



# L'Écho Montfortain

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## A WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

These past twelve months have been marked by sharp contrasts and things turned upside down. On the global stage, the complete destruction of the World Trade Towers in New York took our breath away. (As a New Yorker, I mourned for a large part of my city and my fellow citizens, and felt deeply touched by the messages of solidarity from the Montfortian Family around the world.) But the current talk of war makes us hold our breath again, praying that excessive reactions and generations of wounds and violence may not bring forth a greater whirlwind of vengeance. (As a citizen of the world and as a Christian, I join you in praying that peace, true fruit of justice, will come to all the afflicted peoples of this earth).

But also during these months the SMM has been marked by sharp contrasts and things turned upside down. Two of our most valiant and efficacious experts in Montfortian spirituality died unexpectedly: Fr. Pio Suarez of Colombia and Fr. Carlo Berton of Madagascar. It is impossible to describe the loss their deaths bring to the Montfortians and to the Churches of Latin America and Madagascar. Each burned bright with the knowledge and love of St. Louis Marie, even more, with the knowledge and love of Jesus Wisdom and Mary our Mother. Each was a master in translation, popularisation and preaching of Montfortian spirituality. *Who has known the mind of God?* On the other hand, this very year four young fathers, from India, Philippines, Indonesia and Colombia, have begun their formal specialized studies in Rome in Spirituality and Mariology. And already this year, in Argentina, Guatemala and St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, hundreds of lay people, who take inspiration and guidance from the teaching of Montfort, have gathered in sessions and congresses to celebrate and to deepen this gift of God.

This time last year, we lived in Rome the rather extraordinary special Audience with Pope John Paul II in honour of St. Louis Marie, and the very generous and favourable coverage in the Osservatore Romano presaged most positive results. Now, news from the Vatican tells us that – at least in the current situation - the title “Doctor of the Church” will not be forthcoming for Montfort. Indeed a time of sharp contrasts and things turned upside down, to be lived in faith with St. Louis Marie, but also as a pledge to continue to make him better known and understood in a worldwide Church.

During these past months, for reasons I know not, a rather larger than normal number of confreres has asked to leave the Congregation and the ministry, each one within the mystery of his own life and vocation. On the other hand during these twelve months 35 have professed first vows and 13 have made perpetual profession.

Strong contrasts, things turned upside down – but also elements of constant fidelity and powerful witness incarnated in the everyday lives of our confreres! For example, this year 3 confreres have celebrated 70 years of religious profession in the Company, 18 have celebrated 60 years of profession, and 11 have celebrated 60 years of ordination. Faithful and enduring, but not static!

A few weeks ago I preached the province retreat to the confreres of Great Britain and Ireland. They decided that at the closing Eucharist each individual would renew his Perpetual Vows, beginning with the eldest, who was 82 years of age, and ending with the youngest, who was 37. Each confrere lit the candle of one who would follow him in renewing his vows. It took time; we had time. The chapel became filled with the lights of the 25 confreres, light of their candles, light of their lives consecrated to God for the service of their brothers and sisters. As Superior General, it was very moving to see and hear almost an entire Province renew into my hands the choices and promises of a lifetime. How powerful to hear confreres in their 80's repeat "*I vow forever poverty, obedience and chastity*", when the forever of God was closer than ever before; yet again they placed all their trust in his Love! How vitalizing to see younger confreres, whose world and experiences are so vastly different from that of their elder brothers, ready to commit themselves to incarnate the same dynamic spirit of Montfort in the Third Millennium!

A year of contrasts and things turned upside down; a year of ever faithful love...

*O God, be gracious and bless us  
And let your face shed its light upon us.  
So will your ways be known upon earth  
And all nations learn your saving help.*

*Let all the peoples praise you, O God;  
Let all the peoples praise you. (Psalm 67)*

*William Considine, smm  
Superior General*

## OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS

### FIRST RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

On 15 August 2001, in Bandung (Indonesia), Brother **Petrus Alexander FRANGKY** and scholastics **Selsius JEMAMPUNG**, **Vinsensius SUMARDI**, **Yakobus RUA BAI**, **Theofilus NGOE BENGU**, **Martinus KOPONG PAUN**, **Marselinus RADJA**, **Gabriel DADU GORAN** and **Agustinus HARTONO** all made their first Religious Profession in the Company of Mary.

