



## **Vice-Province of France: Becoming a “True WE” at the Service of the Mission**

**MARILLAIS, France** - On February 17, 2026, the confreres of the communities of the Vice-Province of France met in Marillais for the first step in the process initiated following the Assembly of November 2025. This meeting was not simply a time for fraternal exchange, but the concrete entry into a synodal process desired by the Provincial, Fr. Paulin RAMANANDRAIBE, SMM, and his Council. In his letter of convocation, the Provincial clearly reiterated the challenge of this year: to move from a culture of “I” to one of “WE.” The 2025 Assembly had sparked an awareness; the year 2026 must allow for its maturation. The Provincial Council has thus chosen to approach the community meetings already planned as stages on a single journey, oriented towards truly shared decisions at the Annual Assembly at the end of November.

## **A first step: listening, encouraging open dialogue, and bringing out the essentials**

The meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup> in Le Marillais had as its main objective listening and encouraging open dialogue. As emphasized in the day's introduction, the aim was not to immediately seek solutions, but to dare to speak the truth about what we are experiencing on our journey toward becoming a "WE." Through small group discussions and sharing, a common desire emerged: a desire for truth, mutual recognition, and fidelity to the mission entrusted to the Vice-Province in France. The review conducted after the meeting, as well as the work of the Provincial Council, allowed us to identify three major themes that will guide the continuation of the synodal process.

*1. Building a concrete fraternity.* The need to become a "real WE" was strongly expressed. This implies deeper listening, renewed trust, and a greater acceptance of cultural and generational differences. The acknowledged weaknesses—lack of communication, intercultural or intergenerational tensions—are not seen as insurmountable obstacles, but as calls to fraternal conversion.

*2. Ensuring formation and succession.* Particular attention must be paid to the formation of younger confreres and their preparation for responsibilities. Vocational accompaniment requires a more explicit structure to ensure the continuity and vitality of the missionary presence.

*3. Clarifying and structuring the mission.* A shared need has emerged to clarify the missions entrusted to the Vice-Province, to improve the provincial organization (committees, communication, monitoring), and to make Montfortian spirituality more visible. A joint commitment to youth ministry is emerging as a significant priority.

## **A multi-stage journey**

The day of February 17 was therefore only the beginning. This is part of a broader process: May 19, 2026, a day in Pontchâteau: discernment and structuring of directions concerning the community project of the Vice-Province and each local community (vision, mission, organization); September 29, 2026, a day in Montfort-sur-Meu: discernment and structuring of directions in the economic sphere; the Assembly of the Entity from November 29 to December 1, 2026, in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, with concrete decisions and commitments.

Speaking of a "synodal process" does not simply mean holding more meetings. It is a style: walking together, listening with humility, discerning with courage what the Lord expects of our Vice-Province today. The summary remarks of Fr. Marco PASINATO, SMM, facilitator of the day on February 17, invited us not to close too quickly on what has been opened. The questions raised must continue to resonate in our hearts and our communities. This journey can be summarized by an expression that is gradually emerging as a shared vision: becoming a true "WE" for the mission, a spiritual and fraternal reality to be patiently built, in mutual trust, in service to the Gospel.

May the Holy Spirit, invoked at the beginning of our meeting on February 17, continue to accompany the Vice-Province of France on this synodal path. May each step of 2026 help us

to grow in communion, in missionary clarity, and in shared responsibility, so that the November Assembly may be the culmination of genuine common discernment. Let us continue to move forward with confidence, humility, and hope. MAGNIFICAT! It was with this cry of thanksgiving that each member departed to continue the mission.

Fr. Serge OCGENOR, SMM