

# **Julien Papillon**

**1931-2002**

**Richard Dandenault  
Michel Carbonneau**

**Translated from the French by Joseph Hébert**

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# Foreword

The History Series is now in its tenth year. After a lull, we have resumed our pace of two publications a year. We try to diversify the subject matter as well as the periods in history. In this way, we hope to show some of the many facets of the Society's history.

This issue concerns the life of a confrere whom many of us have known and who has had a very unusual destiny for a Missionary of Africa. He spent only a few months in an African mission. Nonetheless, he left a mark on the history of the Society, as much by the contribution he made in the development of the new Spiritual Year in the 60s, as by the example he gave us in living a fruitful life in spite of ill-health, which incapacitated him for many years. The numerous personal notes he left allow us to comprehend his way of life to some extent and to rediscover that what really matters is not the number of activities undertaken, but the depth and vigour of spiritual commitment. What matters is not what we do, but what we are.

By 2005, Richard Dandenault had already published a book consecrated to Julien Papillon. He agreed, with the help of Michel Carbonneau, to take up the manuscripts regarding Julien once more and to lift the veil which covers the life of this Missionary of Africa. In a preface of a few pages, he presents the foremost stages of Julien's life along with its principal features. He then allows Julien to speak for himself, content to add the notes necessary for clearer understanding. We hope that these pages will be a source of inspiration for many among you.

François Richard

# Introduction

On the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1954, Julien Papillon, at that time a student at Quebec Academy, wrote this to the Father Superior of the White Fathers' novitiate at St. Martin de Laval:

*“It is with great joy that I write to you requesting admission to the White Fathers' novitiate. For the past six years, I have been going to this college, and I have always maintained quite a good standard.*

*After careful consideration and after having consulted with persons of competence, I have opted for the priestly life and more particularly for the White Fathers. Since last September, I have paid regular monthly visits, to Father Bedard, and, undoubtedly, he must have spoken to you about me. Moreover, it was he who advised me to contact you.*

*So, Reverend Father, I hope that I will have the good fortune of being included on your list of novices enrolled for 1954-55.”*

So, Julien decided to turn his life towards consecrated celibacy as a priest in the Society of Missionaries of Africa (the White Fathers). It is noticeable in his letter of request that he is filled with joy and that this joy will become a truly tangible happiness as soon as he learns that he is enrolled in the First Phase of Formation.

This decision matured. It was not without “crisis”. *“To be what He wants me to be, called to be what He wills. I always feel it like a wound of love”*; he will later write in his autobiography, as will be seen in more detail in the first chapter. This crisis will be matured in prayer and reflection, reinforced by referring to a confrere from the same Society in order to avoid all self-delusion. This latter process was to become for him a key element in every vocation history, when he was later appointed to direct young people with the same desire for a priestly and missionary commitment.

In this way, he shouldered the direction his life was to take. Julien was dreaming of adventure in Africa to “save souls”, to use the vocabulary of the time, and which is often found in the diary which he kept

during his years of training. He had taken that expression as his own, far from doubting that his African adventure would be limited to some nine months only and that his interpretation of “missionary service” would take on a totally different appearance.

In May 1959, five months after their ordination and very close to completing their theological studies, Julien and the other confreres of his year received their appointments. Julien was appointed to Mzuzu Diocese, Nyasaland (currently Malawi). Before setting out on the road to Africa, however, Julien had been asked to do two years of educational studies at Goldsmith’s College in England, in view of a ministry specialised in the field of education.

Less than one year later, in March 1960, hardly six months after the beginning of his studies, Julien was awakened one morning with a strange feeling of paralysis in his body, which considerably hindered his initial everyday movements. Not knowing at all what was happening to him, Julien thought at first that it was a matter of typical fatigue which would go away, like all the rest. However, it would prove to be something serious and which, far from soon disappearing, was to go on intensifying itself until the end of his days. During the days which followed, he ended up in a hospital for preliminary tests. Wishing to know more about what was affecting him he took the opportunity at one point of the night, when the nurses were dispersed in the neighbouring rooms, to consult his medical records. His immediate curiosity was satisfied: there, in black and white, he clearly saw what it was all about: MS “Multiple Sclerosis”. Short of a healing miracle, the die had been cast for the 42 years of life remaining to him. It was to be a “long and merciless illness”, as his old friend, Dr. Yvan Auger, was to tell him later. He followed his case from near and far for all those years.

## **Five weeks after Julien’s death, Dr. Yvan Auger wrote this:**

*“Julien died from causes both remote and immediate. The combination of Multiple Sclerosis, slowly progressive but relentless in the end, and of cancer of the kidney, diagnosed in October 2000, have worn away by degrees an organism already strenuously weakened. Multiple Sclerosis, as well as paralyzing his four limbs,*

*had in addition reached Julien's nerves controlling his breathing and his swallowing to the extent that it became painful for him to speak. Moreover, the simple act of swallowing his saliva risked suffocating him.*

*In the end, he no longer had the strength to breathe. He departed from us in a murmur, with dignity and accompanied, as he had wished.*

*Julien lived a destiny, a singular mission, which he brought to reality through a terribly debilitating illness.*

*His last twenty years were to have progressively stripped him of all personal autonomy, a process which he freely chose to live in one generous act and with complete openness.*

*It was the first Beatitude which particularly inhabited him.*

*Our consolation, as you have expressed it, dwells in our assurance that he still lives through the Communion of the Saints, a reality so sweet to our hearts, so human, so divine.*

**Three years later, three days away from the third anniversary of Julien's death, the same doctor and friend gives us a global and striking portrait of what Julien was for him.**

“Word Given, life devoted”<sup>1</sup>

*At the time of Julien's great departure on the 25th June, 2002, I had the perception of an expectation, of an unclear hope, that this man had something more to say: wasn't he a man of words, a man “of the Word”?*

*Also, I am delighted to learn from Father Richard Dandenault about the project of making known certain extracts of his spiritual diary.*

*Julien was branded with a debilitating illness at an advanced stage. His private diary, the scene of his heart-to-heart encounters with the divine, makes frequent allusions to his state of health.*

*What was it exactly? It is impossible to substitute oneself for his person in what he lived most intimately and which, to a certain extent, belongs to the inexpressible. However, starting from his diary, from frag-*

1. Quotation taken from one of Julien's texts entitled “They recognize in them some of Jesus' companions” and was meant for his White Father confreres in the beginning of 1994.

*ments of his medical files, from my own still deep-seated memories nurtured by a friendship of almost forty years, what can I say about it...discreetly?*

*Multiple sclerosis is a wasting illness of the nervous system with some (motor, sensory, sensitive symptoms, etc..) and some variable developmental stages.*

*Julien lived a slow developmental form and varied symptoms, with some periods of severe deterioration (peaks) followed by partial remission. A graphic description would represent a downward decline, with plateaux, episodes of setbacks and remissions, well within the base line.*

*To my knowledge, three major peaks occurred (March 1960, March 1978 and January 1990) of which those of 1960 and 1990 represent, with a thirty-year gap, the very severe peaks of loss in physical autonomy, experienced temporarily in the beginning (1960) then in a permanent way (1990).*

*In March 1960, a man of 28 years foresees throwing his life plan into question because of a substantial paralysis of his four limbs, resulting in inherent constraints with regard to movement, personal hygiene, meals, etc. Eight to nine months would pass before writing begins again.*

*Happily, following this episode, despite the residue from permanent after-effects, his motor recovery would leave room for a very wide independence. At the beginning of 1978, six to seven hours of daily work were once again recorded.*

*Starting from 1978, however, the process of the weakening of legs, arms and hands was to accelerate.*

- *End of 1979; beginning of the use of crutches, able to walk for thirty minutes*
- *End of 1982: must stop writing after an hour;*
- *Middle of 1986: wheelchair, stops driving;*
- *May 1986: succeeds in standing erect briefly, a confrere makes his bed and helps him to undress;*
- *Summer, 1988: left hand and left arm are hardly able to move, legs are completely incapacitated;*
- *December, 1988: the right hand and right arm remain partly functional; writing is painful but still possible;*

- 25<sup>th</sup> January 1990: Last loud vocal sound, total paralysis of the four limbs, slight recovery in his right hand;
- March, 1990: admitted to the Infirmerie of the residential home Cardinal Vachon. He is completely physically dependent on a daily basis.

*In Julien's case, the expression Multiple Sclerosis takes on several forms over and above the ill-effects of the motor function: ataxia, sensitive disorders, dysfunction of the autonomous nervous system, disturbance of the intestinal function, spasticity of the limbs and other general symptoms.*

*Ataxia manifests itself by difficulty in keeping a balance when walking. It will appear very early and permanently.*

*Julien humorously alludes in his diary to his way of walking as that of "a drunk".*

*The sensitive disorders under the form of paraesthesia (a sensation of pins and needles swarming, of needles penetrating, of electrical current, of numbness, of a broken arm), noted since 1960 in the upper right limb, will eventually spread to the four limbs, will be ultimately felt as painful and will never really leave him. Julien did not accept analgesics until the last two or three weeks before he died. Over time, cramps and muscular contractions add to the painful paraesthesia.*

*In 1982, the urinary difficulties associated with Multiple Sclerosis (urgent need to urinate frequently) necessitated a state of constant alert to "damage limitation". When he lost the use of his hands, Julien became dependent on exterior help for this action. He was to accept a permanent catheter only a few years before his death.*

*Equally disturbing were the intestinal problems in the form of abdominal pains and constipation, which became as severe as to require manual intervention from another person. The absence of effective automatic reflexes, which for those of us in good health relieves us of such rawness, was to add an additional degree of social unfitness.*

*I add a few words about the general symptoms generally alluded to occasionally in the diary: weariness, weakness, heaviness, feebleness to the point of being "tired of being tired". After March 1960, the natural feeling enjoyed by a young person owing to an energetic body, capable of action and taking pleasure in displaying it will become more and more alien to him. More than just seeing his movements restricted - the very movement of the body and mind became tiresome. So it is not the*

*least paradoxical that a man so physically affected and overwhelmed has had such radiance.*

*I mention briefly the other problems of Julien's health: a malaria episode in Malawi (1966) which nearly took him away, recurring urinary stones and kidney cancer, diagnosed in August 2000, which will inevitably spread in June 2002.*

*It is not that these complaints would have been insignificant in someone who has already suffered so much, but their impact, more limited with time, would not reach the decisive extent of Multiple Sclerosis in a time perspective.*

*In this regard, let us consider the daily life of Julien beginning from March, 1990 in which a long trying period of twelve years still awaits him:*

- *Cannot carry out his personal hygiene;*
- *Food must be presented to him by mouth;*
- *Cannot change his position without help, both in bed and in an armchair;*
- *The few fingers at the right hand which still enable him to write very painfully will also become useless;*
- *Eventually, he will no longer be able to turn the pages of the book which is placed before him and will often have to wait for the next Good Samaritan;*
- *The swallowing muscles, no longer responding normally, pose a constant threat: he risks choking on his own saliva;*
- *The badly affected respiratory muscles and his state of weakness will make his voice hardly audible during the final months.*

*Julien compares his situation to a child removing the petals from a daisy and allowing one petal after another to fall.*

*He accepts and desires to become "a living host" and from 1993 implores his entry into "silence".*

*The spiritual diary speaks better than anyone about the way in which the long illness was endured.*

*I note certain attitudes which have struck me.*

- *Lucidity: from March, 1960, Julien lived the essence of what will be his permanent condition for the next thirty years.*

*His life will be the progressive updating of a drama already experienced: paralysis of the four limbs with its obligation on dependence, marginalization, and humiliation.*

*His rich interior life and his White Fathers life discipline render him more attentive to the progression and the appearance of the illness than to all other matters.*

- *Humanity: His diary reveals his anguish, his apprehension, his fear, his confusion. We can so easily identify with him!*
- *Generosity and fidelity: He refuses to allow himself to be destroyed by illness and it will never master him despite the “tough” moments. “Word given, life devoted”, these words so well apply to his attitude. His perception, his conviction of being the son of the Father was to support him during all his years, and he remained aligned to the fundamental axis of his twenty years: Christian, priest, missionary.*

*Julien was not exceptional by his illness, as cruel as it is: tens of thousands of Canadians suffer from it.*

*In the sense of his faith and his mission, his singular destiny will have been powerful by making of it a creative event of freedom in the paradox of marginalization, dependence, and impotence.*

*Heroism can etch itself into the decision of one single instant or it can distil itself for decades. His life belongs to the latter way. I express my gratitude that such a happy mixture of grace and freedom would have given us this loving soul.”*

Yvan Auger, MD.

Thus, such an ordeal of ill-health was going to cause him to rethink the direction of his whole life. A whole horizon was being blocked, a vision of the future turning out to be radically disrupted. He was facing what looked like a “crisis”, a crisis which was going to reveal itself in a nature completely different from that which he had lived in his years of youth.

In the summer of 1960, Julien has to return to Canada in order to recover his strength, mistakenly thinking that the latter would return to him and that his departure for Africa would be no more than a question of time. Five years passed by in this respite, most of the time at the novitiate of the White Fathers at St. Martin de Laval, performing tasks appropriate to his condition, such as managing the accounts, teaching English

and doing spiritual direction. It is in this context that the seeds of spirituality will begin to take root and foment in the years to come. *“I am very happy to be here. On the spiritual level, he briefly notes in a small notebook of that year, it is much to my advantage. I am able to confirm my status as a priest-missionary since my ordination and to deepen my spirituality which has become somewhat stagnant.”* Julien was living a paschal experience, the transition from a mission ideology to the continual return to his daily reality. The call of God and assignment to the mission were both ingrained in his body and his context of life.

In September, 1965, he leaves for Africa, sufficiently “resolute”, to use his own word, to risk the undertaking. This will not last long. Ten months later, he is victim of a serious attack of malaria and has to be repatriated at the doctor’s earliest recommendation. In September of that year, 1966, he is appointed to Lennoxville in charge of the Brothers’ postulancy. He would not see a single new candidate show up. In September, 1967, an official mandate will bring him back to the novitiate with the title of “socius” to the one in charge of what in future will be called the Spiritual Year. It is in this framework of formation of young missionaries that he was to practice his ministry until August 1983.

Over the whole of these years, it is interesting for the moment to note the three following points.

\* From September 1967 until August 1983, Julien is the only White Father who will remain as member of the staff during those years at the Spiritual Year. All the other members – more than a dozen – will spend one or two or three years, whether in a role of authority or a member of staff. Julien will make of himself the “regular witness of the White Father tradition” before “handing it on” to young people, more especially since new methods of teaching were being set up during those years when the influence of the Second Vatican Council was still fresh.

\* It should also be observed that the place where the Spiritual Year was taking place changed location eight times during those same years, depending upon whether a Francophone or Anglophone group was being received and whether the surroundings were of French or English culture. Each year, formation work was beginning anew with a new group. He performed his “formator ministry” at St.

Martin, near Montreal, then at Quebec, and at Washington, D.C., Dorking and Birkdale in England, Mours in France, Fribourg in Switzerland, Ottawa in Canada.

\* It is understood that Julien had to accustom himself to a “nomadic” mentality, brought on by successive disruption and uprooting, and aroused as much by the geographic moves as by a departure each time anew with a group of different mentality. As he said later each time that he had to undergo a change of milieu: “I must learn the language”; (2) continually listening anew to what presented itself to him and making of it his own. This mind-set with the appearance of Exodus becomes a constitutive part of his spirituality.

Those years, 1967-1983, are going to form the golden years of Julien’s active life. He was mandated, and that word has great importance for him, at the Spiritual Year. This new designation reflects the theological, spiritual and pastoral renewal of the Church. The total 365 days of the canonical novitiate, which made up the framework of the law until that time, makes room for a basic programme of much more flexible human and spiritual integration within the limits of an academic year.

The objectives of that important year of formation remain substantially the same: to affirm the human and spiritual foundations of each candidate who is conscious of being called to a missionary life in Africa in the Society of the White Fathers. However, Vatican II brings something new to add to it, especially in matters of primary importance, giving first place to the Word of God, giving it an intermediate function in liturgical life, personal prayer and accompaniment. At the core of this word, heard and welcomed, the presence of the Missionaries of Africa’s charism itself is confirmed. The spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, called Ignatian Spirituality, was proposed as an instrument for integrating the one with the other. Following that comes a whole new teaching, of which Julien, after consulting with the other White Fathers engaged in the same field of work, is one of the innovators and teachers. All of these points together will make up the object of the second part of the present work.

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(2) “Learning the language”. For Julien it is not simply a matter of having the ability to speak a language other than his own but to be imbued with the mentality of the milieu, of its mental framework, of its values and priorities, in order to communicate adequately with the persons who make up the sum of them and to make himself understood in their terms.

Doctor Yvan Augé and his wife Ruth. They were close friends of Julien during his illness from 1960 to 2002.

The nineteen remaining years, which will follow his insertion into the Spiritual Year, in which Julien will live a ministry of “availability”, will be lived at Quebec at the Ste. Foy community from September 1983, to November 1989; then at Lennoxville until February, 1990 and finally again at Quebec, at the Cardinal Vachon Residential home until the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2002. There as well, he will say at each place where he must go that he must “learn the language” (3). Those years will make up a third part which will be left for us to explore Julien’s itinerary.

At that moment, Julien became painfully handicapped. His inseparable and un pitying companion, MS, leaves him with no relief interval. “I am tired of being tired”, he will frequently write in his daily diary, which since the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1979, had become his faithful confidant to which he will admit his weaknesses and his anguish as well as his dreams and his hopes.

A purification period, if there ever was one! Julien no longer has a mandate for a precise mission other than that of being present to the community to which he is appointed and to be “available” to the confreres and to outsiders who request his services insofar as he is able. Another “passing-through crisis”, another departure without precise direction, another “opening on to the event” just as he will present himself and where he will be invited to discover the presence of God and the ever-new mission which has been confided to him in each given circumstance. His availability, which could be qualified as “active passivity”, is in fact more and more marked by a double passion: passive in physical suffering, unavoidable, appearing always as imposing itself out of necessity, and the other one active, in which, as much as he can, he wants to think of himself as faithful to the mission which has been confided to him at the service of his brothers and sisters. Everything will be combined in an attitude of self-offer-

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3. See the note p. 16.

ing in the sickness which crushes him more and more and which, in the greatest freedom there is, will reduce him to the most total dependence.

This offering of himself will always remain something complex and will require of him a new awareness as each new day goes by. Since childhood, Julien has been haunted by the “anguish of improving”, and this undoubtedly intensifies his suffering as it is undermined by illness. A sort of pharisaic reflex in the manner of St. Paul (“*Who will deliver me from this mortal body?*” (Rom 7:24), he is saved at the same time by his almost “feminine” sensitivity which he is going to assume gradually, struggling to be “tough” even though he is “tender”. Accepting whatever comes his way will be beneficial to him. He will always be faithful to the latter, stimulated both by temperament and free will; but progressively by “consented intuition”, an expression of his “active passivity” allowing him to combine dependence and freedom. His offering or his availability - which will be its outcome – he will express to God but also in his international life. This will be all the more, since by the illness itself and as it becomes more intense, he will become increasingly sensitive to the body which he still has left. However, he will be able, in that way, even to transcend to the soul where the presence of the God of mercy makes itself known. (“*I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.*” 2 Co 12:9-10). A remarkable metamorphosis appears especially in the years 1967 to 1983: one confrere, living with him during part of this period, gives us a striking example of it in chapter 4.

Is it possible to present in a global fashion the highlights which are going to show his human and spiritual itinerary throughout his life? There is one method which seems to be indispensable here. Paying attention to and referring to his concrete and existential vocabulary, fully watchful about what is happening inside himself and around him, without forgetting what is happening in the distance. His writings are full of rural expressions, of imagery, of colourful words, of inspiring symbols, in which some influential figures intervene. There are interior attitudes, unforeseen events, meetings with benevolent people, movements of the Spirit, appeals for discernment, practices called into question, sensitivity in search of conversion. The will of God needs to be discovered, a friendship to be put into proper perspective, an availability which needs to be guaranteed, a liturgy to celebrate, a mission which needs to be

guaranteed, a condition of poverty or human weakness to be accepted, a spirituality to be brought into unity.

The means of support which are given are both traditional and new: the attentive listening to the Word of God, personal, community and liturgical prayer, regular recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to spiritual direction. He intends to remain constantly mindful of his Exodus situation, with a pilgrim staff which he kept carefully under a watchful eye, in steadfast expectation of departure, near the door of his room. He earnestly asks for participation in the spirit of the Beatitudes. In every event, he looks for God's smile, Who, in turn, invites him to share his goodness and mercy. In his prayer of thanksgiving, he graciously acknowledges all of life's gifts, especially that of divine filiation. He never ceases to give thanks for having been made a priest and missionary and member of a community of brothers. He thinks of himself as strictly attentive to those under his care, to their difficulties, to their trials. He wishes to make himself closely related to the "Communion of Saints" which he visits every day during the reading of his "Office" (breviary). He wants to see himself as a perpetual artisan of peace and love and to subscribe to all the "*Shalom and Love*" encounters. In all, a whole world of ideas is found, of words and images which inhabit his mental, imaginary and spiritual world. He can ceaselessly draw from this in order to become attentive and alert for the strength coming from the interior life and the relationships which contribute to his life force and which he wishes to receive fully, wholeheartedly, yet avoiding any form of manipulation.

Julien wrote – he wrote much – so as to find thereby a confidant who would remain in regular contact with him in his progress. "*Live in your situation if you wish to find God, for God is never found anywhere else,*" he writes on the first page of his 1979 diary. Everything will be centred on his own human, spiritual, priestly and missionary experience, which he would always wish to unify better without omitting the one or the other. These are his writings, these which are available for us and which we are going to consult in order to follow him in his "nomad spirituality" up to his "final Exodus", as he frequently liked to recall.

Richard Dandenault

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See the note on page 16.

### **(3) Julien's available writings:**

1. Between August 1954, and June 1959, a period which covers the whole of his formation years: some daily notes of his novitiate (1954-1955) and his first year of scholasticate (theological studies), and other notes from the other years relating to retreats at the beginning and end of the year.
2. Some accounts recorded in six notebooks on loose-leaf paper about annual retreats and monthly recollections from September, 1959 to February 1971, with an appendix about his brief experience in Africa from September 1965 to May 1966.
3. Correspondence with his mother: 16 letters and 44 postcards from September 1971 to June 1975.
4. Three agendas about the planning of activities and meetings with occasional reflections on current events covering the period from September 1975 to December 1978.
5. 21 notebooks from his daily diary beginning 1st January 1979 until 31<sup>st</sup> December 1999.
6. Three documents drafted during the Spiritual Year (novitiate) during the years 1978-79: his personal autobiography, the account of the Exercises in his daily life (daily practice of the Ignatian retreat), and some reflections on his own feelings following a session.
7. A text on "the White Father identity" in response to a requirement from the one in charge of the Spiritual Year at Fribourg, dated from September 1996.
8. A reflection from Julien, dated from 1994, responding to a requirement from the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa, requesting a certain number of confrère to provide their testimony on their missionary life.
9. 40 texts "Parole et Vie" for the magazine "MISSION" covering the period 1976-1983.
10. A fairly considerable number of conferences, class notes, recollections on spiritual matters, which have been the fruit of his years as formator of the Spiritual Year (1967-1983) and others of the years that followed. Certain of these documents will be quoted in the current work. In the appendix, some extracts of this talk by Julien will be found dating from 1985 on John Paul II and on the mission.
11. A faithful and regular correspondence with those in charge of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, that is, 23 letters from Julien, 54 from those in charge. Finally, another type of correspondence: a certain number of letters which are available to us at the moment, addressed by Julien to his friends (18), confrère (38) and permission to use them with authorisation from the persons concerned.

