The blood of love

The martyrs of Algeria
(1994-1996)
The Church of Algeria

This booklet presents a group of nineteen martyrs of the Church of Algeria. All were passionate about their Church, of which they were zealous servants, and passionate also about Algeria and its people where they had weaved their friendships. Humble and gentle, the Lord radiated from their hearts, in their lives and in their silence. They witnessed to a settled, lucid faith, the faith of those preparing the space for dialogue in their prayer and in their presence. They are a very beautiful image of the Church of Algeria: small, a few thousand faithful people, dispersed in four dioceses: Alger, Oran, Constantine-Ippone et Laghouat. It is a living Church by its poverty as it has lost its social power and pomp. Daily, it lives love and service. Thus purified and without ambitions, it can be a bridgehead for dialogue with Islam. The small Church of Algeria is conscious that it is living a prophetic mission, that of creating
for tomorrow the climate for a most peaceful dialogue between the Christian faith and the Moslem faith, in the certitude that we are all sons and daughters of God, the work of his hands and that the sons and daughters of God will finish by recognising each other. For the Moslem majority of Algerians, the Church of Algeria signifies the other, the one who is different, the one who allows one to be aware of his identity and his own faith, by his difference and his presence, leading to respect for mankind.

The Church of Algeria does not forget that it is the inheritor of Saint Augustine, Saint Cyprian and Tertullien. These are all men of light that prepared times of change. The prophetical nature of the small Church of Algeria will enlighten the horizon of tomorrow. It is not for nothing that these martyrs died with a very great number of Moslem brothers. Together they intercede that our humanity becomes more welcoming, more tolerant, more human and capable of giving glory to God in his diversity.
A man who always tended towards more clarity and simplicity.

Born on the 15th July 1930 in the East Pyrenees, France. At 12 years of age, he started his journey towards Marist life. At 22 years of age, he pronounced his perpetual vows as a Little Brother of Mary. From 1958 to 1966 he was sub-master of novices in Corrèze (Notre-Dame de Lacabane). On the 6th August 1969 he arrived in Algeria. His apostolic life in this country knew three stages:

■ from 1969 to 1976 he was Director of the St. Bonaventure school, in Algiers;
■ from 1976 to 1988 he was a teacher of mathematics at the Sour-El-Ghozlane ;
■ from 1988 onwards he worked in Algiers, responsible for the diocesan library that more than a thousand young people from the neighbourhood of the Casbah frequented. He was murdered in his work office, with Sister Paul-Hélène, on the 8th May 1994, in the early afternoon. During his funeral, on Thursday 12th May, the feast of the Ascension, Cardinal Duval declared:

“Dear Brother Henri was an authentic witness to the love of Christ, to the absolute self-denial of the Church and to fidelity to the Algerian people.”

Henri thus summarised his lived experience in the house of Islam:

“... It is my Marist commitment that has allowed me, despite my limitations, to harmoniously be part of the Moslem environment, and my life in this environment, in its turn, has made me more profoundly a Marist Christian. May God be praised!”

In 1986, he wrote:

“Let the Peace of Christ invade me always more and more intimately. Patience, gentleness towards myself; patience, gentleness towards all, in particular the young people the Lord entrusts to me. Virgin Mary, make me an instrument of peace for the world.

“Patience, calm and tranquil perseverance. As the sower who entrusts his grain to the earth and allows the time of God to do its work. An essential attitude for an educator: especially as I do not know the rhythm of development of each of these young people. God has simply sent me to sow the seed in the field chosen by Him; thus to sow in peace and to leave him to look after the growth. Without being surprised by the presence of the cross, as in the life of Jesus himself.”
A Family without Frontiers:
At the heart of the World, at the heart of the Church
4,200 Brothers, from all continents, present in 76 countries.
Working as Christian educators
for the children and youth
to make out of them men and Christ’s disciples.
A religious family that opens its spirituality,
its charism and its mission
to all Christians who want to live
and collaborate with the Brothers.

Guided by the pedagogical principles
of Marcellin Champagnat:
– To educate well one must love!
– To educate well, one must train the whole person:
  the citizen and the Christian!
– To educate well one must live with the young ones!
– To educate well one must offer
  God’s paternal and maternal tenderness.
– To educate well one must allow himself to be inspired
  by Mary, Christ’s Mother and Educator.
– To educate well, one must open his heart
  to children and youth in difficulty.

Guided by
Marcellin Champagnat’s Spirituality
We go to the young ones
because we ourselves are loved by Jesus:
We go to the young ones with our eyes turned to Mary,
the Good Mother: “Our apostolic action is
a participation in her spiritual maternity.” (Const. 84)
Our motto is:
“All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus.”
With Marcellin’s ambition:
“All the dioceses of the world attract us.”

