



XIV Montfortian Congress for South of Italy

SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO, Italy - *On March 24 and 25, 2023, the XIV Congress of Montfortian Missionaries and the Maria Queen of Hearts Association (AMQAH) was held in San Giovanni Rotondo. Here is the report of this event which brought together about 250 participants.*

Due to the pandemic and its consequences, we had lost the habit of moving to find ourselves together. Finally, with great joy, we experienced our XIV Interregional Congress in southern Italy, organized by the AMQAH with the Montfort Missionaries. The place chosen, San Giovanni Rotondo (Apulia region), a place of spirituality, thanks to the spiritual presence of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, attracted many participants, many also from northern Italy. These days required a lot of preparation work, especially on the part of the Group with wishes of the Maria Queen of Hearts Association of the Regional Center of Trinitapoli, but in the end the results paid off for the effort provided.

The Congress opened with the Eucharistic celebration on the eve of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, which concluded the Spiritual Exercises for priests in preparation for Consecration to Jesus through the hands of Mary. Five priests from different regions of Italy made their consecration for the first time, other priests have already renewed it. It was very moving to see the people of the AMQAH praying for these priests on such an important occasion. The following day, Saturday morning, the conference began with morning praise and greetings from Archbishop Msgr. Franco MOSCONE, of the Archdiocese of Manfredonia/Vieste/San Giovanni Rotondo, who had known the Montfortians during his studies in Rome. In a paternal spirit, he addressed to us words of welcome and esteem for our presence as a sign of true spiritual communion.

Thus, after having invoked the Spirit, we listened to the video-message sent by Father Luiz Augusto STEFANI, SMM, Superior General of the Company of Mary.

The first biblical catechesis of Father Gioacchino PRISCIANDARO on the letter to the Hebrews: "The mystery of obedience, from the "Here I am" of the Son to the "Here I am" of the Mother". May the way of the Cross become our way, may the way of Crucified Love be for us the way to follow. Jesus taught us how we can live and how we can die. The man conceived by God, the new Adam be for us a model of Christian life. The second catechesis focused on "Holy Slavery as a Christian way of life", animated by Fr. Luciano NEMBRINI, SMM. Ineffable and unthinkable the mystery of the incarnation for Montfort, it is up to us to imitate the dependence that Jesus had on Mary for the glory of God and our salvation. In the mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus presents himself as prisoner and slave in the womb of Mary and depends on her in everything, it must be so for us too. Little by little the Word, prayer and song introduced us to the great mystery of the Incarnation which is at the heart of Montfortian spirituality.

Father Gaetano Fernando GRIPPO, from the diocese of Tricarico, also a member of the AMQAH, then warmed hearts by making them understand how the mercy of God, abundant in the Heart of Mary, comes to us through this mystery where Jesus lives and reigns in Mary. The participation and the emotion then became uncontrollable thanks to the testimonies of those who encountered this mercy in an indelible way in life, experiencing that Mary was truly the channel of the Grace that Jesus acquired for us on the Cross.

The touching testimony of the life of Antonella FRAGIELLO, former Miss Italy finalist, told by her husband Carlo SILVESTRO and actress Ilaria SPADA. In the encounter with Mary at the Montfortian Spirituality Center in Medjugorje, this couple found the strength to take the step of marriage despite Antonella's incurable illness and to embrace the Cross of Jesus. The testimony of Dajana D'IPPOLITO who left her singing career to change her life, found a Christian family and put her gifts at the service of the mission that Mary entrusted to her. Her song lifted our hearts seeing in it the beauty of the Heart of the Mother. With all these gifts of the Spirit, the day then unfolded with songs and dances in honor of Jesus and Mary and ended in the evening in the crypt of Saint Pio with the Eucharist presided by the archbishop and the renewal of the act of consecration.

The next day, Sunday morning, Fr. Kristijan ZLENDER, SMM, responsible for the postulancy, in simple but profound words, opened our eyes to the dimension of our humanity in the Incarnation and its missionary horizon which reaches the wounded flesh of humanity today, flesh that we saw and heard immediately afterwards in the testimonies of Fr. Mimmo (Cosimo) OZZA, a fervent supporter of Montfortian consecration and founder of the Community of Recovery of San Francesco and its boys. Here too the touching testimonies and finally the echoes and resonances of the people present at the days lived reached the hearts of everyone. The Congress ended on Sunday afternoon with a very beautiful and enlightening speech by Fr. Carlo Maria LABORDE, Ofm Cap, on the devotion to Mary of Fr. Pio de Pietrelcina and the closing Mass.

We give thanks to God for the many gifts received, in teachings and testimonies, for the lay people of the Montfortian Family who live spirituality, for these days of fraternity and joy that the Queen of All Hearts wanted to give to her children who are consecrated. Certain that the

spirituality taught by Montfort is a treasure to be lived and of great value for the times in which we live, may it give vitality and missionary fire to the Church today.

Association Mary Queen of All Hearts