

THE MONTFORTIAN MISSION IN TODAY'S WORLD

Circular Letter



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Circular Letter
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Were not our hearts burning within us as he talked while we walked along the way and he explained the Scriptures?

LK 24, 32

1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Brothers,

I extend my fraternal greetings and warm embrace to each and every one of you who accompanied the conclusion of the month of October devoted specifically to the mission. It was the extraordinary missionary month desired by Pope Francis whose theme was "*Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World*".

Of course, the extraordinary missionary month of October 2019 is ended but the Montfortian mission continues and will continue beyond the month.

I'd like to take the opportunity of this circular letter to look at our mission in today's world, the places, people, culture and we, the Montfort Missionaries, who are inserted among them.

This is "a letter," not a study of documents and it doesn't pretend to be the result of any profound study. I want to share with you some convictions about the montfortian mission today: what I have seen; what I have heard; and what I think is the service we can offer to the Church today as montfortians.

I am grateful to the confreres who have collaborated and accepted to share their experiences, and their lives as missionaries with its struggles, joys, challenges, sadness, and hopes. These confreres represent the montfortian presence on the five continents: this serves to give a glimpse, however partial it may be, of all that we do around the world as missionaries. I hope that you can read this as if it were a prayer, as if you are listening to the heart of each one as he wrote these passages.

In fact, we can look at the mission as opportunities of meeting and listening. *Meeting*, as I have already mentioned, with people and cultures, and an encounter with God. *Listening*, to the people, other persons and their histories, and to listen to God present in our midst. This letter hopes to enter into the lives of these people, as they live as missionaries and what it is they encounter along the way, the things they listen to, and how they have responded and committed themselves to the people along the way. As we will see a little further into the letter, Pope Francis inspires us to go further along this path through his encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which he uses imagery that we can well understand. “A pastor should be covered in the smell of his sheep...”

This letter seeks to look at mission with the same fervor and enthusiasm as our founder, St. Louis de Montfort. Of course, a good, meditative reflection on the Triptych would serve us very well.

During the same month of October, the Synod of Bishops took place to reflect upon the “Amazon: New Paths for the Church and towards an integral ecology.” The preparatory work of this synod began with a period of listening in the very place that the Synod Fathers are discussing – in the Amazon! To listen is not an attitude that we accept easily. It demands a lot from us, most

especially patience and honesty. A missionary should be a person who is available to listen and accessible for the encounter.

As you read these pages, I invite each one of us to reflect upon the mission we have served, individually and as a Congregation, as the Company of Mary in service to the Gospel. Let us take time to reflect upon the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. These disciples were missionaries who, after having confronted the disillusionment and the pain of Jesus' Passion, now rush back breathlessly to a decisive encounter with the Risen One. Jesus walked with them, and with us, through the difficult and dangerous roads of the mission. And it is up to us to ask the same question as the two disciples along the Way, "were not our hearts burning within us as he explained the Scriptures?" (LK 24,32)

As you will be able to see, in the letter I share the experiences of the people, some texts, some articles and documents. I have divided this theme by the names of each persons and the place where he is serving. It is my desire that this not be a boring letter to read.

My Brothers, happy reading! May you be filled with joy and enthusiastic at all times.

2. THE EXTRAORDINARY MONTH OF MISSION

There are many documents, articles, and messages that have been circulated since the 2017 announcement of this Extraordinary Month on Mission 2019. I have selected two letters from Pope Francis on this topic. From each I have only chosen a few paragraphs, but it is well worth reading the documents in their entirety.

The first is the letter written by His Holiness on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the promulgation of Pope Benedict XV's apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud*. The second is the letter from the month of June 2018 directed to national Directors of Pontifical Works in preparation of the Extraordinary Month on Mission for October 2019.

2.1 The words of Pope Francis

This comes from the letter of our Holy Father, Francis, on the centennial occasion of the promulgation of Benedict XV's apostolic letter, "*Maximum Illud*", about the missionary activity of the Church in the world (22 October 2017).

In 1919, in the wake of a tragic global conflict that he himself called a "useless slaughter", the Pope recognized the need for a more evangelical approach to missionary work in the world, so that it would be purified of any colonial overtones and kept far away from the nationalistic and expansionistic aims that had proved so disastrous. "The Church of God is universal; she is not alien to any people", he wrote, firmly calling for the rejection of any form of particular interest, inasmuch as the proclamation and the love of the Lord Jesus, spread by holiness of one's

life and good works, are the sole purpose of missionary activity. Benedict XV thus laid special emphasis on the “*missio ad gentes*”, employing the concepts and language of the time, in an effort to revive, particularly among the clergy, a sense of duty towards the missions.

That duty is a response to Jesus’ perennial command to “go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). Obeying this mandate of the Lord is not an option for the Church: in the words of the Second Vatican Council, it is her “essential task,” for the Church is “missionary by nature.” “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity; she exists in order to evangelize.”

Pope Francis continues exhorting us in the letter to overcome the temptation that impedes us from truly being missionaries. These words of the Holy Father call us to read again the conclusions of the General Chapter in 2017 and the six challenges and the six alert points that we received. Each call us to look ahead with hope and to accept the challenge to go to the mission *ad gentes* in very concrete ways.

The Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* called for transcending national boundaries and bearing witness, with prophetic spirit and evangelical boldness, to God’s saving will through the Church’s universal mission. May the approaching centenary of that Letter serve as an incentive to combat the recurring temptation lurking beneath every form of ecclesial introversion, self-referential retreat into comfort zones, pastoral pessimism and sterile nostalgia for the past. Instead, may we be open to the joyful newness of the Gospel.

He concludes the letter broadening the horizon, not only for missionary priests but for all the faithful of God, so that love of the mission will increase.

In the light of this, accepting the proposal of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, I hereby call for an Extraordinary Missionary Month to be celebrated in October 2019, with the aim of fostering an increased awareness of the “*missio ad gentes*” and taking up again with renewed fervor the missionary transformation of the Church’s life and pastoral activity. The Missionary Month of October 2018 can serve as a good preparation for this celebration by enabling all the faithful to take to heart the proclamation of the Gospel and to help their communities grow in missionary and evangelizing zeal. May the love for the Church’s mission, which is “a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people”, grow ever stronger!

Of equal significance is the letter the pope wrote to the Directors of Pontifical Mission Works. In it, he reminds us that the mission which we undertake is not our own creation but is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In some ways, what the pope is writing to us is a reflection of words we find in Montfort himself when he reflected upon the Company of missionaries about which he dreamt: *“Remember your Congregation: for you, it is to only bring about this Congregation by your Grace. If man is to put his hand to the task, he will come to nothing. And if he mixes his own with your divine handiwork, then it is sure to fail, and everything will be thrown into the air. It is your Congregation: it is your work, O Sovereign God”*. (SA, 26)

From the letter to the Directors of Pontifical Mission Works
(1 June 2018):

A fascinating journey lies ahead of us: the preparation of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019, which I announced during last year's celebration of World Mission Day. I heartily encourage you to see this preparatory phase as a great opportunity to renew missionary commitment throughout the Church. It also represents a providential occasion for renewing our Pontifical Mission Societies. Things always need to be renewed: hearts, activities and organizations, because otherwise we end up turning into a museum.

The Holy Father continues a little further along:

It is not merely about renewing the old, but about letting the Holy Spirit create newness. It is not about us, but the Holy Spirit. We need to make room for the Spirit and to allow the Spirit to create newness, to make all things new (cf. Ps 104:30, Mt 9:17, 2 Pet 3:13, Rev 21:5). He is the principal agent of mission: he is the “boss” of the Pontifical Mission Societies, not us. Do not be afraid of the new things that come from the crucified and risen Lord: these are beautiful novelties. But be on guard against other novelties that are unacceptable. Novelties that do not come from him! Be bold and courageous in your mission, always cooperating with the Holy Spirit in communion with Christ's Church (cf. Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 131). This boldness means pressing forward with courage, with the zeal of those who first proclaimed the Gospel. Your regular book for prayer and meditation should be the Acts of the Apostles. Go there to find your inspiration. And the protagonist of that book is the Holy Spirit.

“Baptized and sent: the Church of Christ on Mission in the World.” This is the theme chosen for the Missionary Month of October 2019. It emphasizes that the call to mission is a call rooted in Baptism and addressed to all the baptized. Mission is a “being sent forth” that brings about conversion both in those who are sent and in those who receive their message: in Christ, our life is a mission! We are mission, because we are God’s love poured out, God’s holiness created in his own image. Mission, then, is our own growth in holiness and that of the whole world, beginning with creation (cf. Eph 1:3-6). The missionary dimension of our Baptism thus becomes a witness of holiness that bestows life and beauty on our world.

In the conclusion of this letter, Pope Francis presents Mary to us at the moment of the Visitation. The missionary attitude of Mary is that *“she was the servant of the Lord... she is not the protagonist, but the servant of the only protagonist of the mission”*.

3. THE LETTER OF FATHER DE MONTFORT TO THE ASSOCIATES OF THE COMPANY OF MARY

The wise words of Father de Montfort are always an inspiration for us. His life and his writings are testimony to his confidence, optimism and hope, even in the most difficult and hard moments of his mission. We find in this letter the fruit of his having contemplated Jesus Wisdom, his nearness to the poor and his missionary creativity, are combined with his compassion for sinners and all that he encountered as he served the mission.

