

1793-1859

# Louis Querbes

**Proclaim Jesus Christ:  
Especially to the Poor**

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Robert Bonnafous, C.S.V.

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As we celebrate the 225th anniversary of the birth of Louis Querbes (1793-1859), here is a short biography of the founder of the Clerics of St. Viator. It covers the main phases of a full life: priest, pastor of a rural parish, preacher, founder, superior and author. He put his great talents to good use. Better yet, he knew how to discern and follow the charism he received to provide “remote” parishes with catechists who would be “parish clerics” too, and also in charge of the upkeep of the church; they would assist priests in the catechetical instruction of children and in the celebration of religious ceremonies. Louis Querbes never imagined founding a religious congregation but rather a pious association of laymen. The first catechists were lay people, but through successive interventions, the Most Reverend Bishop de Pins, the Archbishop of Lyon, led the society of catechists to adopt the more classical rules of a religious congregation.

This story illuminates the best traits of the wonderful man who knew how to grow in holiness, who never looked back, so we do hope he will one day be recognized by the Church.

Fr. Pierre Demierre, C.S.V.  
*Provincial Superior*  
*Province of France*



It is with great pleasure that the Viatorian Community presents this short biography of the Venerable Fr. Louis Querbes, the founder of our congregation.

Fr. Querbes, the ‘pastor of Vourles,’ was a man ahead of his time. His thinking was very much contrary to the norms of 19th century rural France. From the very beginning he envisioned a community of professed religious and laymen to assist pastors in educating young people in the faith. His thrust in education was not just catechetical instruction but in many disciplines. He said, no matter what you teach, be the best of teachers. Our community has continued along that same path as educators and in sacramental ministry.

The Venerable Fr. Querbes was able to read the signs of the times and step in to fill the void. In that, I believe, he gives us all a great example of what we are called to do. He challenges us to look at our world today and fill in the void.

I don’t believe that he calls us to merely be a community which only seeks to maintain what already is. I believe that, by his example, he is calling us to areas most in need of Christ and His message.

As you read this short biography, I hope that it speaks to your heart in a way that challenges old ways of thinking and approaching the world. It challenges us to leave the realm of comfort and to enter the unknown. If enough of us do that, we can truly make a difference. Pope Francis challenges us to “wake up the world”. So let us read the signs of the times and step in to fill the void and “wake up the world.”

Fr. Daniel R. Hall, C.S.V.

*Provincial Superior  
Province of Chicago*

Louis Querbes was born in Lyon on August 21, 1793. His father, Joseph, was originally from Les Canabières (Aveyron); his mother, Jeanne Brebant, was from Sainte-Euphémie (Ain). They were both tailors. Louis was born during the violent siege of Lyon. He was baptized the same day in the Church of St. Pierre as Jean Louis Joseph Marie Querbes. His only sister, Joséphe-Magdelaine, was born in 1797.

## A Young Man Who Promises

In 1805, Louis entered the minor seminary of Saint Nizier parish, which had become the family parish. In 1807 he was confirmed, then after only a two month interval, given the tonsure with three other members of the parish minor seminary choir. In writing, and secretly, he professed his perpetual vow of chastity – most likely in October 1808.

With his three companions, he received a very solid academic formation under the direction of Guy-Marie Deplace, a private mentor with whom he would always stay in touch, and who taught him to value his solid intellectual faculties; from him he learned and mastered French, Latin, and passable Italian. In 1812, he received his baccalaureate (high school diploma). The same year, in November, he entered the Seminary of Saint Irenaeus.

The seminary was under the direction of the diocesan clergy who had been educated under the charism of Saint-Sulpice and the French school of spirituality. Louis received the minor orders as early as December 1812, with 118 other seminarians. He was ordained a sub-deacon on June 23, 1815; during the ceremony, St. Marcellin Champagnat, St Jean-Marie Vianney and Jean-Claude Colin, founder of the Marist priests, were ordained as deacons.

After three years in the seminary, but too young to become a deacon, Louis returned to the parish minor seminary of Saint Nizier as a teacher. Like a number of other seminarians and diocesan priests, he tried to enter the re-established Society of Jesus, but the local bishop's council refused his request to leave the diocese. He was ordained a deacon on July 21, 1816, and ordained a priest on December 17, 1816, by Bishop Dubourg, who was born in Lyon, but who had just been named bishop of New Orleans.

At the request of Fr. Besson, the curé (pastor) of Saint Nizier, Father Querbes was named the fourth associate pastor (parochial vicar) of his home parish, with responsibility for the minor parish seminary. This special parish was led by a priest with a strong personality and three priests who had been witnesses to the faith during the French Revolution (Linsolas, Marduel, Huet). In the parish there were active fraternities, numerous charities, and vibrant ceremonies thanks to the parish minor seminary choir with several dozen children.



**Lyon, Saint Nizier Church**

Fr. Querbes was very active; he was the director of the choir; he preached often (some of his sermons have been preserved). So, in 1822, the bishop's council asked him to be the leader of a society of diocesan missionaries which was being created in the Diocese of Tours. He preferred to remain in Lyon. His friends Donnet and Dufêtre went to Tours. The former would become Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux; the latter, Bishop of Nevers.

