



Homily of the Closing Mass of the Extraordinary General Council (EGC)

ROME, Italy - It is a wonderful gospel to end our time together in this context of our Extraordinary General Council (EGC). This gospel is for us a reminder, an invitation and a consolation.

1. A reminder

This gospel reminds us the consequences of being called and being sent. A reminder to be prepared for the risks in keeping in mind our Master, our Founder and our first missionaries.

Like the Master: Jesus makes it clear *"If the world hates you, remember it hated me before you. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too"*. This is a beautiful way to remind us that suffering, tribulations, sorrow, cross are instruments of the power of our Master, instruments of the glory of our Master. This is a paradox. Cross is not a card with which one can play, it is the name of the game. The cross is the door to God and to humanity.

Like our Founder : For our founder, Wisdom and cross go together. In his letter 20 to his mother, Montfort wrote: *"In my new family, the one I belong to now, I have chosen to be wedded to Wisdom and the Cross."* We also know very well the famous saying of Montfort: *Wisdom is the Cross and the Cross is Wisdom* (LEW,180). This saying reflects the extent to which these two realities, Wisdom and Cross, are linked in the thought of our founder. However, in addressing the mystery of the cross, Montfort preferred the language of love. *The dear cross I so love, for which I so yearn* (Hymn 19,11). Montfort sings the glorious cross.

Like our first missionaries: They were men of sacrifices and risks. Our first missionaries worked in very challenging contexts. I was privileged last year, on August 30, 2021, to be the

representative of the Superior General at the celebration of the jubilee of the 150 years when the first missionaries outside of France arrived in Haiti on August 30, 1871. We cannot forget Fathers François Ruppin (64 years old), Ernest Boulanger, and Henri Lamourique (38 years old), who gave their lives to begin the first mission of the Company of Mary in Haiti. When they arrived on the dock in Port-au-Prince, one Haitian approached Fr. Henri and said to him in good French, "Father, who is this old man who is with you (and he pointed out Fr. Ruppin), is he a brother?" Excuse me, Sir, replied Fr. Henri, he is a priest, and he is my Superior. – And where is he going? asked the young Haitian. In Saint Louis du Nord, responded father Henri. The Haitian was moved and added: "You Fathers, you are brave. You take the risk to go to Saint Louis du Nord. You will have a very difficult mission. The fathers responded, yes, we know." From the very beginning, mission and risks for us Montfortians, go together. Risks are part of our mission.

2. An invitation

As we conclude this EGC, we are invited to a new beginning. We are invited to begin again from our Master, from our Founder and from our first missionaries. When we begin again from our Master, our Founder and our first missionaries, there is no room for discouragement, depression and despair. We are invited to begin again **with fidelity** (We cannot forget our roots, our heritage, our traditions). When we begin again from our first missionaries, when we stand on the shoulders of our pioneers, we are stronger. We are invited to begin again with **creativity**. Beginning with creativity helps us understand that there are no ready-made recipes in the mission. We are finally invited to begin again **with serenity**. Of course, during the EGC, we have seen in our different sharings the fragility of our Congregation in terms of numbers, in personnel and the challenges of finances. But there is no reason to be panicked as we have also seen the diversity of our Congregation which is a great richness and also its vitality in several entities.

3. A consolation

When we remember that before us, our Master has taken the Cross, before us, our Founder has chosen to be wedded with the Cross, before us, our first missionaries have happily taken risks; this is for us a great consolation. When we remember that we are taking risks together because we are the Company of Mary; when we know that we are in this together, this is for us a great consolation. As we conclude our EGC, we go back to our missions in peace, with great hope, new energy, new enthusiasm, and new passion.

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