

The Present Moment

Special Edition

January 2010



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Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.

1910 - 2009

FROM THE EDITORS ...



by *Raymonde Jetté and Fernand Turgeon*

Dear Readers,

We are happy to offer you this special edition of *The Present Moment*, a tribute to the Founder of our Institute, Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., who dies May 17, 2009. He returned to be with the One he had served throughout his life. Father loved to talk about God, calling him «the good God.» One of the hymns he particularly loved was “Ah! Qu’il est bon le bon Dieu!» (Oh, how good is the good God!) we, too, can sing in turn that our good God is good for having set Father Parent on our path. Because of him, our spiritual life was transformed through the Three Fives.

We offer you the vocation stories and tributes that we have received. They show how this apostle with a heart aflame that was Father Parent could reach out, touch the hearts and guide many young people: Voluntas Deis, Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and Recluse Missionaries, in their service to God.

Now that he is enjoying his final reward, let us ask him to watch over us from on high. May his intercession be the source of new vocations to follow Christ.

Read on!



The Present Moment

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FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL



A Tribute to Father Parent

by *François Hamel*

“I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. The man who loves his life loses it, while the man who hates his life in this world preserves it to life eternal. If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be. If anyone serves me, him the Father will honor. My soul is troubled now, yet what should I say - Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

(Jn. 12:24-28)

We believers know that Holy Scripture sheds indispensable light in our attempt to give meaning to the celebration of “the present moment.” We have just read the Word of God above. These words still ring in our ears: “Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat...” It is not enough today to welcome and live the Word of God: it must also be shared... the Word is the grain of wheat fallen into our lives. Good earth does not give back the seed, but transforms it into fruit. We should in the same way communicate to others what the Word of God has done in us, once it we accepted it... Witnesses are credible, and our witness today is Father Parent.

The Grain of Wheat

We should also see in the grain of wheat each of our lives surrendered to God, like the seed in the hand of the sower who knows the value of the grain, and who is aware of his indispensable role. The grains are our lives dedicated to searching for the Will of God. Father Parent knew this from a very early age, and we all know that his life was not his own. He accepted to be, for God, like a docile instrument, attuned to the His will expressed in the Word and in events and people encountered, especially his superiors. At 98 years of age, Father Parent belonged to the generation of men and women who could roll up their sleeves and courageously work at building the world in conformity with Christ.

The sower sows the seed where he wants. What is certain is that he knows what he is doing, and he sows so that the harvest may come in its own time.

The Grain Must Die

The Scriptural text also says that the grain must die. This is not an allusion only to physical death at the end of our days. For the instrument to be effective, it must be tractable and flexible, that is, it must lay aside its own will and adopt that of its master, the craftsman, the sower, because he is the one who knows what he does. In spiritual terms, this is known as “submission to God’s good will,” or “filial surrender.” Jesus expressed this perfectly in the Garden at Gethsemane when he said: “Not my will, but your will be done.”

The point of this is that we no longer apply our energy to building our own house, to finding a place for ourselves, but rather to offering to God all that forms our personality: our life, our gifts, our health, our knowledge, our strengths and even our weaknesses, so that the Will of God be carried out in us and through us. Father Parent trained us to be “instruments of Christ carrying out the will of the Father in the reality of the present moment.” Father knew that he was a child of God, chosen and loved. He sought out the will of God, and when he found it he dedicated himself to it body and soul, and nothing and no one could stop him. Naturally enthusiastic, Father was no friend of mediocrity. His passion for God made him an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, whose name he proudly bore to the end of his days. This is the life witness of the one we have returned to God, a life where the risk of faith led him to the end of himself, inciting him to look beyond human weaknesses and hurts. Father Parent would say that difficulties of life temper convictions rather than lessen them. Father had an indefectible love of the Church. His entire life was spent in obedience to God through the Church.

He Bears Much Fruit

Another parable says about the same thing: the one about the talents that must bring interest. From the time of Genesis, God’s will was that He needed men and women to carry out His work of creation. He chose us to bring to the world His kindness, mercy, goodness, and peace.

The more a soul is united to God and His will, the more also does it let God’s power act upon and through itself. Then God works wonders despite our limitations and our poverty. We know this as the presence of God.

Father Parent lived the presence of God, and its gifts are over-abundant in his life. There are, first, the invisible signs known to God alone. Here I think about the countless hours of active and profound listening, and all the time spent in prayer... All of that remains hidden in God as so many secrets of love. I think also of all those who were welcomed by Father Parent, those he comforted, encouraged, mentored, set on the right course in life, because he understood that every human being is made unto the image and likeness of God, that every human being is beautiful, great, and noble, somewhere. Without criticising or complaining, Father became the sacrament of God’s kindness. He understood the parable of the last judgement where Christ says that everything that we do to the least of his brothers and sisters, we do to him. And so, like Jesus himself, he was a person of service, often working to exhaustion, to create peace around him.

Then there are those fruits that are harder to conceal:

There are the Recluse Missionaries dedicated to the contemplative life.

There are the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, consecrated as witnesses of the love of Jesus Christ in the midst of the world.

There are the Voluntas Dei who are called to create peace and fellowship in Jesus Christ.

There are the Volunteers of God who are called to live and witness to the charity of Christ.

Finally, there are all the missionaries and people from other countries who are associated to us and who, from across the world, join us in prayer. They are a beautiful response to Father Parent’s missionary spirit.

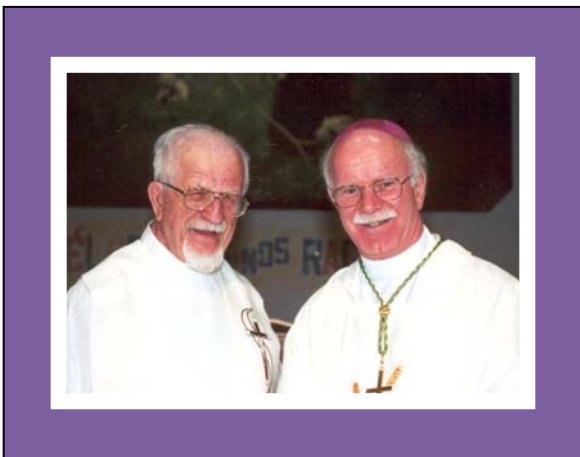
These are fruits that benefit the world through the apostolate of these spiritual families. They are fruit that benefit the Church through the sharing of our spiritualities. Among the basic values left us by Father Parent, we find that of having a positive attitude, a Godly trait that enables us to see our own gifts and charisms and those of others as sacred ground where it becomes possible to blossom and fulfil oneself in all inner freedom.

The Gospel says, “If the grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit.”

What is there for us to retain from the Word of God? Just this: We must in absolute confidence surrender ourselves into the loving hands of God, as a poor but indispensable instrument. We hand over Father Parent into the hands of God, like the Virgin of the Annunciation who said: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Father Parent had great love for the Blessed Virgin, and he gave her to us as a role model.

There are two key moments, in every human being’s life: birth and death. Earthly life that begins, and life that unfolds by crossing the threshold of time and eternity. These times are always accompanied by very powerful and special human sentiments. If death is a trial for us, a loss at the human level, we must not forget that it is also a gain. The Christian vision of this moment is very well expressed in the words from a Preface for Funerals: “For your faithful people life is changed, not ended.” We have lost someone close to us, but we have gained someone to intercede for us. We must now work unrelentingly, in serenity and joy, to carry on Father Parent’s work with the boldness that was so characteristic of him.

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MARTIN VEILLETTE OF TROIS-RIVIÈRES



Like so many others, I, too, had the chance of meeting Father Parent and to share a number of events that concerned him. I first got to know him by reputation as the founder of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and of the Voluntas Dei Institute. It was through the members of these two Institutes that I became acquainted with Father Parent. I had great admiration and respect for this zealous missionary who was full of stories and anecdotes to illustrate his reactions and attitudes, marked with surprise and humour.

In my different contacts with Father Parent I was able to see for myself the great love he had for the Church, and his deep faith. He would address me, as bishop, with a respect that never ceased to surprise me. I believe that he was the first one to practice the spirituality he developed and proposed to the members of his Institutes. During the last fifteen or twenty years of his life, when illness had started to really affect him, he was an example of someone who confronted the reality of old age with wisdom and serenity. It was therefore not surprising that Our Lady of the Cape Basilica was so full, at the funeral which I had the honour to preside with a heart filled with thanksgiving for the witness of this valiant founder!

THE MESSAGE OF MS. CLAIRE NANTEL, P.D.G., OBLATES MISSIONARIES OF MARY IMMACULATE



Introduction to the Liturgy of the Funeral of Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.