### **Writings about Julien:**

1. The evaluations made by his formators during his years of formation: 1954-1959.
2. The Necrology of the Petit Echo.
3. The homily at his funeral: June 28, 2002.
4. Six medical reports which have been written periodically by Dr. Yvan Auger, a General Practitioner.
5. A Graphology analysis by Dr. Rene Pothier, D.G.A., dated from the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1982.
6. 14 testimonies sent to us after Julien's death.

# Chapter One

## From Julien's birth: August 1931 to his entry to the White Fathers: August 1954

We are at Vanier, near Ottawa, Church Street, where the Spiritual Year is situated from 1978-1979. One of the Staff suggests during this January to try the Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola in daily life, a practice to combine listening to the Word of God, prayer, and the daily pursuit of life. And we begin in this month of January, 1979. As a prelude or entry into the matter, we are invited to redraw the significant moments of our personal history or, if you wish, the stages and the enlightenment marking out the itinerary of each person. The idea is to raise awareness of the 'Mirabilia Dei', i.e., the marvels of God, the beautiful things which He has placed in each individual and how the faith has emerged and grown in my daily realities and through that which I will later call the "aimless wanderings of my life".

### Family

This is my first context of life: my family and school. I was born at Donnacona and I grew up at Neuville, both nice villages on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River near the city of Quebec. In my family (1) I was the baby with three older sisters coming from the previous respective marriages of my father and mother. From their union came my

(1) Julien's family: His father was named Ernest and his mother Albertine Godin. From the first marriage, his father had one daughter named Simone. In addition, from her first marriage, Albertine had two daughters by the names of Germaine and Monique. The General Store: was the unique shopping centre in former times in the villages, where everything was found: hardware, linen goods, household articles as well as food supplies coming from the grocery. Let us take note that this account about Julien's childhood and adolescence up to his entry to the White Fathers in 1954, dates from 1979. It is a review of the events which indicate the maturity of a 48-year-old man. Nothing written by his own hand going back to that early period of his life is available. The first chronological document, in fact, is the letter which he writes to the Superior of the novitiate of the White Fathers, requesting his admission on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1954.

brother, Henri, and myself. I lived in the context of the big general store of the village, a place for gathering. My deeply Christian mother, a true product of her time, was directly involved with the village middle-class, mindful of whatever was of ‘social impact’! She generously kept watch over the good name of the family, the house, her daughters’ morality, and in particular ‘looked after’ her two boys, with a love deeply centred on these two lads. Time, meanwhile, is advancing and marital problems are making themselves felt. Emotional attentiveness progresses in proportion to a marked emphasis on the younger one which will never ‘cease’ until after his departure.

At this stage of my life, I notice in myself a great sensitivity, and very soon I will be initiated to the religious dimension of existence through the awakening to the Presence of God within and around the self, to the consciousness and to the will of Jesus at the religious experience of Mass and Vespers. I was thus very much ‘involved’ through the practice of prayer and at the same time of a certain regard for reality, all linked to the existential. Very soon moreover, I was initiated ‘naturally’ into respect for the other person, considerateness and care about his/her presence with its moral repercussions, for those – both men and women – who represent God, with emphasis here on the ‘mystery’ element of what they are and its vocational implications, which will very soon emerge.

## **School: childhood and early youth**

I make the painful ‘discovery’ of the demands arising from difference, jealousy and envy, which it suggests in the sociological context... There I discover ‘evil’ and there I test my first limits; I make my entrance into the world of suffering, psychic and moral... and physical! I make the discovery of friendship as well, of solidarity and group loyalty.

I discover my ‘more than ordinary’ athletic potential, its ascetical demands, the discipline and the team spirit which it engenders...

Discoveries continue. My progressive and marked ‘estrangement’ with regard to the family... for attachment to the ‘gang’ (2)... adolescence breakthrough and quite an early strong attraction for girls! This era is marked by a very ardent sensitiveness and becomes the dominant

(2) “gang”: the friends of the group, without the later derogatory associations linked to violence or immorality.

element and dominator in self-expression: I am very vulnerable both to approval and to reproach.

I notice here something very interesting: the discovery 'of being different'. It is going to engender fear, apprehension and the desire to be the other through imitation. I do not wish to be a 'phenomenon'!

Even so, in spite of this fear and this inclination towards the easy way out, by blending into anonymity, I feel an obscure call from within, aroused by the family-school context, to be 'other', 'someone', to build my life and proceed in my originality in spite of the demands associated with this 'challenge'!

I vividly remember the trauma of my last year and its emotional and religious repercussions: discouragement, revolt (juvenile), denial, awakening to reality, acceptance of and entrance into the practical means: the recovery and serious commitment to the order of means to attain the end, which will very well characterize the whole process ahead: prayer and dialogue with Jesus Christ. I show Him my suffering, my confusion and my lack of understanding. The bond gets underway between prayer and reflection and I am feeling very much alone. God becomes more and more my confidant. I notice here a strong presence of God stirring in my life and at the level of real-life realities, a God who speaks and listens when I address Him.

‘The exile’ from Donnacona is going to intensify this religious sensitivity, make it progress and on the ‘emotional’ level make me live - as never before - the ‘difference’, the ‘solitude’ as it is called and experienced in the demands by the ‘disloyalties’ (especially) of the little friends at the primary school level in Neuville.

Julien with his mother, 1937.

Here, there is an interesting phenomenon to observe: At Donnacona at that stage from the seventh to the ninth school year, the more vocation is talked about, the more it urges me, the more I withdraw. I go out with girls, with the

‘gang’, to be like everybody else.

However, “to be somebody” challenges me very much, and in spite of my inability to say what, I undertake the step to become just that by entering the Académie de Quebec, but with the desire as well to ‘liberate’ myself from the vocational urgings and to be independent – I am 17 years old! ‘The city of Quebec’...

I pause here to assess my emotional development, from the beginning of adolescence until my departure for the college at Quebec in September 1948.

My adolescence begins relatively early. I ‘feel’ myself to be a man at the age of 11! I don’t take advantage of it – I am rather ‘surprised’ about the phenomenon... at the house there is no initiation on that taboo matter, yet it is not rejected... ‘that’ was just not talked about. Friends are the ‘informants’, but everything is done very discretely; so well that on the personal level problems will never arise!

Interest in girls unfolds quickly and intensively and also – naively - in one’s consciousness of purity: relationship with one girl will remain a private ‘centre of attraction’: that relationship will always remain pure and ‘virgin’.

The summer of 1945 was striking: I am 14 years old, and I ‘must’ leave Neuville for Donnacona without knowing how long it will last. I ‘named that’ the exile! It was a violent uprooting, regarding the circumstances and the occurrences which were not of my choosing... and I was too young; accordingly, I had no choice. I still remember the last look; I was in the rear of the van with the furniture... and my cat! The ‘gang’ who were also looking at me leaving and ‘It was not well understood’... The arrival over there, and the impression made by these new places: the river was no longer within sight! Fortunately, Cousin Francois was waiting for me... but it was no longer like before.

**New departure...** School friends and new surroundings: quick adaptation to reality and introduction into sports; quickly recognized and appreciated. Through the ‘gang’, I enter increasingly into a social life which is interesting and abundant in friendships, boys and girls, so much so that I will be singled out by one of the girls in particular. One of the girls has an eye on me, and I will be influenced by her, though we met for the first time, and for whom I felt and expressed a warm attraction. She introduces me to certain types of expressions ‘unknown’ until then! That will last two hot summers. In the course of time, we will remain good friends ‘who remember each other’! Then another friendship which will last two years as well: very friendly, of a pure and naïve type, we are happy to be together...

I got a lot from those three years at Donnacona, in spite of all the demands of the exile and the discovery of new surroundings and adaptability to it. Some friends, both boys and girls, were valued, likeable, loyal and very united. I experience a deeper appreciation of solitude as a component of life. Serious about practice in sports with its repercussions on the level of asceticism, team loyalty, competition, and commitment to the means of attaining the end: studies more appreciated from this viewpoint, and it is thus that the project of going to college becomes concrete. My prayer life deepens and becomes more personal with the frequenting of the Sacraments: the surroundings help and inspire me much more; although at the level of vocational urgings, it compels me - while still keeping my distance - to situate myself personally... This element, along with the desire to be ‘someone’ in life, is going to lead me to the decision of leaving these surroundings for a new integration at Quebec. It is then the summer of 1948.

## College and University: 1948-1954

A new departure is made here with a first experience away from home; relatively easy from the beginning to live in this way away from home and family: which turns out to be harder on the parents, my mother especially. There also, it is easy for me to make friends, very good friends – and here too, sports are a place of encounter and a time to be schooled in formation and solidarity: I will ‘take the lead’ here along with a few others who will become cherished and loyal friends, the new surroundings are very varied and give rise to numerous horizons. ‘To take the lead’ implies social-moral influence: sports, journalism, politics (president of the students, etc.), and getting involved in social-religious activities: getting involved can be done both through the ‘gang’ (Quebec-gang) and on the personal level, research work is done in relation to the ‘future’ as the years pass; so that during last year, helped along by one friend or another, I begin a spiritual dialogue with a priest from the seminary.

Here are the characteristic features of my personality and the development of this important period of my history:

In the beginning there is a very strong ‘perceptible consciousness’ that I am increasingly ‘alone’ and never however ‘solitary’! Entering this new world all alone: it will depend on ‘myself alone’ to shape a place there for myself. It is a radical cutting of the umbilical cord into the eventual after-effects, in relation to parents and family and first sociological surroundings. I am 17 years old and am entering fully into the crisis of adolescence on the psychological level.

Some very strong bonds of friendship are soon created with a group which is lively, athletic, sprightly and fond of good living, affable on the Christian level. We have remained in loyal contact and in friendship to this day.

As a group venture, a ‘Quebec-Gang’ is going to be created, which at all levels – athletic, social, academic, political and ‘religious’ by commitment - is going to influence deeply the life of the surroundings with its consequences on a personal basis...

Personal development and friendship with the group will go hand in hand: interaction and dynamics, thanks to the quality of the lads. What a grace, Lord! Thank you!

Interior life or interiority signifies reflection and contact with friends, exchanges, constant serious reading, continuance and probing with a liking for the inner life. Regarding my personal relationship with God: Jesus Christ is a real living Person Whom I ‘consult’ daily. There is frequenting of the Sacraments almost daily along with one or another pal.

Political-social involvement with the ardour of adolescence which, in particular, does not tolerate injustice on the part of authority... There are daring challenges to take up as the years advance, which will lead to ‘serious’ confrontations with certain persons in office and the government of the day.

Here, I learn the importance of ‘time spent’ and, through sports, the need for training; investing everything for the goal to be reached, in the work and the personal quality (my perfectionist tendency) and solidarity with others, the team counterpart.

Every year, my three-day retreat in silence is a full life experience despite ‘certain lads’ who are not observant of the silence. I always commit myself with an interest more pronounced each year: “What will I be doing in life tomorrow?” With the intimate friends just as ‘interested’ in that question as I am. One of my friends will be a support to me here in a noticeable and remarkable manner.

The vocation which I had ‘feared’ and which I had rejected at the end of elementary school was constantly resurfacing with the two years of Philosophy through some major questions of the baccalaureate which were giving me a stomach ache and unrelenting during the summertime.

Where do I come from? Man’s destiny? The other side? The meaning of existence? The beauty of the universe... of woman and her ‘attractiveness’? What do I do with ‘all of that’? The more I think about it, the more I ‘fear’, because I feel that it is serious and the question is posed to me personally; why with such intensity? By contrast, most others do not appear so preoccupied by those questions: that also, that worries me and raises questions.

These questions from Sixth Form and Philo will be my particularly intense ‘suffering’. I engage in many conversations with some intimate friends, even in summer, near the river at Neuville, after having left the

others. My bosom friend, it comes back to me... recalling 'Suffering, reflection and solitude' with and in my mystery along with my prayer. Little by little without knowing it, I learn about the ways of discernment!

'All of that' leads me to seek out a guide in order to see what is happening and to evaluate it and then steer me. During the last two years at Quebec, I will be going regularly to meet a priest from the seminary for a tête-à-tête, an evaluation and as an observer.

The latter 'concludes' that God is speaking 'loudly' in my life and in my history... He respects me and puts me in front of 'my choice', which remains free, but which must more and more be 'channelled'. I feel like I must 'invest everything' for the ABSOLUTE, that is my unique way to live my life as man: God and Jesus Christ and a 'radical' commitment to the service of the Gospel within the Church... 'in the distance'!

I revert to this perspective in spite of the fear, I who was praying to get married with my bosom friend. The how remains – the manner. A visit to the Franciscans; and on the way back, a brief stop at the White Fathers of Africa, and 'I am hitched'! It is November, 1953! I go back there regularly. I declare my decision to my bosom friend at Christmas-time and my final decision to my parents at Eastertime, 1954.

This channelling engenders peace and a deep, calm interior joy, love and an inner 'security' as never known before then; the confident prayer, the thanksgiving and the strength all add up before the breaks to be made... to be experienced.

## **Breaks... emotional**

The projects: for some years now, I have been dreaming with my bosom friend about a 'quiet' life with my wife and children. A good job in Quebec and a country home in Neuville, a happy and responsible citizen, involved in my surroundings!

This bosom friend had become, through the years and particularly the summers, a part of my universe and rather 'invaded' my feelings and my scope of consciousness. Our relationship was pure - not platonic. It was transparent and very honest, thinking that certainly we would be man and wife. I feared the other project which was making itself in-

tensely 'felt' with its demands of radicalism and separation from my own and our dreams! I speak to her about it seriously in the summer of 1953. It was an 'in-depth' dialogue on both sides and she made me feel that she will never place any obstacle in the way of my progress! In September at the 'Le Laurentin' restaurant in Youville Square, our relationship was officially and finally terminated in mutual respect, with discreet tears, suffering and hardships on both sides. I still find her admirable and lovable!

I am astonished at myself, at the 'strength', the courage and the peace which continue to dwell within me. Since then, each one has gone his and her own way... with loyalty in remaining respectful and 'enamoured' of the other. She 'accompanies me' for a long time and in-depth until she is 'steered' by a marriage on the 27<sup>th</sup> December 1958, the eve of my ordination, the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1959: that was the most beautiful ordination 'gift'!

The summer of July 1954 goes by in a kind of very ardent consciousness that I am really launching out into a very special vocation: the visits with family relations make me feel it joyfully and heavily... a feeling of responsibility. I see above all the friends from Neuville again, from Quebec, and from Donnacona with joy, seeing me in this way 'entering' into this sad and demanding course... exceedingly felt at the emotional level.

# Chapter Two

## From entry to the White Fathers: 1954 to the first attack of Multiple Sclerosis: 1960

### The novitiate period (1954-55)

On the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1954, I entered the White Fathers novitiate at St. Martin de Laval. I had been accepted by those in charge of this first and important centre of priestly and missionary formation. Previously, however, a small inquiry had in my regard been made with persons who knew me well. A few of the questions posed were the following: “Is he normal from every point of view? Yes. Are there any obvious physical defects? No! Temperament: very good! Are there signs of a priestly vocation? He is serious, studious, and pious. Is his behaviour always beyond reproach? Yes! Does he attend Church and frequent the Sacraments? Always exemplary! Is there any pressure exerted to push him to the priesthood? Not to our knowledge. What do people think about his vocation? It is not surprising.

At the end of that first year of formation, my formators confirmed in outline the points of this little inquiry. It is noted that my intelligence is not of the order of a genius but rather that it aims at understanding the essential by force of application; my judgment is good and upright; my will is fiery and generous; I have a beautiful character, jovial and thoughtful, thoughtful in my studies; my confreres recognize my qualities; my prayer life is intense; I have a great spirit of faith, an intensely real charity. Finally, I must be supervised so that I do not fall into forcefulness.

So there it is; a good résumé. In my innermost heart, however, things do not happen completely according to evaluations. The exterior image which is projected does not always correspond to the interior image. It will later be obvious, as the years of formation pass, to what degree I am

subject to nervous tension. This is precisely what will lead me to a minor psychological ‘attack’, bringing to light my lack of self-confidence. I was eager for perfection, and I became aware of my perfectionism. With this kind of temperament, whenever someone invests himself into matters called spiritual and religious, he is bound to have dirty tricks played on him, believing that he must become the craftsman of his own life. That is what it’s like to possess strong self-will.

## Here are a few extracts from my report of 1954

August 11: rising at 5:30. At last, we are really beginning! Fine, that is what we are here for. Sacrifices are necessary, for I am in need of them, but all the same, that is ‘early’! We meditate from 5:45 to 6:25 so as to prepare properly for the coming of Christ in us... we will never be well enough prepared for that... especially myself, ‘bundle of pride!’

The holiness of a priest takes its source in the manner in which he has spent his time in his novitiate. Therefore, I must not hesitate sanctifying myself if I wish to represent properly the One who is calling me. Meditation is to the priest what the sun is to plants; well, nothing more to add!

Striking words from Saint Ignatius: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof... The faithfulness of today is the promise of the faithfulness of tomorrow.” Let us hope that through these conferences, from the ideas that I retain and from my reactions in my life, I will be able to apply these two sentences, which are the promise of happiness, of peace, seeing that they open for us the gates of heaven. They bring us to know God. Deo Gratias!

**The time for the retreat has come:** we are speaking to each other for the last time until the day when the habit is taken. It is 17.00 hours: everything is closed for 8 days with the Lord. The recollection, as much exterior as interior, is obligatory, thereby to converse better with the Good God. For God speaks only where there is silence and peace. Lord, make me learn to know you and to love you. Make my life a holocaust to your divine majesty so as to thank you for all you have done for me and to save some poor souls who are in sin. Grant that all the novices make a good retreat to thus assure the success of our novitiate and of our missionary life.

As the year of the novitiate advances, Julien gets a clearer idea of the presence of a grace of God which will impregnate the activities of his life as much as his being. The expectation of his vocation ideal will not be only the fruits of personal efforts carried out on his self, but also the work of this grace which he calls “the spirit of faith”. From where does he draw that ‘spirit of faith’? This is certainly in his family, school and parish heritage, that ‘religious culture’ in which he grew up. The framework of the novitiate in the course of the days and events will supply him with the necessary instruments to perceive in it complete interior strength. In that struggle with himself, Julien is still buying into a confused perception between his negative image which leads him to deprecate himself and the authentic spiritual poverty which will take place in his life and which he will recognize as the fruit of God’s work.

Spirit of faith in the purity of intention: Jesus, come, help me! I am suffering a little; I am offering it up for the Africans. I don’t know what that results from... perhaps I am feeling inferior to my brothers. There is some truth to that! So, make the effort to accept that for Jesus, but it’s hard, all the same.

During the conference about ‘character’, I discover that I am not very interesting to the others. Why? I do not see clearly enough in my brothers that they also are performing for God alone. I have to free myself from that idea of ME. There are many difficulties which I am offering to Jesus.

Spirit of faith in every act of obedience, like it or not! Spirit of faith, in each one of my actions, offering them up for my W.F. brothers who will be ordained in a few days. Spirit of faith, intense recollection to make up for the evil which is being committed against the Heart of Jesus. Spirit of faith, in each one of the little actions of the day to uproot self-love in myself. I will make progress in my life of virtue only in proportion to the violence which I inflict upon myself. Spirit of faith, to be very charitable in thought, word and deed. In the afternoon, there is a hockey match: I play ‘dirty’ and there is a scuffle between the good brother, So-and-so, and myself. We exchange words ‘rather loudly’ in rage. However, everything returns to normal, not without remorse. Forgive me, Jesus.

Spirit of faith: I believe that I see more and more what Jesus wants from me: to live by love in all things – so that I can set ablaze the souls

with his divine love. I believe that my little sister, Thérèse, has something to do with that. So, with love I must accept everything, like it or not. Resolutions: 1) Doing everything with love – for the glory of the Father, trusting in my big brother Jesus. 2) A more stressed spiritual consideration for my brothers, praying for them very much. I get a deep feeling of peace during the evening prayer.

Spirit of faith: I went in for direction: Jesus is happy with me. I was told to proceed with my formation and to make my scholasticate as I have made my novitiate, that I will be a ‘good bushman’. I will never be a ‘great missionary’! I will follow the little way of a child, which is just what I need.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> July 1955, there is a change of style in Julien’s diary: the days begin no longer with the request for ‘the spirit of faith’ but with the expression ‘*Hostia cum Christo*’.

This change of attitude is symptomatic of a new stress in Julien’s experience. If the request from the spirit of faith was a plea that his struggle for deliverance from all his self-love tendencies would be imbued with the strength of God and, in one sense, to heighten his self-image, this second expression seems to be coming from him: Offering of self so that God will do the work desired. This is the first seed of great importance which will lead him to an authentic spiritual poverty going hand-in-hand with self-love.

‘*Hostia cum Christo*’: In a great intimacy and intense charity with my brothers, living in humility, trust and purity in all things, in order to be radiant. In my meditation, listening attentively to my feelings and acting like a little child toward the Good God, our Father, in filial trust and thus not fearing, but always loving more.

‘*Hostia cum Christo*’: union with Jesus, but since I am inclined to a certain melancholy, healing this by remaining in Jesus and allowing Him to carry on in me. Grant that I become a holy priest. Teach me to live more and more in ‘holy indifference’. Make my heart priestly like yours.

‘*Hostia cum Christo*’: it’s the end of the novitiate. My resolutions are summed up in this: charity, becoming all to all and to being of service; increasing my fervour by living closer to Christ and to souls.

The novitiate ends as it began: in joy and peace, in fidelity and generosity. I learn on my own that this generosity which is inspiring me must be controlled. It is necessary to be clear on this matter! August 1955 is spent in an introduction to the next stage. At Lac Vert, I spend a happy and restful summer there. I discover another stage and other confreres who are very well and who make me discover that even here the world is not perfect: I had many illusions about these products from the seminary!

In reading over again Julien's mini-diary 1954-1955, it is possible to witness the emergence of four elements which could constitute Julien's spirituality during that novitiate year.

1. Julien took on an ideal of immense breadth: becoming a priest and missionary in consecrated celibacy. It goes without saying that the outfit he wishes to put on in his life considerably surpasses his capacities. He fully realizes that this is a gift from God; that it does not emerge from his own personal dignity, but that it is an effect of divine power and goodness.

2. However, and this is the second point, Julien functions on the human level with an 'undervalued' image, relatively negative about himself. Furthermore, he finds himself a 'sinner' on the spiritual level. Regarding this matter, a whole religious education is at work in his conscience. Faced with the demands of his ideal, he is inevitably inclined to feel guilty when failing to meet the bidding of his ideal through the efforts which he makes and which seem not to bear the fruit he expects. His negative image does not help him to overcome this handicap. 'I am not worth very much', he notes, three months after his beginning. His year will be deeply marked by a fight akin to Jacob wrestling with the angel. He struggles and each success like each failure is noticed. The impression is given that this ideal will be the fruit of a personal effort, a certain conquest of his vocation in which self-satisfaction is joined to a certain interior peace.

