



## World Council of the Marianist Family Consejo Mundial de la Familia Marianista

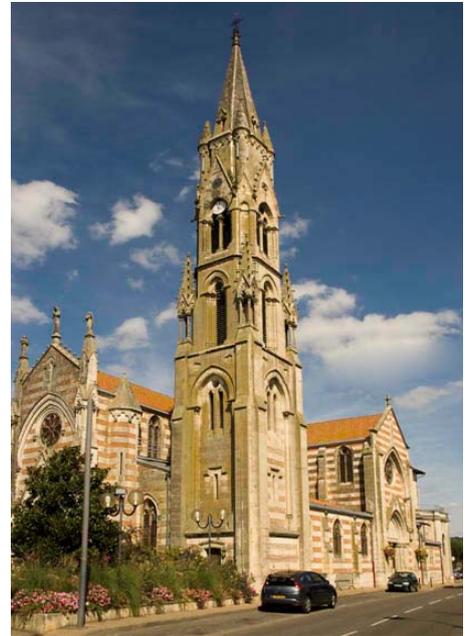
**WORLD DAY OF MARIANIST PRAYER – 9**

**OCTOBER 2016**

**HISTORY OF THE PILGRIMAGES TO**

**OUR LADY OF *Bon Rencontre***

The town of Bon Rencontre, which was called Pau in the Middle Ages, acquired its current name only in the 16th century after the discovery of a statuette of the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to the legend, around 1550, the youngest son of a working class family, Jacques Frayssinet, noticed that one of his cattle used to leave the herd in order to kneel in front of a bush. The young man, curious about the phenomenon, approached the bush and found a statuette of the Blessed Virgin about one foot high. He took it home and showed it to his mother, who exclaimed: “O my! God has given us this good meeting [*bonne rencontre*].” That expression gave the name to the little statue and to the village. It was deposited in a cabinet in the house. When the pastor of Sainte Radegund Church wanted it brought to him to see it, it had disappeared without a trace. The young man found the statuette in the bush again. He took it to the pastor, who put it in an honorable place, but the statuette was not happy about it and returned into the bush. The pastor, finally understanding that it



Basilica of Our Lady of Bon Rencontre

was there that it wished to be honored, put it into a niche at the foot of a wooden cross. The cross was later replaced by a little oratory, which was blessed on August 27, 1551. At that spot, given the miracles which stamped a seal of authenticity upon the origin of the shrine, there began the pilgrimages which immediately took on considerable importance. In 1600, a church was built next to the shrine of the Virgin. That undertaking, initiated under the leadership of the Archbishop Nicolas de Villars of Agen, was completed in 1604.

From 1611 to the French Revolution, the pilgrimage site was cared for by the religious of the Third Order of St. Francis, whose monastery of Bon Rencontre had been founded by Marguerite de Valois.

Towards the middle of the 19th century, the church became too small to handle the pilgrimages, and the decision was made to construct the current basilica, the Basilica of Our Lady of Bon Rencontre.



The miraculous statuette, made of an unknown material and about 8” high, with its face worn by the pious touches of the pilgrims, is now enclosed in a reliquary that is available for viewing behind the main altar of the Basilica.

Upon the initiative of the Marist Fathers, backed by Bishop de Vezins and requested by Father Convert, who was in charge of the renovations of Bon Encontre, a large statue of the Blessed Virgin on the hill, originally planned for a height of about 50’, was erected in 1861 and stood at the height of 55’ in 1880 after a restoration.

For 500 years, the town welcomed pilgrimages without interruption, except for a pause during the period of the French Revolution. Queens, like Marguerite de Navarre, princes, consuls, confraternities of penitents, parishes from Agen, Guyenne, and the surrounding provinces followed one another to gather at Bon Encontre. The pilgrimages were above all a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and occurred principally in the month of May, Mary’s month. (Cf. <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bon-Encontre>)

### Prayer to Our Lady of Bon Encontre

*You, whom our forebears loved so much and whom, after their example,  
we too cherish*

*tenderly, graciously grant to us, as you did to them, marks of your holy  
protection.*

*Help us in our needs, console us in all our sufferings*

*And after you have aided us in this life, help us at the hour of our death.*

*Amen.*

### Our Founders and Bon Encontre

Bon Encontre was a very popular pilgrimage site in Adèle’s time. There are some references to it in her letters:

“Dear Agathe, You must have thoroughly enjoyed the little pilgrimage to Bon Encontre.

How good God is, and how much he helps us in our weaknesses!

Should we not then be filled with joy and gratitude for his kindness and filled with trust and peace?” (*Letter 278.5 to Agathe Diché, September 20, 1815*).

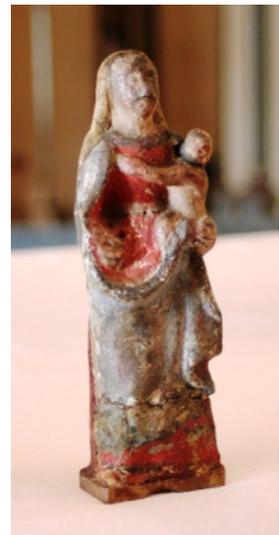
“Your mother is well. She spent three days at Our Lady’s. We are all quite well.” (*Letter 404.7 to Mother Thérèse Yannasch, September 15, 1820*).

