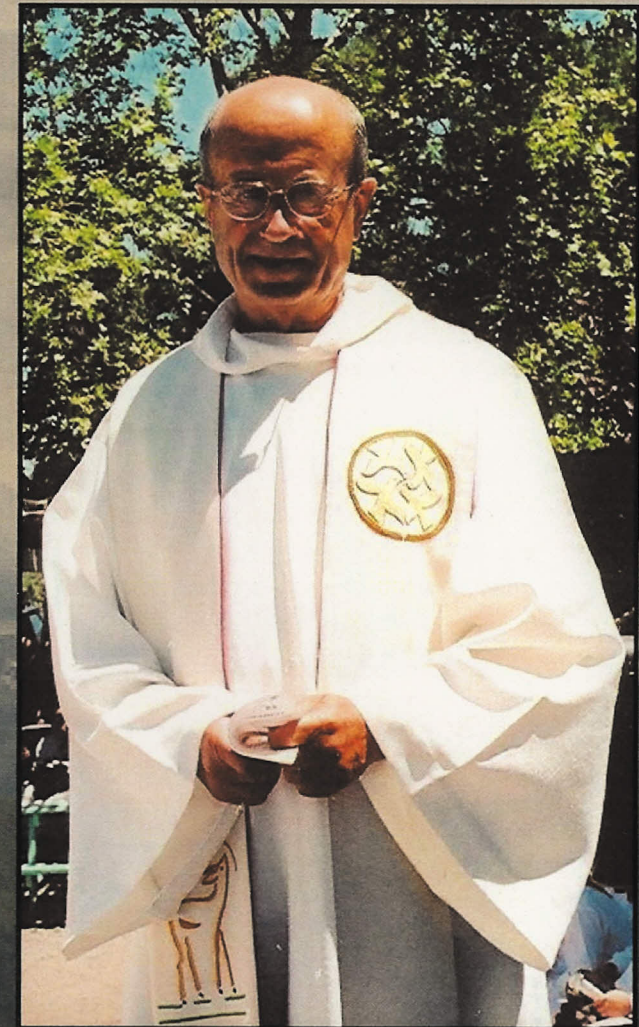


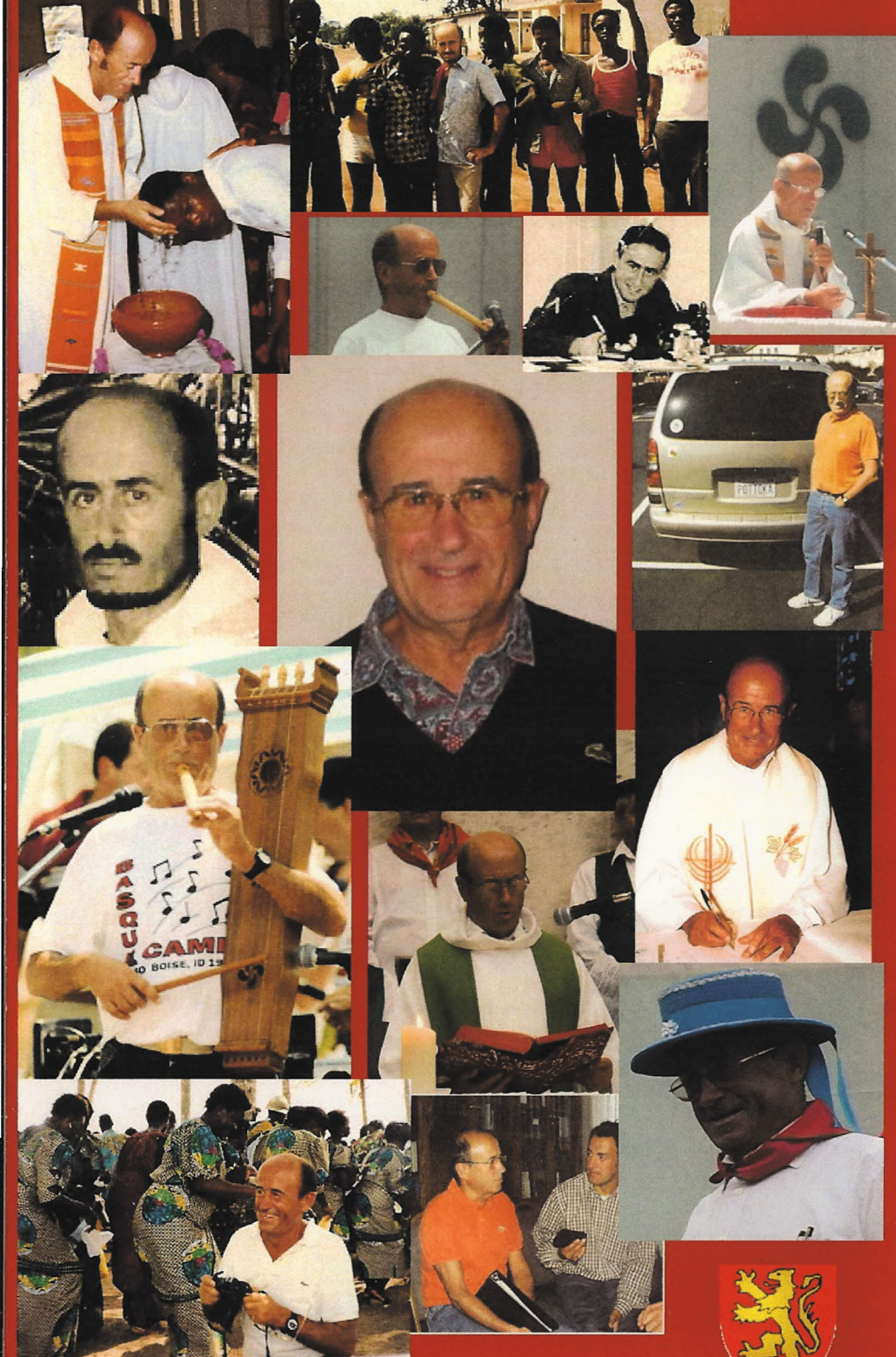
# MARTXEL TILLOUS



1934 - 2009



San Francisco Basque Cultural Center - August 30th, 2009







Martxel Tillous was born on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1934 in Tillousia etxea in the Basque village of Eskiula, located on the eastern border of the Basque province of Xiberoa. His parents, also from Eskiula, were Pierre Tillous (Tillousia etxea) and his mother was Lucie Castillon (Maysounaba etxea). Martxel was the third of thirteen children. As a youngster he learned Basque dance and learned to play the txistu and xirula and performed at village festivals in a dance group called Jeiki. After his studies at Baudonne (just north of Baiona in Tarnos, France) and at the seminary in Lyon, and after three years of military service, where he served France in Morocco and Algeria, Martxel Tillous was ordained a Roman Catholic Priest at St. Mary's Cathedral in Baiona on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1963, and began serving with the Society of African Missions (SMA Fathers).



Aita Tillous spent the next twenty-six years in the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, where he worked as a missionary, converting locals. Aita Tillous learned the local languages of Akye, Aladian and Ebaie and was able to visit his home in the Basque Country about every four years.

In 1990 Aita Tillous regretted that his mission in Africa had ended. Later in the fall of that same year, Aita Tillous was sent to serve the Basque community in Paris and became the first permanent priest at the Pariseko Euskal Etxea, and quickly got involved in the local choirs Gernika and Anaiki and the Basque humanitarian association, Lokarria.

In 1994 Aita Tillous was assigned to serve the Basque community in the Western United States, following the ministry of Aita Jean Elicagaray. In his first three years, Aita Tillous operated out of the vacant house of Jeanne and Faustin Mazeris, who is also a native of Eskiula. Three years later a room became available at the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, where Aita Tillous operated there after, calling his room "Euskal Apezaren Egoitza" (Basque Priest's Residence).



