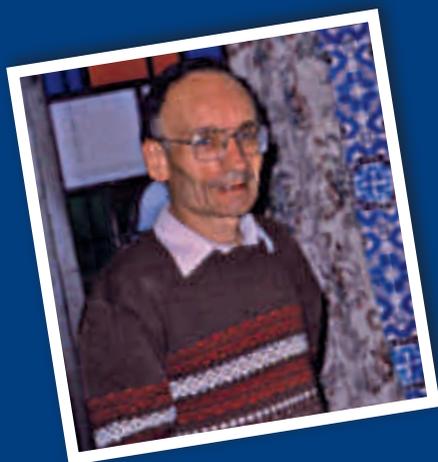


ConVergences

ACCORDING TO THEIR CORRESPONDENCE
STARTING FROM 1971



Brother Basilio Rueda
(1924-1996)



Brother Henri Vergès
(1930-1994)



« May the martyrs
of our time be
a source of courage
and of inspiration »

*General and missionary intentions
of Pope John Paul II for April 2002*

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BROTHER GIOVANNI BIGOTTO and ALAIN DELORME, fms - General House in Rome

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Artwork & Printer:
C.S.C. GRAFICA, s.r.l.
Via A. Meucci 28,
00012 Guidonia, Roma
www.cscgrafica.it

Preliminary remark

The passages printed in bold character underline essential aspects of the message of which Brothers Basilio and Henri are bearers for the today of the Institute, according to their commitments of yesterday. In browsing through them, the press reader will have a shortcut allowing him to discover a bit of the depth of a reciprocal friendship and of a spiritual life which opened up during the course of the years we are considering and under the circumstances that we know.



A Word

Sanctuary of Our Lady of Africa. Algeria.

of introduction

Basilio and Henri are two Marist Brothers who, over the years and by the exchange of letters and visits, were bound by a profound friendship. Both of them can be viewed and considered as models of fraternity, of dialogue, of holiness. Basilio is well known. Providence had prepared him to be a universal man and to occupy important posts. First he will be a great collaborator of Father Lombardi, founder of the *Better World Movement*. Charged with this Movement in Ecuador, he crossed Central America during three years, giving conferences and retreats to the most diversified audiences, going from the Bishops to the workers. Then during 18 years he will be Superior General of the Marist Brothers and his style of government will take him on voyages without end on the roads of the world, to encounter his Brothers. He is distinguished by a clear view of religious life after Vatican II. His writings are read and studied by many Congregations. He is known above all, by his attentive heart which knows how to discover the best in his interlocutor.

After his death, on January 21, 1996, among those who gave their witness, many affirm that they pray to him every day, others are sure that now they have one more intercessor in Heaven. The great affection which Basilio enjoyed while living has been transformed into recognition or fame of sanctity. The General Council also decided on June 5, 2002, to open his cause of canonization.

Henri, his friend, would have passed through our home just like any other Brother among many other Brothers, if a violent death, on May 8, 1994, had not attracted our attention on him and on his spirituality. In fact, his death revealed him as a champion of dialogue, of respect, of openness to the world of Islam and above all, to his Algerian brothers, and to Algeria, the country where he rests and from which he had asked the nationality; and of his openness and respect drawn from prayer, from a profound and permanent intimacy with the Lord and from a heroic attachment to the Marist Institute and to the Church.

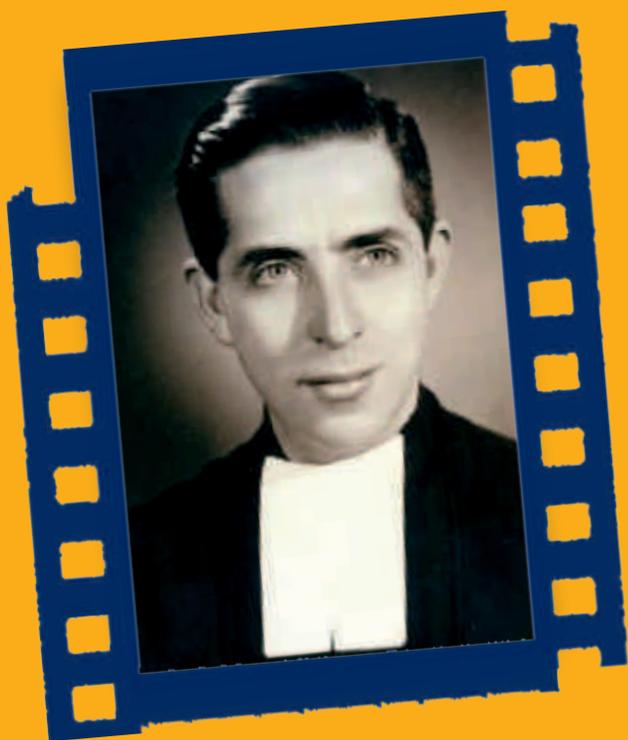
For our humble Little Brother, the General Council decided quite quickly, to open his cause, integrated to that of the other witnesses of faith in Algeria, between May 8, 1994 and August 1, 1996, according to the will of the Archbishop of Alger. The decision was taken on September 19, 2000.

Basilio and Henri, two Brothers, two friends, are two models for us. They are a bit like the light and the shadow, giving us the certitude that sanctity remains present in our religious family after Saint Marcellin and his first Brothers. The reading of the letters exchanged will confirm this and will be a stimulant in our Marist commitment, wherever we are, in the Church and for the world of today.

Rome, June 24, 2002

Br. Seán Sammon,
Superior General





Brother
**Basilio
RUEDA**

(1924 – 1996)

Brother Basilio Rueda Guzmán was born in Acatlán de Juárez, Mexico, on October 14, 1924. He was the fourth child of the family, and at Baptism he received the names of José Basilio. He lost his mother when he was four years old.

He entered the Juniorate of the Marist Brothers in Tlalpán, when he was eighteen years old. On December 8, 1944 he finished his Novitiate.

His apostolic career begins in 1947. He joins groups of Catholic Action, of animation in the catechesis in popular neighborhoods, while continuing his studies of Philosophy, until he finished his Doctorate. He defended his thesis on December 17, 1961 on the theme: "Being and Value". In the meantime, he made perpetual profession on January 1, 1950.

From 1961 to 1965, he forms part of the Team of Father Ricardo Lombardi, founder of the Movement « Better World ». In Ecuador, he will be the first responsible one. His retreats and conferences are greatly appreciated by the most diverse audiences; workers, politicians, persons of the Church and consecrated persons

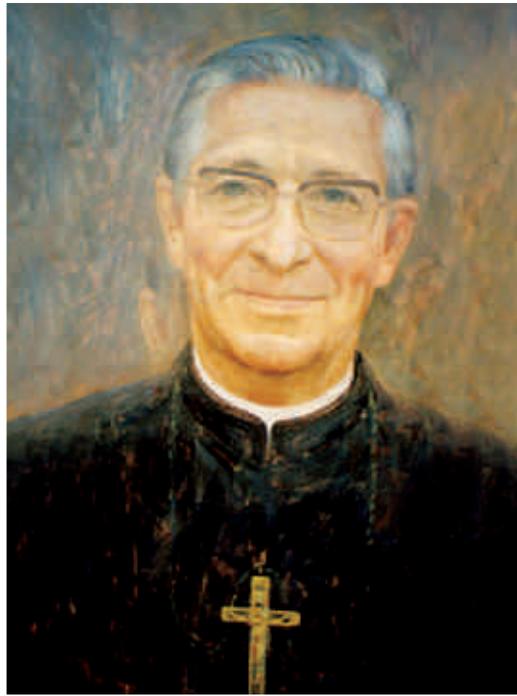
He was named Director of the Second Novitiate in Sigüenza (Spain) in 1966; he profoundly transformed the courses by centering them on the Gospel, giving a special attention to the calls of Vatican Council II and to the problems of the present world. The Second Novices are very enthusiastic because of the humaneness of their Director, his openness, his simplicity. His Province of origin delegated him to the General Chapter of 1967

On September 24, 1967, he was elected Superior General, at the surprise of a good number of English-speaking and French-speaking Brothers who did not know him. Brother Basilio was 43 years old.

An extremely active life then begins for him. He goes around the Marist world to enter into contact with the Brothers and the communities, leaving the ordinary administration in the hands of his Vicar General, Brother Quentin Duffy, an Australian.

The period of time after the Council is difficult. Brother Basilio enlightens the spirits and warms the hearts by means of Circular Letters, rich in doctrine and fully open to the breath of the Spirit: A Chapter for the world of today, The calls of the Church and of the Founder, Conversation on prayer, Community Life, Obedience, to mention the principal writings during his first mandate. These texts are of such a quality that the majority are asked for and translated by editors for diffusion beyond the Marist world.

In the General Chapter of 1976, when Brother Basilio thought of returning to his native Mexico, after nine years at the head of the Institute, he was re-elected with such a majority that he could not refuse to respond to the trust of the Brothers, even if it was at the price of his health. Then, again he took his pilgrim stick, always helped by his excellent Vicar. He continues his work of animation by retreats and sessions, by an enormous amount of correspondence which demands the help of several secretaries. At the end of his two mandates, he would



have written more than fifty thousand letters! He also published a Circular letter on Mary: A New Space for Mary; another one on Prayer and on Fidelity. This last one is composed from spontaneous witnesses of hundreds of Brothers from all over the world. This is a proof of the immense love and the filial trust that Brother Basilio had aroused in the heart of the Brothers because of his way of being and of governing. This long text - more than six hundred pages - is a unique treasure for the history of the Institute.

In 1985, after eighteen years in the exercise of service of authority, finally he had a Sabbatical year to rest physically, to revitalize or resource himself by the spiritual exercises and the discovery of the Holy Land. After that he was named Master of Novices of the Province of Central Mexico.

Brother Charles Howard, Superior General, asked him in 1990, to assure the direction of a Session of formation for future Masters of Novices. He again sees Italy, in the Oasis, near Castelgandolfo. At the end of that Session which lasted eighteen months, he goes back to his role of Formator with the novices of both Mexican Provinces

He knows how to win over the heart of the young who admire in him his goodness, his sense of humor, his spiritual life at the same time joyful and demanding, his dedication without limit in simplicity, his love for the Institute and for Father Champagnat, his apostolic and Marian zeal.

It is in the exercise of this service that Brother Basilio consumes or wears out his last force. He passed away on January 21, 1996. His funeral was an apotheosis of gratitude and of love.



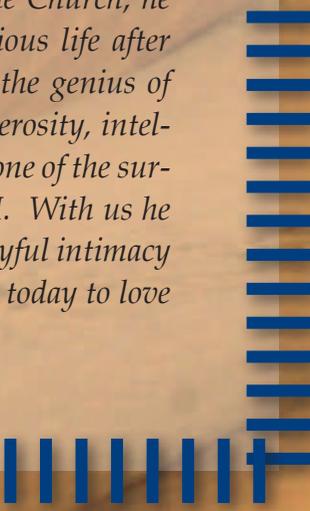
Brother Basilio was a wonderful gift from Marist Mexico to the Institute, to the Church, to humanity. May Our Lady of Guadalupe be thanked for having given him to us!

Bro. Basilio Rueda after his election as Superior General together with Bros. Paul Ambrose and Hilary Mary, General Councillors, and Bros. Gall Hanley, Francis McGovern...





At the first Vespers of the feast of our Founder, on June 5, 2002, the General Council decided the opening of the cause of Brother Basilio Rueda, our Superior General from 1967 to 1985. He was born in Mexico in 1924, died in that same country in 1996, Basilio was during his whole life a universal man. By his way of exercising authority during a tormented period of time of the Church, he is a prophet and an artisan of religious life after Vatican II. From his person shone the genius of friendship, attention to persons, generosity, intelligence, optimism and humor. He is one of the surest spiritual Masters after Vatican II. With us he lived the passions of our world in a joyful intimacy with God. His life repeats to us that today to love Christ is possible and passionate.





BASILIO AND HIS CORRESPONDENCE



When in September 1985, Basilio ended his second mandate as Superior General he recognizes that he has written over 50,000 letters. Already in 1969, after a year and a half as the first responsible of the Institute, he excuses himself before a superior of a community in Ecuador, for having de-

layed in answering him and he adds that he has already written 2900 letters.

Out of sense of duty and friendship he never left a letter without a response. It is true that he had at his disposal four or five secretaries. But the letters which were not administrative flowed from his heart, written in his own handwriting or registered his voice in a cassette so that the secretaries could transcribe them. He wrote everywhere, in the stations, on the trains, in the airports and the airplanes... and especially during the long nights which were prolonged until the early hours of the morning.

He had many friends. Certainly, Brothers, but also Laity, families, religious, priests, children, young couples, doctors, professors, Bishops, politicians and other Superiors General...

What is surprising is the quality of the affection that those persons expressed to him. Many told him that they prayed for him eve-

ry day, others that they would like to write to him every day, others that they waited impatiently for his words. Some only asked him for his friendship, others asked for advice, others the arbitration in a difference of opinion, others for small services like sending Papal Blessings or medicines, books, audio cassettes

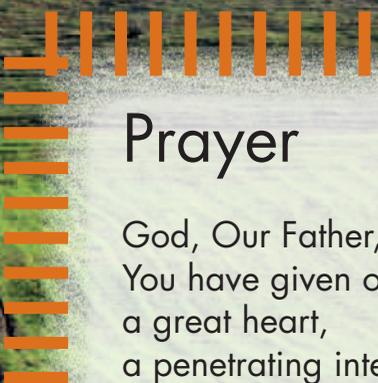
The responses of Basilio express respect, true friendship without any deviation, encouragements, and always such understanding of the difficulties or of the weaknesses that this created a climate of peace and won for him trust and friendship. In all the letters that he received, even the more dramatic and depressing, he knew how to find positive aspects. Even the responses in which he had to sanction or refuse, overflow with affection and end with an open door to friendship and hope.

He had hundreds of intimate friends. And, he recognizes it, far from diluting his affective force; all those friendships helped him to grow, to strengthen it. The Convergences which this book presents are of this vein.

The letters were for him an instrument for the apostolate, a way of getting close to and of meeting his Brothers and the people. They were another way of being Superior General. His work in the service of authority was always tinged with friendship, enlightened by a smile. He knew that the letters charged with love fully flow from his manner of being completely given to Christ. To love people, to encourage them, enlighten them, to be a friend of each one, such was his path of sanctity.

N.B. Those who would desire to know more profoundly the life and work of Brother Basilio can read: "Lumière et flammes d'une vie", translated from the Spanish by Br. Gabriel Miguel, from the original text. "Quemar la vida", written by Brother José Flores Chepo, in 1997.

These two works can be asked for to Rome, General House, 2 Piazzale Marcelino Champagnat, 00144 – ROMA (Italia). Another book which helps to enter into the personality of Basilio is Basilio Rueda Guzman, un autre Champagnat. This book of 110 pages alternates witnesses on Brother Basilio and extracts of his letters. You can find it at the same address.

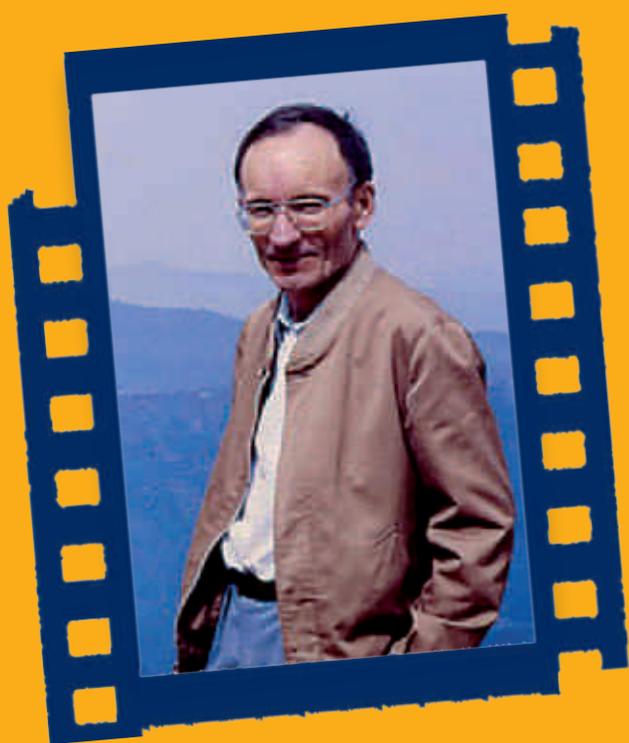


Prayer

God, Our Father,
You have given our Brother Basilio
a great heart,
a penetrating intelligence
and a great passion for your Kingdom.
His heart was a generous source of friendship,
his intelligence knew how to solve our problems,
his passion for your Kingdom renewed our Marist Family.
We give you thanks, God, our Father,
for this precious gift which was Basilio
for the Church, for us and for his numerous friends.
Allow us,
to call him to our aide
when doubt hovers over our lives,
when illness, fatigue or the years anguish us.
That following his example, we will be totally at your service,
every day opening a new space for the Virgin Mary,
thanks to the Spirit of your Son, our Lord.
Father, may our prayer glorify you,
We ask this of you through Christ, your Son,
our Master and Brother.

Amén.





Brother
**Henri
VERGÈS**

(1930 – 1994)

“ The dear Brother Henri and the admirable Sister Paul-Hélène were authentic witnesses of the love of Christ, of generosity and of the absolute unselfishness of the Church and of the fidelity to the Algerian people¹. ”

These words of Cardinal Duval, pronounced with a strong voice at the end of the Eucharistic celebration of May 12, 1994, feast of the Ascension, before the caskets of two martyrs, in the Church of Notre Dame of Africa, authenticate the quality of life of our Brother.

This life, brutally interrupted on Sunday, May 8, at the beginning of the afternoon, in the working office of Henri, rue Ben-Cheneb, neighborhood of the Casbah, in Alger, had begun on July 15, 1930, in Matemale, a small village of Capcir, the high valley of the Aude, department of the Eastern Pyrenees (France).

Henri was the first of six children of the home of Joseph Vergès and of Mathilde Bournet, modest peasants who worked hard to bring up their family. From their

¹ Words of Cardinal Duval, at the funeral, on May 12, 1994.

human roots our Brother drew the love for work and for nature, the simplicity of life, uprightness or honesty, the sense of daily sharing and a profound faith.

At twelve years of age, he left his family to begin an apprenticeship of the Marist religious life, in Saint Paul-trois-Châteaux, in the Drôme Provençal. In 1952, he commits himself definitively in the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary. He is an educator and teacher in different schools before becoming, during eight years, sub-Master of Novices. In this functions he reveals himself as an austere man but just and well-balanced, concerned about equity and the good of the young. This is the witness of one of his former pupils in the Novitiate: « Brother Henri taught me rigor, the will, the dedication (and incidentally Spanish) and his radiant faith, an ascetic touch but incarnated in such a way, to remain fixed or take root in my seventeen years, the definitive certitude that God exists and that we meet him in every man". After the General Chapter of 1967-1968, in which he participates as delegate from his Province of origin, his Superior proposes to him to leave for Algeria. Henri accepts wholeheartedly: for a long time he had desired to go on mission. Then he resolutely gets down to study Arabic during his summer holidays in his family and lands in Alger, on August 6, 1969. His effort of Arabization, Henri will continue it throughout his 25 years of presence in Algerian land. He was Director of the School Saint Bonaventure; he succeeded in having all the constituents of the educational community to participate



Author:
Lucas Sambudio
Brasil
Centro-Norte

in the preparation of the « Pedagogical Project ». He is close to all; pupils, professors, parents, service staff. Since the pupils are Muslims, Henri is attentive that the main lines or lines of force of the « Educational Project » support the values of Islam, those more threatened by the present civilization.

The nationalization of the private schools in 1976, frees our Brother from his responsibility of head of the establishment. He chose to remain in the service of Algerian youth accepting a post as professor in the secondary school of Sour-el-Ghozlane, at 120 kilometers to the south of Alger. He takes care of pupils facing educational difficulties and who are behind. Completely happy in his work, he writes: « I bless God for having placed me as educator of the young. This demands renunciation or ab-



Bro. Henri Vergès with his parents on the day of his taking of the habit.

negation and availability ». After twelve years, his annual contract of work was not renewed. Henri goes to Alger, to the house Ben Cheneb. He renews, remodels it with good taste to receive the young, boys and girls, searching for instruments of work and of tranquility and peace to prepare their exams. In 1994, he had 1200 registered in the Library.

Man of dialogue, Henri participated actively, soon after its foundation, in the Islam-Christian group named Ribât which met twice a year in the Trappist Monastery of Tibhirine. The prior of this Monastery, Christian de Chergé was the friend of Henri. He will be murdered with six of his Brothers in May 1996. The next day

after the death of Henri, he had carefully collected all the interventions of our Brother to whom he had entrusted the edition of the Bulletin du Ribât. This is how we know that during the meeting of October 31 to November 2, 1984, Henri had said these words; « Christ should shine forth through us. The 5th Gospel that everyone can read is that of our life ». With the agreement of his Superiors, he had asked for the Algerian nationality in 1983. It will never be granted to him, but his brutal death was felt like a profound wound by his numerous Algerian friends. His mortal remains rest in Algerian soil, in the cemetery El Harrach.

Had he had had the presentiment of his death? What is sure is that he had prepared his last will or testament which is dated April 22, 1994! But that did not prevent him from living his daily life in peace, totally abandoned to the will of the Father. In 1989, at the end of his account of his spiritual experience, he wrote: "At the end, it is my Marist commitment which has allowed me, in spite of my limitations, to harmoniously insert myself in a Muslim milieu, and my life in that milieu, in turn, has fulfilled me more profoundly in so far as a Marist Christian. God be praised! » (Alger, Christmas 1989)

N.B. Those who desire to know more the life and work of Brother Henri Vergès can ask for the work entitled: « Du Capcir à la Casbah, vie donnée, sang versé ». This book may be asked at the General House in Rome, Fratelli Maristi, C.P. 10250 – 2, Piazzale Marcelino Champagnat - 00144 Rome (Italie), or to Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, B.P.9 - 42405 Saint Chamond Cedex (France).



Prayer

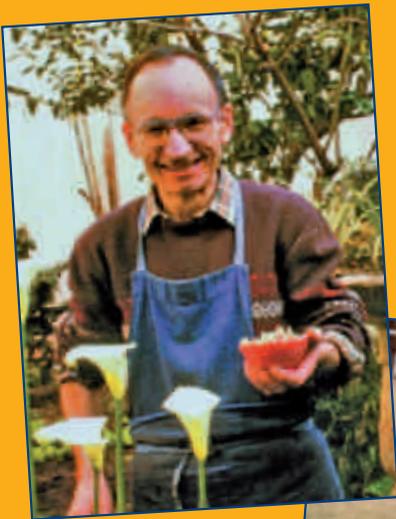


God Our Father,
Your servant Henri Vergès,
true Little Brother of Mary,
«Was an authentic witness of the love of Christ,
of impartiality and complete unselfishness
of the Church and of fidelity
to the Algerian people».
Send your Spirit upon us,
in order that following his example,
« In our daily relationships,
we openly take the side
of love, of pardon, of communion
against hatred, vengeance, violence ».
We ask you this through the intercession
of Mary, to You, Father, who lives and reigns
with Jesus your Son, in the unity of the Spirit,
world without end.

Amén.



Source of a **FRIENDSHIP**



The first mutual knowledge of our two Brothers began during the General Chapter of 1967/1968 which lasted almost six months, in two sessions. But the large number of delegates – more than 150 - and the intensity of the work of the Chapter, no doubt, did not allow an intimate getting close to each other of these two Brothers, of which, one was extremely taken up by his charge as Superior General of an Institute which at that moment counted more than nine thousand Brothers.

We are in summer 1971. Brother Basilio directs the retreat for the Brothers of the Southern-Eastern Province (Saint-Paul-3-Châteaux), in the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of Snows. It was at the time when he asked the Brothers to fill in questionnaires in order to allow him to know them better so as to help them more efficaciously in the living out their vocation to consecrated life. He encounters each retreatant personally, and it is thus that Brother Henri Vergès wrote to him on August 1971, from Our Lady of Snows.

Dear Brother Superior,

I felt quite distressed this morning, on the occasion of my interview with you regarding our Marist presence in Algeria. Before doing anything in the sense that you indicated, I decided to speak with some Brothers, then with Brother Provincial who told you our way of looking at things. You approved it and I thank you.

If I did not take the step to go and see you again – that was where my natural sentiment led me – it was solely in order to preserve your precious time for the province and for some Brothers who desired very much to speak to you.

Besides, I realize or understand better now that this problem is not only my problem, but above all that of the Province which should have discussed this at the opportune time after having pursued the experience begun two years ago on the occasion of the Provincial Chapter.

If you have the occasion of discovering some Brother who would be tempted by the Algerian experience with the agreement of his Superiors, I am ready to welcome, to accept him.

Thanking you for the benevolent interest that you gave to this problem and that you continue to give it. I apologize for what could have displeased you in my way of doing things.

I remain, dear Brother Superior General, your humble and devoted,

Brother Henri Vergès



Brother Henri arrived in Algeria on August 6, 1969, Feast of the Transfiguration. Starting in September 1970, he is responsible for the school Saint Bonaventure situated in the city of Alger and frequented only by Muslim youth. Brother Henri is going to mobilize all the educational community toward the service of these young people. He consults all the concerned parties of the school in order to draw up or prepare an educational project of a great simplicity but which aims at safeguarding the values of Islam. He writes it in French and in Arabic. Henri continues with his personal effort of Arabization, persuaded that his action as educator has to safeguard the values of the culture in which it is exercised. Then it is an imperative need to know this culture. Henri will never cease making efforts in this sense. In 1993, he participated in Granada in a session on the theme: "Christians and Muslims, living together and collaborating."

No doubt that he insisted before Brother Basilio to receive some exterior help to that of the Province. The latter even if accepting the orientation given by Henri to the school Saint

Bonaventure would be very conscious that it will not be easy to find within it Brothers who will be ready to Arabize themselves in order to go and support Henri. Was he very insistent (Cf. the end of his letter)? We do not know exactly the reason of the sentiment expressed at the beginning: "I felt quite distressed... ».

What is sure is that this brief letter reflects thoroughly the man and the religious. The first one knows what he wants and why he accepted to go to Algeria; the second abandons himself to the will of the Lord manifested by the Superiors to whom he has opened himself. Throughout his life these two fundamental attitudes will appear in the behavior of our Brother: fidelity to what the Institute wants through the orientations of the Provincial Chapter and abandonment to what God wants for him through events.

On September 8 of that same year, he wrote an article for the Marist Missionary Bulletin in which he takes back and forcefully and clearly repeats the objectives of the Marist community of Algeria:

Sanctuary of Our Lady of Africa, May 1986. Bro. Henri and Cardinal Duval accompany Bro. Pierre Rousset, Provincial, as he carries out his visit to Algeria.



Marist Missionary Bulletin

From the Marist Brothers in Algiers... A banal thing but, which given the origin of the conditions in which their activity develops or is carried out, it deserves to get the attention for a few moments of the readers of the Bulletin. Who knows if through these lines the providential call would not be addressed to one or other among them in view of assuring to this work an even more evangelical radiance...

It is a question of a school of 750 pupils (500 from the primary school and 250 from the first cycle of Secondary School), it is all full, and within the crowd in the heart of the Algerian capital. It is certain that all this youth is Algerian and Muslim of a quiet varied social level: of a rather middle class, opening more and more, accentuating toward the more deprived. This, the European school that we were still some years ago, has become an African school

A teaching team of about 30 members dedicates itself to the service of these young people. This team,



animated by the community of five Brothers, is formed by Algerians, men and women, of French cooperators, of Palestinians, of Syrians...: some are Christians, the others Muslims; some teach in Arabic, (the national language), others in French (bilinguals of fact). An environment dreamt of in view of the gathering together of all peoples!

How is our community situated in such a context?

At the present moment we are responsible for that school, and we can, because of this, transmit to it

a proper spirit. This is the more visible aspect of our action: in the midst of this people which has taken the serious option for development, we contribute as much as we can to the total success of this enterprise in a capital sector for the future of the country where a high proportion of the children and young people have not as yet gone to school.

Moreover, we can contribute, and this is our concern, so that these people, in full industrial expansion, do not lose by this fact, the best of their soul...



