took up their cause.

**Teacher at the college of St. Louis in Jeremie** - In the last three months of 1964, Bishop Collignon, O.M.I., Bishop at that time, asked me to go and replace a Breton priest, a member of the teachers of the diocesan College of Jeremie, a missionary who had to take 6 months of vacation in France. It is in this way that I became a teacher of Greek, Latin and Catechism at the St. Louis College of Jeremie. And it wasn't easy there. It's not easy to teach young people subjects that according to them are not useful in their daily lives. This experience, even though short, allowed me to understand certain of my teacher friends for whom the students make them see all sorts of colors.

**Meeting with the Voluntas Dei Institute** - It was during this time that I became acquainted with the Voluntas Dei Institute thanks to an old friend from the Major Seminary who had met Father Louis-Marie Parent during one of his many visits to Haiti where he came to conduct a retreat for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. After reading the literature that he had sent me, I found that the Institute was the last hope offered by the Lord to fulfill my vocation. I returned furtively to Port-au-Prince (it must not be forgotten that I was under house surveillance). There, I met several of my colleagues of the Major Seminary who, after a session of initiation into the spirituality of the Institute, decided to become members.

It was in this way that a host of seminarians took the route to Red Rapids (the place where the Major Seminary of the Voluntas Dei Institute was located) in view of accomplishing their theological studies. And out of this impressionable group, several turned to other spiritual families, and a small group, including myself, remained with the Voluntas Dei. Why did I remain? Because I was seduced by the Voluntas Dei spirituality, a spirituality of **commitment**, an **incarnated** spirituality without escapism. Even today, Father Parent does not fail to remind us of the total dynamism of our spirituality: *"Remember what I told you a number of times. The Voluntas Dei must keep his/her head in heaven: the presence of God; the Gospel in the hand: a being of service, and the feet firmly planted on the ground to remain incarnated, close to the people, in their midst as leaven in the dough."*<sup>3</sup>

I remained because I was literally enthralled by the life of the team. It constituted for me an excellent way of living our Christian life or consecration: a life of prayer, fraternal communion, joy, simplicity, sharing, respect . . . (cf. Acts 2: 44-57; 4:32-35). Isn't this the ideal of each community that calls itself Christian?

**Time of reflection in advance of priesthood** - At the conclusion of my theological studies, I did not write as my colleagues did to request

ordination to ministerial priesthood. That was a great displeasure to the Seminary. I did not wish to be ordained right after exams. I therefore requested a year of reflection. I returned to Haiti to assist Father Claude Lacaille (one of my best friends on earth) who was in poor health, and representing in that time the Institute in Haiti. After a long year of reflection and prayer, the major orders were conferred and I received the priesthood from Bishop Claudius Angenor at Jeremie, January 8, 1967.

#### **Ministry in the diocese of Jeremie -**

After having given a year of service in Bolosse, I was sent to found the parish of Our Mother of Mercy where I remained for ten years. There, I started a new life with new responsibilities. There I was the pastor without ever having been an associate, the first pastor and founder of a parish where everything had to be accomplished; church, rectory, health centre, school, centre of domestic economy, school canteen, in addition to the formation of the faithful. To tackle all alone this tremendous task would have been crazy. I decided to put into place a team (apostolic) of collaborators: 2 lay celibate Voluntas Dei, 1 Canadian Oblate, one nurse and 3 students of teachers' college.

To live under the same roof with people of different sexes, formation, education, temperament and different characters demanded the

practice of daily asceticism. In spite of everything, we lived as brothers and sisters and our manner of living constituted an eloquent witness for all of the parishioners. This experience deeply affected my priestly life. The team (apostolic) and the parishioners helped me greatly to be the priest that I am today, far from perfect, without doubt, but in love with Jesus and his Mother, passionate about God and others, especially the poor, and concerned with the advancement of the Church. It was an experience that I would never forget. The connections forged among the team members, the parishioners, remained hardy. Our reunion with each other in New York two years ago was a solid proof of our connections with one another.

At the beginning of 1978, Bishop Romelus took me from the parish that I was in (indeed, I was greatly attached to the people) and asked me to start up (with a religious of the Sisters of Wisdom) the Centre of Catechesis of the diocese oriented toward biblical, catechetical and pastoral formation of directors of chapels and other pastoral agents of the diocese. Work truly passionate. One could take the pulse of the diocese through the delegates from the different parishes. After the Centre of Catechesis, I left for Canada where I was to take a sabbatical year, but eventually seven years passed before returning to Haiti.



