

# Flash

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## **BLESSING OF THE PIERRE BIENVENU NOAILLES SPIRITUALITY CENTRE**



*with your great love all those who enter and may its doors be always open to all who suffer need; may your forgiveness be always found here; may joy fill its empty spaces; may communion be the fruit of every encounter and growing friendship the grace of every departure."*

On the 4 June the blessing of the new spirituality centre took place at the Solitude. This was the culmination of a two year Project – the efforts of many people who lovingly and patiently initiated and carried out the work of the renovation of the Solitude.

About a hundred people attended the ceremony - among them civil and ecclesial dignitaries, members of ACEM, the architect, and the Works supervisor. There were also members of the five vocations of the Family as well as friends and acquaintances of the sisters of the Solitude.

Monsignor Jean Pierre Ricard, Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux blessed the house and presided over the Eucharist. He was assisted by the auxiliary Bishop of

Bordeaux and a number of priests. The celebration began at the entrance to the building. In the opening prayer Monsignor Ricard said:

*"Oh God bless this house. Make it a place where love dwells. Surround*

In blessing the two communities, Apostolic and Contemplative he prayed:





***May the Lord's blessing descend on you as you begin this new stage. May you be blessed with strength and courage; may friendship grow among you and may gratuitous service be your faithful companion in the dance of life."***

He said: "This celebration is more than a simple ceremony or event; it is an act of thanksgiving to God and a handing over of this house to God – a house that has its roots in the life and story of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, the lives and stories of all who have passed through this place, all those who have maintained and renovated it throughout the ages, all those who have taken the decisions that have made it possible that this place is preserved for future generations.

In this spiritual Centre, where there is a network of relationships, we are all servants and collaborators in the work of the Holy Spirit... in the events of everyday life, in the happenings that are not programmed... We may come up against difficulties but the house is built on the rock that is Christ on whom we base our very existence. We will encounter spiritual combat because that forms part of the Paschal Mystery, but we trust that God will sustain us and equip us for spiritual struggle."



Monsignor ended by praying for the Church in Bordeaux and thanking God once again for the Holy Family Spirituality Centre which he named "the green oasis of the Diocese".

In the offertory, participants brought symbols that spoke powerfully of the event that was being celebrated:

- ***Bricks*** that are a symbol of all the patient work that was carried out during the past two years.
- ***The model of the building.***
- ***A globe*** – symbol of internationality and diversity and of the

After the blessings, the assembly sang hymns as they processed to the chapel. In the homily Monsignor Ricard expressed the deep meaning of this festivity. Here are some of his thoughts.

***Through this place the Congregation of the Holy Family offers its charism and spirituality to the local Church, the universal Church, to France and the whole world.***



open door policy to receive people from all over the world.

- ***Bread and wine***, the offering of Christ who gives meaning and depth to all our offerings.

At the final blessing, Monsignor alluded to the vine that is so firmly rooted in the region and is repeated as a symbol everywhere in the house, reminding us all of the need to root ourselves deeply in Christ and in our specific social context.

After the Eucharist the assembly was invited to visit the various rooms in the house.

Then **Margaret Muldoon** directed some words to the gathered assembly.

She began by welcoming everyone, naming different people and groups, thanking them for their presence which “manifests your interest in the Project of the Centre and this moves us deeply”. She continued by thanking all those who collaborated in making the house “so beautiful and at the same time very functional”. She commented on the significance of the vine for us – a reminder to us of our desire to “make this house a place of communion, presence and rootedness in God”.

She then spoke of the history of the house and how the life of our

Founder was very bound up with the Solitude. Mother Bonnat said that it was here that our Founder wrote the rules for the members of the Association and it was here that he and our first mothers came for prayer and rest.

She spoke of the decisions that were taken regarding Martillac during the Chapter of 2008 during which the Chapter members expressed the wish that this house be the house for the whole Family and that it should be developed as a Centre of Spirituality which would be open to the people of the area, to the diocese and to all those seeking a time of spiritual renewal. It would also be an international Formation

Centre for all the members of the Holy Family.

She ended by saying: “We are convinced that the Solitude will become what we, together will make of it. We realise that change is essential for the future – a future where we human beings radically respect and live the sacred and interconnected dimension of the universe. We wish to promote this new awareness and we believe that the Centre can give a new impetus in this direction.

***We wish to make our contribution to the transformation of the world in fidelity to our charism and we hope that all who come here will be encouraged to become co-creators of the world according to the plan of God who is Love and Communion.***

This choice is a response in fidelity to who we are and we live it in faith, hope and enthusiasm. Your presence here encourages us to go forward”.

After this a film on the history of Martillac from 1831 to the present day



was shown. There was also a presentation of the project of the Solitude through which the Holy Family continues to choose life.

**MR. CHARANTENAY, PRESIDENT OF ACEM** then spoke. He explained to the gathering the importance of this place where the Founder lived and dreamed of his Association. “He saw in his imagination, the meadow and the island. ACEM is carrying forward this Project through this work and thus offers to the Holy Family an important opportunity to spread the spirit of the Holy Family through their activities of welcome, sharing, reflection, formation and prayer.

He then explained to the participants the mission of ACEM in the Holy Family,

more specifically in France. He showed how the realisation of the Project was carried out, explaining the meaning of the image of the vine decorating the facade of the house and in numerous places within the building itself. This symbol speaks to us of the rootedness of the Spirituality Centre in the land of the Graves, the relationship that exists between the centre and the Domaine of the Solitude where the wine is made and also of the strong symbolism of the vine in Christianity.

He ended by thanking all those who had contributed to the success of the work and he then handed over the keys of the Centre to the Association expressing the wish that it would always be open to all and



that it would be a place of sharing and prayer.

**THE MAYOR OF MARTILLAC** also spoke to the assembly. His words were very life-giving. He spoke of his own feelings, those of the members of his council and those of all the inhabitants of the village of Martillac who consider themselves very much part of the Solitude.

***The presence of the Holy Family in***

***Martillac gives an international and spiritual dimension to the municipality. It conveys the richness of difference and the certainty that the integration of all races, creeds, cultures is possible irrespective of religious faith.***

The presence of the Solitude in Martillac is a

very significant one and a real witness in the village and surrounding areas.

Finally all the participants gathered to share a cold lunch in the grounds of the Solitude. This strong symbol of friendship marked the end of a very special day.

To find out more: [www.solitude.saintefamille.fr](http://www.solitude.saintefamille.fr)  
[www.sfb.pcn.net](http://www.sfb.pcn.net)