Father de Montfort exhorts the members of the Company to remain faithful to the spirit of evangelical poverty and to trust always in Divine Providence. Saint Louis Marie foresaw that the

number of missionaries in his Company would not be great - and possibly even weak - and these words of his still speak so profoundly to us, his small Company, in these modern times.

3.1 Words from Saint Louis Marie de Montfort

The selections from his different exhortations that I have selected invite us to an attitude of trust, prayer and gratitude in the Lord who, in his Providence, has revealed his love for his missionaries.

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. You are only a little flock, so few in numbers that a child can count you. (Letter to the Company of Mary [LCM], 1)

“I am your protector and your bulwark. I hold you in my hands, little company,” says our Eternal Father (cf. Gen. 15:1; Is. 49:16). I have graven you on my heart and on the palms of my hands in order to cherish and defend you because you have put your trust in me and not in men, in my Providence and not in wealth. I will deliver you from the snares they set for you, from the calumnies they spread about you, from the terrors of the night and from the devil who roams at noonday to seduce you.

I will shelter you under my wings, I will carry you on my shoulders. I will provide your sustenance. I will arm you with my truth and you will find it such a powerful weapon that you will see with your very eyes your enemies falling by the thousands around you: a thousand wicked paupers on your left hand and ten thousand evil rich on your right. You yourselves have nothing to fear from my avenging power. It will not even come near you. (LCM 3)

Dear little Company of Mary, these are the marvelous promises which God has made to you through his prophets. They will be yours provided you put all your trust in him through Mary.

Entirely dependent as you are on the Providence of God, it is for him to support you and to increase your numbers, saying to you, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Do not, therefore, be discouraged because you are few in number. It is for God to be your defender, so do not be afraid of your enemies. It is for God to provide all that is necessary for your bodily needs. Do not, then, be afraid that you will go short of the necessities of life in these hard times which are hard only because people do not have enough trust in God. It is God who will glorify you, and have no fear that anyone will take this glory from you. In a word, fear nothing whatsoever and sleep in peace in your Father's arms. (LCM 4)

But it is not enough to be just unafraid. God wants you to hope for great things from him and to be filled with joy by reason of this hope. Our bountiful Father wants to give you the kingdom of his grace. He has made you his kings and priests by the Christian faith and the priestly ordination he has conferred on you, and your voluntary poverty gives you an additional right to be called kings, for blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3). (LCM 5)

For sure, these selections are not the only writings of Father de Montfort which nourish our missionary spirit and bring us greater confidence in Divine Providence. All the documents in the *Triptych*, the different *Letters*, and a few of his *Cantiques*, are an endless source that replenishes our missionary thirst.

4. THE CIRCULAR LETTER: MONTFORTIAN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

Father William Considine (Fr Bill), Superior General, wrote to us in May 1996 a most beautiful *Circular Letter on the Montfortian Apostolic Community*. Starting from questions that arose during the preparations for the 1993 General Chapter about “...*weaknesses in living our apostolic community. True, signs of life and hope were also underlined, for example the desire to live together, the desire to welcome one another, the desire to communicate even on the international level, the desire to re-value in a new way our apostolic religious life, inspired by the original intuitions of our Founder*” (#1), he invited us into a profound reflection on our apostolic community.

In this very first paragraph, the Letter recalled what was said by the members of the General Chapter: “*Our communities often show signs of individualism and the danger of dispersion, which often makes it difficult to pray together. In certain places, Montfortian inspiration has been weakened, whether in long established communities which feel worn out, or in younger communities suffering from a lack of Montfortian tradition*”.

Individualism and dispersion are very real dangers that are always simmering in our lives and mission. I am not sure, following the General Chapter of 1993, if things have gotten better. But what I do know is that this Circular Letter on Montfortian Apostolic Community still speaks to us and is going to aide us now as we look honestly at ourselves and the value we place on apostolic community and how essential we see it for the effectiveness of our montfortian mission today.

4.1 The words of Father William Considine

As with other texts in this letter, I have chosen “some word,” some key points from Fr Bill’s letter, as an invitation to take what we are reading today with a humble attitude toward conversion. It is significant that, in paragraph 4 of his Letter, he quotes from Blain a text about the missionary and Wisdom:

...different kinds of wisdom; that the wisdom of a person living in community is one thing, the wisdom of a missionary and apostolic man quite another; that the former had nothing new to undertake, and nothing to do but to let himself be guided by the rule and customs of a well-regulated house; ...the former lived a hidden life in peace because he undertook nothing new; whereas the latter, having continually to fight the world, the devil and sin... had to execute new designs...; that in a word, if wisdom consisted in doing nothing new for God, in undertaking nothing for his glory for fear of being spoken about, then the Apostles were wrong in leaving Jerusalem; they should have remained shut up in the Cenacle; St. Paul should not have made so many journeys, or St. Peter have attempted to plant the Cross upon the Capitol... (Blain, 335-337)

Father Bill commented on these texts and invited us to make a radical choice for the mission, to leave behind all laziness and comforts, to be creative and “*take leave of Jerusalem*” – as if he were anticipating Pope Francis who calls us to be a Church “that is always on the march.”

The first wisdom is characterized by a lack of anything new, observance of the rules, remaining in the religious house; the second is characterized by newness, doing something, undertaking combat, a task to accomplish in the world. The title “apostolic man” not only confers a

legitimacy on the missionary, but it brings him to the very heart of the foundational event of all apostolate: leaving Jerusalem... (#5)

All of his findings and conclusions which follow these remarks are complemented by what he had already written. A missionary is 'one who leaves Jerusalem,' just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus whom we mention at the beginning of this present letter. The missionary never goes alone, he is a man of community who is in dialogue with the Scriptures and discovers Christ anew each time the bread is broken. We can't spend much time here on what it means to be a man of community or to critique our confreres who live alone, but let it suffice to recall what Fr Bill wrote to us:

Nevertheless, Montfort also desires to found a Company of Missionaries; his apostolic man will also be a man of community. There is a great paradox here: apostolic man and man of community. Montfort puts the two polarities in a state of constant dynamic tension. When one term seeks to exclude the other, there will be crisis and conflict. It is the crisis of the church of Jerusalem, a community closed in on itself by fears and worries brought on by the entrance of the "Nations", the "others"; a timid church which is frightened by the audacity of Paul and the imprudence of Peter. The crisis of Jerusalem is the same one that shakes Canon Blain, and which will always disturb the apostolic community. It is the continual tension in our Montfortian apostolic community when the apostolic man is also a man of community. (#6)

Something that needs to be deeply rooted in our missionary heart and which needs to motivate all our missionary endeavors is the certainty that all that we might be able to accomplish will be better when it is done from within a community. Father Bill employed a

beautiful expression: *montfortian apostolic community is the place of the Gospel*. This, most definitely, brings consequences.

...a Montfortian apostolic community must be a place of the Gospel. Precisely with my brothers in community I must be able to listen to the Good News, to believe in it, be converted by it, and become myself Good News for my confreres before going out to preach to the wider world. Always, this must become genuinely incarnate and operative. "Things take time." Thus, we need the time to be physically present to one another, the time to gather together, to know one another, to laugh and cry together, to help and understand one another. We need the time to pardon and to be pardoned, the time to "wash each other's feet" in the most ordinary and concrete ways. We also need the time to be spiritually present to one another: in a rhythm that is realistic and real, in a prayer that incarnates our life and our ministry. (#22)

As always, even when using selected texts, we can find more riches in the Circular Letter from Fr Bill. We are invited to reread it with attention and to pray with the same hope as he has at the end of his Letter:

My prayer is that, on the eve of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the canonization of St. Louis-Marie, the Company of Mary and the entire Montfortian Family, religious and lay, will dare to collaborate in new configurations for the mission of the future. And my prayer is that, with a profoundly Montfortian experience of incarnation, we will witness to the Communion of Love that is God, and the Good News that is Jesus Wisdom. "What we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have touched...we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us... and that our joy may be complete. (#27)

5. MONTFORTIAN MISSION IN THE PRESENT DAY

The title of this chapter may seem a bit ambitious. Certainly, I don't pretend to speak of the montfortian mission in its entirety as we find it throughout the world. The title, however, does want to call our attention to a mission that is modern, incarnate, and concrete in some places where we exercise our montfortian mission. In fact, when we think about our mission, we think of concrete realities: the person of the missionary; his strengths; his abilities, enthusiasm, limitations, fragility, excitement and his despair; we consider the places, the times and situations, the people and the cultures. Each place demands a very specific action. It is not good to want to accomplish the mission in the same way in different places of the world.

If we consider that the mission is the response, it is a commitment that we undertake in response to a call. Thus, we can affirm what Father Luis Mosconi writes when he says that "life is the mission." "The mission is in the heart of life. To negate life as mission is to negate the sense of living." (Luis Mosconi, *A vida é missão, para uma missiologia mística popular*, Gráfica Sagrada Família, 6a Edição, pp. 30-31)

In today's world, on each Continent, we can find difficult situations and other challenges to the mission. We ought not be aloof to the pain, the hunger, to the different ways that millions of people are suffering. The *Mystery of the Incarnation*, a central element to our Montfortian spirituality, the daily proclamation of "*the Word that became flesh and dwells among us...*" will not permit us to become insensitive to the suffering of our neighbor.

According to a report prepared by Doctors Without Borders, "the world has reached another sad record on the displacement of people and of those who are refugees: we have reached the highest level since the Second World War. According to the

UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2018 more than 70 million people were forcefully displaced from their homes by violence and war. Some have been internally displaced and others have had to cross borders, becoming refugees.

