

# 33 Years in the Service of a Divine Work

Testimonial of Mr. Earl Masseur, Official Translator into English for the Army of Mary



Earl Masseur  
91 years

At the request of the late Father Philippe Roy, Mr. Earl Masseur revised the English translation of the Army of Mary's *Manual* in 1973. Since that time, he has not stopped collaborating in the Marian Work by translating into English the review *The Army of Mary*, articles for the paper *Marie, L'Étoile, Le Royaume*, the fifteen volumes of *Life of Love*, the five volumes of *Vie d'Amour, Appendice*, brochures and other writings related to the Work, conferences for the days of prayer and for pilgrimages, etc.

At our request, Mr. Masseur accepted, last October, to share with us his thoughts and his experience of almost 33 years within the Work. The contents of that interview is reproduced below in the form of a testimonial.

Sister Chantal Buysse

## STUDIES TO BECOME A JESUIT PRIEST

Originally from the province of Alberta in Western Canada, it was in Regina, Saskatchewan, that I entered the English province of the Jesuits to become a priest. When I had completed my classical studies (2 years) and my studies in philosophy (3 years), I was sent to one of their colleges to teach, until it was time for me to continue my studies in theology.

Seeing that I was a good student, my Superiors sent me to the French province of the Jesuit Order in Montreal where a special course was being given in theology. That's how I came to Quebec in the years 1939-1940.

We studied in the big College of Theology attached to the church of the Immaculate Conception. However, there wasn't enough room in the college to house all the English students, so the Superiors rented apartments for about nine or ten of us.

A few years earlier, I had been diagnosed with a back disease, ankylosing spondylitis, which has the effect of curving the spine and, in time, a person becomes invalid. I had consulted specialists out West and I was sent to see others in Montreal. But the specialists here, like those in the West, offered me no hope of a cure or even of being able to stop its progress.

Now, our apartments in Montreal were located in a building in which a lady of a certain age worked as a chiropractor. She had a friendly and kind assistant called Mercedes. As we always used to go past their back door when we were going to and from our house of studies, she would say hello to us in English. One day she said to me: "I notice you walk with a stoop. Do you have a problem?" After I told her about my case, she said, "Come and have a treatment with Mrs. Germaine, the chiropractor." I said to her, "I don't have the money and I don't think my Superiors would give me the money." She said, "It won't cost you anything."

So I started to go once every two or three weeks for a treatment. However the verdict of the traditional medicine had been quite categorical: "Look, we can't do anything for you; maybe a little operation to make the spine straight, but you will be more or less invalid and... you won't live for a long time."

So, I thought about it and took an important decision: not wanting to be a burden to the Order, I asked, after three years of study in Montreal, to be dispensed from my vows. And that is how I left the Jesuits.

## TOWARDS MARRIAGE

Shortly afterwards, I went to this lady for a treatment and, upon learning that I was going to leave the Order and that I was looking for a place to live, I was given the address of a boarding place not far from there. It was close to the building where Miss Mercedes lived. That is how we continued to see each other. Then, Mercedes brought me to another chiro-

practor who, after many treatments, succeeded in getting rid of the pain. And here I am today, 91 years old, and still in good health.

It was a real miracle! The chiropractor confounded the prognosis of the doctors. I did not die at 45 as they had predicted and I did not become a bedridden cripple. But all that was no doubt providential. What kind of a priest would I have been, lying in bed? They probably wouldn't have ordained me, anyhow.

But that's how I saw Mercedes again, and gradually, we started to go out together. Finally, we got married, and we had 55 years of wonderful marriage. In 2001, she left me for a better Man...!

## FIRST CONTACTS WITH THE ARMY OF MARY

Mercedes was a very pious person. She helped me to stand firm in my spiritual life during the years we were married.

Several years later, in the years 1972-1973, my wife and I went for a retreat in Sutton, in the Southern Townships. There was a Sister there from Quebec. She was the secretary of a center of the Army of Mary, and she persuaded Mercedes to subscribe to the review *L'Armée de Marie*. That was our first contact with the Work.

