

Jesus Living in Mary

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REGIONAL CENTER OF TRINITAPOLI, ITALY

By Fr. Giovanni Personeni, SMM,
from Trinitapoli

“The Association of Mary Queen of Hearts” in Trinitapoli, Province of Barletta-Andria-Trani in the Region of Puglia, Italy, has an absolute novelty: among its members, some observe the vows, while choosing to live in the midst of society, but in a more direct and tangible commitment through the Association and in the mission with the Montfortian Family. This is made possible by the present Statutes of the Association, articles 11-12. Another peculiarity: the members of the Center carry out evangelization with the help of songs and music. Of course, this is one of the most effective missionary tools for reaching people's hearts. Was this not the same means that Father de Montfort used in his missionary work, by composing 164 Spiritual-Missionary Canticles, to renew the Christian spirit of the people as expressed in the promises of Holy Baptism? It is therefore necessary to read this sharing of the missionary life of one of the most dynamic Centers of the Association today. We received this sharing from Father Giovanni Personeni, Spiritual Director of this Regional Center, at the end of February 2021. Wish you a happy reading.

1. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION IN TRINITAPOLI

It was in 1981 that, **in the heart of a young woman from Trinitapoli, the desire was born to pray to the Heavenly Mother with the Rosary** during a long hospital stay, therefore in contact with suffering and the sick. Thus was born the first of the Marian cenacles which, from then on, would have gathered many souls within his house.

The foundations of this **Movement “With Mary to Jesus”** were built around listening to the Word of God, Eucharistic celebrations, personal prayer, Eucharistic adoration and formative catechesis, in community moments where we have grown together in humility, in service and charity towards the poor. Some young people, then, within the movement, attracted by the simplicity and the witness of this Marian way, devoted themselves to evangelization in the parishes of the diocese, in the prisons, hospitals, orphanages and squares. Then, within the Movement, an evangelizing musical group **“Sailing Hearts”** (in Italian: Cuori Naviganti) was born.

In 1999, during a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, we met **Father Michele Filipovič, smm**, Montfort priest in Zagreb.

He was the first priest to initiate us into Montfortian spirituality ... It will be he who will put us in contact with the community of Montfort Missionaries of Santeramo in Colle (Bari, Italy) who will henceforth follow the spiritual formation of the movement by being inspired of the spiritual heritage of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort.



The decisive stage of this communion of the spirit and mission with the Montfortian Congregation began in October 4, 2010, when the Superior General of the Montfort Missionaries recognized the Trinitapoli Movement as the **Regional Center of the Mary Queen of Hearts Association, fully united to the Company of Mary founded by Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, and which thus took the name of Association Mary Queen of Hearts - Fraternity "To Jesus through Mary", with Father Giovanni Maria Personeni, smm** as spiritual director. In addition, on April 4, 2012, the Association obtained the recognition and constitution of the **"Group of Associates with Vows"**.



The encounter with the **"Treatise on True Devotion to Mary"** by Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort revealed to us the importance of consecration to Jesus through Mary, enkindling the desire for an ever more total response to the love of God and by making us also grasp the urgency of the mission that awaits us & all of us, that is to say revealing to all the secret of holiness which can make the Immaculate Conception reign in the souls of men today, a "treasure" that we understand that **we cannot keep hidden but that the world is waiting for to find its way back to God.**

On a monthly basis, we all meet together in our monthly retreats led by the Montfort Missionaries. It is an opportunity and a privileged moment for listening to the Word, Christian formation and deepening of the spirituality. Lived under the sign of fraternity, the retreats constitute a moment of communion and sharing of life under the sign of faith. Each year, in addition to the usual meeting, we organize a regional gathering which is an occasion not only of formation but also of spiritual communion for the groups of the region who live this spirituality.



Other leading missionary activities then joined the Association Center of Trinitapoli. Still in collaboration with the Company of Mary, the meeting with the Montfort Missionaries working in the ad extra mission marked the beginning of a larger commitment to the missions in Africa. After our visit to Malawi, with 15 of our young people led by **Father Eugenio Cucchi, smm**, then another visit to Brazil, we thus came to take care of more than 100 orphans adopted at a distance by our families. Wells were then built in Zambia and Malawi and finally, before returning to Italy, the evangelization group made itself available to popular missions by providing assistance to the Director, **Father Eugenio Perico, smm**.

Now, after this journey, it is beautiful to admire the work of Mary, what she has built during these years, in us and with us, so that the Kingdom of her Son Jesus can be realized in each of his children. It is the presence of the Heavenly Mother that made us feel how important it is to know and love her Son, The Wisdom incarnate. This is why, more and more, and above all in the moments of The Holy Spirit and in the missionary action that we lead in obedience to Mary, we feel ourselves clothed by her in the splendid clothes of the firstborn and unique Son, Jesus Christ (VD 206).

This is the experience of all those living today who, with the help of the Association, come to consecrate themselves to Jesus through Mary, according to the teachings of Montfort.

“ It is the presence of the Heavenly Mother that made us feel how important it is to know and love her Son, The Wisdom incarnate.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF MEMBERSHIP FROM YEAR TO YEAR. HOW MANY MEMBERS ARE THERE CURRENTLY?

