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Centenary of the Death of Fr. Le Vavas seur

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CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF FR LE VAVASSEUR (1882)

Fr Le Vavas seur had asked not to be elected Superior General for a variety of reasons, principally that of health. Nonetheless, the General Chapter of 1881, in its meeting on August 28, the Feast of the Holy Heart of Mary, did elect him almost unanimously (29 votes out of 32). The following account of his death is taken from the General Bulletin of the Congregation.

The hope was that, freed from the work and worry of the Chapter, and the various matters to be handled at the time, the Very Rev. Father would soon recover . . . Unfortunately, this was not the case. Increasingly, he suffered from loss of sleep and appetite and soon became seriously ill.

In mid-September, his extreme tiredness was compounded by a violent and daily-increasing pain in his right side, the cause of which could not be diagnosed. Then, in the beginning of October a certain swelling was noticed about the painful area. Only then was it realised that this was a slowly developing abscess. Soon however it grew and to a considerable size.

The community doctor, Dr Coffin, proposed to call in a second opinion: the surgeon, Mr Tillaux. The latter came on October 7 and confirmed Dr Coffin's suspicion: the presence of a phlegmonic abscess. Without hesitation he took a lancet and cut widely and deeply . . . this released a quantity of pus. The lancing of the abscess soon produced a marked improvement . . . After that, the wound continued to discharge freely . . .

During the night of October 23-24, the Very Rev. Father experienced a fairly high fever: this was caused by an erysipelas which developed around the wound. Up to this point, the cause or nature of his illness was not really known . . . On Tuesday, November 9, three doctors consulted on the case: Coffin, Tillaux and Henri Libermann, nephew of Fr Libermann

and son of Dr Samson. All three were agreed that there was an area of decay in one of the ribs, the 10th on the right side.

That was undoubtedly fairly serious, especially given the age of the patient . . . The doctors promised if not a complete cure at least a partial one.

At the end of November, there was a notable improvement in the state of the invalid but some days later the fever started again and tired him greatly . . . The wound remained almost the same, although less painful: it continued to drain freely.

By mid-December, there was little or no hope of a cure. In the days following December 20, even these faint hopes disappeared before the ever-increasing ravages of this inexorable illness. On December 21, a considerable increase in discharge from the wound was observed with frequent heavy haemorrhages. He grew weaker and weaker: life ebbed from his wounded side without interruption.

From the beginning, the Very Rev. Father had a kind of presentiment that he would not get better. On November 4, he dictated letters to the Daughters of Mary at Bourbon, and to his beloved mother, as though he would soon die. Fr Delaplace hesitated to set down the words "*dying Father*". "Write", he insisted, ". . . dying, *whatever they say*".

Far from being depressed by the progress of the disease, he was on the contrary quite content, for that drew him nearer Heaven. He never wished to be cured: it might even be said he was afraid of it. In consequence, he did not too much like people praying for a cure. *What we should do is limit our intercession to the fulfilment of God's good pleasure. Does God not know what is best? Let Him have his way then and let us abandon ourselves to his Holy Will.* One day the Scholastics and Novices came to ask his blessing, after a pilgrimage to our Lady of Victories. Knowing his dispositions, they told him that in spite of their wish to pray for a cure, they had contented themselves with asking Our Lady that God's Will be done. He warmly congratulated them.

"From approximately the 1st of October, the Very Rev. Father could no longer recite his breviary. Until that moment, though very tired, he had continued to say it a little at a time. Now the extreme tiredness forced him to give it up altogether. On Oct. 23, feeling a little better, he had tried to say it again.

But, on the advice of his two Assistants, he limited himself to saying the Rosary as best he could, to replace the Office.

But, today and since the beginning of November, he has been so worn out that even the recitation of the Rosary was almost impossible. *Fortunately, he said, I have found a way of supplementing for the prayers my poor head can no longer follow. It is to kiss the feet of Our Lady at each bead.*

To this pious devotion which took up a good part of his day, he added short invocations repeated from time to time, offering his sufferings to God . . .

Each day also, until the end, Fr Pallier (Edouard) at his request read him two little passages from the New Testament, the Imitation of Christ or the life of the Saint of the day in the breviary. From December 20, he had even to deprive himself of this consolation, so great was his fatigue.

The only consolation he still had was to hear Mass daily and receive Holy Communion. The installation of a little altar, at his request, in the tribune opposite his bedroom, with a glazed communicating door, made that possible. Filled with joy at this, he exclaimed *How good God is!* Until then, in spite of his weakness, he had insisted on fasting and on rising for Holy Communion. Normally, it was Fr Emonet who said Mass for him . . .

