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FATHER

DANIEL BROTTIER,

C.S.Sp.

1876 – 1936



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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FATHER LIBERMANN

"We do not want weak souls in this totally apostolic Congregation" (Fr. Libermann, N.D. I 662).

Daniel Brottier entered the Holy Ghost Congregation at the age of twenty-seven, after three years of priestly ministry in his native diocese, Blois, not far from the château of Chambord, one of the finest of the Loire valley. His call to missionary work coincided with his call to the priesthood, that is, from infancy. He wrote to Archbishop Le Roy, then superior general of the Holy Ghost Congregation:

From the age of twelve I have always envisaged missionary life, and I still do, as the life of one who is prepared to offer and sacrifice all for the salvation of souls — whether quickly or drop by drop, what does it matter? If I may state my preference it would be for the former. I have no wish to be presumptuous, but if you have a dangerous post where someone has to be risked I say in all simplicity, I am ready.

His generous magnanimity was already evident.

"I think that all those who seem ready to give themselves to God in this holy work will be disposed for everything" (N.D. I 662).

Daniel Brottier wrote to Fr. Genoud, his master of novices, some time before entering the novitiate:

I did not think leaving the world was so complicated. It looks nothing when others are making the sacrifice. Once it touches you personally it is a different matter and appears in another light. My consolation is that I feel the same enthusiasm in my heart. I hasten to take my place among the workers in the Father's huge field. As I am under no illusions about the amount of work I can do and the limited energy I have for it, at least I long to offer my life, my blood, to

spread the good news. I am convinced that the gospel will not be spread among the pagans except as it was in the early centuries. The seed will have to be watered with the blood of martyrs. Oh, if God would only accept my blood for this task, I would give it with a good heart. The desire for martyrdom is ambitious, but there cannot be a genuine missionary vocation without it.

"The special end the Congregation is founded for is the salvation of the neediest and most abandoned souls" (N.D. X 451).

At the time he landed in Africa, in Senegal, Fr. Brottier was a gentle giant, of majestic appearance, his flourishing beard already whitening, his smile affectionate and cajoling, his glance penetrating and deep, at times exhibiting a leader's authority, at times a father's goodness. "This priest had two souls", said a religious Sister who knew him well. The Blacks and half-castes at St. Louis, the tough soldiers at the front, the orphans at Auteuil — these were the humble ones the Lord was entrusting to him. "An epic in three melodies", said Canon Coubé of him: African missionary, military chaplain, father of orphans.

"The soul, source and nourishment of true zeal is a pure, holy, burning love of God, deeply engrained in the heart" (N.D. X 509).

Daniel Brottier's manifest characteristic was zeal. From the moment he reached Africa he gained notoriety for febrile activity in the most varied areas. Retiring late at night, rising early in the morning, he was called to order more than once by his bishop and friend, Bishop Jalabert. If he did not learn the Wolof language it was because he was overburdened with ministry that was supposed to be temporary — a temporary that lasts, as is common among Spiritans! At the war front, as a voluntary chaplain in the infantry, always in the first wave of assaults, he showed, in his own words, "a superhuman abnegation and bravery". He would say later:

If I had to do again what I did at Verdun and the Somme, I could not. I could no longer carry the wounded on my back, remain days and nights in holes

of trees under deafening bombardments, smile and joke when one is stupefied by cold, tiredness, sleep and fear. All that is superhuman.

Heroes appear in such circumstances. He had a high conception of the priest's role in the first line of infantrymen, sharing their existence, privations, dangers, witnessing to his faith and awakening theirs, sustaining their morale and helping them to die as Christians, never wishing to be elsewhere than where the rank and file were most vulnerable.

His breath-taking activity at Auteuil is well known; here is his apostrophe to his inkwell:

Do you see this inkwell? It has collected more than twenty-five million francs. I made no speeches, I did no visiting, I did not queue up for audiences, but I wrote 30, 50, 80, 100 letters a day, sometimes 200. I answered everyone who wrote, everyone without exception. I thanked each of those who sent an offering, either for the cathedral at Dakar or for my orphans. When I received a ten-cent stamp I used it to send the answer and my thanks. This technique succeeded.