## Renewing the Parish of Vourles

On October 25, 1822, Fr. Querbes was sent to the affiliate parish of Vourles, a small village of about 800 people, devastated by the Revolution where there was a lot of work to be done. He spent 37 very active years there.

From the very first year, catechism classes were regularly taught every day at 11:00 a.m. from All Saints Day to Easter. During the rest of the year, Vespers was celebrated every Sunday in the church. Classes for adults were held during Lent. The Society of the Blessed Sacrament was created for the men and the Society of the Rosary, for the women.

With the help of the town council, a new church was built. To enhance the beauty of the ceremonies and to encourage the participation of the faithful, he collected songs, revised them as needed, and published them in a book which by 1861 had grown to 15 printings and editions. A collection of plain chant was published and reprinted three times. He also left in manuscript form a small book of chants for the altar boys of the parish of Vourles.

In 1823, the pastor arranged for the Sisters of Saint Charles to open a school for girls. It was the first one to be opened in the deanery. For the boys, he asked for a Marist brother but was refused because the parish could not pay for the services of 2 or 3 religious. His first biography notes: "He complained about the educational gap that was ignored by the teaching communities. He painfully observed that the rural parishes were without elementary masters from religious orders; they just had hired masters who instead of being helpers to the regular parish priests, were, at least most of them, their most dangerous critics."

In 1824, Pierre Magaud, of the Diocese of Belley, nephew of the mayor of Vourles, left the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools under unusual circumstances. He wanted to be a priest and left without the permission of his superiors. He took refuge in Vourles where the pastor wrote in his favor asking for a dispensation from his vows. The Bishop of Belley, having been made aware of the circumstances of his departure from the Institute, at first refused to admit Magaud to the seminary. (He would eventually admit him.) The pastor of Vourles welcomed the former religious, tasked him with opening a school for boys, and taught him Latin, the arts, and courses in pedagogy. He made him, as he wrote, "a cantor, sacristan, catechist, table guest and companion."



**Vourles, Present Façade of the Church**  
(Photo Élie Salesses)

## Catechists for Small Parishes

The pastor of the neighboring parish in Brignais also had a young teacher to train. He asked his friend Querbes to let him join Magaud during his training. The pastor of Vourles became aware of the need. “Surprisingly I was dreaming of how much of an advantage it would be for my confreres to have the same kind of teachers and companions that I have been blessed to have”. The idea of doing something in the field of the formation of Christian teachers was born. It was toward the end of 1826, wrote Fr. Querbes in 1839, “that the founder of the Clerics of Saint Viator first conceived the plan of this society.”

The project was going to mature for two years while he was disturbed by two choices he was given by the Bishop’s Council: to become the director of the minor seminary of Saint Jodard or to help the priest Vincent Coindre who had become head of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. But Fr. Querbes refused and held on to an idea, which, as he wrote to Bishop de Pins, “kept coming to his mind, even at the altar. It is an idea that he had examined before God for several years.”

Little by little the project began to take shape. It consisted of creating “a seminary for parish schoolteachers.” One must understand the word “seminary” in a wider sense: a place to learn a profession. “These teachers would be more than ordinary teachers: the proposal was to found a school which would train pious parish school teachers for rural parish schools, who would also be altar servers and sacristans under the leadership of the local pastor as well as under the authority of the local Ordinary (bishop). They would either remain celibates, or later on they might get married.”

He did not only want to train teachers — in this field nothing had been done before — but take advantage of the creation of primary schools where the teachers could also become pastoral associates with the ability, in parishes lacking the means, to teach the catechism with competence, to sing in church, and to assist the parish priest who was often alone and isolated. To describe this multi-talented person, Fr. Querbes used the expression of the day, “lay minister”, and especially another term that he invented: “parish minister”, or simply “catechist”. The project became a part of the movement of re-Christianization, which was a hallmark of the Restoration in the diocese. However, the pastor did not intend to found a religious congregation.

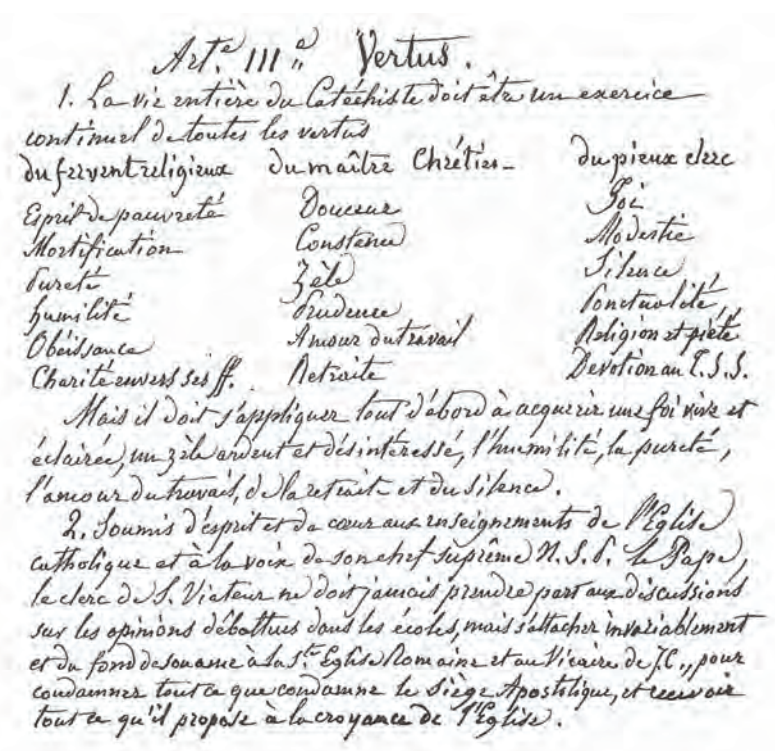
The project was intended for experienced teachers or for people who wanted to enter the profession whether they were married or not. The first drafts of the statutes, however, envisioned more demanding requirements for members who remained celibate: to live according to the rules of pious associations. Their mission was clear and it is articulated by article 4 of the statutes: “whatever the particular vocation of the catechist... he should not