Saint Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840)
The Founder of the Marist Brothers and a true father to them —
A heart that knew no bounds,
A man of faith and action,
A born educator and a trainer of educators,
A man of relationships and communion,
A man of God and a Marial apostle,
A humble, simple, discreet and happy man.
She was born in Paris on the 24th January 1927. While she was an engineer, in 1952 she entered the Little Sisters of the Assumption where she pronounced her perpetual vows in 1960. From 1954 to 1957 her apostolate was with working families at Creil; then she did some studies as a nurse, a profession that led her to the working class sections of Paris. During these years her missionary sense and availability deepened and she wrote on the vigil of her perpetual vows, “I also see myself as a missionary, in the service of God and of the Church, here and elsewhere, in a small corner of Paris or in South America… but I have the deep desire to be totally available… wherever God would want me to be.”

In 1963, she was sent to Algiers. She stayed there until 1974 and then spent one year at Tunis, nine years at Casablanca and then returned to Algiers in 1984. During her first stay in Algiers, she was the mainspring at the medical-social Centre of the Little Sisters of the Assumption that offered the poor people of the neighbourhood a home service: nursing care, family work and a private dispensary. At Casablanca, she was responsible for a service for premature babies. She was also particularly attentive to those who, for political reasons, lived secretly. When she returned to Algeria in 1984, she lived in community at Ksar el Boukhari, where she was a school nurse.

It was 1988 that she rejoined the community of Belcourt in Algiers and worked in the library of the Casbah with Brother Henri Vergès. It was there that she was murdered, at the same time as Brother Henri Vergès, on the 8th May 1994. In the last period that she lived in Algeria, Paul-Hélène said she was very challenged by the violence and she added: “We need to commence to fight against our own violence.”

When Father Teissier warned the community as to the risks, she responded: “Father, in any way our lives are already given.”

One sister gave this testimony: “Her life was given, delivered to the little ones and to the poor whom she passionately loved, welcomed and from whom...
Our mission takes us into popular neighbourhoods, towards the excluded, those without a voice, the ‘displaced’, attentive to the causes of family disintegration, particularly with young people and women in difficulty. Our activities take on the colour of the country where the congregation is implanted; everywhere there is humble work, presence and action. “May your actions speak of Jesus Christ!” our Founder used to say. It is thus ‘in the actions of daily life that we want to manifest the love of the Father to others.’

We encourage the places of dialogue, all sorts of meetings in our suburbs or at work, seeking to put people in contact with each other and to foster communities of faith. It’s our way of being participants in society and in the Church.

Consecrated to the Lord, we put in common all that we are, all that we have. Through that we give our life to Christ. In fraternal apostolic community, we come together around the Word of God and, sure of his love, we seek to spread the joy that he gives us. Mary, in her Assumption, strengthens our hope.

Our congregation was founded in 1865 in France by Father Etienne Pernet, Assumptionist, and Antoinette Fage. The former used to say to us: “You will go everywhere because everywhere there are sick people, poor people and souls to save... “

“France is your crib but the entire universe is open to you.”

There are currently 994 sisters, present in 24 countries and 5 continents.

“We would say she received so much. Her way of ‘announcing Jesus Christ’ in the Moslem society was for her the respect for the beliefs of others, a deeply personal aspect of her Christian faith, demanded in life by the Gospel.”

“There is great happiness in living the life of Jesus Christ and in becoming other Jesus Christs.” (E.Pernet)
Sister Esther Paniagua Alonso

She was born at Izagre (León, Spain), on the 7th June 1949, daughter of Dolores Alonso and of Nicasio Paniagua. Worried and searching for something, she discovered the call to the religious life. At eighteen years of age, she entered the Novitiate of the Congregation of the Augustinian Missionary Sisters. In August 1970 she made her final vows. She studied as a nurse and then was sent to Algeria. The contact with the Arab world enticed her and refined her sensitivity towards the Arab culture and religion and especially towards the people to whom she gave herself without reserve. She worked in hospitals where she gave herself totally to the sick, especially to the handicapped children for whom she did not keep to a timetable. They used to call her “their angel”.

Someone asked her if she was afraid of the situation in the country. She answered, “No one can take our life because we have already given it… Nothing will happen to us since we are in the hands of God… and if something does happen, we are still in his hands.”

In the discernment meeting about staying or leaving, she said to her sisters:

“At this time, for me, the perfect model is Jesus: he suffered, he had to overcome difficulties and succeeded in the failure of the cross, from where gushed the source of life.”