3. In connection with this fight, two graces are going to follow each other which will ascertain for him a stable spiritual base and will make his life fruitful to the end of his days. He will continually petition for it. The first is the spirit of faith, as was noticed above. The expression which appears later: "Hostia cum Christo": is the offering, sacrificial victim with Christ. Those two lights – that of spirit of faith and that of offering – will dominate Julien's interior transforma-

tion. He perceived at which point he was centred on himself, and he implored his Lord in a yet confused way to give him the basis which will allow him to make a move in 'Exodus' toward the Promised Land in the distance.

4. In all, Julien will seek out support for the mercy and omnipotence of God through the first phase of his formation in the gift of himself to the mission. It will become an attitude of life, the foundation stone of his life, enabling him progressively to gain consciousness that the 'completion of his vocation and of his mission' was not his own labour but that of God. One saying from the Letter to the Hebrews will become dear to him during the last stage of his life: "You have fashioned me a body. Then I have said: Here I am, I have come, O God, to do your will" (He 10: 5-10) For Julien, the offering of an increasingly dilapidated body will be the permanent and continually renewed act for living his Mission, the one confided to him and to which he will wish to be faithful until his last breath.

## **The Period of the Scholasticate (1955-1959)**

6<sup>th</sup> April 1955 is the arrival at Lac Vert at four o'clock in the afternoon. I feel very pleased to see my confreres from the scholasticate again. Beware of a certain uneasiness! I maintain a beautiful union with Jesus throughout the evening. Thank you very much, my God, for all that You do for me. Grant that I become a scholastic saint. Give each one of us the strength to live in your love so that we might become other beings just like you in the land of Africa. The confreres from the scholasticate are all very friendly. Never forget this: I live among those whom the good God is most fond of. Hidden nobility, so attempt to love them all!

Spiritual reading on the Mystical Body: what a responsibility, what an influence I can have over the souls of my brothers, of all Christians, members of Christ. So, try to think frequently about that, in order to radiate Jesus to the maximum in the souls of my brothers.

I feel slightly uneasy when gossiping with my brothers. Blasted self-love! Where does it come from and why? Be careful of that: 'May your will be done, my God'! Thank you, my God, for making me feel my weakness, I am offering it to you. Have pity on me! Fill these gaps in me by your infinite graces of love so that I would be able to become an-

other being just like you. I take a siesta. Upon awakening, I feel at the bottom of my heart like a ‘certain sanctimonious person’, I visualise myself full of sins – without any talent. Have pity on me, I am just a poor sinner. I am devoted to you my whole life. That I may grow into your likeness! Rid me of this accursed egoism which is gnawing at me!

4<sup>th</sup> September 1955, we arrive at the scholasticate in the evening. I find a typing table, a mop, etc. The next day, there is a talk by Father Superior on the attitudes to have in view of the retreat which will begin during this year of studies. This year, I must work as a real missionary, with the African souls in my heart. The next day I feel some discouragement. How well I see my weakness! Jesus, you are my strength, have pity on me.

After three months, I meet with my spiritual director, Father Dufresne. It was high time! Yet, I come out from there distressed. I have a ‘heavy’ feeling about my weakness, all of my past, my inability from every angle, especially intellectual. I also feel some very strong sentiments of discouragement, but I struggle, not without difficulty. Nonetheless, there is something positive: my director gives me a method, which is going to help me thoroughly, I believe. Thank you, my God! Thank you for keeping me, even if I am worth nothing.

I have a severe headache during Mass: my Jesus, help me to say yes, a yes full of love to the holy will of the Father. When things are going well, it’s easy, but now, my Jesus, you know my difficulties. I know that You are there, but I am afraid of not corresponding with what you want from me. I wish to become a holy priest. During classes, I am far from noticeable consolations. During the Moral Theology class, I meet with feelings of discouragement: it is telling me not to study! How I would love to be at home ‘in a trice’. Nevertheless, fiat my God! It is your will that I should be here, thank you for making me find it hard. I am offering that to you for the perseverance of souls who are dear to You, for our beloved Africans.

Physical exercises make me feel much better. However, I am finding the Bible class very long. Increasingly, I am observing my fatigue. Help me, Jesus. I foresee the prospect of a rest, it frightens me! My eyes are burning, my head is very fragile. I am going to see the Father Su-

perior and speak to him about my 'ailment'. Like a good father, he tells me to take it all calmly, even if I don't succeed in my Christmas examinations, it does not matter. I perspire a great deal, another indicator of my extreme nervous condition. In the end, I am pleased to have said that to him. I am at peace!

The theology examination arrives, which I find rather easy, but my answer is completely outside of the question. I knew beforehand that I was weak and that's it! I emerge from the examination shaken, in tears over it, deflated, but I am not overcome. If I make 6 out of 10, that will be fine!

During the January recollection, I make the resolution to accept with humility the difficulties in my studies and in my relationships with my confreres. The next day, that's it: I feel one more time my intellectual and spiritual inability. My Jesus, look at what I am worth! For that I am asking forgiveness from You! I am overly introspective! At supper time, bad news was declared about my Moral Theology examination: a rather weak result, without additional details. My Jesus, my heart aches, You know it, I ask you to help me accept that, and moreover to understand more my Theology.

I am not very rich, I lack personality, but I am willing to live with You, my Jesus, to have your personality: to act with you, and together with You to carry out the will of the Father. In going to see the Father Superior, I receive my examination results. It is nothing great! I had nonetheless worked! Together, Jesus, we will begin again in this second semester.

It is the end of the year; we go into retreat before receiving tonsure and the minor orders. Give us the generosity to follow You in the way which leads to the Father, so that we may become some '*lux mundi*'. There we are, from now on I am a 'consecrated being': Grant that I may always conduct myself as such. Thank you for all your graces!

**21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1959, I take my Missionary Oath and I am ordained a Sub-Deacon. 22<sup>nd</sup> September, I become a deacon.** It's the final separation with the world. It is no longer allowed to look back. I am committed to the perpetual service of God. May Christ rule over my whole personality! I am a living witness of Christ

to the world, consecrated to the glory of the Trinity and to the salvation of men. I promise perpetual chastity, the sacrifice of the most ardent worldly affections, an angelic and heroic virtue: witness, in my flesh, to my sacrifice to God but also the heartfelt joy which I must radiate all around me, the joy of the loving sacrifice.

The breviary, the Office, becomes my inseparable companion of the good and bad days. That is an apostolate, by itself, of the suffering and of the public prayer of the Church. In my old age, it will be my initiator to the praise of the blessed ones.

I keep an eminent place for the Eucharist, my daily Mass. It is also a meal, my daily meal with the Lord. It's a real meal, even if that aspect does not strike us. He has wanted to make that something simple. The effect of Communion depends upon the hunger which we have for Christ: it is a blood transfusion; it is there that my joy comes to life. We consume Christ, together as a family, a source of strength for an authentic charity. Fraternal love is the thermometer of our love of God.

21<sup>st</sup> January 1959, ordination retreat begins. My interior dispositions are strong. I have a deep desire not to miss anything, a generous will to open myself to all the graces. This goes for the glory of God, for the well-being of the Church and of Africa, of the Society of the White Fathers and of my soul. My priestly vocation is my salvation. I am opening myself to the Spirit of Christ and through me, Christ will save souls, more particularly African souls.

So, I have a great desire to receive my priesthood, in faith, in humility, to be unafraid. "He has shown might with his arm but lifted up the lowly" (Lk 1:51-52).

My prayer is a confident prayer. It is an attitude of abandon and thanksgiving which dwells in me. I ask to let me be stirred by the Spirit. It is important to me to sustain a long meditation, to remain calm and without stress in an interior and exterior silence.

I desire to remain in the line of the motivating idea: remain united to God. May his presence remain active in my life! I am a bearer of the Holy Trinity: remaining united to It, radiating It, discreetly, like a priest in my ministry, through example, through my words, with tact.

**Priestly ordination takes place on the 31<sup>st</sup> January:** it is both a summit and a 'new departure'. The first Eucharistic celebrations will leave a deep impression on me, I who repeat '*Do this in memory of Me*'.

What a road already travelled! I, the unworthy runt, as St. Paul used to say, I who did not have the 'preparatory' channels: '*I come before You! Here I am to do your will, do with me as You will!*'

I receive my appointment to London for Education – Psychology. I am not surprised, but I would have preferred an immediate departure to Africa. *I come before you!*

In the last months at the scholasticate, I live in joy, in gratitude and in service: 'Here I am...!' During the months from February to June 1959, I do ministry in the parishes and the schools. In confirming my call, I live in thanksgiving and in the welcoming of tomorrow. I am anxious for vacation time, which comes before 'final departure'... Always leaving in reference to Gen 12: 1 and being a prophetic sign of the human condition, an itinerant.

During the summer of 1959 came the recovering of family and friends, the celebrations, and the great intimacies: I will never see 'them' again. 18<sup>th</sup> August 1959, this is the departure by boat for London. This is heartache for my parents. Papa will live his exodus almost day by day 3 months later on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. It's a separation which I am living relatively and without resistance, 'completely full' of hope and certain that this is what I 'should be living'.

London is the first 'out-of-the-country' experience. A university experience which is challenging to

Julien Papillon on the day of his ordination, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1959.

me. I like that very much! It is much work – along with the ministry. After a year, Multiple Sclerosis arrives, diagnosed after Easter 1960, with its painful setbacks of partial paralysis and great weakness that will force me to take a new route. For that reason, there is initial rebellion and aggression, and then there is calm, acceptance, offering and, finally, entering patiently into the mystery.

## **Period of studies in London from September 1959, to June 1960: hardship of the illness**

At the first retreat of the month, the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1959, I request to be fully united to the Trinity, fulfilling my duties of state. I am a student at Goldsmith's College. I struggle to live fully in these circumstances despite the difficulties. Once again, charity toward my confreres and colleagues through my activities and my services. At the College, the beginnings are not easy for me because of the mentality – rather cold. I offer all this to the Father with Christ. Father, I give my life over to You, my daily life. I am yours; keep me in your love.

We are in April 1960. On the 15<sup>th</sup> March, I feel invaded by muscular pains, a kind of paralysis which will later be identified as Multiple Sclerosis. Writing is painful for me. I have trouble completing my duties of state because of rheumatism. The latter becomes a source of mortification. Fiat! I cannot do much. There is even a proposal that I quit my studies. My God, my 'Fiat' here is your will. I make a resolution to accept it and to offer up these sufferings, these limitations which are being imposed upon me with the consequences.

May 7, 1960, faced with my duties of state I feel yet able to do my work. I cannot, however, do the teaching practice. I am preparing myself, on the other hand, for the examinations. "Your will, Father, for the good of the missions. In a resolution I am offering You my suffering, I keep my joy and continue to work".

Between the months of March and June 1960, occurrences are implacably rushed into Julien's life. He faces a second 'attack', which will oblige him to take some clearly unforeseen 'breaks'. This calls into question the same possibility of completing his studies and serious uncertainties about his future in Africa. His missionary

project is not weakened for all that, but 'how will that be done'? (Lk 1:34). At the very heart of the event which threw him into disorder from top to bottom, he will have to decipher the forerunner signs of a spirituality which becomes deeper and of a mission the outlines of which are very imprecise.

His spirituality, as it was revealed to us during those four years of theological formation, evolved along the lines which he drew for himself during his novitiate. A spirit of faith nourished and fostered in his prayer and examination allow him to resist new difficulties which he encounters along the way.

All told, he refers to 'Someone' 'greater than himself', expecting mercy and support. His 2<sup>nd</sup> spiritual benchmark, the offering of himself with Christ, 'Hostia cum Christo', gains more impact on his daily routine and increasingly permeates his daily proceedings.

His missionary orientation becomes more and more determined. His formators' references on the whole of his personality confirm him in his choice, and the successive calls to a final commitment for the missionary priesthood in consecrated celibacy will place a first seal on his desire to 'give his life' so that the salvation brought about by Christ could be shared by others, in particular by the Africans who do not know Him.

# Chapter Three

## The years 1960-1967

### The return to Canada: Julien is 'condemned to a rest'

We are in 1960. In June, following the incident which affected me in England, I thus come back to Canada with the explicit aim of resting and paying more particular attention to what is happening to me. I spend the summer months with my family. I feel very poorly! In September, having been appointed to the novitiate at St. Martin, a place which I had known happily for a year five years previously, I admit that I feel better. My mission was to teach English to the novices, and I will do my best at it. I see Christ who will teach through me. As spiritual objective, I have in view to return the intimacy of the Trinity.

As the days go by, I am quite pleased with the spiritual climate of the house and feel very happy to be there. I have the time and leisure to make contact again with my spiritual roots. There is in me a great need to refresh my spirituality, which has been relatively hardened since the time of my ordination. My desire appears sufficiently clear to me: allowing myself to be seduced by the Lord Jesus and finding the meaning of the glory of the Father in my daily life. It is ambitious! The means are there: the Eucharist and my duty of state, that which I am asked to do. I must keep an eye on my difficulties on the side of chastity. My physical condition is probably the cause of it or very probably its occasion. I unburden myself on that matter to my director in an openness which brings me much benefit. As far as my duty of state, I clearly believe that Christ uses my poor means to give Himself to the novices.

As this was making up part of our manners and customs, in December of the same year I am complying with the correspondence rule, and I am writing the following letter to Fr. Georges-Albert Mondor, one of the Assistants General, in which I write this:

*Dear Father Mondor,*

*I would have liked very much to give you a sign of life before today. However, I was not able, in spite of all the good will which has been enlivening me, since the condition of my hands completely prevented me from any correspondence. However, it's alright now and for about a month quite an evident progress is making itself felt, so much so that I am able to use the typewriter. As far as the pen, it is possible but not always legible. In the ability to write, which has become mine again, I see a great grace from the Lord since this 'insignificant' art requires all the same a certain skill of the fingers; after seven months abstaining, I have come to realize the full importance of it. It goes without saying that if I was unable to manoeuvre the pen or the typewriter, a great number of things were inaccessible to me. During all that time, I have even been beholden to someone else at mealtimes! Even today those things which are hard to cut up have to be given to the hands of 'strangers'. It seems like nothing, but this is a magnificent healing by humility. The Lord knows what He is doing. I was probably in need of it.*

*For two months now, it is getting progressively better, so well that I am able to perform a normal amount of work. As you know, I am teaching English and Liturgy and I am in charge of manual work. Who would have said it in 1954, during my novitiate, that I would have succeeded Father Tetreault. Nonetheless, I must go at it slowly for I am not yet very strong. My hands are still 'full of electricity' according to London doctors. It will be this way all my life. I was also told that I would be crippled a good part of my life, if not my whole life, and on that they are wrong. Our Lady of Lourdes has not spoken her last word. Since my journey to Lourdes, the illness has been stabilized and a constant involution seems to grow stronger since last October. I am hoping for the best!*

*I have a vote of thanks to make to the Palace Court community: the confrère have all been magnificent. Father Tye, with his good humour, was coming daily to make his visit to the hospital, as well as all the other confrère. On my return to the house, everything was done to relieve me of the task and the little problems which my re-adaptation was raising, for after all I had only three fingers, very*

*clumsy besides, and rather wobbly legs. It has really been a re-education. The Lord gave me much support in those rather painful moments. He always kept me in joy, thus making it much easier to accept it and offer it up.*

*As for as life here at the novitiate, it is all going very well. The Fathers are magnificent; they have done everything to help me. I am very happy here. It is the Season of Advent. The theme of Expectation holds a 'charm' over me, even deeper in the hopes of going to live and work 'under the palm trees' in North-Nyassa.*

*Your son in Christ, Julien Papillon*

I take advantage of my retreat in March 1961, to support my outlook on the meaning of my life as a Christian. I am a priest of Christ, instrument of his love, God's theophany, with the responsibility of 'becoming holy as our heavenly Father is holy', and called in my duty of state to find God in all things. I thank God out of habit every morning for having preserved my life, and every evening I become conscious of the presence of the Trinity in me, and in so doing I unite my night-time to prayers, to the sufferings and joys of the whole Church, so that my night might itself be an apostolate.

In the three years to follow, from 1962 to September 1965, when he will leave for Africa, Julien is in search of a profound spiritual identity. The novitiate of the White Fathers at St. Martin where he works as bursar of the house and English teacher, where he is beginning to direct some novices in the way of vocational discernment, has become for him a climate of Nazareth, a kind of hidden life where he endeavours to attain his points of contact with God. Some strong points evolve during that period. He learns to live with an inevitably delicate health condition. The self-will of the formation years begins to become restrained by force of circumstances. Always intent on listening to his self, he discovers the importance of listening to the Word of God as well, and the frequenting of the Scriptures will become the prime source of his spiritual growth. This 'Nazareth' period will be a time of direct preparation for the important ministry which will be confided to him as he returns from his time in Africa: that of directing, in consultation with others, the candidates wishing to join the Society of Missionaries of Africa. In the context of the discovery of the new outlook in the Church following the thinking of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, it

is the whole of the priestly and missionary formation which is waiting and watching for new educational approaches which will have to be rethought and lived on brand-new worksites.

So, there are five years of 'Nazareth', where Julien discloses to us his points of support and his points of growth in his time of service as a fellow-worker with Jesus.

Throughout my spiritual exercises, I have the feeling of doing my best to drive away distractions, but I also realize the complete poverty of my love for Christ. It is with Him that I wish to be united, in my body, my soul and my heart. The desire to be strongly anchored with Him and bound in him does not let go of me. However, there is always a whole margin between desire and reality. Perhaps that is due to the fact that I am not very practical. I would so like to know Him, with a concrete familiarity. Christ is still alive today, my whole personality becoming his with the aim of being a saint and of having a really priestly influence, here in the framework of the novitiate, and of growing in the consciousness of being a missionary. In the accomplishment of my duty of state, I believe myself to be exactly in my place. Is this my excessive adherence to prescribed forms? I don't think so. I could, however, be open to the grace of the moment and of practicing a discernment of spirits in my work of today, that which really motivates me before, during and after. Come, Spirit of God!

In my annual retreat of 1962, in the four hours of meditation, I discover St. Ignatius, the strength of his exercises and their psychology. This discovery leads me to a better understanding of Christ and his demands, particularly those of my vocation as a missionary priest.

It seems to me that the understanding which I previously had of Christ goes from the intellectual to the practical. I make my election once again with this decided tendency, during this retreat, toward spiritual and emotional poverty, a poverty which is humiliated and choosing contempt and humiliations. That frightens me! I want to do so through love for Christ, to identify myself with Him in this way.

This poverty will have to be expressed first of all in how I accept myself as I am, with my sorrows, not so much physical, 'that goes without saying', but above all in the area of chastity. In temptation, Christ

suffers with me, prolongs his Redemption, his Paschal Mystery, for my brothers, the men of my generation. Lord Jesus, give me the strength to think about it practically at the time of temptation, in my ministry with women. The poverty of Christ which I want and choose out of love for Him and the souls must be achieved in my days, in my meditation in contact with the Scriptures, in the Bible. A great discovery of this retreat is the application of the five senses, in the subsequent effort to go out of my excessive adherence to prescribed forms when working with and for Christ; helping me with my breviary, with the rosary; with my practice of availability, the joy of being at the service of Christ. May the will of the Father become my nourishment (Lk 2:49).

While reviewing my meditation, I notice a persevering generosity; and in the thanksgiving I repeat my desire to remain with Christ and to extend His reign for my desire, i.e., for humanity. My vocation has no meaning if it is not orientated toward others. In practice, let my prayer, my time, my person, my love of the Lord be orientated, in practical terms, toward my brothers. In that way, I shall be a happy and complete missionary, wherever I am.

At the end of this year 1962-63, I feel like I am entirely a missionary here at the novitiate even if it is not always interesting, naturally speaking. Without illusion, I aspire to go to the missions. In the course of waiting: generosity, as long as I will be here or elsewhere in the home country. During my ten days of vacation, I had a really good time and much pleasure being with my family and friends. As I return here, even if this past event comes back to my mind, I set about the spirit of prayer and my work as bursar.

1963-64 has begun for some time now. As spiritual climate: it seems to me that I am well exteriorly and not very spiritual. My days are always the same: a lack of continued and precise effort. I am frequently on bad terms with my Superior. Even if they are habitually controlled, I am still not master of my reactions. I am a spoiled child! I must incarnate Christ more into my daily life by practical resolutions: each day to become closer to the Father. Being more affable in my relationships with my confrères, careful with my reactions to my Superior and with my confrère. Affability is the acceptance of others' weaknesses. Seeing Christ in my brothers, in the other, in my work and in my activities. Doing everything for the Lord.

In March 1964, I begin the 30-day retreat, trying to follow closely its spiritual evolution. I am strongly influenced by the atmosphere which evolves. I thank the Lord for having led me here 'in his way'. I am a witness, as spiritual director, to the work of the Spirit in the hearts of others, particularly during this experience. This helps my spiritual life enormously. It's an incentive. Today is Quasimodo Sunday. The Lord gave me a grace on the occasion of my sermon: living the Paschal Mystery today, this week: Christ present in his Word, by his Eucharist, in the midst of us, his people. All of that touches me today.

I make a visit to my director who asks me to stop seeking to solve 'the problems', as being a search for self in which there is too much logic. Accepting that the Lord passes, above all praying, and bowing to all the dryness of prayer in a spirit of poverty. The Lord will come when He wishes, and I, being always ready for his visit, will be welcoming and open. 'Speak, Lord, speak when You will wish, your servant is listening' (1 Sam 3:6). I offer You my election. That I would always be your instrument: always ready to serve You and always ready to accept what You wish from me. That I would always be able to say like Abraham: 'Here I am, Lord' (Gn 22). That I would be your 'man'! That I would be the man of my brothers, the men! We start the year 1964-65. Maybe next year, could I leave for Africa?

October retreat 1964: In my daily meditation, I feel my intimacy with the Lord growing. I am present with all my heart and a constant and increased desire to meet Christ in total reality, to be more with the Father. I frequently feel my inability, my weakness, but I remain positively directed toward the Lord waiting from Him for the answer to these questions which He lays down in my heart. I have the impression that I am seeing God more in my life and in that of the others. My spiritual climate is peaceful and joyful, feeling happy to give myself to the Superior and being useful to him, in spite of a stronger desire to 'leave' the novitiate for Africa, with the ministry of giving Christ to the people. I remain here totally because Christ wants it. I am 'his' man, the man of God, the man of my brothers in service, joy and availability. I take up my Bible again which I had relinquished, in order to be better able to meet the Lord, a meeting in contact with his Word. Lord, help me to meet You every morning. I allow myself to be bathed in the climate of the text in question. I give all my generosity to it and I believe myself to be really meeting the Lord

there. A tree is judged by its fruits and my days feel the effects of these daily contacts with the Word of God. Thank You, Lord, for the great regard You have for me.

In March 1965, I feel in my meditations a great facility in entering and remaining in contact with the Lord. I have the impression of a deepening of my vocation due certainly to the fact that I ‘am quitting’ this year! This idea engenders in me an increased and sustained generosity which nourishes me in my prayer. Hence a qualified ‘ease’ and ‘taste’ for prayer. Moreover, I have had to diminish my activities quite a bit for the last three weeks: health is the cause of it! This helps me as well to meet the Lord in a more practical way. Patience has been irritated during this period but I have still lived as a Lay Brother! My orientation does not change: living deeply these last days here – conscious of Christ in me, of Christ Whom I give to others.

