



PO BOX 763 • Franklin Park, IL 60131 • [P] 260-786-JESU (5378)

Website: www.JesusCaritasUSA.org • [E] Jesus.Caritas.USA@gmail.com

Bishop Claude Rault Homily
November 14, 2005

Mass of Thanksgiving the day after the Beatification of Blessed Charles of Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters,

First of all I would like to thank my brother bishop Vincent Landel who agreed to celebrate our mass of thanksgiving.

He presides the Conference of the Bishops of Maghreb and ensures the presence here of our Church of North Africa. He also reminded us that Morocco was not completely foreign to the human and spiritual journey of our Blessed!

The beatification of Charles de Foucauld does not constitute an event in itself as if we had made him undergo an entry examination towards holiness. What constitutes an event is the uncommon life and, to tell the truth, somewhat chaotic of this man and the fruits he bore.

It took a long time to mature, but they are there! And it is what is of importance in our eyes. It is what we came to celebrate during these few days.

We have just read two passages from the Bible that gives a sense to the gift that God made us through him. These texts suit him well.

The book of Wisdom points out to us the love of God for all human being, beyond its errors, and those of Charles were not hidden from us. The Gospel of John puts again in front of our eyes the great love Jesus loved us and to which He invites us. This love burned the heart of Charles.

What to tell you of Charles the Blessed one? So many things were already underlined... written, said, revealed... What could I still add?

I will stop first of all on his conversion, how God burst into his life.

The God he had little by little forgotten in his adolescence and put aside without perhaps realizing it.

And here as time passed of his existence as lazy pupil, as officer without much zeal, as amateur of refined receptions, as time passed of his late awakening of patriotism, thereafter of a daring explorer, and here little by little, a thirst for another life awakes him, of a life which makes sense, towards the Highest.

A feeling of a great emptiness had ended up to haunt him: "I acted wrongly, but I did not approve it nor did I like it. It made me feel a painful emptiness, a sadness that I have never felt up to then, it was returning each evening, when I was alone in my apartment ", he wrote in one of his meditations.

But God does not abandon his own: "You have pity on all because you are all. You close the eyes on the sins of the men so that they repent ", we heard in the Book of Wisdom.

God is patient. He awaits his hour.

And it is thanks to the testimony of life of Moslems that he will start his awakening: "Islam produced in me a deep transformation. The sight of the faith of these men living continuously in the presence of God, made me foresee something bigger and truer than the



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society occupations ". This experience of his existence at the sides of men of Islam will provoke him and to lead him to find the faith of his childhood. He is 28 years old.

The reunion with his God occurs in the secrecy of the confessional, without noise, in a murmur, a finally acknowledged recognition, an engagement for life, the desire to live only for this God still to discover. But he was seduced.

And this seduction will take the shape of a wound of love. A love always to be refined, a ceaseless and burning research which will hardly leave him. Here is the start for a long interior journey which will carry him to the end of himself. Vast desert, the human heart!

The first calling heard begins long a journey, a long life in pursuit of this God. Initially in the monastic life. But it is not enough.

And then God whom he seeks will take a human face, in this of Jesus de Nazareth of which he visits the country, over there, in Galilee. Jesus of Nazareth. It is the discovery of a God, poor, deprived, humble, always in this place impossible to take from him: the last.

The God of High is to be sought in the Low.

This spiritual nomadic will finally bring him to the borders of the Sahara. He is then 43 years old. He goes there not for the romantic love of the desert, but for the love of the most remote. And this love still will widen.

This Jesus encountered, contemplated, sought during the long meditations of Nazareth, he will find Him in a more concrete and less way, in Beni Abbès and Hoggar, in the small ones and the excluded, those who do not have their place in the human society. He will meet Him in those who do not share his religious universe or his culture.

And he will devote them his time, his energy. Not in a condescending way, but incarnating himself as much as possible, with this constant and throbbing wound not to be able to join them in this last place, always occupied by his Beloved and Lord Jesus.

Living within a population which does not share his faith, he would like to communicate his to them.