Aita Tillous' U.S. ministry had him traveling the eleven western states, averaging 60,000 miles per year, in his van, that he appropriately named "POTTOKA", where he slept an average of 200 nights a year. Along with accommodating the spiritual needs of the Basque-Americans in their mother tongue of euskara, Aita Tillous was also very involved in the promotion of Basque culture and identity. He directed the San Francisco Basque Choir Elgarrekin, created the Basque-Catholic newsletter, Lokarria, which was distributed to over 5,000 people on a bi-annual basis, was a regular faculty member of NABO's annual Udaleku program (Basque Cultural summer camp) as txistu and song instructor, and assisted the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center at its annual anniversary and summer festivals.

Aita Tillous' extraordinary contributions to the Basque community did not go unnoticed by several institutions. He received lifetime contributions awards from the San Francisco Basque Club, the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, NABO and was inducted into the Society of Basque Studies in America's Basque Hall of Fame. The Basque Government recognized Aita Tillous with a special award at the third World Congress of Basque Communities in Vitoria-Gasteiz on July of 2003. In the fall of 2008, NABO, established the "Aita Martxel Tillous NABO Youth Aid Fund" in recognition of Aita Tillous' lifetime commitment to youth.

In 2007, as Aita Tillous was transitioning into semi-retirement he was diagnosed with cancer and began treatments. While battling this disease in 2008 Aita Tillous demonstrated the resilience that marked his career as a Roman Catholic Priest & missionary and made three trips back to the United States from the Basque Country to honor commitments he had made. He celebrated his last mass in the United States on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, and left us from Kanbo, Lapurdi, on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009.



TILLOUSIA



Bi mila bederatzi, urte ondarrera  
San Franziskon Euskaldun, etxeratu gira  
Martxel zuri pentsatuz, kantu egitera  
Urrundu nahiz gutan, daukagun trixtura

Mundu huntan betiko, nehor ez da bizi  
Horrengatikan Martxel, gaituzu gu utzi  
Guretako zer zinen, orai dugu kusi  
Gauean argizari, egunaz iruzki

Nekadura hartzeko, etzinen su lotsa  
Guzieri emaiten, berdin esperantza  
Ez izana gatikan, haundia gorputza  
Orori helarazten, zinduen bihotza

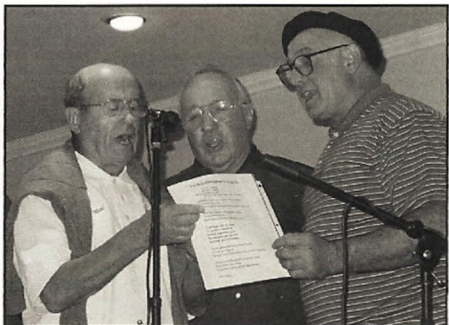
Gutarik urrundurik, zuk sei hilabete  
Hori ezin sinetsiz, amentsetan gaude  
Trixterik urrun beha, oi bainan debalde  
Nola haurrak bakarrik, aitamarik gabe

Beti onartuz gure, irri ta nigarrak  
Trebesatuz desertu, oiha ta elurak  
Guretzat eman tuzu, zintuen indarrak  
Higatu arte azken, hats eta hezurak

Mundu huntan egonik, hor zaude bestean  
Zeruko lorietan, aingeru artean  
Guretzat beha egon, ate sahetsean  
Idekitzeko guri, horrarat heltzean.

Johnny Kurutxet

Translation by Jean Etchamendy



Toward the end of 2009  
We gathered in the club house in San Francisco, to sing in memory of Father Martxel, who passed away, thus trying to find comfort in our sorrow

No one lives forever in this world  
This explains your departure from us Father  
Now we realize how much you meant to all of us. The light of the moon at night and the sunshine during the day

Your long journeys were traveled without hesitation. In order to nourish us with spiritual hope. Even though your physical body was not of great stature. You shared your enormous heart with all of us.

