

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MONTFORT

**A spiritual journey
proposed on the occasion
of the Tercentenary
of the death of Montfort**



Animation Tool 2015-2016

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MONTFORT

PRESENTATION

As in previous years, the General Council of the Montfort Missionaries proposes for the members of the congregation and its lay associates, a spiritual journey that may also be of use to the members and associates of the other Montfortian congregations. On the occasion of the tercentenary of the death of Montfort, it is fitting that this journey should be based on the person of Montfort himself. The journey is entitled: “In the Footsteps of Montfort”. It invites us in effect not to visit the “geographical places” but rather the “spiritual places” to find Montfort in them and to allow ourselves to be transformed by contact with him.



We offer you in this leaflet the various elements of this spiritual journey with a few suggestions for its use. We thank the three people who have worked on it: Father Jean-Louis Courchesne, s.m.m., Sister Claudette Danis, f.d.l.s., and Father Georges Madore, s.m.m. Special thanks also to Fr Paul Allerton who did the English translation.

AIM: to follow Montfort spiritually in order to rediscover him, to let ourselves be questioned by him, to submerge ourselves in his life, his faith, his love of Christ and Mary, his missionary zeal.

USERS: members of our Montfortian Congregations and their lay associates. Any person or group of persons interested in knowing Montfort better and following him.

METHOD: Engaging in a spiritual journey inspired by twenty-one events in Montfort’s life

COMPONENTS: Each module is made up of the following elements:

- a short presentation of an event in Montfort's life
- a drawing representing that event
- a value to explore based on that event
- a quotation from Montfort's writing expressing this value
- a biblical personage or event that sheds light on this episode
- personal integration through certain questions
- a short prayer of praise or petition, in the form of a 'prayer for the faithful'
- Action-commitment: a concrete commitment

METHODOLOGY: we propose a two-weekly rhythm, starting 14 Septembre 2015 to 11 September 2016. But each individual or group can choose whatever rhythm they feel is more appropriate. The journey can be made in small groups or individually either for lay associates or religious. One can also use the proposed material to build his/her own personal retreat.

PUBLICATION: the 21 parts of the animation tool are being offered in the following formats on the websites **montfortian.info** and **montfort-tricentenary.org**:

- an A4 .doc format
- and in the following formats in the form of independent leaflets:
 - A5 .doc format
 - A5 .pdf format

The 21 events forming the spiritual journey

«In the footsteps of Montfort»

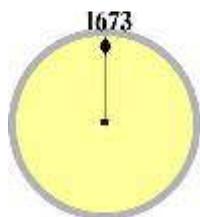
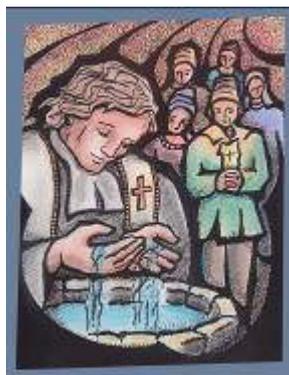
| EVENT | VALUE |
|--|--|
| 1. Birth and Baptism at Montfort | The gift of life |
| 2. Youth in Montfort, influence from his environment | Our roots |
| 3. Departure for Paris | Ruptures that help us grow; surrendering to God's providence |
| 4. Ordination in Paris | Priestly service |
| 5. Arrival at the General Hospital of Poitiers | Being with the poor and serving them |
| 6. Encounter with Marie-Louise | Friendships that accompany us and make us grow |
| 7. Marie-Louise moving to the General Hospital | Radical call; being called to a mission that entails hard choices |
| 8. Stay in <i>Rue du Pot de Fer</i> | Spiritual deprivation, desert, strong desire |
| 9. End of writing of Love of Eternal Wisdom | Experiencing the love of Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom for me; answering to this love |
| 10. Meeting with and calling of Mathurin Rangeard | Mathurin the catechist: helping faith to grow; expressing one's faith in a simple manner and proposing it. |
| 11. Mission in Montbernage; Rosary entrusted to Jacques Goudeau | Rediscovering and reinventing the prayer of the Rosary |

| EVENT | VALUE |
|---|--|
| 12. Pilgrimage to Rome and encounter with Pope Clement XI | Belonging to the Church; committing oneself to the renewal of the Church |
| 13. Pilgrimage to Mont St-Michel | Pilgrimage, symbol and element of our spiritual journey |
| 14. Lay disciples of Montfort: the Count and the Countess de la Garaye and the Marquis de Magnanne | Role and commitment of lay people in the Church and in Montfortian congregations |
| 15. Stay at St-Lazare | Community life |
| 16. The great missions | Evangelization |
| 17. Construction and demolition of the Calvary at Pontchâteau | The Cross of Christ and my own |
| 18. Writing of the Treatise on True Devotion | Consecration to Jesus through Mary as proposed and lived by Montfort |
| 19. New projects in La Rochelle | Pastoral boldness and creativity. Proposing the Gosepl to all, by all means possible |
| 20. Solitude at the Grotto of Mervent | Prayer, contemplation. Creation as a way to God |
| 21. Last mission and death at St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre | Living one's death in serenity and surrender to God |



1. EVENT: Birth and Baptism at Montfort

- **DATE** : 1673, 31 January and 1 February
- **PLACE** : Montfort
- **VALUE** : the gift of life
- **THE STORY** :



Jean-Baptiste Grignon and Jeanne Robert, the parents of St Louis Marie, were married in 1671. In 1672 they had a first son, Jean-Baptiste, who died aged 5 months. Louis Marie, the predestined son, was born the following year, on 31 January 1673, in Montfort-la-Cane. Through the death of his brother, he became the eldest in a family that would number eighteen children: eight boys and ten girls. Several of the children died at an early age. Among those that survived, there were two religious Sisters and three priests. On 1 February, the day after his birth, Louis Marie was baptised in the church of Saint-Jean, his parish. Two centuries previously, in this same church, a saint, Vincent Ferrier, had prayed. While preaching one day in La Chèze, not far from Montfort, this great apostle had foretold the coming of a man of God, a “powerful missionary”: he was foretelling Father de Montfort.

We know the importance that Louis Marie placed on Baptism in his life and ministry. He took the name of the town of his birth, so as to be a living reminder of this. Let us recall the Contract of Covenant with God that he was to have signed at the end of his missions, and the consecration to Jesus through Mary, which he says is the renewal of Baptismal promises.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (hymn 27, 2-4;10-11;21-22)

For the excess of your great love
I possess no worthy return So I want to chant forever: Deo gratias,
Deo gratias, Deo gratias, Deo gratias.
Great God, you made me from nothing,
I received everything from you. You alone are my sole support. Deo
gratias,
I am your image, O great King,
And with lively faith I believe You have imprinted it in me. Deo gratias,
You anointed me with mildness,
And adorned me with all splendour, You have filled me with your
favours. Deo gratias,
You alone had me baptized,
And then and there had me espouse you, And later had me catechized.
Deo gratias,
What is this great joy and sweetness
Savoured at times within my heart? It is the effect of your grace. Deo
gratias,
What can I offer for these gifts,
For many other hidden ones, Except to chant forever: Deo gratias,
Deo gratias, Deo gratias, Deo gratias..

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

Psalm 139 (138): 1. 13-18

Yahweh, you examine me and know me,
You created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb.
For so many marvels I thank you; a wonder am I, and all your works
are wonders. You knew me through and through, my being held no
secrets from you, when I was being formed in secret, textured in the
depths of the earth. Your eyes could see my embryo. In your book all
my days were inscribed, every one that was fixed is there. How hard
for me to grasp your thoughts, how many, God, there are! If I count

them, they are more than the grains of sand; if I come to an end, I am still with you.

Titus 3: 4-8a

When the kindness and love of God our Saviour for humanity were revealed, it was not because of any upright actions we had done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own faithful love that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Saviour; so that, justified by his grace, we should become heirs in hope of eternal life. This is doctrine that you can rely on. I want you to be quite uncompromising in teaching all this.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- What are the most beautiful “gifts” that life has offered me?
- What are the ‘gifts’ of life that I might offer to others?
- Has there been some moment or some circumstance when I have felt particularly alive, profoundly connected with life?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Conscious of the immense generosity of God, let us turn to him in prayer, saying: Praise to you, God of wonders!

For the gift of life, for our bodies, our intelligence, and all the resources you have created within us,

For the beauty of the world and the abundance of your good gifts,

For the gift of our Baptism, which has immersed us in the power of the Spirit,

For all we receive from others, and for all we are able to give,

For Father de Montfort who leads us back to the joy of our Baptism,
God our Father, you are the source of all gifts. accept our praise and our thanks: this is our offering for today and forever and ever. Amen.

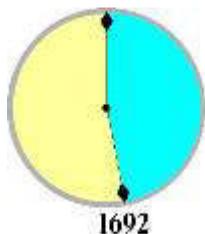
- **SYMBOL:** Seed sown in the earth, or a small pot-plant.
- **COMMITMENT**

- How can I help life to grow - or to bring healing - around me? In my relations with others?



2. EVENT: His Youth, influence from his environment

- **DATE:** 1673-1700
- **PLACE:** Montfort, La Bachelleraie, the Jesuit College in Rennes, the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris
- **VALUE:** my roots



- **THE STORY:**

Every human being is marked by his or her family background and by the social milieu where he or she starts out in life. Louis Marie was no exception.

The region where Louis Marie was born had kept the ancient Breton faith, a faith robust as the granite of its earth. Louis Marie would en flesh this vigorous temperament. Much has been made of the faults of his father, Jean-Baptiste Grignon; and he was not beyond reproach: his outbursts of anger were sometimes terrible, his greed for gain real. He had titles, but little money: he had to feed his numerous children. His job as an advocate brought him more honour than money.

From this we can understand how his domestic troubles might have had an influence on the temperament of this man who was already given to violent reactions. Moreover, Jean-Baptiste Grignon was a convinced Christian, raising his family in the fear of God, concerned with his temporal future while not forgetting the eternal life to come.

Louis Marie's mother was the daughter of a municipal magistrate of Rennes, and the sister of three priests: Alain, Gilles and Pierre. Humble, quiet, she occupied herself with the education of her children with admirable devotedness that persisted through periods of tears during her husband's bouts of anger. Louis Marie, still quite

young, did all he could to console her and, later, would praise her patience, which would sometimes have had to be very great so as to maintain peace in the household.

We can understand that Louis Marie was very close to his mother. Among his brothers and sisters, he had one favourite, Guyonne-Jeanne, seven years younger than himself, with whom he always maintained a very special relationship. He wanted to make her a saint.

We should note that his uncle Alain Robert, for whom he had great esteem, had a great influence on him. At the Jesuit College in Rennes, he was positively influenced by Father Gilbert, a regent and professor, and Father Descartes, his spiritual director. M. Julien Bellier passed on to him, for life, his love of the poor, the sick and the wretched of all kinds. His love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin, already quite remarkable even from his infancy, were confirmed and nourished during the years of his studying with the Jesuits, for whom this aspect of the faith was particularly of concern.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:**

Letter to Fr. Alain Robert, 20 September 1694

May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!

It was with great pleasure that I received your letter, coming as it did from one who has great affection for me.

Your letter brought me news of a death and in return I too have to tell you of a death. It is that of Fr. de la Barmondière, my superior and director, who has done so much for me here. He was buried last Sunday, mourned by the whole parish and by everyone who knew him. He lived a saintly life and died a holy death. It was he who founded the seminary here and had the kindness to receive me for nothing. I do not know yet how things will go, whether I shall stay or leave, as his will has not yet been made known. Whatever happens I shall not be worried. I have a Father in heaven who will never fail me. He brought me here, he has kept me here until now and he will continue to treat me with his usual kindness.

● LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:

Luke 2:46-52

[At the age of twelve, Jesus went with his parents on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Without their knowing, he stayed there] It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' He replied, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he meant. He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- In my personal history (family, educators), who has helped me the most to grow as a human being, and as a Christian?
- Who might have harmed my growth? Have I forgiven them?
- What has enabled me to overcome the deficiencies in 'my human roots'?
- What is the most beautiful heritage I have received from people who accompanied me in my youth?

- **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us give thanks to God for those people who have contributed to the formation of the person I am today, saying: For everything that has nourished me, thank you, Lord.

For my father and mother, who gave me life and helped me to grow,

For other people among my relations whose presence has meant much to me,

For my teachers and those who formed me, nourished me with their knowledge and their wisdom,

For all those who enabled me to overcome difficulties in the course of my life,

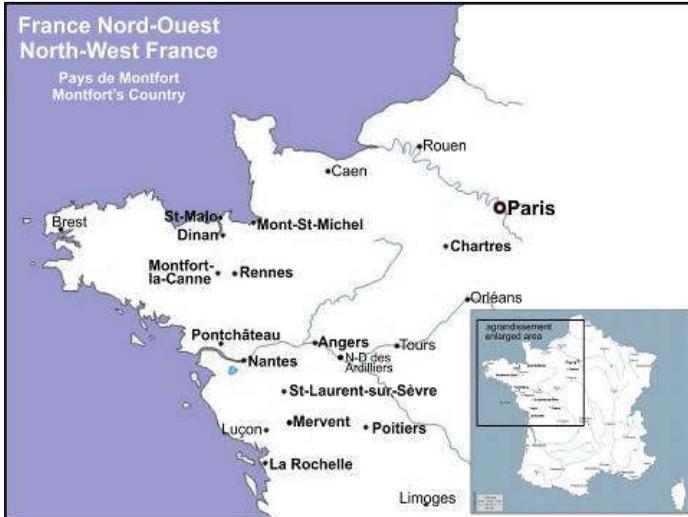
For those people that I have been able to help and walk with on their journey,

Lord, you are the source of all fatherhood. We give you thanks for the people who enabled us to come to birth and to grow. Share with me your generosity, that I may always be ready to help those who ask for my aid. Amen.

- **SYMBOL:** cf. the symbol above: the roots that nourish the plant, the soil in which it grows...

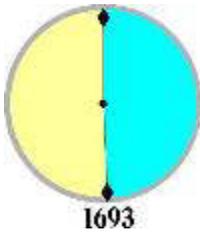
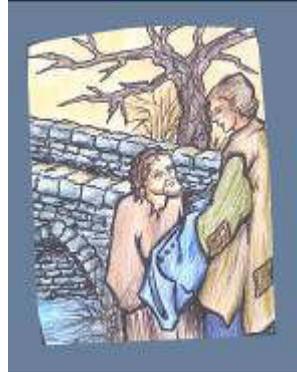
- **COMMITMENT**

- to write down the names of all those significant people who have given me roots; and to give thanks for them.



3. EVENT: Departure for Paris

- **DATE:** 1693, September?
- **PLACE:** Rennes - the Cesson bridge
- **VALUE:** Ruptures that help us grow;
Abandonment to divine Providence
- **THE STORY:**



The doors of Saint-Sulpice opened for the young student. We can guess the transports of gratitude with which Louis Marie received this good news: he had entrusted himself to Providence, and without delay Providence gave him his answer. His “immense desires for perfection” were thus about to be realised. He resolved to allow himself no delay: after “easily” obtaining the approval of his parents, he prepared to leave.

The distance from Rennes to Paris is more than 300 kilometres. They wanted to give the seminarian a horse “to cover at least half the journey”. He refused this, accepting only a new suit, ten écus, and a small pack to carry on his back. He said good-bye to his family and his own country “with such a great detachment” that he surprised even his school-mate, M. Blain. Yet he cherished his family, especially his mother, whose tears he had tenderly wiped away when he was just a child, and who had just lovingly prepared the modest trousseau of her future priest... And also it was not without a wrenching of the heart-strings that he was leaving Rennes, where he had grown up, the College of St Thomas, the source for him of so much enlightenment, the various shrines of Our Lady where he had spent so long in prayer: for sure “he had a heart just as tender as anyone, but the love of God... carried all his wishes and thought up to heaven.”

His uncle Alain Robert and his bother Joseph, and perhaps also his friend Jean-Baptiste Blain, accompanied him as far as the Cesson bridge, one league distant from Rennes. There, they took their leave and embraced.

So there he was, alone, on the road to Paris. His first instinct was to abandon himself to divine Providence, not following some vain formula, but with a very concrete gesture. His ten écus and his little baggage were soon given away; he changed his new clothes with a beggar that he met on the way. Then, in the “transports of his fervour”, he went down on his knees, and made a vow never to possess anything of his own... Then, free of everything, as he himself would later preach, “without father, mother, brothers, sisters or relatives and friends as the world and the flesh understand them, without worldly possessions..., and devoid of all self-interest,” Montfort went on his way with great strides, his Rosary in his hand.