Lastly, Algeria is certainly one of the privileged places for the encounter of two civilizations, the Eastern and the Western. We also contribute our small part to this work of unity in this country where Providence has placed us.

Nevertheless, our true action is still more profound. The Church wants to be present in Algeria like she wants to be present in all nations according to the mission that she has from Christ. She exercises this presence through all her children active here, and in a special way through her religious- men and women. Is religious life not the evangelical sign par excel-

lence, acting in the hearts of all peoples?

Such is our true mission: that through us the Algerian people will be able to encounter the true face of Christ, can dialogue with the Church and this with respect, with total self-sacrifice. We are there in a post of choice. What the centuries have accumulated of misunderstandings, of division, of hatred, has, little by little to cede to the invasion of humble and patient love. And all this demands the practice of the essential values of Christianity to which Islam is very sensitive: interior life for the praise of the unique God,

spirit of a welcoming and accepting community of all, service of the poor... And we to whom Father Champagnat gave this proper character of humility, would it not be good for some among us to live this hidden form of apostolate, on condition that it is authentic?

Since this form of apostolate has its demands: to be true witness of God, living profoundly, humbly, silently the values of the Gospel, in order that these people who already venerate him can encounter Christ in all his truth. This is a constant call to interior personal and community renewal. There is also this inevitable demand to become Algerian with the Algerians, to reach that communion of soul which implies attention, knowledge, availability. This will lead to agreement to the necessary sacrifices, particularly the learning of the Arabic language: literary Arabic and spoken Algerian

Brother Henri Vergès



SOME LETTERS from HENRI to Bro. BASILIO

Now we are going to discover some of the letters of Henri to Brother Basilio with the answers of the latter. In this way we can be witnesses of the concerns and the hopes of our Brother, especially beginning in 1976 the year in which the

gerian State nationalized all the schools. The previous year at the end of my annual visit to our Brothers in Algeria, I invited Brother Basilio to come and visit them. In a letter of April 9, 1975 and sent from Alger, I wrote to him:

Al... Cardinal Duval greatly praised the work accomplished in the School Saint Bonaventure. I truly believe this since there are not too many men so fully and supernaturally given and dedicated than Brother Director.

It was this same Cardinal who, with a strong voice, will say at the end of the fu-

neral Mass of our Brother, on May 12, 1994, feast of the Ascension:

The dear Brother Henri and the admirable Sister Paul Hélène were authentic witnesses of the love of Christ, of absolute unselfishness and generosity of the Church and of fidelity to the Algerian people.

1971-1974

These dates mark or point out the essential of Henri's journey in Algerian land.

Thanks to his correspondence with Brother Basilio we will follow some stages.

Initiative OF BRO. BASILIO...



In August 1974, Brother Basilio gathered together in Quimper more than 400 Brothers from France. During three weeks, with a team of companions, he guided them in their reflection on the mission of the Brother in the Church of this time.

...and Bro. Henri WAS PRESENT THERE

1974
LETTER FROM BRO. HENRI

Henri who participates in this national encounter profits to launch an appeal to the Brothers of France. Below is the text of that appeal:...

How do we respond to the appeal of Christ to evangelize all nations, or to the invitation of Father Champagnat to be present in all the Dioceses of the world?"

When I am witness of the immensity of the appeal in Algerian land and the tiny or minuscule contribution that our Marist community of France grants it, I doubt of the vitality of it! Perhaps it is a simple temptation, for I know that vocations are obtaining maturity, that Brothers are preparing themselves for this presence... with time... But, as yet, no one asks himself the why of this presence?

- Because the Institute is particularly sent to the young and to the poor. They abound in Algeria, and the walls of our little school creak under their pressure which has become more and more unbearable and impossible to hold back: 815 pupils this year, in 19 classes on a total space of 30 X 40 meters!
- Because the school is a ground, a land of choice for the dialogue Church-Islam

- Because France should help Algeria which sends them so many men for work which would be difficult to replace.

After a stay in Algeria, perhaps we would be able to understand and to help these young Algerians who frequently are so poor and so abandoned in our region.

At present the Marist community of Alger is composed of two Brothers of which one of them would very soon long for his retirement, and Brother Provincial asks himself very seriously if he will succeed in discovering a third one to come to comfort him. Regarding the demands for such a community, it is simple:

- **to live profoundly his religious consecration to Christ, his fundamental raison d'être in this country of Islam,**
- **and, in the radiance of that total love of the Lord to give oneself without counting to these Algerian young people who wish to grow but it is necessary to maintain an attitude of openness to the values of faith.**

The progressive discovery of the genius proper of Algeria and even the learning of its language will then appear as self-evident or as something taken for granted.

It goes without saying that I do not pretend to take all the effort of the Marist France!

I do not ask that everything be given to Alger, but only that it be given its small place.

Here is what I wholeheartedly entrust to you, and full of trust for your reflection, prayer and commitment of all of you, Brothers of France, May Our Lady of Africa watch over this seed and allow it to develop".

Brother Henri Vergès,
team 4 – G 405



1974

Bro. Henri TO Bro. QUENTIN

On November 24 of the same year, Henri wrote to Brother Quentin Duffy, Vicar General, to ask for a visit of Brother Basilio to Alger.

Dear Brother,

After the meeting at Quimper, it is a great joy for me to contact you again. It is a question of an idea that if Reverend Brother could make a stopover in Alger about which both of us spoke in Quimper – on his return flight from Rhodesia in April 75, or on the occasion of his trip to the United States in June 75. The information taken here in Alger does not give any practical possibility to make a stopover on the occasion of those two trips. It would be simpler, they told me, to make a two-way flight Rome to Alger and Alger to Rome. Perhaps it would be too much to ask this of Reverend Brother!. At least in Rome you could obtain more precise information. I know you will do what is best; but, above all, do not ask Reverend Brother for the impossible. What is essential for us is to know that he understands and loves us.

Our small community - two Brothers and two aspirants – is well. It tries to present the true Christian face in this Muslim world which accepts u. As regards the school with its 800 pupils, it assures its service with very weak means. In spite of all, it is greatly appreciated by the parents. At present, since the strike in France, we live quite isolated from our roots – beyond the sea; if that still lasts we will have to find a means to re-establish contact.

Kindly greet on our part all our friends from Rome and in a special way Reverend Brother. These past few days we received with great joy the FMS bringing us his collection of news from the Marist family.

With my fraternal affection,

Brother Henri Vergès



Letter from Bro. QUENTIN TO Bro. HENRI

From Rome, December 10, 1974, Brother Quentin answers:

Very dear Friend,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of 24/XI/74. We greatly welcomed the Marist news from Alger.

Reverend Brother constantly takes his pilgrim walking stick. He has already flown to Guatemala and Australia, etc. The General House will not see him again until the next month of May.

In his foreseen itineraries at present, no stopover in Alger has been envisaged; a stop which seems – as you have judiciously mentioned – quite difficult to carry out.

Still it may be that the Reverend Brother has other calendar-itineraries to establish, in view of his visits in Africa. I will see with him, when he returns to Rome, in which trip he could include a short visit to Alger.

You have the assurance of our prayers for your intentions, my very dear Brother, and of those of all our missionary Brothers.

Yours in Christ and the Virgin Mary, our good Mother, whole heartedly I tell you: a Happy and blessed feast of Christmas and my best wishes for 1975.

Brother Quentin Duffy, fms,
Vicar General



First visit BROTHER

Cornice in Kabylie (Algeria).



of

BASILIO IN ALGERIA



1975

Letter from BROTHER HENRI

The greatly desired visit was carried out in **June 1975**, which for us has been worth the following letter written by Henri, dated in Alger on July 2 of the same year.

Dear Brother Superior,

It is very difficult to express our profound gratitude for your recent visit to our minuscule community...

It is a mark of esteem that we appreciate and which comforts and encourages us in our proper mission on this Algerian land. Everything was so simple and so quick that it seems to us that we have lived a dream, but of an exceptional fullness. We wish and hope that the fruits will abound in reality.

We do not dare to ask you – knowing your program – to write a few lines for us to share with us your impressions and your orientations. As you promised before your departure, nevertheless, I take this chance to ask you, but without causing any disadvantage or harm to the other Brothers of the world. If afterwards some supplementary information could interest you, I am ready to give it to you.

We have received your circular letter on obedience: a long wait that was finally fulfilled. Thank you.

And now, there is nothing more to wait for, except your next visit which will allow you to have a more intimate encounter with everyone. And while waiting, we pray to the Lord and the Virgin Mary to accompany you hour after hour, so that truly you may give their Love to each one of our Brothers. To end, a very sincere thank you to those who helped you to make this visit, particularly Brother Quentin.

With my respectful and fraternal friendship as well as that of my Brothers of Alger.

Brother Henri Vergès

Alger, le 2 juillet 1975

Résistant frère supérieur,

Il m'est bien difficile de vous exprimer votre profonde gratitude pour votre récente visite à notre minuscule communauté... C'est une marque d'estime que nous apprécions et qui nous réconforte sous votre mission frappe sur cette terre algérienne. Le tout a été si simple et si rapide qu'il nous semble avoir vécu un rêve mais d'une plénitude exceptionnelle. Souhaitons que les fruits en abondent dans la réalité.

Nous n'osons vous demander - connaissant votre programme - de rédiger pour nous quelques lignes pour nous faire part de vos impressions et de vos observations. Comme nous nous l'avons promis avant votre départ, je m'hasarde cependant à vous le demander, mais sans détriment pour nos autres frères du monde. Si après coup quelque information supplémentaire pourrait vous intéresser je reste prêt à vous la fournir.

Nous avons reçu votre circulaire sur l'obéissance, une longue attente enfin comblée. Merci.

Et maintenant, il ne nous reste plus qu'à attendre votre prochaine visite qui vous permettra sans doute plus intime avec tous. En attendant, nous prions le Seigneur et la Vierge Marie de vous accompagner heure après heure pour donner vraiment leur amour à chacun de nos frères.

Pour terminer, un merci bien sincère à ceux qui ont aidé à réaliser cette visite, en particulier au frère Quentin.

Avec nos respectueuses et fraternelles amitiés ainsi que celle de nos frères d'Alger
 J. Lemihéris



1975

Letter from BROTHER BASILIO

Response of Brother Basilio from Belo Horizonte (Brazil), **July 19** follows:

My very dear Brother Vergès and Very Dear Friend,

Your good letter of July 7, 75 has just been sent to me from Rome and I have the great pleasure in going through its content to relive the good time lived together with you and with each one of the members of the community. I ask you to be my good interpreter to greet them very fraternally, in my name, each one in particular. Thank you!

You must already have received at the present moment, the message that I had promised you. I am always attentive and careful to keep the word for what is promised: that is normal, is that not true?

I rejoice with you that the circular letter on obedience finally was received.

You mention « my next visit to Alger ». The previous one knew quite a number of circumstances which successively delayed and moved back its realization. But as it is commonly said: Everything comes just on time for the one who knows how to wait! Let us allow Divine Providence to act, it sees better than we, what is in relation with its designs, those which are more useful for our good and for the glory of the Lord! How much I have appreciated, my Brave!, the last lines of your letter: "We pray to the Lord and to the Virgin Mary to accompany you hour after hour to give truly their Love to each one of our Brothers".

Courage! Dear Brother Henri; I formulate the same wish for each one of the members of the community and for your devoted collaborators!

May Our Lady of Africa bless the apostolate carried out in the School Saint Bonaventure, an apostolate very appreciated by the parents, the clergy and His Eminence, Cardinal Duval, Archbishop of Alger.

Your Brother and Friend,

Brother Basilio Rueda G., fms
Superior General



Le Supérieur Général des Frères Maristes des
Écoles et les Membres du Conseil Général demandent
au Seigneur et à Notre-Dame de vous accorder
la joie de Noël et une Bonne Année.

Revd. Hno. Superior General y muy querido amigo
71. Pablo:

La Navidad se aproxima y el co-
razón se siente inclinado a expresar
los sentimientos íntimos que el Misterio del Verbo de Dios
hecho hombre produce en nosotros. Sepa que este ami-

que lo estima y admira tanto a Ud. como a su Congre-
gación de Dios, todas las bendiciones del Cielo, las gra-
cias de sabiduría, intuición profética, tacto pastoral,
realismo profundo, pasión apostólica, capacidad de coordi-
nación y de discernimiento de carismas que nos son
necesarios a todos los superiores en esta hora difícil
y privilegiada de la Iglesia y de nuestras familias re-
ligiosas. Todo esto deseo y pido en la inminencia de las
fiestas navideñas y del inicio de 1978.

En tarjeta del 3, 11, 77 la encontré sobre mi escritorio al
retorno del Sur de Italia. Estuve separando alguna llamada suspa
sin recibirla. Yo por mi parte no tomé ninguna iniciativa al
tema en cuanto que mi Consejo General está reducido al
mínimo y personalmente yo me encuentro ahogado en trabajo.
Pero sea querido N. Pablo que estoy vivamente interesado
por su propuesta. Espero que 1978 nos ofrezca la oportuni-
dad de hacer algo válido.

En unión de oraciones y corazones en los gozosa-
telé ción me despido de Ud. hasta nuestro próximo encuentro.

71. B. Rueda 10-XI-77



Roma, Via Aurelia, 476
00145 - Roma

*El Superior General
de las Hermanas de las Escuelas Cristianas*

al H. Basilio Rueda, Sup.Cl.:

Terminadas felizmente las fiestas y celebraciones por la doble Beatificación, mi recuerdo se vuelve a Vd. -¡y a tantos!- para dar gracias de nuevo por su amable recuerdo y prometer mi oración a los nuevos Beatos en favor de nuestras dos Congregaciones hermanas.

La semana próxima procuraré ponerme en contacto personal con Vd. para ver si arreglamos una fecha de reunión de nuestros Consejos..y tal vez de alguno más.

Cordialmente,

Henri Pablos Boritz
3.11.1977



Tibhirine,
March 29 1987.
Bro. Henri
accompanied
by Bro. André
Thizy, Bro. Jesus
and the family
K.

Letter from BRO. HENRI TO BRO. QUENTIN DUFFY

1975

Henri, in a letter of September 1, 1975 addressed to Brother Quentin Duffy, Vicar General, points out that the message to which Brother Basilio refers in his letter of July 19, did not arrive to Alger. And Henri adds a note:

I suppose that for the documents of this order the Reverend Brother keeps a copy. In that case, could you send us the text? If not, even if it would be very useful for us, do not impose a supplementary fatigue to our venerated Superior who already has so much to do.

Brother Quentin responds from Rome, on September 11:

Dear Friend,

...Regarding the "promised special message" by the Reverend Brother, note has carefully been taken care to point out to Brother Basilio the failure which has taken place in the dispatching of the mail. He himself will address a new copy to you. He will consider it a pleasant joy to send it to you in good and due form with his signature.



In Fact, Henri writes from Alger, on October 19, 1975:

Reverend Brother Basilio,

I am happy to inform you that finally we have received your message: a photocopy with a word with your handwriting from Johannesburg 28.IX.75 and an original addressed by Brother Claudio Girardi from Rome, on 11.IX.75. I do not know what happened to the other dispatches.

For us what is essential is to have an echo of your thought, a witness of your profound fraternal affection towards us, directives which we shall try to embody better in this country which knew how to seduce you. Thank you wholeheartedly for these lines which prolong the beneficial action of your unforgettable visit.

...As you expect it from us, we will try always to be more and more the witnesses of Christ and of his Church in dialogue with the Algerian people, respecting the Muslim values.

We always remain united to you and to our Brothers in the world in the intimacy of Christ Jesus and of his Mother.

With our respectful and fraternal friendship,

Brother Henri Vergès

Letter from BROTHER BASILIO

1975

From Rome, Brother Basilio responds on November 13:

Good Brother Henri,

All is well that ends well! I rejoice together with you that the message, for which you and the members of the community waited so long, finally has been able to arrive to your hands and that in two copies!

The lines on this message are intended to witness to the great affection that I have for your apostolate and for your persons.

I am very happy to learn that the school year 75-76 has begun in excellent conditions and very particularly because of the substantial reinforcement in personnel.

I address to you, my very dear friend, my best and warm greetings and my lively congratulations. I would ask you to transmit them also to the Brothers of the Community...

Courage! Complete success in your apostolate, united in prayer.

Your grateful Brother for all the work carried out, and your faithful Friend.

Bro. Basilio Rueda G., fms
Superior general

1975

Alger, le 1^{er} septembre 1975

Cher Frère,

Je vous dois en premier lieu le grand merci de la communauté d'Alger pour tout ce que vous avez fait pour nous mériter une visite au R. Frère Basilio au mois de juin dernier. Visite bien courte, mais combien précieuse pour nous. Nous souhaitons qu'elle porte tous ses fruits pour nous-mêmes et pour tous ceux parmi lesquels nous vivons.

Dans une correspondance du 19 juillet qu'il m'a adressée de Belo Horizonte, le R. Fr. Basilio me dit : "vous devez avoir eu maille à l'heure actuelle, le message que je vous avais promis. Je veille toujours à tenir ma parole pour ce qui est promis : c'est normal, pas vrai ?" Ce message envoyé, nous ne l'avons pas encore reçu : et vous devinez combien nous sommes le recevoir... Ce retard est-il explicable ? ou ce message se serait-il égaré ?

Je suppose que pour des documents de cet ordre le R. Frère garde une copie. Dans ce cas, pourriez-vous nous en envoyer le texte. Sinon, bien que ce soit très utile pour nous, n'imposez pas de fatigue supplémentaire à votre vénérable supérieur qui a déjà tant à faire.

Comme me l'a demandé le Fr. Roland Roussier, j'ai fait parvenir, selon ses indications, les images de la D. d'Alger au Fr. Wagner - Vila Velha (Périb). C'est avec joie que je lui ai rendu ce modeste service, certainement pour l'honneur de Notre-Dame.

Un petit détail : une erreur s'est glissée sous l'orthographe du nom de notre Avéme AHMED GHERMOUL (et non Cheroul Ahmed) dans le livret des adresses de nos maisons. Probablement le Secrétariat ne lit pas nos "états verts"... Je suis méchant ! Budonnez-moi.

Veuillez dire aussi au Fr. Gabriel Nichel que je viens de recevoir sa longue lettre qui me donne des ailes pour l'avenir. J'admire son fervente enthousiasme. Je tâcherai de lui écrire sans trop tarder.

Avec mes bien cordiales et fraternelles amitiés



1975

Alger, le 17 octobre 1975

R^e Frère Basilio,

Je suis heureux de vous informer que nous avons enfin reçu votre message : une photo-copie avec un mot de votre main depuis Islamabad le 11.10.75 et un original adressé par le Fr. Claudio Pirardi depuis Rome, le 11.10.75. Je ne sais où sont passés les autres envois...

Pour vous, l'essentiel est d'avoir un écho de votre pensée, un témoignage de votre profonde affection fraternelle à notre égard, des directives que nous essaierons de mieux incarner dans ce pays qui a su vous séduire. Merci de tout cœur pour ces lignes qui prolongent l'action bienfaisante de votre inoubliable visite.

Notre communauté commence cette nouvelle année scolaire dans de bonnes conditions, bien renforcée par la venue parmi nous de Fr. Lucien Roche, de votre province, et de Fr. Renaud Rogey, de St. Genis Laval. Elle permet une vie communautaire plus riche et davantage de possibilités d'animation pour l'école. Comme vous l'attendez et nous, nous tâcherons d'être toujours plus les témoins du Christ et de son Église en dialogue avec le peuple algérien dans le respect des valeurs musulmanes.

Nous restons toujours unis à vous et à tous vos frères dans le monde dans l'intimité du Christ Jésus et de sa Mère.

Avec notre respectueuse et fraternelle amitié

Fr. Louis Rogey



1976

Letter from BROTHER HENRI

The year 1976 is crucial, decisive for the community of Alger such as is witnessed in an extract from a letter of Brother Henri written to his Provincial, Br. Alain Delorme on May 9.

...For us, this is official; the private schools will be integrated to public education and placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Algerian Education...

If the decision is normal and expected, it surprised because of its circumstances and because it was so sudden. For us, it is always the Gospel lived: « If the wheat grain does not fall on earth and die, it cannot bear fruit”. We remain in the hands of the Lord and also at the disposition, available for our Algerian brothers. We do not know too much what is going to happen, what will follow, but it seems certain that we will be asked to do the maximum to sign in the best possible conditions the transfer of the office, of handing over the power. It is from this that we will be able to judge the gratuitousness and unselfishness of the service that we rendered. At present, we help the personnel and the parents to accept this decree in the best possible dispositions, at the same time being ready to protect their legitimate interests...

All this has not taken away any of our peace, of our joy in the Lord, with his Mother. It is all the contrary!... That all the Brothers pray for us in order that this long Marist presence in Algeria can find the path of a new service in humility and fidelity, in the faith of Abraham, of Moses. And above all that nobody regrets everything that you have done for us. On the contrary, let us all always remain available...

In ending the circular letter of May 20 in which he transcribed this letter of Henri, Brother Provincial wrote:

I totally share these sentiments and I ask Blessed Father Champagnat whose anniversary is today to fully make them a reality

Letter from BROTHER BASILIO

From Rome, on July 12, 1976, Brother Basilio writes to Brother Henri:

My very dear friend and very 'Bravo' Brother Vergès,

I still remain under the charm of the visit to Alger last year. That was a stop in a most fraternal "Home". I continue to live that good very familiar environment that I had the opportunity to have with the community of the school Saint Bonaventure.

Br. Alain Delorme, in a circular letter of May 20 that he addressed to the Brothers of the Province included an extract of your letter of May 8.

It shows that filled with confidence in Divine Providence and benefitting of the maternal protection of our «ORDINARY RESOURCE» each one of the Brothers of the community tries to face, in the best possible way, the special events which form part of your daily life.

I will be very grateful, my very dear Brother Vergès, if you could kindly provide for me a kind of an account or report, an over view of your life today and on your apostolate of tomorrow in the face of the new directives of the Ministry of Algerian Education.

What you will send me will be most welcomed, and from now, I thank you, in advance.

Kindly greet for me each one of the Brothers of the community of Saint Bonaventure.

I wish you good vacations to you and to each one of the Brothers and cooperators.

United in prayer for the intentions of the GENERAL CHAPTER, for the needs of our works and missions in Africa,

Your Brother and Friend,

Bro. Basilio Rueda Guzmán, fms
Superior General



In a letter mailed the same day, Brother Basilio asked Brother Alain Delorme:

Can I count on your good, dedicated and faithful service to provide for me a quite complete study, a type of report on the actual life and on the future apostolate of our ALGERIAN Brothers...?

...I desire, on the other hand, to address a few lines to our good "Algerian Brothers", their optimism continues to be high in spite of the events ; nevertheless, a mark or sign of attention will give them pleasure..



Valley of
M'zab
Ghardaïa
(Algeria).

Letter from BROTHER HENRI

On July 19, 1976, Henri writes from Alger, a long letter to Brother Superior General. Its content is to give an up-to-date account of the events.

Reverend Brother,

Brother Alain Delorme has just called on the telephone and told me that you are waiting impatiently news from us. Excuse me for having kept you waiting impatiently since our Marist presence in Algeria is so dear to you. I have taken some time because of the multiple difficulties of these last times, taken some time for the continuous correspondence with Brother Provincial and I allowed time to go by... I told Brother Alain to communicate without delay with you about the correspondence that I sent to him. And even more, I am going to try to give you a complete brief report of our situation.

To begin with, the Decree of 16-04-76 (Good Friday) published in J, O. on 23-04-76 and announcing the integration of private schools (not only diocesan) to public education. In spite of the permanent uncertainty in which we have been living for many years, the suddenness of the news did not fail to surprise everyone, the personnel and the parents. It is necessary that the transfer of power is effective at the entry of the school in September 1976.

And immediately, as it is always the case here in Algeria, was the execution. An interim or temporary director was named for each school charged with solving the problems of the transfer of power and of transmitting to the new direction a clear situation, while the former direction assured, without any hindrance or obstacle, its normal service until June 30, 1976.

In general, we can say that at all levels of execution, this transfer of power was carried out in the best possible conditions of reciprocal understanding and delicacy and consideration. It was necessary,

Ghardaïa
(Algeria).



since the complexity of the operation was beyond all the difficulties foreseen...

In principle, the pupils of private schools will remain in their places, unless the school or one of its sections will be suppressed. Regarding the personnel or staff, they can ask for their integration: as a whole all the Algerian personnel has accepted. For the foreigners, conditions of qualifications or others are demanded: Brother Y and I have been integrated. But until now we are all waiting the assignment of our place. Let us pray that for everybody, pupils and personnel, this transfer of power will be carried out in the best possible conditions.

The School Saint Bonaventure, as such, will become a Primary School. The pupils of the middle education, about 250 of them, will be transferred to the places of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, our neighbors, their school becomes CEM. The interim or temporary director is a remarkable man who tried everything possible to facilitate things. Unfortunately, he was struck down by a heart attack three weeks ago from which he is slowly recovering. I remain here until the 25th to facilitate things for him; I hope to sign the act of transfer of power within the next few days.

Now we come to what is essential, that is our presence as a Church in Algeria. It will be more humble, more unassuming, self-effacing and in more insecurity; leaven in the pastry... More than ever, it would be necessary that it be good! In the conditions of life which we have had up to the present time, we were threatened by activism: now we have the opportunity of being more attentive to God and to our Algerian brothers and others.

In what concerns us, Marist Brothers, we have asked to be together in one same place; the director of education answered that there was no problem in that, especially if we accept to be named for elsewhere, different from Alger. For next school year, it seems that we will not be more than two, since the two other volunteers... will not come. This is an experience that we have to make; I will keep you informed of how this will develop. I hope that we will be able in this way to be present in service, simplicity, acceptance, like the Virgin Mary

You must have heard about the murder, of Monsignor Jacquier, the auxiliary Bishop of Cardinal Duval, by an unbalanced person; a new trial for him and also for all the Christian community of Algeria and for many Algerians. In spite of all we live in faith, hope and love.

This summer I am going to participate in the National Conference. I will also go to spend some days in Saint Paul and then with my parents in the Pyrenes. I think of going back to Alger at the end of August. My provisional address will be the following: 5, rue des Glycines – Alger.

I end with my very best wishes to all especially to Br. Gabriel Michel for whom the situation is new in regard to his projects. I will write to him when I will know something more.

Once more, thank you for your cordial friendship. We remain united in Jesus and Mary.

Respectfully and affectionately,

Brother Henri Vergès.



Ghardaïa
(Algeria).

**1976**

It is Brother Quentin Duffy, Vicar General who, from Rome, responds to Henri, on August 1, 1976.

Dear Friend,

Since the Reverend Brother is absent, it is in his name that I am pleased to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 19/07/76. The lines received have brought a basket full of information regarding the present state of our community of Alger.

It is a very cordial thank you addressed to you for that account or report of three pages, so explicit and full of interest.

The text will be given to Reverend Brother, as soon as he arrives to Rome and, on the other hand, Brother MICHEL, will have the possibility to know it.

You have from now the assurance of our prayers for your intentions and that of each one of the Brothers Chapter Members. .

Thank you and very fraternally yours in Christ and Our Lady.

Brother Quentin Duffy, fms
Vicario general



Rome, 1967.
Bro. Basilio
receives
an audience
with His Holiness
Pope Paul VI.

Mora - Pinerolo

*Copia con
liberal de la
misita y
y enviada a...*

Excelentísimo y querido amigo,
Desde el otro extremo del mundo,
Australia, te envío mis mejores
votos de una santa Trinidad para
que seas muy feliz y muy sano; pues
el Señor va guiando maravillosamente
tu vida por caminos tal vez para ti
insperados pero llenos de edificación
y de bien para todos los días.

Te presento mi oración y la
oración de 425 Hermanos que durante
el mes de diciembre estuvieron reunidos,
presentemente a la Provincia de
Sydney. Los saludos de tu parte y
acompañados con el espíritu, el or-
ación y la oración, tus promesas, el
fruto de la Congregación de Religiosos. Es
nuestro interés por ti bien a la Iglesia
y por nuestro propio bien. que sea mi
afecto de amigo que te sea a cargo.

