

"Jean-Paul, Your Days Are Numbered..."

On Wednesday, August 17, 2005, a Mass was held at the Eucharistic and Marian Center Spiri-Maria for the repose of the soul of Mr. Jean-Paul Bélanger, godfather of the Army of Mary, who passed away on August 6, 2005, at Laval Hospital in Quebec City. The Mass was presided over by Father Denis Laprise and concelebrated by eleven Sons of Mary confreres. Here is the homily Father Denis gave on that occasion.

"Dear Yolande and all Jean-Paul's dear friends,

"This is the Lord for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" (Is 25:9)

These words filled with hope and consolation, taken from the Book of Isaiah, introduce us into a great mystery of joy. In fact, they are, in a way, the preamble to the mystery of the so very dreaded passage that marks the end of a human life which then crosses the threshold of a new life in God. They indicate the reward granted to all souls that have suffered and loved much. They are also the sign of the victory which we have heard the Lord promise to us. For, in the end, when "all will be accomplished", the Lord Himself will intervene. He will remove the veil of bereavement enveloping all peoples and the shroud covering all nations. He will destroy death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces. And He will call us to the mountain of all peoples where He has prepared a banquet, a feast of succulent meat, a feast of good wine. This word of God is being fulfilled in all its exactness, for He is the one who promised it.

Dear Knights of Mary and dear friends, Jean-Paul is no longer here on earth with his body which is now only ashes, but his soul is here. When, in the year 2000, Marie-Paule had invited all the Knights of Mary, and especially those who were further away and for whom it was not easy to come and pray often in the chapel, to leave their soul before the monstrance, Jean-Paul had understood Marie-Paule's thought, to whom he was very closely bound spiritually, and he had decided to permanently place his soul here before the Blessed Sacrament. And every time he came to Spiri-Maria he would spend several hours before the monstrance in order to recollect himself and pray. Then, he would tell us that he had come to see how his soul was doing. Before the Eucharistic Jesus, Jean-Paul became like a little child again. Though he may not have had that attitude or frame of mind at the time of his conversion, he acquired it over the years.

We should read in *Life of Love* how, in March 1974, he was taken by the Blessed Virgin, in order to understand all the kindness and the great mercy shown by the Lord to Jean-Paul. Yolande's husband and the father of three young children, he had just suffered two major heart attacks from which he nearly died; several other



Fr. Denis Laprise

minor heart attacks subsequently affected him. The specialist who headed the cardiology department at Laval Hospital in Quebec City had given him the final diagnosis: "Your days are numbered."

On that day, upon the suggestion of Father Philippe Roy, Marie-Paule had telephoned Jean-Paul who, quite upset, told her everything. While he was talking to her, Marie-Paule said to the Blessed Virgin, "Cure this father and give him to me as an apostle in the Army of Mary." Marie-Paule immediately "felt" and "saw" like rays of crystal leaving her soul and going towards him. Something celestial was taking place. And she said to Jean-Paul, "Have confidence, you won't die." He felt inside him something that was undefinable. His will and his hope were riveted to those words. Marie-Paule warned him that, although he risked having other attacks, he was to remain calm. The only thing she asked of him was that he not work with his arms.

He returned home to Rimouski to await death, for, although he was resting, he had great difficulty breathing because of the sharp pains in his chest that were constantly there. On April 21, at evening Mass, he accepted to take up the collection. This generous deed tired him and a few hours later, he was rushed to emergency and put in intensive care, having been the victim of another heart attack. Father Philippe immediately informed Marie-Paule of the sick man's condition. After the telephone call, the Lord said to Marie-Paule: "He will not die." (*Life of Love*, vol. XI, chap. 22) And she informed Mrs. Rose Dessureault, Yolande's mother, of this in order to reassure her, giving her the Lord's most recent words.



