



## ***My experience with Father Palau***

Christophe Bahizire  
MILPA Bukavu, R.D.del Congo

For more than two years, I was stuck, sometimes on the beds of the general hospital of Bukavu and FOMULAC Katana, other times on a chair at home, unable to move. No doctor had been able to diagnose my illness. I had a glimmer of hope when I requested and obtained the help of Reverend Father Jean-Pierre Mulwayi, a Discalced Carmelite. He introduced me to Carmelite prayer and helped me to understand the meaning of prayer; the oxygen of the soul.

During my convalescence, I made contact with Father Palau, via my children who were following lessons on Father Palau and the Teresian Carmelite Missionary Sisters of Bukavu. They talked to me about Palau, but I didn't understand anything at first since I had never heard of Palau, neither in secular literature, nor in Christian literature.

I will discover him through his writings: My Relations, The Catechism of the Virtues and The Letters. His way of life blew me away. I was touched by his ability to resist evil, to transcend humiliations and threats, his courage to preach the good news against all odds and his desire to "re-Christianize" Spain.

His work was for me like leaven in a dough. The testimonies that I receive from those around me reveal to me that virtues are buried in me and my contact with Father Palau has helped me to unearth some of them:

- The love of my profession. I already had an aversion to teaching because the pay is poor. This love helps me pay special attention to weak students. In almost all my scientific communications, there is always a spontaneous gospel message. Many formation houses call on me to supervise young people. I understood that my profession is my field of apostolate.
- Compassion for the most vulnerable and commitment to defend the rights of the elderly and abandoned. With modernism, African society has disfigured the image of the African old man: a heritage. A social association in charge of the protection of the elderly came to seek my services to chair its board of directors
- Strength of character. It is very difficult to read the work of Father Palau, without being, consciously or unconsciously transformed. This inner strength helps me to cushion the trials of life. These trials now appear as an unrecognized aid for my purification. As commonly said, no Easter without Good Friday.
- The exhortation. I have noticed that over the past few years, many people in difficulty have come to see me for advice. After exchange, some find the smile.

In short, my meeting with Father Palau changed my way of life in family and in society.