

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SESSION

INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATES of the Montfortian family

Missionary Disciples in the Montfortian Family

“Go from all nations, make disciples” Mt (28:19)



ST LAURENT SUR SEVRE

from August 6 to 13, 2023

CONTENTS

PREPARATION TO LIVE THE INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTAN MEETING.....	4
COMPILATION OF RESPONSES TO THE PRE-INTERNATIONAL MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE.....	6
PREPARATORY PRAYER	10
INAUGURAL MESSAGE - SR. RANI KURIAN	11
MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL	12
MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF ST. GABRIEL	13
SYNODALITY IN THE MONTFORTIAN FAMILY	14
TESTIMONIES.....	17
MONTFORTIAN GABRIELITE ASSOCIATES	17
TESTIMONY OF MISS LUZ MARIA FUERTES, FRIEND OF WISDOM –.....	19
PRESENTATION OF ST LAZARE	22
SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT AND BAPTISM:OUR BAPTISMAL VOCATION AND OUR MISSIONARY COMMITMENT.....	24
HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT THERESE OF THE CROSS.....	34
PRAYER VIGIL - TRIBUTE TO THE MONTFORTIAN FAMILY MARTYRS.....	36
SR. SHIGI CHACKO THACHECHERIL DW THE COVID WARRIOR.....	36
TRIBUTE TO OUR MARTYR SISTERS DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM	37
THE BROTHERS OF ST GABRIEL PRESUMED MARTYRS	39
TESTIMONY ABOUT THE MONTFORT MISSIONARIES MURDERED IN THE GARDENS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON 1 FEBRUARY 1794	40
FATHER SAMUEL MALO	42
FATHER OLIVIER MAIRE	43
A DAY IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FATHER DE MONTFORT AND MARIE-LOUISE TRICHET IN POITIERS	46
HOMILY IN POITIERS	57
THE CALVARY OF PONTCHÂTEAU.....	58
AN EVANGELISATION CENTRE	58
PROSPECTS FOR BETTER COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PARISH OF PONTCHÂTEAU AND THE CALVARY	60
FROM 1709 TO THE PRESENT DAY, GENERATIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN AT THE SERVICE FATHER DE MONTFORT'S WORKS AT THE CALVARY OF PONT-CHÂTEAU.....	62
OPEN TO ALL, ESPECIALLY THE POOR - LAUDATO SI-BASED PROJECT	66
PROSPECTS FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH GROUP AT THE CALVARY OF PONTCHÂTEAU.....	68
THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS	70
SAINT LOUIS-MARIE AND THE BIBLE	79
MISSIONARY DISCIPLES AND SYNODALITY	85

NOTES OF DISCUSSION INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTIAN MEETING - NATIONAL GROUPS	
DISCUSSION (ASIAN)	89
NOTES OF MEETING DELEGATES OF THE BROTHERS OF ST GABRIEL.....	90
CELEBRATION OF THE SENDING MASS	92
MGR. JACOLIN'S HOMELY	92
THANKS TO THE RIAM 2023 COMMITTEE	93
COMMISSIONING.....	95
COUNTRIES REPRESENTED.....	96
YouTube links	97



PREPARATION TO LIVE THE INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTAN MEETING “MISSIONARY DISCIPLES IN THE MONTFORTAN FAMILY”

You have been invited and you are registered and organized to participate in the INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATES of the Montfortian family. Thank you for your commitment which probably already requires a lot of personal investment and which will lead you to a long trip, for many of you, to discover and follow in the footsteps of Father de Montfort in the west of France.

The international meeting of Montfortian associates, at Saint-Laurent-Sur-Sèvre, during the year of the 350th anniversary of the birth of Father de Montfort, on the initiative of the general councils of the Company of Mary, the Daughters of Wisdom and of the Brothers of Saint-Gabriel, responds to an expectation already expressed more than 20 years ago.

The universality and the presence in more than 50 countries in the world of members of the Montfortian family, allows us to think that we all have reasons to hope that our differences will only be shared and developed wealth. This will be all the more true if we cultivate our common heritage together: the spirituality of Father de Montfort, his life, his teachings, his strong accents, his writings, the mission entrusted to him and which he bequeathed to us somehow.

To best live the time of this encounter, unique and therefore initiatory, it is perhaps good to prepare ourselves for it in order to draw strength, hope, courage, audacity and confidence for the future. For this, we need to discover each other, to get to know each other, to recognize each other and to have common time of formation or sharing on our roots linked to Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and Blessed Marie- Louise de Jésus, without forgetting Father Deshayes whom we rediscover day by day.

We will have to share our experiences and create or cultivate links to be stronger in the mission of evangelization that is open to us. It is in the Church, priests, religious, consecrated and lay people that we are called to spread the spirituality that makes us live and makes us happy.

To help us, in our sharing, during our meeting, it seems useful to us to allow you beforehand to prepare for it by giving you the possibility of noting important elements of your journey.

We suggest a few questions that can help you reread your experience and your convictions, wishes, expectations and thus enter naturally into the theme of the meeting.

- *How did I discover Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and the Montfortian family?*
- *What attracted me and made me want to go further in the knowledge and life of Father de Montfort?*
- *What do I find important for my life in this Montfortian family?*
- *What would I put forward in the spirituality of Father de Montfort, to characterize him?*
- *In what way are Louis-Marie de Montfort, Marie-Louise of Jesus, Gabriel Deshayes, those who preceded us, useful to us today for our own life in a world so different from theirs?*
- *What tracks do I see to move forward on the path that is mine and that of the world in which I live?*
- *What conviction can I share with others for today's mission where I am called to live?*

(You can, if you wish, send to the preparation committee some of your personal reflections, in brief of course). clmarsaud@gmail.com

THANK YOU in advance for all you will do to take full advantage of this first international meeting of the “Associates of the Montfortian Family.”

May the prayer composed for this occasion nourish our own prayer and our spiritual life and put us in communion of spirit before we discover ourselves in humanity at Saint-Laurent-Sur-Sèvre in the cradle of the Montfortian family.

Fraternally yours.

Saint-Laurent-Sur-Sèvre / 27 June 2023
The Committee of preparation

COMPILATION OF RESPONSES TO THE PRE-INTERNATIONAL MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE

(Translation DeepL)

26 complete answers listed. All equally interesting.

What follows is not a summary, nor an exhaustive presentation of the responses, simply an overview of the extraordinary richness of sharing communicated in writing. THANK YOU to all of you for what you are and for what you have contributed through your texts, your words, your spontaneous exchanges, your way of experiencing universality, your inner life,

1 - How did I discover Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and the Montfortian family?

A copy of the "TRUE DEVOTION".

- A meeting with a Daughter of Wisdom, a Montfort Missionary or a Brother of St Gabriel
- An invitation to come and work in a school
- The attraction of the life of the Sisters, Brothers and Missionaries and the richness of their charism
- Through the Legion of Mary and Father de Montfort's Consecration to Jesus through Mary
- Through family prayer; we recited the prayer of consecration. I wanted to know more.
- Meeting brothers and sisters in schools or health centres
- Through the Rosary recited in the family and in parishes
- Through my work and access to archives
- Through a friend who gave me a book entitled "Preparing for consecration in 33 days"
- By reading " The Love of Eternal Wisdom "
- By visiting Montfortian places and meeting Montfortian communities.
- Through my wife who made her consecration to Jesus through Mary.
- At the charity home during military service
- Through the "Totus Tuus" journey.

2 - What attracted and inspired me to deepen my knowledge of the life of Father de Montfort?

- Joy, simplicity of life and the way of living as equals, followed by a reading of Montfort's works
- Commitment to education and charisma
- Unshakeable faith in Eternal Wisdom, a missionary spirit and devotion to Mary
- Attention to human need, eagerness to proclaim the Incarnation and care for the poor
- Love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin
- Her humility and sacrifice.
- Father Montfort's simple and detached lifestyle, serving the poor and needy above all else and educating.
- Father de Montfort's writings made a deep impression on me and I wanted to share them with my students. St Louis captured me forever.
- His absolute trust in God, his dynamic vocation and his radical availability for the mission.
- True devotion to Mary.
- The character of Montfort, his personality, his writings, his actions.
- The love of the underprivileged, the love of God and the poor.

- Montfort's independence from what was said about him.
- His special relationship with Mary, the prayer of the Rosary, Consecration,
- His humility in teaching the way of holiness.
- His devotion, his example, his dedication and the story of Marie-Louise.
- Her genuine concern for the poor, her life of piety,
- Catchy quotes from Father de Montfort and the admiration and devotion of his followers today.

3 - What importance does Montfort have in my life?

- I spent 40 years of my life with the Montfortian family.
- The spirit of solidarity, simplicity and commitment to justice, peace and fraternity.
- Constant meditation on the life, works and writings of Father de Montfort inspire me to love, live and proclaim Wisdom, with confidence, optimism and Hope.
- I find strength and courage in sharing and praying with the Montfortian family
- The way of living the messages left by Montfort: ardent desire - praying with perseverance - mortification, devotion to the Blessed Virgin.
- The Montfortian family has become an integral part of my life.
- Knowing Father de Montfort has enabled me to grow in my Faith and to enrich my capital of values.
- I live and imbibe the values of Father Montfort and I extend his teachings to many people in society.
- Montfort has forged my values and my way of acting in life.
- On the one hand, an opportunity for personal, human and Christian development and, on the other, a community of encounters that always places me in a deeply sincere spirituality, in dialogue with the Gospel and with the Church.
- It was through the Montfortian family that I came to understand the role of Mary in the Church and, personally, Mary gradually led me to her son Jesus.
- I was very impressed by the importance of the mission as preaching and evangelisation, but also in caring for those who need it most.
- The fraternal bond that I discovered within this family, as well as the call to make Jesus known through Mary and the joy of witnessing.
- I have always loved taking care of disadvantaged children
- The Montfortian family is a spiritual support for me
- It is my life! He has made me who I am and who I have chosen to be!

4 - What aspect of Montfortian spirituality could I highlight to characterise Father de Montfort?

All the themes of Montfortian spirituality were expressed by the various participants. A summary was drawn up and displayed at the international meeting. (cf spirituality slideshow).

5 - In what way do our predecessors (Montfort, Marie-Louise - Gabriel Deshayes and ...) inspire me for this world that is so different from theirs?

- They all lived in trust in Providence - people of charity, faith and hope.
- The mission of the human being is his own sanctification and that of the whole world; For this reason, we must go to meet true Wisdom, who will help us to contradict the attitudes of the world, as she helped Montfort in his context.

- They teach us to entrust ourselves to Mary to live and proclaim the Love of Jesus Wisdom. To humanise the world, we must become human beings, ardent Christians like them, capable of feeling the pain of the world and caring for it as the Spirit leads us.
- They are models, guides and examples for fulfilling our mission.
- Their principles of faith, love and service, embodied by Louis-Marie de Montfort, Marie-Louise de Jésus and Gabriel Deshayes, are still relevant today. Their devotion to Mother Mary and their dedication to the poor and missionary life inspire and guide us in the challenges of our modern world.
- Their teachings and their lives were exemplary and it is very relevant, even in today's situation, to help and reach out to the peripheries and the needy of our society.
- The examples and teachings of our founders are needed more than ever. The spirit that animated the three founders: their trust in God's loving care, their initiative, their daring, their risk-taking, their commitment to sharing the human condition, their concern for the individual and the needs of the times, their humility, their charity and kindness, their enterprising spirit, their boundless trust in God are attitudes that, even if they are not driven by a faith as firm as their own, are necessary to create a better, fairer and more fraternal world for all.
- True happiness is not having so many things or living an easy life; happiness is giving, happiness is feeling truly brothers in Christ.
- We are all called to holiness through the path that God leads us along, with the help of Mary and the saints who are close to us. Walking with St Louis-Marie is a call to abandon ourselves, like him, to Divine Providence through the hands of Mary, to be docile to the Holy Spirit and to allow ourselves to be guided along the path he shows us through the writings he left us.

6 - What path can I envisage to move forward where I am and where I live?

- The path of Inclusion, Hospitality, Compassion, Love of the poor... values of wisdom
- Constancy in the exercises of piety, witness to the Faith, commitment to the service of the most vulnerable...
- Living in communion with God, sharing with others, showing fraternity, solidarity, living with the poorest, the excluded, the rejected of humanity, like our founders.
- To live my mission with the little ones, the poor, I draw my energy from reflection and prayer, and I try to examine the sapiential meaning of the human pilgrimage. Fraternal discussion helps me in difficult moments.
- Educating young children and young people. They live under all sorts of aggressions from society: poverty, ignorance, violence, manipulation, etc.
- I continue to deepen my consecration to Mother Mary and I intend to share her teachings and spirituality with others, spreading the message of love and devotion to God.
- I plan to move forward on my path by dedicating my life once again to serving the poor and needy by giving them an education that helps them out of their poverty through various projects.
- Working on my own interiority to leave as much space as possible for God; going out to meet others, especially those who need me; fighting for the common good with a radical hope in God and also in mankind.
- It's a question of making myself docile to the Holy Spirit in order to live in the Divine Will. For this, a life of prayer and the sacraments are indispensable. The Eucharist every day or as often as possible, as well as prayer to be united with God and make myself available to what

He inspires me to do. Then witnessing when I have the opportunity in my daily life, talking often about God and Mary to those around me, praying the rosary to meditate on the mysteries and remain united to Mary. To evangelise through catechesis by encouraging an intimate relationship with the Lord through prayer, and to help those who would like to pray but don't know how.

- To move forward, I need to: Seek to balance my life by linking the experience of Martha and Mary. Use material goods with discernment, create an atmosphere of peace where I live, cultivate humility and forgiveness in relationships. To get involved in charitable actions or social works that correspond to Montfortian values.

7 - What convictions could I share for today's mission, wherever I'm called?

The message of universal love. We need to look at what unites us rather than what divides us, and so seek unity.

Work in networks, associations, partnerships, etc. Let ourselves be challenged by the ecclesial synodal spirit.

The constant search for true Wisdom, with the spiritual nourishment of the Gospel and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; "by loving, living and proclaiming Wisdom" on an ongoing basis.

I bring my poverty to the mission, I need to draw strength from the daily encounter with Jesus, with his Word and with his holy Mother, every day I need to become aware of my baptism by renewing my consecration and then go with confidence to those to whom I am sent.

Embracing a life of self-giving and total abandonment to God, as Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort did, can transform our lives and the world around us. By imitating his humility and Marian devotion, we can become instruments of God's love and mercy, bringing hope and healing to a world in need.

- a) Total consecration to Mary
- b) Love and compassion
- c) Model of servant leadership
- d) Deep prayer life
- e) Joyful evangelisation
- f) Solidarity and collaboration
- g) Care for creation
- h) Preferential option for the poor.

The conviction that the way we live and the way we are should challenge others with hope.

Everything through Mary, with Mary, in Mary and for Mary

I would like my mission to be this: to know how to listen, to be present, to give flavour and brightness to my family, my parish and my neighbourhood.

The mission is possible wherever we are, even if we are isolated with few members of the Montfortian family nearby. It's important to stay in touch by phone or email and to meet at least once or twice a year to share what we're experiencing, to support each other and to persevere in the mission. That's what I'm doing at the moment with some members of the Montfortian Marial Fraternity. It also seems important to me to read the works of Father de Montfort regularly and to live, or at least try to live, his spirituality.

PREPARATORY PRAYER

**International Conference
of Montfortian Lay Associates**



God our Father,
you who created us and who love us.
Through our Baptism,
you made us Brothers and Sisters
in Jesus Christ
despite our different backgrounds.

Your Holy Spirit
has opened our hearts to the Gospel
through the example and the words
of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort.
Thanks to him, we have discovered
the true face of Jesus Christ,
Wisdom Incarnated through the “Yes” of Mary...

We are grateful to you
for the richness of our experiences and our commitment
to the Montfortian congregations and we thank you
for granting us -members of the Montfortian Family-
the grace to participate
in spreading the Good News of the Gospel.

As we look forward to gathering together
to deepen our Founders’ message
and strengthen our Missionary Spirit,
Prepare our hearts, O Lord,
to welcome one another and to listen to your Spirit.
As Missionary Disciples,
we will go forward together,
following in your footsteps,
with Mary your humble servant.

Amen !



INAUGURAL MESSAGE - SR. RANI KURIAN

Missionary disciples in the Montfortian family

Good morning to you all,

Today is a very special day in history of the Montfortian family. The vision of Montfort is being realized in the world as the missionary disciples and members of the Montfortian family gather around the tomb of Father de Montfort to mark his 350th birth anniversary. First of all, on behalf of Father Yoseph Putra Dwi Darma WATUN, Superior General of the Company of Mary, and Bro. John Kallarackal, Superior General of The Brothers of St Gabriel, I welcome each and every one of you to this meeting of associates and collaborators of the Montfortian congregations.

You are at the Mother House of the Montfortian family and during these days you will take time to pray and deepen your call to be a missionary disciple in the Montfortian family. Montfort lived for God alone and wanted to make God's love known to humanity. Confronted with many challenges and difficulties, he grew into a deeper union with God and allowed himself to be guided by the Spirit with trust in Providence and total self-surrender. At the time of his death in St Laurent in 1716, he had already sown the seed of the Congregation and initiated Marie-Louise and her disciples to work and walk together in the Church. In 1720, in creative fidelity to the Spirit of Father de Montfort, Marie-Louise arrived at St Laurent and helped to give birth to the Montfortian family. From the beginning of the life of the Montfortian family, it was also lay persons who guide, support and helped Marie-Louise to see the will of God in the continuation of the work left by Montfort. The presence of the tomb of the Marquis de Magnanne alongside those of Montfort and Marie-Louise is a witness to the call of this journey together in the Church. It was the same zeal and creative fidelity that animated Fr Gabriel Deshayes and contributed to the spread of this dynamic of "walking together" in order to respond to the call to help make the Kingdom of God happen.

As a Montfortian family, with all of you, we embrace the invitation of Pope Francis to move forward in Synodality. By walking together, we will make Wisdom known under the guidance and protection of Mary, our Mother. I wish each and every one of you a very fruitful experience, and may it be the new beginning of a long experience of journeying together as disciples in the Montfortian family.

Have a blessed celebration.

Sister Rani Kurian
Superior General of the Daughters of Wisdom



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE MONTFORT MISSIONARIES

TO THE PARTICIPANTS

OF THE INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF MONTFORTIAN ASSOCIATES (IGMA)

SAINT LAURENT-SUR-SÈVRE, AUGUST 6-13, 2023

Malang, Indonesia, August 6, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters participating in the gathering of the Montfortian Family,

Greetings of peace and love of Christ from Indonesia.

Happy Feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is no coincidence that you begin your Montfortian family gathering at this precise moment. It is indeed a moment of grace. As Saint Peter said in the story of the Transfiguration: «Lord, it is good that we are here...». I believe that the same feelings that I may have felt come through in your meeting. This Montfortian family gathering reminds me of the prayer of our Founder, Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, in his Prayer for Missionaries n° 18, who says: «Lord, congrega nos de nationibus, gather us in from every nation. Bring us together and unite us and may all the glory be given to your holy and mighty name!». How beautiful it is that this Montfortian gathering echoes the desire of our Founder, expressed in his prayer. Before the tomb of our Founder and of Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus, we can express what Saint Peter expressed: «Lord, it is good that we are here...».

It is indeed wonderful to see people from different parts of the world, inspired by the same Montfortian spirit and charism, coming together as one family. In our world marked by war, division, sectarianism, socio-cultural discrimination, our Montfortian gathering becomes a sign of hope that could bring the spirit of renewal in our world today. It corresponds to the objective of our Founder in the accomplishment of the mission, namely to renew the spirit of Christianity. For me, renewing the spirit of Christianity is nothing other than renewing the spirit of humanity.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the three Congregations, to the lay associates of the three Congregations, to the lay collaborators, to all of you who are committed and who have worked very hard to make this international Montfortian gathering possible.

Although I am not with you physically, I am with you psychically and spiritually. I pray for you and for the success of the gathering. I wish you all a meaningful and fruitful meeting and sharing. May the luminous face of Jesus, Wisdom Incarnate, illuminate our hearts and our souls so that we experience the renewal of our Christian spirit. May our Mother, Mary, accompany us with her maternal care and love to form us to become more and more like her Son, Jesus our Lord.

Good fraternal meeting and good sharing.

Per Mariam ad Jesus !

Fraternally,

Yoseph Putra Dwi Darma Watun, SMM

Superior General



FRATELLI DI SAN GABRIELE

Casa Generalizia

Via Trionfale, 12840

00135 Roma

ITALIA

Tél : (39) 06 30 35 901 Fax : (39) 06 30 35 90 208

E-mail : sggen@fsgroma.org

6th August, 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF ST. GABRIEL

To all the Participants of the International Meeting of Associates and Collaborators of the Montfortian Family at Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, France.

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Montfortian Family,

It's a joy for me to greet you all from Rome, as you begin your week-long International Meeting of the Associates and Collaborators of the Montfortian Congregations. As Henry Ford has beautifully put it, *"Coming together is the beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success"*. In the first place, we all have every reason to thank God for bringing the representatives of the Associates and Collaborators of the Montfortian Congregations as one united international family, with the common desire to follow the charism and spirituality of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. The fact that St. Montfort continues to inspire and influence thousands of people the world over, is ample proof that what the saint preached and practiced over three centuries ago, is relevant even today. Montfort's motto of *"God Alone"*, his tender devotion to the Virgin Mary expressed in frequent recitation of the Holy Rosary, his love of the cross, his preferential love for the poor, are all simple means he used to live the values of the Gospel in concrete fashion. These are values that can easily be practiced and propagated by each one of us in our milieu.

It is only common knowledge that from the beginning of Religious Life, men and women have associated with Religious Institutes. Lay Associates as a movement has developed organically in response to the desire of Religious Institutes to share their mission and spirituality with the laity, in response to the call of Vatican II. The whole Montfortian Family, has given a new impetus to this call of Vatican II, inspired by the powerful words of Pope John Paul II, addressed to the Montfortian Family in 1997: *"The Montfortian Spirituality and charism are treasures of the Church. It is our responsibility with the whole Montfortian Family and others to promote them"*.

Today, in the context of the Synod on Synodality initiated by Pope Francis, there is a need to re-read, revisit and rediscover the charism and spirituality of St. Montfort, through sharing and dialogue. For us the Montfortians, revisiting our charism implies living with the same enthusiasm, creativity and inventiveness as Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, Blessed Marie Louise Trichet, Father Gabriel Deshayes and all our pioneers; being faithful not only to the tradition handed down, but also to traditions translated and adapted to the needs and challenges of the 21st century. I hope and pray that the different programs like the input sessions, the testimonies from different groups and the pilgrimages, will all help us achieve these objectives, through the synodal model of 'participation', 'communion' and 'mission', for the renewal of the Church.

With my congratulations to the organizers, and wishing the International Meeting all success,

Fraternally yours,

Br. John Kallarackal, FSG
Superior General

Monday, August 7, 2023

SYNODALITY IN THE MONTFORTIAN FAMILY

(by Brother Jean-Claude Lavigne, O.P. on 7 August 2023)

The word Synod comes from 2 Greek words *syn* (together) and *oidos* a path, a path to be taken together. Therefore, to reflect on synodality in the Montfortian Spiritual Family means reviewing the journey made together, and considering the easiest and free-flowing traffic route (if we want to use the image of a highway).

Synodality in the Montfortian family is first and foremost a questioning of the way in which you are Missionaries together. We know very well that the history of the Church has left us with a deficit in relations between men and women, priests and non-priests... today, those problems are called clericalism and/or machismo / macho culture. Synodality is, therefore, a way of imagining new ways of being together for the sake of the mission, by bringing together strengths and sensitivities/perceptions of the different members of the family. Synodality is about participation in decision-making, giving everyone a voice, discovering together new challenges of evangelisation, and taking joint action. Engaging in a Synodal path means acknowledging that charism does not private priority to a few but to all faithful.

The society that LMG de Montfort and Marie Louise Trichet knew was not a very democratic one (Louis XIV), nor was it really any more so at the time of Gabriel Deshayes, and it is not possible for us to speak in this context of synodality, but we remain struck by LMG de M's desire to involve all social groups in the missions, to create associations that lived their baptism together in an original way, to involve lay people in missionary activity... In the cultural and social context of the time, there is a desire to share the mission with others, which is developed with concrete examples in Luiz Stefani's Letter of May 2021 on lay associates. This letter also emphasises the mission to the poorest and the concern to proclaim the Good News to the humblest members of society. Fr Luiz also emphasises the team aspect of the mission. We could also highlight the councils of congregation that exist in the different branches and which are internal places of synodality, as well as your inter-branch meetings of your spiritual family.

This synodality is a feature of the whole Church and not just a questioning of the place of the laity, which the Church has already recalled in various documents (*Christifideles laici*, 1988...) but which remains largely a dead letter in the field. It is a way of mobilising all Christians in a common effort. All Christians as the people of God, as Vatican II said (*Lumen gentium*). A general mobilisation, then, to challenge ourselves and seek to become involved together in the mission. The encyclical "*Ecclesiam suam*" (August 1964) wrote: it is by conversing that believers make the Church. Synodality is therefore a great movement to converse with one another, to dialogue, to share points of view based on different experiences, to imagine a Christian way of life that is a bearer of hope for all humanity, and this is what builds the Church and gives it vitality.

During the chapter of Fathers of the Company of Mary in Rome in May this year, the emphasis was placed on the mission TOGETHER (the triette, PE 18), which colours synodality in a concrete way. But the same concern runs through the whole Montfortian family.

TOGETHER in a society that preaches individualism and makes it the key to dynamism. This is where synodality is prophetic: denunciation/annunciation/visitation to propose another way of being happy in the contemporary world where rivalry and unbridled competition reign.

TOGETHER not in a confusion between states of life that leads to the domination of the most powerful and the despotic triumph of one state over the others... hence an organisation so that this work together is productive (cf. the associations founded by Montfort) and a constant dialogue to

adjust in a complementary way with a view to the mission at a time when the Church is going through crises and the Catholic faith is in decline (29%).