For about, 380 people, from the year of 2011, have completed the preparation process and arrived at Consecration by registering with the Association Mary Queen of hearts, Currently, the members of the Association have **reached a total of 3,823.**



In addition, two one-day interregional conferences are organized each year. In the south of Puglia, since 2011, and recently at the Sanctuary of the “Madonna of Buoncammino” in Altamura (Bari), this kind of conference there has seen the participation of at least 700 people. And, from 2018, in the north, between Lombardy, Piedmont and Liguria, in Tortona, more precisely at the sanctuary of the “Madonna of Guardia” in Tortona (province of Alexandria, in Piedmont), about 250 people participated. Each of these conferences open with prayer and continues with three or four catechisms where testimonies, songs and prayer alternate. These Conferences end with the Eucharistic celebration and the renewal of the Act of Consecration.

3. NAMES OF CURRENT COORDINATORS

The coordinators of the Center for Montfortian Spirituality of the **Fraternity “To Jesus through Mary” of the Association Mary Queen of hearts in Trinitapoli**, currently are:

- The Director of the Center: **Fr. Giovanni Maria Personeni, SMM**
- Contact person: **Anna De Girolamo**

The three-day “Days of Spirituality” organized by the Montfort Missionaries in Loreto with catechesis, celebrations and renewal of the Act of Consecration constitute the annual national event.

With the agreement of the parish priest, in the place, where the event of Consecration takes place, where the preparation course is held, there will be other meetings, monthly or any other, are carried out by the missionary who gives the initial formation or by another Montfort Missionary who is willing to make himself available.

4. WHAT TRAINING ACTIVITIES ARE OFFERED TO THE MEMBERS?

For all those who can join us, there will be a monthly retreat (one Sunday per month) at the Regional Center of Trinitapoli with biblical catechesis and Montfortian Marian spirituality, then prayer and animation. The retreat ends with the Eucharistic celebration.

Those who are closer or who feel the need for more training in-depth have the option of coming on the Friday or Saturday preceding the monthly Sunday. There, they can listen to other catechyses, meet people, share the reading of the works of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort.





Often, catechetical meetings also take place to deepen Montfortian spirituality. **Each group, in addition, having the same mission as all the members of the Association, has a specific goal or mission of prayer or service and charity, chosen in agreement with the local priest.** Each group is invited to have a monthly or weekly group prayer meetings.



Due to the pandemic, on the one hand all of this has suffered a significant reduction and a kind of transformation on the other hand. And as soon as regulations relaxed, where it was possible things were made possible, some works ended and others began. When this was not possible, routes were interrupted while waiting to resume. During this wait, the groups in preparation and those who have already achieved consecration continued their individual journey of prayer, taking into account the indications of the different dioceses and / or parishes. **The Association's contact with each group and each individual member was ensured online, via whatsapp groups.** Indeed, a whatsapp means was set up for each process of Consecration and each consecrated group, also open to those who wished to be initiated into Montfortian spirituality. To each "group", texts are sent daily for reading and personal reflection. Youtube, Zoom and Strem Yard links are also sent for moments of live prayer: Eucharistic Adoration, the Holy Rosary, and Catechesis on the Consecration to Jesus through Mary, Montfortian Spirituality, the Novena of the Immaculate Conception, the Christmas Novena, etc. Also on Zoom, the weekly Lectio divina continued to take place in Trinitapoli.

“ And as soon as regulations relaxed, where it was possible things were made possible, some works ended and others began.



5. ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP WHAT MISSIONARY OR APOSTOLIC ACTIVITIES ARE CARRIED OUT BY MEMBERS, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY?

The missionary activities that the members of the Association carry out, according to the availability and the charisms of each one, range from simple witnessing in one's own state of life, to witnessing particular occasions such as catechetical meetings, retreats and conferences, up to the possibility of specific services such as volunteering in prisons or hospitals or nursing homes.

Some members serve as focal points for individual groups. Others make themselves available to organize retreats and conferences of the Association or of the Congregation, or lend themselves to collaborating in the accomplishment of the parish missions of the Montfort Missionaries or to carry out a period of service at the "Totus Tuus" Center of Medjugorje. **From the beginning, at this Regional Center, a group of members of the Association offered their service of announcement by song, with shows, musicals and evangelistic concerts.**





Currently, in a Covid situation, mainly during periods of confinement, it has not been possible to follow most of the apostolic activities of the Association as well as the volunteer services. **In addition to intensifying personal prayer, consecrated laity therefore collaborate by making themselves available to organize the moments of prayer transmitted online.**





Marcelo Di Gesù

The "Totus Tuus" Center of the Association Marie Reine des Cœurs in Medjugorje, continued to be open throughout the pandemic, to welcome pilgrims, especially those from Eastern Europe, but also remained open as place of prayer and study of spirituality, thanks to the members of the "Group with the Vows" and other voluntary members of the Association, from Italy and Poland.

Their presence, always supported by a priest of the Company of Mary, ensures constant prayer for all the members of the Association, thus bringing to the feet of the "Queen of Peace" the prayer intentions which are constantly transmitted to the Center of Spirituality by all groups and by all Associates.

In recent months, many situations of illness, pain and death have resonated in this house and in this place increasingly called to be the "spiritual heart" of Europe and of the world.



6. CALENDAR OF REGULAR ACTIVITIES

We can list:

The three-day “Montfortian Spirituality Days” in Loreto in September.

The annual one-day interregional conference in northern and southern Italy in June. Monthly retreat at the Regional Center of Trinitapoli, of 4 days.

Weekly Lectio Divina at the Regional Center.

The Holy Rosary and Eucharistic Adoration, the weekly and pastoral activities carried out in the parishes.