**Vourles, the ‘Berceau’ (Motherhouse)**  
*(photo Michel Chabert)*

refrain from any opportunity to 'evangelize Jesus Christ', meaning to proclaim Jesus Christ, especially to the poor." The pastor of Vourles created a prayer service that the parish catechists would celebrate every day with three readings: from the Bible, from *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, and from *The Imitation of Christ*.

Concerning a patron saint and role model to give them, Fr. Querbes looked to the list of the saints of the diocese of Lyon. Viator was, in the 4th century, a lector (minor order) in the Church of Lyon during the episcopacy of Saint Just. When the latter retreated to an Egyptian monastery in the Scete desert, Viator followed him and became a good companion and good minister to the bishop – meaning a good servant.



**Indispensable Manual**  
(Art. 3 § 1 and 2, Calligraphy by Fr. Querbes, 1855)



## The King Approves; the Archbishop Delays

In January 1829, with the approval of the bishop's council, in particular the approval of Fr. Simon Cattet, a Vicar General, Fr. Querbes drafted the statutes of the future charitable association in order to submit them for the approval of the government. He explained that the type of training school that he wanted to create required funds that only a recognized association could obtain. The approval of the civil authorities was the first stage. Against all odds and despite a government not usually in favor of this type of venture, the project was approved on August 8, 1829. The Royal decree recognizing the charitable Society of the Schools of St. Viator was signed by King Charles X on January 10, 1830. The pastor of Vourles who was in Paris, and who had negotiated with the Minister of Public Education, had undoubtedly been helped by some influential people, but barely nothing was left in writing about it; but it explains the speed of approval. Among them, the more or less unknown and somewhat secret pious "Congregation", royalist deputies and priests who had influence with various ministers like the state councilor Clausel de Coussergues from the department of Aveyron or the state councilor from Lyon, de la Chapelle, etc.

But this success created a serious difficulty with Bishop de Pins, administrator of the Diocese of Lyon, who did not seem to have been kept perfectly abreast of the project of Fr. Querbes through Fr. Cattet. He refused that the project of the charitable Association of Saint Viator might even begin to be implemented. He could not tolerate the fact that Fr. Querbes had worked with a government against which he was fighting and that the schools of Saint Viator would be subject to the regulations of the state university. For Bishop de Pins, as well as for many other members of the clergy, any control by the state university was intrinsically evil because it contradicted one of the rights that the bishops wanted to reclaim, that is, the return to them of the authority they had over education before the French Revolution. To accept this control was to accept the new state of affairs, thus accepting a certain liberal spirit.

For two years the Bishop was opposed to the creation of the association, and it wasn't until November 3, 1831 that he agreed – on the condition that the statutes of the charitable Association of Saint Viator be submitted to him for approbation.

## Difficult First Years of the Association

In a series of successive revisions, through corrections and suggestions by the bishop's council, some slight modifications were gradually added which refocused the association toward being a group of celibate men, who even if remaining as laymen, "would profess the evangelical counsels of chastity and obedience to their full extent, and would live the spirit of Christian pov-



**Bishop Jean-Paul Gaston de Pins**  
(Lyon Municipal Library, Coste, 133326)

erty.” One important change happened in August 1833, when the council proposed to merge the society of catechists, which had been approved from the civil point of view, but whose diocesan status was fuzzy, with the Marist Brothers of Fr. Champagnat. Up to then, the Marist Brothers had failed to obtain the approval of the government, but had received canonical approval. The proposed merger was not acceptable to the founders. However, Fr. Querbes, who should have been the superior of the group, prepared statutes that took the two groups into account– the brothers and the catechists.

The merger did not happen, but the regulations concerning religious were not removed from the statutes of the catechists, and, on December 11, 1833, Bishop de Pins approved the final draft of which Article 7 stated: “the Society of Catechists, being at one and the same time a pious association and a religious congregation, has two classes, the first is the class of brothers, the second is called the class of confreres. They differ according to the extent of their commitments and the very nature of their special choices.” So the pastor of Vourles became then, the superior of a diocesan religious congregation and the director of a pious confraternity.

But what was clear on paper was much less certain in practice. For the Bishop’s Council, the society of Catechists ought to have been formed mostly of religious; for Fr. Querbes, it should be mainly made up of laymen. Since some of the laymen that began to be accepted were not examples of perfect conduct, the Council threatened to intervene on a minor point (the habit). The pastor assured that all of them would be totally obedient: “I protest to you in advance our obedience in the name of the Society. We have three houses and a debt of thirty thousand francs. Our acquisitions were only made after the request of some members of the Bishop’s Council. I want to state the devotion of a large number of brothers and confreres. The Bishop could throw us down to the ground at the flick of a pen. We would stand up again, put our sacks on our backs, and we would go, guided by Providence, and certainly find new hardships”.

