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Revisiting “Sites of Spiritan Spirituality, May 14-June 3, 2023” (Supplemental content)

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REVISITING “SITES OF SPIRITAN SPIRITUALITY, MAY 14-JUNE 3, 2023”

INTRODUCTION

How do we renew and refresh our spirituality? How do we awaken our awareness for what feeds and sustains us? A dozen of us ended the Easter season and entered Pentecost time with a three-week trip to France entitled “Sites of Spiritan Spirituality,”¹ from May 14 to June 3, 2023. Jean-Michel Gelmetti, a Spiritan priest resident at Duquesne, and Dr. Ann Steele Labounsky, Chair of Organ and Sacred Music at Duquesne’s Mary Pappert School of Music, joined forces to plan the trip. Scholarship monies were provided through the generosity of Duquesne’s Day of Giving. The gracious welcome we received at each of our guest houses in France helped us focus on the wider spiritual community supporting us. We became pilgrims, sharing prayer, worship, music, and fellowship. Through doing so, we became more grateful for the spiritual and interdisciplinary legacy that Duquesne offers its students and the wider community. We became aware that Duquesne is more than just Pittsburgh, important as that it. We became more aware as well for the way in which the Holy Spirit evolves and continues its work in our lives. As Fr. Jean-Michel reminded us in his homily while quoting Pope Francis: “Do not be afraid to be possessed by the Holy Spirit.”

A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY PILGRIMAGE

Fr. Jean-Michel wanted us to be aware of the origins of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and to know the wonderful stories of dedication and courage, as well as the intertwining of numerous people and events across France and Africa. His determination to have us actually visit past and continuing sites of Spiritan spirituality took us from Paris to the Drôme Valley near Provence, to Alsace-Lorraine, to Normandy and Brittany, and many places in

1. The trip was sponsored by the Keyboard and Sacred Music Area of the Duquesne University Mary Pappert School of Music. Fr. Gelmetti’s air travel ticket was sponsored by the Direction of the Duquesne Mission Identity Department.

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between, all on our own rent mini-bus and with nights spent at Spiritan guest houses or retreat centers dedicated to spiritual hospitality. We could never have had the significant experience we had without Father's extensive knowledge of the Spiritan Communities in France and the enormous amount of work that he put into preparing the trip. Six Herculean figures of our Spiritan history came to life through the visits and information we received, helping us understand the legacy that Duquesne continues to preserve: Claude-François Poullart des Places, Francois Marie Paul Libermann, Jacques Désiré Laval, Daniel Brottier, Joseph Strub, and Lucien Deiss. We were drawn more fully into the blessings the Spiritans have received through St Theresa, the little flower of Lisieux, and Our Lady of Pontmain.

Dr. Labounsky expanded our spirituality and the musicianship necessary to support it by having the eight organists on the trip, young students among them, play as many important and historic organs as possible. She herself played three concerts, in Allex, Marmoutier, and Pontmain, but she insisted that organ-time be primarily for her students, to expand their experience and their resumes; she shared the concert at Pontmain with two of her students, to overwhelming applause. One can only imagine the innumerable letters and emails and phone calls required to receive permission to do so from the resident organists, sometimes protective of their historic instruments. That so many agreed is due in large measure to Dr. Labounsky's years in France and her own reputation there.

One would have needed to be present to record the dexterity of our organists as they climbed the narrow staircases and high balconies to reach some of the Grand Organs. Physical prowess is required, even before sitting down at the instruments; it was richly rewarded as music poured into sacred space. I remember particularly in Notre-Dame in Strasbourg: the cathedral, packed mid-morning with tourists and not particularly quiet, hushed as the first notes surprised the crowd. Immediately all eyes and cameras craned upward to focus on the beautiful high-mounted instrument. The organist and assistant are not usually visible, but the music saturates the space.

By its nature, these three weeks were an interdisciplinary pilgrimage, with sites wonderfully intertwined. Highlights only are possible for this trip that took us to ten cathedrals and basilicas, innumerable churches and chapels, and locations with historical significance across France. On arriving, we had a day of rest just outside Paris in the Spiritan Guest House and Spiritual Formation Center at Chevilly-Larue, originally a hunting lodge for the nobility with considerable property

that has been given to the town for a natural park and public garden. It was good to wander through the cherry orchard and see the bees at work. Good also to see the original watercolors by Maurice Briault with their sensitivity to the African landscape and people.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITANS' MISSIONARY WORK

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We learned a great deal more about Africa and the Spiritans in Africa from the knowledgeable lecture and slides presented by the Spiritan father, Francois Nicolas.