The source and nourishment of this unflagging zeal was his love of God. All who knew him are unanimous, he was "a man of God", devoured by God's love. Some Spiritans who knew him well may be quoted.

Bishop Gay: "He did not see the Auteuil organization as a philanthropic work. It flowed from his love of God, just as his missionary desire and his stay in Africa were not a sort of adventure but flowed from his love of God. Likewise his role as military chaplain, his dedication to the fighting soldiers, are explained by his love of God, driving him on to save souls".

Fr. Pichon, his immediate colleague from 1923 to 1936: "Fr. Brottier had a devotion to abandoned souls; in this he was a worthy member of the Holy Ghost Congregation. When some of our confreres seemed to find that Auteuil was not within the scope of our Congregation he replied that, on the contrary, we should dedicate ourselves to the abandoned souls of the orphans as well as to the Black races of Africa. Faith inspired him. His outstanding devotion was the Sacred Heart, especially Christ's love for us. He lived in the presence of God. Many times he said, When I have an important deci-

sion to take, I pray; I am sure God helps me, and when I speak I really speak in his presence”.

Fr. Rigault: “His love for God, yes, that was his master quality and source of all the rest. Because he was a holy friend of God he was charitable to all his brothers, especially the “blessed” poor and gentle, and the victims of injustice — the little ones. Why a whole life of duty and sacrifice? Because he thought only of serving and loving God in solacing human misery. He said, I seek only God’s glory; as long as God is satisfied and souls are saved, what does the rest matter? I do not work for myself”.

He had the faith to move mountains and warmly transmitted this trust in providence:

Never doubt providence, but pray and act; that levels mountains.

Never rush providence. At times we do not understand what is going on, until one day we see that providence was working for the best.

When some business becomes muddled, gain time and let providence take its due course.

When you are hesitating on a line of action to follow, ask a sign of providence; a sincere request will always receive an answer.

As long as we are able to say to God, (I took in these unfortunate children out of love for you, help me now to train them), be certain that providence will step in; whereas if we tried to tailor the admissions to the resources available we would meet unpleasant surprises.

In cases of failure: (God did not want it; it is not his moment; we will have to wait).

He often asked for signs, either directly from God or from St. Thérèse; to receive some heartened him to ask for more. Faced with a new project or idea, he would say, “I will think about it”. That meant, I will pray, or await a sign. But in the meantime he would undertake the work of prudent research and ample consultation.

The habit of living in God’s presence led him, like the Curé d’Ars, to think he was called to contemplative life. He stayed only a fortnight at the Trappist monastery of Lérins. “The life of solitude is excellent but is not for me. I left it with a gasp

of relief, for it was not my vocation". The providential sign in this case was hunger! He was hungry all the time he was there.

"The principle of all our conduct towards the souls to whom we are sent will be a tender, strong and compassionate love, a burning desire to procure their salvation and sanctify them" (N.D. X 515).

Fr. Brottier's great charity shone forth visibly in his life, the concrete expression of his love for God. "In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25 : 40). His parishioners at St. Louis were used to seeing him mobbed by groups of youngsters, as much at ease in religious instruction as in directing a choir, in a kitchen as in a plantation. The outsize "Brottier-mango" that he grafted is still famous! Always in the breach at the service of all! This description also fitted his ministry as chaplain on the field of battle. He was a ray of sunshine by his joyfulness, his never-failing goodness, his warm interest in everyone, especially the outcasts. He would say, "Goodness dilates the heart, opening it as a refuge for all sufferings". Canon Jamot testified: "I can say he always edified me by his zeal and amazed me by his energy. He always wanted to bring souls closer to God. Fr. Brottier was the most priestly priest I met at the front during the war. Yet he would be swallowing a boxful of aspirins a day for his headache. But I never heard him complain. He would say, This work must be got through today".