TOGETHER to promote the common good and not just the majority of the general interest, with a universal dimension. The bc is the horizon of Christian life; it is the fruit of the work of the ES and of the intelligence of each individual, which is deployed both in listening to the arguments of others and in discerning what serves everyone; it aims at the good of each individual AND of everyone, and generates solutions and organisations conducive to true happiness.

There is no single model of the family, especially today, but there are a few common elements: solidarity and concern for others, and a place where people can speak out in confidence (but also within known and protective frameworks).

Solidarity: becoming strong. This is the project of sharing the spiritual treasure that is the charism (cf. CIC) with everyone, in the diversity of cultures. With the opportunity and challenge of internationality, an essential element in the face of identity-based divisions. Standing together to face adversity in all its forms:

- by showing concern for the happiness of others, for the development of their dignity, by rejecting indifference in the face of the suffering of others, by including their unique journey in our own human adventure and in our choices, including our daily choices and our prayers, our confessions of faith.

- A place where words can be risked in the confidence that they will be understood (or at least with an apriori benevolence). A place where we can say what lives inside us, makes us dream, helps us to hold on... not really fully implemented, alas! A place where fear is reduced (never totally absent) which allows us to see others better as they are with their potential.

So synodality is more than a forum for discussion or even a search for a common strategy or action; it is a genuine spiritual process that places the encounter with others at the centre of its life. It puts them at the centre, but does not make them our own, does not idealise them or try to mould them to our own image, but accepts differences because we believe that they are enriching beyond the difficulties, rejections and disagreements that must not be dismissed in an angelic way.

The other person who always escapes (mystery of being) what I would like him to be or think (like me), who fights in secret against all the forms of "non-being" that invade him, who has his own freedom to flee from me or to love me, who doesn't always know who he is and what he really wants... and he, facing me, who has the same complexity. It is in this strange alchemy that the Christian, and all the more so the Montfortian missionary, is called to situate himself, where he wants to situate himself, having glimpsed that this was the call addressed to him by Jesus and the search for his own happiness. To be a missionary, and therefore a Montfortian, is to respond to a conviction - we could call it a vocation - that the encounter with Christ and the encounter with others are inseparable (1 John 4 and/or Mark 12:28f).

Synodality is therefore a proposal that goes far beyond an institutional reorganisation - which is certainly necessary but not sufficient if there is no spiritual dimension leading towards the other - and that aims to put the encounter back at the heart of the life of faith: the encounter with the other and the encounter with God, a single movement but two distinct and interconnected spaces. Synodality is not just a societal technique for meeting or debating to improve life together in the Church or in a spiritual family, but also a moment that opens up through prayer for one another, through praise for what is beautiful in the relationships that are formed, through requests to God through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and through shared contemplative silence. Contemplative silence to receive and perceive the word of God in today's world.

Exploring all these dimensions of synodality gives rise to multiple questions and very diverse fields of transformation of our lives, but very often the emphasis has remained centred on questions of ecclesial organisation and this is disappointing. Few believers have really got involved in Western

Europe, anticipating the ineffectiveness of this global process, which is too vast to produce anything new. Perhaps we could go further in our spiritual families, for whom sharing and trust are already, to some extent, habits to be developed...

Father Jean Claude LAVIGNE

TESTIMONIES

MONTFORTIAN GABRIELITE ASSOCIATES

Trichy Province - Representing INDIA

*Remembering the past with gratitude;
Living the present with enthusiasm and
Looking forward to the future with confidence.*

In India, there are eight Provinces having approximately 600 Brothers and 180 Institutions. Here, we are going to witness the presentation of foundation and activities of Montfortian Gabrielite Associates (MGA) of Trichy Province, representing INDIA.

The 29th General Chapter appreciated the dedicated services of lay associates and their wonderful collaboration, coordination and cooperation with Brothers in the Institutions run by Montfort Brothers of St.Gabriel. This encouragement and motivation paved a way to reflect upon the concept of lay associates movement and to work out procedures for implementing it in the Province. This initiative was further strengthened and boosted by the orientation of the 30th General Chapter.

Under the inspiring guidance and encouragement of Rev.Bro.S.Dhanaraj (the then Provincial) and by the great motivation and orientation of Resource persons Rev.Bro.A.Paulraj and Rev.Bro.M.Irundayam, preparatory procedures and pioneering work of Montfort Associates Movement (MAM) were started.

In 2005, MAM training camps were organized in 13 different places in the Province to effectively prepare the associates to become members of MAM. In 21.09.2005, an orientation meeting for Montfort Associates was conducted at Campion School, Trichy. His Eminence Cardinal Most Rev. Ivan Dias participated in that meeting, and encouraged everyone to be an inspiring Associate.

The inaugural function of Montfort Associates Movement (MAM) was held on 28.04.2006 (On the feast day of St.Montfort) at Campion School, Trichy. Late Bishop of Trichy Diocese, His Grace Most Rev. Antony Devotta inaugurated MAM and blessed all the Associates. Rev.Bro.M.Irundayam was the first Convener of MAM who had contributed his dedicated services for its development and growth right from its foundation.

From the Generalate of Montfort Brothers of St.Gabriel, Rome, Rev.Bro.Rene Delorme (the then Superior General) and Rev.Bro.John Kallarackal (the then Assistant General) participated in the MAM meeting held on 06.11.2006 at Campion School, Trichy, encouraged and appreciated all the Montfortian Associates of Trichy Province for their active participation in MAM.

Rev.Bro.Rene Delorme released the MAM flag of Trichy Province and Rev.Bro.John Kallarackal released the book on aim, purpose and statutes of MAM of Trichy Province.

We extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the following conveners of MAM from its inception till date for their dedicated services namely Rev. Bro. Irundayam, Rev.Bro.Thomas Selvam, Rev. Bro. James Paulraj and Rev. Bro. John Xavier.

Change of name MAM into MGA:

Later the term 'MAM' was changed into 'MGA' (Montfortian Gabrielite Associates). From then on, this movement of Associates has been known and called as 'Montfortian Gabrielite Associates'. It has

been proposed that only Catholic staff members of Montfortian Institutions could be enrolled as Associates in MGA movement.

Structure of MGA:

a) Province Level:

1. The President
2. The Convener
3. The Secretary
4. Members
5. Resource person.

b) Local Division Level:

1. The Coordinator
2. The Spiritual guide (Brother)
3. Members

Responsibilities

1. Meeting of MGA members twice a year to plan out various activities and programmes.
2. Carrying out Annual activities for members.
3. Organizing Inter Montfort Schools gatherings of Associates.
4. Publishing of MGA magazine thrice a year.

Suggested Activities:

1. Enabling students to improve their knowledge and wisdom.
2. Promoting and strengthening values and skills for life.
3. Inculcating the spiritual values and humanitarian values.
4. Training the mind to grow in wisdom and positive thinking.
5. Seeing the presence of God in human beings and in all the creations of God.
6. Becoming more compassionate towards People and Nature.

Activities of MGA in Institution level / Parish level:

1. Organizing art and quiz competitions on St.Montfort.
2. Conducting prayers for Christian students, once a week.
3. Celebrating Montfortian week in the month of January, as a preparation to celebrate St.Montfort's Birthday (31st January).
4. Organizing Retreat and Pilgrimage for MGA members.
5. Celebrating Eucharist on every first Friday of month for Catholics.
6. Celebrating Christmas at Homes for the Aged.
7. Teaching the Catholic students, the devotional practices of St.Montfort.
8. Distributing copies of the Bible to Catholic students, at free of cost.
9. Encouraging the Catholic staff, to take active part in their Parish activities.
10. Sharing of reflections among Associates on St.Montfort, his charism and spirituality.
11. Starting of MGA for Catholic students.
12. Celebrating the Birthday and the Feast day of St.Montfort at Institutional level as well as at Parish level.
13. Visiting family of every Associate and praying together.
14. Collaborating with Vincent-de-Paul society at Parish level to distribute required materials and new dresses to the poor and the needy during Christmas celebration, every year.

MGA Magazine:

MGA Magazine is being published thrice a year. In this magazine the activities of MGA, reflections, lyrics and drawings on St.Montfort and his writings are being presented by the members of MGA movement.

MGA Projects:

- ❖ An inspiring pictorial story book was written in Tamil, on the life history of St.Montfort in a simpler manner for the benefit of the students.
- ❖ Devotional songs based on St.Montfort's writings were composed in Tamil and brought out in the form of AUDIO CD titled as 'Migavum Irakkamulla Thaaye' which means 'Oh Most Merciful Mother'.
- ❖ During Corona period online meetings, prayer services & orientation talks were organized for the Associates to meditate, to pray and to be united together.

Future Goals:

- ❖ Taking efforts in establishing gender equality and justice.
- ❖ Enabling drop-out students to continue their studies.
- ❖ Making Institutions green.
- ❖ Providing agricultural experiences for students by taking them to farms run by the Province.
- ❖ Creating a website on Province MGA.
- ❖ Bringing awareness on deterioration of culture.
- ❖ Making use of science and technological advanced tools, instruments and gadgets for constructive needs, requirement and growth.
- ❖ Strengthening of relationship between family members of Associates through Biblical quotes.
- ❖ Standing for God Alone, like St. Montfort in any circumstance and situation.

GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS FROM TRICHY PROVINCE
MGA COMMISSION MEMBERS

Bro.I.John Xavier, Bro.M.James William,
Bro.C.Panneerselvam, Mr.L.Arokia Doss, Mr.A.Bosco &
Mr.M.Asin Thangaraj.

THANK YOU.

TESTIMONY OF MISS LUZ MARIA FUERTES, FRIEND OF WISDOM –

Peru - Delegation Maria Luisa (Argentina - Ecuador - Peru)

My name is Luz Maria Fuertes Pinto, I live in Lima and I am happy to share with you my life experience as a Friend of Wisdom living the charism of the "Daughters of Wisdom" today in Peru.

My mother had a great devotion to the Virgin Mary and, as a teenager, I participated in the Legion of Mary group, in which I first heard the name of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort.

Eight years ago, when I started working at the "Nuestra Señora de la Sabiduría" school in Ñaña - Lima, I really got to know Saint Louis Marie de Montfort and Blessed Marie Louise of Jesus, through the nuns who, with their testimony of life, awakened in me the interest of knowing him. I was fascinated by their missionary work on behalf of all and their concern above all for the poor. In addition, being

able to trace the writings of Saint Louis Marie through his inspiring books, such as *The Secret of Mary*, *The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* and *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*, has allowed me to strengthen my spirituality.

I currently participate in the "Maria Luisa" Delegation, which brings together 9 groups of Friends of Wisdom in the three countries of the Delegation (Argentina 1, Ecuador 3 and Peru 5). This year we are carrying out activities to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the birth of Father Montfort with meetings in the presence of groups in each country, in addition to online training at the level of the Delegation group, the prayer of the rosary, pilgrimages, retreats, solidarity missions; thus we share the spirituality and the charism of the "Daughters of Wisdom", who show us affection and hospitality. They accompany us and offer us a space in the mission, to strengthen us as a group, to live and transmit spirituality in our families and in society;

We work as a team with sr. Silvia Parra, responsible for the Council of Delegation and the Sisters who animate the different countries. Let us keep in mind the motto of the mission: "Together we love, live and proclaim Wisdom".

In particular, during this first semester, all the groups reflected on the spirituality and identity of the Friends of Wisdom: where is Wisdom in today's world ?

We find ourselves in changing, complex, difficult and demanding times and, in the face of this, I am aware that our task is to decide what to do and how to react. Taking on this task becomes a personal project, which is part of my life. In doing so, I write my personal story. I am a person who seeks an encounter with God and feels the ardent desire to seek Wisdom, to discover who I am and why I was created.

Knowing the writings and experiences of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort and Blessed Marie Louise of Jesus pushes me to share their missionary ideals and to adopt a missionary lifestyle.

This pushes me to service and solidarity with others, especially with the most needy. Likewise, spirituality leads me to take care of creation and to respect it, collaborating in sustainable development.

Thus, in my family, my work and my community life, living the love of Jesus Wisdom is my great challenge; in fact, in the concrete circumstances of my life as a teacher at the "Nuestra Señora de la Sabiduría" of Ñaña - Lima, I wonder: what would Jesus Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom do if he were in my place? , when I ask myself this question, I am able to know what I should do and what I should not do.

Therefore, my commitment as a friend of Wisdom is to join the mission of evangelization of the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom. In my case, it is addressed to the entire educational community of the Scuola Nostra Signora della Sapienza. This mission occupies an important place in my work with girls and adolescents, both in the educational field and in solidarity actions in all their forms. With other teachers, I try to create healthy and safe places or environments, because only when people feel safe and respected can they effectively communicate the message that God loves them and invite them to open their hearts and to live the Wisdom of the Gospel, which today in Peru means being generous and charitable with everyone.

As a friend of Wisdom, I try to make known the Gospel of mercy, love and justice, making possible the Kingdom of God, in the manner of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort and Blessed Marie Louise of Jesus.

Saint Louis Marie de Montfort tells us: "God has his Wisdom, and it is the only true Wisdom to be loved and sought after as a great treasure. But the perverse world also has its own, and this is to be condemned and hated as evil and pernicious" (ASE 74).

As a friend of Wisdom in Peru, I want to collaborate with everyone in the search, contemplation and revelation of the true Wisdom that leads us to happiness; because we are all children of this century; therefore, what we do or don't do affects others. I try to welcome the times in which we live and to act in them to improve them, to transform them from the spirituality of Wisdom.

Saint Louis Marie de Montfort always encourages us by his testimony of life to show confidence, optimism and hope, even in the hardest and most difficult moments of the mission.

I cannot conclude without thanking the Daughters of Wisdom for having accompanied and encouraged us to spread the spirituality of Wisdom with unlimited trust in Our Lord and his Mother.

Thursday August, 8, 2023

PRESENTATION OF ST LAZARE

1) Why is this place called St Lazare?

In the Middle Ages, a terrible disease spread in Brittany: leprosy, brought by the Crusaders returning from the Holy Land. Saint Lazare was a leper colony. Lepers were treated there by the CHEVALIERS-HOSPITALIERS DE ST LAZARE, hence the name given to this place.

St Lazare depended on the parish of Coulon, very close to here. The church no longer exists.

2) Leprosy will disappear. This place is secularized and becomes a priory which will serve as a stopover for pilgrims on their way to the abbey of St Méen located about 18 km from Montfort. It is managed by successive priors, religious or lay.

From 1563 to 1756, there were 15. The one who was present during the presence of St Louis-Marie, the 13th prior was named Jacques Bertrand.

3) THE CHAPEL is very old as evidenced by the tombstone of a benefactress, Estaice la Testue, daughter of an adviser to the Parliament of Brittany represented here dressed in a coat of mail and a coat, her hands crossed on his chest.

The chapel was dedicated to Saint Roch, patron saint of lepers.

The chapel will be rebuilt just like the priory in 1622.

4) 1707 - COMING OF FATHER DE MONTFORT to St LAZARE

Dismissed by Don Leduger in Moncontour, St Louis-Marie took refuge in St Lazare accompanied by Brother Mathurin Rangeard. They are joined on the way by Jean.

A native of Montfort, living by his clerical title, Father de Montfort had full latitude to found his first Montfortian community. It is also his first experience of community life.

When Father de Montfort arrived in 1707, it had been 18 years since there had been a resident chaplain.

He cleans the chapel to make it more suitable for divine worship. He celebrates Mass. He brings together his favorite devotions inside:

. a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit,

. Below, the Name of Jesus.

. He installed the statue of Our Lady of Wisdom there, which is now at the birthplace.

This statue passed through the Montfort hospital when the Sisters of Wisdom came to work there in 1773, at the request of the rector of the parish of Coulon. One of them came to pick up the statue at St Lazare.

. We also see in the chapel a big big Rosary whose grains are the size of a walnut.

When the chapel is too small to contain the crowds, St Louis-Marie gathers the faithful in the meadow located near the large oak tree under which he was preaching.

During his stay in his native region, Father de Montfort evangelized the parishes of Bréteil, Talensac, Landujan, Médréac, Bréal, Romillé, without forgetting of course Montfort-la-Cane.

In the fall of 1708, the bishop of St Malo expelled Father de Montfort, who was banned from any ministry in the diocese. The humble and docile Father de Montfort will then soon leave St Lazare, with a heavy heart. He will not return to his native region. He only has 8 years left to live.

Before taking the road to Nantes, he entrusted the chapel to a pious Christian aged around 40, Guillemette Rouxel, originally from Talensac. For 20 years, she will faithfully watch over the chapel, living on alms. She was buried nearby, in the cemetery of Coulon, of which only a few vestiges remain.

In the outer courtyard, you can see a statue of Father de Montfort. This statue has a particularity. We see in one of his hands the book of Songs.

The last window on the left of what is called the house of the Saint is that of the room he occupied.

5) In 1757, a hospital was set up in place of the priory. It will be held by the Sisters of Providence of Saumur. (Jeanne Delanoue whom Fr. de Montfort will have put to the test before consolidating her in her charge as foundress). The sick come here for treatment. The sisters also go home. They will stay there for about 40 years.

6) in 1790, the house was sold as national property. The sisters leave. The hospital is attached to that of Montfort.

7) in 1900 3 sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived from St Méen at the request of the priests of the Immaculate Conception who had acquired St Lazare to train brothers there.

8) in 1906, dissolution of the congregation of the Priests of the Immaculate with the laws of 1901. The sisters took over.

9) in 1907, they opened a school. They accommodate 51 residents.

10) then, it is the 14-18 war. Wounded soldiers are housed. At the same time, boarding students will also be present.

11) in 1925, the boarding school was transformed into a juniorate which received young people destined for religious life. It will close its doors in 1968. The sisters will however remain present at St Lazare until 2017.

12) 1969 – Opening of a Medical-Educational Institute.

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

SAINT LOUIS DE MONTFORT AND BAPTISM: OUR BAPTISMAL VOCATION AND OUR MISSIONARY COMMITMENT

I. Montfort and Baptism:

Since I came from Rome, I suggest we begin this talk picturing ourselves as attending the speech of the young Priest Louis-Marie addressing his speech to Pope Clement XI at the Rome on 6 June 1706 at the **Quirinal Palace**. The Pope granted him the title of “Apostolic Missionary” in France and instructed him above all to teach the Christian doctrine to people and children, to help renew the spirit of Christianity through the renewal of the promises of baptism. (Grandet, Book III, Chap 1)

1). Coming back from Rome, Louis Marie had time to reflect on the instructions from Pope Clement XI, and to probably adhere to his recommendations: renew the spirit of Christianity through the renewal of the promises of the Baptism.

1. His praxis baptismal

1.1. The fruit of a personal conviction

We all know that the term “Montfort” derives from the little town of Montfort-sur-Meu, located nearby Rennes in Brittany. A little town where on 31st January 1673 was born the one who will become known as Saint-Louis Marie de Montfort.

At the heart of that little town is his “Birth Place House”, and in that house, there is a magnificent ceramic representing the scene of his baptism with the Baptism Certificate dating on 1st February 1673. The artist, Alessandro LEIDI (SMM) has highlighted the baptism of Louis-Marie because he stayed very little in his native village of Montfort.

As a young priest, in renouncing his civil identity, Louis-Marie had changed his family name 'Grignon' in 1702 to a new name 'de Montfort', now identified with the place of his baptism and a sign of the deeper identity he recognised for himself: that of a baptised man. This significant gesture of signing "de Montfort" demonstrates his awareness of the importance of his baptism, but also the surpassing of a new life that tends towards holiness.

Another gesture that confirms the importance that the meaning of baptism was now taking on in his life is that, around 1703, he restored the baptistery of Saint-Jean in Poitiers, near the cathedral. During this same period in Poitiers, his recommendations to the inhabitants of Montbernage, to whom he had entrusted the mission in 1705 (on the outskirts of Poitiers), show that baptism was already occupying an important place in his preaching: "[...] so do not fail to faithfully fulfill and practice your baptismal promises [...]" (LM, 2).

Upon his return from Rome in 1707, Montfort joined the team of Jean LEUDUGER, director of the diocesan missions of Saint-Brieuc in Brittany. Over the course of a dozen missions, Louis-Marie learned the methods and collaborated in the program of this great missionary. We know that during these missions, a ceremony was held to renew the baptismal promises, which everyone was invited to sign. Montfort was certainly enriched by this experience. He dreamt of a missionary adventure where he could be fully himself, according to his apostolic aspirations and the directives he had received from Clement XI.

1.2 His method: parish missions ending with the renewal of baptisms

Montfort's Book of Sermons, in which the order of preaching for a mission is marked by several series of sermon outlines, shows that, during his missions, Saturday was usually devoted to teaching about the Blessed Virgin and to renewing the promises of holy baptism.

The book also contains a preaching outline entitled Matter for Preaching a Mission or Retreat from the Baptismal Vows. There are 24 topics that develop the formula "I renounce the devil, and I unite myself to you, my Jesus". For Montfort, baptism and renewal are no longer just an integral part of the mission, they become its guiding idea and objective, what gives it meaning and around which the program is structured, because they give meaning to the whole of Christian existence itself.

1.3. A public renewal ... by the hands of Mary

The high point of the mission was the ceremony of renewal of the baptismal promises, which preceded the planting of the crosses and the final procession. Our missionary wanted to give it a festive character and an exceptional scale, to strike a chord in people's minds and engrave the memory in their hearts. A truly liturgical and popular celebration. The renovation took place in four stages (cf. Grandet, pp. 101 and 395):

I) At the end of a grand procession, all pass before the deacon who holds the Gospel open; each kneels and venerates the Book saying: "I firmly believe all the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ".

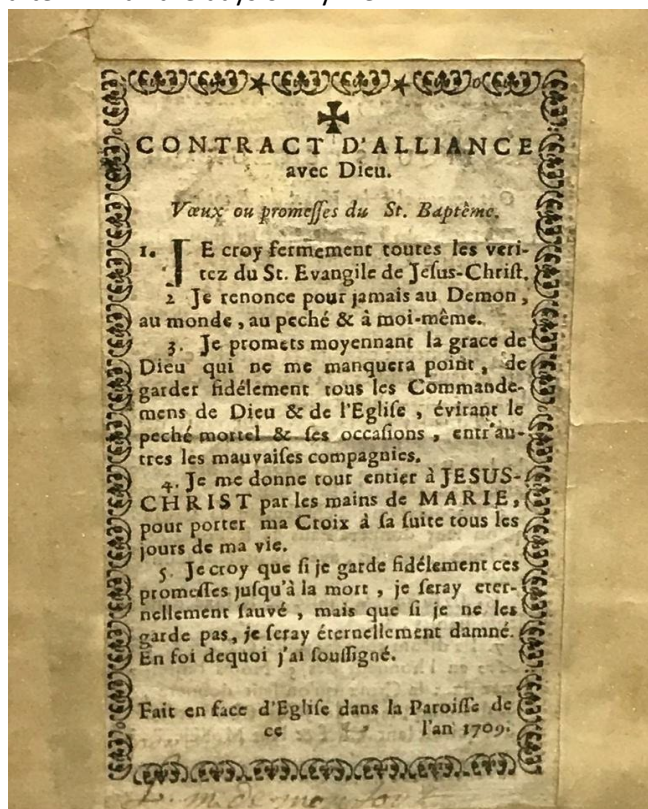
II) Entering the church, they pass the font where a priest receives them; kissing the font, each renews the vows with the formula: "I renew with all my heart the vows of my baptism and renounce forever the devil, the world and myself".

III) From there they go to an altar where Father de Montfort is standing, holding in his hands his little statue of the Blessed Virgin; each one venerates it, saying: "I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, to carry my cross after him all the days of my life".

III) From there they went to an altar where Father de Montfort was standing, holding in his hands his little statue of the Blessed Virgin; each one venerated it, saying: "I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, to carry my cross following him all the days of my life".

IV) Then everyone went back to the baptistery to sing "the great creed"; after which Montfort spoke again, commenting on the "practical commitments" to be observed by those who had taken the step of renewal, according to the "Covenant Contract". This "Contract" bore the signature "L.M. de Montfort", to which was to be added that of the faithful themselves (cf. The Covenant Contract of Pontchâteau, 4 May 1709).

The renewal of the promises of Holy Baptism by the hands of Mary - the high point of Montfort's missions - thus expressed the solemn commitment, sealed in the CONTRACT OF ALLIANCE, to live as true Christians.



2. His teaching on Baptism

Through these writings, our missionary reveals at least 4 characteristic aspects of his teaching on Holy Baptism.

2.1. Baptism and Christo centrism

What emerges from the outset of these texts and their context is Montfort's Christo Centrism. The act of consecration, which is but a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism (VD 120.126), is addressed first of all to Jesus, eternal and incarnate Wisdom (ASE 223) and must lead to being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ (VD 120): "I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ". According to the spirit of the French School of Spirituality, the baptismal life is essentially the life of Jesus in us. Jesus is not just the teacher we listen to, but rather the very life of our life. This is the full application of Saint Paul's phrase in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me", and this identification is achieved through the formation of Jesus in us (cf. Galatians 4:19) thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit and the collaboration of the Virgin Mary.

Unfaithfulness to one's baptismal promises is first of all unfaithfulness to Jesus Christ: "Alas, ungrateful and unfaithful as I am, I have not kept the vows and promises I so solemnly made to you in my baptism" (ASE 223).

2.2. Baptism and consecration

What seems most characteristic of Montfort's teaching on baptism (and the renewal of baptismal commitments) is his insistence on speaking of it as a "consecration to Jesus Christ": baptism "consecrates us to Jesus Christ" (VD 129). In biblical terminology, "consecrated" means set apart and reserved (person or thing) for the worship of God and his service (= the service of his work in the world). In the Christian economy of salvation, consecration to God is only possible in union with Jesus Christ and within one's own consecration.

