

# The Present Moment

Volume 9

January 2008

## 50th Anniversary 1958 ~ 2008



**Banquet of July 2, 1958 ~ Foundation Day**

**1<sup>st</sup> row :** *Mario Laroche, Claude Véronneau, Marcel Piché, Daniel O'Rooke, Father Blais, Father Louis-Marie Parent, Laurent-Paul Gendron*

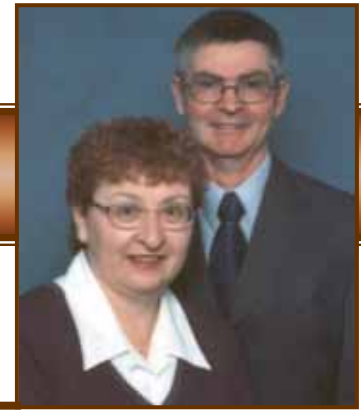
**2<sup>nd</sup> row :** *Maurice Roy, Lionel Grandmaison, Gérald Michaud, Paul Coutu*

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## FROM THE EDITORS ...



by *Raymonde Jetté and Fernand Turgeon*

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to offer you the 2008 edition of *The Present Moment*. We are happy to show our gratitude and joy as we celebrate our fifty years of existence; gratitude to God who called us to our vocation, and gratitude to our Founder Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. who made himself available to the Holy Spirit, to found the Voluntas Dei secular institute.

We have invited collaborators, for this issue. They look back with fondness on the Institute, and they have witnessed its development through the years. We thank them for their contribution.

Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., our Founder, sends to all the Voluntas Dei a message of peace and inner joy. At 97 years of age, he gives us his spiritual testament.

The directors general give us a bird's eye view of the accomplishments of their respective administrations; it is easy to feel their concern for the Institute. Then there are the district and regional

directors who write about the reality in which their members are involved in the apostolate. Some of them live in countries at war or that lack material resources, while others can easily meet together as members of a virtual team. All, however, live the same apostolic objective, each one according to the charism given by the Spirit.

Then follows the personal testimony of members and collaborators. We cannot pass over the 25 years of the Institute's presence in Chile, in 2008. Our heartiest congratulation to its members, on the occasion of their silver jubilee.

The year 2008 shall be the occasion for many Voluntas Dei gatherings in all sectors and regions where the Institute is present. May this be for us an opportunity to talk about our spirituality of the Three Fives, and who knows... and to challenge our listeners as Father Parent did in 1958! We hope that the growth of the Institute continue in peace and harmony "wherever Christ has his rights." ♦

*A Happy Fiftieth Anniversary to one and all!  
Enjoy this issue of The Present Moment!*

### *The Present Moment*

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*N.B. Each district and regional director was invited to present an article*

## FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

### Let the Celebrations begin !

by *François Hamel*



« Praise God in his sanctuary... Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourines and dance... with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with ovation's cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! » From the beginning as a theology student I have always been drawn to Psalm 150 that celebrates the liturgy of the glory of God. The psalm applies very well to what we shall experience as a secular institute, in the course of the year. Fifty years ago Father Parent answered « YES » to his superior general who asked him to found a secular institute for men, with the same spirituality that he had given earlier (1952) to the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. Father Parent's « YES » was modelled on Mary's « YES » to the Angel who told her that she would be the Mother of God. Father Parent's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is well known, so it is not surprising that he had her as role model.



Every one of us members of the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute answered « YES » to the plan that the Lord had for us. Our initial « YES » changed our lives. Over two thousand years ago, at the wedding feast at Cana, a very simple woman encouraged people to say « YES » to her son. « Do whatever he tells you » (Jn. 2 : 5)... and what a change this brought to the world!

Father Parent's « YES » changed the course of history, too. It first changed his own history. It changed our own history since it allowed us set our feet « in the footsteps of Jesus ». As Father himself often says, he was only God's postman. He brought to each one a letter from God, and we answered the

letter. The spirituality of the 5-5-5 was – and remains – a call to respond to our sanctification.

Besides the spirituality, Father Parent also gave us the basic values we must develop : the spirituality, team life, a positive attitude, the present moment, and Christian contacts. With the passing of time, have these values found in us a welcoming heart, open to change the world, our world, or have we let ourselves fall asleep? In a world marked by terrorism in every guise, are we POSITIVE peacemakers, or do we follow the way of the terrorist by manipulating others, destroying their reputation, looking only after ourselves?

These are important questions, if we want to have vocations in 2008. It is good that we do not have any special work as an institute. We are neither a teaching institute, a hospitaller institute dedicated to the care of the sick, nor to prisoners. These are evangelical works, but with us, each one must find his place in society and the Church according to the charisms God has placed in each one's heart. What unites us is a spirituality. The challenge of vocations is not finding someone to take over our activity when the time comes, but to help our young people develop their charisms through our spirituality.

To celebrate 50 years of existence is to look back on the past, because it helps us see ourselves better. However, it is first and foremost to live the present moment as peacemakers... and promoters of love!

Let the celebrations begin, to climax on July 2 in every district and region of the Institute! ♦



# God Speaks through Humans

by Fr Wilhelm Steckling, OMI ~ Superior General



God sometimes speaks directly to the heart, but He often does so through mediators. To the Hebrews He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob. To the Church He is the God of Jesus Christ, His Son. He is also the God of the Apostles, of the Virgin Mary and of all the saints in history. The richness of God is so great that it must be given to us through mediators, and tailored to our size.

The Voluntas Dei Institute gives thanks to God for its 50 years of existence. In this way the Institute acknowledges the presence of God and His protection, in its 50-year history. Allow me to tell you how God speaks to me through your Institute, your history, your life and apostolate, and through your bond with the family of Saint Eugene de Mazenod.

### Your Sacred History

From the very first, your founder, Father Parent, discerned the will of God, the hand of God in this enterprise. You know this story better than I, but I want to summarize it briefly.

In 1952 Father Parent founded a women's secular institute, the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. The Institute developed rapidly, and soon several young men, drawn by the example of the Oblates, expressed the desire to live the same simple, concrete, and practical spirituality. Many requests were made and in 1954 Father Parent got a few of the young men together to found the O.C.I.M., the Oblates of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. However, Father Parent was concerned whether or not this was really God's will. None of his Oblate superiors had clearly supported this apostolic initiative, and so the group was dissolved two years into its foundation.

In 1958, Father Leo Deschâtelets, the Oblate superior general, visited Canada, and in the presence of several Oblate confreres he strongly challenged Father Parent to start a secular institute for men. This is how, on July 2 of that year, Fr. Parent gathered together 12 young men, including one priest, in the chapel of Our Lady of La Salette, in the outskirts of Trois-Rivières. The male secular institute Voluntas Dei was off and running! At the explicit request of the superior general, the new institute took the name "Voluntas Dei."

According to Fr. Parent, God had spoken not directly but through an intermediary, Fr. Deschâtelets. God's main instrument was certainly Fr. Parent himself and the young people around him. Then there was another mediation, that of the Church authorities. From the very beginning, Bishop Henri Routhier, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Grouard, Alberta, accredited the group as a "pious society." Many students applied to the new institute, from different regions of Canada, the United States, Haiti, Sri Lanka, etc. On July 2, 1965, the Institute was canonically erected as an institute of diocesan right by the Sacred Congregation for Religious.

To celebrate an anniversary is to rejoice in the recognition that a few among us – and perhaps many – were instruments in the hands of God, mediators, intermediaries of His grace. This is true of the Voluntas Dei members, particularly of its founding members. However, I as an Oblate rejoice also at the role played by a few of my confreres. I have already mentioned Fathers Parent and Deschâtelets. Another name is Father Lucien Pépin who, as early as 1959, was made Father Parent’s assistant. This was Fr. Pépin’s first obedience, and it was in service to the new Institute. In this way he gave the first five years of his ministry to the young men of the Institute, and left his mark on many of them.

### **Life and Apostolate of the Institute**

The human mediation of Grace is not limited to beginnings but continues thereafter through history; it even tends to expand. God can also speak to those who, like us, are not Voluntas Dei members but who from outside see the good that is being done, and the way it is done. We can learn many things, but even more, we are challenged to discover what God has to say to us about our personal or community vocation, through this half-century of history.

I have therefore learned that the Voluntas Dei Institute is composed as follows:

The Institute welcomes as members, clerics and single, celibate laymen whose desire is to live according to the evangelical counsels. The Institute also welcomes as associate members married couples who commit themselves to live the same ideal and apostolic project as the clerics and laymen, but according to their own state in life.

The ideal of life proposed is common to all: to follow in all things the Will of God as Christ and the Virgin did. The apostolic project is to make that, through their consecration in the midst of the world, the reign of God be actualised in themselves, their own milieu, and “wherever Christ has his rights.” The members, individually and in teams, commit themselves to *create peace and brotherhood in Jesus Christ*. This is their objective.

As a member of a religious congregation, I am challenged by this. We religious are always tempted, at least unconsciously, to believe ourselves a little bit better, somewhat set apart from others. The fact that in your Institute married people and celibates share the same calling reminds us that vocation to a state of life – whether to live as a couple or not – is secondary in relation to one’s baptismal call. What matters is to work at bringing about the reign of God in ourselves, and that peace and brotherhood in Jesus Christ be established around us.

Mention must also be made of your spirituality. Your Institute’s rule of life offers a way of reaching the ideal that every “Voluntas Dei” strive to live according to an appropriate spirituality which is known as the “spirituality of the 5-5-5” or the “Three Fives.”

Because of their practical aspect, one of these “five” chapters particularly challenged me. We read the following:

Each member is committed to letting himself be fashioned by Christ, through living five attitudes: the presence of God, absence of destructive criticism, absence of useless complaining, being of service, and being a peacemaker.

Simple, but I wonder how I could say something as simple as this about my own Oblate spirituality. Encouraged by formulas as simple as yours, I recently tried to find a “formula” for our own Oblate spirituality.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The three basic elements of the Oblate spirituality are: To the most neglected people of the day – an apostolic community – carry the cross of Christ the Saviour. “By playing a bit with these elements, we could say, using mathematical language: giving hope to the poor (H) equals the cross of Christ (C) multiplied by the community’s witness.” – Letter to the Congregation, *La mission des Oblats aujourd’hui*, Rome, 21/11/2006.

I was nearly leaving out what you have done and still do today, through your apostolate. You now have about 750 members, one of whom is a bishop, with 140 priests, 5 deacons, 35 single laymen, 70 seminarians, and 500 married associate members. Your members bring the Good News to 16 countries and, from time to time on my trips abroad, I find myself among you.

Let me say that your first missionaries were sent to Laos in 1959, two members of the Institute and one lay missionary. In congratulating you, at the time, Bishop Routhier noted: "It is obvious that the Cross will be the instrument in doing good." Events were to prove these words prophetic. Still, to this very day you have maintained the faith, in Laos. Of the four apostolic vicariates in the country, two are directed by members of the spiritual family of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, namely, one O.M.I. and one Voluntas.

On the occasion of your golden jubilee, we all joyfully acknowledge the hand of God in your history, your life, and your apostolate. God speaks to us through you: you are to many God's mediators for the transmission of His grace and life.

### **Followers of the Saint Eugene de Mazenod Charism**

I also look at you from another viewpoint. There are today over 40 institutes nourished by the charism of Saint Eugene, and often founded through the intervention of an Oblate. Sixteen of them met together at Aix-en-Provence, France, in 2004, and you were among them. Among these institutes, there are some that go all the way back to Saint Eugene, while others are very recent. I am often surprised, and I marvel at the vitality of these institutes. I often see the hand of God in these undertakings. God still acts through the same instruments that He used with us OMIs. I realise that the mediation of grace flowing through Saint Eugene is more powerful than I had imagined, and that it is always vibrant. This is demonstrated in your case, too.

I have read a bit about your charism and I recognise there the heart and even the words of Eugene de Mazenod. You will probably recognise yourselves if I quote some as examples:

"The Voluntas engages himself in a virile way in the footsteps of the Apostles. He commits himself as one who can be a man of determination, despite those difficulties inherent to the apostolic life... Every Voluntas must consider himself God's cooperator (1 Cor. 3:9) (Lucien Pépin, O.M.I., "S'engager virilement au service de Dieu" ["Committing Oneself in a Virile Way to God's Service"], in: *Voluntas Dei*, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 6).

On his visit of December 21, 1958 Father Leo Deschâtelets, O.M.I. wrote the following words in the Institute's Guest Book: "I bless all the Voluntas Dei with all my heart, and I reiterate again all the hope I have in this new foundation which has been inspired by an immense love of the Church and of souls, by a fervent will to copy the virtues and examples of the divine Saviour. May Mary bless all these young men of good will who want to imitate the surrender of her *Fiat*" (in *Voluntas Dei*, Vol. I, p. 4).