Some six months since you passed away  
So hard to believe! It seems like a dream  
Sadly we look into the distance, but alas all in vain. We remain like children without their parents.

You gracefully listened to our laughter as well as our complaints. Traveling across the vast deserts and snowy mountains. Giving all your strengths to make us happy. Until you ran out of breath and stamina

After having fulfilled your time on earth  
We hope you are now enjoying heavenly glory. Please stay close to the entrance door. So that you can open it when we get there.

Goxoki izan zira, denen gidaria  
Zurekilan günean, botzaren egia  
Eta han hor ikusten, txùlaren erria  
Martxoaren aizeak, hartü dü txoria.

Amerikan direnak, bihotza esküan  
Eüskal giroa düe, lehentarzünean  
Txoria joan zaüe, hegalez aidean  
Ahaidea ützirik, denen bihotzean.

Agur hebentik hantik, gizon maitatüa  
Gazte eta zaharren, ber lagüntzalea  
Guri soegin eta, badüzü kargüa  
Jinkoari hontzeko, Eüskal ahaidea.

Jean Bordaxar

San Franciscotik triste kantuz nahiz hasi  
Zure berria Martxel daute helarazi  
Neure baitan halere ezin dut sinetsi  
Mundutik joaiteko gaituzula utzi

Iparremerikan zuk egin dituzunak  
Gure laguntzen beti gau eta egunak  
Galde hau otoi entzun zeruko Jaun ona  
Ordaintzen (a)hal dazkozu guk zor dazkogunak

Senditzen dituztanak ezin erran elhez  
Anai bat izan zaitut Martxel ainitz urtez  
Begirik hetsi gabe hasten niz nigarrez  
Maite zaitudalakotz gogo ta bihotzez

Johnny Kurutxet



From San Francisco, I start and sing with sadness  
Your news Martxel has reached me  
In my mind though I cannot believe  
That you left us to leave this world

What you have done, you have done so much in the Western US  
To help us always, day and nights  
Lord of Heaven, please listen to this prayer  
Will you repay him what we owe him

I cannot say in words what I feel  
For many years Martxel, I had you as a brother  
Without closing my eyes I am starting to cry  
Because I loved you with mind and heart

You were the guide for us all  
With you we had the true word  
And here and there the smiling xirula  
But the wind of March brought us the bird

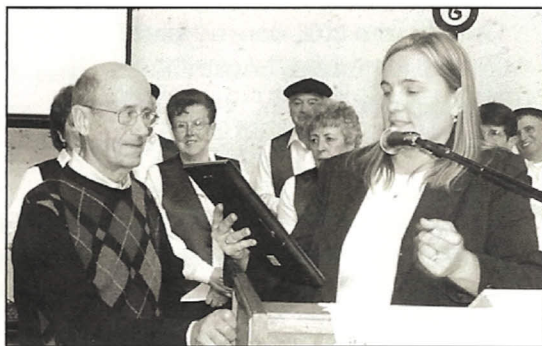
Those who are in America with their hand  
over their heart are worried about the  
Basque spirit. The bird left them in a flash  
Leaving his song in all their hearts

Hello to the man loved here and there  
Supporting the young and old alike  
Look towards us, you have a mission  
To compose for God a Basque melody





Aita Martxel Tillous is starting his 15th year as the Basque Chaplain in the United States. It's hard to find a place to start when talking about him. Not only has Aita Tillous served as our Basque Chaplain, but he is a good friend to many. He is always there when you need him, and always willing to lend a hand.



Aita Tillous is an advocate of Basque language and culture. An avid txistulari, he has taught many young ones to play the txistu. He has taught txistu lessons for many years at Udaleku and has become a mentor to many young Basque children. They look up to him, and see him as a friend. Aita Tillous also directs the Elgarrekin Choir, and we know how great the choir is.