Despite his protests, the pastor remained no less desirous to secure the future, especially the future of what had been the first project of the association: “Among the criticisms of the nascent society, the most popular was an objection to the wearing of the cassock, the habit chosen for the perpetually professed Clerics of Saint Viator. Consequently, the Council of the Archbishop invited the Director of the Society to adopt another uniform. The request was made by Fr. Cattet. It was from this point that the founder of the Clerics of Saint Viator resolved to request from the Holy Father the approval of the statutes of the Society so that they might be safe from any change.”



***The Rosary for Temporary Vows  
The Ring for Perpetual Vows  
The Cross for Superiors***

## The Roman Surprise

In January and February 1838, while he was the leader of a little more than 20 members, Fr. Querbes prepared the appeal to Rome. In this way, he wanted to secure the future of the society, maintain its unity during its future expansion, ask Rome to approve the lay branch, and obtain final approval of the statutes and not a simple decree of praise. But the third objective concerning the lay catechists would not come to fruition.

In May 1838, he left for Rome with two versions of the statutes: the one envisioned by Bishop de Pins, the rules of a religious congregation; the other adding a chapter on the lay catechists – that is to say a branch which was supposed to be the pious association of lay men. He left with a letter of recommendation from the administrator, from Pauline Jaricot, from the Superior General of the Jesuits and from the president of the influential central council of the Propagation of the Faith. In Rome he was backed by Father Roothaan, Superior General of the Jesuits, and his assistants Fr. Rozaven and Fr. Villefort.

The stay was an opportunity to once again revise the text of the statutes and make some points clearer, to write useful commentaries on certain points, to be received by Pope Gregory XVI twice, to strengthen the Roman fiber in the pastor of Vourles, even though it was already very solid in him.

In fact, it was the text envisioned by Bishop de Pins on which they worked, despite the wishes of the pastor to go further: “The regular society is made up of celibate associates; it was their statutes that were submitted for approval to the Holy See. The other class of secular confreres and pious catechists, who might be married, did not exist then. But the civil government had recognized their right to be led by one person, so how nice it would be to take advantage of that fact!”

After a five month stay in Rome, and despite delays which seemed long to the pastor, but which in fact was very short for this type of business, the Congregation of Bishops and Regular Clergy approved the Association of Saint Viator as a congregation of pontifical right on September 21, 1838. During the audience he was granted by Pope Gregory XVI, Father Querbes, who was already Superior General of a congregation, professed the regular perpetual vows of poverty and obedience before the pope.



**Snuffbox with the Portrait  
of Pope Gregory XVI**

*(Offered to Fr. Querbes by Cardinal  
Odescalchi)*

## The Superior

From this point on, the story of Fr. Louis Querbes and the history of the congregation are for the most part one and the same: its growing pains and the question of structures; its failures and its successes. Those 20 years of hard work and constant worries in many areas also brought well-earned satisfactions.

The whole time that he was Superior, Louis Querbes remained in his post as the pastor of Vourles – and this was a real job, not an honorary one – even though he had the help of an assistant priest. He remained the pastor of the parish and participated in various church meetings for his sought-after talks and as a guest preacher. He was well-known to the families of Vourles, and he was sought out for all types of help.

Leading a young congregation entailed a lot of worries. The novitiate opened in June 1839 and welcomed many candidates with Br. Pierre Liauthaud as the novice master and with the assistance of the Jesuits of Lyon. The congregation relied mainly on gifts collected by a lay-operated office in Lyon, but most of the donations at the time went to the victims of the devastating floods that ravaged the region in November 1840, thus depriving the congregation of resources. The novitiate was interrupted for more than a year.

A second disappointment came from the Diocese of Nevers where a house of formation was opened and some local communities were created. There was hope for growth, but the recruits were not solid, and the schools were barely supported by the clergy, so the hoped-for development did not happen.

Several days after the opening of the novitiate, two Americans arrived in Vourles, sent by Bishop Rosati, Bishop of St. Louis, to be trained in the religious life and to return to the United States with French confreres. The Bishop had sent them first to the Marist Brothers, but Bishop Cholleton, the

### **Louis Querbes**

*Photography of an Old and Lost  
Daguerreotype  
(around 1848-1849, ACSV)*





**The Grave of Fr. Querbes (ACSV)**

Vicar General, sent them instead to the Clerics of Saint Viator. Father Querbes found himself in charge of an unexpected foundation that was created too early. He accepted it. It was not a success: divisions among the religious, the death of Bishop Rosati and the inability of his successor to find a place for the religious conspired toward the rapid failure of the foundation.

One of the main challenges arose in 1843-1844. Two civil authorities, Villemain and Salvandy, threatened to suppress every school directed by the Clerics of Saint Viator except for the academy of Lyon. Several unapproved schools had been opened in “departments” where the Association had no right to do it. The Minister decided very reluctantly to suspend his resistance, on the condition that there would be no further unapproved openings.

