

Rome, November 25, 2021

«Rise and Shine, Montfort in Asia-Oceania» Asia-Oceania Continental Year, 2022

Dear Confreres and Montfortian Associates,

The Continental Year for Africa and Madagascar is still not over. During visits to the countries of this continent, the members of the General Council witnessed the enthusiasm of the Montfort Missionaries in missionary life. Their participatory liturgy with hymns, music, dances, clapping, etc., flows and confirms the divine life in those who take part in the various celebrations we have attended. All the welcomes, meetings, dialogues with various people we met in this continent awakened not only in us who visited but also in the confreres and people there the spirit to walk together towards a brighter future amid various challenges that exist.

Still keeping to heart the warmth of this Continental Year of Africa and Madagascar, **now the entire Congregation will be asked to turn its attention to the Montfortian entities that exist in Asia and Oceania.** On these two giant continents, the little Company of Mary has four entities: **India, Indonesia, PNG and the Philippines.**

Our Members in Asia and Oceania

Although India and Indonesia are the two big entities in this Company, they are small in their continent or even in their country when compared to many other Congregations. This smallness is certainly understood here in terms of the number of members and the impact of the very «discretive» apostolic work that these entities have. In a situation like this, Montfort's words are sure to cheer up our confreres in these two continents. «"Fear not, little flock, because it has pleased your Father to bestow a kingdom on you" (Lk. 12:32). Fear not, although, humanly speaking, you have every cause for fear.... » (Letter to the Members of the Company of Mary, 1).

According to current statistics, at the time this letter is written, it can be said that **India** has 65 priests, 2 bishops, 35 scholastics, 4 novices and 4 pre-novices. While **Indonesia** has 71 priests, 1 brother in perpetual vows, 2 scholastics in perpetual vows, 66 scholastics in temporary vows, 4 brothers in temporary vows, 15 novices and 16 postulants. **Papua New Guinea** for its part, has 12 priests, 1 bishop, 1 brother in perpetual vows. To be more precise still, it must be said that in PNG missionaries come from various entities: 5 confreres come from India, 7 confreres from Indonesia, 1 missionary from the Philippines and 1 missionary from Madagascar. Today, this General Delegation has 5 postulants; 3 scholastics of temporary vows, 2 of which are sent by the General Delegation of French-speaking Africa. The **Philippines** has 18 priests, 1 brother in perpetual vows,

2 scholastics in perpetual vows and 5 scholastics in temporary vows. We can say that the presence of candidates in each of these entities ensures the prospect of healthy growth. This gives hope for the future to the whole Congregation.

Furthermore, based on the latest data, there are 17 Indian Missionaries who work outside their home country and there are 2 people who are preparing to go to Germany. Then there are 15 Indonesian Missionaries who work outside their home country, and there are 3 people who are ready to go respectively to Portugal, Papua New Guinea and possibly Vietnam. I am certain that, in the discernment leading to the new mission in Vietnam, the first founding missionaries will come from these continents, one person who has been reserved in Indonesia is already a real hope. Let us pray for this intention. Finally, there are 3 Filipino Missionaries who are currently working outside their home country. From this we can see that these entities are offering a real contribution to the international mission of our Company.

Among the confreres from Asia and Oceania who are currently abroad, there are several who are pursuing further studies in the context of future ministry: 4 from India and 3 from Indonesia. Then there is 1 from PNG and 1 from the Philippines who are preparing for further studies. This is without mentioning some of the confreres who are doing further studies in their respective countries. These will all be necessary for future leadership succession.

Then, with regards to **Montfortian Associates** it can be said that **India** has 60 registered members; while **Indonesia** has 335 members; **PNG** has 32 members; and the **Philippines** has 99 members without counting all the countless people who consecrated themselves. This Montfortian spirituality sharing is part of Montfortian mission to these two continents which shows a thirst for a deeper spiritual life.

Place and Type of Mission Work

With regards to Missionaries in perpetual vows working in their entities in Asia and Oceania, it is good to know more clearly where they are and what they do.

In **India**, confreres on perpetual vows can be found in the Vice-Provincial administrative house, in houses for initial formation (minor seminary, pre-novitiate, novitiate, scholasticate), in a social home for underprivileged children, in two schools and on coffee plantations; the rest work in parishes. Still in India, there is a Marial Center, which also works in conjunction with sharing the Montfortian spirituality with Montfortian Associates. In addition, there are also confreres who are involved in itinerant preaching and become spiritual animators for various ecclesiastical groups.