Fratelli Martelli delle Scuole

Casa Generale Pinerolo, Ch. Champagnat, 2 - 00144 Roma

À la fin de cette Année Sainte,
mon souhait de Noël
est que s'accroissent en nous
l'humilité et la douceur de Jésus
pour la réconciliation et la joie des hommes.

At the conclusion of this Holy Year
my Christmas wish is
that the humility and kindness of our Saviour
will increase in us
to the reconciliation and joy of all men.

Al acabar este Año Santo de 1975,
mi anhelo para vosotros
mejor deseo de Navidad
es el de veros crecer en la humildad y dulzura de Jesús,
como prendes de reconciliación
y de felicidad entre los hombres.

No últimos deste ano santo,
formulo votos natalinos
para que a humildade e a doçura de Jesus
cresçam em nós
para a reconciliação e a alegria dos homens.

el cumplimiento de esta promesa
que te hago. Fray. También dije
entre vosotros un recuerdo emborra-
ble de bondad y cercanía. El tiempo
no será ciertamente menor.

Yo estaré ausente de Roma
hasta abril. Se puede entrar
a Zaira, hasta febrero sea más
sigo a principios del mismo
Vienta en este tiempo como 10
países. Te aspiro mi atención.
Si en algo puedes estar útil hasta
en septiembre.

Recíbelo tu carta; mi gra-
cias por ella. Te envío la
presente a través nuestro do-
micilio de S. Ligea para evitar
las interferencias del correo
italiano, malo en general y peo-
rísimo en Navidad. El Fr. Eugenio que
trabaja en las Cong. de Religiosos es mi
el portador.

Con todo el afecto de amigo y la
obediencia y respeto de hijo por el Señor

F. Martelli
BREVIAIRE - 6-11-75



From Algiers TO



Sour-El-Ghozlane. Algeria

SOUR-EL-GHOZLANE





1976

Letter from BROTHER HENRI

From Alger, on September 9, Henri writes to Brother Alain Delorme, his Provincial Superior. Some passages of this letter clarify his situation.

Dear Alain,

We have just received your kind card from Rome which brings us the first news of the Chapter. Together with Brother Y, we are wholeheartedly with you: moreover, it will be interesting to be able to share with you our experience of these days and those which we are going to live. Let us hope that all, the ones and the others, we respond fully to the call of the Lord within our dear Marist Family.

If I delayed writing to you, it is because I wanted to give a "definitive" view of our situation. Since as yet there is an uncertainty, I am not waiting any longer. I arrived to Alger on August 31 in the morning. On September 1, I finished the removal of things. On the 4th, Brother Y met me at the Diocesan Center, but still we had no news about our nomination. Finally, on Monday the 6th in the evening, Brother Y received his nomination; he had to present himself on September 8 at the lyceum or Secondary School of Sour-El-Ghozlane (Ex-Anmale) for the meeting of professors at the beginning of the school year...

In the high school, we met Father Peuvergne, s.j., a professor at the same high school and living in Ain-Bessem (20 km), who fraternally welcomed us...

Sour-El-Ghozlane (in French: Rempart-des-Gazelles) –the Walls of the Gazelles- is situated at 120 km. from Alger (South-East), a region of High Plateaus which is beautiful but very austere and rough, hard, especially in the winter. The Lyceum which is mixed has 1,800 pupils of which 300 are boarders. The population of the town is of 15,000 inhabitants, 30,000 it seems, with the surroundings.

In what concerns me, the solution is also not a simple one. I spent the whole day on September 7 between the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Alger to get some news of my dossier, my documents. Final-

ly, it was found in the Ministry where it had gotten lost between two Offices, since probably I will be assumed in a CEM (1st Cycle) of Sour-El-Ghozlane around here... In principle, there should be no difficulty in that we can meet with Brother Y in the same locality.

There will still be some small problems to solve, particularly that of lodgment...

... Finally, both of us are very happy with the orientation that the events are giving us. We are conscious, aware that that it is the quality of our interior life and of our openness to those whom the Lord places on our way – the poorest definitively –who will give their sense to this new stage. We try to remain attentive and always available. I know you think of us and recommend us to the prayer of our Brothers.

Greet, especially Brother Basilio and keep him informed about everything, Thank you!

Fraternally, Brother Henri Vergès

Another letter to the same addressee clarifies the situation up to September 17.

1976

Dear Alain,

Week after week our situation in Algeria is clarified more rapidly than we expected or thought at the beginning... On my part, after endless questions, the Ministry finally gave me my road map. I had to present myself to the Direction of Education of Bouira, our new 'wilaya' (=prefecture), to be named for a place in CEM of Sour-El-Ghozlane. And in the evening of the same day, September 13, I found myself, in our new locality. The Director received me kindly, but immediately asked the question of lodgment. He allowed me -contrary to the regulations- to unload my car full with my baggage, several bags and to occupy a bed in the Infirmary of his CEM from where I am writing to you at this moment. I was tired -in addition had intestinal trouble!- But in the end, fully happy on the unforeseen roads of Providence.



I was named professor of mathematics in 2AM (5th) and 4AM (3rd): 20 hours in four classes then the average seems to go beyond the 40 pupils. On the 15th, I contacted those who were present; 35 in the two 4 AM and 41-42 in the two 2AM. There is work in perspective considering the weak level registered in my first tests. I feel completely at ease, at the service of the poorest, as Father Champagnat wanted us to be.

The CEM is completely new: it is only three years old. It has about one thousand pupils of which 250 are boarders. It is in this that one can measure the prodigious effort of the country in regard to education. Regarding the teachers, all of them are Algerians except a Syrian and myself. I find myself totally inserted in this milieu. This is a great advantage.

At present our life in great part is that of improvisation more or less in all domains including that of our occupation (for example we do not have Y and I any school manuals for us or for the pupils!...) In what regards community life our great problem, at present, is lodging. Brother Y obtained at the Lyceum a room of the master of the boarding school that has rather raised the heart at first glance; it is in this cramped place and of doubtful cleanness that he lives in the midst of all this great load of stuff and in which we cook on a camping of gas. My "infirmary" is half an hour away walking. When I am in a hurry and also so as not to lose time going and coming back I use the car. I have the impression that next week (that is, tomorrow beginning on Saturday) this problem should be solved: our director has shaken the local authorities in this sense. It is sure that we have asked the lodging to be together.

In waiting, we do our best in our different encounters and our community prayer: sometimes in the room together, other times outside contemplating nature which is beautiful and also with Father Peuvergne in Ain-Bessem. When we are installed, it will be easier for him to come and celebrate the Eucharist at our place between his courses and we will see how we can keep it with us.

What we can say that if our encounters together with the Lord are not so frequent, on the contrary they are of a unique intensity. More than elsewhere we are aware that in Him alone our lives can have some sense for us and for others.

We feel, Y and I that we will have a richness of communication to make for our General Chapter which is present in our thought. But it will be necessary to mature that and our life conditions at present, you can guess, hardly favor our reflection. Therefore, it would be interesting to think of those small communities like ours, of more flexible structures, more deeply rooted insertions in human reality, in which the spirit of Nazareth has many opportunities of opening up... We will speak again about this when we meet. But it is sure; we remain available at your disposition for you to ask any concrete questions that you would like to ask us.

This is something that I would have liked to tell you. Together with us you can thank the Lord and the Virgin Mary for their goodness toward us.

Cordially,

Brother Henri Vergès

Three months later, on December 24, 1976, Henri writes to the Superior General:

1976

Dear Brother Superior,

It is quite a long time that I have the intention of writing to you!

During the duration of the Chapter, I thought that Brother Alain Delorme would keep you updated, during the weeks, of our life in Algeria and above all, of our sentiments of a particular affection that we hold for you.

It would be useless to tell you that the news of your re-election that we found completely normal filled us with joy! Thank you for having accepted – but could you refuse? – to take back this heavy task for the good of your Brothers. But as my Secretary at Saint Bonaventure would tell me sometimes when he saw me act: "Sarna con gusto no



pica!" (Scables with pleasure do not itch or sting!) Yes, there is the Spirit, Love, Faith and all... May the Virgin Mary, whom you helped us to discover in your last message, accompany you throughout this new stage.

We are waiting for the Chapter documents which certainly will not be too long before we receive them. That will allow us to update particularly, the message of the previous Special Chapter which has not as yet been sufficiently exploited. For us, we were also happy to hear about the re-election of Brother Alain Delorme as Provincial responsible: he will be for us a stimulant during this period of Marist renewal.

For what our situation is in Algeria, in your fraternal friendship – let us even say in your care of a father – you have followed the evolution with particular interest. Behold, we are even more than in the past, in a situation of humble service, let us say it simply through our daily life, that of every day, our love for God and for our brothers in the midst of whom we are present. It is well the life in Nazareth with its work, its humble daily concerns to prepare the meals, do the cleaning, its multiple contacts especially with the little ones, also its moments of silence and of acceptance of the Lord... I have tried to express a bit all that for our Brothers of the Provincial Chapter in one word which you will find, a copy attached.

I think it is a grace from God that we live at this moment, deeply encouraged by those responsible in the Church in Algeria, particularly Cardinal Ducal who even promised us his visit soon, and which can be a providential sign for our Institute. And even more, those conditions of life similar to ours must be lived by several of our brothers throughout the world.

We hope and wish that one or two other Marist communities like ours can one day see the day in Algeria. A greater sharing of our life would be more enriching. This is what I can see and affirm particularly regarding the Sisters SMSM who have three communities in three parts of Algeria.

You propose to come and visit us; I do not dare to think it. It is so small and in a lost corner where the airplane cannot arrive. But one

never knows. What is essential for us is to know that you keep us in your heart. You have told us this in words and in acts which are not forgotten.

At present we are simply waiting for your thought and your orientations starting from what you can know about us.

...Excuse me for taking your precious moments, but I know that it is a joy for you. I end in presenting to you our best wishes, in this feast of Christmas, for the New Year that it may be for all of us, for the Institute, for the Church, for the world a year of renewal in the Lord.

With my fraternal and respectful affection,

Brother Henri Vergès

Brother Basilio responds, from Rome, on January 14, 1977:

1977

Dear Brothers,

It is with great joy that I received your news through your letter of December 24. When you have time, I would love you to give me news, for I greatly appreciate your Algerian witness which gives me great satisfaction.

I am even more interested in your news that I would like to be able to use them in one or other of my conferences and in this way publish an article in one of the next editions of F.M.S. in order that the Brothers may profit from your admirable witness.

By the way, do you receive F.M.S, and the other Marist publications? Did you receive the circular letter "A new place for Mary"?

Here in the General House the new General Council organizes itself; the Councilors, have all gone to look for their things and are



beginning to come in. It is a strong, nice and pleasant team and full of ardor and eagerness...

I end this short note with best wishes for your employment and I ask the Lord to bless your work.

For you, dear Brother Henri and Brother Y, my most fraternal affection in J.M.J. Bx, Ch

Brother Basilio Rueda, S.G.

P.S. If the occasion presents itself and if time permits me, I will be happy to visit you.

1977

From Sour-El-Ghozlane, Henri writes on April 20, 1977:

Dear Brother Basilio,

I would not want to abuse of your time, but I cannot resist the joy of giving you our news since, in your last letter of January 14 you yourself asked us to do it.

It is also the occasion for us to share with you, as a priority, the text that we sent to the editorial "d'Etincelles" for their next number of June. This does not add anything substantial to what we wrote before, but just the same that will interest you.

For sure, we receive regularly the Marist publications. We were comforted and encouraged by the interest that you manifested in the last number of F.M.S. regarding what we are living here. Thank you.

Thank you also for your circular letter: "A new place for Mary" which certainly revived in us the Marian flame like in the heart of many of our Brothers. On my part I regret for not having given you my own witness - I had much work to do then!... It will be for later if, according to your desire, the survey is continued. But I think that just as it is; it represents well the true face of our Institute.

Ann. de Chzyline, le 20 avril 1977

Cher Frère Basilio

Je ne voudrais pas abuser de votre temps, mais je me réjouis de la fois de vous apporter de nos nouvelles puisque vous-même nous demandiez de le faire lors de votre dernière lettre du 16 janvier. C'est aussi l'occasion pour nous de vous faire part, au plaisir, du texte que nous envoyons à la rédaction "d'Étincelles" pour son prochain n° de juin. Cela n'ajoute rien de substantiel à ce que nous avions écrit auparavant, mais cela vous intéressera quand même.

Bien sûr, nous recevons régulièrement les publications maristes. Nous avons été réconfortés par l'intérêt que vous manifestez dans le dernier n° de F.M.S. à ce que nous vivons ici. Merci. Merci aussi pour votre circulaire: "Un nouvel espace pour Marie" qui a certainement ravivé en nous la flamme mariale, comme au cœur de beaucoup de nos frères. Pour ma part, j'ai regretté de ne pas vous avoir apporté mon propre témoignage - j'avais tout à faire alors!! Ce sera pour plus tard si, selon votre désir, l'enquête se poursuit. Mais je pense que, telle quelle, elle représente bien le visage de notre Institut.

Nous avons lu avec intérêt les rapports sur le renouvellement de l'activité de l'administration générale. C'est en votre disponibilité dans l'heure future - t-il suit.



We have read with interest the reports on the renewal of the activity of the general administration. May the dynamism and spirit of your availability arouse that in all our Brothers in the Institute!

Here we continue to live our life very simply in the service of the Lord and of the brothers whom he gives us. We have arrived to give a richer part to personal and community prayer, even if we do not have all the advantages of "religious services". Every Tuesday, at noon, we have in our house the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Father Peuvergne SJ, our "Parish priest" from Ain-Bessem, at 20 km. from here. The "provision" that he leaves us allows us to receive communion several times a week. On Saturday evening in Ain-Bessam, there is the Sunday celebration for the small Christian assembly of the region: about fifteen persons in all, 2 religious Sisters, from Bouira, and 3 young families of cooperators. This is an occasion to share faith very simply but at the same time in a very fecund way.

At present we give the essential part of our time to the pupils. After ten years of interruptions, I have to try to get back to teaching and, since the pupils are numerous and rather weak, it is necessary to dedicate much time to the corrections and to the preparation of the courses. I think that it is there that the service has to begin— This does not prevent us from having interesting contact with the inhabitants especially with our teaching colleagues.

Once more thank you for your fraternal and comforting friendship. Kindly transmit my greetings to your collaborators, especially to Brothers Quentin, Sester and Thouilleux. From here you have the greetings of Cardinal Duval who has kept the best souvenir of your encounter with him in June 75.

Respectfully and cordially,

Brother Henri Vergès

Ici, nous continuons à vivre notre vie toute simple dans le service du Seigneur et des frères qu'il nous a donnés. Nous arrivons à faire une fête plus riche à la fin de l'année personnelle et communautaire, même si nous n'avons pas tous les avantages du "service religieux". Tous les mardis, à midi, nous avons, chez nous, une célébration eucharistique présidée par le P. Ruveque et notre "curé" d'An Bessem, à Lokou d'ici. Les "provisions" qu'il nous laisse nous permettent de communier plusieurs fois par semaine. Le samedi soir, à An Bessem, c'est la célébration dominicale pour la petite assemblée chrétienne de la région : une vingtaine de personnes en tout, 2 religieuses de Boura, et 3 jeunes frères de coopérants. C'est l'occasion de partager de foi très simples mais aussi très féconds.

Pour le moment, nous donnons l'essentiel de notre temps à nos élèves. Après dix ans d'intermittence, je dois me refaire la main à l'enseignement et, comme les élèves sont nombreux et plutôt faibles, il faut consacrer beaucoup de temps aux corrections et à la préparation des cours. Je crois que c'est par là que doit commencer le service... Cela ne nous empêche pas d'avoir déjà des contacts intéressants avec les habitants surtout avec nos collègues enseignants.

Encore une fois merci pour votre fraternelle et reconfortante amitié. Veuillez transmettre notre bon souvenir à vos collaborateurs, surtout les Pp. Quentin, Bester et Houilleux. D'ici nous avez le salut amical du Cardinal Duruel qui a gardé le meilleur souvenir de votre rencontre de juin 75.

Bien respectueusement et cordialement Flaminio



Classic ceramics from the library in the street of Ben-Cheneb.

From Rome, on May 4, 1977, Brother Basilio responds:

1977

Dear Friend,

I have just received your letter of April 20 and you can guess, no doubt, with what great interest I went through those lines.

I thank you wholeheartedly for having, in priority, communicated to me the text that you sent to « Etincelle ». I find that it is clear and exact and, without doubt, it will be the object of exchanges among the Brothers. In fact, you are in some way precursors or forerunners. Your experience and the type of life that you are leading at present is a witness both for the population around you as for the Brothers who follow this experience with affection and great interest. As for myself, dear Brother Henri, I congratulate you for your courage and for your dedication to the young people of that country.

Speaking about the Marian circular letter, you tell me, just like many other Brothers your regret for not having sent your witness. Perhaps, one day you will find the time to send it to me, in your turn, like them. Those witnesses are also useful for me just like the first ones, since in numerous circumstances they serve me to send my conferences through E-mail or to revive devotion to the Holy Virgin in my interlocutors during certain encounters.

When you have the occasion thank His Eminence Cardinal Duval for his friendly greetings and for his remembrance and on the same occasion present my respect to him.

In union of prayer I remain with great affection yours devoted in
J.M.J. Bx. Ch,

Brother Basilio Rueda, S.G.

Kasbah (Argel).

2017
085

Entrance



of Henri
IN SOLITUDE



The solitude of Henri will last from September 1978 to September 1983: five years during which Brother Basilio Rueda will multiply contacts and take steps to find him a companion. His efforts will finally succeed in the person of Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso, missionary in Peru.

From Pau, where the Brothers of France are meeting, during the summer holidays, for a follow up of the meeting of Quimper in 1974, Brother Henri writes to Brother Basilio, on August 7, 1979, on a postcard where there are some Algerian children.



Roman Ruins
of Djemila
in the province
of Sétif
(Algeria).

Dear Brother Basilio,

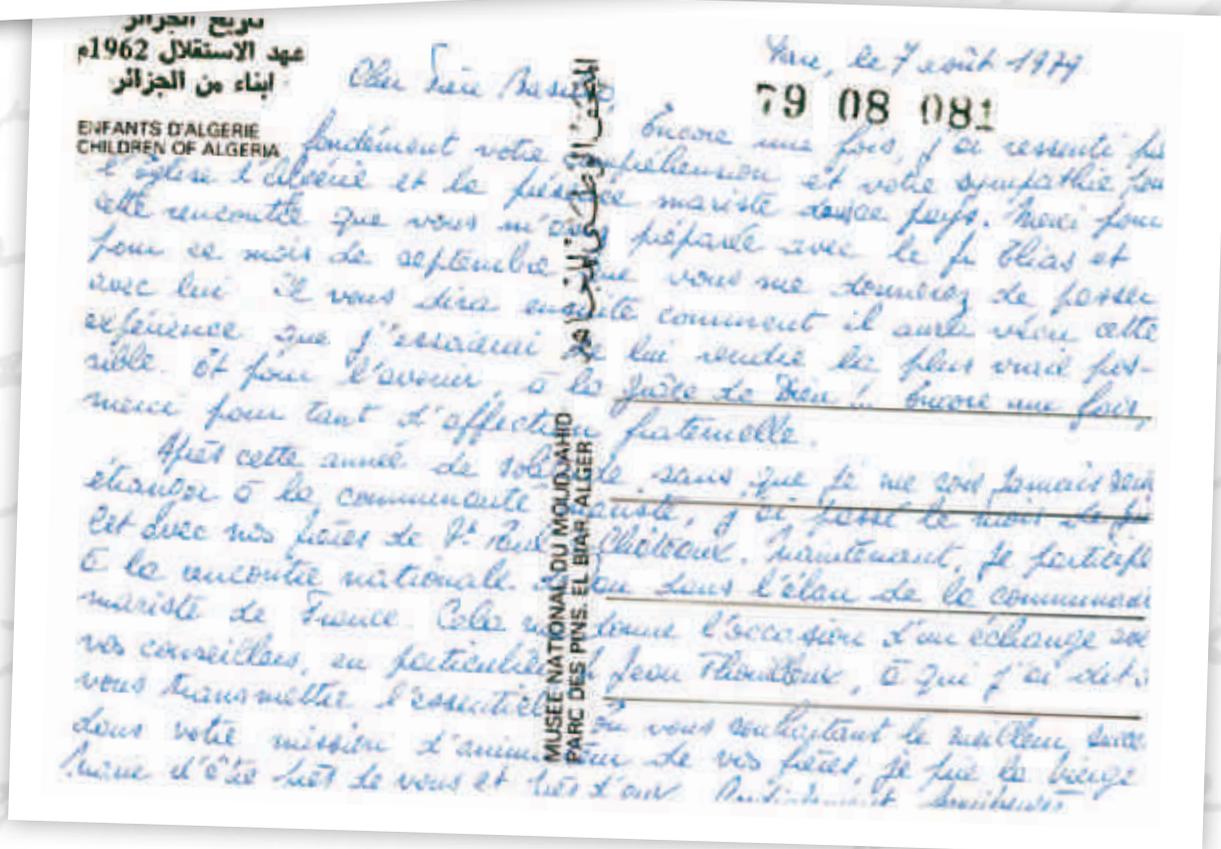
Still once more I have felt profoundly your understanding and your warm feelings of friendship for the Church in Algeria and the Marist presence in this country. Thank you for this meeting that you have prepared for me with Brother E. and for the month of September that you will offer me to spend with him. He will tell you after how he lived this experience which I will try to make it as true as possible. And for the future, left to the grace of God!... Once more, thank you for all your fraternal affection.

After this year of solitude without ever feeling a stranger to the Marist community I spent the month of July with our Brothers of Saint Paul-trois-Châteaux. Now I participate in the national encounter of Pau in the fervor of the Marist community of France

That gives me the occasion of having an exchange with your Councilors, particularly with Brother Jean Thouilleux; whom I have asked to transmit the essential to you.

Wishing you the best success in your mission of animation of your Brothers, I pray the Virgin Mary to be close to you and close to them.

Cordially, Brother Henri Vergès





1979

Brother Basilio responds on September 4, 1979:

Dear and great friend,

I received with great joy your beautiful postcard so symbolical with all those extended hands. Your beautiful gesture touched my heart deeply. You know better than anybody else that I do not refuse an extended hand: I hope that very soon you will find the companion that you desire so much to receive to help you in the beautiful work in the service of so many great people around you. I know how much you love those dear people who have won over your heart.

I congratulate you for all the efforts that you make to serve always better. For me it is a great joy to know how much you profited of the exchanges that you had with your Brothers of France and very especially with Brother Jean Thouilleux.

May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady keep you under her maternal protection.

I remain fraternally yours in J.M.J. Bx.M.

Br. Basilio Rueda, fms,
Superior General

P.S. I suppose that after the stay of Brother E. you can tell me, in common agreement, if the apostolic milieu is convenient for him or not.

In the letter that follows, Henri shares his sentiments and impressions with Brother Basilio after the stay of Brother E. in Algeria.



External view of the library in the street of Ben-Cheneb.



1979

Sour-El-Ghozlane, September 29, 1979

Dear Brother Basilio,

Thank you for your letter – very flattering for me – received recently. It is necessary that the Superior encourages his Brothers!...

Before the departure of Brother E. for Rome, here are some quick remarks – time is lacking – that do not prejudge the decision that you have to take with him in full liberty.

In the first place, Brother E. seems to me, loves Algeria as he could discover it during the few weeks and it seems to me that he is well disposed to make the necessary effort to adapt himself better to this country. And in addition, there is the minimum of qualities required – and even more – to make himself useful.

Moreover, it seems to me to understand the sense of our presence in this Muslim country: to prepare the way of the Lord by the silent witness of a life completely surrendered to God in a loving dialogue with our believing brothers and a humble dedication in their service.

In what concerns his adaptation to religious and community life such as we can live it here, he himself will tell you what he thinks.

Remains the problem of his qualifications:

- in the domain of teaching, Spanish offers very few posts. There is the possibility of obtaining diplomas in Natural Sciences and even in Physics and Chemistry. It would be good to provide for this.
- In the domain of the handicaps: it would also have to be studied. We also spoke at length about all that with E. He could complete the briefness of my lines.

Paris St. Germain, le 18 septembre 1979

Cher Frère Basilio,

Merci pour votre lettre - trop flatteuse pour moi - reçue récemment. Il faut bien que le Supérieur encourage ses frères !

Avant le départ de Fr. Blais pour Rome, voici quelques remarques rapides - le temps me manque - qui ne préjugent pas de la décision que vous avez à prendre avec lui en toute liberté.

Tout d'abord, Fr. Blais me semble aimer l'Algérie telle qu'il a pu la découvrir au cours de ces quelques semaines et me paraît aussi disposé à faire l'effort nécessaire pour mieux s'adapter à ce pays. Le plus, il a le minimum de qualités requises - et davantage encore - pour s'y rendre utile.

Par ailleurs, il me paraît comprendre le sens de votre présence dans ce pays musulman : préparer les voies du Seigneur par le témoignage silencieux d'une vie toute donnée à Dieu dans un dialogue aimant avec nos frères croyants et un humble dévouement à leur service.

Pour ce qui est de son adaptation à la vie religieuse et communautaire telle qu'on peut la vivre ici, il vous dira lui-même ce qu'il en pense.

Reste le problème de sa qualification professionnelle :

- Dans le domaine de l'enseignement, l'espagnol offre trop peu de postes. Il a la possibilité d'obtenir des diplômes en sciences naturelles, et même en physique et chimie. Il vaudrait bien s'y pencher.

- Dans le domaine des handicaps : c'est à étudier aussi.



1979

Brother Pierre Rousset will speak to you about the request made by Brother Jean Garvin, of the community of Saint Paul, to come to meet me. Before, he had already spoken to Brother E. I wrote regarding this affair to Brother Pierre Rousset. He knows that Brother better than I do, see about this together. The best would be perhaps that Brother Jean Garvin come first to spend some weeks to Sour and afterwards one can judge better if this experience is to be continued or not. On my part I do not insist, nor oppose myself, but willingly I would accept him...

I know that E. and Pierre Rousset will complete this information. On my part, my most fervent prayer accompanies your reflection of these days. Thank you once again for all the interest that you give to our humble Marist presence here.

Father René Peuvergne, S.J., was very grateful for the cordial and attentive welcome you offered him in Rome.

I was happy that he was able to speak with you since he is a man of experience and good sense.

I remain your humble and devoted, but affectionate

Brother Henri Vergès

Nous avons longuement causé de tout cela avec Orest. Il pourra compléter la biographe de ces lignes.

Le fr. Pierre Roussel vous parlera aussi de la demande faite par le fr. Jean Garcia, de la Cour^e de St. Paul, de venir me rejoindre. Supplément, il en avait déjà parlé au fr. Orest. J'ai écrit à ce sujet au fr. Pierre Roussel. Il connaît ce frère mieux que moi : voyez ensemble. Ce mieux serait peut-être que fr. Jean Garcia vienne passer d'abord quelques semaines à Rome : par la suite, on pourrait mieux juger si l'expérience est à poursuivre ou non. Pour me font fr. n'importe, ni ne s'oppose, mais volontiers je l'accueillerais.

[...]

Le P. René Penvergne, S.F., a été très sensible à l'accueil cordial et attentif que vous lui avez réservé à Rome. J'ai été heureux qu'il ait pu causer avec vous, car c'est un homme d'expérience et de bon sens.

Je reste votre humble et dévoué, mais affectueux
frère
Léonidas

**1979**

Brother Basilio responds from Rome, on October 18, 1979:

Very dear Henri,

On the occasion of the Conference of Brothers Provincial, we had a meeting of particularly serious discernment between Brother Provincial of Brother E., Brother Pierre Rousset and myself, with the assistance of several General Councilors, during which we became aware that Brother E., was not as yet sufficiently prepared to face the type of life which he would have to live in Algeria if he was to go there, Then we agreed to send him, at least for the first time to Ivory Coast.

We hope to be able to find soon for you the companion who would be able to share with you the demands of life in Algeria.

In asking you to believe in the great care that we take in our search, I renew the assurance of my fraternal sentiments in J.M.J. Bx. Ch.

Brother Basilio Rueda, fms
Superior General

P.S. Thank you for the gift.



Casbah
(Argel).



Casbah
(Argel).