In fact, the highest act of consecration ever made among men to the glory of God is that accomplished by Jesus Christ from the moment he entered this world (He 10:5-10). This consecration in union with Jesus Christ and his consecration to the Father is achieved sacramentally and fundamentally through baptism: by becoming a member of the Body of Christ through participation in his divine life, the newly baptised person is established in Jesus Christ's filial belonging to God the Father and enters into the movement of his life entirely consecrated to the Father and ordered to his service... up to the obedience of the cross. By consecrating us to Jesus Christ, baptism establishes us with Him in a relationship of belonging and dependence, for the accomplishment of God's will, in which our holiness consists.

2.3 Baptism and Slavery of Love

Montfort insists on the relationship of belonging and dependence that the sacrament establishes between Jesus and the baptised, using the term slave, which seems the most appropriate to define this relationship. From what Jesus Christ is in regard to us we must conclude, as St. Paul says, that we belong not to ourselves but entirely to him as his members and his slaves" By repeatedly drawing attention to this dependence, Montfort certainly wishes to emphasise the radical newness introduced into the being of the baptised person, but even more so the newness of the kind of life to which he has committed himself in following Christ, through obedience to his commandments.

There is a before and an after: Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as slaves, and our baptism made us the true slaves of Jesus. Christians can only be slaves of the devil or slaves of Christ, slaves who should live and work and die so that God-man may bear fruit" (Ibid). The same affirmation. The same statement is repeated several times in the writings of the missionary (cf. VD 73, 126; SM 34). In justifying the wearing of chains as a sign of this dependence (in reference to the slaves' chains), Montfort writes: These little chains are a wonderful aid in recalling the bonds of sin and the slavery of the devil from which baptism has freed him. At the same time, they remind him of the dependence on Jesus promised at baptism and ratified when by consecration he renewed these promises. (VD 238).

In using the term "slave" to express the total and devoted dependency, Louis-Marie refers to the application of the term to Christ and Mary, and to the use to which it is put by the Apostles, the Fathers of the Church, and the Councils (cf. VD 72,126-130).

But Montfort carefully explains and specifies that this form of slavery is something quite different from slavery of type or constraint and that it is neither dehumanising nor dehumanised. On the contrary, it is a state of dependence chosen out of love, in all clarity and responsibility.

It is even the summit of freedom and love, for it is in freedom that we can give ourselves entirely to the beloved, as slaves of love:

"Voluntary slavery is the most perfect of all three states, for by it we give the greatest glory to God, who looks into the heart and wants it to be given to him." True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin 70 "We must belong to Jesus and serve him not just as hired servants [...] but as willing slaves who moved by generous love, commit themselves to his service after the manner of slaves for the honour of belonging to him. [...] Our baptism made us the slaves of Jesus. Christians can only be slaves of the devil or slaves of Christ. True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin 73; cf. SM 34. C 139? 32).



2.4 Baptism and Fidelity

Father de Montfort knew from experience that all the baptized persons are unfaithful - to varying degrees, admittedly, but really - to the obligations contracted towards Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism, and therefore to the love that should inspire them. (cf. VD 127.128).

Among the causes of infidelity, the missionary's attention seems to focus on two: 1) forgetfulness and ignorance (cf. VD 127.128) in which most Christians find themselves with regard to the realities of baptism and the need to live its spirit in accordance with the promises made; 2) the difficulties inherent in our sinful nature: tendencies to evil that remain in us, weakness in the face of the demands of baptismal life, as well as in the face of the temptations of the world and the devil.

The great remedy against forgetting and ignorance can therefore only be to enlighten Christians about the meaning, the greatness, and the demands of their baptism, so that they personally renew, in all conscience and responsibility, "the promises and the vows". This is a personal, conscious, and

voluntary renewal and ratification of the "covenant contract" previously concluded with God by the godparents (cf. VD 127; 129-131).

Like Father de Montfort, our ability to value Holy Baptism will be commensurate with our own conviction of the marvellous greatness and fundamental importance of this sacrament. We benefit from a theology of baptism that has been profoundly renewed by rediscovering the riches of tradition (biblical and historical research), and by welcoming the new contributions of the human sciences (pedagogy, the role of symbolic rites in all areas of social life). It would be unforgivable not to nourish our faith and our apostolate with them. Mission and the new evangelisation can only be based on a new awareness of the Christian identity engendered in baptism.

The second cause explaining the unfaithfulness of Christians to their commitments, and which particularly caught Montfort's attention, were the very difficulties arising from their tendencies to evil - even after baptism and the renewal of baptismal vows - and their weakness in the face of the good to be done as well as the temptations to be withstood against the world and the devil. In the face of these difficulties, which Montfort describes with insistence, he recalls and brings to light the particular role willed by God to Mary in our midst, and the support we should take from her maternal help and powerful intercession. The more we entrust ourselves to this spiritual Mother with complete confidence, the easier it will be for her to help us walk in fidelity and strive for perfection. This is the whole point of the first part of the DV (cf. 117-118): Following her all the days of my life.

Holiness is our assured vocation (see SM 3) and this is the objective that Montfort proposes to those who renew their baptismal commitments. And to ensure their fidelity, despite weaknesses and difficulties, he invites them to take the incomparable means of true and perfect devotion to Mary (cf. VD 130). Indeed, "the more a soul is devoted to Mary, the more it will be devoted to Jesus Christ. This is why perfect consecration to Jesus Christ is nothing other than a perfect and complete consecration of oneself to the Blessed Virgin, which is the devotion I teach; or else a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of Holy Baptism" (VD 120).

II. Our Baptismal Vocation and Missionary Engagement

"For Montfort, being a perfect baptized equals "being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ" V120. These three verbs reveal the "Montfortian way" of unfolding our vocation as Missionary Disciples. First of all, the verb "to conform" sums up the whole process of conversion that characterises the life of the baptised; it is a question of renouncing the slavery of Satan in order to live a new life until the age of Jesus Christ. In the verb "to unite" we recognise the call to live an authentic relationship of love with Jesus, and Holy Baptism is only the foundation of this privileged relationship. Thirdly, as we have just explained, the verb "to consecrate oneself" means to be set apart to serve fully Christ's mission in the world.

We fulfil our baptismal vocation when our identity is conformed to that of Jesus Christ; but we are conformed only if, in the first place, we are united and united because we have been consecrated to Him like a branch grafted onto the vine (cf. VD 61). The branch is separated to be grafted onto the true vine or united to it, and this corresponds to the baptismal grace that opens our awareness of God's love: we are beloved children of the Father, living members of the Body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. This conscious union enables the grafted branch to live from the same humus of the vine, have the same inner sap, and have the same form by becoming one reality with the vine. Finally, the branch becomes perfect, that is, operative, and produces fruit for the vine, that is, the baptised person acts as another Christ.

OUR BAPTISMAL VOCATION

Walking towards the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ

Identification with Christ begins with baptism, but it often fails to grow or is slow to reach maturity that brings lasting and abounding fruits of "life according to the Spirit". As Montfort did not want maturity to remain the privilege of a few, he recommends a sure way of revealing that he who gives himself to Mary conforms himself to Christ, because Mary Christianises everything we offer in collaboration with the Holy Spirit. In fact, just as Mary formed the Head, so she forms the Body, each member of that Body. In this way, no one like Mary realises our full conformity to Christ her Son, who lives in Mary: by consecrating ourselves to Mary, we receive the same mind of Christ (cf. 1Cor 2:15-16), his same feelings (cf. Phil 2:5ff), his heart so that we can live and love as he does.

Mary leads the disciple to the "fullness of the age of Jesus Christ" on earth (cf. Eph 4:13), that is, to holiness. Montfort uses this expression nine times in his writings. Taking up the tradition of the French school of spirituality and the Fathers of the Church, he considered that Mary's mission was to serve the generation of Christ in us until his maturity, which is manifested in the sacrifice of love on the Cross. By proposing thirty-three days of preparation for consecration, Montfort is alluding to Christ's age on earth and thus to his maturity reached by fully accomplishing the Father's work (cf. Jn 17:4). The aim of true devotion is to bring us to this maturity by putting into practice the "evangelical counsels of holiness", which Jesus never ceases to give to those who wish to grow and perfect themselves in charity. And Montfort concludes: "Whoever then wishes to advance along the road to holiness and be sure of encountering the true Christ, without fear of the illusions which afflict many devout people, should take up with valiant heart and willing spirit this devotion to Mary which perhaps he had not previously heard about. Even if it is new to him, let him enter upon this excellent way which I am now revealing to him. "I will show you a more excellent way."

It was opened up by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom. He is our one and only Head, and we, his members, cannot go wrong in following him. It is a smooth way made easy by the fullness of grace, the unction of the Holy Spirit. In our progress along this road, we do not weaken or turn back. It is a quick way and leads us to Jesus in a short time. It is a perfect way without mud or dust or any vileness of sin. Finally, it is a reliable way, for it is direct and sure, having no turnings to right or left but leading us straight to Jesus and to life eternal.

Let us then take this road and follow it night and day until we arrive at the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ."

Montfort describes how Mary takes care of our growth as an ongoing gestation process that will lead to our maturity for heaven: "All the predestination, while in the world, are hidden in the womb of the Blessed Virgin where they are protected, nourished, cared for and developed by this good Mother, until the day she brings them forth to a life of glory after death, which the Church calls the birthday of the just. This is indeed a mystery of grace unknown to the reprobate and little known even to the predestinate!" (VD 33). Mary's action towards us is a work of transformation, to which she commits herself, in collaboration with the Holy Spirit, as if on a mission, from the moment we truly welcome her into our lives as our mother, model, and formator.

It is about a mature spirituality that brings the grace of baptism to fruition. "*For it was Mary's womb which encompassed and produced a perfect man. That same womb held the one whom the whole universe can neither encompass nor contain...*"

It's in the same womb that the youth grow and become old and wise in light, in holiness, in experience, and in wisdom, and it is in the same womb that one can reach fulness of Jesus-Christ's age" VD 156

This relationship to Mary helps to empty ourselves with our self-love or from the love of this world. If we are not emptied of the spirit of the world, we will not be able to be filled with the Spirit of Christ and therefore be conformed to him. To empty ourselves, we need first to know, in the light of the

Holy Spirit, our weaknesses, our incapacity to all good worth to the salvation, our weaknesses in whatever, our daily inconsistency, our lack of dignity of grace, and our iniquity in all place (cf. VD 79).

That knowledge of ourselves in the light of the Holy Spirit, that's mean with Gaze's gaze, is given to us by Mary. "In the light that the Holy Spirit will provide you through Mary, her dearest spouse, you will you know your inner weakness, your corrupted personality, our incapacity of all good, if God is not the main author of nature or that grace" (VD 231). The true knowledge of ourselves allows us to "die in ourselves..... > (VD 81). Mary's attitude like Rebeca's prepares our soul and our body to please God as Mary knows better than anyone what is pleasant to God.

Marie facilitates union with Jesus Christ because her intercession attracts in us Jesus Christ, Divine Wisdom, like a powerful magnet that can attract Jesus wherever he is. Let's listen to this passage that describes Mary's intercession as a sacred magnet: [...] (AES 212).

Mary helps us to consecrate ourselves to Jesus. The fourth interior practice that

To do whatever for Mary aims at doing everything for Jesus, and to glorify Him. The aim of the Montfortian consecration is to do everything for the Glory of God Alone. To lose oneself in Mary, that is, to open oneself completely and lovingly to her effective influence, to become living copies of this woman who "is all relative to God [...] the relation of God, who is only in relation to God, or the echo of God, who only repeats God" (VD 225), is therefore - writes Fr. Gaffney - to be one with the personal glory of God Jesus and through Him, in the power of the Spirit, to be one with the Father, God alone, who only wants the salvation of all through his Son, Jesus. Gaffney - to be one with the personal glory of God Jesus, and through Him, in the power of the Spirit, to be one with the Father, God alone, who desires only the salvation of all through his Son, Jesus the Christ (cf. Jn 6:40).

OUR MISSIONARY COMMITMENT

Brave and valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary

We conform ourselves to Christ in order to bear fruit, as Montfort said in VD 68: "Before baptism, we were like slaves to the devil, and baptism has made us the true slaves of Jesus Christ, who must live, work and die only to create strength for this God, to glorify him in our bodies and reign in our souls because we are his conquest, his acquired people and his inheritance. It is for this same reason that the Holy Spirit compares us: 1º to trees planted along the waters of grace, in the field of the Church, which must bear fruit in their time; 2º to the branches of a vine of which Jesus Christ is the vine, which must produce good grapes; 3º to a flock of which Jesus Christ is the shepherd, which must multiply and give milk 4º to good soil in which God is the tiller, and in which the seed multiplies and bears triple, 60th or 10th".

What is the fruit of our identification with Christ, if not to establish his Kingdom in all hearts? This is Montfort's mission for the Church: to remind Christians of the greatness and demands of their baptism, which configures them to Christ and commits them in turn to the service of his kingdom.

1. At the service of the Reign of Christ through Mary

Montfort ardently desired a squadron of men and women who, filled with the Holy Spirit, would be instruments of the coming of the Reign of Christ (cf. VD 114). They call them the apostles of the end times who live the perfect baptismal consecration to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary.

The Montfortian approach to consecration urges those who live it to build the Kingdom of Christ at all costs. Anyone who lives consecration authentically is necessarily an apostle of the Reign of Christ. As Montfort insists, devotion to the Virgin Mary, and particularly perfect consecration, is a prerequisite for these apostles. Not only does it keep them in the Reign of God, which aims at communion between God and humanity and communion between human beings, but it is the weapon that enables them to conquer Satan's empire, that is, all division. By the example of their

lives and their apostolate, they will take part in this incursion into Satan's kingdom and plant "the banner of victory of the cross of Christ the King" (cf. SD 59; EP 29): "Lord] that there may be one fold and one shepherd and that all may give glory to you in your temple" (PE 30). They must be filled with the spirit of Mary, spouse of the Holy Spirit; they must be children of Mary, and therefore apostles of her Son, who fearlessly extend his Kingdom of peace, justice, and love, especially in the hearts and among the poor, the voiceless, those rejected by society (cf. VD 47-48). Service to this Reign involves the daily acceptance of the cross by those who follow Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom.

The Reign of Jesus Christ does not refer to territory, country or domain, but - Montfort tells us - consists principally in the heart or interior of man - according to these words: "The Reign of God is within you, just as the Kingdom of the Blessed Virgin is principally in the interior of man, that is to say, his soul" (VD 38; cf. VD 113). It is not that Saint Louis-Marie does not envisage the final and ultimate transformation of the universe. He speaks of a Kingdom that includes the reformation of the Church and the renewal of the face of the earth (PE 17), and also of great things that will take place "in the world" (SM 59), "on earth" (VD 272). However, this can only happen by transforming people's hearts. It is to this interior transformation of humanity - the result of the dynamic, profound, and effective domination of the love of Jesus Christ by Mary - that Montfort devotes his whole life and his writings, so that an evident reform of the Church and a visible renewal of the face of the earth may truly take place.

Montfortian spirituality, therefore, envisages a revolution of love so that the Reign of Christ becomes effective. By overturning the values recognised in the world and replacing them with the radical demands of Jesus Christ. The strength of this mission can only be felt by people of faith who, under the powerful influence of Mary, their Mother, and Queen, freely renounce themselves and throw themselves wholeheartedly into the life of a renewed and vigorous baptismal vocation.

2. Like the Beloved Disciple

What is the concrete example of the disciple-missionary at the service of Christ's Kingdom if not the "Beloved Disciple"? With the invocation "make me such a perfect disciple of Christ Wisdom", each consecrated person asks Mary to become like the "Beloved Disciple" of Jesus, the only disciple explicitly mentioned by Montfort in his writings. In two texts (cf. VD 179; 216) Montfort takes up the phrase with which the Fourth Gospel concludes the scene of Jesus on the cross with the Mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved: "And from that hour, the disciple took her into his home" (Jn 19:27).

Twice Montfort puts the phrase directly on the lips of the Beloved Disciple, emphasising that taking Mary into one's home is a personal decision that obeys Jesus' invitation. The baptised person who lives the Montfortian consecration makes this explicit choice, thus participating in the experience of the Beloved Disciple. By asking Mary to make us the Beloved Disciple, we implore the grace, but also the courage and perseverance to make this explicit choice to welcome Mary into our life and mission. What is the lived experience of the Beloved Disciple taking the Mother into his home?

Montfort says that it is above all an experience of happiness, because the disciple is rich in Mary, who is nothing other than "the very treasure of God". Montfort expresses the happiness of the one who has given everything to Mary, since being everything to Mary, Mary is everything to him: "He can say boldly with David: *Haec facta est mihi*: Mary is made for me; or, with the Beloved Disciple: *Accepi eam in mea*. I have taken her for all my good, or, with Jesus Christ: *Omnia mea tua sunt, et omnia tua mea sunt*: All that I have is yours, and all that you have is mine" (VD 179). This is an allusion to three biblical references. The first and third do not refer to Mary, but to the Law of God and to God the Father, phrases spoken by the psalmist and by Jesus. Montfort thus associates the joy of the psalmist for the Law of God and the joy of Jesus who shares everything with his Father, with the experience of the one who gives everything to Mary, to invite us to taste the joy of the Beloved Disciple when he says: "I have taken Mary for all my possession". This Beloved Disciple is in fact every

baptised person who consecrates himself to Jesus through Mary. Happy is the disciple "all of Mary" who knows that Mary is his great treasure and that nothing will be lost in her. Indeed, everything is preserved, embellished, and valued.

Secondly, it is an experience of peace, since Mary fills the disciple with great confidence in God and in herself. Montfort says that the disciple can turn to Mary at any moment and say to her: "I have taken you, Holy Mother, for all my good". By inviting the baptized person to address Mary with these same words, Montfort underlines the great confidence that the disciple experiences as a marvellous fruit of his process of consecration (cf. VD 216). True devotion forms in us the same confidence that a child has in its mother: "She makes a soul turn to her in all its needs of body and spirit, with great simplicity, confidence and tenderness; it implores the help of her good Mother at all times, in all places and in all things: in her doubts, to be straightened out; in her temptations, to be sustained; in her weaknesses, to be strengthened; in her falls, to be lifted up; in her discouragements, to be encouraged; in her scruples, to be removed from them; in her crosses, labours and trials of life, to be consoled. Finally, in all her ailments of body and spirit, Mary is her ordinary recourse, without fear of importuning this good Mother and of displeasing Jesus Christ" (VD 107). Like the Beloved Disciple, the disciple of Christ no longer lives without Mary, who then becomes his principal and constant resource; in fact, he lives everything with her, through her, in her, and for her, in union with Jesus, the Son of Mary.

He who, like the Beloved Disciple, has truly taken Mary with him and perseveres in her, therefore experiences the joy of the hundredfold thanks to the infinite treasure he finds in Mary, and experiences at every moment the peace and confidence of always having Mary as Mother, model and fortress of his freedom. "Liberos: true children of Mary, your holy Mother, begotten and conceived by her charity, carried in her womb, attached to her breasts, nourished by her milk, brought up by her care, sustained by her arm, and enriched by her graces" (PE 11).

Conclusion

In this journey around Holy Baptism, we have discovered how Montfort proposes the process of consecration as an effective way for those who wish to live fruitfully their baptismal vocation and mission. This proposal is the fruit of the heart of a missionary and master of the spiritual life, as was Saint Louis-Marie, who, faced with the mystery of God's love communicated to us in Jesus Christ, drew up a synthesis of the best theological and spiritual tradition to offer us an easy, short, perfect and sure path (cf. VD 168) which conforms us, unites us and consecrates us to Jesus Christ for the glory of God alone and the salvation of souls.

Workshop

I note what touched me in Father Marco's talk.

I note what is new for me.

I note what I perceive as calls from the Holy Spirit for my life.

"Go and make disciples of all nations!" Mt 28:19

Montfortian Associates, Daughters of Wisdom, Montfortian Missionaries, Brothers of Saint Gabriel,
* called together to become more missionary disciples in the Montfortian Family:

1. How do the lives of our Founders, their writings, their missionary commitment call me/us to live my baptism more intensely and truly?
2. To what creative daring are they calling me/us?

Methodology:

You have 45 minutes in group:

- Appoint a moderator and a secretary.
- Take 5 minutes personally to start answering the questions.
- You then have 35 minutes for discussion.
- During the last 5 minutes, write collective answers to the last 2 questions.

Note: Sylvie (from the Facilitation Committee) will visit the groups. She will collect your answers, which will be included in the session proceedings that you will receive later.

HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT THERESE OF THE CROSS

(Translation DeepL)



My brothers and sisters, our Christian life needs nourishment. Faithfulness to Christ means taking care of our spiritual life.

Here gathered together, we have just listened to the Word of God. Through his Word, the Lord wants to lead us into the desert, to speak to our hearts, as we have just heard in the first reading. I will lead him into the desert, and I will speak to him heart to heart.

We are there, then, for a loving encounter with the bridegroom of our souls.

We are here for this encounter with the eternal and incarnate wisdom, Jesus, who wants to renew the covenant of love with us. According to the intuition of Saint Luis de Montfort, Wisdom is for man and man is for Wisdom.

The Eucharist is the event, the most important moment, when Wisdom herself gives herself to us as nourishment.

Wishing on the one hand to show her love for man to the point of dying in his place in order to save him, and unable on the other hand to bring herself to leave man, she finds an admirable secret for dying and living at the same time, and remaining with man until the end of time: it is the loving invention of the Eucharist.

Today, the liturgical calendar invites us to celebrate Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, one of the patron saints of Europe. The biblical texts proposed for this celebration truly invite us to a life of communion with God Alone, proposed to us by St. Louis de Montfort.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel

Be vigilant, for you know neither the day nor the hour...". The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is a call to realism in our lives, a call to the radical awareness that is appropriate, a call to live in truth the fact that each of our lives is summed up in its ultimate act: death. We were born for death. Yet we live as if we were never going to die.

The wisdom proposed by Montfort is that of the Wise Virgins. The wisdom of the world is that of the foolish virgins, who live according to the world.

Edith was born Jewish (on 12 October 1891 in Breslau, Prussia), and very soon abandoned her Jewish faith to devote herself to psychology and philosophy.

Mysteriously, through this search for who man is, Edith Stein opened herself up once again to the transcendent.

Her keen intelligence and knowledge of the philosophy of the time enabled her to perceive better than anyone else the terrible storm that was about to descend on Europe, starting with her own people. God is dead, man has gone mad. Anything is possible to turn man against man.

A woman praying alone in a church and a chance reading of the life of the great saint Teresa of Avila will turn the young Jewish philosopher upside down. Suddenly, in the life of this intellectual, the

absolute of God appeared. For Edith Stein, the Jewish woman, the mystery of the cross of Jesus Christ was revealed in the double face of these two women of prayer, against all the philosophic-scientific evidence of her time. She was about to join another great Jewish thinker of her time who, faced with the silence of God at Auschwitz, cried out in response to the question of where God was: He is there, he said, pointing to a young man hanged in the camp by some Nazi executioners. God is at the end of the rope of all those hanged in the history of human cruelty.

Here he is, the God-man, Jesus Christ, who took on the death of man in order to shatter its absurdity. Here he is, illuminating the life of this Jewish philosopher. Here it is, the Wisdom of the Cross.

The bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went with him into the wedding hall, and the door was shut.

Jesus portrays ten virgins who will experience much the same thing. But some will take enough oil from the start. This oil in our lives is the quality of our love for him. It is the decision to love that lies at the heart of the freedom that drives our lives.

This time calls us to be faithful to the gift we have received. Jesus describes the attitude of faithfulness in waiting that will make it possible to enter the Kingdom. It is a question of being present and available at the desired moment, which is unforeseeable. Jesus looks at each of us and asks: Will you remain faithful? "Taking sides with Christ can cost you your life," said Edith Stein.

Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, in her quest for light, was well aware that only a true search for the truth could lead to the happiness she hoped for.

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. "Since union with Christ is our happiness and progress towards that union our blessing on this earth, love of the cross in no way contradicts the joy of being a child of God. Helping to carry the cross of Christ gives pure and profound joy. Those who are given this opportunity and this strength - the builders of the kingdom of God - are the most authentic children of God," says Thérèse Bénédictte. She recognised Jesus and grasped this truth within herself, placing it in her heart. Jesus would be the expectation and the goal of her life.

Edith Stein let herself be led to her deepest heart to encounter her God, the God of her fathers in the faith of Israel and the God of Jesus Christ. She let herself be married. Sister Theresa Benedict wanted to continue to search for the truth about man in the Word of God, and not just in philosophy, in order to acquire the wisdom that leads to eternal marriage. Not without understanding that to do this she had to embrace, like her Lord, the fate of her people and of all humanity, leaving to God the surprise of the moment of her death, whatever the terms. Since Jesus her Lord made himself master of death, every death henceforth lived in him becomes the birth in heaven of what we lived for on earth.

The spirituality of Father de Montfort leads us along the path where we are invited to die to ourselves, in order to live in communion with Jesus in love.

The Virgin Mary, the wise Virgin, helps us to always seek her Son and to live, as He did, the life and mission that God the Father entrusted to Him and entrusts to each one of us today.

S. Laurent-sur-sèvre F. Delfim Afonso

PRAYER VIGIL - TRIBUTE TO THE MONTFORTIAN FAMILY MARTYRS

SR. SHIGI CHACKO THACHECHERIL DW THE COVID WARRIOR

My daughters said mother Marie Louise to all who followed her and all who would follow her in the generations to come. Sr.Shigi too was her daughter, who followed the legacy of mother Marie Louise "If I were a piece of cloth, I would clothe the poor." At the time of pandemic, all the sick who thronged into Mandar hospital in a remote village of Ranchi too experienced care and compassion of Sr.Shigi the daughter of mother Marie Louise Trichet.



Sr.shigi was born on 16th May 1984 in Kerala the southern part of India . She was upheld as the last daughter of the family. Sr.Shigi lived very short but lived well to her commitment. she was a professional nurse, she treated many Covid patients during the wave that claimed several lives in India in 2021 She too affected by Covid while she was treating the sick, and died on 1st June 2021.

Sr.Shigi's memory that we cherish even today is she knew how to bring laughter and joy wherever she was and Where ever she went.

