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Providence in the Montfortian Formation in PNG

MORATA, PNG - The Montfort Missionaries first set foot in Papua New Guinea in 1958 through the Canadian Province. It was only after more than fifty years that the Montfortians based in PNG decided to start the formation program for candidates to religious life. Starting a formation could have been a big deliberation from the missionaries considering a lot of preparation such as lack of personnel, formation infrastructures and most especially the level of readiness of the possible candidates to the formation, knowing that the Church in PNG is still young. However, as Montfort says, *If you don't take risk for God, you won't do great things for Him.*

Formation has gone through much of experimentation in many ways until the leadership decided to have it in Port Moresby. However, the condition of formation house is still very far from ideal. At the moment, the formation house is at St. Martin de Porres Parish in Morata where the Montfort Fathers are in charge. Our temporary formation house is the Resource Center building of the parish. Since the house is for a different purpose, many basic things necessary for the formation house are not there like shower room, kitchen and

water is running only for some hours in the morning and afternoon. We are also sharing with the literacy school of the parish and the Sunday school. The whole building needs to be renovated. In addition, the place is too hot, dusty at times and with a lot of troubling bed bugs. Recently, providence paved its way as a Carmelite convent is being offered to us as our new formation house. Hopefully, transfer could happen soon.

There are eight candidates at the moment. Four are in their postulancy while the other four are in *come and see* program. The four postulants are taking up Religious Studies (RS) at Catholic Theological Institute (CTI). Two are in their third year and finishing up this year while the other two are in their first year. Hopefully God willing, by next year we might have candidates for the novitiate.

Since our eight candidates are staying together, formation program has to cater for two different levels and approach that sometimes need a lot of adjustments, not to mention that our candidates are coming from the different regions of the country and each region has its own unique cultures and languages. One can only imagine how challenging our formation is. As in many other formation houses, we try our best to follow a timetable and programs guided by the spirit of the Montfortian Ratio. We try our best to make the program holistic according to the pacing of our candidates with extra sensitivity to their cultures. The experience in the Parish mission in Kiunga, Western Province of PNG and as a formator back in the Philippines, has helped a lot in adjusting to the different circumstances.

Many would say that Papua New Guinea is a land of impossible wherein unexpected things can happen anytime. However, everything is worth doing knowing that mission work will ever continue. Somebody has to continue the evangelization *a la Montfort*. I am very much hopeful through the guidance St. Louis Marie de Montfort, and the support of the whole congregation, that SMM foundation in PNG will flourish.

Fr. Roy Millano, SMM

Formator