Before leaving Paris, we visited the Chapel of St Theresa in Auteuil, in the 16th arrondissement in Paris. We were welcomed by Louis Cesbron, CSSp, and three other Spiritans. Here in 1923, Daniel Brottier became the director of *Apprentis-Orphelins d'Auteuil*, today *Fondation d'Auteuil*, a trade school founded in 1866 for the orphans abandoned on the streets of Paris.

Brottier was able to raise urgently needed funds only through his fervent prayers to Saint Theresa of Lisieux and her miraculous answers. The possibilities for a spiritual friendship with a saint are seen throughout his life, starting with her marvellous protection while he served as chaplain on the Front during WWI. At Auteuil, he became the father of these children gathered into the School, but St. Theresa was clearly the mother they also needed. This school has now been replicated across France, providing emotional support and vocational training to hundreds of children and young people. When we reached Normandy, we visited the Apprentice School at the Château des Vaux and tour its impressive facilities and amazing student-tended gardens. We were able to do so because of the staggering hospitality of Calvin Massawe, CSSp, who opened up his home to us. We were also able to learn of the heroic work of Jacques Laval, a son of this Normandy region, the "Apostle of Mauritius" in the Indian Ocean. Starting with this introduction in Paris to the Spiritans' work among the poor, we were ready to set off for our time of praying and playing.

ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSE IN ALLEX, DROME VALLEY

First there was the long and beautiful drive to the hill-side little village of Allex in Drôme in SE France, within the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region. The landscape was constantly changing and at the end we could see the foothills of the alps off in the distance.

Our destination was an 18th century palace, given to the Spiritans by a aristocratic family, the La Tour du Pin, at the beginning of

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the 20th century. It is now the St. Joseph Welcoming Center, graced with many stunning sculptures of Jacques Hartman (1908–1994) and sculptures and paintings of Élie Émile Gelmetti (1921–2019), Fr. Jean-Michel's father. It is a beautiful sanctuary with its Rothinger organ on which all the students played and on which Dr. Labounsky gave an Ascension Day Concert. The organ is small and unassuming, but well-voiced and easy to play; all its sounds blended together beautifully. All of us sang the Ascension Day Mass, whose celebrant was Fr. Francis Weiss assisted by Brother Mathieu Boulanger, and a lay associate, Marie-Jeanne Ménesson, all Spiritans. We found the House committed to organic gardening, both practising and teaching care of the earth, following the Pope's *Laudato Si'*. Its Spiritan Museum of African Art is a collection of rare and historic pieces beautifully presented with commentary that witnesses to the Spiritan passion for the history and culture of Africa. A number of us felt that Alex would be a retreat to which we wished to return.

IN ALSACE, AT THE REINACKER, AND STRASBOURG

On to Reinacker, where we were welcomed by the Franciscan Sisters of Notre-Dame—and by a stork perching on the convent roof, the region's symbol of blessings.

From Reinacker, we could drive to Strasbourg, thronged with visitors because of the Ascension Day Weekend. The Strasbourg Cathedral was breathtaking, in every sense of the word. Our organists were particularly impressed by the chance to play an original Silbermann organ. Here are the astute observations by Jonathan Hoyt, a graduate student at Duquesne:

Being an original baroque-period organ, it had a grit and character that I haven't seen on a neo-baroque instrument. In common with the very different organ at Alex, it shared an almost perfect voicing. On these two organs one can combine practically any stop and find that they blend well together. Even with only a few minutes for each of us to play, the time in the organ loft has changed how I look at organs today, and has made me aware of so many of the subtleties in organ building that often get overlooked that really make an organ shine.

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Afterwards we saw the Major Seminary that Libermann had attended. Fr. Jean-Michel insisted on taking us all to a sidewalk café down the street from the Cathedral, and treating us to a *Flammekueche*, or *tarte flambée*, with beer, a regional speciality. It would be sacrilege to call it pizza! We then drove to Haguenau to see the St-George Collegiate Church, and then the famous basilica Notre-Dame of Marienthal, the “Shrine of the Alsatian people”, with the *Maison des Prêtres* school which Joseph Strub attended from age seven to fourteen while his uncle Sébastien Strub was the Shrine Rector and school Superior. At this sanctuary church, we were amazed by the images of Mary and by the sepulchre of a recumbent Christ in whose chest the Eucharist was formerly placed during Holy Week. Everyone had a chance to play the Grand Organ, constructed in 1962 by Schwenkedel and a draw for organists in Europe and America.

