I remember a beautiful experience of God in Isangi, in the in DRC, at night, when the electricity was turned off. Over my head: the dark sky with millions of twinkling stars; below, in the field, hundreds of fire-flies blinking their little lamps off and on. I felt that I was with Abraham with his flocks at night, under the same stars. In that beautiful moment, Abraham came to believe in one true God. The first human being we know of who came to faith in One God. I was struck both by the grandeur and majesty of God, as well as the intimacy and friendship of the Triune God.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Blessed Trinity and 200 years of the life and mission of the great tree of Holy Family, this mystery of God, both awesome and intimate, touches us very deeply. These two celebrations come together and bring us before the God of love, of life and communion.

The Scriptures today do not have the word, "Trinity", but speak of the One who is revealed as a communion of love. The reading from Exodus proclaims God as merciful and gracious, rich in kindness and fidelity, who desires to be close to the people. Moses invites God to come along in our company, to live in their midst, protecting them and leading them to fullness of life. He asks God to receive us as his own! Paul celebrates God as a communion of love and peace. He tells the community that all who follow Jesus, are to reflect in their lives this God of peace, making amends, living in peace with one another encouraging each other and agreeing with one another. In the Gospel we have just heard, Jesus speaks of a God of unconditional love, whose love is eloquently shown in that, while we were still sinners, the Father offered his Son for the life of the world. God wants us to have abundant life!

Le bon Père, Père Noailles, experienced God's unconditional love, and his response was to give himself entirely to God, his only source of happiness, who entrusted him with a mission. His devotion to the Holy Family helped him grow in love for the Holy Trinity. "He often contemplated the Holy Family whom he referred to as 'the lovely image of the Trinity' and in his intimacy with Jesus, Mary and Joseph", he sketched out a spiritual path for a great family to be witnesses to this God of love. Three dimensions, among many others flow from this relationship: closeness (familiarity, intimacy), holiness and communion.

CLOSENESS (intimacy, familiarity)

His friendship with the Trinity, seen through the love and simplicity of the Holy Family of Nazareth, brought him the experience of a God who is love and very close to his people. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, le bon Père longed for a Church that revealed a family face, witnessing to the closeness and tenderness of God. He was inspired by the communion, simplicity and joy of the community of the First Christians. Don't we think of Pope Francis' message to us today, to go out, to be present among the wounded and suffering and to show tenderness, love and mercy? The Holy Family Sisters and your Associates are witnessing this throughout the world through your lives and ministries.

HOLINESS

Another consequence of his friendship with the Trinity, seen through the love and simplicity of the Holy Family of Nazareth, brought him a deep awareness of the mystery of the indwelling of God communicated in the sacrament of Baptism. His conviction that all the baptized are called to holiness, anticipated Vatican II. The good Father envisioned a great tree with many strong branches. This represented a truly inter-vocational Family with 5 vocations, each member living the diversity and beauty of the charism in a variety of ways: apostolic and contemplative sisters, Consecrated Seculars, Lay Associates and Priest Associates and friends. I think of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, calling us to live a "practical holiness" in our everyday lives! You have been inspired to do this since the time of le bon Père, with joy and simplicity!

COMMUNION

The encounter with the Triune God and the Holy Family, also led le bon Père to live the spiritual legacy of communion, exemplified in the Holy Trinity and in the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph at Nazareth. Solidarity with and among all peoples, consciousness of the poor, the vulnerable and those marginalized in society, especially to women, have been at the core of your lives, as you read the signs of the times and respond to them. In creative fidelity to the Holy Family charism, this spirit of communion embraces the depth and beauty of connectedness of the whole universe and calls you to experience intimate union with Creation, respect it and caring for it with tenderness. Again, you anticipate Pope Francis' call to care for our common home and to care for the poor.

We celebrate your creative faithfulness to the vision of Père Pierre-Bienvenu, witnessing in your lives, the closeness, holiness and communion of the Holy Family and giving thanks for your missionary dedication around the world.

I borrow Paul's words: "My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in… to take in the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, filled with the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14).

Happy anniversary!

Louis Lougen, OMI
June 6, 2020