Also on 15 August 2001, in Mbarara (Uganda), Brother **Andrew ANECHO** (Ugandan), and scholastics **Edward CHAKWIYA** (Malawian) and **Felix Mabvuto PHIRI** (Zambian) made their first Religious Profession in the Company of Mary.

On 8 September 2001, in Lavaud (Haiti), **Benedic LAZAR**, **Jean Guerino MARSEILLE**, **Zacharie SAINT-JEAN** and **Louis Marie SOUFFRANT** made their first Religious Profession in the Company of Mary.

Also on 8 September 2001, in Tananarive (Madagascar), **Gervais RAJERISON** and **Jean-Marie Helpa RAKOTONDRAVAO** made their First Profession of vows in the Company of Mary.

On 23 September 2001, in Santeremo (Italy), **Francesco CASTRIA** (Italian) and **Marco Paulo DA SILVA SERRAZINA** (Portuguese) made their first Religious Profession in the Company of Mary.

### PERPETUAL PROFESSIONS

On 29 June 2001, in India, **Robert Jerald REGO** made his Perpetual Profession of vows in the Company of Mary.

On 27 July 2001, in Huaycán (Peru), **Luis SALVADOR AVILA** and **Jésus CUCHO PUCHURI** made their Perpetual Profession of vows in the Company of Mary.

On 15 August 2001, in Putussibau (Indonesia), **Aloisius BANGGUR**, **Rafael BREOK** and **Stefanus SUKRISNO WIDODO** made their Perpetual Profession of vows in the Company of Mary.

On 5 October 2001, in Rome (Italy), **Gianluigi SCUDELETTI** and **Angelo SORTI** made their Perpetual Profession of vows in the Company of Mary.

## **ORDINATION TO THE DEACONATE**

On 2 July 2001, in Mysore (India), **Robert Jerald REGO** was ordained deacon.  
On 7 October, in Rome (Italy), **Angelo SORTI** was ordained deacon.

## **ORDINATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

The following have been ordained to the Sacred Priesthood:

On 17 June 2001, **Orlando CASTRO GONZALEZ**, in Colombia;  
on 24 June 2001, **Jean-Michel NICOLAS**, in Luçon (France);  
on 14 July 2001, **John Mary AHIMBISIBWE**, in Ibanda (Uganda);  
on 21 July 2001, **Louis NKUKUMILA**, in Limbe (Malawi);  
on 12 August 2001, **Robert Crescent RAFAMANTANANTSOA** and **Paulin RAMANANDRAIBE**, in Ambositra (Madagascar).

## **INTERNATIONAL SESSION AT ST-LAURENT-SUR-SÈVRE** **“PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP”**

Over 250 people representing a variety of groups inspired by St. Louis Marie gathered at St. Laurent from 5 to 9 August. Participants came mostly from Belgium and France, but a few came from as far away as Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. A fine number of sisters, brothers and fathers of the Montfortian Family, with the presence of all the provincial superiors from France and Belgium as well as the Brother General, Father General and Vicar General of the sisters were delighted to meet, share and learn from so many lay people. And what a diversity of lay people! Infants and grandmothers, French-speaking and Dutch-speaking, members of all sorts of prayer groups, Legion of Mary, Focolari, Foyers de Charité, Associates of Mary Queen of all Hearts... a rainbow of accents and races, of points of view and experiences, yet all finding inspiration and holiness on the spiritual path of St. Louis Marie de Montfort.

The groundwork for the International Meeting had been prepared for some years by Fr. Frans Fabry and Mr. Roger Matthys, working with various groups and workshops on Montfort and his spirituality. An extraordinarily dedicated committee organized the week in St. Laurent and made each participant feel at home. The Brothers of St. Gabriel housed and fed all the participants with the most fraternal of welcomes. The quality of the conferences, the group sharing, the Liturgies, the silent times and spaces for prayer – all contributed to an international experience that could well be repeated, inviting even more countries to participate in sharing and deepening their love of St. Louis Marie.

