



**Les Fils de la Charité**  
**Région France**

Paris, July 23, 2008

**Francis Frachebois**  
**1924-2008**

*“The exclusive service of God seems to me to be  
The greatest grace that can be granted to a man”*  
(In a letter of Francis of August 15, 1947, when he took  
his first vows with the Sons)

Francis was born on August 9, 1924 in Ougney Douvot in the Doubs department. His father worked on the railroad. His brother Georges was born 3 years later. Very early, when 10 years old, he thought of the priesthood and his parents sent him to the Maîche minor seminary. But later at the seminary of philosophy in Favorney, in the spring of 1943, a conference by Father Forget made him know the Sons of Charity and he was immediately seduced: what attracts him to religious life is “to become a priest with a profound interior life in order to care for parishes on the outskirts of the cities.”

Francis was ordained in Paris in 1950. He was 26 years old. During 58 years, he will go from one team to another. Always available and with a nice constancy in his convictions, a foolproof faithfulness, and warmth in team life. He was 6 years in Sallaumines, 6 years in Kremlin-Bicêtre, 4 years in Hautmont, 10 years in Vierzon, and then 10 years in Grand Quevilly and 6 years in La Rochelle. He then asked to be closer to Paris to prepare his retirement and wishing to know better the Sons at St. Joseph House. So he was appointed to Kremlin Bicêtre where he lived the last 16 years of his life, at the task to the end; not missing his Monday visits at Issy-les-Moulineaux. He had a heart attack this Sunday morning just as he was about to move to the Gentilly retirement house.

Let us now have a look at who was Francis among us.

He was profoundly a Son of Charity. He liked the Institute in its two dimensions of interior life with the Lord and solidarity with the working people. He was a man of prayer yet attentive to the very simple persons he encountered. He liked community life, sharing what he was living with one or the other. A few months ago he was complaining to his team brothers: “You have to keep me up to date on what is happening because in the team I am the man of prayer.” Always concerned about vocations, he had great hopes as to the future of the Institute, interested in all its international development.

He was also a man of Catholic Action, he believed in the laypersons, in their mission and he knew how to accompany them on the human and on the spiritual level. When he arrived at Grand Quevilly, at 52, he got involved again with enthusiasm with the Y.C.W. and with the Children’s Catholic Action. Ten years later in La Rochelle he did the same and got involved with a Portuguese Workers Catholic Action team. And then later on, in Kremlin Bicêtre, he said: “The Christian Movement for Retirees is what makes me live.” He also was very efficient with children. Last June 22, when we “celebrated” our leaving Kremlin Bicêtre, he started to talk very heartily to the youths and one could hardly stop him.

The man of Vie Libre (a Christian movement of abstinence from alcohol), Michel Lecoer, and a close friend of Francis wrote this for us: “He liked these persons, wounded by alcohol; he never had a judgment for any of them!” Since long ago Francis had committed himself with Vie Libre, having made the choice for abstinence himself through solidarity with the sick. Then noticing the difficulties of the families of the sick, he gathered those who wanted to in a spirituality movement called “The Pilgrims of Vie Libre”.

How many persons wounded by life has he greeted, listened to, accompanied; to how many did he give the Lord's forgiveness? It is his secret but also his joy.

A last feature: his love for Mary. Already during his novitiate he wrote: "The devotion to the Blessed Virgin has been for me a true discovery, but what a discovery!" Francis liked Lourdes and its pilgrimages. And his friend Michel writes: "When he recited the Rosary the first five Hail Mary were to thank for the brothers and sisters who had overcome the alcoholic disease and the five next ones to present to Jesus the others who were having trouble getting out of it."

We will remember Francis, sometimes stubborn, sticking to his idea, but also fraternal and joker, enjoying a game of cards, preparing the drinks after the Sunday mass. He had a passion for flowers that he grew and cared for till the end, on the grounds of Ste-Famille church. The passers-by liked it and once more it was an opportunity for an encounter where very simple or essential topics were talked about.

Thanks to God for having given us Francis a humble man and a faithful servant, who had the passion to make Christ know to all those he met with.

For Regional Council of France, *Jacques Robbe fc*

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie fc*