On November 27, 1979, Henri writes from Sour-El-Ghozlane:

1979

Dear Brother Basilio,

I received a letter from Brother Alain Delorme who told me about the serious sickness of your brother. How is he since then? With all my heart I unite to your prayer and to that of your family and, above all, I participate in the prayer of all asking for his recovery.

Brother Pierre Rousset also writes to me to tell me that a visit here by «someone from Rome» foreseen for December would be delayed for later. Since I had received nothing official regarding this, my disappointment is not great. He foresees to come himself in March-April. Besides, he tells me he is expecting 3 identity photos from me: you will find them attached here.

My life continues in the situation which you know. With you, I have great trust for the future, very well in peace in the hands of the Lord and of Our Lady.

After his departure from Rome, Brother E. has not written to me. But I know that he remains with me in his heart on this land of Africa.

With my gratitude, I repeat to you my great fraternal affection,

Brother Henri Vergès

**1979**

From Rome, he receives this response, dated December 10, 1979:

Dear Brother Henri,

I received your letter of November 27, just on time to acknowledge receipt, and to thank you for the interest you show asking for news about my brother's health. At the time when I left him at the end of November, his health had improved somewhat, but he is not out of danger. I thank you above all, for the prayers you say asking for his recovery.

The photos arrived well also, I handed them over to Brother Ismael who is responsible for the control. You have been quicker than many others. Several perhaps have difficulty in finding a photographer.

Since you would like to have news from Brother E., I will send him a photocopy of your letter. I am sure that he will not delay in contacting you. At present he is in Ivory Coast.

In a few hours I will take the plane for Australia, so I am also writing to you in a hurry for I did not want to leave your letter without a response.

Now I leave you in the Holy Hearts of Jesus and of Mary and I repeat my sentiments of fraternal affection.

With my best wishes for a Joyful Christmas and a Good, Holy and Happy Year,

Your friend who keeps you in his heart,

Brother Basilio Rueda, fms,
Superior General



Artisan.
Kasbah (Argel).

**1980**

Six months go by before Brother Henri writes to Brother Basilio. His letter written at Sour-El-Ghozlane, is dated June 9, 1980.

Dear Brother Basilio,

After our encounter of August 6, 1978, I would have many things to explain clearer to you regarding my life here in Algeria.

With time, the difficulties as also the value of our Marist presence in this country appear to me to be clearer.

On the other hand, there are new possibilities of insertion offered particularly by the Dioceses: there was question about Brother E.; at present there is an appeal for the Christian animation of international communities which are more or less numerous of cooperators in service in Algeria. But does this correspond to our vocation here?...

It seems to me that the moment has come to find out exactly the state of the situation together with you even before committing new Brothers. At present, I am in relation with two serious candidates for September 81, both of them from the Province of St. Genis-Laval.

Do you judge or think it would be useful to have such an encounter with me during the next school holidays, July-August. In that case, have you programmed a trip to France during that period? If not, do you think I should make the effort to go and meet you in Rome or elsewhere?...

A rather quick response would facilitate my projects of the holidays in case that this encounter would take place. If not, do not

Rome St. Georges, le 9 juin 1976

Cher Frère Basilio,

Depuis notre rencontre de février 1975, j'aurais bien des choses à mieux vous préciser sur ma vie ici en Algérie. Avec le temps, les difficultés comme aussi la valeur de notre présence manifeste dans ce pays m'apparaissent avec plus de clarté.

Par ailleurs, il y a de nouvelles possibilités d'insertion offertes en particulier par les diocèses : il en avait été question avec Fr. Blas, à présent c'est un appel pour l'animation chrétienne des communautés internationales, plus ou moins nombreuses de coopérants en service en Algérie. Mais cela correspond-il à votre vocation ici ?

Le moment me semble venu de faire le point de la situation avec vous avant même d'engager de nouveaux frères. Pour le moment, je suis en relation avec deux candidats sérieux pour septembre 81, tous deux de la province de St. Genis Laval.

Ferez-vous utile une telle rencontre avec moi en cours des prochaines vacances scolaires juillet-août ? Dans ce cas, avez-vous programmé un voyage en France en cours de cette période ? ou bien pensez-vous que je dois faire un effort pour aller jusqu'à vous à Rome ou ailleurs ?

Une réponse assez rapide faciliterait mes projets de vacances en cas où cette rencontre devrait



worry about it just now: a word addressed to St. Paul-3- Châteaux in the month of July would suffice.

Excuse me, once again, to abuse of your precious time.

In the intimacy of Jesus and of Mary, I remain in a cordial friendship for you and for all the Brothers you keep in your heart.

Brother Henri Vergès



avoir lieu. Sinon ne prenez pas cette peine dans l'immédiat. un mot adressé à St Paul 3 Clément ou sous le pliillet suffirait.

Excusez-moi, encore une fois, d'abuser de votre temps précieux.

Dans l'intimité de Jésus et de Marie, je salue sous une cordiale amitié pour vous et pour tous ces frères que vous portez dans votre cœur,

J. Leukeyer

**1980**

The Roman response hardly took any time. It is dated June 25, 1980.

My Very Dear Brother,

I have just read your letter of 09.06.80. I thank you for all the information that you give me...

Regarding the new situation in Algeria, it is a question of being very realistic, frank and clear without feeling thrilled (sic) and then discouraged (sic) later on.

I doubt very much to be able to obtain something concrete at the moment but the question is to clear up, to prepare the ground if Providence allows it for next school year 81-82, then an encounter would allow us to speak about the two candidates.

While waiting, dear Brother, continue your beautiful apostolic work. Pray in order always to discern well the best choice to make in every decision.

May Jesus and Mary and our Blessed accompany you in everything that you do.

Let us remain united in prayer and charity. Accept my warm greetings and transmit a profound friendship to the Brothers.

Brother Basilio Rueda, fms
Superior General



M'zab Ghardaïa
(Argelia).

Henri responds from St. Paul-3-Châteaux, on August 11, 1980:

1980

Very Dear Brother Basilio,

Thank you for your kind letter of 25-06-80 received at St. Paul-3- Châteaux on August 9, 1980, after having travelled in Algeria. On the contrary I did not find in the envelope the itinerary with the dates of your trips that you had to include. There is only one means of contact: a letter sent through Switzerland.

Since it is freer of « possible controls » than in Algeria, I take a moment to make a quick state of the situation at present. Concerning our encounter, we could postpone it to the next month of March, during your visitation to the Province, whether you come to see for yourself all the things here in Algeria, or whether I go to France (when you pass through Marseille for example). Brother Pierre Rousset will decide all that with you

The life of the Church in Algeria seems to be more and more precarious. After the nationalization of the Diocesan Schools, the priests and the religious who had remained were dispersed throughout the country following the assignments or appointments given by the Ministry of Education, small islands of Christian and evangelic presence, a bit everywhere. The richness of such a presence, but also how very fragile! Our contracts with the State are only annual (but renewable). Now, this year, several priests or religious did not obtain their support. Then the problem arises from that, which is an insoluble one for several, to know how to support themselves in the midst of this Muslim population without an employment which would justify their presence here.

In addition, the Arabianization progressive of teaching limits even more our possibilities. Just the same the will of the country as much as possible, is to do without foreign aid.

This is the essential of what I would have wanted to develop with you in this conversation. Perhaps other elements will emerge in an encounter of one hundred priests. in which I am going to participate from September 1 to 8: it is a meeting wanted by the Bishops to face and speak about the difficulties that we find and which very frequently, we cannot speak about them, except orally, without writing them, because the most inno-



cent things can be misinterpreted in Muslim milieu. Besides teaching, what are other possibilities?

- The handicaps: the social situation of organisms which are in charge is very ambiguous, to the point that Cardinal Duval hardly encourages us to advance in that sense. (The Cardinal is aware, knows our search and follows it).
- A desire of the Bishops of Constantine and of Oran: to participate in the Christian animation of thousands of cooperators of all countries present, more or less, provisionally on Algerian ground. Is this the sense of our presence in Algeria? We could speak about it.
- Perhaps the Chaplaincy of one or other European Lyceum. But it seems that the priests are not looking for that.

In all cases, a great deal of renunciation is demanded from a Brother called to the service in this country. But should we not dare and live it for all the time that the Good Lord wants? On my part, this is what I believe. At present I am in contact with two Brothers of St. Genis who manifested their intention to join me in September 81 (...).

Perhaps you will have the occasion to speak about their project at the time of your next visit in October. Pierre Rousset knows about it.

This is a rapid survey that I ask you not to publish it. This will prepare our meeting of May 81 if you consider it opportune.

I leave a copy of what I have just written to Brother Pierre Rousset. .

I try to conform myself the best possible to your wise directives and I thank you once more for that encouragement that you give me from the Lord.

I do not want to abuse more of your time.

I remain with you in the intimacy of Jesus Christ Our Lord, with the Virgin Mary whom we celebrate on this 15th of August.

Yours devoutly,

Brother Henri Vergès

Henri remains united and communicates very frequently with Brother Pierre Rousset, his Provincial Superior. He writes to him on November 21, 1980:

1980

My Dear Pierre,

Your last letter brought me great joy because of the sharing with me about the happy events of our Marist Family, but also a certain disappointment regarding Brother Basilio who will not be able to come to Algeria and, above all, about... (a Brother on whom he counted). Let us hope against all hope that this is the sign that it is necessary to change direction.

Regarding Reverend Brother, see what I have thought: since he cannot come himself, would it not be good that a member of the General Administration come in his place, for example during the next winter holidays (Christmas)? If none of the Brothers are available, another Brother like. He could see the situation in this place, meet those who are responsible (Cardinal Duval, Monsignor Montalvo, the Nuncio, both of them desired very much to speak with Brother Basilio ...). This would be a supplementary point of view to yours and to mine which would seem to me would enrich our exchange of March with the Reverend Brother. It is only a simple idea; Do whatever you want. I suppose that you think at least, to come yourself before March...

Regarding the dates of the meeting in France the best for me would be the time of the visitation to Marseille, from the 20th to the 22nd; but I would not want to be a very heavy burden for Brother Basilio and also for the community of Saint Joseph. If not, I am ready to follow him to Bourg-de-Péage. Tell me what you think

Brother Henri Vergès

From St Paul-3-Châteaux, Brother Pierre Rousset transmits the letter of Henri to Brother Basilio, on December 2, 1980, adding the following:

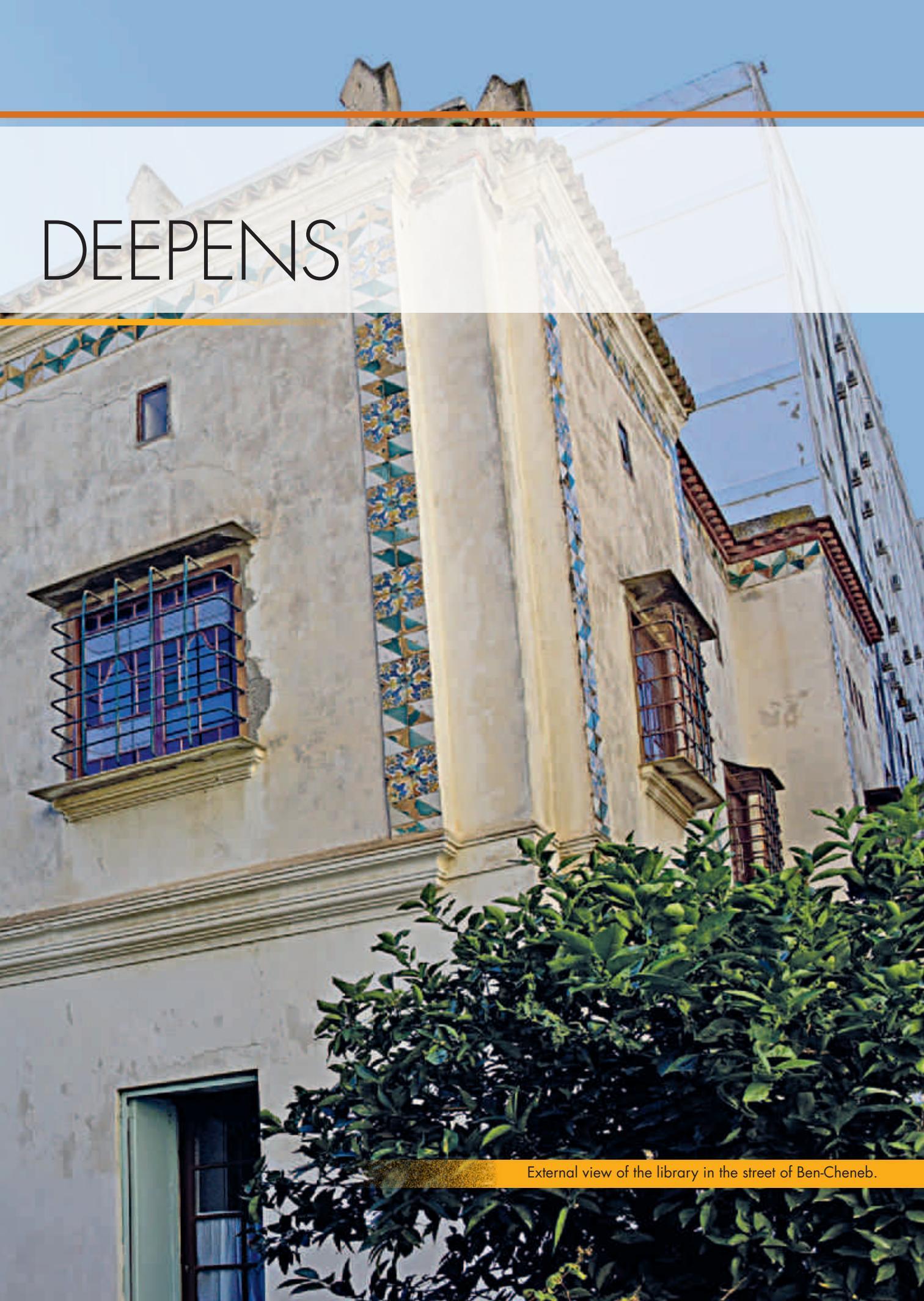
1980

I ask you not to respond immediately to this letter. In Rome you will see the response that you can give to the request of Brother Henri Vergès. On my part I am too involved in regard to him in order to be able, perhaps, to be objective in the decision which has to be taken, if necessary. I have just received the permission of absence for Brother Henri Vergès for the school year 1980-1981.

Friendship THAT



DEEPENS



External view of the library in the street of Ben-Cheneb.

**1980**

On December 30, 1980, Henri writes to Brother Basilio:

30 de diciembre de 1980

Very dear Brother Basilio,

I received your "personal" letter very well, before Christmas. I thank you wholeheartedly for this supplementary sign, if it was necessary!, of the very particular fraternal affection that you have for me. In my solitude, it is a very great comfort!

Surely, with you I ardently desire the coming of the Lord in me, in you and in all our Brothers and in the whole world. Particularly in Algeria which also is going through its difficulties and trials, including the earthquake of El-Asnam which came before that of Italy. It aspires in its national charter to have a new man who is more fraternal and more responsible for the destiny of his brothers. And I am here in the heart of the aspiration of the people on the way to liberation for greater justice and peace. Come Lord Jesus!

But my situation obliges me to become more conscious or aware. It is through the action of the Spirit in the heart of each one, mine first, that this coming of the Lord can be realized. This Spirit of impetuous Love has to shake us, wake us up. Yes, may Mary make of me that "being which is awake" that you wish, a word which struck me the most in your letter.

In the joy of Christmas, I am happy, in turn, to offer you my best wishes for the New Year and beyond. May you more and more draw all your Brothers with you and through them, the whole world, all availability to the Son who has been given to us through the Virgin Mary.

le 30 décembre 1960

Bien cher Frère Basilio,

J'ai bien reçu votre lettre "personnelle" avant Noël. Je vous remercie de tout cœur pour ce signe supplémentaire - s'il le fallait ! - de l'affection fraternelle toute particulière que vous me portez. Dans ma solitude, c'est un bien grand réconfort !

Bien sûr, avec vous je désire ardemment la venue du Seigneur en moi-même, en vous et en tous nos frères et dans le monde entier, et, en particulier, en Algérie qui connaît aussi ses difficultés et ses épreuves - y compris le régime d'Al. Bouamra qui a précédé de peu celui d'Italia - et aspire, dans sa charte nationale, à une bonne nouvelle plus fraternel, plus responsable de la destinée de ses frères. Et je suis ici au cœur de l'aspiration des peuples en voie de libération à plus de justice et de paix. Hâtez Seigneur Jésus !

Mais - et ma situation m'oblige à en prendre une plus vive conscience - c'est par l'action de l'Esprit au cœur de chacun, du mien d'abord, que cette venue du Seigneur peut se réaliser, cet Esprit d'Amour impératif qui doit nous boussuler, nous réveiller, lui que l'Esprit fasse de moi cet "être éveillé" que vous souhaitez, mot qui me frappe le plus dans votre lettre.

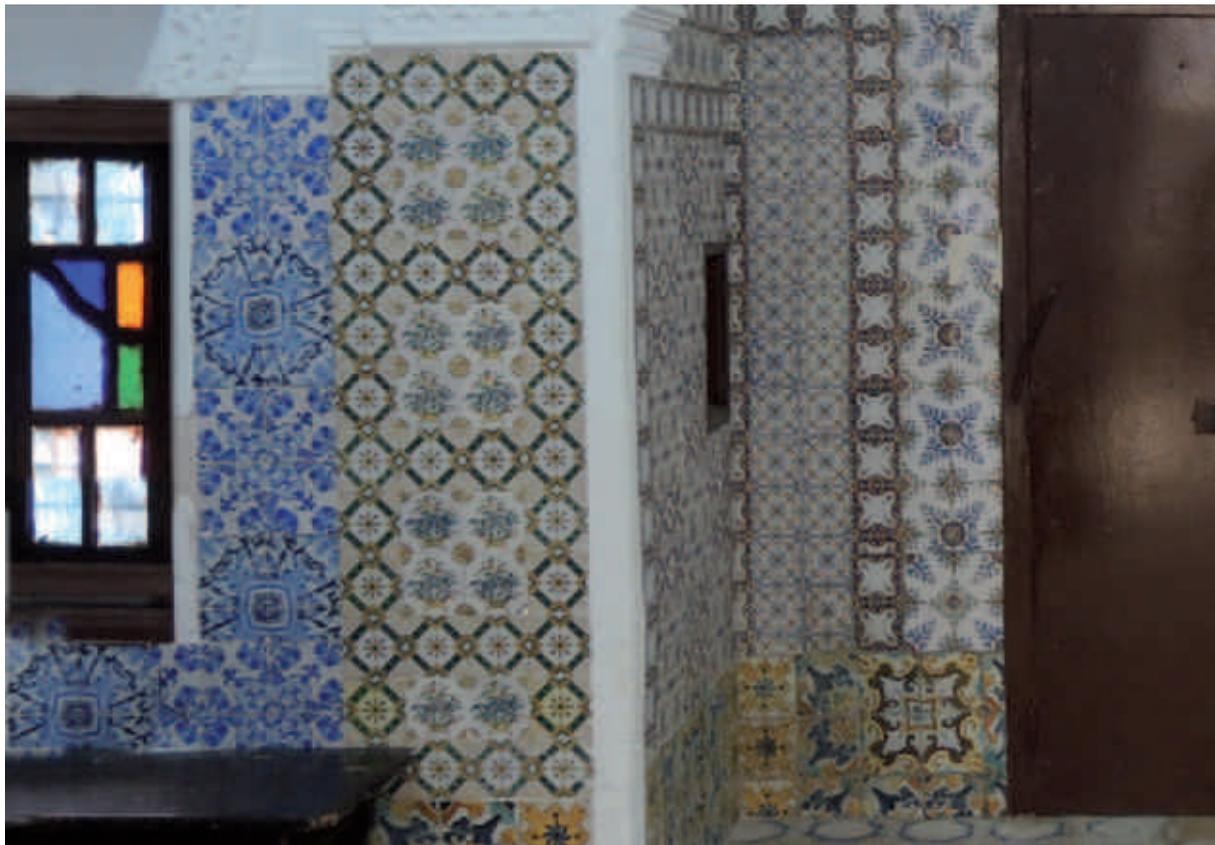
Dans la joie de Noël, je suis heureux de vous offrir à mon tour mes meilleurs vœux pour la nouvelle année et bien au-delà : que vous soyez de plus en plus, entraînant avec vous tous vos frères et, à travers eux, le monde entier, toute



And let us wish the joy for a future encounter. A project which Brother Pierre Rousset will arrange with you. In waiting, I continue to present my poor offering for all your intentions.

I remain your humble and devout Brother,

Henri Vergès



Classic ceramics from the library in the street Ben-Cheneb.

disponibilité au fils qui nous est donné par la
bierge Marie.

Et souhaitons la joie d'une prochaine rencontre
- sujet que règle avec vous le P. Pierre Roussel - en
attendant se continue de persévérer ma faible offrande
à toutes vos intentions.

Je demeure votre humble et dévoué frère

Henri-Louis



**1980**

Here is the text of the « personal » letter that Brother Basilio had sent to his more intimate friends, the letter to which Henri refers.

Christmas 1980

Very dear Brother,

Once again the feasts of Christmas and the New Year approach. I am absent from Rome, deprived of my habitual secretaries and in the visitation to the Province of Saint Genis Laval. Now is a period which involves many obligations of the heart, of friendship, of gratitude and leads one to express wishes. In so far as responsible for the Congregation I have to write to each one of our houses, to numerous Bishops and ecclesiastics of the places where we work and finally to a great number of other persons to whom we are more or less closely related. My situation this year obliges me to delegate this task to the Brothers of the General Council who are present in Rome. But there are some intimate friends, those with whom the Lord allows me to share the affection in Christ and of relationships at a profound and permanent level. This is your case, and, for friends like you, I send by a personal letter, the expression of my sentiments and my wishes. I would like for you to re-read, if you received it and kept it, my letter of Christmas 1979, it will remind you the sentiments that I keep at the bottom of my heart in regard to your person.

This personal letter after some years has become a brief circular letter, but just the same I still wish to call it personal, because the Lord knows that in writing it, I think personally of you, I think of each one of those to whom it is addressed, expressing to them a lively remembrance and a warm friendship.

I write these lines at the beginning of Advent, hoping that they will reach you on time for Christmas. During the time of Advent, I feel within me the desire, the urgent need for the coming of the Lord on myself, on you my friends, on the Institute and the world. This world

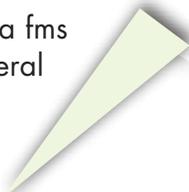
which particularly at this moment, worries me and for which my heart suffers in the Lord and in faith before the threats which weigh down on Poland, the consequences of the earthquakes in Italy and the wars which break out continually among men who do not want to live like brothers but who tear one another to pieces like wolves. It is because of this, I believe, that we have to pray ardently for the coming of the Lord to the world, the coming of His Redemption.

This year my thought goes to this work of the Spirit which takes place in Mary in the shadow or darkness of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus the Savior. The gifts of God are without repentance and Jesus continues to be born from Mary in the mystery of the Spirit. I ardently ask for you, my dear Friend, that an always greater conscience of the call to become "Jesus" will be made in your heart and that the Lord grants you the grace that in you be formed the One who says, "Behold that I come" in imitating the One who says "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord" while in her He is formed. I pray to the Lord to make you enter into this duo in inspiring you total trust in the spirit of love and of force...

With all my heart, I wish that you place yourself at the disposition of the Spirit at this moment when His breath passes so powerfully on the Church, that through Mary He leads you to be the child who knows that God loves him with a tender love, with a maternal love and that this makes of you a being who is awake.

Count on my prayer so that this grace will be granted.

Br. Basilio Rueda fms
Superior General



We do not know if Henri received the letter of Christmas 1979 to which Brother Basilio refers in the letter which precedes, but it seems important to transcribe it since it reveals the heart of Brother Basilio. Then here it is:



1979

December 15, 1979

My very dear Brother
and my great Friend,

It is your friend who writes to you on the occasion of Christmas and who uses a means which is at the same time collective and resolutely personal.

The form is collective, and I suffer because of our friendship, but just the same I dare to speak of personal letter, since I send it exclusively to those who are my greatest friends.

The Lord has given me that joy to be in relationship with thousands of persons; I would probably not exaggerate in saying ten thousand, speaking only of those with whom I have had some true contact on such and such occasion.

Certainly there is a Christian love which places us in relationship of friendship and of charity with the known world and also with the unknown world presented to us through mass-media and imagination. From there could have been born in me and also in each one a solidarity of Christian faith and a human solidarity. The Lord has also granted me to maintain more personal friendships and relationships by means of encounters, occasional letters or even Christmas wishes which could reach such and such a friend within a group or of a community.

But there is an even more intimate circle, and if the number of members is large, the Lord has, nevertheless, allowed me to feel very close, near to me all those who compose it: they are like the children of my own mother; and you are one of those, and you cannot imagine the permanence and the growing force of my friendship.

To some of those from that group I write from time to time; to others almost never. But a circumstance in life or some trip allowing me to encounter one of them, I find that even after five or ten years, the affection has remained as alive, and even more, than at the first moment.

The merit is neither yours nor mine. It is God's design and also the natural fruit of Christian charity, of spiritual friendship and I would also say of consecrated love by virginity.

When I think of the time when I was very young, never could I have imagined this experience, just the same, now it is evident in my life: that the heart can love so many persons as if each one was unique, as if I had for each one the profound and permanent friendship that one can have for an intimate friend. Finally, what I notice is that instead of reducing or dividing the force of love, the number of persons purifies, increases and renders it more an oblation, and more stable.

Then why is it that I want now to express to you sentiments which are at the bottom of my heart, and that you already know and to which you respond? It is because the feast of Christmas, which is imminent, is the most favorable moment to say with simplicity and without any false modesty what God causes to sprout in the best of ourselves.

Christmas is the feast of universal solidarity which makes sentiments become younger by the contact with the sources. The manger tells us: the ineffable, inaccessible love of God for humanity makes itself tangible in that small child. It is the historical kiss of love that the Father gives to men, and by that gesture, He makes us become sons in the Son, brothers in our Brother.

And we can evoke with Saint Paul: "the unfathomable treasure of Christ, and of throwing light on the inner working of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, so that now it is the Church to reveal it to the Principalities and the ruling forces » (Ep. 3, 9-10)

Yes it is the moment to live in a contemplative amazement that loving expectation which makes us fall on our knees: « in the presence of the Father from whom every fatherhood in heaven or on earth takes its name » (Ep. 3, 14), and which maintains us in hope, «waiting in hope, justice and piety for the blessing which will come with the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus, 2, 12-13).

Yes, we are sacraments and proclamation of that Good News which was, which is, and which is waiting for the hour of its fulfilment, for our joy and that of the whole world.

It is in the warm light of Christ that I will now keep you, more than ever, in my prayers, so poor as sincere, to praise with you, to adore with you, to thank with you, and to bless with you. For you and with you I ask



for what the Holy Spirit will inspire our heart of disciples of Jesus and servants of the Gospel to ask for ourselves and for humanity of which we bear the joys and the pains, the anguishes and the hope.

And at present, allow me to give you some news of your friend. During the Conference of Provincials and the days which followed, the correspondence, the interviews, the publications and the administrative tasks created an immense load of work which reduced my hours of sleep to the strict minimum.

Immediately after that I had to annul a whole series of commitments corresponding to the month of November, in order to leave in a hurry to the bedside of my brother, whose state of health was desperately serious. After a month he is not only out of danger but he has recovered beyond everything that the most optimist doctors could expect. I give you this news because I know that many of you knew the sickness of my brother, have accompanied us with their prayers with an interest and a friendship which I will never be able to thank for sufficiently.

I came back to Rome for a short stay but which allowed me to preach a retreat in the Champagnat Center and to send out, with an enormous delay some correspondence. Now I leave for Australia where I will help the Province of Sydney in its search of renewal. I will also visit our missions in the Pacific, this first field of missionary apostolate that the Society of Mary has received from the Church and in which it has incarnated its missionary and pastoral love.

I will come back to Rome for a brief stay at the end of February, and in March I will visit our works in Mexico and will come back to Rome in the middle of May.

Useless to tell you that I will be enchanted to find some echo from my friend, but above all I count on the continual accompaniment of your prayer and your friendship.