Today we bring to his final resting Father Louis-Marie Parent, for some of us, a founder, and for others, a confrere or a friend. For his full life we praise the Lord who filled him with His countless blessings.

The life of Father Parent was a long series of projects, all of which were special. He began his Oblate life as a missionary in western Canada in 1938, and continued there until 1952. He served there first as a curate, then as pastor, and finally as missionary-coloniser. It was during that time that he took part in founding a contemplative community: the Recluse Missionaries.

Then he founded two secular institutes: the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate in 1952, and the Voluntas Dei Institute in 1958. These would occupy the main part of his life.

Beginning in 1952, his mission was looking after the development of these two groups, preaching retreats, writing books, articles and brochures on spirituality, and serving as spiritual animator for pilgrimages. Besides that, he encouraged and supported several new communities and prayer centres. The outreach of his work has spread to four continents.

We are filled with thanksgiving for Father Parent's energetic and enthusiastic faith. He shared this faith, and nurtured it in many people. Because of him, so many have found the courage to get involved in all

kinds of projects, the courage to trust him and, in this way, to develop heretofore hidden talents.

We recall his ease and simplicity in reaching out to others, to strike a conversation with people of all kinds, to call everyone by name, to encourage, and to challenge those who were most hesitant in committing themselves. Because of the trust he showed his listeners, each of them could continue in doing good, being assured of God's love for him or her.

And to Father Parent, the humour of God was seen in so many ways – being with his family that gave him an extraordinary courage, an outstanding character, and an energy that would sweep aside the most negative medical diagnoses, and this, from his youngest years.

And with us all he shared God's word, spoken and adapted for today, with unbounded enthusiasm, his ability, until the last, to communicate in a very picturesque manner and often with humour.

What Father Parent leaves us especially are the Three Fives that you will find on the memorial card that you received. The Virgin Mary was his model, his guide, his help. And it was in imitation of her that he attached himself to the Will of God, the drive of his many activities.

We shall remember that, for him and through him, God has worked marvels, for which we are grateful!

BIOGRAPHY OF FATHER PARENT



by The Oblates Missionaries of Mary Immaculate

Louis-Marie Parent was born in Saint-Camille de Bellechasse (Québec) in 1910. He joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1931 and was ordained priest in 1937.

In 1938 he went out as a missionary in northern Alberta. In 1942 he became the resident priest for the parish of Tangent and District. In 1943, with two young women from Montreal, he took part in the foundation of a contemplative religious community, the Recluse Missionaries.

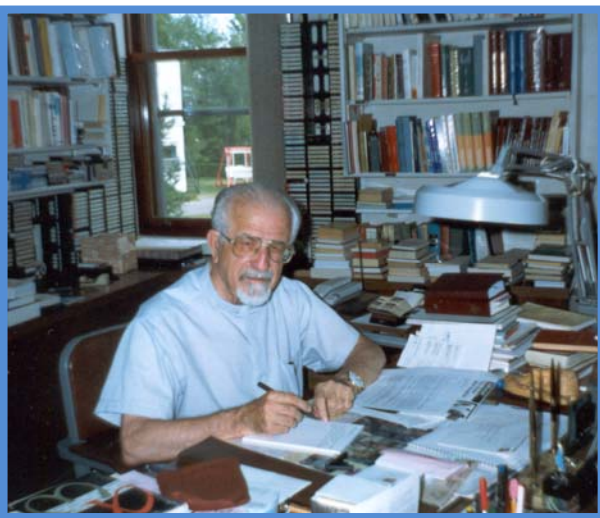
In 1944, he became pastor of Falher, and in 1945 he was appointed missionary-coloniser of Peace River (Alberta).

In 1952 he founded the secular institute of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and, in 1958, the Voluntas Dei Institute.

From the beginning of his priestly life he was a renowned preacher and, in this way, he had contacts with many lay people, religious, and priests.

As a spiritual writer, he was well-known to thousands of readers, because in twenty years he published a monthly booklet for the “Collection Volontaires de Dieu.”

Besides, he is also wrote several books on spirituality and human relationships.



*Do you want to sow for one day?
Then sow flowers.
Do you want to sow for a lifetime?
Plant a tree.
Do you want to sow for eternity?
Then sow kindness, love,
Peace and joy.*

FUNERAL HOMILY

II Tm. 1:6-9, 13-14; Jn. 12:24-28

by Mario Laroche



The Gospel says that Jesus was upset. He is staring death in the face, and he trembles. He, the Master, sees the cross coming to him: will he refuse it? No, because he wants to do the Father's will. This is his life. Beyond the cross, he glimpses the Father waiting for him. That is where he wants to take us, into the Father's glory. Today God welcomes Louis-Marie Parent, **our** Father Parent, who is truly totally fulfilled in God's love, and with the Virgin Mary he loved so well.

His was a long road. Louis-Marie first let himself be stripped of his personal ambitions, in order to discover the gift of God that he had been given at baptism. Dying to oneself in order to bear fruit...

Graced with an extraordinary enthusiasm, he at one time wanted to go into sports, then become a speaker, an orator in the political arena, or even a businessman. However, raised in righteousness in his family, he let himself be guided, in discerning God's project for him. **Several people have read his autobiography**, and they have been able to catch a glimpse of how the Lord formed this apostle according to his heart: an apostle with a heart of fire!

"He who loses his life in the world preserves it for eternal life."

Then, Father Parent was for many of us the one who, like Paul in his second letter to Timothy, awakened and kindled in us the gift of God that we had received, inciting us to overcome our timidity in order to witness steadfastly to the love of God, leaning on the solid foundation of the Gospel.

As a matter of fact, how many are there who have already said :

- "I owe him my vocation" (i.e., I understood my vocation)
- "He helped me hold on."
- "He helped me to have confidence"... or "to trust"

Even to the last, Father Parent was always there to encourage us to keep going.

"If anyone wants to serve, let him follow me.»

Father Parent did not only challenge us, he showed us the way, he walked on the path, behind Jesus.

Yes, through a spirituality that was tried and true, he makes us live in the following of Jesus.

And this spirituality is expressed in so many languages, and is in so many countries, on different continents, especially in those places where there are Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and Voluntas Deis, and Volunteers associated to the O.M.M.I.s

We can bless God, today, for His work in us through the intermediary of Father Louis-Marie Parent.

We are called to be witnesses to the Charity of Christ, to be instruments of Christ doing the will of the Father in the reality of the present moment. To help us carry out our mission, the Lord set on our path a man of faith, Father Parent, that he might help us deepen our faith and live the Faith, by inviting us to constantly be in the **presence of God**. This attitude is a necessary element for the birth and growth of love, in us.

Father Parent acquired patience and kindness (quite a feat for one who was so full of energy and enthusiasm): he showed us a way to better welcome Christ in others by **doing away with destructive criticism**. He himself would look for the dominant quality... and then would indicate three or four others!

When we realise Father Parent's mastery over himself, we understand better how he could show joy in every circumstance. This was how he invited us to welcome Christ in every event, by **abstaining from complaints**.

To acquire kindness and good-will that are signs of love, Father Parent discovered another path along which we could always discover him: the path of service. He constantly called on us to be **beings of service**, attentive to the calls of God and the needs of our brothers and sisters.

He we set ourselves to develop all these attitudes, full as they are of the spirit of the Beatitudes, we shall, like Father Parent, be able to

- experience the inner peace of God
- and be **builders of peace** and of brotherhood in Jesus Christ.

Let me tell you a story.

More than twenty years ago, at the central house of the Oblates, we marked Father Parent's anniversary, at Mass.

I had been asked to deliver the homily and I had developed – somewhat like I have just done – the way that Father Parent lived these five attitudes, these “Five Points.” I acknowledge that Father Parent applied himself to living them fully, and to encourage him to continue,

I added that he always looked like the vigilant servant

- always watchful for the needs and desires of others,
- always ready to serve (or to travel – a trait that became him very well!)



After Mass, Father Parent told me that he had felt somewhat embarrassed, but then he told himself that he had to listen to the words as if he were attending his own funeral! Then he added that I should keep the homily, that it might come in handy! I suppose that you can see him... But it was important to him that we preach on these Five Attitudes. Could it be that he wanted us to talk about them today? If so, I have granted him his wish.

Today I praise God for all that Father Parent has done for us, and for all those whom the Lord has set on his path, both groups and individuals.

Father Parent's wish has always be to be as available as possible to others, so that the Lord would act through him. He greatly appreciated the expression of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity: “being a surplus humanity for Christ.” These last few years, as he already felt “in the waiting-room of heaven, waiting to be called,” as he was fond of saying, he was the humanity of Christ at prayer, on the mountain, praying for his apostles, his disciples, the Church...