To prevent having religious without an assignment, Fr. Querbes accepted in 1844, the request of Bishop Borghi, Bishop of Agra, to send some religious to India to open a boarding school for the sons of colonists and to open an orphanage for the local people. But it ended in failure.

Fortunately, the history of the young congregation was not limited to setbacks. In 1844, the merger of a small congregation, the Brothers of Saint Odilon of Saint Flour, with that of Saint Viator brought in some good members and slow but sure growth in the Massif Central region. In 1847, three religious left for Canada, and very quickly the Canadian branch grew thanks to the support of Bishop Bourget, Bishop of Montreal. In 1851, benefiting from a favorable interpretation of the Falloux Law, the congregation was approved to spread to the whole country of France. An additional merger with the Brothers of Saint John in 1854 led to several openings in the Diocese of Rodez.

The way Louis Querbes managed the congregation sometimes baffled people: correspondence often left unanswered, meetings rarely convened, difficulties with his assistants Br. Liauthaud and Fr. Faure, for a long time putting off writing the commentary of the statutes that the religious strongly required, etc. On the other hand, he was a very busy superior: the parish, visits to the communities from Saône-et-Loire to the Midi, the editing of several manuscripts; all that took up too much of his time, time which was also reduced due to periods of sickness. It is true that he probably had more difficulty functioning as superior of a congregation than as a founder. When founding an association whose statutory director was the pastor of Vourles, Fr. Querbes had never envisioned being the superior for life. It was only slowly that he became Superior General for life of a religious congregation.

In 1853, his first bout with diabetes sidelined him for some time. Other bouts followed until the worst and most serious kept him in bed for several months at the beginning of January 1859, and after a short pause, the illness struck again and he died on September 1, 1859. By then, the congregation had 250 members in four locations (Vourles, Saint Flour, Canada and Rodez).

## A Strong and Rich Figure

Louis Querbes made an impression: tall, with an expressive face, a strong voice which sounded a little rocky; a lively personality; of a simple approach but a little intimidating; kind and obliging. He was well aware that he was a little “petulant”: in his youth, he had been the life-and-soul at parties, even at the seminary. The priests of Saint Genis Laval didn’t fail to give him the opportunity to put his vivacity and also his vast knowledge to good use.

He was a good man. In his correspondence with the superiors of the local communities, he did not hide his concern and desire to help whether it be assisting them face unforeseen events, recommend them to be patient or charitable, and even to be lenient when faced with the faults and failings of their community members. But he also advised them to adopt a strong way of directing combining firmness and tenderness: “Encourage the members of your community both gently and forcefully to be punctual when they have to obey.”

Br. Jean-Pierre Blein wrote that all the witnesses and also the many letters he received highlighted that Fr. Querbes had a really “big, rich, and loving heart”. He knew how to welcome and forgive the sinner – perhaps even a little too willingly for those with a tendency to a more rigorous disposition like Br. Pierre Liauthaud, the novice master. “He never despaired of anyone” wrote Br. Blein who added: “Perhaps his good heart gave him too much confidence in those who were not so worthy, but could one blame him?” Father Francois Favre, without citing an exact quotation, remembered a section of the Gospel: “We have seen his tears of joy in welcoming the lost ones with open arms.... Like a generous father, he did not remember their transgressions, but put the same trust in them as before and remained deeply attached to



### **Vourles, around 1844-1845**

*Engraving by Antoine Duclaux Letterhead (From Left to Right: the Trees of the Comte property, the “Berceau”/Cradle, the Church, the Tower of the Grande Charrière)*

them. On the day of the return of the lost son, there usually was a little party at the local community.”

Fr. Etienne Gonnet wrote that Fr. Querbes placed his intellectual abilities, his acquired knowledge and his interpersonal skills at the service of all. According to a witness, he was always ready to help. As early as his days in Lyon, when he was a parish assistant, but especially in Vourles, many people came to him when they needed advice to help others about multiple cases, either administrative affairs or all sorts of other affairs: to get a job, to get a child into a school, to help arbitrate disputes, and to advise in legal affairs, etc. “What a magistrate he would have been!” said a judge.

As a priest, Louis Querbes took up the cause of priests in difficulty, whether by welcoming them at his home, intervening with their bishops or with a Superior General, or in Rome to secure their regularization. In order to prevent an Italian religious from leaving his order to become a Protestant, he did not hesitate to go to Geneva in the middle of winter to meet him and then to welcome him to Vourles, and he did everything he could to have him welcomed again by his superior general.