During the Revolution, the Virgin of Bon Encontre was profaned and processions of reparation were organized, as mentioned by Adèle:

“The Sodality here is growing in all its branches. There is a lot of zeal.

There was a very touching ceremony today: at the time of the Revolution, the statue of the Blessed Virgin had been profaned, paraded and mocked, taken to the tavern, etc....

Today, a solemn procession was held at Our Lady of Bon Encontre, just a league from here, bearing a new statue of the Blessed Virgin, the men’s Sodality carrying the



Statuette



statue, the girls in white and wearing veils, the ladies in white or black, singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and carrying a beautiful banner as a gift in reparation to that church. Mme Belloc and Mme Yannasch were there”

*(Letter 305.5 to Charlotte de Lachapelle, August 8, 1816).*

Finally, in her account of the life of Adèle, Mother Marie-Joseph de Castéras noted the evolution of her illness. Towards the end of 1826, when the news from Mother Marie-Joseph de Castéras, who had herself been ill since her arrival in Arbois, was better...:

“That was not so for Good Mother de Trenquelléon; concern was growing: prayers were being addressed to heaven from all sides for her recovery: novenas were made in union with the Prince of Hohenlohe (a famous miracle worker of the time), invoking his powerful influence with God. The Sodalists of Agen went in procession to Our Lady of Bon Encontre, and made a general Communion for that intention; but the fruit was ripe for heaven...”

Although it is very probable that Father Chaminade went to Bon Encontre during the years he had to live in Agen, there is no trace of that pilgrimage in his letters nor in the documents we have about him.

### **Meditation on the Visitation, the mystery of the “Good Meeting” (Lk 1:39-56)**

This mystery of the Visitation is the mystery of encounter and of charity. Mary goes to meet her cousin Elizabeth; she causes Elizabeth, as well as John the Baptist, to encounter the Son of God. It is above all a mystery of charity: what could be greater or more beautiful than to bring Jesus to others? What could be greater than making known God’s love as manifested in Jesus to the people of our time, in our culture?

Mary goes in haste to her cousin Elizabeth: love in person whom Mary bears cannot wait; love is called to communicate itself, as St. Paul says; “The love of Christ urges me on” (2 Cor 5:14). Thus Mary is the first missionary of charity, of God’s love, the first to give Jesus to her compatriots and then to all humanity. She says “yes” to God’s angel in our name, in the name of the entire human race. Thus a human person fully welcomes what God has wanted since the beginning.

To carry Jesus to others, to encounter others after the example of Mary, is that not the mission of every Christian, of each one of us? By our baptism we have become “Christ-bearers,” “Christophers.” Pope Francis, following Blessed Paul VI, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, unceasingly reminds us of the primary vocation of the Church: “The Church exists only to evangelize, that is, to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners to God, to prolong the sacrifice of Christ in Holy Mass, which is the memorial of his death and his glorious resurrection” (EN, no. 14). That is the mission of every Christian. It is part of our life as a baptized person just as it is part of the Church’s life.

How can we carry Jesus today to other people? How can we as a community show the love of Jesus to the people of our time. Blessed Chaminade said: “You are all missionaries,” missionaries in the service of “the august Virgin Mary.” Like Mary, with Mary, bringing people of today to meet Jesus Christ. To encounter other persons in truth is to bring to them the Christ who has saved them.

In contemplating the gospel story of the Visitation, we see a human encounter that is full of surprises, full of happiness. The source of that joy is the fruit that Mary carries within herself: Jesus, that is, “Yahweh saves.” It is that joy that Mary brings to her cousin, and from which



John the Baptist is the first to profit, showing it in the womb of his mother; in fact, Elizabeth says: “When I heard the words of your greeting, the child leapt for joy within me.” John was touched by the grace of the presence of Jesus.

That meeting can spur us to reflect about what is a true encounter. An encounter can be considered true when one becomes happy, leaves in peace and the other person does too. An encounter is true when it helps us to grow, brings us closer to God. Joy gushed forth from Mary’s heart because she knew what the Lord had done in her; all that the Lord gave her was in some way summed up in the new name given her at the Annunciation: “Full of grace.” Do we know how to recognize what the Lord has done in us? Are we happy about it? Do we share that joy? Joy is terribly contagious.

Mary is declared happy because she has believed in what the angel said. That is the joy of faith. To believe, to put one’s trust in God’s word. God accomplishes, in fact, what he says. Whence the importance of trusting him. Just as in Mary, the Lord does great things in us. Have we not become children of God by our baptism? Are we not loved like beloved children by the Father? Are we not loved by the Mother of Jesus like her own sons, after the example of her first-born? And are we happy to be in the service of Mary’s mission: to form other Christs, what Father Chaminade called “multiplying Christians.” Let us ask the Blessed Virgin of Bon Encontre for the grace to encounter her Son in truth, to love him above all things, and for the joy of carrying him to others.