On a visit to Father Parent, about a year ago, he pointed out that it was taking a bit of time, to get to heaven: “This is perhaps what is known as the purgatory,” he said. Referring to the problems he was having with his memory, he added: “I preached the present moment my entire life; now, I have to live it.”

One of us asked him to tell us about his day. Early in the morning, after getting up and dressing, he would go to the chapel to pray. During the day, praying was his main task. We told him, “So, you pray pretty much all day!” And he answered: “You know, **we have always done everything together...**”

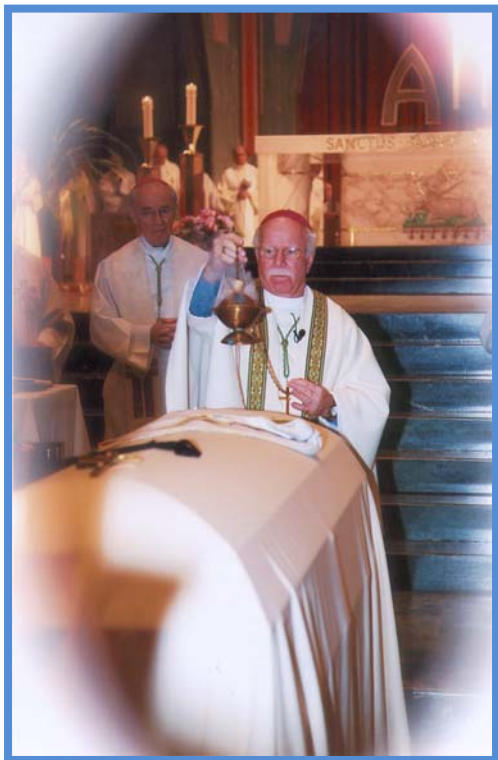
In the last days, at the very end of his life, he was on the cross with Jesus, the man Jesus who suffered atrociously for us. I praise God for Father Parent's priesthood, 72 years tomorrow; for all his Masses, for all the sacraments celebrated by Father Parent over these years, and for his preaching of the Gospel.

“If anyone serves me, the Father will reward him.”

Lord, our friend Father Louis-Marie Parent kept the deposit of the faith. He served.

It is with great confidence and deep affection that we surrender him to your kindness and mercy.

PHOTOS OF THE FUNERAL CEREMONY



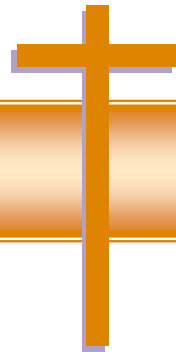
Bishop Veillette incensing the body



**Signing the register: Ms. Claire Nantel, O.M.M.I., P.D.G.
Fr. Jean-Paul Chiasson, Assistant Director General, Fr. Jean-Claude
Gilbert, O.M.I., and Bishop Martin Veillette, of Trois-Rivières**



The Funeral Celebration



CONDOLENCES



Dear François and all my Brothers and Sisters,

It was a great surprise for me to hear of the departure of our venerated Founder Father Louis-Marie Parent, for our Father’s House: **A saint has left us to wait for us in the Father’s House.** It is now our turn to walk in his footsteps and follow his example. The seed has been sown. The wheat shall grow and produce a harvest that the eternal Father expects from us all, Recluses, Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, and Voluntas Deis...!

I am deeply moved by the departure of this beloved, respected and admired soul who had a special affection for me. *He would always write to me by hand*, while he was still able to, and I would write back as his son. He always called me *Mon P’tit Louis – My Little Louis*, right until I became bishop... After that, he wrote to say that it was no longer fitting for him to call me *Mon P’tit Louis* as he had been doing... because his spiritual sensitivity would not allow him. I would have loved for him to continue calling me *Le P’tit Louis*. Our mutual admiration always continued to grow. I owe him everything: my spiritual and human formation, the priesthood and especially my being bishop.

When I visited him shortly after my ordination as bishop, Father Parent said: ***“You know, Louis, your episcopal appointment is a sign that the universal Church has confidence in the Voluntas Dei Institute...!”*** And since then, these words have been anchored in me. Yes, we are all, each and everyone of us, signs of the Church’s confidence in the Voluntas Dei Institute.

I am sad but very happy nonetheless, because a father and a saint waits for us all, in heaven.

I am sincerely united to all my brothers and sisters of the three institutes founded by the same father.

+ Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanékhoun
Évêque de Paksé, Laos

Dear François,

I first want to offer my sincere condolences to you, your council, and the members of your Institute.

My work in Laos allowed me to see how much Father Parent’s travels there marked a turning-point for that mission, and how much his charism is still alive in the country.

My presence [Ed.: at the funeral] may be a sign of this living link. As you know, I am very happy to be the Postulator for the cause of Luc Si who was an associate member probationer, ever anxious to live to the very end to live the beautiful calling of his life: to carry out the WILL OF GOD.

With heartfelt regards,

Roland Jacques, omi
Dean, The Faculty of Canon Law, St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada
Postulator for the cause of beatification of Luc Si

Most Reverend Father François,

Peace in Christ.

It was with great sadness that I heard about the death of Reverend Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., the founder of the Voluntas Dei Institute. He was a devoted servant of the Lord. He also founded the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and the Missionary Recluses. He could do all these great works because the Lord was with him. "Well done, good and faithful servant,... enter into the joy of your master" (Mt. 24: 21).

May he rest in peace. May he also be the intercessor of all his children he has left behind, to continue his work.

I thank you and all the members of the Voluntas Dei Institute for the good works you are doing in Ethiopia.

May God be your hope and strength during these sad days.

Yours in the Lord,

**+ Abune Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel C.M.
Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Abeba,
Ethiopia**

Father Hamel,

We would like to express our sympathy to you and all the members of our Institute on the passing of our beloved Founder, Fr. Parent.

We indeed are blessed that the Good Lord placed him on the path of our lives, and that he followed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to found the Institute that consequently has been a great aid in helping us grow spiritually, and deepen our relationship with Jesus and one another.

We believe that Fr. Parent is now totally happy in the bosom of Mary and Jesus, and welcomed as the "well done, good and faithful servant."

God bless you and our Institute.

Love & Prayers,

Lily & Hubert «Gabe» Doucette, Associate Members, I.V.Dei, Canada

Dear François,

Dear Members of the Voluntas Dei Institute,

I was very saddened to hear about the death of your Founder, Father Louis-Marie Parent. This is a great loss not only for your Institute and his other foundations, but a loss also for the Québec and the Canadian Churches. His liveliness, simplicity, and shepherd's heart shaped him and has marked the history of our Church.

Lately I heard Cardinal Marc Ouellet say with great emotion that it was a big piece of the Québec Church history that was disappearing. I am in full communion with this observation, having had the pleasure of knowing Father Parent all these years. His quality of presence made him a man in whose presence people loved to be, to have a taste of the eternity that he was already experiencing.

Once again I extend my affection, with the assurance of my best sentiments.

**Gérald C. Lacroix
Auxiliary Bishop-Elect of Québec
Canada**

It was with regret that I read your email on the death of Father Louis-Marie Parent. His charisma, his preaching, his writings and his enthusiasm in proclaiming Jesus Christ made him a true witness to the faith and a source of inspiration to many people. Hence, the death of Father Louis-Marie Parent is a great loss to the members of the Voluntas Dei Institute, the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, the Recluses, and the entire Church.

Human words are poor, to express one's feelings at the death of a loved one, and that is why we need to turn to the Word of Him who loves us so much. In Psalm 23 we pray: **“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose. Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil, for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.”**

On behalf of the diocese of Bathurst and in my own name I offer you our deepest condolences and the assurance of our prayers.

+ Valéry Vienneau
Bishop of Bathurst, Canada

On the Occasion of the Death of Father Parent.

Our gratitude to this valiant soldier of Christ. Standing at the very apex of his life, he was able to capture Life. With holy daring and up-to-the-minute creativity, he attentively followed the direction of the Holy Spirit everywhere and in everything.

May the Lord welcome him for ever in “His beautiful home.”

With our respectful and affectionate memories,

Les Équipières sociales (secular institute), Canada
Marie-Paule Émond, President

Dear Members of the Institutes founded by our Father Parent and Associated Persons,
Dear Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Dear family and friends of the deceased,

I extend my sincerest condolences on behalf of the entire Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The loss of a spiritual Father of Father Parent's stature is painful, but I also believe that it also makes us share in the joy that God has prepared for His faithful servants.