ASCENSION SUNDAY FOR THE FOUNDER OF DUQUESNE

On the next day, a Sunday, we got ready with a mass in Kleingœft, a small village church near Reutenbourg (Reinacker), and then drove for quite a while to Roeshwoog, close to the German border, and it was worth it for the scenery, the perceptible difference in the way French is spoken and for meeting the family of Joseph Strub, the founder of Duquesne. It could have been daunting, given that none of the family spoke English and few of us spoke French - let alone the Alsatian idiom. But everyone was very kind and friendly and we had a great time. We enjoyed excellent French cuisine at the “Au Lion d’Or” restaurant, then strolled through the village to visit the Strub family’s church, Saint-Barthélémy de Roeschwoog, where one of the sons of our host Louis Strub is sacristan. The exchange of addresses and e-mails promises continued links. The hugs and kisses we exchanged as we took our leave were no mere gestures of French courtesy; the family deeply appreciated our gesture of willingness to spend some time with descendants of a brother of Fr. Strub, founder of Duquesne. How fitting it would be to build a bridge between our university and this part of France, and to keep Duquesne’s Spiritan roots and heritage alive! Strub’s roots in this hard-working, unpretentious countryside - a region so often torn apart by struggles with Germany - perhaps explain his determination, once he arrived in the United States, to create schools for African-Americans and for Irish and German immigrants. Origins play a mysterious role in our own formation. It was also tempting to recognize Strub’s gentle personality in the kindness of the family of Louis Strub we spent much of the afternoon with. Haven’t Joseph Strub’s personality and manners been compared many times to those of Libermann?

On the way home, we were in for a surprise. We made a short

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detour to the small village of Eschbach, where we tried to establish another link with Duquesne by locating the house where the famous Spiritan composer Lucien Deiss was born. Determined to establish this link, we stopped off at the village church to try and find a stele bearing the family surname. A woman appeared almost immediately as we walked through the cemetery, soon joined by another, and then many more. Shortly afterwards, the mayor himself appeared to help us in our search. And we did find a tombstone in the family's name, although Deiss himself is buried in Chevilly-LaRue with other Spiritans, and the women finally pointed out the location of the Deiss family home, a few blocks behind the church. The exceptional recording of his music, as well as that of Jean Langlais, was made in the Grande Chapelle of Chevilly-LaRue. Deiss made a major contribution to Vatican II. His music and writings on Sacred Scripture are still of great relevance to the Catholic and wider Christian community.

SAVERNE, THE TOWN WHERE LIBERMANN WAS BORN

Monday morning, and we were up early to drive to Saverne for what was to be a Liebermann Day. First there was Mass at St. Florent's House, Fr. Jean-Michel preaching and presiding; then we went to the large town church, next to *le Jardin Public Interrelieieux* (Interreligious Public Garden), a place of contemplation designed as a tool for dialogues between Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and those who are asking questions. Finally, we saw the place where Rabbi Liebermann's house used to be and where Jacob (later on Francis) Liebermann's childhood was spent, we visited the town's Synagogue, and then the town's Jewish cemetery where Rabbi Liebermann was laid to rest. Since there are very few Jews left in Saverne, the cemetery is now cared for by Christians, one from the town's Protestant Church. We had a chance to lunch, back at St. Florent's, with African Spiritans.

The entire commitment in Saverne, it would seem, is to interfaith and interdenominational work. A concern for care for our planet is also evident: "*Agir pour notre avenir!*" (Taking action for our future!), One of our guides spoke seriously of his hope of bringing his high school students to visit us in Pittsburgh—possibly Duquesne—so that together our young people can speak of the Holocaust and our hope for the future. Saverne's concern for healing and care is appropriate in a city that gave birth to Liebermann and his prayer that we put Charity above all else. This full day ended in the formidable fortified Abbaye church of Marmoutier, a big village close to Saverne, where Dr. Labounsky played a concert on the famous Silbermann organ

CATHEDRALS AND OTHER CULTURAL LANDMARKS

We now plunged into the power and beauty of God's Charity to us by visiting a series of cathedrals. Gothic cathedrals are impressive.