Participation in the liturgical life of the Montfortian Family (recurrence of liturgical feasts and those specific to the Regional Center).

Pilgrimages to Medjugorje.

Catechetical meetings of specific formation for the apostolate and for the “Group with the Vows”, & study groups...

Participation in parish missions organized in various regions of Italy.



7. SOME OF THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

- a.** The challenge of the social context very conditioned by dechristianization, by the abandonment of the Christian faith and of the traditional religious practices, overcome through the prayer of the heart, with the witness and the proposal of the Montfortian spiritual journey.
- b.** The crisis of the Church itself caused by the diffusion of the spirit of the world and of modernism. Should the Church not courageously relaunch a coherent choice of Christian life from the rediscovering of her baptism?
- c.** The generalized situation of loneliness and individualism, the fashion for "doing everything by yourself" but also the danger of a religion sometimes reduced to intimism, by reducing portions of fraternity, teamwork and "To do together".



- d.** The nihilistic culture and the economic and social crisis, while there is a joyful proposal for Christian life in the school of Mary which brought joy back to Cana.
- e.** The economic crisis which goes against mutual aid and aid to the poor in the Montfortian missions.
- f.** The crisis of volunteering, instead of going to rediscover the apostolic dimension of Montfortian Consecration.
- g.** The Covid 19 pandemic. Is it approached with the offering of pain in prayer by those who have fallen ill and with the care and charity of those who have not been affected? At the same time, has evangelism and the dissemination of spirituality through alternative online media been sufficiently exploited?



“ The crisis of the Church itself caused by the diffusion of the spirit of the world and of modernism. Should the Church not courageously relaunch a coherent choice of Christian life from the rediscovering of her baptism? ”

8. THE GROUP WITH THE VOWS. DEVELOPMENT OF THIS GROUP WITH THE VOWS. WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROVINCE, WHO ARE THEY, WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THEIR FORMATION, THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES. WHAT IS THE FORMULA OF THEIR VOWS?

The group with the Vows was created only two years ago, after the establishment of the Regional Center. Those who feel called to this form of life within the Association prepare to enter it after a period of preparation of at least two years, according to their personal journey. Usually there is a period of initial discernment followed by at least one year, conceived as a kind of novitiate, characterized by more frequent meetings of spiritual direction, by specific meetings of catechesis and formation on the subject of the content of the evangelical counsels, in the light of Montfortian Spirituality and by periods of more prolonged fraternal life with the confreres of this group with Vows.

The members of the Group with Vows are obviously the most involved in the life of the Mary Queen of Hearts Association, both spiritually and missionary: in the spiritual animation of the Fraternity of the Regional Center of Trinitapoli, within the groups of the Association itself and in helping the Montfort Missionaries who work with the Association, in conferences and missions for the dissemination of Montfort Spirituality. In imitation of Mary, Mother of the faithful, they are particularly called to the spiritual welcome of those who are on a journey of faith or who want to know better the spirituality of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort (Regulations of the Group of vows - RGV 10-11).



The rights and duties of the members who are part of this group are established by the Regulations of the Group of Vows (RGV), with respect for individual lived realities, in the way the Spirit suggests and in accordance with what the Lord Jesus does to hear as necessary to assimilate to Him (RGV 5-7). **The members of this group, both for the decision to issue and renew the vows and for the exercise and practice of these, refer to the superior who is himself is the Director of the Center (RGV 3).** In the form of an organization, also having a life in common, according to the possible modalities for individual consecrated persons, they also have reciprocal rights and duties, as well as reciprocal dependence, in order to concretize the dependence that one wants to have of Jesus and Mary (RGV 8).

Below is the form of vows composed by the Montfortians for those who commit to living the evangelical counsels.

“ In imitation of Mary, Mother of the faithful, they are particularly called to the spiritual welcome of those who are on a journey of faith or who want to know better the spirituality of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort.



Commitment with Vows:

In the desire to consecrate myself more perfectly to God, for his glory alone, for the service of the Church in the poor and for the salvation of souls,

with the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary Seat of Wisdom and Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort,

to progress on my spiritual path towards evangelical perfection, in your hands Reverend Father, delegate of the Superior General of the Company of Mary

I vow to almighty God, of poverty, obedience and chastity, for a year, in the spirit of what is planned by the Statutes of the Association Marie Reine des Cœurs approved by the Church and I take it with all my heart charisma and mission.

May Jesus, my Lord, Eternal Wisdom, incarnate and crucified who became a slave for the love of me and of all men and the Virgin Mary, on whom I depend in everything and for everything, help me observe them with fidelity and conviction.

In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. ■





“ Now, after this journey, it is beautiful to admire the work of Mary, what she has built during these years, in us and with us, so that the Kingdom of her Son Jesus can be realized in each of his children.