His burning love for people was most pronounced at Auteuil. He explained it to a colleague:

What better life could you wish for a priest than the life we live here? Look, we spend the whole day doing what? Practising the virtue of charity. From morning to night, what do we do? Receive people in pain, encourage and help them, give them hope; receive orphans, clothe and feed them and give them beds, shelter them from want, train and catechize them, make good Christians out of them; serve as go-betweens for the unemployed to get them work; intercede with the civil, military or religious authorities for families or people in straits; enlighten and guide wav-

ering souls looking for the right path; visit and console the sick and reconcile them with God; pray and get our children to pray for the thousand and one miseries we hear about; give a service to all, sometimes the rich more than the poor. What is all that, indeed, if not a perpetual exercise of charity? No, believe me, we have chosen the better part, or rather the good God has chosen it for us and we should thank him profusely. To live as Christ lived, is that not, for a priest, the way of perfection?

His exquisite politeness, courtesy and distinguished appearance revealed a great goodness, especially in the last years of his life.

I became angry once, and the consequences were so regrettable that I swore to God I would never get angry again. To be good means to be self-possessed in the details of life, to reflect before replying or taking a decision. The greatest strength is to succeed in refraining from anger.

His goodness hinged on an innate sense of justice. His first move at Auteuil was to raise the salaries of the employees. He would say, "For each to have his due, more than his due must be given him". He improved the food and clothing of the orphans as well. He made it clear that it was preferable to exaggerate on the side of generosity so as not to fail in justice. He would say, "To command well one must be prepared to carry out the order oneself".

These qualities, along with his own natural bearing of authority, made him a peerless educator. He has often been compared to Don Bosco. Goodness and fairness, an alliance difficult to achieve, were the hallmark of his genius. He combined esteem, affection, respect for freedom with the demands he made on the children, no matter what their family or social background. He acknowledged their dignity as sons of God.

If we want to succeed at Auteuil, we must dedicate ourselves to these children wholeheartedly and unreservedly. I have offered myself to God to serve them until death. I desire no other job, I want to die here in their service.

Those who come to live with us must be happy.

The children must feel that I know what they are doing and that I follow them up affectionately.

Let the children be treated without harshness, always with justice. Prefer rewards to punishments.

Let them not have to complain about food, clothing, tools. Then you can preach to them and get them to pray.

Your ideal, children, is to become men. A man knows what he wants and accomplishes it, no matter what it costs. Do not turn out to be aimlessly wandering shadows. Spiritual values are proper to men. Our financial and social situation can change, our personal, intellectual and moral value remains.

Take it to heart to develop the personality in you, the gift that God gave you.

The Christian life will be inculcated in the children starting from the liturgy of the Mass. Only one must go to the trouble of minting it, making it thirty-five living, sung, interesting and basically happy minutes.

The children must get the taste for the things of God, without being overdosed.

Fr. Brottier's eloquence was touching when he spoke to the first communicants.

Children, today I have a favour to ask you at the moment when the Master of heaven and earth is in your heart. What is it? Money? No. Prayers. By your fund of prayers you are the lightning-conductors of this house of Auteuil.

This was not paternalism. In the playground stands a statue of Fr. Brottier stretching his cloak over a poor lad, one of those Paris urchins, more or less vagabond, that he would receive for a few months to prepare for first holy communion. Their ignorance was notorious and their replies ingenuous. Instead of punishing this one who had run away and been brought back, Fr. Brottier drew him to himself and a friendship was made. Many former students testified by letters and visits how much they appreciated and loved him. "True goodness", he used to say, "is that which one procures for others".

"Recollection is the state of a soul present to itself and to God" (N.D. XI 546).

People who had to deal with Fr. Brottier found that he was always in union with God. Fr. Pichon recalls: "When anyone went to see him, he laid down his pen, listened attentively, then replied as if he was repeating words he heard in the depths of his heart". Coming out of his room, priests were known to say, "You would think our Lord was speaking when he replies". A lady testified to the same thing: "When you asked him for advice, he would raise his eyes to heaven. He would reply immediately or else would say, "I will write tomorrow", or "Call me on the phone". This meant he was not clear before God just then". Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit that he enjoyed, that of counsel was outstanding, as it was in Fr. Libermann. Bishops came to consult him on their way through Paris, like Cardinal Verdier, who spoke openly of his holiness on the day of his funeral. Bishop De Langavant of Reunion, now retired at Langonnet, says: "I had only two occasions to meet and talk with Fr. Brottier. I knew his work by hearsay and I was expecting to meet an excited, nervous, jumpy man, worn down by his many cares and worries. On the contrary, I was struck by his serenity, patience, goodness that nothing could trouble. I felt sure that only an intense interior life and constant union with God could bring about such virtue. When, after his death, there was talk of 'saintly Fr. Brottier' I knew I was not mistaken, I was not surprised".