Excuse me for not signing this letter and for not having added two or three words which would make it more personal. I do not materially have the time and besides, it is also necessary to make some economy.

I embrace you very affectionately in Christ and I wish for you and for me that Christmas will permit us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord, in a passionate love for Him and in a total commitment in His service. This gift without reservation has to surpass all our weaknesses and create in us an interior state of peace, of joy, of hope. It should also communicate to us kindness and tenderness, openness and acceptance, that is to say profound love for all mankind, for the whole man and for every man.

May the sweet Virgin Mary, who accepted and rocked the Word of God, she who covered Jesus with her tenderness, preside over our Christmas feasts. In thinking of her I would like to repeat this word of one of you in contemplating the Divine Child: "Happy Child with the presence and the care of such a Mother".

Yours in Him who loves us,

Bro. Basilio Rueda, fms



Easter 1992.
Bro. Henri with
Bros. Michel Voute
and Jesus.
In the centre
the mother
of Bro. Jesus.

**1981**

The General Council, from Rome, addressed a letter to Henri, on February 2, 1981:

Dear Brother Henri Vergès,

It is on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord that we address ourselves to you. We hope that this letter will find you in good health and happy in your Marist apostolate...

We are in plenary session, since January 8. These sessions will last until the 12th, and then we will disperse again. .

From January 25 to 31 we made our community retreat in a House of Prayer in Rome, in the house of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Cenacle. It is only at the end of this retreat that we are writing to you, to tell you that we appreciate you, that we admire your Marist dedication, and that we are very united to you through our thought and through our prayer.

Your presence among the Muslims is in perfect agreement with our Constitutions. It suffices to read article 43, to become aware, which speaks about our intent among non-Christians.

In spite of that at the present moment you are alone in Algeria, you know very well that the Marist apostolate is eminently communitarian. Then be sure of our fraternal presence – invisible no doubt – but very real.

We would like very much to find one or two Brothers, in order that you could also enjoy the physical presence of the community.

Pray for us, as we will do for you, and believe in our esteem, in our fraternity, in Jesus and Mary and Father Champagnat.

Your Brothers
of the General Council

Henri answers them from Sour-El-Ghozlane, on February 7, 1981:

Brothers,

I received your letter today: I hope that my response will reach you before your dispersion of the 12...

I thank the Lord for this wonder that all the Brothers responsible think of a poor little Brother lost on his Algerian high-plateau! Less than ever I doubt of the Marist community in its profound reality. Circumstances may disperse us throughout the world; our fraternal affection in Jesus with Mary is only more real! Is it not the heart of community life? And this affection makes me rejoice to know that you have it for each one of your Brothers and particularly to those more isolated, even within a physical community and very visible!... "Look how much they love one another!..." Father Champagnat must also rejoice.

I received this letter the day after a visit to Monsignor Henri Teissier, who on that same February 2, was installed as Coadjutor Bishop of Algiers. He reacted vigorously when I told him that my presence was not vital for the Church in Algeria!... "Mine neither, then," he responded. So I am convinced that this presence is totally Marist. Those responsible of the Church and of the Marist community join together, are united to confirm me in this vocation!

Thank you for praying for my fidelity to this gift of God that I am happy to live in the spirit of the 16th General Chapter revived by the 17th; while waiting for other Brothers...

In turn, I make it my duty to pray for you and for all those Brothers that you keep in your daily concern.

With my fraternal and grateful affection for all of you,

Brother Henri Vergès,
63 Cité du 20 Août, Sour-El-Ghozlane



Interior patio of the house
in the Kasbah n. 49 in the street of Cheneb.
A place where everything is dedicated
to welcoming young people from
the secondary school where they are able
to find an atmosphere of work and peace.
In this place on May 8 1994 the Marist Brother
Henri Vergès and Sister Paule-Hélène,
were murdered, showing their love for others..

Second BROTHER



visit of
BASILIO IN ALGERIA

**1981**

From St Paul-3-Châteaux, on May 19, 1981, Brother Pierre Rousset writes to Brother Basilio to tell him exactly how he is going to employ the time during his visit in Algeria:

... As foreseen, "we" will wait for you at the airport of Algiers on Monday June 1st, at about 12 noon. Then we will go to the house of the Marist Sisters, to Meftah (Alger). It is there that we will be able to meet Monsignor Henri Tessier, Bishop of Oran and future successor of Cardinal Duval, after four o'clock in the afternoon. From there we will go to the house of Brother Vergès at Sour-El-Ghozlane. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Brother Vergès will do his regular work. In the morning on Thursday, June 4th, we will leave for Alger where we have an interview at 10 o'clock with the Nuncio, Monsignor Montalvo. From there, we will go to visit Cardinal Duval who will receive us for lunch. We will spend the night in the Diocesan House in Alger. On Friday, June 5, we will take the plane as planned at 7:45, flight 1820 Y. Brother Vergès has confirmed with me that the danger of a strike on Friday 5th is practically non-existent. We will be in Marignane at approximately 10 o'clock. Brother Edmond Malclés will take us to St. Paul for lunch. In the evening, we will go to Our Lady of l'Hermitage.

We entrust this trip to Our Lady of Africa and to Father Champagnat whom we will celebrate together. I am sure all will go well...

And Brother Pierre Rousset adds, handwritten: «If you want to please Brother Vergès, do not forget a bottle of Alpestre. Thank you! ».

The foreseen visit took place very well and on June 14, 1981, Brother Henri writes:

1981

Dear Brother Basilio,

Wholeheartedly I would like to say thank you for your visit that you carried out with so much fraternal affection. You know how to take the measure of the situation and you encouraged me in spite of the unavoidable difficulties, that of solitude particularly. Thank you, above all, for the announced Brothers.

Those who had the opportunity to meet you keep an unforgettable remembrance of your attention toward them and of your fraternal simplicity. May the Virgin Mary watch over the growth of the seed sown during these few days of blessing

Regarding the encounters planned for this summer, particularly with Bishops Henri Teissier and Pierre Claverie, I will write to you to tell you the exact dates when they will be in Rome.

Attached you will find some indications of documents or addresses which we spoke about when you were here (these documents are on a separate sheet). (1)

Thank you for sending the "Letters to the Provincials". These days I have more time to reflect on this.

United to you in your concern for all our Brothers in the Lord, I repeat my very fraternal and grateful affection.

Brother Henri Vergès

- ¹ – I.P.E.A.I. (Institut Pontifical d'Études Arabes et Islamiques) ; Piazza San Apollinare, 49 ; 00186 – Roma (Siège de la revue "Islam-Christianity")
- **Orientations pour un dialogue entre Chrétiens et Musulmans** (Secrétariat for the non-Christians) Nouvelle édition : "Le Seuil"
 - Documents des Évêques du Maghreb :
 - a) **Réflexion des Évêques d'Afrique du Nord sur les situations nouvelles dans leurs Églises** 11.06.77 – Documentation Catholique du 17 juillet 1977
 - b) **Chrétiens au Maghreb. Le sens de nos rencontres** – Documentation Catholique du 2 décembre 1979
 - **Algérie 1980. Église en terre d'Islam**, Pro Mundi Vita Dossiers, mars 1980, rue de la limite, 6 – B 1030 Bruxelles (Belgique)
 - Interview de **Mgr Berlier**, évêque de Niamey (I.C.I. – n°559 du 15.02.81 – pp 8/9)



Brother Basilio searching FOR A COMPANION FOR HENRI

1981

Brother Basilio responds from Rome, on June 15, 1981:

Dear Friend,

Having returned from Scotland I had the pleasure to find your letter of June 14. I thank you with all my heart. Even if your letter does not need a response, I cannot prevent myself from taking this occasion to address you a short word before my departure tomorrow for Ecuador

From Ecuador I have to go to France for the meeting of the Provincial Councils. If by chance, you are in France at that time I would be very happy that you would come and visit me in order that we could speak on the immediate plan, on Brother Ayuso and Brother Valentino.

Thanks a million for the precious information that you have just sent me.

Until the pleasure of seeing you again

I remain united to you by prayer. I excuse myself for not being able to write to you longer because of lack of time, my trip is now imminent, from Rome I send you my most cordial greetings.

Fraternally in J.M.J.Bx Ch.

Br. Basilio Rueda, fms,
Superior General

From Matemale, his birth place, on the Eastern Pyrenees where he is taking some days of vacations, Henri writes on August 18, 1981:



Les petites choses n'ont pas de prix, mais elles donnent le prix. C'est comme les fleurs des champs, on les cueille sans parler, et toutes ensemble, elles aromatisent.

Le 15 juillet 1981

Cher Basilio,

C'est peut-être un petit mot de Paris. Mais, au moins, ça vous dit que je suis toujours là, et que je suis toujours avec vous. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous.

Je vous écris de l'hôpital de Lourdes. Je suis toujours là, et je suis toujours avec vous. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous.

Il semble que je balbutie, mais c'est parce que je suis un peu fatigué. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous.

Je demeure avec la même conviction que quelques jours de fête. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous. Je suis toujours avec vous, et je suis toujours avec vous.

Bien cordialement

J. Rueda



Bro. Basilio Rueda
with His Holiness Pope
John Paul II.

**1981**

Dear Brother Basilio,

I am here with my elderly parents after the retreat at Our Lady of Neiges. They are well physically, but they are losing their memory!... Thank God they are well taken care of by my brothers and my sisters.

Thank you for your telephone call at the beginning of August. You have been able to get information about my passage to Rome, since as yet I have not seen Brother Valentino at St. Paul when I returned from Our Lady of Neiges... I also spoke a long time with Brother Terradillos.

Brother Pierre Rousset shared with me part of the correspondence with Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso. The photocopy was not of a good quality but I was able to guess the essentials. Regarding his first stay in Algeria, it seems to me that it would be opportune that he comes as soon as possible after his return from Peru, even before the sessions of prayer, of formation or the encounters which you proposed to him in order to better motivate his choice and his preparation. This is not explicit in your response. What do you think? As you asked me, I will call you on the telephone from St. Paul at the end of this month before I return to Algeria.

While waiting, I continue to pray for you and for all our Brothers in the Institute.

With my most cordial affection,

Brother Henri Vergès

Detail
of Ghardaïa
(Algeria).





Bro. Basilio Rueda, surrounded by his Brothers, celebrates the meeting with the folkloric peculiarities of his homeland.

Brother Basilio responds on August 25, 1981:

1981

Very dear Brother Henri,

I received your letter that you wrote to me during your stay with your family and I am happy to know that even if your Daddy and your Mamma lose their memory somewhat, they are well taken care of.

My letter will be very brief since Brother Valentino, who will take it to you, will give you news about me. I am going to go to the essentials, but be assured of all my affection and of my thought in your solitude.

1)– Regarding Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso your future companion, I am perfectly in agreement with you. In the first place, that he avoids the programmed visit to different countries in Africa and therefore, that he goes to meet you at your place before his preparation in Europe.

But his first contact should not be too long. It should be avoided to accumulate on him all the difficulties all at once: taking him away from his milieu where he is working admirably, the solitude, the learning of the Arabic and finally, the perfecting of his French.

It seems to me that a first contact with the milieu and the orientations that



you will give him during a short stay will be good. Because he was leading a very active life, it is necessary that he is re-immersed spiritually and that prayer will give him the force from on High.

On the other hand, when he arrives it will be winter and you know better than I do the impression of winter in your place.

After the prayer session and perfecting his French, he will go to Algeria, either to begin to teach in French, or to plunge himself directly in the Arabic language and culture.

This is an option that we will take later after a convenient dialogue-

1. Brother Valentino will definitively leave on the 28th of this month for St. Paul and for Algeria. The doctors will tell him later, if necessary, yes or no on an operation for osteoarthritis.

What is important if he goes to Algeria, it is necessary for you to plan on getting another house, if possible on the ground floor, since it is absolutely impossible for this Brother to go up to the floor where you live. Besides, when Brother Ayuso will join you, you will be three and your small apartment will be very small for three persons and eventually a visitor.

Be assured, Brother, of my esteem and of my friendship and that I keep you in my thought.

Brother Basilio Rueda, S.G.

1981

On December 24, 1981, Henri responds – indicating the exact hour : 20.30 -, to the General Council which offered him their greetings:

Brothers of the Council of Rome,

I received your greetings signed in your name by Brother Quentin and accompanied by a fraternal word from Brother Paul Sester; I received a card from Lourdes from Brothers Charles Howard and Stephen Mignogue; I received a Mexican flight into Egypt from Brother Terradil-

los... without speaking about the letter of Brother Basilio Rueda. What joy and what comfort to feel enveloped in the affection of so many Brothers. Thank you with all my heart. Very soon, a priest who has travelled 70 kilometers will come to preside in my house for the celebration at night for a small handful of Christians from around here. I will be particularly united to you. That the spirit brought by the Child of the Manger and presented to us by His Mother, always animate more profoundly your hearts throughout this New Year 1982 and beyond much more!

This morning I received word from Brother Valentino whose knee always refuses to serve him. He seems quite desperate to join me one day. I admire his availability and I am thinking that he is no longer useful in his present situation, the mystery of the divine journey, if he was here. And just the same, how many times during the past three months I said to myself: "If Valentino was here!..."

I hope that with Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso it will be different. I am waiting for news from him to know if he is going to come to find out how the land is, etc. in the next few weeks.

On Monday December 14 Monsignor Henri Teissier, coadjutor of Cardinal Duval, was my guest for one day and night. He missed several appointments with you but he does not despair to succeed one day. He counts on the Marist presence in Algeria. The Protestant Pastor of Alger spoke about a Marist from a school in Sydney who would be ready to come here. But the Pastor, we understand well!, could not say if it was a Father or a Brother...

It is useless to tell you that I remain united to all my Brothers of the world, but I do not pray sufficiently for you who have concerns. I will try to do it more during these days of school vacation.

Your Brother who tells you once again his very affectionate gratitude,

Brother Henri Vergès

Five days later, that is December 29, 1981, Henri writes to the Superior General:

**1981**

Brother Basilio,

Not having the time - I feel embarrassed to write to you, you who always find so much!... – and knowing that you were absent from Rome, I was not in a hurry to respond to your letter of October 15th. I am pleased you chose me for one of your intimate friends – I do not seek to know why. There is in this an aspect of gratuitousness for a heart which, like yours, identifies itself with that of the Lord. There is nothing more for me to do than to accept with joy and to give thanks. And to thank you for that preferred friendship which does not cut us off from our Brothers. On the contrary! Rather it is a demand for a more total availability to God and to all men.

Yes, what we seek is that intimate communion with Christ Jesus who makes us children of the Father animated by the same Spirit. This is the wonder of Christmas that God in His Son has espoused in everything, except sin, in our human condition and in this way renders it capable of God.

It is this that touched our Blessed Father who wanted his Brothers to remain in the heart of the mystery. In the first place, at the Manger but also at the Cross which mark or indicate our path and those of the world... I think of Poland, of the Middle East, of Latin America... and of the Eucharist where we can touch Him in a tangible way, where he becomes our nourishment of life.

It is from this mystery that we draw this interior Presence which vitalizes every human activity – that dedication to youth which is our vocation – It is a Presence that we humbly bear like the Virgin of the Visitation joyfully, as a servant, available and in Love-

This is something of what I wanted to share with you in the joy of Christmas in wishing you the best year 1982 for yourself, for all our Brothers in the Institute and also for all your relatives and friends. You know that my prayer accompanies these wishes.



Bro. Henri in an attitude of prayer in the oratory in the library in the street of Ben Cheneb.

I received Christmas wishes from Brother Valentino. I can guess that he is desperate for his health problems to come to an end. From this I have gained support before the Lord, even in his renouncement.

Regarding Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso, I have not received news from him since October. I do not know as yet if he is going to come to spend some days here before completing the formation designed for him. With all my affection in the heart of Christ Jesus with Mary His Mother,

Brother Henri

Henri, on February 12, 1982, sends another letter to Brother Superior General:



1982

Brother Basilio,

I benefit that you are staying in Rome to share with you my impressions after the visit of Brother Jesús M. Ayuso. First of all, thank you for this choice that you have made and for this encounter that you allowed us to carry out.

During these ten days, 12 to 22 February, he could get quite an exact idea of the life that one leads here. We met together with some Algerian friends, some priests, religious, men and women and above all, our Bishops. The conversation was particularly friendly with Monsignor Gabriel Montalvo, the Nuncio in Algeria. It seems that this experience of several days corresponded well to what Brother Jesús expected. On my side, I find that he has everything necessary to live here: good sense, balance, practical spirit, cordial openness, sense of humor and, above all, religious sense... He seems to me to be the more "adapted" of those who up until now, have manifested their intention to come and join me. Praised be God!... whatever will be that follows.

From this fact, even if the decision has not been made, it seems that Brother Jesús has the intention to come next September. To this effect we prepare the ground. In the first place, the request for an equivalent rating of his degrees to be able to teach in Algeria. The Embassy of Peru in Algeria helps us to carry out the first stage which is we have to obtain the Spanish equivalent in Madrid. Regarding the learning of French, Brother Alain Delorme told you about our project which finally was to abandon it in favor of that of a Master of Novices in El Escorial. The rest will be arranged as the days go by.

In waiting, we pray one and the other so that the light shines on his path and that he is totally available to the breath of the Holy Spirit. I know that you will join us in our prayer, as Brother Valentino, to whom we sent word, generously offers the sacrifice of a project which seems to him to be less and less realizable

My wishes of fraternal friendship to all your Brothers of the Council; I repeat my very fraternal affection in the intimacy of the Hearts of Jesus and of Mary.

Brother Henri Vergès

Bro. Henri
travelling
through
the Algerian
desert.



Brother Basilio responds, from Rome, on February 22, 1982:

1982

Very dear Brother Henri,

Your two letters of 24 and 29 December were received and I thank you.

I personally contacted Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso. Even if he has much to do, first his Second Novitiate and make an experience locally, there is a good reason to rejoice because of his determination to become a missionary with you.

At present I am looking for a third Brother of quality who would be willing to join you.

In what concerns Brother Valentino, the hope of seeing him one day join you, diminishes from day to day. In fact, it seems that there is no improvement of his leg.

In reading your letters I could confirm that we share the same sentiments.

With all my affection I remain united to you in prayer.

Fraternally in J.M.J. Bx Champagnat,

Br. Basilio Rueda fms
Superior General

P.S. When I returned from Assisi where the General Council met during fifteen days, I found your letter of February 12. I was very happy to know that the contact was fruitful and my best wishes for what will follow.



On the occasion of the visit of Brother Pierre Rousset, Provincial, Henri sent a postcard representing the Street Mohamed Chérif dans la Casbah of Alger:

Dear Brother Basilio,

The visit of Pierre places me in the environment of June '81 where we were searching together, in roads similar to this one, for bottles with a special stopper while Pierre behind, dragged the leg!... How many good memories! That well-taken care of crockery... and above all, this fraternal and effective affection which has known how to find a solution to our problems. After, we had the gift from Heaven in the person of Jesús Ayuso. Pierre will tell you exactly the present state of the steps taken and of other questions that we were able to discuss with the Bishops and the Superiors (ess).

Yours devoted,

Brother Henri Vergès

And Brother Pierre adds on the same postcard:

A small note from me while waiting for the telephone call of the 24th. Henri is always wonderfully faithful. I am happy because of the arrival soon of Brother Jesús Ayuso, and I am sure that our Good Mother will bless their community. Everything went well with the Bishops who thank you for your availability toward Algeria.

Filially,

Brother Pierre Rousset



The Algerian
desert.

From Guadalajara, in Mexico, Brother Basilio writes, on May 28, 1982:

1982

My very dear and unforgettable Brother Henri,

What sweet remembrance I have of my very short passage in Algeria. It is useless to want to forget the moments lived on the streets of Alger where the poor Brother Provincial could not follow us, since we were walking fast and without even being aware of the "little" heat. Briefly, those were indelible hours.

I am very happy to tell you that Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso is very well disposed to go to Algeria as a missionary and for always. I will have the occasion to see him in France or in Spain before he leaves and to give him my biggest blessing as well as for you.

The Good God and the Good Mother and the Blessed Father Champagnat will never leave you.

Yours in J.M.J. and Ch. your devoted Brother,

Bro. Basilio Rueda
Superior General



Centennial of the arrival of the Marist Brothers in Algeria.
Bro. Jesus Marcos, Bro. Nicolás Coadic, Cardinal Duval, Bro. Charles Howard, Superior General and Bro. Henri Vergès.

**1982**

From Saint Paul-3-Châteaux where he spent several days among the Brothers, Henri writes on July 14, 1982:

Dear Brother Basilio,

A difficulty to be overcome concerning Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso obliges me to contact you once again. The photocopy of the letter which I sent to him that same day, after having called him on the phone with Br. Pierre Pousset, describes the situation to you. The Spanish Ministry for his Peruvian degree of Mathematics and Physics only gives him an equivalent (validation) – to teach only in Primary School. Such a document would make him feel uncomfortable, not at ease in Algeria. And from there comes the idea that we would propose to him in the enclosed letter. What do you think?

Outside that there would be only « the evangelization » of Spanish speaking cooperators throughout Algeria – a very limited service, it seems - and to wait for signs from Providence along the following days or weeks...

If you judge useful to speak to me over the telephone regarding this subject, the photocopy gives the places where I will be until August 10.

There is nothing new in what concerns me. Brother Valentino was overjoyed by his Algerian stay, but it seems to me he is very handicapped to have stayed here longer as he would have desired.

We remain united in Jesus and Mary.

With all my fraternal affection,

Henri Vergès

Henri VERGÈS

PROVINCE DU SUD-EST

FRÈRES MARISTES

25 - SAINT-PAUL-TROIS-CHATEAUX

Tél. 04-70-28

Le 14 juillet 1982

Cher Frère Basilio,

Une difficulté de parcours au sujet du Fr. Jesús Marcos Ayuso ne m'oblige à reprendre contact avec vous. La photocopie de la lettre que je lui envoie ce même jour, après lui avoir téléphoné avec le Fr. Père Louvet, vous décrit la situation :

Le ministère espagnol, pour sa licence de mathématique et physique péruvienne ne lui donne qu'une équivalence (convalidación) pour l'enseignement primaire seulement. Un tel document ne peut pas être utilisé en Algérie. D'où l'idée que nous lui proposons dans la lettre ci-jointe. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

En dehors de cela resterait "l'évangélisation" des coopérateurs de langue espagnole à travers l'Algérie - service assez limité, semble-t-il - et l'attente des signes de la Providence au fil des jours ou des semaines...

Si vous jugez utile d'avoir une conversation téléphonique avec moi à ce sujet la photocopie donne nos lieux de séjour jusqu'au 10 août.

Rien de nouveau en ce qui me concerne. Fr. Valentin a été comblé par son séjour algérien, mais il me paraît trop handicapé pour y demeurer davantage comme il l'avait désiré.

Nous demeurons unis en Jésus avec vous.

Avec toute mon affective fraternelle. Henri Vergès



1982

Brother Basilio responds, from Rome, on July 24, 1982:

To c. Br. Henri Vergès
St Paul-3-Châteaux.

My dear Brother Henri,

I agree with the advice that you give Brother Jesús Marcos.

Let him take the exams and obtain the necessary diplomas even if that will take 1 or 2 years, that is worthwhile to put in the price and the time.

I do not believe that it is necessary to speak with you on the telephone concerning this subject, what you propose, I support it.

It is much better Bro. Valentino was overjoyed with his stay in Algeria. You are right in judging that he is very handicapped to stay longer as he would have desired...

I wish and hope that you have restful and useful vacations and a generous return there where you exercise your "heroic apostolate"...

United in friendship and prayer to the Lord through Mary,

Friendly yours,

Br. Basilio Rueda
Sup. General



Classic ceramics from the library in the street of Ben-Cheneb.

Henri always IN



Sanctuary of the Holy Cross and view of the city of Orán.



alone SPITE OF HIM



**1982**

On September 27, 1982, Henri writes a letter in which he evokes his particular situation:

Dear Brother Superior,

Brother Pierre Rousset. Provincial, invites me to address "a petition for the authorization to be alone for one more year". I fulfill this demand regarding which I will tell you my intimate sentiment afterwards. The reasons for such a demand, after you encouraged me to continue on this path, you know them; they are essentially in the sense of assuring a Marist presence in Algeria.

I come back to the sense of this move that I do not understand very well. I think that I have responded to the invitation of my Marist Community (Superiors and Council of the Province and of the Institute) to remain alone during some time while waiting for them to find one (or some) companions. In this case it seems to me contradictory that I am the one, who did not take the initiative of such a situation, who has to be the one to ask for the authorization to be alone. I rather have the impression of having been sent by my Marist community – and therefore of having made a community act – the Marist community to which I feel more and more united.

This is not a problem of conscience for me, but rather some fraternal information about a difficulty or trouble that I experience regarding a regulation which I do not believe is well adapted to my situation. Unless I did not understand the sense of this affair!

I benefit from this occasion to thank you for sending Brother Jesús, who must have told you about the success of the steps taken to obtain his diplomas. After a year of preparation with the community of Toulouse, he will be ready to join me in September 83. At last!... God be blessed! This happy perspective makes it possible for me to begin this school year with renewed courage.

My prayer accompanies you during this time of General Conference: May the Virgin Mary obtain the Holy Spirit for you to lead your Brothers always farther on the road of Marist renewal.

With my respectful and fraternal affection,

Brother Henri Vergès

Brother Basilio responds on November 6, 1982:

My dear Brother Henri,

I received your letter of September 27. At that moment the house was buzzing with activity: Plenary Sessions of the General Administration, then the General Conference of the Provinces and other plenary re-sessions. This can explain to you why I took so long to respond.

I perfectly understand your sentiments when they ask you to make yourself the petition to obtain this permission. Taking into account your real situation of having been sent, it rather corresponded to Brother Provincial to do that. But finally, whatever it may be, the permission of absence continues to be necessary – still for a short time, I hope – without it, we would not have the right to keep you there living alone, outside a Marist community. Having made your petition, this becomes possible, thanks to the special faculties granted by the Holy Father in 1964 to the Superiors General and regulated by the Norms of Application.

I am very happy that Brother Marcos Ayuso will soon join you and I am always looking for a third one, I renew the expression of my fraternal affection in J.M-J,

Br. Basilio Rueda fms



Detail of the library of the street in Ben-Cheneb.

**1982**

From Sour-El-Ghozlane, Henri writes to Brother Basilio, on December 28, 1982:

Dear Brother Basilio,

For the second time, I receive your letter to your intimate Friends and I greatly thank you. You recognize that those Friends become more and more numerous. It is normal considering the dimension of the mission that the Lord entrusts you! It enlarges your heart to the same measure of the gift that He gives you! And you live all that in spite of an intense fatigue, "with great joy and peace". It is wonderful! My prayer unites to that of your Brothers and friends to obtain for you always more Marian availability to the Love of God and of your Brothers and that she particularly loves you, throughout the whole of this New Year.

I have just said my rosary and the prayer of the evening hours, especially for you, trying to share your view and your concern for our Institute, for the Church and for the world where, at the same time, in one part exists such beautiful things and such painful ones on the other part... And since you have shared with me some of your personal history in 82, I am going to do the same as briefly as possible. I have already written to you several times this year.

There is the waiting for Brother Jesús whom I told you of the sometimes difficult path that he is following, in view of Algeria. His professional training in Toulouse is hard, but he is admirable in his faith and his courage. He is a beautiful gift that the Institute gives to Algeria! In September 83, if God wills, he will come to wake me up from my torpor.

This year has been for me an additional blessing from the Lord. There has been in particular, the idea that He inspired me to live more intensely this novena of years finishing on the first centenary of our presence in this country. God alone knows if we will see the end or if we will begin the next one... It does not matter: there is an action of thanksgiving to live, a gift to continue to develop in silence,

the humble service to Love, everything in conformity to our Marist spirit. I try to share this vigor or spirit with those who are interested in this presence.

For me, I have gained a renewal in my relationship with the Virgin Mary. She should not forget me, even if I am, not always conscious of her action. And thus, I became aware that I love more the young entrusted to me – a bit like yourself for your Brothers -. The difficulties do not disappear, but a certain interior reciprocity is created, beyond everything else, in Love. And sometimes it happens to me to be conscious, aware of it.