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:**

Hymn 28, 6.8.11.13-14

God knows our wretchedness And all of our needs,
And since He is our Father, He takes great care of us all.
He joins His immense power To His wonderful kindness,
We must place our hope then In His supreme goodness.

Above all, try to understand This great secret of the Saviour
That He came to teach us (What a remarkable favour!):
Hope in God so faithful, Rest at peace in the bosom
Of His paternal love, With no worry for the morrow.

Consider, if you will, The millions of birds
Lacking for their sustenance Both reserves and granary.
Your charitable Father Makes sure they lack nothing;
And you, worth so much more Would lack what you need?

Consider the splendour Of the flowers, the lilies of the field,
Solomon in all his glory Was not arrayed as one of these.

If the fields are so clothed Without working or spinning,
You who are worth so much more, Must I not also clothe?

Do you desire abundance, The increase of temporal good?
First, and before all else, Seek eternal good,
The Lord and His justice, His kingdom and His love;
Earn by this sacrifice Your daily bread..

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

Heb 11:8-13

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the Promised Land as though it were not his, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. He looked forward to the well-founded city, designed and built by God. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise was faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who already had the mark of death on him, descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore which cannot be counted. All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognising that they were only strangers and nomads on earth.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- What ruptures have there been in my life that may have been painful, but that have helped me to grow?
- How are we to distinguish between those ruptures that aid growth

and those that diminish us?

- In what circumstances during my life have I been called upon to experience abandonment to Providence?
- How can we reconcile a religious life in which everything is well organised (board and lodging, social security) with a genuine abandonment to divine Providence?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us ask Christ, Incarnate Wisdom, to make us into true disciples. Let us ask this saying: Make us, Lord, into men who are free.

Lord, you had nowhere to lay your head. Free us from seeking the comfort that prevents us from being available for your call.

Lord, you said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all the rest will be given you as well." Keep us from all that could seduce our hearts and keep us from you.

Lord, you know that we can so easily be prisoners of ourselves and our ambitions. Grant that our hearts may be attached only to God and his Kingdom.

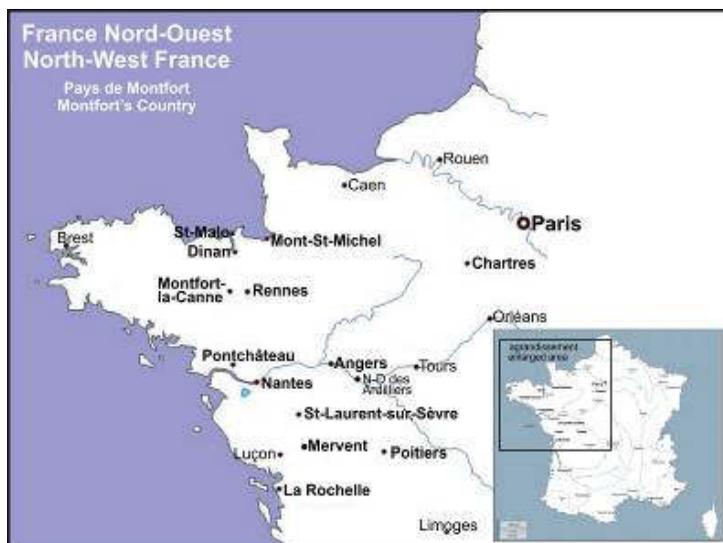
Lord, give us the courage to break with whatever keeps us far from you and whatever slows down our following of you.

We know, Lord, that you alone are entirely free as a human being. Share with us this liberty so that we might always taste the love of our Father and his faithful presence. Amen.

- **SYMBOL:** A butterfly (coming out of its cocoon)

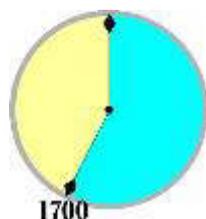
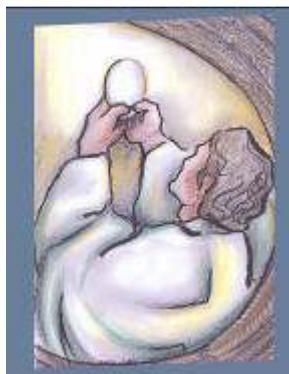
● **COMMITMENT**

- What makes it difficult for me to be genuinely abandoned to Providence? What am I going to do to overcome this difficulty?



4. EVENT: ordination in Paris

- **DATE:** 1700, 5 June
- **PLACE:** Paris, in a church since demolished
- **VALUE:** priestly service
- **THE STORY:**



Louis Marie's immediate preparation for his priestly ordination was so perfect that M.

Leschassier ordered him to make written notes of the sentiments that divine grace inspired in him — a precious manuscript, for sure, but unfortunately it has not come down to us. But what a testimony this was in Montfort's favour, coming from the severe director.

“He was raised to the priesthood,” writes Grandet, “on the Ember Saturday of Pentecost in the year 1700, by Messire Jean Hervieu Bazan de Flamanville, the Bishop of Perpignan, whom Messire Antoine de Noailles, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, had delegated to carry out the ordinations in his diocese. M. Grignon was the more at ease with receiving the imposition of hands from this prelate in that he had had the honour to be, during several Lenten seasons, his clerk or assistant when the latter taught catechism at Saint-Sulpice.”

A profound joy flooded the heart of the new priest: and after the ceremony, as his confreres congratulated him, *‘Deo gratias!’* flowed from his lips not just once but thousands of time. His heart, full of gratitude, needed a long, indeed a very long time of thanksgiving: he obtained permission to spend the rest of the day before the Blessed Sacrament.

Following the custom of those days, he took a number of days to prepare himself for his first Mass: and he chose for its celebration the chapel of the Blessed Virgin behind the choir of the

church of Saint-Sulpice. This was the altar of his “good Mother”, this altar that he had tended with so much love during his years of study.

What a Mass under the gaze of Mary! Jean-Baptiste Blain assisted at it: he struggled to express the tender feelings of his friend’s soul: he could find only one word, that reappears three times under his hand: and other witnesses who did not have the same empathy for the new priest, could find no other formula to express their feelings: He was like “an angel at the altar!”

Throughout his life, even in those times when he found himself bound by absurd censures, he would never fail to celebrate Mass every day; without it he would have felt deprived of the strength and motivation to work for his two great loves, Jesus and Mary.

● FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS

Prayer for Missionaries, 7-12

– What, then, am I asking for? *Liberos*, priests who are free with the freedom that comes from you, detached from everything, without father, mother, brothers, sisters or relatives and friends as the world understand them, without worldly possessions and devoid of all self-interest.

– slaves to your love and your will; men after your own heart who, without impediment of self-love, carry out your will to the full and, like David of old, lay low all your enemies, with the Cross for their staff and the Rosary for their sling: in baculo Cruce et in virga Virgine.

Liberos: men as free as the clouds that sail high above the earth, filled with the dew of heaven, and moving, without let or hindrance, according to the inspiration of the Spirit. They are included among those whom the prophet had in mind when he asked: qui sunt isti qui sicut nubes volant? Ubi erat impetus spiritus illuc gradiebantur, Who are these who move like clouds? Wherever the Spirit leads them, they go? (*Isaiah 60:8; Eze. 1, 12*)

Liberos: men always available, always ready to obey you when those in authority speak., like Samuel: ‘praesto sum, here I am’ (1 Sam. 3:16) always ready to be on the move and to suffer with you and for you, just as the Apostles were: ‘eamus et moriamur cum illo, let us go and die along with him’ (John 11:16)

Liberos: true children of Mary whom she has conceived and begotten by her love, nurtured and reared, upheld by her and enriched with her graces.

Liberos: true servants of the Blessed Virgin who, like a Dominic of old, will range far and wide, with the brilliant and burning flame of the Gospel in their mouth, and the Rosary in their hands, barking like watchdogs, burning like fire and dispelling the darkness of the world like the sun.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

John 13:1-17

Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, loved them to the end. They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garments and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus answered, ‘At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ ‘Never!’ said Peter. ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus replied, ‘If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me.’ Simon Peter said, ‘Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!’ Jesus said, ‘No one who has had a bath needs washing, such a person is clean all over. (...) When he had washed

their feet and put on his outer garments again he went back to the table. ‘Do you understand’, he said, ‘what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ‘In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. ‘Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- How did Jesus put himself at the service of others?
- How did Montfort put himself at the service of others?
- Who are the people that I have known who have been for me wonderful witnesses of the spirit of service?
- What difficulties have I met with in really serving others?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Jesus proclaimed: “I came to serve, not to be served.” Let us ask him to share with us this desire to serve, saying: “Teach us, Lord, the joy of service.”

Lord Jesus, you were “sent by the Father”, wholly in the service of his plans. Teach us to serve joyfully Him who sends us to our brothers and sisters. We pray to the Lord...

Lord Jesus, you put yourself at the service of the poor and the sick, feeding and healing them. Give us solidarity with the most deprived people in the world. We pray to the Lord...

Lord, you took the time to welcome and listen to Nicodemus when he came to you by night, and the Samaritan woman whom you

met at the well. Make us attentive to those people you place on our route. We pray to the Lord...

Lord Jesus, you said: “The greatest among you must be your servant.” Help us to see all received authority as an opportunity to serve better. We pray to the Lord...

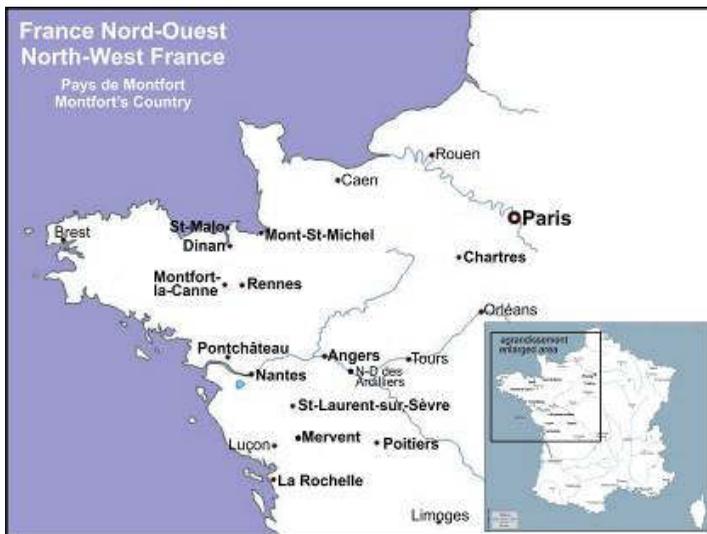
Lord, was it not love and compassion that gave rise to all your actions? May these same sentiments animate us in our relationships with one another. Amen.

- **SYMBOL**

A towel and a basin of water.

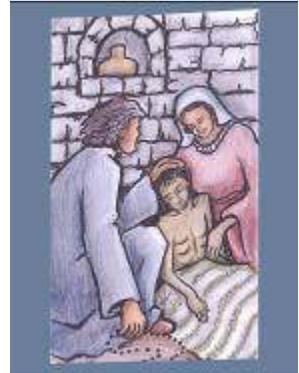
- **COMMITMENT**

- What attitudes am I going to seek to acquire, that my way of serving may better resemble those of Jesus and Montfort?

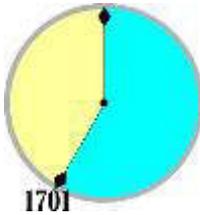


5. EVENT: Arrival at the General Hospital of Poitiers

- **DATE:** 1701, November
- **PLACE:** Poitiers, Hôpital Général
- **VALUE:** to be with the poor and to serve them



- **THE STORY**



The General Hospital, in the time of Montfort, was the place where all the miserable people of a town were gathered together: the sick, the poor, the homeless, the disabled, etc. At the suggestion of Madame de Montespan, a friend of the Bishop of Poitiers, Montfort presented himself at the General Hospital of this town to offer his services.

Before even meeting with the Bishop, he was noticed by the poor, who asked that he might be their director.

He had hardly taken up his role than he undertook an urgent task of “reanimation”. There was so much to be given back life and order in what he himself called “a poor Babylon”. He began by placing himself in their situation, refusing any stipend and choosing for himself the most miserable room. He re-established the daily begging around the town: he went with some of his new friends to collect the left-overs of the bourgeois families and load them onto a donkey. Then he re-organised the meals in the refectory, where he himself would serve at table, sharing the menu of the inmates when he did not content himself with their left-overs. He rearranged the daily rule, with a precise timetable for getting up, for prayer, meals and going to bed. He himself slept on straw, just like his flock, swept the rooms, showed a predilection for the most miserable, and gave up his own blankets to keep them warm. No, the poor “outcasts” of Poitiers had never seen a chaplain who was so close to them. He shared their life, their sentiments and their resentments, as is witnessed by one of his

hymns—The Cries of the Poor—whose inspiration dates from this period: “You rich, wake up and hear!”

After a few months, due to the jealousy of those in charge, and also because he was upsetting the customs of the house, even if it was in the re-establishment of order, discipline and good management, Montfort had to leave. The inmates would write to the Bishop to ask for his return: “We, four hundred poor people, beg you most humbly, through the greatest love and the glory of God, to get our venerable pastor, the one who so loves the poor, M. Grignon, to come back to us.”

- **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:**

Letter 6 to Monsieur Leschassier

I took it into my head however to go to the poorhouse [the general hospital] where I could serve the poor physically even if I could not serve them spiritually. I went into their little church to pray and the four hours I spent there waiting for the evening meal-time seemed all too short. However it seemed so long to some of the poor, who saw me kneeling there dressed in clothes very much like their own, that they went off to tell the others and they all agreed to take up a collection for me. Some gave more, some gave less; the poorer ones a denier, the richer ones a sou. All this went on without my knowing anything about it. Eventually I left the church to ask the time of supper and at the same time to ask permission to serve the poor at table. But I misconceived the situation for I discovered that they did not eat together and I was surprised to find out that they wanted to make me an offering and had told the doorkeeper not to let me go away. I blessed God that I had been taken for a poor man wearing the glorious livery of the poor and I thanked my brothers and sisters for their kindness.

Since then they have become so attached to me that they are going about saying openly that I am to be their priest, that is, their director, for there has not been a regular director in the poorhouse for a considerable time, so abandoned has it become.

Letter 11 to Monsieur Leschassier

The bishop of Poitiers, unable to resist the insistent appeals of the poor any longer, gave me up to them shortly after All Saints Day. I entered this poorhouse, or rather this poor Babylon, quite determined to bear in union with Jesus Christ my Saviour the cross that would not fail to fall to me if this work was really God's work. All that I had been told by a number of experienced priests of the town to dissuade me from going to this ill-regulated house only increased my determination to undertake this work despite my own inclinations which have always been and still are for mission work.

● LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:

Matt 25:31-40

'When the Son of man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate people one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the upright will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- How am I, personally, close to the poor and the deprived?
- How are my local community and my entity close to the deprived?
- The deprived are sometime closer than we think: a sick, fragile or difficult relative or confrere... How can I make them welcome?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Lord Jesus, who were so close to the deprived of this world, fill us with your compassion, that we may make the same concrete gestures after your example.

The poor are naked: teach us to clothe them in clothes and in dignity.

Thousands of children are hungry: teach us to give them food and a future.

Everywhere prisoners are humiliated: teach us to free them of their chains and their hatred.

Foreigners are judged and marginalised: teach us to welcome them into our hearts and our homes.

How many of the sick are forgotten: teach us to give them a presence and hope.