Metz Cathedral is no exception, with its imposing nave and countless stained-glass windows. Here in the "God's lantern", as the cathedral is nicknamed, we have seen Chagall's brilliant colors and brilliant narration of scenes from Genesis and Exodus; his stained-glass windows demand a new narrative from those who are drawn to them.

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The choir organ was guarded by the red eyes and tongue of a dragon statue, *Le Graouilly*, which threatened the city from the Roman amphitheater until St. Clement destroyed it; *Le Graouilly* still allowed us to play the organ! To be able to go and play on the 14th-century Renaissance organ, mounted above the modern choir organ, was the number one privilege of the day. Our stay ended with a descent into the crypt itself, where the "Cantilenus metensis" was born in the mid-8th century, and where we listened to a brilliant lecture kindly given by Miss Reine-Marie Démollière, on this chant renamed in the 11th century: "Gregorian chant".

Reims Cathedral welcomed us with the sculpted figure standing on its portal, of a smiling angel. Reims was badly damaged in the First World War, but the angel is there to remind us of God's abiding love. A powerful statue of Joan of Arc welcomes visitors inside. The cathedral is bathed in light thanks to all its stained glass windows, most of which are an exceptional shade of blue. Its altar is adorned with the swirling blue of Chagall's stained-glass windows depicting the birth, crucifixion and glory of Christ.

At Notre-Dame Cathedral in Amiens, we are greeted by a weeping angel, a large baby carved in stone, holding its tiny head in its hand. His image became particularly famous on postcards after Amiens was liberated by the Allies in 1918. France's largest church, and Europe's largest Gothic cathedral, its architecture is harmonious thanks to the craftsmanship that went into its construction from the 13th century onwards. It contains a labyrinth and, as with all places of worship, the reminder that its beauty makes it a house of prayer; in this case, a site where prayers have been offered for at least 1700 years.

The city of Amiens has given us another gift: its floating gardens. This community of small islands, often with a house or cottage on them, has given Amiens the name "Venice of the North". We took the boat tour, of course, pronouncing the names of the birds that accompanied us on the water.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WWI FRONT-LINE CHAPLAIN BROTTIER

It's worth remembering Brottier's time at the front as a chaplain during WW1, despite France's incredible recovery from the wars. He marvelled at his own survival during the war, and later discovered that little Therese of the Child Jesus had protected him in his work supporting Dakar and the orphans of France. This is what he called his "practical union" with God. So, just before our visit to Metz and Amiens, we went to Verdun and the cemetery that honors the longest battle of the war, with over 700,000 French and German casualties. Photographs cannot convey the solemnity of these vast fields of crosses or the ossuary containing piles of unidentified bones and skulls.

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Afterwards we drove through the countryside, dotted with villages erased by the fighting and now visible only through a sign recording the name. Brottier as chaplain on the front lines on and a deep feeling of sadness were filling us all the more. At one such site, the former village of Ornes, what remains are the stone pillars of the village church, surrounded now by dandelions, clover, and tiny marguerites in the grass. On the stone altar, with its simple cross, we read: O crux/ave/spes/unica. "Hail to the cross, our only hope." These words have a long history in Catholic and Anglican piety and have been set to music, by Franz Liszt among others. But who could forget their relevance in this space!

AMIENS AND THE FIRST STEPS OF LIBERMANN'S SOCIETY

We were reminded of another chapter in Libermann's and even Strub's lives when we were able to walk the outside of the Abbey of Notre-Dame du Gard, at Crouy-Saint-Pierre, not far from Amiens. It is soon to become a high-end hotel, but many of us felt Libermann's strong charisma. He needed a building of this size since he continued to gather followers and students, hundreds in a short time. Thus, this site became necessary because his previous novitiate at La Neuville, which opened on the outskirts of Amiens in 1841, had become too crowded. He had celebrated the foundational mass of his new society only two days before: the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary.

There was an excitement at La Neuville, the conviction of new birth. So many young men came that some had to sleep in the hallways or beneath the stairs. They recorded that they felt as nourished by Libermann's conversations and manner with them while they gardened to provide food for the community, as when they attended his more formal talks on formation. This excitement and need was the preparation for the important move to the Abbey of the Gard. Let us note that it is at Le Gard that Strub received part of his spiritan formation.

