



International Montfortian Marian Congress (IMMC)

BENGALURU, India - On 16 October 2022, the IMMC, entitled: "*LISTENING FOR LIFE: The Share of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the Healing Power of Listening*", was inaugurated by invoking the Holy Spirit. Maria Bhavan Brothers sang a hymn to the Holy Spirit. Followed by the MC of the day Bro. Abhi, SMM on behalf of the Marian Centre-Bangaluru, invited Fr. Deepak JOSEPH, SMM to welcome the entire assembly along with the dignitaries (about 300 persons consist of Priests, Religious and the Montfort Associates). The resource persons were welcomed with a shawl and a garland by the Director of Marian Centre.

The official opening of the Congress was done by Rev. Fr. Luiz Augusto STEFANI, SMM, the Superior General of the Company of Mary. In his video message he said; the "listening" of Our Lady is more than a physical attitude, listening reflects a behaviour, a gesture of fraternity and recognition of the value of the other who speaks. He further said: In convoking the Synod on Synodality, with the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission", Pope Francis reminds us of the first and noblest mission of the Church: to listen to the cries of the people and to walk together, so that no one stays by the way. Quoting from Pope Francis he said: In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Supreme Pontiff tells us that "today more than ever [...] we need to practice the art of listening, which is more than listening. Listening, in communication with the other, is the capacity of the heart that makes closeness possible, without which there is no true spiritual encounter". Pope Francis continues: "*Only from this respectful and compassionate listening can one find the paths to genuine growth, awaken the desire for the Christian ideal, the desire to respond fully to God's love and the desire to develop the best of how much God has sown in our own lives.*" (EG 171)

His valuable message ended by focusing on the aspect of "Listening to the word of God has primacy, being also the principle and foundation of spiritual life and holiness. Mary listens fully, welcoming and meditating within herself, in order to bear fruit. This word, which requires faith, availability, humility and readiness, is accepted as the things of God should be welcomed."

Our Montfortian Belgian confreres, Rev. Fr. Jos VAN DEN BERGH, SMM, the Delegate Superior of Belgium and Rev. Fr. Frans FABRY, SMM, the Director of Marian Centre in Belgium,

beautifully introduced the theme with all their expertism in a Montfortian flavour emphasising "Our Lady as the best model for her listening capacity".

In the first formal Session, Dr. Prof. Reimund BIERINGER from the Catholic University of Leuven, online addressed the theme: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!" (Lk. 11:28 NRS) – "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37 NRSV): An Interpretive Dialogue on Listening and Obeying between Luke (1:26-38) and John (2:1-12).

In his online presentation, he invited for some interactive questions and clarifications. This was one of the best talks of the day which the entire gathering appreciated much. Dr. Maria Micheal FELIX was the moderator for the first session for he knew the Professor from the University of Leuven.

In the second Session, Dr. Maria Micheal FELIX from the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Aluva (PIA), in his theme: The Johannine Mary as the Model of Active Listening: A Literary-Critical Investigation of the Role of Mother of Jesus at the Wedding at Cana (2:1-11) and at the Foot of the Cross (19:25-27). He explained the comparison between the two texts in the Bible in a very scholarly manner. Fr. Prem KUMAR, SMM was the moderator for the two sessions before lunch.

In the third Session, Dr. P. J. GEORGE, SG, Montfort Counselling & Educational Services (MCES), Chennai, explained his theme: "Mary as a Model for Listening: A Psychological perspective." It was a scholarly presented paper in his expertism.

In the afternoon, for the fourth Session, Dr. Sr. Patricia SANTOS, Jnana Deepa, Institute for Philosophy and Theology, Pune, explained her theme: Prophetic Listening of Mary: A Model for Fullness of Life from the women's perspective. Fr. AJEESH (doing his MBA from the Christ University) was the moderator for the three sessions in the afternoon.

In the fifth Session, Fr. Reni PUNNAPPANAL JOSEPH, SMM, Director of Montfortian Marian Centre, India, in his theme:

"The Attentive listening of Mary According to Montfort" explained the Montfortian way of understanding the 'attentive listening of Mary' both in the Scripture and in the writings of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. In his presentation, he said; "the difference between our listening and the listening attitude of Mary is the difference of its 'attentiveness' in its quality."

The sixth and the final Session, by Fr. Nepolean JAMES RAJ, SMM, PhD Researcher in the Catholic University of Leuven explained well his theme: Mary, the Mother of God and My Mother Listens: An Unquestioned Belief in Popular Devotion. His presentation was a unique one with lots of comparison. The vote of thanks was given by Bro. Naveen VAS.

The IMMC had its last and most important and practical session by the Rosary Procession for which all the participants were present. The Rosary Procession was led by the Brothers along with the Montfort Associates that ended at the Marian Grotto with a blessing to mark the end of the Marian Congress by Rev. Fr. Anthony PEREIRA, SMM followed by the anointing with the scented oil that is coming from a special Rosary that was received by Fr. Reni PUNNAPPANAL JOSEPH, SMM a year ago.

As a whole, it was a memorable and a historical day for the Indian Vice-Province and particularly the Marian Centre in Bengaluru. I thank the Lord and his Holy Mother for the success of the day without forgetting the valuable part of the Provincial, Rev. Fr. Peter MASCARENHAS, SMM and the team of Marian Centre who worked together towards its pleasant end.

*Fr. Reni Joseph PUNNAPPANAL, SMM
Director, Marian Centre, Bengaluru*