In the spring of 1965, the Provincial of the White Fathers gave the following evaluation of Julien:

“This young Father, here in Canada for the last five years, performs very precious services at the Novitiate. He is much appreciated by his confrère and the novices. His teaching is good; he is very clear; he is open-spirited. As English teacher, he does very well. He is also a very good spiritual director. His confrère appreciate him for his charity, his good humour, his cheerfulness.

Father Papillon is very well balanced; he has good judgment; but he is handicapped by his health; he always remains a frail man. That famous illness which he had in England, Multiple Sclerosis, has taken away a great part of his strength, but thanks to his energy, to his strong will, and also to the exercises which he does regularly, he is able to give a very good output. It would be good to give him a mission experience, even if it would be to make him spend one year or two; this Father could acquire an experience and return here to Canada for the formation houses.” Louis-de-Gonzague, Provincial.

The doctor of the Hopital Maisonneuve from Montreal, who was following Julien’s medical record wrote this, dated June 28, 1965:

Father Papillon would be capable, I believe, of performing useful work, but on condition that almost no physical effort be required. We see no objection in him going to the missions in a very mild climate,

but it would be necessary to recognize his partial disablement, arranging for several periods of siesta in the course of the day...

## **The departure for Africa: September 1965**

On the way, Julien stops for some time in Uganda, where he visits a few confrère whom he knows well, before arriving in Malawi on the 1<sup>st</sup> November. Here is an account of his African experience, dated 25<sup>th</sup> November at Mzimba, one of the parishes of Mzuzu Diocese, where he familiarizes himself with the behaviour and customs as well as learning the language of that part of Malawi which is called Citumbuka. He will spend 9 months in Africa. The following account is the fruit of his reflections and of his monthly retreats.

I had an interesting vacation in those two months at home. Physically speaking, I had a great need for it. Even though there is continual fatigue which always ‘grinds’ aggravated in the last days by very pronounced backaches. All the same, I leave the country not too bad.

Temperamentally speaking, I am doing very well. The fact of going out of the novitiate and living for a longer time at home, meeting my parents and friends does me an immense good.

The journey has allowed me to become aware also of my material and spiritual poverty. All the same, I have one dominant feeling: thanksgiving. What am I worth faced with all this human mass? What am I coming to do in Africa?

My reactions, the first ones in Africa, in Uganda, faced with the situations of missionary poverty are ‘fright’. What kind of life awaits me? My reaction is acceptance and offering for the salvation of Africa and the sanctification of the confrère. I am also thankful for all the work which has been done. Behind the bricks there is all the work of generations of missionaries, heroes of Christ. What moves me here is the ‘daily diary’ of human lives. Behind all this is the generosity, the sacrifice and the thanksgiving.

In Uganda, I notice certain conflicts between the generations. Certain young Fathers are hard on the elders, even in their presence. There is a lack of consideration here. It can be explained, but it is a fact.

There is also the apostolate of lay missionaries, their isolation, and the lack of unity among them. The Father should serve as an agent of contact, of leisure, of coming together and of an apostolate among themselves. It's delicate when dealing with girls, but it should be done. Helping them particularly.

The isolation of certain young missionaries struck me forcibly. In a certain post, one young Father functions with two 'old ones' who are blocking everything. Here again, it is the problem of the conflict of generations. This young missionary is in danger of ending in resorting to compensations: alcohol, women, children, loss of zeal, and vocation?

We arrive at Lilongwe, more to the north, and this is the first contact with the White Fathers in the country. Fons Heymans, my ordination confrère and Regional Superior is there. I chat with him at length. The 'central problem' is the overburden of work and a certain distaste for not being able to do well what needs to be done because there is too much to be done! There is agreement on the idea of doing less, but better! Not everyone, however, is in agreement. Entering is necessary, otherwise others will enter! The mission is very hard, the climate is distressful, and the region is poor and undeveloped.

Finally, we arrive at Mzuzu, in the northern region. We spend four interesting days at Katoto, the bishop's residence. I stopped in at the hospital for a first medical examination. An interesting mission, but always supernatural. What on earth am I doing here? That often comes to my mind, due, I believe, to several different factors based on physiological as well as psychological factors. It all follows on one from the other when faced with the material conditions. Am I disheartened? Perhaps! Fear?

Is there alienation? Meditation at the village near the river. I reflect on that frequently, my home surroundings, my own people, friends, etc. All of this makes me think deeply. Am I really detached and devoted to Africa and a missionary in my heart and my flesh and Christ's hero, like all those who have come before me? That which I have taught and preached for five years at the novitiate and elsewhere I have yet to live it now. That feeling still remains with me here at Mzimba, a parish a bit farther south of Mzuzu, where I am taking a third week of language studies. This last week is really seen as a hard test and a new birth into a new world. I also suffer from the isolation in which we have been plunged.

The news: nothing. Adaptation becomes laborious for me. What's more, I am distressed at the difficulties in learning the language, due to the fact that all my personal work is diminished by a constant fatigue. Are we insane? One answer: "Go, teach all the nations" in spite of all these – my – weaknesses.

We are a few days away from Christmas. After five weeks at the language school, my health is still very much damaged. As far as psychological reactions, they are quite a bit the same. There is, however, a certain progress. Should I begin to adapt myself? This is possible, but it is slow in coming. The language remains the handicap. I am doing my utmost; it remains laborious. Lord, I love You. I must prove it to You by my daily effort. "It is not the one who says Lord, Lord..." (Mt 7:21).

Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent. Like all Sundays until now, everything is extremely quiet. I have not yet begun to go out. I take the day to continue bringing my correspondence back to normal. Here I am at the point where I like to write, unbelievable but true! A letter becomes really a conversation, an outlet, and a flight home. The isolation into which I have been plunged, I believe, counts very much as the cause of it. I feel like I am far away. I feel fairly alone, due certainly for the most part to the fact that I do not know the language.

The language itself is of prime importance. Nevertheless, practically speaking, I have enormous difficulties to buckle down to it; health yes, but the distaste of being 'pushed' by the circumstances.

Psychologically, on certain days, I am 'fed up' with it. There are enormous advantages in being with a confrère who works like a 'tractor', but as for me who am unable to do as much, I am swamped.

There are many difficulties in accepting this situation of 'inferiority'. "The mission is not made for those who are sick": a phrase from a confrère of the home country which comes back to me frequently. The truth hurts! Lord, help me to your will, to be poor, no longer to look into myself, to follow You wherever You wish to lead me.

This coming to the mission is a real purification, a bringing myself up to date, a disestablishing, an entering into the desert, a privation; briefly, a calling into question of my union with the Lord, of my voca-

tion as White Father missionary priest. I am afraid of all this life. I would so much like a 'quiet little life' without complications. "Lord, I don't know how to speak. Lord, I am too young, I am a child." Ah! The Prophets! "Have no fear, I am with you..." Jer 1:7.

Insecurity: it is a major weakness with every stranger in a new country; it is something lived by all emigrants of our home countries, displaced persons. This insecurity is also felt even by the 'voluntary displaced person'. It is a displaced person put in a completely new surrounding: climate, customs, colour, food, lodging, animal world. In the beginning, everything is upsetting. This upset lasts a more or less long time say the books and those who have already lived it, depending upon the capacity for adaptation of the subject in question. The displaced person is really a 'stranger' faced with this new climate of life. I have already experienced this insecurity in England, this adaptation stress. I was unfortunately sick and so my experience over there is completely particular. Nonetheless, I was happy there. There have been difficult moments there, but in general I liked my course over there very much.

I come to the matter of the apostolate in the course of my reflections. My understanding, where to put the priority, what procedure to follow?

First, it must not be left to the discretion only of the one in charge of the local community and the parish; otherwise there is danger of too unilateral a notion. The one responsible here is the bishop. Next, the local superior, in agreement with the bishop. Next, the dialogue with the confrère who are of the same community and the same parish. This strict collaboration is capital and very important. There needs to be a great opening to the bishop's projects and to the difficulties which are specific to such and such a mission. The capacities and the difficulties of the confrère concerned must equally be taken into account.

The prime demand is first to live the Gospel message oneself to the utmost through a profound interior life matured by fraternal charity lived intensely in the community context. That is a preliminary condition attached to any witness. On this matter, no illusions; strictly grace! If there is no charity practiced humanly in community, where do you think it could be practiced? What are we to communicate? Moreover, wouldn't one lay oneself open as well as the other confrère to the worst compensations?

Nowadays, where is the priority in the apostolate? Whoever kisses too much, hugs wrongly, the old dictum says. What is more important: trying to do as much as we can, everything, if possible, but very often only to the detriment of spiritual life and community life: never coming together, not even once a week? Or else doing less, but attaining what we do in depth, keeping account of the sacred principles of our life in intimacy with the Lord and of a community life which is more fervent and totally pervaded with the presence of each other?

Here, understanding the apostolate is involved. Remember that the quantity of work is crushing, but it is necessary to remain objective, make choices, knowing how to set priorities. Will doing less perhaps be troubling? No, if we proceed with more reflection. Less speed, more objectivity, more personal preparation. It is not a waste of time to sit down and reflect on the catechism classes to be taught and on the homilies to prepare. It would even be necessary to consecrate a certain time each week to serious study, to a return to one's Theology books, to reading, to serious books on spirituality and other disciplines capable of further 'professionalizing' one's work.

This is lacking in the majority, and unfortunately they take pride in it. A confrère who does not do this is liable to repetition and a long-term complete spiritual void. He can be led to distaste for his vocation, there is only one way to go.

In certain parishes, the confrères are in danger because the procedure is not 'prioritized'. We deceive ourselves, in good faith of course, about the understanding of the apostolate. What is the premium? Twenty-five outings to outstations done more or less satisfactorily or ten done perfectly because the missionary is better prepared. It's obvious. Would there not be, apart from this false understanding of the apostolate, a subtle compensation in an overly natural activity? Would it not be easier to 'be active' than to reflect, pray and work in a larger physiological, psychological and supernatural calm? We are useless servants. Are we convinced of it?

Everything here provokes reflection. Extreme poverty, complete destitution is a daily reality. I believe that there is no human motivation which could make a missionary remain here. Of course, someone can

settle down, succeed in carrying on a little middle-class life; it is possible to taste, savour the freedom and independence of life much more emphasized here than in one's home country. That could even become, for some, a motivation to stay, to return to the mission. This works, up to a certain point.

We are three at the station, still at Mzimba. This is New Year's Day 1966. It is three o'clock in the afternoon. An extremely quiet day, rainy and hot! No noise except that of the chickens and the damned rooster! It is a day for reflection on 1965. I establish undeniably that my life at the novitiate, my five years spent over there, have gradually become years 'of installation'. Even at the novitiate, there is a possibility of acclimating oneself to a 'little life' that is peaceful. Perhaps there is too much security, engendered by an easy daily routine of life without much disorder. There were the more pronounced 'shocks', from time to time, from my illness. Even there, nothing roused me too much. I became used to that too. Lord, how easy it is for us to fail in vigilance, in praying, yes, but not as it should be done. We are spoiled children who forget too frequently that we are 'recipients'. It is so easy to follow a self-sufficient, independent pace in order to live one's life all alone.

This is mission! In addition, I am out of my depth, I am afraid. I am upset. I become keenly aware of my weakness at all levels: physiological, psychological, supernatural. Everything provokes reflection here: estrangement, insecurity, poverty, language, people, confrère, work to be done. For me, it is the beginning of the wilderness. So there is a possibility of renewing my covenant, my betrothal with the Lord: 'So I will allure her, I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart' (Hos 2:16).

In February 1966, we have arrived at the bishop's residence in Mzuzu. The purifications of Mzimba once finished, I begin another series of them. I open another box! After a month here, I have the impression that it is continuous. Life is certainly more pleasant here, but my health does not improve. I would dare to say: quite the contrary. My visits to the hospital have become a well-known pilgrimage. Every week brings me its new weakness. Four weeks, four wounds from Egypt. Sinus: easily recognizable; a pronounced insomnia. Athlete's foot: I know all about it. Blood passing in the urine! The latter item is the last born, this is really recent.

What I suffer mostly from is not being able to do as the other confrère do, and very often being forced to do nothing. Psychologically speaking, am I in a better position? I would like to say yes, it is certainly more liveable, but how often I am so tired I could weep over it. I attempt to be generous anyway, but generosity is not health! Lord, how cumbersome this is on certain days. You well know it. I am hiding nothing from You. You see everything; I want you to see all that passes in my heart. Many times, today among others, a Sunday, nostalgia oppresses my heart. I see my happy and happy-go-lucky youth again. I find myself here. Lord, how unfathomable are your designs. "Your will be done!" Am I happy and at peace today in February 1966, in Mzuzu? Yes, in spite of the distress.

My work at Mzuzu is, more correctly speaking, a work of influence, which must remain hidden, likened to leaven. Lord, as a recapture of your intimacy, in trying to direct me, grant me the willingness to work in the darkness, to perfect myself for the others, to enrich the diocese, the heart of my missionary confrère, the people, through my intimacy with You, allowing You to work in me, through me.

Julien's 'Afrique' record ends in this way. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1966, he comes back to Canada, after many trials, as much physical and psychological as spiritual. He spent less than six months in Malawi, where he was to work for the missions. His account discloses that at the most he benefits from passing through African soil to form an idea about missionary life which is correct, diversified and without illusion, about its beauty, its successes, as well as its dangers and its failures. He makes the point between the ideal which had been fixed during his formation years and the harsh reality, sometimes brutal, which is met on site, in practical terms.

That critical experience was to be solidly beneficial for the ministry which would become his duty in the next seventeen years: the formation of future candidates who also will want to be White Fathers, Missionaries of Africa. He will know how to guide and advise from inside information, aptly perceiving the spiritual interior attitudes and capacities for adaptation required to live up to these expectations without any illusions.

In the spring of 1966, the Regional Superior of the White Fathers in Malawi, Father Alphonse Sormany, wrote to Father Raymond Robillard at the hospital, Maisonneuve, in Montreal, seeking advice

from him about what line to follow in the case of Fr. Papillon. The answer from the doctor came without delay: 'I am in favour of Father Papillon's return as soon as possible; he must not be endangered any longer; he will have seen Africa as he had desired.'

On the 19<sup>th</sup> April of the same year, Bishop Jean-Louis Jobidon, Bishop of Mzuzu, sends to Father G. A. Mondor, Assistant General in Rome, the following letter:

"If you were in Rome on Easter Wednesday, you would have met dear Father Papillon at the airport at the time of his journey on the way to Canada.

I deeply regret the departure of this dear confrère, but it was certainly the opinion of everyone, his own included, that he had better return to his country without delay. After a little trip which we made into the north where, although I had taken very good care of him, careful not to exhaust him, malaria struck and shook him in a brutal way. The dear Father confessed to us that he felt worse than he did in London in 1960. After two weeks in the hospital where our two doctors, Sisters Luke and Pauline from the Medical Missionaries of Mary, did their best to help him, we brought him back here to my house to enjoy the rest and peace more. On certain days, he suffered such headaches that he was afraid to lose it.

It is then that we decided together to make a novena to the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady of Lourdes, in whom he had great confidence since his pilgrimage in 1960, he confessed to me. "The miracle must have worked even in my head for the tiniest mosquito wants to make me lose it, the more I am afraid of it, the more I suffer from it.'

His heroic morale edified everybody. Although he was with us a short time, this confrère did much good, for he had won everybody's sympathy."

## **The 2<sup>nd</sup> return to Canada**

4<sup>th</sup> May 1966, back at St. Martin from where I had left eleven months previously, I write this to Father Mondor:

*"I lived, suffered in deep joy at Mzuzu. Even so, I had to leave with tears in my eyes and in a painful physiological condition. How*

*strange and impenetrable are the ways of the Lord; who would know how to probe them? Is my return a defeat? Today, I say no, but I must confess to you that the thought of it tortured me at the most grievous moments in which I had really reached the 'lowest point'. One small push, very small, and I 'was crossing the Great Passage'! My malaria in March gave the finishing touches. What a blow – to the 'negative forces' which had already begun their ravages 'of death'! My return trip was debilitating. I thought I was going through Johannesburg! Thanks to the care of a doctor who accompanied me, I arrived in Montreal safe and... not very sound, but in a sanctified way, all the same! A delegation, full of concern, the Provincial Superior leading, was 'warmly' awaiting me.*

*They treated me to 'filet mignon and small onions'. My strength is speedily returning. I had an electrocardiogram last week: the heart is good: 'good heart' as someone said.*

*So, I do my novitiate in 1960: we always come back to our 'old flames'! It is a surrounding which is well-known to me, a surrounding which I have loved, and some charming confrère. I can only climb the hill again. I had lost 25 pounds in Africa. I now have seven pounds more to my credit. It must be a sign of development.*

*It was very hard for me to leave Bishop Jobidon, my good friend Guido Bourgeois and all the others, but today I know, even in my flesh, that the missions on African soil is for others. I am now no longer deluded. My role, Providence has clearly made it known to me, is here. My mission will perhaps be that of collaborator in the development of missionary souls! I thank the Lord for having given me the consolation of setting foot in Africa. It is an expensive but positive experience. Your son in Christ, Julien Papillon.*

## **In charge of the postulancy at Lennoxville: September 1966**

This time I was appointed to Lennoxville in charge of the postulants. At the September monthly retreat, I notice that since my return from Africa, I have almost always been absent from morning meditations for health reasons. Thus, from April to August, I have tried to compensate.

I have not always succeeded for reasons of fatigue, but sometimes for trifling reasons, a type of laziness perhaps. Psychically, I was tolerably disorientated, something which has not been of help. There has been some development in this domain in my last rest periods at the novitiate. In spite of my lack of physical resistance, I have kept up an inclination to generosity and of charity, and that is what counts!

My duties of the day are to live in my motionless state more frequently. It's really hard at times, but I think that I am accepting it generously since my arrival at Lennox. I have the conviction that I am fulfilling my task after the example of Christ with his disciples. I place all my heart and my energies into it, with joy and peace confronted with the work which I have to do here. Help me, Lord, to take on, for your glory and the salvation of my brothers, the men, and to be your example, affable and humble, forming his disciples, toward the Father, together. I feel really like an instrument of the Spirit.

Since my coming here, I find the work relatively easy, despite my ever-precarious health. On the work level, I am inclined always to do too much. The heart is always inclined to answer a call, but the staying-power remains always limited. Sometimes that elicits some 'humiliating conflicts'. It's a part of my make-up which is long and not always easy to evangelize.

I have tried, very honestly, throughout the year to give Christ to others, to make Him increase in the postulants and 'elsewhere'. I have really loved my work; I have become conscious of myself, as ever and that since I am a priest, as an instrument of Christ giving the love of Christ, I must continue living in thanksgiving and the joy of communicating it by my lifestyle, full of hope. By the example of the Virgin of the Annunciation: 'And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart' (Lk 2:19).

Thus ends this period, 1960-1967, in the itinerary of Julien Papillon. A period of shock, if ever there was one.

A visit to Africa took away the last illusions about his abilities. They are heavily hypothetical and Julien does not rely on them as being promising for 'missionary production'. He knows it, and will be feeling it more and more. He will have to live contentedly together with fatigue and weak-

ness, his partners which will never let go of him. In the long term, he will be able to do nothing except offer them up and allow the Word of God to take care of them.

A surprising fecundity is in the making. What occurred to him as premonition in an almost prophetic way during his last moments in Africa will prove to be enough. In the autumn of 1967, he is appointed specifically and officially to the Spiritual Year as collaborator of the one in charge. 'I build up the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men by my charity, my poverty, my material inertia, my weaknesses of health and its humiliating consequences.'

To the other elements of his spirituality, that of the spirit of faith and that of self-offering which had been set up at the time of his formation periods, a third element is added here, that of spiritual poverty which evolved while listening to the Word of God and the love received from his Lord. The references to the somewhat negative self-image, leading him to devalue himself are rather rare. He perceives the importance of the spirit of the Beatitudes and makes himself increasingly welcoming of them. By that very fact, almost unconsciously, he recovers an astonishing self-confidence which allows him to let his charisma and talents grow, as he himself points out at the end of the present account.

# Chapter Four

## The years 1967-1979

In September 1967, Julien moves from Lennoxville, where he was in charge of the Brother Postulant candidates, at St. Martin, near Montreal. That is where the formation of the candidates desiring to join the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, the White Fathers, occurs. Let us recall that this above-mentioned year of the novitiate was to be called the Spiritual Year in the future.

September 1967, I make my way to St. Martin where the Spiritual Year is to be held. I work in the company of Fathers Raynald Pelletier and Jean-Marie Tardif. It is a time of a new beginning and a slow adaptation all over again, but I begin there with all my heart. During my holidays, I neglected meditation quite a bit, but I made up for it anyway by an effort on heart level by remaining in a climate of love of the Lord in real life. Getting back into the White Fathers context, it is easier.

After a month, I look to see how I am doing with my duty of state. I have done my work with generosity. I sometimes feel in my heart some sentiments of jealousy. This is more explicit towards one or another confrère. I react by asking the Lord for poverty of heart. My spiritual climate is good and lived in joy with the idea of serving Christ in the novitiate. I maintain an attitude of spiritual poverty by accepting my limitations and by the loving service of Christ in others.

In the following months, I make use of Scripture and particularly certain chapters from the Gospel of Matthew. It is the type of prayer that turns out the best for me, that of a simple and loving dialogue. I pay special attention to the preparation. As far as my duty of state, the time has come when I am a real spiritual counsellor, and I think that I have been generous and joyful in the accomplishment of this difficult but very consoling work. I would so much like to give shape to this desire of being 'of service'. I am very 'provoked' by the anxiety of giving witness to a pleasant face of Christ, without sweetening the message. I feel much joy and peace in seeing myself the instrument of the Lord.

For 1968-1969, Father Raynald Pelletier and I are moving to Quebec, into something new: The centre of missionary formation in which we work in consultation with the Pères des Missions Étrangères. It is an enriching and original experience. I still feel awkward and timid in my difference. By contrast, I also feel very much at ease with the students and a great capacity for development in this domain. I maintain a sober distance from my family and friends, being concerned about being present in my place of life and work.

After a degree of negligence since my annual retreat, my life of prayer here at the Centre is improving and is more and more committed. I get down to the liturgy of the day: 'Let us pray as Church'. Mass and thanksgiving: I am conscious of the gesture carried out and I treat it with due consideration. I always wish to live better the memory of the Lord who is passing, and who wishes to pass through me. This consciousness engenders in me a current and qualitative responsibility- that of living to the full my adaptation and making it easy for youth. As a practical orientation, I have felt the need to promote communication by developing my attention to Christ in me and in events. In that line, the anxiety about poverty still lives in me.

In June 1969, the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa take a decision to create one single centre for spiritual formation in Washington, DC. All candidates wishing to become Missionaries of Africa will be sent there. It will be an international centre. The Fathers in charge will be: Raynald Pelletier, Julien Papillon, Roger LaBonté and Josef Hartman.

Washington, DC, September 1969. Raynald and I enter there, we are 'moving backward'! Just as I noted 10 years later, it is a demanding and painful year! Is the group ready to live the spiritual experience as proposed? We get through it, but what purification! My confrère is filled to the brim with it! For my part, certain persons increasingly enter into my life, and I perceive that my affective need takes place then. The demands from the group will come to intensify it. It is here that my itinerary with my confrère Roger begins. He introduces me to the Charismatics.

