



communiqué

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LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE NORWEGIAN NOBEL COMMITTEE

The Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, released today the following text of a letter dated February 7, 1986 to the Director of the Norwegian Nobel Committee placing in nomination His Eminence Paul-Émile, Cardinal Léger, for the Nobel Peace Prize:

"Dear Mr. Sverdrup,

I have the honour and privilege, as a member of the Parliament of Canada and of the Government of Canada, to propose to the selection committee for the Nobel Peace Prize the candidacy of His Eminence Paul-Émile, Cardinal Léger.

Cardinal Léger has brought intelligence, zeal and vigour to his priestly vocation wherever his work has taken him. Born in 1904, he was ordained a priest in 1929. He worked in Japan as a parish priest from 1933 to 1939 and taught at the Sulpician Seminary he founded at Fukuoka in 1938. As Rector of the Pontifical Canadian College in Rome (1947-1950), he helped to alleviate the misery and poverty in which the Roman population lived in the post-war years; his appeal to Canadians for money, clothes and food resulted in 4000 cases of food and clothing being delivered to the neediest families in Rome.

After his appointment as Archbishop of Montreal in 1950 he won the affection of a city undergoing rapid social change and he encouraged widespread participation in the projects he founded, Le Foyer de Charité, a refuge for the city's poor and abandoned, and the Hôpital-Charles-Borromée for the chronically ill.

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Cardinal Léger was a member of the Preparatory Commission for the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and won a reputation as a progressive, urging his colleagues to confront the problems of poverty, birth control and the relevance of the Church's teachings for the everyday lives of men and women.

Following a visit to Canadian missions in Africa in 1963, Cardinal Léger founded the Fame Peree Institute for Lepers, which has since distributed aid to some eighty leper colonies in twenty countries in Africa. New dispensaries and facilities for craftsmen have been built and villages equipped with electricity, water and sanitation. Fame Peree raised nearly two million dollars in 1985 for projects throughout the world.

His visit to Africa and his meetings with his African colleagues at Vatican II inspired Cardinal Léger to resign as Archbishop of Montreal in 1967 and begin missionary work in Cameroun. There he founded the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped near Yaoundé which provides medical, therapeutic and educational facilities for young handicapped people.

In 1970, Cardinal Léger founded the organisation called "Cardinal Léger and his Charitable Endeavours" to administer and raise funds for his projects. This organisation now supports more than 150 projects in 32 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, for which it raised over \$5 million between January 1984 and June 1985. It raised a further \$5 million for projects in 12 drought-stricken countries in Africa during the same period.

Upon his return to Canada in 1979, he developed with his brother, the late Jules Léger, the concept of a foundation to support charitable and philanthropic activities to help the poorest among the poor. In 1981 the Canadian Parliament created the Jules & Paul-Émile Léger Foundation by special Act of Parliament; it was hailed in our House of Commons as "as testament to the important work that the Légers have performed and the desire ... to recognize (their) valuable contribution". Today, at age 81, Cardinal Léger continues his many humanitarian activities.

I believe that the life and work of His Eminence Paul-Émile Cardinal Léger is an example of outstanding dedication to the plight of the world's poor and most cruelly afflicted. He has personally given help and hope to thousands and, through his fund raising activities, to millions more.

If not alleviated, the inequality among people and nations which is so flagrant and widespread could become a source of serious instability in the world. The fight against disease, illiteracy and poverty must engage the attention of everyone if the hopes of the underprivileged for a better future are to be realised. Cardinal Léger, by his personal example and his encouragement of others, has contributed to the betterment of his fellow men and women; he has been an ambassador for the ill and poor among the people of more fortunate countries. His work has fostered peace, understanding and fraternity amongst the citizens of the developed and developing worlds.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Clark"

His Eminence Paul-Emile, Cardinal Léger

Born 26 April 1904, at Valleyfield, Quebec.

Educated at the Séminaire de Sainte-Thérèse (Québec), the Grand Séminaire de Montréal and the Institut Catholique de Paris. (Degrees: L.Th., L.D.C.)

- 25 May 1929: Ordained to the priesthood.
- 1931-32: Professor, Séminaire d'Issy-les-Moulineaux (France).
- 1932-33: Assistant master of novices, Séminaire d'Issy-les-Moulineaux.
- 1933-39: Superior, Seminary of Fukuoka (Japan).
- 1940-47: Vicar-General, Diocese of Valleyfield (Québec), and Curate of Valleyfield Cathedral.
- 1947-50: Rector, Pontifical Canadian College, Rome.
- 1950: Archbishop of Montreal.
- 1953: Elevated to the Sacred College of Cardinals.
- 1961: Member of the Central Preparatory Commission for the Second Vatican Council.
- 1962: Member of the Vatican II Commission on Theology.
- 1963: Member of the Vatican II Commission on Canon Law.
- 1967: Member of the Canadian delegation to the Synod of Bishops, Rome.
- Resigned as Archbishop of Montreal, to undertake missionary work in Cameroun.
- 1972: Member of the Council for the Propagation of the Faith, Rome.
- 1979: Returned to Canada.
- Member of the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral of Tourism and Migrants.
- Co-president, Canadian Foundation for Refugees.