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Montfort EurHope 05: The Parish Mission at City Centre Catholic Parish in Southampton, United Kingdom

***'The priests who enter must be called by God to preach missions in the steps of the Apostles.'* - Father de Montfort: Original Rule**

SOUTHAMPTON, United Kingdom - Each day of the year, the Community at Saint Joseph's Centre in Southampton takes time to reflect on the Rule of Life. Going back to our original Charism, we contacted the Diocese of Portsmouth and offered to conduct Parish Missions. We accepted two Missions this year. The second will take place in October 2019 with a focus on the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Eucharist. The first has been completed and its title was 'A Shepherd's Heart' - Where have all our people gone!

This first Parish Mission began on Ascension Thursday 2019 and ran through to Pentecost Sunday. Having carefully studied the Original Rule especially the section on the Mission - adapting it to suit the situation of today, we brought Father de Montfort's suggestions to the Mission Planning Team. They were inspired.

A Mission Team of 10 people of all ages and skills was created. We met each month over a period of a year before the Mission began. An audit of the Parishioners' Spiritual Life was made. This enabled me to address various issues that came to light regarding their belief and Sacramental Practice.

Having looked at the Canticles of Montfort calling people to the Mission of his day - a Mission Hymn was written by Mr. Paul Inwood who wrote the Hymn for the Year of Mercy. I composed a Mission Prayer. All the existing Parish groups were asked to pray the Mission Prayer every time they meet leading up to the Mission. The Mission Hymn was taught to the Parishioners and began to be used each Sunday before the Mission to prepare the hearts of the people and to encourage them to attend.

Two new large Crucifixes were acquired. They would be blessed and hung above the Altars of the two Churches of the Parish. This was done in keeping with Father de Montfort's efforts to build a Calvary or shrine after the Parish Missions he gave, as a reminder of the Mission and a continuous call to conversion.

Every household within the Parish boundary was informed of the dates of the Mission. A Mission Website was created and the local radio was informed of the dates. Various interviews were given by the Monsignor about the Mission and the Charities we were supporting. I visited the Parishes on two occasions before the Mission took place to encourage the people to attend.



The days of the Mission consisted in: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Confessions, the praying of the entire Rosary (to prepare the hearts of the people for what they were going to hear), street evangelisation and a night vigil before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Sermons were a balance between evangelical Gospel preaching (appealing to the heart) and solid Catholic Catechises on the person of Jesus the Christ and the Sacraments of the Church. There were two occasions given over to the Catechises of the children of the Parish. After each talk, a period of meditation took place or other forms of prayer. Every Thursday of the Mission, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick was given in both Churches. It was truly a moving event. Each evening, refreshments were served to those who attended the Sermon.

A number of monetary collections were made for the poor. The Parish gave £1000 to the School of Joy in Palestine and £1000 to their own Parish Charity - Catholic Home Care. This charitable giving held Father de Montfort's desire to have the poor of the Parish fed each day.

We did not ask the Parish to pay the Montfort Missionaries for their work during the Mission but Providence provided us on the last day with a generous donation for our Missionary work in the Parish.

The Mission came to a close on Pentecost Sunday with the blessing of the Mission Crucifixes and the Solemn Renewal of Baptismal Vows.

The Mission Team will continue to meet for the next year to respond to the various insights given during the Mission.

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