

FATHER JEAN-YVES CALVEZ SJ

1927 - 2010



Homily

Jean-Yves Calvez, our companion, our near, dear friend, has now closed his eyes to the sights of our planet, this human world over which he traveled. We feel sad because he knew how, without imposing himself on others, to be close, to be a friend. But we are joyful that we can grasp in a single figure a life given for the glory of God and the salvation of men, to recall that flow of gifts which he never kept for himself but spent generously for the service of the Church, in the Society of Jesus. How can I convey the simplicity with which he welcomed everyone, refusing to cloak himself in the power of the offices he held or was associated with throughout the years? How can I not try and evoke his way of being at the outposts of humanity, in the midst of a colourful mix, never ceasing to look out for a new dawn?

His apostolic life has a Pauline colouring that strikes the eyes when one sees, as in an instant, the scene of Paul speaking in front of the Areopagus, to announce to the pagans the "God who made the world and all things in it", the God that everyone must "grope for", for he is not conceived according to human models. Yet the Kingdom is very close to man since "we are of his offspring", the offspring of him who "gives to all life and breath, and all things". In order to reveal that God to remote cultures, one must follow Paul's example, seek support, familiarize ourselves with different ways of life, learn new languages, discover works of human genius, read poets from those

cultures, in a word, plunge into those remote areas in search of the "Unknown God". One must go before the thinkers, engage with the skeptics, spend time with those who talk a lot. And not give up when faced with scoffers and cynics. There is no doubt that, in his Jesuit life, Jean-Yves got to meet such Areopagites.

Evangelizing otherness in depth involves heavy risks, tireless work that is never satisfied, courage and patience. That is the law of all serious inculturation which dares to engage with the strangeness of the other without using useless, pious words, and never giving up a favourable predisposition towards the other and his right to be himself. "God can only divinize what man has first humanized" warns Father François Varillon. Echoing those words, Adolfo Nicolas, our new General Superior reflecting on the most urgent needs of the Church today, is not afraid to say: "With easy access to information, our risk is to remain on the surface and thus never be able to make good assessments, or carry out an in-depth reflection, which allows us to reach the sources of hope, meaning and salvation".

Such a vigilant attitude, such high standards only find their roots in faith in the risen Christ who, for the Greeks, was as hard to conceive as he is in the public fora of our societies. Yet "he who believes in me, the works I do shall he do, and greater works than these shall he do". Personal itineraries are as varied as people's faces. For each person is unique. That is why places in the Father's house are also many. Every life is meant to find one day a welcoming home that is especially suitable. "I am the way, the truth and the life". It is within that triangle that we are to grow. Not the truth alone, nor self-proclaimed life, but a way between the two. The truth does not impose itself, it penetrates in us in the depths of silence; it is recognized through the extra life it engenders. God frees our life so that it becomes the way to truth. Welcoming Christ is welcoming the Trinitarian mystery, it is asking everything in his name. By becoming a man, God passed over the impassable. Master of the impossible, the one who is "more intimate to me than myself" is, at the same time, transcendence beyond grasp.

Today, we receive in hope the inheritance of eternal life and, with him who brings us together, we say the prayer that Saint Ignatius left us: "Take and receive, O Lord, all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, O Lord, I return it. All is yours, dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is sufficient for me."

Henri Madelin, SJ

Tireless! Bertrand Cassaigne SJ

Tireless and faithful. Faithful to the many bonds, nourished by all the encounters made in a life – “a crossing” – dedicated to the “social question” for nearly 60 years.

Faithful to a rigorous dialogue, initiated very early, with proponents of Marxist socialism. (His first book, as early as 1953, is a study on Law in USSR, published by Armand Colin).

Consistent in his questioning of liberalism (which for some has become the only way) he contributed to the reflection of American bishops on the economy, a contribution he later made available in a French translation – published by Castella-Cerf, in 1988. Fairly recently, in seminars he gave at the Centre Sèvres, he proposed simultaneously a reflection on Marxism after Marx and an approach of liberalism and the crisis.

Faithful to a discernment of emergencies and aspirations on development, employment, and the impact of globalization and careful to take into account the reality of situations, he drew on research and proposals inspired by the Gospel and by the Church’s discourse which, throughout history, has generated initiatives and commitments. The result was “Christian Social Thinkers “ in 3 volumes published by Cerf.