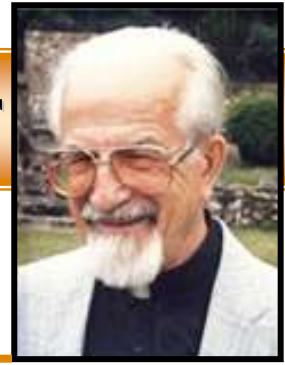
I feel privileged, personally, to have known Father Parent and to have received letters from him. May he continue to inspire us as we follow the Risen Jesus to whom he dedicated his entire life. And may St. Eugene, whose feast coincided with Father's funeral, welcome him into the house of our common Father.

Greetings from Aix-en-Provence (France) where our community is gathered together for its annual retreat.

In Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Wilhelm Steckling, O.M.I.
Superior General

FROM THE HAND OF FATHER PARENT



From *Entre-nous*, Canadian District,
vol. 21, No. 6, December 2003
by *Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.*

Dear Voluntas Deis,

I join each one of you in thanking God for the year that is coming to a close, and the new one which He has reserved for us. The years go by rapidly, and it is up to each one to make a serious inventory. The only thing that interests the Lord is the quality of our relationship with and faithfulness to him. In his love he set us on our way, and this love will determine the happiness he is preparing and reserving for us, for eternity.

The most comforting thought in our life is to know that we are loved by God, that the Virgin, our mother, is present to each one of our thoughts and actions. She makes us think about and reflect on the quality of the love that Jesus builds up in each one of us. In heaven, there is nothing but Love. And Love is God himself in us, invigorating us, transforming us, and making us happy forever. We have only a few years to live between now and our coming to God. The Virgin is present in our lives and she does an outstanding job in continuing our education, in directing us to eternity, in creating in us an eternal solidity. Everything that we have experienced and all the time we still have to live is controlled by the Virgin to whom we were dedicated from the time of our baptism. There is no comparison possible between what we do for God and what the Virgin does in each one of us because, since we were baptised, she has been the co-owner of our lives and of our eternal destiny.

One day we shall be in heaven: such is the will of Jesus and Mary, it was the *raison d'être* of the incarnation of Jesus and the intervention of Mary. Let us employ the time that is remaining to thank Jesus for have chosen us. Let us tell the Lord of our gratitude. The most beautiful for each of us is still to come. Let us let ourselves be loved. God is Love. Happy New Year! Let us exchange blessings, and let us continue to surrender ourselves to Mary who works at our salvation.

*God simply asks us to give him
the present moment so that he may give
eternal happiness.*

TRIBUTES



“A Loving Tribute”

by Fr. Marc-André Lafrenière, I.V.Dei, Canada



An old man has just passed away (May 17, 2009) at the age of 98 and 10 months, a very ordinary person, naturally impulsive but so deeply animated by the fire of the Holy Spirit. **Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.** dedicated his whole life to the Gospel.

As a chosen and cherished child, he sought out the will of God, and once he had found it, he gave himself body and soul to it, with nothing and no one to stop him.

The more a soul is united to God through prayer and attachment to God’s will, the more does it leave the power of God act in it and through it. God then works wonders despite the soul’s limitations and poverty. In relation to the spirituality of our Institute, this is known as “the presence of God.”

Father Parent was a deeply prayerful man, and we could see the fruits of this in his life. There are, first those invisible fruits known only to God, such as the countless hours of active and profound listening, in periods set aside for prayer... all of this is lost in God like loving secrets. In the inheritance of the essential values he has left us, we find “positiveness,” a trait of God that enables us to recognise our own gifts and charisms as sacred soil where it becomes possible to be oneself and fulfill oneself in all inner freedom.

Then there are those fruits that are difficult to hide: the apostolate of the Recluses dedicated to contemplation, the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and their affiliated group called the Volunteers, whose commitment is to live and witness to the Charity of Christ, and the Voluntas Deis whose members are called to build peace and fellowship in Jesus Christ. THANK YOU, Father Parent, and, from heaven, please watch over us who seek to do the will of God!

Let us ask to have a Gospel spirit in order to follow the will of the Father in all things by allowing ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

In Grateful Remembrance

of Father Louis-Marie Parent, Co-Founder of the Recluse Missionaries

The First day on Alberta Soil

As the Angelus bell rang on August 14, 1943, travellers Rita Renaud, Jeannette Roy and Jeannette Beaupré arrived by train from Montreal after a three-day and four-night journey. They were met by Father Parent who welcomed them warmly and gave them communion. “Grandma” Garon, the rectory housekeeper, served them a bowl of “fly soup” – there were so many of them flying around the table – a soup that the young ladies ate with delight... Their previous penances served them well.

Father Parent brought them to visit the “shack” he had purchased for them the day before, an old granary populated by mice. In the centre of the building was an old buggy. Everything had to be cleared out and the building washed down, restored, and winterised. Their experience of hermitage life in a stable in Pointe-aux-Trembles, Québec, kept them from panicking, when they saw this poverty.



Father Parent in front of the first Recluse monastery, Tangent, Alberta, January 1944.

Their first day of the newcomers on Alberta soil ended with night prayer (Compline) in the rectory chapel. Father Parent, whose ear for music is far from perfect, would always remember the closing hymn: “Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit” – sung by three beautiful voices, and with such spirit! (From the history of the community).

It was on this note that the first day of a ten-year period during which Father Parent was actively involved with the Recluses came to an end. A seeker of financial aid and of vocations, he was first and foremost a priest who encouraged the pioneers in the spirituality they had drawn up for themselves. Despite the pressing needs of his parish apostolate, he always respected the contemplative life of the Recluses.



Immigration office acquired by Father Parent and transformed into a monastery, Falher, Alberta, 1945.

Dear Father Parent,

You are now at home with God, with “le bon Dieu.” Keep watching over us Recluse Missionaries, so that we always remain faithful to our mission of adoration and intercession.

Thank you for everything! May the Lord himself be your eternal reward!

*Sister Monique Béland, archivist,
The Recluse Missionaries.*

Father Louis-Marie Parent

by Fr. Michel Laroche, I.V.Dei, Canada

I first met Father Parent in July of 1958. My brother Mario along with the first candidates to the priesthood were receiving the cassock. Along with my family I joined in the celebration presided by Father Parent.

I remember that at the homily Father Parent talked to us about the Institute's founding. I don't recall exactly what he said but I remember being impressed with his boldness, his enthusiasm, and his simplicity. Deep in my heart I realised that this was what I was looking for without knowing. On August 15, 1958 I asked to join the Institute. A few days later I received a letter from Father Parent telling me that I was accepted and that I had to come to La Salette at the beginning of September.

From the very first I discovered how far Father Parent was willing to go, to help priests. As a matter of fact, he had appointed a priest with a serious alcohol problem director of the group. We had just started work on a construction and I didn't believe it made much sense, the ways things were going with this priest in charge. One evening during the novena to the Virgin of La Salette (September 1958), I had the opportunity to voice my concern to Father Parent. I told him what was going on, and this is approximately what he replied: "Michel you are absolutely right regarding the construction and the other problems. However, even if it were to cost us \$10,000... to save a priest, it would not have been expensive." I had my lesson. Finally, after two years with us, the priest returned to his community and had a wonderful priestly life in his old age. How many are the priests, the men and women religious who were able to rediscover the beauty of their vocation, thanks to Father Parent?



I shall never forget the lessons in humility that Father Parent gave us. Here is an example: In 1966-1967 there came to us a rather sizeable contingent of Haitian seminarians, at Red Rapids. At the time, Yvon Carpentier was rector of the seminary. Father Parent came to the seminary and met with Yvon and me. With his usual enthusiasm, Father mentioned adding an extra floor to the dormitory and class buildings, and then he left us. Yvon and I were of the opinion that this did not make much sense. As there was an old farmhouse sitting on the property, we thought that it would be better to renovate it and then it could house 10-15 students. We returned to Father Parent to explain our point of view. He listened attentively, and after a few minutes of silence, he replied: "Young men, you are right, and that is what we shall do."

I add to this testimony a few words from a letter he wrote to the members of Altagracia District in the Dominican Republic for their 25th anniversary of foundation:

"Be consecrated according to your state; do not get used to what you do, avoid routine, start over again each day, like the river whose water flows continuously without going dry. Hold evil in horror, and be passionate for the good. May the daily gift of yourself be the fruit of the Eucharist in your lives" (September 12, 1996). This advice, Father Parent lived it throughout his life.

From Heart to Heart

by Fr. Pierre Marois, I.V.Dei, Canada

My heart is united with that of Father Parent in thanking God for what he is and for his coming among us.