Before visiting the cathedral in Amiens, we had stopped with the bus to catch a sight of a now elders' house that was the first La Neuville Noviciate.

It was getting dark now that we had left Amiens and Picardy, and were entering the Pays d'Auge countryside towards Lisieux in Normandy.

LISIEUX, ST THÉRÈSE AND A CERTAIN BROTTIER

Lisieux is dedicated to Saint Thérèse, the Little Flower. Roses are her signature, her way of whispering that God responds to us. We were all moved by her and by her story. Always depicted with the roses that she loved, she filled her life of twenty-four years with acts of devotion and sacrifice. Given permission to enter a strict Carmelite convent at the unusually young age of fifteen, her rule of life was to consecrate all her actions, even the smallest, to God's honor and glory. Who can forget her definition of prayer as a burst of the heart towards God ("un élan du Cœur"). Her spiritual friendship, i.e., after her death, with Fr. Brottier, shaped his life and mission. Her "Little Way" encourages all of us to put love into the most ordinary acts of our lives. We began our day with Mass celebrated by Fr. Jean-Michel. Our day ended with a visit to her basilica, splendid because of the love that people feel for her. The organ in the crypt, on which we were invited to play, was splendid. Our guest house was filled with kids on retreat in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation; it seemed fitting for them to get to know Theresa, who was herself eleven when she made her first Communion.

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JACQUES DÉSIRÉ LAVAL

On our way to Chartres, still in the north west, and before the wonderful hospitality we received during our one night and extensive morning tour of the facilities at the Apprentis d'Auteuil Foundation at the Château des Vaux, we wanted to pay homage to the life work of the Spiritan father, Jacques Désiré Laval. Accordingly, we drove to Pinterville to see the small village church where Laval served for two years. As we lingered there, we were joined by a local writer and photographer, who presented us with a book filled with information about Laval.

Laval's life story is inspiring: Pious during his medical studies, he began to abandon religion. Then, secure and popular in a medical practice in a small village, he began an increasingly lavish life, drawn even to high-class horseback riding. But his con-

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science began to trouble him. In 1834, he radically converted and became a parish priest. His meeting at the St-Sulpice seminary in Paris with Libermann's companions Le Vasseur and Tisserant, and their subsequent visit to Normandy as fellow seminarians, who told him about Libermann's *Ceuvre des Noirs* (Works for the Blacks), sparked his desire to serve in Africa.

After leaving Pinterville, he became a member of Libermann's Society of priests and went to the English colony of Mauritius, an island in the Indian Ocean. Inspired by Libermann, his mission was a resounding success with his illiterate parishioners. He died after fifteen years of tireless work with the poor and sick, for whom his medical training had prepared him. He was also tireless in his own daily hours of devotion. There had been none to welcome him when he arrived; 40,000 accompanied their beloved Father to his grave. Pinterville remains very proud of having had "*un saint de chez nous*", a saint right among us!

CHARTRES

It was now the eve of Pentecost and we were soon on our way to Chartres. Once more, we were surprised. We knew the reputation of Chartres and its windows. A blue worthy of Mary is called "blue as the glass of Chartres." What we experienced was not a treasure of art history, but an active living parish! We could not walk the labyrinth because it was covered with chairs. We couldn't wander the sacred space because it was filled with families gathered for a Confirmation. Instead, we witnessed a church being used as Church: As some of us watched the Archbishop of Chartres anoint the young men and women into their Sacrament of Faith, we saw families—mothers, fathers, confirmands, and relatives—engage each other in this Holy Sacrament, and were stunned. It was also moving to see a private room, with glass walls, where a priest was deep in conversation offering liturgical concern and several young acolytes, all excited but serious, as they prepared to enter for Mass

SOLEMNES

We arrived at Solesmes, in the Loire region of the NW of France, just in time for Compline, greeted by the Benedictine Abbey rising austere above the bank of the Sarthe river. Now we would finally hear Gregorian Chant prayed to perfection—and in person, actually sitting in the Solesmes' chapel and worshipping

with them. This monastery was founded in 1010. It continued until 1791, when it was “suppressed” until 1833. Despite a challenged history, it has survived. What a privilege it was the next day, Pentecost Sunday, to be called to church by the bells, and to hear the chant reinforced and made vibrant by the singing of four new monks. Hearing it in Latin, as it has been guarded and sung for centuries, moved us into those centuries of music and devotion. It was both remarkable and eye-opening. We could not hear this at home, even though we are experiencing a Gregorian revival here. In similar manner, the art in the transepts of the Abbey Chapel, South and North, required us to deepen what we might assume we know about the Entombment of Christ and Mary’s Assumption. In the quiet offered by Solesmes, we could consider such mysteries. Clearly, we did not need an excuse to be there, but it is worth noting that the first biographer of Libermann was a Benedictine from Solesmes, Dom Pitra, the secretary of Dom Béranger himself.