Sr.Shigi was a straightforward person, because of which she was considered of having a strong personality. But all those who mingled with her closely knew that Sr.Shigi was a gentle and kind hearted person. She worked hard in any field that was given to her. May it be her studies, in the mission area or in her personal life her aim was to reach the star. She often said " Who knows how long will we be alive, so let me enjoy my life was the hearty expression of Shigi.

Prayer life was her prime priority weather the others were in the chapel or not, but she was with the Lord on time for personal prayer as well as for the community prayers. As she moved around various communities , she accepted her mission whole heartedly and committed herself for their cause.In Kalghatgi she learnt the unknown language to work for the school dropout. In Diviya Karunya Ashram , she was the well being of those men who were emotionally challenged. She taught them personal cleanliness and guided them to care for the nature. It wasn't easy to live with unstable men,yet Shigi was prudent enough to protect herself from unexpected dangers. Though they were differently abled men but we saw the tears in the eyes of those men when they heard that Sr.Shigi was no more.

When Sr.Shigi received her obedience to North of India, she parted eagerly to share her experience and the knowledge that she gained from St.Jhon's one of the deemed medical college Bengaluru. When she arrived at the hospital, she was entrusted with the responsibility, nursing superintendent . She was passionate in teaching, she taught the students to widen their knowledge of medical field, she taught them to learn with eagerness, she was attentive to the weaker as well as financially backward students, with all her tenderness, she cared for them. As well as she laid the

challenge before the young nursing students to learn English and to do well in their academic performance.

As a nursing superintendent nothing could compromise for cleanliness, people appreciated Sr. Shigi how she handled these illiterate people teaching them the importance of cleanliness and therefore every nook and the corner of the hospital was clean, for this was one of the reasons the Daughters of Wisdom invited to manage hospital as it was not managed well by the previous management and Sr. Shigi proved that she was the right person chosen to be in the hospital. She also stood as a mediator between the director and the working staff, she was clear of her role and spoke for the rights of the workers and the working staff, she requested for the nursing staff to increase their wages and she handled challenging issues tactfully and maintained discretion which was appreciated by many in authority.

Mandar hospital was not a well furnished hospital but it was marching towards its realization, and it was not all equipped to face the pandemic and this was a great challenging moment for Sr. Shigi. She knew the severity and the danger of the sickness yet she encouraged the nurses, doctors and the workers in the hospital to protect themselves in order to take care of the exceeding patients overflowing in the hospital. Carrying the poor on his back Montfort said please open the door for Jesus Christ and laid the sick on his bed. There were no more beds, no more place to accommodate the sick in the hospital yet like Montfort Sr. Shigi found ways and means to welcome the patients and to care for them as this was the only hospital meant for the poor and the ordinary people of Ranchi. With her lively talk Sr. Shigi stood by the tired nurses and the doctors, to care for all those who came in until Sr. Shigi herself collapsed infected with covid. In the somber days of pandemic, Sr. Shigi stood as a torch bearer welcoming the sick and caring for them as Mother Marie Louise Trichet stood by the poor in the hospital of Poitiers.

Thank you Sr. Shigi for the love that you shared with all those who entered Mandar hospital, thank you for the gentle and soothing hands, with which you cared for the sick and the suffering till your last breath. You were a God sent Angel at the crucial moment of pandemic. Thank you for the many lives that you saved and the call that you leave us behind never forget the poor like our founders Father de Montfort and Mother Marie Louise of Jesus.

Sr Lydia, DW

TRIBUTE TO OUR MARTYR SISTERS DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM

My name is Pierrette Bwamba. I am a daughter of Wisdom from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I am currently on mission in Paris, France as General Councillor and member of the Leadership team of our congregation.

In the history of our congregation, many sisters have experienced martyrdom though they have not been officially recognised by the Church as martyrs. The most famous cases are the following:

In France, during the French Revolution (1789-1800) several sisters were guillotined for their faith and their love of Christ - the Incarnate Word/Christ-Wisdom.

In DRC, during the rebellion of 1964, 2 sisters had been murdered along with the Montfort Fathers and the Montfort Brothers of Saint Gabriel.

Recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic, many of our sisters died of COVID. Among them an Indian sister, a dedicated nurse who gave her life to save Covid patients.

The song from Robert Lebel, a Canadian Priest, my testimony about 2 sisters murdered during the 1964 rebellion. " Happy are the numerous martyrs / to the memory of our Father. Numerous and Happy are the martyrs/ who have never been, who did not leave any image of themselves..."

Today, we celebrate the memory of our sisters who loved the Lord and served their brothers and sisters to the point of sacrificing of their lives.

Sr Anne-Françoise (from Belgium) and Sr Marie-Antoinette (from the US)

(Picture of the 2 sisters)

Two Daughters of Wisdom missionaries in the Congo, serving the poorest people in the villages of Isangi diocese in the North-East of the DRC. One was a primary school teacher and the other ministered to poor children.

The two sisters were arrested along with other missionaries (Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and their bishop) Montfort Missionaries, and Daughters of Wisdom serving in this diocese. (As an aside, in another diocese in the same Region, the FSG were also arrested in the same context of the rebellion and suffered martyrdom in Buta).



The missionaries were falsely accused and arrested because they were foreigners. People pretended to "protect them", but in reality, they were accused of "spying", suspected of passing on information about the political situation in the Congo to their native countries.

It was in this troubled context that our two sisters died in Zaire. Their deaths came after several days of torture and abuse that made them look like the suffering Christ on the way to execution. Sister Anne-Françoise was put to death because she refused to be the wife of the leader of the rebellion. And Sister Marie-Antoinette was killed because she was an American, suspected of passing on news of the rebellion to the American government. Both were courageous to the end, accepting to die in the name of their faith in Christ the Incarnate Word. (Silence)



I conclude this tribute with the same song by Robert Lebel, which goes on to say: "There are many blessed men and women, martyrs in memory of my Father. All the men and women who, for ages, have loved their brothers and their God unceasingly and to the best of their ability. And when one of them leaves earth to go to the Father's house, a star is born in heaven..."

Sr Pierrette Bwamba, Daughter of Wisdom

THE BROTHERS OF ST GABRIEL PRESUMED MARTYRS

None of these presumed martyrs has been beatified, at least for the time being. However, the beatification process is underway in Rome for the first of these martyrs and is progressing very well.

1) In 1936 - 49 BROTHERS VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN SPAIN

In 1936, civil war broke out in Spain. Society was divided because a Republican regime with Soviet leanings was in power since 1930 and was threatening the Church in particular. They were known as "the Reds". In this desire to restore a more peaceful way of life in society, General Franco was to win back province after province. The fighting would be fierce, especially from 1936 onwards. 7,500 priests, religious sisters and brothers, seminarians, and novices were killed in Spain over a 6-year period.

Among those, 49 Spanish Brothers of St Gabriel and their chaplain were shot and thrown into mass graves, all between July and November 1936, in Catalonia. Only 7 of the 50 bodies were identified.

The Congregation for Saints' Causes / The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints

They all died, without trial, without records, without trace. Although we know them all, we had to conduct a great deal of research to find out as accurately as possible the details of their assassinations.

It is clear that they died because of their faith and because of their enemies' hatred of it. As already mentioned, their cause for beatification is underway at the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican, and is progressing rapidly. The historical background has already been acknowledged, which is very important in this context.

2) 30 May 1965 - 7 BROTHERS MASSACRED BY THE "SIMBAS" IN BUTA, CONGO - KINSHASA (ex-Zaire)

This immense country became independent from Belgium in 1960. Immediately afterward, the struggle for power began. In 1964-1965, half the country was in the hands of the SIMBAS rebels, especially the north of the country where 7 Belgian brothers were based in BONDO. The young Colonel Mobutu and his army set out to conquer the rebel provinces. The Simbas were reduced to little, except in the district of BONDO where they resisted by taking famous hostages. 7 Brothers were held hostage with 14 other missionaries.

Seven months later, the rebels were camouflaged in BUTA and decided to disperse. But misfortune! They executed all their hostages with machetes before leaving and threw the bodies into the river Rubi. Of our 7 victims, only one body was found, that of Br. Laurent BOSMANS.

These 7 confreres had remained faithful to the end, patient and charitable to the point of giving French lessons to their jailers. They were as innocent as on the day of their baptism.

They are rather victims of missionary duty... and of a great political disorder, which does nothing to diminish their merits.

3) 8 APRIL 2008 - BROTHER JOSEPH DOUET, MURDERED IN KATACO, GUINEA-CONAKRY

Brother Joseph DOUET had already been a missionary in Senegal since 1974 and was Provincial Superior of Senegal, then promoter of our Gabrielle establishments in Guinea: Ourous, Katako, Katakodi.

It was there, in Katako, where he was the founder-director of the college that bears his name today, that Brother Joseph DOUET was eliminated, suffocated at the hands of three young men. They were probably sponsored by the old leaders of the village and parish who had lost their harmful influence because of the school. It was probably a crime of jealousy, but the circumstances of the assassination were never properly clarified: a cloak of silence and shame immediately set in.

Brother Joseph was killed while reciting Vespers in the shadow of the threshold of the house. He was alone that evening.

The 4 Brothers of Katako knew they had been under threat for 7 or 8 years, but they stayed on the job like big brothers among children, with the aim of forming a new generation of Christians. And it continues.

We can say that Brother Joseph is a martyr for the TRUTH because he had denounced the evil powers of the traditional leaders of the village and the parish.

The Bishop closed the church and excommunicated the village for a year. Pope Benedict XVI praised the courage of Brother Joseph Douet, who is still remembered by his family at Le Pin-en-Mauges, 30 km from here.

"Do not fear those who kill the body, but rather fear those who can kill the soul" (Mat 10, 25).

TESTIMONY ABOUT THE MONTFORT MISSIONARIES MURDERED IN THE GARDENS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON 1 FEBRUARY 1794

In the turmoil of the Revolution in 1789, the Superior General of the Montfort Missionaries, Father Micquignon, worried about the anti-religious tendencies that were beginning to emerge, wrote a warning to all the communities of the Congregation in February 1790.

He recommended that they keep their faith pure, intact and courageous: "... We would rather lose everything," he told them, "our possessions, our health, even our state, than lose the treasure of our faith...".

Events proved him right. In January 1791, parish priests were required to take the constitutional oath.

The Montfort Missionaries set about enlightening the people's conscience. In the form of maxims, they set out the duties of the "faithful in a time of Shiism and persecution".

"Thou shalt profess one faith: that of Rome alone.

... Thou shalt submit to the Pope, and likewise to the bishops. ...

..... Thou shalt show an inviolable attachment to true pastors..."

The activity of the Muloitions - as the Montfortians were called after their first Superior General, Father Mulot - worried the representatives of the Republic.

In 1793, the revolutionary government banned the Montfortian institutes and the infernal columns ravaged the west of France and the Montfortian Mother Houses. War broke out.

Saint Laurent became the hospital centre for the royalist army: the missionaries' house, the Mother of Wisdom house and the presbytery were filled with wounded patients.

In the village, people were shot and beheaded, women raped, children massacred, the elderly and infirm tortured and killed.

The Daughters of Wisdom and the Montfort Missionaries were not spared. Three Montfort brothers were tortured and murdered in the Gardens of the Holy Spirit for having remained faithful to their faith:

- Fr BOUCHER 60 years old
- Fr Jean 30 years old
- Fr Olivier 30 years old

A commemorative stele was erected in the gardens of the Holy Spirit.

FATHER SAMUEL MALO

Testimony of Brother Jean-Pierre CALVEZ and Homily of Father Jacques ARROUET

29th March 1994

So what happened on the evening of 29 March? 29 March is the day we remember the 1947 revolution.

After our rosary we went our separate ways. Samuel Malo, 64, from Loire Atlantique, who had been on mission in Madagascar for 35 years, was brutally murdered on the night of 29 to 30 March. Perfectly integrated, loved and respected by the Malagasy people, he was in charge of a rural family training centre in Antsiramandroso, near Tamatave. The Roger Riou Association and an association in his native country, "Amitié-Solidarité-Espoir avec Madagascar", actively supported his work. Promoting all men and every man at the same time, taking into account their systems of thought and their differences, was his profound conviction.

J.P. Calvez

Samuel, on Tuesday 29 March you were at your home in Antsiramandroso, which is a rural family training centre. A number of people in this assembly visited the centre with you. Tired after a busy day, you were sleeping... At 11pm, 3 young people ask for help. Someone had been injured 14 km away. They wanted a car to go and get him. In agreement with Brother Jean-Pierre Calvez, who lives with you in the centre, you went to take them on foot to the Sisters of Wisdom, who will show them how to make a

tourniquet. Halfway between the house and the dispensary, the drama begins. You have just enough time to shout "Help, the thieves! Brother Jean-Pierre flew to your aid, and the workers who had heard you also arrived on the scene. With a last breath, you tell them: "They've beaten me up and dragged me along the road. Go and get the car...".

You fainted and went to the other side of the river. You made the great passage. You gave your life to the very end by doing your duty.

J. Arrouet

Who was he?

He was a Montfortian as Father de Montfort wanted him to be: in the Fiery Prayer, in every sentence, you could say: Sam wanted to be that and he was. He made me love Father de Montfort by his life and by his words... He was a man of conviction and a coach: "Alone we can do nothing, together we can do everything"; and he carried out what had been decided as a group. He encouraged everyone, so that many came and saw.

There were fifteen of us in the church at Antsiramandroso on the first Sunday in November 1979 when he presided at the Eucharist. There were more than two hundred of us twenty-five years later, even when there was no priest to preside at the Eucharist. His teaching had something to do with it. Preparing catechumens took the time it needed, as did preparing them for the sacraments. He encouraged responsible villagers to engage in public life selflessly and fairly.

He loved people and wanted them to be happy. How many of them have rediscovered a taste for their work and their family life, where, while it was customary to leave everything to the woman, the parents helped each other and the children were called by their first name instead of saying 'so-and-so's child', as if it were an object?

He loved his congregation and the other Montfortian congregations: what grief at the sudden death of the only Malagasy Montfortian Father: Pascal Lahady! He surrounded his family as best he could. What joy at the opening of the Madagascan Montfortian novitiate!

And in his rosary, the reminder of the intention of vocations! What joy at the happy events of the Daughters of Wisdom (the beatification of Marie-Louise Trichet) and the Brothers of Saint Gabriel (the reopening of the novitiate). He also shared in the sorrows: the deaths and illnesses of others.

He loved Mary: he could not avoid talking about her in his sermons and catechism classes. In Antsiramandroso, Mary was the model of the family mother. So many activities were organised on Marian feasts and during the month of Mary!

He was faithful in his friendships: how many letters he sent and how many testimonial letters, at the time of his death, from all over the world: his friends from la Grigonnais who created ASEM (Amitié, Solidarité, Entraide Madagascar), from France, Italy, Germany, Belgium and the bush! How many of us attended the mass of remembrance a year later, at the place where he died? Some say there were more than two thousand people from the bush, from the town, from everywhere: every skin colour in Madagascar was there.

He was a missionary because a baptised person, a consecrated person, a priest-religious person cannot fail to proclaim the Good News in season and out of season, and in a simple, understandable and credible way, within the reach of those he spoke to.

We can say with Paul VI: "Men have more need of witnesses than of teachers, and if they listen to their teachers it is because they are first of all witnesses".

J.P.Calvez

FATHER OLIVIER MAIRE

Second anniversary of his death



When we were young, didn't we build magnificent sandcastles by the sea ?

The waves quickly erased all traces of them.

Yes, the wear and tear of time always takes its toll.

In Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, time has also passed! It's already been two years since our dear father Olivier left us. But as faithful people, we are here together to tell him, to tell ourselves, that we loved

him, that we want to listen to him beyond his departure, that we want to integrate his influence into our spiritual life.

Where do we stand ?

Judicial officials are responsible for answering the big questions raised by his death: where, when, how, why ?

Everyone is waiting, and our thoughts today are with his parents, his blood brothers, his brothers in the priesthood, not forgetting all those who came close to him with affection and gratitude.

Father Olivier's sixty years on earth have generated a fruitfulness that goes far beyond the investigations of justice. It is up to us to "dig, dig, dig, a treasure is hidden inside" as Jean de la Fontaine said. By revisiting each period of Father Olivier's life, we can get to know him better : his humility, his discretion, his ability to listen, the difficulties he faced, his deep faith, his trust in Mary to lead him to Jesus, his fidelity to his Congregation.

Little by little, out of sight, Father Olivier, like the Wise Virgins, increased the oil in his lamp to prepare for the surprise coming of the Bridegroom on 9 August 2021.

As we all know, Olivier Maire had an extremely discreet pen for writing. How many times did I say to him : "When you're no longer here, we're going to need so much of what you're telling us today. Write, it's important".

Well, he responded to this desire in another way than by writing books. He gave us his testament, visibly inspired by the Holy Spirit, who reaches out to us all for our spiritual good. I'm referring to his last homily. He offered us "in extremis" what was the finest flower of his life, of his spirituality, of his reason for being a priest: the Eucharist, the Bread of Life,...

Let me explain :

You all know the little miracle of the telephone placed next to a loudspeaker in the basilica? A hearing-impaired person recorded the last homily delivered by Father Olivier on 8 August 2021, enabling us to write it down. It is available to everyone, and everyone should meditate on its depth and its many surprising insights.

Allow me to make a bold comparison :

- A few hours before his death, thanks to the evangelist Saint John, we have Jesus' final conversation with his disciples after the Last Supper, which was his testament on Maundy Thursday evening, summing up the essence of his message.

- A few hours before his death, Father Olivier spoke of God's love and infinite mercy in his last homily to his bishop here.

- A few hours before his death, Saint Louis-Marie, in his final homily on the Bread of Life, spoke of the Eucharist and the gift in anticipation of his own life. It was his testament, it was his profession of faith, it was the fulfilment of the way he celebrated Mass every day.

"By receiving his body, we commit ourselves to do the same, that our lives too may be given to Christ for the life of the world, at our level and among ourselves.

This last homily represents a treasure signed in his blood. Do we have the right to relegate it to oblivion ? If Father Olivier has sown the seed, it is so that now we ourselves can become the soil that allows the *Mysterium Fidei* of the Eucharist to germinate in us and around us.

From this testament, publicly proclaimed in our basilica, no one, dear friends, can claim the right to ask for silence. Our tears and our condolences can only be sincere if we accept these last words of Father Olivier. This is not a sermon for the mind! Just a few hours before his departure for heaven, he joined the implacable and trenchant logic of the Gospel. His conclusion prophesies the blood he will shed the following night, without forgetting the advice to be ready to do the same:

"We must give ourselves to Christ. This is what Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort called Consecration: since Jesus gave himself to us, we must give ourselves to him by becoming the body of Christ.

So dear friends, the last words of a deceased person always have a special resonance that engages us and can change our lives. So be it!

Bertrand Lemaire

Thursday, August 10, 2023

A DAY IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FATHER DE MONTFORT AND MARIE-LOUISE TRICHET IN POITIERS

INTRODUCTION

Poitiers, at the time of Father de Montfort and Marie-Louise Trichet, was a city of barely 20,000 inhabitants. Marked by religious wars (Catholic-Protestant), Poitiers had a real vitality linked to its intellectual, judicial, and administrative activity. As an episcopal city, it had become a stronghold of Catholicism. The number of secular and regular clergy was impressive (almost a thousand), with about twenty parish churches and numerous convents of nuns and religious.

The Jesuits had a renowned College in Poitiers. In contrast to the upper part of the city, where the wealthiest people lived, the city's physiognomy was also marked by the general hospital, in the lower part of the city, a place of containment for the underprivileged, the poor, and a refuge from misery.

For Father de Montfort, Poitiers was an unknown city where Providence led him in 1701 and where he stayed three times from 1701 to 1706. For Father de Montfort, these stays in Poitiers,

"represented a real school of training". It was in this city that everything began, the commitment to the poor, the missions, the preaching, the spiritual guidance, but also de Montfort's contemplation of Jesus' Wisdom and the very special place of Mary in our salvation and sanctification. It was also there that Father de Montfort, Marie-Louise Trichet and their faithful companion Mathurin, planted the seeds that would become the community of the *Daughters of Wisdom*.

If we look at how lay people (men and women) were involved in various aspects of the life and mission of Fr. de Montfort in Poitiers, we might be surprised by the number and diversity of these people.

The most important thing is to ask ourselves in what way these experiences lived by, and with, lay people can enlighten, stimulate and open us to reflection. It can help us to examine our life and our mission as Christians today, right where we are.

The following is a brief, non-exhaustive overview of the lay people who played a role in the mission of Father de Montfort and Marie-Louise Trichet, in Poitiers:

If we consider how lay people have been associated with the different aspects of the life and mission of Father de Montfort in Poitiers, we might be surprised by the number and diversity of these people.

The most important thing is to ask ourselves in what way these experiences lived by and with lay people can enlighten, stimulate and inspire us to reflect on our mission as Christians today.

Here is a small, non-exhaustive overview of the lay people who played a role in the mission of Father de Montfort and Marie-Louise Trichet, in Poitiers:

- Mme de Montespan
- The residents of the general hospital
- The group of Gouvernantes inside the hospital
- Marie Louise's sister
- Marie-Louise Trichet herself
- Mathurin Rangeard
- The 'elite' students' association of the Jesuit College

- Jacques Goudeau
- The inhabitants of Montbernage (see letter)
- Five individuals and four groups of people
- Madame de Montespan

THE MYSTERIOUS AND DEEPLY HUMAN WAYS OF PROVIDENCE.

In April 1701 Mr. Grignon, who was in the community of Saint Clément in Nantes, received a letter from his sister who lived at the Abbey of Fontevraud. The letter was written "by order of Madame de Montespan" asking him to "come to Fontevraud immediately to witness the ceremony of nuns who were receiving the veil/habit. The ceremony was to take place the following Tuesday. Montfort specifies in his letter addressed to Mr Leschassier, Superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris: "I, therefore, left the same day on foot. I arrived at Fontevraud on Wednesday morning, the day after my sister took the habit".

In his letter, Mgr. Grignon goes on to say: "During the two days that I stayed at Fontevraud, I had the honour of having several private conferences with Madame de Montespan. She asked me about many things, but particularly about myself. She asked me what I wanted to become. To this, I naively told her of the attraction (you know I have) of working for the salvation of the poor, my brothers.

She told me that she very much approved of the plan I had, especially as she knew from experience that the instruction of the poor was much neglected and that she would give me a canonry, if I wished, which depended on her. For this I thanked her humbly and promptly, stating that I never wanted to change Divine Providence in a canonry or a benefice. On this refusal, she told me to go and see Monseigneur de Poitiers at least, to discover my intentions. Although I was reluctant to comply with this desire of Madame de Montespan, both because of the 28 leagues I still had to travel and for many other reasons. I nevertheless obeyed her blindly out of a desire to do the holy will of God, which was my only concern.

Notes on Mme de Montespan 1640-1707 (Château de Versailles website):

AN INFLUENTIAL FAVOURITE

Mistress of Louis XIV in 1667, the Marquise de Montespan arrived at Court thanks to Anne of Austria. This dazzlingly beautiful woman, feared by the courtiers thanks to the famous "Mortemart spirit" that characterised her family, had a great influence on the life of the Court. Passionate about the arts and protected by the king, she occupied a flat close to his before being ousted around 1680 by Madame de Maintenon and leaving Versailles for good in 1691.

M. Grignon was still a seminarian when he met Madame de Montespan for the first time between 1695 and 1697; she offered him the management of the future of two of her sisters. From Paris, where the girls had joined her, Mme de Montespan "had them taken, a few days later, to Fontevraud. Mme de Rochechouart, her sister, who was abbess, received them with open arms [. but one of them was obliged to leave and return to her parent's home in Rennes, because of a flux on her eyes, which threatened to make her lose her sight (Grandet, p.18).

The girls' names were Sylvie (born 1677) and Françoise-Marguerite (born 1679). The latter left the monastery. Sylvie took the habit on the 26th April 1701 and died at Fontevraud in 1743. A little further on in the same letter he says: "When Monseigneur de Poitiers returned, I went to greet him, and I told him in a few words what Madame had ordered me to do."

QUESTIONS

- *What can we retain for today from this episode of the meeting between Mme de Montespan and Father de Montfort ?*
- *Since Mme de Montespan already knew Father de Montfort when he was a seminarian at Saint Sulpice in Paris, if she wanted to meet him, it is because this first meeting had not left her indifferent. What was it that had touched her so much at that meeting? The young seminarian's inner attitude ?*

When Father de Montfort received the letter of invitation to go to Fontevraud, he did not hesitate, he left immediately. And then he considered it an honour to have "several private conferences with Mme de Montespan". Finally, he accepted Mme de Montespan's proposal to walk a good distance to meet the Bishop of Poitiers in an attitude of blind obedience to do the holy will of God, which he looked upon solely. Father de Montfort, therefore, recognised that God/Holy Spirit was speaking to him through this meeting with Mme de Montespan. This is a surprising path that the Lord takes to help the young priest de Montfort to discern the will of God, which he never ceases to seek.

FOR ME TODAY

- What does this experience teach me ?
- What do you think of the initiative and the attitude of Madame de Montespan towards Father de Montfort ?
- What do you think of the attitude of Father de Montfort ?
- How can I listen to people who, a priori, are not part of my social network ?
- What steps should I take to listen to what the Lord is saying to me in unpredictable circumstances ?
- What does it mean for me to do the holy will of God ?

THE RESIDENTS OF THE GENERAL HOSPITAL

The year was 1701. de Montfort writes "I arrived in Poitiers on the eve of Saint James and Saint Philip, and I was obliged to wait there for four days for Monseigneur de Poitiers, who would soon return from Niort. During this time, I made a little retreat to a small room, where I was shut up in the middle of a large town, where I knew no one according to the flesh. I thought of going to the hospital to serve the poor corporally if I could not serve them spiritually. I went to pray to God in their little church, where I spent about four hours waiting for supper, which seemed very short. They seemed very long, however, to some of the poor, who, having seen me on my knees, and wearing clothes so much like their own, went to tell the others and urged each other to give me alms; some gave more, others less, the poorest a penny, the richest a sol. All this happened without my knowing it. But I was deceived on the one hand, having learned that they did not eat in the community, and surprised on the other, having learned that they wanted to give me alms and that the porter had been ordered not to let me leave. I blessed God a thousand times over to be poor and to wear the glorious livery, and I thanked my dear brothers and sisters for their goodwill.

