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Ninth Annual Fête-Dieu du Teche Bayou Eucharistic Procession to Begin in Franklin and Is Offered to End Violence in our Communities



Fête-Dieu du Teche 2023 to take place Tuesday August 15 from Franklin to New Iberia. The 9th annual Fête Dieu du Têche will travel a southern route this year. The great procession will begin in the city of Franklin at the historic Church of the Assumption and will work its way north to St. Peter Catholic Church in New Iberia. The 37-mile Eucharistic Procession by boat this year is offered to beseech the Prince of Peace for peace in our hearts, families, and communities and an end of gun violence now so prevalent. Once gun violence was a concern only in large cities, now even along the peaceful shores of the Teche there remains a constant threat of violence and death, especially among the youth. As we enter into this second year of the National Eucharistic Revival, a *Renaissance Eucharistique*, it is a joy to be able to honor Our Lord with solemn boldness and love in this manner and share the graces of the Fête-

Dieu du Teche with the southern residents of the bayou. Fr. William Blanda, Pastor of St. Peter's in New Iberia and Vicar Forane of the Southern Deanery stated, "The Fete-Dieu has become a noble tradition here in the Diocese of Lafayette. Our people richly steeped in devotion to Our Lord present in The Most Blessed Sacrament and to His Holy Mother give honor to this richness which has nurtured the people of our Diocese for many generations. This yearly pilgrimage down the Teche sustains our devotion for our generation and for generations to come. We are blessed to have this sacred event take place this year in the southern part of the Teche."



On this unique southern route, the day begins with Mass at the Church of the Assumption in Franklin. A gem of the Diocese of Lafayette, the Church of the Assumption recently celebrated 100 years of the current church structure. The local Catholic community which surrounds the Church and the City of Franklin are celebrating the Solemnity of their Parish Patroness- Our Lady of the Assumption with much enthusiasm this year. The Mayor of Franklin, Eugene Foulcard, stated, "I am excited that Fr. Michael Champagne has included St. Mary Parish, specifically Franklin, to start this year's

Fête Dieu du Teche." Franklin will even begin celebrating the vigil of the Solemnity with a Fais Do Do. City of Franklin's Main Street Director, Ed "Tiger" Verdin stated, "The Mayor had no hesitation when asked to host a ceremonial Fais Do Do the night prior to the Fete Dieu du Teche. Partnering with Cajun Coast Tourism we can celebrate what South Louisiana is all about: Food, Music, Family, Heritage & Faith as one community."

After Mass in French in the Church of the Assumption celebrated by Bishop Douglas Deshotel, there will be a procession with the Blessed Sacrament and a statue of Mary and St. Joseph to the nearby boat landing. All are encouraged to join in the procession down to the boat landing for Benediction. At 9:30 AM a cannon will sound and then boats will depart in procession down the Teche toward New Iberia.

August 15 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 258th anniversary of the arrival of French-Canadian immigrants who brought the Catholic faith to Acadiana after enduring great trials and suffering.



Lafayette’s bishop Douglas Deshotel states, “In the Diocese of Lafayette, August 15 is the day observed when the Acadians began settling in our part of Louisiana. After the French and Indian War, around 1763, the British demanded that those living in present day Nova Scotia renounce their Catholic Faith and swear allegiance to the British King. Those who did not were expelled from the country. They lost their lands, their homes and some their lives. It was the first example of ethnic cleansing in the new world. Many came to settle in South Louisiana where it was French and Catholic. They brought their culture, their food,

and their Catholic Faith – a special devotion to the Holy Eucharist and Mary the Mother of God.” With this “special devotion” as a front and center of our Catholic Faith, many on the day of the Fête-Dieu du Teche experience our Lord in a profound way as He is honored in such a profound way. Sr. Anne-Marie of the Sister Servants of the Community of Jesus Crucified has attended the annual great procession since August 15, 2015. She recalls her experience, “The proximity to the Blessed Sacrament has been powerful. Several times Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has been just merely a foot from my face. Seeing my reflection in the pure, white Host, I’m reminded of St. John Paul II’s words, “In the end there will be Father, Child and Love.” These words became reality for me several times throughout the course of my experiences of the Fête.”

