



Montfort_EurHope20: Consecrated Montfortians in Fatima

FATIMA, Portugal - *Testimony of Isabel de Santiago, assistant professor and visiting researcher in health communication at the University of Lisbon, one of the 23 people who pronounced their act of consecration among the Montfortians on August 15, 2020.*

Between heaven and earth! How can we give witness to a path? How can we share the strong feeling that dwells in us, the unique and divine experience of a consecration, where abandonment is nothing other than servitude to Jesus, son of God in the footsteps of his Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary? I am only a sinner who puts herself at the service of others. This journey has taken place through the introduction made by Fr. António Martins PEREIRA, SMM, for more than 22 years, in a relationship of faith and spiritual friendship. In a leap year, in which a great turning point has taken place in the world, and where human beings are forced to rethink their life and existence in the community and in the service of others, before the pandemic devastates even the region where the Virgin Mother appeared to the Little Shepherds of Fatima, I traveled in a pilgrimage to Israel during Lent, under the spiritual guidance of the same Montfort priest. We came back infected. And a new and threatening phase began in our lives: the experience of service took me away from fear. I served others like it was my life. This was followed by the 15-day retreat in Fatima, at "Casa Montfort", after the second negative test for COVID-19. In an embrace of humanization and faith, union and sharing of poverty... With the reflection led by Fr. Carlos Miguel on the way from the Via Sacra to the Chapel of the Hungarians... By observing the signs of water and the warmth of silence in reflection and the harsh words of Montfort who revisit our soul and place us on the Way of the Cross, in the unconditional surrender of Love for God, through Mary... unceasing prayer.

A silent battle that I followed before the consecration is one personal sacrifice and surrender for the common good. Reading the texts of the book, *"The Friends of the Cross"*, repositions us in life at the present time, and sends us back to an incessant search for an approximation of perfection from our immense littleness and imperfection. Living through these times of

pandemic, it has already affected the lives and health of thousands of people around the world, especially the poorest with poor hygienic conditions. The millions of infected people have shattered our false paradise. The earth has started its vertiginous fall on us and it cannot dismantle the sky that exists in us, with faith.

The celebration took place in the presence of 3 Montfortian priests: Fr. Amílcar TAVARES, the Superior of Portugal; Fr. Carlos Miguel VIEIRA, the Superior of the House; and Fr. Luís OLIVEIRA, the Bursar. The consecration ceremony took place in the chapel of "Casa Montfort". The reading of the visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth made a big impression on me, especially since my name is Isabel Maria. The symbolism is very strong: the Word of God, the image of Our Lady of the Water, symbolizing baptism and the lighted Paschal Candle. The group of 23 consecrated persons recited in unison the act of consecration. Here are the texts of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, the words which I recorded in my heart that accompany me:

"Giving preference to villages more than cities, to the poor more than to the rich" and the most decisive for me, "The Lord does not consider suffering so much in itself, but rather the way in which we suffer". I want to follow my path to the Cross, out of devotion to Mary, with Jesus. "If anyone wants to come behind me, let him give up himself, let him take his cross, day after day and follow me "(Lk 9:23). "I am all yours, and all that is mine belongs to you, my beloved Jesus, through Mary, your Blessed Mother".

Fr. Carlos M. Vieira, SMM