As this year progresses, I am trying to liberate myself in view of a real encounter with God. I am preoccupied with myself. I pay attention to

the will of God just as it presents itself here. I feel more receptivity in spite of certain inner resistances, just as a certain peace and joy, despite certain clouds caused by my sensitivity. My prayer directs itself toward a greater union with Christ in order to be like his presence in these surroundings. The effort to understand better the situation of each candidate and to be more attentive to it helps very much to keep me in the truth.

It is a year of purification, if ever there was one. I try to let myself be challenged by the surroundings: allowing the others to speak, listening to them, and not judging them too quickly by posing too many unreasonable demands. All this comes from the desire to see them more and more responsible for themselves, but perhaps there is deep down in myself a lack of security?

Unsettling, that is the great lesson from this year in the capital of capitalism. We are challenged by the surroundings and its differences of age, culture, language, education, nationalities. We are also challenged by a lack of receptivity, self-sufficiency, inconsiderateness, and some criticism. So, I see there a call from God to a greater poverty: adaptation, all the while avoiding false compromise. Consequently, there is a deeply felt need for prayer and the promotion of confidence to the maximum.

I discover one dangerous weakness in the group: mutual trust and a certain ‘mistrust’ of the directions given in direction. They need help in understanding spiritual counselling, which is a charism, which necessitates a flexible discretion, but nonetheless to be respected.

I point spiritual direction toward reading the Scriptures and other inspiring books. However, I promote the Scriptures during Lent and the ‘penance’ aimed at the building up of the community. The pedagogy of spiritual counsel is the deepening of conversion beginning with a very realistic topic with respect to the times. It is learning to know oneself properly in a climate of mutual confidence and friendship, by allowing the Gospel to penetrate a life of serious prayer and fraternal commitment.

In this self-renunciation, God calls us to freedom and to adapt ourselves to the signs of the times. I keenly observe the importance of friendship: For the missions, it takes first place. The demand of youth on this point requires on our part an adaptation to this need. It’s a step-

ping stone from the Gospel. It is necessary to be able to recognize this need, to respect it, to make oneself known as a man and spend some time at it, and above all not to hasten our desire to see ourselves involved in that. The Word has to take second place. In that climate, it becomes an apprenticeship in which the students slowly feel won over and open their minds to the Word.

At the time of the revision of life, 1970, I discover a whole new spirituality of the event. Learning to decipher it is necessary in order to seek and answer it. The event is a call from God, a meeting, a place of love, a 'sacrament'. It's the old performance technique: seeing judging and acting with regard to a reality which we are concerned about. The reality, this is our present situation and our action and reaction next to ourselves, the group, among us.

The 'Washington event' seems to have had a determining effect in the human and spiritual experience of Julien. He seems to have been deeply shaken in his sensitivity and emotions, faced with the challenges of the group of students comprising the Spiritual Year of that year, challenges springing from the psychology of the group. Did the latter have the necessary human maturity to commit themselves to the spiritual experience which was being proposed? The same question was posed equally at the level of each candidate. For their part, those in charge of the formation were likewise having their own vision of the formation to promote according to the demands of the priestly and missionary vocation and of the charism proper to the White Fathers of Africa. Finally, the new instructions freshly worked-out by the Second Vatican Council on matters of Theology and of Spirituality and the imposing heap of 'missiological' matter born in the 1967 White Fathers Chapter do not make things easier. Who could foresee that the pedagogy of ecclesiastical and missionary formation is being dealt with and adaptable to meet every challenge?

Two things are clarified from Julien's testimony. On the one hand, he will listen very attentively to his own emotional reactions entirely as movements of the Spirit, which he perceives in his prayer and listens to it from the Word, according to the demands and developments of the surroundings. More than ever, a spirituality of the Incarnation, further and further away from the perfectionist injunctions which always dwell in him, will become his line of growth and maturation. He will put in its place an educational scheme of rele-

vant accompaniment and discernment arising from this experience for his own account. As the years go by, this pedagogy will be filled in by reading and reflection. For all that, it will not be something learned from books. He will 'confide' more and more in his 'spiritual feeling' and his own sensitivity more and more refined with Gospel contacts. On the other hand, the fact of also having some more frequent contacts with persons on the outside in different places of encounter and of prayer will bring him to challenge himself more deeply on his own emotions by means of new friendships which are introduced into his life. The latter will be multiplied in the next five years, which he will live in Europe. What place to give to the emotions in his spiritual growth? How to offer his own sensitivity to the work of the Gospel?

We now follow Julien from Washington DC to Europe, where he will spend those five years from September 1970, to June 1975: three in England, one at Fribourg in Switzerland, and the other one at Mours in France. This obliges him to move at the end of each year, depending upon whether the groups are Anglophone or Francophone. Multiple Sclerosis is undermining Julien's health constantly and relentlessly. He pursues his 'nomadic' life with all its requirements.

## **Broome Hall: Dorking, England, 1970-1971**

23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1970

*Dear Mother,*

*The 'wandering Jew' who comes back to you, this time with a new address... Calmly, we are beginning to get settled. I confess to you that our new location is very different from what we had at Chemin Ste Foy. We are plunged into the English countryside. This is the bush, to use a White Fathers expression which means that we are really withdrawn. We will certainly not be bothered by noise from vehicles, situated as we are a respectable distance from a quiet country road. The change, as far as the location, is thus very significant of a completely new situation for the students. So, it is normal that they feel some confusion: At first sight, there is a feeling of being a bit lost. As someone used to say: the countryside promises to be beautiful for a long time!*

*Here, there is a realistic initiation into White Father missionary life. I say White Father because we happen to be really in an international context: we are of nine nationalities, trying to understand each other in English. It is a real achievement. Nonetheless, Christ has to be a living being if someone succeeds in living this original style. We will begin the retreat at the beginning of October. I recommend it to your prayers so that we would all be able to live a year of authentic Gospel brotherhood.*

*The weather, the food and the language inclusively are easily adapted to. There is one thing which I need more time to get used to, it's the location. We are, as I mentioned to you already, 'very withdrawn'... a bit too much for my taste. So there is a considerable enough difference from the places where I stayed previously. I consider that like a good retreat, it can only do me good.*

*In spite of all that and many other small things, however, our students are advancing and making progress in brotherly joy. I confess to you that the presence of God is being felt.*

*Affectionately, Julien*

Preparations are being made for another move at the end of June... for the north of Liverpool, city of Southport, a place called Birkdale.

In the summer of 1971, I return to Canada to see Mother and the family. I also have to meet and prepare another group of Canadian students, a kind of pre-novitiate at the Quebec Procure, as I had done the previous summer. This summer like the previous one was also spent making friends.

## **1971-1972: September at Birkdale**

My two confrères become totally involved in the charismatic movement. Some friends visit us. As far as I am concerned, I visit the University of Lancaster for many encounters and exchanges with the students. The year will be rich in friends. We have some Eucharistic celebrations in a context of intense prayer and love. I feel very much the presence of three persons where I go in Lancaster every month. Through them, I have several contacts and I develop some friendships

which will leave their mark for years to come. Despite those numerous contacts on the outside, I am still present to the novices. Thank the Lord for this balance!

In June 1972, a new preparation for moving, this time to the continent! Fribourg will be the next post. Mike will do a sabbatical year in Ottawa. Roger will again make his way to Uganda. I am offered a trip to Canada for the summer vacation of 1972. I accept with pleasure. Mother is more and more in ill-health. I will spend the summer with her, the family and friends. The summer is full of loving and affectionate encounters. Thank God!

At the end of August, I am headed for Fribourg. A group of 21 students, very nice and Irish! All of them 'researching'. One month overloaded but rich from every point of view, and I quickly learn to function well with Albert Nyssens and Michel Lepage. There is the beginning of a great friendship here. I am coming to know the mother of the latter and one of her great friends. Thank you, Lord, for so much tenderness: the long intimate, emotional and proper conversations we miss very much and are a marking point in our human, spiritual progress.

After Easter, the social work stage is on at Lyons. It will also be something to mark the solidarity between us and all the new arrivals. During several visits to Taizé we have experienced several exceptional Eucharistic celebrations. I am still more sensitive to every human: man and woman. This year is rich in all kinds of experiences. Encounters with men and women affect me very much, and I remain 'warmly' imbued with it and enriched by it. It is all 'intensely' experienced. Lyons is a smiling city for me because of the men and women encountered and loved, and it is also strongly connected to the generosity and paternal hospitality of our White Father confrères at Ste. Foy-les-Lyon and associated to our first visits to Taizé.

At the end of 1972-73, a new call is made for me to prepare my luggage and return to Birkdale. I begin my journey with my luggage in our Renault, with Thomas Hillas as a courageous companion on this terrific and memorable journey!

In the summer of 1973, I feel that Mother is losing ground. So I shall go to Canada for the summer. Before leaving, I 'settle again' at

Birkdale and I spend a few days there in contact with my friends and neighbours. I am visited by a neighbour whom I met the previous year and to whom I have become a counsellor and friend. This is the last summer with Mother at Neuville. I reach there in mid-July after a productive and warm week in London with some friends. There is a torrid heat in Montreal. I rest there for a few days before setting out for Neuville. Mother is very weak but still autonomous and dignified and she will remain so until the end.

Apart from a few encounters and visits I try to be fully present at home. I celebrate the Eucharist there with Mother in the kitchen. We pray closely together and we chat more warmly about the family and the future. Nearing the third week of August, the departure is making itself felt on both sides. It will be very hard for both: I remember the last afternoon and the 'pulling away' at about 4 P.M.. I travel alone up to the home of my sister at Cap de la Madeleine. I have very deep feelings. It was known and it was felt that this was the last time when we were to see each other here below. Lord, thank you for the strength and the courage which You gave us on that day. Give her the joy of being wholly with You today and being reunited with loved ones all together for eternity. Amen. I am thinking about Romans, Chapter 8 (14). Maranatha! At Neuville, she will lie next to Father, near the River – and in my turn 'when the time comes'. Fiat!

18<sup>th</sup> October 1973, he writes the following letter to his mother:

*Dear Mother,*

*The group is exceptional and very much likeable company. I thank the Lord for it. We live and work in a very relaxed, joyful and at the same time very serious atmosphere. Such a climate says something to us about their maturity, young in age but wise in heart. I am very happy with them. There is much work, we are only two animators since Roger's departure for Uganda, but having become used to live and work together, Mike and I easily and joyfully share the job. The health is holding up well, I feel better than in September when I was too tired. I still have the bad habit of going to bed late. The days are too short.*

A month later, my loneliness here is fuelled by the ‘departure’ of Mother (17<sup>th</sup> December 1973). Twenty-four hours after the telephone call from Henri (brother), I was in Quebec and in Neuville. Several confrères come to concelebrate. The Eucharist is full of faith, peace and calm. The fact of having seen Mother’s ‘reflective’ repose when I arrived two days earlier at the funeral parlour comforted me and ‘confirmed’ that she is fulfilled. I spend Christmas at home, the first in six years, and put Mother’s affairs in order, including her will. We promise to gather once a year for a Eucharist in grateful memory. At the beginning of January 1974, I return very tired to Birkdale,. There is a pile of sympathy correspondence coming from Africa, America and Europe. Several are inviting me to go and rest here and there; I refuse and fully begin the daily routine up to the time of the social service stage after Easter. I am ‘burnt out’! I am again beginning to have ‘extensive’ health problems with Multiple Sclerosis, exhaustion and trouble with the kidneys. It will last until the end of the year!

It is the end of this year, 1973-1974, in Great Britain. The request for another move in this entire context will be more difficult to do, but anyway, I accept to be on the road again, which I feel as a precious step in emotional self-denial – towards certain persons. The Lord is asking me to keep a certain distance. I begin and move in a positive way. I total up my cash account again! My ‘goodbyes’ to the North: Lancaster, Birkdale, Liverpool.

This time I leave for France, for Mours. However, during the summer, I come to spend a few weeks of rest in my country at my own expense. I land at Toronto, exhausted. The weather is torrid and, with my fatigue, I am really completely exhausted! Moreover, ‘it shows’ and I resent that! The summer is spent in complete rest with family and friends. My health is recovered sufficiently to be on my way again at the end of August. At the beginning of September, I enter Paris.

1974-1975: Mours with Mike Targett and Michel Lepage, who has been added to our staff. They are 18 students in a house ‘being renovated’. The location is exceptional, at Paris’ door. It is a year which becomes nice, easy and inspiring. My health ‘still’ remains the place of purifications! My friendships with Michel, his mother and a few friends become deeper. Thank the Lord! Those friends will bring warmth and joy to a rainy temperature from September to January. Together, sharing the

same needs, we search to find meaning to our progress in life. Prayer, this year, will remain faithful and generous, nurtured by a 'vigorous' liturgy. There are still some 'emotional gaps' which one or another visit will bring to light. I am very tired at the second semester with a strong 'attack' on the kidneys. I spend two weeks of rest in the hospital. The centre at Mours allows us to get to know better the French Province of the White Fathers. It is of superior quality, and I am pursuing some great White Father friendships.

If the event of going through Washington (1969-70) and the challenges of the surroundings allowed Julien to develop his education programme of accompaniment facing students in search of vocational and missionary vocation, the five years in Europe allowed him to become conscious of his emotional potential through the friendships which occur in his life. Gift of God among others, the latter becomes for him quite a privileged occasion of evangelization and of profound conversion. It is with his whole being that he wishes to learn to love, in truth and fidelity to himself as to all persons who visit him and those whom he meets on the way, in a rigorous discernment facing the authentic demands of love. The fight within himself continues. He becomes more and more vigilant, 'listening' to his heartbeat and welcoming every day the Word of God which projects the light desired on this event.

From September 1975 to September 1979 the Spiritual Year was relocated to Canada at Vanier, near Ottawa. So, I find myself again in Canada, in one of the buildings of the former scholasticate, where I did my studies in Theology twenty-five years earlier, to begin another Spiritual Year there. It's a new appointment, in the same line, but 'elsewhere'. I visit a few friends from France and England. I feel it somewhat like a last visit, with its emotional repercussions. My Eucharistic celebrations are experienced and prayed warmly. There is a depth of bonding with one family in particular. Thank you, Lord, for all that I have lived in Great Britain.

I arrive tired but happy to come to work in the home country for two years, so they tell me! The vacation goes by quickly and intensely: conversations with friends are not lacking as well as enrichments filled with acknowledgements and affection.

The 21<sup>st</sup> February is the first sign of a fatigue and of a stupor which will frequently be pointed out in the weeks that follow and

onto the end of that Spiritual Year. Later, on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1978, he will have to take an additional rest at Lac Vert, a rest home for the Missionaries of Africa. On that date, he remarks upon a return from a walk: 'Legs very tired and lying down... Writing is difficult for me, the right hand 'nervous', difficult to control and very quick fatigue.' 15<sup>th</sup> March: conversation with the Provincial about Julien's health and request for a replacement for the year to come.

5<sup>th</sup> April 1978: 'Very tired this morning. It is 9:00 A.M. I am alone and I feel very weak and wretched. Would like to write another letter, but something is wrong. Consequence: Rest! I have no choice.

Julien in Ottawa around 1975.

10<sup>th</sup> April: Father Yves Gaudreault, Assistant to the Superior General, passes through: discussion about the need to find a replacement or to find a third partner for the personnel of the Spiritual year. The name of Richard Dandenault, on sabbatical at that time, is put forward. The latter accepts for one year, delaying his departure for Africa in doing so.

I have begun the fourth year at Vanier, rested but nevertheless more fragile than ever, and even if the summer has been good, I am handicapped and I would have to remain aware of it! I have much difficulty in channelling my potential and my limitations! This 'generosity' of my nature and the instruction which I have received regarding it is all the same not so simple to 'direct'! This summer of 1978 says it to me again in terms of flesh and blood! It is not, however, 'the exchanges' about what has taken place which are lacking! Lucidity, then, does not seem to be lacking? The means to take are given and it is necessary to situate oneself in an attitude of receiving and willing the metanoia and of committing oneself to it realistically, by unmasking the deceits so as not to be taken in! Would there not be temptation on one part and greed on the other?

God wants me as I am: affectionate and vulnerable, weak, tender and sensitive, self-offering but also oriented and educated in Christ. With reference to the Trinity in the deepening of my/our personal mystery, it is not at all possible without the Cross.

Julien celebrates the Eucharist with a group of students of the Spiritual Year in Ottawa in 1976.

Thus, I go over that drawn-out period in February 1979, which we spend reflecting about our own emotions. A first question which we are asking is: what are my apprehensions and expectations when I meet up with love, with tenderness, and with friendship? A vital question if ever there was one! In the whole of your life, what has guided and motivated you faced with these great realities?

I feel no apprehension. I am deeply certain that, through the experience of my life history, family influence in particular, there is a natural and generous gift in me regarding this domain which becomes deeper even now. In me, there is an ease in loving relationships, and I feel natural in it. Tenderness comprises part of the make-up of my world, and I feel in myself the urge to 'say' it with my whole being, itself being 'vulnerable' to tenderness and fidelity in my own openness to God. May the Latter be Love and Goodness and Tenderness and Mercy: isn't that part of my make-up just as is Christian and missionary? That is a Word of God which has its parallel in Jesus Christ. To that which has been endowed to me by nature, I add my family influence.

With a certain number of persons, my emotional responses are set to perform and to be tested. I have great affection for them, with feelings experienced which make me vibrate in my whole being while I am at the same time at ease and in touch with them intimately and reciprocally. There is a total openness to everyone because of deep respect and mutual transparency. In this matter, history and time are very important for me. Out of respect, I understand the intimate and personal mystery belonging

to each one which ought never to be taken over or violated. For me this is something capital and a vigorous source of maturation on the level of intimacy. It is the ‘place’, the unique identity of one or the other, which belongs only to one or to the other, or to the Author, i.e., that bond of the ontological relationship with God, Creator and Father of Jesus Christ.

When speaking about affection, I need history and time and affinity and a context of exchange at the level of being. Here the ‘feeling’ is important in the evaluation of this type of relationship. There is also a need to feel discretion and respect. I am severe about emotional blackmail and emotional exploitation. It must not feel artificial, instrumental, ‘diplomatic’, a concoction.

I remain grateful for all the persons who have been given me by the Lord. I always see them as such, and I accept them from Him, even if in the past there have been some indiscretions, some liberties taken, and some precautions which remind me that a minimum of ‘prudence’ can help us to sublimate our sharing and to help us in channelling how we express ourselves.

I feel that I still need to get more into the gift of my whole being for the Lord, in transparency and in respect for others. Let me be ‘seeking’ in all the sum of which my past has made me to be: tender and affectionate, sensitive and vulnerable, affable and naïve, weak and expressive, receptive, ‘likeable’ and attentive to beauty. I act and react in consequence. Experience tells me that this is the fruit of the Spirit but that the expression must be constantly rechanneled.

Putting an end to these days of reflection, I resume the pivotal stages of my history. Interesting and demanding! I detect in it the call to conversion with all my being and the emotional relationship which is a relationship on a daily scale. As always, I see the importance and impact of my sensitivity of vision and of my reaction to my ‘ordinary contacts. This was perceived formerly, and I always end up letting myself be guided by the Spirit and not by my feelings.

## **Here are those pivotal-stages of my life**

1. Childhood and adolescence: I am quickly initiated into the Presence of God by Mother and the sociological context, a presence appeal-

ing to my personal relationship with the vision of a good and merciful God. I am equally initiated into the moral demands transmitted by the surroundings of Jansenist leaning. I discover the harshness and the painful competition at school and the little companions.

2. To be 'something' appeals to me and makes itself felt early and will be expressed mostly in certain academic sectors. I also make a slow and unreasonable discovery of solitude and the commitment into a context where support is almost non-existent. This remains my interpretation and I painfully learn the demands from choices and bit by bit from the 'choice' which channels the energy of one's being in a given perspective. This is the learning experience from separation: projects of career, of marriage, of a family to establish, but also separation from my surroundings for the 'adventure' strongly felt for a long time in a confused way and which never ceases to torment me and 'to hurt' very often. I feel a deep peace and an interior joy on the day when I lay down my arms and enter into designated perspectives. I accept to 'lose my life' and to undertake a progress attractive on the one hand and one of which I am afraid on the other hand, but the YES engenders peace and profound joy. That's it!

3. This is the confirmation of all the earlier encounters. The God of Jesus Christ is a very personal God Who made us for Himself and 'everything' must be seen and evaluated in this perspective: I join the White Fathers.

4. Stages of formation, intense and generous and some discernment. I discover the face of the Father, my sin and my limits.

The other stages are only mentioned quickly:

5. Student-priest at the University of London in Education. Stricken by Multiple Sclerosis. Return to Canada and convalescence. Feeling of uselessness. Resumption of life and work: I question myself about the vocational style. In Africa with its dangers and apprehensions: it's a painful childbirth. Another return to Canada after eight months. It is once again convalescence with its demanding questions. Five years in Europe: resumption of life and of work. Return to Canada in 1975: deepening of the spirituality of the Exodus and of the departure according to

Genesis 12: 1. It is the moment of great friendship, encounters with men and women who mark my existence, with certain particularly privileged persons, which are underway.

My daily diary becomes an existential discovery in the constant deepening of what the fidelity of God means, experienced in my past, a fidelity which sorrowfully questions me on certain days... and nights.

I notice some severe difficulties when writing for a prolonged time. At present I have a sclerotic arm and it is beginning to show! Someone is helping me to pack my bags and carry them. For me, this is a unique and happy occasion because with my legs, walking and carrying luggage have become very painful. Short outings at night, I go round the property and I have much difficulty coming back, I am like a drunken youth: others stare at me: what a fellow... not another one!

My prayer this morning continues on into the line of the liturgy of the day and of the Gospel. 'And every man who will have left behind because of me home, brother, sister'... Lord, I am here for You, here, in Exodus, on the road, in great peace, into the deepening of my personal mystery which I am alone to live. My prayer becomes the offering to Jesus Christ of my life of solitude and of exile for You, Lord, in peace. I am 'touched' by this loving presence of the confrères, of the men and of the mysteries given to your mission. Thank You, Lord! Yes, You are alive! We are marginal beings because of Jesus. This is our prayer and our warm relationship with the Living Christ, and the vigour of our existence, that of growing older, maturing and dying his life in order to live his death.

# Chapter Five

## The years 1979-1983

### Preliminaries

We skim through the itinerary here of Julien Papillon during his four last years of active ministry in the context of the Spiritual Year, in which a certain number of youth appear, wishing to commit themselves to the Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), either as priests or Brothers. As in preceding years, Julien is part of a team of those in charge who share the work of the different sectors of formation. Each one of them also takes on the function of 'guru' or spiritual director for one or another who is of their choice. In his diary everything is noticed: the context, the daily occurrences, the lived experiences, the feelings. Nothing escapes his attention and his awareness.

Let us recall here the elements of the formation programme which are the same for the most part in each of those years. The themes proposed for reflection and prayer: vocation, mission, prayer, and foundation of the spiritual experience, the problem of evil and suffering, the following of Jesus and entering into the Paschal experience. Through these elements there is the personal discernment of each one. At the beginning of the year, there is a personal presentation by each one with his personal history. What kind of community are we forming? It is important to know each other well. The reports from the counsellors of the staff, (Fathers Alexandre You, Gotthard Rosner and Julien Papillon) are equally noticed and registered according to the responsibilities assigned to each one. Finally, in a larger context: that of Switzerland, in the Canton of Fribourg, next to an-

other community of Swiss White Fathers who are living in the same house. Julien knows this context well, having lived there before.