The rest of the day he spent in an armchair or in bed. What caused him most pain was to have to keep the same position because of his wound. Knowing his incessant activity and habits of work, one might assume that these long and monotonous days without anything whatsoever to interest him might prove a heavy burden. He never however gave the slightest indication of this. *God in his goodness, he said, had given him the grace not to be bored.* It is clear how our Father remains united with Our Lord on the Cross in that spirit of sacrifice and of immolation he so often preached. *God, he often repeated, does not heed the demands of nature; we must suffer out of love . . . this is very necessary in order to contemplate and to possess Our Lord. For that, it amounts to nothing at all to suffer.*

Christmas night and the night after were very bad. No rest, only fever and deep suffering. During the day the wound haemorrhaged even more abundantly: it is almost pure blood that is lost.

On St Stephen's Day, Dec. 26, he called the two Assistants and Fr Barillac, who was responsible for his care. It was morning. He said to them: *Now two things are clear: first, the old machine is spent: the second follows of necessity, it cannot go on much longer. How will it end and how soon? That is the unknown element . . . It could last some time for I am hardy but the end is certain. I ask you therefore to have my bed moved to the big room, where the Venerable Father was when he was dying, and that you do not delay giving me Extreme Unction.*

His first request was carried out without delay. Where Extreme Unction was concerned, it was thought that the news released prematurely to the Communities might cause unnecessary upset. Since moreover there was no apparent urgency, he was told that they would see about it after having consulted the doctor. He had already spoken of it about two months before, when he was suffering greatly, the worst so far experienced. With an improvement the matter had been deferred. On the evening of Christmas Day, he again insisted: *Why delay, he said, for sooner or later it must come to that? Why refuse me the grace of the sacraments of which I have such need?* Yielding to his wishes, it was decided to have the ceremony the following day.

That was when, in order to prepare himself for this great occasion by an act of total renunciation, he asked Fr Delaplace, in private and in testimony of his own great humility, to carry out a pious wish, which was not known till after his death. He dictated to him his resignation from the office of Superior General in a letter addressed to the whole Congregation:

* * *

Paris, December 26, 1881.

My dear Fathers and Brothers,

As I feel the approach of that moment when I can no longer express my thoughts to you, I wish to communicate them to you while I can.

The basis of all is the good pleasure of God, especially and in final resort at the hour of our death.

Now that I am in a state of suffering that will endure, I seem to understand better than ever, in a more living and complete way, that all is in the good pleasure of God; the Cross is nothing else. The venerable Mr Icard came to see me one day and made a remark that did not impress me much at the time but which I have not forgotten: it was, «All is in the Cross, that's where you are; there you must die». Unfortunately, we do not sufficiently discern during life the designs of God as embracing our last end: in the ultimate, these are our spiritual formation . . . But, this formation cannot take place if we are not immolated to God's good pleasure, that is, to the fulfilling of the divine Will. In everything then, our sole concern should be to sacrifice ourselves to that adorable Will.

Unfortunately, it is not what we do: we seek to fulfil God's Will in the way least painful to us. In consequence, the natural life gets the upper hand, our poor soul is greatly weakened and cannot yield to grace what the Cross or the good pleasure of God requires, that it may be spiritually fulfilled.

That's what has happened to me. I always had God's good pleasure on my lips or quite sincerely in the depths of my heart but I sought to avoid the Cross, the acceptance, that is, of the sufferings that accompany it. For the Cross is nothing else but suffering. The good pleasure of Our Lord is nothing other than suffering. In consequence, it remains for us only to merit what unites us to Him. Necessarily therefore the last moments which lead us to possess Our Lord in person must be moments of suffering. That is where I am, and I can tell you that in spite of good will, courage and the desire to please Our Lord, it does not take much to discover my weakness. I am indeed in great danger of growing weak and thinking that it is too much to suffer. If I had been more mortified, I would have been more courageous, certainly. Let me then give you a last word of advice. Always keep before you love of suffering, for that is what love of the Cross is, or, if you will, God's good pleasure, which is the same thing. From that you may conclude that the most valuable thing a man can do in this world is to love suffering. It is man's greatest good because it is the Cross: the Cross without suffering would be the Cross without a cross.