His presence to himself, his self-possession in peace, was so habitual to him that it seemed normal and natural to anyone who did not know his burning, sensitive, tender and violent character. A hasty word or inconsiderate action never escaped him, even when faced with difficulties, opposition and misunderstanding. His own brother said: "I never saw him discouraged, even though he was often dreadfully tired. When something he understook did not succeed he would say, "We did not go about it the right way; we will try again and see". Unjust criticism wounded him but did not make him waver. "We will wait for them on the rebound", he would say laughingly". At the seminary he had given the impression of a boy who was turbulent and quarrelsome. By dint of prolonged sustained efforts he gradually achieved a self-control that gave the appearance of perpetual serenity.

"Christian perfection consists in a perfect union of love with our Lord, founded on complete self-denial" (N.D. II 133).

Recollection and self-denial are the conditions Fr. Libermann gives for an apostle to be led by the Holy Spirit. Fr. Brottier took our Lord's words at their face-value: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8 : 34). He did no extraordinary penances, nor sought them. His cross was the dreadful headaches he suffered ever since he was a boy, increasing according to his responsibilities and, perhaps, his holiness. Archbishop Le Hunsec said, "Fr. Brottier's merit was to work while struggling every day against atrocious headaches. When asked about this he would reply, "the boiler is still overheating". He did not complain. His only relaxation was three or four weeks holiday at Saverne, in one of our houses, where the superior was one of his good friends. To that Spiritan he would say on his death-bed, "Fr. Groell, I am off". And Fr. Groell, far away in Saverne, heard him distinctly in the middle of the night!"

He suffered from congestion, which made his face flushed. "What a fine complexion you have", those who did not know his sickness would say. "I have no quarrel with my complexion", he would murmur, "but with its complex causes". He got through an amount of work with that persistent migraine. The Lord was giving him a share in his passion, to which he had a special devotion. Fr. Pichon writes:

"He suffered terribly from headaches, but he was a hardened worker, nothing daunted him. I often saw him mix eight or ten aspirin tablets into his soup. I told him it was imprudent, it would poison him. He said it was the only way he could work in the afternoons. He did everything in his power not to be interrupted in his task, and in fact he never was. But he suffered to the end; I think God allowed those physical trials to increase his merits. He used to say, "I do not know what it is to write without a headache". But his head was always clear. He had a gift of improvising on his feet. A week before he died I entered his room and saw him weeping profusely, head in hands. "You are suffering greatly". "Yes, for several hours, uninterruptedly; there is no way out", he said".

His evening rosary was a daily moment of relaxation. He used to say it walking alongside the chapel deeply recollected, in the children's playground. His power of concentration was clear from the easy way he settled into prayer or celebrating the Eucharist.

"Strength and gentleness, that is the divine action and also a summary of all apostolic activity" (L.S. II 468).

Fr. Maurice Briault insisted that Fr. Brottier's greatest virtue was his strength, a calm, persevering strength that nothing could diminish, neither the inertia around him nor the misunderstandings or even outbursts — which, incidentally, he preferred to eulogies. This is the characteristic of the Holy Spirit's living presence: *fortiter et suaviter*. A climate of strength, gentleness and peace is described by Fr. Libermann as the atmosphere that gives free rein to the Spirit of Pentecost. Fr. Pichon says: "What best shows Fr. Brottier's heroic strength is his calm and unruffled serenity all the time in a house like this where catastrophes are daily happenings: a child runs away, a workman injures his hand, an employee complains about a boss. By evening-time everyone has lost patience except Fr. Brottier".

"What matters is to live all day long in practical union with God" (N.D. XIII 699).

