by Father Donat Lamothe, A.A.

It was a great privilege to be present at the canonization of Blessed Marie- Eugenie, founder of the Religious of the Assumption, which took place during the Mass on Trinity Sunday, June 3, 2007 celebrated by Pope Benedict in the great space within the arms of the Bernini Colonnade before St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. But the celebration lasted for three days, not counting the pilgrimage that many sisters and friends had taken in the preceding week to places in France associated with the new saint.



I arrived from Paris Saturday afternoon and began my participation in the events with the vigil service held in St Gregory VII church in the evening of June 2. When we arrived at the church, its main level was already filled and we had to find place in the crypt of the building that also was filled to capacity. The vigil service lasted about an hour and contained hymns and readings from Holy Scripture and the writings of Marie Eugenie. Those of us in the crypt could hear what was going on upstairs but could only contemplate the slide of the official icon of Marie Eugenie projected on a screen before the altar. It was a prayerful moment very conducive to entering into the spirit of the event.

June 3rd dawned grey and cool. As we left the General House to walk down to St. Peter's a fine misty rain began to fall. It became a steady rain by the time we reached the colonnade about 7:30 AM. It took another hour to pass through security and reach our seats in the reserved section closer to the outdoor altar. By the time we reached our places we were under an umbrella and stayed there for the entire proceedings. At 9 AM a preparatory service began which featured the brief biographies of all four saints being declared saints: Giorgio Preca, a priest from Malta, Szymon Z Lipnicy, a fifteenth century Franciscan friar, Karel van sint Andries Houben, a Dutch Passionist, missionary in Ireland and Marie Eugénie Milleret.

The Mass began at 10:00 AM with the arrival of Pope Benedict. The Gregorian chant introit for

the feast of the Most Holy Trinity accompanied the procession. The penitential rite followed and when the Pope mentioned the names of those to be declared saint in his opening remarks, applause rose from the various pilgrimage groups associated with each won. I can assure you that the acclamation from the Assumption family was the loudest! It was very loud indeed during the actual rite of canonization that began shortly thereafter. The Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins made his request to the pope that the names of the four blesseds be inscribed in the catalog of saints. The Litany of the Saints was sung and then the pope pronounced the declaration of canonization. Cardinal Martins expressed the thanks of the Church.

The Mass continued normally with the Gloria and the Readings, the Eucharist, etc.

It was a splendid moment in the history of the Assumption Family.

Since the sisters had the largest group of pilgrims for the events, they were allowed to use St. Peter's Basilica for the Mass of Thanksgiving that was held Monday June 4. And the Assumption group certainly filled it to near capacity. I joined the numerous bishops and priests in concelebrating the solemn yet joyful Mass which was presided by Archbishop André Vingt-Trois of Paris at the main altar over the tomb of St. Peter.