

December 23, 2007

Death Notice No. 39 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the France, recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JOSEPH SONNTAG**, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 6, 2007 in St. Hippolyte, France, in the 94th year of his age and the 77th year of his religious profession.

Bro. Joseph SONNTAG was born on January 2, 1914, at St. Hippolyte. Having entered the postulate on September 11, 1926, at the age of 12, he made his first vows on September 12, 1931, at Saint Remy. Bro. Sonntag passed the upper certificate in '39, which allowed him to teach.

His first assignments were to schools in the eastern part of France: Saint Claude, Grandvillars, La Bresse and Le Val d'Ajol. From 1952 on, his apostolic work was in secondary schools.

In 1955, he left for the mission in Central Africa. Well liked by his students, he was soon surrounded by young Africans of the same age.

What can we remember about Bro. Sonntag?

Bro. Sonntag was enthusiastic about teaching and methodical. He loved giving courses in physics, the charms of which he knew how to share. He collected different kinds of apparatus for his lab demonstrations and for his activity on the citizens band and as a ham radio operator. The transport of antennas was often a delicate matter. The length of the antennas among other things posed a problem in planes destined for Africa. Air France, Air Afrique and Sabena generally gave him very good treatment. The antennas were placed on the floor in the cabin.

He never thought that one could improvise a course. His courses of physics were always well prepared. Electricity, radio, citizens band, apparatus for sound, apparatus repair, electrical installations, and emergency repairs of all kinds held no secrets from him. In the missions, his ability was appreciated in all the communities. His hands were golden. Bro. Sonntag was a ham radio operator on an international level. Several times he helped in life-saving operations.

In Abidjan, he was president of the Amateur Radio Operators of Ivory Coast.

Thanks to him, all our communities were equipped with amateur radios. In times of crisis, the SM network functioned. This allowed the superiors to always have news of the situation of the religious. His emulators, Claude REYNES, Fernand BIBEAU, Alphonse EDEL and all the religious in Brazzaville Congo have been involved in the service.

Then came computers. He was very happy working on the hardware. Bro. Joseph had a great heart. Kindness led him to the young who followed him and with whom he shared his secrets.

On his return to Antony, he taught physics in the postulate and at La Croix.

He was Alsatian by birth, a native of Saint Hippolyte. His family, it is said, lodged Father Chaminade during his trip to the region. Joseph was a man of silence and solidarity; his sense of service was remarkable. He was orderly and methodical; nothing was left to chance.