Fr. Libermann coined a lapidary phrase for the secret of holiness of the apostolic person who is completely immersed in God's work, "practical union". This expression suits Fr. Brottier down to the ground. It means the habit of remaining united to God in the midst of the most diverse activities and of being totally submissive to the Holy Spirit. The more the activities increase, the greater the union. This has to be, so that the Spirit can guide those who are in peaceful self-control.

Is not that our whole responsibility as Spiritans, a special belonging to him who is the chief Agent in missionary work? Mystic and man of action like his spiritual master, Fr. Brottier was a Spiritan in the apostolic line the Holy Spirit wished for us. Fr. Libermann wrote, "The supernatural life becomes somehow natural" (E. Sp. 554), and Fr. Brottier re-echoed,

"When the supernatural becomes natural for you, then you have a true interior life".

"A cardinal principle in the interior life is to simplify things as much as possible" (L.S. I 419).

Do not complicate the spiritual life, as people often do. Yet it is a simple thing. The spiritual life is made up of little details: doing our duty to please God. In this way we are united to him all the time and become more perfect by grace. (Fr. Brottier).

Fr. Briault, an unimpeachable witness, said Fr. Brottier was humble by virtue and by intelligence. "He never became vain over his successes. His fine mind preserved him from all exaggeration in word or thought about his works. In his immense labours he often took the advice of competent and authoritative people, provided the competence was genuine. He seemed to my eyes great rather than holy. Not that I oppose these terms, but his greatness struck me, it matched his humility". Faced with what he considered minimal results in the Christian training of his young people he really wondered if he could go on asking people for money. He discussed his worry with his colleagues, and was prepared to reconsider.

It has been asked why he always wore his decorations on his soutane, protruding beneath his long beard. His brother explained: "Daniel was a humble man; the decorations he had been honoured with facilitated his task with the authorities in favour of the orphans, he saw no other use for them. One day Bishop Jalabert insisted he wear the decorations when he went to visit a ministry of state, as the bishop himself told me". Far from posing as important, he was always affable, good-humoured, treating his simplest and most distinguished visitors with equal courtesy.

There is a striking photo of Fr. Brottier and his two chaplains among the orphans on the Rue Rivoli, 10 May 1935, national feast of St. Joan of Arc. It was his big day. His work and person were known to all Paris. As he strode forward, preceded by the band and followed by 400 boys, the cry went up, "Long live Fr. Brottier". From Place de la Concorde to the Ministry of Finance he received delirious ovations. He whispered to his neighbour, "What good luck for our orphans!" He was radiant, but all the glory was theirs. "The

more one does great things, the smaller one feels; the do-nothings feel big!" was one of his sayings.

Finally he was humble because he was true. His humility and simplicity were expressions of precious traits of the Spiritan family, calling the apostles of the most abandoned to task. "Genuine simplicity", wrote Fr. Libermann, "is the virtue of the perfect" (L.S. I 238).

Truth is vital and I like it. It is sometimes bitter and one hesitates to say it. I beg you to do me the service of telling me things as they are, to bring me back on the right path if I have strayed. Consequently never tell me agreeable things just to please me and leave me in illusory peace. Tell me the truth. (Fr. Brottier).

The superior general, Archbishop Le Hunsec, and his secretary, Fr. Jean Gay, used to come to Auteuil for lunch with Fr. Brottier on Sundays. A fraternal *cor unum* atmosphere would lead to wide-ranging conversation on myriad subjects. Neither man saw him as a saint, nor did any of the Spiritans interrogated at the Process, even Fr. Cabon. His sister-in-law, at whose house he sometimes stayed after his parents had died, said: "We respected and trusted him, but in general we never thought of using the word "saint" about him". Mr. Pierre Boquet, the lay colleague who knew him closest, said: "Already in his lifetime Fr. Brottier enjoyed an esteem not given to all. Great virtue was acknowledged in him, but, as for being raised to the altars one day, no one thought of it. God himself had to establish Fr. Brottier's reputation for holiness, if I may say so, by the miracles and benefits in answer to his intercession".