Knowing Father Parent's story as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, knowing also about his searching, his love, and the realisation of the will of God in his life, I can say that "in the manner of the Virgin of the Annunciation," he was "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."

While remaining an Oblate, Father Parent not only founded the Voluntas Dei Institute, but he was a Voluntas Dei through and through. His living in the presence of God and living the present moment, his positiveness, his being an instrument of peace, and his availability in Christian contacts make of him the example of a master and spiritual guide. He was a really good father who sacrificed himself for his children and others, as he helped them think positively, day by day.

Father Parent helped me from the very beginning of my vocation as a Voluntas. I had just passed through a difficult period when I asked to see him. He accepted, and talked to me about the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute. He told me that lay missionaries of the Institute had left a short time before for Laos. What a wonderful project! I was really attuned to this, since being a missionary was my dream. So, this was such a good opportunity for being one... Another delicate touch of God!



Father Parent accepted me into the Institute with no conditions attached. He trusted me and said: "Continue on with your studies and then we shall know the will of God." I am very grateful, because this year (2009) I celebrated my fortieth anniversary as a priest. I am grateful – I dare say, "We are grateful" – to this man of God who passed among us, who continues to pass among and who will continue to pass through our lives in his teaching, his work, and the agreeable souvenir of his person.

In doing good in the presence of God, let us live in the reality of life the testament Father has left us: to see the positive in others as we focus on their qualities, to marvel at the beauty of nature, being of service, and being peacemakers as together we build the fraternity.

Let us remember Father Parent's enthusiasm, his zeal, his piety, his availability and holiness. Let us follow in his footsteps in order to "become saints, and rapidly." The torch has been passed. Let us let Father live through us in the reality of daily life.

Fr. Louis-Marie Parent – A Man of Faith and Inspiration

by Fr. Florentine Rajaratnam, I.V.Dei, Canada

The Voluntas Dei Institute in Sri Lanka owes its presence and its growth to Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.

It all started in Rome during the Second Vatican Council. The providential meeting took place between two great people, Bishop Emilianus Pillai, the Bishop of Jaffna, Sri Lanka and Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., the founder of the Voluntas Dei Institute at the Oblate Fathers House in Via Aurelia. The meeting concluded with the Bishop extending an invitation to Fr. Parent to visit his diocese. Fr. Parent, accepting this invitation of the Bishop, visited Sri Lanka in 1963.

The charisma of Fr. Parent enabled Bishop Pillai to send a group of young people to further their studies and to get acquainted to the reality of Secular Institutes. This is where I came into the picture. I was one of the eight people, one priest, three seminarians and two laymen to be introduced to the Voluntas Dei Institute and two young ladies to be introduced to the O.M.M.I. Thus, started a relationship between me and Fr. Parent.

I cherished his weekly conferences. The simple spirituality of the 5-5-5 he proposed, his faith in providence and his positive attitude towards people and things were my inspirations. I appreciated the trust he had in me by making me the person responsible for the Institute in Sri Lanka and India. I will never forget his confident encouragement when he repeatedly mentioned, in his own words, “Florentine, you are the founder of the Institute in Sri Lanka.”

I recall his many visits to Sri Lanka, which always encouraged and strengthened us. I have vivid memory of his visit in 1975, when we laid the foundation stone for the formation house, “Parent

Illam” at Muhamalai. It was a bright sunny morning. We had no rain for sometime. I saw Fr. Parent, outside on the veranda with outstretched arms, eyes closed and only his lips moving. I asked him what it was all about. He told me that he was asking God for a sign as proof that the Institute would flourish in Sri Lanka. The sign he asked was to have rain three times that day.

To my surprise, we have to delay the laying of the foundation stone because of rain. As he asked, we had rain three times that day, within a span of three hours. Today, despite the civil war, many displacements and many set-backs, the Institute has expanded to four dioceses in Sri Lanka and has a membership of more than one hundred – a proof of the sign on that eventful day.

I remember with appreciation all the financial help he rendered to Sri Lanka in addition to his advice and his prayers which were always powerful. On my many visits to Canada, I always expressed my gratitude to him for everything he has done for me and for Sri Lanka.

I cherish the statue of Our Lady of Madhu, he gave me when I came to reside in Canada. This statue was given to him by the late Bishop Pillai, which he carried in his arms from Sri Lanka to Trois-Rivières, and occupied a special place in his office at La Salette.

I am sure his continued prayers from above will always be with the members of the Institute in Sri Lanka, and that they will remember Fr. Parent with loving gratitude.

Fr. Parent, may you find peace and eternal rest with Jesus our Lord in the Kingdom of the Father.

Trilogies, and a Heritage

by Fr. Arthur Beaulieu, I.V.Dei, Canada



When I was a child my grandmother taught me that there was one God in three persons. Three equals one, a funny kind of mathematics! Not being a doctor in that science, I lived this statement in blissful ignorance, as our dear confrere Maurice Cadoret would have said.

Grandmother Beaulieu, who prepared me for first communion, also said that there were three great virtues: faith, hope, and charity. To her, they seemed to be welded together and inseparable, like three Siamese sisters who could not be separated from one another.

Our holy Founder has left us to return to our eternal Father. It was Jesus of Nazareth who said: “I leave to prepare a place for you, and then I shall return to take you with me”... and “There is room for everyone, in my Father’s house.” What a promise, and what a dwelling, by God!

What I remember the most about the heritage of Father Parent was his need and taste for prayer, like Jesus of Nazareth. Father was a man of hope and of faith: trusting in God and in humankind, in man and woman. It was this hope and faith that coloured his love in such a way that if he had been able to he would have spread the good news of the Gospel just about everywhere. “Go and teach all the nations.” Louis-Marie Parent was a smaller-scale model of Jesus of Nazareth, though of rather grand dimensions.

Like Jesus of Nazareth, Father Parent has returned to the heavenly Father while still being with us. Even if his spirit is with us to the very end of our pilgrimage on earth, he will be there to welcome us in the Father’s dwelling.

On Easter evening Jesus brought his peace to the poor Apostles. Father Parent was a peacemaker in service to others and in accepting every act of service possible. To him, by living as closely as possible in the presence of God, life was beautiful. He told us that if we threw out all useless complaining and non-constructive criticism, things would be much better.

Jesus said to his Apostles: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Father Parent told us that the best path to perfection or improvement is the Boulevard of the Three Fives, to serve the Church in a team, proclaiming the Good News “wherever Christ has his rights.” Son of God and equally son of man, Jesus the Son of God became man. How extraordinary!

Today, Louis-Marie Parent the man has become “god” through participation and inheritance. This seems to be a sign that our God has no doctorate in business sciences. Anyhow, in His exchanges with us, God comes out the loser, to my mind.

Everybody in the Canadian District knows that Father Parent and I did not always agree, at times strongly disagree. However, at a meeting I had with him at Cap-de-la-Madeleine, 5 or 6 years ago, I told him that I had no regrets at having disagreed with him, but I wanted to let him know that I loved him.

Before concluding I would say that Father Parent, like any man, had his own faults, but that through his faults a wonderful garden of human-divine virtues of the “watchful servant” grew and developed. This garden produced

the most beautiful and fragrant flowers. Father Parent placed his talents in the service of the Gospel and the team to which he was very attached.

Dear Father Parent, thank you for everything, and enjoy a happy eternity! Be our protector before God your Father and ours. May the Lord your served so well in your own way give you one hundredfold forever.

Jesus of Nazareth, Louis-Marie Parent and the men and women of our Institute: a beautiful trilogy that must not be forgotten or separated. Prayer, hope, trust in God and in the members of our Institute: a beautiful trilogy to inspire each of our lives. Father Parent, a sincere thank you spoken from the lips and felt in the heart. Without you, the Church would have been a lot less beautiful, and much poorer. With your leaving us, the earth is the poorer, and heaven is enriched.

To you, with Jesus for ever, I wish a blessed eternity and say “Au revoir.” Be happy at being with many of your friends and disciples. The others will join you in turn for an eternity of divine and happy or perfect bliss. But in the meantime, the journey is not always easy. Long live the presence of God! It helps us remain committed to building peace and fellowship in Jesus Christ, “wherever Christ has his rights.”

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord! The Five, Five, Five... of your Institute and ours.

Thank you, with my love, and au revoir!

P.S. – There are still many other things that Louis-Marie Parent did, yet if they were written about in detail, I doubt that there would be room enough in the entire world to hold the books to record them (inspired from Jn. 21:25). This is what I believe, dear Founder. Thank you, with my love, have a happy eternity, and au revoir.