These populations of displaced persons are constantly exposed to abuses and frequently what they do have is not sufficient to cover their basic medical, housing, food and water needs.

And we also find large populations of people on the move out of necessity. This is fueled by extreme necessity and misery, forcing them to travel via dangerous routes that are known for exploitation and violence.” (*Consult the website for Doctors Without Borders*, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org>)

Displacement is not the only reality generating suffering and death, there are family problems, unemployment, the lack of evangelization in remote and dense urban areas, and the most worrisome concern are the consequences of global climate change around the globe. We can add to this list of complex situations simply by looking around ourselves and being more aware.

I am going to invite you to “listen” some of our missionaries have to say. They will relate and share their concrete missionary experiences amidst the tears and joy, from what they have lived and what they are living today on different Continents of the planet. It is good to repeat that we cannot fail to take into account the reality of each continent without also reflecting upon our mission and its missionary experiences from some specific places.

Some of the following texts were a bit long so I have had to draw some conclusions, however, the messages they share with us have not lost their essence or content.

5.1 AFRICA

From the testimonies that follow, I don't want to infer that all of the African continent is similar. With all of the different cultures and lands, the objective is to listen to our brothers with "the ears of our hearts" and, thus, to be open to their particular place in the world. Africa will forever be a mystery, it will always have a mythical sense to it, something that has resisted the influences of foreign cultures. Listening now to our confreres let us take time to pray for our missionaries, lay people, religious men and women who find themselves in the most difficult places of mission.

5.1.1 Words of Father André Babusia – General Delegation of Africa Francophone, DR Congo

From his experience, Father André Babusia shares with us what he understands about the montfortian mission today. His struggles, sufferings, uncountable missionary services and those times when his health has been fragile are shared in this simple and profound text.

Our mission is our specific way of expressing "be daring for the Gospel" today, *a la Montfort*; and in the daily struggle to be like Mary and with Mary, docile to the Holy Spirit in love with a preferential option for the poor to help build-up the Kingdom of Christ: a Reign of Love and Mercy, without borders and with a choice to choose situations without borders; top constantly be focusing our attention and awareness of the needs of the Church and the world in our day.

These present-day realities, circumstances of different times and places, bring us back to a rigorous analysis and audacious hermeneutic to read the signs of the times.

What motivates our montfortian mission today is an external and internal dynamic which can better be expressed in these words: the person is the path toward God.

The mission of **proclaiming** the Gospel in such a way demands that we consider all aspects of what it means to be fully alive and of all of God's creation. This suggests an immense amount of work to be done and tasks to be completed.

A mission such as ours **denounces** all false wisdoms, beginning with a true personal conversion and a call, through action, to transform all that surrounds us. It doesn't stay quiet nor close its eyes to dehumanizing events. The mission cannot be tranquil while still there is so much suffering and injustice.

The mission **renounces** all self-centered love and personal interest. It is far-removed from any kind of abuse of power; one can lose everything except what is essential: faith in Jesus Christ. It renounces revenge.

And it **announces** (without shouting or wailing, but instead by articulating what's the deepest meaning of each day), signs of peace, mercy, pardon, happiness, fraternity and solidarity in times of war, insecurities, disasters, persecutions, calumnies, isolation, sickness, tension and misunderstandings.

It **pronounces** with conviction the maxims of Love and the Mercy of God for His friends: the poor and the small ones. It is a spokesman of the Beatitudes and strives always to be a sign of the tender love of God for all people.

In view of all that has been written, today's montfortian mission demands:

- Freedom of spirit to decide, daily, to be at God's side without ever stepping away from reality, but more as an inspiring figure in the midst of a world filled with antichristian messages;
- A faith that is solid and simple that is fed by a deep personal prayer life and the sacraments of the Church;
- A great capacity to adapt and to continue learning about oneself. Each of us is a mine filled with talent and it is necessary that we share the fruit of who we are. We know, for example, that there are missionaries who are priests and, who by their own strengths, have taught themselves to become architects, nurses, educators, teachers, mentors in agriculture, plumbers, mechanics, officials who lead rural growth committees, pharmacists, etc.
- To transcend prejudices of all kinds: racial, tribal, regional, cultural, ideological, political and economic so that we can "Act Together" in an effective, efficient and Christian manner;
- A good dose of patience and a strong trust in Providence, especially during tumultuous moments;
- A fidelity, with a doubt, in the Holy Spirit when those inevitable Crosses come to the missionary's life: persecutions, beatings, calumnies, oppression, tensions, misunderstandings, jealousy and hatred. Because these

crosses are a school of patience, pardon and hope when the Lord gathers us together to allow us to be formed by his Spirit;

- An altruistic culture that is animated by good stewardship of the “Res Communes”;
- A profound sense of belonging to the Company of Mary and a desire to be converted into an ambassador of Montfort in the maze of daily life.

5.1.2 Words from Father Louis Nkukumila – General Delegation of Africa Anglophone, Malawi

How can you recognize a mission *a la Montfort*? With this as a point of departure, Father Louis Nkukumila shares with us some concrete activities and his thoughts on that very same question.

A Door to Door Mission - We Shall Go to Them

Among several mission activities we have at Balaka Parish, I would like to single out one activity which has been unique and has left an impact on my life as a Montfortian religious priest and I see it to be typical ‘*a la Montfort*’. As a matter of fact, Montfort desired us to be “missionaries” who would continue the mission Christ entrusted to his Church: “That there may be good missionaries in your Church” (PM 3). “They are called by God to preach missions...” (cf. RM 2).

It is a mission which I dubbed as “Door to Door Mission” because it entails visiting each and every Christian at his or her doorstep. Our mission in the Church consists in revealing the mystery of salvation to those who do not yet know it, and in helping those who have already heard the Good News to

rediscover and deepen this mystery by a renewed consciousness of the meaning of their Christian commitment. This is the mission I would like to share with you.

Why embarking on such kind of mission:

Balaka Parish has approximately 40,000 parishioners. The catchment area of Balaka is comprised of people who have been victims of natural disasters, political instability, hunger, corruption and poverty. Above all these are also victims of newly Pentecostal churches which are now mushrooming around Balaka. It is worth noting that Balaka Parish has been losing some of its parishioners to these Pentecostal churches. This is visible more particularly among those parishioners who are in very remote villages of Balaka Parish where the Church is far.

What's the aim of such a mission?

Mine was the desire to be with the people, to share their joys and sorrows, to help them realize their dreams, to bring them a message of liberation, in fact the whole exercise was meant to bring again the Gospel to them. It was aiming at a spiritual renewal of their Christian life.

What did it entail?

The exercise entailed visiting each and every family in every Small Christian Community.

The pastoral team and I, would always start off early in the morning on foot visiting one house after the other. The exercise would take place the whole day. Mostly we would pray, share the word of God with them and lastly, we would inquire about their sacramental life. Every encounter per family would last an average of 30 minutes. Actually, each encounter was meant to listen to them and

then share a word of God with them. This would go on for the whole week depending on the number of families per small Christian community. At the conclusion of the visit, every Saturday we would organize a day-long retreat/recollection for all the people we have visited during that particular week. Then the whole exercise would end on a Sunday with high Mass. During the Mass Christians would renew their Christian commitment. The following week we would start once again with new families of different Small Christian Community.

Results:

The results of this door to door exercise have been overwhelming. The response of the people reminds me of the 72 disciples who were sent two by two by Jesus who said “Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name”. (Luke 10:17)

In almost all visits we made to different homesteads, we could see the joy of these simple Christians. Apparently, to be visited by a priest was an extraordinary event to them. In response, they would always prepare some simple food for us (despite their lack...) and often times they would offer us simple gifts to take home. Yet these are very simple people who are economically poor.

A good number of families we visited were people who had left the church for some reasons, some were couples which had never gotten married in church, others had just stopped going to church.

After this exercise, we would see many people coming back to church and renew their sacramental life. For instance, in one out-church called Matola, the response

was overwhelming. After the whole exercise in this particular area, we had 28 couples having their marriage blessed in church, 16 people coming back to their sacramental life and 8 people coming back to the Catholic Church after they had defected to other local churches and the Pentecostals. All in all, it was a renewal of their Christian commitment.

Where did I get this inspiration from?

This inspiration goes back to our three pioneer confreres who lived in Nzama about 117 years ago. These confreres had been asking themselves what they could do to help people especially those who lived very far from the mission. After some time, one of them said “*we will go to them...*”. The three missionaries had found the core of their missionary commitment to go among the people and be their companion on the journey of life.

In the same realm I felt that the people of God of Balaka could be re-evangelized using the same method which is typical Montfortian.

Conclusion:

Montfort’s preoccupation all his life was the mediocrity in the faith in the whole realm of the church as a result of which the Christians were living a life far from ideal of Jesus, the Incarnate Wisdom who out of love came to build the relationship with man. Accordingly, Montfort wanted the faith to be conscious decision, responsible and personal. The consecration to Jesus through Mary was according to him, a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism (TD 120). This I believe is what a Montfortian today is called to live and preach. I feel that this is the reason why we are baptized and sent...

5.2 AMERICA

The exercise of reading the experiences, passing from continent to continent, helps us to see that our mission is dynamic, and its diversity is a richness, a gift of the Spirit for the whole Church.

America is an enormous continent of ancient and modern civilizations. It is a place of great metropolitan cities and of enormous forests. The countries where the montfortians practice their mission are marked by various kinds of religious, social and political realities. America is a land of martyrs, including some montfortian martyrs. The mission cannot turn its back on those who suffer political or religious persecutions, or those who are oppressed by military forces. The mission cannot ignore the simple and profound faith of the people of different religions. Let us listen with charity to the experiences of these, our missionaries.

