



**Les Fils de la Charité
Région France**

Paris, August 21, 2006

Jacques GUÉRIN (1921-2006)

Jacky was born in Paris on July 8, 1921. His father was a postal worker. They lived on Charonne Street. That is where he grew and always said that he remembered Fr. Anizan's funeral at Bon Pasteur parish when he was seven. But his parents came from Mosnes. That is where he was baptized and confirmed and he always remained faithful to that place where his parents, then his two sisters and their families lived there. He studied in Saint Michel College before entering the seminary of philosophy in Conflans. After two years at the Saint-Sulpice seminary he decided to enter the Sons of Charity. He pronounced his first vows on December 8, 1921 and was ordained a priest on April 1st 1946. During the war he was against the compulsory work service for the Germans from 1943-1944. He hid under a false identity first in Belleville and then hid in Haute Marne working in a wood products factory.

His father was anticlerical. Jacky mentioned that many times and said that at times he also felt anticlerical. That did not diminish in any way his attachment to Christ and the Gospel and made him close to all those who were deceived by the Church.

His first assignment in 1947 was at the novitiate in Bellevue, then in 1948 at St Curé d'Ars parish in Kremlin-Bicêtre. In 1949 he became a professor in Saint Paul seminary and was there for 6 years.

It is from those years that many Sons admired him and became attached to him. He was a young 28 years old professor hardly older than some seminarians; he brought some fresh air in an atmosphere that was then tense and choking. If his theological teaching has left its mark it is surely less by its high speculations than by his profound love of Christ. His careful and humble listening, his dynamic style, his youth of body and mind, his passion for sports that he practiced all his life (bike, swimming gym, etc.), the basketball games played with them, brought an atmosphere of humanity and a climate of joy in the house. Through his ministry in Saint Bruno, where he dedicated himself mostly to the Armenians and the young people, he was looked upon as a model pastor. *"His way of greeting the young seminarians that we were at the time, he has allowed us to live through the trial of formation, to temper our tensions and ambitions, to live these years in a conscious and generous adhesion to Jesus Christ and with the concern for the little people and the poor"*, said one of his former students.

From 1956 he was pastor of Bon Pasteur parish in his past neighborhood as a kid, then in 1961 at Notre-Dame Auxiliatrice in Clichy, then in Argenteuil. He was parish assistant in Gentilly in 1977 and pastor in Vieux St Ouen in 1989. His last assignment was at Villeneuve St Georges from 1994 to 2002.

All along his different ministries and responsibilities he was first of all a religious, a man of God. His faith was not theoretical; it was a sensitive friendship for Christ. He was extremely faithful to prayer: we have all seen him coming and going with his breviary in his hands or sitting in the chapel for mental prayer.

He was very detached from material things, owning almost nothing; he was simple, pleased with very little and concerned about a Church that should also be poor.

He was fraternal; he was a man who listened much before giving his opinion, he never criticized his brothers, he had a great sensitivity that he held back somewhat, he liked to laugh and have fun; his humor never hurt

anyone. He dreaded conflicts (sometimes too much). His limit in community life was to have to go to bed at 8 p.m.

More than a team leader he was first of all a pastor.

Until the end of his life he had a great capacity to enter in a relationship with children and teenagers. He was close to them because he followed sports, music and songs. He was an affectionate confidant, the one to whom one could entrust his wounds. His Y.C.W. was not very well structured but he was always available to them. He was concerned about attracting them to Christ but he did it with much patience. The rectory in Gentilly looked like a “youth center”. Many were there and felt at home. They invaded his office and much more. In Villeneuve St Georges he helped with the youth ministry, for example by accompanying some young catechumens. One of his brothers says: *“I keep the image of a man paying attention to the teenagers, above all to those in need of affection. He knew how to be the grandfather that the youths from the Caribbean or elsewhere so needed; He did them a lot of good.”*

He had a great sensitivity and a concrete friendship-love of the persons especially the poor. In Clichy he had dedicated himself with Le Nid a movement that fights prostitution, and afterwards he remained in touch with the movement. He liked being with people like going to the swimming pool with some seniors He was conscientious, dedicated, available: one could rely on him; he was there if needed. His favorite pastoral tool was the bike: he went through all the streets of the parishes; he went to visit families, catechumens or to leave a document or an invitation, stopping to talk to someone he knew.

People liked his homilies never long, simple, but profound with anecdotes to draw attention. He could communicate with passion his love for God and Christ and put at people’s reach the essential of our faith. In ministry he could be creative, for example allowing laypersons to preside funerals at a time when that was seldom done.

In the years 1971-1973 in Argenteuil he suffered from the tensions in the Church and in the Institute. He went into a depression. His sensitivity was also a fragility. That did not stop him from recovering and keep his dynamism for many years in Gentilly. Although he remained fragile. Everywhere he left an example of kindness, gentleness and listening; he became more glum in later years., discouraged in reflecting and inventing once more in ministry and impatient as he saw the slow going of the Church. Some of his brothers did not see anymore that fiery and cheerful Jacky of past years.

At 81, in 2002, as he was very tired he asked to go to St. Joseph retirement home. He was not a demanding boarder, kind and brotherly, never complaining. But he soon became glum. He did not accept the many invitations to spend a few days in Villeneuve St Georges. He was afraid it would hurt him

As his illness progressed he became as one said *“a suffering servant, with a sad look but with something of a smile.”*

His illness kept him from recognizing people but there remained that smile of the kind and fraternal Jacky.

He was admitted to Pompidou hospital in the afternoon of Tuesday, August 29. André Perinet who knew him from St Michel College days gave him the Unction of the sick. His eyes closed he joined in the prayers with great emotion. He died shortly after midnight.

Regional Council of France

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie f.c.*