



**Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie**  
*Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma*



**July 19, 2022**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 24**

The Province of France recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Bernard VIAL**, priest, of the Marianist Community of the Madeleine, Bordeaux, France, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on July 13, 2022, in Pessac, France, at the age of 97 with 80 years of religious profession.

Bernard was born into a family of farmers on February 8, 1925, in Val d'Ajol. He was baptized on the 14th of the same month. Bernard began his studies at the Marianist school of Val d'Ajol. When he was twelve years old, he left his family to continue his studies at the postulate of La Tour de Sçay.

Bernard was determined to follow the call of the Lord. At that time in history, the Germans controlled parts of the country. The novitiate, which had moved from Belgium and then from Brittany, opened in Antony near Paris. Bernard went to the novitiate on November 2, 1940. He made his first vows on November 21,

1941. He was 16 years old but already very mature, as were many of his fellow novices. Bernard often made mention of this fact during his life.

In this difficult period of history, he went to continue his studies in Belfort as a scholastic. There he prepared for the baccalaureate, which he obtained in 1943-1944. After that, he returned to La Tour de Sçay where he began his work as a teacher and Dean of Discipline. At the same time, he continued his academic studies. Bernard professed his perpetual vows on August 28, 1947 in Besançon. Since he had not yet completed his degree in classics, he remained in the region to accomplish this task. He lived in the communities of Courtefontaine (1947-1949), Gy (1949-1950), Saint-Jean de Besançon (1950-1951) and the Villa Saint-Jean in Fribourg (Switzerland). As he matured into the role of teacher and educator, he was entrusted with the mission of prefect of studies at Sainte-Marie de Belfort (1952-1954).

Bernard's work was not limited to the academic formation of his students. He also cared deeply about their spiritual formation. His superiors sent him to the international Marianist seminary in Fribourg (1954-1958). After Bernard received his degree in theology, he was ordained on July 14, 1957 by Bishop Charrière.

Priest, educator and leader of men, that was his vocation. Bernard began working at Saint-André de Colmar. There he was a teacher and Dean of Discipline for three years before beginning his career as the principal at Sainte-Marie de Belfort from 1961 to 1967. He then became the director of the Collège Saint-Étienne in Strasbourg. During his two years of leadership, he was able to guide the establishment through the turbulence of May 1968 without any major problems. At the same time, he gave the school new momentum. The students who knew him and the former teachers and collaborators who worked with him during his short stay in Strasbourg, never forgot this remarkable man. They remembered in particular his exceptional human qualities as well as his great competence as a leader.

After a year spent at Sainte-Marie Grand-Lebrun in Bordeaux as a middle school teacher and disciplinarian, he became the principal of the young institution of Sainte-Marie d'Antony (1970-1974). In this position, he showed himself to be a man of faith, a man rooted in spirituality and the Marianist philosophy of education. Recognized as such, he joined the provincial administration as assistant for religious life from 1974 to 1979. In addition, he was "priest-advisor"

of the Alliance Mariale for many years. After this period, he resumed his career as principal at Sainte-Marie Grand-Lebrun, until his professional retirement in 1992.

In Antony, he lived in the nearby Saint-Jean community. He was appointed national spiritual director of the Marianist Fraternities. Bernard was a man who worked hard at keeping in contact with many people. In addition, he continually sought to make new connections. Frequently, people asked him to write articles for various publications and to give conferences. However, an unexpected change came into his life. Fr. Jean-Claude Délas died in 1999. Bernard accepted the request that he become the interim principal of Sainte-Marie in Antony for one year.

Then, from 2001 to 2003, he assisted the master of novices in Saint-Hippolyte in Alsace. After that, he joined the community of the Madeleine in Bordeaux.

In 2010-2011, he offered to help the scholasticate in Abidjan, which lacked a priest. Unfortunately, he arrived in the Ivory Coast in the midst of a post-electoral crisis. In fact, the scholasticate was located close to the neighborhood where the events were taking place. He returned to France exhausted from his work in the Ivory Coast.

Bernard was a fighter, however, and he returned to Bordeaux and his various commitments, in particular the chaplaincy of the Charles Perrens psychiatric hospital. This lasted until the summer of 2020. In that year, he suffered a stroke and became a hemiplegic. He fought against the impairment and moved around with his motorized wheelchair. However, he could not employ the means of communication that he used so well in earlier years. He could read only with great difficulty and could not pick up his telephone. These physical limitations were a heavy burden to bear for someone who was so active. Stripped of everything, but still very alert, he continued to inquire about important tasks that he had not been able to complete. At the end, all that remained was his rosary.

Bernard Vial was a plain-speaking man, like the harsh climate of the Vosges, with good days and stormy ones. He was also a great listener, who accompanied an impressive number of people in their spiritual growth. He was appreciated as a confessor. His way of celebrating the liturgy and his homilies touched hearts and revealed the inner nature of a sensitive man. Bernard made many

contributions to the Marianist school network in France. He participated in several General Chapters, and rendered many services to the General Administration, especially with translation.

We give thanks to the Lord for all that Bernard has sown so that the kingdom could grow, by spending himself without counting the cost. May he rest in peace!