## **TOTAL CONSECRATION IN ARGENTINA**

Invitation and travel arrangements organized by the Society Grignion de Montfort in Barcelona, I actively participated in the First National Congress on Marian Slavery which took place in the city of **Salta**, Argentina from 8 to 10 July. I also participated in the First Encounter of Marian Slaves of Love held near the city of **San Juan** from 12 to 16 July. My interventions focused on the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary: its foundations and characteristics, the means to live it out, its relationship with the baptismal covenant, and the commitment to evangelise in the Church following the example of Saint Louis Marie.

In both cities I experienced what I had already also lived in the Catholic Marian Congress, “To Jesus through Mary”, held in Guatemala City, Guatemala from 26 to 28 January. Let me sum up these experiences in several points:

- Laypersons have been the organizers and promoters of these meetings. The few persons who constitute the nucleus of the group usually have experienced a recent and great change in their lives, due to a knowledge and practice of the Marian slavery as taught by St. Louis Marie de Montfort. They feel an urgent call from God to make this pathway known to others.
- There is an awareness of the call of every Christian to holiness and the commitment of the Christian in the Church to evangelise. It is most interesting to see the creativity, generosity and boldness that the most committed demonstrate, using various communication media including TV and Internet, as well as the efforts they undertake going “door to door” among families.
- I was surprised at the extent of the knowledge of St. Louis Marie de Montfort held by some of them, and their love and devotion for him. The most curious part is that there has been not a single Montfortian involved in their initiation to Montfort, and that the priests, religious and laity who have worked with them do not belong to the Montfortian Family.
- I was struck by meeting professional people, particularly women, and also families involved in organizing these meetings. Likewise I encountered persons of profound spiritual and apostolic experience. The number of participants in each of these gatherings was about 200 persons. In Salta, four members from the Montfortian parish of Santa Cruz, in Buenos Aires, who had made the Consecration, also attended.
- At each gathering a small group that had been making the 33 days preparation for the Consecration were able to make the Consecration. Those who had already made their Consecration renewed it, and the rest felt stimulated to begin an adequate preparation. Each day unfolded in an atmosphere of prayer, with the celebration of the Eucharist.
- One senses the thirst that lay people have for both spirituality and evangelisation, the very great appreciation for our spirituality, which they find most relevant and fruitful, and also the love and admiration that they express for St. Louis Marie as apostle and prophet.
- I was truly challenged seeing that it is the lay people who urge the priests and bishops to escape from their trenches and fears and to step out to accompany the laity.

*Fr. Miguel Patino H. smm*

## **NEWS FROM INDONESIA**

*(Following the meeting of the Asian Delegates in Manila in August, Assistant General Fr. Hub Louis spent five weeks visiting the confreres in Indonesia. There are now 31 finally professed confreres (24 Indonesian, 7 Dutch); 34 scholastics; 25 novices in two years. Here is a brief account of the visit written by Fr. Widodo, superior of the scholasticate).*

This month we had a big man and a big visitor from Rome, Fr. Hub Louis. He visited all of our communities in Bandung and in Kalimantan. In the scholasticate we performed traditional dances from several regions to welcome our big boss. At the front yard of our house, the Javanese protected him from sunlight with a big parasol. Then some brothers from West-Flores showed their respect by giving him a black chicken and a bottle of beer. With the chicken in his left hand and the beer in his right hand he walk slowly behind dancers from Central-Flores. At the front door of our house Br. Leo, a Dayak, welcomed him dancing with a *mandau* (sword made in Borneo) in his hand. At the end he handed the *mandau* over to Fr. Louis inviting him to cut the palm tree barrier at the door gate. When he successfully had performed the job we applauded together.

In the scholasticate he had a meeting with the formators and also with all our seminarians. Then accompanied by our Delegation Superior, Fr. Piet Derckx, he went to Borneo for about 10 days and visited there all of our Montfortian communities: in Sintang, Lebang, Putussibau, Benua Martinus. He survived! Didn't even get any illness. After coming back from Borneo and before going to Flores he spent also a morning in the novitiate. The next day he gathered all of the formators to discuss some points concerning the report on the formators' meeting last February in Rome. We shared with him our views on the demands of internationality and what are we doing about it, on becoming a general delegation, on how we are going on and continuing, how we are guiding the young Montfortians, how to re-found, how to collaborate as

formators with the Montfortians working in the parishes and with the pastoral teams for catechetical work in Sintang and in Putussibau.

