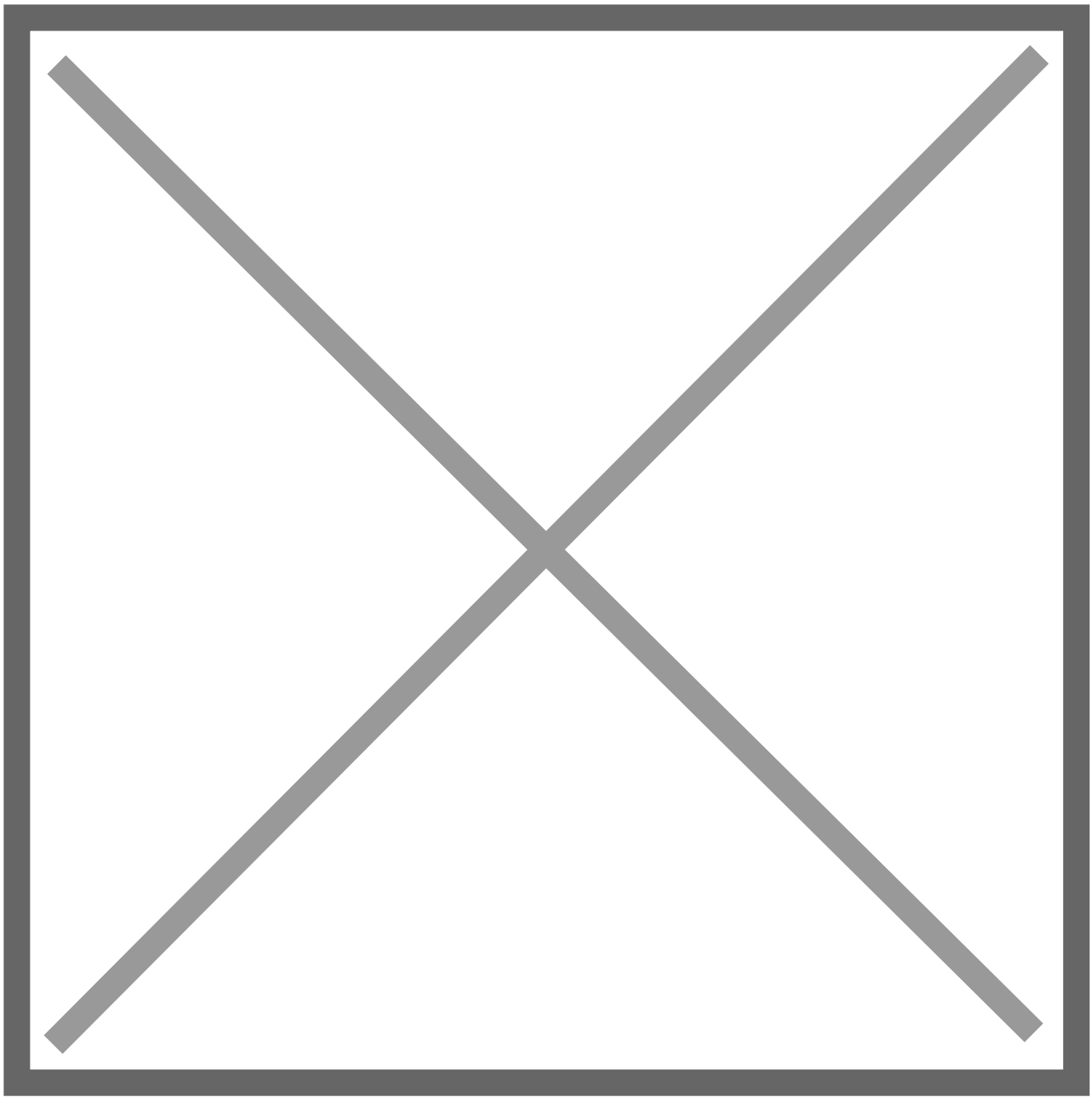
News



Fr. Geoffroy Génin, a 69-year-old French priest, is pictured in an undated photo. Génin spends one day a week on the ski slopes in the Alps offering chairlift confessions for skiers. (OSV News/Courtesy of Génin)

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VAL CENIS, France — February 12, 2026

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Fr. Geoffroy Génin is a 69-year-old French priest whose appearance is sometimes unusual. Tall and slim, he has the look of an athlete. Once a week, he can be seen on the ski slopes, in the heart of a magnificent snow-covered valley in the Alps. Dressed in a ski suit and goggles, he wears a red T-shirt or a blue bib bearing his name and the website of his parish. He has made a habit of hearing people's confessions on the chairlift that takes them to the top of the slopes.

