fil leo

International Federation of associations and pLaces dedicated to Saint Leonard

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english edition



Translation :
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This newsletter is distributed to around 860 people in more than 30 countries.

It is available in: German, English, French, Italian, Dutch, and Slovenian !

We need you! All the information that appears in the newsletters is transmitted by members of the great family of "Saint Leonard" throughout France, Europe and the World. If you wish to distribute information, contact us by e-mail : fil-leo@federationstleonard.com or by post : fil-leo, L'Escalier, 3 place Gay-Lussac, 87400 Saint-Léonard de Noblat (France).
The next issue will be published end of December 2026. We're counting on you. Thank you!

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A summer of fraternal friendship



We sometimes feel that time passes far too quickly, especially when we are in such wonderful company. That is precisely the feeling we have at this end of summer. After the chance of a wonderful discovery by this Italian architect who happened to pass by the collegiate church at just the right moment and found the right person to forge the connection.

Life sometimes hangs on very little: a mutual friendship that allowed the First Counsellor of the French Embassy to attend the gathering in Slovakia, or a Slovak teacher who kept in touch with her former pupils. This improvised circle dance is worth more than a long speech and bears witness to the spirit that brings us together. We move forward together on the Path, with Saint Leonard as our compass.



Welcoming of Antonello d'Ardes (Siponto, Apulia, Italy)

At the end of July, Antonello entered the collegiate church during a guided tour. The French guide realised that he was from a Saint Leonard parish and put us in touch... 3 hours of discussion later, a fine friendship was born with this heritage architect, president of the Guilielmus association, which is responsible for highlighting the oldest church dedicated to Saint Leonard in Apulia, built on land gifted by Bohemond of Antioch: Siponto.
Grazie Antonello,
for these beautiful drone photos.



The new major census of sites is underway

In the previous newsletter, we expressed our wish to launch a new major census. It is a complex undertaking in certain countries. But it is underway and will yield good results. Our large family is going to grow with many cousins who do not yet know the network but already share a number of values. We may need your help on the ground to refine the results. But we will certainly have the opportunity to return to this subject in the next newsletter.

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : highlights of the Confraternity pilgrimages and liaison contacts

In this newsletter, we continue the 2016-2026 file: 10 years of fil-leo. We will focusi on the pilgrimages of the Confraternity of Saint Leonard of Saint-Léonard de Noblat across Europe during this period. For each location, we present a few men and women who help keep the bonds between us alive and are true living stones of fil-leo (the list is not exhaustive; our thanks to those not mentioned for their understanding). As you will see in the report on the 2026 International Gathering in Lenartov (Slovakia), it sometimes takes very little to launch an initiative and set off on an adventure. A simple message can be the start of a wonderful story that strengthens ties.

2015 : Mascali (Sicily, Italy)



In Mascali church, the statue of Saint Leonard is hidden in a cupboard that opens only on rare occasions during the year.



Carabinieri in ceremonial uniform guarding the relic alongside a member of the Mascali *confraternita* and a member of the Noblat confraternity.



Pupils from the Mascali secondary school performed the French and Italian national anthems in honour of the delegation.



Concetto Stagnitta has been taking part in the Ostensions since 2009. He has been a member of the confraternity since 2010 and contributes to the newsletter with **iconography** and church discoveries.



Carmelo Contarino has been taking part in the Ostensions since 2006. He is a former president of the *Confraternita San Leonardo Abate of Mascali* and **carved the new reliquary arm** *[see newsletter No. 14, 30/11/2021].*



Angela Contarino has been taking part in the Ostensions since 2016. She has been a member of the confraternity since 2024 and set up an **Erasmus+** exchange project between the secondary school in Saint-Léonard de Noblat and the one in Chieri. *[see newsletter No. 26, 31/12/2025]*

2016 : Ostensions in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, no pilgrimage

2017 : Kirkop (Malta)



The church was illuminated for the festival, and impressive fireworks set the rhythm for the procession.



The entire town was decorated for the occasion.