Rose Dessureault - 1974

That is how the Lord would make use of His humble instrument, Marie-Paule, to work a miraculous cure through the application of her left hand on the upper part of Jean-Paul's heart. The Lord had prepared everything; He had indicated how to proceed and even the side effects, that is to say, the physical reactions Jean-Paul would experience after Marie-Paule's visit at the Rimouski hospital. The Blessed Virgin confirmed his cure to Marie-Paule by saying: "It is in gratitude for his generosity that

Jean-Paul will be cured." In fact, it took three visits from Marie-Paule before Jean-Paul was completely cured.

Shortly afterwards, in July 1974, after the death of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Rose Dessureault, godmother of the Army of Mary, Jean-Paul and Yolande became the godfather and godmother of the Work.



Jean-Paul and Yolande Bélanger - 1974

From then on, Jean-Paul did not stop showing his tremendous gratitude to the Lord and Mary through a radical change, a transformation which could first be described as a spiritual transfiguration. Then his gratitude was manifested through all kinds of generous material deeds, through the generosity of his heart but also in the giving of himself in the multitude of services he rendered to the Work. It was his way of saying "thank-you" to God and to the Blessed Virgin who had given him his physical health again; but they had done more than that, they had resurrected him spiritually.

When, on August 6 – more than thirty years after his cure, having succumbed to complications arising with his lungs and kidneys and not his heart – Jean-Paul went to meet the Lord in His glory on the Mount Tabor on the feast of the Transfiguration, he donned the white garment of those souls that have been invited to partake in the wedding feast of the Lamb. On His holy mountain, the Father prepared a feast of succulent meats and good wines. The Author of Holy Scripture expresses through human words spiritual realities, so that we may better understand the happiness of the souls that have departed. I am sure that Jean-Paul will appreciate these thoughtful acts now that he is resting close to Jesus. In the litany of the Sacred Heart, Jesus is invoked under the title of "Desire of the everlasting hills". That is because this holy mountain is quite real and the Lord offers the spiritual banquet to all souls on these everlasting hills. In Saint Luke, it is written: "It will go well with those servants whom the master finds wide-awake on his return. I tell you, he will put on an apron, seat them at table, and proceed to wait on them." (Lk 12:37) Jesus Himself had given an example of this at the Last Supper when, on the evening of Holy Thursday, He prepared His Apostles to receive His Body and His Blood in the Eucharistic Banquet. This sacred nourishment, given to us in each Communion, prepares us here and now to live as if we were already in heaven.

While we wait for this blessed day when we, in turn, will hear these words: "Come. You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world" (Mt 25:34), let us fervently celebrate this Mass for our brother Jean-Paul, so that Jesus and Mary, Mother and Queen of All Peoples, will welcome him into eternal glory. Amen.

Father Denis Laprise

We share the sorrow of the bereaved families. To you we offer our condolences and the assurance of our prayers for your loved one who has now "entered Life". May the hope of joining him or her one day be your consolation.

IN MEMORIAM

BÉLANGER, Jean-Paul - Ste-Foy, Quebec
 BENOIST, Lucie - Courbevoie, France
 BOARMAN, Father Leon- Notre Dame, IN, U.S.A.
 BOISJOLI, André - St-Boniface, MB
 BOLDUC, Béatrice - Ste-Foy, Quebec

EMILE, Fannie - Flushing, NY, U.S.A.
 GAMACHE, Father Joseph - Kasama, Zambia
 LABERGE, Monique - Beauport
 LEBLANC, Corrine - Montreal
 LORD, Françoise - Quebec
 RIVERA, Enrique - San Antonio, TX, U.S.A.
 ROSS, Jeanne - Mont-Joli
 SCHOUTEN, Johannes (Jan) - Haarlem, Netherlands
 STAFFORD, Charleen - Paducah, KY, U.S.A.
 THÊTE, Jean - Jarnioux, France
 TRAVERSY, Robert - Laval
 VAN DE BOOGAARD, Theodora (Doortje) - Groesbeek, Netherlands
 WOLENSKY, Charles - St-Boniface, MB