It is sure I always remain with my difficulties, particularly that profound life in God – prayer – that I desire, but that I have the impression that is very little realized. Is this desire essential? A recent book of H. Caffarel “Camille C. or the ascendancy of God”, which fell into my hands, enlightens these holidays at the end of the year. The only thing is to be available for God who has the initiative of his gifts. In spite of all, like you, the Lord gives me the gift to live always in peace and joy, even if because of the circumstances, this year I will not have a single Mass during this time of Christmas, not even the day of the feast!

Thank you for the calendar of your displacements which will allow me to be with you day after day.

With my very fraternal affection,

Brother Henri Vergès

This letter witnesses the depth of the fraternal relationships which been had established between Henri and Basilio. These relationships allowed them to reveal to us some of the richness of their intimate life. The lines above are an eloquent witness and are an example to meditate. We are fraternally grateful to them.



Henri asks FOR THE ALGERIAN NATIONALITY

1983

On May 1, 1983, a new mail, from Henri to Brother Basilio

According to your calendar you must have already returned to Rome. I have tried to accompany you, day after day, in your visits since December. Your itinerary was at the entrance of the oratory that you know. May the Lord make fruitful your cordial dedication to your Brothers!

Thank you for your circular letter on prayer. I have taken it for meditation for a second time. It is an essential dimension of our Marist religious life that it was necessary to encourage us to live it more intensely.

I am writing to you especially, to inform you about the evolution of the community of Sour. Brother Jesús came to spend his Easter holidays with me. It seems that we will be much in agreement, both of us, to try to give to our community life all its sense of a Marist presence in this country. And we wish and hope that the Virgin Mary will accompany us for that day after day.

Thank God a place of physics-chemistry was available at the Lyceum of Sour, with a small complement of teaching Spanish. His dossier has been deposited in the Ministry and all seems to be assured for him for next September. That visit persuaded him even more of what I tried to explain to him by letter; to give his effort of preparation to physics and not only to mathematics.

On my side, I still do not have the renewal of my contract. There seems to be some difficulty – from the fact of the Arabization of mathematics that I teach -, but no major difficulty it seems.

In agreement with our Provincials, we have decided to participate in six weeks of intensive Arabic in Tunis next July-August. He to begin and I to perfect it. We will try to profit to the maximum.

So now you are up-to-date on our situation. May God be praised for this new beginning! On my side, I think I already told you, I have asked for the Algerian nationality, as a witness of our Marist attachment for this country. And we remain available in the hands of the Lord for everything that he wants.

Best greeting to our Brothers in Rome,

With my fraternal affection,

Brother Henri Vergès



From left to the right:
Bro. Henri Vergès,
Mn. Henri Teissier,
Archbishop
of Algiers,
Christian de Chergé
and Pierre Claverie,
Bishop of Oran,
with reason
of the centenary
of the presence
Marist in Algeria
(1891-1991).

**1983**

Brother Basilio responds, from Rome, on May 26, 1983:

Very dear Brother Henri,

Thank you very much for your letter of May 1. It is with great satisfaction that I received the good news that you communicated, as also the good acceptance that you gave to my circular letter on prayer, exactly in the spirit that I wished that all the Brothers would receive it.

I congratulate you for having found a teaching post for Brother Marcos Ayuso. The idea of following courses of Arabic pleases me very much, to perfect it for you and as initiation for your future companion.

The gesture that you do in asking for the Algerian nationality is particularly beautiful: it is a really evangelical incarnation and I congratulate you wholeheartedly.

Please excuse me if, because of lack of time, this letter is rather short. The long trips and the absence from Rome cause that mail becomes particularly abundant and suffers, and since I have to leave again in approximately two weeks, I am in a hurry trying to get up to date.

Once again thank you for having given me such good news and, during this time of Pentecost, I ask the Lord to send you His Spirit with the super-abundance of his gifts for the good of your mission in the service of your Algerian brothers.

Fraternally united in prayer,

Br. Basilio Rueda fms
Superior General

The letter that follows is dated September 7, 1984, that is one year after having the community of two. Did Henri write other letters which were not kept in the Archives? Perhaps he had the possibility to communicate with Brother Basilio by telephone or in another way.

Brother Basilio,

I benefit that Father Timmermans is leaving to send you this short word. I have just participated in the Inter-Diocesan Session for Priests of Algeria, an intense moment of grace for our Church of Algeria, about which Father Timmermans himself will speak to you.

I am waiting for the return of Brother Jesús Marcos Ayuso. I suppose that you were able to meet him in Spain. I am certain that he will bring me your fraternal encouragement.

Thank you for your circular letter on Fidelity which I received very well at Sour-El-Ghozlane. I bless the Lord with the Virgin Mary for this idea that He inspired you and that you have known patiently how to lead it to the end. More than the theory, that living witness will know how to lead our Brothers in their response to the call received.

Attached is a letter of our Session for our Brothers of Latin America. In spite of my agreement on this move, I thought I should not sign because of the paragraph before the last one. Does the Church contest these theologians? Is this truly done outside a fraternal dialogue?... Is this point of view truly shared by the grass-root communities as the writers of this letter pretend it?... It would be necessary to clarify all these things and I find that such affirmations have to be verified and balanced. What do you think?

When you have the occasion, tell our brothers who are tested and suffering how much myself and several of those who did not sign participate, in Christ and the fidelity to His Church – even if it is necessary to contest, but after a mature information, such and such of its members or even unfaithful organisms – their combat in Latin America. In any case, from now, my prayer is more ardent for them.

Just the same, if you judge it opportune, you can communicate to the concerned Roman Congregation these reflections – my reflections and those of the members of the Session - which are a suffering for us as well as for our concerned Brothers of America.

I do not add anything more so as not to waste your time. Brother Jesús must have informed you on our situation at the beginning of the school year. I continue to recommend to the Lord with the Virgin Mary your efforts and your concerns for our Brothers.

With the expression of my grateful and fraternal friendship,

Brother Henri Vergès

**1984**

Here is the text of the letter that Henri believed he should not sign:

To the Christians of the Grass-root
Communities of Latin America

Brothers and Sisters,

It is the moment when the priests of Algeria are meeting accompanied by the representatives of the communities of religious women and of the Laity, for a Session which has as theme: « Gospel and promotion of Man », when we learn about the Roman Instruction on « some aspects of the Liberation Theology ».

Even before deciding what form our response to this document, could take we can assure you immediately of our fraternal friendship.

The sufferings which you endure, the manner in which, in the light of faith, you seek to liberate yourselves together of the forces of oppression which overwhelm you, are for us, so much a call to solidarity as a reminder of the demands of the Gospel there where we are.

Let us hope that your struggle may continue to serve as example to all those who, around the world seek that the Liberation in Jesus Christ is effectively shared by the poor.

We know that those of your brother theologians who reflect with you are, today, contested in the Church. We do not allow that this contestation be done outside a fraternal dialogue, sign of our fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If not, how can the voice of all those who are oppressed in the world, who claim and demand justice be heard?...

To all of you, brothers and sisters, to those who among you, suffer in their body or in their heart, we address the most cordial greetings.

ALGER, the 05/09/1984

Brother Basilio responds, from Rome, on September 24, 1984:

1984

Dear Brother Henri, my very great Friend,

It is with joy that I have just received your letter of September 7 brought by my good friend R. F. Timmermans.

I am very happy with the news that you give me about your moral situation and about your enthusiasm. You are always very present in our spirit with Brother Marcos whom I met personally in Spain where he followed completely the retreat that I gave to the Province of Levante.

I congratulate you for not having signed the text that you attached to your letter. That text was written, no doubt, with good intention, but it frankly lacks a base of information. There are there some particularities, dramatization and exaggerations. The document of the Holy Seat on this matter is remarkably balanced. There where it hurts, it is because a mixture is made of the noble cause of justice toward the poor, for which evidently we have to commit ourselves with our whole heart, and of Marxist tendencies. On certain occasions Marxism seeks to exploit the situation politically.

Then, it seems that you have done very well in not signing that document, because even if the intentions are good, those priests or religious are either out of this mixture or very particularized.

I am very sensitive to the good sentiments of sharing with the poor and with the struggle of the best priests and religious who, with prudence and a serious commitment, consecrate themselves to the poor in Latin America.

United in prayer, fraternally in J.M.J.

Br. Basilio Rueda fms
Superior General

In his letter of January 25, 1985, Henri gives the history of his relationship with Brother Basilio. Because of this it is precious for us:



1985

Very Dear Brother Basilio,

I do not want to delay any longer in responding to your very cordial letter of December 20th. I would hope that these words find you back from Korea. Thank you for so much fraternal kindness, for that intense friendship, for that gift from God which springs from your heart for such and such of your Brothers. How wonderful is all that and gratuitous!

It is an experience that we will not be able to forget in the future – like you evoke it – and which should not harm in anything, for sure, the mission of the new Superior General. I share with you your hymn of thanksgiving.

In what concerns both of us, what a road travelled since the summer of 1971 at N. D. de Nieges. The solution foreseen for Algeria threw coldness on our relationship, at least on my part, that the summer of 1974 at Quimper had to disperse or make disappear... Then everything became cordial beginning in June 1975 during your brief visit to Alger and was always warmer and warmer throughout the years, reaching its summit at Sour-El-Ghozlanein in the beginning of June 1981. This journey has permitted me to measure your concern of perfect availability to the Spirit of the Lord, thus allowing you to guide your Brothers for a better Marist insertion in the Church of God worthy of Christ among all peoples. Still, once again it is a Magnificat which springs from my heart.

Le 25 janvier 1985

Bien Cher Frère Basilio,

Je ne veux plus tarder à répondre à votre si cordiale lettre du 30 décembre. Je voudrais que ce soit vous trouve à votre retour de Grèce. Merci pour tant de délicatesse fraternelle, pour cette intense amitié, pour ce don de Dieu failli de votre cœur pour tel ou tel de vos frères. Combien tout cela est merveilleux et gratuit ! Expérience que nous ne pourrions pas oublier à l'avenir - comme vous l'évoquez - et qui ne doit nuire en rien, bien sûr, à la mission du nouveau Supérieur Général. Je partage avec vous votre climat d'action de grâce

En ce qui nous concerne tous les deux, quel chemin parcouru depuis l'été 1974 à l'8 des Heiges : la solution envisagée pour l'Algérie était un froid dans nos relations - du moins de ma part - que l'été 1974 à Quimper devait dissiper ... Puis tout devient cordial à partir de juin 75 lors de votre brève visite à Alger, et de plus en plus chaleureux au cours des années, avec ce sommet à Nou-El-Chophane début juin 81. Ce cheminement m'a permis de mesurer votre souci de parfaite disponibilité à l'Esprit du Seigneur, vous permettant ainsi de guider vos frères pour une meilleure insertion humaine sous l'Église de Dieu, Seigneur du Christ



What can I wish you for this last year of your Mandate as General? May the Spirit of Love continue to animate you to prepare that renewal which our next General Chapter has to be. That you may know how to find the words and the attitudes which will know how to mobilize all our Brothers, especially those who dedicate themselves more directly in the preparation of this great event for our religious family. That in the heart of each one develops this immense desire for the coming of the Lord that you evoke in your letter, during this time which is a true Advent for us. It is a "spark" from Troussures, where I had the happiness of making my retreat this summer, it is a sign that our prayer was valuable it is this desire of God that it has to make it be born in the deepest part of our being. May the Virgin Mary arouse in us that desire, that spirit, that Love which the Lord has the right to expect from all of us. My prayer, an intense and fraternal desire, accompanies these wishes.

Attached is a word sent to the friends of René Peuvergne, S.J. whom you met several times and who has just left us. He has been a friend for us since our arrival to Sour, a wise and prudent counselor, a brother who shared with us cordially, efficiently, our joys as well as our sufferings. May the Lord receive him in His peace and His joy!

I transmitted your friendship to Brother Jesús. He has adapted well to the country. Thank God, we form, it seems, a

parmi tous les peuples - Encore une fois, c'est un
 magnifique qui feillât la bon cœur.

Que vous souhaiter pour cette dernière année
 de votre généralat ? Que l'Esprit d'Anou continue
 à vous animer pour préparer ce renouveler qui doit
 être votre prochain Chapitre Général. Que vous sachiez
 trouver les mots et les attitudes qui pourront mobiliser
 l'ensemble de nos frères, surtout ceux qui se consacrent
 plus directement à la préparation de ce grand évé-
 nement pour votre famille religieuse. Qu'en cœur de
 chacun se développe cet immense désir de la venue
 du Seigneur que vous évoquez dans votre lettre, en cette
 période qui est un véritable Avent pour nous. Une
 "étincelle" de Troussures, où j'ai eu le bonheur de faire
 une retraite cet été, c'est qu'un signe que notre pièce
 a été valable est ce désir de Dieu qu'elle doit faire
 naître au plus profond de notre être. Que la braise
 Anou suscite en nous ce désir, cet élan, cet Anou
 que le Seigneur est en droit d'attendre de nous tous.
 Ma prière, un désir intense et fraternel, accompagne
 ces vœux.

Ci-joint, un mot envoyé aux amis de René
 Penvergue, S.V., que nous avons rencontré plusieurs fois,
 et qui vient de nous quitter. Un ami pour nous dès
 votre arrivée à Anou, un conseiller sage et prudent,



good duo, a good pair. Concerning our future here – in fact, in particular, of the next Arabization (2/3 years) of courses given by Jesus – he is in the hands of God. May we know how to be attentive to His signs which he will not fail to place on our way, I only have to tell you now my respectful but very fraternal affection in Jesus and Mary,

Brother Henri Vergès

P.S. Thank you for your response of October regarding the subject of the "Liberation Theology" which comforted me very much. May the Lord accompany the Holy Father on his trip to Latin America!

Bro. Henri together with another Brother is about to complete the laying of the marble tiles and their assistant D. who accompanies the community in their adventure from March 3 1990.



un frère qui a partagé cordialement, efficacement
nos joies comme nos peines. Que le Seigneur l'accueille
sous sa croix et sa joie !

J'ai transmis à J. Jésus vos amitiés. Il
s'est bien adapté au pays. Grâce à Dieu, nous
formons, semble-t-il, un bon tandem. Quant à
notre avenir ici - du fait, en particulier, de
l'arabisation prochaine (2/3 ans) des cours donnés
par Jésus - il est entre les mains de Dieu. Que
nous sachions être attentifs à ses signes qu'Il ne
manquera pas de mettre sur notre route.

Il me reste à vous redire ma respectueuse
mais si fraternelle affection en Jésus avec joie.

J. heminger

PS - merci pour votre réponse d'octobre au sujet
de la "théologie de la libération" qui m'a bien récon-
forté. Que le Seigneur accompagne le St. Père dans
son voyage en Amérique Latine !



Evoking the SOUVENIR OF A FRIEND

The letter here below was sent by Henri and Jesús to the friends of Father René Peuvergne S.J., after his death:

1985

Sour-El-Ghozlane, January 18, 1985

Dear Friends,

We thought that you would be interested to know how we have lived here since the departure of our dear Father Peuvergne.

On January 12, at 19 hours, at the same moment when he was dying in Lyon, we celebrated with Monsignor Teissier who was visiting with us, the Sunday Liturgy at the Spanish camp d'Ain-Bessem, a celebration which René presided over himself a short time ago. His presence accompanied us.

Having arrived late, we did not receive the news after several tried to communicate it to us. When getting up on the 13th, Father Henri Sanson succeeded in contacting us on the telephone. No surprise but pain for such a rapid separation...

According to his program, Monsignor Henri T. set out to Bon-Saada to meet the Sisters of whom Father René was also in charge. On our side, we notified his friends here and in France, but already the news had crossed the Mediterranean several times in both cases. It is just to mention the name and attachment of his friends, without counting the bonds that he knew how to knit among them

In the evening of that Sunday, approximately fifteen of us met around Monsignor Henri T. and Father Jean-Michel Salomon at Sour-El-Ghozlane, in that place which was the heart of his pastoral concern: three French cooperators from Bouira, a Bulgarian, our

Egyptian Copt brothers. A moving sharing where each one simply evoked the attaching personality of our dear deceased. We wrote a word of affection for his family. We concluded by a small "reception", - as he loved them, - with some delicacies of Christmas received from all horizons.

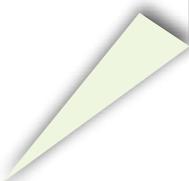
On January 15, the day of his funeral in Lyon, "El Moudjahid", the national newspaper, announced a Mass at the Diocesan House of Alger at 19 hours on January 17th. In spite of the bad weather, 20 to 30 cm. of snow on the countryside of Bouira, we set out on the way towards noon. Numerous assistants filled the chapel around Cardinal Duval. N.S. Henri Teissier and Jean Scotto surrounded by Louis Perret and Henri Sanson, Jesuits, J. Michel Salomon and Jean Courbon, priests from our region and about twenty other priests. In the homily, Louise Perret knew how to evoke the human and spiritual qualities of René. It was a moment of intense prayer. Before the blessing at the end, the Cardinal read one of the letters that he had received, that of a "former" person from Bouira, who expressed wonderfully the impact that he could have had with those whom he accepted with all his heart.

Then we shared the evening meal with the Sisters of Saint Joseph d'Annecy, formerly from Bouira, with whom we evoked many experiences lived together by all of you around René; Who, at present in the peace and the joy, the Lord accepts him He himself at His table.

Before leaving Alger on the morning of the 18th, we wanted to participate in the Eucharist celebrated by Jean C. and J. Michel S. at Ben-Smen where René went frequently to the community of his Jesuit brothers. To the latter we express our gratitude for so much good received through their brother.

Very cordially,

Henri and Jesús




1985

And this is the last letter of Brother Basilio, as Superior General, to our Brother Henri. It is dated March 13, 1985:

Dear Brother Henri,

I received your warm and friendly letter of January 25. I thank you for the sentiments that you have expressed on the occasion of this last year of my mandate as General and of the preparation of the General Chapter. We have just finished the plenary Sessions of the General Council. The different groups working at present in the house ask me for conferences and interviews. This leaves me very little time to catch up on my correspondence, before taking the pilgrim's stick.

Your letter came opportunely to remind me of the long journey traveled since 1971 and how throughout the years a sincere and profound friendship has knitted between us with the shared concern of our perfect availability to the Spirit of the Lord.

Recommending myself to your prayers, I give you the assurance of mine and I renew the expression of my fraternal affection in J.M.J.,

Br. Basilio Rueda fms
Superior General

How did Brother Basilio receive the news of the brutal death of Henri, on May 8, 1994, in his office of the Street Ben Cheneb?

Did he communicate his sentiments on this event? We do not know.

What is sure is that he did not hesitate to give the authorization to publish the autobiography of Henri which is in the book "Du Capcir à la Casbah, Vie donnée, sang versé" – from Capcir to the Casbah, Life given, blood shed" - (pp.17 to 27). This moving text which traces the spiritual path of our Brother is dated First Sunday of Advent 1978. Henri finished it by the words: « FIAT. MAGNIFICAT ».

A Don Jesús Justo y Ruiz
 con profunda estima y moral solidari-
 dad. Sabiendo por su hijo, el Sr. Juan
 María, la enfermedad que le aqueja y
 también su estima por la literatura, me
 ha venido la idea de enviarle esta obra

POKITAKOSA

esbozo un *Homero* *Traneta* que quedó ciega-
 do en la cuna de la enfermedad por 30
 años. La vivió de un modo admirable
 y dejó plasmado algo de esa admirable
 existencia en las páginas escritas por
 él a lo largo de su itinerario espiritual.

Con todo afecto como mi oración a las de
 los suyos para obtener su curación o los
 gracias para sanar su enfermedad

Afirmo en Cristo

B. Basilio



Bro. Basilio
 with a group
 of Former Pupils
 in Brazil.

Library of the street in Ben-Cheneb.

At the
OF





Library

RUE BEN-CHENEH





For the readers who know less about the activities of Henri as director of the Library of the rue Ben Cheneb, here is the letter that he wrote to Brother Yves Thénnoz, Secretary General, in Rome his former Provincial, at the time when he begins his new function.

1988

October 21, 1988
Brothers Jesús MARCOS AYUSO
and Henri VERGÈS
46, rue Ben Cheneb
16017 – HAUTE-CASBAH
ALGÉRIE, Tél 262 70 75

Dear Yves,

For several days now... I have been thinking of writing to you: to communicate our new address, to return a letter of Br. Charles H. which was probably not for me – I hope there is nothing urgent for that Dear Brother Henri! – to communicate for Brother Charles and his Councilors some quick news. But we do not finish installing ourselves in a house which for many years had been very neglected...

For the address it is the one in the heading.

In what concerns us, we are responsible for the house Ben Cheneb which includes: social service which occurs in the morning, which helps the "paumés" or drop-outs of society, in their correspondence and steps to be taken, from the neighborhood and they are not lacking!, and a Library open to the pupils of the Lyceum of the surrounding places: Bab-El-Oued and the Casbah. We have stopped the inscriptions at a bit over 900. Besides borrowing books these young people, the majority are girls, find approximately 150 places to remain here between the courses. I assume the responsibility of the whole full time and Jesús participates part time. In addition, he continues with his studies of Arabic and animates on the Christian plan, together with a Spanish Sister, the hundreds of African Christian students on stage in the Institutes and Universities of Algiers. The

Library is opened in the afternoon. Two Sisters, One a Little Sister of Jesus and the other an Indian Salesian, also participate part time.

With the recent violence in the capital, we were in one of the hottest points but we were not in any sense the target aimed at, we were obliged to delay the opening until October 15th. This has allowed us to advance in our preparation by the adjustment and fixing the place of the Library close to the entrance door of the pupils which was on the opposite side. Brothers Damien Quercy and Jean Blanc came from France during one month and were a precious help for the transfer. In addition, our residence or dwelling place is a jewel of Turk style, but how broken and ruined, dilapidated ... We restore it with means that cost a fortune. The funds are limited, furnished by the Diocese and by Dutch Caritas. We never hire a worker unless in a case of absolute need. On the other hand, the Library had no card file. Jesus has found the decimal classification of Dewey and every time we have a minute, we are on the typewriter writing cards. He writes in French and I do it in Arabic. At present we must already have almost one thousand books registered. There is work to keep us busy all the rest of the year!

Thank God, the morals and health remain good. We try not to lose patience in the length of time that it takes for the different administrative affairs which are not yet finished, particularly in my case.

We follow the Marist activities, particularly through the documents that we receive from Rome or from Luis Vives. I hope that everything is going well in the Institute and that Brother Charles and his Associates are able to carry out all their plans. We should accompany you more with our prayer. We will think of you right away in our Mass at Our Lady of Africa.

I have the impression that I have been able to catch up somewhat. Offer our excuses to everyone for the delay,

Very cordially yours and all in Jesus and our Good Mother,

Henri



Announcement to the Province OF THE DEATH OF HENRI

To conclude these pages, it seems to me it would be well to include the circular letter that Brother André Thizy, at that time Provincial of Henri, addressed to the Province a few days after his death, on May 17, 1994. Its reading is always very touching:

1994

AMONG BROTHERS FOR THE MISSION

Never before today, has this title seemed to me to correspond so well to what I would like to live with you. We are all still under the shock of the brutal death of our Brother Henri VERGÈS. "Why, Lord, do you allow all that?" (Jn. 11, 32)

The two days that I have just lived in Alger for the funeral of Henri, as well as the numerous witnesses of sympathy which continue to arrive, are almost an evident response to this question. The discretion of the daily witness of Henri suddenly becomes a public and universal dimension. The Lord himself has given us, in the readings of the week which followed the event, luminous responses. Who was not seized by the Gospel of May 9, "those who will kill you..." (Jn. 16, 2) or of May 14, "there is no greater love..." (Jn. 15, 11-17)? The twinkling or wink of the eye of the Lord!

Henri was at the end ready to go to encounter his Lord. The Sunday be-

fore his death, he went, with Brother Michel, to the Trappist Monastery of Tibbirine, for a last "washing" (witness of Brother Christian, abbot of the Trappist Monastery). His last testament is dated April 22, 1994! He died exactly on the day of the closing of the African Synod in which he had put such great hope

Let us not stop and dwell on the exact circumstances of his killing. Let us rather try to listen to what Brother Henri tells us by his death and above all by his life. (Gospel of May 11: Jn. 16, 12), Many of the witnesses received expressed the desire, the hope that the "sacrifice" of Henri will be a seed of Peace and a source of Reconciliation. We can do no more than to share these wishes. But I invite you, in what concerns us Brothers, to impregnate ourselves of the witness of our Brother Henri so that his death will be for each one of us a call to imitate the radical nature of what he has lived.

“Religious life is a call to live radically and in community of disciples, from that love which comes from God, to the point that Heaven, in a certain way becomes visible on earth”. (Homily of Monsignor Teissier at the funeral Mass).

Being alone in Algeria during several years, Henri was, in spite of all, in a profound communion with all his Brothers and more attached perhaps than others to the bond to his Province. Those who lived with him these last years could say how much he had the concern for the community, always ready to render service to each one. “Not to place any obstacle to the invading love of God: all acceptance, all a gift to God and to my Brothers. Love lived, manifested concretely in daily life, in the life of each day, more than a proven sentiment” (from his retreat resolutions)

Who, among those who met him was not struck by the extreme simplicity of life of Brother Henri! A true ascetic, he knew how to be satisfied with the minimum as well as at the table (Cf. his “barboton”) as in his personal affairs. Entering into his room, Thursday evening, we were seized by the bareness that reigned there; only the presence of a transistor and of the Coran distinguished it from that of Father Champagnat! “Lighten, diminish each day somewhat our equipment” (from his retreat resolutions).

Many among you, no doubt, have believed that Henri was in Algeria because he wanted it very much. The Superiors who knew him before I did know well that it was not so; Henri was totally available. During my last visit there in March, even in spite of the events there, he thought that his presence was more important than ever and he placed himself entirely at my disposal, totally available “to do God’s will”. “This was the order of my new spiritual accompanier: ask for nothing, refuse nothing, accept everything” (from his retreat resolutions).

How can we express in a few lines what his life was as educator? Perhaps, by simply saying that he was totally at the service of the young. On Friday, May 6 when he called me on the telephone, his great concern was that the Library could rapidly have a new photocopying machine so that the pupils could have their exams in the best possible conditions. “This year make a particular effort to give special attention to the more disadvantaged among the pupils. From the beginning know each one by name... Adapt better my teaching especially for those who are more destitute” (from his retreat resolutions 87).

You have all understood, Brothers, that all these profoundly evangelical attitudes, typical of our Marist religious life, were only possible for Henri thanks to the grace of an intense



strength and renewal that he found in prayer and the Eucharist. How many hours he spent in the magnificent Chapel of Ben Cheneb? How many barriers of the police he had to go across to participate in the Eucharist in the different communities of Alger? (Allow me to express here my sadness before the little effort of certain Brothers to live the Eucharist). "Like Mary, with Mary, receive Jesus in me and give Him to men" (from his retreat resolutions),

In a preparatory text for an Islam-Christian meeting, Henri wrote on last February 4th, like his spiritual testament:

- In our daily relationships, let us openly take the part of love, of pardon, of communion against hatred, vengeance, violence.
- In the spirit of Ribbat, let us take care to promote groups, no matter how modest they are, of prayer and of sharing among men of good will.
- Let us feel close to those who coming from Islam, want to share our baptismal commitment; that their move and ours mutually question us.

Our Brother Henri was buried in Algerian land, that land that had become his. Did the Lord want to give him a last sign? At the moment when the casket was going to enter the ceme-

tery of El Harrach, a crowd of young people was going out from the close-by Lyceum! A priest who had met him recently witnesses: "I had perceived in the account that he gave me of his work in the Library a true passion; passion for the encounter; passion for the service of those young people, a passion which bound him strongly to these people. Up to the end he had this Passion". May this seed which was sown in this land bear much fruit!

At the moment when our General Chapter invited us to get close to the poorest, why does the Lord come to weaken this Marist implantation in Algeria which corresponded so well to this wish? How are we going to be able to continue this presence? There are so many questions which we need prayer for.

Here we have very rapidly evoked some characteristics of the personality of our Brother Henri. It is necessary to think to do something more exhaustive, perhaps a small biography. While waiting, I hope that we will be very numerous at Saint Paul on Sunday May 28th at 15 hours around the family of Brother Henri in order to thank the Lord for this magnificent life offered up until the end.

