

# The Clarion



*Newsletter of the Brothers of Christian Instruction*



## Historic Meeting Held in Alfred



Brothers pictured at the front of Notre Dame Spiritual Center are: Front row: *Omer Tessier*, Asst. Prov. Guy Roddy, Provincial Jerome Lessard; 2<sup>nd</sup> row: Marcel Sylvestre, *Michel Gravel*, James Lacasse; 3<sup>rd</sup> row: *Herve Lacroix*, *Charles Gagnon*, Asst. Gen. Gerard Byaruhanga, Asst. Prov. *Levi Boudreau*; 4<sup>th</sup> row: *Claude Gelinas*, *Provincial Gabriel Gelinas*, *Mario Houle*, *Walter Zwierchowski*. Absent: *Asst. Prov. Robert Smyth*. The members of the Canadian Provincial council are in italics.

On July 8, 2011, the joint meeting of the members of the provincial councils of Notre Dame Province and of Jean de La Mennais met on the Notre Dame Institute campus in Alfred, Maine.

The primary objective was to hear from a representative of the General Administration what the Superior General was asking us to undertake to undertake concerning the dwindling number of Brothers in the Notre Dame Province.

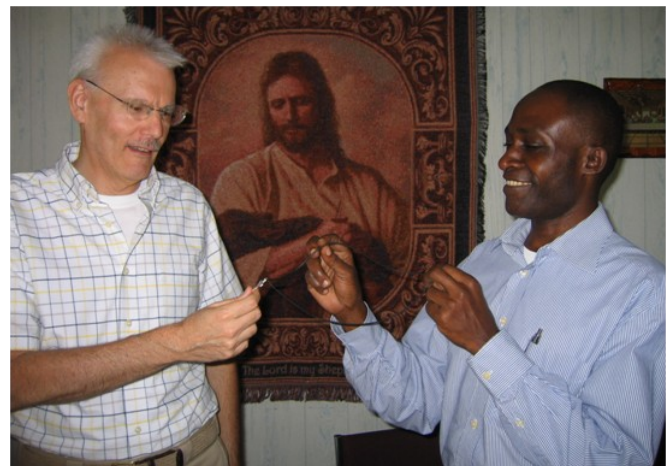
Asst. Br. Gerard Byaruhanga read a prepared statement emphasizing the need for greater cooperation between the two provinces with the central idea being that the mission of evangelization must continue to be a main preoccupation.

Notre Dame Province is quite capable of maintaining its present status with sufficient personnel and funding.

However, a change of status as a province may be necessary in five years or so. Greater collaboration between the two provinces in the meantime would ease the eventual assimilation of the FIC communities in the US into the Canadian province.

All the members were in agreement that starting this new academic year additional initiatives will be taken to enhance communication and interaction between the two provinces with the intention that in the years ahead all the Brothers become better acquainted with the personnel, ministries and challenges facing both North American sectors.

Subsequent to this very fraternal and enlightening exchange, each council is committed to review the suggestions offered to enhance mutual understanding and appreciation for the realities faced in each other's province. One immediate resolution concerns the ability of each North American Brother to become comfortable with both English and French.



Br. Walter Zwierchowski receives from Asst. Br. Byaruhanga the newly minted congregational symbol, a cross with the letter D. S. (*Deo Soli* or *Dieu Seul* - God alone). Br. Yannick Housay, Sup. General, initiated this religious sign during the March 2011 assembly of major superiors in Castlegandolfo, Italy. The American Brothers received theirs during the July province retreat.

## Province Hosts Missionary Cross



On Aug. 14, 2011, during a Mennaisian Year celebration in the Brothers' chapel in LaPrairie, QC, the Missionary Cross was given over by Canadian Brother Provincial Gabriel Gelinas to the American Brother Provincial Jerome Lessard.

Neither of the Founders, Gabriel Deshayes and Jean-Marie de la Mennais, envisioned the sending forth of missionaries when they undertook their work in 1819. Both were responding to the crying need of Christian elementary schools for boys in impoverished post-revolutionary rural Brittany.

That would change within twenty years. In 1836 the Ministry of the Navy, then overseeing French colonies, contacted Fr. de la Mennais asking him to provide elementary school teachers for the port cities of Martinique and Guadeloupe in the West Indies. After much prayer, consultation and reflection, Fr. de la Mennais, reading the signs of the times, accepted the challenge. Several years earlier, Fr. Deshayes had become Superior General of the Missionaries of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom, leaving the administration of the Brothers of Christian Instruction to Fr. de la Mennais.

