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On the "Pas de Montfort" – FIM 2022

"It's over, I run around the world, I took a wandering mood, to save my poor neighbor". (Montfort C22)

SAINT-LAURENT-SUR-SÈVRE, France - A beautiful experience on the "Pas de Montfort" took place on the initiative of the Montfort Missionaries, on the occasion of the FIM (International Montfort Formation).

This was first a session of six solid weeks of formation in Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, open to the three Montfortian congregations (Daughters of Wisdom, Montfort Brothers of Saint Gabriel and Montfort Missionaries). The members who made up the animation team were all Montfortians from different countries, namely: Bishop Gilles COTÉ, SMM from Canada, Father Arnold SUHARDI, SMM from Indonesia, Father Joji, SMM from India, Father Robert Junior, SMM and Brother Jasmin, SMM (Scholastic) from Haiti, Father Luis Manuel, SMM and Mrs. Angela Maria from Colombia, Father Samuel, SMM and Mrs. Joan-Fany from Madagascar, Deacon Ephrem, SMM from Congo (DRC). This group already bore the mark of the Montfortian synodality which the Church urges us to live in these times.

The after-session, for the group of Montfort Missionaries alone, was a very copious pilgrimage on the "Pas de Montfort". The group began this time of discovery with the celebration of the Eucharist on August 15, 2022, in honor of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, at the tomb of Saint Louis-Marie in Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre. The Mass was presided over by Bishop Gilles Coté who was

insistent about the necessary request for grace to be available and free in the footsteps of our great apostolic missionary, an apostle of the end times.

During the first week, the visit of the historic Montfort circuit was guided by Father Santino BREMBILLA, SMM, the former Superior General of the Company of Mary and now a member of the International Community of Pontchâteau. He introduced us to the places and missions of Father de Montfort in the Vendée region, starting with Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, then Roussay and La Séguinière, Saint Christophe du Ligneron, La Garnache and Salertaine. The first week ended with a long trip to Paris, without forgetting a stop in Chartres, more precisely at the Notre Dame de Chartres cathedral and its crypt where the statue of the Virgin Mary sits, in front of which Louis-Marie prayed.

When we arrived in Paris, we found accommodation in the community of Lazarists, rue de Sèvres. This Friday evening was also marked by the arrival of Father Arnold, assistant general, from Indonesia, to be the new guide on the "Pas de Montfort". Then, on Saturday, the group went on a walking tour of the Parisian places that Montfort frequented. Our stay in Paris ended with Sunday Mass at the Basilica of St. Sulpice, where the new priest, Louis-Marie Grignon, celebrated his first Mass in 1700.

As soon as we returned from Paris, the second week was focused on the rest of the visit to the places and the mission of Father de Montfort in the Vendée and in the region of Brittany such as La Boissière-du-Doré, Landemont, Vallet, Poitiers, St. Pompain and Villiers-en-Plaine, Luçon and Fontenay le Comte, Nantes...Saturday of the second week was the trip to Rennes where Montfort spent his teenage years. There, the pilgrimage was centered on the visit of a few places including the Parish of St. Sauveur, near the statue of Our Lady of Miracles and Virtues in front of which the young Louis-Marie often prayed while he was at the college of St. Thomas Becket in Rennes.

In the afternoon, we visited the Cesson Bridge before reaching Montfort-sur-Meu. The stay in Montfort-sur-Meu began with a visit to the birthplace and the celebration of Sunday Mass with the faithful of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort Parish. In the afternoon, with Pierrette Magnier, we visited the surroundings such as St. Lazare, Iffendic, La Bachelleraye and Le Bois-Marquer, where the missionary spent his childhood. We even pushed to Dinan and Mont Saint-Michel where he spent his spiritual retreat in 1706. The next day, the group returned and took time to visit Notre-Dame du Marillais, where a Montfortian community is always present and active.

The last week of our stay in France was marked by the visit of other famous places in the Montfortian mission: Fontevrault, Notre Dame des Ardilliers (Saumur), the cave and the church of Mervent and Vouvant, Saint Amand-sur-Sèvre. On the first Sunday of September, it was the community of Pontchâteau where Montfort erected his great and famous Calvary during his mission in 1709. Finally, we ended with a visit to Aigrefeuille and La Chevrolière, where Saint Louis-Marie composed a Canticle to Our Lady of the Shadows.

Our journey on the "Pas de Monfort" in France was concluded with the Holy Mass celebrated in honor of the nativity of the Virgin Mary and the renewal of the vows of Brother Jasmin (scholastic of Haiti) at the tomb of Father de Montfort.

Rome has made the second stage of our living pilgrimage a reality. The group went to Lorette where, according to tradition, Father de Montfort did pilgrimage before us, on the occasion of his

visit to Pope Clement XI. Then it was the discovery of the site of the old church of St. Blaise and the parish of Saint Louis, King of France: Montfort stayed there and celebrated Mass. Thanks to our two guides (Fathers Arnold and Joji). The group took the opportunity to visit the obvious historical sites and then all the basilicas of Rome; outside Rome, he visited the monasteries of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica in Monte-Cassino and Subiaco, the basilicas of St. Francis and St. Clare in Assisi. Thus, "Les Pas de Montfort 2022" ended.

Five intense weeks of experience and sharing but also an authentic pilgrimage in the footsteps of Montfort, bathed in prayer, the rosary and the singing of hymns composed by him. Haitians had to leave before the others, and the other members of the group returned to their respective countries on September 22, 2022.

On behalf of the FIM 2022 team, I would like to thank all the people who have participated or contributed, in one way or another, to the achievement of this discovery on "Les Pas de Montfort". I would especially like to thank Fathers Santino and Arnold who made us discover, with a very affectionate availability, a wandering missionary devoured by the love of God and his holy Mother. I also thank Father Joji who took care of the logistics. Thanks to him, the group really felt very good.

Finally, my thanks go to all the Montfortian communities, those of France and Rome who welcomed us, especially the community of Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre and the General House in Rome, where we stayed longer.

Very brotherly!

To Jesus through Mary!

P. Henri Samuel NILAINA, SMM