On Sunday, Sept. 23rd, Fr. Hub Louis and Fr. Piet went to the island of Flores. From Bandung they took the train to Surabaya and from there they continued their journey by plane to Flores. In Flores they will meet our confreres in the Montfort Parish of Poco and take a look at the new novitiate in construction in Ruteng. We hope the new building will be finished by the end of January 2002 and after that the novices will move to Flores in May 2002.

On the last day of October three of our brothers (Br. Aloisius Banggur, Br. Rafael Breok and Br. Ariston) will receive the ordination to the diaconate. I humbly request your prayers for them.

## **40 YEARS OF MONTFORTIAN PRESENCE IN PERU 1961-2001**

### ***Reflections on the Montfortian journey***

The Montfortians first arrived in Peru nearly 100 years ago, in 1903. They had been invited by the bishop of Huaraz to look after missions in the abandoned high Sierra. Unfortunately when they arrived the bishop had died, and after having spent a year in a coastal zone, the fathers received orders from their superiors to leave the work they had begun. To the great unhappiness of the local population, they took the road for Santafé de Bogotá in Colombia, and established themselves there.

In 1961 a group of Montfortians from Italy, responding to the urgent and prophetic call of John XXII, set off again. Latin America was considered the continent of hope; without a new evangelisation it was feared that the faith and traditional values would be lost because of the profound changes taking place and the proliferation of the sects.

The first group settled in a poor zone on the outskirts of Lima, founding the parish "*Our Lady of the Visitation*". The fathers came from backgrounds of formation and accompanying Marian groups; some were young, others less so; rapidly the parish took on life. The arrival of new missionaries and the opening of a Montfortian Seminary brought the need for more ample spaces. A new parish "*St. Louis Marie de Montfort*" was founded at Nana, responding to a request by the Sisters of the Visitation. Then the SMM established itself in the Sierra in Huanuco and afterward organized an itinerant missionary group. Meanwhile, during the years 1970-90, the great "invasions" into the cities began, and the small parishes became immensely inhabited zones. Nana, for example, was transformed in fifteen years from a small agricultural area of about 3,000 inhabitants to a densely populated residential zone of more than 150,000 poor people in search of housing.

### **Points of Inspiration**

The presence and history of the Montforts in Peru have been guided by certain points of inspiration; it is worth recalling them in order to understand the spirit that animated the missionaries during these 40 years.

1. **Close to the poor.** Some time ago, during a meeting with the Christian communities, the question was asked: "What do the people say about the Montforts?" The spontaneous answer was: "They are close to the people; they are simple; they help..." This characteristic, pointed out by the people, was a choice from the beginning, inspired by Montfort, who had desired missionaries "in the footsteps of the poor apostles" who would proclaim the Gospel to the "poor people in the countryside and the city". On the other hand, living in a situation of generalized material and spiritual poverty, in continual contact with suffering people, it would not have been possible to choose differently.
2. **Missionary Parishes.** From the start the Montforts chose parishes with "missionary" characteristics, poor due to the lack of pastors and structures, with special needs, or those that

could serve as a base of support for evangelising another zone. The reason for this choice was not only because it is easy to find many such parishes in Peru, but rather in fidelity to the inspiration of the Congregation. Thus, from the 1970's the Montforts formed a group of itinerant missionaries, re-affirming their availability to leave the parishes in order to attain a certain autonomy. As the first example, the parish of Nana has already been handed over to the diocese.

Today other questions arise: How to continue being faithful to the mission and to the original missionary charism in the new situations of Peru? How to cultivate a coherent missionary project that forms lay people and helps them to grow and to mature, creating responsible communities that live a Marian and missionary spirit in the footsteps of Montfort?