«Transmitting the Montfortian Spiritual Heritage»



By Arnold Suhardi SMM

Transmitting the Montfortian Spiritual Heritage. What is it about ? It is:

- 1. sharing with others ...*
- 2... in a natural way...*
- 3... of a life...*
- 4... which is animated by Christian values and teachings which are understood and lived by Louis-Marie de Montfort...*
- 5... and that a person, in turn, can understand and live with conviction.*



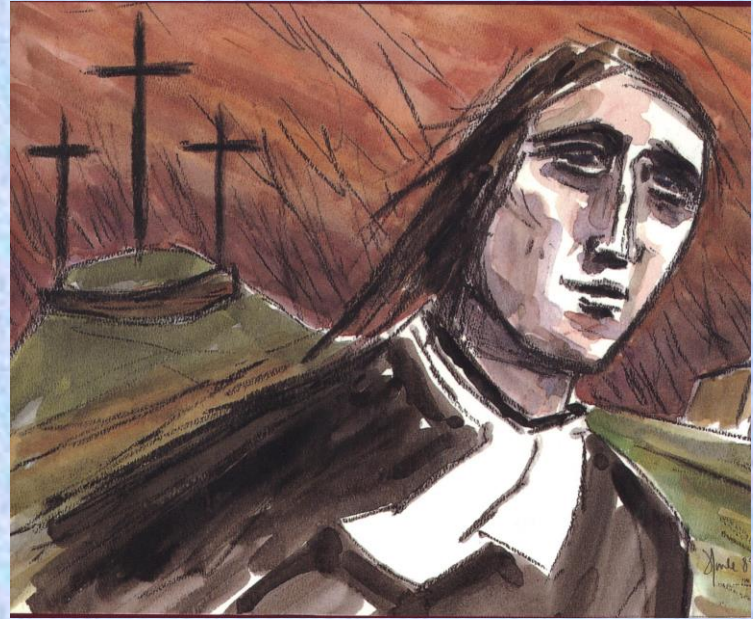
1. SHARING WITH OTHERS ...

Our life has a social dimension. This sharing takes place in a space of relational interaction. Sharing means saying, telling, communicating, giving, passing on, transmitting to others, like any heritage.

For a Montfortian Associate, as for everyone else, this sharing can start from "the closest environment" where one lives and works: members of the family, friends, colleagues. More specifically for Montfortian formators, these people with whom they share Montfortian spirituality, for example, are the candidates in formation houses. In addition, this sharing can be experienced within the larger SMM environment, within the Montfortian Family and even with various movements and congregations that also live Montfortian spirituality in the Church.

This sharing of Montfortian spirituality can be addressed to the poor, to young people, seekers of God through Mary, seekers of meaning and purpose in their lives.

What we share is what we have, know or live and which is or has already grown. **We cannot share what we do not have, neither know nor live.** We have when we possess something related to a certain material or a certain information; we know something after a research that does not necessarily have to be scientific and we live Montfortian spirituality if we live accordingly and with consistency in the practice of daily reality.



But we have to be careful because this sharing is not a step that takes place after we have, know or live. Because even when we are still in the process of possessing or knowing or living, we can already share. Even this sharing is a great way to have more, to know more and to live more. Those who never share Montfortian spirituality do not possess it, do not know it, or even do not live it, they only preserve it. Sharing is not one-sided by nature, but always in dialogue. The more we share, the more we have, know and live. Thus, those who benefit from the sharing of Montfortian spirituality are not mainly those who receive it, but rather those who share it themselves. The more we give, the more we receive.

This sharing can take the form of information. Information that is read, heard, seen, appreciated forms life. So information and training go hand in hand. Information influences, energizes, encourages, inspires life; it shapes the way we feel, the way we think and therefore the way we are. Montfortian spirituality shapes a person's personality in a holistic way. The content of this sharing is therefore in fact life itself, this community life about which we speak so much.

2.... IN A NATURAL WAY...

Sharing is cheap, it does not need money, it does not affect our precious time ... Because it is linked to life and derives from it, it is then done in a natural way, as automatically, without special effort, without even having to think or plan. It flows as it is, naturally, like a breath of air, like life itself. But this type of sharing occurs only on a personal level and within a limited range.

If in any social relationship there is a meaningful response, then over time organization becomes definitely necessary. Because if it is true that the spiritual treasure of Montfort is a way of Christian happiness, then surely we will proclaim the secret of our life to the people we meet: **«what you live, what you believe, you cannot shut it up»**. Then, little by little, a group of “clients” of Montfortian spirituality will be formed, namely people who start «consuming Montfort» and will use it as their spiritual food. **Within SMM, there is already this named reality: the Association Mary Queen of All Hearts”**. Association can be an option to facilitate the accompaniment of people who live the Montfortian spirituality which is larger, as it should be, than the consecration to Jesus through Mary.



To nourish these people, a person living the Montfortian spirituality will be confronted with the talents at his disposal. We can creatively bring all his talents to the spreading of this Montfortian spirituality.

If you are good at preaching, you can teach or give seminars. If you have time to write, you can write one or two articles. If you have artistic talent, you can write poetry, compose hymns and music, stage animation, create dance movements or other animations. We can even involve various other people who have different talents for the same purpose: to share Montfortian spirituality.



The members of the group are not only simple recipients, but in turn seek to form themselves to participate in the same mission: to spread Montfortian spirituality, to become a missionary disciple in the Church today with a colorful life through the prism of Montfortian spirituality. The constitution of an **"animation team"** within a group is therefore necessary. Cooperation or teamwork goes without saying in the spirit of synodality.

If the "clients" of this spirituality become more and more numerous and "hungry", then one will surely learn to use the various means of social communication to communicate with and reach them. After all, are not accompaniment and continuing formation a constant need for people who live the Montfortian spirituality?

People who have received Montfortian spirituality have the right to be supported by SMM. This is true, especially if they are involved in the Association Mary Queen of All Hearts, which is juridically-organically united with SMM. In addition, television, radio, newspapers, etc. are used in certain places as channels for the sharing of this Montfortian spirituality and this is becoming normal. For example, I know that in Gitega, Burundi, through Radio Maria, every Saturday, the Militants of the Blessed Virgin of the missionary post "Marian Works" regularly teach "true devotion to Mary".