As early as 1961, he published with Jacques Perrin a big book, *The Church and the Economic Society: The Social Teaching of the Popes* (ed.Montaigne). At the end of 2009, he supervised for the CERAS the last edition of “The Church’s Social Discourse” (ed.Bayard): “A tall tree that we watch grow and expand... which grows further through our discernment and our commitments”, he wrote.

Combining intellectual rigour and dialogue with people driven by a genuine concern for humanity that went beyond their differences and sometimes contradictions, he never ceased to listen to researchers, to scholars and also to committed Christians: in Latin America, in the USA, in Asia, in Russia...

Many of his books reflect that concern. I mention only two of them: “The Church and Society: Dialogue between Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism” (Cerf, 1998) or “The New Century Horizon”, a dialogue with an Argentine scholar which was published in Buenos Aires in 2004).

His outreach was large. He benefited from the innumerable contacts made through the countless debates he was invited to – whether in China, Rome, or Saint-Jacut in Brittany... or contacts developed during the ten-plus years of his term as Assistant of the General Superior of the Jesuits. During

that period in Rome, he played a different role, less of scholarly work, but active, together with Father Arrupe, in concretely inviting all Jesuits worldwide to develop the link between “living one’s faith and the promotion of justice”. Such is the title of a decree promulgated by the 32nd Jesuit General Congregation which he actively helped to prepare.

Tireless till the last days, he never ceased to travel all over the world, responding to numerous invitations, giving conferences to groups, parishes, high schools...

He never stopped teaching: since 1973 at the Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy, then at the Institute of Social Studies (the FASSE, which is now part of the Catholic Institute of Paris), at the Institute of Political Studies of Paris, at the Centre Sèvres... He never ceased to provide advice or take initiatives... He was part of the team that restarted the Social Seminars of France, of the First Council of the Jean Rodhain Foundation. In the 90s, he presided over a research team on “Religion and Politics” in the International Association of Political Sciences... He helped set up social centres similar to CERAS on several continents: in Peru, Argentina, Africa (the Inades in Abidjan)...

And of course, he never stopped writing. From his first books in 1953 and 1955 on the Soviet Union and his 1956 best-seller, “Karl Marx’s Thought”, reprinted several times, to the three volumes of “Christian Social Thinkers” and the “80 Words on Globalization” (DDB, 2008).

Throughout the “crossing” that was his life, the CERAS was for Jean-Yves Calvez a stable reference point, his point of departure and a platform from which he never stopped opening up horizons to the larger world while being all the while attentive to the original inspiration (anthropological and theological), as well as the evolutions brought about by today’s changes, both positive and negative. A member of the CERAS team in Vanves from 1959 to 1966, and from 1984 to 1989 (at 14 rue d’Assas), he also served as its director for several years. Nominated to the *Etudes* journal, he remained a member of the steering committee of *Projet*. In September 2003 he joined its editors’ team.

Until the end, he remained for us an advisor, with a great grasp of situations, sharing with us his worldwide experience and his skills for synthesis. He passed on to us his love for the Church at the service of the world.

Bertrand Cassaigne SJ

Jean-Yves Calvez SJ Pierre de Charentenay SJ

Father Jean-Yves Calvez, editor of the journal *Etudes* from 1989 to 1996, passed away on the night of January 10-11, stricken by a heart attack. He was aged 82. Every reader of *Etudes* remembers his contributions to the journal he ran for six years. His sense of curiosity and his wide knowledge allowed him to engage in diverse fields such as philosophy, social sciences, international issues, but also in religious issues, theology and the Church's social teaching. He had a special concern for justice in the world.

After serving as Jesuit Provincial for France, he was called for a period of fifteen years to Rome, to be Assistant of Father Arrupe, General Superior of the Society of Jesus. As part of his job, he travelled throughout the world to visit Jesuit communities. He met civil and religious authorities from a hundred countries. Back in Paris, he ran the CERAS (Center for Research and Social Action), and after that, the journal *Etudes* starting from September 1989. Very early, he became known as a scholar of worldwide repute thanks to his impressive work on Karl Marx's Thought, published in 1956, at the age of 29. From then on, he wrote more than ten books on economics, development, the Church's social teaching, capitalism and Christian social thinkers. He had a long-standing interest in Russia and in Latin American countries to which he travelled every year.

He wrote benchmark papers for *Etudes* and kept up a fraternal friendship with the journal, advising its editors with rare generosity and availability.

In the name of *Etudes* which owes him so much, I thank you for your condolences and your prayers.

