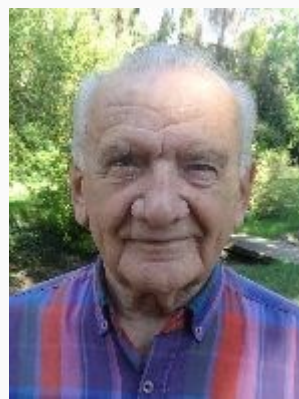




Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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Jly 17, 2025

Biography of Death Notice N. 14

The Region of France recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **André BRISSINGER**, of the Eastern Territorial Community, Saint Hippolyte, France, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on June 28, 2025, in Colmar, France, at the age of 94 with 75 years of religious profession.

André was born on October 22, 1930 in the town of La Bresse (Vosges), a country of mountains and forests. He was baptized on the 26th of the same month. The last child of Louis and Angèle Coulin, he joined his two older sisters, his brother Jean, who became a Marianist, who died while he was director of the Collège Notre-Dame d' Afrique in Abidjan in 1978, and another sister. Their father was a gardener and their mother a weaver.

André was enrolled in the Saint-Laurent primary school, run by the Marianists since 1854 (and which they had to leave with regret in 1979).

Bresse is a fertile land of vocations, many Brothers of Mary, as they used to say in the past, came from there. His teacher threw the net and André answered "yes" to the call.

At the beginning of the 1942 school year, despite the war and the difficulties of obtaining supplies, he entered the postulate of La-Tour-de-Sçay (Doubs) where he met other Bressauds, some of whom were relatives. Despite a few warnings, the years passed quietly until the start of the 1944 school year when he was to start his third year.

While La-Tour-de-Sçay was liberated by the Americans on September 9, 1944, the war raged on the front. La Bresse was shelled from October 3rd and 80% destroyed. A resistance group (La Piquante Pierre) had formed there. "The men, our fathers and brothers, were deported, the men of the resistance were surrounded, the prisoners tortured, then shot, finally, the whole village was dynamited and burned." "Out of 1,060 houses and 21 factories, 850 houses and 20 factories were completely destroyed." On November 9, 1944, the Germans ordered the population to leave the city. A period of wandering then began until November 18th when the Germans allowed the population to cross the front line to take refuge in Haute-Marne. At the beginning of December, the news of André's presence in Fayl-Billot reached the postulate where he finally arrived with a few companions on December 22. Like many others, André had no news of his father and brother Jean, who had been deported to Alsace, and had to wait until April 16, 1945 to learn that they were safe and sound. As you can see, the disrupted school year did not allow him to finish his third year, which he resumed the following year. From 1946 to 1948, he continued his studies at the Institution Saint-Jean in Besançon and felt ready to enter the novitiate at Antony near Paris. He pronounced his first vows there on September 12, 1949.

As a scholastic, he deepened his knowledge in Antony and obtained the baccalaureate. Appointed to Saint-Hippolyte in 1951, he began his teaching career there. André was a sportsman, the summer before his military service, he took a course at the UGSEL (Union Générale Sportive de l'Enseignement Libre) to improve his physical education.

From 1954 to 1956, he did the first part of his military service in Germany in a

regiment of cuirassiers. In Tübingen, he attended the training of the School of Reserve Non-Commissioned Officers; From then on, tanks held no secrets for him. Promoted to second lieutenant in November 1955, he lived in the city with 6 other officers. It was during this period that he rubbed shoulders with another second lieutenant: Jacques Chirac, future President of the Republic.

In February 1956 and until the end of his service in April-May 1957, he was an instructor in Vannes and lodged at the Jesuit college in the city. As he writes: "I made good friends. What a source of discovery and personal enrichment! "

After the rich experience of military service, of which he will retain something in his personality, it was important to plunge back into religious life with the summer "second novitiate" in Castel Gandolfo near Rome, where he chose to make his perpetual vows on August 30, 1958. He resumed teaching at Sainte-Maure when the Provincial invited him to take a year to do the second novitiate in Castel Gandolfo, in 1960-1961. After a short period in Saint-Dié, he had to finish his studies. He was appointed to Sainte-Marie de Monceau where he taught French and Latin. He was also prefect of discipline for the Sophomores and Juniors, while studying at the Sorbonne where he obtained a degree in modern literature in 1968. Sainte-Marie de Monceau having been expropriated, he became deputy director and teacher in the brand new establishment of Sainte-Marie d'Antony.

In 1969, he returned as director of the agricultural school of Sainte-Maure to succeed Joseph Fimbel; A difficult succession that he will assume with tenacity, foresight and trust, supported by the community. At the first alumni meeting following this change, Joseph Fimbel gave him his support, saying, "He's a young colt, but I assure you that he jumps well."

André will continue to give substance to the "family spirit" of the school, a value cultivated since the foundation of the school. He worked to create and develop a real educational community in which the teaching staff, the farm staff and the various services felt recognized, linked, useful, committed to the development of young people, and therefore happy. Under his direction, several buildings were erected, including a gymnasium, and a building that housed the BTS section and the computer services.

In his speeches, his oral or written interventions, an expression recurs like a leitmotif: "to have in mind the meaning of other people". He is not content to talk about it, but through his confidence, his listening, his cordiality, his high standards, he shows the way to everyone, young people and adults.