3. **Itinerant missions among the people.** This ideal has always been present among the group, as a constant point of discussion. Montfort's dream of itinerant missionaries, free for the mission to renew the spirit of Christians by a missionary preaching in the manner of the poor apostles – this has always inspired our pastoral work. One could not remain indifferent to the numerous abandoned villages in the high Sierra or to the densely populated peripheries of the large cities, a cry that became more insistent and tragic with the worsening political and social situation. After a first attempt in the 1970's, the EMIN (Montfortian Itinerant Missionary Team) was established. We are now asking ourselves how this typically Montfortian missionary form can be renewed and revitalized. What are the new "*areopagoi*", what are the new demands that will allow us to balance the choices between the needs of the itinerant mission and the missionary dimension of the local pastoral life?
4. **The Seminary.** Vocations had been one of the objectives of the Montfortian presence in Peru since the beginnings in 1961, but that only became a reality in the 1980's. The Italian confreres came from a Province that was young and full of life, that drew energy from a fine seminary whose history was strongly identified with formation for the mission. They were convinced that, in addition to its necessity for insuring the Montfortian future in Peru, they could not think of incarnating our spirituality and serving the mission without a seminary. Today there are many Peruvian Montforts ready to insure those objectives.  
But even if today the seminary still constitutes a priority and a hope, it is not without difficulties. The majority of the missionaries are oriented toward pastoral work, and even though they might be convinced of the importance of formation, at times they look upon it as a parallel ministry. By means of community reflection we are trying to deal with certain challenges: How to make the vocation ministry the responsibility of all; how to set apart and prepare personnel for formation? What can be done to make our communities and parishes reference points for young people?
5. **Spirituality.** The Montfort Missionaries in Peru are convinced that they are the inheritors of a great treasure: the spirituality of Montfort, a gift of God to the Church. The Holy Father has recently confirmed this in his exhortations, encouraging Christians to live the Marian consecration as a path of holiness. The group here has tried to live and to spread our spirituality, preparing persons for this mission. Devotion to Mary and to the Cross, the renewal of the promises of Baptism: this is a natural pathway for evangelisation in Latin America and in Peru. Marian groups and Montfortian laity have multiplied, and easily gather together many persons desiring to know our Lady, to begin a deeper spiritual journey. The challenge for the future will be the witness of our communities, a type of accompaniment that requires religious full time, and research into a pastoral approach that makes spirituality an important element of our evangelisation.
6. **Montfortian religious life.** This is the locus that unifies our life, according to the spirit of Montfort, which encompasses the spiritual commitment of prayer and the contemplation of Wisdom, obedience and community life that are fundamental aspects of sanctification and mission.

Over these past 40 years we have travelled a road:

- In the 1960-70's a rather traditional religious life was maintained;
- In the 1980's some changes were made: a common search for a new style of consecrated life, common apostolic projects: formation of CEBs (Basic Christian Communities), family catechesis, Itinerant Team (EMIM), opening of the seminary;
- In the 1990's the group, caught in the midst of the new political, social and ecclesial reality, entered into crisis. It questioned itself if it were truly rooted in its pastoral and missionary work, and asked light from the Lord to take up the journey with renewed enthusiasm.

Consecrated life is considered fundamental, but pastoral necessities and the demands of apostolic work curtail listening to the word of God; the confrontation with an every more rapidly changing reality curtails community life; the requirements of local ministry impedes full freedom for the mission. The balance between the spiritual and apostolic man risks being shattered, and with it even the witness of being signs of communion, prophetic signs of the presence of God amidst the suffering brothers and sisters.

### **Which future?**

These points of inspiration mark out the convergence between the Montfortian missionary spirit and the call of the Church and the reality of Peru. The greatest part of the Montfort Missionaries actually working in Peru recognizes themselves in this convergence.

Periodic meetings and reflections on the economic situation of the country have deepened fundamental themes: liberation, incarnation, insertion, inculturation... In this moment, according to the directives of the CLAR and the major superiors, we are studying the theme of re-foundation. This will be the challenge for the coming years. What things must we renew in order to make our journey more incarnate and our life more prophetic for this present time? What objectives do we propose for ourselves, what steps do we take in order to go forward as a community, according to the spirit that animated Montfort in his time, attentive to the call of the Church and of today's society?

The response is not easy and it cannot be ours alone. We await also the orientations of the Congregation, remaining as always open to change, to community and personal searching.... There is work enough for all!