5.2.1 Words of Father Francis Pizzarelli - Vice Province of the United States

Father Francis gifts us with his lived experience in a large urban area of the United States. There is nothing like discovering, in his telling of the story, the meaning of the montfortian mission that fills the heart of the poor and converts hardened hearts. We have to consider the effort and studies he has done to find an answer to this reality when, in many cases, good will is not sufficient.

On April 28, 2019 on the feast of our founder St. Louis de Montfort I celebrated my 40th anniversary of my ordination as a Montfort Missionary Priest in the American province. For more than 39 years of my 40 years as a Montfort Missionary I have spent my life ministering to the poorest of the poor. With total trust in Providence,

I started a shelter for the homeless, a home for abused women and pregnant women, two alternative high schools for at risk youth, a transitional residence for those leaving prison, a full-service mental health clinic, and an outpatient treatment program for addictions, a family and children's clinical counseling center, and the heart of my ministry-Hope Academy, a long-term nontraditional residential treatment program for addiction. I have lived among the poorest of the poor whom I have served from the onset of this ministry. Every day I see the pain and suffering of our broken humanity. I cry tears with them, I celebrate their joys and triumphs, their dreams and their hopes that tomorrow will be better.

How did all of this begin? Why did I become a Montfort Missionary? I am the oldest of five children. I was born into strict Irish Catholic Italian family. My parents lead by example especially my mother.

Faith from my earliest days was a cornerstone of my journey. I felt the best way that I could make a difference is becoming a priest. However diocesan priesthood did not appeal to me; but religious life did. As a young person I had a profound devotion to our Blessed Lady and a desire to live simply and work among the poor.

As I began my search I was drawn to a variety of religious communities. I was looking for a congregation that had a Marian character and a deep commitment to the poor, a community that was small in numbers but also very human.

The American Montfort Missionaries possessed all those qualities and so much more. My novitiate and theological formation were grounded the best practices of Vatican II.

I studied theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC, where I was ordained a deacon and worked as a teacher, coach and school administrator in a poor Catholic junior high school.

As I look back that chapter of my life was probably the most formative, inspirational and transformative of my journey.

It was during my final year of formation that I realized clearly that God was calling me to work with the poorest of the poor-and to preach by the way I lived and worked and only use words when necessary.

In January 1979 I received my first assignment as a finally professed Montfortian. I was hoping to be assigned as a missionary in Nicaragua. So, when I was assigned the Montfort Parish of Infant Jesus in Port Jefferson New York a little more than 60 miles east of New York City I was sadly disappointed. I spoke at great length with my provincial at that time about not thinking I had the skill set to work in this affluent community. He indulged me for a good 40 minutes (he was 40 years my senior). He thanked me for sharing my concerns and then said you will go to Port Jefferson, you will like going to Port Jefferson and if you know what's good for you, you will do a good job in Port Jefferson!

The rest is history. I have been doubly blessed to work among a community of amazing people. Every day I see miracles happen. I see the blind see the deaf hear and the broken transformed!

In addition to my theological training, I have postgraduate training in religious education from the Catholic University of America. I'm a trained sociologist and

community organizer with a Diplomate and Masters' degree in clinical social work with a specialty in addictions from Fordham University in New York City. My professional academic training has been vital to my ministry of 40 years. These past 40 years have given me another lens to look at the problems of the world that we live in. It has helped me to develop the skill-set to touch the broken and wounded in ways that the seminary did not.

Hope House Ministries came to life while I was a young parish priest at the former Montfort parish known as Infant Jesus. It is located 65 miles east of New York City on the North Shore of Long Island.

My first eight months were a baptism of fire. One of my ministries at the time was to be the night chaplain at the emergency room in our community hospital in order to give the hospital chaplain two days off. The seminary did not prepare me for what I encountered during those first eight months. I had to comfort and console families who lost their children to drug overdoses, suicide, decapitation, violence and recklessness. I had minimal skills to comfort and support these families as they grieved but I realize that God was using me as an agent of his healing and grace. He gave me the words that those grieving families needed which helps them to cope and to heal.

Those dramatic circumstances forced me to look at what was happening in this larger community-where many had anything money could buy. However, it was a place where so many were spiritually bankrupt and impoverished.

After a young 10-year-old boy hung himself I shared his story at our Sunday night youth mass where hundreds of

teenagers gathered every Sunday to worship; after mass countless students commented on my sharing and thanked me for challenging them every week. One student who thanked me who was a senior in high school and ended his comment with a challenge! “What is the church doing to respond to these tragic human circumstances?” I couldn't respond to him because I realized at that time the church was doing little or nothing to reach out to the poorest of the poor in our midst. I went back to the rectory that night. I tossed and turned all night and decided that I needed to live my life differently, that I needed to do more.

My prayer focused on Montfort's life. As a young religious I was always taken by his willingness to go and do what was not being done for the church. As an itinerant preacher he reached out to street people, sang songs in pubs and built hospitals and schools for the poor. He walked the road less traveled by the clergy of his time. He did what the church should have been doing but was fearful of doing. During this powerful time of discernment, I discovered the power of his canticle's central to my life and my ministry, especially in his canticle which challenges us to always look for the God hidden in our brother and sister.

During this discernment I was graced with an epiphany that led to the foundation of Hope House Ministries-a ministry that supports eight different entities, employees 80 people and 300 volunteers who live the gospel every day.

The mission of Hope House Ministries is founded on the spirit of St. Louis de Montfort, who had a commitment to the poor and the courage to do what no one else the courage to do.

This is our mission: to provide compassionate, comprehensive and competent care for the poor, the marginal and the wounded among us.

This commitment is woven in the gospel vision that all life is sacred and every human person is unique and has the right to be respected and protected.

Specifically, we are committed to young people and families in crisis, pregnant women and mothers and babies in crisis and all other wounded people within our society who are seen as abandoned and neglected.

Thus, we seek to be men and women of hope in a world of shattered dreams.

This 40-year journey has not been easy. It has challenged my faith but made me strong. This caused me to raise questions about the church's bureaucracy and at times its blindness to the poorest of the poor among us. My faith has been strengthened by my collaboration with countless laypeople who really enliven the gospel every day by the way in which they live.

The real miracle of Hope House Ministries is God's grace working through me and the countless lay collaborators. My trust and dependence on Providence has helped me to stay the course. We charge nothing for services. Money is never an obstacle for helping people reclaim their lives. Presently, it cost more than \$6 million every year to do what we do!

This ministry is genuinely about renewed hope. Hope does not abandon us, we abandon hope. Gospel hope must become the anthem of our souls. So, the journey continues

the story continues to be told about the miracle of change, grace and transformation. The spirit of Montfort has touched my soul. I am privileged to be a part of a band of brothers who in our brokenness attempt to be agents of healing and transformation in a wounded world.

5.2.2 Words of Fr. Luciano Andreol - General Delegation Peru-Brazil

We leave North America and move to Latin America, beginning with this beautiful experience of Fr. Luciano Andreol, who is currently working in the city of Sao Paulo, the grand metropolis, in a parish on the periphery where the Montfortians arrived more than 50 years ago. Fr. Luciano is Italian and a missionary in Peru and Brazil from the beginning of his priesthood.

The Christian mission obliges us to be honest with the reality around us. We speak much, we want much, we unfold many theories, and nevertheless, encountering the reality helps us to keep our feet on the ground. Fr. Luciano shares with us what he has been discovering in his missionary life in Latin America.

Liberos ... with enthusiasm and passion as if it were the first time: this does not mean that I have succeeded in carrying it out. It is the ideal. It was not easy to leave Italy the first time for Peru. What helped me, no doubt, were my youth and the enthusiasm of those youthful years. Nor was it easy to leave Peru for Brazil after more than 10 years in 2 different communities and various services in the entity. It was not easy to accept the service as Superior Delegate returning to Peru, and afterwards to Brazil in another situation. What scares me now is aging, with its problems of arthritis and various infirmities. But I continue convinced

that for the mission and the Montfortian mission, we always need freedom, enthusiasm and passion.

Holiness – Humanity: through all these years, I have experienced how great is my humanity and how small my holiness. Yet, at the same time, one becomes holy from one's humanity. There comes all the affective crises, with your conscience that recriminates, "You are a priest; you are holy", and you are not, but always trying to keep on the journey. Montfort says to his friend Blain that he never had problems of sexuality or anything similar: Montfort is Montfort and Luciano is Luciano. Affective crises and constant contact with the people, so many people, on the other hand, have made me more human and more a friend of fellow men and women humans.

Parish YES – Parish No: Is it Montfortian to work in a parish? Can the Montfortian work in our parishes be defined as missionary work? In Montfort's time, the pastor was a well-to-do cleric with many social and economic privileges, more oriented toward wealth, material goods, with a real taste for "worldly pleasures" and little for "spiritual delights", with little interest in the service and evangelization entrusted to him. I do not believe that to be the case in our parishes today, where the pastor and all who work there have little time to rest and even care for themselves. In the parish are the gossips and attacks of fervor; we have friends, many men and women friends, but we also create enemies. The Montfortians pastor has time for nothing; the people make claims on him at every instant. Already, in my case, there is no Monday as a day of repose. Rather than privileges or wealth, what abound are criticisms and what run short are praises.

