

**10th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MOTHER HOUSE**

15 Rue Monin – Blois (France)

2003 - 2013



**10TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BLESSING OF THE
MOTHER HOUSE
ON THE FEAST OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
8 DECEMBER 2003 – 2013**

**THE HOUSE OF 15 MONIN
STREET IS THE 8TH HOUSE
INHABITED BY THE
FRANCISCAN SERVANTS OF
MARY OF BLOIS**



Beauvoir Street,
Bourg-Neuf,
Prêche Street,
Bourg Saint John,
St Louis' Square,
Puits-Chatel,
11 bd Eugène Riffault,
15 Monin Street

But officially it is the
third Mother House



1 - Mother House

21 Puits-Châtel Street

1866



2 - Mother House

11 Bd Eugène Riffault

1894



3 - Mother House: 15 Monin Street (2003)



In June 1996, we had celebrated the centenary of our presence at 11 Bd Eugène Riffault. Already from this time questions began to emerge: How can we keep alive, today, our spiritual heritage, in this oasis of peace in the heart of the city of Blois?



In September 2000, during the General Chapter, the capitulate reflected on "What is the future for our Mother House"? Because the place we live in for over 100 years, is no longer appropriate, the house is too big,



the buildings require maintenance, important work to be envisaged. After several months of reflection, in June 2001, the General Council of Congregation decided for a new building on the same property “at the slope”.



This step was painful, it was as if we had sold the family house...



but as it is said:

*“the events are our
masters”.*

It took courage to look
towards the future.



Two years to realize the project, obtain permits, sale, and one year for construction: building built in record time,



with the skill of the architect Mr. Blanchet and his team. An article in the newspaper wrote: *“This is the second miracle of Marie Virginie...”*



March 19, 2003, the feast of St. Joseph, laying of the first stone. House built on the rock. Some stones still visible in the garden are there to remind us of the strength of the foundation: Jesus Christ himself is the corner stone in him the whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord.



And we are the *living stones*. Reminder, too of the house built on the rock in the Gospel.



As the work progressed, a concern: how to keep what we had at heart, family souvenirs, statues, trees, archives... and whatever was transportable?



HOUSE FITTINGS: On arrival we are welcomed by St. Antony's statue which reminds us that whatever be our activity, *"we are called to keep at heart the spirit of prayer and devotion"* (letter of Brother Francis to St. Antony).



The bell at the entrance,
which was near the
parlour at Bd Eugène
Riffault:
invitation, welcoming the
visitor, as "*Abraham at
the oak of Mamre*",



**Inside the house:
St. Joseph**

from the community of
Champfleury: reminder of
the devotion of Mother
Foundress to St. Joseph



The oratory: orientation to the east, the rising sun: as the sunrise on the banks of the Ganges. *"The Lord's coming is as certain as the dawn"* (Hosea 6:1-6). United with the whole Church. Open to the world, football stadium. Open nature: place of contemplation and prayer.



The tabernacle :

In the form of Tau.

Sign of salvation, with
the symbol of the world



The altar:

symbol of Christ, place of the Eucharist, the centre of our community life.

In front: **the burning bush** that symbolizes the presence of God, tradition gave Mary the title of burning bush.



The oil lamp, from Assisi



The Crucifix of San Damiano:

offered by the Sisters of the Carmel of Blois:

"Most High God enlighten the darkness of my heart: Francis, Go and repair my Church which you see is falling into ruin."



Our Lady of Miracles:

this statue is a copy of Our Lady of Miracles which is in the community chapel of Tours.

At the Good Shepherd's, Marie Virginie prayed to her every day. In thanksgiving she will pray a few invocations all the days of her life to Our Lady of Miracles.



The fresco painted by the artist Maurice Denis in the chapel of Joyeuse at Rouen. Works of mercy by the Franciscan family, we see a Franciscan Servant of Mary with the children of the house of Joyeuse



The Way of solitude, the Carcerie: place of silence and contemplation. A statue of Francis reminds us, "*Francis often withdrew into solitude in order to take care only of God. The cleft of the rock was his favorite nest, or a cabin in full solitude.*" (1 Cel 71). The three hermitages recall the life of Francis, Greccio (christmas), Alverna, Fonte Colombo (where he wrote the first rule).



STATUES FROM THE GARDEN AT BD EUGÈNE RIFFAULT:

Our Lady of the exile:

before the law of separation of church and state, this statue adorned the courtyard of the seminary of Blois. At the time of destruction it was offered to Franciscan Servants of Mary. Because of its origin they called it the "*Virgin of the exile*", On the part of the community it is subject to a great reverence (Berthe Colomban, page 141). Commitment to pray for the priests of the diocese.



