



Father Joseph OLIFANT
(1931 - 2014)

*Died 21 June 2014, in St Laurent sur Sèvre (France)
aged 82, with 59 years of Religious Profession.*

Joseph Olifant was born in Guipavas (Finistère) on 9 July 1931, the son of François and of Marie Yvonne Jacolot. His father was a manufacturer. Joseph was baptised the day after his birth and confirmed at the age of ten (4 June 1941 in Guipavas).

Having heard the Lord's call at a young age, Joseph left for the Apostolic School of the Calvary in Pontchâteau in 1945; he remained there until 1953, when his secondary studies came to an end. His response to the call to the Montfortian religious life was realised on 8 September 1954 by his first religious profession among the Montfort Missionaries in Chézelles (Indre et Loire). Then he went to the scholasticate in Montfort-sur-Meu for his studies in philosophy and theology (1954-1960). He made his perpetual profession on 15 August 1959 in the Basilica in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, and was ordained a sub-deacon there the following day by Mgr Jules Puset, at that time bishop of Tamatave (Madagascar), who also ordained him deacon in Montfort-sur-Meu on 20 September 1959 and priest on 18 October 1959.

Was Father Olifant bound for Madagascar? No! He was sent for one year (1960-1961) to be a teacher and monitor at the minor seminary in Pelousey. Then he was appointed as curate to the parish of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre (1961-1964), a pastoral ministry for which he prepared himself by a pastoral year for young priests in La Roche-sur-Yon (from 1 October 1961 to 15 June 1962).

From 1964 until 1973, Father Olifant was a missionary at our house of Le Rody in Guipavas, the place of his birth and Christian initiation. The profound changes that were then taking place in the itinerant parish missions led him towards another mode of Montfortian presence: he was sent to Montierchaume (Indre) as parish-priest and chaplain to the Lycée, from 1973 to 1977, joining the young Montfortian team that was already there...

Health problems obliged him to take a long period of convalescence in La Gardiolle (Gard) from 1977 to 1978. He was to remain in this community in the South, on a mission of welcoming and pastoral activity in various parish sectors: Lasalle (1982), Sauves, Villesque and Dufort (1983). Then Father Olifant returned to Brittany, not this time to Finistère, but to the Morbihan, at La Chartreuse (1990-2000). There he exercised the ministry of chaplain to the Daughters of Wisdom and took up once again the itinerant mission.

At the start of the third millennium, Father Olifant returned to his family roots: he was appointed superior of the community of Le Rody-Guipavas (2000-2006). After the closure of this community, Father Olifant returned to La Chartreuse after a short stay in La Gardiolle. But, as his health deteriorated, he was led to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, to the community of the Holy Spirit, in September 2009.

We were then to hear only rarely his missionary voice, except when he sang Breton songs... We were to watch his strength ebbing away little by little, with bursts of energy after each hospitalisation. But his last stay in hospital was very difficult; he was not to recover...

On 21 June, during the night and without fuss, Father Joseph Olifant ended his missionary career in the very place where he had begun it... May Our Lady accompany him into the eternal dwelling places!