



For Immediate Release Contact:

Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC

fetediuduteche@gmail.com

www.fetediuduteche.org

June 28, 2019

(337) 394-6550

<https://www.facebook.com/CommunityofJesusCrusified/>

**Fifth Annual Fête-Dieu du Teche 38-mile Eucharistic Boat Procession to be held on August 15
Boat Registration is Now Open**

The fifth annual Eucharistic Procession down Bayou Teche will take place on Thursday, August 15. The date is important for Roman Catholics as it is the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patroness of the Acadian people and of Acadiana. It is also a day that marks the 254th anniversary of the arrival of French-Canadian immigrants who brought the Catholic faith to Acadiana after enduring great trials and suffering. Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC, organizer of the event, notes that “having a Eucharistic Procession by boat on the waters of the Teche rather than by foot in the streets makes a lot of sense. Fête-Dieu du Teche on the Feast of the Assumption recalls our rich Acadian history and, in a way, re-enacts the journey made by the Acadians 250 years ago.” The Acadians were persecuted for their Catholic faith and sent into exile from Nova Scotia. Many ended up settling in Louisiana. Fr. Champagne explains that having a boat procession with the Blessed Sacrament and a statue of the Assumption involving priests, religious, and laity is basically what happened in 1765. “In order to serve the Acadian settlers in the Attakapas district, Fr. Jean-Louis de Civrey accompanied the Acadians on their journey down the Bayou Teche. Fr. Civrey became the first resident priest. In his records, Fr. Civrey refers to his new home as “la Nouvelle Acadie” and his new parish “l’Église des Attakapas (Attakapas Church)” and later, “l’Église St-Martin de Tours (St. Martin de Tours Church)”.



It is believed that St. Martinville is named after the Church. Having the Catholic Priest accompany the Acadians on their journey to Acadiana is indicative of our ancestors’ great allegiance to their Catholic Faith, especially the Eucharist and Our Lady. Fête-Dieu du Teche today relives that original experience of the Acadians.”

Hundreds will travel by boat to celebrate this occasion in honoring the Blessed Sacrament and Acadian heritage. Last year the event was held on the Vermilion river to help celebrate



the centennial of the Diocese of Lafayette. Thousands travelled from throughout Louisiana and beyond to participate in the event. Many participated in the Eucharistic Procession by boat and others traveling by car and gathering along the banks of the bayou at the various stops. Fr. Jeremy Zipple, SJ traveled from New York to do a documentary on the Fête in 2017. He recounts, “I found the whole thing incredibly moving. It was beautiful to see an entire town coming together for prayer. It’s a

sense of communal identity we just don’t see much anymore in the Western world.” Bishop John Douglas Deshotel, D.D., a native son of Acadiana and the current Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, will begin this year’s event by celebrating the Mass of the Assumption in French at St. Leo the Great Church in Leonville at 8 am.

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15), is a very important feast in the Catholic Church, but especially for the Diocese of Lafayette. It is the Feast of the Acadians who settled here in 1765. The Acadians originally sailed to Nouvelle-Écosse (Nova Scotia) under the star of Our Lady of the Assumption and again during the Grand Dérangement. The Acadian flag, both Canadian and Louisiana Acadian, highlights the centrality of Our Lady of the Assumption for the Acadian people. The gold star on a white field represents “Our Lady of the Assumption”, Patroness of the Acadians. When the first settlers departed France for the New World, the Virgin Mary was highly revered. It was a period of great devotion to the Virgin. The King of



France, Louis XIII, and Pope Pius XI declared the Virgin Mary the patroness of the kingdom, (Patronne de Royaume) and Patroness Saint of all the Acadians in Canada, Louisiana and elsewhere. On August 15, 1638, France and her colonies were consecrated to Mary under the title “Our Lady of the Assumption”.



Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC, the organizer of the unique event, explains that during Fête-Dieu du Teche “the Blessed

Sacrament will be fixed on an altar on the lead boat under a canopy, with a pair of adorers in adoration between the towns visited. Another boat will carry the statue of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Eucharistic Procession will stop and disembark at makeshift altars along the Bayou Teche for recitation of the Rosary and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. For those who are unable to participate by boat, all are invited to join for Mass at St. Leo the Great in Leonville at 8 am and then to drive and gather at any of the planned stops along the banks behind the various churches along Bayou Teche. Priests will be available at each stop for Confessions.”