I did not wish to end my life without committing to the Archives my resignation and that for three reasons:

Firstly, that I might, voluntarily and by express act offer the sacrifice of my superiorship to God;

Secondly, to have the merit of offering to Him expressly the consolations I was assured of in an administration full of peace, union and mutual affection. No doubt, I would have had bad days but the suffering inseparable from them would have been tempered by my relation with those who seconded my efforts;

Thirdly, is the sacrifice of my great desire to do something for you all.

These are the thoughts I dictate to Fr Delaplace. Since there may be no question of my resignation before my death, because of the inconvenience that would cause, I am giving him this note now. He will give it to the First Assistant when I die.

My dear Fathers and Brothers, may God bless you as I ask Him to.

F. Le Vavas seur, Sup. Gen.

* * *

As the Very Rev. Fr Vicar wrote in his recent circular to the Communities, this resignation could not have any exterior effect, and the V. Rev. Fr Le Vavas seur continued to preserve the title and rank of Superior General, like our Venerable Father and Fr Schwindenhammer. Nonetheless, this is an act which will remain in the future as an outstanding testimony of the spirit of humility, of sacrifice and renunciation that possessed him. Before presenting himself to God, he wished as far as possible to make the total sacrifice of himself to Him. In point of fact it was observed that from that moment Fr Le Vavas seur never acted as Superior General. On two or three occasions, decisions were referred to him. He answered simply, *Try, and fix that up yourselves*. Similarly for all the care he needed, the food and remedies to be taken, he did nothing for himself but showed the greatest submission, the greatest docility possible.

Dec. 27. This morning there arrived letters from Bourbon and from Mauritius. Amongst other news, we learnt with emotion of the death of the excellent and pious mother of our V. Rev. Father. Where others were concerned, the shock of such news might be considered dangerous and so withheld.

This was indeed the advice given by the doctor when consulted. But we knew too well the great spirit of faith of our Father and his abandonment to God to fear that. When in fact he received the sad news, he limited himself to one gentle exclamation: *Oh, my dear Mother! Its all to the good: she will not have the sorrow of hearing of my death . . . Soon I shall see her in Heaven! . . .*

The time for his reception of Extreme Unction had been fixed for 4.45 p.m., shortly after Vespers. Half-an-hour before, Father called Fr Leon Le Vavasseeur, his confessor since the departure of Fr Lannurien for Rome in 1853. He wished once again to purify his soul with the grace of absolution. He then asked for a Ritual to prepare for the ceremony and himself gave instructions for the arrangement of the room. He had his bed moved to the end of it before the great ivory Crucifix of Christ and sat in an armchair before the bed. This was done with the utmost calm and peace as if it were a case of some day-to-day affair.

At the appointed time, all the Fathers and Brothers in the Mother-House assembled with a deputation of Deacons, representing the seminary. Since Fr Collin could not control his emotion, Fr Emonet asked the V. Rev. Father if he wished his confessor, Fr Le Vavasseeur, to administer Extreme Unction. *Very good*, he said, and Fr Leon began the ceremony, assisted by Fr Lancel . . . The venerable invalid followed the prayers of the Ritual and answered in a quiet voice with those who were present.

At the end of the prayers, Fr Delaplace, who stood beside him, invited him to give us, and all the Congregation, his paternal blessing. Until that moment our dear Father had shown complete mastery of his feelings. Then, however, his heart seemed to burst. He sighed and sobbed for some time without being able to control himself. At last he regained control over sentiments we all experienced, and spoke to us the following words which we endeavour to set down as faithfully as possible:

My dear Fathers and Brothers, my dear children, I die happy and contented, relying on the infinite mercy and goodness of God.

Nevertheless, I should say that, had I to start my life again, I should live differently. I cannot say much because I am so weak . . . One thing we have not sufficiently entered

into, sufficiently treated with importance: that is to seek and to fulfil in everything and always, the holy Will of God, His good pleasure . . . Yet, all depends on that . . .

See how at this moment I suffer, sometimes terribly; I have great difficulty in bearing it. I have to beg unceasingly of God the grace I need to do so . . . Well, had I been more generous, more mortified, I would now be stronger, more courageous, before the last sufferings.

We should therefore want and seek only what God wants and we should always accept and carry that out, whatever the cost, and especially when it costs. That is the genuine love of God, love of sacrifice, love of the Cross . . .

This, my dear Fathers and Brothers, my dear friends, is my last word to you . . .

We were all on our knees listening respectfully to the final words of our dying Father. When he had finished speaking, all heads bowed and he blessed us cordially.