All that affects his susceptibility and his reflection is also noticed and commented on, all as that which resounds in his life and his history as memories, deep impressions of joy and pleasure, of grief and of wounds and which influence his choices and his orientation. The daily events are coded and qualified according to the visceral reactions which he feels interiorly from these events: the meals, the encounters, the letters received, the unforeseen situations, the short outings, the exterior ministries, the contextual difficulties, the easy relationships and those which were less easy. He is alerted to everything that corresponds to his sensitivity. In a routine way, the latter becomes for him the first and privileged place of his own evangelization.

At Ars in France with Alex You, Superior of the Spiritual Year in Fribourg, Switzerland in 1980. Alex was murdered in 1991 in Uganda.

The Spiritual Year programme also includes a period of social stage lasting about six weeks, following Holy Week. It is performed in different centres of France or Great Britain, depending upon whether the group is Francophone or Anglophone. Usually these are the Communautés d'Emmaus de l'Abbé Pierre, the Centre du Secours Catholiques, the Communautés de l'Arche de Jean Vanier in France, and the St. Joseph's Hospital, the Simon Community, and the Communities of the Arche in Great Britain.

This long period of active service (four years) will require much energy from Julien to face up to the activities in hand. His illness increases and greatly affects his mood. References to weakness, of extreme fatigue happening almost every day, of pains in the legs, arms, stomach, are frequent.

In spite of it all, a great generosity is evident in him to be up to the task of his ministry as formator and spiritual director. His efforts at being attentive and present to each one is constant. His everyday prayer reflects his inner state of self-offering, his abandonment to the mercy and tenderness of God. His pleas to be freed from guilt feelings become insistent, just like his need for purification. His desire for the Father to take charge of him so that He might give and confide him to his Son Jesus by the loving power of his Spirit is the object of a constant request.

So, at the approach of Christmas, 1979, here is a small anecdote which will illustrate the state of his soul:

The interchange of letters with parents and friends at this time of year, 1979, is relatively heavy, and I remain quiet about the cost of Christmas cards required by the Swiss postal service. I am paying 1.50 FS (\$1.08) for each card-letter. I decide to agree with it for two reasons. In many cases it is a letter which is long overdue and in some cases it is a message to be delivered to each and every one. It will cost me \$100, but I think that the motivation justifies the expense and the effort! As well as the time spent! It's a ministry which I can perform, whereas so many others are closed to me – So, Jesus, I want to do it for You, knowing very well that in all of that there are also 'certain impurities' which will slip in, bound up with some emotional abundances. Purify me of that! I spend the afternoon in correspondence and I am very tired, but once again, this is a ministry which I value dearly and I do it freely and lovingly.

For the period of September to December, 1979, we are reproducing here a few points clearly alluded to by Julien relating to his health, his prayer, his life context. First of all:

## **His state of health**

The dinner was nice, but afterwards, my legs are very weak and I go upstairs to lie down. I feel bad and I am having severe pain in the legs and stomach. This is happening to me frequently. Is there 'flu around? Rising from the siesta, I spend a good part of the afternoon doing correspondence, to the extent of making my hand almost cramped: another sign showing the increase of limitations! My walk with my confrere Alex this evening is done from now on with crutches. It is more pru-

dent! It was necessary to break the ice and for me to perform my premiere act, and there it is, it's done! I remain in union with all these persons who need You, Jesus.

Another morning: I had a good night, but one which does not take away the discomfort in my legs and arms, which creates a severe feeling of fatigue and of painful heaviness when trying to raise them. This comes back in my prayer: I offer myself and I pray by helping myself with the Gospel of the day: 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on me and bring comfort today to everybody who is suffering, especially those who have no hope of getting away from it. Yes, Lord, have mercy on us.'

I feel tired and more and more 'inept' faced with my physical limitations. It is a feeling of complete uselessness, and it is this marginalization which challenges me from every angle. We must allow Jesus to speak in all of this and be confident. It is the 'how' which is not so clear in this action. Faith and trust in Jesus! The cross! Acceptance and self-offering: I see Jesus in my flesh through and with the suffering of man – Is this true? Jesus, increase my faith! My prayer is centred on the name of Jesus and of Abba!

We are at the end of November. I am walking this evening, with the help of my crutches. After a half-hour of walking, I am worn out and very weak. My legs are weak and I feel a heaviness of heart. I feel a really marked and gradual decline these last few days. A message here: don't be stubborn and get going into a new lane with faith and courage and it will be necessary for me to talk seriously about it at Christmas-time in view of an eventual change. How I would like to complete a year and 'finish' with the Francophone year. Lord Jesus, help me to see it all more clearly and to accept with You the will of the Father. Truthfully speaking, I feel the sclerosis in a very painful way and I realize intensely that with my limitations I am no longer 'exportable'. It is doing its work. God does not seem to be very cooperative! This is only an impression. I frequently have discomforts, I feel terribly heavy, and I feel it would be good to get away from this lifestyle at the Spiritual Year. I should ask at the right moment, but when and for doing what? God will foresee, have trust, old Pap!

## Reflections following his prayer of the day

Julien discloses to us here the struggle in his prayer life: his intention of being completely at the service of God and of others, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the incessant withdrawals into himself which he feels in all places and in all circumstances and from which he would so like to be liberated. The quotations, though sporadic, reveal anguish. Struggle in prayer, struggle also in faith which illuminate and which are increasingly playing a role in his life. It is Jacob's wrestling with a mysterious figure who speaks of himself as being stronger than him. Wounded at the hip, handicapped in his walk, Jacob asks him to reveal his name and to bless him (Gen 32: 25-33).

In the line of my retreat last August, my thoughts are about self-offering, and I try to be a man of prayer and intercession. I am happy to be there, with Mary at the foot of the cross.

I have had a good night, and I am praying this morning in our new oratory, along with others. My prayer is deeply centred on myself with feelings of withdrawal into myself. I am not happy with that. I am trying to react, a certain peace comes back. Lord, have mercy on me. It is not by comparing myself that I am going to recover harmony and interior joy but by entering the today of my life, as I am here, by 'service' of presence. Lord, You are choosing what is weak. Grant me the grace to accept myself as I am. I place myself again into the hands of the Father and of Jesus. Amen!

The feelings of withdrawal into myself are coming back. I am being plagued by it. It is very cold, with a pouring rain and a humidity which is penetrating. I am spending one hour, alone, in our oratory. I pray to Jesus in my brothers to direct my activity toward God. I am reciting Lauds, a prayer of the Church. Here, at least, I am agreeable to You.

A simple and peaceful prayer which is over quickly and I feel it being broken by a sorrowful progress toward the personal autonomy in which I meet the only absolute there ever was, the Father of the heavens. The family is not unconditional and is not the exclusive aim of my life. "Who is my brother, my sister, my mother? They are the ones who listens to the Word and puts it into practice."

I am very much preoccupied with myself! Myself in activity, as God would will it. What if it were about being, being today in the context of now? In a 'flash', I feel that I must learn to be as I am before the Lord, without comparing myself, even if it is not easy. Peace returns to me slowly. Lord, I am here for your glory and for the missions. Have mercy on me!

My morning prayer was done early today, in a calm self-offering of the day. That thought comes back to me, however, that I have not adequately answered God's calls in my life, that I have done nothing for the poor and little people, but the important thing is today, in my weakness and limitations, with and in Jesus, for the missions, in my brothers, in communion with those who proclaim your name.

Vigilance consists in discovering the presence of God in events. Today! In my reality, I wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning in the Lord's presence, which is continued in the prayer with a degree of lethargy: I regularly fall back on the name of Jesus to concentrate on Him. That is the grace to request every morning and every day which You are giving me Lord.

I begin the Eucharist tired, feeling much pain throughout the celebration with feelings of complete poverty in my body. I am exhausted. Lord Jesus, take my life, I have often expressed that to You, not in an undesirable manner, but take me if you want it, for the glory of the Father. My afternoon is spent at work in spite of a nauseating temperature and a much weakened health: it is the holiday correspondence which swallows up the time and energy and, with the little time and energy that I have, it is strenuous. Take care not to unload your burden on the others. That leads me to a certain isolation 'all that'. I must watch myself during supper time that I may remain open and receptive.

## **His principal work**

A third point to note in the daily diary of Julien is his principal work: that of spiritual direction of the students who are proceeding with him on the road of their vocational identity, while listening to the Spirit. This work, as we have seen, he calls: 'the armchair apostolate'. He looks like a real witness of the Church in that difficult pursuit known as spiritual discernment.

Today with one of the students, I enjoyed a very friendly sharing. Together, we enter upon the place of discernment in prayer first of all, of which he feels more and more the important impact in life. He is awakened to reading and the interpretation of what he is living – the part that they play in prayer. He is more stable in it, thanks to daily prayer. He recognizes the place of the Donor and opens his

The Fribourg Years from 1979 to 1983. Julien with Gotthard Rosner.

mind to giving thanks. He also perceives some movements as invitations to do 'great things'. He also speaks of the presence of the Spirit in him in line with the fruits given in the letter to the Galatians (5:22). He has begun the acquaintance and the acceptance of his own personal mystery. He recognizes the importance of time, of patience with himself, of the slow maturation of his being in contact with a simple and ordinary life. Thank God! 'Today salvation has come to this house' (Lk 19: 9).

Julien is wishing, from the end of this year, 1979, to return to Canada with a mission less demanding for 'his means', as he puts it. He remains, however, at Fribourg until August 1983, three more years. His diary always testifies to the mission, which he must affirm in order to remain 'faithful' to his mandate of spiritual director and to himself. The constant reference which he makes to his prayer, to the reaction of his health, of the events of the day and of his daily life reveal altogether the intensity and the constant struggle which do not let him go and of which he himself does not wish to let go and of the work of evangelization which is stirred up in his life and in his heart.

The next pages give us a report of the interaction of the three constants in the today of Julien's life. His prayer becomes at one and the same time request, plea, thanksgiving, praise, depending upon the impact of the events and the development of his history and of his illness.

1980. *“Fidelity takes root in the commitment at Baptism and is renewed every day in the brotherly love which makes us remain in the light.”* I write down this sentence of Father Jean Laplace, S.J. on the first page of my diary 1980, in order to allow it to live and penetrate me. ‘Lord, may this first day of the New Year, which You Yourself have given, be completely consecrated to You. While offering oneself in one’s freshness and one’s naiveté let this totally unspoiled 1980 be lived with, for and in You, Lord Jesus, for the greatest glory of the Father, under the docile influence of Your Spirit and like You, Virgin Mary. I am presiding at the liturgy of the day and I speak pointing out that the liturgy is a school of ‘objectivity’. It is important to learn to receive it properly in poverty, patience and as a place of progress in our discovery of Christ.

While praying, it occurs to me to ‘doubt’ the ‘veracity’ of my gift to the Lord and I feel the complete lack of purity as far as my motivations which are rooted in my past. However I plunge myself again into the mercy of the Father Who creates and Who saves. If I am here today, it is because of You, Lord. I leave it at that spontaneity to receive and to offer my new days as gifts of the Spirit, of Jesus and of the Father. This is particularly appreciated.

My self-offering prayer is imbued with the Word of Jesus. For me it is enough to be there and to subdue all those voices in me which pull me to the right and to the left. I need to allow myself to be taught and to learn to give my life in my context of a very ordinary life, in solidarity with those who are struggling, suffering and dying. All of us, we are to

The Staff of Fribourg, Switzerland in 1983. Julien with Patrick Fitzgerald, Gotthard Rosner, and Richard Dandenault.

bring forth this new life into newly re-born beings. I spend one good hour completely recollected in Jesus, my Saviour, seeking forgiveness and I look at Him to be imbued by Him, Jesus. My poverty bothers me: as I am still facing Him. Lord, after so many

1982-83: The Spiritual Year in Fribourg, Switzerland.

years. My perfectionist outlook is taking another beating.

In the week following Holy Week, the students have left for the social work stage, some to Lourdes serving the pilgrims, the others in the vicinity of Paris, in the Emmaus de l'Abbé Pierre communities. Lastly, some others are working at the Centre du Secours Catholique also at Paris. The members of the leadership team go to visit the groups of students to share their experience, to celebrate the Eucharist and to dialogue about the meaning which they give to the time where the 'praxis' in difficult circles allows them to demonstrate their human and spiritual energies.

Today, I am again at Lourdes. I frequently think of Our Lady of Africa parallel to Our Lady Of Lourdes. Some invocations come back to me linked with the White Sisters, the White Father confrères, the family, the friends. Lord Jesus, thank You for giving me life and for making me live it in that way, feeling that You are always calling me to greater gratitude and joy in the mystery of the Resurrection, pleading for all my friends and relations in need. At 2 P.M. I am at the grotto spending the afternoon. Virgin Mary, thank you for being here and for living over and again all these years, frequented by all those beloved faces. Watch over them in Jesus!

It is the 1<sup>st</sup> May. Bad news! I have begun to bleed again profusely, after a year of almost day by day respite and after embarrassing treatment from the year before. What is the cause of that? Spices, fatigue, prolonged stomach-aches? Anyway, once again this morning in a painful

act of consciousness I conclude that I am delicate. Nevertheless, the travels are not ended. Lord, help me to live what You are proposing to me by these events.

The 1980-81 Spiritual Year has begun. Julien's daily diary is faithful and gives witness to his prayer, his struggle, his need for liberation, and for purification. One prayer embodied in the events of his daily diary: that of his job as spiritual director, that of his health which is relentlessly deteriorating: everything is lived in self-offering and in intercession for the persons who frequent him and for the world abandoned to violence. Expressions of violence always impress Julien. He perceives his own in his heart, his feelings, his judgments, his words at times. He does not forgive himself for it at the expense of others. He lays bare his own permanent need for evangelization and growth in tenderness and in love. This part is continued in the line of the year 1979-80 and will be shortened quite a bit.

At the beginning of this year, each one of us introduces himself. I begin with a prayer, the singing of the Our Father, and I begin to tell my history divided into stages with headed intervals. My emotional upsets and my health problems, I feel at ease and I try to avoid the 'dramatic' look in demonstrating God's work.

Recollection day in the first trimester: Thank You, Lord, for your Spirit of Love and Fire which is burning in my heart. You have expressed Yourself warmly this morning. You have passed through my guts! Thank you on behalf of myself and of my young brothers for showing Yourself in this way, full of fire, of joy, of peace and of prophetic truth. I feel a great open-mindedness in my young brothers.

At the same time, tonight after the news on TV, I go up to my quarters, I am very tired. I feel temptations of discouragement and the wish to end it all: I am tired of being tired! This goes away. Lord Jesus, what do I have to complain about? While my brothers and sisters are counting on my prayer. 'Behold, I come to do Your will' (Hb 10: 5-10). Thank You, Lord, for this day and for your presence!

1981 has been launched. This is the year of the handicapped! Health problems are recurring in me again. On a January morning, I once again have stomach-ache, and my mind turns to intestinal cancer. It has been this way for some time, and I am still trying to learn: cancer or not?

Here or there? It is not a question of there but how to live it here? In solidarity with those who suffer throughout the world, I am learning to keep quiet and sigh for the final Coming of Jesus. I am learning to sink into Cl 1:24: *'In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ'* Marana Tha!

On this Sunday I am offering up an experience of heaviness and fatigue. After breakfast, I remain alone in the refectory with my great weakness and I can hardly walk. I succeed all the same in doing all the cleaning without complaining as an act of self-offering and of solidarity. Afterwards in the chapel, I feel lousy! Here I am, Lord, just as I am! I recall the spirit of the conversation at lunchtime in which I lacked discretion and charity linked to the liturgy about two students from last year. At prayer time, I make an experiment with my sin and I detect all the subtleties of heart in the movements of self-aggrandisement and show of 'power'. Such is the situation of the man and of self after so many years in a situation ideal for living the Gospel. So, there it is, I am once again expressing the human 'hardheartedness'. Salvation: we receive it, we don't create it!

In the week following Easter, the students leave once again for the centres where they make their social stage: Lourdes, Lyons, Paris. Departure from Fribourg in the direction of Le Valais and the French Alps.

We visit different communities of White Father confrères. In one place, I feel some 'irritations' in my sensitivity. There is someone with a strong voice who controls the Morning Prayer. This feeling is continued into the refectory while taking care of the tables. His 'bossy' attitudes and reactions annoy me, but it is interesting to learn his background. In the Christian sense, I have a long way to go; I have yet to 'prove' this conversion is done in one's sensitivity and develops there! This type of temperament 'torments' me: I need to remain open and affable in ordinary life.

Difficulty in rising: my body weighs me down heavily. I have feelings of discouragement, to let go of everything and to offer myself. We leave, both of us, in the direction of Ars. One part of the day is devoted to prayer through the intercession of the saintly Curé d'Ars for ourselves, for our confrères and for all the priests of the world, in particular those who are

‘alone’. We have a Eucharist with the group in Lyons. We are invited to share our faith by listening to the Word and its impact on us now. It is necessary to know how to create conditions for hearing each other and for a service, especially in the small encounters on our way, wherever we are at the moment. Good encounter! As for my sensitivity, it remains still a bit irritated in the presence of certain reactions of one of us, one of whom I have a tendency to give an interpretation of. I have ‘the experience’, however, and I direct myself toward respecting his style.

During the summer of 1981, Julien prepares himself to confront the Spiritual Year, 1981-1982, which will be made up of two groups under the same roof with the same personnel. One Anglophone group with eighteen candidates and one Francophone group with five candidates. One will be in charge of the two groups, Father Gotthard Rosner, with two collaborators: Father Julien Papillon and Richard Dandenault. This will be a difficult year. It is necessary, for these latter ones, almost to plan everything in the two languages. Julien’s health does not improve. Multiple Sclerosis slowly and implacably does its work of deterioration.

During the same summer, he goes on the missionary walk, organized by the White Sisters and the White Fathers of Europe with two relay stations at Taizé and Carmel de Mazille and a return through southern France. This is an event where Julien will meet some young people, all of which will give rise to new friendships. This walk lasts 7 days, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> August.

We have gone from Fribourg on the 5<sup>th</sup> August in the direction of Taizé and Mazille, for the Missionary Route. The heat is crushing. I meet 250 young people there, affable and tired, but joyful and looking upon each other with expectation and desire to get to know one another. The days which follow are very loaded. I notice only a few items for the moment. The 9<sup>th</sup> August is our last morning at Mazille. I rise at 7 and I am taking my first shower since my departure! It is very much appreciated! Thank You for my sister water, Lord. My night has been restful, and I am astonished at how resistant I am. I arrived in pain, and I now feel a thrust of new life. I have taken a risk and the Lord has gratified me. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, I am writing after having spent more than a week failing to follow my daily writing routine because of ‘nomadic’ circumstances as well as the desire to break away from the usual routine. I will calmly take up the evaluation of Mazille and Taizé in the days which are

coming. For the moment, I renew my faith in Christ and in the Eucharist for receiving my being beyond death. I note that Jesus becomes for me a master and 'quite intimately' and continually a companion. What a grace You are bestowing on me, Jesus!

In a constant struggle with himself, with the upheavals of his 'past' and of the self-image which he does not always like, Julien tells us about his intimate fight with the Gospel. The sometimes excessive and inordinate challenges are revealed. He realizes that the best of himself at the service and in the gratuitous love of others will be possible only with the companionship of Jesus who lovingly and mercifully lends him a strong hand. With the consciousness of a recalcitrant sensitivity, looking for his satisfactions and his own interests first of all, it is still the emerging and springing up of affection which appears in these unpublished pages.

Discussion with a confrere about our itinerary and about our present situation. We are conscious of the joy and the progress made, the freedom and the fruitful solitude, the recognition of the body as language. Thank You, Lord, for this generous and friendly discussion.

My prayer is being influenced by my tired body, which is my present condition, and it appears to me as being very poor. I preside at the Eucharist for lack of 'volunteers' and my introduction is a bit 'painful' and I have a hard time ending it! It is perhaps too long. The rest went on 'comfortably'. I am wondering if it is the presence of God which takes the lead in my emotionalism or is it my presence to men with a super-me self-image which 'controls the situation'? Good question! Undoubtedly, there is something of both in it. It is interesting to know it and to raise awareness of it in order to let the essential emerge: it's a long development, and what is really important is not to drop it and to pray and to welcome the Spirit who works in me. Jesus, come to me and my dwelling.

Gotthard returns from the house of the Sisters, who must have said to him: 'We hope Father Papillon will not preach too long tomorrow'. I understood the message. Those Sisters are teaching and must be ready for their work after breakfast. I felt it also. I am sensitive to that kind of thing. There is, however, one truth to gain and to accept: "'Don't try, Julien, to justify yourself, take the message and remain on top of it!'

The group leave for the mountain with Gotthard. He presides at a prayerful and well-directed Eucharist. He is strong, that Gotthard! It

takes me some time to liberate myself always entangled by my return to my self-image, difficult to deal with! Lord Jesus, free me from these interior embarrassments. Make me transparent! I have blood in the intestines for several days now with a stomach-ache which is tiring, disquieting and it takes away much of my bodily freedom and the possibility of being present to others. Lord, have mercy!

At the same time of autumn, 1981, Julien writes a letter to the General Council and to the members of his Council to describe his general condition, his reduced capacities on the work level and his availability for work 'elsewhere' or for remaining in place in the same ministry according to what they think best.