"It is an open-air confessional for an airy pastoral ministry," he told OSV News with humor.

Génin's parish, Notre-Dame de l'Alliance, includes churches in numerous mountain communities, where the population doubles with the arrival of vacationers, particularly during the winter sports season. It is to meet them that he stands near the ski lifts of the Val Cenis ski area, every Monday morning, in the Maurienne Valley in Savoie.

The department of Savoie is very close to the Italian border. Nine-tenths of the diocese's territory is mountainous and home to around 60 ski resorts. The diocese is known for its shortage of priests.

"I am originally from Lyon," Génin told OSV News. "That is where I studied at the seminary and where I first exercised my ministry."

Génin had grown up in a family where he had been baptized, but where faith was not practiced.

"I was a cultural Christian," he said. "I had taken a little catechism, but that was all."

At around age 35 or 36, he was working in production management. He wanted to give more meaning to his life but did not know how to go about it.

"One day, I went to visit the Abbey of Cîteaux, the founding abbey of the Cistercian order," he told OSV News. "I was with my friends visiting the Burgundy wine cellars, and we arrived there somewhat by chance, as tourists.

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"I was deeply struck by the quiet peace that inhabited these monks," Génin recounted. "I was so impressed that I went back to see them several times afterwards. The monks eventually advised me to go and see the priest in my parish. I had to search for him, because I had no idea where to find him…!"

A few years later, in 2000, Génin was ordained as a priest in the highly urbanized city of Lyon at the age of 43. But in 2014, he moved to Savoie, a much more rural diocese.

"I had spent all my childhood vacations in the Alps, so I volunteered when the bishop there asked the Diocese of Lyon to 'lend him priests,'" he said.

Génin became a parish priest in Bourg-Saint-Maurice, a town in the Tarentaise Valley, well known for its renowned alpine ski resorts, including Les Arcs, one of the largest and most prestigious ski resorts in France. A great skier himself, he felt completely at home in this environment.

"I love the mountains," he said. "And I love meeting people who enjoy mountain sports. I enjoy doing various activities with them, like climbing, paragliding, hang gliding, and skiing in winter." "Above all, I love long hikes," he added. "I go hiking a lot."

It was during a Sunday Mass, as Easter approached, that some skiers asked him one day to hear their confessions.

"I did not have time at all that day, so I told them to meet me the next day at the foot of the slopes," he recounted. "The following morning, I rode up with each of them at one end of the chairlift for a discreet confession, whispered in a low voice,

that lasted six or seven minutes. After absolution, at the top, facing the snow-capped mountains, I skied down the slope with them!"

"I found it so easy that I kept going," Génin said. “Confession goes well with skiing, because the mountains allow you to gain altitude and take a step back. And confession is not sad or tearful. On the contrary, it lightens your heart. So I have continued until now to offer confessions on the chairlift to those who come to Mass on Sundays. We make an appointment for the next day so that I can be sure they will not forget. Once there, seeing their friends confess, others volunteer."

Today, Génin lives in Val Cenis, in the Maurienne Valley. There, the ski resorts are smaller and more family-oriented.

"The atmosphere is particularly friendly," he said. "I can talk to those who work on the ski lifts. No one thinks to thank them for all the work they do throughout the day. They tell me their prayer intentions, and sometimes, whenever there are fewer people around, they also come to the chairlift to confess."

Sometimes these meetings are an opportunity for simple exchanges, without confession, especially if the people are not believers. "I enjoy meeting people where they are," he told OSV News. "Right now, people are on the slopes. So I am there too. And the simplicity of mountain life facilitates human relationships."

In addition to confessions, Génin loves to take people who cannot ski on their own out skiing. He glides down the slopes on tandem flex skis with elderly or disabled people.

"I do it as often as possible," he said. "I am very happy to share this happiness with those who cannot enjoy it on their own."

These days, Génin is following the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan Cortina, Italy, from afar.

"I am not really a fan of watching sports on TV, but I am following the news about the athletes who come from here," he said. "For me, sports are all about sweat, blood and flesh, rather than television. And it is a great opportunity to meet people who never go to church and who would otherwise never think of going to see a priest."