



Brother Nicolas (Albert HELMER)

(1919 - 2013)

*Died 28 September 2013, in Saint Laurent (France)
aged 94, with 69 years of Religious Profession.*

Albert Helmer was born on 7 June 1919 in Metz (Moselle). His father's name was Auguste, and his mother's Marie Meyer. Albert was baptised on 14 June 1919 and confirmed in Metz in 1932. The 1939-45 war dispersed the family, made up of the parents and 5 children: 3 boys and 2 girls. From the Moselle, Brother Nicolas would keep a good knowledge of German.

On 19 March 1943, having worked for the SNCF (*Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer*), Albert entered the novitiate of the Brothers in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where he would make his first religious profession in the Company of Mary on 19 March 1944, taking the name Nicolas. From 1943 to 2013, Brother Nicolas had only two obediences: to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre for 68 years, and to the short-lived scholasticate in Dreux from 1967 to 1969. Until 1970, his work consisted of cutting the hair of his confreres (he had a hair-dressing diploma) and also service in the bakery and the refectory. At that time, the "Holy Spirit" house counted between 55 and 60 Fathers and Brothers, of whom quite a few were working in the service of the Daughters of Wisdom. Brother Nicolas, for his part, was responsible for answering the door and for various errands for the community (the post, relations with the town-hall, the pharmacy, etc...). At the door, Brother Nicolas did not just sit unoccupied: apart from the sale of Montfortian books, medals, statues and objects of piety, he made Rosaries of legendary strength. He was very proud of his beautiful Rosaries. How many did he make in all? No-one can say!

In his various tasks, everyone noted the qualities of Brother Nicolas: he was calm, discreet, a hard-worker, attentive, with a desire to do well and to make others happy. His contacts at the door were much welcomed. He was completely at the service of the Brothers of the house. But he was also filled with the Montfortian missionary spirit.

With a passion for the history of the Congregation, of which he knew all the secrets, Brother Nicolas was a much-appreciated guide to the "Maison Longue", the cradle of our history. He delighted in keeping up-to-date various "files" on the Confreres, of the present day, of yesterday, of France and of elsewhere... taking special care of the photographs of our Superiors General and of the Montfortian Bishops and their coats-of-arms... With precision he gathered and classified the news and information concerning the Congregation.

His sense of welcome was always noticed. With great care, he welcomed the many visitors and confreres who came for meetings, on retreat or on pilgrimage. Like Christ, Brother Nicolas received many wanderers who came to our door asking for shelter or something to eat; hospitality offered to the simplest people, those mistrusted, rejected by society, those who, like Father de Montfort himself, haunted the roads as vagabonds.

It is only right and normal for us to pay homage to Brother Nicolas and to thank him, and with him all the Brothers who, along with him, have been teachers and guides for the Congregation in the house of the "Holy Spirit". On Saturday 28 September, at 10:45, our Brother Nicolas fell asleep very peacefully in the Lord, with his Rosary beads in his hand. Mary had come to fetch him.