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Our private meeting on Sunday afternoon with Fr. Guilmard was also a great privilege. Affable and perched on a table, our distinguished host considered all our questions. When we finally asked him about the seeming apathy towards faith, he smiled: He asked whether we attend to the sounds of children—they are our hope. “With every baptism, the church grows,” he said. “The Church stands and endures.” How often can one take the whole of Pentecost as a day apart? Although many of us took home far too much of the Book Store, Solesmes truly offered us a Sabbath rest. And walking down to our dinner, some of us saw a group of chatting, laughing young monks. We waved; they waved. They were clearly enjoying some Sabbath time too. We had lovely meals and generously appointed apartments; I’m not sure anyone was ready to leave the next morning.

IN PONTMAIN, WITH THE OBLATES

But we were heading for Pontmain, also in northwest France, another marial site because of the apparition of Our Lady in 1871, today entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a missionary congregation friend of the Spiritans. Our excellent guide was a Spiritan lay associate, Miryam Herveau, and our guesthouse a Marian shrine, which is important since the Spiritans are also a Marian congregation. Labounsky and his students, Luke Ponce and Jonathan Hoyt, immediately had to prepare for their concert in the basilica. The concert, brilliantly performed by each of them,

drew a full house. Members of the association *Les Amis de Jean Langlais* (The friends of Jean Langlais) even attended.

Portmain is thus a sacred site because of the appearance of the Virgin Mary on January 17th, 1871. In that winter, the war made situation in France desperate. Food was scarce, the dead and the wounded were being carried home from the Front. The four children to whom our Lady appeared had been pounding nettles, hoping to make them edible for their cattle. And then, as they left the barn for supper, Our Lady showed herself to them—and later three younger ones-- and only them for three hours. She was clothed in a blue dress, spangled with golden stars, and a golden crown. Three bright stars surrounded the Lady and these were seen by the villagers. With outstretched hands, she smiled at the children, so in need of comfort on this bleak night.

Soon a scroll unrolled under her feet. One by one, golden letters appeared that were spelled out by the children: “Oh! Do pray my children. God will answer you very soon. My son lets himself be touched.” The apparition was a sign of an opened sky for all there. Peace was signed eleven days later. A year later, the Bishop of Laval acknowledged the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Portmain to be genuine.

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AT POUILLART DES PLACES IN RENNES

The next morning, we headed to Rennes, the capital city of Brittany, and to the House of the Spiritans there, to learn about the first founder of the Spiritans, Claude-Francois Poullart des Places, and to see the streets where he had been born, the places where he had lived and worshipped before he headed to Paris. Raymond Young, CSSp, our guide for the day, and the other Spiritans treated us royally, with a splendid lunch and a car for those who couldn't manage all the hills.

Although Poullart's wealthy parents wanted him to become an influential lawyer and he agreed to law school and a period of reflection, he wanted to become a priest and soon knew that he had to do so. Throughout his childhood, he had been blessed by friends and mentors whose spirituality had been shaped by intense efforts in Brittany to move Catholic practices to a more evangelical faith. Gone to study in Paris, he began assisting seminarians who desperately needed financial help, using his own modest income and living like the least among them. Then he realized that they also needed a true spiritual foundation. This great conversion re-

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sulted, in 1703, in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit that began gathering followers determined to live as simply as their founder, no matter what that meant in terms of hunger or cold. The winter of 1709 was one of the harshest within memory. The price of food skyrocketed, but many died simply from the extreme cold. Becoming desperately ill from pleurisy and fever, Poullart died in 1709 at the age of thirty. Since, in 1848, his Congregation would join with Libermann's Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, he can be considered Spiritan's "First Founder." In his life, one can see passions shared by Libermann: Christ's preferential option and love for the poor and Christ's invitation to be among others as one who serves.