Even so, he did not forget our brethren who were abroad. Immediately after the ceremony, he called upon Fr Delaplace once more and dictated to him the following touching letter, which the Vicar General published as a sequel to his last circular. We believe we should reproduce it here so that all, Fathers, Brothers and aspirants may steep themselves in it. It is truly the spiritual testament of our dying Father, and for this reason the advice it gives us should be treasured by all his sons:

My dear Fathers and Brothers,

I have just received the Last Sacraments and do not wish to die without wishing you farewell. Death is for me a great happiness. I trust in the mercy of God: I could never be afraid of Him.

What I counsel you for the future of the Congregation for which you are responsible before God and the Church is what I repeated to you unceasingly when I had an opportunity of speaking with you: (1) the spirit of faith; (2) trust in God and in the Holy Heart of Mary; (3) love of sacrifice. As long as we see the Congregation as the work of God and of God living in her, we have nothing to fear. As a consequence, our trust in His protection, in his conduct of affairs, will make us capable of bearing all. The ultimate consequence: we shall be

able to love by self-sacrifice what the Cross stands for. The good pleasure of Jesus is all that matters.

Thus, in a few words, I say all I can that would be useful to you.

I need not tell you that I shall be with you as far as is possible in heaven.

May God bless you all, my dear Fathers and Brothers, through the Holy Heart of Mary, in answer to my prayer.

F. Le Vavasseeur, Sup. Gen.

During that day and the days that followed, he also had written for him many moving letters to various people he had guided who wrote for a last piece of advice or to request his fervent prayers. He encourages them and blesses them with truly paternal goodness and promises not to forget them in Heaven.

The day following reception of Extreme Unction, the Communities were informed of the moving ceremony that had taken place. The following is a copy of the letter written on the subject by the Very Rev. First Assistant:

I need not tell you, my dear confreres, with what sentiments of faith, piety and resignation to God's Will, our dear sick one received the Last Sacraments. After the ceremony we asked his blessing. He then spoke some very touching words, recommending to us above all generosity and a spirit of sacrifice in carrying out God's Will. You will later receive the full text of what he said with the details of his illness.

So, my dear confreres, we are soon in danger of being orphaned again! . . . It is a great trial God sends us. May it inspire us to become more fervent, more faithful, more attached to our holy vocation.

Let us pray with renewed ardour for our dear sick Father to whom we are so deeply indebted, for the Congregation so painfully tried; and let us be full of confidence and generosity.

Yours very devotedly in the Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary,

M. Collin, Assistant.

P.S. The morning of the same day, the V. Rev. Father received news of the death of his mother in Mauritius on November 15.

There is no need to tell the sentiments of sorrow with which this letter was received in all the Communities. Despite

the serious illness of the V. Rev. Father over several months, all liked to believe that Heaven would preserve him for us. Now all hope was gone. From all over came back expressions of sorrow and regret but all accepted the holy and adorable Will of God.

Dec. 29-Jan. 2: As already stated, the bed of our dear invalid, as he desired, has been transferred to the big bedroom. He is already talking of giving too much trouble and inconvenience. Needless to say, he himself is alone in that. All are anxious to render him service, all the more so as he is so grateful for the smallest thing done for him and each time has something kind to say: *Thanks, many thanks . . . you are very good, etc.*

To help Brother Joseph, his infirmarian, Brother Evode is asked to come from the community of the Holy Heart of Mary. He takes up his post on Dec. 30, a Friday. The following night is one of the worst he has passed. He did not wish the Brother to keep vigil by his bed but, about midnight, unable to bear the pain, he called the Brother and asked him to summon Rev. Fr Barillac. To the fever and the pangs of his wound were added the sufferings from his hernia and from an erysipelas which had developed a few days before and which caused him indescribable suffering. His pain was eased a little and on the following morning he attended Mass and received Holy Communion as usual. He even wanted to get up for it as he had always done so far. But, yielding to advice, he agreed to remain in bed until the doctor came.

Dr. Coffin, who showered attention on him with the utmost devotion, asked for a new consultation with Mr Tillaux. This took place on Monday, Jan. 2, at 5 p.m. After a careful and complete examination and having consulted together, the two doctors were agreed that nothing further could be done and that the patient should be allowed to die peacefully . . . That was the final condemnation on our beloved Father. Humanly speaking there was no hope, but God is all powerful. If only He would work a miracle!