With Father Louis-Marie Parent, in 1970-1980
by Fr. René Désilets, I.V.Dei, Director General Emeritus, Canada

In the fall of 1970, following the resignation of Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. as director general of the Voluntas Dei Institute, I was elected to the position following the election of the members of the central council. Until then, the central council was composed of the director and four councillors, and it was the only level of government of the Institute.



Following the rapid changes and the difficulties of the time, and also because of the need to quickly make important decisions, we must note that the reports to and contacts with Father Parent were discontinued. On the contrary, I believed that it was still very important in managing the affairs of the Institute to have the closest relationship possible with Father.

In all the important decisions that were taken between 1970 and 1980, the relations with Father Parent were constant. Concerning the closing of the major seminary at Red Rapids, N.B., Father Parent insisted on personally paying off the debt incurred at the time of construction. Then there was the

closing of the seminary of philosophy at Trois-Rivières, Qc.

This was also the time of foundations outside Canada: the Dominican Republic and Colombia. We also had to ensure the maintenance and support of those foundations dating from before 1970, like Ecuador, India, Sri Lanka, and Laos.

We pay homage to Father Parent as a man and as the founder of an Institute that has defended the objectives he had established in founding the Institute. We recognise that he was aware of the fact that there were many ways of realising these objectives. The decisions he had had to take had been taken by taking into account the special circumstances of the time. Father Parent understood very well that in the evolution that followed on this, there needed to be a review a direction that could be different from the present experience.

We must recognise that the years 1970-1980 were crucial for the Institute and its future. In view of the facts, I have no hesitation in declaring that the support I received from Father Louis-Marie Parent was constant and without reserve. It is for this reason that I can say that the growth, development and spread of the Institute that are the products of the years that followed, find their clearest and most obvious explanation in his support, and that they are due to him in large measure.

Sincerely,

René Désilets

A Tribute to Father Parent

by Gisèle Couture and Louis Paquet, Associate Members, I.V.Dei, Canada

Louis and I enjoyed visiting Father Parent. Every time we were in the Trois-Rivières region we would stop in to visit. Before leaving, we always asked for his blessing. The visit brought us joy and stimulated our apostolic zeal for continuing our journey in the Institute.

In the last five years of his life, Father Parent was still challenging people to come to the Institute. This was really a marvel to us. And he never missed an opportunity to talk to us about the Five Points and the five essential values. Besides, when Louis would set off on pilgrimage to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, he would always distribute a small card with the Five Points and would invite each one to live them during the pilgrimage. And this would give good results.

Father Parent was a great lover of Mary: when we travelled together by car we would lovingly pray the rosary together. He loved and welcomed everyone, no questions asked, and he would quickly bring up their qualities. His vocation was directed by his talents.

One day, Louis asked Father whether he was afraid to die. Father answered: “I worked all my life to make Him known, so why should I be afraid to die?” Throughout his life Father Parent was, like the Virgin of the Annunciation, an instrument of Christ carrying out the Will of the Father in the reality of the present moment, in the midst on the world, wherever Christ has his rights.

Good-bye, Father Parent!



Father Parent and Sri Lanka

by Anthony Marusiline, layman, I.V.Dei, Sri Lanka

When Fr. Parent came to Sri Lanka for the first time in 1963, I was in Jaffna getting ready to go to India for Catechetical training for two years. I remember I had met him for the first time with a group of youngsters to whom he spoke about the spirituality of the Institute *Voluntas Dei*.

When he came for the second time in 1966, I met him and expressed to him my desire to join the Institute. Late Mr. Emmanuel and I were admitted to aspirancy as first *Voluntas Dei* members in Sri Lanka. I was in touch with him through letters. I found him to be a man of deep spirituality, and a man of zeal for souls.

When he came in 1970 for the third time, I was with Fr. Rajaratnam at St. John's parish Jaffna. It was then the institute was officially erected in Sri Lanka with late bishop Emmilianus Pillai, o.m.i. as its guardian. We started our first team in this parish.

It was in 1975 when he came for the last time. Fr. Raja and I were in Mirusuvil parish. Fr. Parent stayed with us and laid the foundation for the Parent Illam at Muhamalai. Before laying the foundation stone. Father Parent prayed and asked God for a sign as a proof that the Institute would flourish in this land. Pouring rain fell three times as the sky was bright and clear. We accept this as a miracle God had worked through his servant.

Father Parent and Us
by Juliette Roy and Guy Veer,
Associate Members, I.V.Dei, Canada



We have accepted to write a few words and are happy to do so because Father Louis-Marie Parent is an important person to both of us, a man who changed our lives and who gave the Roman Church a lasting legacy, the Voluntas Dei Institute that, through the years, has become a Church family composed of single laymen and sacramentally married couples, a family where both are committed according to their state in life, and live the same spirituality.

A Letter to Father Parent,
by Jean Lebrun, Associate Member, I.V.Dei, Canada

Father Parent,

It was in the basilica of Cap-de-la-Madeleine that I bid you “à Dieu,” farewell. Your earthly life was transformed into celestial life, which allows me to pray to **you** for your continued guidance in our challenges...

By your example and life style totally focused on Christ and his mother Mary, you have helped thousands of people find or rediscover the path that leads to the Holy City.

My years spent at LaSalette as a student served me as a guide in daily life and strengthened my life of faith. When I left LaSalette June 14, 1964, you had welcomed my decision to leave with your blessing, and told me to go out and convert the world.

Like the Samaritan woman who met Jesus, you, Father Parent, allowed me to taste again once more today the life of yesteryear, and you have **given** the hope of tasting some day that life you already enjoy.

À Dieu, Father Parent. I love you.

We have known Father Parent both in action and in service at the Institute’s assemblies general and at meetings with members of the central council. It was at these gatherings that he specified several points: the formation of a Voluntas who must be a man of God; the charism, the meaning and the formal matter of the vows and commitments, etc. he welcomed married members, and the directions he gave for their active sharing in the life and mission of the Institute, went hand in hand with his seeking a canonical framework for them, which allowed a *modus operandi et vivendi* for each and every member.

To us, the objective of “Building Peace and Fellowship in Jesus Christ,” and the charism of “being... wherever Christ has his rights” are important guideposts in our very secular lives. We realise, however, that there are times when we don’t see the light, and there are failures, too, in the Institute.

Thank you, Father Parent! May your clearsightedness and intuitions continue on, among us!

Voluntas Dei per Mariam Immaculatam.

A Tribute to Father Louis-Marie Parent

by Fr, Danis Ridoré, I.V.Dei, United States

On May 17, 2009, the venerated Father Louis-Marie Parent passed from this life to eternity. On this occasion, the congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Recluse Missionaries of Notre-Dame-de-Namur, the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and the Voluntas Dei Institute celebrated a funeral worthy of the priest, the prophet, and the king that he had become through his baptism, confirmation, and priestly ordination.

This prophet and visionary was always attuned to the Spirit. He travelled throughout the world to speak the Word, to recruit apostles, to bring peace and create fellowship. It was led by the Spirit that he was led, one day, to undertake a beautiful trip to Haiti at the time the government had closed Notre Dame Major Seminary in Port-au-Prince. He immediately became the instrument, channel, intermediary in helping a number of seminarians come to Canada, find benefactors to help defray the cost of their studies, and to join if they so desired, the Voluntas Dei Institute. I happened to be one of the first beneficiaries, along with the late Yves Bélizaire, André Gibbs and Serge Léandre. More than a dozen others soon followed. Some became priests and others left, others still opted for other vocations, but all benefited from the kindness and understanding of Father Louis-Marie Parent. And so, I can therefore proclaim loud and clear: “If I am a priest today, I owe it to Father Parent.”

Of course, there are other confreres – Eddy Julien, Numa Silma, Yves Sévère, Father Gérard Jean-Juste just recently deceased in Miami, Smith Jeanneau – who could say as much. And if I were to mention the many committed laymen who are what they are today thanks to the help of Father Louis-Marie Parent, the list would be endless.

Heavenly Father, thank you for all You have done for so many of your children through the work of Father Louis-Marie Parent. Grant him eternal rest and peace in your kingdom of light for eternity!

N.B. : At the author’s request, we give the following information.
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My vocation

by Fr. Anthony Philip, I.V.Dei, Sri Lanka

It was in 1963 that I entered the minor seminary in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The late Bishop Emmilianus Pillai once asked me whether I would join the Voluntas Dei Institute. Since it was then an institute of diocesan right, Bishop Pillai was my vocation promoter. By the time I became a priest in 1976 he had already died.