Her preferred book was the Bible which enlightened her life filled with light and shade. She also read the Koran to better understand the faith of the people and she loved to read the mystics and the Sufis of the Moslem world.

Sister Caridad Álvarez Martín

She was born at Santa Cruz de la Salceda (Burgos), Spain, on the 9th May 1933, in the home of Sotera Martín and Constantino Álvarez. In 1955, she entered the Congregation of the Augustinian Missionary Sisters. She was sent to Algeria and gave herself fully to her mission. She made final vows on the 3rd May 1960. Her delicate health made her return to Spain. Once she had recovered, she returned to Algeria and stayed there more than thirty years. She mostly looked after elderly people and
the poor. She lived through the violence crisis that erupted in the 1990s. Enticed by her mission, she never doubted for an instant about staying by the sides of the people who had accepted her and whom she loved profoundly. “I am open to that which God and my superiors want of me, Mary remained open to the will of God, which probably cost her. In the present situation, I want to stay in this attitude before God.” Every day she recited the rosary and this love of the Virgin Mary identified her as someone consecrated. On the 23rd of October 1994, Caridad and Esther were killed on the way to the Sunday Mass.
Jean Chevillard

He was born in Angers (France) on the 27th August 1925. Once his studies were finished, he entered the White Fathers. It was the war. At sixteen years of age, he succeeded in reaching North Africa. There he took his missionary oath on the 29th June 1949 and was ordained a priest on the 1st July 1950 at Carthage. Appointed to Algeria, he stayed there nearly all his life: responsible for centres of formation, regional superior, regional econome. He was murdered on his feast day on the 27th December 1994 at Tizi-Ouzou. He was in his office, receiving people, recording information and doing the mail. Towards midday, he was snatched by four armed men.

Father Pierre Georgin, Superior General, said,

“This serious man of duty, I found in him a degree that touched on heroism.”

In the Kabylies mountains, while violence was on the increase in all of Algeria, Jean knew he was exposed:

“I know that I can die murdered. Our vocation is to witness to the Christian faith on Moslem land. For the rest, ‘Inch Allah!’”

One of his sisters asked him in September 1994: “Why are you returning there?” He answered:

“I am returning there to give witness. My home is there, near my Berber friends. If I die, I want to be buried there.”

Alain Dieulangard

He was born on the 21st May 1919 at St-Brieuc (France). He followed his studies in law which he finished in 1943. This same year he was accepted by the White Fathers. He made his oath at Thibar on the 29th June 1949 and was ordained a priest on the 1st February 1950. Appointed to Algeria, he spent all his missionary life there, especially in Kabylie, working in administration and teaching. He was a man of God, seeking the absolute.

“When Father Alain started to speak to me of God, I recall that he would close his eyes, remembers Amar, and softly he let loose his words in so low a tone that I would have to listen hard: we must love God our Father, our refuge and our life, by loving also our brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that’s what he would repeat over...
and over again.”
Before his death he wrote:
“As the apostles on the lake,
we have only to cry towards the
Lord to wake him… The future is
in the hands of God.”
He was murdered in the mission courtyard on the 27th December 1994.

Charles Deckers

He was born at Anvers (Belgium) on the 26th December 1924.
At the end of his studies he joined the White Fathers. He took his oath on the 21st July 1949 and was ordained a priest on the 8th April 1950. He studied Arabic in Tunis. In 1955 at Tizi-Ouzou he learnt Berber and became responsible for a youth hostel. For three years he directed the El Kalima Centre in Brussels, a centre of documentation and of dialogue between Christians and Moslem immigrants. In 1982, he went to Yemen, but in 1987 he returned to Algeria, as parish priest of Our Lady of Africa. Very loved by the Kabyles, during the celebrations in January 2005, his name often came up in testimonies:
“I knew Father Deckers,”
recalled one witness, “I keep in my memory the image of this sower of hope for the most hopeless… with this serenity that only emanates from saints…”

He was aware of the dangers he was courting:
“I know that my activities are dangerous for my life. Here is my vocation, I remain… Our Lady of Africa remains at the mercy of an insane act. In the diocese, we think that the maintenance of the presence of the Church is important, as much for the Church itself as for the country.”
On the 27th December 1994, he set on his way to celebrate with his friend Jean Chevillard. A few minutes after his arrival, he was killed in the mission courtyard.

