

NU-FRA-759
2021-11-08



"Calvaire Evangelization": Something New in Pontchâteau

PONTCHÂTEAU, France - *The bicentenary of the rebuilding of the Calvary of Pontchâteau and of the chapel at the foot of Calvary offered the pilgrims, who gathered on Sunday, September 26, 2021, the opportunity to appreciate the work carried out and the new initiatives of the site.*

Following Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and taking over from Abbé François Gouray, since 1865, the Montfort Missionaries have been running this place of pilgrimage. Thanks to Fr. Santino BREMBILLA, SMM and the new international community who motivated the Daughters of Wisdom and the Brothers of Saint Gabriel to get involved. On the weeks leading up to September 26, this new impetus could be seen in the dedication of the volunteers from the surrounding area and even from Italy, finalizing the maintenance, decoration and works of the site. Yes, the Montfortian Family has made a missionary project that includes, at the same time, the Calvary and the parish of "Sainte Croix de Montfort" in Pontchâteau.

For this reason, on Sunday, September 26, the beginning of the pastoral year, saw the presence of the Bishop of Nantes, Mgr. Laurent PERCEROU who presided over the installation Mass of Fr. Santino BREMBILLA as Parish Administrator. The course of the day saw first a gathering at the Chapel of the Rosary for the blessing of a series of 15 biblical paintings (2.80x2.30 mt) by the artist Anne MANDEVILLE, with the title "A people on the march", placed in the chapel.

Going in procession towards the Eucharistic celebration, we made a stop at the "house of Nazareth" - reorganized into a small chapel for Adoration and the sacrament of Reconciliation. Mass was celebrated in the completely renovated "Hall of the Temple", with a great crowd of people with the Superior General as one of the concelebrants. The provincials of the three

Montfortian congregations in France accompanied their respective communities who will support Fr. Santino in his responsibilities as Parish priest and Superior of the community of Calvary.

In his homily, the bishop wished this Calvary of Pontchâteau to become a place of hope for all those who frequent it: pilgrims, tourists and visitors. As Bishop of Nantes, he is delighted with the projects carried out by the Montfortian Family to make this place shine, because "we have never needed such a place so much to welcome all those who toil and suffer along the way of life". Finally, using the image of a ship, the bishop entrusted to the new pastor and to the Montfortian Family, the mission of opening hearts to the wind of the Holy Spirit by indicating the horizon of service, self-giving and fraternity following Christ: "Father Santino, as pastor-missionary, must not be satisfied with organizing life only inside the boat, but must also indicate the vast ocean of the world as the very place of the mission". After Mass, the celebrants and the crowd went in procession in front of the chapel at the foot of the Calvary in the presence of elected officials, to bless the work carried out in collaboration with the municipality: the paving and lighting in front of the chapel, the new location of the statue of Father de Montfort, the cleaning of the tomb of Abbé F. Gouray (1787-1857) covered with a metal plaque.

In the afternoon, the historian André MARTIN, author of the book "Figure of the good priest in the 19th century - François Gouray", helped to discover the figure and the dynamism of this priest of Pontchâteau for forty years and his work on Calvary. Leaving the "Hall of the Temple", we realized that the premises of the old hotel have become a house of the "Village Saint Joseph", an association which welcomes men and women in suffering for a stay of support and sharing from 6 to 24 months allowing them to once again become actors in their lives, in connection with the heritage left by Father de Montfort.

The reactions of the pilgrims, parishioners and visitors echoed Hymn 113 of our Holy Founder: "*Oh, how wonderful will we see in this place!*" Indeed, the project of the Montfortian Family to take charge of the animation of the Calvary and the Parish is a bearer of hope for the local church and a response to the challenge of the new evangelization. A French motto to sum up all this could be "*Calvaire***E***vangélization*" where the letter "E" in the middle recalls the word "Ensemble" (Together), an essential attitude for this work of evangelization.

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