Since then they have taken such a liking to me that they all say publicly that I will be their priest, that is to say, their director, for there has been no fixed director in the hospital for a considerable time, so poor and abandoned is it. They have since taken such a liking to me that they all say publicly that I am to be their priest, that is to say, their director, for there has not been a fixed one in the hospital for a long time, so poor and abandoned is it."

In 1704, while Father de Montfort was in Paris, he received a petition from the poor of the general hospital of Poitiers addressed to Mr. Leschassier, his former superior of the seminary of Saint-Sulpice:

"By the death and Passion of Jesus, Sir, we four hundred poor people, beg you very humbly, for the greatest love and glory of God, to bring us our venerable pastor, the one who loves the poor so much, Mr. Grignon."

The choice of Father de Montfort to go and pray in the hospital chapel dressed in a poor man's habit touched the hearts of some poor people who took two initiatives:

- They spoke about it around them and organised a collection to give alms to Father de Montfort.
- They said publicly that Father de Montfort would be their priest.

FOR ME TODAY

What does this experience of Father de Montfort being welcomed by the poor at the General Hospital teach me ?

THE GROUP OF WOMEN AT THE GENERAL HOSPITAL

If Father de Montfort was concerned to raise the dignity of the poor in the hospital by improving their material living conditions, he did not forget the souls. "Inside the hospital, he had organised a humble association of girls,' which he wanted to dedicate to the Wisdom of the Incarnate Word that confounds the false wisdom of the world".

From among the women boarders and staff, Father de Montfort chose women who were crippled, lame, and disregarded and placed a blind woman at the head of this small association. The group met in a room which he called Wisdom and in which he erected a cross. These women met according to a set of rules for exercises of piety, meditation, and praying the rosary, but also for manual work and recreation. It was at this 'School of Wisdom', a school of humility, poverty and obedience, that Marie-Louise Trichet came to learn when she entered into the service of the poor in the hospital.

Thus Fr. de Montfort could write to Mr. Leschassier: "It is true, however, my dear Father, that among all these troubles and contradictions,...God wanted to make use of me to bring about great conversions."

The hour of rising, of going to bed, of vocal prayer, of the rosary in common, of hymns and even of mental prayer for those who want it, still exists.

In setting up this small association within the General Hospital, Father de Montfort associated himself with other people chosen not according to the usual criteria we would spontaneously think of physical, intellectual, organisational, etc., but on the contrary, he chose women who were "poor" but undoubtedly rich inside.

Wisdom's folly according to God and all this to improve the material and spiritual climate of the hospital and thus "humanise" this place of confinement of people that "the world abandons".

Although the experience was brief, it can inspire us today.

FOR ME TODAY

- *What lesson did I learn from this experience ?*
- *How can I associate myself with people I would not even think of to carry out the mission entrusted to me ?*
- *What inner attitude do I need to develop for that ?*
- *How can I live the "folly of Wisdom" in my context ?*

ELISABETH, MARIE LOUISE'S SISTER

One day Elizabeth, Marie Louise's sister, goes to the church of St. Augustine. She returned enthusiastic about the sermon she had just heard from the preacher. It was Grignon de Montfort. So, "she was so touched by the sermon of this man of God, that she was not more eager to tell her sister what she had heard as soon as she returned home. Oh sister, if you only knew the beautiful sermon I have just heard, never in my life have I heard anything so pathetic and touching; the preacher is a saint! (cf Besnard).

Marie-Louise then decided to go to confession to him and confide in him her desire to become a nun. Thus, it was thanks to her sister that Marie-Louise met Father de Montfort. All this because she was deeply touched by the words of this preacher whose name she did not even know. Elisabeth, a relay person full of spontaneity, will thus allow Marie-Louise, without knowing it, to discover her vocation within the Church.

FOR ME TODAY

- *How am I attentive to the words of each person I encounter, even those who are given little importance ?*
- *Do I believe that God, through them, can accomplish his work of salvation ?*

MARIE-LOUISE TRICHET

Following the exciting report from her sister Elisabeth, Marie-Louise decided to go and see the "great preacher" the very next day. "She finds him in the confessional, and that is what she wants; she prepares herself for the sacrament, she introduces herself: what a surprise when the confessor, before going into the details of her conscience, asks her who the person who talked her about him! ... It's my sister, sir. No, no, my daughter, it was not your sister who told you to come here, it was the Blessed Virgin who sent you to me for confession" (cf. Besnard).

From that moment on, Marie-Louise's life took a new direction. She placed herself under the spiritual direction of this young priest. She followed the retreats he preached in the hospital or the suburbs of Poitiers. She attended the small association of young girls, "La Sagesse", which Father de Montfort had set up in the hospital.

Preoccupied by God's call to commit herself to religious life, Marie-Louise insisted on speaking to Father de Montfort. She repeatedly expressed to him her desire to become a religious. She wanted him to tell her where this desire could be realised. Well...go to the hospital! Marie-Louise had the intuition that this proposal was the expression of God's will. She decided to take the necessary steps and spoke to Father de Montfort before asking for the approval of the new Bishop.

He addressed the hospital office, which refused. Marie-Louise insisted on asking the Bishop: "Well, Monseigneur, these gentlemen do not want to receive me as a Governess, perhaps they will not refuse as a poor woman, and if, out of kindness, you would like to entrust me with a letter from you, I am sure that I will enter" (cf. Besnard).

The bishop wrote her a letter which she took to the hospital office. Her approach aroused the admiration of the directors who could not help but accept her as a poor woman. She was asked to help the superior. Marie-Louise then gradually acquired know-how and knowledge in the field of treasury and hospital organisation. Father de Montfort integrated her into a small association. She was nineteen years old. This choice of Marie-Louise Trichet did not go unnoticed in the city of

Poitiers. A prosecutor's daughter living among the poor in the hospital! She, therefore, lived as a laywoman until 2 February 1703, when she took the habit, pronounced her first vows, and received her new name "Marie-Louise de Jésus".

Marie-Louise's choice to follow Father de Montfort was not to the delight of her mother. "You will go crazy like him! When the latter saw her daughter dressed in the habit he had given her on the 2nd of February 1703, she felt dishonoured and asked her to remove it: "Remove this habit immediately, take up your ordinary clothing again, and obey your mother. Father de Montfort had to intervene with her mother to tell her that from now on Marie-Louise was no longer hers but God's. One can imagine the inner struggle of Marie-Louise, then just 19 years of age.

Marie Louise, a young laywoman, made the courageous choice to commit herself to the particular mission of caring for the poor, guided by Father de Montfort. She took the initiative and made her choice to become a religious. She did not go it alone. Despite opposition from her mother, who was displeased that her daughter had chosen Father de Montfort as her spiritual guide.

FOR ME TODAY

- *How can the experience of the young Marie-Louise be a source of inspiration for me today as a lay associate ?*
- *What is it about this experience that particularly touches me ?*

MATHURIN RANGEARD—AN ENCOUNTER, A CALL, AND A RESPONSE

The year was 1705 in Poitiers. A young man named Mathurin came to Poitiers to become a Capuchin. He entered by chance the Church of the Penitents to pray. When Father de Montfort saw him, he invited him to come and see him, and knowing his intention, he asked him to stay with him to serve him in his missions, where for nearly 15 years he taught catechism and schooling to the children and sang hymns with many blessings. Father de Montfort did not speak to him in any other language than that used by the Saviour to call his apostles : "Seque me! Follow me! And immediately this good boy obeyed. He was tonsured after the death of Mr. Grignon and had many talents for carrying out his duties.

REFLECTION — A LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTER

God often calls unexpectedly. For Mathurin, God's call comes through the encounter and the request of Father de Montfort: "Follow me". Father de Montfort speaks in the name of Jesus himself in Matthew's call. Matthew did not expect this. He had another project in mind. But he answers as a free man, without any hesitation.

FOR ME TODAY

- *What reflections do Mathurin's call and his response inspire in me ?*
- *Take the time to remember the calls I have heard in my history that have been decisive for my commitment.*
- Give thanks to the Lord for the calls heard and the responses given.
- Who today could I call to join us as a Montfortian associate ?

PRAYER

Lord, you who called your disciples to leave everything and to follow you, you continue to call whomever you want to follow you, like our Brother Mathurin. I give you thanks for all the lay associates who respond today to your calls. Give us the audacity and the faith of Fr. de Montfort and

Br. Mathurin so that we in turn may dare to launch calls to others to work in the mission of education in the Montfortian way. We ask this through the intercession of Fr. de Montfort and of our Brother Mathurin, of the Virgin Mary, and Jesus your Son, Wisdom Incarnate. Amen!

JACQUES GOUDEAU MONTBERNAGE POITIERS

In the year 1705 the mission of Montbernage, given in the lower quarter of the city of Poitiers, came to an end. As always, Father de Montfort was careful to put in place simple means so that the mission would continue to produce fruit after his departure. Already, in the barn of the Bergerie, transformed into a chapel, the rosary prayer is well in place in front of the statue of Mary Queen of Hearts. But who is going to provide this service now? So, he launched the appeal: "If someone agrees to recite the rosary here on Sundays and feasts and to sing the little crown at noon, I will leave the image of my good Mother there". It was then that Jacques Goudeau, a master weaver, offered to fulfil this mission. He would be faithful to it for 40 years.

Thus, thanks to this "yes" to the call launched by Father de Montfort, Christians in this neighbourhood with a difficult reputation would remain faithful to prayer. Father de Montfort can leave at ease.

After the death of Father de Montfort, when Sister Marie-Louise returned from La Rochelle and was thinking of setting up the community of the Daughters of Wisdom in Poitiers, it was again Jacques Goudeau who suggested to her the idea of going to meet a lady, Mme de Bouillé, in Saint Laurent sur Sèvre, where the tomb of Father de Montfort is located, who could help her to find a house there to set up the motherhouse of the Community of the Daughters of Wisdom.

Father de Montfort had had the audacity, in this difficult neighbourhood, where people were far removed from the life of the Church, to establish a chapel for prayer in a former dance hall, which for him was equivalent to a place of debauchery. The other audacity was to ask someone from among those who had just lived the mission and therefore someone who has publicly lived the act of renewing the promises of his baptism before the Christian community. He trusted this layman, Jacques Goudeau, a simple craftsman who responded to his call, to ensure the rosary. Thanks to him, the mysteries of Jesus' life will continue to be contemplated with Mary. The mission continues with the Virgin Mary who leads to Jesus-Wisdom.

FOR ME TODAY

- *In reading about Jacques Goudeau's experience as a partner in the pursuit of Father de Montfort's mission, what is it that particularly touches me ?*
- *What does this imply for me today, where I am involved as a lay associate with the Brothers of Saint Gabriel ?*
- *What place is given to the prayer of the rosary, as a simple means of supporting each other and growing in the knowledge and love of Jesus-Wisdom ?*

PRAYER

Lord, your servant Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort wanted companions to help him with his missions. In Jacques Goudeau, a simple layman, de Monfort recognized the authentic baptized person, ready to take on responsibilities to help his Christian community by agreeing to ensure the service of the rosary prayer. Virgin Mary, "Queen of Hearts" with you, we thank the Lord for all those who remain faithful in contemplating with you the mysteries of the life of your Son Jesus Wisdom Incarnate. We pray to you for all those who commit themselves to ensure in confidence the service of prayer in our communities.

Virgin Mary, "Queen of Hearts", intercede for us with the Lord so that, following the example of Jacques Goudeau, we too may be attentive to the calls that are made to us to help our brothers and sisters grow in Christ. Rejoice, Mary "Queen of Hearts", full of graces, the Lord is with you, you are blessed among all women and Jesus who trusts his disciples is blessed.

Holy Mary etc...

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen!

ASSOCIATION OF ELITE PUPILS OF THE JESUIT COLLEGE

"I give a lecture every week to the 13 or 14 pupils who are the elite of the college, with the approval of the late Monsignor. (O.C. L. 11, 4 July 1711, p. 35-36)

OC note p. 36 "The college of the Jesuit Fathers. The students of the Collège Sainte-Marthe were joined by students from the University. M. Grignon brought them all together in a "Congregation" (as one of them put it), with its own rules and daily exercises (Mémoire de Le Normand; Grandet, p. 465).

According to Grandet, Father de Montfort admitted into this Congregation: "those who were the most docile", and to whom he recommended oration, spiritual reading, the frequentation of the sacraments and the apostolate with their "most deranged comrades"; he urged them to join the Congregation of the Virgin established at the Jesuit College. It was especially the congregation members whom he grouped together at his conferences. This pious society was a breeding ground for excellent priests, holy religious and virtuous laymen (e.g., Alexis Trichet, Marie-Louise's brother, who became a priest; Mr Le Normand, a lay prosecutor at the Presidial of Poitiers...)

Father de Montfort did not invent, but adapted an experience of this type of "congregation" of students, having lived it himself when he was a student at the Jesuit college in Rennes. He knew the benefits of such an association with the spiritual help of a priest, to nourish and live his faith through teaching and prayer, but also to experience commitment to the poor.

FOR ME TODAY

- How can we be inventive in offering young people the opportunity to live an experience of "community", of "Church", allowing them to deepen their faith and to live it in a form of commitment towards those whom society neglects?
- Father de Montfort takes care of the poor but also of those who can have a positive influence on others thanks to their human and spiritual formation. What does this inspire me in my responsibilities, especially with young people?

THE INHABITANTS OF MONTBERNAGE

CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE INHABITANTS OF MONTBERNAGE (1706)

GOD ALONE

1. Dear inhabitants of Montbernage, St. Saturnin, St. Simplicien, the Resurrection and others who have benefited from the mission that Jesus Christ, my Master, has just given you, greetings in Jesus and Mary. Unable to speak to you in person, because holy obedience forbids me to do so, I am taking the liberty of writing to you on my departure, like a poor father to his children, not to

teach you new things, but to confirm you in the truths I have told you. The Christian and paternal friendship I bear you is so strong that I shall always carry you in my heart, in life, in death and eternity! I would rather forget my right hand than forget you wherever I am, even to the holy altar! I would rather forget my right hand than to forget you anywhere, even to the holy altar, what shall I say? To the ends of the earth, to the gates of death: be sure of it, provided you are faithful to practice what Jesus Christ has taught you through his missionaries and me unworthy, despite the devil, the world and the flesh.

2. Remember, then, my dear children, my joy, my glory and my crown, to love Jesus Christ ardently, to love him through Mary, to make your true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, our good Mother, shine forth everywhere and before all, so that you may be everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ, so that you may constantly carry your cross in the wake of this good Master and win the crown and the kingdom which awaits you. So do not fail to fulfil and practice faithfully your baptismal promises and practices, to say your rosary daily in public or in private, and to attend the sacraments, at least every month.
3. I beg my dear friends of Montbernage, who have the image of my good Mother and my heart, to continue and increase the fervour of their prayers, not to suffer with impunity in their suburb the blasphemers, swearers, singers of ugly songs and drunkards. I say with impunity: that is to say, if they cannot prevent them from sinning, by rebuking them with zeal and gentleness, at least let some man or woman of God not fail to do penance, even public penance, for public sin, even if it be only a Hail Mary in the streets or the place of their prayers, or to carry a lighted candle into the room or church. This is what you must do, and you will continue, God willing, to persevere in the service of God. I say the same to other places.
4. My dear children, you must serve as an example to all Poitiers and the surrounding area. Let no one work on non-working days. Let no one spread out or open his shop, even against the ordinary practice of the bakers, butchers, shopkeepers and others of Poitiers who steal God's Day, and who unfortunately rush into damnation, whatever fine pretexts they may bring, unless you have a real need recognised by your worthy parish priest. Do not work on holy days in any way, and God, I promise you, will bless you in the spiritual and even the temporal, so that you will not lack the necessities of life.
5. I beg my dear fishmongers of St. Simplicien, butchers, dealers and others to continue the good example they are giving to the whole town, by practising what they have learned in the mission.
6. I beg you all, in general, and in particular, to accompany me with your prayers on the pilgrimage I am going to make for you and many others. I say for you: for I am undertaking this long and arduous journey, to Providence, to obtain from God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, perseverance for you. I say for many: I carry in my heart all the poor sinners of Poitou and other places, unfortunately damned. Their souls are so dear to my God that he gave all his blood for them, and I would give nothing? He has made such long and arduous journeys for her, and I would give none? He risked his own life, and I would not risk mine. Ah, only a pagan or a bad Christian is not touched by the immense loss of these infinite treasures, the redeemed souls of Jesus Christ. Pray for this.

My dear friends, pray for me too, so that my malice and unworthiness do not hinder what God and his holy Mother want to do through my ministry.

I am looking for divine Wisdom, help me to find her. I have great enemies in mind: all the worldly people, who esteem and love things that are out of date and perishable, despise me, mock me and persecute me, and all hell, which has plotted my downfall and will raise all the powers against me everywhere. In the midst of all this, I am very weak and weak indeed, ignorant and ignorant indeed, and the rest I dare not say. There is no doubt that being alone and poor, I shall perish, unless the

Blessed Virgin and the prayers of good souls, and especially yours, sustain me and obtain for me from God the gift of the word or divine wisdom, which will be the remedy for all my ills and the powerful weapon against my enemies.

With Mary it is easy: I put my trust in her, even though the world and hell may grumble about it, and I say with St. Bernard: "Hoc, filii mei, maxima fiducia mea ac tota ratio spei meae". Have these words explained to you, I would not have dared to say them myself. It is through Mary that I seek and will find Jesus, that I will crush the head of the serpent and defeat all my enemies and myself for the greater glory of God. Farewell, without farewell, for if God keeps me alive, I shall pass this way again, either to remain here for some time under the obedience of your illustrious prelate, who is so zealous for the salvation of souls and so sympathetic to our infirmities or to pass on to another country, because, since God is my Father, I have as many places to dwell as there are where he is so unjustly offended by sinners "Qui justus est justificetur adhuc. Qui in sordibus est sordescat adhuc. Aliis quidem odor mortis in mortem, aliis quidem odor vitae in vitam".

All yours. Louis-Marie de Montfort, priest and unworthy slave of Jesus in Mary.

In this circular letter, Father de Montfort expresses all his love for the inhabitants of Montbernage and the other poorest parishes of the city of Poitiers. He exhorts them:

- "to love Jesus Christ ardently, to love him through Mary, to make your true devotion to the Blessed Virgin manifest everywhere and before everyone,
- to be faithful to what they received during the mission "that Jesus Christ my Master has just given you"... to be "faithful to practise what Jesus Christ taught you through his missionaries and myself unworthy...".
- to continue to be a good example of Christian life for the whole city of Poitiers and its surroundings
- to pray for him, for the pilgrimage to Rome that he is undertaking "I am looking for divine Wisdom, help me to find it". Even if we do not know how these parishioners of Montbernage and the surrounding area received this circular letter, it may be interesting to see how it resonates with us today.

FOR ME TODAY

- *What does the love and trust that Fr. de Montfort expresses in his letter towards the inhabitants of Montbernage and the other poor parishes of Poitiers inspire in me ?*
- *Fr. de Montfort is counting on the witness of the Christian life of these laymen and women so that the mission will continue to bear fruit for the whole city and its surroundings. What lessons do I draw from this for myself ?*
- *Fr. de Montfort also relies on their prayer "I am looking for Divine Wisdom, help me to find it". What does this request for communion in prayer between lay people and priests inspire me*
- *What touches me, particularly in this letter to the inhabitants of Montbernage ?*

CONCLUSION

We have just discovered several lay figures, men and women, young people and adults, of very different social conditions, members or not of an association, etc. Each one, in his or her own way, played a role so that the providential mission of Father de Montfort in Poitiers might bear fruit, despite the various obstacles he encountered.

If we can risk finding a common point between all of them, it is surely that of *having simply lived the grace of their baptism which is the foundation of every vocation.*

For all this let us give thanks to the Lord. This is what he is calling us today.

F. Maurice Hérault

30.03.2023

Note: the extracts from the texts quoted come for the most part from the booklet "Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, Marie-Louise Trichet" Le temps des commencements, collection Trésors Poitevins, under the responsibility of Jean-Paul Russeil.

HOMILY IN POITIERS

On May 2, 2023, I sent to Monsignor Pascal WINTZER, Bishop of Poitiers, the letter from Father Luizinho, Superior General of the Montfortian Missionaries, in the name of the Montfortian family. Its content was to inform the Bishop of Poitiers that today, August 10, the participants of the RIAM (International Meeting of Montfortian Associates) would make a pilgrimage to this city of Poitiers.

The next day, May 3, Bishop Pascal WINTZER replied to me by writing:

“Father, Can you express to Father General my gratitude for his letter. I hope that the day in Poitiers goes well. Alas, I will not be able to be present: at this time, I will be in Lourdes with the diocesan pilgrimage to Poitiers; believe that I regret not being able to welcome and greet you. Very fraternally and respectfully. Archbishop Pascal WINTZER”.

I read this letter at the beginning of this homily so that we feel at home when we make our pilgrimage here, because here we are known and recognized by a father, the pastor of this diocese, Mgr. Wintzer. We also thank Father Claudie, parish priest of Marie-Louise de Poitiers, for welcoming us and being with us at this celebration.

In this diocese, Father de Montfort knew two bishops. He was received by Bishop Antoine Girard de la Bournat. On March 8, 1702, Bishop Girard died. On April 15, 1702, he was replaced by Bishop Jean-Claude de La Poype (February 9, 1655 - February 3, 1732). So let us pray for the bishop of this diocese, let us pray for this diocese of Poitiers.

Today's readings invite us to follow Jesus. It is by following him that we serve him. By following him, we become his servants. "If anyone wants to serve me, let him follow me... if anyone serves me, my Father will honor him".

And there are many ways to follow and serve Jesus. Our pilgrimage to Poitiers can help us discover or rediscover how we follow Jesus and how we serve him. In connection with the context in which I live and work, I have a particular response to the call of Jesus. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it is a charism.

F. Arnold Suhardi

Friday, August 11, 2023

THE CALVARY OF PONTCHÂTEAU

AN EVANGELISATION CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

For some time now, the Montfortian family (Montfortian Missionaries, Daughters of Wisdom, and The Montfort Brothers of Saint Gabriel) present at Calvaire, and the Diocese of Nantes have been reflecting on the future of Pontchâteau, which is a High Place for Montfortian Spirituality.

Together, we want to be faithful to Montfort's heritage and spread the Gospel in a specific way.

Together, they have been reflecting on the preparation of a Pastoral Project to be presented to the Superiors of the 3 Montfortian congregations and to the Bishop of Nantes.

Between 25 and 30 people from the 3 congregations, the local parish and the diocese took part in this discernment. The whole process and the preparation of the project were guided by the professional expertise of Mr Eric Dujonquoy.

The group identified 5 basic principles underpinning the project:

1. Unity and fraternity, which constitute a twofold challenge, central for us in view of our history: We are called to live and do together, respecting our own charisms and calls, and to live this dynamic for the whole project (shrine and parish),
2. A call to commit ourselves to a process of (re) evangelization, in a missionary way,
3. At the school of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, the spirituality of the project will be focused on the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery (Cross and Resurrection), and devotion to Mary, and will benefit those who are drawn to the centre,
4. An invitation to give priority to youth, to the most vulnerable, and to those who are distant from the Church.
5. A commitment to launch a Laudato-Si-based project, seeking to move towards an integral ecology, and paying attention to the human being. By this doing, our sanctuary could be particularly attractive to the greatest number of our contemporaries.

We then identified 4 complementary pastoral orientations:

1. The development of a "youth" centre (Sister Christine)
2. The creation of a Montfort-style spiritual centre (Fr Santino)
3. The deployment of a project of openness to all, and in particular to the poorest, based on the encyclical Laudato Si (Brother Jean Friant)
4. The development of greater collaboration between Calvaire and the parish (p. Hervé)

Spiritual Centre

The Calvary of Pontchâteau has always been visited by several groups from parishes and different associations throughout the year, and there are also many individual visits. More and more of the groups that visit the site are also asking for a presentation on Calvary and Montfortian spirituality.

Our desire is to improve the hosting of these visiting groups. We want to build year-round accommodation facilities and, so that in future, we can provide accommodation for larger groups or individuals.

Here is our concrete proposal

We want to:

- Develop a typically Montfortian welcome that allows people to experience God, and get new inspiration,
- Make the Calvary of Pontchâteau a place of silence, prayer, meetings, and reflection...
- Create a place for deepening Montfortian spirituality in collaboration with the Diocese,
- A fraternal place with the presence of the 3 congregations of the Montfortian family, and with the network of volunteers...
- Montfort-style welcome: everyone is welcome
- Welcome for organised and autonomous groups (more or less 50 people).
- Diocesan, parish, and Montfortian activities: Up to 200 people without accommodation, and 40 - 50 with accommodation.
- For individuals: Up to 20 people?
- Catering conditions to be specified

Hosting capacities

At Present time, we have:

- 1- The Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort Hall (Salle du Temple), where we celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday, with a capacity of 400 people for meetings and conferences.
- 2- The Chapel Notre Dame du Calvaire (130 people), where we celebrate the Eucharist every day at 8.30 am.
1. The Chapel of Father de Montfort, where we celebrate the Eucharist every day at 11.30 am during the summer. This Chapel, where we celebrate the Eucharist every day at 11.30 am during the summer, is located at the foot of Calvary and can accommodate 40 people.
- 3- The Frère Mathurin Hall which can accommodate groups of 25 people and Saint Gabriel Hall for groups of 60 people.
- 4- The podium and the courtyard of the Temple is an outdoor venue that can accommodate large groups, during the summer only.

Perspectives for the coming years:

- 1- We would like to build a large hall inside the Temple courtyard (with a kitchen, showers and toilet facilities), to accommodate youth groups, a space to heat up meals, and the possibility of showing films and videos. This hall could also be used by various groups throughout the year.
- 2- We are looking into the possibility of employing someone as a permanent manager for the spiritual centre and all its activities.
- 3- As a next step to be taken, we want to look into the possibility and feasibility of providing accommodation for groups at weekends and/or during weekdays.