The Virgin of the Hillside

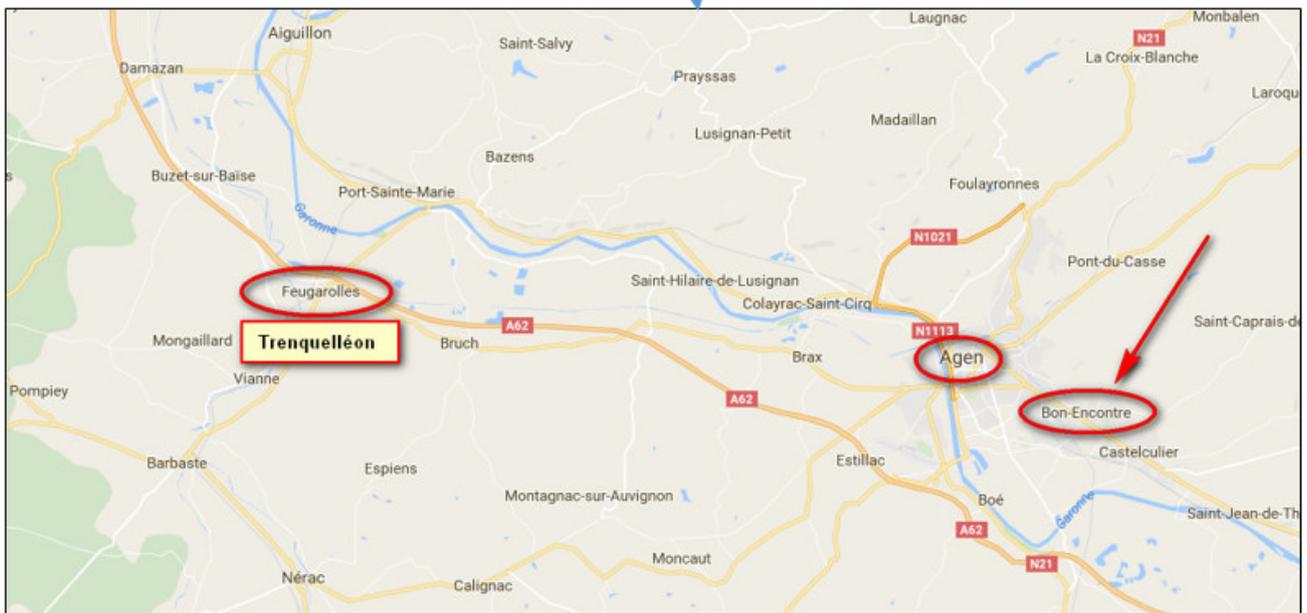
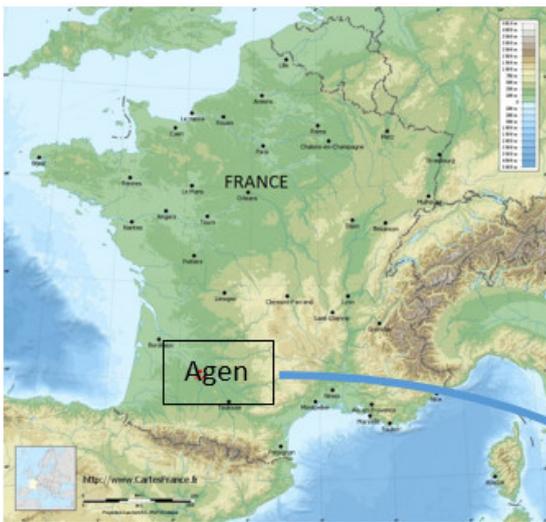
## PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Lord, in this bicentennial year of the two Marianist religious foundations, we thank you for the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and for the Society of Mary. We pray for priestly and religious vocations, at the heart of the Marianist Family, which is living its call throughout the world.
- In these times when the world is more and more in jeopardy, a world ever more individualistic and closed to spirituality, a world where Christian life values are often misunderstood and neglected, above all in the so-called more developed nations, we pray to you, Lord, for the young people of the whole world. Deign to form men and women of faith to bear witness to the Gospel wherever they are. Raise up among them new religious and priestly vocations who can continue your work throughout the world.
- Our Pope Francis has invited the Catholic Church to celebrate an extraordinary Holy Year. This “Jubilee of Mercy” began with the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will end on the



Solemnity of Christ the King. Lord, we pray that our Church be for the entire world a visible sign of the Christ's Mercy.

- Lord, we pray to you for our parish community, in which there are members of at least one of the four branches of the Marianist Family who seek, through their missionary spirit to make known Christ's love with Mary's help. Send your Holy Spirit to the whole community, so that it might imitate Mary who gave her definitive "yes" to God's plan of love for all humanity.



Location