



### **The Frescoes of the Chapel of Father de Montfort at Calvary of Pontchâteau regain their colors**

**PONTCHÂTEAU, France** - The Calvary Site today includes 30 monuments. Chapels, caves, stations of the cross, halls and Calvary are harmoniously located in this life-size park of 14 hectares. The Father de Montfort Chapel is visible in all its splendor at the same time as the hill of Calvaire, the highest point of the Site. It's right at the foot.

#### **A Chapel that tells the story of Father de Montfort**

The chapel was built in 1747, burned down during the Revolution and rebuilt in 1821 in its current form. Its frescoes represent the life of Father de Montfort. It was Paul LEMASSON who created these painted decorations in 1943. There are 9 stations, plus two, at the corners of the facings to the West, which represent landscapes, which makes 11 scenes. The paintings are organized by alternating small scenes in brown monochrome (approximately 120cm x 175cm, framed with ocher and dark brown lines) with large polychrome scenes framed in large blue frames (approximately 310cm x 240cm). The shades of the east corners measure 120cm x 60cm and the large scene on the east wall 310cm x 600cm.

The first scene begins on the South wall to the West with a decor representing the adolescence of Father de Montfort, then the scenes continue chronologically towards the East, with a scene from 1711 (Father de Montfort in a boat, helping people during a flood), and continue North to return to the choir where they end with the scene of death of Father de Montfort in 1716.

## **“Paul Lemasson, painter... solitary, discreet”**

On the site of the Calvary of Pontchâteau, we can look at numerous frescoes created between 1939 and 1942 by the painter from Loire Atlantique: Paul LEMASSON. Born in St Mars du Désert, about twenty kilometers from Nantes, in 1897, he attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Nantes and Paris. It was there that he studied the art of frescoes in the workshop of Paul BAUDOIN.

From 1925 he was called upon to decorate numerous churches. His paintings are so appreciated that they are in exhibitions in Paris, England, the United States, Canada, and Latin America (Chile, Peru and Brazil). He collaborated with his brother, Albert LEMASSON, also a painter, who used to sign his works “Paul Lemasson Jeune” to differentiate himself from his elder.

At Calvary, we find his frescoes in the Temple, in the Cenacle, in the Chapel of the Visitation and, in the Chapel of Father de Montfort where they evoke the life of our Holy Founder.

Died in Nantes on September 22, 1971, an article by LENORMAND describes our painter as follows: “Paul Lemasson, painter, was a solitary, discreet man. The man was friendly, with sober distinction. His welcome was warm, not without a touch of humor. The artist lived outside of all the chapels, and the agitations of his time annoyed him a little or made him smile. He led his fight against the tide and his perseverance, like the intellectual seclusion he imposed on himself, led him to his recognized truth. Because he had something to say and to achieve it, he wanted to protect himself from all external influences.”

## **Restoration of the Frescoes in 1981**

The frescoes of the Chapel of Father de Montfort were restored for the first time in 1981. In July of this year, the workshop of Yves DEHAIS installed stained glass windows and rose windows in the chapel. In September, following the instructions of Mr. DEHAIS, volunteers cleaned the vault and the walls including the frescoes. These are cleaned with a sponge, then “all the defects in the frescoes are then repaired with ready-made. Noting the gaps punctuating the scenes, we are considering “a serious restoration” which will take place during the following months”. During the months of October and November, Mr DEHAIS came either on Friday or Saturday to restore the paintings.

## **New restoration of the frescoes in 2023**

Given the deterioration of the frescoes, and with the desire to renovate each year a monument of this Montfortain High Place, Ms. Géraldine FRAY, a graduate of the Louvre school and the National Heritage Institute, was asked to take charge of the restoration frescoes from the Chapel of Father de Montfort. Based in Brittany, near Josselin in Morbihan, Géraldine FRAY and her team work on mural painting restoration for public and private historic monuments. Since October 2 and until mid-November, every week from Monday to Thursday, the restoration team came to give color to the history and message of Father de Montfort.

Certainly, the monument is restored, the history is marked. The present international community formed by the 3 congregations in Pontchâteau is there to watch over, guard, continue and bring this immense work to life. “Let us all work on this divine work, God will bless us all” (H 164) sang Father de Montfort and the devoted volunteers on this site.