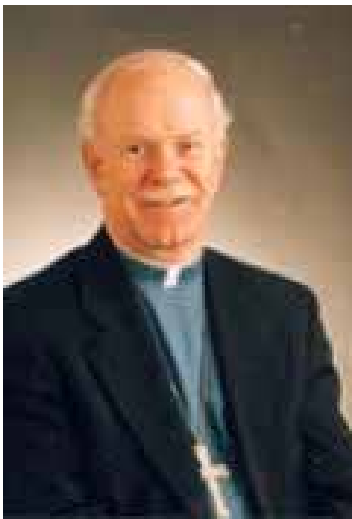
There are really many traits common to the Voluntas and Saint Eugene, especially this "fervent desire to copy the virtues and examples of the divine Saviour," the "love of the Church and of souls," and the desire to live the "apostolic life." This was what inspired Saint Eugene de Mazenod in founding the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate: to gather together men who would strive, as you are still doing, to continue in this first enthusiasm. Contact and dialogue between Oblates and Voluntas Dei will make us better appreciate these common traits, and they will stimulate us in our fidelity and creativity. Let us praise God for the riches He has given us, and let us gently accept His often speaking to us through humble, human mediators.

## Conclusion

A final thought: It is not only the great and renowned and officially recognised saints who are mediators. You know this better than others: as members of a secular institute, you are called in a special way to act in the midst of the world, and you often have the opportunity to be witnesses of God's presence to all kinds of people. You shall help us open our eyes so as to recognise that God can show Himself to us through anyone.

Whoever like you has walked the ways through which God's grace flows can help many people fix their gaze on their actions. Gratitude makes us acknowledge that God is never far from us because He acts through human agency. Congratulations on your first 50 years! ♦

Rome, April 2, 2007



## Happy Fiftieth !

*by His Excellency Bishop Martin Veillette ~ Trois-Rivières, Qc*

Already fifty years!  
How time goes by, and the years pile up on one another! Not such a long time, yet (compared to other religious foundations), but long enough to

look back on the distance covered since the inception of the Voluntas Dei Institute.

I don't know whether the founder Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. , had any vision of the future development of the Institute, when he first laid its foundation and launched his young men on the adventure. Maybe yes, maybe no! Perhaps in its broad lines, but certainly not in detail.

To celebrate a fiftieth anniversary is a very special time that allows us to look back on the past, to consider the actual situation, and to look boldly to the future.

It is very difficult to gauge what an Institute such as yours can bring to the life of the Church today. Of pontifical right, present in several countries throughout the world, composed of clergy and lay people, men and women, tied together by a common spirituality, supported by team life though living the secular condition, your Institute offers another facet of what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Our local Church of Trois-Rivières is happy to have you among us. Not only was the Institute founded here, but your general headquarters is here, also. Our diocesan Church benefits from the precious collaboration of your members in its pastoral ministry, a collaboration that will doubtless continue in the years to come. This, at least, is the object of our hope!

To everyone in the Institute, may the Fiftieth bring Joy and Thanksgiving! ♦

Trois-Rivières, May 8, 2007



# A Tribute to the Voluntas Dei Institute

By His Excellency Bishop François Thibodeau, C.J.M. ~ Edmundston, Qc

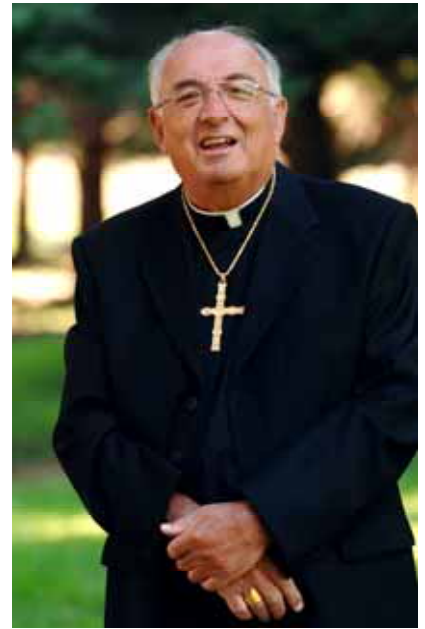
To tell the story of the Voluntas Dei Institute is to recall a good portion of the history of the diocese of Edmundston, New Brunswick, founded in 1944. Following discussions between Bishop J. Romeo Gagnon, second bishop of the diocese, Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., decided in 1962 to open a seminary at Red Rapids, in the actual Southern Victoria pastoral zone.

The seminary campus housing a minor seminary was completed in 1963, and in 1964 it was transformed into a major seminary with theological studies for young men preparing for the priesthood. From the Maritime Provinces and Québec, the United States, Ecuador, Grenada, Colombia, France, Sri Lanka, India, Laos, and South Africa, “Voluntas Dei” came to Red Rapids. This continued until the seminary’s closing in 1971.

For nearly forty years, from 196 to 1998, the “Voluntas Dei,” along with the Franciscans, ensured the pastoral ministry in Southern Victoria. Among them we must mention Father Leo Grégoire who has been in the diocese of Edmundston since 1971. We do not forget Fathers Claude Lacaille, Yvon Carpentier, Arthur Beaulieu, Michel Laroche, Michel Villeneuve, Laurier Albert, Germain Côté, Louis Pearson, Alfred Irving, and Paul Boulay. For its 2007-2008 pastoral year, the Diocese of Edmundston will have five members of the Voluntas Dei Institute involved in ministry: Father Leo Grégoire who, besides being the diocese’s official translator and vice chancellor, is also moderator of the pastoral unit composed of the parishes of St. Patrick (Limestone Siding), our Lady of Mercy (Aroostook), St. Mary of the Angels (Perth-Andover), and St. Ann of Maliseet (Tobique First Nation). He has as collaborators Deacon Gilbert Doddatto and Seminarian Intern Andrew Mayer. I am also grateful for the ministry of Father Roland Poitras in the parishes of St-Léonard, St-Léonard-Parent, and Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, and of Father Whalen Bossé in the parishes of St-Thomas (Lac-Baker), St-Cœur-de-Marie (Baker Brook), and St-Hilaire.

I join you in your tribute to Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., your founder, and in giving thanks to God for your Institute’s charism. As I strive to be a true disciple of Saint John Eudes who recommended that we write the following heading on all correspondence: *May the divine Will be our conduct in all things*, today the very name of your Institute reminds me of the radical commitment of Jesus and Mary. At the Annunciation, Mary made herself the faithful servant of the Lord: “Let it be done to me according to your will,” and the Letter to the Hebrews shows us the path that Jesus himself followed: “Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will!” As bearers of such a message, you are called to be “prophets of love and hope” in the world of today in the manner of Mary and her divine Son.

My prayer and gratitude are with you throughout your celebrations. ♦



# Message of the Missionary Recluses

by Sister Louise-Marie Dupras ~ Superior



The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Voluntas Dei Institute gives us the opportunity to congratulate and encourage our brothers and sisters of the Voluntas Dei, to whom we are related. As a matter of fact, while the Voluntas Dei Institute celebrates

its 50 years of existence, we the Missionary Recluses celebrate 65 years, to the time we were founded in Western Canada, with the invaluable collaboration of Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. After having worked at the development of a contemplative community, Father Parent dreamed of giving the Church apostles in the midst of the world, and it was from this that the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and the Voluntas Dei were born.

*To do in all things the will of the Father, like Christ and the Virgin Mary.* Such is the ideal of life of the Voluntas Dei members, embodied in the spirituality of the Three Fives. This spirituality is akin to our Eucharistic and Marian spirituality. It is through the offering of his life made once again present in the Eucharist celebrated and worshipped day and night in our monasteries that Christ did the will of the Father. And it was at the Annunciation – a mystery honoured in a special way in the Voluntas Dei Institute – that Mary gave her consent to the Father’s loving plan for her and for humankind. For us, too, Our Lady of the Annunciation is our patroness. We readily see that spiritual and fraternal bonds unite us.

We want to assure everyone in the Voluntas Dei Institute of our support and prayer. According to the beautiful expression of the first Recluses, we *hospitalise in our hearts* your projects and all those you reach in many countries, through your consecration and your apostolate.

Thanksgiving, in this jubilee year, and long life! ♦



## A Congratulatory Message

by Ms. Claire Nantel ~ President-Director General ~ Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate

2008 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Voluntas Dei Institute, and on this happy occasion, we Oblates are happy to offer our congratulations to you, through your Journal.

Throughout its fifty years of existence, your Institute has worked without cease at instilling the strength of the evangelical counsels in every milieu, in every country where we find its members. May the Lord bless you with much ever-growing apostolic fruitfulness.

We thank God in a special way for Father Parent, where the seed of the foundation was sown, “little by little, under the great sun of God’s grace,” as the Most Reverend Father Leo Deschâtelets, O.M.I., the superior general, wrote on May 21, 1958 (Cf. *Journal des Oblates: Caritas*, Vol. VI, août-septembre 1958).

For many Oblates, remembering the *Voluntas Dei* is also recalling the beginnings of our own story. In the mystery of His plan of love, the Lord allowed our Institute, while still very young, to witness the birth of your Institute, July 2, 1958, and to support its first steps. This made Bishop Georges-Léon Pelletier of Trois-Rivières say to the *Voluntas*, on September 22, 1958: “... *you were born in the shadow of the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady of La Salette, and you are like brothers to the Oblates founded by the same father. Therefore, together you form a group of families, and you will be praying for one another. I have the feeling that the prayers of the Oblates have been of extraordinary [help] in the birth of your Institute*” (Cf. *Journal des Oblates: Caritas*, Vol. VI, octobre 1958).



Along the years, this family relationship certainly helped our two Institutes open new horizons of love, commitment, and daring, in our different milieus. We hope that these bonds continue and intensify so that we may continue to carry out our mission and “produce fruits of authentic faith, by writing with our lives and witness words of hope, by writing them with the works suggested by ‘the imagination of charity’”. (Cf. Benedict XVI, at the Symposium of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Provida Mater Ecclesia*).

We shall be united to you in prayer, in your thanksgiving celebrations, for the Lord’s loving presence “yesterday, today, and tomorrow,” within the history of your Institute.

A happy jubilee year to each and everyone of you! ♦

Trois-Rivières, May 8, 2007

## Ordinations :

January 20, 2007	<b>GUERRA ROMERO, Marcos Alejandro – Chile</b>
April 12, 2007	<b>FRANCIS, Andrew – India</b>
April 15, 2007	<b>SANTIAGO John Paul Vinod – India</b>
April 19, 2007	<b>KANIAMPURAM Antony Shabin – India</b>
April 28, 2007	<b>THOMMAN KUTTY THOMSON, Ollattupurath – Sri Lanka</b>
December 7, 2007	<b>DODDATTO, Gilbert – Canada</b>
December 27, 2007	<b>PAUL, Pierre-Maxis - Haiti</b>



# *Anniversaries*

*25 years of priesthood :*

*André Côté ~ Canada  
Madelon Eustache ~ Haiti*

*25 years of marriage :*

*Antonio M. and Gilsa Elupina Trinidad Gervacio ~  
Dominican Republic*

*50 years of priesthood:*

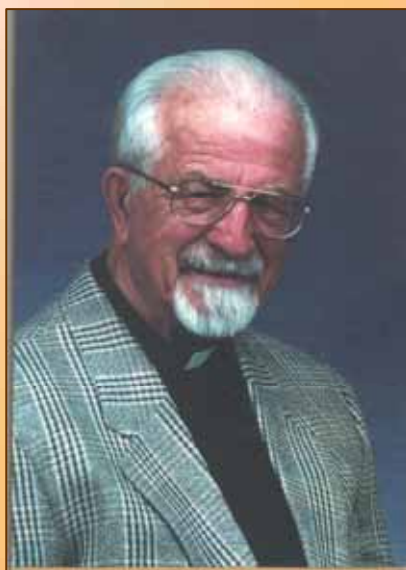
*Angelus Croce ~ United States*

*50 years of marriage :*

*Oscar Evaristo and Primitiva del Carmen Guerra Bustos ~  
Chile  
Joel and Carol Livingston ~ United States*

# *Congratulations !*

# General Directors



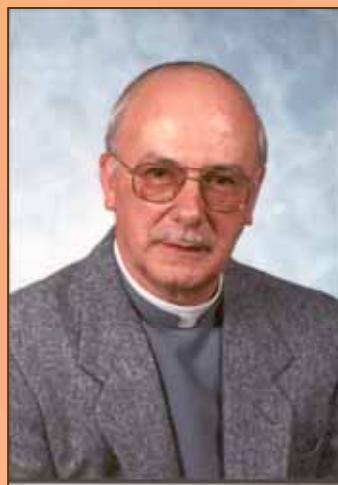
**Father Louis-Marie Parent, o.m.i.**  
1958 ~ 1970



**René Désilets**  
1970 ~ 1980



**Mario Laroche**  
1980 ~ 1992



**Yvon Carpentier**  
1992 ~ 1998



**François Hamel**  
1998 ~ ...

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS



Dear Voluntas Dei,

I have been asked to write you a letter, but I have become so simple-minded that I don't even remember who it was who asked me to write!