Another sign of his simplicity was his good humour. He could play a practical joke. For example, on arriving at St. Louis he was invited to give the Sunday sermon. One of the priests got him to practise it, whereat Fr. Brottier pretended to do it very badly; when the day came, Fr. Brottier acquitted himself perfectly, to the relief of his worried confrere! Another time he served up a cat-stew for a rabbit-stew! In community he was the life and soul of the party, much in demand, a man to work with.

Trust is the greatest quality in collaboration. Good will is never to be either discouraged or rushed. Our

collaborators must be re-wound regularly, like a clock.

He was a man of friendship.

Friendship is a rare and divine thing. It is the most perfect of human sentiments because it is the purest, deepest, most free.

Friendship is the reciprocal possession of two thoughts, two wills, two virtues, two existences.

Friendship is forgetting oneself for the well-being of others.

Sharing the joys of our friends we add to the gentleness they feel; sharing their sadnesses we soften their bitterness.

Fr. Cabon testified: "What I noticed most in him is that he was a community man who, without attracting attention in the least to himself, tried to give pleasure to all and thus drew all to him". His humility was the touchstone of his community spirit.

Fr. Brottier lived out his vow of poverty in an authentic Spiritan way before God and his confreres: poverty of the apostolic type, where everything is ordered to the service of the missionary work. One little room served as both office and bedroom. The list of clothes found in his wardrobe is eloquent: two used soutanes, four shirts, four pairs of socks, six handkerchiefs and two pairs of shoes. Archbishop Le Hunsec testified: "He drove poverty to the limits. He refused the car the administrative council offered him; he used the metro and bus rather than taxis. Of the vast sums that went through his hands, he kept nothing for himself or his family or the Congregation. He had his book-keeping checked. He gave alms liberally while he was strict in administering the millions he received. Nothing must be deflected from its earmarked purpose". Fr. Briault recalled that Fr. Brottier occupied for some time an uncomfortable room near his in the Motherhouse in Paris. He never complained, living among the postal sacks that were coming in for his work.

Testifying about Fr. Brottier's spirit of obedience, Archbishop Le Hunsec said: "Everything he undertook was in understanding with his superiors. It was not easy, for he often had to convince his superiors, given the breadth of his daunting initiatives. He had the plan before his death, for example,

to gather all the orphans of France into one gigantic organization with financial and educational cooperation. His obedience was intelligent and responsible, it could relinquish personal dreams and demonstrate that superior's decisions had priority".

With his vow of chastity Fr. Brottier was a man of limpid glance, of delicacy, reserve and distinction. He could love without keeping anything for himself. He gave demanding and comprehensive training in chastity to the adolescents in Auteuil who were starved of family affection. The vow channelled the energies of his sensitive nature towards the absolute gift of himself that characterizes the apostolic person. "There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves".

"I will not take up that business with you now. . . I will do so with our Lord and his holy mother. . . then I will speak to you about it" (L.S. III 211).

Fr. Brottier spoke of the communion of Saints, with particular allusion to St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, with whom he "conspired" mysteriously. From the moment he learnt from Bishop Jalabert that Thérèse had protected him during the war she became his confidante, benefactress, "little queen", in the extraordinary intimacy of saints!

The providence of the orphans is especially little St. Thérèse, who has taken responsibility for our house once for all.

All our friends continue trustfully to make their intentions, requests, thanksgivings to her, presenting everything that upsets and troubles them.

Human miseries from outside are added to the children's and cast into our patron saint's heart. She welcomes, consoles and heals them. The prayers of our young people bring down her shower of roses on their helpers.

He went so far as to display posters of St. Thérèse in the metro in Paris. People said, "Do you not think it out of place to put St. Thérèse on the same walls with actresses and pop stars?" He replied, "Must the metro walls be given over definitively to advertisements for music-halls, theatres or drink? Among the two or three million people who use the metro

every day, are there no Christians, devout friends of St. Thérèse? Why forbid Catholics to advertize?".

He was thought to have a secret for obtaining favours from St. Thérèse. He expressed his feelings:

People who come looking for my <secret> are funny. My secret is this: help yourself and heaven will help you. My secret, as you well know, is twelve years of work, day and night, hard and persevering, and twelve years of hard and persevering prayer by everyone at Auteuil, priests, Sisters, young people, first communicants. I have no other secret. If the good God worked miracles here, through Thérèse's intercession, I think I can say in all justice that we did everything, humanly speaking, to be deserving, and that they were the divine reward of our work, prayers and trust in providence.