In the spreading of Montfortian spirituality, we must never let go of the relationship with the local bishops and parish priests. Synergistic collaboration must be built for the benefit of spiritual and missionary people who live the Montfortian spirituality.



Mission and spirituality go hand in hand. During a provincial chapter, it happened that a capitulant confrere was surprised that, in the current General Administration, the Commission of Montfortian Spirituality is distinguished from the Commission of Mission. He even expressed his astonishment that these two commissions are also animated by two different members of the General Council. According to this confrere, Montfortian spirituality and mission must therefore go hand in hand. Thank God, in the follow-up dialogue, it appears that he accepts the distinction in the name of the orientation of all animation and coordination in these two commissions, which in fact form only one unit. This distinction is far from being intended to separate so that they become a kind of sealed dualism. However, what is very important to underline is this: Montfortian spirituality is by nature missionary and the mission can and must be linked to the spreading of Montfortian spirituality.



During a meeting with the elderly confreres in Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, at the end of September 2021, a confrere asks: what pushes the candidates, currently in our formation houses, to become Montfortians? Is it because of the mission or because of spirituality? To answer this question, it seems that we have to look at it on a case-by-case basis. Because there is no uniform motivation that would push candidates to engage in a Montfortian vocation. For some candidates, it is perhaps not the Montfortian mission or Montfortian spirituality that pushes them to enter the SMM, but simply the desire to become a priest-religious. During their formation, the formators communicate to them something of Montfortian spirituality or the Montfortian mission. It may even happen that, until the end of their life, there are some who do not yet really know what the Montfortian mission is or what the Montfortian spirituality is, but they continue to live and work as Montfortian religious-priests, without special coloring. Of course, here appears the importance of total formation in Montfortian life.



3. ... OF A LIFE...

Sharing is of a vital nature, that is, it concerns "being", not primarily "doing". An authentic Christian life is already a sharing, for it radiates a beauty that captivates the hearts of others. A life can radiate the spiritual treasures of Montfort, as a privileged way to be happy as a Christian. In such a beautiful life, it will also be revealed that Montfortian spirituality is a real style of missionary life that the Church needs through the ages. The fiery prayer for missionaries speaks of it in a beautiful way.

This lived testimony is the key to the credibility of a transmission. Because it is not the words that move but the lifestyle of the person who pronounces these words. This congregation may need to multiply the motivators or influencers in the field of Montfortian spirituality by their words, whether they are written or spoken, but above all to multiply the people who live this spirituality, through a true testimony.

The testimony of life cannot always be detected from the outside, for Montfortian spirituality is intrinsically interior; only the person himself can know all his interior operations: how he do everything through, with, in and for Mary so that he can do everything, even more perfectly, through, with, in and for Jesus Christ. **Montfortian spirituality is a very special school for the formation of the heart for interior and missionary life.**

Then it is through the fruits that one can discern if one really lives the Montfortian spirituality.

4.... WHICH IS ANIMATED BY CHRISTIAN VALUES AND TEACHINGS WHICH ARE UNDERSTOOD AND LIVED BY LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT...

Montfortian spirituality is not a theory but an enlightening vital synthesis. **This spirituality has something to do with various themes of Montfort's teaching:** God alone, Jesus Wisdom, the Holy Spirit, Incarnation, the Cross, the nobility of the poor, Mary, Baptism, the renewal of Consecration, the mission or evangelization. All of this will then be shared with others in life.

Montfortian spirituality also reflects **the values of the missionary life of Montfort:** availability, liberos, detachment, evangelization, Mary, slavery, cooperation (working together), divine providence, poverty, the poor, the place and role of the laity, obedience ... the positive values of Montfort's life on his way of being a Christian will be sought in order to be translated into life. Then there is the personal effort to experience what Montfort teaches. To be authentic, there should be no dichotomy between personal conviction and life.

I know an associate who reads the writings and the life of Montfort. Then he humorously compares what he reads with the behavior of certain Montfort Missionaries he knows. Then he asks himself: "Why is their way of life so different from Montfort's?" Montfort, according to him, is a man full of the fire of the Holy Spirit, ready for evangelization, making room for Mary in life and evangelization, gentle and patient. But unfortunately ! Our associate does not manage to find all these elements in the life of the Montfort Missionaries that he knows.

If this is authentic, at least according to the words of this associate, it means that there are values in the life of Montfort which are not assimilated, nor translated in the life of these Montfort Missionaries that he knows.

I also know a Montfort Missionary who lets himself be inspired by Montfort and is active in the sharing of Montfortian spirituality. Some confreres laugh at him saying: "this Father feels like another Montfort". It therefore seems that following Jesus with the inspiration of Montfort is not at all easy. Even more, to be a disciple of Jesus with the inspiration of Montfort today.



5.... AND THAT A PERSON, IN TURN, CAN UNDERSTAND AND LIVE WITH CONVICTION.

This conviction is drawn from an intellectual and spiritual affinity that we experience with the content of the teachings and values of Montfort's life.

Without affinity there is no passion, there is no determination let alone loyalty. By affinity, people become generous and available to share Montfortian spirituality with others. **Sharing Montfortian spirituality with others is not a mission, much less a job, but a pleasure, a joy.**

This conviction stems from the strengthening of our union with Jesus, facilitated by Montfort's teachings. It is like an enlightening experience, where one feels that one can see very clearly the relevance of Montfort's teachings for the Church today. It is like the experience of Paul who declares: "Life for me is Christ", or "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel". Here is a powerful experience that gives full meaning to the whole being, with Paul as with Montfort. Therefore, this conviction is not a theory but a personal synthetic experience; a "wow", or an "ahaaa ...", or a "voilà".