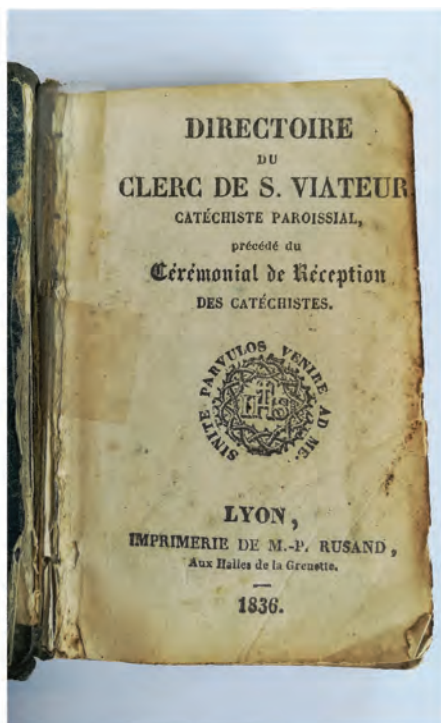
## Adored and Loved by Jesus

Louis Querbes did not write a spiritual book. Since he worked first with lay people, then with lay people who became members of a religious order, and since he was first an active parish priest, he stressed the value of the spiritual life that comes from Baptism. It is the spirituality that every Christian should live out, and which is based on virtues that he regarded as “ordinary”. He wrote to Father Faure: “Let us work for our salvation and our perfection by trying to acquire these virtues that I see as common to everyone, and the rest will be given to us”. Though he considered these virtues as ordinary, they are not ordinary at all, since they are: “faith, zeal (charity), humility, purity, love of work, love of retreat and silence.” For those who professed vows there was also obedience, chastity, and the spirit of poverty.

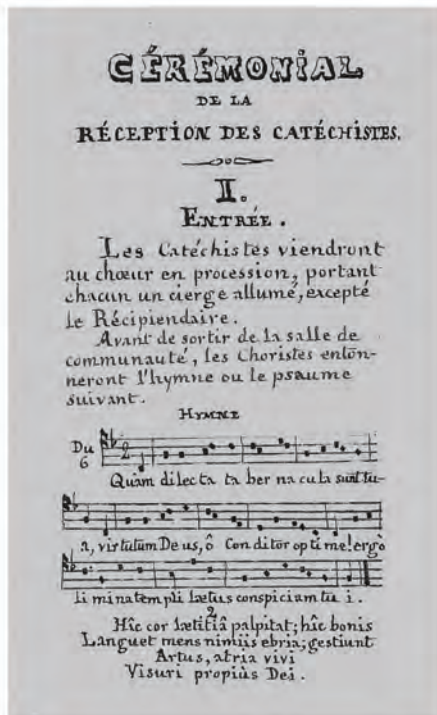
### *There are three important innovations for catechists:*

1. Louis Querbes created a special prayer book (the *Legende*) for his religious which fitted their primary responsibility. They will have to proclaim the Gospel, “so they will read the Bible every day, morning and evening.” They will have to teach the Christian doctrine, so, morning and evening, they will meditate on passages taken from *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*. They are messengers of Christ, so daily they will read short passages from *The Imitation of Christ*. The prayer book was the *Legende* (from Latin *legenda* = what needs to be read). While the 19th Century often favored simple and various devotions, Fr. Querbes wanted something solid.

2. The importance of the Eucharist. He emphasized the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which is the way to meet Christ.



***The Directory of the Cleric of Saint Viator***  
6,5 x 10 cm (1836)



**Ceremonial for the Reception of the Catechists**  
(ACSV)

He recommended something that was not commonplace at the time – “frequent communion”, a practice that would be recommended by Pope Pius X at the beginning of the 20th Century. In the Directory (1830) he recommended to the catechists “to be worthy to receive communion, at least every week with the approval of their confessors.” (#46)

He recommended frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament of at least fifteen minutes daily plus other short visits throughout the day.

He describes in detail the attitude of reverence one should have in church and when acting as a sacristan. He was critical of the “sacrilege of casualness with holy things.”

According to the commentary on the statutes, all the catechists are at the service of the altar and all of them ought to be able to sing during the Office.

3. The feeling of belonging to the Church. The project of the congregation of the Clerics of Saint Viator was ecclesial. Whatever the church authorities decided for Father Querbes, he always accepted their final decision. Besides, he was an ultramontanist (‘beyond the mountains,’ meaning Rome), so he was in favor of the papal infallibility, and that is why he warned the catechists against any loosening of their links with the Church and the Pope.

The motto Adored and loved be Jesus perfectly sums up his spirituality: contemplation and action for the neighbor or as Fr. Pierre Laur, csv, said: “Querbes, a man of adoration; Querbes, a man of active love”. That is exactly what he expected from his catechists – to be Christians who fully lived out their baptism.

The terse motto was probably imagined by the founder, and it seems that it is an expression of the maturation and of the unifying goal that his spiritual experience had reached. By following the Christology of his time, Father Querbes centered his life and defined the mission that he was giving to the catechists: adoration and action, prayer and mission, liturgy and teaching catechism. The invitation to zeal (proclaiming the Gospel) is the result of “feeling the Presence of God.” We are in the best biblical tradition: “You will love the Lord your God and Him alone will you serve”. (Mt 4: 10)

Pierre Laur writes: “From 1830, we often find the motto in his writing. This indicates to us that the relationship between adoration and love emerged in him very early and accompanied the birth of the society. This Christ-centered orientation became gradually more important than the emphasis on the missionary aim from the Gospel, Let the little children come to me. Contemplation became more important than action. Father Querbes dedicated all his life to reaching only one aim: that Jesus be adored and loved.”