At my age, memory begs for a holiday. If I do not grant its request, it is not shy and walks out, and I have the feeling of free falling into a void. However, I do not feel heavy or lost, rather, I rub against the void whose space accelerates my speed and where imagination loses control somewhat and does not tire adjusting itself. I feel myself to be in good health, even mentally, my memory fills me with precious memories, and I feel that peace and inner joy take the liberty of being at home in me.

I have no illusions, I feel that God is very close, that the Virgin feels at home in the pursuit of my destiny. I am a happy man, cherished by God under the tender care of the Virgin whose concern for me is like that of a mother whose only interest is her children's happiness. I have a feeling that I am at the door of another life, and this fills me with unutterable and indescribable happiness.

I needed many things and many people, to be happy. When I look back on my life, I discover you all in the basic elements of the happiness which the Virgin watched over, at the heart of my being. My life is ending, I feel myself going very peacefully, I am trusting as the child who sees all of his mother's love as he gazes into her eyes. My life has been beautiful, very beautiful, I have felt God filling it to overflowing, and the Virgin occupying it. And I am happy to see Mary walking around in my heart and being quite at home, there, and so she is. These are things that are so identified with life itself that it is impossible to forget that the presence of God and the Virgin are the constant breathing of a heart that is loved.

All those around me nourish the love of God in my heart. One of my life's forces is the Virgin who not

only makes her presence felt, but especially her constant, loving presence. One is very secure, living in God under the motherly gaze of the Virgin. In heaven only shall we fully live the happiness given by Jesus himself who did everything to love, even accepting an unjust death. Presence of an infinite love which has shown to the eyes of my soul its kindness, tenderness, and love! God is so good! To love is to feel one's heart seized by the other, and this is what Jesus and Mary do to us. In heaven we shall have but one song: "God is so good! God is so good!" And the place where happiness will reach our hearts will be the heart of the Virgin who accepted to be our mother.

Dear Voluntas, are you aware of the joy you have created in the heart of Jesus, by your unfailing faithfulness? He it was who willed the Institute, but with you as its soul, as the principle of its life on earth.

Together let us thank God for this witness of life, through our perseverance, and let us ask Him to continue giving us the love which He shares with those who give themselves to Him in all simplicity. Whoever could describe love, and its richness in each of you?

You are the basic elements of the love of Jesus and Mary for me. As I dissect my happiness, I see your faces, you are a strength in my life, and a powerful element of the love of Jesus and the Virgin for me. *We are completing fifty years, it is the best preparation to begin another fifty!* ♦

I bless you and I love you.

**Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.**

Feast of Our Lady of La Salette  
September 19, 2007

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

### René Désilets (1970 ~ 1980)

At the beginning of my mandate as director general in 1970, the Institute had already 12 years of existence (1958). My charge coincided with the years following Vatican Council II which, as we know, brought about deep changes in the fabric of the Church and the different groups within her. In many ways these years brought into question many ways of doing things in the Church and in the different constituted groups recognised by competent authority. On its part, the Institute took an active part in this *aggiornamento* and the decisions that followed because of adjustments and adaptations that had to be made.

First of all, the revision of the Constitutions, asked for by the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, left the different religious groups and secular institutes for several years without an adequate point of reference for direction and management: this, too, affected the *Voluntas Dei* Institute.

Following the 1968-70 Assembly General, with the retirement of our Founder, Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., and the election of the first central council, the decisions of the assembly general had to be implemented. There had to be urgent readjustments in a number of areas. Due to the slowness of the elections to the central council which was then done by universal suffrage, it was impossible for this council to begin functioning before November, 1970, despite the fact that there remained one councillor to be elected, and this was not done before 1971.

As could be seen at the time, the years 1970-1980 would be of major importance and bring about deep and significant changes in the life of the Institute and its members. As examples, following are a few of the changes and modifications brought about at the time.

### HOUSES OF FORMATION



*St. Joseph Major Seminary at Red Rapids, N.B.*

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

In Canada at the time, the Institute had its own houses of formation: **St. Joseph Major Seminary** at Red Rapids, N.B., and the Philosophy Seminary in Trois-Rivières, Québec. The decision taken by the central council about these houses of formation was announced in December, 1970, with the closing the major seminary to take effect at the end of the school year, that is, June of 1971. Most of the major seminarians who still had studies to complete were regrouped in the “Motel” of our residence in Trois-Rivières, next to the house of philosophy, in September, 1971.

The general feeling was that the members of the Institute, coming from different countries needed as much as possible to have their academic and pastoral training in their country of origin or, at least, in the region where they were from. This would avoid their having to move away from their milieu, and having problems of adaptation to a new culture, when they came to complete their studies prior to ordination.



*House of Philosophy in Trois-Rivières*

Soon after the closing of the major seminary at Red Rapids, it became necessary to look into what we should do with the **house of philosophy in Trois-Rivières**. It would continue to remain open for a while longer, but the reasons for its creation had changed considerably, in the space of a few short years. The Philosophy Seminary had allowed us to welcome a good number of candidates who, given the context of the time, could not find a flexible enough institution to accommodate their studies and prepare them for theology. The closing of the Seminary of Philosophy, whose opening had coincided with the founding of the Institute, occurred around 1974.

It must be said that in both cases, these institutions were of great service to the Institute and allowed it to welcome many candidates who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to know us.

### COUPLES IN THE INSTITUTE

It is good to remember that the initial project as laid down in the first version of our Constitutions made no mention of the presence of married people and couples in the Institute. It was at the first assembly general which ended in 1970 that the question was raised, and that the presence of married catechists in Laos and of couples was accepted in the Institute. What we needed to do was to convince Rome of the validity of this orientation. The official response would come later, that is, with the approval of our Constitutions on July 12, 1987, and the official recognition of our Institute as of pontifical right. However, the new direction took place during these years.



## **MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)**

### **FORMATION OF DISTRICTS**

In the beginning the Institute was one entity, and the central council looked after the Institute as a whole and its members wherever they were and worked. Governance was global and centralised.

The first assembly general of the Institute determined that the Institute would be divided into districts, with a district director and council in each one. Since this decision implied a number of changes and adequate preparation, it was decided that implementation of this decision would be left to the next central council.

At first, the central council decided to establish the Canadian District and the Laotian District. The establishment of districts required some time since it was a rather complex question, and because we had to avoid from the start the duplication of responsibilities between the central council with those of the district, whose responsibilities were not well defined as yet.

The implementation of this decision took place gradually, taking time for it to take root, so as to avoid as much as possible blind spots in administration, between the two governing bodies.

### **MODALITIES IN THE EXERCISE OF POVERTY**

One of the strong points where it was necessary to intervene, following the 1968-1970 assembly general was the question concerning the practice of poverty. I am not saying anything new when I say that from the moment of the founding of the Institute and the first years following, the accepted practice of poverty was considerably inspired by what was practised in religious communities. We also remember that at the very beginning nearly all the members were in formation, and hardly anyone received a salary for work done outside the Institute. At the beginning of the 1970s, it was decided to give more freedom to each member and to give more responsibility to each one regarding the exercise of poverty. In the years that followed, the members had to take into account the need to gradually look after their own financial security while supporting the Institute, to help it carry out its mission, for its promotion and development worldwide. In this same aspect, the Louis-Marie Parent Foundation was incorporated in 1975, and through the years it has received considerable sums that have served to help in the formation of districts and regions where the Institute was beginning.

### **THE FOUNDING OF THE INSTITUTE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND IN COLOMBIA**

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Institute was already present in many countries. Following the first assembly general it was decided to accept a request from His Excellency Bishop Juan Pepen Soliman of Ntra. Sra. De la Altigracia in Higüey, Dominican Republic, on visit to Trois-Rivières, Canada, to solicit priests for his diocese. Father Michel Laroche arrived in Santo Domingo, September 19, 1971, to undertake pastoral work which would trigger the growth which the Institute has known in this country, since we are now in six dioceses, and Altigracia District is the biggest district in the Institute, as far as the number of members go.

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

Besides, the district has the “Residencia El Buen Pastor” in Santo Domingo, where our major seminarians are given pastoral training. The district also has a “Seminario menor” at Hato Major del Rey, where the young men receive initial formation as seminarians.

During these years the Institute not only set its roots in the Dominican Republic but, towards the end of the 1970s, Fathers Pierre Marois and Guillermo Perez established the Institute in Colombia. It is thanks to their excellent work that the Institute was born and developed in that region which is called to become a pastoral and meeting place of priests, single laymen and married couples of the Institute.

This is a summary of the main events and direction taken in those years when the Institute was still young. An institute that is just beginning is rather fragile, and we had to take this into account. Thanks to God’s protection and the help of the Virgin of the Annunciation, this seedling which is the Institute has grown into a tall tree today, with roots and branches on four continents.

I end with this wish, for the Institute’s fiftieth anniversary:

*Long life and prosperity to the Institute! May its development and that of each one be inspired by respect for our Constitutions and the will of God, with the grace of the Virgin of the Annunciation.* ♦



### Mario Laroche (1980 ~ 1992)

As a witness of the Institute’s first events back in 1958, I was a privileged observer of its development in the course of my two terms as director general of the Institute: 1980-1986, and 1986-1992.

On the occasion of the Institute’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 1983, we published an album that related the Institute’s beginnings.

#### **Revision of the Constitutions**

We had an assembly general, that year (1983), on the revision of our Constitutions. We wanted to ensure that the presence of married couples in the Institute was better acknowledged, and their special secular consecration and way of belonging to the Institute more clearly stated. This was a long enterprise which required much consultation, both with Rome and with Canadian canonists. This brought about multiple revisions to the text... We were finally recognised as a secular institute of pontifical right on July 12, 1987; our Constitutions were officially approved September 21, 1988.

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUATION)

### Charism of the Institute

During the work of revising the Constitutions we wanted also to specify the *charism of the Institute*. Father Louis-Marie Parent shed some precious light by focussing on the mystery of the Incarnation. The wording of the text which was included in the Constitutions was finalised and approved at the 1986 Assembly General. The central council then published a brochure on the charism, based on the work of the Assembly.

### Formation

In the *Director General's Report* to the 1986 Assembly General, I wrote:

“During the period 1980 to 1986, the council members sustained a constant interest in the support and formation of members of the Institute. There was, especially, the publication of the formation guides. Every year, also, was adopted a theme for reflection, along with animation resources, were offered to the members of the Institute.”

### Growth of the Institute

In the same *Report*, regarding the growth of the Institute:

“We notice every year a gradual growth in the membership of our different districts and regions. Besides, there are requests for new foundations in several countries. However, since we do not have any personnel available, it is not always possible to answer these calls. However, there have been new foundations thanks to the collaboration of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate.”

In Chile in December, 1982; in Mauritius in February, 1984; and a team in its formation stage in Bolivia.

This growth of the Institute requires constant effort, for formation. In 1983 the Institute had 225 members: 68 priests, 16 celibate laymen, 29 candidates to orders, and 142 married persons. They could be found in 13 countries. In 1992: 446 members: 92 priests, 3 permanent deacons, 35 celibate laymen, 48 candidates to the priesthood, 1 candidate to the permanent diaconate, 287 married persons.

Formation resources and an *Information Bulletin* were published in French, English, and Spanish.

### Secular Consecration

In 1989 an *Intermediate Assembly* was held on the theme of “The lived experience of secular consecration in our Institute.” For us of the Institute, this topic always needs to be deepened further. We had had much difficulty with this. An editorial committee did the follow-up to the Assembly and published a brochure entitled *Living Consecrated Secularity in the Voluntas Dei Institute*.

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

### Visiting the Districts

Visits to the districts and regions were for me a privileged way of ensuring that the Institute's project of life was thoroughly understood everywhere, that the Constitutions, Regulations, and Statutes were observed, to support the apostolic effort of the members, and to support the formators. I greatly appreciated these opportunities to get to know better my brothers and sisters of the Institute the world over. I still have fond memories of this. I have always marvelled at how the Gospel, seen through the lenses of the 5-5-5, could touch people from every race and culture! I am proud of the involvement of all those who made themselves available for the development and spread of the Institute in all these milieus.

### Gratitude to the Councillors General

I am grateful for the indefatigable and generous support given to me by all the members of the central council through all these years, in the form of precious, enlightening advice, sincere collaboration, and constant encouragement. ♦



## Yvon Carpentier (1992 ~ 1998)

The Voluntas Dei Institute is marking its fiftieth anniversary, nothing outstanding, in the life of the Church. When I look back at the past, it makes me feel old when I realise that I joined the Institute before the end of its first year of existence.

Father Parent was a providential encounter in my life because without him I do not believe that I would ever have been a priest. He was to me the instrument of God's plan for me.

