



**Les Fils de la Charité
Région France**

*“What will happen on the other side,
when for me all will have toppled into
eternity, I don’t know. I only believe
that a LOVE awaits me.”*

Mother Aline Aimée

Louis BESNARD 1933-2008

Louis Besnard was born on February 19, 1933 in Chamillé, Anjou, in a family of seven children; the only boy with his sisters who never failed to spoil him. His mother was the sister of Pierre Thivollier. He was of course very close to his family; he met regularly with his sisters, brothers-in-law, nephews and nieces.

Louis entered the Sons of charity in 1953. His studies were interrupted during the war in Algeria that left his mark on Louis as in so many others. When he comes back he takes his last vows and is ordained a priest on June 29, 1961. He was in Villeneuve Saint Georges the first seven years of his priesthood. Then he was appointed to Grand Quevilly where he will stay for 22 years. After some time at the parish, he is sent as a worker-priest. He is hired at Carnaud, a factory of metal containers, he is on a cart as storekeeper, a job that brought many health problems and made him suffer from backaches for the rest of his life.

Louis had a great influence among his fellow workers. He was a union member with the C.F.D.T. (Democratic confederation of French workers); very soon he was chosen as a delegate. He knew how to ally justice and friendship, struggle and listening, right and bargaining. He kept well informed and had a keen analysis of economic life at the local, national and international levels. He would situate his analysis in a perspective of evolution.

He was liked and appreciated by his worker-priests team. To those who went to work after him, he helped them discover the importance of the worker-priest ministry, of life with the workers, to fight with them in the struggles of the workers movement. During the meetings of workers priests he knew how to smooth out rough edges. He has always been very welcoming, warm and full of humor. He knew how to prepare a good meal to greet his friends, whether Sons or his friends of Grand Quevilly.

Louis was interested by the Sons’ parish ministry at Grand Quevilly. The Sons’ team was living a real unity in a great diversity of ministries. But it was the same Spirit and the same vocation that inspired the team.

In 1991 Louis became treasurer of the Institute. And will remain there for 11 years. He fulfilled his “trade” with strictness, flexibility and much humor; he never ended up with headaches about that. He liked rendering that service.

At the same time he is part of different pastoral teams: Grigny, St-Ouen, Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and finally Bezons. Everywhere he feels at home, caring for people, practical and full of fraternal gestures.

There was another form of apostolate important to Louis: Les Équipes Enseignantes (Christian teachers' teams). One of them writes: *“Louis was for many years chaplain of Équipes Enseignantes, a milieu in which he felt totally at ease. He had such a good understanding of our profession as teachers to children of public schools. He brought us a theological and biblical enrichment and fervor when we had Eucharistic celebrations. He was part of a group of friends believers and non-believers where his ability to listen was appreciated.”* Later on Louis was appointed as National Chaplain of these teams from 1999 to 2002.

Louis also took part during many years at tourist ministry at Notre-Dame des Monts with many other Sons. His humor and his smile had an unbelievable efficiency to smooth away difficulties and allow the team to live rich and missionary moments.

His last responsibility was serving his isolated brothers of the Institute and also the Sons retirement home in Colombes until 2006.

Louis had an indefectible, intuitive, discreet and efficient friendship. He could find the delicate gesture, offer a present, and send a card for a birthday or other occasions. He was gifted in that he could “guess the other”. The Sons from other countries remember his efficient and warm welcome when they came to St-Paul! He was attentive to those with health problems, never hesitating to make a long trip for a visit or to help someone. For Louis there were no problems, only solutions. He settled difficult questions with his cunning and his charity, as Saint Paul means it. Saint Paul's words fit him like a glove: *“Love is kind, is not inflated, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”*. (1 Cor 13, 4)

But finally, who was Louis? Behind that unlimited humor, “Boo! There's that and that and that, which is not going so well, but otherwise all is fine”! What suffering, what wound was hidden behind his great sensitiveness? He talked very little about himself, those who have known him can bear witness to that. His quest for the truth was not easy. For a few months now he would talk in a disillusioned way of his coming death. He doubtless was struggling in a mystical night of which God has the secret to get us accustomed to Him.

Louis had come near to death during his stay at the hospital after his trip to Africa and had regretted that they had him come back to life while he had perceived a great light in his coma. How not to wish him that light in our Father's house.

For Regional Council of France, *Jean Guellerin fc and Jacques Robbe fc*

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie fc*