



Testimony of a 'retired' missionary



Father Jacques Dugas

Following Fr. Freddy's article inviting articles for the Petit Echo, I offer my testimony as a retired missionary of the 4th age (91 years). I am living in La Chauderaie, the Jesuit retirement home near Lyon in France.

I am a missionary until my last breath.

My active life in Africa is over, but happily, not my life as a consecrated missionary. Theresa of Lisieux, who never left her convent, is the patron saint of missions in the same way as St. Francis Xavier. That is to say that my consecration as a missionary does not depend where I am, but on the way I live. I love Africa passionately especially Burundi where I spent 50 years of my life. I continue to remain in contact with her and follow closely the sad and dreadful events, which are taking place there now.

“...in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church.” (Col. 1,24)

Old age brings with it various troubles, more or less serious. There are physical problems; one does not see well anymore, it is hard to hear, it is difficult to walk, and there are various other aches and pains. Sometimes, there are problems in community life even if the Jesuit community welcomes us as brothers. There are moments of interior suffering arising from different sources, which can be very painful. All this makes sense, if it is offered for the Kingdom of God.

Marian devotion

For me this is of the greatest importance. It began during my years of formation when I consecrated myself to the Virgin Mary according St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, and it has always been a great support during all of my missionary life.

I wait joyfully for the big meeting...

...which will mark my “entry into life” when and how the Lord wishes. There are times when, at one moment or another, I fear death, like everybody else but actually, it is the desire for heaven, which fills me with joy and hope.

If these lines are of help to other confreres, especially those who are retired, so much the better!

Jacques Dugas