



**Robert BRACHET**  
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*For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Gentiles alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1Cor 1,21-24)*

He was born on April 9, 1912 in St Rémy sur Bussy in the department of Marne. His parents were bee keepers. He was the only boy and had five sisters. His father whom he lost when he was 10 used to go regularly to Montmartre for night adoration. One of his sisters who died recently was a Benedictine nun in Jouarre. He became a priest for the diocese of Chalons on October 7, 1936 and that is where he had his first ministries. He was a prisoner in eastern Germany during the war and upon his return he entered the abbey of Hautecombe where he made his novitiate (1947-1949). He was well liked but apparently he left for health reasons.

That is when he thought of the Sons of Charity. He was then 37 years old. He made his first religious profession on October 7, 1950 and his perpetual profession on November 3, 1952, only two years after, having obtained an indult from Rome.

He had taught before and his first assignment was as a teacher of philosophy at the Sons' seminary... During the fifties and the sixties many young Sons appreciated him much as a teacher. Many recall that, he was a genuine intellectual knowing how to communicate his passion for philosophy, very friendly and close to his students: *“a very competent man that made us reflect wisely”* ; *“ a very good professor who managed to make himself understood by the most refractory”*; *“a man who made me discover Kant and also philosophical Marxism”*; *“after two years of philosophy in my diocesan seminary, where I only had duplicated lecture notes, his courses on existentialism, his openings on Sartre, Camus were stimuli to study even deeper. It was a pleasure to listen to him, to understand with him that beyond the words there were men and women of our times”*; *“also a priest who could listen silently, with much attention and with whom one could have very profound dialogues.”* Others underline that he was down to earth and was a football fan; he could have a good laugh and tell some good jokes. The last generations of students remember with joy the simplicity and kindness with which, on some occasions or feasts, he would end his course earlier to offer a glass of very cool Muscat from Samos and that he had bought for us. It was a complement to our Greek culture and a concrete encouragement to love Aristotle. That gesture had pleasantly surprised us the first time coming from that discreet and rather reserved professor, but it showed his fine kindness.

Aristotle was his passion. We have always known him working on a thesis that, it seems, was never upheld. He worked a lot on the idea of God of the pre-aristotelians, wanting to show the

roots of Aristotle's thought. He published a book: "The religious soul of young Aristotle" in 1990.

From 1952 to 1956 he became superior of the scholasticate. That was no doubt the most demanding time of his life as a Son. He had only been in the Institute for three years and he had been entrusted with a difficult mission. Many who knew those years say he was caught in a stranglehold between a heterogeneous body of professors of which one or the other member saw communist influences everywhere, an omnipresent general superior whose strong pressure was permanent and turbulent seminarians attracted by the exterior ministry for which they were preparing and that they were in a hurry to begin. One of them concludes: "*A good professor does not necessarily make a good superior of scholastics, but he must have suffered much from that and for the rest of his life.*"

Indeed that experience left a long lasting mark in him. Perhaps it helps us understand that short sentence of his spiritual testament (1991): "*It happened to me to live solitarily my fidelity to my vows and my priesthood while keeping my attachment to the congregation.*" In spite of a short while in 1960 when he thought of leaving the Institute he always remained faithful to it. And that surely must not have been without an interior struggle. He adds: "*I always have had a passionate love for the Church and suffered painfully from the crisis it went through.*" (1991) He also was always somewhat concerned for the Church and the Institute, fearing some possible drift.

After that responsibility, he stayed at the scholasticate (1956-1959) and was successively appointed to Champs sur Marne (1959-1961) and Paray-Vieille-Poste (1961-1967) During the time he kept giving his appreciated courses at the Sons' seminary until 1965. He was in Brunoy from 1968 to 1970 and back in Champs sur Marne from 1970 to 1977. After a short stay at Tonneins (1998, he goes to Aulnay sous Bois at the school of the sisters of the Protectorate of Saint Joseph. There he will engage in a ministry serving the children. With the sisters he had created a Eucharistic movement that gathered the youths on Sunday for a time of discussion and of reflection on the Gospel; it was followed by a picnic, some games and then the Eucharistic celebration. "*He was excellent in the catechetical formation of children, enjoyed telling stories and explaining things. He was more limited with the teenagers of the technical school, for in his kindness he did not want to impose things to them.*"

He was also at the service of the sisters and he also accompanied many families: "*He was a father to us. He was very much centered on the Sacraments, the Eucharist; he heard a lot of confessions. He welcomed kindly, listened well and brought us much kindness, simplicity and benevolence.*"

He had organized a biblical group that went well and that he went on leading when he had already come to St. Joseph. He could put himself at each one's reach. "*He had a great culture, but he was very close to the simple people. He could explain things.*" For that biblical work he had written many duplicated booklets, one of which *Genesis* was published in 1995.

He came to St- Joseph's in 1996. Always discreet and a bit secretive, he was nice and simple with all, kind and brotherly. During these last months he was overcome with illness and little by little could no more speak. "*In the past I had know him unable to bear his health problems or*

*necessary operations*, said one of his friends, *and that slow entry into dependence must have been a terrible struggle.*” Surely a victorious struggle when one thinks of the marvelous smile with which he recognized and welcomed his visitors. Each day when his brothers brought him communion, he made the sign of the Cross and greeted them with the same smile and with them he murmured the word of the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*. They were his last utterances.

That peaceful and luminous smile in his suffering and his long approach to death, are surely a sign of a man of God, who lived faithfully and conscientiously his donation to God with whom he overcame a rather anxious character and the trials of a life he had wanted a genuine priestly life.

One of his favorite prayers was of Léonce de Grandmaison: “...*give me a heart tormented for the glory Jesus Christ, wounded by his Love, and whose wound will only be cured in heaven.*”

He died on Friday, February 3, 2006 at 9.15 p.m., assisted by one of his brothers of St. Joseph’s.

Regional Council of France

Translated by *Lorenzo Lortie fc*