“Contemplation happens in meeting God in the children and in the poor, in the events of the real world. It gets deeper by listening to the Word of God. Everything is anchored in faith. Everything is driven by love which leads us to the service of God and our brothers in the mission of the catechists”. (Pierre Laur)



## After Louis Querbes

After the death of Fr Querbes, Fr. Hugues-Marie Favre was elected Superior General. The Congregation of the Clerics of Saint Viator spread at first in France, then to Canada, and then to the United States. In 1903, the fact that the religious were driven out of their schools by the civil authorities had a devastating effect on their communities. Belgium, Spain and Canada welcomed some religious who had to leave France. World War I was another hard test for the French (one-tenth of the religious died on the front line). In the twentieth century, it is in Asian countries (China, Japan and Taiwan), that the congregation founded missions, but later on, it left China and Taiwan. Then, in the second half of the century, it was the turn to the Caribbean nations (Haiti), Latin American nations (Chile, Peru, Colombia, Honduras, Bolivia) and African nations (Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso).

With the revision of the Constitutions required of all congregations by Vatican II, Article 5 of our constitution is finally an answer to the wishes of Fr. Querbes by making clear that “Conforming to an idea dear to our Founder, our Congregation accepts that lay people may become associates and share in its mission, its spiritual and community life”. The commentary states: “The association of non-religious to the Congregation aims to permit associates and religious to improve their human relations, deepen their spiritual lives and their ministerial commitments, strengthen and extend the network of charity that unites them as associates in the mission”.

The General Chapter of 2000, considered that Fr. Louis Querbes’ time had come and that he could be a role model and an inspiration for the Church today, especially for his disciples in the reform and revitalization of the apostolate to which they have been invited. The General Chapter required that the cause of Fr. Louis Querbes be introduced without further delay. The Superior General then asked Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, Archbishop of Lyon, to introduce the cause of Fr. Querbes to the Congregation for the Cause of Saints. In 2006, the cardinal opened a diocesan inquiry and sent to Rome all of the required documentation. The cause is now following its course.



**Gravesite of Fr. Querbes  
in Vourles, France**

## **Br. Robert BONNAFOUS, C.S.V.**

*Province of France*

## Louis Querbes Seen by his Contemporaries

**Br. Jean-Pierre Blein** (1812 – 1885) had entered the Society in 1834. He founded the school of Amplepuis (1838); he helped it grow and led it until his death.

He wrote this about Fr. Querbes: To his intelligence and spirit, Fr. Querbes joined selflessness, a lot of self-denial and certainly a big and rich loving heart. He loved all of his brothers as his own children to the point of becoming ill when he lost even one. That is what many found it difficult to believe. Because of his natural and extremely quick-tempered character, they inferred that he was severe and even indifferent. Those who did not know him might suspect that he was angry when he got carried away. He was more humble than disinterested. He was only the “authority figure” in his community. Everywhere else he behaved like a servant. When he visited his foundations, he was always afraid of causing some embarrassment; one would have thought he was timid. In the presence of priests, he always behaved as if he was on the same level as them and he refused any honors...

He really intended to write all the usual and necessary books for a small school, but he did not have enough time to do it. Time was his only enemy. However, he created an excellent reading board that was a real little masterpiece, a math book with problems and answers and a hymnal book. He could write easily, even in verse. He could easily use perfect Latin, Greek, and Italian. He knew mathematics, especially all parts of arithmetic, commercial law, and the content of all the books from which he taught. He excelled especially in theology, canon law and Church history. When he wanted to relax, he tried to find the solution to a difficult arithmetic or algebra problem, or write a piece of poetry. He loved all areas of learning, and he was happiest when he gave lectures on primary school teaching methods to his confreres. He was overjoyed when, during exams, he found someone who could hold his own with him ... Fr. Querbes' main traits were certainly a great depth of kindness, charity, and compassion...

He never despaired of anyone. Maybe his good heart sometimes allowed him to put too much trust in some who were not worthy, but who could blame him? He was poor, his brothers were poor. He was happy with one coarse habit and a small amount of food. Those who knew him will agree with this testimony: He was never concerned about what he was served for a meal...When he was thinking of creating his institution, Fr. Querbes knew he would have to give up any advancement in the ministry which would have been rightfully due to him thanks to his talents and gifts, and he wholeheartedly accepted tiredness, the worries and the small disappointments that he had to endure. Who would have the courage to count as nothing this self-denial and sacrifice?

