



Les Fils de la Charité
Région France

Paris, May 12, 2009



Louis HAMARD (1921-2009)

“How am I living my ministry today? Another form of ministry in the hospitals, among the sick. People tell me something about God. I listen and try to put them on the road to hope. If someone invites me for a meal... I think of Emmaus “What were you talking about on the road’.”

Louis was born in St Georges de Reintambault on September 19, 1921. His parents were small farmers and had four children. But the father died when Louis was only twelve. On the other hand his mother celebrated her 100th birthday in 1992 and lived until 1996. His brother Constant became a Brother of Christian Schools; he also died early, he was 33. The family went on with his two sisters Hélène and Élise and their children and their grandchildren. Louis was very attached to them and his nephews and nieces liked his open-mindedness, his joviality, his taste for trips and for the mountains that he shared with them, taking them with him in the camps for youths that he organized. Last Christmas a last family dinner took place at the Gentilly retirement home for the great joy of all those who attended.

In St Georges a man was revered: Father Maunoir, a Jesuit missionary, who was later beatified. Louis was marked by that man. He entered the Minor Seminary of Châteaugiron, and then began his theology at the Grand Seminary of Rennes. He learned about the Sons through a summer camp of Bon Pasteur parish in Paris and a visit to Olivet where the parish vicar spoke to him about Fr. Anizan. Fr. Lhande's book “Christ in the Suburbs” a conference by Fr. Goison and Francis Feillet (His elder by a few years and also of St-Georges) finally convinced him to enter the novitiate,

He took his first vows on September 8, 1943 and was ordained a priest in Paray Vieille Poste by a Vietnamese bishop on June 30, 1947. Looking back on his life 60 years later, he recalls the years gone by “A call to be turned toward the others and the events in order to work at the liberation of this world; a call to live in solidarity with mankind: those who have the most needs and those who are searching. Later on, when came the foundation of the Institute in Latin America, he became open to our “internationalization”.

His first assignment was at St Pierre de Vaise in Lyon until we left that parish in 1957. He then joined the large Vierzon team of which he will be one of the pillars. His team brothers admired both his contemplative spirit, every day he took time for a long mental prayer and made many visits to the chapel, and at the same time his pastoral spirit: he greeted very well the people he met. A small detail: some who heard him in the church use to say that they didn't need to buy a newspaper, because in his sermon he talked about a whole lot of local events. On the economic and social fields, when they cut jobs at the farm tractors plant and in the porcelain factory, he could just as well meet labor union leaders or the managers of these companies, as he was chaplain of the C.W.M. and of the Independent Catholic Action.

In 1964 he is sent to Escaudain where he is the team leader. There he discovers the hard life of the coal miners and encounters great poverty. In 1972 he agrees to go at Villeneuve St Georges to replace Robert George (an exchange of assignment) Four years later he leaves for Bègles, near Bordeaux.

But that is where his health began to decline. In the twenty years that follow, including the years in Ste Livrade, he will have more or less long stays in hospitals until he came to our retirement home in Issy-les-Moulineaux in 2000. We discovered a great contrast: his love for life, his ability to welcome everyone, and his anxiety about his health so that he only felt safe in a hospital: that is why he left the retirement home to go to a medical center in Gentilly.

Louis lived his last years in an astonishing way. The director of his retirement home said: "*Father Louis was able to maintain his priesthood even during his illness.*" The employees whatever their convictions would entrust to him their concerns and he always succeeded in boosting their morale. He received that influence in his faith: "*Friendship with Christ was not always glaring but I have a wish...*" On the other hand, well looked after by Jean Naert and Sava, Louis kept himself informed of all that went on in the world and in the Church. He was interested by all, asked questions, reflected, thought over things and prayed. That is how he supported the Institute during the Anizan Year and the Fraternity of the Suffering Servant because of Frédy Kunz who had left a great impression on him. On Saturday May 2, totally conscious he prayed for the young Sons that were being ordained in Brazil on that day and for the Y.C.W. giant gathering in La Courneuve. Then he went into silence and passed away in the evening of Friday May 6.

Regional Council of France

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie f.c.*