Christian Chessel

He was born in Digne (France) on the 27th October 1958.
After having obtained his engineering diploma in 1981, he worked as a volunteer in Ivory Coast for two years and in 1985 he entered the White Fathers. It was in Rome, by a strange coincidence, that Christian took his missionary oath on the 26th November 1991, his right hand placed on the pages of a Gospel of Saint John in the Arabic language, found on the remains of Father Richard, murdered in the Sahara in 1881. He was ordained a priest on the 28th June 1992. On his return to Tizi-Ouzou, he prepared the library project for the students.
A young Algerian woman wrote after his death:

“To the parents of our young Father Christian...
I would say: know that during his last days, Christian was very happy... He had started the project, so dear to his heart, of building a library for all the young people of Tizi-Ouzou.”

At the start of November 1994, Christian went to the monastery of Tibhirine to be with the group Ribât-es-Salam (Link of peace). He wrote:

“I feel the necessity of balancing my life by a more spiritual dimension and something more simple and lived.”

A hail of machine gun bullets ended his life on the 27th December 1994 in the Tizi-Ouzou courtyard.

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**The Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)**

A missionary Institute founded in Algeria with a passion for Africa.

Formed by 1770 brothers and priests of Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

640 are in Africa in the service of the local churches: parishes, institutions of formation and animation.

A constant commitment: the first evangelisation.

An important presence in the more Islamic African countries.

Commitments for justice, peace, reconciliation and inter-religious dialogue: heritage of the founder.

A life in international communities, founded on sharing and mutual help.

**Attitudes of an apostle according to the founder**

“Be apostles, be only that or at least be nothing but that in this aim.”

To be all to all “by language first, by clothing, by food”: a first step towards inculturation.

To Christianise Africa, not to Europeanise it: importance of tolerance and respect for others.

“Visum pro martyrio”: “it is, in effect, my well beloved Sons, the trial that waits you all.”

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**Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892)**

Founder of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) and the White Sisters.

Archbishop of Algiers, of Carthage and Primate of Africa.

A zeal to knock down barriers.

A battle: to defend the rights and the liberty of people.

A concern: to reconcile the Church with its time and to prepare the future.

A stern voice, a heart of gold and an extraordinary capacity to be interested in everyone.
In the name of God, 
the Clement 
and Merciful One.

“Praise to God, Lord of the world, 
the Clement and Merciful One, 
the King at the day of judgement. 
It is You whom we adore, 
it is You from whom 
we implore help. 
Show us the right path, 
the one of those whom 
You have filled with Your grace, 
not the one of those who incur Your anger, 
nor the one who has strayed.”

“Al-Fatiha “
*(1st sura of the Koran)*
Jeanne Littlejohn
Sister Angèle-Marie

She was born in Tunis on the 22nd November 1933. In 1957, Jeanne entered the Postulancy of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles and received the name of Angèle-Marie. She pronounced her first vows on the 8th September 1959 and she left for Algeria to Bouzarea where the Sisters ran an orphanage and boarding school for young girls. She stayed there from 1959 to 1964, in charge of the little ones and as an embroidery teacher. In 1964, when the Algiers School of Art opened in Belcourt, she went there as an embroidery teacher. She stayed there until her death.

Patient, close and simple with the girls, she wanted to inculcate in them the love of art, of work well done; she spoke to them in their own language. Sister Angèle-Marie was profoundly attached to Algeria, to its inhabitants, to her mission, sharing with this people their joys and their sufferings. When Father Bonamour, the parish priest, recalled the danger and invited the sisters to be ready, they responded:

“We are ready.”

When leaving from Mass during the afternoon of Sunday the 3rd September 1995, a sister shared her fear about the violence with her. Angèle-Marie answered her:

“We must not be afraid. We must only live the present moment well... the rest does not belong to us.”

Her mission was fulfilled in this peace and this simplicity. About ten minutes later, on their way to the house, Sister Angèle Marie was killed with Sister Bibiane, her companion.

Denise Leclercq
Sister Bibiane

Denise Leclercq was born on the 8th January 1930 at Gazerau, France. She entered the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles on the 4th March 1959. After her first vows on the 8th March 1961, she was sent to Algeria to the maternity ward of Constantine. A good collaborator, attentive to the needs of others, Sister Bibiane flourished in the care of the newly born and their mothers. In 1964 she was in Algiers, in charge of a sewing and embroidery centre for young people without studies. The sisters received the young girls from underprivileged neighbourhoods where they visited the families. This allowed
Sister Bibiane to discover the great material and moral misery of Algerian women. She witnessed to Jesus Christ in the “silence of words” and the actions of her life. In 1994, she had to make a decision: stay or leave? Sister Bibiane’s response was clear: ✤ “It is the people themselves who have asked for the Sisters. Actually they have asked that we stay. I am very saddened, I feel powerless before so much suffering, but I know, God loves these people and I have great confidence in Our Lady of Africa. Jesus said, ‘the Father will give you all that you ask for in my name’… His light helps me to discover marvels that are hidden, surprising solidarities, generosities, superhuman courage; the Spirit is in their heart who works. The Word of God helps me to stay attentive to be a ray of hope: I choose to stay”.