Handing oneself over to parish work makes one mourn deep in the heart, because one feels limited and impotent and without being able to do anything to help those who suffer. In parish life we are “controlled” by our people: everyone knows where we are going, with what man or woman, when, how, why, hours of departure, hours of return; what families we frequent, who are our preferred or privileged “women”; some persons want to be the proprietresses of Padrecito; the long-time employee is the mistress of the house and the secretary is Madame Pastor.... After a life in parishes, today I can say: the Montfortian in a parish, Yes, he is a missionary, if he lives today’s parochial reality with his meaningful presence.

Seminary YES – Seminary NO: If we desire a fundamentalist reading of Montfort, then we know very well: he did not want to lose time and energy on the formation of seminarians; he wanted ready-made priests, ready for the mission. The greatest preoccupation today is vocations and the economic upkeep of the houses of formation. We must concern ourselves with our own vocation, in the first place, so that I, with my brothers, we might be witnesses and have a significant presence where we are.

Community – Acting Together: community is something good and wonderful and, at the same time, something very difficult, especially today where what dominates the most is individualism. We seek to give what we live in community: when it is not lived, the people take notice. A community of persons, brothers, who love one another, that is already mission. But how difficult! I have lived many moments in the community with prayer, retreats and meetings, without wearing ourselves out.

Today, at times, we are like those families who gather for a funeral but don't manage to unite back at the house. I continue to dream of community life that does not need to gather 3 or 4 persons to see that there is a community: there could also be 2, but with a really meaningful presence: when you are there, no one remarks; when you go, the people ask: Where are they? Thus, you are important.

'Instabiles' – Itinerancy: reading texts on the Synod for Amazonia, it says in various places that Amazonia needs to have certain stability. I also believe that in our large parishes in Peru and Brazil, it is not possible to change in a short time. I believe we must avoid “pastoral and communitarian tourism”. *'Instabiles'* and itinerancy are interior attitudes that continually open the heart to availability. There are other forms of not being fixed or stuck that I live in the parish:

Hours: it is common among us to tell the staff, when the doorbell rings, ‘Tell them I am not here...’ It's because we have programed our timetable and the people de-program it because they don't have the same hours that we do.

Programs: like the case of what I am writing here. It has been programed for some time, and I am just getting to it now, on the last day given me.

Places: how much time to I spend in the house and how much time in the street?

Persons: if you go to talk with someone from the Left, Father is a communist; if you go with the Conservatives, Father is on the Right; if you go to visit a “rich” family, Father doesn't like the poor; if you stop to talk with the youth, Father doesn't like older people; if you go to a house where there are only women, Father is a womanizer...

Possessions and goods: it is easy to fill yourself with so many things that the people give you, and afterwards depend on you to get rid of.

Mary: in the parishes where I have been, more than speaking about Mary, *“I have lived and breathed Mary”*.

Montfortian parishes are and ought to be *communities of communities*: it is in the small or the large communities that daily reality of the faith is lived, where you come closer to the people and the people to you. They are the force that the Church still has to make itself present in the life of the majority of the people. I believe in the Ecclesial Base Communities. I am not an enemy of movements, but I am firmly sure that the future of the Church is and will be the communities. I was born in a small community, I developed in communities, I grew in the masses, but I continue existing in communities.

Option for the poor: it is an option of the Church, but we Montfortians have done much so that the poorest of the poor might feel fulfilled and loved: food kitchens, health centers, schools, literacy, policlinics, workshops of every sort, peoples' pharmacies, Sitio Agar, pastoral for infants, small farms, aide for basic necessities like water, light, sewers, welcome for handicapped, drug addicts, old people... The poor person has no timetable; the poor person deserves to be seen at any time; the poor person never says No to you; the poor person is poor ... and we love him.

Others points I will not develop, but merely touch on, that are important elements for our Montfortian and parochial mission: liturgy as life celebrated; holy parish missions, tithing and other forms of support.

Concluding:

I believe in the evangelizing Montfortian mission. I believe in the work that I have done and am doing. What is the difference between a Montfortian parish and a Diocesan one? It is the aspect less of having worked in our communities, but of striving to be ourselves; to live the mission with joy and gratitude, with emotion and passion for Christ and for our brothers and sisters. If we succeed to be a Montfortian parish community of persons who love one another, we will be witnesses and reference points for so many young people who seek something beyond this life, and we will be able to offer that to them. During all these years of mission in Latin America, Peru-Brazil, I thought very little about whether Montfort would like parishes or not. I sought to live “something” of Montfort, perhaps something very small, or something of Montfort’s style like his love for the poor, for Mary, for Christ-Wisdom, for the Church (at once holy and sinful), for my religious community. It has not always been easy to bring Montfort’s message up to date.

Today I am sure that Montfort was much more radical than I, in all things. I had many temptations to work alone: in some situations not to share my way of thinking or acting with my confreres, and in others because I would want to “run more” and my confreres forced me to go more slowly in order to respect the rhythms of each one. In Brazil we had begun a very fine project for a “formative community”, that is, formation based on the pastoral reality or on the mission. It made me take account that we Montfortians are very different and the difference is –at the same time – a richness and a problem. It is a richness because it makes us “rich” in experiences and religious

life; a problem ... because we are humans and we do not always accept the humanity of the other.

The Montfort mission is large, and the missionaries are always fewer. If we succeed in rebuilding communities that are reconciled and truly fraternal, our mission will recuperate in brightness and in beauty; in depth and in holiness; in the joy of living and loving; in quality and in quantity.

5.2.3 Words of Fr. José Maria De Orbe -- Provincial Delegation of Ecuador

Father José Maria De Orbe is best known in Latin America by the name of Pepe and he is Montfortian from Spain. From the beginning of his religious life he exercised his mission in Latin America. Itinerant, missionary of the ecclesial base communities, priest of the peripheries and untiring fighter for human rights.

Fr. Pepe tells us, in a most simple way, how Montfortian life is itinerant, that it ought to be at the service of the poor, and that the mission ought to take into account the culture and religiosity of the people.

From the age of 12 or 13 years, thanks to a visit by a Montfort Missionary to the school where I was studying, I rapidly felt myself attracted to life the Montfortian vocation. The principle elements of attraction were the foreign mission (places, countries most in need socially and ecclesially), and the mission among the poor. Both pillars are very Montfortian. Then, novitiate and philosophical and theological studies would go with

complementing the rest of the characteristics of the Montfortian charism.

Indeed, my first Montfortian missionary experience before my priestly ordination was in Medellín (Colombia) in the populous barrios, in the hills of the large city where poverty and social conflict lived and hit strongly in the parish of Guadalupe in the sector of Manrique Oriental.

Then, with the desire to create a Montfortian foundation in another Latin-American country where we were not yet present, I also had an experience in Bolivia; where we lived the charism of Montfort very harshly with poverty and persecution under the military dictatorships who had the country, until having to leave practically just before being expelled. All this was from 1977 to 1984.

In 1985, invited by the bishop, we arrived in the Diocese of Machala in Ecuador, in the coastal zone, and until now, although in different parts of Ecuador, we continue in this mission that seems to us to be very Montfortian in its style and project.

At this time, we are 4 Montfortians: 2 in Sucumbíos (eastern Ecuador) and 2 in El Oro (coastal zone). In this Diocese of Machala, I believe that the Montfort Missionaries are really filled with our Charism since the 2 fundamental pillars “mission” and “option for the poor” have been lived since the beginnings. Here “work as a team” is fundamental, since the coordination and organization that exists in the Diocese of Machala demands it, also for this, community life and prayer is for every day.

With respect to Mary and Marian devotion, let us not forget that in Latin-American culture and the religiosity of our people, it is fundamental. On the other hand, a life simple and austere allows our abandonment to Providence to be present in our style of life and in holding nothing as our own, not even house or car, since they are from the Diocese. I believe that in our mission in Ecuador comes firmly with life and pastoral work among the ecclesial base communities, these fundamental characteristics of the Montfort Missionary charism.

Greetings to the whole Montfortian Family from Ecuador, hoping this experience might be a humble and meaningful contribution to the text that is being elaborated. United in prayer and in the mission, a fraternal embrace.

5.2.4 Words of Fr. Pierre Étienne -- Province of Haiti

Father Étienne shares with us the anxious spirit of the Haitian people. An anxious and worried spirit in the sense of not giving in before difficulties. For him, the Montfortian mission cannot be separated from concrete projects on behalf of the poor, the rural country folk, the illiterate. Something must be done, and it is urgent that it take place, so that our words do not become mere words.

Definition of the Montfortian Mission

To speak of the Montfortian Mission is, in the first place, to speak of the universal Church from which it derives its origin and consistency. The Church receives the terms of reference for her mission from various important biblical texts, of which the principal one is: *“Go out to all the nations and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...”*

(Mt 28: 19-20). This command of Jesus to his apostles is neither exclusive nor excluding. The center as much as the periphery occupies the mission work. It was in order to adapt himself to this dynamic that Louis Marie Grignion turned into a priest, and in order to give more weight, more disciples to these missions, he turned into a Founder of religious communities. Thus, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he decided to found a spiritual family with three branches: the Daughters of Wisdom, the Missionaries of the Company of Mary and the Brothers of Saint Gabriel. The proposal of this Founder is to make known and to extend –thanks to zealous disciples, free from all – the Reign of God through Mary and the Love of the Eternal Wisdom. To do this, he desired that the salvation offered by Christ to all might come to the greatest number of people possible, including to the poor, for whom his profound and radical choice would sacrifice none of his competencies. Thus, the mission of Montfort in the past and now, here and in other places, has an orientation: the poor, as much those affected by metaphysical poverty as by sociological poverty. So, the Montfort Missionary ought to be part of every fight for life, human dignity, justice, inclusion, fraternity, education and respect for biodiversity. Because *“the glory of God is man fully alive. The life of man is the vision of God”* (Saint Irenaeus).