St. Roch: Prayer for infectious diseases: plague, He is depicted with an abscess in the thigh, an angel comes and treats him, a dog comes to bring him food every day.



St Anthony of Padua:

patron of the mother house
since 1896



The pedestal of the statue of St Michael

has ensured the protection of the Mother house during the war of 1939-1945.



St Francis :

St Francis at the generalate, come from Rome, he has a history...



In the grove :

The statue on the tree trunk, after asking all the sisters the story and the name of this statue before which so many have prayed , what is the name of this statue, it was the "*Divine Shepherdess*" which was retained



Our Lady of Lourdes

in memory of the grotto while climbing slope behind the house, the prayer "*Hail Mary*".

St. Bernadette's statue was broken.



TREES:

Trees for humanity is a sign of the presence of water and thus, of life



The olive tree:

"we are the olive plants", sings Psalm 127. The olive tree is a symbol of peace, strength and longevity. Where there is the olive plant, appears peace.

"An olive branch springing from the earth, a source of peace will flow out of our hands."



In the Bible the olive tree is often accompanied by a **cypress and cedar**.

Here the cypress is replaced by a yew, "*same family*" because it is also evergreen.

"The Lord says: I am like the evergreen cypress trees, it is I who give you your fruit."



Cedar:

next to the chapel, a cutting from the park of Romorantin



The almond tree:

called the watchman because it is the tree that opens its flowers that turn to the sky at the break of winter.

The watchman (Jer 1-11):
"The word of the LORD came to me: What do you see Jeremiah? - I see a rod of almond. Well seen, for I watch my word before performing it".



The apple tree:

planted at Bd Eugène
Riffault by Sr. Therese
Françoise's family,

transplanted and grafted
here, reminds us of
everything that was lived



Vine: *"I am the vine you are the branches."* (ch. 15 of st John)



Walnut:

a sucker, a root next to the cabin in the garden, reminds us that we used to come here to pick up nuts



The basin for flowers, a symbol of all the work of the sisters in the laundry.



Lavender, that feeds the bees to make honey.



The tulip de Virginie tree:

offered by "*l'Homme*" (Gardener of the Mother House). It was planted on the day of inauguration 8 December 2003. See poem on the tree by Sister Yvette



Roses, flowers: invitation to praise. *"Praise be to you Lord for the colourful flowers and herbs"* (Canticle of creatures).



Lawns, grass, dew, "I will be like the dew to Israel." "Your love is fleeting as the dew and fog in the morning" (Hosea 6:1-6). "Grass dries but the Word of your God remains forever."



The tomb of our foundress: transferred on October 10, 2003 to Bd Eugene Riffault. Place of prayer to Marie Virginie. Presence of a stone brought from Joyeuse, given by the domestics.



Bell:

call to prayer three times a day for the Angelus. And it rings every hour. *"Every hour of the day may we praise you": 1 R 22*

This bell was baptized (named) in 1894. Workers found it in the basement of the old Mother House. The sound of the bell symbolizes God's call



The weather-cock: Where does the wind come from? *"The wind no one knows where it comes from and where it goes..."* (Nicodemus in the Gospel). The wind symbol of Breath of the Spirit of God.



Nature in the different seasons: winter, rain and snow. *"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there without having watered the earth."* Spring reminds us of life arising after the winter; buds, blooms



The suspended garden: with roses, overlooking the Loire, symbolizes a cloister. *"Lady Poverty visited the brothers in the monastery and asked to be shown the cloister. They led her to a hill and made her admire a splendid panorama. Madam, they said, "this is our cloister, open to the world."*



Blessing on December 8,
2003,

by Bishop Germiny in the
presence of Mayor Mr.
Perruchot



On the following day the newspaper narrated the event with the title: house of light, opened by singing, laughter and joy. It follows: light, beauty, calm, prayer



Mother House St Antoine, an oasis of peace in the heart of the city of Blois remains still the center of our religious family. We wanted to keep in mind three exigencies



- **Space for the presence of the generalate** : Service of the congregation, office, archives
- **Space for living an international community**, place of welcome
- **A privileged place of Meeting** of the sisters from France, India Madagascar Chad, England



Place of prayer,

resourcing, where each sister comes regularly to deepen her roots, drawing from the living water of the family spirit.

The community remains attentive to the calls of the Church and the people of Blois



In January 2004, on the day when the house was open for visit, the people of Blois visited our new Mother House, and with them we were reminded of the words of a citizen of Blois in 1868.

"Here you are going to own a new house, may it not change the goal for which you were founded originally. Stay what you are. "



To conclude, looking at the Loire: *"If we knew how to adore, nothing could truly trouble us, we would go through the world with the peace of the great rivers" - Wisdom of the Poverello.*

"I will have never finished building my house because my house is the others"