From the plain and poor house at La Salette in 1959, and through Ottawa, Red Rapids, New Brunswick, the Magdalene Islands in Québec and then back to the diocese of Trois-Rivières, long roads were travelled. Time has gone by so fast. Through all these years I have filled several different functions: teacher, superior, director, and parish priest which I still am.

Recalling the past gives me the opportunity to express all my gratitude and thanksgiving to the Lord, the prime author of my priestly life; to the Virgin Mary who was always at my side; to Father Parent who was the expression and guide of the Will of God; and to all the confreres in the Institute for their support, presence, friendship, collaboration, and example.

I have loved the Institute and still do, and all its members, with their hopes and sufferings. I hope that we can help build the Kingdom of God wherever we are, in whatever we do. I pray the Lord each morning to be a better shepherd, not by doing great things but by accomplishing whatever I do with the greatest love possible.

To all in the Institute I wish a beautiful year of celebrations and of thanksgiving to the Lord. ♦

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

### François Hamel (1998 ~ ...)

In 1998, after six years as secretary general, I was elected director general of the Institute. Besides my experience as secretary general I have been a high school and a university teacher for 25 years. There has been a complete change of direction in my life! The evening of that day in 1998, I was in the chapel, and my prayer was filled with anxiety. I had accepted to make myself available, and the Lord had taken me at my word. Peace came down on me once I was able to say from my heart: "May your will be done and not mine." A spiritual experience of the very beginning of my new charge has guided my work. My availability to God has led me to invite others in this direction.

From the very first meetings of the central council, we were led in a particular direction. We had inherited – if I may express myself in this way – an Institute which had acquired some ecclesial maturity and been sanctioned by the approval of our Constitutions and our recognition as an Institute of pontifical right. Our predecessors had also worked at establishing a serious and solid formation.

The 1998 assembly general had focused on the theme, Let Us Dare the New Evangelisation, a theme that directed our apostolate in the midst of the world to a renewal of life among us. Starting from the heart of Christ, the discovery of the signs of the time, and the action of the Holy Spirit working in humans and in events, we could understand, as *Voluntas Dei* and in solidarity with all Christians, that we are bearers of Christ's mission of being light and yeast in the world.

We wanted to continue in that direction. That is why all the formation guides were revised: the Aspirant's Guide (2001), the Probationer's Guide

(2003), and most recently, the Professed and Committed Member's Guide (2007). These guides were meant for others besides members of the Institute. For this reason, in 2000 the central council published an animation resource titled *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening*, a reference to the experience of Samuel who wanted to be available to the Will of the Most High (1 Samuel 3). The brochure was translated in the three official languages of the Institute: English, Spanish, and French. At the end of 1999 the brochure was given to the regional and district directors, and I urged them to invite their members to hold their first three meetings of the third millennium with this resource.

The theme dealt with the three categories of members in our Institute, the celibate laymen, the priests, and our married people. This was an opening to vocation promotion. In 2003-2004, all of our animation resources were translated in the three languages and sent to the directors for use in their district or region.

It was hoped that the first three years of the new millennium could help us gain a better understanding of and better integrate the formation that the Institute strives to give all its members in whatever country they serve the Lord. Initial formation is very important because it helps develop our spiritual personality as *Voluntas Dei*. It allows others to recognise us as brothers and sisters united in the same project of "creating peace and brotherhood in Jesus Christ" while respecting our personal and national identity.

The Institute is growing. Just looking at the statistics I note an annual increase of 5% to 6%. For your information, here are the figures as of December 31, 2006:

Under the Sign  
of  
Availability

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUATION)

Categories	1998	2004	2006
Celibate Laymen	25	29	49
Mejor Seminarists	41	76	99
Deacons	02	05	09
Priests	123	140	150
Bishop	-	01	01
Married Associates	468	541	575
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>883</b>

What I believe is more important than statistics is what I hear when I visit the members. The bishops are happy to have Voluntas Dei priests and deacons in their diocese. Some bishops would even like to have more of them. It also happens that a number of bishops know some of our celibate laymen and married associate members who are involved in diocesan services. These two groups are also appreciated in their own parishes, for their many services.

Since 1998 the Institute has grown in all countries where it is present. Some grow faster, and others at a slower pace. We in the northern hemisphere should seriously question ourselves regarding vocations. I see the whole of our Institute as a blooming flower that seeks to show its colours and bloom where it is planted. As long as a flower is closed in on itself, it may very well believe that it has everything needed to develop, but no one will notice it. It must experience the stress of its coming out of the soil, and the heat of the sun, to reach the opening of its petals and the ripening of its fruit. It is then that it draws our attention: it speaks to us of beauty and perfection. Like the flower, each of our districts and regions is under God our Father's watchful gaze. So, where are we, in our development? We have passed the embryonic stage, and even our period of growth is well advanced. But how fast are we blooming, in the flower garden? What does our future look like, and where are the fruits? Does the Institute's formation meet the expectations of the One who called us into being in those places where we

develop and put in roots? This is what I give you to ponder, in all friendship. God calls: this is a certainty. We have but to look around us, especially in the new "religious" groups. God calls, but do we invite? Are we ready to change our way of doing things? Are we inclined to **question** our security?

The Institute has expanded internationally. The team at Basse-Terre in Guadeloupe had asked for Voluntas Dei. Two Haitian priests answered the call. Are there any local vocations? In 2004, a group of people in Ethiopia asked to join the Institute. General Counsellor Michael Craig took on the charge of mentoring them, and the effort has borne fruit: there are now 11 celibate laymen and 2 married persons in the team. Archbishop B. D. Souraphiel of Addis Ababa supports the group.

Finally, I want to mention that the Institute is also growing "from inside." I want to point out that Haiti and the Dominican Republic went from being districts in formation to becoming full-fledged officially erected districts, the former in 2002 and the latter in 2004. On the other hand, the South American district in formation was dissolved to make way for two new regions, Colombia and Chile. The members in Ecuador are under the temporary jurisdiction of the central council. This is good news; since this restructuring, Colombia and Chile have welcomed three seminarians, and a priest was ordained in Chile in 2007.

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

Another piece of good news: in 2001 our confrere Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun of Laos was appointed vicar apostolic of Paksé, thus becoming its bishop. For years Louis had been the only member of the Institute in Laos. His availability has produced spiritual fruit: several young men are now journeying towards the priesthood. One of them – Thomas Kandavong – is now in Sri Lanka for his formation.

The growth of the Institute also has repercussions on the central administration. At the beginning of the Institute, there was but one administration, but since 1970, the central administration has been distinct from the Canadian District administration. Then there was the development of local administration in other countries.

The central administration has taken an international flavour, thus distancing itself from what is going on in Canada. Taking one's distance does not imply disinterest. It only means a greater availability to **all** the countries, to help them organise, develop structures, and especially to ensure a good formation in the spirituality of the 5-5-5.

From my very election in 1998, I deemed it important to establish easy communications with all the directors. Investing in computers and internet communications has produced good results. All the directors – general and local – can have direct contact with us whenever required. The Institute's website is available to all, and it has been kept updated since 2001. This project is really in line with the new evangelization.

The site opens on the world, allows the members to communicate directly with the districts and regions of the Institute, and facilitates access to the

Institute's different publications. The site is a priceless source of information, and a way to bring us closer to one another and to those who are interested in learning about us.

Some publicity was made through the brochure *The Voluntas Dei Institute in the Midst of the World* (2004), and the pamphlet (2000) *A worldwide fellowship...in the service of peace*.

Information on the Institute's membership was given in the year 2000 edition of *The Present Moment*, and monthly information has been given on our website section called "The Central Council Newsletter", since the year 2002.

The systematic organization of our archival material through a complete catalogued inventory has made our information retrieval easier. This work of cataloguing took two years to complete (1999-2000) and is kept up to date by Cécile Davidson Corneau of the Canadian District.

Finally, the central administration moved into a new house. The old central house which had been acquired in the first years of the Institute had become rundown and needed much repair and renovation. Following consultations with all the district and regional directors, the central council decided on a new construction. So it was that at the end of the 2004 assembly general, the central administration took possession of its new residence. It is more functional: the basement houses the Institute's archives, the chapel, and the council chamber. The first floor has six offices and a reception area (secretariat); the second floor is the residence proper with four bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, and living room.

## MESSAGES FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)

The administration personnel is composed of five full-time people: the director general, the director of the Vocation and Mission Office, the accounting clerk, the secretary, and the cook / housekeeper. To these we can add the secretary general, the director of administrative services, the archivist, and the translators.

Celebrating the 50 years of the Institute leads me to wish to all the members that they recover the enthusiasm that animated Father Parent and his first companions. If we can let ourselves be permeated

with the spirituality of the 5-5-5, we shall feel like sharing with others.

I make mine these words of Pope Benedict XVI to the members of secular institutes who participated, in February 2007, in the Symposium marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Provida Mater Ecclesia*: “The Church needs you, too, to bring its work to fruition. Be seeds of holiness, scattered generously in the furrows of history (...) May you bear the fruits of a sincere faith as you write parables of hope, through your life and witness.” ♦

**Prot. No. I.S. 4999/99**

### DECREE

**The Director General of the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute, whose general headquarters is in the diocese of Trois-Rivières (Canada), submitted to this Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life a petition to grant dimissorial letters to members of the Institute who are candidates to Orders, in exception to can. 1019 §2 of the Code of Canon Law.**

**His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect, at a private audience on July 6, 2007, presented the petition to the Holy Father. The request was granted.**

**This is why this present Decree gives the director general of the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute the faculty of granting dimissorial letters to members of the Institute who are candidates to orders.**

**Notwith standing anything to the contrary.**

**From the Vatican, July 17, 2007.**

**Franc Rodé, C.M.  
Prefect**





Presence of God

Abstention from destructive  
criticism

*interior and exterior*

Abstention from useless  
complaint

*interior and exterior*

Being of service

Peacemaker

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



### Canada ~ André Côté, Director

« We are aware of having been called by Jesus himself to live a special lifestyle: to be consecrated persons immersed in the midst of the world, revealing Christ with the means of the world. As Christ allows himself to be guided by the wills of the Father, so do we let ourselves be directed by the wills of the Son. » (Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, "Founder's Preface," *Constitutions, Voluntas Dei Institute*)

Father Parent's spiritual intuition took shape July 2, 1958, and with a few young men joining him to journey with him, the call to follow Christ was answered.

It was in Canadian soil that the Institute took root. In fact, Maurice Roy, Paul Coutu, Laurent-Paul Gendron, Mario Laroche, Gerald Michaud, Michel Laroche, Marcel Forest and a few others were the "first walkers" who, like Mary, probably asked, "How is this to be?" Then, in applying themselves to interiorizing the spirituality of the Institute, they discovered a path of Presence, Trust, and Hope.

At the 1982 District Assembly, the interim district director wrote: "In 1972 the central council worked on the Statutes that were approved by the membership of the Canadian District. A provisional district council was appointed and five meetings were held between February 23 and September 19, 1972, following a meeting held November 29, 1972, on the same day the new district council held its first official meeting." (Report of Canadian District Interim Director Marcel Forest, August 2, 1982).

Since 1972, the district directors have been Léon Robichaud, Arthur Beaulieu, Marcel Forest, Jean-Paul Chiasson, Michel Villeneuve, Marc-André Lafrenière, and André Côté.

It is my pleasure to introduce the new district council elected in May, 2007 at the District Assembly. They are: André Côté, director, Robert Lebel, assistant director, Jacques Théberge, secretary, and Michel Laroche, Gerald Michaud, Jean Lebrun, Marcelle Perrier Lebrun, councilors.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of our Institute, may our periods of prayer and get-togethers raise to the Lord our thanksgiving for our Founder Father Louis-Marie Parent, for our pioneers, and for us who strive to create Peace and Fellowship in Jesus Christ.



*Council's Members*  
*Michel Laroche, Gérald Michaud, Jean and Marcelle Lebrun,*  
*André Côté, Robert Lebel, Jacques Théberge*

## **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

# Chile ~ Manuel Cornejo Gárate, Director

Silver Jubilee (1983-2008)

## Regional Council

**Regional Director:** Fr. Manuel Cornejo Gárate, into his second mandate as regional director. Native of Santiago, he is a member of La Serena Team. He holds the following functions: superior of the Institute's house of formation, teaches at the Universidad Católica del Norte, is rector of Santo Domingo Church and pastor of María Reina de los Apóstoles; has been in La Serena these past two years.



**Assistant director:** Fr. Marcos Guerra Romero. Newly-ordained priest. Into his first mandate as regional councillor. Assistant pastor at Santo Domingo church and Maria Reina de los Apóstoles, in La Serena. He is also a formator at the Institute's house of formation in Chile.

**Councillors:** Richards Leiva Muñoz and Catalina González Menay, associate members having stability in the Institute. Both are members of the Viña del Mar team, of which they are among the founding couples. Are part of the Institute's animation team, and they frequently visit the other teams.