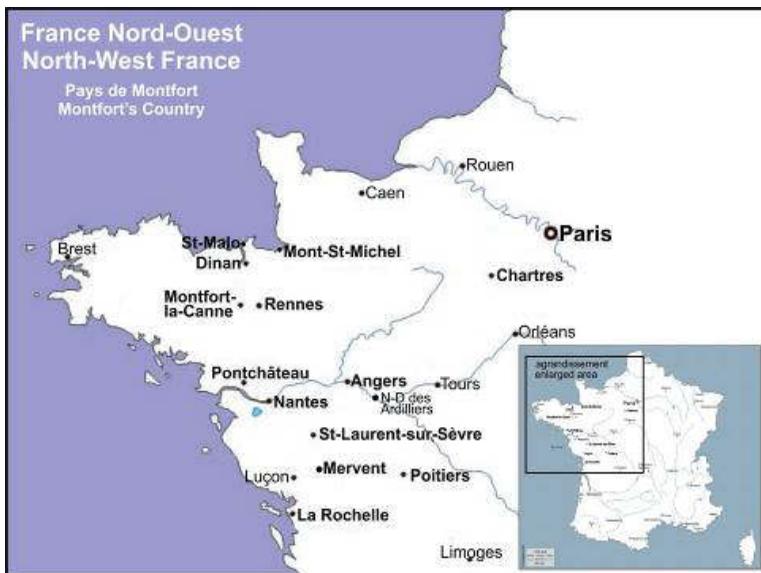
Lord, open our eyes, that we may learn to recognise you in our poorest brothers and sisters. Open our hands and our arms, that we may learn to act for them. Amen.

● **SYMBOL:**

A loaf of bread (or a dish with the common food of the country)

● **COMMITMENT:**

- Jesus enumerates six ways of helping others: food, drink, a welcome, clothing, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison. In which of these can I be involved?



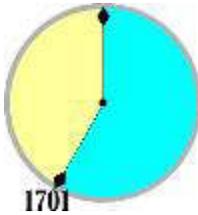
6. EVENT: Encounter with Marie-Louise

- **DATE:** 1701, November
- **PLACE:** Poitiers
- **VALUE:** friendship that “walks with” and helps growth



- **THE STORY**

One day, Marie-Louise Trichet saw her sister Elizabeth coming home full of enthusiasm and very excited: “Oh, Marie-Louise! If you only knew what a sermon I have just heard; no, I have never heard anything so moving. The preacher was a saint!” While Elizabeth was looking for words to fully express her feelings, Marie-Louise suddenly made a decision for herself: she would go and ask this priest to take charge of her spiritual direction.



This strong, clear-cut, sudden resolution was to change the whole course of Marie-Louise’s life. The next day she went to the church where Father de Montfort was hearing confessions. Marie-Louise waited her turn and when it came she was surprised by the first words addressed to her: “Who sent you here, my daughter?” “My sister,” she replied in astonishment. “Oh, no, my daughter, it was not your sister; it was the Blessed Virgin.”

This meeting with the young penitent lost in the anonymous queue of souls seeking the hospital priest, was a significant date in the life of Father de Montfort. Here were two young people who were resolute and open to anything, two individuals capable of obstinate perseverance, two characters quite unlike one another, but wonderfully suited for mutual collaboration. To the impetuous and unquenchable temperament of Father de Montfort, with his hidden torments, there corresponds the refined and solid equilibrium of Marie-Louise, with her natural modesty. Her peaceful openness and availability provide a perfect foil for the creative genius of Louis Marie, his constructive imagination and his courage in the face of the new. She is the fertile soil ready to receive God’s word in abundance, she

will appear as a partner who is reflective and infinitely available in the face of the “foolishness” of the hospital priest. (Papásogli)

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:**

Letter 16 to Marie Louise (24 October 1703)

My dear daughter,

May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!

Please do not think that the distance between us and my apparent silence mean that I have forgotten your charity towards me and the charity I owe you. Your letter tells me that your wishes are just as strong and eager and as persistent as ever. This is a sure sign that they are from God. So you must put your trust in God. Be sure of this, that you will obtain from him even more than you think. (...)

I feel that you are still asking God that by crosses, humiliations and poverty, the poor sinner I am may acquire divine Wisdom. Be brave, my dear daughter, be brave. I am grateful to you; I feel the effects of your prayers for I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever. Both men and demons in this great city of Paris are waging against me a war that I find sweet and amiable. Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name. (...) They form the accoutrements and retinue of divine Wisdom which she brings into the lives of those in whom she dwells. When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will She come to live in me? (...)

My dear child in Jesus, do not fail to reply to my requests and so, fulfil my wishes. You can do it, yes, you can do it, along with some of your chosen friends. Nothing can resist your prayers. Even God himself cannot resist.

Dialogue!

Marie-Louise said to Montfort: “You work a lot to help so many young ladies enter into a congregation, and to present their vocation to the bishop. I know quite many who became nuns through your help. You have in mind everyone but me! Don’t you know how I reject worldly values? Why don’t you help me to become a religious sister, like you did for so many others?”

Montfort answered: “You will be a religious, my daughter, you will be!”

(**Besnard:** *Life of Sister Marie-Louise de Jésus*, 21-28)

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:**

Ben Sirach 6:6-10; 14-17

Let your acquaintances be many, but for advisers choose one out of a thousand. If you want to make a friend, take him on trial, and do not be in a hurry to trust him; for one kind of friend is so only when it suits him but will not stand by you in your day of trouble. Another kind of friend will fall out with you and to your dismay make your quarrel public, and a third kind of friend will share your table, but not stand by you in your day of trouble.

A loyal friend is a powerful defence: whoever finds one has indeed found a treasure. A loyal friend is something beyond price, there is no measuring his worth. A loyal friend is the elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find one. Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends, for as a person is, so is his friend too.

John 11, 1-45

There was a man named Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Mary and Martha. These sent a message to Jesus: «Lord, the man you love is ill.» Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. But, even though he knew Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days. Then, he said to his disciples: ‘Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him.’ (...)

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went to meet him and said to him: ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ (...) She then went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, ‘The Master is here and wants to see you.’ Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. As soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ (...)

Jesus wept; and the Jews said, ‘See how much he loved him!’ But there were some who remarked, ‘He opened the eyes of the blind man. Could he not have prevented this man’s death?’ Sighing again, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, ‘Take the stone away.’ Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, ‘Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day since he died.’ Jesus replied, ‘Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?’ So they took the stone away. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: ‘Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I

myself knew that you hear me always, but I speak for the sake of all these who are standing around me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me. When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with strips of material, and a cloth over his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.' Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in him.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- What friendships in my life have brought me growth?
- How have friends helped me to grow as a human being, as a Christian, as a religious?
- Have I ever sensed that certain friendships move me further from my commitment as a Christian or as a religious? How have I reacted to this?
- How have I myself helped others to grow through my friendship?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

Thinking of the friendships we have experienced throughout our lives, let us give thanks to the Lord...

For the friends with whom I have laughed and cried, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have shared with me their secrets and their dreams, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have opened to me their doors and their hearts when I have been alone, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have had the frankness to confront me with my mistakes and my pettiness, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have been my sun in my darkest days, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who revealed your face to me by their welcome and their faithfulness, thank you, Lord.

For the friends whom I have been able to help grow as human beings and as Christians, thank you, Lord.

For the friends who have supported me in my life commitment, thank you, Lord.

Lord, who loved to share the table and the presence of your friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary, teach us to appreciate the friends who walk with us, to welcome them as a gift that you give us and a call to be generous and faithful towards them. Amen.

- **SYMBOL:**

Two pairs of sandals.

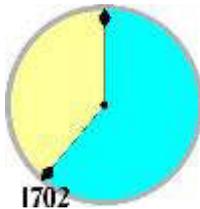
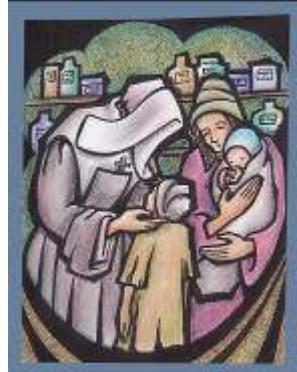
- **COMMITMENT**

- I take the time to communicate with a friend; I thank him for his friendship. In a personal prayer, I thank God for the friendships that have brought me growth.



7. EVENT: Marie-Louise moving to the General Hospital

- **DATE:** 1702?
- **PLACE:** Poitiers
- **VALUE:** radical vocation; vocation involving difficult choices



- **THE STORY**

Which religious house should Marie-Louise enter to realise her religious vocation? Challenged one day by Marie-Louise, Father de Montfort gazes for a long time at this young woman who does not wish to postpone her gift to God. Smiling and in an offhand manner, he says the words in such a way as to put no constraint on her nor violate her liberty: “Well, then, go and live in the hospital.”

At that point, Marie Louise does not attach much importance to the remark, for it seems unthinkable. But when she goes home, the real meaning of the words dawns on her and takes hold of her. She understands all that Montfort has intended by this invitation. The more she thinks about it, the more she is persuaded that God has made known his will to her, and a great peace descends on her spirit regarding her vocation. Without delay, she goes off to find Father de Montfort at the hospital: “I have thought for several days about what you said to me. I want to come to live among the poor.”

But the response of the hospital administrators that the Bishop passes on to her is negative: they already have too many governesses, and do not want one more! Without turning a hair, she answers the Bishop: “Monseigneur, these gentlemen are not prepared to accept me as a governess; perhaps they will not refuse to admit me as one of the poor.” Now this answer gives the Bishop a clear

indication of the stature of the young woman before him. So without further objection, he writes a letter requesting the administrators of the hospital to accept her. Their surprise is extreme. So they try to disguise the entrance of Marie Louise as a matter of convenience: they create a prestigious post specially for her—a sort of sub-superiorship. But Father de Montfort has other plans for her: he demands that she come to live in his small community of Wisdom, and when the head of the hospital asks that she be made at least the superior of the group, he replies with firmness and to her astonishment: “Oh, no, Madame, first she must learn to obey.”

So Marie-Louise enters tranquilly into the little group of the “Daughters of Wisdom”, and follows the rule, point by point, exactly as they do. Having refused the oft-repeated requests of the Superior to eat with the governesses, she eats willingly and with all the hearty appetite of a nineteen-year-old the black bread and soup of the poor. Every morning, with the permission of Father de Montfort, she receives the Eucharist, her face shining with serenity, for all the uncertainty of the past long months has now been resolved. (*After Papásogli*)

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:**

Hymn 139, 2. 4. 7. 15

To serve God: what illustrious grandeur, Greater than an emperor’s!
Lord, I am not worthy To be your servant,
But you will it, great Master. I will then try to be one,
Telling the whole universe I love you and serve you.
I serve God when I adore Him “In spirit and in truth;”
To do so, I beg The help of His goodness
For his grace is necessary Both to will and to do it.
I serve God with my whole heart, It is my glory and my joy.
As soon as I awake I raise my heart to God.
Sleeping or waking, Lord, I am all yours;
Here I am, ready to do Everything to please you.
I serve God with my whole heart, It is my glory and my joy.

I read, I write or pray, I work steadily,
Spending my life for God Without wasting a single moment.
Time is so precious And cannot be reclaimed!
I serve God with my whole heart, It is my glory and my joy.

Original Rule of the Daughters of Wisdom, 128-129

They [the Daughters of Wisdom] endeavour to be both kind and firm towards the poor. They are charitable, bearing with them and excusing them in their frailties, ignorance, defects of body and mind, and even in their sins. (...) They render the poor every service within their power, both spiritual and corporal, becoming all things to all men and even to the least among them, convinced that the first among themselves is not the richest, the most exalted and the wisest, but the one who believes and places herself the last of all.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE: John 1:35-39**

The next day as John [the Baptist] stood in the same area with two of his disciples, Jesus went past. John looked towards him and said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God.' And the two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, 'What do you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi' -- which means Teacher-'where do you live?' He replied, 'Come and see'; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Going back over the texts: what links do I see between them? What do they teach me about Montfort? And about my relationship with God and with others?
- What has guided me, enlightened me, in the choice of my vocation in life, whether it be the religious life, marriage or celibacy?
- Like Marie-Louise, I want to walk in the footsteps of Montfort.

What is it that draws me most of all to Montfort?

- What choices have I had to make to follow Montfort?
- What has helped me—and helps me more today—to discern the will of the Lord in my life?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

By our baptism, Jesus calls us to follow him. Let us thank him for this call and ask him to help us to be faithful.

Lord Jesus, you said to me one day: “Come, follow me.” For this call that gives meaning and fullness to my life, all praise to you.

Lord, you said: “If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, let him take up his cross everyday and follow me.” You know my weakness. So that I may be faithful to your call, give me the strength of the Spirit.

Lord, you said: “I do not call you servants any more; I call you friends.” For this wonderful gift of your friendship, all praise to you.

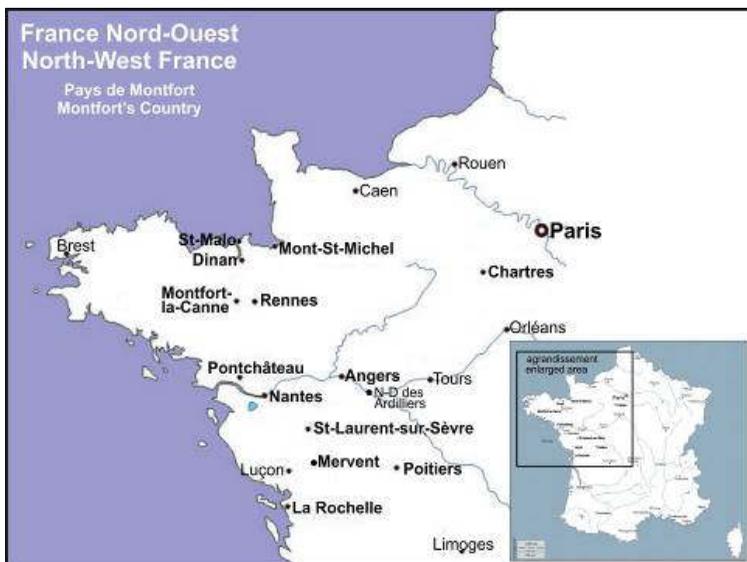
Lord, you prayed: “Father, may they all be one as we are one.” That we might contribute by our words and actions to helping one another to follow in your footsteps, give us the peace of the Spirit.

Lord Jesus, today you are still calling men and women to follow you. That we might help them to hear your call and follow you, make us true witnesses.

- **SYMBOL:** An apron

● **COMMITMENT**

- I pray to Marie-Louise, asking her to help me to follow Christ ‘in the footsteps of Montfort’. I ask her to help me in a particular situation...

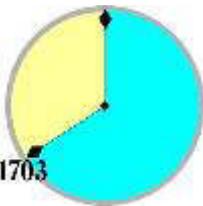


8. EVENT: Stay in the Rue du Pot de Fer

- **DATE** : 1703 Summer-Autumn
- **PLACE** : Paris
- **VALUE** : Spiritual deprivation, desert, great desire



● **THE STORY** :



In the Spring of 1703. Louis Marie resigned as chaplain to the General Hospital in Poitiers, and undertook a similar ministry at the Salpêtrière in Paris. After four or five months of devotion in this other miserable hell, “one evening he found his dismissal at his place at table.” He then sought refuge under a staircase in a miserable hovel in the Rue du

Pot de Fer, near Saint-Sulpice. There he lived in total material abandonment, but he was the happy neighbour of the Jesuit novitiate, where he met up again with Father Descartes, who had been his director in Rennes, one of the few people and friends who did not abandon him at this moment.

He wrote: “My only friend here is God. Those friends I once had in Paris have deserted me.” This was truly a desert experience for Louis Marie. His short life so far as a priest seemed to him to have been a failure. The future seemed closed to his deepest desires. All sorts of rumours were going about regarding him, to which his former fellow-students and teachers seemed to be paying attention. The Sulpicians no longer wanted to be seen with the student of whom they had once been so proud. Even his spiritual director, M. Leschassier, openly rejected him, even though what he said of him is a testimony that Louis Marie was truly guided by the Spirit. The young priest no longer knew what to think, nor how to deal with these reactions, so ambiguous and contradictory, coming from a man in whom he had total confidence.

M. Blain reports that Louis Marie, born with an attraction for the tasks of the apostolic life, was now asking himself whether he should not forbid himself, or at least suspend for a time, the carrying out of his ministry.

Reduced to the most abject poverty, both in the spiritual and material sense, Louis Marie felt himself graced with an absolute thirst for God. He was completely filled with a powerful call to contemplate Wisdom alone. “God,” says Blain, “made up for his poverty, his humiliations and sufferings by granting him the grace of communicating with Him so intimately and so frequently that the servant of God spent the greater part of his days and nights in prayer.”

Thus sunk in prayer, thirsting for God, he attained the heights of that elevation of soul that the theologians call an intimate union with God, ecstatic and transforming. To emphasise this transformation, he gave up his own family name, Grignon, forever: henceforth he would use only the name of the village where God, by Baptism, had chosen him for Himself: Montfort.

From this desert, Louis Marie came out with Wisdom dwelling within him. For sure, he would still have to make discernments, but they would be regarding the way he was to fulfil his mission.

● FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:

LETTER 16

[To Marie-Louise Trichet, 24 October 1703?]

24th October 1703

My dear daughter,

May the perfect love of God reign in our hearts!

Please do not think that the distance between us and my apparent silence mean that I have forgotten your charity towards me and the charity I owe you. Your letter tells me that your wishes are just as strong and eager and as persistent as ever. This is a sure sign that they are from God. So you must put your trust in God. Be sure of this, that you will obtain from him even more than you think. Heaven and earth would

pass away before God would break his promises and allow anyone who hoped in him to be frustrated in their hopes.

I feel that you are still asking God that by crosses, humiliations and poverty I may acquire divine Wisdom. Be brave, my dear daughter, be brave. I am grateful to you; I feel the effects of your prayers for I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever. Both men and demons in this great city of Paris are waging against me a war that I find sweet and welcome. Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name, put me into prison; these are precious gifts, tasty morsels, great and wonderful things. They form the accoutrements and retinue of divine Wisdom which he brings into the lives of those in whom he dwells. When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will Wisdom come to live in me? When shall I be sufficiently equipped to serve as a place of rest for Wisdom in a world where he is rejected and without a home?

My dear child in Jesus Christ, do not fail to reply to my requests and fulfil my wishes. You can do it, yes, you can do it, along with some of your chosen friends. Nothing can resist your prayers. Even God himself, great though he be, cannot resist. Fortunately for us, he has shown that he can be moved by a lively faith and a firm hope. So pray, entreat God, plead for me to obtain divine Wisdom. You will obtain it completely for me; of this I am quite convinced.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Matthew 6:19-21; 13:44*)

Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too.

The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Write down “the story of my desire”: what I most desired at 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years old... And today?
- Montfort and Marie-Louise united the strength of their desires. With whom might I unite my own desire, so that it might grow?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

Let us listen to Montfort and ask the Lord to renew in us the desire for Wisdom.

- *“So you must put your trust in God. Be sure of this, that you will obtain from him even more than you think.”*

Holy Father de Montfort, share with us your complete confidence in God our Father.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- *“I am infinitely more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever. ... Let them slander me, scoff at me, destroy my good name, put me into prison; these are precious gifts.”*

Holy Father de Montfort, help us to discover the mysterious fruitfulness of our crosses.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- *“When shall I possess this lovable and mysterious Wisdom? When will Wisdom come to live in me?”*

Holy Father de Montfort, plant in our hearts an ardent desire for Christ, Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- *“I feel that you are still asking God that ... I may acquire divine Wisdom ... Nothing can resist your prayers. Even God himself, great though he be, cannot resist ... So pray, entreat God, plead for me to obtain divine Wisdom. You will obtain it completely for me; of this I am quite convinced.”*

Holy Father de Montfort, teach us how to support one another by fraternal prayer.

Holy Father de Montfort, pray for us.

- **SYMBOL:** An empty bowl.

- **COMMITMENT**

- I make for myself a “Rue du Pot de Fer” in my life: a moment, a place of solitude, where I can encounter myself, and encounter God, regularly.

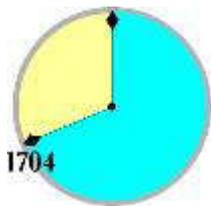


9. EVENT: Final editing of *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*



- **DATE** : 1704 according to the tradition
- **PLACE** : Rue du Pot de Fer, Paris
- **VALUE** : Experience of the love of Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom for me; my response to this love

● **THE STORY** :



After his painful experience in Poitiers, where he had seen his apostolic endeavours paralysed and rejected out of jealousy and the inertia of people who were upset by change and novelty, Montfort examined himself and retired to the Rue du Pot de Fer. His prayer and reflection led him to put down on paper what was the basis of his faith, which was solidly established and would be the source of his life and message until the end of his days. What he wrote then was "*The Love of Eternal Wisdom*". This book, in which he brings together the themes he had developed in conferences at the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, was his response to the crisis which had been threatening to stifle him.

Wisdom, for him, is Jesus Christ himself, the Incarnate Son of God, who invites us to live with him the mystery of the Incarnation, which includes the mystery of the cross on the journey towards God. We recognise in this work by Montfort the portrait of Jesus Christ that he would proclaim in all his preaching.

The Jesus portrayed by Montfort is always gentle, humble, welcoming, affectionate, warm, loving; he is the friend of the poor, the friend of children, the friend of sinners. He is neither authoritarian nor doctrinaire, he does not condemn; on the contrary he seeks out his lost sheep. He does not quench the smouldering flax. He is always ready to

welcome and to forgive...And he never ceases to remind us: "There is your Mother!"

For certain intellectuals, Montfort can sometimes seem to possess a disarming simplicity. But one needs to have had a deep encounter with the love and tenderness of God to be able to describe so simply the great mystery of our faith. Montfort is so much at ease with God that he can speak of him without using grand words, and he does this through his pen. It seems something natural for him. He has the heart of a child before God: this gives him a simplicity of welcoming and a simplicity of word. He shares with us what he himself has received and meditated on, because he believes in it with a child's trust.

His words are full of tenderness when he speaks of Jesus coming to us. Basing himself on the Book of Wisdom, which he says is like "a letter written by a lover to win the affections of his loved one"—to win our friendship (LEW 65), he enables us to discover already in this Wisdom, which would become incarnate in Jesus, the love that was determined to give itself to the full.

This little book is a summary of all of Montfort's thought. He would later give explicit form in *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* to what is already very clear in chapter 17 of this book, which includes the formula of the Consecration to Jesus through Mary.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*The Love of Eternal Wisdom, 64-65*)

64. The bond of friendship between eternal Wisdom and man is so close as to be beyond our understanding. Wisdom is for man and man is for Wisdom. "He is an infinite treasure for man," (*Wisd.* 7:14) and not for angels or any other creatures.

Wisdom's friendship for man arises from man's place in creation, from his being an abridgement of eternal Wisdom's marvels, his small yet ever so great world, his living image and representative on earth (cf. Nos. 35-38). Since Wisdom, out of an excess of love, gave himself up to death to save man, he loves man as a brother, a friend, a disciple, a pupil, the price of his own blood and co-heir of his

kingdom. For man to withhold his heart from Wisdom or to wrench it away from him would constitute an outrage.

65. This eternal beauty, ever supremely loving, is so intent on winning man's friendship that for this very purpose he has written a book in which he describes his own excellence and his desire for man's friendship. This book reads like a letter written by a lover to win the affections of his loved one, for in it he expresses such ardent desires for the heart of man, such tender longings for man's friendship, such loving invitations and promises, that you would say he could not possibly be the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and at the same time need the friendship of man to be happy.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Wisdom 6:12-22*)

Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades. By those who love her, she is readily seen, by those who seek her, she is readily found. She anticipates those who desire her by making herself known first. Whoever gets up early to seek her will have no trouble but will find her sitting at the door. Meditating on her is understanding in its perfect form, and anyone keeping awake for her will soon be free from care. For she herself searches everywhere for those who are worthy of her, benevolently appearing to them on their ways, anticipating their every thought. For Wisdom begins with the sincere desire for instruction, care for instruction means loving her, loving her means keeping her laws, attention to her laws guarantees incorruptibility, and incorruptibility brings us near to God; the desire for Wisdom thus leads to sovereignty. If then thrones and sceptres delight you, monarchs of the nations, honour Wisdom, so that you may reign forever. What Wisdom is and how she was born, I shall now explain; I shall hide no mysteries from you, but shall follow her steps from the outset of her origin, setting out what we know of her in full light, without departing from the truth.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- How have I become aware of the love of Christ for me, personally?
- How have I felt the need to respond to this love, and how have I decided to do this?
- What is it that nourishes my relationship with Christ?
- What might damage my relationship with Christ?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us enter into the ardent desire of Montfort; let us enter into his prayer full of confidence; and let us pray with his own words: “Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.” (*Hymn 124:8*).

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

- O Eternal Wisdom, present in the mystery of God, revelation of His Being,

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

- O Eternal Wisdom, in whom God the Father finds his love and delight,

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

- O incarnate Wisdom, forever united with our humanity and our fragility,

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

- O Wisdom, friend of human beings, you who seek them out on the world’s roads,

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

- O generous Wisdom, who set the table and pour the wine for us all,

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

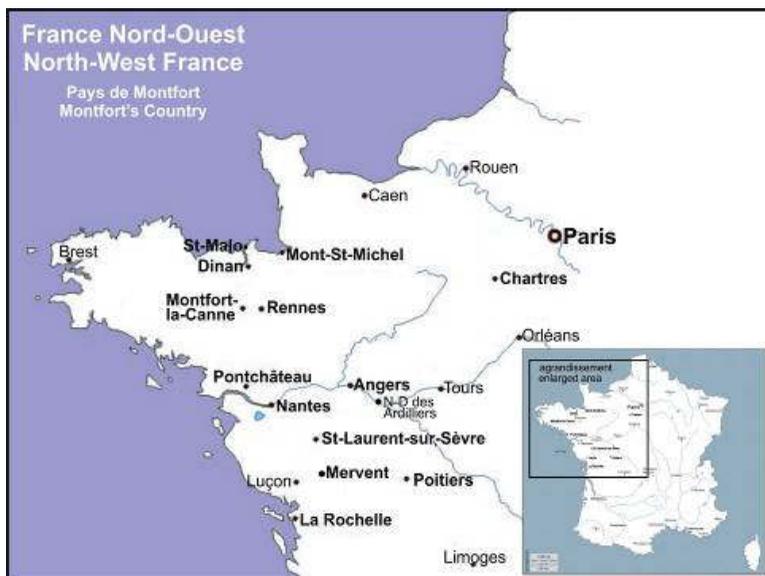
- O Wisdom, who loves us with the folly of the Cross,

Wisdom, come then, through Mary’s faith.

● **SYMBOL:** A manuscript page from LEW

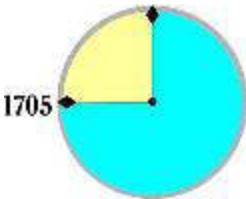
● **COMMITMENT:**

- Read the principal passages of *The Love of Eternal Wisdom* (chapters VI, VII, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII)



10. EVENT: Meeting with Mathurin Rangeard

- **DATE** : 1705 at Summer's end
- **PLACE** : Church of the Penitents, Poitiers
- **VALUE** : Mathurin the catechist: helping faith to grow: speaking of his faith, presenting it in an accessible manner, suggesting faith.
- **THE STORY** :



Our saint was hearing confessions in the Church of the Penitents, when he saw a young man come in who was praying with devotion and reciting his Rosary; his recollected attitude struck the missionary who, having finished hearing confessions, went up to the unknown young man and questioned him about his plans. - "I intend," he replied, "to enter the Capuchins; one of their Fathers has just preached in my parish; it seems to me that God is calling me to follow him. I came by chance into this church to pray." - "Not by chance," the man of God replied, "but providentially. Would you not like to help the missionaries in their labours? Follow me: that is your certain vocation." The traveller was Mathurin Rangeard, from the parish of Bouillé-Saint-Paul in Poitou, on the border with Anjou; born on 7 November 1687, he was then eighteen years old. Won over by Montfort's virtues, he was to be forever associated with him and to follow him in the majority of his missions. After the saint's death, he would receive the tonsure at the hands of Mgr de Poudras, the coadjutor of Mgr de la Poype, during the mission in Jaulnay in 1722; he would end his life in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre on 22 July 1760, having worked for fifty-five years in the work of the missions. Having an excessively delicate conscience, he would never take vows; but he was to bear the name "Brother Mathurin", and would be the first of this line of coadjutor Brothers who, in their obscure role, were to render so many services to Father de Montfort and his successors. (*See Le Crom, pages 148-149*)

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*Rule of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary, 79, 80, 82, 83*)

– The catechist has the most important function of the whole mission, and the one who is appointed catechist by obedience must do all he can to fulfil his function worthily. It is more difficult to find an accomplished catechist than it is to find a perfect preacher.

– He must endeavour to make himself both loved and feared at the same time but in such a way that the oil of love predominates over the vinegar of fear. Consequently, while he inspires a certain fear in the children, as an experienced teacher does, by warnings and punishments which humble them, he must also, like a kind father, encourage them by praising them, by promising and giving them rewards and by showing them affection. He must never strike them either with his hand or with the cane. (...)

– (...) He can, however, and indeed must, enliven the catechism lesson (of its nature a rather dry subject) by adopting a pleasant manner, making little jokes or telling interesting little stories which entertain the children and bring their attention back to the lesson.

– One great principle he should follow is to put a lot of questions to the children while saying very little himself. Afterwards, at the end of the lesson, he or another missionary will give a well felt exhortation of about fifteen minutes. The topic of this talk will be one of the great truths of our faith so that, after the children's minds have been enlightened by the questions on the catechism, their hearts may be moved and touched by this exhortation. It is a fact of experience that this is the best of all methods for teaching catechism in a short time and for turning the children's hearts to God.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Luke 10:21-22*)

Just at this time, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do. Everything has been

entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- In the examination and understanding of my faith, which person or author has helped me most?
- Today, what is the greatest help to me for nourishing and deepening my faith?
- How are we to pass on our faith to others, especially the young?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us pray for all those who work to proclaim the faith and to cause it to grow.

- We offer to you, Lord, the parents and grandparents who bear witness to their faith before their children and grandchildren.

Give them light and support, Lord.

- We pray, Lord, for the bishops, priests and deacons whose task it is to give a taste for the Word in their homilies.

Give them light and support, Lord.

- We pray, Lord, for our Pope Francis: guide him in the ways of Saint Peter, that he may strengthen the faith and guide your Church.

Give him light and support, Lord.

- We entrust to you, Lord, those children who have never heard tell of you: send them witnesses of your presence in their lives.

Give them light and support, Lord.

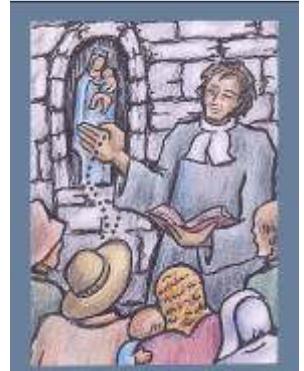
● **SYMBOL:** A child's drawing

● **COMMITMENT:**

- I choose some way of witnessing to my faith.

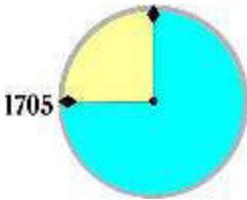


11. EVENT: Mission in Montbernage; the Rosary entrusted to Jacques Goudeau.



- **DATE** : 1705
- **PLACE** : Poitiers, chapel of Mary Queen of All Hearts
- **VALUE** : Rediscovering the value of the Rosary, and renewing it.

● **THE STORY** :



The mission in Montbernage was to close with farewells. Montfort entrusted his children to the Blessed Virgin: he renamed the barn of the Bergerie, Our Lady Queen of Hearts. “If someone,” he added, “is willing to recite here that prayer known as the Rosary, on Sundays and feast days, and to chant the Little Crown at midday, I will leave to that person the image of my good Mother.” A workman, Jacques Goudeau, offered to fill this role, and Father de Montfort, with joy, made him a gift of the statue that is invoked under the name of Mary, Queen of All Hearts.

The missionary could now leave without any worries. It has been reported that he was dissuaded from building a church dedicated to the Holy Spirit in Montbernage; but henceforth the district would possess his place of prayer, Our Lady, Queen of Hearts, which would be a centre of Christian life. Since that time, this shrine has always been venerated. In 1734, M. Devaucelle, the parish-priest of Sainte-Radegonde, solemnly blessed “on the orders of Mgr Jean-Claude de la Poype de Vertrieu...the chapel in Montbernage, under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, erected by the late Messire Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, a great missionary, who died in the odour of sanctity at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre in the diocese of La Rochelle, the said chapel

of our district being called Our Lady of Hearts”. In the written record of these proceedings, next to the signature of M. Devaucelle, we find that of Jacques Goudeau. Faithful to his promise, this man was to preside for another forty years over the recitation of the Rosary. (*Le Crom, pages 138-139*)

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:** (*The Admirable Secret of the Rosary, 9*)

The Rosary is made up of two things: mental prayer and vocal prayer. In the Rosary mental prayer is none other than meditation of the chief mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ and of his blessed Mother. Vocal prayer consists in saying fifteen decades of the Hail Mary, each decade headed by an Our Father, while at the same time meditating on and contemplating the fifteen principal virtues which Jesus and Mary practised in the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. (...) Thus, the Rosary is a blessed blending of mental and vocal prayer intended at honouring and imitating the mysteries and the virtues of the life, death, passion and glory of Jesus and Mary.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Luke 2:16-19*)

The shepherds hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds said to them. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

(*Acts 1:12-14*)

So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, the Apostles went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a Sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. With one heart all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Is the Rosary a form of prayer that I use today?
- If I still say the Rosary, why have I kept to it?
- If I do not say it anymore, why did I abandon it?
- How might we avoid routine in the prayer of the Rosary?
- In my own experience, what is the great merit of the Rosary?