With this interior freedom, when leaving mass on the 3rd September 1995, only about one hundred metres from the house, Sister Bibiane was killed with Sister Angèle-Marie.

THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE APOSTLES

A religious family that is exclusively missionary, founded in Lyon in 1876 by Father Augustin Planque (1826 – 1907) who, by his faith and audacity, shared his passion with us:

“To know and love God to make him known and loved.”

There are 800 Sisters, of 21 nationalities living in 19 countries.

- We live in international communities, a sign of the universality of the Church.
- As Mary at the Cenacle with the Twelve, we persevere in prayer and with the audacity of the apostles we commit ourselves to the service of God’s Kingdom in the world.
- Sent beyond borders, we audaciously proclaim the dead and resurrected Christ to a pluricultural world.
- We work at evangelisation, particularly in Africa. In an attitude of simplicity and respect… we collaborate in the inculturation of the Gospel.
- We live an effective solidarity with the poor, especially with women and the marginalised of our contemporary society.
- Attentive to the missionary dimension of the local Church, we collaborate in social, religious, educational and health activities …
She was born on the 17th July 1932 in Champagne, France. In 1950, she headed towards teaching and was a teacher for three years. In 1953, at twenty-one years of age she entered the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Charles de Foucauld. In 1959, she made her perpetual profession. From 1958, she left on mission to Kbab in Morocco, then to Argenteuil (France) among the Maghrebines and in 1968 to Algiers. She tried to enter into the great spiritual adventure of understanding others at the interior of their own religious tradition. She read the Koran and prayed in groups where Christians and Moslems prayed together. She knew how to live very close to the people of her poor neighbourhood in respect, friendship, in the little things of life, in services asked and services given. Following Jesus of Nazareth, she let the love of God be seen in the simple encounters of life. She knew how to analyse political situations and was aware of danger; “It’s a privileged time to live fidelity to Jesus Christ and to the Gospel more truly.” She died in Algiers from the bullets of a terrorist while she was going to Mass on the 10th November 1995. No one could take her life for she had already profoundly and consciously given it.

She knew how to live very close to the people, in respect, friendship, in the little things of life, in services asked and services given.
THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART

A small religious family following in the footsteps of Charles de Foucauld, present in France, Spain, Algeria, Tunisia, Mali and Bolivia.

Mission
Prayer is our first commitment for our brothers and sisters and for the world, in a life of sharing and of closeness with those who are least favoured, far from the Church.
To be a place of dialogue between people and different cultures in a fraternal community life.

Way of life
To live in small fraternities with those who are in a precarious position.
To make our relationship with God in times of prayer and in our fraternal relationships legible and accessible to all.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)
An orphan with a Christian education, he sought the meaning of his life during his adolescence and his youth.
In Algeria, faith and Moslem prayer awoke in him the concern of God; he converted at the age of 28.
“He made religion a love”. He entered a Trappist monastery, then he went to Nazareth and finally in the Algerian Sahara where he was murdered on the 1st December 1916.

Spirituality:
– to follow Jesus to Nazareth,
– to contemplate in the Eucharist and in the poor,
– to become brother of all.
During the night of the 26\textsuperscript{th} March 1996, seven monks out of nine, from the monastery of Tibhirine, were taken hostage in circumstances that have never been clear. Probably the seven monks were murdered during the night of the 21\textsuperscript{st} May 1996. They were decapitated and only their heads were buried on the 4\textsuperscript{th} June in the monastery cemetery, after a solemn funeral in the cathedral of Algiers. The precise circumstances of the fifty-six days of detention and their death remain a mystery. Their choice to stay in Algeria, despite a growing climate of terror, had matured in common after an intimidating visit by an armed group during Christmas night 1993. This free decision expressed their wish to stay together, sharing with their neighbours the dangers of the violence that affected the most destitute. They wanted to be in solidarity with the small ecclesial community, given to God and to Algeria and offered like Christ for the salvation of the people. They knew they were heading towards death and they accepted this unreservedly. The offering of their lives and the forgiveness of the aggressors are found in a marvellous way in the testament of the prior, in the diary of the master of novices and in the letters of other brothers to their families.