Gently our Father was told of the doctors' decision. They themselves said any further intervention would only increase his sufferings to no purpose. He then took the hand of Mr Tillaux: *Thank you, doctor: I am quite happy.* Far in fact from being saddened or upset he was happy to leave this sad world. He complained only, some days later, that he had not

been told more bluntly that he was finished. *Since that is what I longed for, waited for, he said, why was I not told so frankly?*

Jan 2-8: The painful news of the hopeless condition of our V. Rev. Father produced outside amongst people who had relations with him personally or through the Communities, as in the Communities themselves, lively sentiments of regret. The Abbé Lagarde came again to visit him and brought the blessing of the Cardinal Archbishop. Ever since the days of the Paris Commune, when he received much needed advice from our V. Rev. Father, the Vicar General had held him in great affection and esteem. After his visit he appeared both moved and impressed.

M. Icard, Superior of Saint Sulpice, also came to see him several times. Unable to return to present New Year greetings because of a leg injury that confined him to his room, he wrote to Fr Leon Le Vavas seur to say how closely united he was with us in our trial and asking him to assure the invalid of his sentiments of constant friendship and devotion. He was able to come on Sunday, Jan. 8, and on that occasion told our V. Rev. Father of his keen desire for a perfect union always between the Company of St Sulpice and our own Congregation. M. Icard referred to certain exchanges some years before between the Sulpicians and ourselves when their house in Rome was founded, concerning its possible competition with the French Seminary; he renewed the assurance that the Company had no such design. Our V. Rev. Father assured him that this desire for union and mutual charity was also our own. We could never forget that our Venerable Father and his followers were all products of St Sulpice, and so we could never have for that Society anything but sentiments of gratitude and affection.

The Sunday within the Solemnity of the Epiphany, Fr Emonet, with several Fathers and Brothers assisted at the ceremonies of the Archconfraternity at Our Lady of Victories, where he preached and presided over the Office.

Before setting out he had asked a blessing from our V. Rev. Father, saying we were going to pray for him. *Ask above all, he answered, that I remain faithful to the end, for that is important. The Abbe Dumax, who made the usual intercessions, asked especially for prayers for the invalid. This was a duty of the Associates of the Archconfraternity,*

for the first idea for the Work for the Blacks was of his inspiration.

On all sides, in our Communities and outside of them, fervent prayers were offered: all hoped against hope. The Sisters of St Joseph, who had shared our anxieties and our desires from the beginning, the religious of the Reparation, those of the Immaculate Conception, the Sister Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary, many other religious and many lay-people made novenas. Many even offered their own lives to obtain if possible the preservation in life of one more valuable without doubt for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Two gentlemen came to see him one day. They had expressed so strong a desire to see him once more that they were permitted to enter for a moment. They embraced him, speechless with emotion. One of them, a Mr Deshays, was a childhood friend. Later he said to Br Dosithee, when thanking him for letting them in, How happy I am to have seen him, even for a moment! What a saint! The world is not worthy of such men.

Jan. 8-15: Soon, it seems, heaven will take him from us. There are several signs that the end is near. The wound discharges less but his purple lips suggest the beginning of gangrene. His stomach can retain no food, except and with difficulty a few spoons of milk. The intestines are also very tender, which gives rise to heavy bouts of diarrhoea these last days. Another and more serious symptom declared itself today: an almost continuous hiccup, which gives the poor invalid no respite day or night. In vain has the doctor tried various remedies to cure it. There is nothing more trying, more painful, to hear. For his part he does not seem to mind or pay any attention to it.

Tuesday, Jan. 10, about midday, he appeared very pale and drawn. We feared the worst and suggested the indulgence for a happy death to him. "You upset yourselves unnecessarily", he said. "This unfortunately is not the last moment. I am hard to kill. The hiccup is a sign of death, of course, but 'positis ponendis' I believe I have still another eight days."

The next day, however, he was reminded that this indulgence could be repeated and he gladly accepted to receive it. He wished, however, to prepare himself for it with the Sacrament of Penance. He called Fr Leon Le Vavas seur, confessed

with sentiments of deep regret for the little he could have to reproach himself with and received then from the same Fr Le Vavasseeur the indulgence for a happy death. He recited the *Confiteor* by himself and answered all the prayers with a strong voice, even though interrupted by the hiccup. When all was over he said, *Well, now go in peace.*

Next day, a further grace filled to overflowing his cup of gratitude to God. The following telegram was sent to Fr Eschbach: *Father General dying: implore Papal Blessing.* Some hours after came back the reply: *Blessing granted.* Fr Collin hastened to inform the invalid of this message. He welcomed it with expressions of lively gratitude.

