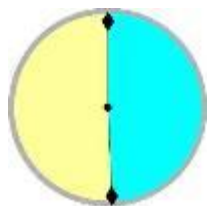


3. EVENT: Departure for Paris



- **DATE:** 1693, September?
- **PLACE:** Rennes - the Cesson bridge
- **VALUE:** Ruptures that help us grow; Abandonment to divine Providence
- **THE STORY:**



1693

The doors of Saint-Sulpice opened for the young student. We can guess the transports of gratitude with which Louis Marie received this good news: he had entrusted himself to Providence, and without delay Providence gave him his answer. His “immense desires for perfection” were thus about to be realised. He resolved to allow himself no delay: after “easily” obtaining the approval of his parents, he prepared to leave.

The distance from Rennes to Paris is more than 300 kilometres. They wanted to give the seminarian a horse “to cover at least half the journey”. He refused this, accepting only a new suit, ten écus, and a small pack to carry on his back. He said good-bye to his family and his own country “with such a great detachment” that he surprised even his school-mate, M. Blain. Yet he cherished his family, especially his mother, whose tears he had tenderly wiped away when he was just a child, and who had just lovingly prepared the modest trousseau of her future priest... And also it was not without a wrenching of the heart-strings that he was leaving Rennes, where he had grown up, the College of St Thomas, the source for him of so much enlightenment, the various shrines of Our Lady where he had spent so long in prayer: for sure “he had a heart just as tender as anyone, but the love of God... carried all his wishes and thought up to heaven.”

His uncle Alain Robert and his bother Joseph, and perhaps also his friend Jean-Baptiste Blain, accompanied him as far as the Cesson bridge, one league distant from Rennes. There, they took their leave and embraced.

So there he was, alone, on the road to Paris. His first instinct was to abandon himself to divine Providence, not following some vain formula, but with a very concrete gesture. His ten écus and his little baggage were soon given away; he changed his new clothes with a beggar that he met on the way. Then, in the “transports of his fervour”, he went down on his knees, and made a vow never to possess anything of his own... Then, free of everything, as he himself would later preach, “without father, mother, brothers, sisters or relatives and friends as the world and the flesh understand them, without worldly possessions..., and devoid of all self-interest,” Montfort went on his way with great strides, his Rosary in his hand.

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:**

Hymn 28, 6.8.11.13-14

God knows our wretchedness And all of our needs,
And since He is our Father, He takes great care of us all.
He joins His immense power To His wonderful kindness,
We must place our hope then In His supreme goodness.

Above all, try to understand This great secret of the Saviour
That He came to teach us (What a remarkable favour!):
Hope in God so faithful, Rest at peace in the bosom
Of His paternal love, With no worry for the morrow.

Consider, if you will, The millions of birds
Lacking for their sustenance Both reserves and granary.
Your charitable Father Makes sure they lack nothing;
And you, worth so much more Would lack what you need?

Consider the splendour Of the flowers, the lilies of the field,
Solomon in all his glory Was not arrayed as one of these.
If the fields are so clothed Without working or spinning,
You who are worth so much more, Must I not also clothe?

Do you desire abundance, The increase of temporal good?
First, and before all else, Seek eternal good,
The Lord and His justice, His kingdom and His love;

Earn by this sacrifice Your daily bread..

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

Heb 11:8-13

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the Promised Land as though it were not his, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. He looked forward to the well-founded city, designed and built by God. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise was faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who already had the mark of death on him, descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore which cannot be counted. All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognising that they were only strangers and nomads on earth.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- What ruptures have there been in my life that may have been painful, but that have helped me to grow?
- How are we to distinguish between those ruptures that aid growth and those that diminish us?
- In what circumstances during my life have I been called upon to experience abandonment to Providence?
- How can we reconcile a religious life in which everything is well organised (board and lodging, social security) with a genuine abandonment to divine Providence?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us ask Christ, Incarnate Wisdom, to make us into true disciples.

Let us ask this saying: Make us, Lord, into men who are free.

Lord, you had nowhere to lay your head. Free us from seeking the comfort that prevents us from being available for your call.

Lord, you said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all the rest will be given you as well." Keep us from all that could seduce our hearts and keep us from you.

Lord, you know that we can so easily be prisoners of ourselves and our ambitions. Grant that our hearts may be attached only to God and his Kingdom.

Lord, give us the courage to break with whatever keeps us far from you and whatever slows down our following of you.

We know, Lord, that you alone are entirely free as a human being. Share with us this liberty so that we might always taste the love of our Father and his faithful presence. Amen.

- **SYMBOL:** A butterfly (coming out of its cocoon)

- **COMMITMENT**

- What makes it difficult for me to be genuinely abandoned to Providence?
What am I going to do to overcome this difficulty?