Characteristics of this mission

The mission of the Church in its various manifestations is one thing only: the sanctification of man, and, in the last instance, his salvation. The form of the mission is dictated by the Charism which, in its time, determines the posture of the missionary following the teachings of the Master. The identity of the mission of Montfort is found in these four dominant notes, namely: Evangelization, Availability,

Mary and Working Together. But also, in the baptismal and Marian aspects of our spirituality. This aspect of the renovation of the promises of baptism at the end of each mission will engender the renovation of Christian life. Thanks to this baptismal renewal, special emphasis is placed on the ultimate vocation of those whom the Montfort Missionary evangelizes.

The commitments of this mission

The history of the Montfortian Mission in Haiti, the first mission “ad extra” of the Company of Mary, illustrates well the commitments of this mission. When various countries, including Canada, United States, sought to undertake the mission, the Superior General chose Haiti. Although the superiors of other congregations solicited by the bishops of Haiti were considering the rigor of the Northeast of the country, they did not commit to go there. They looked only toward their own interests and turned down this offer. Indeed, the first French Montfortians paid a very high price.

“Seeing all the tombs that border the paving stones of our Churches, we can say that the Mission is based on the Cross, on the Cross, and on the Cross. But it is because we have sprung forth and grown from the Cross that the harvest of souls announces itself today so beautiful and so promising” (The Montfortians in Haiti, after the chronicles of the mission, p.1)

In no way were they mistaken, because the proclamation of the Gospel is not principally the search for material security. It is above all the search of those who fight against difficulties of every type, especially the poor, in order to build a home or return to a home. It is to help them

have a successful life in God despite the hardships. Based in the reality of Haiti and the commitments of the Haitian confreres and those from France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Canada and the United States, there exists material to translate eloquently the commitments of this mission. Having said this, our commitments of today do not have to ask questions like: How to do it? Where to do it?

In fact, there exists a Montfortian culture of mission. Our commitments push us to seek the good, to do it better and in whatever place, because we are Montfortians on the journey, *liberos*. Since Montfort, the Montfortian cannot ignore a concrete and disinterested commitment, that the *Totus tuus* of our Father Founder might not be an empty eggshell.

For those who regard us in our work, there ought to be an interpellation, a questioning, a provocation in a society of obsessive consumption and avarice. This posture ought to bring us to live here, and in other places, the exigencies of the Kingdom of Heaven married with poverty. To be Montfortian today is to get involved in the name of the Gospel, not only for and with the poor and with men of good will for a world that is strong, united and in solidarity, but also to safeguard biodiversity and fight global warming. To be Montfortian today is to be part of a Church that goes out from Jerusalem to be amidst all human pathways in order to speak of God to those whose hearts are broken, anguished and desperate.

Jubilee of the 150 Years of the presence of the fathers of the Company of Mary in Haiti (31 August 1871 to 31 August 2021)

The Montfortian Province of Haiti would like to make the Jubilee at the same time an event that is of the Church, the

congregation and the nation. An ample range of activities has unfolded, including conferences, debates, a collective work on the contribution of the Montfortians to the Church of Haiti and to the Country. In addition to this, the province has unfolded a strategic plan that includes two principal projects, always in the context of this Jubilee. Here they are:

The foundation of an Agriculture and Livestock Technical School (FECAGET) on 158 hectares of land granted to the Company of Mary by the Haitian State. They gave the Montfortians a hectare for each year of mission in Haiti.

It is a structure being born from local, endogenous, transferal and holistic development. FECAGET is the translation of a university work that I presented and defended at the CIEDEL (International Center for Studies in Local Development) at the Catholic University of Lyon, to obtain a masters in engineering for local development. It is an extension and synthesis of my pastoral experiences. It is under my direction. The management is headed by two councils: Administration and Management.

The members of these councils are competent professional colleagues of differing backgrounds, including associates of Montfort. The provincial is its honorary president and the provincial bursar is a member *ex officio* of the directing team. The Provincial Council is represented by two delegates in each Council (Statutes and Procedures Manual). Eight components are grafted together: agriculture, breeding, sea school, agro-forestry, health, education, sporting, ecotourism and solidarity tourism.

FECAGET was conceived to supervise youth, fishermen, peasants, artisans and ranchers to better announce, in words and deeds, the gospel of Christ. It was also designed to finally allow the Province of Haiti to achieve financial autonomy. This is the first time undertaking a project so ambitious to achieve this goal. To achieve it, FECAGET is seeking technical, financial and strategic allies. It has faith above all in the Providence, who better than any other, knows how to care for disciples sent out on mission.

5.3 OCEANIA

From Oceania comes to us the experience of a young missionary. A Montfortian from India who works in Papua- New Guinea. For him, the mission “is to give life”. To be a Montfortian is to be a “giver of life”. To realize the mission with confidence in Providence, to know the reality of the place of mission and take time for poetry and art, as well as for the various ethnic groups present in the mission zones. Let us welcome this witness as if we were listening to the songs and dances of our Papuan brothers.

5.3.1 Words of Fr. Francis Prashanth, - General Delegation of Papua-New Guinea

Mission is life giving

Saint Louis Marie de Montfort once prayed for the handful of missionaries who live according to the heart of God. In my three years of stay as a young missionary in Papua New Guinea, I can say that mission is all about giving of- love, hope, time and one’s life for others. As St. Francis of Assisi says and I quote, ‘It is only in giving that we receive’.

Mission Context

Right after my ordination in 2016, I was sent as Montfortian Priest in Our Lady of Star Mountain Parish, Tabubil in the Diocese of Daru - Kiunga, Western Province in Papua New Guinea. I consider the place a beautiful paradise – a little city on the top of the mountain. Yes! It is surrounded by giant mountains, abundant rivers, and wild animals and with freezing weather condition. Likewise, mining company operates in the place that gives people royalty support and at the same time has its harmful effect both in human and other creatures and to the environment as a whole.

Majority of the people are Catholics. They are warm-hearted with their amazingly-rich culture. The mission is quite challenging since the place is mountainous. Geographically it is very difficult to reach the people in the far-flung villages. We have ‘patrol’ or village visit to administer sacraments and to know the situation of our parishioners. We need a mission plane or walk for couple of days in the jungle to reach the place because there’s no proper road and transportation means. Amidst all these realities, the important thing is that we give life to the mission and allow mission to enrich our missionary spirit. The mission is not what we do, but who we are. Truly, the mission is all about who we are - in the midst of people different from us, in the midst of isolation and loneliness, in the midst of difficulties and vulnerabilities, and in the midst of happiness and success.

Happy people

Happiness does not open its door unless we open our hearts to it. I feel so privilege by the comforts and authenticity of love they shown as expressed in many ways. They welcome missionary as they welcome Christ in their

villages. With their beautiful cultural traditions and dances they make us feel comfortable and loved missionaries.

Spiritual people

They have that longing for divine intervention and communion with God especially for the Holy Eucharist and other sacraments. Their devotion to the Blessed Mother is so strong and it mediates them to get closer to Jesus.

Simple people

Simplicity is what makes human to be God like. '*Em orait!*' is a *Tok Pidgin* word which means that's ok! If they commit mistake they say, '*em orait*' and if they are satisfied and happy they also utter the same words. Even they own the gold mine, people still live in simplicity. Precisely, money is not everything and the standard of living for them. What matters for them is good relationship- a relationship which is simple as possible.

Changing people

As observed, many of the people from the mountains are migrating to town to look for greener pasture. They have shifted their consciousness of what the lifestyle in town can offer such as new technology to their way of life. Many parents expressed their observation about the effects of modern technology and how it influenced the young people. Their children have easily adapted to the modern world that affects and changes their behavior. The youth of today is different from youth before as they commented. Sad to note, slowly the tradition is disappearing and gradually forgotten. Mindfulness and rootedness to their culture and tradition must be preserved and passed on for the future generation.

Hungry people

I feel sad to hear and witness how children collapsed because of an empty stomach. They went to the school without breakfast and lunch and even go to church to serve and attend Mass without something to eat. Being hungry is not only for children but for some youth and elderly. They are hungry because nobody looks after their needs because they are from broken family, their parent doesn't have work, depend on their relatives to feed them and some are really lazy. Those who migrated from the mountain and came to the town have hunger too. They walked in the streets looking for some food and started to beg. We have some alternatives to lessen this problem by feeding some children and by advising the adults to go back to their respective villages. But still some of them like to stay in hunger and poverty in the town.

The commitment

My commitment to the mission is expressed on how I live the vows in relationship to people whom I ministered. I consider my consecrated and priestly life as a gift from God which is to be shared to the church in faithfulness to the Gospel. Being baptized and sent is both a privilege and responsibility. I feel privilege to discover the essentials in life in the simplicity of people and feel responsible to mold and nurture their faith and to proclaim the reign of God. I allow and make myself evangelized first and become an evangelizer in the process.

A Call for More Missionaries to Consider PNG Mission

Another thing that is most important here is the presence of more missionaries to share in the mission. We need courageous missionaries who can risk and dare to bring the

Gospel to the people in the mountains. I am grateful to the early Canadian Montfortian Missionaries who shared their lives to be the first to conquer the hardest jungle and show me the way to walk to holiness. We live our faith- and proclaim the Gospel as channels of God's love, working to transform human suffering and build societies that prioritize human dignity, care of creation, and the common good, inspired by Mary our model disciple. The call for mission continue...

