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## **Training Session on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, Paipa, Colombia**

**PAIPA, Colombia** - A training session on the protection of minors and vulnerable adults was held in Paipa, Colombia from April 23 to April 26, 2019. For this week of formation, we have the presence of the Superior General Luiz Augusto Stefani and the general assistants father Wismick Jean- Charles, in charge of the commission of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults for the Congregation, and father Marco Pasinato.

Father Gerald Fitzsimmons of the Vice Province of the United States was the leader of that training. We have seen positively the participation of all the superiors and delegates of the countries in Latin America and the Caraibes, where our Montfortian presence is: Peru, Brazil, Haiti, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Colombia, the host country. We have felt the joy of being in the same spirit and dynamism, with a good disposition to receive the new materials on the topic carefully and skillfully prepared by our training leader.

We began the training by observing the reality of abuses on a global level and once this situation was clear, we have been presented with strategies to act in unity about this need of the Church. This experience of unity has been lived with hope and commitment. During these four days of intense training, we have learned, among other topics, how to write policies, to build strategies, and how to implement safety plan in the cases of abuse in order to contribute to the Montfortian mission more effectively. This great workshop has enriched us not only with knowledge on how to act in the face of the pain of those who have been hurt by the abuses in the Church but also

with skills on how to accompany with compassion a confrere on safety plan in order to lead him to a conversion process and discernment of his vocation of option for Christ in the Company of Mary. We have reflected that we are called by God to heal the ones who suffer; that we are called as Moses to walk besides those who are abused and to listen to their cries of pain and despair.

It is impossible to achieve all these goals if we do not join our forces and if we do not take responsibility on this urgent need in the Church and the world today. We understand that we are not alone since we are a congregation that must act together. During this week of formation, we have opened ourselves to new ways to respond to the demands of the Church and those of the Company of Mary.

We thank God for this opportunity that we have had to be together and we thank the General Administration and the International Commission of the Protection of Minors and vulnerable adults who have organized this training session.

May Mary, the Mother of the Company, accompany us in this journey and may our holy founder, Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort intercede for all of us and for the Church.

*Fr. Alonso Antonio Lazo, SMM*