All this will be carried out in close collaboration with the activities of the 3 other groups (Youth Group, Parish, and Laudato Si) and always in relation with the Montfortian Family and the Diocese of Nantes.

By Father Santino, Smm

PROSPECTS FOR BETTER COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PARISH OF PONTCHÂTEAU AND THE CALVARY

"The venture to make Pontchâteau a Radiant Centre of Evangelisation is the fruit of an alliance initiated by the Montfort Missionaries and the Diocese of Nantes. This pastoral project now has the support of two other congregations: the Daughters of Wisdom, and the Brothers of Saint-Gabriel. As the project concerns both Calvary and the Parish of Pontchâteau, the parishioners are also involved in the project.

Parish & Sanctuary

Saint Croix de Montfort Parish: comprising 6 different churches: Pontchâteau, Saint Guillaume, Saint Roch, Missillac, Besné, and Sainte Anne sur Brivet.

Calvaire Sanctuary of Pontchâteau

Observation

"A Parish community is born of the Eucharist".

We've noticed that the Eucharistic celebrations in the 6 churches that compose our Parish are attempting to be dynamic and attractive, especially for young people. To breathe a new life into our parish, we need to find a way to liven up our Sunday celebrations.

Close to our parish is Le Calvaire, managed by the Montfort Missionaries, Brothers of St Gabriel, and Daughters of Wisdom. This shrine already attracts many faithful for various devotions, including Sunday mass. Le Calvaire represents the nucleus of the "radiant centre" we hope and pray for, which could become the centre of a parish and a larger, more attractive, more fraternal Christian community...

The project

Based on this observation, we suggest:

- in the medium term, submit the proposal to have a parish (whose boundaries are to be redefined), centred on Le Calvaire and including the other churches. The church of Pontchâteau would be the most important church.
- in the long term, the only parish Mass on Sunday mornings should be celebrated at Le Calvaire, the heart of the parish and a gathering place for the whole parish community. This lively Sunday gathering and attractive Eucharist could be a visible sign of the radiant centre towards which we are moving.
- to have one Sunday Mass either in Pontchâteau or in Le Calvaire. We can then go further depending on our experience.

We could imagine three parish days a year with a Eucharist followed by a shared lunch and a convivial moment: concert, conference, celebrations, etc.

- Catechesis could take place before certain Sunday Masses.
- Special effort would be made to make this Mass unique and attractive:
liturgy, welcoming children, conviviality...

For the project to be a success, we are committed to meeting all the requirements in terms of:

- **Human resource:** by setting up a motivated team to implement the project, drawing on people who are already involved and/or not involved (newcomers, young couples, musicians, etc.).

- **Material conditions:** by this unique Sunday Eucharist possible at Le Calvaire, and to welcome groups of children and young people, we first need to create the conditions to accommodate between 600 and 800 people on Sundays. Eventually, we could envisage a new church that would meet the needs of all the centres - including the parish centre with all its activities (welcoming children, training, etc.).

But to begin with, the existing facilities will have to be adapted to accommodate Sunday gatherings of 600 to 800 people, even in winter.

Projection of actions for one year to initiate the Sanctuary/Parish rapprochement

Beforehand, it should be made clear that these projects must be approved by the EAP of the Parish, and by the Montfortian Community of Le Calvaire.

In order to unify the places of worship, Sunday Masses will gradually alternate between Pontchâteau and Le Calvaire, starting with the family Mass. This is already done for the Parish feast in September (10 September this year).

By alternation, in the literal sense, we understand that when there is Sunday mass at the Calvary there is none at Pontchâteau. Saturday evening mass is of course held in the other "chapels".

Until the end of 2023, the current programme will remain unchanged, except that family Mass will be held every month as long as possible (see dates for school holidays).

From January 2024, family Mass will be held alternately every other month at Pont Château and Le Calvaire, which will be a first step in familiarising parishioners with this change.

From January 2024, the Mass times will be unified, at 10.30 am for both locations /(which is more practical if you want to create a little social time at the end of the Mass).

The family mass will therefore be followed by a "potluck" (for this, in practice, a small team will be set up to organise and manage these potlucks, which is currently not the case).

This development should provide an opportunity for the Calvary and parish outreach teams to "work" together; this will have the effect of increasing skills and creating cooperation between people.

As soon as these developments have been taken into account, particularly by the Parish Pastoral Team, information will be passed on to the parishioners, both by oral announcements at the end of the Masses and by inclusion in the hymn sheets and parish bulletins. A text will be drawn up.

By Father Hervé, Smm

FROM 1709 TO THE PRESENT DAY, GENERATIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN AT THE SERVICE FATHER DE MONTFORT'S WORKS AT THE CALVARY OF PONT-CHÂTEAU

(M. André MARTIN)

Presentation

Nearly 150 years ago, on 30 May 1874, the Week Catholic Journal of Nantes Diocese published a five-page article entitled "Visit to the Calvary of Pontchâteau".

The columnist reported that pilgrims and visitors were "pleasantly surprised at the considerable changes" that the monument had undergone in its surroundings. An "avenue 420 meters long and 20 meters wide" has been opened up and planted with trees. The moats around Calvary Hill have been repaired. "And how was such a huge job achieved? The answer is quick: "As in the past, when Father de Montfort called, the people responded to the voice of the priests of Pontchâteau.

Pontchâteau and they set to work with eagerness, in the same spirit reminiscent of that of fifty years ago ; the old men who had worked then, and who have returned to lend their arms, are pleased to say so."

In December 1873, the Parish Priest of Pont-Château rallied "two hundred and forty men" to plant a string of trees around the hill.

In January 1874, 216 men from Campbon Parish began to build the avenue we mentioned earlier. The following day, 214 "came from Sainte-Anne-de-Campbon". Then came 220 men from Crossac, followed by 130 from Saint-Gildas-des-Bois. There were also "large numbers from even more remote parishes". One day, when the men from Pont-Château were called up, there were 540 of them on-site".

The author of the article in *La Semaine Religieuse*, the Week Catholic Journal of Nantes Diocese, goes on to describe a typical day's work: "In the morning, these good people would arrive with their supper [their lunch] and their work tools, picks and shovels, and would gather in the church square in Pont-Château. After kneeling at the altar of the One to whom they were dedicating their day, they would line up, cross the town to the singing of hymns, and head for Calvary. [Once they reached Calvary, everyone left their dinner on the moor; they gathered in the chapel to hear Holy Mass, and then the work began. [...]] You could admire the enthusiasm and unity with which all these men set to work straight away, and the speed with which they carried out the considerable earthworks, thanks much more to their good will than to the skill of the direction they were following. The engineers were the vicars of the parish of Pont-Château. [...] At midday, the bell, ringing the angelus, announced that it was time for lunch, and, an hour later, it marked the return to work. The day ended with the Way of the Cross [...]. Then everyone would return through the town of Pont-Château, marching in good order and singing pious songs, as they had done in the morning. When they left those who had convened them, they waved goodbye in the hope of being called again very soon. Reading these pages, you'd feel like you were back in 1709, 1747, 1820 or 1880-1910. The parish priest of Pont-Château, Abbé Nicol, in 1873 and 1874 was just reproducing exactly what his predecessors had done and what his successors had done, be they parish priests or Montfort Fathers. The present appearance of the Calvary of Father de Montfort in Pont-Château is therefore the result of the many efforts of parishioners over more than 300 years.

Although the era of major works came to an end in 1939, volunteers are still hard at work maintaining the grounds, restoring the statues and buildings, and preparing the special events organised on the site.

Father de Montfort not only started the Pont-Château Calvary, but he also initiated a practice that has been perpetuated to this day: the use of volunteer workers, without whom nothing would exist today.

1) What did the first biographers of Father de Montfort say about the workers' mobilisation?

In 1724, Joseph Grandet wrote: "No sooner had he made known his plan to [erect a Calvary], than all the peoples eagerly offered to help him carry it out. For fifteen months they came from all sides, from twelve to fifteen leagues [that is, from 48 to 60 km] to work on it, men, women, boys and girls, more than three hundred in number, each bringing provisions and tools to do the work." The example set by Father de Montfort encouraged these first workers on Calvary: "what greatly increased their fervor," Grandet continued, "and made them want to get on with the work, was that they saw M. de Montfort at their head tilling the earth, moving large stones and carrying them". The work was also stimulated by hymn singing and devout conversations.

According to Charles Besnard around 1770, it was the insistence of the parishioners that led Father de Montfort to envisage a more grandiose work than he had initially planned: "One day after his exhortation, he told his plan to the priests and the assembled people. He showed them the great advantages that this Calvary would produce. They all recognised them and promised to work on it. As soon as the first day was free, he went to the middle of the moor, accompanied by several of the inhabitants, designated the site and began by himself giving the first blow with a pick to make a ditch to prevent animals from approaching the cross he wanted to plant there. That seemed to be the extent of his plans. But God, who wanted to give him at the same time the merit of a greater undertaking and a very appreciable disgrace, allowed the people of Pont-Château and the neighbouring parishes to show him so much eagerness to speed up this good work, that he improved on his first project and gave it extraordinary scope and magnificence. He took a chalk line and drew a first enclosure four hundred feet in circumference; the second was about fifty. The mountain, made from the earth removed from the moat, was one hundred and thirty-three feet wide. The entire moat was fifteen feet wide. No doubt a lot of people were needed for such a job. So there were a lot of them there every day and especially on days off during the mission when as many as four or five hundred people would gather. Some were spading the earth, others carrying it in sacks to the land that was to form the mountain". While continuing his missions, Father de Montfort returned regularly to Pont-Château to motivate the workers: "He gave his orders and made all the appropriate arrangements for his project. His presence animated everyone; everyone worked with incredible zeal, young and old, rich and poor, men and women, men of distinction, ladies, and even some priests; they all made it a religious exercise to carry the earth and it seemed as if this work, however tiring it was, cost them nothing. In his book published in 1785, Pierre-Joseph Picot de Clorivière confirms Besnard's version of the influence of the parishioners on the missionary's project: "The enthusiasm with which he saw that we were going to work gave rise to a much more magnificent idea". The biographer praises the courage of the workers in their great diversity: "The people on their side worked with unbeatable courage. There were sometimes as many as 500 people at work. Everyone worked without distinction, gentlemen, ladies, priests. "There were workers who came from very far away, bringing with them all the materials and tools they needed. Their primary motivation was religious: "Piety, which alone brought them to work, seemed to increase their natural strength and made them do things they would not have thought possible on any other occasion".

Dalin in 1839 noted that "the faithful" were "perfectly disposed" to Father de Montfort's project. He launched the work: "Montfort, setting an example, grabbed a digging spade and gave the first blow. Immediately, everyone lined up, and on all points, the work was begun: enthusiasm was at its peak". Dalin repeats the information given by his previous biographers, sometimes word for word, adding that: "The workmen themselves said that they would never have been able to do so much, for any pay".

In 1875, Abbé Pauvert gave a few technical details to highlight the achievement of the workers: "It is easy to appreciate the gigantic task. Some 8,000 m³ of clay and sandstone had to be extracted, and 2,400,000 kg of rubble had to be carried in baskets or hoods". He also points out that the work was entirely voluntary: "There were always between two hundred and five hundred workers who, without receiving anything, brought their food and their tools, their carts and their oxen and worked tirelessly [...]. The women were equally enthusiastic.

As we know, all these efforts ended in failure, with the monument being forbidden to be blessed and ordered to be demolished. The demolition was probably incomplete, as suggested by M. Olivier in 1721: "We spent three months without being able to remove half the mountain, even though a large number of people were forced to work on it. It seems that men had arms of steel to build it and arms of wool to destroy it. Today, you can still see the mountain and the ditches almost entirely".

2) A first attempt of restoration (1747-1748)

In 1747, at the request of the parish priest of Pont-Château, Vincent Naël, Fathers Mulot, and Audubon attempted the first restoration of the monument. As in Father de Montfort's day, the inhabitants of the neighboring villages "abandoned their land and plows" and flocked to raise the hill. Many men had worked 38 years earlier under the direction of Father de Montfort. The project failed again due to the hostility of the local authorities.

3) Rebuilding after the Revolution (1818-1874)

Having just been appointed parish priest of Pont-Château in 1818, François Gouray, a native of the neighboring parish of Sainte-Reine, planned to re-establish Calvary Hill. Unlike his predecessors, he obtained authorisation from the civil and episcopal authorities, before recruiting hundreds of volunteer workers. Most of them were descendants of those who had worked with Père de Montfort and then Père Audubon. François Gouray composed a hymn to motivate the 500-day laborers who came from Pont-Château and the surrounding parishes, as in 1709-1710: Missillac, La Chapelle-des-Marais, Sainte-Reine, Crossac, Saint-Joachim, Besné, Drefféac, Prinquiau, Campbon, Saint-Gildas-des-Bois, Donges and Saint-Dolay. The parish priest of Pont-Château was also responsible for building the chapel at the foot of the hill, again using volunteer labor.

This reconstruction was part of the movement launched by the Catholic Church after the French Revolutionary (1789-1799) to "reconquer" minds and space. This reconquest was supported by the monarchy under the Restoration between 1815 and 1830. It was the sub-prefect of Savenay, Mr. Dufeugray, who laid the foundation stone for the chapel on 1 March 1821. In addition, three fleurs-de-lys, symbols of royalty, adorn the main cross of the new calvary. François Gouray's successor in 1857, Abbé Pierre Retière, seemed to lose interest in Calvaire. He spent only seven years at the head of Pont-Château parish, compared with 39 years for François Gouray.

The parish archives do not show any mobilization of parishioners before 1873. In the meantime, the Montfort Fathers had settled in Le Calvaire in 1865. Their main concerns were to gain acceptance from the local clergy, organize the material aspects of their installation, and manage the site on a day-to-day basis. As we have previously mentioned, it was not until 1873-1874 those new mobilizations took place.

4) Transforming Calvary into a "Holy Land in Brittany" (1888-1939)

1888 was a pivotal year. On 22 January, in Rome, Father de Montfort was beatified by Pope Leo XIII. That same year, Father Jacques Barré returned to Pont-Château Calvary as the new director of the Pilgrimage.

Jacques Barré wanted to transform the site by rebuilding a new hill and turning the surrounding 14 hectares into a "Jerusalem in Brittany" with a monumental Way of the Cross and shrines linked to the Rosary.

He was assisted in his task by Alfred Gerbaud. Originally from Legé, a commune in the south of the Loire-Inférieure region, Alfred Gerbaud joined the Pontifical Zouaves regiment in 1862 to defend the Papal States against Italian patriots. He then travelled to the Orient as a customs officer and visited Jerusalem. From the end of 1891, he came to Calvary very often and became a sort of site manager. He drew "a panorama of the Pilgrimage", which presented the entire development project.

Like Father de Montfort, Jacques Barré recruited thousands of men and women, mainly farmers, to carry out work on an unprecedented scale. These volunteers came from the south-east of the diocese of Vannes and the west of the diocese of Nantes. As in 1709-1710, the work day was first and foremost a pilgrimage. That's why the workers came dressed in their finest clothes, even though they had to move huge blocks of stone, carry impressive quantities of earth in baskets or wield a spade for long hours. Nearly 700 days of work are donated over 25 years.

Jacques Barré recounted in 1902 : "We appealed to the people of Brittany, inviting them to come and help us, firstly to transport the materials for the Praetorium and then, the following year, to extract and place the huge blocks from the Grotto of Gethsemane and to dig up the Kidron torrent. It was only a trial run. Forty parishes sent us their men. We had 300 to 400 volunteer workers every day. The women claimed the honour of making the Painful Way: a considerable task, carried out with admirable faith and enthusiasm! But this was only a preparation for the work on Calvary itself. For five years, 120 parishes came to offer us their help. We can estimate that more than 120,000 days were donated free of charge by 80,000 different people. On some days, we had as many as 1,200 workers at a time. Many walked 6 leagues or more. One day, some poor women who didn't have enough money to pay for the railway came on foot from 12 leagues away. They had left the day before. The furthest ones usually left at midnight, sometimes at ten o'clock in the evening, to be here at 5 o'clock in the morning. One day, a special train brought us 800 workers. Another day, it brought 600. Some of these workers had walked 4 leagues to get to the station.

Some of these workers had walked 4 leagues to get to the station. They had to set off at midnight. They had spent 4 francs on their railway ticket. After working all day, they left happy to have contributed to a work designed to make Jesus Christ better known and loved, happy to have thereby shared in the glory and happiness of the apostles. Often they could not return home until midnight. That was the whole day. But the more tired they were, the more joy there was, because there was more merit.

We also know that the pupils of the apostolic school gave a few hours as Jacques Barré recounted in 1896:

"Today, Saturday, which is usually a day of unemployment, we can see from our window that there is movement on the Calvary side, a lot of movement even. It's small movements rather than big ones. But how intrepid they seem at work! There's no doubt about it, they're children from the apostolic school. We knew that throughout the week they would be busy with long examination sessions, which would not fail to be an occasion of painful tension for everyone, teachers and pupils alike. Obviously, the idea is to relax our nerves a little; the exams are over. And without knowing it, we could say that the exams were satisfactory.

After working all day, they left happy to have made a hard contribution. Obviously, it's all about relaxing the nerves a bit; the exams are over. And without knowing it, we could say that these exams were satisfactory. As we know, today's favours are highly prized, valued more than any walk or holiday. So the brave children are having a field day! The carriages are loaded and unloaded, going up and down with uncommon speed and, it has to be said, regularity. Everyone was getting on with it and shouting at each other. It seems that the youngest don't want to give anything up to their elders. In any case, everyone is at his or her assigned post: train driver, team leader, pointsman, loader. The embankment we're working on is advancing along the hillside as far as the eye can see.

5) A particular form of mobilisation: subscriptions

Even if the mobilisation of workers cost the Montfort Fathers nothing, they had to face up to unavoidable expenses, in particular the work of craftsmen and sculptors. This is why, in the spring of 1893, a lottery was opened to finance four statues for the future monumental Way of the Cross. Tickets were sold for 25 centimes each. The prizes were donated by parishioners and included statuettes of Our Lady of Lourdes, curios, various items of children's clothing and a tea set.

Parishioners were also invited to donate money directly. Between 1895 and 1897, the parish of Crossac was the most generous.

Between 1930 and 1940, Father Daniel also appealed to the generosity of the faithful, particularly readers of L'Ami de la Croix, the monthly pilgrimage magazine. Donations poured in from Loire-Inférieure, other Breton departments, Maine-et-Loire, Vendée and Mayenne. Donations are also sent from abroad, including Belgium, the United States and Vietnam.

6) Preparing and managing special events

The archives are virtually silent on the involvement of volunteers in preparing highlights such as parish, diocesan and inter-diocesan pilgrimages, which increased in number between 1888 and the 1980s. The reports published in L'Ami de la Croix and the local press highlight the number and geographical origin of the pilgrims and how the days went.

However, we should not forget the women who made the costumes for the open-air Passion plays in the early 1930s. These costumes were made by parishioners from Pont-Château, Crossac and the area around Le Calvaire. The roles were played by almost 200 pupils from the Calvaire apostolic school. All under the initiative and direction of Father Henri Daniel, who also wrote the texts.

The most popular pilgrimage took place during the Montfort celebrations on 10, 11, 12 and 13 June 1948, which brought together 200,000 pilgrims to celebrate the canonisation of Father de Montfort. The parish priest of Pont-Château has nothing to say about these days, but he would like to point out that "so as not to give the impression that the parish was left out of the preparations for these festivities, I will simply remind you that thirty teams were formed by the parish clergy, including the entire population of the countryside, and that the most popular pilgrimage took place during the Montfort celebrations on 10, 11, 12 and 13 June 1948, which brought together 200,000 pilgrims to celebrate the canonisation of Father de Montfort. The parish priest of Pont-Château has nothing to say about these days, but he would like to point out that "so as not to give the impression that the parish was left out of the preparations for these festivities, I will simply remind you that thirty teams were formed by the parish clergy, including the entire population of the countryside, and that these teams magnificently decorated four kilometres of the route, while the urban population decorated the streets of the town and the church square where midnight mass was to be celebrated".

The municipality of Pont-Château, led by Maurice Sambron, played an active role in the preparation and running of these days. As early as 14 June, a municipal poster thanked the population.

Conclusion

More than 300 years after Père de Montfort's attempt to build a monumental Calvary on the Madeleine moors, 200 years after the first successful restoration under the direction of François Gouray, and more than a century after the metamorphosis of the site undertaken by Jacques Barré, many volunteers are now the heirs to the thousands of men and women who gave their time and energy to make the Calvary what it is today.

Today, around a hundred volunteers are responsible for the upkeep of the site, the flowering of the chapels, welcoming pilgrims and tourists, the readings at Masses, Montfortian hospitality, etc. These men and women are the heirs and continuers of a centuries-old history.

OPEN TO ALL, ESPECIALLY THE POOR - LAUDATO SI-BASED PROJECT

Our 14-hectare site, the Calvary of Pontchâteau, offers a plethora of environmental and artistic opportunities while remaining open to pilgrims and tourists.

1- 1- Our project

We wish to create:

A lively abode, a vibrant place connected to nature and spirituality. A place where selflessness, gratitude, beauty, listening, sharing, love, and togetherness prevail.

A place of natural beauty, of artistic expression (manual work, creativity), to welcome, comfort, and restore joy and the zest for life into human body, for the victims of trauma, abuse... but also for any human being in a state of fragility or in need of renewal, in quest of meaning.

A place of creation and 'living together' that brings people to life.

2-To achieve this objective, we have chosen 3 groups focusing on different themes: gratuity, beauty, sharing, fraternity and altruism.

A- the human environment: respecting life - welcoming fragility.

B- the environment in all its biodiversity: caring for our common home.

C- the cultural environment: the arts and education.

“so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” (Laudato Si N°49)

3- Concrete projects planned for each group:

These achievements will be implemented over time depending on human and financial resources.

A) HUMAN ASPECT: Respecting life and welcoming fragilities

- The "Saint Joseph Village" at Le Calvaire, Le Sycomore, has already been up and running since March 2019. The couple that runs the house welcomes around ten vulnerable people to help them get back on their feet, through a family-friendly life, manual activities, and times of prayer. This village is at the very heart of the Calvary of Pontchâteau and aims to continue the preference that Father de Montfort gave to the poor.

- In collaboration with the Association called “Mère de Miséricorde”, a “Way of Consolation” will be officially inaugurated on 24 September 2023.

This initiative aims to help couples who have lost an unborn child and wish to be reconciled with the child and with God. Accompanying them in this process is the naming of those children, whose names could be inscribed on a mosaic plaque, and placed on the walls of the podium in the courtyard of the temple. On the signs that mark out this route, we find biblical words and Father de Montfort's thoughts taken from these hymns.

- As an extension of the Way of the Cross, we would like to build a "Via Lucis": a path of light and resurrection.

B) ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT, BIODIVERSITY: caring for our common home.

- We want to develop biodiversity in partnership with the Natural Regional Park Brière.

- We are gradually planning to set up an arboretum, an educational trail, a conservatory orchard, and a spiritual labyrinth.

- We will be launching workshops to raise awareness of the need to preserve our common home (climate fresco, biodiversity, permaculture, understanding living things, etc.) and retreat sessions on Laudato Si.

- We will make sure that our developments and new buildings comply with environmental standards.

C) **CULTURAL ASPECT:** arts and training

- We plan to create an open-air theatre around the Calvary site to host shows linked to the Calvary project.
- We will be working on enhancing, maintaining, and restoring all the works of art located on the site or to be housed there: paintings, mural frescoes, statues, marquetry, etc. The mural describing Father de Montfort's life-in the chapel at the foot of the Calvary-will soon be restored.
- We are already organising guided tours in collaboration with the local Tourism Office. In the future, we wish to open training workshops in Arts and Culture in partnership with people involved on the site and in the local area.

Bro. Jean Friant – FSG

PROSPECTS FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH GROUP AT THE CALVARY OF PONTCHÂTEAU

Dear Montfortian Associates,

I have been entrusted with the mission of leading the prospecting group for the future Youth Centre in Pontchâteau.

Our reflection team comprises a Montfortian missionary (Father Willi - from Indonesia), a brother of Saint Gabriel (Brother Michel from Senegal), and lay people who have at heart youth evangelization in today's world, a field in which they already involved in such kind of mission.

We hope that our **PASTORAL ORIENTATION**, which is the basis of the **YOUTH GROUP**, "will enable each young person to encounter the Lord by experiencing God's presence and to be nourished and transformed so that they can then be witnesses, disciples, and missionaries with a specificity to be developed, that of Montfortian spirituality".

Pope Francis encourages missionary evangelisation among young people and often reminds us that pastoral work with this group requires us to abandon the comfortable criterion of "we've always done it this way" in favour of "daring to make bold, concrete proposals" with the zeal, creativity and intuition so characteristic of Father de Montfort.

This is why our reflection team has been challenged to organise special events aimed at all young people, especially the most vulnerable, those who were particularly loved by Father de Montfort and Marie-Louise Trichet.

These times could take the following form:

- Leading worship evenings with teachings adapted to young people, coloured by Montfortian spirituality and able to take various forms according to the calendar and liturgical times...
- Laudato-Si type evenings in nature with stargazing and contemplative meditation
- Walks/pilgrimages/sports and spiritual events around the Sanctuary
- Proposals for some young people to prepare and lead a Mass by and for young people once a quarter at the shrine and in the parish.
- Some innovative ideas, such as a "Christian top chef" based on a famous reality TV programme - in other words, cooking sessions bringing together people of different generations (young people, lay people and consecrated members of the Montfortian family) through cooking competitions and times of spiritual meditation.
- And many other ideas to come...

As young people are visually sensitive, we'll be making sure that our proposals are ever more "attractive", so that we can "say God" and "reveal Christ-Wisdom" through art, music, entertainment, dance and carefully designed settings...

We are fortunate to have in our team Laypeople who are sensitive to communicating with young people via the social networks they use.