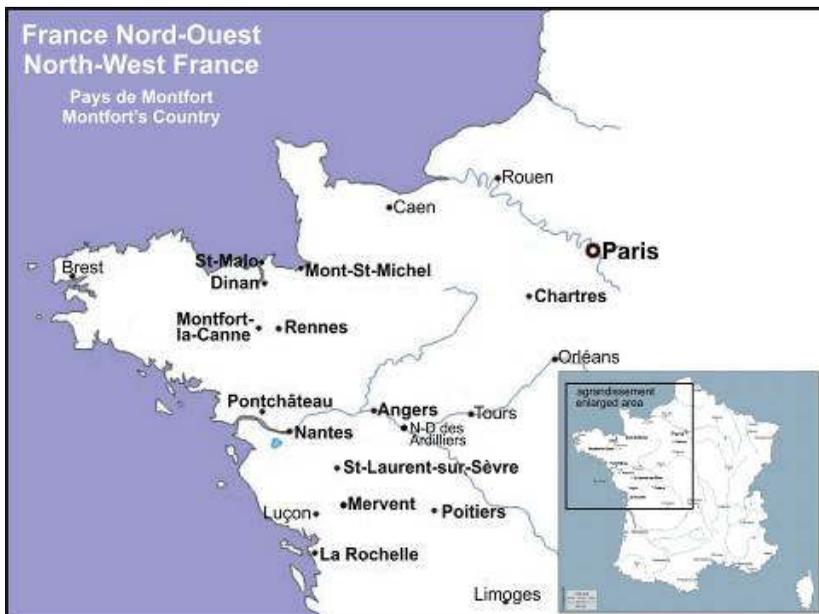
● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

- Mary, guide us in the paths of your prayer and contemplation.
Draw us in your ways.
- Mary, teach us to contemplate Christ, that we might become Christ.
Draw us in your ways.
- Mary, remove from us the noise and chattering that distract us from what is essential.
Draw us in your ways.
- O Mary, obtain for us from the Holy Spirit a deep taste for prayer.
Draw us in your ways.
- O Mary, may our prayer in common bring us closer to one another.
Draw us in your ways.

● **SYMBOL:** Rosary beads

● **COMMITMENT:**

I read a book presenting the Rosary, *The Admirable Secret of the Rosary* by Montfort, or the letter of Pope John Paul II on the Rosary (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 16 October 2002)

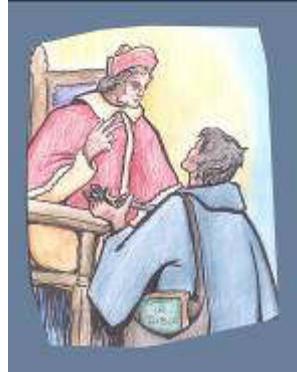


The original statue of Our Lady Queen of all Hearts,
in the suburb of Montbernage, Poitiers

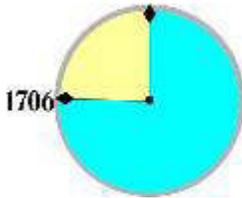


12. EVENT: Pilgrimage to Rome, and meeting with Clement XI.

- **DATE** : 6 June 1706
- **PLACE** : Rome, the Vatican
- **VALUE** : Belonging to the Church; commitment to work for its renewal.



● **THE STORY** :



The first five years of Louis Marie’s ministry put his apostolic zeal and his creativity to a severe test. He was hesitating between a far-off mission or a mission in his own country. He decided to make a pilgrimage to Rome to meet with the Holy Father.

In response to his own call, and conscious of the mission he had received from God, Louis Marie would ask to be sent into the Church by the Church itself. Having asked, among others, the people of Montbernage (Poitiers) and Mathurin, to accompany him in their prayers, he left on foot, going by way of the Marian shrine in Loreto, to meet Clement XI, who received him in audience on 6 June 1706.

Montfort believed he was seeing Jesus Christ himself in the person of his Vicar on earth. He set forth his motives for coming, summarising in a few words his history, his ardent desires, and his availability.

Clement XI showed himself in a paternal light. He questioned Louis Marie, allowing him to speak at length of his Marian devotion, the pattern he used in his mission, his plans for foundations. And at the same time, he thought of the dioceses of France, that difficult territory which the Gallican trend was dividing from Rome and whose faith and fidelity Jansenism was eroding.

Finally, the Pope said to him: “You have a wide enough field in France, Monsieur, for the exercise of your zeal; do not go elsewhere, and always

work in perfect submission to the bishops in the dioceses to which you will be called: by this means, God will bestow blessings on your labours.” He conferred on Louis Marie the title of “apostolic missionary”. Then, very willingly, he blessed a small ivory crucifix that he presented to him, and that Louis Marie would fix to the top of his pilgrim’s staff. Montfort would carry out to the letter the words of Clement XI, and would make his whole life an act of obedience to the mission confided to him by the Pope. His pilgrimage to Rome allowed him to see his intuitions confirmed, as well as his desires to respond in his own way to the urgent needs of the Church, that he had already expressed very clearly from the first months of his priesthood (cf. Letter 5).

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:** (*Prayer for Missionaries, 17*)

When will it happen, this fiery deluge of pure love with which you are to set the whole world ablaze and which is to come, so gently yet so forcefully, that all nations,(...) will be caught up in its flames and be converted? *None can shield himself from the heat it gives* (Ps 19:17), *so let its flames rise* (Is 62:1). Rather let this divine fire which Jesus Christ came to bring on earth be enkindled before the all-consuming fire of your anger comes down and reduces the whole world to ashes. *Send out your breath and life begins; you renew the face of the earth* (Ps. 104, 30). Send this all-consuming Spirit upon the earth to create priests who burn with this same fire and whose ministry will renew the face of the earth and reform your Church.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*1 Corinthians 1:19-25*)

As scripture says: I am going to destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of any who understand. Where are the philosophers? Where are the experts? And where are the debaters of this age? Do you not see how God has shown up human wisdom as folly? Since in the wisdom of God the world was unable to recognise God through wisdom, it was God’s own pleasure to save believers

through the folly of the gospel. While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, we are preaching a crucified Christ: to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. God's folly is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

(Romans 10:13-15)

All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent? As scripture says: How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Montfort prayed that “the Church might be reformed”. In what special ways does my Church need to be reformed?
- What precise challenge does Pope Francis address to us, the Montfortian family, today?
- What might being an “apostolic missionary” mean today?
- What is one urgent need of the Church to which we are called to respond.

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

- Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of the Gospel.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts.
- Holy Spirit, make us all good servants of your Church.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts.
- Holy Spirit, make us love the Church as Christ loved her and laid down his life for her.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts.

- Holy Spirit, renew in us the joy of our Baptism.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts.
- Holy Spirit, lead us in the footsteps of Montfort.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts.
- Holy Spirit, free us from fear when faced with the challenges of evangelisation.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts.

- **SYMBOL:** A photo of Pope Francis

- **COMMITMENT:**

- One cannot be a Christian alone. What can I do now to nourish and deepen my belonging to the local Church?



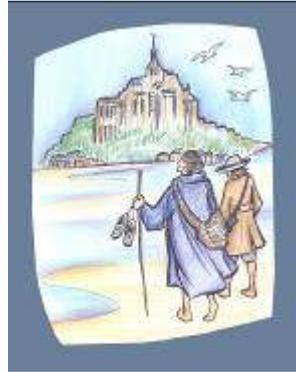
Loreto today



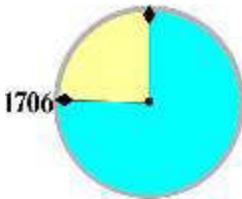
From Poitiers to Loreto today

13. EVENT: Pilgrimage to Mont-St-Michel

- **DATE** : 1706: 29 September to 15 October approximately
- **PLACE** : Mont-St-Michel
- **VALUE** : Pilgrimage, spiritual journeying.



- **THE STORY** :



‘In this way, he travels, stage by stage, to the first destination of this pilgrimage he has mapped out for himself: Mont-Saint-Michel. It is the end of September, the Eve of the Feast of Saint Michael when Louis Grignon and Brother Mathurin arrive at the beach scrubbed clean by the incoming and outgoing tides of the sea. In a kind of battle-vigil,

Louis kneels at the feet of the Archangel and asks, as Le Crom has put it, for that gentle valour which will be the inner force of his imminent campaign as a missionary.

‘Louis spends fifteen days in that fortified citadel which seems to hang between the sky and the ocean: fifteen days among the flights of the seagulls and the chanting of the monks, which soars to the vaults of the Abbey-Church. His eyes contemplate and his heart leaps upward, for the spectacle is marvellous: from its mighty foundation of rock, the whole citadel leaps upward in inspired vertical flight, reaching its apex at the spire and, almost lost in the clouds, the statue of the archangel carrying in its hand the reassuring weapon of the justice of God. Michael, the one who is “like God”, gentle, humble, and pure: the themes of good and evil, the struggles of asceticism, are peacefully contained in this inimitable symbol.

‘Fifteen days are spent at Mont-Saint-Michel by the silent priest, who celebrates the Eucharist in the little village church which is also dedicated to Michael. This battle-vigil is one of the highpoints of the

life of this perpetual pilgrim who so loves sanctuaries along his way. Perhaps, the imagery and spirit of Mont-Saint-Michel express some of the characteristics of an apostle: an unyielding determination in combat which is, however, both gentle and strong, and a battle cry that rings out with passion for God.' (*Papasogli, pg. 298*)

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:**

The Holy Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Saumur made by the Penitents to obtain from God good missionaries (1-4. 13)

1. You will make this pilgrimage for the following intentions: Firstly, to obtain from God through Mary's intercession good missionaries, who will follow the example of the apostles by complete abandonment to divine Providence and the practice of virtue under the protection of our Lady.

Secondly, to obtain the gift of wisdom in order to know, love and practise the truths of our faith and to lead others to Christ.

2. You will have nothing in your dress to distinguish you from others, except your modest demeanour, your holy silence, and your continual prayer. You could, however, without making yourselves conspicuous, have a rosary in your hand and a crucifix around your neck to show that you are on a pilgrimage and not making an ordinary journey.

3. In the villages and towns you will walk two by two to edify, but in the country you will keep together and not separate into groups except through necessity or obedience. If through fatigue anyone falls behind, the others in their charity wait for him and, if necessary, put him on a horse, thus keeping each other as members of one body.

4. On the journey they will sing hymns, say the Rosary or engage in silent prayer. They will not speak to each other except for one hour in the morning about ten o'clock and again after dinner between one and two o'clock.

13. If they make the pilgrimage in this way, I am sure they will be a sight worthy of God, of angels and of men; and they will obtain from God through the intercession of his Blessed Mother great graces not only for themselves but for the whole Church of God.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*1 Kings 19:3-16*)

Tracked by Queen Jezebel who wanted to have him killed, Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He came to Beersheba, a town of Judah, where he left his servant. He himself went on into the desert, a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. 'Yahweh,' he said, 'I have had enough. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down and went to sleep. Then all of a sudden an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked round, and there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of Yahweh came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you.' So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, God's mountain.

There he went into the cave and spent the night there. Then the word of Yahweh came to him saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I am full of jealous zeal for Yahweh Sabaoth, because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, have torn down your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am the only one left, and now they want to kill me.' Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before Yahweh, for Yahweh will pass by'. A mighty hurricane split the mountains and shattered the rocks before Yahweh. But Yahweh was not in the hurricane. And after the hurricane, an earthquake. But Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, fire. But Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, a light murmuring sound. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him, which said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I am full of jealous zeal for Yahweh, God Sabaoth. (...) Yahweh said, 'go back by the same way to the desert of Damascus. You must go and anoint Hazael as king of Aram. You must anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat, of Abel-Meholah, as prophet to succeed you.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- How may we say that our life is a kind of pilgrimage?
- If we look at the life of Montfort, we note that he spent almost as long on the road (pilgrimages to Chartres, Rome, Mont-St-Michel, Notre-Dame des Ardilliers, and long stays in St-Lazare, Mervent, with long walks between his missions, etc...) as he did preaching. Is pilgrimage for me an important form of prayer?
- What pilgrimage has most made its mark on me, and in what way?
- On pilgrimage, the journey is just as important as the destination. What does the act of walking teach me?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

The pilgrimage of the prophet Elijah to Mount Horeb (Sinai) is a pilgrimage that summarises his life. Let us ask the Lord that our lives might be a journey towards him.

- Lord, lead me along the pathways of life; keep me away from the ways of death.

You who are my light and my joy, guide my steps.

- Lord, you have given me company and companions on my way; grant that I may be for them a support and a strength.

You who are my light and my joy, guide my steps.

- Lord, when fog invades my way, come to chase away the doubt and fear it brings.

You who are my light and my joy, guide my steps.

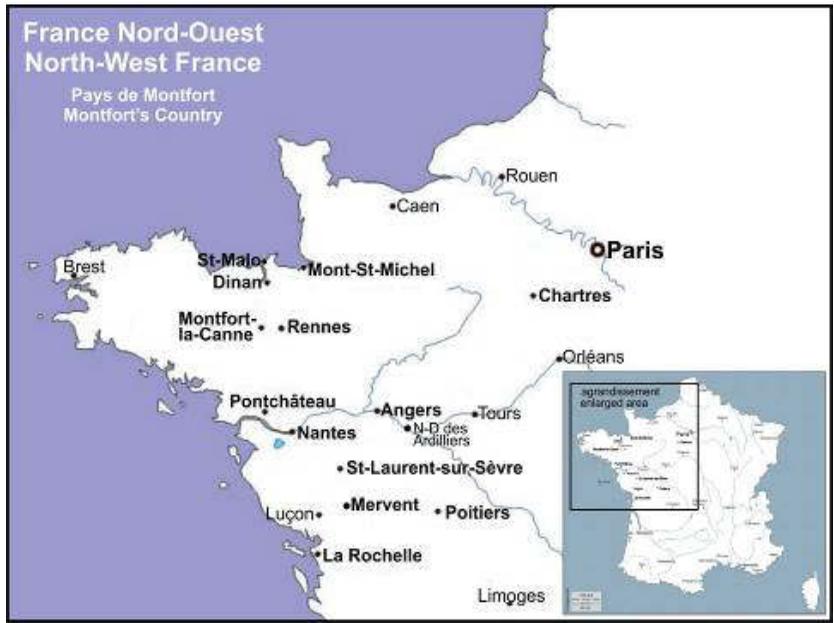
- Lord, let every step I take bring me closer to my accomplishment in you.

You who are my light and my joy, guide my steps.

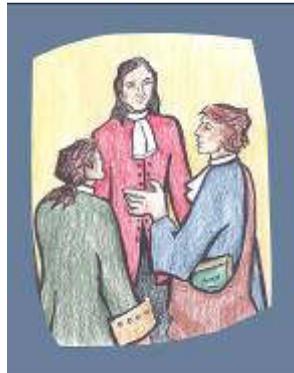
● **SYMBOL:** A walking stick

● **COMMITMENT:**

- Organise and take part in a little one day pilgrimage, either alone or in a team. On returning, share about the experience, or describe it in a pilgrim journal.



14. EVENT: Lay-folk who followed Montfort: the Count and Countess de la Garaye, and the Marquis de Maignanne.

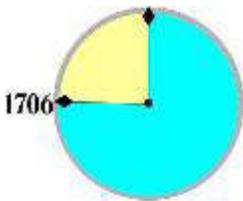


- DATE : 1706 – 1714

- PLACE : Dinan, Rennes

- VALUE : The role and commitment of lay people in the Church and in the Montfortian congregations.

