

Montfort_EurHope20: Interview with the Superior General on the Continental Year

ROME - *On the occasion of the launching of the continental year dedicated to Europe that took place in Rome from January 30 to February 1, 2020, we interviewed Father Luiz Augusto STEFANI, SMM, Superior General, on the meaning and events of this year as wanted by the general administration.*

What is the objective of this continental year for Europe?

The continental year "Montfort_EurHope20" is a special time with three objectives: to evaluate the presence of Montfort missionaries in the continent, to strengthen the sense of belonging and unity, and to trace the missionary perspectives for the future. This year, all the members of the Company of Mary, starting from the General Administration, are invited to listen in order to help the confreres and lay Montfortians who live and work in Europe to be faithful to the Montfortian charism today.



Why is Montfort_EurHope20 the title?

During these first two years of our mandate and during the preparatory consultations of the various entities, we have noticed that phenomena such as advanced age, the decrease in the number of confreres, pessimism, closure and secularism meander in our communities in Europe. These phenomena are shared with many brothers and sisters who live in this continent. The virtue of Hope helps to detect the signs of the blessing of God that calls to serve Him and to trust Him in difficult situations, as what have known by Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus and many brothers and sisters who preceded us in faith. As I wrote in the year's announcement circular on the 2nd of December, this year 2020 is a time of renewed hope for the Montfortians of Europe.

What does this launch of the year consist of?

On the anniversary of the Founder's birth, we convened the superiors of the European entities in Rome, where the meeting with the Pope gave Montfort the vision of his mission. *"Clement XI - writes Joseph Grandet - gave him the quality of Apostolic Missionary, and he especially advised him to teach Christian doctrine well to people and children, and to renew everywhere the spirit of Christianity by renewing the promises of baptism."* This launch is therefore a symbolic event for a new birth of the Montfortian mission in Europe.

How was this event?

I would like to summarize it in three words: listening, praying, sending. 1) *Listening*. The confreres were welcomed at the general house in an atmosphere of celebration and listening. Each of them was able to express his hopes, concerns and suggestions on how to live this year, wherein each entity will experience the canonical visit of the general administration. 2) *Praying*. Each mission of our Founder was preceded and accompanied by numerous prayers. During these two days, we had the joy of praying together for the good fruits of our visits in Europe, entrusting the presence and the Montfortian mission of Europe to Mary, Mother of Hope. 3) *Sending*. The missionary sending, with the recommendation to distribute the calendar of the General Council's visits to Europe, aims to involve everyone in this movement of renewal.

What does the successor of Saint Louis-Marie expect from this continental year?

I expect to meet and get to know all the confreres in Europe better and to grow with them in the virtue of hope. I intend to help the confreres to reinforce the joy of being part of a Congregation which has the vocation of being without borders and which can widen its missionary field.

A message to the Montfortian Family on the occasion of this launch of the European continental year?

Please accompany us this year with much prayer and as Pope Francis told us, *"Let us not be robbed of hope."* (Evangelii Gaudium, 86).

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