

## Charles-Hector Deslauriers (1898-1979) Founding parish priest of Mont-Tremblant

On Sunday, August 11, 1928, in the little chapel in the village of Lac-Mercier where he had just celebrated mass, the new parish priest of the *Sacré-Cœur-de-Jésus* mission addressed his flock. Charles-Hector Deslauriers thanked his parishioners for their warm welcome: "I make a commitment," said the young priest, "to promote the spiritual well-being of your souls, without neglecting the material progress of the whole parish."



In June 1930, Mgr Eugène Limoges, bishop of Mont-Laurier, blessed the new church of Mont-Tremblant. Built by local contractor Euclide Dubois, it replaced the original modest chapel (at the left of the church in the photo).

Source: SOPABIC, photographer unknown.

brainchild of an American, Joseph Bondurant Ryan, had been stopped because of an administrative muddle involving provincial authorities. At the end of a telephone marathon with the members of the Maurice Duplessis government, he had succeeded in straightening things out, and Mont Tremblant Lodge opened in February 1939. Having gained the confidence of Joe Ryan, Father Deslauriers subsequently mediated between the staff of Mont Tremblant Lodge—who were largely villagers—and the business owner.

It was not an empty promise. For the next 50 years, in addition to his religious activities, Curé Deslauriers carried out a body of work that would influence the shared history and individual paths of many Mont-Tremblant citizens. This churchman was not only a spiritual guide but a man of action who brought people together and was aware of the economic, social and environmental issues facing his parishioners.

From his very first winters in Mont-Tremblant, Charles-Hector Deslauriers encouraged young people to ski, created a local club and built a ski jump ramp. In October 1938, he learned that construction to create a ski resort at Mont Tremblant, the



In addition to having a big vegetable garden, from which he sold produce at a minimal cost, Father Deslauriers grew flowers and vegetables from seed in a greenhouse in which he also taught horticulture.

Source: Société d'histoire Chute aux Iroquois, photographer unknown



Perfectly bilingual, Charles-Hector Deslauriers established a close relationship with the owners of Mont Tremblant Lodge. We see him here in September 1960 on the hotel's new golf course, accompanied by Hugh Reed and Mary Ryan, who managed the company after the death of her husband in 1950.

Source: Société d'histoire Chute aux Iroquois, Jan Brunner, photographer.

up their land, and of planting flowers and trees. In 1960, with the support of the International Paper Company, he created the Association de la vallée de la Rouge (Rouge River Valley Association), dedicated to reforestation of the region. Ten years later, it was estimated that, thanks to the Association, close to one million trees were being planted annually in the 37 member municipalities. This commitment won him an award from the Ordre du mérite forestier as well as the national award "L'homme et les ressources naturelles" (Man and Resources), which Natural was bestowed jointly with the Association.

The name Charles-Hector Deslauriers is inextricably linked with that of Mont-Tremblant. From the wooden church to the ski trails, and

Convinced that tourism was the keystone of the local economy and that the people of Lac-Mercier should direct their own destiny, he succeeded in having Québec create, in June 1940, the municipality of Mont-Tremblant, whose borders were identical to those of the parish.

An ecologist before the term was even invented, Charles-Hector Deslauriers fought for the protection of the landscape and the environment. In 1942, he created the Club 4-H de Mont-Tremblant, which encouraged rural young people to preserve natural resources, particularly the forest. He was very active in the movement, becoming the provincial moral advisor in 1952. He founded and led the Société d'horticulture de Mont-Tremblant and, from his pulpit on Sunday, reminded his parishioners of importance of making their properties more attractive, of cleaning



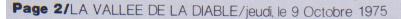
Curé Deslauriers was well known in forest industry and reforestation circles. Here he gives a speech at the annual conference of the 4-H Clubs.