These seven brothers, very different from each other, were united in love for the Algerian people, respect for Islam and the desire for poverty. This second vocation, linked to the great Christian and Cistercian vocation, led them to witness together to the Lord’s Paschal Mystery through the offering of their lives.
D. CHRISTIAN DE CHERGÉ

Prior of the monastery, he was the animator of a spiritual path that led the community to accept clearly the possibility of martyrdom. He was born on the 19th January 1937 at Colmar (Haut-Rhin), France. He was ordained a priest on the 21st March 1964 and he entered the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle on the 20th August 1969. In January 1971 he arrived at Tibhirine where he finished his novitiate and made his simple profession. From 1971 to 1973 he studied Arabic and Islam in Rome. He returned to Algeria and made his solemn vows on the 1st October 1976. On the 31st March 1984, he was elected prior.

“IT IS CERTAIN THAT GOD LOVES THE ALGERIANS AND WITHOUT DOUBT HAS CHOSEN TO SHOW THEM THIS BY GIVING THEM OUR LIVES... FOR EACH ONE IT IS A MOMENT OF TRUTH AND HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY IN THESE TIMES WHEN THOSE WE LOVE FEEL SO LITTLE LOVED. EACH ONE LEARNS TO INTEGRATE LITTLE BY LITTLE DEATH IN THIS GIFT AND WITH DEATH ALL THE OTHER CONDITIONS OF THIS MINISTRY OF LIVING TOGETHER WHICH IS A DEMAND OF TOTAL GRATUITY”.

(Circular letter – 25.4.1995)

BR. LUC DOCHIER

Brother Luc Dochier, gruff but profoundly human, became legendary in the region thanks to his services to the sick. Born on the 31st January 1914 at Bourg-de-Péage (Drôme), after his studies in medicine, he did military service in Morocco as a medical lieutenant. He entered the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle on the 7th December 1941 and took the habit of a brother. From 1943 to 1945 he was a voluntary prisoner in Germany having taken the place of a father of a family. In 1946, he left for Tibhirine where on the 15th August 1949, he pronounced his perpetual vows as a brother. In 1959 he was taken hostage with another brother by the ALN, but they were released after two weeks. When the monks were kidnapped, he was 82 years old and with fifty years of presence in Algeria.

“WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO US? TO GO TOWARDS THE LORD AND TO BE IMMERSED IN HIS TENDERNES. GOD IS ALL MERCIFUL AND THE GREAT FORGIVER”.

(Letter of 5.1.1995)

“THERE IS NO TRUE LOVE OF GOD WITHOUT CONSENTING UNRESERVEDLY TO DEATH... DEATH IS GOD”.

(Letter of 28.5.1995)
FR. CHRISTOPHE LEBRETON

He was the youngest. He belonged to the generation of the student revolts of 1968. He grew rapidly in faith to the gift of his life according to the profound testimony of his diary and of his poetry. He was born on the 11th October 1950 at Blois (Loir-et-Cher). At twelve years of age, he entered the minor seminary but he left at the end of high school. He enrolled in the faculty of law and did his civil service in Algeria. On the 1st November 1974, he entered the Trappist monastery of Tamié and while still a novice he left for Tibhirine. In 1977 he preferred to return to Tamié where he made his solemn profession on the 1st November 1980. On the 8th October he returned to Our Lady of Atlas. He was ordained a priest on the 1st January 1990.

Testament:

“*My body is for the earth; but please, no protection between it and me. My heart is for life, but please no way between it and me. My hands for work are crossed, very simply. May my face be absolutely bare so as not to prevent the kiss. And the look, let it see it*.”

BR. MICHEL FLEURY

He was an untiring worker, a simple and silent man, desirous of participating fully in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. He was born on the 21st May 1944 at Sainte-Anne-sur-Brivet and until the age of seventeen he worked on the land. For nine years he studied at the seminary. Then he spent ten years at Prado, working as a factory worker in Lyon, Paris and Marseille. He entered the Trappist monastery at Bellefontaine in November 1980. He left for Tibhirine in 1984. He made profession on the 28th August 1986.

“*Spirit Holy Creator, deign to bind me as soon as possible—not my will but yours be done—to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, our Lord, with the means that you would want, sure that You, Lord will live it in me...*”


FR. BRUNO LEMARCHAND

Superior of the annex house at Fès, in Morocco, he was a measured and deeply humble man. He was born on the 1st March 1930 at Saint-Maixent and entered the major seminary in Poitiers after his secondary school studies. From
1951 to 1953, he did his military service in Algeria. He was ordained a priest on the 2nd April 1956. From 1956 to 1980 he taught at the Saint Charles de Thouars College and at the age of fifty-one, he entered the Trappist monastery of Bellefontaine. He left for Tibhirine in 1984. On the 21st March 1990 he made his solemn profession at Tibhirine. In 1991 he became responsible for the annexed house of Fès. At the time when he was taken hostage, he was at Tibhirine for a few days for the election of the prior.

