

# Tea...with a French flavour

The Montserrat Hills in the Central Range came alive on April 26 when the Shrine Committee of Our Lady of Montserrat (OLM) RC Church in Tortuga hosted its annual "Afternoon Tea with Our Lady" – or "Goûter avec Notre Dame de Montserrat" as it was titled this year.

For the past four years, the Shrine Committee has hosted a tea party in honour of Our Lady of Montserrat, which on the last two occasions has coincided with the feast day of Our Lady of Montserrat's mother church in Catalonia, Spain.

The members of the Shrine Committee are all parishioners of OLM Tortuga, and have committed themselves to working steadfastly toward the organisation's mandate: elevating OLM to a shrine of international recognition. To help attain this goal, the committee has two annual flagship fundraising events: "Afternoon Tea with Our Lady" and a "Christmas Carol Service and Country Food Fair".

In addition to the spectacular view and refreshing atmosphere, one of the key

attractions of the Afternoon Tea is its special themes, which change from year to year. In 2012, the focus of the tea party was the Hymn to Our Lady of Montserrat choir competition featuring choirs from the parish.

Last year, the Shrine Committee celebrated the Spanish heritage which played an integral role in the church's history.

The committee has declared 2014 "The Year of the French" in special tribute to the French ancestors who are well remembered for their socio-economic and spiritual development of the parish and wider community of Tortuga.

This year's celebration began at midday with Holy Mass celebrated both in French and English by Archbishop of Port of Spain, the Most Reverend Joseph Harris.

Concelebrating were Fr Alan Hall, parish priest of OLM, along with Msgr Michael de Verteuil and Deacon Simon Rostant. The multi-lingual Fr Hall awed the congregation with his greetings, reading of the Gospel and

intercessory prayers all done in perfect French.

The French flavour was augmented by the music of the guest choir from the Maraval/Paramin parish. As a special 'thank you' and 'love song' to His Grace, the Shrine Committee invited the winners of the 2012 Hymn to Our Lady of Montserrat competition, the choir of the neighbouring Tortuga Government School, to render their winning composition. Pores were raised and some members of the congregation were teary-eyed as these jewels raised their young voices and hearts to Our Lady with a tender and heart-felt rendition of *Our Lady of the Hills*.

The Mass was followed by the Tea Party which was held at the church's presbytery. After a short but sweet spiritual segment conducted by Fr Hall, the gathering was brought to its feet as Denyse Plummer got the crowd moving! She had the audience clapping, singing and dancing as she led them through hit after hit. She succeeded in striking the perfect balance between the upbeat calypsoes and the heart-warming ballads.

To all gathered it was, yet again, an afternoon of deep spirituality, great food and much fun!

– Submitted by the Shrine Committee, Tortuga



Tortuga parish priest Fr Alan Hall addresses the tea party guests. Behind him are some of the famous stained glass windows at the shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat.



Archbishop Joseph Harris is flanked by Fr Alan Hall and Deacon Simon Rostant during the Mass.