In memoriam Brother Vincent de Paul Rabemahafaly (1933-2025)

On 27 September 2025, at the age of 92, **Brother Vincent de Paul Rabemahafaly** passed away. He had been General Councillor of the Institute for 17 years, during the time when Brother José Pablo Basterrechea (1976-1986) was Superior General and during the first term of Brother John Johnston as Superior General (1986-1993).

Brother Vincent belonged to the District of Madagascar. He was born on 26 March 1933 in Ambositra, in the central region of Madagascar. In 1951, at the age of 18, he entered the Novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Soavimbohoaka and took his first vows in 1952. Later, in 1958, after completing his formation at the Scholasticate and teaching at several Lasallian institutions, such as the *École Frère Raphaël Rafiringa* and the *Juvenat Notre-Dame de Lourdes,* he made his perpetual vows.

Between 1961 and 1965, he continued his academic studies at the Jesus Magister Institute in Rome, and from 1966 onwards he was entrusted with various responsibilities in his District, first as deputy headmaster and headmaster of *the Collège Stella-Maris* in Toamasina, and then as Visitor between 1968 and 1973.

Pioneering leadership

In 1973, Brother Vincent moved to the Generalate in Rome to take up the position of deputy director of the International Lasallian Centre (CIL) until his appointment as General Councillor for the Lasallian Region of Africa-Madagascar (RELAF) in 1976, a responsibility he took for two terms until 1993, when he returned to the District of Madagascar to take up a new term as Visitor (1993-1996).

Widely recognised for his intense pioneering work in the establishment of RELAF, Brother Vincent also rendered various services to the Church in his country, serving as Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Madagascar for several years.

Since 2019, he had been residing at the *Communauté de Saint Joseph Maison de*

Retraite. “My last meeting with Brother Vincent dates back to 8 August 2025, when I visited him in his community in Ambohimangakely”, says Brother Anatole Diretenadji, General Councillor. “Although he was in a wheelchair, he was in good spirits and participated fully in our conversation. His joy was evident, especially when I conveyed the greetings of the Superior General and the General Council”.

Upon his departure to the Father’s house, Brother Anatole gives thanks to God for his life “dedicated to the faith and to the Lasallian Educational Mission, lived with constant joy and exemplary humility. Brother Vincent was a true model of fidelity for all of us, and his commitment and devotion to his vocation have illuminated the path of many Brothers”. “May his legacy of love, service and faith continue to inspire us all to live our commitments with the same enthusiasm and kindness”, adds the General Councillor of RELAF.

“An icon for our Institute”

For his part, Brother Julien Ratsimbazafy, Visitor of the District of Madagascar, remembers him with affection and gratitude: “Brother Vincent was a religious who had his place in the Church, in the Congregation and in his family. He always maintained communion and fraternity; he was always ready to help those in need”. “Not only was he an exemplary Brother in his way of being”, adds Brother Julien, “but he was also an icon for our Institute”. He was no stranger to a commitment to integral ecology, as “he was distinguished by his love of planting trees, thus responding to the ecological question”.

Brother Urbain Andrinirina, Secretary of RELAF, who also belongs to the District of Madagascar, remembers Brother Vincent with deep appreciation and admiration: “In 2017, I had the good fortune to work alongside him at the Sanctuary of Blessed Rafiringa in Soavimbahoaka (Antananarivo). We had interesting anecdotes to share and deep conversations about our vocation as educators and lay religious in the Catholic Church”. Since then, Brother Urbain continues, “I have always remembered his great intelligence, his humility and his serenity. His dedication as a Brother has convinced me that it is possible to achieve great things in a beautiful and quiet way”, he adds, acknowledging that “he is a true hero for today’s new generation and is the person who inspired me to become a De La Salle Brother”.

“I can bear witness”, Brother Urbain asserts, “that Brother Vincent knew how to combine our Malagasy traditions and the message of the Gospel. He knew how to

use his sharp wit and his ability to speak, I believe, more than five languages, to share his wisdom and reflections. His example encouraged me to continue my intellectual adventure in literature, languages and culture".

His last days

Recalling his last emotive encounter with Brother Vincent Vincent in November 2024, when the Standing Committee of Young Brothers visited the residence of elderly Brothers in Ambohimangakely, Brother Urbain comments that, although "he could not articulate his words well, his agile mind remained the same, and we all listened attentively to his interesting stories as General Councillor of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools". "I remember that his body was weakened, but his mind was still that of a true intellectual: wise, prudent, calm and attentive".

Brother Urbain Andrinirina trusts in his intercession and that of the Blessed Brothers Scubilion and Rafiringa for "our beloved country, Madagascar, which is going through a difficult period, both politically and socially". Furthermore, he considers that "it is very significant that the Catholic Church commemorates, on the same day as Brother Vincent's death, the entry into heaven of its patron saint, a true apostle of charity, Saint Vincent de Paul, and that our Institute also celebrates the feast of our Blessed Brother Scubilion, who made the voice of the slaves on the island of La Réunion heard".

"His death has left a great feeling of emptiness. May he rest in peace in the Lord", concludes Brother Julien Ratsimbazafy, Visitor of the District of Madagascar.