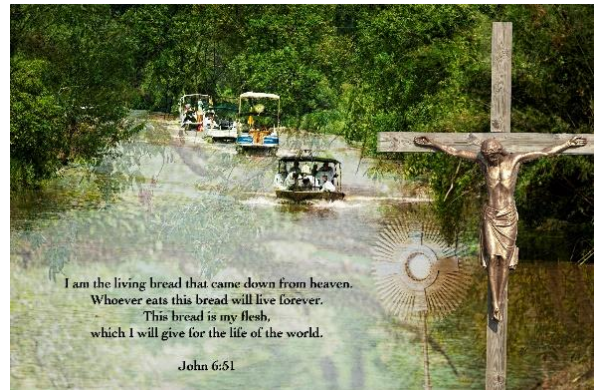


Bishop Douglas Deshotel, who will begin the day with a French Mass of the Assumption at St. Leo the Great in Leonville, notes, “I have been edified by the devotion and participation of so many priests, deacons, religious and lay faithful. I think such a public Eucharistic celebration is an excellent manifestation of the new evangelization that we so desperately need.” Bishop Glen Provost, a native son of the Diocese of Lafayette and bishop of Lafayette’s daughter diocese, the Diocese of Lake Charles, reflecting on Fête-Dieu

du Teche says, “Let us remember that the Acadians and French who first settled in our area were Catholic, and in the case of the Acadians were expelled from Nova Scotia primarily because they were Catholic. It is our history we remember. It is our faith we celebrate. It is our Lord we adore and worship.” Fr. Champagne adds, “We need a day that is a true ‘feast day,’ in the old sense of the word - a *holiday* that’s truly a *Holy Day* ... where we can really, all day long, have a *feast day*. Such is our celebration Fête-Dieu du Teche!” In his homily at St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church last year Bishop Provost quoted Lafayette’s second bishop, Bishop Maurice Schexnayder who predicted, “The waters of the Teche will be drained to the ground before the people of Acadiana lose their Catholic Faith.” Such a large throng of faithful gathering on the Feast of the Assumption for Fête-Dieu du Teche points to the veracity of the good bishop’s prophecy.

**Itinerary for Centennial Eucharistic Boat Procession on Bayou Teche
Thursday, August 15, 2018
(Feast of the Assumption of Mary)**

- 8:00 a.m.** Holy Mass in French with Bishop John Douglas Deshotel, D.D. at St. Leo the Great Church, Leonville
- 9:00 a.m.** Procession from St. Leo’s to Leonville boat landing
- 9:30 a.m.** Boat Procession departs
- 10:20 a.m.** Arrive at Arnaudville and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 11:45 a.m.** Arrive at Cecilia and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 1:35 p.m.** Arrive at Breaux Bridge and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 3:15 p.m.** Arrive at Parks and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 4:45 p.m.** Flotilla arrives at St. Martinville; Procession to Notre Dame de Perpetuel Secours for Benediction
- 5:00 p.m.** Procession from Notre Dame to St. Martin de Tours Church for Benediction
- 5:30 p.m.** Procession down Main Street to Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel for Solemn Vespers & Final Benediction
- 6:00 p.m.** Solemn Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament



** Confessions will be available at all stops in Mobile Units along the Procession

Boat Registration

To register a boat for the procession, send an email to fetediuduteche@gmail.com or download a registration form at <http://www.fetediuduteche.org/registration19.pdf> Once the registration form is completed and waivers signed, either mail them to 103 Railroad Avenue, St. Martinville, LA 70582 or scan the completed forms and email them to the above email address as an attachment. The boat coordinator will contact you with details. The procession will travel at about 8 mph and thus only motorized vessels are allowed. Catholic schools are encouraged to send their students or a representative group to be present at the opening French Mass in Leonville with Bishop Deshotel, at one or more of the stops along the procession, and especially to participate in the final foot procession in St. Martinville.



Additional Information

For more information, visit the website www.fetediuduteche.org or Fete-Dieu du Teche on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityofJesusCrusified/> or contact Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC by telephone at (337) 394-6550 or email at fetediuduteche@gmail.com

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