It is this experience which is supposed to have been lived by many people, in various places, who propagated the teachings of Montfort, even before the presence of the Montfortian Family: in Poland, Burundi, Kinshasa (DRC), in Uganda, Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Rwanda... John Paul II got to know Montfort, it was only later that he knew there was a Montfortian Family.

This conviction is not accidental in nature as if it arises one day and then disappears the next. No, it is something warm, strong, flaming, which continues to disturb a person's heart and stir it. The heart of a person who has been touched by Montfortian spirituality will be fully satisfied if he proclaims "in good time and out of time" his conviction to others, whether asked for it or not. **It is because there is something powerful in his heart that he cannot contain it on his own. Keeping it to himself becomes unbearable.** A person who believes with such conviction will come out of his house and start doing things a certain way to express what is in his heart. And that can drive his madness, to the point of giving himself totally to what he believes in, in a way that is within his reach. Without this kind of madness, you can't do anything meaningful in life, at least for yourself. What could have prompted Fr. Luciano Ciciarelli to explore the countries of Latin America, and not only, in order to spread the consecration taught by Montfort, relying solely on Divine Providence, if not this madness?

Without madness like this, there is not enough deepening of Montfortian spirituality, there is no effort to actualize his message, no effort to inculturate this message and the values of his life.



How can this conviction be formed in a person?

First, by looking at the lives of people who live the teachings of Montfort. During a pilgrimage to Lourdes from September 13th to 18th, deacon Yves Dupas told me: “Seeing what Father Olivier Maire has done, namely welcoming a poor person in a spirit of charity in his community, I was strengthened on the way to follow Jesus Christ with the inspiration of Father de Montfort”. It is not only Olivier Maire, there are many unknown characters who breathe a beautiful life into their daily lives thanks to Montfortian spirituality. They are there for our example.



Second, through diligent reading. A very personal reading of Montfort's writings can make a person completely absorbed by Montfort's very strong convictions, for example on the role and place of Mary in the path of holiness of the faithful, starting from baptism.

Reading is done not only once, but several times, because Montfort's writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit. In these printed words there is spirit and life. This is what makes the hearts of those who read them "simmer" and makes them addicting to keep reading and come back to read them again. John Paul II had brought his book “Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin” to the soda factory where he worked and was eager to take a break to find a quiet place and continue his reading. If there were things at first that he did not understand, thanks to his continued reading, they began to become clearer to him. Karol Wojtyła (the initial name of John Paul II) even went so far as to capture the essence of what Montfort was trying to convey behind his exuberant writing style that he called "baroque".

Until now, Montfort's writings and Montfort's biographies are still read by many people. Regarding these writings in particular, Muriel Fleury (Director of «Nouvelle Cité» Publications), wrote to me by email, when I received the last edition of the «Livre d’Or» of Montfort, on October 7, 2021: «I wish the texts of Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort continue to touch many hearts». **In the pages of Montfortian writings, Christians today continue to draw from the source, a living spiritual-missionary water to quench the thirst of their soul, as disciples of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit for the greater glory of God the Father. Amen. ■**

THE VISIT OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL AND HIS ADMINISTRATION: MOMENT OF JOY, GRATITUDE AND LEARNING FOR THE ASSOCIATES IN KENYA

By Brother Amos Hope Makina, SMM, from
Nairobi, Kenya

Saturday, October 16, 2021, will remain as a great memory for the Montfort Associates in Kenya that can be told through the twists and turns of history. On this date, the Superior General, the Very Reverend Fr. Luiz Augusto Stefani, SMM, accompanied by the Rev. Fr. Felix Mabvuto Phiri, SMM (Assistant General in charge of Africa and Madagascar) and the Rev. Fr. Arnold Suhardi, SMM (Assistant General in charge of Asia and Oceania) met the Associates of Kenya, who welcomed them with joy, to the international scholasticate community in Nairobi.

During this historic meeting, Brother Amos Makina, SMM, welcomed the Superior General and his assistants, as well as all the Associates who were present for this meeting. In his welcome address, Brother Amos expressed the very sincere gratitude of the Associates who had come in large numbers to meet the Superior General and his assistants. And later in his response, added that the Associates with their commitment and love for the Montfortian Family are always appreciated, and he encouraged them to feel free to participate actively in the discussion that will follow.

During the meeting, the major point of this year concerning the Continental Missionary Year for Africa and Madagascar was reminded to the Montfortian Associates. The Superior General shared with the group a documentary which reflects in depth on the theme of the Continental Missionary Year, namely: “Montfort, sign of hope and life in the Family of God”.

In the second part of the sharing, Fr. Arnold Suhardi, SMM, who is also currently responsible for the Montfortian Associates at the level of the Congregation, underlined the mission and the responsibilities of the Associations of Mary Queen of Hearts, in the world.

