



## **Opening of the Renovated Park in Genk, Belgium**

**GENK, Belgium** - We take pride in what our confreres have accomplished in the Diocese of Hasselt. We are well known for our popular mission preaching, moving from parish to parish. We share a close bond with this diocese, as many of our confreres have collaborated with the local church, serving as parish priests in numerous parishes. The Bishop of Hasselt has expressed great appreciation for the wonderful collaboration and dedicated service our confreres have provided here. In this regard, we Montfortians are better known in this diocese than in any other across Belgium.

These days, I encounter many people in this diocese, and every time I introduce myself as a Montfortian, they spontaneously express their esteem and admiration for the confreres who have served them. The warm greetings and kind words they share make me proud to be a Montfortian. Our confreres have left an unforgettable legacy in this region of Belgium.

My appreciation and gratitude for our confreres doubled on Saturday, 19 October 2024, when I met the Mayor, his team, well-wishers, and many kind neighbors who were present for the opening of the renovated park. These people also spoke highly of our presence in Genk. I must

honestly say that the good seeds our confreres have sown through their dedicated service to the Church and their work of evangelization among the humble believers are bearing much fruit, especially now when we have become weak and dependent. Many greeted our confreres with gentle and kind words, expressing their appreciation for our continued presence in Genk.

A group called “The Friends of the Park,” which was formed with the goal of renovating the park that had fallen into a neglected state, worked tirelessly over the past three years. Fr. Jan Tachelet serves as the president of this group, which includes four other members. These four friends took the initiative to convince the city Mayor to provide financial assistance so the park could be restored and reopened to the public. With the financial aid from the city, they have renovated the Way of the Cross, the Grotto, and the park, transforming it from a once wild area into a beautiful space where people can spend time in prayer, silence, and harmony.

Although these four friends came together voluntarily to restore the park, it’s important to note that one of them is our neighbor, whose grandparents originally donated the park to us with the condition that it remains open to the public. In fact, this concerned neighbor stepped forward to help us when we were no longer in a position to employ a gardener to care for the park.

The garden and park were previously cared for by the brothers who lived in this community of Genk. After their death, the park turned into a wild jungle. However, it now looks beautiful, and the group is confident that the city will continue to assist with its maintenance. On the opening day, exceeding our expectations, more than 70 people attended, along with the entire team of the Mayor. The Mayor expressed how wonderfully situated our park is and emphasized its ecological importance, especially for the bustling city of Genk. The park connects the residential area to the forest behind it, and I must mention that I have personally seen deer in our garden many times.

During the recounting of the park's history, our neighbor requested that the Mayor ensures the city’s support in maintaining the park. Hopefully, the re-elected Mayor will secure the city’s continued assistance. Afterward, Fr. Jan Tachelet said a prayer and blessed the park. He not only blessed the park but also led a decade of the Rosary as I moved around to bless the Way of the Cross, with the people joining in prayer. Following the blessing, a reception was held for the attendees. Jos Van de Bergh, the Delegation Superior, was present, and the Friends of the Park thanked him for collaborating with their efforts. It was also an excellent opportunity for me to meet the neighbors.

All ended well. A heartfelt congratulations to "The Friends of the Park," who did their best to restore our beloved park.

*Fr. Nepo smm*