- THE STORY :



Claude and Marguerite DE LA GARAYE: they married in 1701. The hunt, dances, pleasure: “they were led astray by grandeur.” Following an accident suffered by the Countess, what were they to make of their lives? When Louis Marie met them, during the mission, they were already taking in the poor; Claude had studied medicine and

chemistry, and was distributing his remedies. His wife was caring for eyes... They invited Montfort to their château, to give a retreat there to the beggars they were lodging there... After the death of Sylvie, Claude’s sister, in 1710, their whole life was dedicated to the poor... It was they who got the Daughters of Wisdom to come to take charge of the hospital they would by then have opened in their stables.

“In the Spring of 1714, M. de Maignanne was staying in Rennes with his friend, M. de Bedouët d’Orville, to whose house he had come seeking a little comfort and diversion. He immediately became interested in some projects for charitable schools, which were occupying the diocesan authorities. He contributed to the purchase of a house for a female teacher in the Rue Haute; then he bought, out of his own pocket, the Maison du Verger, with the hope of starting there a school for young girls...

“But the climax of the encounters M. de Magnanne had in Rennes was the series of spiritual conversations which brought together some extraordinary souls: M. d’Orville, the Count and Countess de la Garaye, the exquisite Madame de Pontbriand, the Count’s sister...

“What is to be said of the arrival, at one point or another, among such a group of the man of God, Louis Marie de Montfort? The winds of trial might be unleashed; but the ‘good friends’ held on to one another... and Louis Marie pushed these souls, full sail, towards new horizons.” (*Le Marquis de Magnanne, pages 23-24*)

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:** (*Letter to the People of Montbernage, 1-2, 6*)

March 1706

God alone

Dear people of Montbernage, St. Saturnin, St. Simplicien, La Resurrection, and others who profited from the mission which Jesus Christ, my Master, has just given you, greetings in Jesus and Mary. Not being able to speak to you personally, since holy obedience prevents me, I take the liberty of writing to you on my departure, as a father writing to his children, not to teach you anything new, but to confirm you in the truths I have already taught you. The Christian and fatherly love I bear you is so great that you will always have a place in my heart as long as I live and even into eternity. I would rather lose my right hand than forget you wherever I may be, whether at the altar.

Remember, then, my dear children, my joy, my glory and my crown, to have a great love for Jesus and to love him through Mary. Let your true devotion to your loving Mother Mary be manifest everywhere and to everyone, so that you may spread everywhere the fragrance of Jesus and, carrying your cross steadfastly after our good Master, gain the crown and kingdom which is waiting for you. So, do not fail to fulfil your baptismal promises and all that they entail, say your Rosary every day either alone or in public and receive the sacraments at least once a month.

I ask you all, in general and individually, to follow me with your prayers on the pilgrimage which I am going to make for you and many others. I say, "for you," because I am undertaking this long and difficult journey

in dependence on the Providence of God to obtain from him through the prayers of Mary, your perseverance. (...) My dear friends, pray also for me, that my sinfulness and unworthiness do not hinder what God and his holy Mother wish to accomplish through my ministry. I am seeking divine Wisdom; help me to find it.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Luke 10:38-42*)

In the course of their journey Jesus and his disciples came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

(*1 Corinthians 1: 4-7. 13-14. 27*)

Brothers and sisters, there are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all. The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good.

We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. And indeed the body consists not of one member but of many. Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Everywhere he went, Montfort called lay people to carry on his ministry. What aspect of the Montfortian charism of lay people might they pursue today?
- How do I see the mutual support between lay people and priests

and/or religious:

- As a lay person, how have I been helped, accompanied, nourished by the presence of one or more religious?
- As a religious, how have I been helped, accompanied, nourished by the presence of lay people?
- As a lay person, what aspect of Montfort attracts me in particular?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us give thanks to the Lord for the many gifts of the Spirit among Montfortian religious and lay people.

- For the common grace of our Baptism, which makes us all one body, praise to you, Lord.

Praise to you, Lord.

- For the gifts you give to our Montfortian family, both through its lay as well as its religious members, praise to you, Lord.

Praise to you, Lord.

- For the bonds that unite us in the same search for Christ, Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, praise to you, Lord.

Praise to you, Lord.

- For the call you have given us to be bearers of the Gospel message, wherever we are, with all that we are, praise to you, Lord.

Praise to you, Lord.

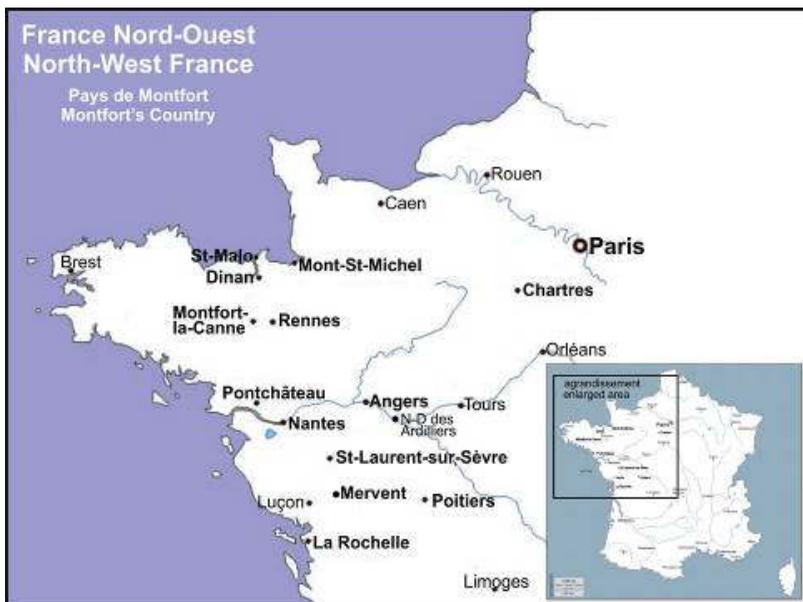
- For the friendship that unites us, for the mutual acceptance of our differences, praise to you, Lord.

Praise to you, Lord.

● **SYMBOL:** a symbol of Pentecost—perhaps 12 small lamps, or some representation of Pentecost

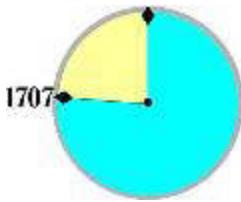
● **COMMITMENT:**

- Organise a meeting between associates of the Montfortian congregations and their members.



15. EVENT: Stay at Saint-Lazare

- **DATE** : September 1707
- **PLACE** : St-Lazare
- **VALUE** : Community life
- **THE STORY** :



“Louis Marie combs the countryside adjoining the town of Montfort for a suitable place in which to stay; he finds it in the hermitage of St. Lazare, which at one time had served as a leprosarium. He is not alone: Mathurin shares his life and another recruit enlisted along the way, Brother Jean, completes the little group.

“From the point of view of events soon to follow, the interval at St. Lazare takes on a particular significance. In this place is born the first Montfortian community of men. At St. Lazare, where Montfort's utopian dream is first lived in all its purity, the Company of Mary comes into being in embryonic form. It is, symbolically, the Cenacle of the poor, united in pleading for graces from on high, together in handing on the Word; it is the little Church of the Acts of the Apostles, prayerful and mission-oriented.

“The three men experience the awakening of the forest when the dawn sparks off the singing of the birds. Their days are passed in prayer, manual work (for they restore and decorate the small crumbling chapel of the hermitage), and preaching to the people round about who begin to come to St. Lazare as to a place of pilgrimage. The three hermits live a life of utter simplicity, stripped of all but the most elementary necessities, but they do not worry about the morrow. They live on the charity of people poor like themselves. Occasionally, they sit at table without even a scrap of bread before them while they wait for Providence's unflinching gift to appease their hunger.

“Louis savours the experience with its Franciscan delightfulness. He lives outside society's structures and experiences a borderline existence, yet he is, at the same time, very close to the poor. His uncompromising stance, so full of evangelical love, finds here a new incarnation. Saint Lazare where a priest and two laymen have only a stone for a pillow, achieves the one thing necessary: authentic communion. Perhaps this is why it is the best realisation so far of Louis' dream. It is a perfect embodiment of a life-style, free because it is unencumbered by material things, effective because its prayer and apostolic life are motivated by only one value: love.

“The renewed walls of the chapel and hermitage are solid and rustic; their very solidity removes any hint of insubstantiality that Father de Montfort's dream might have had about it. At one stroke, in this little corner of the earth where life is intense and human, simple and varied, Louis succeeds in achieving a synthesis of the time spent with God alone and that given over to a tender closeness to the people. Above the altar of the chapel a few refreshing images that more or less summarise Montfortian spirituality are to be found: a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, spreads its wings over the name of Jesus written in large letters, and also over a statue of Mary, Our Lady of Wisdom, holding her child in her arms; the child holds in its tiny hand a sphere representing the earth.

“The quiet prayer of the three men becomes more and more interrupted by the needs of people. Peasants and vagabonds come in crowds; if the chapel cannot hold them all, Louis gathers them in the shade of the magnificent oak tree that protects the sanctuary. He speaks to them of God and prays the rosary with them. Behind them, the forest of Brocéliande serves as a majestic cathedral for this most primitive of missions.” (*Papasogli*)

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*Rule of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary, 44-49*)

44. (1) Their charity to one another will be full of attention and good will, and they will look for opportunities to do one another a good turn. It will be marked by mutual respect which brings them to

give precedence to others and by patience which will enable them to bear with one another's faults.

45. (2) This queen of all the virtues is the queen and superior who governs the Company with her golden sceptre. She is its life-blood, the bond which holds it together and its guardian; pride, self-conceit and self-seeking being banished from it. "Cross the threshold, life-giving love reigns within."

46. (3) Their charity towards everyone, especially towards their enemies, will be joyful and sincere. They will return good for evil and, far from complaining about anyone who has done them a notable injury, or speaking ill of him or taking revenge, they will pray to God for him for a week.

47. (4) Be it during the time of their missions or not, the poor are to be the especial objects of their care. They must never refuse to help them, materially when possible, and spiritually, even if they say only one Hail Mary.

48. (5) After each catechetical instruction, they will provide a meal for all the poor of the parish who have attended the instruction and every morning and evening they will bring one of them in to eat at their table.

49. (6) They will strive to implement faithfully the words which express so well the charity of the great Apostle: "omnibus omnia factus sum" (I Cor. 9:22), becoming out of love all things to all men, even in indifferent matters, without getting caught up in the ways of the world or in any way becoming slack in the observance of their duty.

• **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Acts 2:42-47*)

[Members of the Jerusalem community] remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and miracles. And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but

met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.

(Colossians 3:9-15)

You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator. (...) As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- 'Living together' is always demanding, whether it be at a town level or that of a small community.
- What is it that makes this 'living together' difficult?
- What makes a community into a place of human and spiritual growth?
- What can I receive from the community and what can I offer it?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

Let us pray to the Lord that the newness of Christ may penetrate our hearts and our actions more and more.

- Look on our weakness, Lord, and through it build deep bonds of respect and friendship among us.

For where there is love, you are present there, Lord.

- Look at our differences, Lord, and transform them into an opportunity for encounter and sharing.

For where there is love, you are present there, Lord.

- See our personal riches, Lord, and teach us to put them at the service of our brothers and sisters.

For where there is love, you are present there, Lord.

- Look on our difficulties and crosses, Lord. Grant that we may live through them united to one another and to you.

For where there is love, you are present there, Lord.

- Hear our prayer, Lord, and pour into our hearts your Spirit of peace and communion.

For where there is love, you are present there, Lord.

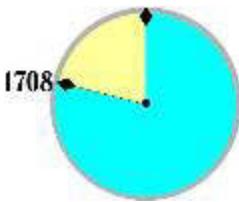
● **SYMBOL:** Three places set at table, representing the community of St-Lazare.

● **COMMITMENT**

In a community prayer, offer to the Lord our riches and our poverty. Ask the Holy Spirit to renew our community life.

16. EVENT: The big missions

- **DATE** : 1708
- **PLACE** : The West of France
- **VALUE** : Evangelisation



● **THE STORY** :

Leaving Mont-St-Michel, Montfort preached several missions and retreats, with great success, in his native Brittany. During a large part of the year 1707, he was working as a member of the team led by M. Leuduger, the most famous missionary of that time, from whom he learnt the operating principles of a missionary team, and with whom he deepened his understanding of what a mission should be.

Then he was able to develop his own charism and inspiration. We will see later on how he adapted his activity and creativity to the people and their needs. For the moment, here is an idea of what characterised his work of evangelisation.

His apostolate would always be characterised by attitudes to which he clung throughout his whole life, particularly his efforts to relieve the miserable situation of the poor. Everywhere where he preached, he was concerned with them. It was at this time that his memorable cry of “Open up to Jesus Christ” took place. Care for the poor and the sick, in whom he saw the Sacrament of Jesus Christ, was always part and parcel of his proclamation of the Gospel. During those first years of preaching missions, as he had done in Poitiers, in line with the desires he expressed in his letter as a young priest in 1700, he himself taught catechism to the most deprived people. He introduced them to his secret of salvation, available even to the simplest people: meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary. One thing that was special to him was the renewal of the promises of Baptism and the signing of a “Covenant

Contract with God”, done in public and signed as a solemn commitment to persevere in the good resolutions issuing from the mission. In this context, the consecration of oneself to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, and, more generally, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, was proposed as a privileged means for remaining faithful to one’s Baptism: to Jesus through Mary.

The whole thing was accompanied by the singing of hymns that he composed to popular tunes, on the themes of the simplest and clearest faith, on the moral principles guiding the Christian life, and on the holiest forms of devotion for the people and the Church, especially the Rosary.

His preaching on the mystery of the Cross was crowned at the end of each mission by the erection of a cross—sometimes of a calvary—to perpetuate the memory of the moment of grace accorded by the Lord to the village and the parish. Father de Montfort would become famous for his grand celebrations of the closure of the mission.

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:** (*Hymn 22: 1, 5, 16*)

1. My choice is made! I’ll roam through the world,

Living just like a vagabond,

To rescue my poor neighbour.

Could I see my dear brother’s soul

Perishing everywhere through sin,

My heart not being touched?

No, No, Lord, his soul is too dear.

5. Grant me the gift of wisdom

And of fervent charity,

Creating a godlike man.

Great God, make my voice thunder

So evil may be destroyed,

And your holy Will be done

On earth, and in heaven.

16. In the exercise of my zeal,

Make me always very faithful

To the duties of holiness;

May my spring gush forth night and day,
Never leaving me depleted,
May I preach to transform hearts,
But by preaching, let me be renewed.

The grace of touching hearts

“The mission in Bréal was so successful that M. Hindré [the rector] could not conceal his happy surprise. And Louis Marie replied: ‘I made a pilgrimage of more than two thousand leagues to ask God for the grace of touching hearts, and he has answered my prayer.’” (*Vilain, page 148*).

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Luke 4:16-22*)

Jesus came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.' And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- Christ was ‘sent’ by the Father, and in his turn he sent the Apostles. Montfort felt himself to be sent. And I, do I feel sent? To whom? Why?
- Montfort prays that his work as a preacher might be for himself, too, a source of holiness (cf. *Hymn 22:16*). How is my own work, for myself, a spring where I can ‘drink’ God?
- Montfort asked for the grace of ‘touching hearts’. What is needed that a sermon might truly touch the heart and bear fruit in life?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

Lord, you confide a mission to each one of us. We pray with Montfort that you would accompany us on this mission that you have entrusted to us, saying:

Make me, Lord, your missionary. (*Hymn 22:31*)

- Enlighten us, Lord, that we might have a good understanding of the mission that you entrust to us at various times in our life:

Make me, Lord, your missionary.

- May your Spirit, Lord, give us strength and courage to accomplish our mission joyfully.

Make me, Lord, your missionary.

- Like Montfort, make us, Lord, attentive to the needs of the poorest of our brothers and sisters.

Make me, Lord, your missionary.

- So many young people are seeking a wisdom to guide their lives, and some meaning for their existence.

Make me, Lord, your missionary.

- So many suffering people feel themselves to be useless in a world obsessed with productivity.

Make me, Lord, your missionary.

- So many elderly people are alone with their memories and their solitude.