**Councillor:** Henry Bernal Arancibia. Celibate layman with stability in the Institute. He is a member of Viña del Mar team, of which he is a founding member with Gabrielle Foucault, O.M.M.I., and is into his first mandate as regional councillor. He shares in the pastoral work in the parishes around Ventanas, where he lives with his family.

## Foundation of the Institute

The story of the Voluntas Dei Institute in Chile goes back to 1982 when Gabrielle Foucault, O.M.M.I., was in Linares. She first met several times with a few celibate laymen who had answered her invitation. The object of these meetings was to introduce secular spirituality and consecration. All the participants were from Linares. Of the group, one seminarian had to leave the Institute for personal reasons. Father Hernán González is the only member left from the original team.

A second stage of the Institute's foundation in Chile was the establishment of the Linares team. In 1987, on the occasion of his canonical visitation, the Director General Father Mario Laroche appointed Fr. Guillermo Perez Montoya director of the South America District in Formation (Colombia-Ecuador-Chile). In Chile, the team was composed of two celibate laymen – Hernán González Medina and Manuel Cornejo Garáte – and of a married couple – José Palacios and his wife Celinda Ramos. For two years they met twice monthly. Then Gabrielle Foucault moved to Valparaiso where she invited other people to join her. Both teams functioned under Fr. Hernán González, the sector animator, and Fr. Pierre Marois, director of the district in formation. A first national meeting was held at Valparaiso at which time the two teams were consolidated, the Linares Team under the responsibility of Fr. Hernán González, and the Valparaiso Team under Manuel Cornejo.

In 1992, Fr. Hernán González founded a new team in Chillán, composed of married couples. The team developed in its understanding of the Institute's spirituality and charism, with the help of Fr. Hernán.

In 1995, Manuel Cornejo left the Valparaiso team for the seminary. In 1997 the Santiago team was composed of Manuel and three couples, two of which have commitments in the Institute.

In 2002, the national meeting was held in Curicó, and the topic of the gathering was to study the evolution and implantation of the Institute in Chile. It was decided to ask the Director General and his council to erect Chile as a region. This request was made keeping in mind the number of members, the growth of the Institute in Chile, and the desire for a more self-reliant financial management. In January 2003, the regional council was formed with Fr. Manuel Cornejo Gárate, regional director, Fr. Hernán González Medina, assistant director, and councillors Richards Leiva and Catalina González.

In 2003, Fr. Manuel Cornejo and seminarian Marcos Guerra started introducing the Institute in La Serena. A team was formed, composed of two couples and a celibate layman who have grown in their understanding of the Institute, with the help of Father Manuel and seminarian Marcos. This team is now composed of two couples and three seminarians.

## **Evolution of the Institute**

### ***Difficulties Encountered***

- At the beginning it was the geographic distance that existed between the district director who resided in Colombia and visited once a year.
- The distance between teams, because of the country's geography.
- The lack of systematic formation of the members and of common actions by the teams.
- The lack of financial autonomy needed to cover the expenses incurred by the animation of the Institute in the region.
- The lack of resources for each member, at the time of our becoming a region, and of active archives with information regarding each member's stage of formation.

### ***Strong Points***

- A high point in the development of the Institute in this region was its being granted greater autonomy, after twenty years of Institute presence in Chile. This led to the creation of the Chile Region in 2003. From that moment on, we no longer depend on the South America district in formation (Colombia, Ecuador).

- Creation of the first regional council.
- Election of the first regional council.
- Participation of Chile in the 2004 assembly general in Canada, as a guest of the Director General.
- The members' motivation and commitment in the study and implementation of the 2004 assembly general's workshops. This paved the way for a line of action in ongoing formation and helped pick up the challenge of the vocation and mission ministry of the Institute, which is now present in five dioceses;
- The project of the house of formation for new members aspiring to the priesthood.
- Recognition of the presence of the Institute as such in the Diocese of La Serena.

### ***Diversity of Members***

- Each region of the country has its own socio-cultural characteristics which distinguish the members according to the work they do.
- A majority of associate members (couples) in comparison with the number of priests, seminarians, and single laymen.
- Creativeness shown by the members in the different pastoral tasks.
- The commitment of some of the members in governmental organisations whose objectives favour social justice.

### ***Hopes and Perspectives for the Future, for the Institute in Chile***

- A greater *rapprochement* among members of the different teams, through the use of means that are currently available.
- Ongoing formation with common objectives compatible with objectives proposed and challenges in our region. Implementation of the new formation guides.
- Achieve financial and administrative autonomy according to the possibility of members.
- Be present and accepted as an institution in the country's different dioceses.
- Consolidate the house of formation for future priests in the Institute who are recognised by their secularity and their characteristic spirituality.
- Work towards becoming a district in formation.
- Work at being better known in the local Churches, with a ministry of vocation discernment, mentoring, and discernment. ♦



# Colombia ~ Alonso Posada Echeverri, Director

The founding of the Voluntas Dei Institute in Colombia, South America, was already in preparation in 1978. That year, Father Pierre Marois was scheduled to leave for Africa. At the same time Father Guillermo Pérez was in Canada preparing to return to Colombia. He asked the Director General not to return alone to his country, and so, after studying Spanish in Mexico, Fr. Pierre and Fr. Guillermo formed a team in Medellín, in 1979. Following visits to different towns, they decided to settle down in Pereira.

At the bishop's invitation they settled in a parish of the diocese. The Colombia foundation dates from March 21, 1979. Growth was slow. Father Guillermo moved on and established a team in the town of Armenia. Santiago Armijo, a consecrated layman, was the first vocation. Jaime Henao was ordained a priest August 15, 1997. A number of people interested in our spirituality formed into a team, but none persevered.

There was also a team at Medellín, but the only member remaining is Alonso Posada, the actual regional director. Alonso then moved to Tumaco in southern Colombia, where he worked in education, in the diocese. Father Nestor Salas was in the Institute for some time, and then left. In 1999, Fr. Pierre returned to Canada for good. The regional directors in the 28 years of the Institute in Colombia were Pierre Marois, Guillermo Pérez, Jaime Henao, and Alonso Posada. Following a decision of the regional council, because of budget difficulties and many displacements, the Director General of the Institute accepted that Ecuador be separated from the Colombia Region.

Today our Institute is well accepted and appreciated by several bishops in Colombia. There are new vocations in Cali, Medellín, Armenia, Pereira, and Tumaco. There are now two priests, two major seminarians, eight couples, one widow, seven pre-aspirant seminarians, two consecrated laymen with stability and two in aspirancy. We hope that the number of vocations will increase in the near future, because our spirituality is viewed as a novelty in the Church. 💧



*Council's Members  
Edward and Martha Lucia Rengifo  
Alonso de Jesus Posada Echeverry  
Guillermo Perez*

**"To look at others with the eyes of the heart,  
It is the best way to find joy in living."**

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

# United States - George F. Hazler, Director

## Beginning and Evolution of the USA District-in-Formation

The Voluntas Dei Institute (USA) was incorporated in the State of Maryland, February 25, 1992. Records show the first Annual Board Meeting was held May 16, 1993 with Rev. Michael Craig as Chairman of the Board and President, Rev. James Morse, Vice President, Rev. Francis Sweeney, Treasurer and Ms. Wanda Canino, Secretary. For many years prior to this official status of incorporation, there were several members of the Voluntas Dei Institute ministering in the United States.

Meetings were held annually in Maryland and then the first joint meeting of the newly established teams (Michigan and New Jersey) was held at the Hampton Inn in Pittsburgh, PA.

In November of 1996 a mandate to study the feasibility of creating a region was given to Fr. George Hazler by Fr. Marc-Andre Lafreniere. By April of 1997 there were already 5 teams established. On August 15, 1998, there was a change in juridical status – the United States Sector of the Canadian District became the United States Region with Fr. George Hazler as Regional Director and Fr. Michael Craig and Fr. John O'Neill as Regional Councillors.

And on August 5, 2006, during the Summer Congress, the juridical status of the United States Region was changed to that of a District-in-Formation. On behalf of the Director General, Fr. Francois Hamel, the document was presented by the Most Reverend Bishop Louis Ling of Laos who concelebrated the Mass celebrated by Fr. George Hazler, Director.



*Council's Members  
Élaine Antonucci, Andrew Sioleti,  
Domenic Basile, George F. Hazler, John O'Neill*

Presently there are 14 teams in the District-in-Formation in the United States with the planned development of a team in Trinidad. We also have a seminarian who will be ordained a deacon this year in Germany.

Since the early days of the Institute in the United States we have experienced God's blessings and are most grateful for all those who planted the seed in this country. Our teams are blessed with married couples, single laymen and priests. The teams meet monthly while we have three national gatherings each year.

Our hope and vision for the future is to welcome young adults who are searching to dedicate their life to the Church in a secular institute. ♦

**Editors' Note :** Please take note that the 2009 edition of *The Present Moment* will be mainly about the activities held in the Institute's districts and regions on the occasion of our fiftieth anniversary. We invite you to send us your stories, too, and photos, if you have any. Thank you!

*Raymonde Jetté and Fernand Turgeon*

# Haiti ~ Philippe Désiré, Director

In His wisdom God can use an unhappy event, even the experience of death, to fulfil His plan of salvation and bring about life. Wasn't it a result of God's intervention following the great disappointments of the Catholic Church in Haiti at the time that the Voluntas Dei Institute was implanted in the country during the summer of 1965, with the visit of Father Parent, our Founder?

In fact, this has been the interpretation of Freud Jean, a former member of the Institute and one of its founding members in Haiti. "A little more than a year before, François Duvallier had ordered the closing of the major seminary, expelled the Jesuit priests who staffed it and put all the major seminarians under house arrest, a few of whom were even thrown in jail. It was at that time that Father Parent was in Haiti for a canonical visit to

his Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate who had been in Haiti for a few years."

Father Parent also offered the possibility to those young men wanting to answer the calling of Christ and those who wanted to continue their priestly formation to come to the Voluntas Dei seminaries in Canada and then return to Haiti after ordination, to take up their ministry. Freud Jean, Eddy Julien, Danis Ridoré and Yves Sévère, to mention but a few, were part of the caravan that profited from God's goodness to them through the intermediary of Father Parent. The Voluntas Dei in Haiti is therefore part of this experience and, despite difficulties, continues to carry out its mission in this beautiful, poor but hospitable Caribbean country. O happy visit of Father Parent... or happy closing of the major seminary!



*Council's Members*  
*Evynx Monestime, Horace Didi,*  
*Salomon Jérôme, Philippe Désiré*

Today the Institute is implanted in four dioceses: Jérémie, Les Cayes, Jacmel, and Port-au-Prince, and has members ministering in the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, France, the United States, and Ecuador. We have candidates preparing for the priesthood, and single laymen and sacramentally married couples who are showing interest in the Institute. The district is composed of 33 priests (28 with stability), 13 seminarians, and over a dozen couples who are faithful to Christ via the Institute. Quite a few young people have approached us, to answer God's call by joining the Institute.

The Haiti District is faced with major challenges as we near the Institute's fifty-year anniversary, and is trying to find ways to meet them. The Haiti District therefore has major concerns:

- ensuring the solid formation of its candidates to the priesthood
- recruiting new couples and single men, and looking after their formation
- strengthening the members' feeling of belonging in the Institute, and team life
- give spiritual and pastoral support to the members in the district
- provide district animation, and ensure trained personnel for the Institute and the Church
- bring our spirituality to our pastoral commitments, make the Institute visible
- share our human resources (our missionaries) with other districts and regions of the Institute
- work towards the district's financial autonomy, etc.

We certainly have our work cut out for us! May God in His kindness help us realize these dreams, if He deems it advantageous and useful. ♦



# India ~ Joseph Thannikot Variath, Director

The Institute which was founded in India in 1967 at the instance of its founder Father Louis Marie Parent, OMI with Msgr. Mark Netto, the then Vicar General of the Trivandrum Diocese as part of Sri Lanka Region, has grown many times with 15 priests (10 incardinated and 5 diocesan), 2 celibate laymen, 80 seminarians (major 49 & minor 31) and 80 married couples to date. From a major team when it was founded, it has now developed as a region.

Till this year, the Region was compelled to accommodate its seminarians at its Directorate, Bethel, and at other religious houses and other seminaries. The region thanks the Almighty Lord, the Father General & all the Central Council Members, its benefactors, the bank authorities, and the private parties who have helped us to build the ground floor of the study house for the major seminarians at Vellarappilly in Aluva where diocesan as well as religious major seminaries are available. The ground floor of the study house was blessed by His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Daniel Acharuparambil, Archbishop of Verapoly, and inaugurated by His Excellency the Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Karikkassery, Auxiliary Archbishop of Verapoly, on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007. While seminarians are staying at “Our Lady of Miracle”, the major study house, only 25 are at Bethel, 9 are at Tillery and 9 seminarians are in regency in different parishes. It is expected that 5 seminarians could be ordained this year and another batch of 5-6 seminarians by the end of 2008 or the beginning of 2009. After these ordinations, it is hoped the Region would attain self-sufficiency in the matter of priests, and we would be able to spare some of them for mission work in India and abroad.



