



Opening of the Tercentenary in Belgium

BANNEUX, Belgium - On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the death of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort the Montfortian family in Belgium opened the Montfort year on 12th August .

The organisers of the Marian Congress, Meeting Mary, that takes place every three years, offered some space in their agenda for our Montfort day which suited perfectly well with the theme of the Congress: *'Mary leads us to the source of Love'* with conferences by cardinal Danneels.

The sanctuary of Banneux, where the Congress took place, offered a unique setting for the celebration. Some people of the three congregations and their collaborators wondered what Montfort would have done at this very moment in history. He might have answered: do as I did and pray constantly for vocations: priests, religious and lay people. Hence the idea to start a process of prayer, a sort of novena, from now till 7th May 2016 when we have our national Montfort Day in Brussels.

On 12th August some 180 people were welcomed in St Francis chapel in Banneux. A small choir, especially raised for this occasion, brought us in the right mood and the welcome and opening words were spoken by René Deleu, staff member of the organisation 'Evangéliser avec Marie', who twice a year offers a Montfortian weekend in the Foyer de Charité. Focusing on Montfort he described the 'missionaries' the Church needs today: 'Men and women who continue the evangelisation started by Jesus, people with a clear view on the way God acts and Mary's part in his plan. People who are engaged and have an eye for

the needs of people today, men and women who care about the poor and the needy, who are looking for ways to reach them, who by their way of living are a testimony for what they stand for, who in Mary's company and led by the Holy Spirit are on the road, are available and liberated of 'what other might say', and people who pray.'

Fr. Santino Brembilla, Superior General, found inspiration in Montfort's epitaph in St. Laurent and mentioned Montfort's relevance in our times and he stressed the importance of his mission. 'Our world has lost its direction completely: violence, intolerance and suffering undermine the meaning of life. On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of his going to heaven we would like to say to Montfort that we want to walk in his footsteps by renewing our vows and our evangelical efforts.'

Every month all those who left their addresses will receive texts to pray for vocations in our times. After the conferences the participants were invited for personal prayer supported by biblical texts from the gospel of Marc, another by pope Francis and last but not least from the 'Prayer for Missionaries' by Montfort.

After the coffee break the group walked in procession to the Montfort chapel. The statue of Montfort inspired Fr. Santino and Fr. Frans Fabry to describe the sort of missionaries the Church needs today. In turn we were praying and singing. Finally Fr. Santino read the prayer which was especially written for the tercentenary and promised to do the novena together with us till 7th May next year.

Already 97 people left their addresses to pray with us.

-Fr. Frans Fabry, SMM