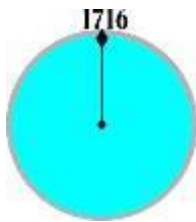


21. EVENT: Death in Saint-Laurent

- **DATE** : 1716, 28 April
- **PLACE** : St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre
- **VALUE** : to experience one's own death with serenity and abandonment
- **THE STORY** :



Father de Montfort died on 28 April 1716, right in the midst of his apostolic work, during the mission he was giving in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre. He was already very tired when he arrived. During the opening celebration of the mission, on 5 April, he took hold of the processional cross and carried it to the end.

He himself chose the tree from which would be made the mission cross. It was to be erected the day after his death. Mgr de Champflour, the Bishop of La Rochelle, announced his intention to come on 22 April. Montfort tired himself out organising the procession that would welcome his friend and protector. He was struck down with acute pleurisy, from which he knew he would never recover. Sick and feverish though he was, he insisted on preaching in the Bishop's presence. The subject of his last sermon was one of those most dear to him: the gentleness of Christ. Everyone was touched by it, and the crowd was in tears.

Then he had to take to his bed. On 27 April he dictated his Last Will and Testament to M. René Mulot. To this man who spoke of his inability to succeed him, he left his missionary soul: "Have confidence, my son, have confidence, I will pray to God for you." Father Mulot would say later: "These words worked the greatest of miracles in me: they obtained health and strength for me."

He asked that the crowd at the door be allowed to come in. He hesitated to bless the people because they took him for a saint. Father Mulot said to him: "Do it with your crucifix; it will be Jesus Christ who will bless them!" He encouraged those around his bed by intoning the popular hymn:

Let us go, dear friends, Let us go to Paradise!
No matter what we may gain here on earth,
Paradise is worth much more!

His last words confirmed for himself what he had written: "They are happy

at the hour of death, which is sweet and peaceful for I am usually there myself to lead them home to everlasting joy” (*TD 200*):

“In vain you attack me! I am between Jesus and Mary. *Deo gratias et Mariae*. I have come to the end of my race: it’s all over, I will never sin again!”

The following day, 29 April, Father Mulot declared: “Brethren, today we have two crosses to erect: first this material cross that you see before your eyes; secondly the burial of M. de Montfort that we have to carry out today.”

The life of the whole region was interrupted: more than ten thousand people participated in his funeral.

Two years later, after a period of silence, Fathers Mulot and Vatel, accompanied by Mathurin, the faithful companion of Montfort, and a few other Brothers, cured of their fears, would boldly take up again the Rosary and the staff of the missionary.

Translation of the Latin EPITAPH that was placed on his tomb when it was restored after the exhumation carried out on 13 November 1717: it may have been composed by his disciple, the Marquis de Magnanne, a highly cultivated man, or by M. Barrin, his friend who was the Vicar General of the Diocese of Nantes. This stone is now to be found in the crypt of the Basilica, since the construction of a common tomb for Saint Louis Marie and Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus, in 1992.

Traveller, What do you see?
A light quenched,
A man consumed by the fire of
Charity,
Who became all things to all
men,
Louis Marie Grignion de
Montfort.
If you ask what was his life:
There was none more holy;
His penance: none more austere;
His zeal: none more ardent;
His devotion to Mary: none more
like St Bernard.
A priest of Christ, he showed

forth
Christ in his actions, and
preached
Him everywhere in his words.
Indefatigable, he rested only in
the grave.
Father of the poor,
Protector of orphans,
Reconciler of sinners.
His glorious death
was the image of his life;
As he had lived, so he died.
Ripe for God he passed to
heaven,
April 28th 1716
Aged 43 years

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*True Devotion, 200*)

This loving Mother says to them "Happy are those who keep my ways" (Proverbs 8:32), which means, happy are those who practise my virtues and who, with the help of God's grace, follow the path of my life. They are happy in this world because of the abundance of grace and sweetness I impart to them out of my fullness, and which they receive more abundantly than others who do not imitate me so closely. They are happy at the hour of death, which is sweet and peaceful for I am usually there myself to lead them home to everlasting joy. Finally, they will be happy for all eternity, because no servant of mine who imitated my virtues during life has ever been lost.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*John 12:23-24*)

[A short time before his death, as he was entering in Jerusalem,] Jesus declare: «Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. In all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest.

(*Acts 20:17-22. 24. 32*)

From Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. When they arrived he addressed these words to them: 'You know what my way of life has been ever since the first day I set foot among you in Asia, how I have served the Lord in all humility, with all the sorrows and trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. I have not hesitated to do anything that would be helpful to you; I have preached to you and instructed you both in public and in your homes, urging both Jews and Greeks to turn to God and to believe in our Lord Jesus. 'And now you see me on my way to Jerusalem. (...) But I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me -- to bear witness to the good news of God's grace. (...) And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace that has power to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all the sanctified.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Have I ever witnessed a death that made an impression on me?
- How may Montfort be a 'model for a happy death'?
- Does death frighten me? Why, whether yes or no?
- How might I acquire today the attitudes I would like to have at my

death?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

With the epitaph of Father de Montfort as our starting point, let us give thanks for all he has been for his contemporaries and all he still is for us.

- *“A priest of Christ, he showed forth Christ in his actions.”*

For the transformation of Montfort into your own image, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“He preached Christ everywhere in his words.”*

For his word that touched the hearts and nourished the faith of the Christian people, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“He was Father of the poor, Protector of orphans.”*

For his care for the littlest ones, and his efficacious love of the poor, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“He was the Reconciler of sinners.”*

For his ardent desire to reveal the mercy of the Father to everyone, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“As he had lived, so he died.”*

For his death in trust and abandonment to the love of the Father, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

● **SYMBOL:** A statue of Montfort, about which may be placed certain of the symbols already used: a staff, a shoulder-pack with the Gospel, a small statue of the Blessed Virgin...

● **COMMITMENT**

- I re-read the epitaph of Montfort, I give thanks for what he has given to me personally.