Personally, I didn't read the review, but Mercedes took an interest in it and, with a few lady friends, she went to a meeting announced in the review, which was held at the Montfortan Fathers' shrine on Sherbrooke Street East. After the meeting, as she was looking over the literature of the Army of Mary set out on a table, a lady came up to her and asked her if she would like to do something for the Army of Mary. And my wife said, "I would, but my health isn't too good." The lady answered: "Mine hasn't been too good either..." It was Marie-Paule...

So, that's how it all began. My wife attended the meetings. I encouraged her to go ahead, for it was a Marian movement, and I was all for it, but I myself did not participate in it actively. Sometimes I would drive her to the meetings, especially when the weather was bad.

One night, we were at Notre-Dames-des-Anges church in Laval where I had driven Mercedes for a meeting. I sat in the back. After the meeting, I joined my wife who wanted me to meet Marie-Paule. As I greeted her, I said to her in French: "You have a very beautiful Movement." And her reply struck me: "It's not my movement, it's the Blessed Virgin's!"

## TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ARMY OF MARY IS TO WANT TO BECOME A SAINT

Some time after that, I went to a meeting with my wife again. The priest celebrating the Mass for the local center was a Sulpician, Father Arthur Delorme. He said: "The Army of Mary, it's not preaching on street corners, it's not going around distributing literature, it's not running around trying to convert people. The Army of Mary is becoming a saint. You become

members of the Army of Mary to become saints!"

Those words deeply impressed me; they made sense. That's when I entered the Army of Mary, that I began to actively go to meetings with my wife and that I began reading the little review.

## TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH

One day, Father Philippe Roy came to our place and asked me if I would accept to revise the *Manual* of the Army of Mary. "What would you charge to revise this little book," he asked, showing me a little blue booklet. "Charge the Blessed Virgin for work? Come on, Father Philippe!" Of course, I immediately accepted to revise it.

Shortly afterwards, someone called me to ask if I would consider translating the review *L'Armée de Marie*, and what I would charge to translate it. Again, I replied that there would be no question of my charging and that I would be glad to do it in my spare hours, for I was still working at the time. That was the beginning of a new career...

December 30, 1974, was my last day at work and then I retired. I immediately began to translate full time. I remember: it was January 1, 1975. We were preparing to receive our children for dinner. I went to the kitchen to ask my wife if I could help her with the preparations. She said to me: "No, no, you go and do your translation!" And so, on January 1, 1975, I began to translate full time.

## THE MOVE TO QUEBEC CITY

I had almost finished the translation of the third year of the review when, at the end of October 1976, Mercedes told me that she had called Marie-Paule that very morning to tell her that she felt we should go to live in Quebec City. My wife was a woman of organization; she looked after the practical things. I was in agreement, but I told her that she had to make all the arrangements. For my part, I continued working on translation.

But Mercedes had been inspired. We didn't know that on the morning of her call, Marie-Paule had had an indication from the Lord which she had just transmitted to Father Philippe. She had learned that the time had come for her to have her volumes recopied and that the English translation would be done simultaneously. She thought that this wouldn't be possible because we would have to be living in Quebec City.

Everything was arranged very rapidly for our lease. A young girl took over our apartment which allowed us to move before the end of our lease. And, at the end of November 1976, we were settled in Quebec City, in an apartment at the Army of Mary Center.

Marie-Paule then asked me if I could stop working on the little review and begin translating *Vie d'Amour*. That's how I began the first volume.

When a certain section had been translated, I'd always give it to Father Philippe who would give the pages to Marie-Paule. One day she said to him: "If Earl is working for the Work, I have to see him from time to time, so tell him to bring the translations to me himself." So it was that I had the joy of seeing her every so often, and talking with her. It was just wonderful! She was so simple!

## FRATERNAL LIVING

The following year, the Laprise family

came to live at the Center and then Roger Michaud's parents and Mr. and Mrs. Beauchemin. Even though each one remained in his own living quarters, we formed one big family. There was no social life but a bond of spiritual friendship. I can't remember ever having gone to visit someone in their apartment or their visiting with us in our apartment, and yet we were friends.

We would gather together downstairs for the recitation of the rosary and then everyone would sit and talk. Personally, I didn't stay, going back up to the apartment immediately after the rosary, since I was very shy because my French was so poor.