Aita Tillous loves to watch pilota games - he's always there to cheer on the players. Not only has Aita Tillous been a big part of promoting and teaching Basque Culture, but he has also been a big part of the Basque Cultural Center's hospitality. He frequently takes our out of town guests sightseeing, or drives them from one Basque town to another. We can always count on him.

We are not the first to recognize Aita Tillous's contributions to Basque Culture. Some other organizations have recognized him, including, but not limited to: the Bizi Emankorra award given by NABO in 2002; Hall of Fame honoree recognized by the Society of Basque Studies in America in 2002; and an award given to him in Vitoria Gasteiz by the Basque Government in 2003 for his contributions to Basque Culture. The Basque Cultural Center wanted to recognize him for his outstanding service to Basque Culture, so today we are honoring him with the Bizi Emankorra Award.

There is so much more that can be said about Aita Tillous, but I'll stop there, so we can have lunch today.

Aita Tillous, eskerrik asko. Zorionak.

Isabelle Ocafrain Bushman  
February, 17th, 2008

## Asiseko San Frantses-en Otoitza Bake emaila

Jauna, egizu nitarik zure bakearen emaila:

Herra den lekuan ezar dezadan maitasuna;  
laidoa den lekuan ezar dezadan barkamendua;  
berexgoa den lekuan ezar dezadan batasuna;  
gezurra den lekuan ezar dezadan egia;  
duda den lekuan ezar dezadan fedea;  
etsia den lekuan ezar dezadan esperantza;  
ilunpea den lekuan ezar dezadan argia;  
tristura den lekuan ezar dezadan bozkarioa.

Jauna, egizu bila dezadan lehenik  
ez kontsolatua izaitea, baizik kontsolatzea,  
ez konprenditua izaitea, baizik konprenditzea,  
ez maitatua izaitea, baizik maitatzea;

emanez baitugu ukaiten,  
guhaur ahantziz baitugu aurkitzen,  
barkatuz baitugu barkamendu ardiesten,  
hilez baigira betiereko bizirat pizten

### Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi Giver of Peace

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me bring love;  
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon;  
Where there is division, let me bring union;  
Where there are lies, let me bring the truth;  
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith;  
Where there is despair, let me bring hope;  
Where there is darkness, let me bring light;  
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may first seek  
Not to be consoled, but to console,  
Not to be understood, but to understand,  
Not to be loved, but to love:

For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in self-forgetting that we find,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.





San Francisco Larraine Eskiula Parise, luze bidea  
 Luzeago gizonena aldiz bilatuz beti egia  
 Zer ote zuten herri horiek izanik hurrunegia  
 Zerbait azkar xume bihoztoia: Aita Martxelen zubia  
 Tximista bat pottokaz jauntsirik txistu bizian zaigu jin  
 Tillous « Ezki-olara » itzuli hameka lur bira egin  
 Utziz Abidjan eta gu kantan utzirik ere Wyoming  
 Dener emanik ta bakotxari Euskaldun baten bizi min  
 Bizia llabur hiltzea segur ozpina hurtzen ez-tian  
 Artzainak daki arima hazten itzalez nola ekian  
 Biziaren harlaxea duzu iragan argi betean  
 Agur Jauna eta laster arte see you soon zauden tokian

**Doinua: Goizean goizik  
 Xiberotar kantua**

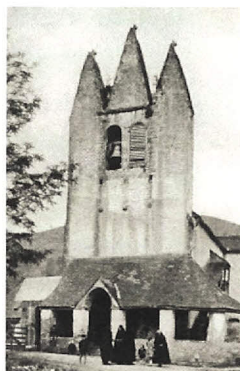
**Mixel Etxekopar  
 (Xiberoako aize epailea)**

San Francisco, Larrau, Eskiula, Paris, the roads are long  
 Even longer are the roads of men who search the truth  
 Who would have these places so far apart?  
 One simple thing strong and full of heart: The bridge built by Aita Tillous

A bolt of lightening in the guise of the pottok came to us  
 Tillous has returned to the "woods of the lime tree" \*  
 Leaving Abidjan and us, singing, leaving also Wyoming  
 He gave to everyone the love of a Basque for life

Life is short, death is at the rendezvous, vinegar melts in honey  
 The shepherd knows how to grow the spirit in the shade as well as in the sun  
 You have crossed the stair case of life, in full light  
 Goodbye sir and see you soon where you are henceforth

\* the name Tillous is derived from the French word "Tilleul" (lime tree), which is also the root (in euskara) for the name of the village Eskiula.



