

March 13, 2026

We began our pilgrim's journey today, by walking and travelling by metro to Marseilles.

Arriving at the Old Porte (the harbour), we saw the fish market and merchants. This was the area that St. Eugene would have been familiar with years before.

Across the street from the Old Porte, was the Church of St. Ferreol. While there, Eugene met a Jesuit priest, who



helped him discern his vocation. Later, in this church, in 1820, Eugene preached his first mission to the people of Marseilles, in their local language of Provençal. This greatly endeared him to the people. St. Ferreol was also where Eugene's missionaries gathered to pray in front of the blessed sacrament, before they were sent forth from the Old Porte, to the many countries of the world (Canada being the first!).

Marseille cathedral was next on our agenda. There, we celebrated mass at the tomb of Saint Eugene with Fr. Mike and Fr. Bonga. One of the highlights of the day, was hearing Fr. Mike's passionate and joyful homily summarizing Eugene's theology of love for Christ, forgiveness and mercy.





Sainte Eugene was Bishop of Marseilles from 1837-1861. During that time, he was instrumental in planning the construction of Marseille Cathedral, and Notre Dame du Gare Basilica, although he never saw the completion of either one.

After a windy, steep, bus ride, we arrived at Notre Dame de la Garde basilica. It is built high on a hill, and gives a breathtaking, panoramic view of Marseilles. Before we began touring, we took a break for a delicious lunch and fellowship. We shared some of the comical adventures that we had enjoyed along the way, and the Oblate humour was true to

form (right MattSherry?).

Later, we visited the crypt and the ornate, upper basilica, where names of various missionaries who had prayed there, were hung on plaques. Our western Canadian pilgrims recognized two: Bishop Grandin and Bishop Grouard.



The last places in Marseilles that we visited, were the church of Les Accoules and Place du Calvaire. These places were where Eugene brought back the rule, after it was accepted by Pope Leo XII in 1826.



They are known as the Oblates "Mount Sinai". They served as the Oblates first Formation house, Scholastic and Novitiate. It was here that the Order ceased being named the Missionaries of Provence, and became Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The Marseilles experience taught us much about Saint Eugene, and how he loved and advocated for the poor, both practically (through politics, etc.), and spiritually).

Cathy & Greg Saretsky 😊