Jan. 13: Up to this, the V. Rev. Father would not allow anyone to watch by his bedside at night: *It is useless, he said, to tire yourselves unnecessarily.* But someone slept nonetheless in the room next door to his. This usually was Br Evode, most used to the treatment to give him. From Jan. 12, however, someone watched every night. The work was shared by a Father and a Brother. He was so good, so patient, so thankful for the slightest service, that everyone was happy to go and be edified by him.

January 13: some Novices come from Paris with Frs Grizard and Gerrer to get his blessing. They gather round his bed of suffering and Fr Emonet asks him to bless them. In spite of the hiccup which interferes with his speech he says a few words to them: "*You see where I am. Sometimes I suffer greatly. Ask that I be faithful to the end: that is all that matters. God's Holy Will, His good pleasure, that is what we should seek in all circumstances. Be good novices, very generous, very fervent . . .*" Then all knelt for his blessing.

The invalid's breathing became increasingly laboured. On Friday he had two crises of suffocation. Saturday, it is even worse. It is the last agony that begins. The Doctor thinks he can only last another 36 hours. At 11 o'clock, fearing he would go in one of these crises, all the Fathers and Brothers available were called and the prayers of the dying recited. He united himself to their intention. Once more, Fr Emonet asked his blessing upon the Congregation and its works, on all members present and absent. This he gladly gives, recalling the words of the Rule that are the motto of the Congregation: *Cor unum et anima una.*

In the afternoon he calls Fr Emonet and gives him his last instructions for the welfare of the Congregation.

Sunday, Jan. 15: *To-day is the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. It's a lovely day to go to heaven*, he says, but does not think the end is yet. The day in fact passes fairly peaceably. The hiccup is no longer as strong or as frequent; he seems to breathe more easily. But he can no longer swallow anything, not even water. Only with difficulty can he sometimes take a few drops to moisten his mouth. And yet his throat is dry as parchment, he says. The voice becomes hoarse: sometimes it is difficult to make out what he is saying.

Monday, Jan. 16: Once again, to-day, the invalid begins the day with Mass and Holy Communion. There was fear he might not be able to swallow the Sacred Host. However, without too much difficulty he was able to take a small portion of it, as on the preceding days. From his bed of suffering he followed devoutly the whole of the Holy Sacrifice, making with the priest the sign of the Cross, and let escape from his heart on fire those sounds and sighs that expressed his habitual fervour. *This undoubtedly will be your last day*, someone said to him. *How I wish it were*, he replied.

During the day, right enough, he had several bouts of smothering. At 7 p.m., when we were leaving the Chapel after the visit to the Blessed Sacrament and were on our way to the refectory, he had an even worse attack. His breathing became more difficult and more painful. The two Assistants and some other Fathers hastened to his bedside. Once more the prayers for the dying were recited and in answer to the request made him, he blessed the Congregation, its members and works for the last time. During recreation, the other Fathers and Brothers mounted guard at his bedside. From time to time ejaculations were proposed to him. Although scarcely able to speak, he repeated them immediately with lively sentiments of faith and hope. Above all, he lovingly embraces the Crucifix each time it is offered to him. This will certainly be the last night for our beloved invalid.

Fr Emonet remains at his side with Br Didyme. He sent to bed himself several other Fathers and Brothers who had come to him after night prayer. About 9.30 p.m. he said to Fr Emonet: *I have a great thirst. I'm afraid*, was the reply, *that that may revive the bouts of suffocation. "No"*, he said,

"the blockage has gone. There is no further problem". And, true enough, the few drops of water he swallows have no harmful effect.

Soon however the respiration grows weaker. He can no longer speak. Fr Emonet gives him a final absolution, makes him kiss the crucifix several times and suggests to him acts of love of God. He also calls Frs Delaplace and Barillac, who hasten in after Br Joseph. It is, alas, the final moment. With deep emotion the last prayers are said for the dying Father. There is every reason to believe he is still conscious, for he himself strikes his breast with his right arm. The breathing becomes more and more slow and difficult; only occasionally a faint sign until at 10.34 all movement ceases. He had rendered his soul to God peacefully, without effort or convulsion.

(Extracts from the Bulletin of the Congregation, XII, 1881-1883, pp. 85-87, 129-130, 163-185).