



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

### **Michel AMIAUX**

(November 11, 1942 – February 20, 2004)

*“What is living? It is by accepting to die on the cross that Christ gives his live freely! God’s answer is the resurrection and eternal life offered freely to the whole universe. We are invited to adhere to Jesus Christ. That daily life of ours is eternal. What are we doing with it?”*

*Michel Amiaux, June 2003*

Our brother Michel AMIAUX died at the Lourdes hospital at age 61, on Friday, February 20, 2000 at 2h.40 p.m. while his sister Monique was reading to him the gospel of the day (MK 8, 34 to 9, 1)

That death ended a vigorous eight month struggle. Since the preceding Saturday when he had received the sacrament of the sick at Cité Saint-Pierre, he was peaceful and abandoned. As early as June he had spoken to us about that sacrament, recalling that he had given it himself to Michel GOBIN and that he would like to live it in the same way. Which means that receiving the sacrament and that peaceful abandonment were the result of a long struggle as days went by.

For Michel fought on many fronts.

First of all, against the “invader” that aggressed him as he would say. Perhaps what struck us most was the courage and determination of that struggle; it was so spectacular and so like Michel as we knew him. And also because with him we also were secretly hoping that victory. Michel HERBRETEAU had the idea and we all prayed together for that.

But when going over all that he wrote to us we discover another struggle; the one that led him to the peace of his last days. On June 24, he wrote: *“Two possibilities are opened to me: either the chemotherapy is a success or it is my meeting with God within a short time. In either case it is always toward Life. But I won’t hide it from you when I reflect and pray, to tell myself that in a few months I will have left this earth that does something to me. I thing back at what I now have said for the past 28 years at each funeral: it is the place of eternal happiness where there is nothing but joy and peace with the Father. I can now verify how I live interiorly what I proclaim...”* And he adds: *“But reassure yourselves, I’m doing what I have to do in order that solution number one succeeds.”* The day before his chemotherapy: *“What is awaiting me is going be hard; I know it*

*intellectually for the time being. But so many persons have gone through that. Therefore it is humanly feasible. For the time being except for some pains I do not feel that my life is leaving me. If that should happen, how will I react? Would I accept to let my life go away?"* Last December he told Pierrot: *"I'm thinking about the Unction of the sick, but before that I need to write down what I'm living. An illness is difficult; you're no more the master of your body, that is enormous. Abandoning myself to God; I feel that a lot. Letting myself go. I need the Lord's strength. I will write all that and will live it afterwards..."*

His last act of letting go was to accept receiving the Unction of the sick without being able to write, prepare and master everything. And with the grace of the sacrament's action, he found peace.

The Sons were his second family. He was born in Colombes on November 11, 1942. His parents were grocers and he was the second of four brothers and sisters. He started working with his father when he was 14. Pierre THOMAS says: *"I knew him when he was 18. He drove a delivery truck. We had started a Monday team with young people of restaurants and stores. He was a generous, enthusiastic, spontaneous and efficient young man who cared for the young workers of the working world. He always remained so. Come hell or high water he has always been the promoter of Catholic Action for youths and adults. That natural generosity and that love of Christ that he had received from his parents led him to become a Son of Charity."* He belonged for a while to the lay brothers team and he always kept his ties with them. Pursuing his search he decided to prepare to become a priest after having courageously come back to studying. Jo BOUCHAUD says: *"We admired this young brother Michel, his simple, natural and enthusiastic belonging to the workers world. And the faith that he was a witness to seemed as simple, as true, and as limpid as all the very lively stories about his life as a driver. He was, he remained and wanted to remain always a simple and true witness of Jesus among the workers."*

He pronounced his first vows on September 16, 1972 and was ordained a priest on June 21, 1975. He was first assigned to Kremlin-Bicêtre until 1978. Then to Belleville from 1978 to 1985, Valenciennes from 1986 to 1992, Port de Bouc in 1992 before coming to Lourdes, assigned to Cité Saint-Pierre last July.

All along these years of ministry he dedicated himself first to Catholic Action: ACE, JOC and ACO (Catholic Action for Children, Young Christians Workers and Catholic Action for Workers) In Paris he had been diocesan chaplain of ACE. *"He had a gift to get youth to relate to one another, make them know each other, help them get involved."* *"Always ready to give all he had, creative and educator, never hesitating to get involved to defend them and to open a future for them. How many kilometers he drove with them and for them!"* Emblematic of many other vehicles that followed, we must recall the famous green truck of Kremlin-Bicêtre that went dead on the parkway, while it was loaded to the limit with equipment of a YCW meeting after having transported many youths, children and all kinds of equipment.

In Valenciennes and in Port de Bouc, he would make himself available to the youths of the city through the Social Center, organizing for them many summer camps. He wrote *“In Valenciennes, I would go at the High School to greet the students, to keep them from loitering in the stairways. In my place they could do their homework, drink a chocolate, play ping-pong, and talk with an adult. When I told them I was leaving for Port de Bouc, one of them said: ‘It’s not surprising, who are we for people to be interested in us?’ That hurts”*, said Michel.

He recognized himself in Fr. Anizan, his *“aching for the people, the forsaken crowds, religion to be put at their reach, to be theirs...”* He was always worried that the small people and the poor would not be looked after and listened to. That is why he would sometimes be radical and rough in his questioning. He was not always very sure of himself, and that led him sometimes to take cut-and-dried standpoints that could hurt others.

Nevertheless he was a delicate and very faithful man. He proved it to many and wonderfully when he accompanied Michel Gobin, than in the ties with family. He maintained many relationships, through his yearly letter, always ready to cross France if someone needed him or was having problems. Joyful, dedicated, ready to give away his shirt, he did not calculate. He was able after a Christmas Mass to go and celebrate another Eucharist for a nun who attended to her sick mother.

During the eighties he took part in the Spots adventure, going to meet with the crowds in the market places and in vacation areas. Tireless to drive, to put up or put down the equipments and showing an unbelievable easiness to meet with youths and children.

The last years at Port de Bouc and Berre were difficult ones for him. He suffered in a broken up team and from a ministry far from parish work. At the pastoral level, he dedicated himself mainly to the regional Y.C.W., and to CCFD (the French Catholic organization to help Third-World countries) and to the workers’ mission. He proved his qualities in going on with his task as team leader, by maintaining its meetings and its daily life. And he was always available to serve by replacing sick or absent diocesan priests.

All that he wrote during his illness shows well enough the profoundness of his spiritual life. He was indeed a man of faith and of prayer; he was a pastor who always invented and imagined ways to say to the youths and adults that they were loved by God and to help them pray, to help them get closer to Him.

That apostolic zeal has been his third combat when he arrived to Cité St-Pierre. He was well aware of the *radical change* in his life after years mostly helping the apostolic movements. He said: *“Today, I’m more exclusively in direct contact with the excluded and the roads are not yet mapped out.”* He liked Cité St-Pierre and, in spite of his illness, he got involved right away. He saw his illness as capable of making him closer to the many who suffer in Lourdes. He began to work with Caroline especially on the words of the poor that he had noted down during the last season. He asked the doctors to relieve

his pains, but without taking away his consciousness and his capabilities, so that he could drive, be present, have his place and be available for the meetings. When he entered the hospital in Paris on Christmas he wanted absolutely to go back to Lourdes, “because that is where I have been assigned”. At the hospital he kept up to date on the new mission of the Sons in Lourdes and... attentive to the hospital staff.

His sister Monique, his family, Pierre Dherbomez, the friends of Cité St-Pierre, Pierre Tritz, our messages and our visits have accompanied him on that way were with confidence he commended his life.

The Regional Council of France

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie fc*