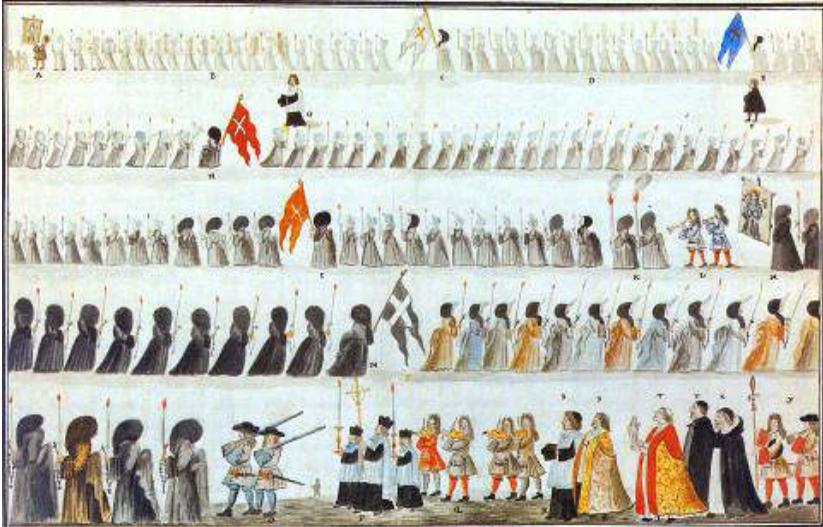
Make me, Lord, your missionary.

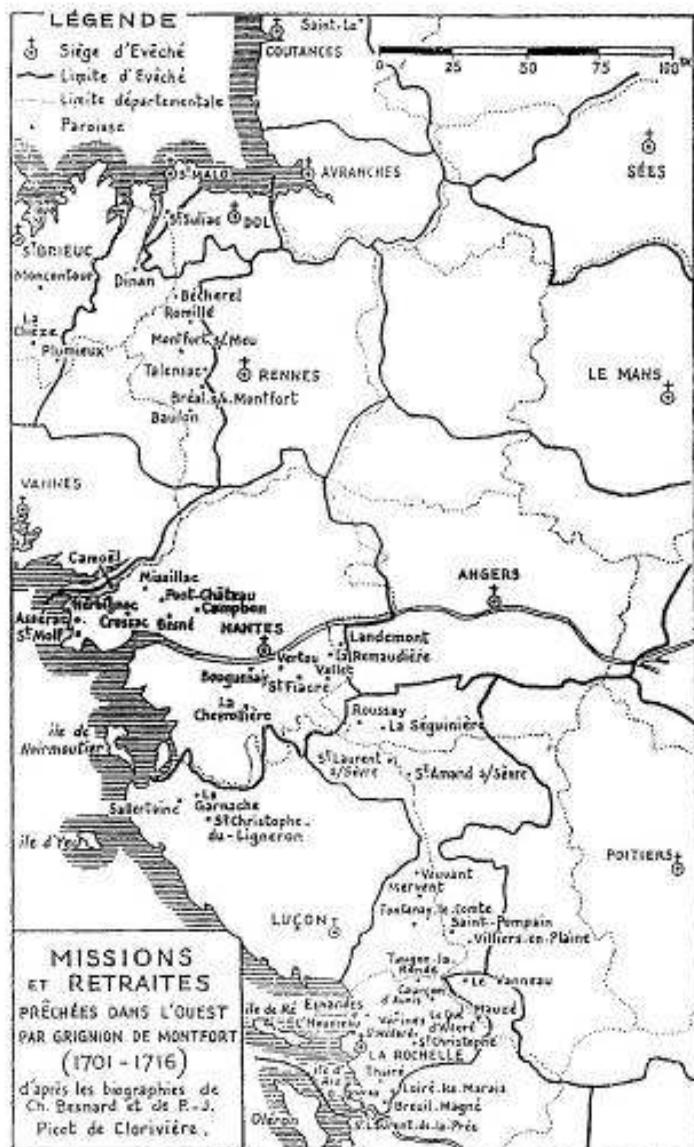
● **SYMBOL:** A shoulder pack containing the Gospel.

● COMMITMENT

- Recite the *Prayer for Missionaries* written by Montfort to ask for missionaries whose word will ‘touch hearts’.

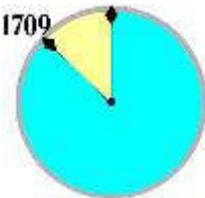
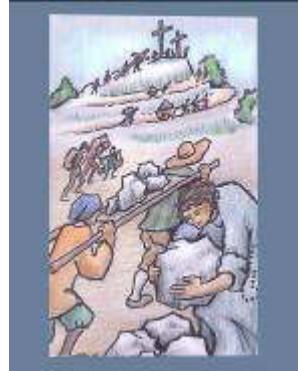
Drawing of the procession at the end of the mission in La Rochelle, by an eye-witness





17. EVENT: Erection and demolition of the Calvary at Pontchâteau

- **DATE** : Beginning: Summer 1709; Summer - 14 September 1710
- **PLACE** : Pontchâteau
- **VALUE** : The cross: that of Christ, and my own
- **THE STORY** :



We know the story of the Calvary at Pontchâteau, built by the faith of the people, and demolished through jealousy and the meanness of people in high places.

Louis Marie continued his preaching in the neighbouring villages and parishes, but himself managed, by frequent visits, several hundreds of the peasant folk who were making a concerted effort and raising a mighty hill on which the three crosses would be placed. During this time, the news of what was happening spread far and wide, and reinforcements arrived from all over the place, even from as far away as England... Montfort succeeded in finding the money necessary to provide food for all the volunteers who were working without ceasing.

Begun in the Summer of 1709, everything was ready in September of 1710 for its inauguration and blessing. The day had been fixed: 14 September, Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The chapels of the Stations of the Cross were finished, the life-size statues were in place. More than 20,000 people had arrived from all over. Montfort's father and some other members of his own family were among this number. But in the evening of Saturday 13th, there came, quite unexpectedly, a prohibition of the blessing of the Calvary. Stupefaction reigned, for the Bishop had given his authorisation. During that night, Montfort hastened to Nantes, and the Bishop received him next morning to explain to him the veto that had arrived from Paris, from

the Ministry of War, which saw this construction as a possible fort that the English or brigands could occupy.

Montfort took this event with calmness, serenity and simplicity, with no air of being persecuted. He undertook a retreat in St-Molf, where he received a second blow: the prohibition of his ministry. Following this, he made a retreat at the house of the Jesuits in Nantes. Father Préfontaine wrote: "I used to see him as a good man ... but his calm, his equanimity and his tranquillity... made me look upon him as a SAINT." His friend, M. des Bastières, hurried to console him, but it was Montfort who consoled *him*: "His holy name be praised!"

Montfort was sharing the cross of Christ. The resemblance is striking: Reasons of state... A man fearful of no longer being seen as a friend of Caesar... An innocent victim... A place called Calvary... And in God's eyes, this was to be, yet again, the victory of life!

Nothing would be able stop Montfort anymore, freer and stronger than ever, "raising up the cross in the depths of his heart," higher even than on the hill of the Madeleine, his only dream now was to continue the work of the missions.

Three times the Calvary of Pontchâteau was to be demolished, and three times rebuilt by the arms of faith of a population that Montfort had marked with his love for Christ.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*Hymn 11: 36-37, 33*)

You desire then, Jesus my master,
That I be with you on the cross.
I am content, deign to place me there,
It is for me too much honour by far.
In putting me there, give me your grace
And keep me there by your might,
That I may walk in your footsteps
In suffering most gladly.
I am a poorly polished stone,
Crude and without adornment,
Shape it, Lord, I beg you,
To set it in your building.

I want to suffer in patience,
Cut, shape, strike, slice,
But help my helplessness
And forgive me my sins.
This amazing grace,
This joy in affliction,
We obtain through prayer
We make with humility.
To obtain it, let us pray to Mary;
Through her sorrow-pierced heart
She bestows life
And even the cross of the Lord.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Luke 9:18-25*)

Now it happened that Jesus was praying alone, and his disciples came to him and he put this question to them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' And they answered, 'Some say John the Baptist; others Elijah; others again one of the ancient prophets come back to life.' 'But you,' he said to them, 'who do you say I am?' It was Peter who spoke up. 'The Christ of God,' he said. But he gave them strict orders and charged them not to say this to anyone. He said, 'The Son of man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.' Then, speaking to all, he said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it. What benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and forfeit or lose his very self?

(*2 Corinthians 12:9-10*)

It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Neither Jesus nor Montfort actively sought suffering. But the spiritual journey of Montfort caused him to experience the mysterious fruitfulness of the cross. As trials, difficulties and ruptures occur in my life, have I myself experienced the fruitfulness of the cross?
- What values underlie the stark language of the Wisdom Cross of Poitiers?
- If I had to make my own ‘Cross of Poitiers’, what words would I write on it?
- Going beyond words, how can I help and walk with someone who is suffering?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

We do not venerate just any cross; we venerate the Cross of Christ, for it is for us the sign of a love that gives itself to the limit. It reveals for us the powerful mystery of suffering.

- I offer you, Lord, the sufferings of people who have asked for my prayers.

By your cross, O Christ, give us strength and hope.

- I offer you, Lord, all the pain of people suffering from cancer.

By your cross, O Christ, give us strength and hope.

- I offer you, Lord, the anguish of parents in the face of their children’s mistakes.

By your cross, O Christ, give us strength and hope.

- I offer you, Lord, the powerlessness of abused and ill-treated children.

By your cross, O Christ, give us strength and hope.

- I offer you, Lord, the suffering of believers who are troubled by doubts and spiritual dryness.

By your cross, O Christ, give us strength and hope.

- I offer you, Lord, my own crosses, those of the past, those of the present, and those yet to come.

By your cross, O Christ, give us strength and hope.

- **SYMBOL:** A crucifix, the Cross of Poitiers.

- **COMMITMENT**

- Make my own 'Cross of Poitiers': take the form of the Wisdom Cross of Poitiers, and write on it my personal crosses...

- Make myself present to someone who is going through a trial, either by writing, by my words, or by a visit...

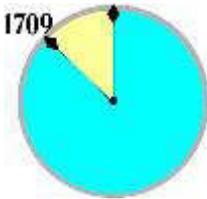
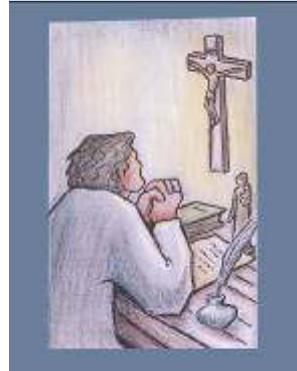


Bird's

eye view of the present Calvary

18. EVENT: The writing of the Treatise on True Devotion

- **DATE** : 1712 ??
- **PLACE** : Hermitage of St-Éloi
- **VALUE** : Consecration to Jesus through Mary, lived and proposed by Montfort



● **THE STORY** :

In his treatise on *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Montfort takes up again the idea he had sketched with broad strokes in chapter XVII of *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*: the Blessed Virgin as a means of acquiring Wisdom. The *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* is the full flowering of this fundamental

thought.

In the absence of precise information, we are reduced to conjecture regarding the place and the date of its composition, which was certainly quite late on, for Montfort says clearly that in it he has written down what he had been teaching in all his missions “for many years” (TD 110). It seems very likely that this was in the hermitage of St-Éloi (La Rochelle), in the Autumn of 1712. The composition was done relatively quickly. Abundant reading, familiar conversations with the holiest and wisest persons of his time, unceasing preaching, ardent prayer “over many years” (TD 113): such was, according to the author himself, the preparation for this little book. He undertakes it with enthusiasm: “My heart has dictated with special joy all that I have written” (no. 13). As Montfort had predicted (TD 114), this little book was lost “in the darkness and silence of a chest” and was not re-discovered until 1842. The first pages of the manuscripts having disappeared, it was given the title we are familiar with. Montfort seems to suggest another title in number 227: “Preparation for the Reign of Jesus Christ”. We know the

success it has had since that time. Pope John Paul II revealed it to a yet wider readership by making it the foundation of his own spiritual life.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*TD 120, 152*)

As all perfection consists in our being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus it naturally follows that the most perfect of all devotions is that which conforms, unites, and consecrates us most completely to Jesus. Now of all God's creatures Mary is the most conformed to Jesus. It therefore follows that, of all devotions, devotion to her makes for the most effective consecration and conformity to him. The more one is consecrated to Mary, the more one is consecrated to Jesus.

This devotion is a smooth, short, perfect and sure way of attaining union with our Lord, in which Christian perfection consists.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Luke 1:26-38*)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is

impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

● **PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING**

- What has most helped me to discover the role of Mary in my relationship with Christ?
- What passage from the Gospel concerning Mary speaks to me most?
- If I had to give a 'title' to Mary describing her role in my life, what would it be?
- What stages have I experienced in my relationship to Mary?

● **PRAYER/CELEBRATION**

Let us turn to Mary to tell her of the joy of having her as a companion on the way and the mother of our faith.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- You are the one in whom the whole faith of the people of Israel comes to flower.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- You are the fruitful earth in which the Father sowed his Word.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- You are the docile clay in which the Spirit forms the body of the Son of God.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- You are the most holy one through whom the whole human race welcomes its Lord.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- In your arms, the shepherds discover the Saviour who is the friend of the poor.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- In your arms, the nations discover the King who comes to serve.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- Thanks to your faith, the new wine of the latter times is poured forth for us.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- Your hope keeps you standing at the foot of the cross.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- You are Mother of the Church, the Body of Christ in our world.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

- In you, the human race has entered into the glory of God.

Hail Mary, full of grace.

● **SYMBOL:** A manuscript page of *True Devotion*.

● **COMMITMENT**

- Take the time to read a few chapters of *True Devotion*. Then share with others.

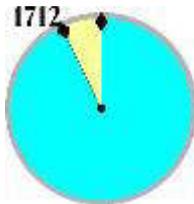
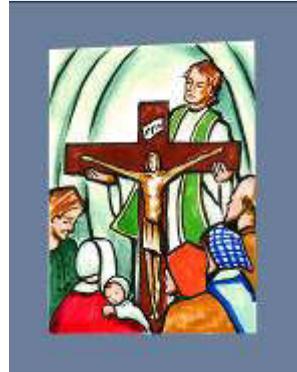
- Ask Montfort to help me to deepen my relationship to Mary.

C'est par la tres sainte vierge Marie que Jesus
Christ est venu au monde pour la premiere fois, et car
c'est par elle qu'il doit ~~regner dans le monde~~
^{regner dans le monde}.
Marie a été tres cachée dans sa vie, car pourquoy elle est
appellee par le s^{cs} esprit sainte. Alma mater, mere
cachée, et secreta. Son humilité a été si profonde qu'elle
n'a point eu sur la terre, d'attrait plus puissant et plus
continuel que de se cacher a elle même et a toute creature
pour n'être connue que de Dieu seul. Dieu pour le s^{cs}cur
dans les demandes quelle lui fit de la cacher, appaurent,
et humblement a pris plaisir a la cacher dans sa conception
dans sa naissance, dans sa vie, dans ses mysteres, dans
sa resurrection et ascension a l'égard de toute creature
humaine, ses parents même n'ela ^{peut être} connus par les
anges se demandoient souvent les uns aux autres, qu'est celle
qui est celle la, parce que les uns haut la leur cachoit, ou s'il
leuren decouvrait quelque chose, il leur en cachoit inferieurement.

First page of the manuscript of the Treatise on True Devotion

19. EVENT: La Rochelle

- **DATE** : 1711-1715
- **PLACE** : La Rochelle
- **VALUE** : Pastoral daring and creativity. An evangelisation that reaches out to everyone, using all possible means



- **THE STORY** :

The original missionary pastoral project of Montfort was made more precise, was refined and brought to maturity over the years. Little by little, those traits were emerging that differentiate him from all the others.

If we had to condense the originality of Montfort, two adjectives seem to stand out: an audacious activity, and a popular activity. We rediscover in a different form the young priest who, in 1701, wanted to live poor with the poor. No doubt his manner is quite different since then, but the source is still the same: confidence in the Christian possibilities of the simple people. (Rey-Mermet).

It was noticed that the fruits of his missions persevered longer in those places where he had been than in those where other missionaries had laboured, either because he had more abundant grace, or because he made use of practices that favoured a follow-up to his presence there. His concern to involve the people of the place at all possible levels was no doubt an important element in this success.

We might think of the board and lodging of the missionaries themselves; the custom had been that missionaries could count on an assured method of finance. Montfort refused this arrangement and relied on Providence. It was the people of the place who would bring what was necessary. That brought about the involvement of everybody. The mission became the business of all, including the caring for

numerous poor people who always finished up by profiting from the surplus of gifts made to the missionaries.