I expressed my desire to Fr. Florentine Rajaratnam and joined the Institute as a diocesan priest incardinated in the Jaffna Diocese. I became the regional director of Sri Lanka after Fr. Raja, and I had a chance to attend an Assembly General. It was at that time that I met Fr. Parent for the first time. He greeted me with a smile and said: “Father Philip, you are a gift to the Institute, and the Institute is a gift to you.” These very words of Father Parent are an approval of what I am in the Institute, and an encouragement to be a Voluntas for the rest of my life.

A Holy Man and a Holy Priest

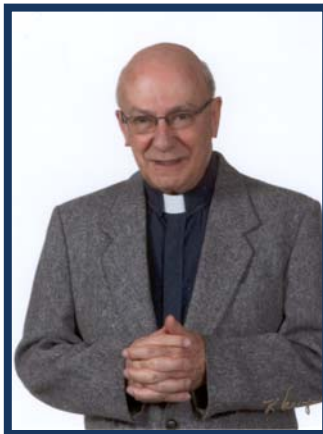
*by Fr. Yvon Carpentier, I.V.Dei
Director General Emeritus, Canada*

My last visit to Father Parent was on April 13, Easter Monday. On May 17, news of his death was immediately sent to the Voluntas Dei central house.

As I was alone in the house, at the time, I was the one to receive the sad news. I felt like an orphan, all of a sudden. I was in mourning. I had just lost my father. I was young when my biological father passed away, so Father Parent had become a real father to me. Besides, Father Parent was at the root of my priestly vocation.

I joined the Voluntas Dei Institute in 1959, one year after the foundation. I therefore knew and worked with Father Parent for many years. This allowed me to discover how much of a man of faith he was, faith in God, and with a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary in such a way that she had pride of place in all the meetings and get-togethers we had with him.

A man of the church with immense respect for all authority, a man of decision and action, a man of dreams and realisations, a man of compassion and forgiveness, a man of respect and generosity... he was a born communicator, an excellent preacher who opened his heart with enthusiasm; he was convinced and convincing, and he had a wonderful sense of humour.



With the founding of two institutes and religious community, it is easy for us to think that Father Parent was a sower of vocations among both men and women. We see traces of him in all the religious communities because of the many people he directed there.

A lover of God, he was well aware of the Lord's infinite love for him. He responded in kind to the Lord through the commitment of his entire lifetime and the witness of his entire self every day.

His life of presence to God took was sacred to him and reflected upon those who were close to him.

To me, Father Parent is simply a holy man and a holy priest.



*Holiness
is not something
we give ourselves :
it is a divine attitude
that we receive
freely.*

A Prophet Walked Among Us

by Fr. Mario Laroche, I.V.Dei, Director General Emeritus, Canada

This is really what Father Louis-Marie Parent was, for me: someone who showed the way to the Lord, someone who proclaimed the Word of God on life's journey.

His apostolic energy and evangelical joy in serving the Lord made him a "raiser of vocations" and a support of one's commitment. Through his actions, words and views he could arouse in us the desire to serve God in the world today.

Father Parent had the gift to make us discover our possibilities and help us go beyond ourselves. He made us believe that God's grace was working in us as well as in our neighbour. This positive gaze on others made him trust them and to give responsibilities to others in such a way that he was always ready to respond to challenges.

I remember our first meeting, at the beginning of Holy Week in 1958. It was at the Prince Albert, Sakatchewan, Seminary. Father Parent was visiting his Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate who were working at the Diocesan Centre in Prince Albert. He had stopped by to say hello to Maurice Roy whom he knew from the time of his first attempt of founding man's religious group, a few years earlier. Maurice introduced Laurent-Paul Gendron and me to Father Parent, and Father greeted me with a pun: "Laroche (The Rock, in French)? Peter, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." I knew nothing of him or secular institutes, at the time, but I was told about the meetings that followed, and about the foundation project. I asked (April 30, 1958) to join, and the response came back quickly by telegram on April 30: I could begin my aspirancy on May 1! Several years later, at the ordination of a fourth member of my family, one of us recalled this pun of Father Parent, adding "What he didn't know was the he would find himself with a whole pile of rocks!"

Father Parent was open to the universal Church and to the world. With the audaciousness of faith, he undertook mission projects for the O.M.M.I.s or the Voluntas Dei wherever he was invited, oftentimes in the poorest parts of a country. He was everywhere willing to welcome new vocations, whatever their race or culture. He always relied on the grace of God. How many seminarians did we welcome at the Trois-Rivières and Red Rapids (New Brunswick) seminaries, from Laos and Sri Lanka, Haiti and Ecuador, the United States and Grenada...? When one of them arrived at ordination, Father Parent would trust them enough to send them "found" the Institute in their own milieu.



As soon as the occasion presented itself, Father Parent would visit and encourage them, bring them a new dose of energy, and renew his confidence in them. Upon returning from his trips to the missions throughout the world, he would tell us about the visits he had made, with many interesting details, along with names. We remember his phenomenal memory for names! He would mimeograph reports of his journeys for the O.M.M.I.s and the Voluntas Deis, and we read these as so many *Acta of the Apostles!*

Father Parent showed me his confidence and his friendship many times, and I know that I owe him a lot. Thank you, Father Parent. I hope that you enjoy fully the love of the Lord and of the Virgin Mary.

A Priest with a Heart Ablaze *A Saint*

by Fr. Gérald Michaud, I.V.Dei, Canada

I met Father Parent in 1958 at Gravelbourg (Saskatchewan) College where I was a student, and then again at Cap-de-la-Madeleine (Québec) where he met me to take me to “Le Rochon,” in the outskirt of Trois-Rivières. It was there that I met about ten young men who had gotten together to become members of a new foundation to be called “Voluntas Dei.”

Father divided us into small sharing and living teams to help us grow together in communion of life. We worked on construction because of the increasing number of candidates who came from all over. The need was great and the resources limited. We built a house with donated material by recycling centres, or purchased material.

Our vehicle, which we had baptised “Ferblantine,” soon was out of breath. Father Armand, a Trappist monk, joined us and supervised the construction. Sisters gave us chairs, tables, and other needed furniture: the community was generous to us.

Like a far-sighted steward, Father Parent purchased a few low-cost parcels of land. The Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate came to our help, Father was given gifts... of paint and of everything that was needed. All the material arrives in due time, Providence is looking after all. Father found benefactors and involved them in his burgeoning project. We built... pushed by the need to shelter everyone... but the real construction, however, was taking place in the heart of each one.

At the time, Father Parent did spiritual direction with the O.M.M.I.s; he gave them their mission, encouraged them, and sent them on. He acted with them the way he acted later with the Voluntas Deis. He gave them responsibilities: they were formed right in the midst of action. For those destined to foreign countries, they learned the language and customs.

As a former priest-coloniser in the Canadian West, Father Parent did everything for the cause of the Kingdom. He gave conferences and retreats. He trained us in the spirituality of the Institute; he organised courses and found professors: Father Augustine Stefko, Father Roland Blais, Yvon Royer, René Allard, and others. He enrolled seminarians in the major seminaries of Trois-Rivières, Ottawa, and St. Boniface (Manitoba).

Father was a born story teller. He would pick up hitchhikers and others who were community and seminary drop-outs, and invited them to come to us. He went after “guys” who wanted to be priests and missionaries. It was as though he could discern the good that was in the heart of each one. He acted with boldness and with great trust in Providence.

As we read what he has written we can see how he took seriously his call to holiness. To me he was a Saint Paul of our time. Saint Paul was caught by the love of God and nothing could prevent him from proclaiming the Word. In the same way, Father Parent was an apostle aflame of prayer and the Word of God, to call and challenge others to commit themselves in service in the Lord’s vineyard.

The spirituality of our Institutes (O.M.M.I. and Voluntas) show how ell Father Parent grasped the heart of the Gospel and wanted us to engage on this path of life. He knew how evil could easily penetrate the heart, and in a very simple spirituality, in attitudes of life, he guided us to a life in God. He knew how to awaken the potential in everyone, and he wanted everyone to give the best of him/herself.

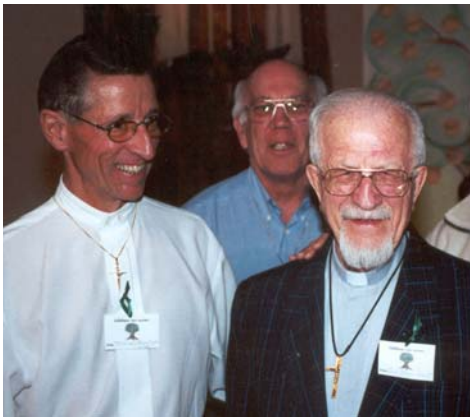
In the course of his life Father Parent travelled all over the world to visit the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and the Voluntas Deis, to support them, encourage them and guide them as St. Paul himself had done. Along his journeys Father also met with superiors of other communities, and he tried to respond to the needs of the bishops. He

wanted the O.M.M.I.s and the Voluntas to be of service to the bishops and the Church, and he asked the Voluntas to be “men of the Church.” That is how at the very beginning of the Institute, Voluntas Deis were sent to Laos, on the other side of the world, after only one year of the foundation. Such daring! Such confidence!

