



The Superior General in Mbarara, Uganda

MBARARA, Uganda - On Friday evening, the 8th of October 2021, Mbarara Montfort Missionaries community was graced with the arrival of the Superior General of our congregation, Rev. Fr. Luiz Augusto Stefani, SMM with his assistant, Fr. Felix Mabvuto, SMM and Fr. Jacob Otieno Ombidi, SMM who was representing the superior delegate of the Africa Anglophone Delegation. We really cherished this presence. He is indeed the Father at home.

Though the visitors arrived at night in the community, we welcomed them with joy as seen on the smiling faces. We were all so excited with this missionary visit. To most of us, it was a blessing to be with the Superior General since it was our first time to see and meet him face to face. For our visitors, it was a great time to be home after a long drive of more than seven hours from Entebbe airport to Mbarara community.

On the 9th, following his arrival, it was so significant in giving us a taste of what is to come. It was the final day of the preparation for the official opening of the novitiate. It was a ceremony that was so colourful and formative. The novitiate was once again in Uganda after a period of about 10 years in the Philippines. In the morning, the whole team, led by the local superior of the Montfort communities in Uganda, went to meet His Grace Lambert Bainomugisha, the Archbishop of Mbarara archdiocese. They were treated to a very good breakfast. After this, they went to the hospital where one of our community members, Fr. John Mary, SMM, the socius, is hospitalised. They greeted him and prayed with him for his quick recovery. The rest of the day was spent on meeting with the Superior General and his assistant individually. It was indeed a moment of great affirmation.

On the 10th of October 2021, the long-awaited day came: the day that was a climax of what we have been looking forward to. In the early morning hours, we were busy finalizing with the preparations. Around 9:30am, the visitors started arriving with great expectations. They were gracefully welcomed and directed to their respective places. Among those who arrived were the archbishop, many priests from the diocese and some from afar, many religious men and women, our lay associates and the faithful who stay in our neighbourhood. At 10:30am, the ceremonies commenced with the blessing of the novitiate house by Archbishop Lambert Bainomugisha, together with Fr. Luiz, our Superior General and a team of priests around them. It was so fulfilling to see our newly renovated novitiate wing. It is so good for us. In a special way, we thanked all the people involved in this work, most especially the Vice-Province of USA. To you all, we thank you very much. As we were blessing this block, we thought of you and offered a prayer for you.

The Mass proceeded after this act. It was a very gracious moment. What a joy to see the Archbishop with the Superior General together with the priests, religious and all the other faithful in this act of thanksgiving. It was a complete presence. We wholeheartedly thanked the archbishop for being so welcoming, flexible and for his loving presence. We were happy that he blessed our novitiate in this mission year. The novitiate began on the 6th of August, the Feast Day of the Transfiguration. The initial plan was to start on the 1st of August. But due to the inconveniences arising from the lockdown, the Superior General could not come at that time. We were, therefore, very happy that he is here to officially open the novitiate in Mbarara, Uganda.

We also prayed for Fr. John Mary who is sick and we request that you continue praying for him. Father John Mary is the socius to the novice master. He could not be with us, but in the hospital where he is, he was aware of what was taking place. We thank you for your continuous support. In a very special way, it is important to know that on the 22nd of August, he reached 25 years of religious life. We were supposed to celebrate this Silver Jubilee on the day we celebrated the events mentioned. We are so hopeful that we will have time for this in the near future. Likewise, we also prayed for the late Fr. Olivier, SMM who worked here as the Novice Master. At the time of his untimely death, he was the Provincial of our congregation in France. We pray that he will continue resting in eternal peace.

During the Mass, our novice master was taken through the rite in which he accepted his role as the novice master. After the Mass, we had a very good meal. Those who came to us really blessed us.

In the evening of this same day, the Superior General with his team went to the community of Kabuyanda. This is our parish community that is about 78 km from our Mbarara community. On the 11th, they came back to Mbarara and greeted some people around and among them were the Poor Clares nuns. In the evening, we had a very productive meeting with the Superior General and his assistant.

On the 12th, we were led in the celebration of the Eucharist presided by the Superior General. It was indeed befitting to receive his blessing before his departure. Looking at and listening to the Superior General as he heads to Kenya and then Malawi, we could hear the voice of our founder saying: "The Christian and fatherly love that I bear you is so great that you will always have a place in my heart...continue praying even more fervently...I ask you all, in general and individually, to follow me with your prayers on this pilgrimage..." (*LPM Nos. 1,3,6*).

*The Novitiate Community
Mbarara, Uganda*