Now in its ninth year, Fête-Dieu du Teche draws thousands from Louisiana and beyond. For those who have attended multiple years, each experience holds new graces, as God is never out done in His generosity. Fr. Michael DeBlanc, Pastor of Sacred Heart in Baldwin and Immaculate Conception in Charenton states, "I've been attending the procession since the beginning; it's been exciting to watch our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament down the bayou I grew up along. This year, it feels like a “God moment” for me. I just became pastor of both Sacred Heart Church in Baldwin and Immaculate Conception Church Charenton, just in time as the procession happens to come up this part of the bayou this year! I'm looking forward to leading prayer over two of the stops belonging to my parishes--what a blessed way to encounter the Lord down this part of the Teche!"

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15) is also the Feast of the Acadians who settled in Louisiana 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 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”.



The Eucharistic Boat Procession arrives in New Iberia on the banks of New Iberia City Park at 4:45 PM. From there the Blessed Sacrament will begin a half-mile foot procession to St. Peter's Catholic Church for Solemn Vespers and Benediction. One pastor who participates in the Procession most years and works in environments where violence and death are sadly a frequent occurrence has experienced the healing graces of this day totally dedicated to Our Eucharistic Lord and His Mother. He has experienced the unifying power of the procession for the various cultures represented within the local Church. He notes, “Fête-Dieu du Teche is a great event and holds a deep significance in the lives of the people of Acadiana. The August 15 flotilla reenacts the story of the struggles of the Acadians when they were exiled from Canada and their difficult journey to Louisiana. The Eucharistic procession involves different cultures including African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and others. It brings the community together.”



During Fête-Dieu du Teche the Blessed Sacrament is fixed on an altar on the lead boat under a canopy. Two bell boats announce Jesus’ arrival and the thurifer boat carries a thurible which burns over 10 lbs. of incense along the journey. A statue of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a statue of St. Joseph follow on individual boats behind Jesus. The Eucharistic Procession pauses and disembarks 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 the Church of the Assumption in Franklin 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. Solemn Vespers and Benediction at St. Peter’s Catholic Church in New Iberia at 5:30pm. will be a good stop for families to gather together to close the day with a burst of Eucharistic praise. The prayers will be broadcast live on radio and live streamed, so persons with

compromised health can listen while remaining in their vehicles. Priests will be available at each stop for Confessions.



The all-day flotilla requires some 120 volunteers to ensure that all the many “moving parts” synchronize. The superabundant graces that are showered upon the pilgrims during the special day also reach the organizers and volunteers. Denise Denais is responsible each year for boat registration. She notes that she “has experienced a deeper faith in witnessing the many prayerful faithful lining the banks of the bayou simply to worship Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.”

Numerous priests and religious attend the Assumption Procession each year. The event effects a powerful Eucharistic Revival among them as well. Sr. Marie-Thérèse, who attributes her own religious vocation to her encounter with Jesus during the Bayou Procession in 2015 explains, The Fête-Dieu du Teche has been an event, well more than an event, really an Encounter with our Eucharist Lord. That first Fête in 2015 I was participating in various ways, when the Lord put before my heart an interior decision manifested in a simple situation. In this encounter, I experienced the Lord calling me to a deeper self-emptying which ultimately resulted in a very clear call to enter the Community of Jesus Crucified. Less than two months later, I entered as a Sister and have been encountering Our Lord every day in this same manner- for which I am deeply, eternally grateful”

Boat Registration

Register your boat on-line by completing the form at <https://fetediuduteche.org/> and sign the on-line waiver. Once the registration form is completed and waivers signed, 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 Franklin with Bishop Deshotel, at one or more of the stops along the

