

Biographical profile  
**Father André Prévot, scj**  
(1840 – 1913)



*"Love knows no measure"*



Devotion to the Sacred Heart and the spirit of reparation are characteristic features of the current of victim spirituality in the 19th century. Father Leo André Prévot of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the still little-known representatives of this spirituality. The third Theological Consultor of the *Positio super introductione causae* wrote: "Prévot's ideal was to be a voluntary victim, consecrated to the love of the Sacred Heart and to reparation. Now, according to the testimony of the witnesses and the documentary evidence, it can be said that the Servant of God fully realised this ideal of his". The first Theological Consultor the writings also wrote: "The Servant of God André Prévot was an exceptional soul, who always lived in prayer, in hiddenness, in the daily acceptance of his physical and moral sufferings, all bent on the ideal of immolation".

The Servant of God Leo Prévot (in religious life, Father André) was born on November 9th, 1840 in Le Teil (Ardèche, diocese of Viviers in southern France), into a family of merchants of solid Christian faith. He was baptised on November 10th. He made his First Communion on March 17, 1850 and received his Confirmation on April 1 of the same year.

Attracted by his vocation to the priesthood, he entered the minor seminary in Aubenas at the age of twelve, directed by the Basilian Fathers, showing signs of a rich personality and a lively spiritual fervour. He went on to the major seminary in Viviers, where he met, as professor and then as superior, the Sulpician Father Emilio Roux, who was to have a decisive influence on his future orientation, because of the relations that Father Roux was to develop with the foundress of the Victim Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Mother Veronica Lioger.

During his theology course, he felt a religious vocation and entered the Jesuit novitiate in Aix-en-Provence on the 15th of October 1860. But he was looking for a more austere way of life, which would prove to be more and more demanding as he entered his true "way", that of Priest-Victim of the Sacred Heart. His closest friend, the Benedictine Father Lazare Gervais, wrote of him: "He sought his way with great self-denial and blind abandonment to divine Providence". After leaving the Jesuit novitiate, the Servant of God continued his stay in Aix-en-Provence, as tutor to distinguished families, also completing his preparation for the priesthood, in agreement with the bishop, Mgr Chalandon, from whom he would receive priestly ordination on June 10, 1865. He carried out his first ministry in Aix, first as chaplain to the Ursulines and then as parish priest in Port-de-Bouc, at the mouth of the Rhône. His priestly zeal was such that people said they had found in him "a new Curé d'Ars".

On the initiative of his former master, Father Emile Roux, and his friend Abbé Emile Gervais, he met Mother Veronica in Les Avenières (diocese of Grenoble) in June 1876. With the consent of his bishop, Abbé Prévot thus embarked on a path towards religious life. At first, he shared Mother Veronica's attempt to extend her project of "victim spirituality" to a community of "Victim Priests". Then, unable to realise this initiative, in May 1885, he entered the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded by the Servant of God, Father Leo Dehon. On the 22nd of September 1885, he made his religious profession at St Quentin (diocese of Soissons). The following year, because of his great spiritual maturity, he was chosen by the Founder as superior and master of the international novitiate in Sittard (diocese of Roermond), Holland, and then in the other locations where the novitiate was later transferred. He played such an important role in the life and history of the Congregation that the Founder himself did not hesitate, in a letter of March 21, 1923, to declare: "Father Prévot was more the founder of our Congregation than I was". In the twenty-two years of his mission as formator of the first Dehonian generations he had more than 600 novices on whom he left indelible traces by his teaching and the example of his life.

He became the first Provincial Superior of the Western Province of the Institute on January 6,

1909 and was then elected Assistant General on May 7, 1913. Alongside the responsibilities entrusted to him in the Congregation, the Servant of God also developed a broad and appreciated apostolic ministry, through preaching, writing and spiritual direction. His pastoral impetus was accompanied by an extraordinary life of prayer and especially of intense Eucharistic adoration and fervent Marian devotion. He preferred those whom, with fraternal tenderness, he used to call the "*pauvres prêtres*". To them he devoted his most delicate and insistent attention without reserve.

Consumed by his generous donation and also by unspeakable interior sufferings, convincingly accepted and lived in the spirit of his vocation and mission as "Priest Victim of the Sacred Heart" he died at Brugelette (diocese of Tournai), in Belgium, on the 26th of November 1913. Father Dehon immediately wrote a circular letter to his Congregation with the eloquent title: "Our Saint is dead!".

The reputation for holiness, which the Servant of God enjoyed while still alive, became more evident when he died: "All those who knew Father André", wrote Father Dehon in the circular letter announcing the Servant of God's death, "say unanimously: he was a saint. Bishops, priests, religious, community superiors repeat it". And in 1918 Leo Dehon declared: "It is necessary to think about a future process of beatification of Father André". At the death of the Founder, Fr Dehon, in 1925, some problems that



internally engaged his Congregation, together with the upheavals brought about by the two world wars of the first half of the 20th century, prevented the General Postulator of the Institute from organising the promotion of the Cause. It was only in 1946 that the third successor of Fr. Dehon, the Dutch Fr. William Govaart, who had been a novice of the Servant of God at Sittard, was able to entrust one of his religious, Fr. Julien Jacques, with the task of preparing the necessary documentation in view of the Canonical Process to arrive at Canonization.

Thus, in the years 1956-1958, the Informative Process was prepared. Once the *Transunti* had been delivered to the Congregation of Rites and the decree of approval of the writings had been obtained on March 4, 1965, the *Positio super Causae Introductione* was prepared and presented in 1973 to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. On April 13, 1978 the Cause was introduced, so that his reputation for holiness with the title of Servant of God was recognised. After the reform of January 25, 1983, Father Prévot's Cause was resumed according to the new canonical procedure. The new *Positio super vita et virtutibus ac fama santitatis* was handed over to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 1996.

Throughout his religious life, Father André Prévot fully realised the ideal of a soul entirely



consecrated to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus through reparation. He practised mortification in everything; he loved the interior life and continuous prayer and was animated by an ardent zeal for the eternal salvation of souls. His ardent devotion to the Holy Eucharist made him remain for hours at a time motionless at the foot of the Tabernacle, and every night he remained for a long time prostrate on the floor of the church. His union with God was habitual. Total self-denial and great austerity of life harmonised in him with an inexhaustible fund

of charity, patience, gentleness and goodness. On every page of his books, and especially in "Love, Peace and Joy" and "The Year with Mary", exudes his entire humble, serene and trusting spiritual physiognomy.

From the numerous writings one can grasp the key to his whole life: a pure victim ready for God's will – "*Ecce Venio*" - and always with much love and immolation in the service of God and humankind. It is enough to give an example of this to read the page on the measure of charity, his focal goal in life:

From time to time I will tell myself:  
you must not place a limit on your love.  
When self-love tells me:  
defend your rights, I will answer:  
You must not place a limit on your love.  
If laziness says: you need some rest, I will answer:  
You must not place a limit on your love.  
If the wisdom of the world tells me not to forgive  
In order not to lose self-worth, I will answer:  
You must not place a limit on your love.  
If I am embarrassed, tense, tired, I will tell myself:  
Have courage! You must not place a limit on your love.  
Then, on my part, when I will have need of help, counsel,  
correction, consolation, perhaps forgiveness, support  
for the body, for the soul, for myself or my brothers/sisters,  
then I will turn to Jesus and say:  
"Good master, you promised to use the same measure:  
You too must not place a limit on your love". Amen.



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