

“A SECOND VOCATION”



Bertrand Desbiens

On Saturday, September 10, 2022, the morning of his ordination, Bertrand Desbiens was invited to give his testimonial at Spiri-Maria within the context of the Days of the Lady. We are reprinting it in full below.

Childhood and Adolescence

I lived a happy childhood with loving and generous parents and religious grandparents. During my early years at school, I liked to listen to the stories of saints, since they fascinated my mind. With the arrival of the new post-Council catechetics, the religious teaching became permeated with humanism. Nothing of that stayed with me. This was the beginning of a laxity in the Church and in families. Thus, my faith did not develop any further and I gave up religion for many years.

I met Suzanne when we were still young. Both of us were strongly attracted to children.

Very quickly, we began talking of marriage and of our desire to establish a family. We were married in 1974, 48 years ago.



December 21, 1974 - Suzanne Tremblay and Bertrand Desbiens' wedding.

The Army of Mary

My mother Hedwige was the first one to know of the Army of Mary in our family. As a convinced Knight of Mary, she tried to interest us in it for some time, but I was not at all receptive, at least until



Hedwige and Dollard Desbiens, Bertrand's parents.

the day when, in 1979, I began reading Raoul Auclair's writings. That was then a revelation. I was holding Raoul's book in one hand and looking for the references in the Bible with the other. Everything coincided, everything was being enlightened, everything made sense to me. This was the beginning of my reconversion.

Suzanne and I slowly began to attend the meetings of the Army of Mary and read the volumes of *Life of Love* as they were published. Together, we went from one discovery to the next, from one question to the next with regard to Marie-Paule and the presence of the Immaculate in her.

In 1980, we requested our "blessing by holy picture" as a Son and Daughter of Mary. I, for my part, received a picture representing the Sacred Heart to which I was drawn in my childhood. However, I did not understand the significance to be given to the other elements on the picture.

Marie-Paule: a Teacher and Educator

In the early 1980s, I had the grace of coming into contact with Marie-Paule on several occasions at different meetings. In her extraordinary role of teacher and educator, Marie-Paule was constantly instructing us. She would guide us and give us lessons in life which



Holy picture of blessing Bertrand received as a "Son of Mary".

deeply marked me. She taught us how to abandon ourselves to Providence and perceive the providential events in our everyday life. "We go forward, the doors open, the doors close..." she would say. We must pray and ask for God's help. The Lord guides us in our life, in our work, regardless of the field in which we work. When we send up a request to Heaven, we must accept the events as they are put before us and not expect that our desires will be fulfilled, and so forth.

In my life, I sought to put these lessons of spiritual life into practice, as much within my family as at work, and this always sustained me.

The years went by and the family rapidly grew. Suzanne showed remarkable deftness at maintaining a united and joyous family atmosphere. Our five children grew up, each one found his or her path and they married. One after the other, our fourteen grandchildren arrived; moments of grace and joy for

the grandparents, the crowning of all those years of family life.

A New Form of Priesthood

Then in 2015, we attended the ordination of the first married men, Father Yvan Laprise and Father Richard Latulippe. This was the discovery of a new form of priesthood. As of that day, the thoughts jostled themselves in my mind and I began to feel a certain appeal for the priestly vocation. Without my mentioning this to anyone, some friends encouraged me to meet Padre Jean-Pierre, saying that they could see me following such a path. Surprised, I replied that I had my doubts about this, that this was not the time, that it needed to mature and so it was better to wait.

I only had a few years left before retirement. I could not see any urgency in going forward in that direction.

And yet, the more the time of retirement approached, the more the questions increased. One fine morning, tired of spending my nights going around in circles, I got up thinking: "Today, I am going to see Padre to seek his advice."

As we were at Lac-Échemin, I made the necessary arrangements to meet him and he received me in the afternoon. I set before him my questions with regard to a vocation to the priesthood, and he immediately declared himself favorable to this. He even said, without knowing me very much, that he had already thought of this for me. He also spoke at great length of his very positive vision of this form of priesthood. Then, he sent me back to my thoughts and he encouraged me, with my wife, to let this mature. That was on Pentecost Sunday in 2018...

Now that the door was opening, was I to go forward?

Suzanne and I then began a period of reflection, considering the implications this would have in our life. I un-



2014 - Bertrand and Suzanne and their five children: Raphaël, Jean-Louis, Dominic, Marie-Christine and Véronique. Below, with twelve of their fourteen grandchildren (picture also taken in 2014).



derstood her hesitations: having to live with a man in clerical garb and also assuming the consequences of the commitments inherent in the life of a priest at a time when we were reaching retirement.

Over the summer, we met Padre Jean-Pierre together to confirm my intention to be open to this vocation. In February 2019, I definitely retired and, the following September, I began my studies full time.

A Seminarian in the Church of John

What wonderful years of study,

thanks to the very dedicated professors for one single seminarian! The courses given at the Seminary or by video on Internet unfolded so rapidly. The training, the lectures, the prayers and meditations made this ever-greater desire for the priesthood grow in me. And when there were periods of doubt, Providence seemed to constantly encourage me with little winks, urging me to become stronger and advance along this path.

Marie-Paule said that a man can have both vocations in him, conjugal and priestly at the same time. One thing is certain, I had the vocation to marriage and it is still very much alive. However, this "second vocation", the one to the priesthood, is meant today to broaden my paternity and give it a new dimension by devoting myself for souls.

In the course of last winter, the thought came to me to look again at the holy picture of my blessing as a Son of Mary which I could not remember. Everything was then enlightened as I opened our album! You will have an opportunity to see this for yourselves this afternoon at the end of the ceremony. [See the holy picture on the preceding page.]

Now I understand that the Lord can announce things in advance in the same way that He can hide them from us, in our best interests. He knows better than we do what the most opportune moment is.

Such an outcome, unthinkable 40 years ago, required our full consent. So, what was the point of worrying about it before the time had come; everything occurs in its own good time. However, for this to happen, we must remain open, and advance in keeping with the divine plans. "The doors open, the doors close..."; let us always go forward with prudence and confidence.

May all the Quinternity be blessed for ever!

Bertrand Desbiens