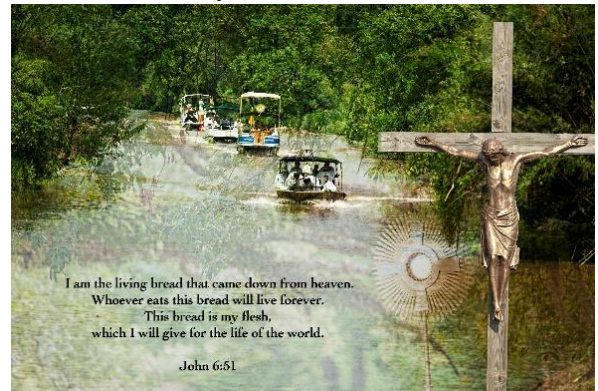


procession, and especially to participate in the final foot procession in New Iberia. One-hundred boats will be allowed to participate in the flotilla which will yield a one-mile procession on the water. Boaters are asked to have an FM radio and/or have access to Facebook so that they can participate in the

continuous prayers led by the cantors and adorers on the Eucharist Lead Boat. Live stream will be available at www.facebook.com/CommunityofJesusCrucified.

**Itinerary for Ninth Annual Eucharistic Boat Procession on Bayou Teche
Tuesday, August 15, 2023, Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary**

- 8:00 a.m.** Holy Mass in French with Bishop John Douglas Deshotel, D.D. at the Church of the Assumption, Franklin, LA
- 9:00 a.m.** Procession from Assumption Church to Franklin boat landing
- 9:30 a.m.** Boat Procession departs
- 11:00 a.m.** Arrive at Baldwin and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 12:30 p.m.** Arrive at Chitimacha Reservation and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 2:30 p.m.** Arrive at Jeanerette and disembark for Rosary and Benediction
- 4:45 p.m.** Flotilla arrives at New Iberia Park and disembarks for Benediction
- 5:00 p.m.** Procession from City Park across Bayou Teche and Church Alley to St. Peter Catholic Church for Solemn Vespers & Final Benediction
- 5:30 p.m.** Solemn Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Peter's Catholic Church



Pope Francis Grants Fête-Dieu du Teche Participants a Plenary Indulgence

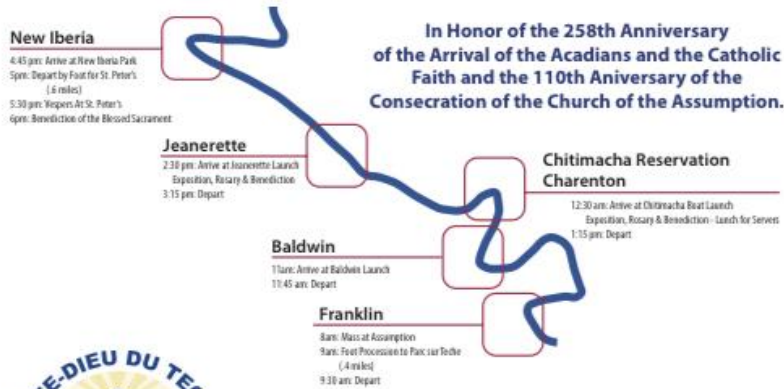
Pope Francis has granted participants of Fête-Dieu du Teche a Plenary Indulgence. The indulgence is valid on August 15 for those who attend the 8 am French Mass in Franklin, those who make the procession by boat, and those who participate in the devotions at one of the many stops along the Teche. Those who are impeded for a serious reason from physically attending the procession may also gain the indulgence by spiritually uniting their prayers and trials. The Holy Father asks participants to pray for fidelity to the Christian vocation, for the good of the family, and for priestly and religious vocations. This grant is under the normal conditions which means that the faithful must have the intention to gain

the indulgence, perform one of the indulgenced acts as given above, be in the state of grace at the time of the event, have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance within 20 days, receive Holy Communion, pray for the Holy Father's intention, and be free from all attachment to sin, mortal and venial. To help facilitate the gaining of the indulgence, 12 priests will be available to hear confessions at all the stops along the way in Mobile Units.





Tuesday, August 15th
Feast of the Assumption



For More Information, Contact Fr. Michael Champagne, cjc
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Additional Information

For more information, visit the website <https://fetedieuduteche.org/> or Fete-Dieu du Teche on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityofJesusCrucified/> or contact Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC by telephone at (337) 394-6550 or email at fetedieuduteche@gmail.com Videos from past processions can be found on YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCelyOi9waRB8A9SuYIO3UyQ>

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