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09. Charles Besnard (continued)

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(These retreat notes, like those of his retreat in 1701, come to an end with a question. His director was able to help him to draw conclusions from this journey in search of the truth. Relying entirely on the love of God, Claude would follow up the work he had started, but sharing the responsibility with others. It was the beginning of a small community of formators, the "Society of the Holy Spirit", dedicated to the large community of "poor scholars" known as the "Seminary of the Holy Spirit")

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Charles Besnard (continued)

While Monsieur des Places¹ gave himself entirely to the demands of his embryonic community and exhausted himself by austere mortifications, he suffered an attack of pleurisy that was accompanied by a violent fever and a painful tenesmus, which for four days caused him atrocious sufferings. But not one word of complaint, and still less of impatience, escaped his lips. One could only tell that his pain was growing by the fact that his prayers of resignation became more frequent. His very exhaustion seemed to give him new strength as he repeated continually the prayer of King David: "*How lovely is your dwelling-place, Lord of Hosts! My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord*" Psalm 84: 2-3). As soon as it was known in Paris that he was seriously ill, a great number of people known for their holiness came to see him. (...) He eventually received the last sacraments and then quietly

e) *The vital importance of prayer, the Eucharist and the sustained thought of God as often as possible. For Claude, we cannot really love God without frequently averting to his presence and his love.*

¹ As a result of sharing his responsibilities, Poullart was able to complete his theological studies. He was ordained sub-deacon on 18th December, 1706, deacon on 19th March, 1707 and priest 17th December, 1707.

expired around five o'clock in the evening of October 2, 1709, at the age of thirty years and seven months.

Thus was the holy and famous Monsieur des Places, the founder of the Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris. (...)

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Charles Besnard (Continued)

It is not difficult to see the kind of life for which the young students of the *Seminaire du Saint-Esprit* are being formed. They are trained to develop all the virtues needed to carry out the sacred ministry, especially through the example given by their wise directors. They show an extraordinary degree of detachment and obedience. They commit themselves to the service and needs of the Church. They constitute a kind of military detachment of auxiliary troops, ready to go to any place where there is work to be done for the salvation of souls. They consecrate themselves by preference to missionary activity, both foreign and domestic, offering to go and live in the poorest and most abandoned places for which it is especially difficult to find volunteers. Whether it is a question of being buried in the remote countryside, lost in some obscure hospital, teaching in a college, lecturing in a seminary, directing a poor community, travelling to the farthest corners of the Kingdom or remaining in a difficult posting, whether it is a question even of crossing the seas and going to the very ends of the earth to gain a soul for Christ – they are always ready to carry out his wishes: *Ecce ego, mitte me* (Is 6, 12)".