*Beyond the border he set his foot
Proclaiming God to the poor in the remote
His steps were bold and too fast
Pleasing God was his first preference and last.*

*He knew God was dwelling in his heart
With Mary his Mother he was bright
Time to time he was inspired to write
The love that God has instilled in his heart.*

*Way to Jesus is easy through Mary
He was called the priest with Big Rosary
God was his provider he has nothing to worry
God gave him everything from his treasury.*

*He desired to have handful of Priests
Who are ready and free to work as Mary's Slaves
He knew the vineyard was big, the laborers were less
But he holds them all together through Mary's embrace.*

*He was called as the fool of the Gospel
Always he was found before God as truthful
Being Montfortian is to be available to all
To God and to God alone with heart and soul.*

5.4 EUROPE

From Europe contributions have come to us from France and Italy. They are testimonies that fill the soul. The Montfortian mission that is in the streets, in the factories, the schools, and that makes our missionaries men “all of God and all of the people.” A Montfort Missionary cannot be insensitive to the suffering of those who suffer. Prisoners, drug addicts, the sick, workers, youth, the elderly and children hold a place in our fields of mission. We are called to go out to meet them.

5.4.1 Words of Fr. Robert Chapotte -- Province of France

Baptized and Sent

Introduction

In presenting this witness, I repeat a passage from the letter that they sent me to invite me to collaborate in composing this letter to the Congregation. *“It is a question of saying what we are living and how we understand the mission of Montfort in our place of work, from its cultural reality, from the commitment that this type of mission demands, and from what you have lived as a Montfort Missionary.”*

To situate this testimony, let me add that I am 85 years old, and that the Bishop of the Diocese of Evry, where the Montfortians have been present for nearly 50 years, has renewed my mission contract as a member of the Team. Pastoral Sector Orsay (also called “Sector de Yvette”). This team has a dozen members: priests, deacons, and permanent lay people. This sector has about 100,000 inhabitants in 6 towns, 6 parishes and 8 places of celebration.

- **The path that I have taken, since my ordination at Montfort sur Meu, in 1961**

The Montfortian Minor Seminary at Pelousey (Doubs) from 1961 to 1973:

I wanted to go to Madagascar or Latin America, but we needed teachers in the Montfort formation centers.

This mission would “require”, besides the acquisition of academic programs, familiarizing the students with the Montfortian mission, especially through the French Montfort Missionaries sent to foreign lands: Madagascar, Central Africa, Haiti, Latin America.

The students were informed about their possible future mission. From time to time, the Montfort Missionaries were sent to parishes in France. This education in the Montfortian spirit was accompanied with knowledge of the life of Father de Montfort and his spirituality, especially the Consecration to Jesus through Mary.

This focus was made concrete with a visit of the Montfort fathers and brothers from the mission countries, and visits to the Minor Seminary at Pelousey.

As a teacher, I benefited from this training, which happily completed what I had received through all the years of my Minor and Major Seminaries.

But, with other confreres, we dared to change the relationship of teacher / student. De facto, we found that the hours of classes were often disciplinary sessions. Aided by experiments in schools and the humanities, we created structures that helped the students to master their

academic programs. In brief, we were talking about self-guided classes.

By episcopal decision, we had to return to the classic formula. After that, I desired to leave teaching. It disheartened me that the Minor Seminary of Pelousey had lost its initial vocation: to be a place to sensitize students for the Mission of Montfort in France or in foreign countries.

- **Pastoral insertions in parishes: from 1973 to today (2019)**

First Period: Saint Francis de Sales de Petit-Clamart – Suburbs of Paris (Southeast) - Diocese of Nanterre. From 1973 to 1994

Petit-Clamart is a district of the city of Clamart. The pastoral team was formed by four Montfort Fathers, a diocesan priest and a professional catechist.

Given that the population living in the housing developments of HLM was primarily working class, the members of the team chose a pastoral presence toward the working class, supported by the movements of Catholic Action in Mission for Workers, namely, the ACE (Catholic Action for Children), YCW (Christian Working Youth), and ACO (Catholic Worker Action).

For me, it was a discovery, but not totally, because our initiative of “self-guided classes” had characteristics in common with the pedagogy of Catholic Action in the method “*see, judge, act*”.

This practice had its roots in the missionary currents that crossed the Church of France since the rise of the

“industrial civilization of the 19th century”, in those places where work was exploited and dehumanized. The Popes, one at the end of the 19th century and the other in the 1930’s, published encyclicals that warned against exploitation in the working-class world.

This pastoral practice has marked our way of being Montfort Missionaries.

Some confreres, fathers and brothers, committed themselves in solidarity with the working class even to joining in the workplace as Priest-Workers. I myself participated in this type of missionary insertion in the world of the working class.

I had to stop at the request of the Bishop who was thinking of me for a Diocesan responsibility as Diocesan chaplain to the ACE-MO. I was there from 184 to 1990. This allowed me to know Paris and its suburbs, along with priests and lay/ militant Christian activists.

Second Period: Sector of Orsay (sector Yvette) – Suburbs of Paris (south) – Diocese of Evry/Corbeil. From 1994 till today.

In 1994, I asked to leave the parish of St. Francis de Sales: two confreres had died and the fourth had left the priesthood. I knew there were structures of the Workers Mission in Essonne. There were also some Montfortians. The Bishop named me to the sector of Massy and then to the sector of Orsay, which I have not left since 1994. I inserted myself in the world of the workers pastoral in the Diocese of Evry/Corbeil. I have been responsible for the DDMO (Diocesan Delegate for the Workers Mission). I participated in the structure of the Mission of the Workers that existed in

a new city of the sector: Les Ulis. The population included more than 40 nationalities. Three places of worship: the Center St. John XXIII, a synagogue, and a mosque.

A rural area of some hundreds of hectares resisted a field of housing development.

A part was occupied by the CEA (Center for Atomic Energy). The farmers who had once made use of nearly 2000 hectares, formed an association, and defended their “precious” lands. Through my presence, I participated in this fight to support these women and men who were defending their lands and mean of livelihood. I was “pastor” of the two secular churches present in the two villages of these places.

I believe that all these pastoral presences have something to see with the Montfortian mission.

“*Retired Missionary*” since 2012, I am happy to be able to dedicate my time to two teams of Catholic Action (ACO and ACI) each month, to be available every month for the Portuguese community, to be present in a pastoral team with this regard of Christians who act for human dignity.

Also, I am very happy to meet each month the team of PO, faithfully for 5 years, garage worker, member of a team of 6 or 7 persons.

For some years we knew a community of Sisters of Wisdom, also present in a densely populated city. This community still exists in the Diocese of Evry/Corbeil.

Four communities in the Province of France lived this type of missionary insertion. For that reason, already in the 1970's an annual meeting of two days united the members of these communities, in order to reflect on the Montfortian missionary life. In the archives of the Provincial House, one can find traces of this sharing among confreres. These documents are compiled under the name "Group Solignac", the place where these annual meetings were celebrated from the beginning. Solignac is a town in the region of Limoges, where the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate had their scholasticate.

Conclusion

First, I define the mission of Montfort by the title of a book written by a disciple of Father de Foucauld: *"To be in the heart of the people."*

In terms of its characteristics: the words that St. Luke places in the mouth of Mary at the Annunciation sum them up: *"I am the servant of the Lord."*

Commitments: solidarity with the "poor", with their struggles; to see and to reflect; listen and listen again; in order to share intellectually, spiritually, materially. Re-reading life in communities, in teams.

That is what lets me keep the missionary breath and courage. Good Luck, young people!

5.4.2 Words of Fr. Angelo Vitali - Province of Italy

“Together with the anxiety, involved in the discomfort, living the uneasiness, without pretending to resolve it, contemplating it and observing it as an historic part not resolved, perhaps insoluble in this humanity, for which the Redemption and the Coming of Christ seem to have brought a great benefit.”

Is this an endemic evil that not even God can stop? It would seem to be an unconditional surrender!

“Father, do you have any idea of the evil there is in the world?” a justice co-worker asked me in one of many interviews in prison. “Father, you have no idea; because I am evil made flesh, I incarnate part of the world’s evil; but we are too many to have this role, too many!”

“Father, I don’t remember how many people I have killed, how many I sent to kill. I take it as my due; I believe the Eternal Father has given me this plague.”

“Tell my son not to be ashamed of his toxic father: I took this decision, and although I am dying, I am not sorry. That would be too simple! If God exists, let him accept me as I am, or they are his bets!” I softly say that perhaps they may also be “your bets” ...

“Ask pardon from my mother, because I made her suffer more than Most Holy Mary at the foot of the cross. But my mother loved me!” He died a few hours after these statements. He was sick with AIDS.

“Ah, Father: tell us about death! This night do not go to bed; stay here with us, surrounded by this silence, this darkness, and then you will tell us what there is “in death” and “after” death. The suppers, the entertainment, everything that you propose to us day after day are not sufficient for us; this is our obsession: death.”

I am not a sociologist or a psychologist or a simple social worker; I am nothing, catapulted in this human reality that somaticizes, absorbs, raises within itself the stigma of the different, of the particular, of the non-qualified, of the non-religious or canonically correct (or moral?).

I feel like a priest adrift in this magma-like reality, always ready to try new forms, unprecedented and not easily contained. I have let myself be taken by this mud eliminating judgement, without issuing moral judgements, cradling myself in a reality at the limits...