***Council's Members :***

***Fr. Joseph Thannikot Variath, Fr. Innaci Mudiappan,  
Fr. Antony Shabin Kaniampuram,  
Ambrose and Lourde Mary Sesaian***

Though the Institute was founded in Trivandrum in India, it has now spread over all the dioceses in Kerala and many dioceses in Tamil Nadu. Our candidates are from both these states and our priest members are working in different dioceses in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, etc. and our seminarians are doing regency in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as well as in Assam.

The only difficulty is that the Region is not yet self-sufficient both in monetary terms and in terms of accommodation for seminarians. We pray and wish to have one more seminary for minor seminarians so that the present “Our Lady of Miracle” could be for theologians, and the seminary attached to Bethel could be earmarked for philosophy students. Similarly, we should also have a minor seminary somewhere in Trichy or Madurai in Tamil Nadu so that the candidates recruited from Tamil Nadu receive their initial formation in their own land, complete studies up to Plus II level by staying there vis-à-vis the married couples; there could also be a common place to gather once in a while. The Region is in great debt as it had to purchase the land for the Major Study House and construct a building there with the meager collections our Father Director could make by conducting retreats in Germany, and from some of his friends in England, as no funding agencies have come forward to finance said project, though many were approached, except an amount of Indian Rupees 3, 62,240-00, by Propaganda Fide. Despite all these difficulties in hand, the Region is marching towards, for a better tomorrow.

Though we have all these ambitions for the development of the Institute in India, our first and foremost priority is to find resources for the immediate repayment of a private loan of Rs. 65 lakhs and Rs. One crore equals a monthly instalments of Rs. 1.84 lakh. We trust in Him who has led us all these years.

We also aspire to form a Charismatic Prayer Group of our own, so that preaching could be undertaken in a larger way which will not only help us to spread the Word of the God among those who are not fully aware of the Saviour, but also fully utilise the services of the talented priests and seminarians. ♦

# Sri Lanka ~ Selvaratnam James Dunstan, Director

## History of the Sri Lanka Region

Reverend Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., founder of the Voluntas Dei Institute met Bishop Emilianuspillai, the bishop of Jaffna in Sri Lanka, in Rome in 1962, and talked to him about the Voluntas Dei Institute. The bishop invited Fr. Parent to visit his diocese. Six young men were sent to Canada with him in 1963 (1 priest – Father Francis Joseph, 3 seminarians – Bernard Ratneya, Stanislaus Moses, and Florentine Rajaratnam, and 2 layman – Joseph Emmanuel and Guy de Fontgaland). This marked the beginning of the Institute in Sri Lanka. Later on, a few others came to Canada for formation.

On January 16, 1970 the Voluntas Dei Institute was officially inaugurated in the diocese of Jaffna in the presence of Father Parent, with four priests and three celibate laymen, of whom Fr. Rajaratnam was appointed director of the Sri Lanka Region. Besides, Fr. George Perera, who is from Colombo, worked in the archdiocese of Colombo as a Voluntas.

Between 1970 and 1975, the Institute was introduced to married couples and a few joined the Institute. In 1975 the foundation was laid by Fr. Parent on his fourth visit to Sri Lanka, for a house of formation at Muhamalai, Jaffna: the house was named “Parent Illam” in his honour; it was destroyed in 2000, a casualty of the Civil War.

The secular spirituality of the Institute attracted many priests and lay faithful, and the Institute expanded to the diocese of Mannar. Even the bishops started appreciating the beautiful secular consecration. In the beginning the seminarians were sent to the diocesan seminaries and the Oblate scholasticate for their seminary studies. However, when the Institute started growing, there was need to open another house of formation in Jaffna, for major seminary formation. This was in 1990.

The war was a real barrier to the growth of the Institute, not in quality but in numbers. Our members lived a real consecrated, spiritual, exemplary life during the war and the many displacements. War became severe, and both formation houses were damaged and the members were displaced. This gave us an opening to expand the Institute to other dioceses like Colombo in 1992 and Kandy in 2000. There is always some good, in bad experiences. The displacements paved the way to welcoming sinhala vocations from the south.



*Council's Members*  
*Anne and Joseph Navaratnam,*  
*Anthony Sahayanathan, Selvaratnam James Dunstan,*  
*Sebastiampillai Anton Mariathas*

Now, by the grace of God we are present in four dioceses, with three houses of formation, and three sectors with twelve teams. We have 95 members, of whom 40 have stability, 25 have commitments, 5 have vows; there are 14 in probation and 11 in aspirancy. There are 16 minor seminarians and 12 married couples as candidates and in the process of becoming members of the region.

These are a few historical sketches of the Sri Lanka Region from 1963 to 2007, under the directorship of five directors. Besides, the Sri Lanka Region has welcomed seminarians from Laos and India, for priestly formation. Furthermore, a few members are scattered in other countries, offering their services and living the spirituality there.

## Hope of Further Development

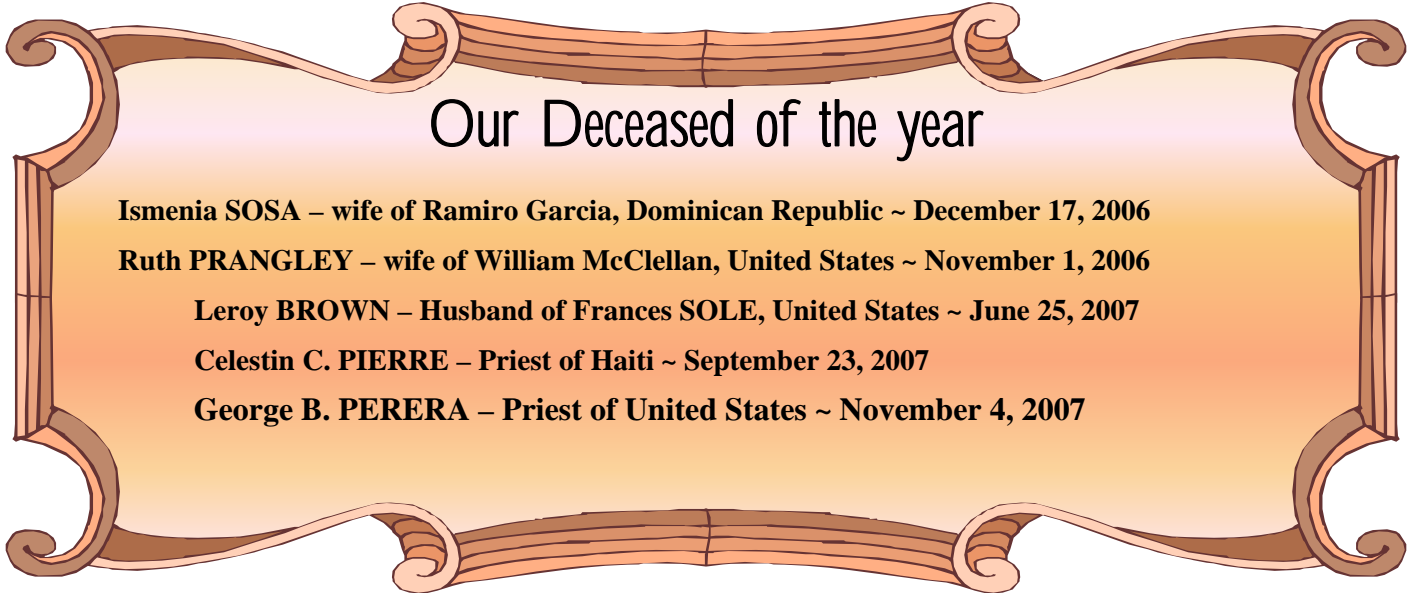
The development of the Voluntas Dei Institute in Sri Lanka is a clear indication that God is blessing not only the Sri Lanka Region but also the Institute as a whole. There were two secular institutes in Sri Lanka few years back but we are the only one remaining, perhaps because of our charism and our spirituality. The charism challenges all our members to witness to Jesus Christ in all circumstances. The spirituality – especially the second Five – invites all the members to live with positive attitudes in the present moment and in the presence of God. This is lived by the members, and it attracts almost all the bishops of Sri Lanka and obviously the priests and the ordinary lay people. There are many who are not part of the Institute but who live its spirituality.

Looking at the lifestyle of our members, two bishops have already invited us to come and introduce our Institute in different parishes of their dioceses, at least the spirituality of developing peace and fellowship within the parish communities. Moreover we are living amidst war and destruction. There is a division between Sinhalese and Tamils. However, our members are really living as bridges and peacemakers.

There is a rapid growth in Sri Lanka. So many vocations are there from all over the country. As we have an opening to do mission work, it is easy to go all over Sri Lanka, not only among the Catholics but also among other religious people. This is really a specialty of our spirituality. All our members live their witnessing consecration in their own respective parishes.

We are sure that one day we shall be throughout Sri Lanka, and our way of life will not only influence the members or the Catholics, it will become part of everyone as human beings.

In light of all this we feel that there is a great growth, but of course it may not be achieved very soon as the civil war is a great block to one's own security. However, the Sri Lanka Region is prepared and ready for the next step of becoming a district-in-formation. ♦



### Our Deceased of the year

**Ismenia SOSA – wife of Ramiro Garcia, Dominican Republic ~ December 17, 2006**

**Ruth PRANGLEY – wife of William McClellan, United States ~ November 1, 2006**

**Leroy BROWN – Husband of Frances SOLE, United States ~ June 25, 2007**

**Celestin C. PIERRE – Priest of Haiti ~ September 23, 2007**

**George B. PERERA – Priest of United States ~ November 4, 2007**

# Ecuador ~ Enfants Tiers-Monde (5-5-5)

by Guy Veer, *Voluntas Dei Associate Member*

## Translation of the Remains of Father Maurice Roy

Father Maurice Roy, a professed and incardinated member in the Voluntas Dei Institute, went to Ecuador in 1987 to found a home for orphans, the poor, the abandoned, or those children living in prisons. Ten years later, he added to this a “Voluntas Dei” college, to give to the poor the same training and education as that given to the children of the rich. This social complex is called the “Casa Hogar del Amigo Jesús,” and is in Pascuales, Ecuador. Father Michel Charbonneau, I.V.D., in Ecuador since 1968, is rightly seen as the initiator and co-founder of this institution for the poor children.

Father Maurice also founded a religious community, “Los Hermanitas de Nuestra Señora de la Visitación,” which was where he desired to end his days. However, on May 14, 1998, Father died in his room at the orphanage and his body was entombed in the chapel of the Peace Park Cemetery, where his funeral mass was held the day after his death.

In 2007, the Sisters expressed a desire to have the remains of their founder in their chapel, and after following the norms and prescriptions of the concerned authorities for such things, the body was exhumed October 5, 2007 in the presence of Father Charbonneau, two Sisters of the Visitation and two Misericordia Sisters. The bones were deposited into a casket of 50 cm. in length.

### **Thursday, October 11, 2007**

In the morning there took place the transfer of the remains from the cemetery to the orphanage by the Sisters of the Visitation, the community founded by Maurice, in the presence of Father Michel Charbonneau, Father François Hamel, and Guy Veer. The casket, carried by the Sisters, was set into the back of a van decorated with flowers; the van was escorted by two young girls walking on each side, with each one bearing a message.

Upon reaching the orphanage, the casket was borne by four young men who were at the orphanage at the time of Maurice’s death in 1998. The cortege, preceded by Michel Charbonneau, Guy Veer and François Hamel, entered the yard which had an honour guard composed of the children of the orphanage and the students of the College, amid the sounds of a band of musicians. In front of the chapel were Maurice’s friends: Sisters, teachers and professors, children of the orphanage, the students of the Voluntas Dei College and of Saint John the Baptist College in Pascuales, in all, about 500 people. The casket was placed on a table in front of the altar which had been set up in the chapel courtyard: Maurice was back home!

Michel Charbonneau, assisted by François Hamel and Seminarian Vicente Morocho, resided the Mass in memory of Maurice: beautiful singing, a Mass at which the many works of Maurice were recalled, the objectives he had pursued for his young disadvantaged, and the tangible results of 2007. A child from the orphanage and a student from the College gave vibrant testimonies to Maurice, and one of the College professors sang a beautiful song to “Mauricio.”



*Michel Charbonneau and François Hamel*

Following the Mass, the students lined up in the school yard and the dignitaries, the invited guests, and the Sisters drew up in front of the flags. Once again appreciation was expressed for Maurice, and a painting of him was unveiled. Then the national anthem was sung, followed by the “O Canada”, following which certificates of gratitude were given to Guy Veer and François Hamel.



Finally, the College students hosted an exhibit they has prepared on Maurice and their works, in the Padre Maurice Roy Auditorium. The ribbon was cut by Guy Veer.

