

# Editorial

GEORGES PHILIAS VANIER, 1888-1967

ON SUNDAY, March 5, one of the finest public servants in Canadian history died in Ottawa. From the beginnings of New France to the present day, few men have commanded the respect or inspired the affection which his fellow-countrymen gave to Georges Philias Vanier. The thousands who assisted at his funeral ceremonies in Ottawa and Quebec and the millions who quietly watched television screens or listened to radio broadcasts were moved by a feeling much deeper than a decent regard for the human symbol of the Canadian State. They were saddened by the loss of a good man, whom even the dullest and the most cynical could hardly fail to recognize as a decent and generous human being, and in whose life the perceptive saw a sign of hope for Canada's future.

To begin with, Georges Vanier stood out as a living embodiment of the unity of purpose which this country so desperately needs. Himself a child of both "Canadas," he believed passionately in the ideal of one Canada; he was not afraid to speak out for one Canada; he spent his life and energies in the service of one Canada. The same generous temper which made him much more than a mere Canadian kept him from becoming less than a Canadian. He was unshakably committed to the proposition that those whom Providence had joined together must learn to dwell together in unity, if they were not to fall short of their true destiny.

But all that would have been easy for sceptics to dismiss if Georges Vanier had not been so unmistakably devoted to truth and goodness. He was patently interested, not in keeping a viceregal roof over his head, but in promoting national unity as a good and joyful thing. His appeals for unity were credible precisely because his whole life was a credible testimony to the ideal of self-forgetful service. As far as any human observer could presume to judge, he was truly dedicated to the virtuous life. He was conspicuously unimpressed by cheap and facile attacks on the traditional virtues of honesty and truthfulness, temperance and purity, marital fidelity and family loyalty. In this age of the huckster, infested by politicians and preachers, professors and propagandists, all busily polishing their tawdry "images," he was content to be known simply as a conscientious man, doing his duty as well as he could. He had altogether too much self-respect to be a respecter of fads and fashions. Regrettably, such self-respect is rare enough for us to be surprised when we encounter it. But happily, most of us are still human enough to be sorry when we lose a good example of it.

As a patriotic citizen and as a man of integrity, Georges Vanier set a high standard for the people whom he was called to serve. But there is a

further lesson to be learned from his life. His sense of public duty and his human self-respect were bound up with his faith in God. In our time it has become fashionable to suppose that orthodox Christian belief is somehow a hindrance to the fulfilment of earthly responsibilities. No doubt the devotees of this secularist fashion will find it unnerving to be confronted with a man who served his fellow-men unstintingly because he believed in the God who made man in his own image. But the hard fact is that Georges Vanier both went to Mass faithfully and did his job tirelessly. Nothing would have surprised him more than the suggestion that God must decrease so that man might increase. He was a good citizen just because he was, first and foremost, a committed Christian layman. We hear many speeches today about the "servant Church." The career of Georges Philias Vanier was a good illustration of the "servant Church" in action. *Requiescat in pace.*

E. R. F.

#### COMING THEOLOGICAL EVENTS IN CANADA

A "Congress and Institute on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church" is to be held on the campus of the University of Toronto from Sunday, August 20, to Friday, August 25, 1967. This event is being sponsored by the Canadian Roman Catholic bishops to mark the Centennial of Confederation. The programme includes both plenary sessions—to be addressed by cardinals Paul-Emile Léger (Montréal), Leo-Joseph Suenens (Malines-Brussels), and Franz König (Vienna), and Archbishop Georges Hakim (St. John of Acre and All Galilee)—and sectional meetings. At the latter, about forty scholars will present papers. The preliminary list includes, among others, Yves Congar, O.P. (Strasbourg), Abraham Heschel (New York), Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P. (Nijmegen), Max Thurian (Taizé), Eric Mascall (London), Albert Outler (Dallas), Jaroslav Pelikan (New Haven), Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P. (Paris), Paul Ricoeur (Paris), Langdon Gilkey (Chicago), Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R. (Rome), Henri de Lubac, S.J. (Lyons), and Karl Rahner, S.J. (Munich). A number of Canadian theologians and philosophers will also appear on the programme. Membership is limited to about 1,800. For further information, write: Congress on the Theology of Renewal; The Pontifical Institute; 59 Queen's Park Crescent East; Toronto 5, Ontario.

The "Contemporary Theology Institute," sponsored annually by Loyola College, Montreal, will hold its fourth session from Monday, June 26, to Friday, June 30, 1967. This year's theme is "New Ways in Theological Ethics." The main speakers are to be John C. Bennett (New York), James M. Gustafson (New Haven), Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R. (Rome), and Robert O. Johann, S.J. (New York). There will be position papers, panel discussions, and general discussions. For further information, write: Contemporary Theology Institute; Loyola College; 7141 Sherbrooke Street West; Montreal 28, Quebec.

#### ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Journal of Theology* will be held at McGill University, Montreal, on Tuesday, May 16, 1967, at 3 p.m. All subscribers and friends are cordially invited to attend.

NORMAN E. WAGNER  
*Secretary*