Let us not forget the family and the Sisters of Paul-Hélène who are living the same pain and suffering and the same thanksgiving. Let us not forget Brother Michel who had to face these tragic moments.

This painful event has made us touch clearly that the Marist family lived well. The numerous witnesses of sympathy from Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and Marist Laity have been a great comfort in these difficult moments.

Let us keep the memory of our Brother Henri, so as to become, in turn, like him, apostles of Peace, of Union and of Understanding beyond the barriers of race, language or religion.



Bro. Henri working in the library of the street in Ben-Cheneb.



Father Christian EVOKES HENRI and PAUL-HÉLÈNE

The following pages transcribe a homily of Brother Christian de Chergé, friend of Henri who also had to give the witness of blood, together with six of his Brothers of the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of l'Atlas, on May 21 1996. **This text, pronounced two months after the martyrdom of our Brother, comes back on the circumstances of his death and reveals the profound friendship and admiration full of emotion that Brother Christian had for him.**

1994

HIDDEN WITNESSES OF A HOPE

July 17, 1994

...All those who participated in the funeral of Sister Paul-Hélène and of Brother Henri at Our Lady of Africa would have been profoundly marked by the extraordinary sentiment of peace and of communion which emerged. The solemnity of the Ascension, celebrated on that day, leads all as far as Jesus through the open breach on the invisible and all at once sending us back to the daily life of those people and of the country, where we knew we should find, day after day, the witness of that Sister and of that Brother. At no moment was the word "martyr" pronounced. It would have seemed misplaced. They did not need it, neither one or the other to make themselves known to all, unquestionable, undeniable, even in their joint message of modesty, of smallness: Little Sister of the Assumption, Little Brother of Mary... What happened to

them that brutal death was inscribed in continuity where the steps become luminous. Those who have claimed the responsibility for the murder could not appropriate their death. It belonged to Another One, like everything else and for a long time. "That forms part of the contract, Henri would say smiling, and that will be when he wants. It is not that which is going to hinder us to live, just the same!" Perhaps, is that what they call "Christians on deferred sentence»?

Henri like Paul-Hélène, was a constant exigency of spiritual regularity, taking the daily means for prayer which makes the last day hardly different from the previous ones. Simply, one is ready to receive the pupils (it's time), as well as to leave (it's time).

Henri also a looked toward Islam which did not cease to allow itself to

be placed in cause, from the interior of a search for God always awake. "I allow myself to be questioned, and I question, I unsettle the other somewhat, and the other unsettles me... It is like Mary, I do not understand, but I keep. What the little ones have seized is wonderful. The wise (understood of Islam) block me in my affairs".

A Brother, a Sister were then killed in their place of work, in the heart of their daily existence. in the «working dress of the servants», among those young people of the neighborhood who seek the same opportunities as others who are more fortunate, to have access to culture and blooming or opening up of their intellectual and human capacities. Henri was totally in his work. In fact, he was always known at his work, even in the most opposed situations. Director of the school, he became a simple teacher in an Algerian Lyceum, he constantly had known how to invent the good way of adjusting himself there to the charisma of his teaching Congregation, in the school of Mary. In the Library he insisted very much in an interior environment; that it be one of silence, of work of mutual respect, of trust; the beauty of the framed picture, which had been so carefully restored, helped to do this. "These young people, he would say, live violence all around, on the street as well as at home. It is necessary that

here they have the experience of the peace they bear within them".

Paul-Hélène and Henri were then at their place. They were offered without any defense. They knew they were vulnerable. They were not ignorant of fear. They simply experienced that it can go across from one part to the other, and therefore, overcome by a greater urgency of availability to the other. Everything was very quick. One shot alone for each one. Right in the face for the Brother. He collapsed in taking back to his chest the hand which he had extended to his murderer. In this way he ended the gesture of acceptance such as is practiced here, to say better that it comes from the heart. The Sister was struck on the head, on the back of the neck. She had seen the Brother fall down. She raised her arms in a gesture of surprise which was familiar to her. She died amazed, like the children. A violent death, certainly and just the same, apparently a natural death. "They looked as if they were sleeping", said a witness. There was no trace of suffering or of fear. "Each encounter is that of God" Henri would say and he added: "I ask Him, as far as possible, to miss the less!" He would not have "missed" this last encounter, leaving us to prolong it indefinitely by applying the order which he gave himself to face the ambient confusion: "In our daily relationships, openly take the

part of love, of pardon, of communion against hatred, vengeance, violence". (Letter of February 4).

Thus, with all those who know they are threatened, with the personnel directly exposed, especially the women and the young of the contingent, and all those of whom one never speaks about. Paul-Hélène and Henri had it "until the extreme", the humble courage of small gestures of today which assure the victory of life on all the forces of destruction. They are very much those "hidden witnesses of a hope" which sing a ferial hymn. It is on them that all the future of the world rests. Who would dare to believe in this future if it was not there at our side, step by step, elbow to elbow, instant after instant, patient and obstinate, lucid and optimistic, realistic and free infinitely? According to the

Soufi adage or proverb, "they did not wait to die in order to die"; they did not wait for the persecutors, to commit themselves in martyrdom, in this way reinventing, in the hollow of the masses, what the monks went to look for in the deserts after the time of persecutions; the "martyr" of hope". Such is the "risk" that we "daily live" here. After a long time, it has been imposed on us. It is a choice that it is necessary to hold, even at present. It can strongly be bet that many also do it "at one hour's flight from Alger!" At the margin of this risk, do we still have something to say of the Gospel in the world of today?

Brother Christian-Marie,
En mémoire des premiers
martyrs d'Afrique
(Carthage, en 180),
17 juillet 1994

Paule-Hélène,
member
of the Assumption
Sisters.





The internment
of Bro. Henri
and Sister
Paule-Hélène.
El Harrach
12.05.1994.

Prayer of Henri to Mary



Space in the library of the street in Ben-Cheneb converted into an oratory.

Let us allow Henri to finish these pages by his prayer to Mary, a prayer composed on the occasion when he arrived to the Street Ben Chebch (September 1988), in preparation for the celebration of the centenary of the arrival of the Marist Brothers to Algeria.

Virgin Mary, we come to pass the beads and say our decade of Algeria, of that which has marked our year, knitted by thanksgiving and supplications, open on Africa and the world.

You Our Lady of Africa, star of hope on the horizon of our new insertion: a new departure in the Marist spirit, joined together with the Champagnat Year (1989-1990),

Accompany us in the expression of our filial spirit in the heart of a people who venerates you, but who have not discovered as yet the measure of the mystery of your Son.

Our Father...

1. Very soon 100 years (1891) that the Little Brothers walk on this land of Algeria. Thank you for all they have sown. Brothers who have already arrived... Brothers still on the way... we entrust them to you, as well as the fruit of their effort, all those who have been marked by our presence, with you, in the name of your Son.
2. This year, a new stage: Bab-el-Oued, la Csbah... discretely lost in the heart of the multitude, behold us with you, Mary, with the poor, with the young, a humble presence wanting always to be available, radiance of your Son... And already of encounters of VISITATION; Magnificat
3. Our installation was painfully marked by the « upheaval of October »... Led by whom?... Hundreds of young lives sacrificed... a profound aspiration for more liberty, for dignity, for responsibility. Virgin Mary, you allow us to be witnesses in this time of the breath of the Spirit which arouses the world... in Russia, the Countries of the East, China; barriers which are jumped over, men who fraternize. Queen of Peace, in spite of all the blood that has been shed, accompany this irreversible vigor or spirit of hope!
4. The poor... They have been more than 1000 this year who have come to share with us their distress. Jean-Benoît sometimes bends under the burden. So much misery, so much injustice, and is this still possible in our time? And this is only a reflection of the miseries of our earth... Through our powerlessness, compassionate Mother, be the comfort of all!



5. The Library, those thousand and more young people whom we accept..., those of thousands who surround us...
A multitude still impregnated of faith, but which doubts about its future...
Young people of the Third World, who are frequently abandoned...
May we be able, our Mother, to light hope in those young hearts.
6. You know, oh Mother, those who help us in so many ways and wholeheartedly: the two Sisters and Baya who share our daily life, Brothers Damien and Jean who have come to help us get the year to start moving, and so many others who have lent us their hands, have given their money (Dutch Caritas, the Province).
You know... Bless them all.
7. You also know those, men and women, who simply come from day to day, drawn by the Spirit. There are encounters where we share, in the acceptance of differences, the gift of God, a same ideal of life; Humble realities, a mysterious road of the Kingdom of God among men. You are also there, Mary!
8. The RIBAT, link of Peace, this group which receives us, desirous of a more spiritual approach of Islam and of the Muslims, in daily life. You walk with us Mary, sometimes in the exaltation of those wonders which take place at the base, a prophetic sign, in the spirit of the fraternity of Assisi to which the Church of your Son opens itself.
9. We entrust to you the « friends of saint Augustine », Christian Algerians or catechumens...
The one who has just manifested himself to us, still a Muslim, whom we will accompany; and the mixed Homes...
What will that seed of the Church in the House of Islam become?
It suffices for us to watch and give witness of the Love that dwells within us.
10. You also know, Our Lady of Africa, those hundreds of young French-speaking African Christians in a stage in the Algerian faculties. Jesus dedicates to them the best of himself; this is a vital experience for these young people in a climate which sometimes is hostile.
The future of Africa... may the spirit of the Gospel animate them!

Glory to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit

Blessed are you, Lord!



Detail of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Africa. (Algeria).



Pages de travail de frère Basilio

Introducción

Tendencias

a) en sentido positivo

- caso no fundamental
- con ambigüedad según tiempo
- en materia de movimiento para dila
- haber algunas cosas (Basilio)
- consideración (a) + (b) (Br. Basilio)

b) en sentido lato

- puntos fuertes } disminuidos y no necesariamente
- equívocos } original
- desigualdad } constitucionales / "no está mal"
- } heterogénea } para granit
- } } -seguridad
- desafíos y atracción (cada región no
- uniforme para muchos)
- "mundo real" "casi" = Kelly

c) Fuentes

- no he usado los Cap. Piv. } hay un orden
- } de hoy a posterior
- las fuentes canónicas (como ordenadas
- a) como estudio autónomo en
- el C. Code - (Basilio)
- la experiencia y contacto directo
- muchos

d) lo que doy es una primera entrega

para diálogo y reacción

y si es el caso reemplazar

y de valor variable según regiones y según

e) su utilidad

"Para un Tribunal provincial"

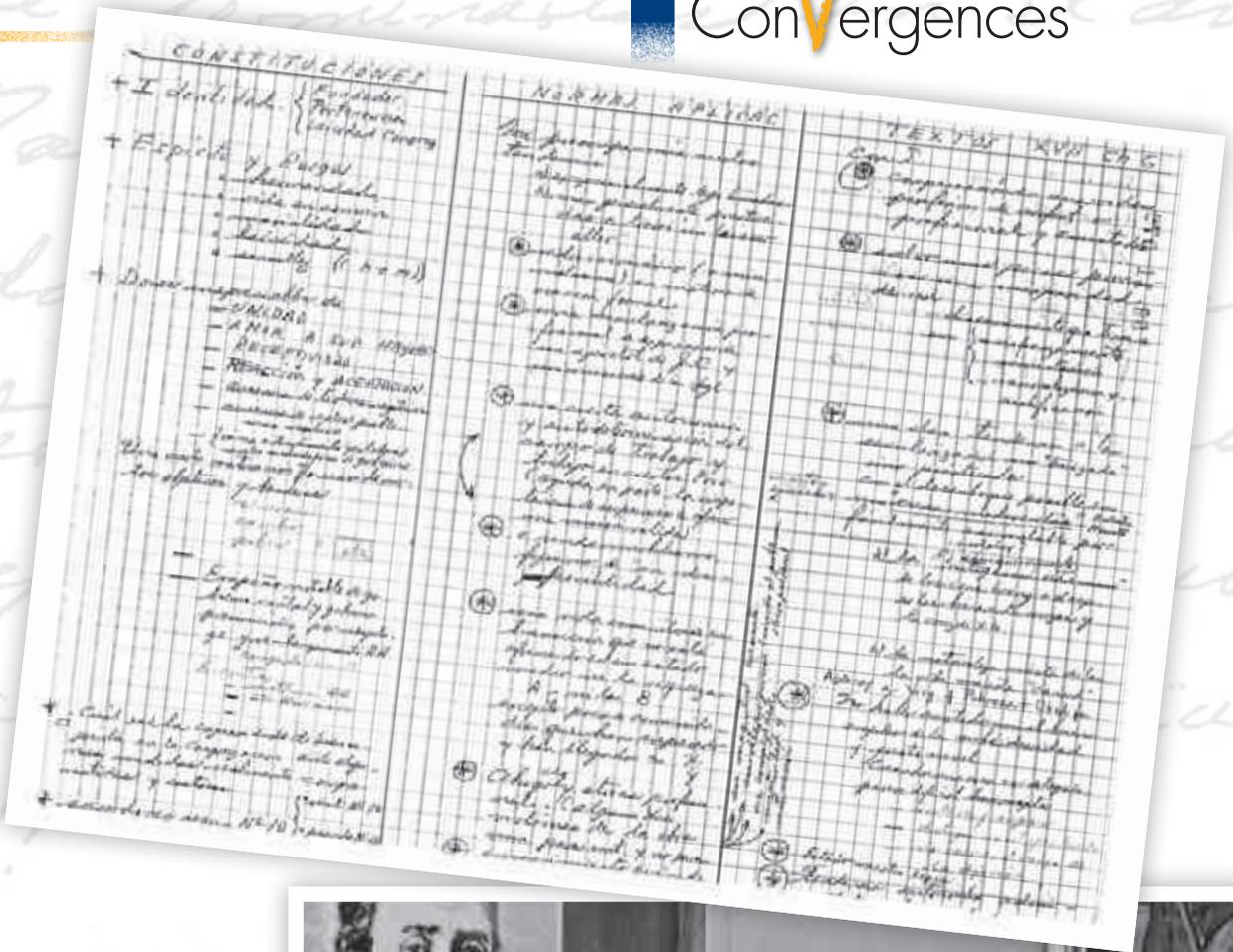
"para una reforma con post cap especial

legislación

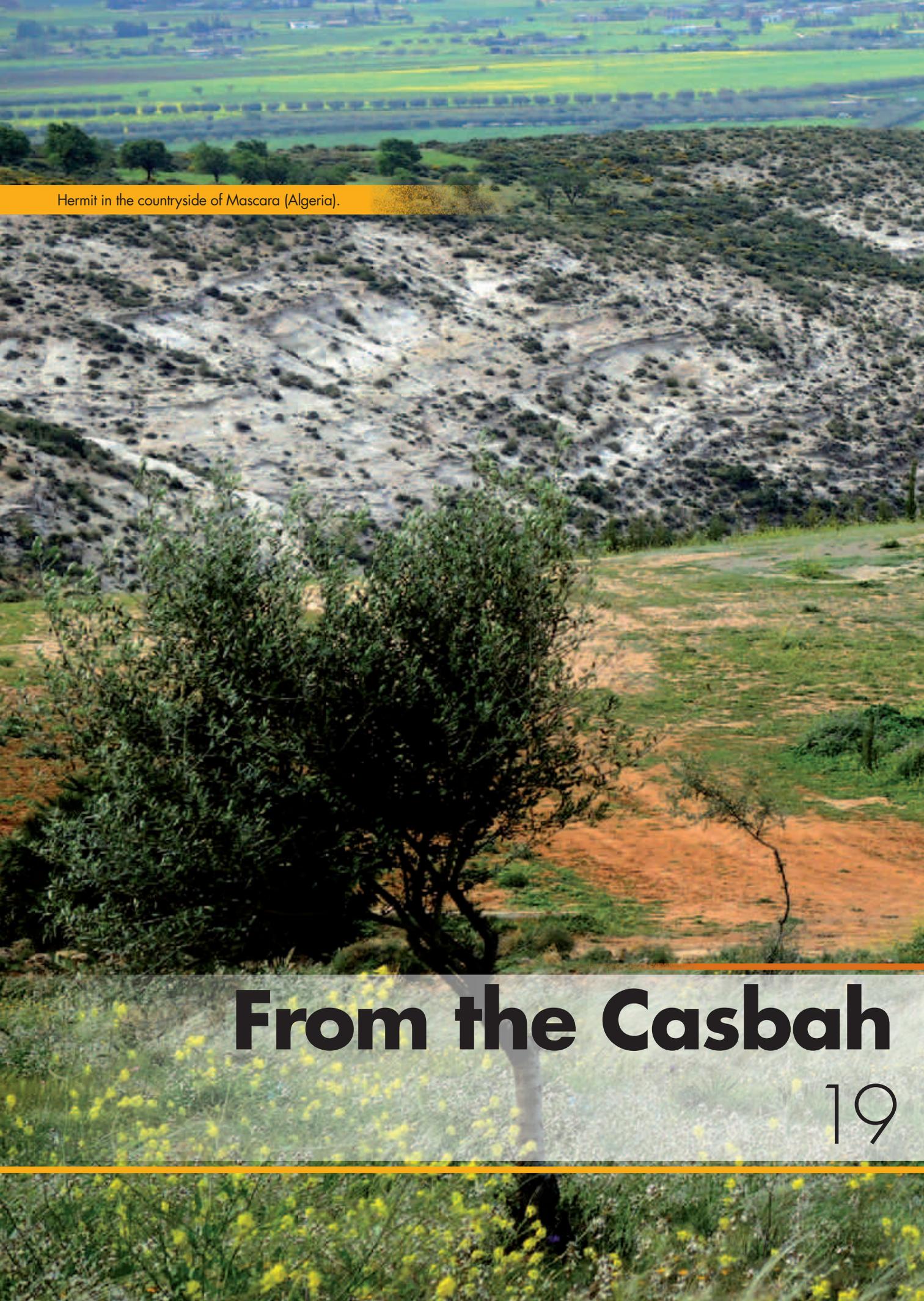
y

pública

lo que se es y se quiere ser
 los tendencias p.e.e.g. para polit
 & demandas
 las disposiciones de...



Bro. Basilio addressing a group of Brothers.



Hermit in the countryside of Mascara (Algeria).

From the Casbah

19



to the Coliseum

MÁRTYRS of ALGERIA



His Holiness
Pope John Paul II
in audience.



For the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, Pope Jean-Paul II had organized, on May 7, in the Coliseum, an ecumenical commemoration of the « New Martyrs » of the XX century, in order not to lose their memory..

« In the great Algerian storm or turmoil which took lives by dozens of thousands stands the Church of Algeria which has neither appearance nor power. She is a presence which has cost her the price of nineteen martyrs in a few years: a Marist Brother, six Religious Sisters in Alger, four White priests at Tizi-Ouzon, the seven monks of l'Atlas and Pierre Claverie, the Bishop of Oran. Certain of them did not leave any writings but all have given their life, which wanted to be their love for God and for the Algerian people their next choice. The ones and the others, all are icons of a Christian presence for the Muslim people, as Monsignor Henri Teissier, the Archbishop of Alger said, of the brothers of Tibhirine, "Until the end of the night" they were bearers of hope toward and against all. Their death cannot be separated from that of dozen millions of others for whom Algeria does not end weeping. They figure a small number in the immensity of the Algerian misfortune. But their word and their lives are a powerful message, stronger than death ».

Text of presentation of the book of Robert MASSON, entitled:
« Until the end of the night, the Church of Algeria ».
This book published in 1998 by the editions Cerf/Saint Augustine,
evokes with fervor the journey of the nineteen martyrs.

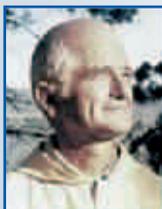
At the end of the Eucharist celebrated in the Apse of Saint Peter of Rome on May 8, 2000, sixth anniversary of the death of Henri and of Paul-Hélène. Monsignor communicated to the assembly his intention to open a common process for the martyrs of the Church of Algeria in view of an official recognition of their witness. The following are the names, with the date of their death:



Darkness falling
in Orán.



May 8, 1994	in Alger (Casbah) Henri Vergès, Little Brother of Mary Paul-Hélène, hermanita de la Asunción
October 23, 1994	in Alger (Bab-el-Oued) Caridad Álvarez Marín, Augustinian Missionary Sister Esther Paniagua Alonso, Augustinian Missionary Sister
December 27, 1994	at Tizi-Ouzou Alain Dieulangar, White Father , Christian Chessel, White Father Charles Deckers, White Father , Jean Chevillard, White Father
September 3, 1995	in Alger (Belcourt) Bibiana, Sister of Our Lady of the Apostles Angèle-Mary, Sister of Our Lady of the Apostles
November 10, 1995	in Alger Odette Prévost, Little Sister of the Sacred Heart (Charles de Foucauld)
May 21, 1996	The 7 Trappist Brothers of Our Lady of l'Atlas, in Tibhirine (Médéa) (Kidnapped the night of the 26 to 27 March, murdered on Tuesday; May 21) Christian de Chergé (Prior), Luc, Christophe, Michel, Bruno, Célestin, Paul
August 1, 1996	in Orán Pierre Claverie, Dominican, Bishop of Oran





It is in thinking of those lives offered, and of many others, that the Pope wrote in presenting the Jubilee in his Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente:

« At the end of the second millennium, the Church has again become a Church of martyrs. The persecutions against convents have caused the abundance of seeds of martyrs in different parts of the world... It is necessary that the Local Churches do everything possible not to lose the memory of those who suffered martyrdom. The greatest homage that all the Churches will render to Christ on the threshold of the third millennium will be to show the All Mighty presence of the Redeemer by the fruits of faith, of hope and of charity to men and women of such numerous languages and races who have followed Christ », (37).

No doubt Monsignor Teissier, wanted to respond to the petition of John Paul II in revealing his initiative to the relatives of the martyrs of Algeria whom he had convoked to Rome for a triduum (6, 7, 8 May 2000)

Didier Rance, Director of AED (Aide à l'Église en Détresse) in France, wrote in his book: "Un siècle de témoins. Les martyrs du XX^e siècle". (« A century of witnesses. The martyrs of the XX century) »:

« Do not lose the memory of the martyrs; it is also to expose oneself to run a risk. For we do not need so much to serve ourselves of those witnesses of faith, let it be to strengthen ours, to allow ourselves to be shaken by their witness. As Henri Vergès, the Marist Brother murdered in Alger in May 1964, wrote "the fifth Gospel that the whole world can read, is our life"». (p. 9)

Varenes-sur-Allier,
Wednesday, May 8, 2002,
eve of Ascension,
eighth anniversary of "Easter"
Brother Henri VERGÈS.

Brother Alain Delorme



Detail of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Africa, (Algeria).



Matemale, native village of Bro. Henri Vergès.



AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Henri wrote the following text in 1978 at the request of Brother Basilio Rueda, superior general, who gave permission for us to publish it after our brother's death.

Brother Superior,

Thank you for this invitation, which will give me an opportunity to sing the glory of God and Mary. I am answering you all the more willingly since this task will be for me a way to integrate myself more deeply in the flow of the Marist community, from which I find myself physically isolated at present....

I will let myself be freely guided by your outline, whose points I will develop to the extent they seem useful. This method will also facilitate your own work. Obviously, I am available for any needed explanation of these lines.

THE SOURCES

Fidelity, a double movement: that of God who calls by means of a gift which is never taken back and always guaranteed in time and that of man who responds to this call through the mysterious journeyings of his liberty.... For me, the journey has been very simple, developing "naturally" as it should for most Christians; the highs and lows of life, nothing more, through a slow and progressive discovery of God's gift.

The source of all this, at least as far as I can make out, is my parents. At the age of 27-28, while on pilgrimage to Font-Romeu on 8th September 1929, they "met" and on 29th September of



Brother Henri Vergès on the day of his first religious profession.



General view of Matemale, native village of Bro. Henri Vergès, located in the Pyrénées Orientales, in the plain of Capcir.

that same year, they married.... The Nativity of Mary, the dawn of salvation, that date will often figure in the major stages of my life. All of that, I think, was prepared for by the profound fidelity of my grandparents. Just one example. My maternal grandmother, who was the last to leave us, at 80 was immobilized for several months during the summer of 1958 by a broken hip. The parish priest came one day to visit her. For an hour, they chatted about the things which made up the foundations of her very simple life, of her journey with God.... As he was leaving, she said, "Father, I'd like to give you a hug!...." And with that gesture of fidelity to Christ and to his Church, she died, even though nothing had given us reason to think she might do so any time soon.

So, I led the very simple life of country folk, poor and hard-working, as the oldest of the six children my parents would welcome into the world. Little by little, my daily experience awoke

me to the Christian life: Sunday Mass and Vespers, my father's catechism lessons – I was still very small when the last resident priest left our mountain parish – family night prayers, etc. But it was most of all the ambiance of my family completely impregnated with a faith lived without ostentation or affectation. One or two examples. One day, when I was 10, my father and I were tending the communal herd of cows. Seated on the riverbank amid the cool splendors of the mountains where I was born, he suddenly asked me, "What do you think about all day long?" And he introduced me to what Father Champagnat called "the exercise of the presence of God", beginning with the marvels of nature.

When I was 11, I made my solemn First Communion (Pius X hadn't yet reached us...). I may not have been very enlightened about the mystery of the Eucharist but I was full of good will. I followed in my book and with such fervor!... Each one approached the holy table with a

Family picture before his parents' house. Henri beside his mother who has Monique in her arms, his father and his paternal grandmother. In first left line to right: Pierre, Marie with her doll, Jean and Marthe.



companion chosen by his or her family. Mine was George, the poorest man in the village. And I was very happy that it was he and that afterwards, according to the custom, I went to eat at his home and then invited him to ours.... A mysterious encounter with the whole Christ....

FORMATION

All of this was in preparation for my religious vocation, but at the time, I was unaware of that. It was enough that I respond, day after day, some days better than others, to whatever God revealed to me. But until I was twelve, I had given no thought whatever to my future; neither the religious life, which was totally unknown to me, nor the priesthood attracted me. Then, one day in July 1942, the brother recruiter, Henri-Edilbert, happened

to pass through. He decided that I was, as he said with his Spanish accent, "a good little boy"...and he took me to the juniorate of Espira-de-l'Agly without my knowing exactly why. The first thing I did there was cry for 15 whole days.... Fortunately, the brother director held out. There are moments when others, in their own way, have to be faithful for us.

My first year there passed without any well-defined inner experience, apart from the experience of bodily hunger (I never told my parents – I don't know why not) and of the German occupation. Our living conditions were so miserable that the superiors decided to close the juniorate at Espira and send everyone there to the one in Saint Paul Trois Châteaux in September 1943. I had heard many stories about the severity of Brother Anatole, the director of this latter juniorate. When the time came, I refused to go to Saint Paul.

That was when my father spoke to me about responsibility: "To know what this brother is really like, you have to go and see.... Only experience will allow you to make a free decision about what you should do.... Otherwise, you may later regret before God that you followed your own whim...." I could not resist those reasonable words. My only major crisis which would be dealt with later on. The response of a young freedom guided and sustained by family fidelity. For me, that family presence, especially that of my father, was the deciding factor.

Another year at the juniorate – where I really appreciated Brother Anatole – and then at 14, as was the custom, I entered postulancy. The master, Brother Gervais, was unwell but tremendously dynamic and understanding. As before, I followed the flow, living from day to day without asking myself too many questions. I think Brother Gervais had the intelligence and goodness to take us as we were just kids. On 8th September 1946, anniversary of the founding of my family, I made my first profession.

One minor incident on the evening of that day suddenly made me realize that I had not understood anything during the novitiate. I wanted to exchange my profession cord for that of another brother. He asked me, "Do you have permission?"

"That's true," I thought, "and it's as if you didn't even know! And it's the

same for everything else!" I immediately went to see Brother Gervais and asked him to start my novitiate all over again because it seemed to me I hadn't understood anything about my commitment. He made me understand that life would take care of completing my novitiate. And that persuaded me, in particular, to make the most of the time set aside for spiritual reflection.

