



# Bulletin of the Postulation August 2018

## "The heroicity of virtues"

### THE MISSIONARY ARDOUR

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"I have come to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were blazing already !" (Lk 12:49). The ardent hearts of our founders, Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes, appropriated these words of Jesus. They were both men of action, passionate, tireless pastors, promoters of a thousand initiatives, both in the ecclesial domain and in civil society. Their passion for Christ was their constant stimulus: "The charity of Christ urges us? ". Already very young, Jean-Marie was struck by the commitment of the clandestine priests who, like good pastors, risked their lives to help their flock exposed to the destructive tempest of the Revolution. It was there, before the guillotine that spilt the blood of the priests-martyrs, that was born his priestly vocation, and it was there that the model of the pastor that he would later become took shape.

As a young priest in Saint-Malo, he devotes himself entirely to multiplication of pastoral initiatives with the aim of rebuilding a Christian community almost destroyed by persecution: liturgy, catechesis, confessions, sermons, retreats ... And he does not forget the key to reconstruction: the formation of young Christians and especially new priests. There is no lack of ideas to revive the Christian faith, and that in the whole of France: he exposes them in some of the works that he writes with his brother Féli, but which reflect his passion of a good pastor. But these writings were a mere pause in his commitment to pastoral action. Very early he invested himself totally in a large diocese: the missions in the cities, the sermons, the retreats for all categories of the faithful, the struggle to rebuild the various ecclesial institutions and to invent new ones: a whole stream of initiatives that do not give him time to breathe. And all that is not enough. There is need to look to the future: the new times require new instruments of evangelisation.

And here is Jean-Marie founder, that is to say, he invents something new, like a seed that has not yet blossomed in the tree of the Church. It is certain that the Holy Spirit is upon him and gives him a prophetic look. But Jean-Marie has the same look as Father Gabriel, his eyes and heart are wide open to realities: the harvest of new generations without education, without masters, without fathers and who risk being left in the dark. to be indoctrinated by ideologies without God, without spirituality, without a true humanity. It is necessary to rebuild a Christian society respectful of the values of the person in all its dimensions, that of 'living together' in a respectful and supportive community, an economy of communion and dignity, an instruction respectful of the person of the young, with an integral cultural vision: material and spiritual, economic and cultural, personal and communitarian.

To achieve this "dream" were needed a thousand and one things that were totally lacking: teachers, schools, economic resources, programmes, religious formation, Novitiates, spiritual accompaniment and coordination. An enormous job !

And here is the Founder at work. From the first schools in the countryside to the busy classrooms of small Brittany towns, it was necessary to cover the whole Brittany with a network of schools, luminous points of the new integral Christian evangelisation. And finally, to the ends of the world, to the slaves of the West Indies, the cold lands of the North Atlantic, the torrid Guyana and the sub Saharan lands, the lost islands of the Pacific Ocean. How many "missionary" Brothers and Sisters, how many schools of life and of prayer, how many resources burned for the reign of God in the service of those who have nothing!

And Jean-Marie, trusting Providence: "I always have an account open up there! ". An overflowing activity, but not an empty activism. Simply the reflection of his passionate heart for Jesus and for the Church, which spread over all his works. One Brother in particular left a very beautiful trace in the Congregation, it is Brother Philippe Friot, whose book, "Spirituality of a man of action", describes the spiritual profit of Jean-Marie. An apostolic action like that of Jesus and the apostles, imbued with a passion for Jesus, passionate love of the Church and paternal affection for children and young people.

*Fr. Dino De Carolis, Postulatore*