

# Three Young Priests from the Work Bear Witness

In the last few decades, the image of the priesthood has suffered greatly from the scandals which have sullied the life of the Church and been reported in the media. As a result, for today's priests, there is no better way of making reparation for the serious misconduct of certain among

them than that of living fully their vocation in the service of souls.

In these two pages dedicated to the priesthood, three young priests from the Work bear witness to the way they live three different aspects of their vocation. Father Jean-Michel, a priest

for a year, talks about the preaching; Father Francis, a priest for three years, talks about the celebration of the Eucharist; and Father Leander, a priest for eight years, tells us how priests are called upon to support souls in their spiritual journey.

## Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom

Besides being the heirs of all the Christian tradition, the priests from the Church of John have the privilege of being the first pastors to be able to draw from the immense collection



of Marie-Paule's writings.

Thus, aware that we must prepare souls for the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth, we must focus our preaching on the whole of God's plan, namely, the "single Mystery" made up of the work of Jesus Christ and the one of Marie-Paule, with

all the developments to which their union gives rise, including the new light today's Co-Redemption casts on the Redemption of two thousand years ago. If we, the priests of the Church of John, do not bring out what constitutes the spirituality proper to the Lady's Work, who will do so? If the members of the Work do not hear any mention of this in our homilies and conferences, where will they be able to hear about it?

Before each new preaching, it is a great responsibility to find the quotations, the words, the images and the ideas which will move the members of the Work and stimulate them in their sanctification. For us, that is essential and how important it is to us! In fact, as Sons of Mary, we are fortunate to be able to live withdrawn from the world, protected by our Community life, whereas the lay people are confronted directly with a world that is in very bad shape and that is the least we can say. We cannot forget that. Thus, on each occasion, we pray so that Marie-Paule may "pass" through our words to touch and reinforce her Knights in their spiritual commitments and revitalize in them their hope in the new world that is coming.

To attain that ideal, we must feed off of *Life of Love* and the other important writings in the Work. It is a grace to be able to work with those sources. As we read, do research and meditate, so many of Marie-Paule's articles impress us by

their depth, so many of Raoul's writings astonish us by their prophetic scope, and so many articles by Marc Bosquart lead us along new and sometimes unexpected paths.

On a more personal level, we are the first beneficiaries of the exhortations we prepare. In fact, we can draw much benefit from all the time we spend working on them, for our own interior reform which remains, of course, our first duty. For, if we want our preaching to be "authentic" and bear good fruit, we must strive above all to live what we teach and to draw lessons from the events we experience.

In fact, we generally feel very small and very unworthy to deal with such subjects. But we know that, through the grace of the priesthood, God passes, that He makes up for our failings and touches hearts. May we always be better disposed to understand well the inspiration!

Father Jean-Michel Bouchard, O.F.F.M.

## Supporting Souls in T

"It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you." (Jn 15:16) The longer a priest has been dedicating himself in the service of souls, the more these words echo in him because he has had multiple occasions to realize that his ministry does not lie in his own hands but in those of Christ.

Of course, the priest is responsible for his life of prayer, his interior reform and his continuing formation which will contribute to the fruitfulness of his apostolate, but first and foremost, he is an instrument in the hands of Providence, and the more he is self-effacing, the more the proofs of this consoling truth will multiply along his way.

Thus, before the evidence that God is at work in the souls he meets, the priest gains an ever better understanding that his role is to support this divine action which adapts to the progression of each person. In the light of the grace of the priesthood, the priest strives then, in a common effort with the soul confiding in him, to understand God's will in its regard and to encourage it to humbly cooperate with it.

The rich experience of mystical doctors such as Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila helps the priest identify the different stages in the sanctification of souls and encourages him to be distrustful of too human considerations. In fact,

# A PRIEST OF THE TOTAL CHRIST

How great is the vocation to the priesthood! It has already been three years that I have been a priest, and during that time, so many events have led me to discover the richness of this vocation.



What fills me most with wonder is the celebration of the Eucharist. I attended Mass so many times in my youth and my life as a religious, but now that I am the one celebrating it, the mystery of the Eucharist takes on a totally different significance. Every time, I discover how great the mercy of God is since, thanks to the sacrament of Holy Orders, He comes down into the host at the moment of the words of Consecration said by a

poor creature to whom He grants this sublime power. Thus, the celebration of Mass makes me feel just how wretched I am, and at the same time, how privileged to be able to offer to the faithful the great miracle the Eucharist represents.

In distributing Communion, I discover how deep the love of souls is as they receive this host which has the capacity to fortify them by its power. What of those souls that receive it in the last moments of their life! When I give them Communion, I have the impression of already giving them, as though in anticipation, a bit of this heaven they

are waiting for with so much fervor and self-abandonment.

On another level, I am impressed by the fact that, when a priest gives Communion to his own parents, he is giving divine life to the very ones who gave him natural life. Is that not, for the priest, an opportunity for thanksgiving and, for the parents, their just reward because without their union the priest would not be? Let us remember the story of Pope

Saint Pius X who, after his election at the head of the Church, hastened to show his mother Margherita the ring on his finger. Right away, his mother said, as she showed him her wedding ring: *"If I had not had this ring, you would not have had that one."*

I would like to end my testimonial of gratitude towards God for my priesthood by quoting this wonderful text on the priest which my godmother sent me. (It was written by Lacordaire, a French priest in the 19th century.)

*Living in the midst of the world  
without desiring its pleasures,  
being a member of all the families  
and belonging to none of them;  
sharing in all sufferings,  
penetrating all the secrets,  
healing all the wounds;  
going from men to God  
to offer Him their prayers,  
returning from God towards men  
to bring them hope and pardon;  
to have a heart afire for charity;  
a heart of bronze for chastity;  
to teach, absolve, console  
and bless incessantly,  
my God, what a sublime life,  
and it is yours,  
O Priest of Christ!*

**Father Francis Thériault, O.F.F.M.**

## Their Spiritual Journey

a regular reading of their writings fosters the development of a truly spiritual perception of the confidences he is bound to receive.

In this area, no work is more profitable to him than *Life of Love* itself in which there is a vibrant teaching of an unequalled depth and simplicity. Moreover, priests in the future will certainly find in it all the subtleties in relation to the glorification and the divinization of the being, a transformation which more and more souls will experience during the Terrestrial Kingdom.

Garrigou-Lagrange, another specialist in mystical theology, recommended to the Sons of Mary by Marie-Paule, wrote that, for the human being, the seeking of a union with God is *"the only thing necessary"*. For a young man and in a world which is declining like ours is, to be able to devote his life to gaining a deeper understanding of this great mystery while striving, first of all, to live of it, is a very special grace. From that moment, the rareness of his vocation and the contrast between its nature and the general state of the world seem to increase the importance of faithfulness in the choice he made to serve God.

Not that the priest then feels important, but he feels the importance of the treasure the Total Christ entrusted to his very



poor little person. Like Saint Paul, he is inclined to say: *"This treasure we possess in earthen vessels, to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us."* (2 Cor 4:7)

If the fact of being witnesses of this *"surpassing power"* inspires in our priestly soul an incessant prayer of thanksgiving, the consciousness of our lowliness which it arouses at the same time, encourages us also to often ask for the grace of remaining faithful to our vocation and even, with Heaven's help, to correspond to it ever more and more.

**Father Leander Van Renterghem, O.F.F.M.**