Owen Bonnici, Minister for Culture of Malta, was present for the closing concert (pictured here with Michel Defaye, president of the confraternity).



Kenneth Cassar has been taking part in the Ostensions since 2002. He has been a member of the confraternity since 2012 and he contributes regularly to the newsletter. He supervised the logistics for the visit of the Saint Leonard Band Club of Kirkop to the 2023 Ostensions.



Musicians from the Saint Leonard Band Club of Kirkop perform the European Anthem with the local harmony of Saint-Léonard de Noblat for the opening of the 2023 Ostensions.

2018 : Association Trait d'Union Saint Léonard (Nice, France)

newsletter n°3 15/03/2018

The Trait d'Union association provides transitional housing for prisoners released from prison, assisting in their reintegration. Faithful to the spirit of our shared patron saint, in March 2018, they wished to place their association under the patronage of Saint Leonard.

https://www.traitdunion-saintleonard.org



2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : highlights of the Confraternity pilgrimages and liaison contacts

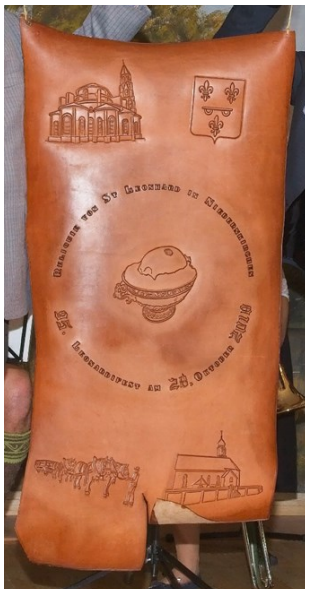
2018 (and 2023): Niedernkirchen (Baviaria, Germany)

newsletter n°5 20/02/2019



The fine horse-drawn carriages give the Leonhardiritt and Leonhardifahrt in Bavaria and Austria a special charm. And their participation in the Ostensions is a wonderful attraction.

This cowhide *(right)* originating from Bavaria, tanned and engraved in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, reinforces the link between us through livestock farming and craftsmanship.





Xaver Schmidhuber came to Saint-Léonard de Noblat for the first time in 2000 for a symposium on Saint Leonard between Bavaria and Limousin. He is the chairman of the organising committee for the Leonhardiritt and has taken part in the Ostensions since 2002.



The gatherings are also an opportunity to discover the folklore of each region. Here, the "squirrel" game.

2019 : Zoutleeuw (Belgium)

newsletter n°6 08/07/2019





In 2002, Zoutleeuw organised a walking pilgrimage between Saint-Léonard de Noblat and Belgium ahead of their Whit Monday procession.



Etienne Vandormael has been a member of the Confraternity of Saint-Léonard de Noblat since 2014 and a member of the Saint Leonard Confraternity of Zoutleeuw. He has taken part in the Ostensions since 1988 and was also present at the Quintaine.

Zoutleeuw had invited the members of the Confraternity of Saint-Léonard de Noblat and the skull relic of our shared patron saint on the occasion of the inauguration of their church following its restoration.



In Zoutleeuw, Saint Leonard is the patron saint of miners. Prayers are offered to him to avoid being trapped in the event of a mine collapse.

2020-2021 : covid-19, no pilgrimage.

2022 : Atouguia da Baleia (Portugal)

newsletter n°16 30/10/2022







With this embroidered altar frontal and this azulejo tile reproducing the painting of Saint Leonard in their church, Atouguia continues exchanges around local craftsmanship.

The medieval wooden statue is beautifully highlighted by its canopy in the colours of Portuguese royalty.



Ademar Vala Marques has been a confrere of Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat since 2018. He attended the Quintaine in 2018 and took part in the Ostensions in 2023. He contributes to the newsletter throughout his travels.


A Voz do Mar

PERIÓDICO REGIONALISTA

RUAS SEM NOME

NOMES SEM RUA

Atouguia da Baleia

As early as July 1960, a delegation of priests from Atouguia came to Saint-Léonard de Noblat to bring a scale model of their church (*left*, article from the time recounting this pilgrimage).