At the end of the annual retreat of 1837 the first five Brothers were selected among dozens of volunteers. After long delays, they sailed from the port of Brest, in early January and reached Basse-Terre, in Guadeloupe six weeks later. From 1838 to 1860 more than 300 Brothers, all volunteers, would leave their homeland for missions in the Antilles, Senegal, Guyana, St Pierre-et-Miquelon and Tahiti.

Early on, Fr. de la Mennais accompanied the pioneer missionaries to Brest, the port of embarkation, but especially after his stroke in 1847, he, with dozens of Brothers, would go five or six miles, from Ploermel to a high point on the way to Brest. There stood an unpretentious wayside cross, about four times the size of the replica now circling the globe.

At this point, he would address some encouraging words to the Brothers being sent forth and the oldest departing

missionary would give a brief response. Fr. John would then give them his blessing as he sent them on their way to the port and the Brothers who had accompanied him returned to the motherhouse.

By the time of Fr. de la Mennais' death in 1860, 127 Brothers were serving in Martinique and Guadeloupe, thirteen in Senegal, fourteen in French Guyana, six in fog-bound St. Pierre-Miquelon, off the coast of Newfoundland, and four in Tahiti in the South Pacific.

This commemorative cross has appeared in twenty countries since its solemn blessing at Ploermel last November and will soon leave for Tahiti and the Marquesas. Though small and unpretentious, it remains a monument to the great faith, courage and heroism of hundreds of humble heroes who gave themselves to evangelization through Christian education for **God Alone**.

*Br. Marcel Sylvestre, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Chapel, Walsh University, N. Canton, Oh, August, 28, 2011*



While visiting Notre Dame Institute, **Br. Vincent Barigye** presented the Missionary Cross to the folks attending the weekend Masses the weekend of July 19-20, 2011. Br. Vincent used the occasion to deliver the annual NDI campus summer missionary appeal, dovetailing his summary of the Brothers' missionary history with the needs of his native Ugandan FIC province. Though enjoying encouraging numbers of young Brothers, the province needs assistance in maintaining religious formation centers and in providing for the development of new and of well-established schools. Having completed his term as provincial of our East African Brothers, Br. Barigye

is enjoying a sabbatical as a graduate student at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, MN.

Lucille Andrews  
Hector Bosse  
Ronald Cote  
Joe Cuchetti  
Pete Delesdernier  
Rev. Wilfrid DeRoche  
Sr. Constance Drouin  
Paul Dumais, Sr.  
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*As of Sept. 15, 2011*



# Plattsburgh Community Mourns ... and Celebrates

## *Brother Rene Demers Dies on Reaching His 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday.*

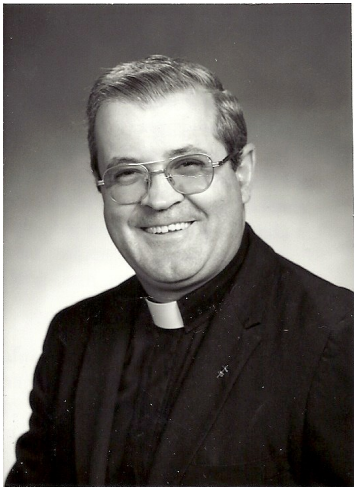
Brother Rene Demers, FIC, died on September 1, 2011 at Champlain Medical Center, in Plattsburgh, NY at the age of 80 of which 61 years were as a Brother of Christian Instruction.

Born in New Bedford, MA on August 31, 1931, he joined the Alfred formation center in 1949, making his novitiate in Oka, QC in 1950-51. Br. Rene manifested a great devotion to the founder of the Brothers, Venerable John-Mary de La Mennais.

Brother Rene's teaching career took him to St. Joseph's School, in Waterville, ME, St. Louis H.S. in Biddeford, ME, Denis Hall Jr. High in Alfred, ME and Msgr. Prevost H. S. in Fall River, MA. He was known to be a very devoted teacher, close to his students.

