



Living the Montfort Marian Spirituality with and among the People

BELGIUM – The Montfort Missionaries in Belgium undertake new initiatives to make the Montfortian Spirituality available to the people and relevant for our times. Among such initiatives, the regular meeting of “Na-Oostakker Group” both in Dutch and French is one to name. This group is an outcome of the tercentenary celebration of the feast of Montfort in Belgium. It took its birth after the closing tercentenary celebration in Oostakker. It was formed with a view to prayerfully reflect on the spirituality of Montfort and thereby to translate the spirituality in accordance with the signs of the time. Montfortian Spirituality is still practiced by a good number of people in Belgium, hence when the invitation was sent out many people came to take part in both the events: the opening ceremony of the tercentenary celebration held

in Banneux and the closing ceremony organized in Oostakker; both the places are blessed with a shrine dedicated to Mary.

The two groups meet every month. The Dutch group consists of ten members, by name: Frans Fabry, Marcel Ulenaers, Nepo, Sr. Rozemie, Christian, Christine, Nic and others. For our contemplative reflection and sharing we are asked in advance to read one or two steps from the book series of “In the footsteps of Montfort.” After reading the steps from the book we bring to the group our inspirations, questions, and suggestions. And during the meeting we share these points and ask the rest of the members to add or comment. I compare this activity to that of what is happening in the small Christian communities in many countries. It is indeed enriching for the Montfortians to hear from the lay people their views and their comprehension of the person of Montfort and his spirituality. Their sharing inspires Montfortians and makes them aware of the relevance of Montfort and his spirituality even in this present time. We realize that it is against the spirit of Montfort to reach a conclusion saying, “we live in a secularized world and hence it is meaningless to speak any longer about God, Mary or the spiritual tenets of Montfort.” Their sharing convinces that in this time of secularization, rationalization and atheism there are still people who long to experience God and continue to seek God. No doubt, even caring for this group of believers is doing the mission of Montfort.

Mostly we gather in the afternoon. We begin the meeting with a prayer which is mostly led by Fr. Frans Fabry. He actually leads us into the different moments of the meeting. He entrusts each part of the steps to different participants and invites them to read aloud while the others listen with utmost attention. Thus we meditate, step by step, on the different parts of the steps such as: description of an incident from the life of Montfort, a short passage from the Gospel, a short passage either from the Old or New Testament, points for reflection and sharing and prayers of the faithful. After prayerfully meditating on these passages we choose a date for the next meeting and finally we end the meeting with the recitation of the rosary in our small chapel. Participants are happy to express their enthusiasm for the spirituality of Montfort. They proudly confess that they are unprofessed followers of Montfort. Comparing to the mega spiritual activities organized in different parts of the flourishing mission countries what we do here is too insignificant; however, we pray and believe that our prayers and our small initiatives produce remarkable fruits in the near future.

-Fr. Nepolean JAMES RAJ, SMM