### Friday, October 12

Early this morning, 24 children from the orphanage, with employees from the orphanage, were in the chapel praying before the casket that had been placed on the altar. Around 10 o'clock, the procession started and the children followed the casket to the door of the orphanage and there, the casket was placed on the van like the day before, for its journey to the chapel of the Visitation Sisters.

Once arrived, four Sisters carried the casket into the chapel, followed by the sisters, Maurice's friends, 7 children from the orphanage, and students of the Visitation Sisters. We felt very strongly that the Sisters wanted to honour their founder with readings and songs they themselves had chosen, and a eulogy by their Mother Superior, besides the

homily of Michel Charbonneau who recapitulated all of Maurice's apostolate on behalf of the poor.

Towards the end of Mass a document was signed by Father Michel Charbonneau, Guy Veer, Father François Hamel, the mother Superior, and the director of the College, sealed in a bottle and deposited in the casket which was then incensed and blessed.

The casket was then transported to a niche where it was placed, and the niche sealed up. A picture of Maurice, placed over the niche, was then unveiled. The ceremony ended with a blessing and songs and a final tribute by the Mother Superior. Maurice is resting in peace where he wished, among his Sisters who will perpetuate his memory. Facing the niche is across that Maurice had made in 1992 to mark the 500 years of evangelisation in America.



I cannot recount here all the emotions I felt in the course of these two days. I recalled all the happy times spent with Maurice. There were tears and difficult moments for those who knew him. His memory and his works as a *Voluntas Dei* priest will continue, in Ecuador!

P.S.: A thank you to the College's directors and students for having prepared all of the ceremonies at the orphanage, and the Sisters who did the same in their chapel. 💧



### Cécile and Roger Corneau ~ Canada

**A**s members of a secular institute, it is quite relevant to anchor our Institute life in the daily secular activities of our married life. We strongly believe that this is the very essence of the Voluntas Dei Institute's ideal and spirituality.

#### OUR MARRIED LIFE

We have been married some 40 years already. In our early years of life together, we had come to realize how each of us possessed a strong individuality, with such different tastes and interests. This has proven to be quite formative in developing respect for each other's gifts and expressions, while fostering similar growth in each one's own personal way.



In the early years of our life together, we took three young children into our care while their parents, our relatives, re-organized their lives. Needless to say, this experience quickly exposed us both to the challenges of parenthood. Subsequently, we had two children of our own: Sylvie, now 38, with a Master of Arts in Education, teaches high school fine arts at a rural high school, and Martin, 35, with university degrees in management and psychology, heads a business intelligence training team for a large Toronto multinational corporation. Both have children of their own and our small home is regularly a happy scene when all five from ages 3 to 16 invade the ordinarily quiet living space.

#### CÉCILE

Cécile studied in several fields also: education, library science, management, and theology. Cecile's background is quite varied too: five years of teaching in primary and secondary schools, seven years as library and archive technician at the University of Ottawa, and in a municipal library's technical services for a subsequent 16 years.

When the children reached school age, Cecile decided to invest her energies in the local pastoral activities, preparing the children for the sacraments of initiation. Her spare time was spent singing at the parish's liturgical celebrations. To top all this off, in 1975, she and Roger founded a coop day-care centre serving some 60 underprivileged children.

In 1999, along with an associate member, Louise Simard-Tremblay, they undertook the inventory of the Institute's archives. Cecile regularly spends several days doing the technical update of each year's new record transfers. At this time, she is deeply involved in researching and writing the Institute's history, at the request of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee.

## ROGER

In today's world, Roger is basically an incurable optimist academician! After obtaining his first university degrees in philosophy, he decided to pursue a specialization in information science and obtained subsequent graduate degrees in this field and in education. His free time has normally been spent reading philosophy, exploring his growing collection of classical music recordings, and mastering areas of applied computer science.

Roger's career started at Saint Paul University in Ottawa where he devoted seven years to the technical services team inventorying the library's philosophy collection. But the call to active academia was not to be denied as he joined the teaching staff of the Collège de l'Outaouais as professor of information science and department coordinator for the next 30 years. Twelve of these were also spent lecturing in the University of Ottawa, faculty of Education. This fruitful period provided many rich experiences, fulfilling the normal duties of committee participation for the Quebec Ministry of Education, national professional associations, and pursuing regular post-graduate training.

His free time during this period was devoted to the board of directors of the boys and girls scout group. In another field, Roger supplied many hours participating in the first computerized editions of the Constitutions and Statutes of the Institute.

Since his retirement in 2001, he has helped Cecile in preparing the new edition of the Formation Guides while setting up and maintaining the Institute's multilingual web page, which he actively manages to this day.

## THE VOLUNTAS DEI INSTITUTE

Our first contact with the Voluntas Dei Institute dates back to 1978. Our small family had recently moved to another suburb and we were searching for an active religious group. The young clergy of our new parish put us in contact with these Voluntas Dei members.

We were particularly attracted to the prevailing spirit of fraternity, openness and spontaneity between all members, whether lay or cleric. Furthermore, one could not avoid noticing that throughout all this fraternal expansiveness there remained the spiritual bedrock of a deep abiding reality: a very realistic and mature spirituality called *'the Voluntas spirituality of the 5-5-5'*. Both of us recognized immediately that this was what we had been searching for: a concrete spirituality of Christian commitment to the world and in the world, expressed in the realities of lay experiences in a day-to-day existence... that slow pilgrimage towards perfection through daily discoveries of the divine in normal everyday situations.

This very discovery of 1978 was vital to our reaction to the difficult trials of 1986 when the Church authorities insisted that married members should be relegated to a separate and secondary association with the Institute. We regularly witnessed the constant time and energy lay men and women gave to the Church and to our Institute in this mission to be present to the secular world as we built Christ's Kingdom. All that remained was a blind faith in what St. Paul described as *'knowing in Whom we had put our faith'*.

With the arrival of married members to the Institute, there appeared a new energy and vibrancy: these new, young members brought forth the urgency and innovation which everyone, lay and cleric, held in the very bottom of their hearts. The presence of couples expressed the lay Church as it was lived in the day-by-day experiences of a secular world. The focus was at that very place where *'the world'* experienced its daily existence, and this dimension brought a renewed dynamism to team life: there appeared a new convergence of the very aspirations of the world and the Church, and each gained a renewed vigour from the meeting. Lay members realized that they were integral members of their Church, and participated in the very decision-making processes of this local community.

After 30 years of this pilgrimage trek with the Institute, it remains quite impossible to draw up an exhaustive list of all those graces it has brought. They were years of spiritual sustenance and growth, of intense discoveries and shaping of interior life and, most importantly, of an appropriation of spiritual wealth geared to our particular lay lifestyle with its varied commitments continually invading our existence, our thoughts, our motivations, as well as the daily renewal of our lives together as a married couple.

We had learned early on that to be true Christians in the Church, we had to expend all our energies in fulfilling our secular commitments. For this very reason, we accepted to serve on the council for the Canadian District and especially on the Formation Committee for six years. Again, for this same reason, we served another 10 years on the central council. At times, it was not easy to relate the debates continually to our 'secular' mission and to the need for formation for our married associate members. More pressing housekeeping decisions imposed by a Church structured with a top-down model and recurring support measures for our many seminarians throughout the world often distracted from issues dealing with married members. As married members on these councils, we always believed it was our duty to foster what we perceived as a 'balanced' attention to all membership groups. This period brought us tremendous learning experiences, as we discovered the varied cultural traditions which made up our Institute and as we wrestled to understand and formulate the constant challenges of our secular mission.

With age, of course, our health slowly deteriorates. We still maintain, however, a very deep commitment to those issues described above. It is our hope that we shall be able to continue giving our best insights in this area of secular consecration and of the Institute's unique gift to the Church in its understanding of this secularity. If we cannot influence important changes, we shall remain present at least to ask basic critical questions... We only hope we are not alone!

The Institute has given us many friends, both lay and cleric. They have listened patiently and often assisted with wise counsel. Always, they were present for support and encouragement. If we may sum up in a few words what we perceive as our Institute's unique area of expertise, may we suggest, then, that **it is to weld ourselves to Christ in the chaotic daily experiences of our secular world like a rider who welds himself to his steed, to carry both more swiftly towards their mission, the approaching finish line.** ♦



## Sergio Miño ~ Chile

Sergio Miño was born in Puente Alto March 1, 1961. He joined the Voluntas Dei Institute July 14, 2004. On April 14, 2005 he began his probation. Following his two years' probation he professed his first vows in the Institute. He works in his parish as director of youth ministry. He is also involved in baptismal and confirmation preparation.

### Testimony

All this time I have tried to find how I could serve the Lord in the world. I thought that the only form of consecration was the priesthood or the religious life until I met Father Manuel Cornejo who introduced me to a new form of consecration in service to the Lord, which I have adopted. This form of dynamic consecration allows me to carry on my regular activities and my pastoral involvement. I can witness in my own milieu to the richness of the Gospel. Thanks to the teachings of Father Parent, I follow Christ by adopting the Five Points of the Voluntas Dei spirituality.





Team life and the welcome I have been given are a great richness to me. I can now answer the call the Lord has made to me since my baptism, of greater commitment to God and the Church.

It is a time of consecration through the evangelical counsels, and I must progress daily in faithfulness to God, as did the mother of the Lord in the reality of the present moment. This faithfulness to God was lost in the new ways of thinking. I shall risk following Christ, to break down this wall of indifference. Besides, I must attain the objectives of our Institute as a worker in the harvest, by bringing the peace and fellowship of Jesus Christ, all this being done with help from the Virgin of the Annunciation. ♦



**François Hamel, Director General  
His Holiness Benedict XVI  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Provida Mater, Roma, February 2007**



## A conversation with Bishop Louis-Marie Ling

*Raymonde Jetté and Fernand Turgeon*

We met Bishop Louis-Marie Ling, I.V.D., Vicar Apostolic of Paksé, Laos, during his visit to Trois-Rivières in July of 2006. He gave an account of his first years in the institute.



Bishop Ling was born in Laos in 1944. He studied at the seminary there from 1955 to 1963. He met the Voluntas Dei in 1959, in the persons of Deacon Daniel O'Rourke, Olivier Dallaire and Claude Véronneau, laymen. These had come to Laos at the request of the local Bishop who knew Father Parent. The Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate – Élise Bélanger, Odette, Annette Trudeau, and Bernadette were already at work there.

Louis' fellow-students became catechists while Louis himself did not really know what to do, despite his aptitude for studies. At the end of his secondary school, his bishop asked him: "Do you want to be a priest?" Louis answered, "I don't know." In 1963, despite a fragile health but trusting the authorities – that is, his parish priest and Father Parent – he came to Canada to continue his studies.

During our conversation Louis quickly mentioned those he met when he first arrived: Father Lucien Pépin, Yvon Royer, Gérard Dubois, Onil Boilard, Jean Lebrun, Jean-Roch Morin, Daniel and Gilles Poulin, Denis Servant, André Legault, and David Simpson, spoke of them fondly.

The year 1964 brought about many changes for the Voluntas. At that time members could be found "all over the planet:" Trois-Rivières, Victoriaville, Red Rapids, Whitehorse (Yukon), Ottawa, Roberval, Laos, New York Bolivia, Haiti, etc. Besides, that year marked the opening of the Institute's major seminary at Red Rapids, New Brunswick. At Trois-Rivières, the minor seminarians moved into the O.M.M.I. teachers' college: this greatly improved their living conditions. There were 65 students, with O.M.M.I.s and Voluntas Dei as teachers, and several Oblates looking after the housekeeping and the kitchen, and about ten Voluntas Dei laymen looking after the overall maintenance. Louis greatly enjoyed this period spent at Trois-Rivières, and he adapted very well.

From 1966 to 1968, he was very much at home at St. Joseph Major Seminary at Red Rapids, with its warm and welcome atmosphere. However, Louis desired to return to his home for his pastoral internship, as a way of confirming his pastoral orientation. In his country he could teach the catechists; a few of them were being formed for the Institute.

During his stay in Laos, from 1968 to 1970, Louis had several painful experiences: he witnessed the ill-treatment of members of his family, while he himself was not assaulted. On another occasion, during an ambush, his companions were wounded or killed, while he did not get a scratch. He understood at that moment,

as he himself says, “that the Lord had a mission for me.” He adds: “I prayed for two years, to see the light. From that moment on, I was determined to return to the *Voluntas Dei* in Canada.”

Back in Canada, from 1970 to 1972, Louis was involved in the team in Trois-Rivières with Réal Maltais, Réal Turgeon, Whalen Bossé, Jean-Nil Lebel, and Marc-André Lafrenière, and in activities at the Trois-Rivières campus of Université Laval.

Louis also told us that at first, team life felt somewhat artificial, but with the passage of time he realised that it gave structure and a framework of discipline, besides being an introduction to life itself.