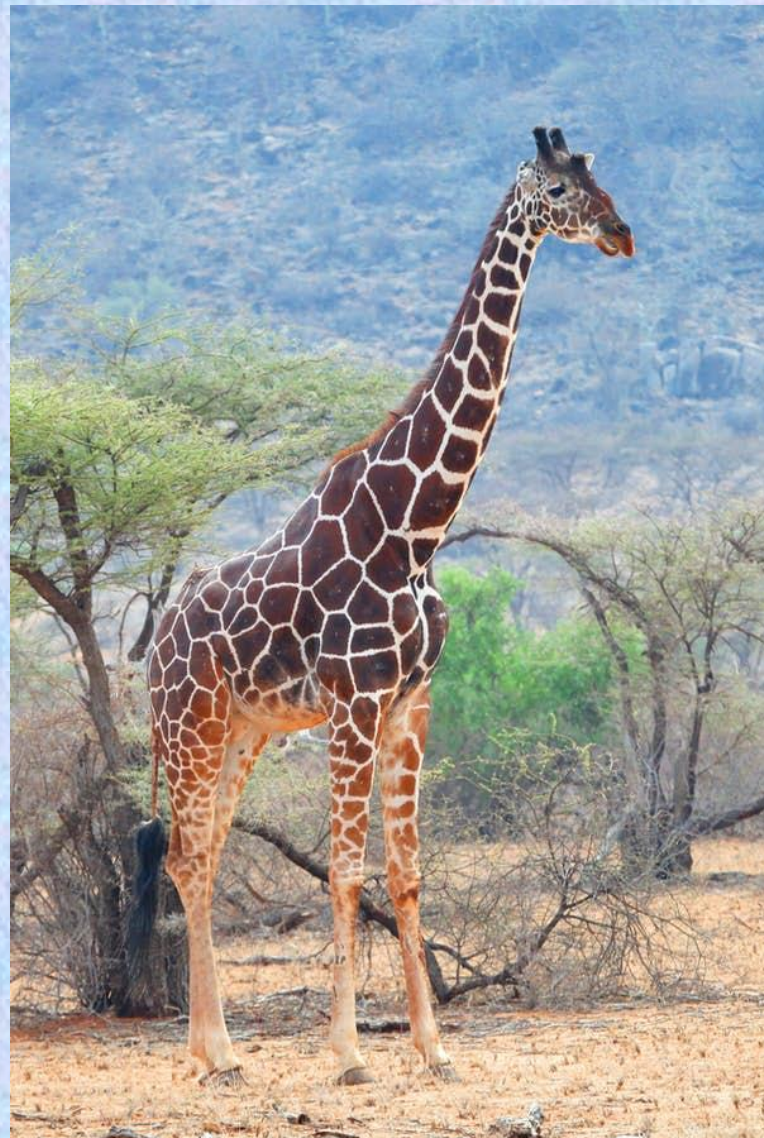
He explained that the Association was indeed growing in many countries around the world, and with quite remarkable hope on the African continent and the island of Madagascar. He appreciated the contribution of the Kenyan Associates to the Montfortian Family who remain faithful to our spirituality, to make known & loved each day Jesus The Wisdom Incarnate & his holy Mother.



Another activity that the General Administration does, by animating the Montfortian Associates, is to approve the modifications of the Statutes of the Associates: a clear example is the approval of an amendment to the Statutes of the Association submitted by the National Center of Philippines. The General Administration also describes or defines the identity of a Montfortian Associate. What is a Montfortian Associate? In this regard, three characteristics were discussed: a Montfortian Associate is the one whose name is entered in the register of members, it is also the one who lives the Consecration to Jesus through Mary as proposed by Louis-Marie de Montfort as master and spiritual guide. Finally, the Montfortian Associate is the one who participates or collaborates in the mission of the Company of Mary.

Fr. Arnold also spoke of the animation service as General Administration towards the Montfortian Associates. He explained at length that within the General Administration, **there is a Commission of “Montfortian Associates in the World”** which makes great efforts to accompany brothers, sisters, Christians, to follow Jesus with Mary according to the inspiration of St. Montfort, so that the Kingdom of Jesus through Mary becomes more and more a reality in the hearts of many people and in the world.

This “Commission of Montfortian Associates in the World” carries out several activities including: the dissemination of the Statutes of the Association Mary Queen of hearts. Father Arnold further explained that Montfortain associates is a word used to designate the members of the Association Mary Queen of hearts, and that this name is recognized by the Holy See.



In addition, by animating the Montfortian Associates, the General Administration appoints spiritual Directors of Associates throughout the world. They also ensure to eliminate the isolation between the Centers by creating inter-Center communication and this has been achieved by creating a monthly newsletter called JESUS LIVING IN MARY which is available in seven languages. Fr. Arnold clarified that the Montfortian Associates are not only lay people but also bishops, priests, religious, brothers and sisters.

Fr. Luiz Augusto Stefani SMM, (Superior General) added that apart from the members of the Mary Queen of Hearts Association, there are members who have made their consecration independently.

He then asked the members of the Montfortian Associates in Kenya to share the treasure of Montfortian spirituality with other people. He

exhorted them to be united in prayer, to remain in solidarity with one another and assured them of the link that exists between the General Administration and the members of the Montfortian Associates in Kenya.



The meeting ended with the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Arnold Suhardi SMM. The holy sacrifice of the Mass was also joined by the Brothers of Saint Gabriel. It was a colorful celebration. In his homily, Fr. Arnold underlined three important characteristics of a genuine Christian. **A genuine Christian is one who has personally encountered Jesus Christ in his spiritual life and his personal experiences; it is he, in whom we can read Jesus Christ (that is to say the one who radiates Jesus Christ by a life perfectly united to Jesus Christ, loving him tenderly and serving him faithfully (VD 62) finally, he is the one who proclaims Jesus Christ in word and in deed.**

After the Eucharistic celebration, Fr. Jacob Ombidi Otieno, SMM (Superior of the Community) thanked the Superior General and his assistants for their visit to Kenya and for their generous love towards the members of the Mary Queen of Hearts Association. He mentioned his appreciation of Brother Amos Makina, SMM, for his dedication and accompaniment of the members of the Association in Kenya.

