

Jean Gueguen, O.M.I., by Father Gilles Francois, May 25, 2016

Father Jean Gueguen, OMI, died yesterday, May 24, in the 96 year of his life. For 20 years, he was at Pontmain. In the beginning he was named vice-postulator for the cause of beatification of Madeleine Delbrel, in 1993 by Bishop Francois Fretelliere. Then he rapidly became postulator and remained that until 2011, conducting the entire diocesan inquiry, then the beginning of the Roman phase of this long work of discernment which is a process of beatification.

Above all, he was a friend of Madeleine. It was he who waited at the Termini Station (Rome), May 6, 1952, when Madeleine, during the height of the crisis over Worker Priests, came to pray at St. Peter's. But Madeleine, on that day, didn't know that he was waiting for her and that he had arranged a meeting with Pope Pius XII! She went to St. Peter's and spent the entire day praying "with a broken heart and a heart breaking," as she put it herself. Then she left that evening to return to Ivry, France. Madeleine met Pius XII fifteen months later. Jean became her trusted advisor and the facilitator of all the times that he was at Rome during the years which followed. He came frequently to 11 Raspail Street, Ivry, and he became almost a member of the Teams of Madeleine Delbrel (Equipes Madeleine Delbrel) well before her death on October 13, 1964.

But there is something more important and deeper than that: to give evidence of the bond between Father Jean Gueguen and Madeleine Delbrel, it suffices to read the singular homage that she addressed to him in her letter of June 19, 1957.

"I want again to thank you for your letter. More profoundly and simply, that for which I want to thank you is that you have been for me, for that which I found myself to have been in charge of, since I have known you. That which I have been in charge of, is above all, after God, due to you. But, unless I am being blind, I should well know that this being in charge has coincided, with a stunning precision, with a continuation almost uninterrupted, of events of which the most part didn't seem to me so heavy because they were, truly, unusual. For, while in all these plans, the people who would have normally helped or supported, placed themselves or were placed on vacation, definitively, temporarily. . .or incomprehensibly, four people whom I didn't know before these last years,

helped me without any reason. You are one of those and I can tell you that among you four, on different grounds, you have given me incomparably more than you can imagine."

What did he cause Madeleine to be "in charge of" when she wrote him "That which I was in charge of, above all, after God, was due to you"? Perhaps without Jean Gueguen, Madeleine would have gone "alone" to pray at Rome. For her, that was essential. But Jean was "in charge" of putting her in contact with Pius XII, then Monsignor Veillot. She went to Rome every year for the ten years which followed. He had aided her to make concrete this indispensable coming and going between the hierarchy and the laity, without which the mission cannot prosper. Above and beyond this, Jean was also the unexpected friend during the most difficult years, from 1955-58, when "la Charite" was in crisis and when the supports of Madeleine were stolen away. He was then of the four who aided Madeleine "without discussion," four providential people when Madeleine lived very difficultly the times of great sorrows and isolation.

Jean, faithful and praying friend who has gone on. Become very deaf and almost blind, he endured. Thank you, Jean. Thank you, God.

(translated from the French by Harry Winter, O.M.I.; translation cleared by Jean-Pierre Caloz, O.M.I., June 20, 2020).