A RELAXING DAY AT THE ST-MICHEL MOUNT

Our final adventure was to drive to the coast to Mont Saint-Michel, a tidal island right on the border of Normandy and Brittany. Before reaching the Mont, we had a good visit at the Museum of Manuscripts in Avranches: Interactive, multidisciplinary, fascinating. This was followed by lunch at a first-class restaurant, with a view of the Mont in the distance. Even from a distance, we could feel the dignity and power of this abbey-fortress, perched high on its rocks, dedicated since the Middle Ages to the copying and preserving of sacred manuscripts. It has stood firm for a millenium, even though the Germans hoped to take it. For centuries, it has been a major destination for pilgrims.

We walked on foot for miles, like real pilgrims, because there was no parking for our minibus. But that gave us an afternoon, bathed in sea air and sun, with the tide coming in beside our walkway and the coastline of England just visible. Some of us walked more deliberately than others. But we were all drawn, step by step, as the postcard promise of this noble and sacred place grew ever more distinct.

BACK TO PARIS AND DEPARTURE

And finally, home to Paris and Chevilly.

Dr. Labounsky and her cousin Dora Odarenko got to spend some important time in the Spiritan Archives with Fr. Paul Coulon. Dr. Labounsky had wanted to determine the relationship between Libermann and Guéranger, the Benedictine monk who re-established the use of Gregorian Chant. Through talking and looking at documents, including finding a reference

from Coulon's seminal biography of Libermann², it was clear that Libermann's allegiance to the Roman Rite, which includes Gregorian Chant, stemmed from his absolute allegiance to Rome. As we were leaving the last day of our time in France, Fr. Coulon came to the bus to sing for us the chants that Lucien Deiss sang at Chevilly during the last days of his life there. Clearly, he didn't want us to leave!

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For all of us, in our last two days in Paris, we played organs, visited as many cathedrals and churches as possible, visited the Mother House, and saw friends. We could also simply be tourists, take a boat tour on the Seine, and drink champagne in the Tour Eiffel. Of course, we often simply had fun. There were wonderful times of laughter and trying to improve our French! Who can forget that fresh bread every morning, often with home-made preserves—not to mention being instructed to drink our morning coffee in bowls! Some of the students had their first raw oysters! We had exceptional guides and chauffeurs. Each of us also recorded being moved in personal ways: the young teens from Paris at Lisieux, on retreat with vigilant chaperones, but still cutting loose at times and just running and laughing like kids; Fr. Jean-Michel's pride in his birthplace, shared during our long drives; the realization by our youngest member that many of the cathedrals and organs were older than the country from which we come; the poppies crowding the roadsides, even into Paris; the owl seeming to answer the early morning church bells one morning in the Reinacker...

For many, the trip was deeply and personally transformative, both educationally and spiritually. The Spiritan sites impressed us as being peaceful, beautiful, and purposeful. We realized the sacredness of our journey as we came to understand more of the Spiritan way of life. Duquesne University will always be associated now with the Spiritans, and vice versa. Throughout we had been weaving together history and reverence, tradition mediated by our own playing, our prayers, and our shared conversation. Pamela Shaw spoke for the musicians among us when she wrote:

Visiting cathedrals and churches where great organists thrived, served, and continue to make great music provided the context for our own organ playing experiences

2. PAUL COULON, PAULE BRASSEUR et collaborateurs, *Libermann 1802-1852, Une pensée et une mystique missionnaires* [Paul Coulon, Paule Brasseur and contributors, Libermann 1802-1852, A missionary thought and mysticism], Cerf, 1988.

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while on the trip. Sitting on the organ bench and thinking about the famous organists and composers who had been there before us made our own music come alive in an unforgettable way. Hearing, playing the organ and studying music in the future will never be the same for us. The connection will be real and lasting because music history came alive in an authentic way.

One of our brochures reminded us that "It is essential to see that, in all our travels, we are being given space for an interior encounter; a pathway opens before us on which to discern what is important from what is not." In this way, each of us carried home much that is critical to our well-being—spiritual and cultural. These sites, both priestly and musical—so carefully chosen, so clearly intertwined-- filled our souls in many ways and will continue their work within us.

*Reverend Dora Janeway Odarenko
and recollections by members of the trip to France:
"Sites of Spiritan Spirituality".
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States.*

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