



# Postulation Bulletin- September 2018 "The heroicity of virtues" EVANGELISATION THROUGH CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION

The apostolic project of Jean-Marie, like that of Father Gabriel, became more and more precise. They started, like all priests, to take care of all kinds of pastoral activities, but they soon found themselves confronted with the adventure of a Christian school. Father Deshayes started early with his school mistresses from the countryside, the Sisters of Christian Instruction of Saint-Gildas-des-Bois. Jean-Marie, after turning forty, devoted himself totally to his own schools of the Brothers of Christian Instruction and the Daughters of Providence, while taking care of other teaching Congregations also.

For this work, he gave up other services and ecclesial offices, refusing 17 times, to be made a bishop. He put aside his career as a writer and theologian, confirming the word of his brother, the prestigious writer: *"Little Brothers, here is your work!"* It was in these terms that Feli addressed his brother prophetically. And that's what Jean-Marie was going to do.

Why did Jean-Marie want to immerse himself in such a modest and obscure work without much clarity while he had the opportunity and the ability to invest in other areas, perhaps more prestigious and more difficult?

Children and young people, especially those from the lower classes, are the privileged of the Gospel. These are the ones that Jesus identified with *"What you did to the youngest, you did it to me."* They are the privileged of the Kingdom. *"Jesus took a child and put him in their midst."* Here are those who best understand the mysteries of the Kingdom, for whom the evangelical proclamation finds their ears and their hearts attentive. They are docile to the word and fatherhood of God, those who welcome the Kingdom, without complications or artificial obstacles: *"If you do not become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven"*.

Jean Marie was always in their midst, he used to joke with them, caress them and tell them stories about Jesus and the mysteries of the Kingdom. He let himself be easily approached by them. They were his joy as is the case today for Brothers and Daughters of Providence

It is true that sometimes they are difficult and that we succeed in supporting them but with difficulty. However, our heart cannot live without them. A relationship made of spiritual paternity, paternal affection and familiarity, which passes through the transmission of knowledge, and all that with the heart of Jesus.

Jean-Marie saw in the educational act a total mission: in the same act, the educators - Brothers and Sisters - transmitted knowledge and skills, maintained a paternal relationship which made the evangelical message grow, and more to that an invitation to meet the person of Jesus. Moreover not in different moments because of the juxtaposition of materials, moments or places. But in the same act, at the same time, in the same vision. For this, the encounter with Jesus was fundamental. *"My schools are made to make Jesus known and to loved"*.

Everything was christocentric: the presence and the life of the teachers, the arrangement of places and signs, the conception of culture based on Christian worldview, the type of educational relationship, the good understanding in the class, the construction of an educational community including teachers, pupils and families ... Also a school became a powerful means of evangelisation: it was open to all, both to non-practicing Christians and non-Christians, because it started from a human experience open to all, it realised in practice what was announced in words.

Of course, all this on condition that the school is truly a Christian school: and we know how much Jean-Marie maintained it, how he reprimanded the Brothers, how he formed them in retreats, in his letters and on the occasion of his frequent visits. The Brothers and Sisters were the artisans of this "new evangelisation". They were the guardian angels who watched over these little children and helped them grow. They sanctified themselves by making children saints. They were apostles who shared the bread of the Gospel with those who were hungry for the word of God and at the same time satisfied the hunger for education, affection, presence and accompaniment. The Brothers and Sisters formed with their pupils and their parents a real family that little by little realised the mysteries of the Kingdom. This was Jean-Marie's dream of a true Christian school that he has bequeathed to us too.

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