“You lead me, Lord, in silence and in prayer, in work and in joyous service of my brothers, in the example of your hidden life at Nazareth. (Notes – 1981) I am always happy in my monastic life and to live in the land of Islam. Quite simply: Here is Nazareth with Jesus, Mary and Joseph…” (Letter of December 1995)

**Fr. Celestin Ringeard**

He was of a rich sensitivity and very talented in interpersonal relationships. He was born on the 29th July 1933 at Touvois (Loire Atlantique) and at twelve years of age he entered the seminary. From 1957 to 1959 he did his military service in Algeria. He was ordained a priest on the 17th January 1960 and for more than twenty years his ministry was among the marginalised of Nantes. On the 10th July 1983 he entered Bellefontaine. In 1986 he left for Atlas where he made profession on the 1st May 1989.

“O Jesus, I accept with all my heart that your death is renewed and accomplished in me; I know that with you we ascend from the dizzy descent to the abyss, proclaiming to the demon his defeat”.

(Paschal Antiphon)

**Br. Paul Favre-Miville**

Very skilful in manual labour; he was helpful and friend to all. He was born on the 17th April 1939 at Vinzier (Haute-Savoie). He worked with his father as a blacksmith, then he followed a professional training and became a very expert plumber. After the death of his mother, in 1984, he entered Our Lady of Tamié. From there he left for Tibhirine in 1989. He made his perpetual profession on the 20th August 1991.

“What will remain in a few months of the Church of Algeria, of its visibility, of its structures, the people who compose it? With all probability little, very little. And yet I believe that the Good News is
The Trappists are contemplative monks. Their way of life is coenobic, in a stable community, which is the school of fraternal charity. They follow the great Benedictine tradition, reinterpreted by the Cistercian founders of the XIth century who rediscovered the value of manual work, with a balance between liturgy and the lectio divina, personal prayer and necessary work for living without depending on anybody. The life is lived in a climate of solitude and silence, with a certain austerity, radicalised in the XVIIth century by the Trappist reform (De Rancé). Today that is expressed especially by a kind of robust, sober life that tends towards the experience of the living God.

A characteristic of the order is the link between the different houses, autonomous, but united among them by the Chart of charity, with the obligation of reciprocal help, material as well as spiritual.

Saint Bernard de Clairvaux, the most well known saint of the Order, described the Cistercian life in this way:

“Our order is renunciation, humility, poverty, obedience, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Our order is living under a master, under an abbot, under a rule, under a discipline. Our order is to apply ourselves to silence, to fast, to keep vigil, to pray, to work manually and especially to follow the way that is still more excellent which is that of charity; then, in all these things, to progress day by day and to persevere in it until the final day.”

(Letter 142)

There are 171 Trappist monasteries, present in 46 countries on 5 continents, with close to 2100 monks and 1700 nuns.
Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped.

But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.

And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names; so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians, 2, 6-11).
The life and death of Pierre Claverie, 1938-1996, Dominican and bishop of Oran, offers a response to the signs of our times, characterised by tensions that are often violent between people who live different faiths and creeds. The incessant search for God and the call to all believers that Claverie made, to live together in peace and in reciprocal respect, find an expression in a vowed existence totally at the announcement of his own faith: a long fidelity, where his commitment in favour of dialogue was the centre and his life the price. On the 1st August 1996, Pierre Claverie, bishop of Oran, was murdered with Mohamed, the young Algerian who was his driver.

**Journey of a life given.**

Pierre Claverie was born in Algiers on the 8th May 1938. In 1957, he studied mathematics physics and chemistry at the University of Grenoble. In 1958, he directed his life towards the Dominicans. He would always keep alive the glowing charism of the Word for which he was particularly gifted. From 1959 to 1967 he studied theology at Saulchoir.

He returned to Algeria in 1967:

> “After independence, I asked to return to Algeria to rediscover the world where I was born… It’s there that my true personal adventure began.”

He quickly started studying Arabic. In 1970, the bishop of Constantine-Hippone, Bishop Jean Scotto, took him as personal collaborator. But in 1973, he was asked to look after a language and pastoral centre of the Glycines, in Algiers. On the 5th June 1981, he was appointed bishop of Oran. He participated in social and political debate and placed himself on the lines of fracture there where the future of the country was being formed; but there also his life was in danger. As bishop and as a Dominican, he refused to be silent and on the contrary, he pushed the word with lucidity towards the audacity of the truth. His life would be the price he would pay.