We are aware that the Pontchâteau sanctuary is a magnificent place steeped in history, and we are keen to make it known to young people by passing on to them the spiritual heritage bequeathed to us by our founders.

We are counting on your prayers to help us face the challenges that await us as we implement this vast evangelisation project for the future youth centre of Pontchâteau.

Sister Christine Pichery - Daughter of Wisdom

On behalf of the Youth & Children Prospecting Group

Friday, August 10, 2023

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

We slowly make the sign of the cross : In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death

From the Gospel according to Saint John

When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus out and seated him* on the judge's bench in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your king!" They cried out, "Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

Reflection

Jesus gave everything, he offered everything. He preached love, healed the sick, and comforted countless broken hearts. His first priority was the little ones, the poor, the foreigners, the sick. Today, it could be the exiled, the illegal immigrants, the jobless, the homeless.

Let us pray with Montfort so that, like him, we may discover the mad love of Jesus.

Merciful Father, in your immense love, we pray to you for all those who are unlawfully condemned by the injustices of men, those condemned by sickness..., Grant them your help and your grace. May all peoples live together in solidarity.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : Pitié Seigneur car nous avons pêché

2nd Station: Jesus carries his cross

From the Gospel according to Saint John

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. And carrying the cross himself* he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

Reflection

Our crosses are heavy on our shoulders, our daily crosses planted by life in our hearts and bodies. It is long, the road to climb our ordeal and accept the cross! Let's walk step by step and put our crosses on the cross of Jesus; they will become like a tree of life.

Let us pray to the Father with Montfort for like him, to understand the place and the meaning of the cross in our lives.

Lord, since no one can be your disciple and share in your Kingdom unless they take up their cross and follow you, help us to take up our crosses with both arms and walk, day after day, in the hope of finding rest and life with you.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : *Si l'espérance t'a fait marcher plus loin que la peur, (bis)*

tu auras les yeux levés.

Alors tu pourras tenir jusqu'au soleil de Dieu.

3rd Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

From the book of Isiah

Who would believe what we have heard? He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain. Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. By his wounds, we were healed.

Reflection

Jesus, you fall from exhaustion, you fall under the weight of the cross and cruelty of men. You're weak, you're a man of pain, lying on the floor.

You generously give up your strength because of your love for us, and this weakness of love causes you to fall.

Today, so many people fall: succumbing to anxiety about their future, and to depression; so many men and women feel invaded by despair, anguish, sadness, and loneliness.

Let us pray with Father de Montfort so that we may love Jesus' Cross like him.

Père miséricordieux, ton fils a vécu pour nous l'humiliation, le rejet, la moquerie. Nous te rendons grâce de nous avoir aimés jusqu'au bout. Quand nous tombons donne-nous de nous relever malgré tout, les yeux fixés sur toi dans la confiance.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : *Vous qui ployez sous le fardeau, Vous qui cherchez le vrai repos.*

Ne craignez pas pour votre corps, Ne craignez pas devant la mort,

Levez les yeux vers le Seigneur, criez vers lui sans perdre cœur.

4th Station : Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

From the Gospel according to Saint John

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Reflection

Lord Jesus, your mother Mary is present in every moment of your life, just as she is in ours. She is a mother who contemplates her son's physical and moral suffering. And her heart is pierced by that suffering.

With Montfort, let us pray to the Lord to grant us the grace to participate with Mary in the salvation of the world.

Lord, we entrust to you all the mothers of the world who mourn the loss of their children, their husbands, or their loved ones. We pray that all those who suffer may find consolation in Mary's loving gaze and the strength to rise again.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the father...

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

From the Gospel according to Saint John

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. Lk 23, 26

Reflection

Very often, the weight of the cross on my brother's or sister's shoulder depends on me. When I refuse the outstretched hand, when I turn a deaf ear to the call of the sick, when I leave my friend in solitude, I burden the crosses of my neighbours. It's enough to be there, like Simon of Cyrene, to have a compassionate heart to relieve those who are bowing under their cross. My own cross becomes lighter when I help my brother carry his...

Let us pray with Father de Montfort, so that, like Simon of Cyrene we may help our neighbours carry their crosses with courage.

Lord, through Simon of Cyrene's example, you have shown us an example of compassion and participation in your suffering. Grant that we know how to be attentive to all those who need support to help them carry their cross. Let us pray for the carers who devote themselves to serving the sick.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

*Song : Si tu dénonces le mal qui brise l'homme, si tu soutiens ton frère abandonné,
La nuit de ton appel sera lumière de midi (bis)
Alors, de tes yeux pourra luire une étoile, l'étoile qui annonce la terre de demain,
L'étoile qui annonce la terre de Dieu.*

6th Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

From Psalm 27

"Come," says my heart, "seek his face";

Your face, LORD, do I seek!

Do not hide your face from me;

do not repel your servant in anger. You are my salvation;

Do not cast me off; do not forsake me, God, my Saviour!

Reflection

Veronica looked for Jesus in the middle of the crowd. She looked for him and finally found him. She wanted to soothe him by wiping his face with the towel. A simple gesture, but it expressed all her love for him and all her faith in him. This gesture reminds us that Jesus is present in everyone who walks the road to Golgotha and that we must look for him in all who suffer.

Let us pray to the Lord, so that like Father de Montfort, we may see Jesus in our brothers and sisters, especially the neediest:

Lord, you teach us that an injured and forgotten person does not lose his value dignity and that he remains a sign of your hidden presence in the world.

Help us to wipe on his face the traces of poverty and injustice so that your image becomes apparent and resplines in it. Let us pray for all those who look for your face and find it in the face of the sick, the dying, the poor, the migrants, the forgotten, and all the rejects of the earth...

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

*Song : Je cherche le visage, le visage du Seigneur,
Je cherche son image tout au fond de vos cœurs.
Vous êtes le corps du Christ, Vous êtes le sang du Christ,
Vous êtes l'amour du Christ,
Alors ? ...Qu'avez-vous fait de lui ?*

7th Station : Jesus falls a second time

From the Book of Isaiah

Though harshly treated, he submitted and did not open his mouth; Like a lamb led to slaughter or a sheep silent before shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Reflection

Jesus' falls are proof that God became human out of love to be like us. So many people are exiled by war or threatened because of their faith. So many men and women feel crushed by burdens, experience unemployment, fear for their future, or simply for tomorrow... When we fall, we forget that Jesus is with us, at our side.

Let us pray to the Father to grant us the same grace as Montfort: never to consider the Cross without Jesus, nor Jesus without the Cross:

Lord, send us your Spirit to console and comfort us. When we are in despair and anger, grant that we listen to your call to rise up and join all those who dedicate themselves to the service of others, of freedom, and of respect for life.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

*Song : Si la souffrance t'a fait pleurer des larmes de sang (bis),
Tu auras les yeux lavés.
Alors tu pourras prier avec ton frère en croix.*

8th Station: *Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem*

From the Gospel according to Luke

A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children,

Reflection

By consoling these women, Jesus wants to console all the women of the world, all those who mourn a loved one they were unable to accompany to the end of the road, all those who fight for respect for human rights and justice.

Let us pray to the Father that, like Father de Montfort, we may become more aware of our sins, which continue to make Jesus' body suffer:

Merciful Father, you said to us through your son: "Blessed are those who weep, for they will be comforted". They are happy with the women who are there when and where they need them. Look at those who weep, their tears are priceless to you. Look at the women of tenderness: they know how to invent gestures of love, and they know how to speak words of peace that give confidence and hope.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : N'aie pas peur, Laisse-toi regarder par le Christ,

Laisse-toi regarder car il t'aime. (bis)

9th Station : *Jesus Falls a Third Time*

From the Gospel according to Matthew

"Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves."

Reflection

Once again Jesus falls. But he needs to be lifted up so that he can continue to the execution site. He could have escaped arrest in the Garden of Olives, but he went all the way so that he could show us how much he loves us.

Let us pray for the grace of "answering love for love", because, as Montfort says, "love is paid for by love" (Hymns.2)

God our Father, your Son has fallen again and again; we entrust to you all our brothers and sisters who fall; let us learn to understand that we can only stand with others. Your Son, out of love for us, took upon himself all our sins; set aside our fears, break our hearts of stone, and open our hearts to the presence of your love.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : *Tu sais combien les hommes ignorent ce qu'ils font.
Tu n'as jugé personne, tu donnes ton pardon ;
Partout des pauvres pleurent, partout on fait souffrir ;
Pitié pour ceux qui meurent et ceux qui font mourir*

10th Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

From the Gospel according to John

The soldiers also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So, they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be," in order that the passage of scripture might be fulfilled: "They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots."

Reflection

Jesus' Way of the Cross comes to an end. He has now reached the summit of Calvary, and the ultimate humiliation has been inflicted on him: he is subjected to public laughter.

Let us pray to the Lord to grant us the grace of detachment like Montfort.

Lord Jesus, through the example of Jesus, you teach us, detachment, grant us to seek the essential values of life, and to defend the dignity of every human being.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : *Regardez l'humilité de Dieu,
Regardez l'humilité de Dieu,
Regardez l'humilité de Dieu,
Et faites-lui l'hommage de vos cœurs.*

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

From the Gospel according to John

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. [...] Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Reflection

So many people are confined to hospital beds! Let's also think of their families who are worried. Let us pray for victims of natural disasters and wars, the disabled, the sick, and the elderly in care homes. Let's also think of those who have been wounded in love, the divorced, the separated...

With Montfort, let us pray for the contrition of our sins.

Lord Jesus, by dying on the cross, you give us life. Grant that we may contemplate your cross with gratitude. You who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, be a light for those who walk in the night of humiliation and suffering.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : *Mon Père, mon Père, je m'abandonne à toi.
Fais de moi ce qu'il te plaira.
Quoi que tu fasses, je te remercie,
Je suis prêt à tout, j'accepte tout,
Car tu es mon Père, je m'abandonne à toi,
Car tu es mon Père, je me confie en toi.*

12nd Station: Jesus dies on the cross

From the Gospel according to John

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So, they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Reflection

Lord, everything is said, everything is finished, and everything is accomplished. No words are needed to understand your love for the men and women of this world. Lifted up on the Cross, you died for me, for my brothers and sisters, and for the whole world. In my turn, I can repeat your words every day, saying: "Into your hands, I commend my spirit".

With Montfort, let us pray to the Father for all those who are drawing near to death:

Lord Jesus, by dying on the cross, you granted salvation to all Mankind. From now on, we are all brothers and sisters with no difference. Help us to consider every person we meet as a brother or a sister.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : *Quand Jésus mourait au calvaire
Rejeté par toute la terre,
Debout, la Vierge, sa mère,
Souffrait, souffrait auprès de lui.*

13rd Station: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

From the Gospel according to John

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. [...] Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So, he came and took his body.

Reflection

Mary embraces her dead son. She knows that Bethlehem and the Cross are united in the obedience of faith. Mary's faith gives birth to the Church. O Mary, we commend to you all those who are sick, and all our departed brothers and sisters.

Mary, our compassionate mother, help us to combat disease, terrorism, violence against the vulnerable, exploitation of the weak, murder, hate, and all the evil that seems overwhelming.

O Mary mother of compassion, intercede for us as you stand before the cross on which your son stretched out his immaculate hands for our salvation.

With Montfort, let us pray to the Lord to grant us to be always attentive to the suffering of our brothers and sisters.

Mary, like you, we want to be transformed by the Holy Spirit and to live faithfully the way of the cross. Mary, Mother of God and of men, pray that we may have courage of faith, desire for poverty, and strength of love. Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

*Song : La première en chemin pour suivre au Golgotha
Le Fils de ton amour que tous ont condamné,
Tu te tiens là, debout, au plus près de la croix,*

*Pour recueillir la vie de son cœur transpercé.
Marche avec nous, Marie, sur nos chemins de croix,
Ils sont chemins vers Dieu, ils sont chemins vers Dieu.*

14th Station : Jesus is laid in the tomb

From the Gospel according to John

They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where he had been crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So, they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by.

Reflection

That's the end of it. Christ is dead, hope is dead. A heavy stone closes the tomb. It is cold, it is dark. What a complete waste! "We have believed..." say the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We too are often like that. We have believed, we have hoped... But when doubt overtakes faith, when our prayers have no effect, when God seems so far away, we are tempted to believe in the victory of the tomb; a heavy stone crushes hope.

But who can believe that life remains enclosed in a tomb, that God's light does not pierce the night, and that death prevails over love?

The tomb is already cracking, like a bud ready to burst open under the immense thrust of Life...

With Montfort, let us pray to Mary for the grace to carry our daily crosses, and for the love of Jesus Christ, to keep the Faith.

Lord Jesus, you have conquered death once and for all. Already, we have risen with you... Give us the gift of learning to live in hope, confident in the arrival of the New Dawn that you have inaugurated for us in these days.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

*Song : Victoire, tu régneras ! Ô Croix, tu nous sauveras !
Rassemble tous nos frères
A l'ombre de tes grands bras.
Par toi, Dieu notre Père Au ciel nous accueillera.
Victoire, tu régneras ! Ô Croix, tu nous sauveras !*

15th Station: Jesus, rises from the dead

From the Gospel according to John

“You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. But he has risen! He is not here! See the place where they had put him. Go! Tell his disciples and Peter....

“Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Reflection

As Christians, we are all called to announce the Joy of the Gospel and of Christ the Risen. It is a right for others to hear the message of the Gospel as it is a duty for us to bring that message through Montfort and his teachings. Such a project requires sincere collaboration from all: Lay Associates, Montfort Missionaries, Daughters of Wisdom, Brothers of Saint Gabriel, and all people that share our spirituality.

As we “journey together” in a synodal Church, let us open up our hearts and minds for better collaboration among the Montfortian Family for the benefit of the whole Church.

With Montfort, let us ask the Lord to grant us the grace of unity and collaboration in spreading the Gospel of Jesus.

Let us give thanks to God for having put men and women on the road to Montfort who have participated in a concrete way in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Lord Jesus, grant us to continue the work of Saint-Louis Marie like Jacques Goudou. May we imitate Marie-Louise in helping the poor and the sick. Give us the audacity of the Marquis de Magnan and the ingenuity of Gabriel Deshayes to perpetuate the work of Montfort. May we collaborate harmoniously in spreading the Gospel.

Our Father / Hail Mary / Glory be to the Father...

Song : Victoire, tu régneras ! Ô Croix, tu nous sauveras !

Saturday, August 12, 2023

SAINT LOUIS-MARIE AND THE BIBLE

The Word of God at the heart of life



How did the Bible accompany Louis-Marie ? That's the question I'm going to answer.

Louis-Marie's experience can touch us and invite us to examine our own relationship with the Bible. His life can show us in what ways it can today, where we are, resource us and guide us, calm us and energise us, challenge us... so that together we can live better as disciples in our Montfortian Family.

- It was 1701 in Poitiers. It was the first time Louis-Marie met Marie-Louise Trichet, who had come to confess. Naturally, he asked her :

"Who referred you to me?

- Father, it was my sister.

- You're wrong, my daughter, she's not your sister, she's the Blessed Virgin!"

Louis-Marie invites us to go beyond the concrete, immediate aspect of the encounter. He invites us to see the Invisible beyond the visible, to see the active Presence of the Lord who "...dwells in all things to contain, sustain and renew them...". ASE 32

For the Bible, it's the same thing. Based on the Word of God I have received, through my reading of the Bible, Louis-Marie invites me to :

- relate this Word to my life,

- experience how the Word relates to my life. In this way, the Word is no longer outside me, but within me :

"It is in our lives that, from morning to night, the Word flows between the shores of our house, our streets, our meetings, where God wants to dwell..."

It is in our spirit... through the acts of our work, our sorrows, our joys, our loves, that the Word of God wants to dwell.

The words of the Lord that we have plucked from the Gospel during a morning Mass, or on an underground journey, or between two chores, or in bed at night - they must never leave us, any more than they leave our lives or our spirits.

It wants to fertilise, modify and renew the handshake we give, the effort we put into our work, the way we look at those we meet, the way we react to fatigue, the way we jump out of our skin in the face of pain, the way we blossom in joy.

She wants to be at home wherever we are at home.

It wants to be us wherever we are us. (1)

The Bible is the starting point of Louis-Marie's life, where he discovers God's ways for him. (2)

People, events and Creation are also the Word of God for him. (3)

For Louis-Marie, the Word of God is a person: Jesus Christ Wisdom, a person who loves him and whom he loves ardently, the love of his life, his only model :

"Our only teacher who must teach us,
our only Lord on whom we must depend,
our only leader to whom we must be united,
our only model to whom we must conform,
our only doctor who must heal us,
our only shepherd who must feed us,
our only way that must lead us,
our only truth which we must believe,
our only life which must give us life
and our only all-sufficiency in all things". VD 61

The Word of God is the foundation of our spirituality, our spiritual attitude.

It nourishes his life, his mission, his decisions...

To go further :

"You're wrong, my daughter, it's not your sister, it's the Blessed Virgin!"

- Look at an event in your life in which Louis-Marie might say to you, "You're mistaken... it's not this person who's telling you, it's the Lord..."
- What does this invite me to do?

A mystical and spiritual reading of the Word of God

We meet Louis-Marie in the rue du Pot-de-Fer, Paris, in 1703. He was distraught, having just been rejected from the Salpêtrière hospital, and took refuge under the stairs in the rue du Pot-de-Fer. He lived there very poorly. The sisters gave him one meal a day. He was young and full of missionary zeal but, in the eyes of men, he went from one failure to another and his future was uncertain. What is he going to do? I am personally convinced that he is having a powerful mystical experience. Christ meets him at the heart of his desire, of his poverty. It is the poor Christ who reaches out to him, the Christ who has experienced what he is experiencing. He experienced the loving presence of Christ, who tenderly revealed to him the immensity of his love and his desire to be a friend to human beings, to bring them happiness.

Louis-Marie is overwhelmed by this mystical experience...

I invite you to read the very beautiful chapter VI of L'Amour de la Sagesse Éternelle (from n° 64 to 71) and especially the letters 15 and 16 that he wrote to Marie-Louise: "Heaven and earth would rather pass away...that God should be at a loss for words by allowing a person who hoped in him with perseverance to be frustrated in his expectation. I sense that you continue to ask God for divine

Wisdom for this poor sinner, by means of crosses, humiliations and poverty. Courage, my dear daughter, courage. I am infinitely indebted to you, and I feel the effect of your prayers, for I am more impoverished, crucified and humiliated than ever...". The words he uses reflect his life, his suffering, his prayer, his encounters with God, his search, but also God's active presence and faithfulness... In his great poverty, he is joined by Wisdom. He is touched by her tenderness and love. In our difficulties and sufferings, let us be touched by Christ crucified...

The Word of God, his life and his spiritual experience are intertwined. What's at the heart of it is listening to the Word of God, and the desire to live it. It's a journey of conversion.

Louis-Marie is looking for the Word that continues to make itself heard by believers. He is a spiritual writer who lives and wants people to live a spiritual, mystical experience, thus enabling an inner knowledge of the Lord. It is the Lord himself who gives this knowledge. The aim of his writings is to provide an interpretation that is beneficial to the spiritual life. So he does not confine himself to the literal meaning of the Bible. He reads Scripture spiritually, finding in it the Holy Spirit at work, past and present.

For Louis-Marie, Christ is eternal Wisdom incarnate. It is the action of the Spirit within him that makes him sensitive to this characteristic, this 'Wisdom' component of Christ. In his reading of all the main sapiential texts, he perceives, in the background, the figure of Christ, Wisdom incarnate. The Church invites us, Montfortians, to highlight this Wisdom trait in the face of Christ, to reread the whole mystery of Jesus, the whole of Scripture, in the light of his reality as the Wisdom of God.

The Word of God and the life of Louis-Marie

In 1714, near Rouen, Louis-Marie met his great friend Blain, canon of Rouen Cathedral. (4) Blain suffered from his friend's bad reputation. He was well aware of the rejection he had suffered and was still suffering. He was critical of his friend's attitudes and ways of acting. He reproaches him, telling him that if he doesn't continue in this way he will never have the companions he desires. I can see Louis-Marie's incomprehension in the face of such reproaches. Our Founder showed him his New Testament and told him that he was simply following Jesus Christ by living as He did, by living what He practised and taught... And he challenged his friend to prove him wrong...

For Louis-Marie, Jesus Christ is his only Master... His contemplation of Christ - during his Incarnation - is the source of his discernment about how to live. This contemplation gradually transformed him. Like Christ, he is moved by the Holy Spirit.

To go further :

- I invite you to take the time to relate Louis-Marie's life to that of Christ. Take a particular passage from his life and look at the words and attitudes of Christ that guided him.
- Louis-Marie assumes the consequences of the radical nature of the Good News. He is undoubtedly moved by the first proclamation of the Passion (Mark 8:31-38) and by Jesus' words: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me". Louis-Marie lived out this fundamental invitation from Christ. He refers to it explicitly in his writings, for example in no. 225 of Love of Eternal Wisdom (Mary's consecration to Jesus) and in nos. 59 and 154 of the Treatise on True Devotion. (5))



Mépris
 Douleurs
 Outrages
 Persécutations
 Humiliations
 Calomnies
 Maladies
 Injures



In 1702, Louis-Marie took up his post at the Hôpital Général in Poitiers. Mind you, this was not a hospital in the current sense of the word, but rather an asylum where all the outcasts were kept... Imagine the reality of the people there:

they were the dregs of society. With a few of these people and Marie-Louise, he created the first (short-lived) Wisdom community. (6) As a Rule of Life, he offered the Cross of Poitiers.

Let's look at this cross. What do we read there? ... Let's put ourselves in the place of the people who make up this group... They are listening to these words. These words say what they

are, what they are going through, their own experiences of rejection and suffering... But these words also speak of what Jesus Christ went through.

Through the Word of God, they rediscover Christ at times when he is scorned, humiliated and maligned. They are joined in their trials by someone who has experienced what they are going through. He is one of them. They are loved up to that point. Their lives are precious to the One who joins them. He does not meet them from the height of his power, but in the humility of his poverty (Song to the Philippians, chapter 2).

To go further :

- I invite you to contemplate this Cross and to let episodes from the life of Christ evoked by these words rise up in your hearts.
- Then choose one or other and take the time to pray it.
- Take the time to see if it resonates with your own experience, including that of Christ's loving presence.

In 1706 in Dinan: Louis-Marie returned from Rome where he had met the Pope. He led the mission in Dinan. He found a poor man, took him in his arms and went to a house.

and said, "Open up to Jesus Christ". For Louis-Marie, the poor really are Jesus Christ. "Whenever you did it to one of the least of these who are my brothers, you did it to me". Mt 25:40

To go further :

- Looking at Christ and Louis-Marie, what attitudes am I invited to adopt in my encounters with the most disadvantaged?

In July 1707, Louis-Marie was invited to his parents' home for a meal. He accepted on condition that his poor friends would be with him. This was a constant in his life: he never ceased to remind us of the inclusion of the poor in society. Such a commitment went against the grain of the general hospitals of the time. I would venture to say that Louis-Marie encouraged social diversity. How can we not make the link with Jesus' meal at Simon's house (Luke 7, 36 to 50)?

There are two inseparable aspects to Louis-Marie's life: his commitment to following Christ and his passion for proclaiming the Gospel to the poor. Olivier Maire, in a talk he gave to the Ami.e.s de la Sagesse in 2003, said that it was the poor who revealed his mission to him.

This can guide us at a time when we are being invited to live out the synodal approach: "The synodal dynamic implies that everyone should be listened to and involved, and invites us to pay particular attention to the poorest, the smallest and those on the periphery. It must encourage the participation of all and, in particular, give a voice to the voiceless. The ideas put forward for the synodal consultation invite us, for example, to ask ourselves: 'What place does the voice of minorities, the marginalised and the excluded occupy?'"

In 1684, Louis-Marie's precarious life as a seminarian did not seem to worry or preoccupy him. He was still guided by the words of Jesus: "Do not worry for your life about what you will eat or about your body..." (Mt 6:25-34). He has unconditional trust in God alone. He lives in "Providence". He accepts the conditions of his existence in peace and serenity. He invites us to do the same (cf n° 4 of his text "To the Associates of the Company of Mary" (SAM)). (7)

The Word of God at the heart of his missionary life : his preaching, his writings...

I'm just touching on the subject. I'll leave it to his biographers: "abandoned to Providence, carrying with him only the Holy Bible, his breviary, a crucifix, his rosary, an image of the Blessed Virgin and a staff in his hand" (Grandet p. 96, 478). Besnard describes the furniture in the rue du Pot-de-Fer in Paris as follows (Besnard T IV page 62): "a poor bunk, a vessel a breviary, a Bible, a crucifix, an image of the Blessed Virgin, a rosary...". This says it all, including the central place of the Bible, which he spent hours reading, praying and meditating on.

Louis-Marie would also put the Bible at the forefront of his life during his missions. At Villiers-en-Plaine, in February 1716, Besnard recounts that he "took the book of the Holy Bible, neatly bound, and had it carried under a canopy to the church in the place where the mission began that day". (Besnard T V, 138). In this bold way, he wanted to emphasise the "real presence" in the Word of God.

"real presence" in the Word. During the procession that accompanied the "renewal of the baptismal promises", he prominently displayed the book of the Holy Gospel, which was solemnly carried by a deacon, venerated by the faithful and which he himself took "on his knees, and having taken it on his breast after rising, he preached so patiently that all his listeners burst into tears" (Grandet, 411). This "liturgy" makes the preacher disappear, so to speak, behind the very Word of God!

A few figures on the extracts or references from the Bible in his writings: 30 books from the Old Testament and 21 from the New Testament are quoted. More than 440 extracts or references from the Old Testament, more than 600 from the New Testament. These may be a few words or entire passages. For example, in *L'Amour de la Sagesse Eternelle*, chapter 12 (n°133 to 152): "Les principaux oracles de la Sagesse incarnée qu'il faut croire et pratiquer pour être sauvés" (The principal oracles of Incarnate Wisdom that must be believed and practised in order to be saved) are only extracts from the New Testament.