His intimacy with St. Thérèse did not remain on the level of material services. They lived the same spirit of humility, surrender, trust and zeal in collusion. "In the heart of the Church I will be love", had said Thérèse. Fr. Liagre, former novice-master in France, in a little book entitled *A Retreat with St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus*, which is often reproduced in the Lisieux Annals, establishes a detailed parallel between the spiritual teaching of Fr. Libermann and that of St. Thérèse, in his chapter on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He concludes with two of Fr. Libermann's statements. "There is no genuine greatness except in this life of divine love" (L.S. II 230). "The Holy Spirit leads us until it is no longer we who live but our Lord who lives and acts in us in gentleness, peace, strength and love" (L.S. II 230). St. Thérèse said on her deathbed, "Love alone counts".

"Be as a poor victim offered by Jesus to his Father for the salvation of souls" (L.S. IV 687).

The cathedral of the African Memorial at Dakar, "his" cathedral, was to be consecrated on 2 February 1936. That day he experienced the first attacks of the typhoid that would carry him off. "I fell on the day of my *Nunc Dimittis*", he said, "soon I will be going to heaven to sing God's praises". According to the doctor he had an unknown type of typhoidal infection from the age of thirteen, whose poisonous effects

were giving him the severe headaches all his life. The terminal typhoid fever was only a reactivation of these elements, that is why his headaches redoubled.

How much I suffer all over, without respite; I have nowhere to turn. I think God is telling me my task is finished and I will not be much longer with you. Fiat! Fiat! May your will be done; after all, you need nobody; yes, my God, may your will be done?

For fear of contagion he had to be transferred to hospital. "I see my chapel for the last time", he said. "I have done all I could; God will do the rest". Paul Claudel puts similar words in the mouth of St. Francis Xavier dying in Japan and looking out to China: "I did not accomplish all I wanted to, I did all I could".

Fr. Brottier died on the morning of 28 February 1936, alone, or rather with Mary, as this prayer of his indicates, found in his breviary:

At the hour of my death, O Mary, whom I have often invoked, be near my deathbed. Be there as my mother would if she were alive. My paralysed tongue may not be able to pronounce your name, but my heart will be calling it, as it does now for the fearful moment. Will I be alone, without a loving hand to close my eyes? It does not matter. I will die with a smile in your presence. This I hope, this I believe, this I know for certain.

Other anecdotes are told. A good friend of Auteuil, seriously ill, invoked Fr. Brottier the next morning, the 29th, when she learnt of his death from the newspaper, and was healed. An unbroken procession of about 15,000 people filed past his remains, and thousands more have prayed at his grave ever since. As Cardinal Verdier said at the funeral, "The Christian, and especially the saint, never departs from us completely".

A few hours after Fr. Brottier's death, Fr. Pichon, his successor, was handed an envelope from an anonymous donor containing eighty-four thousand-franc notes "for the orphans of Auteuil, from St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus". Thérèse at that crucial moment was continuing her maternal influence from heaven, henceforth with Fr. Brottier alongside her. So it goes on.

"Be holy as Jesus was holy; this is the one and only way to redeem and sanctify souls" (N.D. XIII 144).

Blessed James Laval and Daniel Brottier were two Spiritans very different in character, involved in different ministries, but much alike in their path to holiness. They were apostles of unflagging zeal, men of exceptional breadth of activity, consumed by love for people, especially the most deprived, and no less consumed by love for God. They integrated these two loves in simplicity. After their death they pursue their apostolate to the most abandoned. They are living signs by which the Lord maps our route.

Alphonse Gilbert, C.S.Sp.

N.B. All the quotations given without reference are from the process for the cause of beatification, in the archives of the Spiritan Research and Animation Centre, Rome.

The texts in italics are from Fr. Libermann (ND = Notes and Documents; LS = Spiritual Letters). The texts in bold face are from Fr. Brottier, collected *passim* from the works or reviews mentioned at the end of this issue of *Spiritan Papers*.