Lima, July 2001

*Fr. Giovanni Bigoni*  
*Fr. Ivo Libralato*

## **OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN**

### **Fr. Hendrik HENDRIKS**

Died 18 June 2001, in Ruppichteroth (Germany), aged 81, with 60 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1940, and was ordained a priest on 17 February 1946. A Dutchman by birth, he spent most of his priestly life in Germany, at the service of the church there in the dioceses of Aachen and Cologne. It was he who was the first parish-priest of the parish of St. Elisabeth entrusted to the Montfortians in Bonn, and he was also involved in Marian apostolate and in writing historical articles.

### **Fr. Carlo BERTON**

Died 19 June 2001, in Bergamo (Italy), aged 70, with 50 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1950, and was ordained a priest on 25 February 1956. His great desire was to be a missionary, and that same year he left for Madagascar, where he spent most of the rest of his life. He was able to immerse himself in the culture and the milieu of Madagascar, and was highly appreciated and esteemed by all for his ability, his sincerity, his zeal and consistency of life. In 1981, he was elected as a

General Assistant, and spent the next 6 years in Rome. But as soon as his term of office was over, he returned to Madagascar, where he devoted himself especially to the care of the young Malagasy candidates for the Congregation. A few months before his death, illness forced his return to Italy.

**Bro. THÉOPHILE (Joseph CADIEU)**

Died 3 July 2001, in Saint-Nazaire (France), aged 76, with 60 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 19 March 1941. His first appointment was to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, but after five years there he was moved to Pontchâteau, where he spent the rest of his life, 55 years in the service of the pilgrims to St. Louis Marie's Calvary, and the upkeep of the extensive grounds. He was well-known in the whole area for his joviality and generosity, but especially for his hard work. The last year of his life was marked by suffering, from the illness which brought him to his maker.

**Fr. Roger SCHMIT**

Died 15 August 2001, in St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre (France), aged 78, with 58 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1942, and was ordained a priest on 16 February 1947. After spending two years as a teacher of mathematics in the Minor Seminary of Pelousey, he went as a missionary to Haiti, where he spent most of the rest of his priestly life. He was a curate in the Cathedral in Port-de-Paix, Director of the College of Our Lady of Lourdes, administrator of the parish of Gros Morne, Diocesan Bursar, and many other things. From 1986 he spent two years in Paris helping in the Mission Procure. He returned to Haiti in 1988, but ill health finally forced his return to France and retirement in 1993.

**Bro ALEXANDER (Rudolf LEISTRA)**

Died 22 August 2001, in Valkenburg (Netherlands), aged 66 with 45 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 15 August 1956, and was stationed for the first few years of his religious life at the minor seminary in Schimmert. Then in 1964 his life-long dream of being a foreign missionary came true when he was sent to Mozambique. There he worked for 12 years looking after the buildings in Namuno mission. After the struggle for independence in Mozambique, he transferred to Malawi, where for many years he was in charge of the maintenance of the Montfort Hospital in Nchalo, then from 1992 manager of the plantation in Nantipwili. In May 2001, he had to return to Holland, where it was discovered he was suffering from a terminal cancer.

**Fr. Jacques HOEBERICHTS**

Died 3 September 2001, in Maastricht (Netherlands), aged 86 with 65 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1935, and was ordained a priest on 23 March 1941. After 10 years teaching at the minor seminary in Schimmert, he moved to Voorschoten, where he continued to teach, and was for a time the superior. In 1970 he was made assistant Procurator for the Missions, a post he held for many years. During that time he was much involved in MIVA, the organisation responsible for supplying vehicles to the missions. He retired in 1990, and in 1998 took up residence in Valkenburg, in the retirement home of the SMM.

**Fr. Marcel CORNET**

Died 4 October 2001, in Saint-Nazaire (France), aged 75 with 53 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1948 and was ordained a priest on 7 February 1954. The first 20 years of his priestly life were spent as a missionary in Haiti, and this experience marked the rest of his life. Returning to France in 1974, he was posted to several places before being appointed in 1986 to take charge of the Retreat and Spirituality Centre at Chézelles. There his welcoming personality made an enormous contribution to its development. After 14 years in Chézelles, he moved to Pontchâteau, where his presence was a blessing for the community until his rather unexpected death.