Finally, he thanked all those present for their presence and their commitment to the mission of the Congregation.

In his concluding remarks, Fr. Luiz Augusto Stefani SMM expressed his joy for the successful meeting with the Montfortian Associates, a meeting which was defined as “a meeting of quality”. He asked the members to keep the unity of prayer as the Continental Missionary Year continues so that Mary can lead us to do the mission of God. He assured them of his prayers. ■

Father General's visits the Associates of Nairobi

By George M. Ndinius,
President of the Montfortian Associates of Kenya

After receiving confirmation that Father General along with Fathers Felix Phiri and Arnold Suhardi were to arrive in Nairobi on October 16, we were already delighted in advance and we decided to be at the "Maison Montfort" early in the morning.

The program began with prayers in the chapel led by Fr. Felix. Shortly after the prayers, we went to the conference room.

During the meeting, Fr. Arnold announced that a report on the activities in all the Centers had been submitted by the National or Regional Spiritual Directors. **It has also been said that Kenya may soon become a national center with Uganda. If successful, a Spiritual Director will be appointed for both countries.** After the meeting, we continued our activities with the Holy Mass.

Lunch was then served on the terrace. Subsequently, Mathilde, an Associate, offered Father General a personal gift while George also gave on behalf of the Associates.

It was also announced that George would accompany Father General and his group to the Continental Assembly in Mangochi, Malawi, as the Associates representative in Kenya. ■



Here are our hearts, Child Jesus, / But hearts of no great worth; /
Enrich them, then, we beg you / So we may sing each in turn, /
Since you make room for us here: / Child Jesus, by your love, /
Reign over us night and day. (H 58,12)

"What should we do?"



By Pierrette MAIGNÉ

DECEMBER 12, 2021

3rd Sunday of Advent, De Gaudete - Year C



Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St Luke (Lk 3:10-18)

During that time, the crowds who came to be baptized by John asked him: "What should we do?"

John would answer them: "He who has two clothes, that he shares with the one who does not have one; and whoever has enough to eat, let him do the same!"

Publicans (i.e. tax collectors) also came to be baptized; they said to him: "Master, what should we do?"

He answered them: "Do not demand more than what is given to you."

Soldiers in turn asked him:

"What about us, what should we do?"

He answered them:

"Do not do violence to anyone, don't blame anyone; and be content with your balance."

Now the people were waiting, and all were wondering within themselves if John was the Christ. John then addressed everyone:

"I baptize you with water; but he comes, he who is stronger than me.

I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

He holds the winnowing shovel in his hand

to clean his threshing floor,

and he will gather the grain in his barn; as for the straw,

he will burn it with a fire which does not go out."

By many more exhortations,

he was announcing the Good News to the people.



In this passage read on the 3rd Sunday of Advent in this year C, the figure of John the Baptist is at the center.

John has with drove to the desert and preaches a baptism of conversion. Luke presents to us the preaching of John the Baptist, here we have the central part which concerns the act.

John responds concretely to those who come to be baptized and asks him the question: "what should we do?" "

We can see how concrete John is in his answers, they are adapted to the life of each person, to his real situation.

It is our actions, those of our most daily life that are a sign of our conversion. It is social behavior and not ascetic practices or sacrifices that we are called first.

How can we not hear this word of Jesus as an echo: it is not by calling me Lord, Lord that one will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is by doing the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Mt 7, 21-23).

But already the prophet Micah eight centuries before declared: how should I present myself before the Lord? asked the people, How do I bow down to the Most High? ... Man, replies the prophet, you have been made known what is good, what the Lord demands of you: nothing other than to respect the law, to love fidelity and to apply yourself to walk with your God. (Mic.6, 6.8).

In fact, our conversion is measured by our attitude towards our neighbor: justice, respect for others, refusal of violence in all its forms, these are the attitudes the Lord asks of us.

Let's listen to Pope Francis: "It's not easy to follow Jesus. You have to base your life on rock, asking yourself what is the center, the beating heart of the Word of God? What is it that ultimately gives stability to the life that will never end? Charity will never end. He who does good invests for eternity. And us, what are we investing our lives in? (Angelus of 11/14/2021).





In this time before which prepares us to welcome the Savior, this can nourish our reflection and our action.

Then to the question that many ask themselves: would not John be the expected Messiah, his answer is very clear: the one you are waiting for, he comes behind me and I am only a precursor who prepares his coming by preaching a baptism of conversion and proclaiming the Good News. Messenger, witness, this is also the mission of each baptized person to prepare the way for the One who is to come. ■

*O the sweet tenderness, / O the tender smiles, /
O the holy caresses / Your dear Son gives you! /
Blessed is your womb, pure and faithful Virgin, /
For having contained immensity, / For having nourished,
for having borne / Eternal Wisdom! (H 63,9)*



O Jesus, the reason for your plan / To be born in
a stable / Is to find in my heart / A pleasing
place to stay. / Then come to me now, / Rest in
me with glory. / May I be conquered by a child, /
O sweetest victory! (H 61:9)

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