

What is a memoir? A memoir is a narrative of events which have marked one's life. If this is the case, then can such a narrative be expressed in poetry? Hence, can poetry be a memoir? As Hamlet said it so well: *Voilà la question!*

The novice master was a man whom my Québécoise mother would label as someone "*qui n'a pas posé les pattes aux mouches*," (someone who did not affix legs to flies). My memoir this afternoon is expressed in poetry. It refers to an event in my life which has marked me forever: namely, my novitiate year in Colebrook, NH, in 1954, with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (the OMI's).

It was both a trial year as well as a year of trials: **a trial year** in the sense that a novitiate year is supposed to initiate one into the religious life of a particular religious order; it was also **a year of trials** in the sense that my sanity almost went awry.); in other words, someone who was not very bright.

The novice master did not like me. He would not allow me to play the piano because I might get too proud in doing so. He named as choir director and organist a novice less competent than I. Again, so that I would not become proud. Then, when I asked the novice master to buy a book (not in the library) that I wanted to read, he responded by asking whether I had read all the books in the library. Only then, would he buy the requested book!

At any rate, here was a time in my life, at the age of 21, when I felt isolated, unrecognized for who I was, fearful, insecure, frail, and with no one to go to except -- according to my Catholic upbringing -- the Virgin Mary.

Here is my memoir, my poem.