Louis-Marie refers mainly to sapiential texts (The Book of Wisdom, Sirach, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Psalms, St John, etc.). These massive references reflect his desire to step back and give primacy to the Word of God.

He wanted to give people a taste for the Word of God. He respects the biblical texts but does not treat them in a static way. He feels the need to bring them up to date by putting them in dialogue with our current realities.

Louis-Marie's companionship with the Word of God made him a man of disproportion, the disproportion of love... A prophet, a praying man who let himself be shaped by the Word of God until he became a fiery missionary. Admirable, but not imitable, you might ask? Not so sure! Let's take more and more time to get to know him, as he draws us into the madness of God's love.

Let yourself be guided by the Word of God...

"But the words that divine Wisdom communicates are not common, natural, human words; they are divine words. They are strong, touching, penetrating words. They pierce more than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12); they start from the heart of the person through whom they are spoken and go right to the heart of the listener". Love of Eternal Wisdom, n° 96

"But who will these slave servants and children of Mary be ? They will be clouds thundering and flying through the air at the slightest breath of the Holy Spirit, who, without holding on to anything, nor wondering about anything, nor worrying about anything, will pour out the rain of the Word of God



and of eternal life; they will thunder against sin, they will roar against the world, they will strike down the devil and his minions, and they will pierce from side to side, for life or for death, with their two-edged sword of the Word of God, all those to whom they are sent from the Most High. " Treatise on True Devotion n° 57

Stained glass window by Jean de Chelles (1200-1265) and Pierre de Montreuil (1200-1267), Christ of the Apocalypse, Centre of the south rose window of Notre Dame de Paris, 1260 A great sharp two-edged sword comes from the mouth of Christ. The sword is the Word, the prophetic word that denounces evil and guides hearts.

Louis-Marie's way of life opens the pages of the Gospel to us. He was the Word of God for the people of his time, and he remains so for us. In turn, "We are the faces of God, reflections of his light. We are the faces of God, reflections of his love. (8)

There is so much more to say. I simply hope that this evocation will give you the desire to continue. You will realise more and more that to look at Montfort and to follow him is necessarily to be inhabited by the Word of God, to taste it, to enter into dialogue with it. It is an invitation to turn to Christ and let him enlighten our lives, transforming them by our adherence to the action of his Spirit.

Let's be aware that this is a strong challenge to our cultures, where all too often we refer to "ourselves" to judge, think and act.

My wish is that during this week you will be able to welcome this Word that comes from the heart and goes to the heart. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, may we say, "Was not our heart burning within us? Lk 24

Sr Anne Marie David, Daughter of Wisdom

[1] Madeleine Delbrel

[2] Montfortian Spirituality Dictionary, p. 384

[3] For example, the canticle 99

[4] St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort by Louis Le Crom, p. 326s

[5] Montfortian Spirituality Dictionary, p.691

[6] [4] St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort by Louis Le Crom, p. 102s

[7] Sr Nathalie Becquart, Xavière, Subsecretary to the Synod Secretariat

[8] Daniel Lachance Musique : Alpec

MISSIONARY DISCIPLES AND SYNODALITY

Experience of the Province of Spain

The aim of our testimony is to express to you not only our experience of synodality between lay people and Brothers of Saint Gabriel, but also to express to you our conviction that the joint mission between religious and lay people is not only an option or only a necessity, but an enrichment that we must promote in order to make possible the Kingdom of God through our Montfortian-Gabrielite charism.

In this sense, independently of what each reality needs to carry out the mission wherever it is (since the realities are different within the same congregation), walking together, consecrated and lay, is a sign of the times that we must live in fullness and with joy.

We are going to explain our experience based on this diagram:

- A) Aerial view of the Gabrielite Shared Mission in the Province of Spain
- B) What has brought us here? What are the objectives and what is the context of what we see?
- C) How is it lived? What do we emphasise?

[A\) Aerial view of the Gabrielite Shared Mission in the Province of Spain](#)

Who we are?

At present, the province of Spain is made up of 26 Brothers distributed in 6 communities - schools (there are 2 more schools without a religious community); 450 teachers, of whom some 35 are associates (they collaborate more closely with the Brothers and share spiritual formation with them) and another 60 associates who are not educators, although some are linked to the Institution through the educational centres.

There are only 3 Brothers who are representatives of the Titularity in 3 schools, and only one other Brother is a teacher. For several years now, it has been lay people who have held the positions of management and who are also representatives of the Titularity.

The associates are distributed in two regions of the Province by geographical proximity: the central zone and the zone of Catalonia.

What do we do?

The 35 associated collaborators (teachers) explicitly share the mission of evangelising through education. They also share these activities with the Brothers:

- 2 Saturday mornings: a formation meeting on Montfortian spirituality, history...
- 2 weekends of joint formation with the Brothers of the Province.
- 1 day of sharing at the end of the course.
- other times of shared mission and life: meetings in the summer.

The other 60 non-teaching associates

- They deepen the charism and Montfortian-Gabrielite spirituality and ecclesial themes.

- Formation meetings once a month and moments of sharing by Brothers or trained lay people.
- Annual pilgrimage to Lourdes
- Prayer of the rosary
- Participation in the Grignon de Montfort Society.
- Collaboration in solidarity campaigns within and outside the Province.
- Some of its members have made the consecration to Jesus through Mary.

B) What has brought us here ? What are the objectives and what is the context of what we see ?

Circumstances that have led to the Shared Mission in the Province of Spain:

1. The very nature of the Institution: Collaboration with the laity has been part of our history from the very beginning. Just as Montfort developed his apostolic mission with the help of the laity, so too the Brothers of Saint Gabriel have worked with the laity throughout their history.
2. The theology of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent ecclesial reflections on synodality, which underlined that the evangelising mission of the Church is unique and shared by all baptised Christians (religious and non-religious). The conviction that authentic shared mission includes sharing the charism.
3. The express invitation made by the Brothers to the laity and the response from them to share –each one in his own environment and from his own vocation– the Montfortian charism from what is specific to the Brothers of Saint-Gabriel.
4. The need for collaboration due to the decrease in the number of Brothers (at first, due to the forsaking of religious life in the 70s and 80s) and then due to the lack of vocations and the increase in the average age of our Brothers. This caused the process of shared mission in the Province of Spain to accelerate.

From the celebration of the 29th General Chapter in 2000 (which explicitly promoted collaboration between Brothers and lay people) until today, the road, as in other provinces, has been slow and not without its difficulties. On the part of some Brothers, the fear of lay interference in their religious life and identity. And also on the part of the laity, who also thought that sharing the mission would mean adding more tasks to those they were already carrying out.

Even so, the Brothers invited those lay people with whom they had established bonds of friendship to become involved in a more committed way in the mission based on Montfortian spirituality.

When the process of collaboration began to accelerate due to the departure of some religious and the increase in retirements among the Brothers, the Institution took care to offer training in the leadership of Catholic educational centres, carried out by the Foundation of Christian Schools, to some teachers, so that they could take on management positions. But this general formation lacked something very important: formation in the Identity of our Institution. If we wanted a good transmission of the Montfortian-Gabrielist charism, we had to pay a lot of attention to the selected persons and accompany them in the process of formation in the identity and leadership of our educational centres.

At the same time, the invitation of the Brothers to visit the Montfortian-Gabrielite sites, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, to people

linked to the Brothers by friendship or by collaborating with them in various activities, led to the creation of three groups of people who, accompanied by the Brothers, went deeper into the charism and spirituality of the Founder. Today these groups are well consolidated.

In a subsequent pilgrimage trip (2012), offered expressly to the collaborators of the educational communities, two more groups emerged, ready to advance in their commitment to the mission and to be formed in the Montfortian-Gabrielite identity and spirituality.

With the help of the Management Team of the centres, Brothers and lay people worked on the document of the General Orientations of March 2009 and together we were better defining and clarifying our objectives and aims. Here we became more aware that we had to walk together, in synodality. Finally, in 2019 we drew up statutes for associates that we now want to revise in order to compare them with the AMG Charter published in 2019.

C) How is it lived ? What do we emphasise ?

This journey has led to the evolution of what we call shared mission. That is to say, not only have structures changed, but also the way of understanding collaboration between Brothers and lay people:

- The laity, from being the recipients of the mission carried out by the Brothers, we have also become the dynamisers of that mission.
- Collaboration has become the co-responsibility of all, Brothers and lay people.

We are together in the school and youth pastoral teams, in the elaboration of the Institutional Educational Project, in the Team for the management of all the schools, in the Team for the formation in the shared mission...

It has to be said that not all lay people embrace what shared mission is, but some have understood that this transformation is necessary to extend the mission and transmit the charism.

Determined to give continuity to the mission in our Province, we put the emphasis on:

- Discerning together about the mission and the work, its future in Spain.
- Accompanying each other, Brothers and lay people: The Brothers accompany us as teachers of life and mission. For our part, we lay people make a lay reading of the charism and share it with the religious. In addition, we accompany each other in certain aspects of daily life according to the needs that arise. By helping one another, we create bonds.
- To welcome Brothers from other provinces in order to enrich our own presence in our own province.
- To spread the Montfortian charism and the Gabrielite values.
- To form in the Montfortian-Gabrielite identity.

With the aim of transmitting the Montfortian charism and the Gabrielite style, we have given priority to the formation of associates, collaborators and leaders of the educational communities. To this end, the Brothers have opted to release some full-time or part-time lay people to be trained as formators.

The formation programmes are developed according to the different target groups:

1. 1 For teaching and non-teaching Associates: We deal with topics on our Montfortian history and spirituality already unified by our International Partnership Commission.
2. For those teachers who hold positions of responsibility, we carry out a training of six seminars (two per year), provided by the Province of France, and adapted to our reality, with the aim of forming Montfortian Gabrielite leaders.
3. For all the collaborators: We have implemented a formation for mission within the hours set aside for pedagogical formation to fit in with their timetable by agreement. There are 4 areas: Personal growth, Transformation of the world (justice, peace, integral ecology), Christian Spirituality, Gabrielite Legacy. Each of the areas corresponds to one or more aspects that we believe are necessary for teachers to become more aware that we are all working on the same mission, even if our beliefs are different. The service staff, despite the fact that their agreement does not provide for training, do one two-and-a-half hour session a year on the history and style of our educational tradition.
4. For the Brothers : Joint formation. The formation sessions that they used to do alone, are now done with the laity and we usually prepare them from the Formation Team, between Brothers and lay people. We have dealt with topics to work on synodality, structures of shared mission, justice and peace in our institution...

Challenges that activate us:

- To promote among the members the Consecration to Jesus through Mary.
- To share regularly more time for prayer and meditation.
- Ongoing formation for Brothers, collaborators and associates
- To make room in the institution for personnel who are retiring and wish to continue in the mission.
- Work more on vocation with young people
- Accompany new teachers better in order to integrate them into the mission.
- Identify new fields of action: immigrants, vulnerable people, etc.

If consecrated and lay people do not walk together, in synodality, we are depriving our congregation of an essential good to carry out its mission. Because wherever a mission brings us together, the gift of the Spirit that consecrated and lay people have received in baptism always acts over and above the different vocations.

NOTES OF DISCUSSION INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTIAN MEETING - NATIONAL GROUPS DISCUSSION (ASIAN)

12 Aug 2023

The following objectives were shared and agreed upon:

1. Educate people (church, schools, beneficiaries, communities, congregations, associates etc.) on Montfort and Marie Louise as a person and a spirituality.
2. Improve collaboration across the three congregations which includes the associates.
3. Make a holistic and tailored Montfortian Spirituality Formation available and accessible for congregations, associates and collaborators in Asia.
4. Bring to consciousness that our congregations and associates belong to one Montfortian Charismatic Family.

To facilitate the implementation of the objectives in the spirit of collaboration at Pontchateau, the meeting proposed to form a platform using an existing one initiated by Fr. Arnold Suhardi called "Montfortian Synodality: Montfortian Family in Southeast Asia".

The proposed name of the platform would be "Montfortian Disciples of Asia" and it would look into the following:

1. Formation for formators at national, regional and continent levels
2. Provide resource persons, materials and pedagogy at national, regional and continent levels
 - a. Monthly Montfortian Synodality Sessions (online and in-person)
 - b. Formation Mission Teams (one resource person from each congregation at national, regional and continent levels)
3. Organise a continent level meeting once in two/three years

NOTES OF MEETING DELEGATES OF THE BROTHERS OF ST GABRIEL

International Montfortian Meeting

9 Aug 2023

International Community House, St. Laurent sur Sevre

2.30pm – 4.00pm

39 members present

9 members absent with apologies

Br. Dionigi welcomed members and invited them to take this opportunity to get to know each other. Members introduced themselves, their names, provinces, and mission.

Br. Dionigi conveyed the greetings of Superior General Br. John Kallarackal as well as the General Council. He added that it was a great privilege to have a gathering like this as one Montfortian Gabrielite family.

Members were invited to share their feedback on the experience in being part of the International Montfortian Meeting. The following points were raised:

- It was an honour to meet the lay associates from the three congregations doing the same work in collaboration with the religious from the three congregations. This gathering should be an impetus to make the MGA vibrant and active in our respective provinces and context. (NE Province)
- This gathering is a great way to learn from the strengths and best practices of the other associates in the other congregations. It was a great sign to see young participant taking lead in their respective countries and provinces. One suggestion was to organise a meeting at a continent or country level for all three congregations to further discuss and develop plans for implementation. Br. Dionigi clarified that there would be such a meeting on Saturday (11 Aug). (Hyderabad Province)
- One suggestion was to have an ice breaker at the start of the event so that participants would be able to interact and get to know each other at a more personal level. Sharing from countries who have more experience and dynamism in their MGA could be invited to share their experiences.
- Parents and students were invited to follow the spirituality of Montfort in 2022 and experience the consecration to Jesus through Mary. This was finally done after many years since the start of the associates. (Ranchi Province)
- There is a good family spirit in this gathering with everyone interested in the spirituality of Montfort. The Brothers have been united in the promotion of lay associates in their respective schools. (Bengaluru Province)
- It has been challenging to leave her family, but it has been a wonderful experience and it is a great way to inspire and motivate her to do more as an MGA in her school.
- MGA Chennai started in 2007 with mostly spiritual animation but more activities can be done for the MGA.
- Experience in France was spiritually enriching and deepening.
- Happy to be here and meet the other congregations. Invitation to share education and pastoral materials and experiences in relation to Montfortian spirituality on website.

Br. Dionigi recommended the following:

- Members should meet the members from the other congregations and learn from them.
- Share what you have received from your experience.
- Share events and articles of the happenings of the associates and congregation with Br. Dionigi.
- Brothers are invited to give a voice to the lay associates of their provinces in the upcoming General Chapter in 2024.
- Pray for one another and the coming General Chapter.

The meeting was closed at 3.40pm.

CELEBRATION OF THE SENDING MASS

MGR. JACOLIN'S HOMELY

Dear brothers and sisters, here you are at the end of this international meeting of Montfortian associates with the objective of becoming ever more " Missionary disciples in a Montfortian family ".

The formula " Missionary Disciples " comes from our Pope Francis who, in his inaugural letter *Evangelii Gaudium*, " The Joy of the Gospel ", presents it as a program for the life of every baptized person.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus encourages his fearful disciples: "Trust that it is me; do not be afraid any longer!

Then Peter, after starting to walk on the water at Jesus' call to join him, is overcome by fear and starts to sink. Then he cried out, "Lord save me! Jesus then took him gently by the hand to save him from drowning, saying to him: "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

So, living as a disciple is first living in trust in Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior. Indeed, by receiving at our baptism the Holy Spirit who makes us children of God, we move from a life dominated by fear to a life led by a relationship of filial trust, as St. Paul recalls in Chapter 8 of his letter to the Romans: For you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children....

"Have no fear! Open wide the doors for Jesus Christ and His saving power. Open the borders between countries, economic systems, regimes, and civilization directions. Have no fear!"

At the beginning of this session, you renewed the vows of your baptism as Saint Louis Marie Grignon of Montfort invited to do it to those who followed his popular missions.

But when Pope John Paul II came to the basilica in 1996 to pray at the tomb of Saint Grignon de Montfort, which so strongly inspired him in his spiritual and pastoral life, he emphasized the meaning of baptism during the service of vespers that he celebrated in the basilica. Here is an excerpt: Christ knows that His coming into the world and, in particular, His passion, Death and Resurrection must reveal to men their vocation, inscribed by the Father in the mystery of His son's Incarnation. It is conscious of this that Christ, at the end of his earthly mission, addresses to the Apostles this exhortation:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

From century to century, the successors of the apostles and many disciples worked to fulfil this mission entrusted by the Lord. In your region, Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort was one of the most remarkable. Today... I would like to emphasize first of all the fact that, in the spirit of St. Louis Marie, all spiritual life derives directly from the sacrament of the Holy Baptism.

Thus we see how the great missionary figures of St. Paul, St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort and St. John Paul II worked to achieve the mission that Jesus risen entrusted to his apostles: to make all nations disciples, by baptizing them and teaching them to keep all his commandments.

Each one of them, with his own style, exhorts us not to be afraid of Christ the Savior who comes to us to save us and to follow him with the confidence of the children of God that we have become by our baptism in water and the Holy Spirit.

We admire these missionary giants, but let's not forget that, through our baptism, we too are sent to be witnesses in the world of the joy of the Gospel, as Pope Francis likes to remind us.

"On the road to mission" is the theme you discussed in your national groups at the beginning of this afternoon.

Saint John Paul II invited us not to be afraid to personally open wide the doors to Christ and his saving power.

In this Mass of Prayer, I would like to remind you of the rest of his invitation, which has been less remembered:

Open up, open up the borders of states, political and economic systems, as well as the immense fields of culture, development and civilisation. Do not fear!

Yes, as you set out again to the four corners of the world, in the diversity of your peoples, your languages and your cultures, hear the message of Saint Paul, Saint Louis Grignon de Monfort, Saint John Paul II and, above all, of the Risen Christ himself: Do not be afraid! In the strength of the Holy Spirit, be courageous and radiant witnesses to the joy of the Gospel in all areas of human life.

THANKS TO THE RIAM 2023 COMMITTEE

Very Reverend Monsignor Jacolin

In the name of all the participants in the International Meeting of Associates of the Montfortian Family, and in the name of the general and provincial administrations of the three Montfortian congregations, I would like to thank you warmly for your presence among us on the occasion of this celebration of sending. On your part, it is a very strong sign of your closeness and your affection for the whole Montfortian family.

At the end of this extraordinary and beautiful week, it is right to express on behalf of all the participants and the 3 general administrations a big thank you to those who made it all possible. I am of course talking about the organizing committee.

Mr. Eric Joyeau - coordinator

Mr. Claude Tignon

Ms. Marie-Line Tignon

Mrs Véronique Frinault

Mrs. Sylvie Abraham

Sr. Marie Laure Paillet - FDLS

Sr Dorothee Harushimana

Fr. Eric Manirakiza SMM

f. Claude MarsaudFSG

f. Maurice Herval FSG

Bro. Guy Bertrand FSG

Dear friends of the committee, when more than a year ago the three general administrations decided to launch this project, Sister Pierrette, Father Arnold and myself were confronted with a big question: would we be able to find someone willing to collaborate in the organization of this big and difficult project? We began asking within our congregations and associates who would be available. Well, everyone we asked, following the example of the Virgin Mary, said yes with a faith and enthusiasm that surprised us. Although aware of the immense task that awaited you, and despite your many

commitments, you did not hesitate to respond positively... and when sometimes the three of us, CDA delegates, were a little hesitant and almost discouraged in the face of difficulties encountered, you have been a source of encouragement.

Dear friends of the committee, you have made possible what we thought almost impossible, thanks to your deep faith, your will and the qualities of each of you placed at the service of God, the Church and the Montfortian Family.

By your courage, your perseverance, your generosity, you have shown that you are worthy disciples of Montfort and Marie-Louise Trichet, and for all those who participated in this session, you have been true witnesses of what it means to put at the service of his neighbor with humility and gratuitousness. For all of us, associates, collaborators and consecrated, you have been a model of service and a point of reference at every moment of this session.

Thank you on behalf of everyone, thank you for all you have done for us, and thank you for the way you have done it. The whole Montfortian family is grateful to you for having realized this precious gift: the RIAM 2023. May the Lord reward you for your generosity and for the many sacrifices you have made during these months.

I would also like to invite Brother Daniel Busnel and Brother Michel Mendy to get closer, who, through their translations and interpretations, made communication between all the participants possible. Thank you for your precious help.

As a token of thanks, on behalf of all the participants of the meeting, we would like to offer you a small but meaningful present: it is a recently published book, whose author, Elisabet de Badouin, was here a two days, and which is entitled: The madness of Totus Tuus. What more appropriate title for this "madness" that the three General Administrations have asked you to achieve? What you have accomplished is folly, but a concrete sign of your Totus tuus to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary.

(presentation of gifts)

We know well, however, that you have not been alone in accomplishing all this... with you have collaborated at various times and in various ways so many lay volunteers and men and women religious, here in Saint Laurent as well as in Montfort sur Meu, Poitiers and Pontchâteau. I invite those who are here to come and come closer to the assembly to receive our thanks and those of all the participants in the meeting. Thank you for your invaluable help and your collaboration in the various services that have been requested of you. I invite everyone to give them a warm applause as a sign of gratitude.

Thank you also to those who have welcomed us these days. So thank you to the parish community of Saint Laurent sur Sèvre and its parish priest Fr. Ronel Charelus; thank you to the director of the school of Saint-Gabriel and Saint-Michel and to all the staff. Thank you for welcoming us so warmly and fraternally.

Friends of the committee and volunteers: in the name of the three general administrations represented here, in the name of all the participants in the international meeting of the Associates of the Montfortian Family, a huge thank you to all for allowing us to feel during this beautiful week that we are members of a great and extraordinary family: the Montfortian Family. And for the gift of all of you, we give thanks and praise to God and to our founders.

Br. Dionigi Taffarello, Vicar General FSG

On behalf of the participants in the RIAM 2023 e of the Three ADCs of the Montfortian Family

COMMISSIONING

Dear Associates, now the time has come for you to leave Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre after these rich and wonderful days of reviving Christian Faith and sharing Montfortian, spirituality.

Let the world hear your joy of being Christians (baptized), let them feel your rejoicing at being members of the Montfortian Family! And what about singing a few tunes of Father de Montfort's Canticles, translated into all your languages and cultures, or learned during these days?

"Let us bless the Lord forever for his goodness".

But if you are not yet blessed by singing grace, at least keep in your heart the spirit of the Canticles and transform into thanksgiving everything for which you are Montfortian Associates:

"Let us bless the Lord forever for his goodness".

All your feelings, your resolutions, your plans for the future ... don't leave anything on the Basilica square, but bring it all and express it in thanksgiving, but also in "action of hope". Yes, because in Montfortian spirituality, Hope is there, most often very courageous and joyful. May the God of Hope be with you on your journey home. The sure Hope is that God is an "immensurable" Father and that you are on the right path outlined by God himself " to Jesus through Mary ".

"Let us bless the Lord forever for his goodness".

Pray to Him boldly for yourself, for your groups, for your mission, and for every man and woman the Lord places in your path. Be audacious and daring to ask God like the Virgin Mary at Cana, like Father de Montfort in his Fiery Prayer, like Marie-Louise de Jésus, Brother Mathurin, the Marquis de Magnanne, Gabriel Deshayes: all of them, together, instruments of Providence, like the many friends who have preceded us in this beautiful history of the Montfortian Family.

"Let us bless the Lord forever for his goodness".

Be daring also with your Principals and spiritual Assistants. Last Wednesday, after my talk, I had so many questions about how to "live the Baptism by Mary" that - I said to myself - our associates need to ask their guides for more time for Spiritual Resourcing and deepening. So dear friends, having come physically to the spiritual source here at Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, now continue to draw together from this source through more systematic and committed ongoing formation, and do so for yourselves and for the people of God of which we are a part.

May the Lord's blessing, which you will now receive through the intercession of all the "saints of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre", go forward, and may God be with you !

F. Marco Pasinato

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED
AT THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING
Of the MONTFORTIAN ASSOCIATES



Europe	America	Africa and Indian Ocean	Asia and Oceania
England	Canada	Burundi	India
Germany	USA	Congo	Indonesia
Belgium	Haiti	Kenya	Papua New Guinea
Croatia	Equador	Malawi	Philippines
Denmark	Argentina	Uganda	Singapore
Spain	Brazil	Republic Dem. Congo	Thailand
France	Colombia	Rwanda	
Holland	Mexico	Senegal	
Ireland	Peru	Madagascar	
Italy			
Poland			
Portugal			

YouTube links

All the live streams are visible on the channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCY7TCfZ8C2xG5a4UhOPmfeA>

Any person, community, having a channel, can integrate these live streams into their channel

August 7

11 a.m. Mass

<https://youtube.com/live/Jm7eNBXUIbo?feature=share>

3 p.m. Teaching

<https://youtube.com/live/HjmJTOP-Xgg?feature=share>

4:45 p.m. Testimonials

<https://youtube.com/live/OisrIPahFJg?feature=share>

August 9

8:30 a.m. Prayer then

9:00 a.m. Teaching

<https://youtube.com/live/ACqCibum3xA?feature=share>

11 a.m. mass

<https://youtube.com/live/FCZrnS8bpDk?feature=share>

8:30 p.m. Vigil

<https://youtube.com/live/MdC7el3-rxY?feature=share>

August 11

8:30 p.m. Festive evening

<https://youtube.com/live/cQbAMjGi-Y0?feature=share>

August 12

8:30 a.m. Prayer Then 9:00 a.m. Teaching: On the march following Father de Montfort

<https://youtube.com/live/cXUG-pvH39I?feature=share>

10:15 am: Teaching: Missionary disciples on the path of synodality initiated by Pope Francis

<https://youtube.com/live/RXywlZLuiU8?feature=share>

Please note: This lesson may follow the previous lesson at 9:00 a.m. You will then have to follow with the previous link

5:30 p.m. Sending Mass

<https://youtube.com/live/NYAEpsPmDIE?feature=share>