

Extract from the community journal in Chartes

Year 1914

15 August, 1914 : Assumption of Our Lady. Solemn High Mass, on leaving the chapel, the Mayor of Chartres arrived, preceded by a whole convoy of exhausted, but not seriously injured soldiers; it was not announced, but the beds had been ready for several days and by reducing the community's portion it was possible to give food to the twenty or so men who were grateful and asked how they would be able to pay. Mother Mary invited them, if they were rested enough, to attend the procession, which almost all of them did.

16 August : At High Mass, all the soldiers conduct themselves like good Catholics, they come to Vespers of their own free will. In a few days' time several will be reformed, others will be sent on leave before going back to the front. Some of them remain as nurses...

24 August : New influx of wounded.

31 August : In view of the possible arrival of new wounded, all those who can leave in the ambulances are sent to the military depot, they leave with regret

4 September : ... The war continues claiming victims. Newspapers are very reserved in detail about the daily facts and their consequences. The government will withdraw to Bordeaux. Paris is under siege. To stay in communication with her houses T.R. Mother General agrees to leave for Tours (250 km south of Paris) where Father Ernest takes her, then goes to Fontarabie (Spain), unable to return to Belgium.

13 September : Exaltation of the Holy Cross. At ten o'clock in the morning, two ambulances brought three unfortunate Germans, picked up on the battlefield by French soldiers after having remained among their own for eight days without receiving any treatment. Their injuries were too serious to hope to save them. Two are sent to the Hôtel Dieu for urgent amputation, the third has punctured lungs and asks for a priest to confess. The chaplain of Bon Secours (a nearby religious community), who is in charge of our soldiers, gave him a few words of encouragement while, with great humanity, he is taken to the ambulance. He bears a first bandage and goes to confession; he seems to be afraid of the nurses, because they are soldiers, and is reassured when he sees some religious. In the afternoon new injured soldiers arrive.

15 September : Two German soldiers who were amputated yesterday died shortly after the operation, the one here seems better, the major seems surprised. The best news of the war confirmed these days. A convoy of wounded is still arriving, there are all kinds of weapons.

24 September: Second visit of Monseigneur who shows himself very affable with everyone and pushes condescension to the point of going to see the German who, as soon as he can be transported, will be reunited with the other prisoners interned in the school.

1^{er} October : Opening of the month of the Holy Rosary. All the able-bodied soldiers come to pay homage to the Blessed Sacrament and answer the rosary piously; they sing the patriotic hymns with great liveliness and seem to forget the length of the recitation of the five dozen Hail Marys (...) of the litanies, the prayer to Saint Joseph.

4 October and every Friday: Mass with hymns for the armies at war and for the wounded and dead.

19 October : The German leaves for the school in an ambulance, escorted by four soldiers with bayonets on their rifles, who accompany the stretcher on which he is lying on to be transported.

28 October : Canon Bouillet, (...) comes to visit the ambulance. At 4.20 a.m. he speaks to the soldiers gathered for the exercise of the Holy Rosary and greets them with respect and gratitude and invites them to pray; with a touching anointing, an apostle's conviction, he demonstrates the necessity of prayer and reminds them of the duties of the creature towards the Creator. He concludes by urging them to celebrate All Saints' Day with a good confession and holy communion.

1 November : Feast of All Saints' Day; at 6.30 a.m. a soldier-priest, Father Alphonse Bouillet comes to celebrate Holy Mass during which twenty soldiers take Holy Communion. For one of them it is the first: a child from Paris, brought up without concern for his soul, he is happy with everything he has learned and assures that confession is not difficult.

12 November : 10 Belgian soldiers and non-commissioned officers, as well as a captain and a lieutenant from the reserve arrive at 11 am from the fighting in Ypres (Belgium). It is a great joy for the convent to welcome allies and to receive them well, since none of them is seriously wounded.

6 December : Saint Nicholas is celebrated to honour the Belgians who venerate him greatly in their country.

25 December : Christmas, Christmas! At twenty minutes to midnight the chapel is full, a soldier sings "Minuit chrétiens", the choir resumes with the ensemble. The High Mass begins; in the Creed the Gregorian chant gives way to a musical score with the words "et homo" and then resumes. After the community has approached the Altar, those present then the soldiers in perfect order do so, and it is touching to see those who are supporting themselves on sticks and crutches, bearing the marks of their wounds. The Good Lord is then given to the sick sitting in armchairs near the crib which is pretty, and all lit up. The Mass of Dawn follows, during which beautiful hymns are sung. The traditional New Year's Eve is not without significance. The High Mass of the day takes place with the same solemnity, four soldiers from the Aboville depot return and take Holy Communion without shame, happy to be in the ambulance where they have been well looked after. They do not miss the opportunity to take time off to come and spend it with their comrades and take part in the singing.

At 6.30 a.m. the Christmas tree is lit and presided over by the Chaplain of Bon Secours, there again the joy is overflowing, simple, expansive. They are big children, happy to be spoiled. At the end, the oldest addresses a few words of thanks which are kindly expressed.

31 December : La Mère, after receiving the wishes of the community and the residents, goes to the ambulance where a soldier reads her a well-turned compliment. The painful year comes to an end without any hint of how the new one will begin!