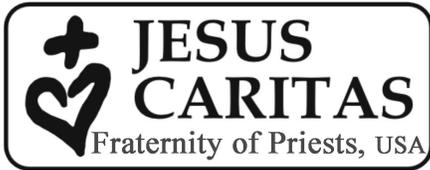
He, who was animated by the fire of the Gospel, he will conceal it, in this infinite respect of the other and he discovers that it is with his life that he has to proclaim the Gospel: it is undoubtedly the most beautiful heritage that he leaves us. He will be satisfied with speaking with his Beloved in the Eucharist, celebrated and contemplated and through the continually meditated Gospel.

He, who dreamed to give his life for others, it is from them that he will receive it, at the time when scurvy hits him, it was going to die. It is the poor that gave him theirs. Always Nazareth!

It will bring further this incarnation by putting himself into the study of the culture and language of the other because it is him the foreigner; it belongs to him to make the step, starting with the first mumbling of the child. During relentlessness and long working hours, he put himself into the study of the language, finds more than 6000 verses of poetry, and composes a dictionary of 4 volumes.

His life will thus be spent, divided between greeting, worshiping, and studying, until the day of this 1st December 1916, when he will be killed on the doorstep of his refuge in Tamanrasset.

Will we now remain to contemplate the life of this man, as if he had finally obtained some certificate of perfection?



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But we know that he did not successfully reach all the challenges that he set to himself throughout his life!

It would be a shame to be mistaken on this point: there is perfection only in God. God alone is the Saint. God alone is the Perfect one.

His existence will be constantly gnawed by the suffering to be so far from God who nevertheless is so close to him!

He, who dreamed of a life of fraternity with companions proved to be inapt for community life.

He, who meditated so much on universal fraternity, had remarks on the opposing protagonists of the First World War which we cannot admit.

Close that he was to the populations of the Saharan South, he could not imagine their development apart from colonialism, even though with human face.

His warlike blood will sometimes surface before conflicts generated by rebellious populations.

He dreamed of martyrdom, and let himself be locked up in his refuge with weapons that he had prohibited possession by his possible companions of Fraternity. And it is perhaps what caused his death!

And we could easily be the devil's advocate on other shadows of his existence! But I believe that has already been done...

You will perhaps think that I am tarnishing the figure of a man of which a few moments ago I traced the main lines in rather eulogistic terms?

No! We should never forget that Charles was a man, made of the same earth as us, animated by the same interior movements, the same contradictions, the same errors.

And if that tells us more on holiness?

And if that tells us more about the love as Jesus proposes us?

"Like the Father loved me, I also loved you"... "Here my command: Love the others as I loved you".

Ah! If there was not this "as" that makes it impossible forever to us to love like Jesus loved!

Here, I believe is the large wound of Charles, and is also ours, of each one of us: that of a desire to love that cannot reach its plenitude.

But happy wound of the wounded love, because it can be a stimulant to us to go forward.

Charles de Foucauld leaves us a heritage for us to bear fruit, challenges to take up. He leaves us an unfinished work.

Will we enclosed it in a museum of piety or raise our sleeves to continue the traced groove?

The great evangelic challenges remain open in front of us:

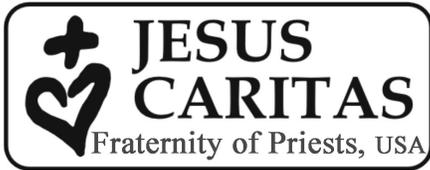
Challenge of gentleness and evangelic non-violence.

Challenge of the brotherly love to living within a community.

Challenge of a fraternity lived on a planetary scale, beyond any demonstration of ethnic hatred and avenger, beyond any feelings of national or cultural superiority.

That we wanted or not the beatification of Charles de Foucauld, we are trapped by his own message and his unfinished work.

It is not so much a question for us to place our Blessed on altars, to carry his medal



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around our neck, to honor his relics, it is more to put us at his school, i.e. at the school of Jesus, his Beloved and Master Jesus.

If we want to walk on the footsteps of Charles, there is no other way that to go through Jesus de Nazareth, The One who took the last place.

+Claude Rault

Bishop of Laghouat-Ghardaia (Alger)