He continued to refer to it until recent years in the letter of greetings that he sent to his many correspondents in recent years. The sense of others and the openness that he always encouraged have certainly marked the agricultural world through the thousands of alumni scattered in many departments of France.

François Cacheux, a deacon who worked with him, testifies: "As director, I saw him again, presiding over a class council. We were examining the situation of a student who was a little turbulent and in real difficulty at school. In the round table, a colleague had expressed himself in a very harsh way. André then immediately intervened to tell him: "If you are not able to see qualities and hope in relation to this student, you are not useful in this advice and it is better that you leave the room". Several times, after an interview with a young person, he would stand up and say 'I'm counting on you!' and accompany his words with a punch on the shoulder, as a gesture of trust. His gestures were known to all...For me and many of the people he met, the example of André, a man of faith and courage, is to be honored at the height of a "great man": his temper and charisma were proof of this fact. His courage, the affirmation of his speech, his leadership that gave the school its strong reputation and its influence. André's life was enlightened by a solid faith. Missionary faith by example, united to Christ by a tenacious hope, and availability to others. At the invitation of the alumni, he never hesitated to join the former students of a class for reunions in different corners of France, and to stimulate them. He was concerned that these links would remain."

Two years before leaving Sainte-Maure, André drew the conclusions of the years he had spent as director of the Notre-Dame de l' Aube School of Agriculture: "Appointed here in July 1969, without any preparation in any field, neither technical (a degree in literature director of an agricultural technical school!), nor administrative (I had never been the assistant of a "boss"), I am therefore finishing my 19th year of management. Almost at the end of these two decades, I feel animated by a double feeling. First, a feeling of weariness, fatigue, emptiness. When you arrive at the age of 39 in a house, as was my case in 1969, you innovate, you build, you reform, you breathe a spirit, you print a work of your

own. This was all the more necessary as I succeeded Bro. Fimbel who had built Sainte-Maure and had managed it according to a very autocratic method. To say that the transition was easy would obviously be a lie, even if I found in the religious in place a help and understanding to which I would like to pay tribute. I have tried to set up government structures that allow for greater participation by endowing the heads of departments: deputy directors (short cycle, long cycle, adult center, then higher cycle), bursar, accountant, manager, with real powers, and therefore by making them responsible. Delegation of power goes hand in hand with the empowerment of employees. It was an arduous task and I have the very clear impression that I did not succeed as would have been desirable and desired by some of them whom I would not want to make suffer any longer. Today, I feel a sense of weariness, fatigue, emptiness; I think I have given Sainte-Maure what I could give. To remain any longer at the head of this house would be to condemn it to immobility, to a lack of imagination, of creativity, to the necessary adaptation that the new situation requires."

Another suffering he expresses: "My lack of professional training is cruelly felt. It is all well and good to say that a director of an agricultural school may not be a specialist in agricultural issues. It's easy to say when you're not in the game, but when you're called upon to discuss the problems of training people for the year 2000, [...] when you sit around a table with directors of agricultural colleges, high-level professional leaders, colleagues who are agricultural engineers or agronomists, you sometimes feel uncomfortable. Only I can say this because only I am living this situation."

In 1990, he returned to Antony for two years with the responsibility of Censor of Studies at La Croix. Difficult years of adaptation, without the notoriety of the director of Sainte-Maure and the students of a world very different from the one he was living with. But very quickly, a new mission awaited him, he was appointed vice-provincial of France at the beginning of the 1992 school year and shared the mission of Adalbert Muller and then Vincent Gizard for 8 years.

André returned to service for two years at Sainte-Marie d'Antony, then at Maison Saint-Jean from 2000 to 2004.

He knew Tunisia, which he had visited as vice-provincial, and was linked to it by

his niece, who was married to a Tunisian. In September 2004, he came to strengthen the small Marianist community of the Ecole Supérieure Libre de Tunis and to live a Christian presence in the land of Islam. He taught the French language to the religious men and women who remained deeply marked by his personality and by his demand for the correct pronunciation of the language of Molière. He also participated in a literacy program set up by the Caritas of the Archdiocese. In the summer, he followed the renovation work of the establishment, a faithful watchman, despite the Saharan temperature.

In September 2011, he was appointed to the community of Saint-Hippolyte, then in 2017 to that of Méry-sur-Seine: "Returning to the Aube after 27 years of absence, I met former students, friends, professional relations (school or 'agricultural'), during Sunday Eucharistic celebrations, visits to this or that elder with whom I was led to work in view of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the school of agriculture". It was on this occasion that he wrote the history of the Lycée agricole de Sainte-Maure.

In 2019, he found himself again in Antony for two years of contacts, meetings, with this concern to make connections as testified by Santhosh, a young Indian Marianist priest: "Brother André was a great source of inspiration for me. When I met him in 2020, he was already 90 years old. Due to the COVID pandemic, David Kangwa, Renny Markose and I were unable to attend a French school during the summer. With great courage and generosity, Brother André agreed to teach us French. He was a strict teacher, but always filled with love, hope for the future, and a great vision for the Marianist mission. He is one of the many Marianists who have marked my life and strengthened my attachment to the Marianist vocation."

He returned to Saint-Hippolyte in 2021, its hillsides, its vineyards, its daily walk. His deafness bothered him as well as some health problems, but he continued on his way to the goal, to the final encounter with the Lord and the Virgin Mary, to this feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We give thanks for this life of service given so willingly.