39	2	k	2	9 Apr	XXIX	2006	12	Y	2	10 Apr	XXVII	
40	3	xxxj	B	2	14 Mar	IV	11	1	2	8 Apr	XXVII	
41	4	y	b	2	13 Apr	XXIII		1	2	23 Mar	III	
42	5	xxxij	n	2	5 Apr	XX		1	2	12 Apr	XXII	
43	6	xxxij	E	2	25 Apr	XXCV		1	2	4 Apr	XIV	
44	7	y	e	2	9 Apr	XX		1	2	16 Apr	XXIV	
45	8	xxxij	r	2	1 Apr	XI		1	2	8 Apr	XXIX	
46	9	xxxij	H	2	1 Apr	XXSI		1	2	31 Mar	X	
47	10	xxxij	h	2	6 Apr	XXVI		1	2	20 Apr	XXIX	
48	11	xxxij	d	2	23 Mar	VIII	VI		1	2	5 Apr	XX
49	12	xxxij	P	2	17 Apr	XXVII		1	2	27 Mar	VII	
50	13	xxxij	l	2	9 Apr	XX		1	2	16 Apr	XXVI	
51	14	xxxij	C	2	25 Mar	IV		1	2	1 Apr	XI	
52	15	xxxij	c	2	13 Apr	XXIII	XXIII		1	2	21 Apr	XXSII
53	16	xxxij	p	2	5 Apr	XX		1	2	12 Apr	XXSII	
54	17	xxxij	F	2	13 Apr	XXVII		1	2	6 Apr	XIV	
55	18	xxxij	v	2	10 Apr	XX		1	2	17 Apr	XXVII	
56	19	xxxij	s	2	1 Apr	XII	XI		1	2	9 Apr	XIX
57	1	xxxij	N	2	2 Apr	XXSII		1	2	31 Mar	XXIX	
58	2	x	k	2	6 Apr	XXVI		1	2	20 Apr	XXIX	
59	3	xxxij	B	2	29 Mar	VIII		1	2	5 Apr	XXV	
60	4	y	b	2	17 Apr	XXVII	XXVII		1	2	28 Mar	VI
61	5	xxxij	n	2	2 Apr	XI		1	2	14 Apr	XXI	
62	6	xxxij	E	2	22 Apr	XXVII		1	2	21 Apr	XXSII	
63	7	y	e	2	14 Apr	XXIV		1	2	13 Apr	XXVII	
64	8	xxxij	r	2	29 Mar	IX	VIII		1	2	28 Mar	VII
65	9	xxxij	H	2	13 Apr	XXVII		1	2	17 Apr	XXVII	
66	10	xxxij	h	2	10 Apr	XX		1	2	28 Mar	VI	
67	11	xxxij	d	2	26 Mar	V		1	2	5 Apr	XX	
68	12	xxxij	P	2	14 Apr	XXVI	XXVI		1	2	15 Mar	IV
69	13	xxxij	l	2	6 Apr	XXVI		1	2	28 Mar	VI	
70	14	xxxij	C	2	29 Mar	VIII		1	2	5 Apr	XX	
71	15	xxxij	c	2	11 Apr	XXI		1	2	25 Apr	XXSIV	
72	16	xxxij	p	2	2 Apr	XII	XII		1	2	10 Apr	XX
73	17	xxxij	F	2	22 Apr	XXVII		1	2	21 Apr	XXSII	
74	18	xxxij	v	2	14 Apr	XXIV		1	2	13 Apr	XXVII	
75	19	xxxij	s	2	30 Mar	IX		1	2	6 Apr	XXVI	
76	1	xxxij	N	2	13 Apr	XXVII	XXVII		1	2	28 Mar	VI
77	2	x	k	2	10 Apr	XX		1	2	17 Apr	XXVII	
78	3	xxxij	B	2	26 Mar	V		1	2	5 Apr	XX	
79	4	y	b	2	13 Apr	XXVI		1	2	15 Mar	IV	
80	5	xxxij	n	2	2 Apr	XVII	XXVII		1	2	14 Apr	XXI
81	6	xxxij	E	2	19 Apr	XXIX		1	2	5 Apr	XXVII	
82	7	y	e	2	11 Apr	XXI		1	2	16 Apr	XXVII	
83	8	xxxij	r	2	5 Apr	XIII		1	2	10 Apr	XX	
84	9	xxxij	H	2	22 Apr	XXVII	XXVII		1	2	2 Apr	XII

### Ecclesiastical Comput Featuring the Dates of Easter

**Br. Charles Saulin** (1821 – 1912) made his profession in 1841. After teaching in different schools with competence and spirit, he became the treasurer for the Province of Vourles, then the visitor for the three French provinces, and novice master. Then he spent six years in America (1887-1893) mostly in the novitiate in Chicago. Despite having an unattractive physical appearance from a fall during his childhood that left him with a spinal cord curvature, he was a real busy bee.

He wrote this about Fr. Querbes: Rather tall, but thin. When he was about forty, he began to become overweight which caused him to be tired at the end of days. He had a large forehead with receding hair, grey, lively and penetrating eyes, a nose that was a little too big, the same with his lips. He had an oval somewhat tanned face that was a little pockmarked; he had a strong and vibrant voice. Due to his clearly marked features, his face betokened a man of spirit, resolve and perseverance. He was very happy, lively, quick-tempered and absolute. Despite the weakness and imperfections inherited from our poor fallen human nature, Fr. Querbes had precious qualities. Always simply attired, so much so that anyone else could have thought that he was careless, he commanded respect and confidence; it revealed a man of great merit and of high reach. He had a heart of gold, not knowing how to refuse to be of service, nor holding a grudge; generous, an indefatigable worker with the zeal and unselfishness of a Vincent de Paul; an energetic will and a courage that nothing could get down. He had a steady demeanor in bad times and in good; he was literate and also pious and modest; and had boundless trust in Providence. His favorite saying was: “God will provide”. It was quite easy to approach him as he was, like the Apostle, very close to all; he possessed all the qualities making him a man always ready to do good. One could not know him without holding him in high esteem and loving him. As a child he was extremely mischievous, loving to play tricks; later in life he was always pleased to be able to play a trick on his colleagues and confreres. He always had a quick reply with anyone who wanted to joke with him. Yet, modesty prevented him from being the first to do it, and he never took the lead in a conversation. But as his confreres knew him to be full of spirit, they urged Fr. Querbes to start a conversation, thinking that he would be the only one keeping the conversation going and on.

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### **Credits**

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**Fr. Louis Querbes**  
(Lithography by Gaillard – ACSV)