During the missions, Montfort made use of all the means for evangelising: Preaching using visual aids, adapted to a population that could not read, question and answer sessions, spectacular processions... He also established with the people of the place activities that prolonged the mission, for example, the establishment of the Roasry, associations and confraternities, that corresponded with a healthy popular piety and that were to survive his going.

For a man who normally was just passing through, Montfort left surprising traces that demonstrate his influence. He followed up the project of Mgr de Champflour to restore the charitable schools of La Rochelle and open new ones. These were free schools.

In 1714, he asked Marie-Louise Trichet and Catherine Brunet, whom he had left in the hospital in Poitiers, to come to take charge of the school for girls. In 1715, schools for boys were opened. In these, Montfort applied a method that would permit a single teacher to occupy himself with a great number of children all at the same time. The results were excellent.

We might summarise by emphasising that Montfort put into practice the principle that, to touch the people with a message that will endure and bear fruit, it is necessary to know and love those one is addressing and to get within their reach. One must also know how to involve the population and make use of the resources of the area. Montfort did this with remarkable creativity.

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*Letter 27, beginning of 1715*)
[To Mother Marie-Louise de Jésus and Sr Catherine Brunet]

My dear daughters in Jesus Christ, Marie Trichet and Catherine Brunet,
May Jesus and his Cross reign forever!

I have spoken several times to his Lordship, the Bishop of La Rochelle, about you and about our plans and he thinks you ought to come here and begin the work we want so much. He has rented a house for the purpose until another house can be bought and suitably furnished.

I know you are doing a great deal of good where you are, but you will do infinitely more away from home and we know that since the time of Abraham right up to the time of our Lord and even to our own day, God sends his greatest servants out of their own country because, as our Lord himself says, no prophet is accepted among his own people. I know you will have many difficulties to overcome but an enterprise which is going to do so much for the glory of God and the salvation of men will have its way strewn with thorns and crosses. If one doesn't take risks for God, one doesn't accomplish anything great for Him. Totally yours in God alone.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Mark 1:21-28, 35-38*)

Jesus and his disciples went as far as Capernaum, and at once on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. And at once in their synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit, and he shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked it saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking one another what it all meant, saying, 'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation at once spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the message there too, because that is why I came.'

(*1 Corinthians 9:18-23*)

What salary do I get, then? That in my preaching I offer the gospel free of charge to avoid using the rights which the gospel allows me. So

though I was not a slave to any human being, I put myself in slavery to all people, to win as many as I could. To the Jews I made myself as a Jew, to win the Jews; to those under the Law as one under the Law (though I am not), in order to win those under the Law; to those outside the Law as one outside the Law, though I am not outside the Law but under Christ's law, to win those outside the Law. To the weak, I made myself weak, to win the weak. I accommodated myself to people in all kinds of different situations, so that by all possible means I might bring some to salvation. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its benefits with others.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- How can we be creative today in our way of evangelising?
- How are we to offer a first evangelisation to those who are in total ignorance of the Gospel?
- What quality or skill is most important to be a good evangeliser?
- How can we bridge the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of today (language, values, symbols)?
- What means can we come up with to walk with Christians in their spiritual development?
- How can we be a significant presence for the youth of today?
- What orientations, what special role, what resources can we offer Montfortian associates?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

Our world is thirsting for Good News. Let us ask Christ, the one Sent by the Father, to make us witnesses of his Gospel.

Lord, fill us with the joy of the Gospel.

- That our actions and our words may bring your presence to the world,
Lord, fill us with the joy of the Gospel.
- That we may be courageous in the face of the difficulties of evangelisation,

Lord, fill us with the joy of the Gospel.

- That we may learn to create new ways of reaching the youth of today,

Lord, fill us with the joy of the Gospel.

- That we may be able to speak the Good News in the various cultures and languages of today,

Lord, fill us with the joy of the Gospel.

- That our prayer may nourish our witness,

Lord, fill us with the joy of the Gospel.

● **SYMBOL:** The picture of the great procession of La Rochelle, or a banner representing Christ or Mary.

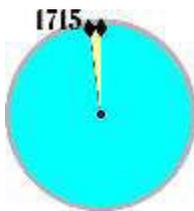
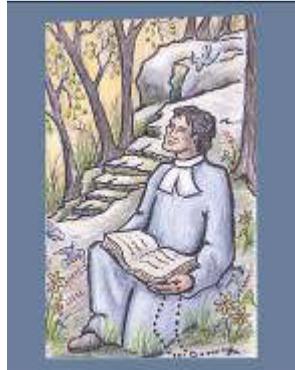
● **COMMITMENT**

- Does my style of life challenge; does it appeal to other values than those of success and consumerism? What can I change in this?

- I choose a group of people with whom I am in contact, and I find a way of evangelising them.

20. EVENT: Retirement to the cave in Mervent

- **DATE** : 1715, September-October
- **PLACE** : The cave in the Forest of Mervent
- **VALUE** : Prayer, contemplation, creation as a pathway to God
- **THE STORY** :



In June 1715, Montfort had preached a mission in Mervent, and had been attracted by the enchantment of the surrounding area. “The little town of Mervent looks out on the forest that climbs the hills and drops down into the valleys.” This forest, spread like a cloak over a solitary stretch of land, creates one of the most virgin and yet most grandiose landscapes that

Louis Marie had been given to contemplate.

The land-owners of the area invited Louis Marie to construct a hermitage in the forest with which he had fallen in love. In the middle of some crevices in the rock, Father de Montfort discovered a cave, where he retired to pray, tired as he was. The hermit’s soul of Louis Marie was reawakened with the desire to take his repose with the infinite Good, healing the wounds that men had inflicted on him. In September, after an exhausting Summer that, as well as his labours in La Rochelle, had included the mission in Fontenay-le-Comte, he returned to Mervent. Abandoning the little hermitage that, in fact, was too close to the passing road, he came up with a bolder project: to penetrate into the forest as far as an unspoilt gorge wedged between two hills and rich in water, and there to build a little house of peace which, according to the plans whirling round in his head, might one day become that place of repose offered by the Rule of the Company of Mary to the missionaries who would no longer have the strength to

work. Louis Marie knew very well how necessary it is to prepare for death by a deeper encounter with God, who speaks in solitude.

The “cave of the fawns” is situated on a height, in the midst of the forest, that looks out over a wild and superb panorama: the slopes covered with trees, and the wide bend of the river that flows deep in the valley. An enormous rocky outcrop and, inside, a small space smelling of earth and wood. In this space carved in the rock and protected by a vestibule wall, he put a bed, a table, a chair and a crucifix. The man who had cried out on all roads his voracious “God alone!” could not have found a more perfect symbol of dispossession than this humble dwelling lost in the midst of nature. All the silence of the forest seemed to guard and envelope the humble solitude of the cave. Within these walls of rock where one could only pray, there burned the quivering mystery of contemplatives and lovers of God.

Father de Montfort had plans also to build a chapel and to erect a cross in it; but in the Autumn of 1715, he was obliged to leave this place, faced with the intransigence and the meanness of government bureaucracy, which accused him of occupying the place illegally and having caused damage to it. The missionary, however, had found there the interior momentum that would serve him for the last six months of his life.

● **FROM MONTFORT’S WRITINGS:** (*Hymn 157:13, 16, 18, 21, 24, 28, 31, 33*)

The eloquent silence
Of rocks and forests
Only preach peace,
Breathe only innocence.
The rocks preach fidelity,
The woods, fruitfulness,
The streams, purity,
All things, love and obedience.
The Creator’s mighty hand
Which formed this universe,
Shines in these remote sites

Of innocent nature.
What happiness, even in this life,
And what marvellous rapture
We experience in these places
As the soul is recollected.
Solitude is the wise book
Which all the saints have read,
Drawing from it stunning secrets
On how to live this life well.
I am the One, says God, who leads
A sinner to the wilderness,
To speak to his heart,
And submit it to my reign.
Sheltered from the world's concerns
Let us savour recollection,
Praying continually,
Tasting profound peace.
Zealous folk, Jesus calls you
To rest awhile,
To fill yourself with God
And His words of life.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*Matthew 6:26-34*)

As he was teaching on the mountain, Jesus said: “Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you who have so little faith? So do not worry; do not say, ‘What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What are

we to wear? It is the gentiles who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

(Psalm 148)

Alleluia! Praise Yahweh from the heavens, praise him in the heights.

Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all shining stars,

praise him, highest heavens, praise him, waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of Yahweh at whose command they were made;

he established them forever and ever by an unchanging decree.

Praise Yahweh from the earth, sea-monsters and all the depths,

fire and hail, snow and mist, storm-winds that obey his word,

mountains and every hill, orchards and every cedar,

wild animals and all cattle, reptiles and winged birds,

kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all judges on earth,

young men and girls, old people and children together.

Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for his name alone is sublime, his splendour transcends earth and heaven.

For he heightens the strength of his people, to the praise of all his faithful,

the children of Israel, the people close to him.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Montfort sings of the silence and solitude of Mervent. What place does silence occupy in my own life?
- How can I organise my day to make space for silence?
- What aspect or element of nature opens me up to the presence of God?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

For the beauty of the world, that opens us to his mystery, let us praise the Lord.

- By the game of the stars and the constellations,
by the immensity of the universe which sings of your grandeur,
Praised be you, Lord.

- By the complexity of the infinitely small,
by the atoms and particles that make up our world,
Praised be you, Lord.

By the beauty of plants, by their peace-giving strength,
Praised be you, Lord.

- By the insects, fishes, animals and all living things that people our earth,
Praised be you, Lord.

- By our sister water, by her calm and her power, by her gentle clarity,
Praised be you, Lord.

- By the cultures, languages and traditions passed down from past generations, the wealth of our humanity,
Praised be you, Lord.

● **SYMBOL:** A rock or a branch.

● COMMITMENT

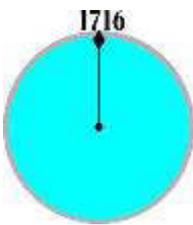
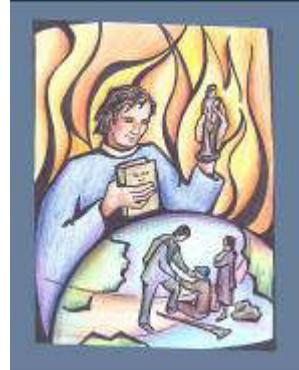
- I choose a moment in my day to be reserved for silence.

- I take the time to go and contemplate nature.

- I eliminate from my daily life any manner of acting that harms the environment.

21. EVENT: Death in Saint-Laurent

- **DATE** : 1716, 28 April
- **PLACE** : St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre
- **VALUE** : to experience one's own death with serenity and abandonment
- **THE STORY** :



Father de Montfort died on 28

April 1716, right in the midst of his apostolic work, during the mission he was giving in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre. He was already very tired when he arrived. During the opening celebration of the mission, on 5 April, he took hold of the processional cross and carried it to the end.

He himself chose the tree from which would be made the mission cross. It was to be erected the day after his death. Mgr de Champflour, the Bishop of La Rochelle, announced his intention to come on 22 April. Montfort tired himself out organising the procession that would welcome his friend and protector. He was struck down with acute pleurisy, from which he knew he would never recover. Sick and feverish though he was, he insisted on preaching in the Bishop's presence. The subject of his last sermon was one of those most dear to him: the gentleness of Christ. Everyone was touched by it, and the crowd was in tears.

Then he had to take to his bed. On 27 April he dictated his Last Will and Testament to M. René Mulo. To this man who spoke of his inability to succeed him, he left his missionary soul: "Have confidence, my son, have confidence, I will pray to God for you." Father Mulo would say later: "These words worked the greatest of miracles in me: they obtained health and strength for me."

He asked that the crowd at the door be allowed to come in. He hesitated to bless the people because they took him for a saint. Father

Mulot said to him: “Do it with your crucifix; it will be Jesus Christ who will bless them!” He encouraged those around his bed by intoning the popular hymn:

Let us go, dear friends, Let us go to Paradise!
No matter what we may gain here on earth,
Paradise is worth much more!

His last words confirmed for himself what he had written: “They are happy at the hour of death, which is sweet and peaceful for I am usually there myself to lead them home to everlasting joy” (*TD 200*):

“In vain you attack me! I am between Jesus and Mary. *Deo gratias et Mariae*. I have come to the end of my race: it’s all over, I will never sin again!”

The following day, 29 April, Father Mulot declared: “Brethren, today we have two crosses to erect: first this material cross that you see before your eyes; secondly the burial of M. de Montfort that we have to carry out today.”

The life of the whole region was interrupted: more than ten thousand people participated in his funeral.

Two years later, after a period of silence, Fathers Mulot and Vatel, accompanied by Mathurin, the faithful companion of Montfort, and a few other Brothers, cured of their fears, would boldly take up again the Rosary and the staff of the missionary.

Translation of the Latin EPITAPH that was placed on his tomb when it was restored after the exhumation carried out on 13 November 1717: it may have been composed by his disciple, the Marquis de Magnanne, a highly cultivated man, or by M. Barrin, his friend who was the Vicar General of the Diocese of Nantes. This stone is now to be found in the crypt of the Basilica, since the construction of a common tomb for Saint Louis Marie and Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus, in 1992.

Traveller, What do you see?
A light quenched,
A man consumed by the fire of Charity,
Who became all things to all men,
Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.
If you ask what was his life:

There was none more holy;
His penance: none more austere;
His zeal: none more ardent;
His devotion to Mary: none more like St Bernard.
A priest of Christ, he showed forth
Christ in his actions, and preached
Him everywhere in his words.
Indefatigable, he rested only in the grave.
Father of the poor,
Protector of orphans,
Reconciler of sinners.
His glorious death
was the image of his life;
As he had lived, so he died.
Ripe for God he passed to heaven,
April 28th 1716
Aged 43 years

● **FROM MONTFORT'S WRITINGS:** (*True Devotion, 200*)

This loving Mother says to them "Happy are those who keep my ways" (Proverbs 8:32), which means, happy are those who practise my virtues and who, with the help of God's grace, follow the path of my life. They are happy in this world because of the abundance of grace and sweetness I impart to them out of my fullness, and which they receive more abundantly than others who do not imitate me so closely. They are happy at the hour of death, which is sweet and peaceful for I am usually there myself to lead them home to everlasting joy. Finally, they will be happy for all eternity, because no servant of mine who imitated my virtues during life has ever been lost.

● **LIGHT FROM THE BIBLE:** (*John 12:23-24*)

[A short time before his death, as he was entering in Jerusalem,] Jesus declare: «Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. In

all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest.

(Acts 20:17-22. 24. 32)

From Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. When they arrived he addressed these words to them: 'You know what my way of life has been ever since the first day I set foot among you in Asia, how I have served the Lord in all humility, with all the sorrows and trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. I have not hesitated to do anything that would be helpful to you; I have preached to you and instructed you both in public and in your homes, urging both Jews and Greeks to turn to God and to believe in our Lord Jesus. 'And now you see me on my way to Jerusalem. (...) But I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me -- to bear witness to the good news of God's grace. (...) And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace that has power to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all the sanctified.

● PERSONAL INTEGRATION/SHARING

- Have I ever witnessed a death that made an impression on me?
- How may Montfort be a 'model for a happy death'?
- Does death frighten me? Why, whether yes or no?
- How might I acquire today the attitudes I would like to have at my death?

● PRAYER/CELEBRATION

With the epitaph of Father de Montfort as our starting point, let us give thanks for all he has been for his contemporaries and all he still is for us.

- *"A priest of Christ, he showed forth Christ in his actions."*

For the transformation of Montfort into your own image, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“He preached Christ everywhere in his words.”*

For his word that touched the hearts and nourished the faith of the Christian people, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“He was Father of the poor, Protector of orphans.”*

For his care for the littlest ones, and his efficacious love of the poor, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“He was the Reconciler of sinners.”*

For his ardent desire to reveal the mercy of the Father to everyone, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

- *“As he had lived, so he died.”*

For his death in trust and abandonment to the love of the Father, may you be praised, Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, master of life.

● **SYMBOL:** A statue of Montfort, about which may be placed certain of the symbols already used: a staff, a shoulder-pack with the Gospel, a small statue of the Blessed Virgin...

● **COMMITMENT**

- I re-read the epitaph of Montfort, I give thanks for what he has given to me personally.

- I choose an aspect of the life of Montfort that I will try harder to put into practice.

Notes:

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