In 1969 Brother Rene arrived at Mount Assumption Institute in Plattsburgh, NY, where he is especially remembered as Director of the Alumni Association. Hours were spent updating addresses of the alumni with whom he kept in touch via "The Bridge", the school alumni newspaper. Singlehandedly he produced over 35 years scrapbooks of school and alumni memorabilia, volumes of great historical value.

In 1989 he was appointed Director of Foreign Students for the newly created Seton Catholic Central. He was actively retired until several years ago when health issues started taking their toll.



Aug. 31, 1931 - Sept. 1, 2011

Brother Rene was first of all a community man. He took great pride in decorating the residence and the house chapel. He had a green thumb; his garden was a source of beauty. He was interested in jigsaw puzzles, often framing them as gifts for his special friends. In the last 4 years he spent much time with his many friends at the Clinton County Senior Citizen Center, which he called his second home. He regularly volunteered for the

Saturday Seton Bingo and the K. of C. Bingo on Mondays.

He is survived by one sister Jeanne Sukwa of Fairhaven, MA.

Funeral services were held in St. Peter's Church in Plattsburgh on Tuesday, Sept 6 and on Wednesday, Sept. 7 in Alfred where he is buried.

## *The LaMennais Service Award*



Don Recore, Brothers Charles Thomas, Raymond Fortin and Rene Demers.

On July 23 the Plattsburgh community joined Don Recore and his family to celebrate his reception of the LaMennais Service Award in recognition of generous services rendered to community and Church. His many acts of volunteering include keeping the Brother's "computer literate and functioning."

Upon graduating from Mount Assumption in 1972, Don attended Canton College and SUNY in Plattsburgh.

Don revisited the Brothers at his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary alumni gathering in 1982 and has been involved with them ever since. He has become their computer "guru" keeping them on the internet as well as updating their hardware.

A Morrisonville Knight of Columbus since 1987, Don has served many positions from Grand Knight to Chairman of the Northern Conference. He has also served on the board for The Retired Senior Volunteers.

In addition, Don and his wife of 37 years, Dawn, are very active in their parish. He has organized and run the annual parish "Harvest Dinner" for 13 years.

Don is a great advocate of Catholic education putting his two daughters through the area Catholic schools and now supporting his three grandchildren.

He has helped to install Seton Catholic Central's computer center and helps in organizing the web site for the Catholic Schools of Plattsburgh, serving all alumni of former Catholic schools (MAI, St. John's, OLVA) as well as the present Seton students. He is currently chairman of the Champlain Valley Catholic Schools Alumni Association.

The award was presented by Brother Provincial Jerome Lessard at the recommendation of the provincial council in gratitude for the support Don Recore continues to provide the Brothers of the Plattsburgh community.



## Mennaisian Pilgrimage Held in Alfred.

On Saturday, July 9, a gathering of our Mennaisian family celebrated the province's Mennaisian Day, highlighting the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr. de La Mennais' death in 1860. The event opened in Notre Dame Chapel with an official greeting from the General Administration delivered by Asst. Br. Gerard. This was followed by Br. Marcel Sylvestre's reflections on Fr. John-Mary's contributions to the Church. At the co-Founder's monument on campus we prayed for his beatification. We then processed to the community cemetery to reflect on our deceased confreres. On that occasion we paused to hear Br. Guy Roddy introduce our friends to the Missionary Cross (then still in transit). Br. Ted Letendre presided at the various prayer stations. Feedback from many of our guests (especially former members and area friends) was very heart warming. (Pictured is Brother Ted and Brother Daniel Caron.)



### THE CLARION

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Publisher: Br. Jerome Lessard, FIC  
Staff: Brothers Robert Michaud and David Denicourt  
Layout: Joyce St. Pierre

To receive by mail or electronically, please use this contact information:

Address: The Clarion Desk  
P.O. Box 159  
Alfred, ME 04002-0159  
Telephone - 207-324-0067  
Email: jlessard40@yahoo.com

### 2011 Province Week Highlights

#### Pictured below:

Province picnic by the shores of Shaker Pond, Alfred, hosted by York County Shelter marking the end of the Mennaisian Anniversary Year.



#### Pictured above:

Canadian Br. Marcel Lafrance was the main presenter at the Brothers' annual six-day retreat held in Alfred, July 11-16. His theme: Mennaisian Spirituality.

The Clarion  
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Alfred, ME 04002-0159

Fall, 2011

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