



Elaine talks to: Marie-Laure about “Pardons”

Elaine: Well Mar Marie-Laure. Good to see you again and welcome to Spotlight's headquarters, and these er to start with if you're ready to tell us all about Pardons.

Marie-Laure: Good morning Elaine. I'm so happy to be with you today again and especially to have come to speak about my favourite hobby, attending a Pardon. So this morning we're going to answer this very question, what is a Pardon?

First of all I would like to say to all our British friends that they are going to like Pardons, which are very specific Breton events. And this for several reasons. A Pardon is all about meeting local people and being a helper in an association. So it is a very good way to get to know neighbours and to learn French and even a few words of Breton.

So now that I have said this main point, let us get back to something more general. A Pardon is a one-day feast - the annual occasion to have a good day for the village. It is an all-day-long feast, roughly it is religious in the morning, with a mass, and non-religious in the afternoon with games and the mid-day meal in between. Feel free to go to the mass. Either you would like to attend it or and discover what it is all about. Or, whether you do not feel like it, do know that nowadays the mass is really open t to all kinds of people, believers and non-believers. And there is often a piece of Breton cake given to everyone, under the name of 'blessed bread' to thank everybody for coming while going out of the church or the chapel. It is often home made and local women are usually very proud to make it.

You need to know that a Pardon is the annual occasion to gather around the local saint, who protects the chapel. Each saint has his story, his very special powers and his song, which is called the 'cantique', often still sung in Breton. You will be given a leaflet with the lyrics. Breton people cherish their local saints. Each of them has special healing powers and are also often helpers. You just have to call their name. And they have their wooden statue in good place in the chapel. What we call the saint in Brittany, which usually never be called the one by the Roman Catholic Church, and this is why Brittany is so special because even nowadays people just love their saint, would they be otherwise believers or not. They could be very touchy about him or her. And the cantique tells all the beautiful things that the saint did.

Mark my word, British people should feel very much attracted to those saints because just like themselves, they have once been channel crossers. I explain. Nearly all the saints have come from the other side of the channel. They were the first Christian monks. They came to find a very quiet place to live in and sometimes when they became famous and were too much bothered by people asking for healing or help, they would move to more secluded place, but on the whole we can say that each saint was at the head of a clan. And you find

explanations in the names of villages, such as Lann something, Lannédern or Tré something, Trémargat, or Plou something, just like Plouguernevel. All of these names meaning something specific about the creation of the heritage. So I personally think that British people should feel very much at home with all this planning organisation of the land.

Now that we have spoken about the hero of the day, let us go back to the feast. So, in the morning, we have the mass and this is when you have a procession to walk to the fountain because there is still usually a spring with a pool and a statue of the saint made of stone this time in a little niche. You can guess by this that these places have been sacred from times far far going back before the Christian Christ. During the procession you sing the Cantique and you get out the banners of the saint and his followers like the Virgin Mary or Saint Anne who is much beloved in Brittany as the greatest saint. For the mass and the procession, some people may have put on their Breton costumes and it will be a pleasure for the eye. Of course, you are most welcome to go to your local Pardon. But do also go to big famous ones such as Saint Anne d'Auray, Saint Anne la Palud or le Folgoet.

During the procession you may also hear the musicians play typical Breton music but they will be at their most during the feast in the afternoon, which is called a Fest Diez, a feast during the day.

After the mass comes the most important thing of the day, the big midday meal. And this is where British people might find a good way to integrate the local community because such a big meal means a lot of work and a lot of small hands needed to help. In many places the meal is hand made because it is cheaper of course and also because a Pardon is all about getting people together and maybe trying to put aside all the disagreements that arose during the year. Pardoner - to forgive. There used to be hundreds of people at lunch, but since the Covid, it has slowed down. Nevertheless, as it means a lot to people, people are coming back again.

In the afternoon there is usually a lot of games and dancing. This will be the occasion to listen to Breton music and to see Breton dances. It is much opened to dancers and non dancers, so anyone is highly welcomed, because it is all about also being together and having a good time.

As for myself I begin my Pardon year at the end of January and I attend about thirty Pardons a year, which means that I sometimes go to three Pardons in a weekend. On my agenda I have about three or four Pardons written at each weekend and afterwards I make my choice. So you should read the newspapers or go onto the local religious website to know when and where there will be a Pardon. Each year each Pardon takes place on the same Sunday, would it be for example the thir third Sunday of June. Of course, most Pardons take place during the good season, beginning in April or May, and ending in September with the highest on the day of the Virgin Mary, on the 15th of August. On that special day



you can see nearly everywhere boards on the sides of the roads advertising about a Pardon. In no time you will know the ones you prefer and you may meet me on some of them.

So. I'm really looking forward to meeting you on a Sunday. Have fun. Oh and by the way, I have got family stained glasses in the church in Gouarec, go and have a look. They are dedicated to Sainte Anne in Breton language Saintess Anna, mother of Brittany, and also to Saint Thérèse de l'enfant Jésus, they are beautiful. All of deep blue and deep green and I I often come to admire them because they make me feel good.

Er, being practical, the mass of a Pardon begins around half past ten. As for the meal, it is usually good quality and rather cheap, around fifteen euros. Sometimes you need a a reservation, but it will be written somewhere. When you go to the mass, er you will be asked a small contribution. Er a coin of one euro is enough. And just enjoy yourself.

Elaine: Enjoy yourself, yes. Thank you very much indeed, Marie-Laure.

Maire-Laure: Thank you so much Elaine for asking me.