But one day after confession, Father Philippe said to me: "You know, Earl, if you are going to be shy with us, we will be shy with you. If you don't come down, we won't feel at ease with you."

I explained to him that it was because of my French. He said to me: "Come down, do your best, and don't worry about it." That's what I did, and today, I am not as shy... I got over that.

#### DEPARTURE FROM THE ARMY OF MARY CENTER

In 1983, with the beginning of the Community of the Daughters of Mary, the families and lay persons living at the Army of Mary Center were asked to leave. Poor Marie-Paule! She was so embarrassed over having to ask us to leave. So Father Philippe spoke to us, explaining that Marie-Paule felt so badly about this that he would do the talking. He told us the place would be used as a noviciate, and therefore we were being asked to move. But we were lucky enough to find a suite in the apartment block across the street from the Army of Mary Center. We moved, and life went on! It wasn't hard. I think Marie-Paule suffered more from this than we did. For quite a few years, Raoul Auclair was my neighbor, a neighbor whom I appreciated very much.

#### WHAT THE ARMY OF MARY GAVE ME

Before getting to know the Army of Mary, I must say that my spiritual life had become more and more dormant, torpid; I should say that it had become very mediocre. Sure, I still went to Mass and confession, but there was very little enthusiasm in my approach to spiritual things.

The Army of Mary very gradually changed my life. It's marvelous to see how God works things out. The process went on very quietly, and very deeply. As it is said in the Gospel: the seed falls to the ground and matures, unseen, unnoticed, and suddenly one day it flowers.

And I can say that the best, the wonderful things I'm seeing in my spiritual life have come to me in the last four or five years, when I'm reaching the term. Like Saint Augustine, I sometimes say to the Lord: "Too late have I known Thee, Lord! Too late have I known Thee!" Why did these things come so late? Why did I not understand them earlier in my life? But, that's how the Lord wanted it.

Ah yes, the Army of Mary is something wonderful. I believe that God sent it to show the world how He wanted His doctrine accepted and applied to our daily life, in our times. Most of us are simple people. Marie-Paule herself is a very simple person and her life has been very simple, in the sense that the things she has undergone have been lived under very simple circumstances, things that we all live.

#### THE IGNATIAN FORMATION AND THE ARMY OF MARY

It's difficult for me to say whether or not the Ignatian formation had an influence on my understanding of the Army of Mary. My studies were very interesting, of course, but I never really understood the spiritual life of Saint Ignatius – perhaps because

the Order wasn't my place. Therefore, not having understood it well, I didn't retain many things.

When I left the Jesuits, I was a good Catholic, but I was not a very spiritual man... All the spirituality I've gotten, I got in the Army of Mary: the submissiveness, the acceptance of the cross, etc. Every bit of it! I've just become more and more familiar with God every year, every day of my life in the Army of Mary.

I'm happy to be old because I have less problems with the world. The world no longer means as much. The television, for example, I watch it from time to time. My relationships with others are all on a spiritual basis; I'm not looking for an affectionate relationship.

I've developed a great devotion – excuse me for talking in this way, but I'm not boasting – to the blessed rosary, especially.

And the Eucharist! That's why I was so happy to come here to Virgo-Fidelis. I kept thinking: "Where will I go so that I can have Mass every day?" When I was in Quebec City, I could look out my front window across the street where the chapel was and say: "Hello, Jesus!" The Army of Mary! I can't for the life of me understand why the bishops can't see that!

#### THE ARMY OF MARY, IT'S SIMPLICITY

The Catholic faith is very simple, but it's also the hardest thing in the world. And you don't get it at school, through courses. You get it through the grace of God. God gives it; you have to be simple and humble. If I've learned one thing in my years in the Army of Mary, it's that I'm not anything special. I do what I can; if it's well done, so much the better and if it isn't, too bad! You do your best and you leave everything else to the good Lord.

I read very few books on spirituality. You find God in the very simple things: the prayer of the rosary, the adoration of the Eucharist, the Mass, understanding what it is when we receive Communion... It's an awesome thing to receive God in us! Little things like that, you don't get those out of books; they come by God's grace. I think that's the way it is.

#### DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL

The Army of Mary has taught us that the most important thing in our life is God's will, is seeing God's will and doing it! There are two things Marie-Paule used to tell us. Maybe they didn't originate with her, I don't know, but she always repeated them. "All is grace!" When you stop to think about it, it's a tremendous thing; when you apply it to your life, everything is grace! Secondly she said: "Nothing ever happens by chance!" I've thought about them so often in my life and applied them to my life. And the Army of Mary has done what the Gospel wanted us to do, namely, to live with God, in God; to walk in His Presence, to walk in the presence of Mary and the Lord. I would think of the people in this world as I watched them walk pass the Army of Mary Center. The Blessed Sacrament was there, at the Center, and I thought: God is there across the street from my place... and I would see people walking by... and they didn't know... they didn't pay any attention to Him!

The Army of Mary is the giving of oneself simply, humbly, without personal ambitions. The Army of Mary brings us peace, not necessarily freedom from sufferings, but always Peace.

#### "LIFE OF LOVE"

What does *Life of Love* represent to me? I have always seen in it a marvelous application of the evangelical principles and teachings to the average life, to the ordinary, almost monotonous, things that we do day after day. I saw how Marie-Paule lived those principles in her life.

That's the thing that impresses me. Our Lord lived them to begin with, and Marie-Paule lives them in our age, adapted to our modern times, adapted to all the problems of today, for example, marriage, financial problems, relational problems. She lived all these situations in the spirit of the Gospel, and how she did it, that's how we should do it. She is the example. *Life of Love* is like a Third Testament.

I never had any problem with the Lord's messages to Marie-Paule. God can speak to whomever He wants, and, throughout the ages, He has always spoken to His servants. So why not Marie-Paule? I can see it and I can understand the mystical part of Marie-Paule's life, but she is at the same time so simple and so human. And generally speaking, being human and the mystical life go hand in hand.

#### WORK AS A TRANSLATOR

I did not have any specific formation as a translator. But there is no doubt that I owe it to my formation by the Jesuits.

After the noviciate and our vows, we would start our course of studies with two years of classical studies during which time we did a lot of translation from English into Latin, from Latin into English, from Greek into English and from English into Greek. When we translated, we had to concentrate on writing good English, for the Jesuits are not only great preachers but also great writers. One of their strong points is writing. Therefore, they insisted upon good writing, and we had very good professors. That's where I learned to be precise and clear. I must say that I also had a certain knack for writing. Later, my employers appreciated my composition of commercial documents, etc.

It will soon be 31 years that I have been translating full-time the documentation from the Army of Mary: the review, the paper, the books, brochures, etc. I have enjoyed every minute of it! It has been marvelous! It has become a third career! First there was the career as a religious, and then as a lay person in the world and finally as translator for the Army of Mary.

And I still continue today, certainly with the same enthusiasm, but not with the same energy. I used to translate six or seven hours a day every day.

Today, at 91 years of age, I am happy to be able to still work three or four hours a day. I have very good health. The last time I went to see the doctor, he said to me: "You know, you're spoiled!" That's true! And I thank the dear God every day for it. To work for the glory of God is a great blessing. I have often asked the Lord: "Why me?" I always considered it to be a great favor. I've had a chance to be associated with wonderful people both in Montreal and in Quebec. It's a fantastic brotherhood.

I haven't been to a meeting or gathering of the Army of Mary for eight years, first because of Mercedes' illness and then because of circumstances. Since she died on November 22, 2001, I have lived a rather solitary life. But I have never felt myself to be apart from the Army of Mary. I've always felt solidly one with the members of the Army of Mary. It's one big family! Besides, no one has ever been expelled from the Army of Mary.

#### THE HARVEST TO COME...

I think the harvest is still ahead. *Life of Love* is so meaningful for anybody, regardless of who you are. What a privilege and what a blessing to be there! And it's incredible to think, when you reflect on it a bit, that it all comes from a single woman, Marie-Paule, who suffered so much for each one of us!

**Earl Massecar**

(Excerpts from an interview conducted by Sister Chantal Buysse)