



Éric MANIRAKIZA SMM for the mission in France

SAINT-LAURENT-SUR-SEVRE, France. *Deacon Éric MANIRAKIZA, SMM, who will soon be ordained a priest in Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre on April 1, 2023, talks about his vocation and the Montfortian mission.*

Eric, introduce yourself. What was your life and vocation path so far?

My parents called me MANIRAKIZA Éric! I was born on January 10, 1990 in Murehe-Gasura (Burundi). Son of RIRAGENDANWA Thaddée and NDUWIMANA Viola (Deceased February 25, 2005). I am the 2nd in a family of 2 boys and 4 girls. I was baptized on September 3, 1993, first communion on December 24, 2004 and confirmed on June 25, 2005 at Munanira Parish, Archdiocese of Bujumbura in Burundi. After my schooling in my country, I did my Montfortian formation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Pre-novitiate) then in Montfort-sur-Meu - France (Novitiate) and in Burundi (Scholasticate). I professed my perpetual vows on March 23, 2022 and I was ordained deacon on March 25, 2022 in the DRC by Archbishop Marcel UTEMBI TAPA, Archbishop of the Diocese of Kisangani. I was sent to France on May 26, 2022, on the feast of the Ascension where I still continue my diaconal ministry.

Being of Burundian origin, arrived in France a year ago, how is your integration in this country and Montfortian entity going?

First of all, I appreciated how the other confreres received me as I am, as a Burundian of course, but above all as a citizen of the Company of Mary! The welcome was quite wonderful! I take this opportunity to say “Thank you” for the fraternal and happy welcome that was reserved for

me because it did me good for my community and pastoral integration! I also cannot pass without pointing out that I am the beneficiary of a beautiful and good community where the atmosphere, understanding and mutual help (doing together) reign! And this has a huge positive impact on my integration into the entity and the country! I love the community and the members of the community; I love seeing my colleagues in joy! I am comfortable! My integration in the country and in the mission continues! I discover pleasant surprises always! But as soon as I arrived, I followed this following pattern: see, listen, ask questions, synthesize and act concretely! I must first see what is done, how it is done; listen to why it is done this way, listen to each other's advice, ask questions to better understand; make a synthesis and act with a few benchmarks!

How do you foresee your ministry in France today?

Like other countries, France is hungry and thirsty for the Gospel message! It seems that there are even those who don't want it, but I feel at the same time that we have to find the right words, simple language and initiatives that meet the needs of French people today to make known and love Jesus Wisdom through Mary! I foresee my ministry here in being with people (Christians and others), sometimes going towards them without always waiting for them at the parish or in a gathering place: closeness and daring to risk for God, testimony of a joyful and authentic religious life!

The Congregation in recent years has explicitly placed the Montfortian mission in Europe under the sign of Hope: where do you see this hope manifesting itself?

The Congregation is right to make it turn towards trust in the future and do our part so that God realizes his promises! Hope is not an illusion: it is a risky virtue: a virtue, as Saint Paul says, of an ardent expectation of the revelation of the Son of God (Rom 8:19). God who has always been faithful, He is not going to make the exception with us! Our communities are bearers of hope, our pastoral care of proximity with all layers of society is not without issue either: people are discovering who we are and the message of Father de Montfort at the same time! We have lay associates with whom we mission together, etc.! God's gift to men is accomplished in time: we must leave the fruits to time! God goes before us in our missions! The future is bright!

In relation to vocational animation in France, what suggestions or concrete initiatives?

Pray for vocations, create opportunities to meet young people: do not always wait for them to come to us: go to them, play with them where possible! Dare to talk about religious life to young people, do itinerant missions! We are facing a society in crisis not of religion in my opinion, but in crisis of civilization understood as "set of social characteristics common to a society or a group of societies." Most of our young people no longer have any bearings! Our contribution in this direction can lead young people to question themselves and open up to the mission! Not being afraid to be as we are: authentic testimony of our consecrated and missionary being. We are religious before being priests and by being priests, we are religious and that changes everything! Our way of being a priest, of being a missionary and of radiating must identify us! But then, in everything, avoid clericalism and self-reproach! Find a current language to talk about Saint Louis Marie de Montfort of his century without distorting the spiritual path he left us.

What are your expectations for the next General Chapter of the Congregation?

The theme of the General Chapter 2023 edition is: "Dare to take risks for God and for humanity our creative fidelity". Our Holy Founder said: "If we do not risk something for God, we do nothing great for Him" (Letter 27 Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort). From this Chapter, I expect that we really dare to take risks for God (send us more confreres here in France as elsewhere to risk a lot! Why not risk the Mission in dioceses where Father de Montfort ministered, where we are called?! Daring to strengthen formation where vocations are still numerous for the mission where there are few or none today, while waiting for vocations on the spot because we will have many in a few years I believe it! Reinforce the formation of formators for the formation of young people; continue the policy of the international communities to risk not one day closing our missions, the missionary work with the laity and our associates: to be promoted as you are already doing.

A last message to the readers of "Montfort-news"?

Dear readers, the life given is a successful life! Father Grosjean "A successful life is a given life! (lefigaro.fr) will say rather than "A successful life is a given life!" It's the same for me! We all want to succeed in our life: how many remember that we succeed by giving ourselves and that we give ourselves to succeed? Yes, dear friends, every man realizes himself fully in a vocation which implies the disinterested gift of himself! Each time we accept to become a gift for God and for others, we let ourselves be carried towards the Great Love (Jesus), we open ourselves to his grace and his mission, we accept to become a disciple! May the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the "Yes" help us to say our little "yes" with love and determination! To Jesus Through Mary.

Eric will be ordained a priest by Mgr François JACOLIN, bishop of Luçon, at the Basilica of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, Saint Laurent sur sèvre. Until then, Deacon Éric is at the service of the Parish-Sanctuary. You can follow the mass live with the links below:

https://www.facebook.com/basiliqueMontfort/live_videos

or

<https://youtube.com/live/ApUywyThHpM?feature=share>

Communication Office, Rome