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : highlights of the Confraternity pilgrimages and liaison contacts

2024 : International gathering in Panza (Ischia island, Italy)

newsletter n°21 20/09/2024







Nicola Castaldi has been a confrere of Saint-Léonard de Noblat since 2006. He organised the gatherings in Ischia in 2004 and 2024. He has taken part in the Ostensions since 2009.



Guistina Mattera is a municipal councillor in Ischia and a member of the EU network of local councillors.

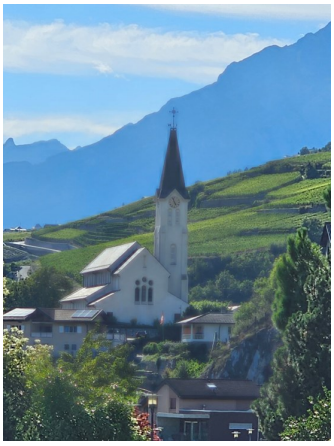
It was through her that an article discussing fil-leo was published in Quotidiano del Sud.

Proposed in 2023 on the initiative of Lenartov, Panza was the first international gathering outside the Ostensions since the creation of fil-leo, featuring:
- 250 people,
- 10 delegations,
- 6 countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Malta, Slovakia)

During the festival, the statue of the saint is carried in procession, accompanied by fireworks, through the entire town and hamlets, over many kilometres.

2025 : Saint-Leonard (Valais, Switzerland)

newsletter n°25 30/09/2025



The church overlooks the municipality.



The underground lake of Saint-Léonard is the largest in Europe and the third largest in the world.



The parish priest and the mayor with gifts from the confraternity.



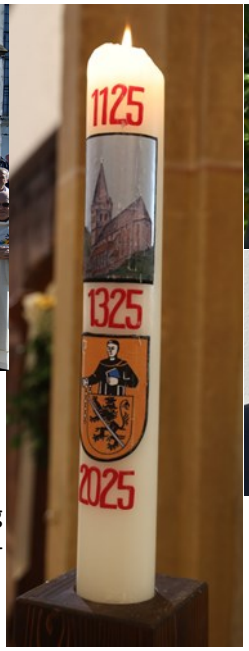
Statue of Saint Leonard, patron saint of cattle

2025 : International gathering in Bad Sankt Leonhard im Lavanttal (Carinthia, Austria)

newsletter n°25 30/09/2025



Organised to mark the 900th anniversary of the parish and the 700th anniversary of the municipality. At this gathering, there were: around 150 people, 6 delegations, 6 countries.





Martin Edlinger, parish priest of Bad Sankt Leonhard, took part in the 2023 Ostensions and contributed to the census of sites dedicated to Saint Leonard in Austria.



Christian Gsodam has been a member of the confraternity of Saint-Léonard de Noblat since 2025. He is responsible for strategic communication and foresight at the EU External Action Service.



A fil-leo meeting took place alongside the gathering.

Lenartov (Slovakia) planted a lime tree of friendship.



2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : highlights of the Confraternity pilgrimages and liaison contacts

2025 : Lenart (Slovenia)

newsletter n°25 30/09/2025





11 Slovenian delegations, 1 Croatian delegation, and 1 German delegation were present to welcome the relic of our shared patron saint, Saint Leonard, for the first time in Slovenia.

The Mass at the hospital was a great moment of solidarity and fraternity.



Good practice: The exhibition presented the municipality of Lenart, the parish of Lenart, the Saint Leonard churches in Slovenia, Saint Leonard, his relics, fil-leo, and the 2023 Ostensions.



Marjan Pucko, former parish priest of Lenart, the first to come to Saint-Léonard de Noblat, invited his fellow parish priests from Slovenian Saint Leonard parishes during the visit of the relic in 2025.



Janez Kramberger, Lenart mayor. He was the one who first established contact with the municipality of Saint-Léonard de Noblat.