*"I suppose that the weeks to come will see the matter of the novitiate laid down regarding locations, the matter of staff, etc. Having been part of the décor for the last 14 consecutive years, I have thought of sharing with you a few intimate thoughts about my long presence in this very particular context of ministry.*

*Obviously, a prolonged experience endangers the risk known and 'experienced' abundantly, indeed of spiritual exploitation, which is put into action with each New Year; but the Lord takes upon Himself the possible purifications, and that is not usually lacking.*

*Feeling secure by carrying out one's duties out of habit, which, however, is subject to the demands of disruption with each new group, I am questioning myself, as I grow older in this service, about my aptitude for getting on the road again. (Gen 12: 1) Fear of leaving this privileged place? Fear of the unknown? Being sure of one part, and of another part, a call to leave for another task and availability for that other task. That is the unique reason for this letter.*

*Availability to leave and make it easier for you if you think the time has come for me to leave this very particular ministry for other younger replacements.*

*My health condition is always a major limiting factor and my availability to take on other services happens to be obviously reduced. Would it be possible for me to live in Africa and work there? The answer is probably to look into the 'climatic conditioning' in the full sense of the word.*

*I also know that I am generous by nature... and I must avoid 'dreaming in Technicolor'. My two confrères occupying this place with me are certainly in a good position to shed a bit of light on that matter...*

*On the personal level, would it be good for me to leave the Spiritual Year? This is also difficult for me to answer. I would say simply that it seems normal to work for a long time in the same place and particularly in formation. I am always ill-at-ease when someone complains about his station, etc. I am thinking of so many good people who just have no choice, and myself, who am I to complain? Therefore, I am entering more deeply into my situation and I am trying hard to assume it in the rhythm of the days to come and are granted to be lived in full certainty. I stop talking and I work as I am today.*

*I also observe that my health is slowly and progressively diminishing. Multiple Sclerosis is successful in doing its work. My age equally contributes to the 'wear and tear of the parts'. Since last August I have now entered my first half-century: this is not yet an achievement, but it still has to be reached. A few details about my state of health: 1) the legs: increasingly poor, I walk only with crutches and I cannot go longer than the time for praying a rosary. 2) The hands: very much diminished, incapable at this time of writing for a period of two hours. 3) I am obliged to follow a strict regularity of life, with periods of prolonged rest; otherwise I don't withstand and can no longer work. 4) Ever more pronounced frailty. Very delicate and little resistance. 5) Working capacity still amazing on condition that point no. 3 is observed.*

*I will close by saying very simply that I have never had, neither in my past and still less today, the 'means' of imposing myself, and I do not have the explicit intention of doing so, but being always better acquainted with the extraordinary subtlety of the human heart and knowing that one is able to salvage everything when one's life is at stake, I have dared to write these few very personal thoughts in order to unmask these contingent subtleties of the heart, allowing you as well very simply to get a glimpse of a heart on the way toward those premises of total transparency, and, while awaiting, I know that obedience has been, is, and will always be the real medium here*

*below for our meeting with Him Who directs our destinies by some human media of which you are for me and for the whole Society the current ones in charge and the ones second-in-command. So I am once again stating my desire to serve the missions wherever you think it possible and the most useful. Of course, and the tone of the letter suggests it, I think, I remain open to the possibility of still continuing with the Spiritual Year if you judge it to be fitting.*

*May God bless you and render your service of the Church fertile in our 'Petite Société', and may his Spirit be your guide, your light, your support and your consolation in your heavy responsibilities.*

*Fraternally yours, Julien*

By sharing with the two groups, Anglophone and Francophone, I can say that this year, 1981-1982, has given place to a deepening of my faith and a wider awareness of the human in me and in the others. I have felt my instability and my need to be saved. I have learned to relativize things, to love the difference, to apply to myself the pedagogy of growing in patience: much time is required to become a man, to build up his experience and to raise up his quality of being. Together we have been placed by Him for the Missions in the White Fathers style. This is a year of grace, of deepening, of awareness of the Father's face and the call to be mercy and tenderness like Him.

Last year at Fribourg and the Spiritual Year, 1982-1983, there were two groups of students: one Francophone with eight students, and the other Anglophone with twelve. Those in charge of the latter group were Gotthard Rosner and Patrick Fitzgerald. Those in charge of the other one were Julien Papillon and Richard Dandenault.

The year has been launched. I end my presentation about a vision to share and a perspective about the 'breach' to live in order to be more in communion with Jesus Christ, the Father's labourer. The Missions means service and availability. Amen!

Siesta which shows me again my frailty. Don't let go, Pap, in spite of the feelings of impotence and uselessness which are tormenting me these last two days. My legs are paining me and I am feeling very tired. I have pains everywhere. I am really unable to rest. In a state of ill-

health, my faith is disturbed. Such poverty. My hand is almost paralyzed. I am thinking of those who are suffering, and sometimes I would like to die, but I have no right to think that! I am offering this up for Uganda and for some friends who are there. I am offering myself up to the Father in parallel with Jesus.

The days follow in succession but they do not resemble each other! This morning my prayer is filled with joy and thanksgiving with a thought which frequently returns to mind coming from the Spirit, expressed in yesterday's homily: My interior freedom is proportionate to my capacity to receive. Thank You, Lord, for the joy which You have placed in me this morning.

It is 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I am beginning to write a bit again, and I become aware that if I lose my writing ability, it will be very hard. This is for me quite a means of communication, the only one still with me, with which I can travel throughout the world and meet my friends. Multiple Sclerosis persists. May your will be done, Lord! The event bears its message: Lord, what are You telling me by and through this 'increasing poverty'? At about 5:15, Richard comes to talk about tomorrow's course. He tells me that I am not looking well, which is an occasion for me to tell him what is going on inside me. I am happy to know that it can 'be so apparent'. It is up to me now to be more attentive and thoughtful and united to Jesus even more.

It is raining and the temperature is low. I am doing a research work and a preparation about the theme of evil from the first week of the Exercises. After one hour, writing becomes painful. I am really poorly; I need to return inside my skin and to live my mystery with love and joy. The next day I give my account about the problem of evil. I put my whole heart in it, the guys listen. The subject matter is tough. One of them seems to find that tiring. With all my heart I go on, the subject matter is very demanding. I am thinking that it would be interesting to stop and 'sound out' how much is being absorbed! I put my whole heart in it as I continue, and I make a comment that I do 'suffer', as I have for some time, from those 'feelings'. Feeling them is one thing, but using them as occasions of deepening of my faith in Jesus Christ and of the purification of my 'growth' is another. The Lord is my rock.

## The year 1983: 1<sup>st</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> August

The mail this morning: letter from the Superior General with an appointment ‘quicker’ than foreseen. I am appointed to the Canadian Province for this summer, 1983, at the disposal of the Provincial. I read it over three times, and I am deeply moved. My first reaction is that I find that very fast. I was counting upon next year for that. Nonetheless, I quickly see in this a call to growth in that direction and to live Genesis 12: 1, as the Lord has suggested to me. It is unexpected but very real and certainly from him, well written and signed by Bob, the Superior General. Here I am, Lord, Amen!

Letter from Robert Gay to Julien Papillon, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1983 (extracts):

*I have taken a decision, but my motives for this decision are not grounded in an absolute. Of its own nature, you could very well continue your work at the novitiate as you are doing at the present time.*

*However, if I think of your future, and consider in full objectivity the state of your health, I say to myself that there is no reason to keep you at the novitiate and there are some very valid ones to offer your presence and services to the Canadian Province. I consider it more prudent that you return now, i.e., at the end of the current novitiate year. You are still fit and well, you are still autonomous, despite all the physical limitations with which you have to reckon. You can leave the work for a new team; and moreover, you can offer to the Canadian Province a very precious service in the domain of spiritual and missionary animation, in dialogue with the provincial team. From that platform, in Quebec or Montreal, you will be able to render excellent services as much to confrères who are often looking for a competent and very approachable spiritual adviser as to youths who are coming to our houses looking for some spiritual resources.*

*What I wish to avoid, as I was telling you perhaps too discreetly, is that by holding you back for too long a time in the novitiate you arrive in Canada too limited to manage all those contacts.*

*I know that for you this will be a decision not easy to take on. However, I am convinced that it will be for the greatest good in con-*

*sideration of all that we want to accomplish: may his Name, his Good News spread in the world and more particularly in the African world.*

*The current year is far from being over, moreover, I wish you courage and good health in order to bring it to completion with complete patience and the usual zeal. Old buddy, Pap, my prayer goes with you, and I am counting on yours.*

*Fraternally yours, Robert M. Gay, Superior General*

Julien's answer to this letter, March 8, 1983 (extracts):

*'Since the day when I received your letter, I have had the time to reflect, to pray and to absorb the 'different movements' in order to decipher the meaning of your message and so go into the invitation which it proposes to me.*

*I admit that I was 'impressed' at the first reading, and even 'moved' at the second. However, quickly enough the reflexes of Grandpa Abraham were surging in me, which has always impressed me in his nature to set out, to get under way... even when he knew not always where it would lead him.*

*I was looking forward, as you emphasized it, to receiving that invitation next year; but the reasons which you mention are very intelligible and correspond to a mysterious reality which dwells in me and which is increasingly taking root in me. I am 'still' autonomous, but with such frailty and poverty in all of that. I don't wonder why it is so, for I know in my flesh that I cannot find answers to these questions... It's just 'exhausting', but I am learning in all humility, i.e. poorly, to live-with and to keep the daily bond deep-rooted with the suffering and the missionaries at work as well as the Church and the pilgrims which we all are. Tough! Yes, a road which we do not select but which we 'learn to select' if we are plunged into it all of a sudden.*

*In a word, thank you for your understanding and fraternal and friendly letter. Thank you as well for the possibilities expressed in your letter which the Canadian Province could offer me. As you say, it remains to be seen with the Provincial, Denis-Paul Hamelin, and his council. I know that I am more and more limited and I know that I will not be able to 'accomplish' much, but I remain confident and open to*

*propositions and conversations to eventually discover together 'a position' fit for someone handicapped... but in his heart 'still in love'!*

*Fraternally and in communion in The One Who gives meaning to our existence and Who enables us to walk down the same route.*

*Julien*

22<sup>nd</sup> August: departure Swiss-Canada, Swissair. Upon rising, act of presence and offering of this last day in Switzerland. We celebrate a Eucharist loaded with love, strength and inspiration. I belong to the sea: my boat is ready to leave. Here I come to do your Will. It's the break again, hard to leave each other and we devote to You, Lord, this gift of love which comes from You and which is returned joyfully and gratefully, loaded with promises of Life eternal.

We arrive at Montreal. Some friends are there to welcome us. We have supper at the White Fathers Provincial House. This first night is 'eventful'. My body is here; my heart is still in Switzerland. I am praying about the whole of this Exodus-event while restoring everything into your hands, Father.

The next day, upon rising, I offer up my future life in a completely new reality. I encounter the confrères who receive me fraternally indeed, happy to see one another again and to know that I am back in the Province. That's right! What remains for me is to let myself become familiar all over again, to 'learn the language anew'. To return to the sensitivity of a White Father who returns disorientated and who will have to get used to the existential fact that I am no longer 'exportable'. What will I be doing? I am meeting Father Provincial. He suggests Quebec to me in prospect: 'We thought that you would be an important element for the community and for people outside.' That is quite alright! 'Here I am, Lord'.

This marks the end of this long stage in the life of Julien. It is the end of his active ministry within the framework of Initial Formation for the Society of Missionaries of Africa, the Spiritual Year or novitiate. More and more heavily burdened by his illness, Julien commits himself from then on to live a ministry of availability - offering himself, as far as he is able, to give retreats, occasional recollections, and to direct all persons wishing to live a spiritual experience. The active presence towards his family, his friends, and his confrères, inspired by his faith and lived in fraternal love constitute in this last part of his life a major dimension of his missionary witness.

# Chapter Six

## The years 1983-1990

### Preamble

In the second part of 1983, a third crisis occurs in Julien's life. He has returned to his country. After the vocational crisis of his younger years, 1953-1954, in which he shattered his dream of the future in order to commit himself to the priestly and missionary vocation, afterward his second crisis in March 1960, in which the first attack of Multiple Sclerosis forces him to rethink his missionary itinerary in an interval of rest; now after having left Fribourg and a ministry duly mandated and specific in its objectives, he returns to his 'land of origin'. This is where he had come up against the first great questions about existence thirty years earlier. This time, he is left quite a bit at a loss. He is now faced with an 'uncertain' future of a vague and imprecise nature. He is asked to be 'simply available' for the spiritual animation of the community in which he is living and for spiritual direction for any person who will request it. His 'perfectionist' temperament has not left him. Nothing is structured. He will have to find the order for his own ministry and for his mission. What is God asking of him? How will he become heedful to the breath of the Spirit for a mission which he wants to make of himself a docile instrument?

His diary, without any order, testifies what he sees, what he thinks, what he feels. The events which occur are carefully noticed, and the relationships which remain in his life are warmly enhanced. The life of prayer, morning prayer, the Eucharist, regular participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, watchfulness over the direction which his heart is taking, being open to the calls of life, are as much a thing of discernment to place oneself before a God Father, Son and Spirit, in the intense desire to become an active member of this unique and eternal family. In his state of increasing physical poverty, the cry which comes back constantly and which underwrites pages and paragraphs is clearly that of 'Marana Tha', 'Oh yes, Come Lord Jesus', accompanied by 'Kyrie eleison'. It is a cry which profoundly immerses his consciousness and imbues his sensitivity.

We are the 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1983, the day after his arrival in Montreal. Julien has conclusively turned the page in his experience at Fribourg and in Europe. He is back in his home surroundings.

I wake up in North America. At about 2 o'clock and up until 4 o'clock, my thinking and my praying are all directed toward my friends from over there. I am not feeling very well. I feel 'oppressed' by the insecurity and I am not yet at peace with the perspective foreseen by Father Provincial. Father Denis-Paul Hamelin, has proposed that I remain in the Quebec community with a new kind of ministry which appears relatively vague to me for the moment, but 'it settles' calmly. I fall asleep and it helps me to start it off! I rise at 7:30 and I make my self-offering. I have breakfast with a few confrères and it is pleasant. I awaken quietly. At 9 o'clock, we have the Eucharist: God is present even if my body is 'protesting'. I 'am beginning again' to pray and 'fluently'! At 10 o'clock, I have a second meeting with the Provincial and with his assistant, Father Raynald Pelletier: I am very calm and I begin with my new reality, in your word in order to discover the Word there. They are really good to me. I will be at Quebec, available for internal and external animation, for recollections and counselling. I am at peace and 'happy' to be installed, all the while remaining open to possibilities of change. For the moment, I see this event as coming from You, Father. I am free to begin in October, when I will be 'ready'.

At the beginning of 1984, in a letter addressed to Richard Dandenault, at Fribourg, he sums up his new situation:

*I remain united with you but without any nostalgia! Rather with gratitude and thanksgiving for all that we lived together during those years.*

*What counts is the rose... and today! All that I have lived since my return to the home country, this fundamental capacity of being on the road has restored me to full light: adaptability! Confirmed even in the poverty of my flesh of these deep tendencies which worry my whole being ever since being came into consciousness: Gen 12: 1, it is the urge to leave and the capacity to take off! Happy as ever to feel in my whole being that, to use a symbolic expression, I belong to the sea! I have been tested at this level of my being very often in my life, and profoundly so these last few months so that I may plunge into this*

*mystery! I have been more handicapped than I wanted and that I wish to admit. 'Doing' next to nothing tires me for the rest of the day or even for days. I am not ready to resign yet. Frequently, some thoughts of death are encroaching upon me. That is tough! I am praying that he will*

Around 1987 – faithful to the Breviary as always, in the White Father's house in Québec.

*leave me with the use of my hands – to use them for the ministry of the sacramental presence. I devoutly exercise listening and reception and discreet communication and respect of these veterans of the Word which are my confrères from here: I am discovering them, these are precious gems. I love them; I am beginning to feel at home and am not thinking of myself as being 'somewhere else'. The memory remains true, but the past has 'lapsed' into history! Greetings to everyone, Julien.*

Until the end of 1986, events and the activities follow their course in the same Quebec community framework, with the same rhythm of reflections and thorough research of which the body is always the source of inspiration and interpretation, the vehicle which makes possible, slows down or accelerates the Exodus, the journey through life. The vocabulary is always loud: he sings or shouts the concealed emotions; the outbursts of hope and of re-launching ahead, the stoppages and the temptations to shut down the gifts received which have a tendency sometimes to fill his heart completely and rise up as insurmountable obstacles. It is by the power of Him who dwells in him that he stays on the course ahead in the cry – a constant theme which he never ceases to repeat: 'Marana tha'. 'It's me, here I am'.

The end of the winter and the spring of 1987 bear witness to a decidedly poor state of Julien's health and his constant recourse to prayer.

I am very tired and very poorly in my body, the pains are widespread, I get up feeling stiff and bruised all over. It pains me to move my four limbs, and I feel underlying fear, an increasingly invading helplessness. I have a fear of becoming helpless and losing my relative autonomy.

Around 1985 - a haircut from his sister, Monica.

Faced with my physical inability and its repercussions, thoughts of death invade me. It is death extended! I remain in prayer and united with Jesus. Come to live your Exodus in and through me Lord Jesus, Come, I am afraid, come! With courage, trust and in solidarity with every creature, eyes fixed on Jesus, let us begin. I begin in the struggle of God: this is my strength! You have made me a body, You have given me a body, here I am to live your Will. Give me strength and courage to do Your Will and to be, moreover, all humanity for You. Marana tha! Come, Lord Jesus!

The rest of 1987 is lived in that incessant dialogue amid events, state of health, encounters with friends and prayer.

Jesus enters into all areas of my being. Yes, it is normal that You have something to say in my life. Thank You for saying it: that I may be total availability so that I may be able to let Your Word go through in all that I am and that which I live! I love the Lord, my whole life I

Around 1986 – The Québec Community.

will invoke Him. Yes, my whole life I will invoke your name Jesus, the name above every other name: ‘Yahweh saves’. Thank be to God!

In the autumn of that same year, I live some moments of tranquillity and unity in the presence of a close lady friend who spends a few days with my family. Those are wounds of love and times of light which I deliver up into your hands, Lord. Thank You! Then, I am thrown back into myself, to my solitude, to my mystery. Some thoughts which make me withdraw into myself are coming back to me, but I don’t want to allow myself to be distorted by these thoughts. I wish to accept my ‘situation’ of a poor soul and its consequences and the invitation that my life owes it to itself to be free and available for the praise, thanksgiving and service of brothers and sisters.

## 1988 and 1989

**Prayer life:** increasingly in the form of self-offering. Thanksgiving, praise, become the dominant note of Julien’s prayer. Also to be noticed, as the basis of everything, is the eminent place of the Word of God which liberates, purifies, transfigures.

**State of health:** more and more uncertain. Multiple Sclerosis has a severe effect on his arms and legs, with a feeling of ‘toothache’, Julien says. The malfunction of the intestines and the serious problem of haemorrhoids for which he underwent surgical intervention are not yet resolved.

The wheelchair is his only means of getting around. It is a matter for the first time of moving into an institute where “comprehensive care” is guaranteed. Against the whole world and without asking for a total healing, Julien always hopes for a “better destiny” in his body.

**Friendships:** they hold a prominent place in his life, both masculine and feminine. There again, without comparing one with the other, certain persons mark him profoundly. In no case, however, are these friendships turned into withdrawals or sources of boredom. They are always a very privileged occasion of thanksgiving, praise, gratitude to the Father for having allowed him to meet these persons and to grow in love and in humanity.

In a letter of December, 1988, addressed to a friend, he writes:

*“Multiple Sclerosis is gaining more and more ground and infirmity as well. Nothing else but the right side, an arm and a hand ‘still’ allow me a relative autonomy. As you can see, writing is still possible for me in stages. For a page such as this one, I had to start three times. I am accountable to patience. If you are going to pray at the Mont des Oliviers, you will please think of me.*

*I have given Him everything, but if He wills it, ask Him to leave me the use of my hands, if not both, at least the right one. The total loss of writing would be very hard, but He is the one who has to decide. Would I serve Him better in complete silence? He alone knows that. Fiat! As you see, I have to think of Lennox possibly in the coming October. This is all a stage in prospect. While waiting, I assure you of my good sentiments and my wishes to remain united with you in Him, Who has opened for us the way of hope in this new heaven and this new earth which we are giving birth to! Marana 'tha. Shalom and Love”, Julien.*

The year 1989 will bring on three movements for Julien. He assumes, with increasing weakness, as he remarks in the preceding letter, his ‘nomad’ vocation. Another ten months in Quebec, he is still helped by a few confrères making up for his loss of autonomy. He reaches Lennoxville in October of the same year, to be helped by the nurse and by other confrères. In February 1990, a new relapse of paralysis compels him to spend two weeks at the hospital. Becoming more and more dependent, he has to be taken to a clinic providing comprehensive care. He leaves Lennoxville for the inter-community clinic of Val-de- Rapides. He will stay there only two weeks. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1990, he ‘takes up his pilgrim staff again’ for the residential home Cardinal Vachon at Beauport, in his family’s vicinity, and where he will stay until his ‘final Exodus’ on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2002.

# Chapter Seven

## The years 1990-2002

The years from 1990 to 2002 mark the last period of Julien's life. On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1990, he moves from the residential home Cardinal Vachon, Quebec – Beauport. He is set up at the Unite de Soins because much care is necessary for him to make up for a state of health which is being downgraded more than rapidly. He will stay there until his death, on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2002: which would be twelve years and four months. His spiritual diary ends the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1999.

Reckoning from December 1995, the pages of Julien's diary are drafted partly by himself and partly by the "hand of a lady friend". 29<sup>th</sup> January 1998, is the last day on which he writes in his own handwriting. On that day, after having begun 'his page', he remarks: "Incapable of writing, I call upon someone to help me. The books are laid out in front of me, but I think of what the Cardinal (Lavigerie) said: "When you are sick, what are you capable of?" Reckoning from that date until the end of 1999, i.e., almost two years, Julien's diary will be drafted entirely by that "hand of a lady friend".

During 1994, the members of the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa, White Fathers, requested testimonials from confrères with respect to their identity and their missionary vocation. We are reproducing here the one which had been prepared by Julien and which well reflects his personal Credo at that instant of his life: "They recognized them as the companions of Jesus" (Ac 4: 13b). That confession of faith seems to us to be a spiritual synthesis of his life, firmly anchored into his flesh, far from all evasive, imaginary interpretations, imbued with faith and realism.

For Julien, it seems to have been for him like an experience of transfiguration in which, in the Father's light, he feels "confirmed" in his status as "son in the Well-Beloved Son", allowing him to follow his route toward Jerusalem to confront his final Exodus in peace (Lk 9:28-36). Julien is sure about the fundamental data of his faith, but without dogmatism or abstraction. It is the Word which interests him, that one which creeps each morning into his heart and which repeats for him unconditional love to sustain him in existence. The 2000-odd pages of diary from these years, as his dependence is intensified

and the twilight of his life is sharpened, disclose an astonishing depth, closely related, truthfully speaking, to the purest of the mystics.

*Our life is not based on the appreciation of men! It is nonetheless interesting to listen to what is being said*

*about that. Is it recognizable that we are companions of Jesus? In the depths of my being, do I feel myself as a disciple of Jesus Christ – Saviour – Lord – Son of the Living God – King of the Universe – Alpha and Omega of History, of my history? My identity as White Father, Missionary of Africa, is it still alive? These are questions which incite reflection and fraternal sharing. Each one must respond in the context of his today, in the reality which is his own.*

Julien with Mrs. Marguerite Miller Gosselin at the Residential home Cardinal Vachon, Québec. 1995.