In **Indonesia**, the confreres serve in the administrative field of the Province, apart from letting themselves available as spiritual guides for various ecclesiastical groups. There are many confreres who work in the field of formation (two minor seminaries belonging to the dioceses, community of aspirants, postulant-novitiate, scholasticate) and in parishes. They can also be found in the two categorical missionary communities «à la Montfort». This entity pays attention to sharing spirituality through Montfortian Associates locally called «Kerabat Santo Montfort» (KSM).

In **PNG**, almost all the confreres can be found in parishes, even the Superior of the entity administration of the PNG Delegation General is still a parish priest. This is important for their

financial autonomy. Now they also have a formation house located in the country's capital, Port Moresby. This entity has just started to open itself up to share the Montfortian spirituality with the laity.

In the **Philippines**, the spread of the Montfortian spirituality is very prominent in the work of the confreres. There were certain confreres who were assigned to it, but all the confreres who serve in other fields are actually involved. They all work together in a solid team of very dedicated lay people. Apart from this special area, confreres are found in houses of formation, in parishes and in the administration of the General Delegation of the Philippines.

It should be specifically mentioned here that **in India, Indonesia and the Philippines there are some Missionaries who continue their missionary work by carrying the cross of their health**. Sick confreres continue to receive the attention of the responsible of these entities in order to find the best solutions for the restoration of their health. It is certain that their missionary life emanates from prayers offered in struggling silence, from willingness to be cared for, from smiles and patience.

How to «Rise and Shine»?

After seeing the number of members, the type, map, and extent of the work of the Montfort Missionaries in these two continents, the question is: how to make their presence meaningful to the environment in which they live? This meaning has to do with the contribution, precisely a distinctive contribution, that their missionary presence might provide.

To get there it is important for the Missionaries in these two continents, along with their Missionary Associates, **to be true to their distinctive identity**. It is this sense of self-identity that radiates a unique light to their surroundings, while being aware that the Montfortian identity is dynamic precisely because of its contact with the local context in each country.

So «Rise and Shine, Montfort in Asia-Oceania» which become the theme of this Continental Year is not a «big story» that is boastful in nature. The basis for this «Rise and Shine» is «self-oil» (read: self-identity) which will be faithfully lived by the Missionaries in this region along with their Montfortian Associates. And that light will not radiate widely and infinitely by reaching all corners of these two giant continents, but locally, in places that are within reach of these Missionaries and Montfortian Associates. Thus «Rise and Shine, Montfort in Asia-Oceania» is an encouraging cry, which pushes for a Montfortian presence in these two continents to be prophetically meaningful.

In this continental calendar year, there appear to be several special opportunities to reflect on this theme in more depth: firstly, on **the official opening of this Continental Year in Manila on January 23, 2022**, then and especially on the **Continental Assembly which will take place in Malang, Indonesia, on 4 -13 July 2022** and finally at **the official close of this Continental Year in one of PNG's places in December 2022**.

We will live all this **in the spirit of synodality. Togetherness, communion, participation and cooperation** are some of the keywords of this synodal mentality. Hopefully all of this can be applied by the Montfort Missionaries and Montfortian Associates in preparing and carrying out this Continental Year of Asia and Oceania. This fits with the fact that, in the Church calendar, we will be in the middle of preparation and even implementation of the Synod on walking together,

«synodality», in October 2022. The words of encouragement in the development of the Synod also serve for us: «Walking together, and reflecting together on the path traveled, the Church will be able to learn, from what she will experience, what are the processes that can help her to live communion, to participate and to open oneself to the mission».

Finally, let us unite our hearts and minds with our confreres and our Montfortian Associates in Asia and Oceania as they seek to consolidate and renew their presence and missionary zeal in these two continents. May all people in Asia and Oceania let God be present and reign in their hearts. May the «Secret of Mary», the preparation for the reign of Jesus Christ, be more and more revealed by the Holy Spirit to the people of these two continents.

I wish you all **a happy entry into Advent** which will begin this Sunday 28 November. Advent is a promise, a time to wait but it is certainly more than a hope. Because the Lord has truly come and invites us to follow him resolutely. We hope that this Continental Mission Year that we are about to begin, gives us strength to live the missionary desire of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort to be a missionary without borders to the peripheries. We can live this ideal in our context in Asia and Oceania. It's not impossible that we could put these words of Thomas Merton: «In Asia I hope to find anything or someone to help me move forward. I don't know if I will finish my days here, and that is not the most important, well, the most important thing is to always respond to the will of God». Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort and Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus always pray for us all.

My greetings in Jesus living in Mary,



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Superior General

Website :

<https://www.montfortian.info/asia-oceania/>