Vitoria-Gasteiz 2009ko urtarrilaren 14an

Aita Tillous maitea,

Urte Berri honen hasieran jakin dugu erretiroa hartuta zaudela Capbretonen, eta zure gaixotasuna aurrera doala, ezinbestean.

Horrek esan nahi du zure "Pottoka" geldik dagoela, eta ez dabilela egunotan Estatu Batuetako Mendebaldeko bazter guztiak zeharkatzen, familia euskaldun fededun guztien "Lokarri".

Euskal Herrirantz (edo hurbil, behintzat, Capbretonera) itzulia zara Afrikan eta Ameriketara zure bizitza besteei laguntzen eman ondoren. Bi ziklo diferente, munduko bazter pobreenetatik aberatsenera joan bait zinen, baina bietan lan eskerga egitera.

Nire miresmenik zintzoena azaldu nahi nizuke izan duzun ibilbide aberatsagatik eta baita ere gaixotasunaren aurrean azaldu duzun adorea-gatik. Herrigintzan eta euskalgintzan apaliki ibili zara eta pozik egoteko moduan zaude atzera begirakoa egiten duzunean.

Horregatik, erein duzun hazia fruituak ematen ikusten dugunean konturatzen gara egin-dako lan mardulaz. Ameriketara bada euskaltasunik pixka baterako!

Zorionak beraz eta eskerrik asko, eta berriz elkar ikusi arte, Jainkoak esan beza noiz eta non!

Juan Jose Ibarretxe – Lehendakaria



Vitoria-Gasteiz, January 14th, 2009

Dear Aita Tillous,

At the beginning of this new year, we have learned that you have retired at Capbreton and that your illness irremediably advances.

This means that your "Pottoka" is stopped and no longer travels the Western United States, linking all the Basque Christian families.

You've returned to the Basque Country (or at least very close at Capbreton) after having spent your life in Africa and America helping others. Two different cycles, where you worked in the poorest and the richest countries of the world, and in both cases achieved extraordinary results.

I would like to express my most sincere admiration for your dedication and for the courage you have demonstrated facing your illness.

You have humbly worked for mankind and for your people and it is with great satisfaction that you can look back.

Because we can see the fruit being born of the seeds you have planted, we realize the richness of the work you have done. The Basque spirit will continue to exist again in America.

You have my congratulations and my thanks and good bye, until and where God would like!

Juan Jose Ibarretxe  
 President - The Basque Government



## Aita Tillous- eri bertsuak Doinua; Xorteko laguneri

Bertsuak emain ditut Aita Tillous zuri  
Pentsatuz guretako egin duzun lanari  
Laguntza eman duzu hemen euskaldunari  
Gero pentsatu duzu eskual herriari  
Oroitzapen goxo bat utziz guzieri

California; Oregon; Washington gorago  
Arizona; Nevada ta gero Idaho  
Montana ta Wyoming; Utha; Colorado  
Ahantzi gabe ere bada New Mexico  
Estado horietan euskalduna frango

Zuk baino hobeki ez daki jakintsunak  
Nun eta zer egiten duen Euskaldunak  
Xoko guzietan badira fededunak  
Heietarat heltzeko behar gau egunak  
Kuraia eman dauzu zeruko jaun onak

Desertu handietan zu zira izana  
Denetan maite dute apez euskalduna  
Zu zira elizako egiazko artzaina  
Etxen; otoan ala lurrean etzana  
Uros jaunaren hitza hedatzen duena

