

"We Recognized God's Love in Our Midst..."

"My dear friends." These words were heard often by those who knew "the good Father Philippe" well or who had a chance to profit from his preaching and his teachings. For him, they were not the expression of a customary and polite greeting, but truly the expression of a deep sentiment in his loving heart of a priest. All were his "friends", not of that human and ordinary friendship, but as a result of a profound feeling that had its source in Jesus alone, the Priest and Victim. Those very simple words recalled those said by Jesus:

"I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father." "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (Jn 15:15,13)

The good Father Philippe loved. He loved with that love of Christ for all redeemed souls called to enter into the very joy of God, our Father. In his paternal exhortations, his support of the afflicted and his mercy for sinners, he manifested Christ's love towards each person who met him. In effect, he embodied the words of Saint John which we repeated in the acclamation before the Gospel: "We recognized God's love in our midst..."

A WITNESS OF GOD'S WORK

Today, we are underlining the 20th anniversary of Father Philippe's death, who passed away on February 22, 1988, the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter. However, what we are celebrating is the work of God in a priestly soul entirely given over to the service of God. We are recalling the memory of God's work in souls through his priestly ministry. We are remembering the witness of what he so ardently proclaimed: the Work of God in a soul totally dedicated to Mary in view of the Co-Redemption. A priest whose soul was sensitive and open to the supernatural, Father Philippe was able to recognize the merciful action of God through the Immaculate for the renewal of the Church he loved so much.

Today's liturgy challenges us. We can discover in it at least two levels that complement each other: that of the memory of God's action in Father Philippe's life and the exhortation to walk along, each according to his own calling and to the extent of his full capacity, in the footsteps of this witness of the first hour. The souvenir holy picture he was given on May 1, 1972, when he was received as a Son of Mary, applied these words to him: "He walks in front of them and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice". Having been the



The Virgin of Fatima whom Father Philippe liked so much.

reflection of Christ the Good Shepherd in his life and in his words, these words from the prophet Micah are quite appropriate for him and they urge us to follow the way he set out for us: "Lord, shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance..."

PURIFICATION AND GRACE

However, in order to become a docile instrument in the hands of the Father and of the Immaculate, Father Philippe had to follow the steep road of purification. Illness, the trial of war, physical and moral sufferings accompanied him along this road of necessary deprivation so that God might have all the room. He encourages us to have the same generosity and the same spirit of self-denial.

Although marked by tribulation, he was also very strongly marked by the grace that came to him during his illness. He had a grateful heart that was able to discern God's merciful action in his life. Because he had been miraculously cured in his weakened body, his gratitude to God was an opening to others so that as many souls as possible would have access, through his ministry as a priest, to another kind of healing, this one of a supernatural nature. Does not the opening prayer for this Mass recall both kinds of healing: "Through your grace, you heal us, Lord, and by your gifts to us on earth, we already share in your life."

TO LOVE WITHOUT MEASURE

"This man welcomes sinners." The Gospel of the prodigal son will recall forever Christ's mercy and love for sinners. To the elder son who was angry over the father's love, the excessiveness of divine Love is recalled: "My son, you are with me always, and everything I have is yours."

The mercy and love of souls in the "good" Father Philippe were in the image of Christ's sentiments. A priest, "another Christ", he deeply loved the weakest, and those set aside by society whom he wished to lead to God and to His most Blessed Mother. Should not our prayer and our apostolate be enflamed with the same love for souls?

THE DIRECTOR AND DEFENDER OF THE MARIAN WORK

Mary wanted him to be her "greatest Director... and the greatest Defender of the Marian Work". To achieve that, he had to learn to let himself be guided according to the little way of the spiritual childhood of the saint from Lisieux, whom he liked very much. Thus, does not the same opening prayer remind us of the road he followed: "Be yourself our guide in our daily life and lead us to the light where you wish to welcome us?"

An old saying states that in order to be able to guide others well, one must know how to obey. Father Philippe taught this in words and in deeds. He

Fr. Jean-François Mastropietro



liked to transpose his military experience in order to encourage us to obey promptly and generously in complete flexibility. He reminded us that we are an army, the Army of Mary, and that Mary is our Commander in chief, as he liked to call her.

If the military virtues are obedience, discipline and loyalty, his filial devotion to Mary which was sensed through his entire being aroused in those who listened to him the keen desire to be all hers for the good fight of holiness. And his invitation to each one of us today is still pressing.

Our first Marian Father experienced first hand God's Work for our time. A witness of the Handmaid's *Life of Love*, he was able to recognize the authenticity of her mission and always supported her.

He was the good and faithful servant whom the Lord welcomed in the joy of his Master. From On-High, he still challenges us today. We have now reached the hour of the end. The hour of the renewal of the Church has arrived and, in our turn, we are called to be faithful in bearing witness to what we have seen and heard.

THE HOUR OF LIGHT

It is the hour of light! May we let it show through in our lives, in our families, in our apostolate. May our souls be like pure and limpid crystal offering a perfect transparency to that Light which must radiate over all peoples. It is the hour of the Lady of All Peoples. The Co-Redemption has been accomplished. We are the first beneficiaries of it.

We who have seen and believed, we who have journeyed for so many years at the very heart of the Work of the Army of Mary, let us now open wide our hearts to the action of the Immaculate, so as to bear the first fruits of this renewal which is beginning in the Church of John. Again, the opening prayer to today's Mass invites us to do so: "Lead [our life] to the light where you wish to welcome us."

May this Mass in which heaven and earth join together raise up to God and the Immaculate our praise and our love. May the divine Light illuminate us and, through the Eucharist, transform us so that Christ the King's Kingdom of love may be established in us and about us through the Lady of All Peoples.

Fr. Jean-François Mastropietro



Fr. Philippe Roy
Director and
Defender of the
Army of Mary