FIRST STEPS

Our cultural formation had been very sketchy during the turbulent years of World War II. After the novitiate, I still don't quite know why I asked brother provincial to assign me to manual work at Saint Paul. But little by little, the idea came to me that I hadn't been called to be a Marist Brother to work in the garden. Brother provincial once again agreed with me and brought me at Christmas time to the scholasticate at Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage. After two trimesters of hard work, I landed my B.E. (brevet élémentaire), which earned me an assignment the following October (1947) to teach the lowest class in the town of Saint Geniez d'Olt, Aveyron. I would have preferred to continue my studies but I told myself that God's will was pointing me toward something else which must be better....

Our religious life blended with that of the parish, with its traditional fervor –

the year-long liturgical life with all its devotions the months of the rosary, of St. Joseph, and of the Blessed Virgin, in which the community and the school participated with equal enthusiasm. My very simple piety was satisfied with that. I was not perceptive enough to ask myself if my brothers and the students felt the same way....

Hard work (three sections in my lowest class) and a frugal diet brought me to the sanatorium at the end of my second school year. It was a providential step which opened me up to a much vaster human and Christian reality. The director of the sanatorium had demanded that I arrive in secular clothing, but everywhere in the institution I was known as "the little brother". The team of Young Christian Workers invited

me to join their group, which enabled me to break into the method of "see, judge, act". In addition, I profited by the opportunity to prepare as well as I could for my baccalaureate I failed the exam the first time I took it.

One important fact is that I was experiencing difficulties with chastity, augmented by the very fact of my tuberculosis and life in the sanatorium. In this area, my lack of openness with the priest was not the best solution, far from it. Something lacking in my formation?...personal infidelity (=pride)?...a bit of all of that. To bring closure to this topic, the reappearance of tuberculosis centered in one testicle fifteen years later, freed me to be much more open with the priests with whom I dealt and with my superiors,



In Our Lady of l'Hermitage, in 1946-1947, during the preparation year to obtain the Brevet Élémentaire.

even if their advice was sometimes upsetting and occasionally contradictory. The Lord seemed to be backing me into my last lines of defense in order to force me to be more transparent. Fidelity, not just in words, but in my whole being. But I still have plenty to do!

ACTIVE LIFE

A supplementary clarification for the preceding paragraph concerning my attraction for a woman; that was, especially at the age of 20, a meeting which I did not follow up. Besides, the lady who "attracted me" did not know how I felt about her. But I had made another choice.

After the complementary formation which the two years in sanatorium represented, my life again entered a more active phase. Brother provincial suggested I make my perpetual vows immediately. He didn't appear satisfied with my request to postpone them for a year, but still he agreed. Did he see this as infidelity? For my part, it was in the final analysis my determination to further clarify the step I was about to take after having once again plunged myself into the community atmosphere. So, I made that commitment at the age of 22.

After six years as vice-principal in the Ardèche, I was sent to the novitiate of Notre Dame de Lacabane where I stayed for eight long years.... During

the first period, I longed for community life but, because of my assignment, I was rather removed from it. Perhaps it was better because with my determination to live according to the logic of my ideal, I would have made my confreres suffer too much! It was only bit by bit that I learned not to judge, to let each one follow his own rhythm before God. But I must add that I sometimes suffered a great deal from what I thought was lack of generosity on the part of my brothers.

Notre Dame de Lacabane was a rude apprenticeship in letting go interiorly, in a setting which was too stiff and formal for my taste, and for that of our little community of animators. Little problems of interpersonal relations took on unforeseen dimensions. What was most painful for me was the master's more or less conscious determination to have exclusive responsibility for the formation of the aspirants. I found myself being reproached for the most innocent exchanges with one or another of the young men. What crucifying self-effacement! The age of "collegiality" had not yet come. Deep within myself, I left everything in the Lord's hands, silently offering him my pain for the development of those young men, of our Institute, of the Church, and for as long as he wished. But when the end came, having never taken the least step to shorten it, it was a relief.... Besides, it was the least I could do to subdue the "old man" within me.

On the other hand, it was a providential time of deepening on every level. God be praised for that desert experience! On the intellectual level, I profited by that period to finish my baccalaureate and to move a good bit ahead in my university studies in philosophy. But the price included many sacrifices: the trips to Bordeaux were long and uncomfortable, the pace of work was exhausting. But above all, there was the Council. Teaching the postulants religion, I steeped myself in reflection on the Council which seemed to me to as deep as my meditation on Don Columba Marmion, whose teaching had nourished me until then. I was even able to participate in three days for priests and religious during which Fr. Martelet explained to us the major lines of force of the Council. For me, the Council was the seed falling into ground prepared for it. It's wonderful to have been able to live through such a period! I can only say thanks and try to make that precious seed bear fruit within and around me. It's a question of fidelity.

At the end of that period at N.D. de Lacabane, I was invited, along with two other brothers my age, to make the vow of stability. The fact that we were three encouraged me to go ahead because, although I appreciated the vow in itself, I regretted that it was the "royal road" to the highest positions. Trying to purify my intention, I accepted what appeared to me

to be a response of more enlightened fidelity to the Lord who was waiting for it.

I was then named superior of the community in Bourg de Péage and principal of the school. I could tell the brothers that until the age of 37, I had been able to learn what obedience was and that I was therefore disposed to understand them, love them and help them. I could only sow the seed, with a generosity on certain points which I regretted in terms of my successor. For before the end of the school year, my brothers elected me their delegate to the XVI General Chapter. A new blessing which would enable me, for several whole months, to deepen my understanding of our vocation in the Church. Besides, during the intersession, I was able to complete my licentiate in philosophy under the guidance of an incomparable teacher, Aimé Forest, the philosopher of "consent". For me, that word echoed as "fidelity", whatever might happen, whatever the cost.

After the Chapter, I was ready for a fresh start, which I wanted to be in keeping with what I had expressed there with my brothers and in their name. Fidelity to the gift received.... Through the years, I had often expressed, sometimes ardently, my desire to leave for "a mission country". Some vague promises were forthcoming, but it seems that my superiors had never taken me seriously. It was at



In Rome during the XVI General Chapter of 1967-1968. Bro. Henri is in the centre.

that moment that I finally became more available. I decided never again to make such a request and to remain totally at the disposition of Providence. I thought that would mean in France.... But no! The provincial council, not long after, spoke to me about Algiers and asked if I were ready to take over the administration of the school there.... In all my thinking about the missions, I had never envisioned Algiers! It was all part of the Lord's sense of humor! It was a jolting sort of fidelity on his part and I spontaneously vowed to him my poor fidelity.

To do things properly, I first asked for two years to learn Arabic and above

all to size up at first hand the various aspects of a situation of which I knew nothing. And it was granted.

The situation of diocesan schools in Algeria was precarious. I tried to live fully that present moment which would probably be only temporary, while remaining available for whatever the Lord would want next.

April 1976. The diocesan schools were integrated into the state educational system. The Church asked the religious communities to remain at the disposition of Algeria in the fullest possible measure. For me, it was a sign from God, who was calling me to give a more Marist sense to my consecrat-

ed life: "a hidden life, a humble and hard-working life, a life of service of the most neglected...." Our service among the rural population of Algeria seemed to me more meaningful than it had been in Algiers.

After two years of life together, in June 1978, Brother Benoît decided that he had to follow another direction in life.... For me, it was a stripping in the faith: no prospect of another companion in the immediate future.... My conviction of the profound significance of the life of a Marist community here in Algeria, of its importance even for Marist life in general...and the uncertainty of our future.... To be always available in the face of the provisional. Where was God leading me? It was a bit like the adventures of Abraham: to live like him with unshakable hope among these children of Abraham, the Muslims.....

And so, by the grace of God, in spite of my weaknesses, I think I can live my life above all as a gift of myself to God and to others, remaining attentive to the signs he may give me. And on this journey, I try to bring along in ever greater measure my capacity for responsibility and initiative with a firm resolve to share that responsibility with my brothers and with others, especially educators and parents.... I have more or less succeeded because of my own limitations and blunders and also because of lack of cooperation from others.....

I have done all this in peace, despite my somewhat excitable temperament. Amid the greatest difficulties, I have always slept well, ultimately leaving in God's hands whatever I could not do myself.

A CONSECRATED VOCATION

To me, that is the essence of my life; service, it seems to me, is the way it spreads and flowers.

Poverty

One aspect of it is that I try to be content, as much as I can (although I am far from being so!) with what is strictly necessary in all things, avoiding the least waste, producing the maximum profit from the gifts the Lord places at my disposition, whether they belong to me or to human society...to avoid causing the waste of any energy or raw material which humankind needs now or for the future. A piece of chalk used to the very end...a trip made on foot rather than by car.... In that way I can better share God's liberality toward the least favored.... Fidelity to God by respecting the reality of the world in which I live.

Chastity

I spoke above of my difficulties in this area. I think that fidelity must refuse certain experiences, readings, shows,

etc., which are likely to disturb the delicacy of one's gift of self to God and to everyone.

As for relationships, I have tried – and this was always something quite natural for me – to consider all my brothers and sisters whom God places in my path from day to day as children of God, for whom there is neither man nor woman, neither young nor old...but only persons marked by his love.

Obedience

For me, superiors have been the expression of the divine will with a human face. Thanks to a gift of God, until the age of 36 I did not have responsibly for a community. I have been able to appreciate, usually without any problems, but sometimes painfully, very painfully, what obedience means.

I instinctively set myself to follow wholeheartedly the path opened by obedience – not passively but responsibly, discovering with the superior what was God's will and opposing him sometimes, when it was evident to me, that since he was human, he was straying from it...in the sense that I made him assume his responsibility towards me and did not automatically agree with him.

Let me make a comment here which applies to other areas: it has often been harder for me, in this or that situation, to know what I had to do, than to do it. One constant element of my

fidelity: I let myself be guided by my heart, by the depths of my being (perhaps the Spirit who pushes us where he wills by the sharp point of our soul) often not very enlightened, rather than with a clear view of the road we should follow. A little like Abraham who went forward without knowing where God was leading him.

The evolution of religious life after the Council and the Chapter put me more at ease on the level of obedience. But I consider the role of the superior, who is the one responsible for the community and its animator, together with his brothers, as essential for community life. He certainly needs plenty of patience in hope – the very patience of God – in order to respect and to unfailingly arouse divine enthusiasm in the heart of his brothers. Either free submission or else the worst slavery.

PRAYER AND INTERIOR LIFE

A primordial aspect of our life. During these last few years in particular, I have better discovered – and I live it as well as I can, but better than before – this essential dimension of our life. A silent, prolonged presence before the faithful God, "the first places at the crib, the cross and the altar". As for the cross, I humbly content myself with the one the Lord chooses for me and that's enough for me.

APOSTOLATE

My present situation in a Muslim setting has deepened a certain view of the apostolate which seems essential to me:

- first of all, witness to a life totally taken over by the Lord Jesus: "to give witness that the leaven of renewal can transform a man's whole life from the inside out.... Like Mary at the Visitation: it is Elizabeth who recognizes Jesus within her".
- profound respect for the personality of each person, of his or her personal journey toward God. To help him above all to be available, to live coherently

with what constitutes his faith, his ideal.... To disturb his complacency....

- to give a clear account of one's faith and hope when that is expected, desired, requested... and that is where circumstances differ.

More and more, I am happy to dedicate myself in love to those who the Lord currently gives me to serve - I will always carry them in my heart - but I am ready to leave them for others.... I don't want to consider any of them as a number, but as a child of God, a brother whom I love with God, trying to know him by his name. Always along with my own failures.

Personal details of Bro. Henri Vergès lodged in the General Secretariat of the Institute in Rome.

FRÈRE Marie Rodríguez
 Nom de famille Vergès
 Prénoms Henri
 Lieu-naissance Commune Matemale
 Département Pyrénées Orientales
 Date de naissance 15 Juillet 1930

PÈRE
 Nom Josep
 Prénoms Vergès
 Profession Fermier

MÈRE
 Nom Matilde
 Prénoms Bournet
 Profession Ménagère

Entré au Postulant le 1945-03 à 1945-09
 Entré au Noviciat le 8 octobre 1909
 Veture le 1945-09-08
 1^{ers} Voeux annuel le 1946-09-08
 Profession le 1952-08-26
 Stabilité..... le 1965-08-11

RÉSIDENCES

ANNÉE	POSTES	FONCTS
1946	Hermitage	Scol
1947	Saint-Geniez-d'Olt	Ensg
1949	Sanatorium	Mala
1951	Le Cheiland	Surv
1956	Ferrières	Ensg
1957	Lacabane	Ensg
1958	Lacabane	MaiA
1964	Lacabane	Ensegn
1966	Bourg-de-Péage	Admr
1967	Ganges	Etud
1968	Aubenas	Ensg
1969	Largentière	Admr
1969	Alger	AdmA
1970	Alger	Admr
1976	Sour-El-Ghozlane	Ensg
1983	Sour-El-Ghozlane	SupC
1988	Alger	Bibl

Assassiné à Alger 8 mai 1994

A LOVE STORY

It can be guessed at through these poor lines. God be praised, and the Virgin Mary, for having called me, for having given me this grace of very simple fidelity to which I try to respond as best I can. Thanks to my brothers who have permitted me, through their own fidelity, sometimes through their weaknesses, to respond better myself to God's call, including some who have left the institute and who remain very dear to me.... A mystery.... Thanks to my parents, to my family, to so many friends, especially priests and religious men and women, who have drawn me along the road to Love. A love story which is still going on: may the faithful God keep us faithful.

FIAT MAGNIFICAT.
1st Sunday of Advent 1978.

Mgr. PIERRE CLAVERIE AND BROTHER HENRI VERGÈS

Pierre Claverie was bishop of Orán, a great lover of his native Algeria. Numerous Muslims recognized him as their teacher. He did not wish to abandon "that fractured place" an expression that was dear to him when his vocation located him there and where he lived and shared with Christians and Muslims alike, believers or unbelievers. His "Lettres et messages d'Algérie" demonstrate the force of his convictions.

On August of 1996 Pierre Claverie was murdered at the very door of his house.

We have selected some pages of his book where he mentions Brother Henri.

Mgr. Pierre Claverie,
bishop of Orán.



WHY?

Letter number 28

During the month of May 1994 we well knew that there were some who considered us to be dangerous and disastrous people, descendants of a colonial past, agents manipulated by a cultural neo-colonialism, unyielding enemies of Islam, resolved to destroy it from within... we had read and heard this so often, and even recently, in certain newspapers as well as in the media and in the small screens to which we had now become accustomed. Nearly ten years earlier, we had become aware of the official religious speech attributed to Sheik Mohammed el Ghazali. This good apostle had written a work on the enemies of Islam among which naturally featured the Jews and the Christians. The last chapter was devoted to better known individuals: Mother Teresa of the dying from Calcutta and Sister Emmanuelle of the Copts of Cairo. Certain teachers, on the other hand, distilled the poison of hate in the spirits of the young, feeding their distrust of the foreigner, the Jew and the Christian. How many verbal aggressions and throwing of stones contributed to this gradual growth of xenophobia!

We however continued to maintain the trust and friendship of numerous Alge-

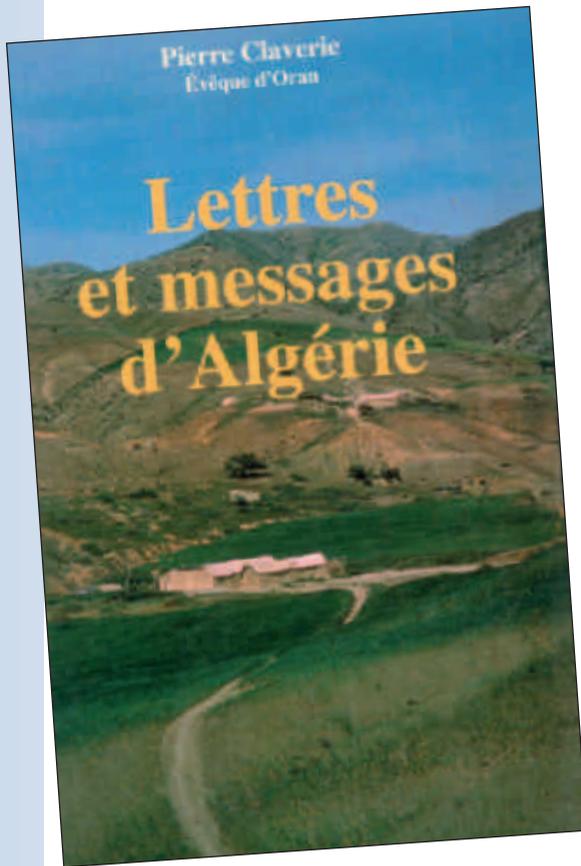
rians which served us as protection. As one person close to us put it: "This cannot happen in the land of Saint Augustine and of the Emir Abd-el-Kader". Those that know us well realise that we are not some crusaders or infiltrated spies of foreign powers. They know that we do not have any other ambition than to be truly Christian, that is to say, living in the world according to the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Jesus. Why in Algeria? Because we believe in the importance and the urgency for change in the relationships between Christians and Muslims. We do not have any lesson to teach anybody because we are aware of the weight that lies on the history of the mentalities of some others. In this story, no one is innocent: neither Christian, nor Muslim. If each one has had good moments and hours of glory, they also contributed to maintaining distrust, humiliation and violence. We sincerely believe, and the colonial experience confirms it to us, that it is possible to abandon this infernal cycle and to learn how to live together.

We have used all our resources with this purpose for almost forty years. One will always be able to be suspicious of our intentions and our errors during our journey have certainly maintained misunderstandings on the global sense of our presence.

But the facts are there and they deserve to be stopped. As for the services that we offer in an effort to contribute our grain of sand to the construction of Al-

geria, besides our cooperation in the Algerian situation

- what former students of the schools run by the Fathers or the Sisters would renounce what they received? Are those who have been formed in these schools less Muslim or less Algerian?
- what sick, handicapped, elderly people, cared for and accompanied by Christian men or women, would complain about the care or friendly presence received from these men and women? Were they pressured into being less Algerian or less Muslim?
- what young person, whether he or she be a student in an institute of secondary or university teaching, would, by frequenting our libraries, find the works in Arabic and foreign languages gathered at great expense thanks to the solidarity of Christians worldwide? Do we alienate them from their culture, from their formation, by attacking their convictions?
- what young girl, or woman, learning to be seamstresses, learning embroidery or knitting did not appreciate the importance of this learning, which allows them to contribute to the economy of the home in these times of crisis and of widespread poverty? Were they forced to abandon their traditions, their religion, their pride in being Alge-



Cover of the book by Mgr. Pierre Claverie.

rian? In our study centres, through conferences and meetings, have we stopped valuing the culture and the wealth of Algerian civilization, leading to a better knowledge and a fairer understanding of this Algerian inheritance little understood by foreigners?

Let it not be said that we should not involve ourselves in all of this because we would have to admit to regretting it as a sign that in Algeria as in Bosnia, eth-

nic cleansing, religious and cultural, is a fact of life. Everywhere we live close to other people: why not profit from this coexistence and finally, discover that humanity is one rich element of diversity? Can we not put an end once and for all to imperialism and nationalism, to anathema and proselytism? But, in fact, here we are not satisfied with words: Brother Henri and Sister Paule-Hélène were murdered in Algiers, doubtless because they were religious; perhaps also because they worked in a library (80% Arab) where they installed computer science courses and acted as social secretary for the neediest in the Citadel and of Bab El Oued; can it also be because they were the most vulnerable? Those who killed them considered them to be enemies of Islam. On the following day, did they not attack one of our Algerian Brothers because of his faith, he who had never done harm to anyone nor betrayed his country, nor his village, nor his friends, nor his Algerianism, did they believe that this was pleasing to God? Is their faith in Islam so fragile that they are afraid of a 65 year-old man, of a 67 year-old woman, afraid of unarmed and confident, calm and peaceful, humble young Christians? And what abominable cowardice is shown by these murderers hiding in the shadows! If I were to be taken as an example, I would understand it: as bishop, perhaps I represent in the eyes of some a dishonoured or dangerous institution. I am the person responsible and I have always de-

fended openly what seemed to be true, and what favoured freedom, respect for people, especially for the youngest and the minority groups. I argue in favour of dialogue and friendship among people, cultures, and religions. All of this probably deserves death and I am willing to take that risk. It would be an honour to return to the God in whom I believe. But to do this to Brother Henri and Sister Paule-Hélène, I struggle to understand it. They lived and died as teachers.

They carried with them to the end the consequences of their gift of life for love of God and humanity. They asked to be buried in this ground where they had sown, quietly and with humility, the seeds of hope for the young of Algeria. They honour our Church and we recognize in them that we still want to live with the Algerians for as long as they will allow us.

We do not demand vengeance, we do not request the price of blood. We are unwilling and unfortunate witnesses of the perversions created by decades of bad administration, manipulation and political exploitation of our culture and religion. Those who commit these crimes against humanity do not know what they

do, as Jesus said of the executioners who crucified him, and he added: Father, forgive them! The culprits are those who created the conditions of this dehumanisation and those who provided the ideological justification. May God illuminate their conscience and their judgement! We can only commend ourselves to Him and continue our mission.

During the funeral rites, Cardinal Duval used these simple words: "Our dear Brother Henri and our admirable Sister Paule-Hélène were authentic witnesses of Christ's love, of the absolute relevance of the Church and of their fidelity to the Algerian people".

We will soon celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. The Spirit of God has been shared amongst us in the living flesh of Jesus, who gave back to us this Spirit as our inheritance, our strength and our defender: it is he who pushes us beyond our limits and our fears to finish the work of reconciliation and peace that Jesus carried out by dying on the Cross. Brother Henri and Sister Paule-Hélène lived and died in this Spirit: they remain alive in our memories, in our hearts and in the communion of the saints.

Pierre Claverie, *Lettres et messages d'Algérie*,
Edition Karthala 1996, p. 147-150.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN ALGIERS

1830

5 July:
the taking of Algiers by
marshal Bourmont.

1954

1 November:
proclamation of
the *National Liberation
Front* which claims
independence, wave of
attacks throughout
the country.



1962

5 July:
Algiers gains
independence.

1988

4 October:
violent mutinies,
repression by the army
(almost 600 dead).

22 October:
president Chadli Benjedid
re-elected for 5 years.

1989

23 August:
approval by referendum
of the new Constitution
which opens up
to political pluralism.

14 September:
legalization of the *Islamic
Front of salvation* created
in March.

20 September:
legalization of the *Front
of socialist forces* created
in 1963 by Ait Ahmed.
Nearly 50 more different
parties are approved.

1990

20 April:
in Algiers, push by
the FIS for application
of the charia
(400.000 people).

17 May:
march of the FLN
(200.000 people).

31 May:
march of the FFS
(400.000 people).

12 June:
victory of the FIS
in the municipal and
regional elections
(51% of valid votes).

27 October:
all through Algiers there
are demonstrations for
democracy.

(1988-1995)

1991

25 May -15 June:

call of the FIS for a general strike (premature presidential elections), fails but violent confrontations with the army in Algiers. State of siege

30 June:

imprisonment of Abbassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, leaders of the FIS.

26 December:

first votes for the legislative, victory for the FIS (47% of votes counted).

1992

2 January:

in Algiers, the call of the FFS for the safeguarding of democracy is answered.

11 January:

forced resignation of president Chadli, suspension of the electoral process, extended state of emergency for several "wilayate".

12 January:

cancelation of the elections.

14 January:

creation of the High Council of State presided over by M. Boudiaf in charge of administering the transition for democratic recovery within 3 years.

4 March:

breakup of the FIS by the Tribunal of Algiers.

29 June:

the assassination of president Boudiaf in Bejaia.



2 July:

Ali Kafi (Former freedom-fighter) succeeds M. Boudiaf.

15 July:

condemnation of Abbassi and Benhadj to 12 years imprisonment.

26 August:

bomb in Algiers airport (9 dead).

1993

Extension of the violence, attacks against the forces of order and repression of civilians.

22 March:

march against terrorism in the whole country.

21 September:

the first two foreigners are killed in the French region of Orán.

1994

25-31 February:

national conference of dialogue boycotted by the main parties. L. Zeroual, retired general, Secretary of Defence, president of the State.

22-30 March:

the foreign embassies encourage their citizens to leave the country.

10 April:

devaluation of the Algerian dinar by 40%.

8 May:

march to Algiers in favour of national reconciliation. Br. Henri Vergès and Sr. Paul-Hélène are murdered in the library of the Casbah.

31 May:

installation of the national Council for transition (200 members), appointment of the Advisory Assembly.

1 June:

Agreement with IMF for the restructuring of the debt (26 thousand million dollars).

7 July:

murder of 7 Italian sailors in Jijel.

21 July:

tentative dialogue between the FIS and the opposition.



Casbah (Argel).

4 August:

murder of 5 French citizens in Algiers (57 foreigners from September of 1993).

4 September:

supervised freedom for Abbassi and Benhadj, possible contacts.

27 October:

2 Spanish nuns murdered in Bab el Oued (Algiers).

31 October:

L. Zeroual announces presidential elections for the end of 1995

21 November:

meeting in Rome of opposition parties (Sant'Egidio).

24 December:

attempt to divert an Air France Airbus to Algiers.

27 December:

murder of 4 White Fathers in Tizi-Ouzou.

1995

The violence extends and intensifies throughout the country and abroad (France). nearly 35.000 dead are counted among whom there are nearly 100 foreigners. The armed groups (*Armed Islamic Group - GIA, Islamic Army of Salvation - AIS*) clash in certain regions. Attacks on civilians multiply. The repression is merciless and often blind.

7 January:

failure of contacts between the Presidency and the FIS.

8 January:

reopening of dialogue with the Presidency, the leaders of the parties and organizations.

26 January:

invitation by the Presidency for the parties to re-establish dialogue.

31 January:

car bomb in the city centre of Algiers (42 dead, 250 wounded)..

3 September:

murder of 2 nuns in Belcourt (Algiers).

15 October:

presidential campaign for 4 candidates among whom there are two Islamists.

10 November:

violence against 2 nuns in Kouba (Algiers), one dies as a result.

16 November:

election during the calm as president of the Republic, L. Zeroual.

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Spiritual TESTAMENT

Christian, Peace in the Lord.

You must continue gently among the storms of your mountains... We know ourselves to be united in trusting prayer. "Make haste Oh Lord, to help us!"

You will already have received the "provisions" of Ribât (Bulletin). I have tried to distribute the rest as best I can. It would be unpardonable if this were the last, so here are the ideas which have been suggested, p. 4 of the report (cf. Bol.).

I would like to suggest 3 points:

- In our daily relationships, let us share openly our love, forgiveness, being united against hatred, vengeance and violence.
- Within the spirit of Ribât, let us promote prayer groups, however modest, to share among men of good will.
- Let us stay close to those from Islam who wish to share our baptismal commitment. May their journey and ours be mutually trusting. Naturally, this should be integrated in the appendix (n. 18, p. 16).

I believe that these three ideas, better prepared and expressed, ought to stay with us in the present situation. My love to you all.

Henri

(Letter sent 4th of February 1994 to the prior of Notre-Dame de l'Atlas en Tibhirine, CtoC, p. 119).

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Printed in November 2018
in CSC Grafica (Roma)
www.cscgrafica.it

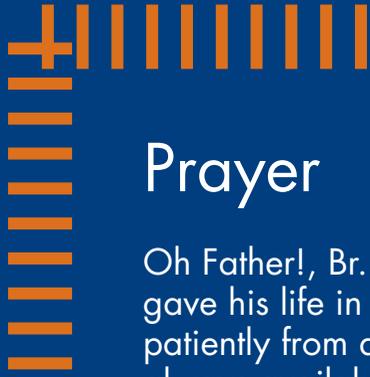
HENRI VERGÈS

BLESSED BROTHER



8 THE DECEMBER 2018

BEATIFIED IN ORAN



Prayer

Oh Father!, Br. Henri Vergès
gave his life in following Jesus,
patiently from day to day,
always available to your will.

Among the youth,
he was a man of faith and kindness,
servant of the poorest and marginalised,
authentic witness
of Christ's love.

Following his example, make us,
men and women who can talk
with our brothers of Islam,
with discretion and respect.

May the peaceful and simple happiness
that he showed,
the fruit of his simplicity of life
and closeness to Mary,
live in us and attract to your Church
those you place in our way.

This we ask of you through Jesus,
Your Son, our Lord and our brother.

Amen.