Our conversation did not take us to his life as a young priest, his prison experience in the 1980s, or his new reality as bishop. Louis told us of his being happy and trusting in life. Regarding the Institute’s future in Laos, he leaves its development up to the Lord and the good will of the Institute authorities. ♦



## Testimony of Denise Mathieu

*In 2006, as soon as it was decided to celebrate the 50 years’ activity of the Voluntas Dei Institute in the January, 2008 edition of The Present Moment, we asked Ms. Denise Mathieu, who taught literature to our seminarians for a year, to give us a few memories of that time. This was her reply:*

What I am sending you are not really anecdotes. At the age of 75 and 40 years after the events, I do not really remember funny and amusing facts, nor humorous and subtle rejoinders from my students. It is vague but memorable memories that I have, vague but fond faces... My heart is filled with gratitude for this blessed year. This teaching experience was a unique one, in my life. I had taught at every grade level of the classical course, from Introductory Latin to Philosophy II. The Lord had plans of his own...

Imagine!... A young Oblate of 34 is given an obedience: to teach at the *Voluntas Dei* philosophy seminary to men between the ages of 25 and 40. What a challenge, and what boldness! Is it folly, or

is it faith in the One who can do anything? Is it because I trust Father Parent’s “flair?” It is a bit for all of these, and I accept.

From the very first class – even if things go well with the fourth year (“Versification”) students, I notice smiles and furtive glances from the students from the Letters (“*Belles lettres*”) to the Philosophy II classes. They are probably wondering what I am doing in a seminary. Fortunately I had enough grey hair to impose myself, and the subject matter, literature, seems to interest the students at every level. And geography is my specialty.

The older students are treated with the romantic novel “*Le grand Meulnes*” of author Alain Fournier. The high point of the year was, however, a study of Paul Claudel’s “*L’annonce faite à Marie*.” At every reading we did together, the students wanted to add their comments. It was a game for them, but at the same time a very beneficial exercise in self-expression. We had such wonderful time together, as we put our all into it.

This drama of “L’annonce faite à Marie” resonated even with the Haitian students because, at the end of the year, they put on a whole scene of the drama for the student public. How I loved these baccalaureate students, always smiling and polite, with a quick mind! How I loved, also, the two Laotians who would write with their own calligraphy, during recess. They were touching their roots, a bit nostalgically.

And then there were the debates where the two opponents defended their viewpoint before the panel of serious and diligent judges. These were

good exercises for future homilies. Even music had its own place. Having learned the International Phonetic Alphabet, some of the students got together to form “Les Klassik.” The richness of the French language allowed for taking liberties with it.

Generally speaking, teacher and students were on the same wave length... times of complicity... times of intense happiness. Painful moments, too, for some of them when papers had to be turned in, but also the satisfaction of having made the needed effort in order to succeed, despite the difficulties. ♠



## Excerpts from an Address to the Oblates (2002)

*Following is an excerpt of the homage given to the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate in 2002, on the occasion of their golden jubilee.*

From the very beginnings of the Voluntas Dei Institute on July 2, 1958, there was a team of Oblates serving the dozen or so Voluntas Dei students. Ms. Reine-Aimée Welsh, Director General, and Ms. Marie-Marthe Laroche, the treasurer, were watchful and gave us their much-needed support.

The Oblates’ central council would visit and support us financially. They gave us room and board, as well as kitchen, laundry, sewing, book-keeping, and teaching personnel.

Do you remember the choir directed by Françoise Gravel? Despite the reticence of Father Parent, we had a beautiful choir of Oblates and Voluntas Dei. At the time, Fernande St-Onge was in charge of the tape recording.

Let us remember the devotedness of our Oblate teachers: Ms. Denise Mathieu (French), “Aunt” Odile Lanoue (Latin), Ms. Louise Lalonde (English), Ms. Denise Guertin (Mathematics). We did our studies in the philosophy seminary, and the Oblates contributed largely to our success.

At the time of the teachers’ college existence, we used to go to chapel for the *Salve Regina*. Berthe Lagacé, our first cook, waited on us with great kindness... She prayed very much for vocations.

There were over 40 of us Voluntas, and there were as many Oblates to be fed from the same kitchen... but when the menu had to be composed from what the Voluntas brought back from their Friday evening and Saturday begging at the Trois-Rivières and the Cap-de-la-Madeleine farmers' markets... the task was quite a bit more difficult.

While the Voluntas Dei students occupied constricted quarters above the La Salette chapel, five Oblates lived in a tiny house just next door... At night, five folding beds would be opened and set side by side. During the day the beds were folded up to turn the place into a sewing room. The poor women must certainly have felt the winter's cold, in that house, but they never complained. In February of 1959, the Voluntas moved from above the chapel to the newly-built "White House." This freed room space for the Oblates, above the chapel.

On the transportation side, we had the grey "Ferblantine" ("Tin Lizzie"), a gift from the Oblates. Its trips from Cap-de-la-Madeleine to La Salette were too many to count. The vehicle was a carry-all, for material in general, bed frames, and mattresses,

We owe so much to our elder sisters, the Oblates. They were generous and contributed a lot to the growth of Voluntas vocations which came from everywhere, to study at our philosophy and theology seminaries. Financial aid and help in personnel were essential to us. The Oblates supported us with their prayer throughout all the years of development of the fledgling Institute. They developed the family spirit that we have with them.

Dear Oblates, we thank you for your support, your evangelical spirit, your love of Jesus and of your mission. Thank you for having followed Father Parent who led you to Christ and who helped us, too, to be faithful in carrying out our mission through carrying out the Will of God. ♦



**Members of the  
Central Council**

*Front row :*

*Michael J. Craig  
Fr. Louis-Marie Parent  
François Hamel*

*Back row :*

*Jean-Paul Chiasson  
Léo Grégoire  
Fernand Turgeon  
Raymonde Jetté  
Manuel Cornejo Garate  
Paul-Alain Monpas  
Selvaratnam James  
Dunstan*

# Stability

## Canada

Benoît ROY

## Chile

Jose Emilio and Lidia del Carmen NAVARRETE CONTRERAS

## United States

Anthony DI PALMA  
Julian GONZALEZ-MONTENEGRO  
William McKEONE  
John SZAMRETA  
Paul TOLVE



## Haiti

Pierre-Maxis PAUL

## India

Gratian and Saroja AYYAPILLAI  
Michael and Valsala CHELLAYYAN  
Antony Cruz and Sebastian CRISPIN ROMULAS  
Antony EUGENE BRITTO  
Rex and Maria Poorana LOURDURAJ  
Antonysamy and Abaranam PATHIMANATHAN  
Arockia Amal and Mary RAJ  
Inghasy Pillai and Ayya Pillai SUSAI VAZ  
Manickam and Rosary SUSAI  
Ollattupurath THOMMAN KUTTY THOMSON

## Dominican Republic

Angel Maria and Rosa Luz ARAUJO RODRIGUEZ  
Heriberto and Vidalina BATISTA  
Antonio and Sixta CALCANO  
Elpidio and Julia CESAR  
Jose and Angelica COTES RAMOS  
Vicente and Pilar DE LA CRUZ  
Elias DE LEON  
Fermina DE LOS SANTOS REYES

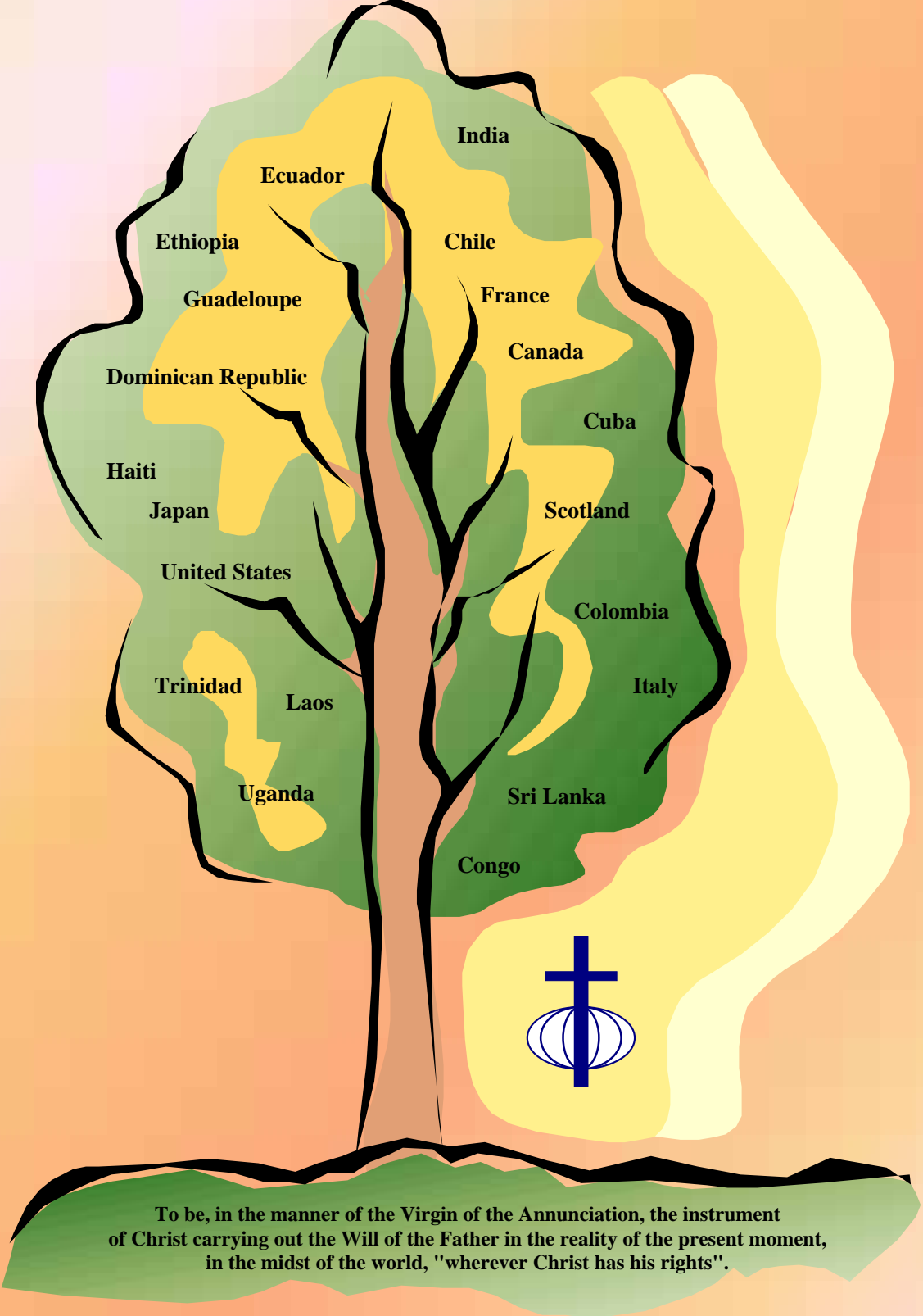


# Stability (continued)

## Dominican Republic (cont'd)

Edita and Amancio DEL BOIS  
Severa and Santiago DEL ROSARIO  
Luz Emilia and Felix Maria DIAZ  
Francisco Antonio FERREIRA  
Sonia Maria and Eleodoro FRIAS  
Ismenia and Ramiro GARCIA  
Eustasia and Augustin GERMAN JIMENEZ  
Dominga and Jose Maria GUZMAN  
Francisca and Manuel GUZMAN  
Maria Antonia and Ramiro HERNANDEZ  
Luisa Pilar and Andres Maria HIDALGO  
Satumina and Juan Pablo JIMENEZ  
Cristina and Ramon LIZARDO  
Mercedes and Secundino LOPEZ  
Josefa and Ramon MALDONADO  
Luz Maria and José MARTINEZ  
Gloria and Maximinio MATOS  
Dolores and Modesto MEDINA DIAZ  
Maria Altagracia and Francisco MEJA RIVERA  
Maria and Basilio MERCEDES CARRASCO  
Matilde and Agustin MERCEDES  
Maria Providencia and Benjamin MOREL ALCANTARA  
Ambrocia and Andres MOREL  
Julio PAYANO SANTANA  
Antonia and Manuel Maria PIMENTEL  
Dominga and Martires PIO VALDEZ  
Paula and Francisco REYES  
Dignora and Ciprian ROMERO  
Sonia and Luciano SANCHEZ CARRASCO  
Antonia and Freddy SANCHEZ  
Ana Altagracia SANTOS-VARELA  
Genara and Juan SEBERINO  
Consuelo SOSA  
Gilsa Elupina and Antonio Manuel TRINIDAD GERVACIO  
Antonia and Andres URBAEZ V.  
Rosa and Eduardo VILORIO





To be, in the manner of the Virgin of the Annunciation, the instrument of Christ carrying out the Will of the Father in the reality of the present moment, in the midst of the world, "wherever Christ has his rights".