



Montfort EurHope: "Fire under the Ash"

SAINT LAURENT-SUR-SEVRE, France - Father Jean Didereau DUGER, SMM, 42 years of age who is from the province of Haiti has been at Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre for six months for his new mission. He introduces himself by describing his time of integration in France.

SELF-PRESENTATION

I was born on December 11, 1977 in Léogâne, Haiti and son of Mr. Dureste DUGER and Mrs. Chérina Casimir DUGER. I am the fourth from a family of six children, consisting of five boys and a girl who is the youngest. I did all the stages of my formation in Haiti- Léogâne and Port-au-Prince. I entered the Montfort Missionaries in August 2007. I made my first profession in September 2009 and I was ordained deacon in October 2016. I was ordained priest in January 2017 in Haiti. I did my diaconal and presbyteral ministries at the parish of St. Louis King of France, from Turgeau to Port-au-Prince with Father Wismick JEAN-CHARLES, SMM who helped and accompanied me. His accompaniment marked my first year of priestly life. At the parish, I was responsible for some groups including the choirs. I worked in the social action also with two other associations in the parish. Among other things, I was responsible for the pastoral care of the sick. Besides from the activities of the parish, I had also two chaplaincies at the Daughters of Wisdom and the College of the Sacred Heart. In addition, I was a student in education (sciences) since September 2017.

OBEDIENCE FOR FRANCE

After almost two years of presbyteral ministry in my country, the Provincial Father of the Montfortian Missionaries in Haiti asked me to come to France to lend a hand. I never thought of such an obedience at that time because I just started studying. I thought I would be given the time to finish them. In fact, I had no more than a week to give an answer to the request of the provincial. I asked myself some questions, wondering why he cannot let me finish these studies. I assumed that in France I could finish them, but it remains a question for me. It was a bit difficult to detach, but finally I accepted it because of my vow of obedience and that the Lord calls me where He wants and where He needs me and where I can be useful. In addition, I know that I am part of an international congregation and that I am an instrument of the Lord. Hence, I said to myself that the Lord is not going to send me but he is going to take me with Him. So, I trust Him. For me, it is the

will of God and I don't know why, but only God knows. I trust Him alone and I rely on Him. In the end, I packed up and arrived in France in May 2019.

MY COMMUNITY IN FRANCE

Arriving in France, I was greeted by Fathers Olivier, the Provincial, Pierre, Paulin and the international community of Saint Laurent. On the day of my arrival at Saint Laurent, Father Pierre BONHOMMEAU upon seeing me for the first time as I am always smiling said: "Oh, what a nice smile!". On the next day, Fr. Paulin accompanied me to validate my visa. He organized everything and he even took me to a store to buy a SIM card for my laptop. He also showed me the different places of the house, the Basilica and also some spires in the parish. I received a few words of welcome and encouragement from different confreres from Italy and France. On the other hand, my two brothers, namely Charelus and Jackson called me every day to find out how I am doing. This gesture coming from them gave me moral support which is very important to me. In summary, my stay here is memorable to me because I was well received and that made me feel comfortable.

On the other hand, I was aware at first that I will be assigned to the community of Marillais and yet I was informed after a few days to stay at Saint Laurent. I may be disappointed but I told myself that the will of the Lord is done. I was appointed as the chaplain at the Basilica and a collaborator at Montfort-sur-Sevre parish. I am part of the international community and I live with the Montfort Fathers in the House of the Holy Spirit at Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre. I am trying to integrate myself more in this community.

So far, I am having a beautiful experience in this new community as well as in the parish. The faithful are so kind as I am kind to them as well. I feel the warm welcome of the parish priest and also at the Basilica. I even received words of appreciation and encouragement from the faithful. There were also people who thanked me for my homilies. Gradually, I'm trying to understand the reality, being in a different culture, people and mentality. Moreover, I am still in the observation phase to integrate well. I do counseling both at the parish and the Basilica. This allowed me to understand the reality of the church of France.

MY FIRST MONTHS IN FRANCE

My first months in France were not difficult for me. I arrived here with a positive spirit and I did not consider the language as a barrier since I already know French a bit. I needed time for my body clock to adjust due to time difference from where I come from. I was bored at first because I did not have so much thing to do. After a week, I presided a Holy Mass at the crypt and then in two or three weeks except Sundays, I concelebrated. In my home country, I am used to celebrate at least 2 or 3 masses a day and indulge myself to many other activities. Hence, I need to accept and adapt the reality that I am in a different country now. On the brighter side, I have more time to pray, rest, read and prepare my homilies.

Before coming to France, I was told that the church of France is down and I soon realized that the priests are few and most of the churches are almost empty. There are almost no young people in the church. Sadly, the church of France is poor. A parish can gather several old parishes and more and more it decreases considerably. In this regard however, I have high hopes that the church of France will regain its splendor because there is still fire under the ash. Hence, there is still faith. I don't know how but God knows. I believe that God is there in the heart of the world and walks with His people.

In conclusion, I am still in the observation phase and there are still a lot of things to learn and understand. This is basically my point of view on my new obedience in France. So far, I cannot say more than that. As I said, it's just a time of observation, adaptation and integration with the environment in this mission.

Fr. Jean Didereau Duger, SMM