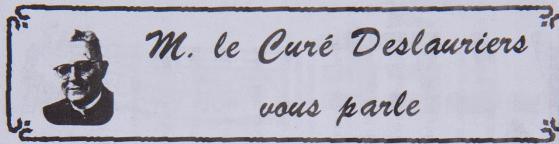
Source: Société d'histoire Chute aux Iroquois, date unknown, Gérard A. Laferrière, photographer.



from the pine plantations that dot the territory to the memories of the villagers, there are numerous testimonials that speak to the work of this most unusual parish priest who was as comfortable with the powerful as with the homeless, and who planted trees and prayed for snow.

Research and writing: Danielle Soucy





## LE CELIBAT VS LE MARIAGE

-De nos jours, c'est devenu de mode, pour quelques "Jos -connait-tout" qui pérorent à la télévision ou l'écrivent dans certains journaux, quand ils sont à court de nouvelles sensationnelles, de remettre en question le célibat des prêtres et des religieux, pour le plaisir de faire choc! S'ils se donnaient la peine de consulter saint Paul pour se mieux renseigner sur un sujet qu'ils ignorent, ils apprendraient de lui ce que pense le Seigneur lui-même sur le célibat consacré: "ceux et celles qui ne sont pas mariés, mais se consacrent totalement au Seigneur, dit-il, sont à la fois plus libres pour servir Dieu et pour se dévouer à leurs frères. Ils ne sont pas partagés, comme les gens mariés , entre la poursuite des intérêts du Seigneur et la préoccupation de leurs affaires matérielles."

-Saint Paul ne méprise pas pour autant la vie conjugale. Il dit lui-même que "le mariage est un grand mystère dans le Christ et dans l'Eglise". La vérité est qu'il existe deux états de vie parallèles, qui témoignent tous deux à leur manière; le mariage témoigne plutôt de l'amour INDIVIDUEL du Seigneur pour chaque homme, tandis que la vie consacrée témoigne plutôt de l'amour UNIVERSEL pour l'humanité. Il n'est donc pas important, du point de vue des personnes, de faire des comparaisons exaltantes pour les uns, odieuses pour les autres!

-Les consacrés, comme moi et comme tous ces innombrables religieux et religieuses qui persistent dans la fidélité à leur engagement, ne méprisent pas pour autant les gens mariés. J'ai eu moi-même pour parents des "gens mariés" qui ont été pour moi des modèles de vie chrétienne. Mais, je réclame, tout de même le droit de suivre mon propre appel au service de Dieu et je me refuse à ce que le premier venu remette en question la valeur de mon état de vie. Comme tous mes confrères dans le sacerdoce ou la vie religieuse, je me réclame une place au soleil, et je n'exige rien d'autre que me soit permis de suivre mon état de vie et d'y servir, comme j'ai librement accepté de le faire.

-L'important n'est pas de comparer les états, mais de bien vivre là ou le Seigneur nous a embauchés. Ce qui compte, c'est bien plus de s'interroger sur sa propre raçon de le servir que de remettre impudemment en question l'orientation des autres. Les consacrés ne peuvent admettre ni laisser dire impunément que le fait d'être religieux ou religieuse, ou d'être engagé dans le sacerdoce, les rend inaptes à remplir des tâches humaines.

-Ne serait-il pas plus honnête, et plus urgent, de demander plutôt au Seigneur de continuer quand même à prodiguer à notre pays et aux pays de missions des âmes "données" à son service: la moisson sera encore si grandel...de lui demander, aussi, plus de compréhension réciproque, plus de respect pour la vocation des autres, surtout plus de générosité, plus de fidélité à vivre concrètement, quotidiennement, ce témoignage que le Christ est en droit d'attendre de ceux qui se disent encore chrétiens?

Charles-Hector Deslauriers, prêtre Curé de Mont-Tremblant.

In the middle of the 1970s, when religious practice was in free fall, Curé Deslauriers wrote a weekly column in a local newspaper. Here he expresses himself on the subject of clerical celibacy.

Source: Société d'histoire Chute aux Iroquois, La vallée de la Diable, October 9, 1975.