*After the proposed invitation, I dare to share the life of a confrere stricken with Multiple Sclerosis for some years now. As is the case with most of us, my ministry has developed through the events which have occurred and which have incited me to checking further and repeatedly in order to discern finally who calls and what calls are being made and to go still further, to remain faithful to myself and to the word presented. Word presented = devoted life is still for me a “capsule phrase”, vigorous, inspiring energy.*

*I will mention quickly that I was in Africa only once for a brief stay, in Malawi, Diocese of Mzuzu, in the domain of Bishop Jean-Louis Jobidon to be exact, and some health problems directed me providentially to houses of formation, to the novitiate, to be more precise, which became known as “The Spiritual Year”. I have been very happy, receiving therein an extraordinary grace to know and to love generations of young confrères who today are fellow-workers of Jesus, craftsmen of peace on four continents: Africa, Asia, America*

and Europe. Sporadically some generous letters reach me... and touch me deeply. "He must increase, I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

*I had the awareness for quite a long time that I would enter into silence; and since my return to my home country in 1983, events have happened quickly and, for these last four years, here I am! I have been reduced to a lifestyle which, thanks be to God, progressively resembles the Nazareth life. An "extraordinary" heartfelt association with Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Lk 2:51) frequents my solitude, nourishes my days... and many nights!*

*He, Word (John's Prologue), "all things were created through Him and for Him" (Col 1: 15-17) inculturates Himself fully by humbly espousing the whole of the human condition.*

*After his first expression spoken at the Temple, He begins the silence, in the ordinary lives of little people, and He learns to become a man, and What a Man (Jn 7:46)!*

*I attempt humbly, poorly, to keep my eyes energetically fixed on Jesus, He Who transfigures my agonies in labouring to give birth (Rm 8). This chapter from Romans is strength, inspiration and consolation for me in the toughest hours. I receive each new day-given, with open hands. Being entirely welcoming and self-offering (Rm 12: 1, 15:16) united with all the members of our respective communities, the White Fathers and the White Sisters, from the youngest to the oldest, remaining available to the one who knocks at my door, free in spirit and in heart, in spite of the body's heaviness, that continuous oppressive fatigue which is unrelenting throughout the day. One's resources are completely lost, one begins to become dependent in all matters, and one has no power at all. I am learning with all the "today gifts" to live in patience completely imbued with the meekness of Christ Jesus (Mt 11:25-30).*

*As 'whatever we accomplish wastes away' slowly but surely, the interior being grows, takes up more and more space (2 Cor 4:14-5:10). This evolving chronic illness caused me to travel through a whole geographic and "interior" itinerary. After having left Quebec at the of 1988 and a short stay at Lennoxville, health dilapidating exceedingly, I left to go for a stay at the Sherbrooke hospital and at the Ville Laval mixed-community infirmary, and after a few weeks, I ar-*

rived at the comprehensive-care home, Residential home Cardinal Vachon, at Beauport, and I have just completed my third year here. I am quite comfortable here, 24 hours a day. My strength is fading away; I am losing my autonomy, petal by petal! Gradually, the four members are almost totally paralyzed. I have only one hand remaining, the right one, very weak and awkward.

*Submitting to reality? I prefer rather to begin positively rather than simply submitting, and to go at it in the manner of Jesus. To help myself in doing this I draw my energy from the Eucharist celebrated every day with a group of Anawim. The Liturgy of the Hours combined with my rosary are my daily "pastimes". I even indulge in Ongoing Formation by drawing from the Revue Christus and a good book on spirituality, always in progress.*

*Thus my handicap has a positive side. The Lord gives me much time which I devote to praise and to service thanks to the Communion of Saints and to our White Fathers-White Sisters fraternity, remaining cordially united in thought, in prayer and in heart with the leading intentions of the Church, of our "Petite Societe" and of all my brothers and sisters in humanity united in the liturgy of the Gospel. With a privileged regard, I express my profound gratitude for all those encountered and beloved faces of men and women who have been given to me on the road travelled and who remain now and always a source of strength, of inspiration and of vitality in today's deserts and faced with the great paradoxes of existence. Yes, may You be praised, Lord, for our Sister Death.*

*I will conclude in somewhat the way that I end each day with a checking on what I have lived. I thank the Father for having retained in me the taste for Jesus in the Joy of the Spirit, for giving me this serenity of spirit and of heart through the deserts and for still being a White Father, Missionary of Africa, in spite of all the deficiencies of my life. Deeply grateful for all my confrères with whom I maintain daily contact. There is no distance, nor time, nor ageing this fraternal bond which links us in the present time, which is a prelude of Eternity which is offered to all of us (Ap 19: 9). Living in the shade while awaiting the light. Thank you as well for this ministry of spiritual direction, here, close to priest confrères living their final Exodus.*

*The Word of God remains an inexhaustible source of strength/comfort faced with the deficiencies of my body/heart in not always being a reflection of his face (Jn 14: 9). Kyrie eleison! How I do love what is said in 1 Jn 3:20, "if your heart condemns you, remind yourself that God is greater than your heart" (also in Wis 11:25-26). "And if God is for us, who will be able to separate us from the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus?" (Rm 8:31-39). I live my numerous deficiencies in the Communion of Saints, in the vigilance and expectation of his return (1 Cor 1:26), with a flower in hand, joyful in the hope of being recognized as a companion of Jesus. Oh yes, Come Lord Jesus! Marana 'Tha (Rv 22:20).*

*"Increase the faith in us Lord, grant us the grace to keep to our obligation of praise and of service". Lauds, Tuesday, Week IV, Liturgy of the Hours. Julien Papillon*

The last words written by Julien's hand date from the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1998: the remainder of the diary was dictated by him and written by the hand of a lady friend...

I remain grateful for my being in spite of an extreme corporal weakness in my body. I am incapable of writing, I send for help. The prayer books are laid out in front of me, but I think of what the Cardinal said: "When someone is sick, what is he capable of?" I am taken care of with much consideration. Antibiotics are prescribed for me. I tell the nurse that I absolutely do not wish to go to the hospital and I expect that my desire will be respected. I am trying without posturing to pray in this situation and to offer this poverty and all those beloved and well known faces which are linked to my past, in particular the missionary world. In the depths of my being, I feel that my whole life is a synthesis of the life of the People of Israel. Kyrie eleison.

It is good to begin every given day acknowledging the thanksgiving and the joy of being always in progress toward the "new heaven and new earth" (Rv 21-22). One saying from Scripture is coming to my mind frequently: "I prefer obedience and docility of heart to all the sacrifices". That saying helps me to accept the orders from the nurses. Without having the daily liturgy, I wonder from where I would be able to draw real solid nourishment. Thanks to Paul VI who has said: "the liturgy is the school of holiness". Deo Gratias.

## One day in March 1998

Even if for the past week I have been living a situation of really great corporal poverty, and by that fact, ‘my usual programme is disrupted’, I realize that, even if I am out of my element, I must adapt myself to this situation of poverty, i.e., that my usual prayer life of the morning has been totally upset. Having no access at all to my breviary and to my ‘*Prions en Église*’ by the fact of being confined to bed, perhaps I am understanding the “Lord’s invitation” to break the ritualistic habit of praying in order to attain more “freedom” by learning the ‘prayer off the heart’. Each inspiration and expiration in the breath of the Spirit and of the heartbeat at the same rhythm as the heart of Jesus, asking Him to make our hearts like his. All of that for the joy of the Father and the salvation of our brothers and sisters, under the guidance and benevolence of Mary and Joseph. I think I have found here the heart of this new mystical threshold. Leave it to me to nourish myself humbly without attempting to wish any control over it.” My prayer: these days of great weakness all look the same but in the interior of my heart there is a progress which is forcing its way through. I end this other day in gratitude for being thus taught by this new moment of trial.

With the progression of time, in the presence of a lady-friend, one question arises: the keeping of my diary, has it become something for me, which I continue to “control”? The Lord, would He ask me to detach myself from it, to offer it up and even be ready to leave behind at least this whole chronicle part to keep for me only what is exclusively essential; and the “essential” would be no more than a spoken word, an encounter, a reflection which would call me to a discernment and which the Scriptures would be able to shed more light on? There is this lady-friend who is now coming to mind at this moment since she is now the one who leaves her home every evening to offer me her presence and her service free of charge and because she knows me well, I am seriously thinking of asking her: I will ask her to help me to make the discernment about this existential matter. She is very impressed by my proposal to help me in making the discernment for this matter.

Sharing with this lady-friend comes back to mind from time to time and this return enables me to feel an invitation to a “freedom” which the Lord proposes to me opposed to an excessively personal attachment, ‘à

la Julien', from my "over-chronicle style" of editing my diary. Realization that I still have a "richness" to let go of... It certainly seems to me that I must abstain from imposing this 'service' to those persons who love me very much, in particular to Marguerite who will be coming back to us soon. Important also that I do not feel an obligation to fill the page!

### **31<sup>st</sup> December 1999**

I am offering up the last day of a year endured, especially in the summer, with very great difficulties such as I have rarely encountered in my life. The summer, yes, has been particularly painful, caused by demolition-construction work throughout the whole residence. Everyone in the house has suffered from it, but more so ourselves from the Unité des Soins, where it has been completely "forbidden" for us to go outside, while we have experienced the hottest summer since my arrival here.

Julien in the Residential home Cardinal Vachon, between 1991 and 2002.

On that same day, I am expressing to Marguerite my intention to discontinue my diary on this last day of 1999. A resolution which I have retained in my heart for a long time and which I have shared with one or another friend. I could occasionally take the liberty to record certain events which could be important. I am ending these last words in expressing my deepest gratitude to Marguerite. May God bless her and at the same time all those whom she carries in her heart.

**End of the last diary drafted  
by Julien Papillon  
31<sup>st</sup> December 1999**

# Epilogue

## Testimony

### Testimony from a witness of the final hour

A remarkable man died peacefully on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2002, at 11:10 and his absence is causing much sadness and grief around him.

For a just reason, Julien upheld a personal pride. Moreover, he insisted on being dressed every day and seated in his wheelchair near the window overlooking the magnificent St. Lawrence River and kept at it until the afternoon of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, always with his ‘Prions en Église’ before his eyes.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June, Vigil of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, he invited me to sit down. It was to turn the page of his “Prion en Église”. With great emotion, I reflected upon Julien moribund, diligent at reading the Word of God even up to the time of his death. I was watching his eye running over and devouring each line.

*“When I found your words, I devoured them; they became my joy and the happiness of my heart. You have seduced me, Lord, and I let myself be seduced...”* (Jer 15:16).

I was deeply moved by what I was seeing.

The last Sunday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, he kept his eyes closed from beginning to end of the Eucharistic celebration. All life was stirring inside him. He opened his eyes without prompting, however, to receive the Body and the Blood of Christ. He was peaceful, suffering, thirsty, and conscious: the Suffering Servant (Is. 52).

On the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> June, it was very evident that this was the end. A confrere, Father Blanc, celebrated the Eucharist in Julien’s room.

*“Thanks for what you are, Julien, for what you have been and will remain for everyone. Thanks for your faithfulness in the Word of God read, meditated kept. Thanks for your witness of life! Pleasant journey, Julien!”*

*“Dwell in your situation, if you wish to find God. God is never elsewhere.”*

(Julien Papillon, Spiritual Diary, January 1979)

The following three testimonies are from confrères who have known Julien in the mid-time of his life, the liveliest of his action, in his work as formator.

## **Testimony of Raynald Pelletier, M.Afr.**

*“I bless You, Lord, for the marvel that I am”.*

I really like that verse 14 from Psalm 138. Each human being can repeat that magnificent word. All of us are images of God, ‘marvels’, but each has his own features, his unique savour.

Julien Papillon has been able to repeat it in all truth. He was a man of talent, a marvel, a man of slight build but of high human and spiritual stature. All his life, he has been like the other one of slight build from the Gospel who ‘wanted to see Jesus’. One day, Julien was giving me a watchword which I have always kept: “Thank You, Father, for keeping in my heart the savour of Jesus”.

With a lively humour, a brisk imagination, Julien was always in a good mood. We have been together at the novitiate/Spiritual Year in 1960 at St. Martin, in Quebec with the PME and in Washington. He was very popular with the students and several chose him as spiritual director. He knew how to direct youth. As a staff member, his judgment, his openness, and his optimism were precious trump cards.

All his life he bore a weakness, a ‘thorn in the flesh’, which made him humble, vulnerable, and made of him a ‘poor one of Yahweh’. “My grace is enough for you”. In one sense, I think that he was grateful, for, in a perfect physical well-being, what would have become of all that vigour, pride and talent with which he was gifted.

In the last years when I was coming on leave and going to Quebec, I always went to visit my friend, Pap, at Beauport. Increasingly, he was ‘diminished’, at the end, incapable of moving a finger, but he was all there

in the head! We were going to give him encouragement and it was he who was offering encouragement to us, so that whenever we left his side, we were stimulated, comforted by his courage, his smile, by whatever he said, though his speech was growing weaker and weaker but always appropriate. What a beautiful example! Years of doing nothing, apparently useless, but rich in prayers, of inner self-offering, of missionary dimension, thanks to the Communion of Saints. In union with his Lord, he lived, in depth, the passion of Jesus 'for his body which is the Church, thus for the benefit of the people of Mzuzu, of Africa, of all of humanity.

Thank You, Lord, for this beautiful life of courage, of faithfulness, of such human, spiritual and missionary density.

## **Testimony of Gotthard Rosner, M.Afr.**

I lived and worked with Julien from 1979 to 1983. It was a period of his life in which the Multiple Sclerosis was making unrelenting progress in his body. In the beginning he was walking with the help of one crutch, and then of two, and in 1983, he had to have recourse to a wheelchair for any sort of important movement.

I am now working as a missionary in Zambia. A few days ago, my sister, who is living in Germany, came to visit me. When she saw a photograph of Julien on my desk, she exclaimed: "Julien! That was a saint!" 25 years ago, she had come to visit us, Julien and myself, when we were at Fribourg in Switzerland. Julien had spent a few days at her family home. So, in the heart of Africa, we remembered Julien and we spoke about those encounters of years past.

Why was Julien an extraordinary man? One day he said to me: "You know, Gotthard, there are only two important gifts in this world: one is that of life, and the other is that of faith. Both of them come from God and from our parents." Julien lived his life in fullness. In spite of his illness, he was filled with gratitude, joy and inner peace. He was radiant with peace and his joy was contagious. Being in his presence made you feel happy and, because he was so transparent, I was able to be completely open and honest with him and in this way I was able to become a better person. He taught me that it was in sharing my weaknesses that I could be healed. I was no longer afraid. Julien was a man fully alive in and by his sufferings.

Julien was also a man of faith. He talked easily and freely about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He gave the feeling that the Holy Trinity was the centre of his life. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. This was a man of prayer and of great understanding, but he could also challenge or call us into question, and he did not hesitate to do it when, for example, I had done the wrong thing. He did it, however, with such love and consideration that I never felt offended. Sometimes, his illness became insufferable for him. In those times he was going through periods of sadness and of doubt, but this did not last long. His trust in God was so steadfast that he was pulling himself together and continuing to enjoy life.

Yes, Julien was an extraordinary man.

## **Testimony of Denis-Paul Hamelin, M.Afr.**

This was in 1983. I was at that time Provincial at Montreal and Julien was arriving from Fribourg, the last station of his time in the various novitiates of the Society in which he had directed a whole generation of our young candidates in their spiritual formation. He was convinced of having reached the end of his active vocation, and the prospect of setting up residence in our Quebec community, without appointment to a specific job had left him with a well-justified feeling of uneasiness.

I really think that it is with the conviction of Abraham's faith much more than with the strength of my arguments that he went in the direction of Quebec with very little reassurance. The radiance shown in his life during the following years has clearly shown that once again he had made the right choice by trusting the Lord. The requests for retreats and the visits for spiritual direction multiplied, and in spite of all the physical limitations, his joyful and fraternal presence brought a ray of sunshine into his own community.

All of his life, Julien walked by the light of one single star: the most holy will of the Father, but the way had not been mapped out beforehand and the route was often arduous. He sought to understand the ways of the Lord. He struggled before abandoning himself to it. However, the more the illness had the mastery over his body, the more he allowed himself to be dispossessed of all autonomy, the more his inner freedom seemed to grow and the more his spiritual presence intensified.

During his long illness, Julien never sought excuses to lapse in fidelity despite the fatigues and frustrations connected with his long illness. The hundreds of pages covered with his flawed handwriting are evidence in their own way of his discipline of life, a discipline which was neither inflexibility nor compliance. These ‘rereadings’, like all of his faithfulness, were routes of inner freedom. He sought the callings of the Lord in his everyday life.

For us, his friends, who were still in active service in Africa, a home leave would remain incomplete without a visit to Julien. Without fail, the conversation took the same detour. He answered quickly and very simply to our initial question about his state of health, but very soon he was the one who took the initiative: ‘And you, how are things? And your work? Are you happy? How is Bishop Jobidon doing? He had remained very much attached to the Bishop who had welcomed him into his diocese at Mzuzu during his much too short stay in Malawi.

Julien had overcome the temptation to pity himself on account of his misfortune. He had assimilated his illness so well that he was able to talk about it with humour. He had made of it his way to growth. Through his dwindling, the interior man who draws his strength from the Lord was growing. Dispossessed of all physical strength, the Lord spared him in his full spiritual forces until the end so that he would abandon himself completely into the Father’s hands.

Julien has gone toward his Jesus for Whom ‘he had never lost the savour’, as he used to say. That savour for Jesus, he has shared it with us, reminding us of a mission route – the route of poverty – which we too frequently tend to forget.

# Celebration of the “Final Exodus” of Julien Papillon, M.Afr. Neuville. 28<sup>th</sup> June 2002

## Homily

For a long time Julien was talking about that event which would end his life as being his “Final Exodus”: a departure from this world to make a move toward another world. This is what we are celebrating in this Eucharist today.

One last time to be setting out, one last departure, going to meet Him Who called him during his childhood years, who progressively attracted and comforted him throughout his life: the Trinity-God: attraction of the God-Father, in relationship with word and counsel with the God-Son, the Lord Jesus, and transformation into Peace, Joy, Benevolence and Love by the God-Spirit. Jesus lived in a completely privileged relationship with each one of the persons of the Trinity and he makes his signing of Him every day: to the Father, in Christ, through the Spirit: “Shalom and Love” on the sign of the Cross.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1979, Julien undertook to write his spiritual diary day by day: his daily living, down-to-earth, the encounters, the events, the trials, the difficulties, the joys, : nothing in his life such as it occurred and unfolded itself from day to day was overlooked by his watchfulness: a reality carefully registered in his memory, rigorously interpreted according to the dictates of his conscience, and increasingly transfigured in his prayer. This human reality of body, heart, soul, spirit, of Julien he also learned to let it be illuminated by the Word of God. This daily diary, Julien stopped drafting it on the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1999, after 21 years. If you figure it out, it all adds up to nearly 7,000 pages. To that, it would be necessary to add the contents of numerous letters, personal and intimate, the texts of conferences, of preached retreats, of multiple homilies in order to discover the vision both deeply human and divine which he was forming about life and about the meaning of existence.

We are thus looking at a considerable heritage. Quite apart from his writings, many have known Julien at different degrees of intimacy. Numerous testimonies would be appropriate in this celebration.

## **Way of humanity: Julien: the man**

Let us allow Julien to speak about the first way: that of his humanity, a humanity which he has always taken very seriously.

*“Dwell in your situation, if you wish to find God. God is never elsewhere.”*

Dwell in your body, in order to make it athletic and adapted. Dwell in your heart to enable it to love. Dwell in your spirit, your soul, your Psychology to situate yourself in the culture in which you live and to develop your own profile. Dwell in your events so as not to brush aside your history. Dwell in your family relationships to be in contact with your roots. Dwell in your encounters, your friends, your friendships to welcome and discover the other in his difference. Dwell in the stages of your life: the challenges, the trials, the crises, the calling into question, and the rejections. Dwell in your family. Dwell in your friends. Dwell in your intelligence, your will. Your memory, your sensitivity: let your consciousness emerge in that which you are, without evasion, without escape, without compensation. Know yourself, honour yourself, accept yourself: Live with your qualities, your riches, your limitations, your illness, your fatigue. Accept your mistakes, your ignorance, and your sin. Direct yourself into life with what you are, into what you are, not into what you think you are or what you would like to be. We are in the presence of the man Julien proving himself and seeking to perform the truth in this physical matter, pursuant to the multiple particular circumstances of his life, while respecting the maturation with which time provided him.

## **Way of faith, spiritual way: Julien the believer**

*“God had become the confidant of my life. God in my situation. No mere emotions of piety or of religious practice. God in my life, in everything that dwells in me, making Himself manifest in all dimensions of my being”. A second profile of Julien is delineated via this human compo-*

*ment, that of believer, man of faith and trust in a God Who seduced him and fascinates him increasingly.*

*Some notes from his diary: every morning: prayer and self-offering. Very soon the self-offering became the first expression of my prayer". A self-offering which will become more and more diminished, that of his handicapped humanity, as he points out. Self-offering for the Missions and for the Service in each of the todays of his life, in the details of daily life with full consciousness and presence of his being. What a lot of times he noticed "wishing to be elsewhere, being otherwise, offering himself efficient, courageous, energetic", living more consistent realities. It is, nonetheless, before his God and enlightened by his Word that he was coming back present into the restraints of reality.*

Julien the believer: the man with open and empty hands before God, listening assiduously to his Word to hear what God expected from him on that day. That attitude became contagious and missionary through multiple encounters and friendships, sown in life.

## **The Missions: Julien the Missionary**

At the inner level of his experience of faith, he was living a great availability to welcome whatever was being asked of him. He had taken his Oath for that. He intended to remain faithful to it until the end of his abilities.

Julien never could leave for Africa for a long period, following his youthful dream. The few months which he spent in Malawi from September 1964 to May 1965, were subject to curtailment by an increase of illness: that of malaria at the end of his stay, he had to be repatriated as soon as his condition showed some improvement.

His availability was being situated elsewhere. His missionary style was asserted in another way, simply through human relationships.

*"We are made for relationships, in the image of the Holy Trinity," he said to a friend. Until the last days of his life, he practiced this outlook of trust in others drawn on the trust which God gives us, whoever we are."*

Helping others to exist: this seems to have been Julien's missionary motivation. Amazingly gifted in cordial and warm human relationships and knowing how to use his pedagogical talents, the best service which Julien could render to others was to meet them and then to help bring out the best in them.

## **Accustomed to suffering**

In addition, Julien, as we know him, had become a "person accustomed to suffering": he had tamed his illness and had allowed himself to be stripped by it of every form of power to enter the greatest poverty possible. In 1979, he makes this observation:

*"As the "doing" diminishes, he tells us in these last years, slowly but surely, the being emerges, grows, and takes increasing space. This chronic, progressive illness made me travel through a geographic and "interior" itinerary. Strength is withdrawing; I am losing my autonomy, petal by petal! Submitting to reality? I prefer rather to enter into it in a positive way than by a simple submission, and enter in the way of Jesus',*

*"Jesus. Through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus, he offered himself into the obscurity of quite a simple life which he liked to compare to the life of Nazareth, next to Jesus, Mary, Joseph, in whose companionship he loved to live and hoped to die".*

In a message received after the announcement of Julien's departure, one confrère said: *"He knows God now, for he sees him"*.

Julien must have gone through Purgatory quickly to purify himself of the little bit of dust from the nomadic route which he had been on, to take a good shower, vest himself in the nuptial robe, in order to go to meet Him Whom he had passionately loved and served.

Thank you Julien for all that you have been for us!

Richard Dandenault

# Table of Contents

Foreword	p. 03
Introduction	p. 04
Chapter One: From Julien's birth: August 1931, to his entry to the White Fathers: August 1954 p. 17	
Chapter Two: From the entry to the White Fathers: 1954 to the first attack of Multiple Sclerosis: 1960	p. 26
Chapter Three: The years 1960-1967. The return to Canada: Julien is 'condemned to a rest'	p. 38
Chapter Four: The years 1967-1979	p. 56
Chapter Five: The years 1979-1983. His state of health, his payer, his principal work	p. 71
Chapter Six: The years 1983-1990	p. 91
Chapter Seven: The years 1990-2002	p. 97
Epilogue. Testimony from a witness of the final hour	p. 104
Testimony of Raynald Pelletier, M.Afr.	p. 105
Testimony of Gotthard Rosner, M.Afr.	p. 106
Testimony of Denis-Paul Hamelin, M.Afr.	p. 107
Celebration of the "Final Exodus" of Julien Papillon, M.Afr., Neuville, 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2002. Homily	p. 109

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