Biography

Born in Saint-Brieuc on February 3, 1927, Jean-Yves Calvez joined the Society very young, at the age of 16. Ordained priest on July 31, 1957, he took his final vows on February 2, 1961. He passed away in the morning of January 11, 2010, in Paris, victim to a pulmonary oedema with cardiac complications.

Father Calvez is one of the greatest Jesuit figures of the XXnd century. Here is how he presented himself in a brief foreword to his book *Compagnons de Jésus: Un itinéraire*, published in 2000 by Desclée de Brouwer: "I am known to many people for having written, in 1956, a sort of best-seller on Karl Marx,

entitled *Karl Marx's Thought*; for having dedicated my work within the Church on social, economical and political issues; for having studied 'the social doctrine of the Church' and issues related to development; for having served for thirteen years as General Assistant for the Society of Jesus, as a close companion of Father Pedro Arrupe, then General Superior, one of the great figures of revival within the Church after Vatican II".

It is during his theology studies in Chantilly, before he was ordained priest, that Jean-Yves Calvez published his 1956 best-seller on *Karl Marx's Thought*. The book, innovative in many ways, was quickly reprinted in paperback format, which is still in print. It is said to have been recommended within the Soviet communist Party. A fine connoisseur of Marxism and of the USSR – his first book is entitled *Constitutional Law and Sovereignty in the USSR* – he developed many contacts with the Soviet world, together with Father Chambre, another Jesuit expert of the USSR. He prepared a doctoral thesis on XIXth century German philosophers, which he never found time to defend.

Passionate about social, economic and political issues, a perfect polyglot (he spoke Russian, Spanish, English, German, Italian... fluently, passing very easily from one language to another), Father Calvez lectured at the Fontaines Faculty of Philosophy in Chantilly. He was director of *Action Populaire* (that gave birth to CERAS of which he remained a member), the founder of the INADES in Africa, director of the Institute of Social Studies (IES), and lecturer at the Institute of Political Sciences in Paris. He travelled a lot during those years, notably to Latin American countries, with which he had very strong ties of friendship and respect all his life.

In 1967, he was made first President of French Provincials (there were four of them back then) with the mission of unifying the four Provinces in a single Province of France. He was noticed at the 31st General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1967-1968) and called to assist Father General in 1971. At the 32nd General Congregation, he was made General Assistant which he remained until the 33rd General Congregation in 1983 (when Father Kolvenbach was chosen as the new General Superior).

Father Calvez was a close collaborator and esteemed advisor of Father Arrupe. He played an active role in the preparation of the 32nd General Congregation (1974-1975) which promulgated the decree entitled "Our Mission Today: Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice". He worked hard with Father Arrupe to have the decrees of the General Congregation welcomed in the Society of Jesus, facing with great courage all the challenges that came along. When Father Arrupe suffered a thrombosis which left him unable to govern (1981), Father Calvez remained at the side of Father Paolo Dezza, named by Pope John Paul II as "Pontifical Delegate for the Society of

Jesus". He then worked to prepare a new General Congregation in order to elect a successor to Father Arrupe.

Father Calvez dedicated much effort to spread Father Arrupe's writings. He helped bring out an excellent collection of Father Arrupe's texts under the title *Writings for Evangelization*, published in 1985 by Desclée de Brouwer Bellarmin. Most recently, he contributed to the publication by Lessius Pbsch of *Pedro Arrupe, General Superior of the Jesuits (1965-1983): Government by a Prophet*.

When he came back to France, Father Calvez ran the CERAS from 1984 to 1989, before serving as Editor of the journal *Etudes* from 1989 to 1995 and teaching at the Public Ethics Department of the Jesuit Faculties of Paris, Centre Sèvres, which he ran from 2002 to 2006. At Cardinal Lustiger's request, he gave the Lent Conferences at Notre-Dame. During all those years, Father Calvez developed a great many contacts throughout the world, notably in Argentina where he went regularly to deliver summer lectures. He was a member of Georgetown University's Board of Directors.

Father Calvez had a large role in spreading the social teaching of the Catholic Church through his greatest works, which retraced its history through the great figures of Christian social thinkers (two books published by Cerf). He had begun working on those issues in a 1961 treatise entitled *The Church and the Economic Society*.

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Note: We are grateful to Fr. Thierry Lamboley SJ, responsible of the [site internet](#) of France Province for allowing the publication of these texts.