Marylene Stavbar, a Slovenian who lived in France, is the translator, together with her husband Klemcen, of the Slovenian edition of the newsletter, which also maintains ties with our Croatian friends.

2025 : Borgoricco (Italy)

newsletter n°25 30/09/2025







Borgoricco has participated in the Ostensions since 2009. Its Saint Leonard church is located at the corner of Saint Leonard street and Europe street. As with the other 3 locations visited in 2025, this was the first time that the relics of Saint Leonard were present here.
Each gathering is also an opportunity to collect different hymns dedicated to Saint Leonard.

2016-2026: 10 years of fil-leo: To be continued in the next newsletter

Fil-leo is not limited to exchanges between the Confraternity of Saint Leonard of Saint-Léonard de Noblat and the outside world; these are also decentralised exchanges and visits hosted locally.

The anniversary feature will continue in the next newsletter with a focus on:

- **Exchanges between other locations, without Saint-Léonard de Noblat**
- **Visits hosted from external delegations in Saint-Léonard de Noblat outside of the Ostensions.**

The feature will then continue, based on your testaments and memories, featuring your fondest memories and your ideas for the next steps of the adventure.

International gathering in Lenartov (Slovakia) 21-23/08/2026

The 2026 gathering in Lenartov (Slovakia), on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Saint Leonard's Church (which replaced an older wooden church), was a profoundly moving moment on a human level. Throughout the weekend, we experienced true fraternity among us and heartfelt generosity from our Slovak hosts. Among the delegations represented: Austria (Bad Sankt Leonhard Im Lavanttal), Belgium (Sint-Lenaarts), France (Saint-Léonard de Noblat and Vains), Slovenia (Lenart and Selca). Moments rich in meaning punctuated the weekend: for the first time on the Saint-Léonard de Noblat Bridge, the presence of a delegation from this municipality (including municipal councillor Michaela Carpenet), the planting of a Tree of Peace, the inauguration of the Cross of Gratitude, and the installation of a time capsule (which will be opened in 2126).

Jacques de Noray, First Counsellor of the French Embassy in Slovakia, was present on Friday the 21st. And Most Reverend Bernard Bober, Metropolitan Archbishop of Košice, presided over the Solemn Mass on Sunday.

Friday, 21st August: Welcomes in Bardejov and Lenartov



Official reception in Bardejov (administrative centre of the territory where Lenartov is located).



Jacques de Noray and Michel Defaye (president of the Saint-Léonard Confraternity) discover the traditional welcome in Lenartov with bread and salt and the seniors' choir.

Saint-Léonard de Noblat bridge



"It'm speaking to you today as First Counsellor and Chargé d'Affaires of the French Embassy in Slovakia. But I also do so, and perhaps above all today, as a child of Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat. My maternal family originates from this town. [...] A bridge is never quite like any other structure. It allows us to cross an obstacle, but above all, it connects. It brings together two shores that, without it, would remain separated. [...] In Lenartov, we too are building a bridge. A bridge between two municipalities, between two countries, between two histories. But above all, a bridge between women and men. [...] Giving this bridge the name of Saint-Léonard de Noblat is therefore not merely a fine gesture of friendship. It is also an affirmation of something deeper. For this story reminds us of what Europe truly is. [...] In this context, bringing to life bonds of friendship, fraternity, and solidarity among Europeans is no small gesture. It is our very concrete way of bringing Europe to life." (excerpts)

Jacques De Noray, First Counsellor of the French Embassy in Slovakia

Planting of the Tree of Peace





Following the welcoming of the relic of our shared patron saint, Saint Leonard, at the church, the planting of the Tree of Peace took place.

This initiative was launched in 2010 by the Slovak association Servare et Manere and benefits from the support of the United Nations.

The Tree of Peace in Lenartov is the 43rd planted by the association.

To find out more (in Slovak and English): https://www.tofp.eu/lenartov

International gathering in Lenartov (Slovakia) 21-23/08/2026





The primary school children had prepared songs and dances.