**Seven years in "refrigeration"** - In Canada, I lived in a variety of Voluntas Dei teams, mainly in Quebec, Ottawa and in the Outaouais sector. There I discovered the Institute through the members with whom I interacted. I learned to appreciate team life, the presence of couples and celibate laymen in the Institute, the flavor and the profundity of our beautiful spirituality. I discovered and left behind in Canada friends (as many Haitians as Canadians), people who assisted me greatly, supported me tremendously, encouraged, backed and shouldered me, true brothers and sisters. I do not wish to mention names for the list would be too long.


**Return to Haiti** - Upon returning to Haiti in 1985, Bishop Romelus entrusted me with the guidance of the *Caritas* of Jeremie. This was a very difficult experience at times, but overall, extremely enriching. Indeed, the management of a personnel, very heterogenous, was rarely pleasurable. Through this period of time, enormous conflicts arose among the very antagonistic temperaments. It took a great deal of prayer and tact to resolve these conflicts, which left unattended, could aggravate the life

of the group. The practice of team life in the Institut, as well as my experience with the Irois, assisted me in my work with *Caritas* of Jeremie.. The Lord prepares us in a variety of ways to accomplish the works that He confides to us. On October 4, 2001, I left definitively the *Caritas* of Jeremie to occupy myself solely with the animation of the District of Haiti.

It was a heartrending experience for me. At *Caritas* of Jeremie, I was constantly in contact with small farmers, a social stratus with whom I had a great deal of sympathy. The numerous sessions or the many gatherings of farmers were the true school of formation where I learned a great many things. In a word, I was pleased to be in the midst of the farmers. It was for me a great sacrifice to leave this situation to go to Port-au-Prince, the seat of noise and insecurity. I dare hope that this sacrifice will benefit the district. But there still, the "acceptance of total devotion requested by legitimate authority" will bear fruit (cf. *Const.* no. 7).

**Conclusion** - Well then, the aforementioned briefly summarizes

what one could call the story of my vocation. It is a path punctuated with joys and all sorts of consolations, marked here and there by the cross in a variety of dimensions, but sunny by the presence of Him who called me one day to be *WITH HIM* (cf. Mark 3:4), and to announce the Good News of salvation. Our Voluntas personality fortifies us each day through our daily and intimate contact with Jesus (*Const.* 10). That which I truly love within the Institute and which attracts me to it are the simplicity of the spirituality suitable for the common person, the fraternity which develops within team life, the living presence and comfort of couples, the commitment of celibate laymen, etc.

I wish from the depths of my heart that the spirituality of the Institute will be each day more deeply appropriated and more popularized by each member in his/her own milieu. That is the price that we pay in "creating peace and fellowship in Jesus Christ wherever Christ has His rights." 

*Eddy Julien*

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<sup>1</sup> St-Exupéry, *Œuvres complètes*, Citadelle, Gallimard, 1953, p. 552.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, today we are three consecrated persons who came from the Secondary School, Nord-Alexis of Jeremie : a religious from St. Hyacinthe, a brother of the Sacred Heart and myself.

<sup>3</sup> Louis-Marie Parent, 25-03-96, excerpt from "Entre-Nous", vol. 14, no. 2, 1996.



## A project of evangelization

As an adolescent, Robert Lebel began to write poems and songs. As a young man he did popular singing. With his studies in Theology, he directed words and music toward liturgical singing. Ordained to the priesthood in 1976, he pursued religious singing, and recorded his first album in 1979, then a second . . . He is on his 23<sup>rd</sup> - an average of one recording per year with each album having about ten songs.

Inspiration for the songs come from biblical words, events, the Church, liturgical seasons, the Virgin Mary, founders of religious communities, persons dear to him, to name just a few sources. And to this is added the words and music for a Mass. His three most recent albums are intended for school aged children.

For the coming of the Pope to Canada in July 2002, he was chosen and accepted to write the theme song for World Youth Day (WYD). The theme “Salt and Light of the World” plunged him into the composing phase which lasted 8 weeks. His song, translated into several languages, was on the lips of everyone during the summer.

In the week preceding WYD, Robert participated in a number of activities along the lines of a show, diocesan celebration and special events. The theme song soared in popularity. During the week of World Youth Day, he participated in different WYD activities in the same manner as all of the other pilgrims. He had the good luck of hearing his musical work sung by a choir, soloists, and the entire crowd

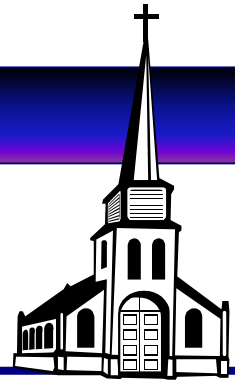
and this in twelve different languages. At the height of the event, 800,000 people attended the closing Mass.