I am not here to judge, to sift and normalize, but rather to listen and to grasp this cry of desperation and place it in the depth of my heart. Might this be only my mission? Welcome to this mountain of suffering!

“Don’t dare to waste more Eucharistic celebrations on Saturday: we need a word that is strong and penetrating. Your talk, sometimes almost offensive and very abrasive, helps us to rid ourselves of the masks we wear. We need a God who denounces us, but who loves us: a shock therapy that puts balance into our life. Thirsting for love, for an infinite love, that never denies itself, that is always ready to begin again because our life was made for constant new beginnings.”

I am the custodian of important secrets; I carry with me a physical strength, but above all an existential one, feeling the sting of death in me, a mortal infirmity. Here the Resurrection has a taste that is most sweet, the taste of Eternal Life given as a gift to those who remain outside history, to histories and not to histories, to the absolute abandonment that Christ also knew in the moment of his Passion.

Now, at the end of my life, I feel this same life, peopled by a wounded but important humanity; I feel that the Reign of God comes to meet me in these brothers so foreign, to different from me, who reveal to me the Otherness of God, this God who comes and who seems unknown. Perhaps so many years of theology and study weren't what were needed; perhaps what was needed more was the Epiphany of God in these brothers. These brothers are a "theological place" that makes Good Friday and the rejection of Christ be so present.

I end by declaring myself perfectly complete as a Montfort Missionary in this prison and marginalized world. I always wanted to finish my life in this reality; God gave it to me in a long, preparatory journey. To these brothers I owe the continual and renewed enthusiasm of my life. The change and persistent motivation to live and work comes solely from the poor.

I conclude by remembering a lesson that I have never forgotten and is fixed in my heart, from a person with a mental illness in the hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà in Monte Mario (Rome). The baby disappeared from the Crèche they had been preparing for years; a "handsome and chubby" baby, that mocked the poor children, badly

nourished and maltreated... This “crazy” brother had taken it because he was sick in bed with a high fever and all alone. He had hidden the baby under his sheets because it was the true blanket of his heart with which he was keeping it warm and talking to it for the night.

Yes! He was speaking because he held it close to his heart.

A child of plaster held hostage for ten days beneath the sheets of a demented person. When Christmas time was over, this friend of mine returned, recuperated and happy. But who was the crazy one: he or us?

5.4.3 Words of Fr. Eugenio Perico - Province of Italy

Immediate and spontaneous reflections on “Montfortian Parish Missions”

I very much appreciate the proposal to center the “charism of the missionary” in the Montfortian realities, with an eye toward the celebration of the “Extraordinary Missionary Month” desired by Pope Francis on the theme “Baptized and Sent”.

With the invitation of the Superior General, I share these notes, based on my years of lived experience, in the context of the “Parish or Popular Missions”.

1st Point: the Reasons

In accord with the Charism of Montfort, the field of evangelization ought to be included in our projects in a natural way. Father de Montfort wants us, apostles, itinerant, missionaries, at the service of today’s Church,

under the force of the Spirit's action. There is no possibility so clear and convincing for investing energy, resources and personnel in this proposal that the parishes can ask and demand of the Congregation.

While we appreciate all the forms of evangelization in which we are working (parishes, Marian animation, ordinary preaching and many other ways), the activity of the Parish Mission assumes a particular priority because it corresponds perfectly to the figure and work of the Montfortian in today's actual world. More than this, one cannot do. In addition, the journey of faith and witness of the parishes, in the current phase, makes it not easy to propose the faith; it seeks and experiments with new forms of proclamation and pastoral care, in order to be the "Church sent out" among the poor, the little ones, the marginalized and excluded. Do not content yourself only with a pastoral solicitude for conservation, but rather to activate a true pastoral care for evangelization.

Moreover, at least a "missionary breath" is also good for our religious communities, which at times are closed in on themselves and have lost that missionary coloring that will recharge them with vitality, with new spirit and agility in our own fraternal relations. A religious community that neither proclaims nor witnesses loses the meaning of its very being, and converts itself into a ghetto of heavy air, of spiritual weariness, of pastoral dryness that will bring about the beginning of the end. No – to the culture of occupying houses; rather, that of the "streets", where each person today struggles and hopes. The vivacity and dynamism of the Spirit, breathed out on our Missions, transforms itself into opportunities to establish Montfortian communities that are

alive, dynamic and happy, because they are illuminated by the “fire of the Mission”.

2nd Point: Objectives

The project “Parish Mission” places us at the service of the parish communities. It is an experience of faith, as an extraordinary gift, an event of grace. The meaning of these days opens particular goals to be shared among the believers and baptized.

1. To become conscious of their proper Christian identity, through the rediscovery of baptism and the example of Mary.
2. To place pastoral plans in the light of the new evangelization, especially to lighten the paths of all that is secondary, and return to proposing the “Kerygma”, the proclamation of Christ dead and risen who walks with us.
3. To recover the communitarian dimension, in a spirit of authentic collaboration among laity and clergy, and in line with the family as the protagonist of formation and catechesis.

All this and more committed us to delineate a way of Mission that is parallel and complementary to the way that the Parish was already implementing this. Therefore, it is important to unite the two requirements: the specific priorities of the Parish and the contents proposed by the missionaries, in harmony with the Montfortian characteristics of this project. To lose our charismatic specificity would signify losing our religious identity in the Church itself. Let us never repeat what others have done. We are “Montfortians”. It is for this that we need

certain skills: creativity, adaptation, the unforeseen, taking decisions, and firmness.

3rd Point: The Realization

These years, on the average, we travel for two missions a year. Taking into account that requests, in comparison to the past, have decreased. To concretize our proposal, we put “the parish in a state of mission”. This affirms that all the members of the community are protagonists, although with different charisms and roles.

Each mission ought to begin following three phases: preparation, celebration and continuation. The time of preparation is undefinable because it is linked to the fruits of the journey as it unfolds, and can be prolonged if the necessary conditions for a positive celebration of the mission are not present. The phase of celebration is subject to two proposals. The first is the period of ten days (from Thursday till the following Sunday). The second is two weeks: the first being “go forth in departure”, all dedicated to the trips and visits to encounter the families and the reality of the town; in the second week, emerges the various celebrations and encounters, “a coming in”. It is called a mission of “going out and returning”.

The common points with each Mission are visits to families, setting up “centers of listening to the Word”, time dedicated to spiritual direction, encounters with the sick, experiences in various parish groups. There are also some rather special initiatives that I will mention briefly:

- the experience of the “Tent” of the Eucharist ... it would be interesting to repeat this in some zones of the town.

- the path of the “Way of Light” ... from the parish church to the cemetery, to remember the death and to witness to the Risen One.
- the night of “Show of the Mission” ... with protagonists and witnesses to the Christian faith in some social fields.
- the pilgrimage to the Cathedral with the renewal of Baptism and the consecration to Mary.
- a cinema forum ... especially to attract the people if possible.
- the “Good morning Jesus” with the children ... in the morning.
- the prayers in the morning before beginning the day ... to bless the factories and fields.
- multi-ethnic night with people from different parts of the world.
- the afternoon of mini-tournaments for the young people ... with prayer and a buffet.
- the celebration of the closing in the oratory, for a moment of celebration with the families ... entertainment by a “Magician”.

For the spiritual reflections a theme is chosen and each day it unfolds in meetings and homilies. The mission itself is prepared and celebrated with a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Mary.

Beyond all this, it is necessary to prepare information material, booklets, publicity handouts and training, placards to place in strategic places for the public and

more. For adolescents and young people we propose that they create a recital, to create an ambience of friendship, union and sharing among them. And more...

I reach three pages! Only two were required, and so I stop writing.... with the hope that in the future the Spirit will animate us to the “mission” in the Church, without fear, with enthusiasm and confidence, to give life to the Charism of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. Thank you and Ciao!

6. FINAL MESSAGE

I confess that I changed ideas in the midst of writing this *“Circular Letter on the Montfortian Mission in Today’s World”*; at the beginning I thought only of gathering parts of the testimonies from our confreres, placing them within some specific reflections, like the theme “listening”, “service in urban areas”, “preparation for the Synod of Bishops on Amazonia”. In short, the relations of the experiences would be mixed in the middle of the Letter. I decided to change that method.

I saw in the sharing of our confreres a richness so great that it deserved to be presented in its totality, that I could not “dilute” its content by mixing it with other things. I give thanks to God for these experiences and for so many others realized in the past, and that are accomplished today in diverse parts of the world. I hope that all the Montfort Missionaries feel represented in the experiences shared in this letter.

In this theme of the Montfortian Mission, we cannot forget the elderly missionaries who are in our houses of rest. We cannot forget the missionaries who are ill, who now cannot realize a

mission “to the outside”, “going forth”, using the language of Pope Francis. Our brothers have given their life for the mission, have made history in the places through which they passed.

“Listening to” the testimony of Fr. Robert Chapotte, with his 85 years, a missionary heart that represents here in this letter all the Montfort Missionaries in their diversity of places and types of mission, those who have already passed and those who still continue “on the journey”, they encounter in their prayers, concerns and struggles Saint Louis Marie de Montfort who repeats to them: “Do not be afraid, friend, do not lose heart...trust in Providence, and continue loving the people God has confided to you.” Thank you for everything, thank you for the example that you have given and continue to give.

Friends, take heart always. The mission continues!

Rome, 14 November 2019

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Stefani', with a large, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the signature.

Fr. Luiz Augusto STEFANI, S.M.M.
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