The staff of the municipality of Lenartov sang 2 hymns to Saint Leonard.

Saturday, 22nd August: Inauguration of the Cross of Gratitude and installation of the time capsule






fil leo
Medzinárodná federácia združení a miest zasvätených Svätému Leonardovi
č. 28 august 2026 špeciálne číslo Lenartov
Od roku 2018 leží Lenartovu na srdci nadväzovanie vzťahov
Lenartov (Slovensko) / hrsť zeme z Francúzska

At the foot of the cross, a time capsule *(the metal cylinder in the middle photo)* was sealed. Each delegation was invited to place a item of testimony inside it. On behalf of fil-leo, a special newsletter was deposited (in Slovak, thanks to Jaroslava) tracing our ties with Lenartov since 2018 and all the gatherings in which they have participated.

Gala dinner and exchange of gifts



The majorettes of Lenartov delighted the assembly with their energy.



Michel Defaye, president of the confraternity, and Michaela Carpenet, municipal councillor of Saint-Léonard de Noblat, thank our Slovak hosts under the watchful eye of Jan Bortník.

Jan is the one who initiated the link between Lenartov and Saint-Léonard de Noblat.

Thank you! A special word of thanks to Frédéric Jacq, Jaroslava Bitu, and Michaela Carpenet who, through their perfect command of French and Slovak, helped facilitate exchanges.

International gathering in Lenartov (Slovakia) 21-23/08/2026 Sunday, 23rd August: Solemn Mass for the 200th anniversary of the church



*« **Thanks to the generation of builders***

Our dear ancestors, fathers and mothers of Lenartov,

We stand today beneath the vaults you built and on the ground you laid. Although an abyss of two centuries separates us, in this moment we feel your breath and the strength of your faith. In 1826, in a time incomparably harder than our own, you accomplished an act that transcended your own existence. With hands worn by stone and lime, faces whipped by the wind of our mountains, you erected this house of God — Saint Leonard's Church.

We thank you:

- ***For your sacrifice:** For knowing, in times of scarcity, how to place the common good and spiritual heritage above your own comfort.*
- ***For your vision:** For not having built solely for yourselves, but also for us, your great-grandchildren, whom you could not even imagine at the time.*
- ***For your tenacity:** For having sealed within these walls not only stone and sand, but also your prayers, your hopes, and your love for this land.*
- ***For your hard work and commitment:** To all those who opened their hearts and arms 20 years ago during the restoration and consecration, as well as to those who care for the church today.*

This church is not merely a stone building. It is a song carved in stone dedicated to your faithfulness. Every chime of the bell that echoes across Lenartov is an echo of your heart.

On this precious jubilee, we promise you today to protect this heritage. Not to let the flame of faith that you lit here burn out. When we look at the altar of Saint Leonard, we see your face — the face of hardworking, humble, and people of deep faith.

Rest in peace, dear builders. Your work lives on. Your church still breathes. We, your children, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. »

Ing. Jana Blandova, Mayor of Lenartov

The gathering as seen by local web TV channels

Ahoj.tv and Bardejovska tv (in Slovak):

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G57OcSkg_5M
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAmOOrzKBtY
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QaIbGYywG0



This was the first time that the relic of our shared patron saint could be venerated in Slovakia.



Mgr. Bober, Metropolitan Archbishop of Košice



« Let us pray for all European citizens. Lord, grant us the wisdom necessary to understand the European continent as our shared heritage and to shape it in freedom, solidarity, and mutual respect. We give thanks for being able to live in political freedom and solidarity in Europe, and we pray that you grant us the foresight to preserve these values and peace among nations through enlightened political choices. »

Christian Gsodam, Bad Sankt Leonhard im Lavanttal

***In the next newsletter**: the visit of the delegation from Saint-Léonard de Noblat to Saint Leonard's Church in Lipnica Murowana (Poland) and the Mass in Saint Leonard's Crypt at Wawel Cathedral in Kraków (Poland).*