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Shrine: Place of Consolation

NOTRE-DAME DU LAUS, France - From January 27th to 29th, as it does every year, the Association of Catholic Shrines held its congress at the Shrine of Our Lady of Laus in this holy year of the Jubilee of 2025. This congress took place under the theme: Shrine: Place of Consolation, with the participation of more than a hundred people from various backgrounds in France and elsewhere. Like all the other participants, the Montfort Missionaries were also present, along with those who serve the shrines. There were eight (8) of us representing our three (3) shrines: four (4) from Pontchâteau, two (2) from Marillais, two (2) from Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, who left with five (5) priests, one (1) brother, and two (2) lay people.

These three days were well-animated by speakers from different backgrounds who gave profound teachings. Beginning with the Jubilee, biblically, it is the feast of great forgiveness, liberation, and deliverance. Thus, to experience this Jubilee year, sanctuaries are privileged places. It is in this sense that they are places of consolation, mercy, deliverance, peace, and silence for all those who, in their suffering, are on the path to hope. "Comfort, comfort my

people, says your God" (Is 40:1): with these words, Fr. Valentin RHONAT introduced us to the theme of the conference.

Bruno MOUSSET also informed us that the primary mission of sanctuaries is to create an environment for prayer and meditation. He also spoke to us about the design of sanctuaries. Sanctuaries must be organized to welcome wounded pilgrims who often seek a place of peace and silence. Along the same lines, Bishop Marco FRISINA emphasized the beauty of liturgical songs and music, because songs lift the soul to God. In the Bible, life's events become songs. Music is the heart's overflowing joy and emotion. Our sanctuaries must be places where the beauty of the revelation of the manifestation of God's glory resonates.

Similarly, Bishop Xavier MALLE wanted, through his intervention, to remind us that hope is the love of the heart of Jesus, who is the first consoler. He is at the heart of the Church, and to make sanctuaries a place of eschatological hope. "How are sanctuaries places of hope?" His teaching showed us how our sanctuaries must first be "an ear," a place of welcome and listening, and one that proclaims the Gospel. Jesus always speaks words of consolation. In the same vein, Father Thomas LAPENNE shares with us four (4) sources of consolation: The Holy Spirit; The Word of God; Forgiveness; Blessing.

As disciples of Father de Montfort, apostle of Mary, witness of hope, may we all be bearers of hope through the proclamation of the Gospel with Mary, Mother of hope.

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