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**For Immediate Release Contact:**

Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC

[fetedieuduteche@gmail.com](mailto:fetedieuduteche@gmail.com)

[www.jesuscruified.net](http://www.jesuscruified.net)

(337) 394-6550

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

**Seventh Annual Fête-Dieu du Teche 40-mile Eucharistic Boat Procession to be held this year in honor of the Christian family.**

**Fête-Dieu du Teche 2021 to take place Sunday August 15.** The 40-mile Eucharistic Procession by boat this year coincides with the Year of St. Joseph and the Year of the Family. The procession this year will highlight the Holy Family as Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will be accompanied by boats carrying the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. Families are encouraged to participate by registering a family boat and traveling down the Bayou Teche as a family or by following the stops together for recitation of the Holy Rosary and Benediction.



The day begins at 8 AM with Sunday Mass in French by Bishop Douglas Deshotel at St. Leo the Great Catholic Church in Leonville. Following the Mass there will be a procession with the Blessed Sacrament and a statue of Mary and St. Joseph to the nearby boat landing. Families are encouraged to join the procession as a family and follow to the boat landing for Benediction. At 9:30 AM boats will depart in procession down the Teche toward St. Martinville, retracing the voyage made by the Acadians over 250 years ago.



August 15 is a significant date 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 256<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of French-Canadian immigrants who brought the Catholic faith to Acadiana after enduring great trials and suffering. Bishop Deshotel of the Diocese of Lafayette states, "Fete Dieu du Teche has become an annual celebration in commemoration of the arrival of the first Acadians from what is now Nova Scotia. They were the first examples of ethnic cleansing in the New World when they were forced to leave their homes and go into

exile because of their Catholic Faith at the end of the French and Indian War. A large number of them found their homes in South Louisiana which was Catholic and French. Many settlements were established along the Teche river where they built Churches, homes and a new life.

Our observance takes place on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven at the end of her earthly life. On that day, a boat procession is held from Leonville to St. Martinville with the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the lead.” 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 over 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. de Civrey became the first resident priest. In his records, he 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. Bishop Provost of the Diocese of Lake Charles has participated in the celebration on a number of occasions. He states, “La Fête Dieu is a joyful celebration of the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the lives of His faithful followers. I recall with great fondness my participation in the Procession, surrounded by thousands of men, women, and children, reaffirming our faith in the Eucharist, which is our Lord’s special gift. What a transcendent moment! How privileged we are to express our faith in this way!” Not only priests and bishops, but also local and state leaders promote participation in the event. Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry states, “I would encourage all to attend the upcoming Fete-Dieu de Teche. It is a wonderful tribute to our Lord and Savior and embraces the continued faith and belief that the Cajun culture stands for!”

Thousands travel from throughout Louisiana and beyond to participate in the event. Many







participate in the Eucharistic Procession by boat and others follow by car and gather 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.” Fr. Jason Vidrine, a long-time participant and pastor of St. Martin de Tours Church

in St. Martinville says, “Fête-Dieu du Teche has been a tremendous blessing on several levels: it has helped to increase love and devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, to celebrate the feast of Our Lady's Assumption as it should be kept, and to bring awareness to our culture and heritage of love for Our Lady and our Holy Catholic Faith received from our ancestors. I've had the great joy of participating in it from its beginning and in different ways - from concelebrating the Mass in French, hearing confessions, and riding in the boat procession with different Parishioners each year. I always look forward to the graces Our Lord bestows upon all who participate in it.”

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15) is also 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”.



During Fête-Dieu du Teche the Blessed Sacrament will be fixed on an altar on the lead boat under a canopy. Another boat will carry the statue of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This year will feature as well a St. Joseph boat with a statue of the husband of 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. The prayers will be broadcast live on radio, so persons with compromised health can listen while remaining in their vehicles. Priests will be available at each stop for Confessions.



Bishop Provost, 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.” Bishop Deshotel encourages his faithful of the diocese to participate

in Fête-Dieu du Teche and follow the faith of our ancestors: “Just as the Acadians were led by their faith in Jesus the Bread of Life and in Mary the mother of Jesus, it is time for all of us to renew our faith. May we be strengthened as was theirs in Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life. May we put ourselves under the protection of His Immaculate Mother who is patroness of the Americas.”

### Boat Registration

Register on-line by completing the form at <https://www.jesuscruified.net/events/fete-dieu-du-teche-2021/form> 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 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. Church parishes, ecclesial movements, KC and St. Peter Claver councils, Catholic schools, etc. are encouraged to register a boat and decorate it accordingly. Celebrating the Year of the Family, families are encouraged to gather the family by boat or by car and worship together. Fifty boats will be allowed to participate which will yield a one-mile procession. Boaters are asked to have an FM radio so that they can participate in the continuous prayers live as they are led by the Eucharist Boat. Additionally, participants in the procession

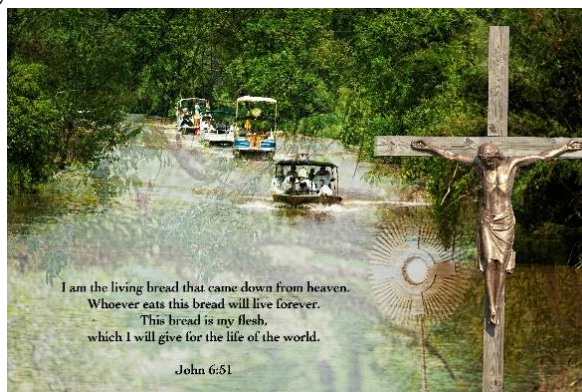


as well as those in their cars or on the banks of the Bayou can follow the prayers and devotions live from the Eucharist boat at [www.facebook.com/CommunityofJesusCrucified](https://www.facebook.com/CommunityofJesusCrucified).



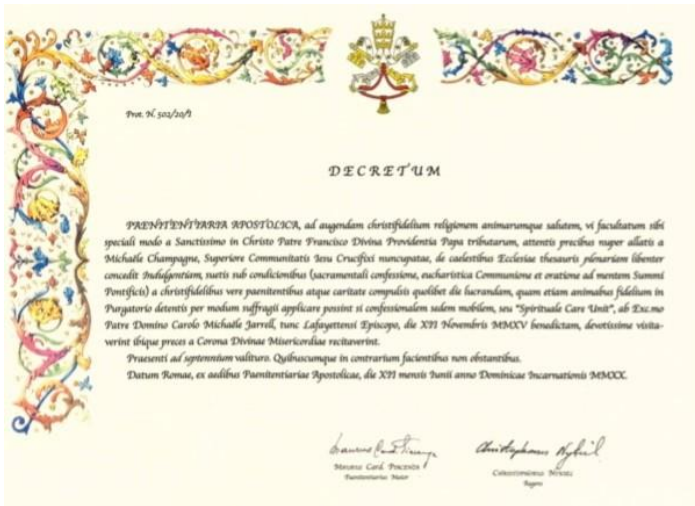
**Itinerary for Seventh Annual Eucharistic Boat Procession on Bayou Teche**  
**Sunday, August 15, 2021**  
**(Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary)**

- 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 behind Notre Dame; Foot 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 at Mater Dolorosa Chapel





## 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 Leonville, 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, confessions will be available at all stops in Mobile Units along the Procession.



### Additional Information

For more information, visit the website [www.jesuscruified.net](http://www.jesuscruified.net) 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 [fetiedieuduteche@gmail.com](mailto:fetiedieuduteche@gmail.com)

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