This was the boldness of the totally dedicated apostle. He was obedient to his superior and trusted

in Providence and in the individual gifts of each one. Like the Good Shepherd, he knew each member and placed his trust in them. He challenged. He lived in a deep relationship with God. He would get up during the night to pray, meditate, and write. As he was attentive to God’s Will for himself, so does he invite us to do the same.

Voluntas Dei per Mariam Immaculatam



Marcel Forest and Father Parent

Father Parent I Knew Him

by Fr. Marcel Forest, I.V.Dei, Canada

I have been asked to write to you about Father Louis-Marie Parent such as I have known him.

First of all, he was a man of prayer: his life lived in the presence of God was rooted in prayer, daily devotions, and Marian spirituality. Hunger for God was to him is natural as physical hunger. His periods of prayer kept him focussed on the Will of God, gave him strength and energy, zeal and eagerness in the execution of his mission.

Father Parent was a man of God, focussed on His Will, always ready to answer His call, to carry out His desires, to show his love to Him, whatever the cost. Examples: poverty, hunger, poverty, fatigue. (Cf. *En route avec Quelqu’un*, vol. 2), or his foundations: the Recluse Missionaries, the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and the Voluntas Deis.

Father Parent was a man of faith: connected on God, he placed all his trust in Him in order to serve as Christ did, and work at the salvation of the men and women he crossed. His was a solid faith, daring, unshakeable. Like Saint Paul: “I know in whom I have put my faith,” he trusts in Providence: projects of foundations without needed material resources, he counts on the human capital that the Lord sends him, on the good will of others. The mission is urgent! The Lord shall provide. At the beginning of the Voluntas Dei Institute, vocations came in droves, a minor and a major seminary had to be built. He used to say, “One cannot prevent the family!..”

Providence arrived by way of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. It is thanks to their financial support and their support personnel that we survived. We are very grateful to you.

Father Parent was a daring man very like Saint Paul. Full of evangelical projects, he got into them with all his might; these projects had been well thought-out, meditated, inspired. They were projects of the Church because he had consulted the authorities. His projects prodded others to move, it made them react. He knew how to get people of good will on his side.

Father Parent was filled with zeal: “The zeal of your house overwhelms me. I want to be with you all the days of my life.” He was full of zeal, zeal for the good.

A man of generosity, he gave his life to God and never took it back. Each day he lived the present moment that belongs to God. He placed his talents, gifts and charisms in the service of God and the neighbour.

Father Parent was a courageous man, enterprising, and daring. All his energy was directed to building the Church, to working at the salvation of everyone: "I want that none that you have given me be lost." He certainly had disappointments and felt abandoned, misunderstood, perhaps betrayed, criticised. Wounds could sadden him, but he continued on because, as a man of prayer, his heart was protected in armour, so filled with love of God and Mary that he was, that he never lost his serenity, his peace, or his sense of humour.

He was steeped in Marian piety, and had a great devotion to Mary. He prayed to her through the meditated rosary. He spoke lovingly of Mary who was his good counsellor. All of his homilies and conferences ended with a reference, a thank you, a request or an invocation to Mary. She maintained him on the virtuous path and watched over him. His life as an Oblate was dedicated to Mary Immaculate, and his wish was that our institutes be under her protection: Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and "Voluntas Dei per Mariam Immaculatam."

He was a disciplined man. He read the lives of the saints and meditated the imitation of Jesus Christ. Like the saints, he was determined to achieve holiness. He drew his inspiration from those who were sanctified, who excelled in the exercise of charity: love of God and love of neighbour. With discernment he reached out for everything that helped him progress on the road to perfection. He even drew his inspiration from sportsmen and sought inspiration in their willpower, talent and self-sacrifice to reach their end and achieve perfection.

Like the sportsmen, Father Parent needed to practice self-sacrifice, spiritual exercises, a spiritual diet, prudence, determination, confidence in himself and in Jesus, his trainer. He had a craving for the glory of God and for heroism. As a disciplined person, he found time for prayer, service, action, and love.

Father Parent was a man of the Beatitudes: happy, very happy. He was inhabited with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and bore all of the fruits.

A man of the Present Moment: This inspiration animated him from the very first days of his ministry. Because of this he always gave one hundred percent of himself. By not accumulating the burdens and fatigues of the past and not being concerned with the future, he kept going and made the day's work bear fruit. The Present Moment was certainly the secret of his longevity and his serenity.

Father Parent lived the Five Points that he preached: Presence of God, Absence of criticism, Absence of complaint, Being of service, and Being a peacemaker. This, he believed, was a formula for being holy.

Father Parent was a priestly man: the Eucharist was the centre and summit of his life. He always had a devotion to Holy Mass which he celebrated every day. At consecration he always committed himself to giving his life today.

Father Parent, thank you for having been the holy priest who welcomed me into the first Voluntas Dei team in 1958. It was there that I found happiness. You helped my priestly vocation to blossom, and me to serve the Institute and the Church.

Thank you to the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate for their generosity, their dedication, their example as women of prayer and of joyful service. And thank you to the Volunteers of God for your dedication to living the five attitudes and the Christian contacts.

Father Parent's Presence in my Life

by Fr. Jean-Paul Chiasson, I.V.Dei, Canada



When I speak about Father Parent, it is like speaking of someone who had a major influence on the development of my vocation and its blossoming into the priesthood.

I first shook hands with Father Parent in early August, 1961 when he visited the director of a summer camp in Rawdon, Québec.

I had left my native village of Lamèque, New Brunswick in early July and became a camp counsellor. It was when I met Father that I learned about the Voluntas Dei Institute. We had a warm meeting, and from then on he always remembered my name. After a few questions, in order to get to know me better, Father Parent invited me to join the Institute and, looking me squarely in the eyes, he said: "Jean-Paul, we are waiting for you at La Salette in Trois-Rivières." I understood in that invitation of Father Parent that the Lord was calling, a call that I had first heard as a child.

It is now 48 years that I have been in the Institute, and 42 of them as a priest. From the very first and through all the years, Father Parent's presence in my life was very strong, and I would like to share with you a few examples of his fatherly care for me.

A few years after my coming to the Institute, Father Parent dropped in to visit my parents at Lamèque and thanked them for supporting my vocation. My parents kept an unforgettable souvenir of this warm and unexpected visit. Four years after my father's death, when my mother was in the hospital, Father Parent's kindness led him to write me in his own handwriting a letter full of concern, compassion and support regarding my mother. This gesture of kindness clearly demonstrated that I was not alone in Father's mind and prayers.

From my first meeting with Father Parent to my last one which was at Richelieu on February 12, 2009, I have always marvelled that he always remembered my name. Whenever he saw me approaching, while he was reading the newspaper, he would exclaim: "Well, well, well! It's Jean-Paul! What a nice visit!" After a few minutes he would inquire as to whether I was happy where I was. This is how Father Parent was.

I have always admired his liveliness and his open mind, his concern and care, his generosity and greatness of heart, his pacifying humour, his gaze that was full of goodness and kindness.

"Every day let us be together bearers of joy and prophets of hope wherever Christ has his rights. Let us be apostles of the inner life and this, in the midst of the world. Following in the wake of the caravan guided by Jesus, let us follow walk with the apostles and hold on to the Virgin, the specialist of the 'divine wills.'"

Your elder brother in the mystery of Christ,

Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.

(From a text written by Father Parent and published in the 1983 souvenir album)

Toward the Future

Lord,
I thank you
for the night and the day,
for the spiritual dryness
and the spiritual light,
for illness and health.

In your love for me you guide my path,
I know where I go, I feel that you attract me,
and I let myself be loved by you.
You draw me to the Will of the Father
as you pour in me your own self-surrender.

I know that I shall die.
Death is but a door that opens to you.
Death is the embrace of your arms
holding me in your mercy.
Death is the sweet voice of Mary
that resonates in me to the very heart of love
of your divine Spirit.
Death is your kiss,
your look of kindness,
the sweetness of your heart,
the fulfilment of your promises,
the joy of the Beatitudes,
the end of a mission of enlightened misery
supported and overcome because of your love
and the gift of your life. Amen.

Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.