Ameriketan dira eremu handiak  
Orai apezak bezain bakan dira herriak  
Jateko pausatzeke nun dira tokiak  
Loaren kasatzeko badira iturriak  
Heietan freskatuz zuk garraitu guziak

Urrunetik etxerat etorri orduko  
Prest zinen gurekila hemen kantatzeko  
Ainitzetan jasanez hotz beroa frango  
Ez zira beldur izan hola eritzeko  
Agian luzaz Jaunak zaitu lagunduko

Kantuz artzea zauzu egiazki gustatzen  
Musika ere duzu ongi irakurtzen  
Gaizki ari baginen ez zinen lotsatzen  
Esperantxa zinuen beti atxikitzen  
Ikasiko ginuela zinuen pentsatzen

Alegerarik zagon hemen euskalduna  
Kantuz erakusteko zu baizinen ona  
Ahal hori ez baita deneri emana  
Gogotik ari zinen hori bixtan dena  
Zure pazientzia gure zoriona

I will sing bertsos to you Aita Tillous  
Thinking of all the work you have done for us.  
You helped the Basques from here,  
Then you thought of Euskal Herria.  
You've left us with very fond memories.

California, Oregon, Washington and higher  
Arizona, Nevada and then Idaho  
Montana and Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado.  
And without forgetting New Mexico  
Plenty of Basques in those states.

The wise man doesn't know better than you  
Where and what the Basques do.  
In all corners of the world there are those with faith.  
Days and nights are needed to get to them  
The good God from heaven gave you the courage

You have traveled to the big deserts  
Everywhere they love the Basque priest  
You are the true Sheppard of the church.  
Sleeping at home, in the car or on the floor  
Happy the one who spreads the word of the Lord

There are vast plains in America  
Now the villages are as scarce as the priests  
Where there are places to rest and eat  
To get the sleep away there are fountains  
You beat them all by freshening in them

By the time you came home from afar  
You were ready to sing with us  
Many times enduring a lot of hot and cold weather  
You were never afraid to get sick like that  
Hopefully God will watch over you for a long time

You truly enjoy singing  
And you can read music well.  
If we were singing badly, you would never despair.  
You were always keeping hope  
You were thinking that we would learn

The Basques from here were delighted  
As you were good for teaching us how to sing  
That skill is not given to everyone,  
You were definitely motivated, that's for sure  
Your patience was our good fortune

Ezkontza ta bataio ta eliza bestak  
Artetik erieri; xaharrereri bisitak  
Jaunak nahi duelarik heldu ehortzketak  
Denetarat heltzeko zuretzat lan gaitzak  
Bai hunkituko gaitu hemen zure faltak

Hola beraz gurekin bai hamalau urtez  
Baliatu zira zu dituzun dohainez  
Ikusten dugu zer den izaitea apez  
Bai erran behar dela erran nahia ez  
Eskerrak bihotzetik gu guzien partez

**Charles Moustirats**  
San Francisco-tik « Elgarrekin »  
koruaren partez  
2009 ko martxoaren laua

Weddings, baptisms and other church events  
In between the sick, visiting the old  
When God wants to come to funerals  
To get to all the events was a big job for you  
Yes, your presence will be dearly missed

And so you were with us for 14 years  
You took advantage of your talents  
We saw what it means to be a priest  
Yes, you have to say what needs to be said  
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, from all of us

**Charles Moustirats**  
Elgarrekin Basque Choir  
March 4th, 2009

Translated by Idoya Urruty and Mayte Ocafrain.



### Aita Martxel Tillous Youth Aid Fund

In memory of Aita Tillous, the North American Basque Organizations (NABO) has established a special fund to assist youth in attending NABO's youth programs. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to this fund, please make your checks payable to "NABO" and mail to:

**Aita Martxel Tillous Youth Aid Fund**  
c/o Grace Mainvil, NABO Treasurer  
705 Nicklaus Lane  
Eagle, ID 83616

POTTOKA