> “It is now that we must take our part of the suffering and of the hope of Algeria, with love, respect patience and lucidity.”

> “I have been often asked… You return home? But where is our home? We are here for the
crucified Messiah: for no other reason and for no other person!... It is a question of love.

“The martyrdom is the greatest testimony of love. It is not a matter of running towards death, nor seeking suffering for suffering’s sake... but it is in shedding your own blood that you come close to God.”

Holiness is above all a great passion. There is a madness in holiness, the madness of love, the same madness of the cross, which mocks the wisdom of mankind.

A Moslem friend wrote:

“There are men who, having perceived in advance the meaning of history... emerge from destiny as mortals by actions of a great range of humanity or of truth... These men, moved often by a demanding moral reflection, do not hesitate to take their part of responsibility through love of the truth... Bishop Claverie was one of these exceptional men, in search of creating bridges between men of any faith or origin, struggling so that the right for difference can be accepted and lived without restriction, in a sincere dialogue that is without reserve...”

THE DOMINICANS OR THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

The joy of living and announcing the Gospel

The Dominicans were founded by Saint Dominic in 1215. Today, there are more than 6,000 present in all the continents. The contemplative nuns and many male or female religious institutes who are inspired by their spirituality, and the laity who share in their charism and mission are more and more numerous. They form the Dominican family.

The Dominicans are characterised by contemplation, study and the preaching of the Word of God: “Our zeal is founded on our passion for opening men to ways of life, truth and freedom, by the word. From the origin, the vocation of the Order of Preachers has been to “work for the salvation of souls” by the proclamation of the Gospel.

Saint Peter of Verona, Saint Raymond de Peñafort – in the XIIIth century founder of a study centre for Arabic in North Africa, Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Blessed Fra Angelico were Dominicans.
«No matter that the universal believer be Brahman, Jew, Christian or Moslem, his religion is love: love towards God and love towards his creatures… Each child born in a Jewish, Chinese or Moslem house can know, in God, his true master; this aptitude is innate».

(Koran XXX - 30)

«God is one, Life is one, Humanity is one, And love is one.

(Koran II - 133; 140)
The martyr

Every day, at Mass, we celebrate the passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, our Lord, the central event of our faith. From this death comes salvation, our life as sons and daughters of God. We have a martyr as Saviour and Lord.

Jesus thus opens a way for his disciples: “If the grain of wheat that falls to the ground does not die, it remains alone... Whoever loses his life, will find it again in eternal life!” The call to martyrdom is an integral part of our faith. That certain Christians go as far as shedding their blood signifies the good health of the people of God. Jesus renews his martyrdom, “the grain dies and bears much fruit”, as Tertullien said, one of the great theologians of the Church at Maghreb: “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians!”

Throughout its already long history, the Church has known many martyrs. In latter times, many are disciples who have given witness by the shedding of their blood. John Paul II recalled this on the 7th May 2000, at the Colosseum, in commemorating the “New Martyrs” of the XXth century: “In the great Algerian torment, which took thousands of lives, the Church of Algeria stands without appearances or power. It is present to a prize that has cost it nineteen martyrs in a few years: a Marist Brother, six religious sisters at Algiers, four White Fathers at Tizi-Ouzou, the seven Trappists monks of Atlas and Pierre Claverie, the bishop of Oran.”

Our nineteen martyrs present a very varied gamut of humanity: we find the soft and the strong, the mystics and the poets, the active and the contemplatives, those of humble daily service and the pioneers in mission, those of the powerful word and those of contemplative silence. All witness to love, service and dialogue. Their sacrifice is a blessing of peace for the small Church of Algeria and for all the Algerian people.
Prayer

Lord God, our Father,
we praise you for the passion, the death
and the resurrection of your Son Jesus,
He, the martyr by excellence,
from whom salvation comes.

You wanted to share his martyrdom
with our brothers and sisters of the Algerian Church:
Henri and Paul-Hélène, Caridad and Esther,
Jean, Charles, Alain and Christian,
Angèle-Marie and Bibiane, Odette,
Christian, Luc, Christophe, Michel,
Bruno, Célestin and Paul,
and your bishop Pierre.

We pray you, Father, so that, by their intercession,
dialogue, respect and love will be strengthened
among your Christian and Moslem children.
Bless Algeria and its people,
and we give you glory, in peace.

Father, we invoke our martyrs for…
(specify the grace to be asked for)

And you, Mary, whom all have loved
and who are venerated in the house of Islam,
hear our prayer and intercede for us with your Son,
Jesus, our Lord. Amen.