



Canadian and US Vice-Province Councils meet to share Ideas and Challenges

MONTREAL, Canada - As part of the SMM's Year of Mission in North America, provincial superiors Fr. Georges Madore and Fr. Tom Poth organized a joint meeting of the councils of Canada and the United States that was held on September 19. The Canadian council: Fr. Gaétan Ouimet, Bro. Gilles Paquette, and Fr. Louis-Paul Saint-Laurent, joined Fr. Georges Madore in welcoming Fr. Tom Poth, provincial of the US Vice-Province, and Fr. Don LaSalle, the vicar-provincial of the US, to the *Sanctuaire Marie-Reine-des-Coeurs* in Montreal. Frs. Don and Tom arrived a few days earlier to participate in the Canadian Vice-Province Assembly.

The Canadian Assembly on September 18 gave the Canadians and Americans the opportunity to compare their experiences of ministry in shrines, in parishes, and care for their aging confreres. They also discussed ways that confreres from other entities could share in the mission in North America.

The following day, the members of the two councils met to discuss Leadership in Animating Montfortian Spirituality and Mission in the Current North American Context. They were joined by Fr. Luiz Stefani, Superior General, who was visiting the Canadian Vice-Province.

Their discussion touched upon the following aspects:

- The impact of the current cultural and social situation on Montfortian mission and spirituality
- The impact of the current ecclesial situation on Montfortian mission and spirituality
- The impact of diminishing numbers in the entities on their future
- The impact of collaboration with lay associates and other lay people
- Looking toward the future – connections with confreres from other entities

The two councils also discussed how the leadership of our two entities could support one another in the future.

Although the cultures and languages of our two entities are different, we noticed similar cultural and ecclesial dynamics that provide challenges to our mission. While there is a growing interest in spirituality in general, at the same time there is a decline in participation in church life, due to a suspicion of organized religion. Consequently, the interest in the Church and in religious life among young people is greatly diminished. We also noted the impact of the sexual abuse crisis on the way the Church is perceived. We discussed the need to promote Montfortian spirituality by weaving this dimension into all our ministries as well as by offering programs that explicitly present Fr. De Montfort's perspectives on the Gospel.

As a service to the Congregation at large, and in honor of the Year of North America, the councils of Canada and the US began to plan a means for bringing together confreres who have engaged in Montfortian studies and who are involved in promoting a lived Montfortian Spirituality. The aim of this effort is to sponsor a colloquium of a small number of confreres in 2020 in order to build a network of mutual support and critique among confreres engaged in this ministry. More on this to follow ...

The councils of our two entities found this chance to discuss issues together to be very helpful. We agreed to meet periodically on a regular basis.

Fr. Don LaSalle, SMM