He had the joy of being invited to a private audience granted to the immediate collaborators of the office of the organizers of WYD. In front of the Pope, he had the opportunity to sing several of his songs without microphone, without orchestra, without choral backup, short of resources . . . with only his guitar. This hour long audience was filled with emotions of great joy as well as with a certain sadness at the sight of a man visibly tired. In greeting personally the Pope, Robert Lebel told us that he could not find the words or gestures except to express these few words: “Thank you, Holy Father, for helping us to pray.”



Robert Lebel became a member of the Voluntas Dei Institute in 1988. In 1997, he composed the theme song of the Institute inspired by the five attitudes of life for cultivating the quality of relations with God and the subsequent ones, that is, the second five of our spirituality. At present, he exercises his ministry in a parish; he animates spiritual retreats especially for young people at Versant-la-Noel (Thetford Mines, Quebec). He gives about thirty concerts of religious music yearly.

Robert Lebel is a wonderful communicator of the Love of God which he strives to make known to us. [✠](#)



## Congratulations!

Yves Dionne



Luc Richer



Jean Dubé



Richard L'Archer



### 4 April

Abraham John CHURCHIL BAS, to the priesthood by Bishop Soosaopakiam, Bishop of Thiruvananthapuram, India.

### 7 April

Prevoist Jr Irlan MAXIME, to the priesthood in the Cathedral of Port-au-Prince, Haïti, by Bishop Willy Romelus, Bishop of Jérémie.

### 7 April

Evynx MONESTIME, to the priesthood in the Cathedral of Port-au-Prince, Haïti, by Bishop Willy Romelus, Bishop of Jérémie.

### 23 June

Yves DIONNE, to the priesthood in the Church of Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire, Ville-Marie, Québec, by Bishop Dorylas Moreau, bishop of Rouyn-Noranda.

### 29 September

Luc RICHER, to the permanent diaconate in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Ottawa, Canada, by Bishop Marcel Gervais, Archbishop of Ottawa. Luc is married, father of 3 children.

### 27 October

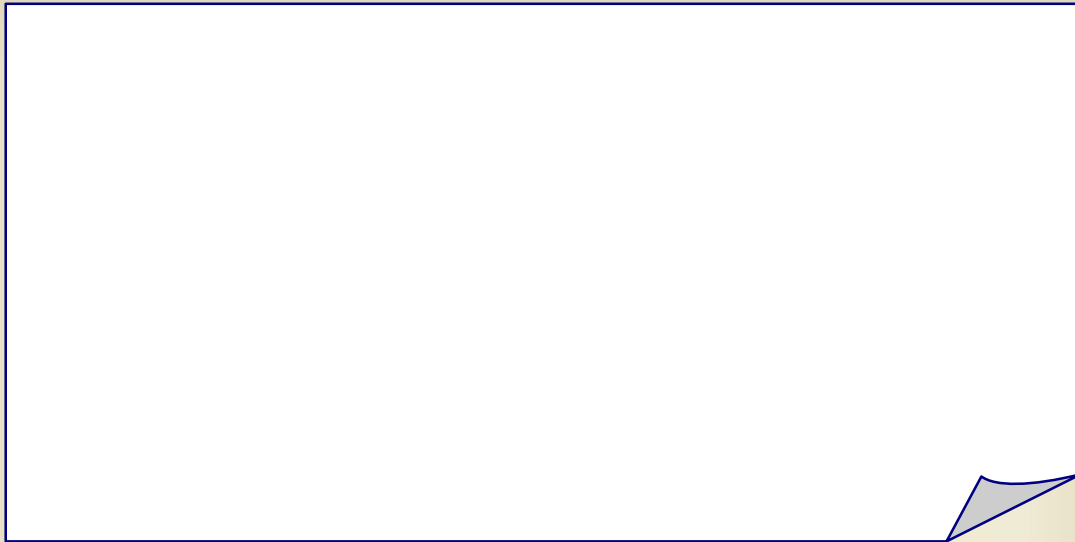
Jean DUBÉ, to the priesthood in St. Stanislas parish, Québec, by Bishop Martin Veillette, Bishop of Trois-Rivières.

### 1 November

Richard L'ARCHER, to the priesthood in Ste-Angèle de St-Malo parish, Québec, by Bishop Jean Gagnon, auxiliary Bishop of Québec.



# Thank you to our partners



## **RBC INVESTISSEMENTS**

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