

**COMPANY OF MARY
MONTFORT MISSIONARIES**

**NEWS
OF OUR PILGRIMAGE
WITHOUT BORDERS
2017- 2020**

October 2020

Since the last General Chapter in Rome, the little Company of Mary has been journeying. Sometimes rapidly, sometimes less quickly. Sometimes as a compact group, sometimes only the fastest pioneers... but all, in their way, have been moved along. And that deserves to be acknowledged and the One who allowed it deserves to be thanked.

In this booklet, we would like to give you news of the road covered... without flashy optimism or cynical pessimism. For the pleasure of sharing, for the joy of fraternity. This news come from your reactions to the letter of the Superior General, Luiz Augusto Stefani, of 24 January 2020 and from the witnesses of the General Councilors. They do not tell everything of the great richness that has been lived, but they are simple lights that clarify certain aspects.

Here, then, is some light-shedding news -positive, negative- on a journey that continues and advances toward the next Extraordinary General Council – EGC 2021.



THE DEPARTURE POINT:

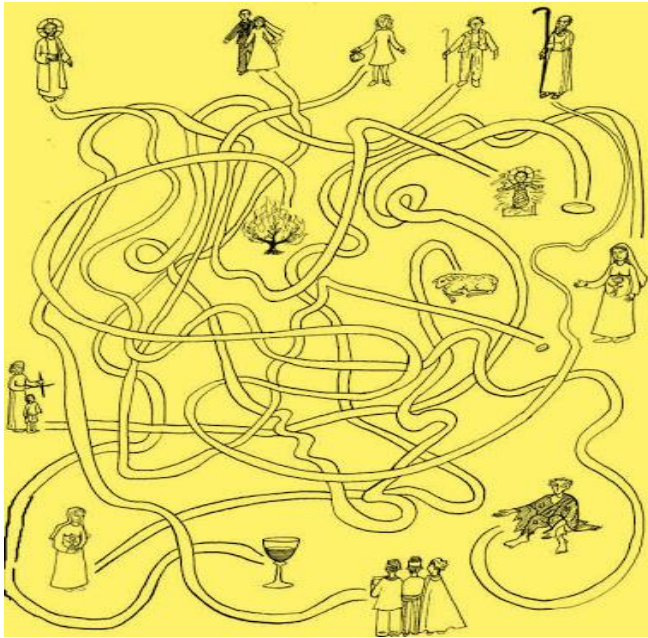
After a very fraternal and creative chapter in Rome, we had decided to cross borders, but it became necessary to realize that these were numerous, more numerous than foreseen:

- **Borders within each one of us:** our psychological and health limits; our limits regarding fraternal life, the mission... and then, fatigue, aging, disillusion.... The list would be long but sadly real. But there has also been the antidote: the Spirit who breathed in the Chapter and who mysteriously carried on his work and the desire for a more intense international fraternity.

- **Borders concerning our resources:** not only financial (always insufficient and badly spread about) but especially human resources. We have never been very numerous and we always think that we cruelly lack the active forces to respond to all the challenges, all the urgent needs or the new projects.

- **And lastly, borders of languages, of fraternal welcome, of the fear of something new** (experts call it neophobia!), the fear of not having what is habitual and reassuring...

And then came the **border of COVID** which has closed us into ourselves, isolating one from another except for the Internet. Thanks to the inventors of Zoom, Skype and the other technologies.



BUT IN SPITE OF ALL THAT,

these three years have seen multiple displacements, large or small, but each one requiring energy, generosity and boldness. There have been some true and beautiful crossings of borders. Even if we do not have many resources, there has been and there is a strength in us that drives us to open new missions, in new countries, to cross borders which we believed were impossible to reach beyond.

This is what we want to share in this small booklet, real nourishment to continue on the road that will lead us all together, in our diversity, to the next EGC-2021. Difficulties are not lacking; we must not deceive ourselves, but we are looking for once at what works well and taking that for our “morning star”.

There have been GEOGRAPHICAL CROSSINGS...

They have been numerous and clothed in diverse forms.

- 30 confreres left their own countries for another and thus participate in the Montfortian mission: 6 from Haiti, Indonesia, Madagascar, Africa Francophone, 4 from India and 1 from Italy and the Philippines.

- Welcome of confreres into entities they did not know. Canada received young confreres from Madagascar and Haiti; the Netherlands welcomed young Indonesian confreres; Belgium had confreres coming from Francophone General Delegation of Africa; Colombia received a young confrere from Francophone General Delegation of Africa, Nicaragua an Indian confrere, Brazil a confrere from Francophone Africa and from India; France welcomed confreres from Madagascar, Indonesia, Italy and Haiti; GB&I confreres from the Philippines; Portugal an Indonesian deacon; Italy a confrere from India; PNG two young men from Francophone General Delegation of Africa.

Such crossings are not easy, not for those who leave home nor for those who welcome them with the best will in the world. We have to form ourselves for a welcome without borders, those who leave as well as those who receive. Another example: the welcome of missionaries in PNG arriving from India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Madagascar and the Francophone General Delegation of Africa... Thus is lived out the universal dimension of the Church for which we are responsible. Each one had to inculturate himself in order to love the culture of the other person and thus bring the good news of salvation. In the USA a process of discernment is underway to know how to welcome missionaries and what to propose to them.

- Our international communities (e.g. 4 in France) are fine laboratories to experience the globalized world which is ours and to discover the cultural richness of everyone.

- In certain entities we have enlarged the zones for mission. In particular this is the case in India which confirms the new mission in Australia, in English speaking Africa where a mission will begin in Zambia and also in Kenya. In Madagascar, 2 new parishes are now served by the confreres. In Uganda our two communities are very active. In the Francophone Delegation of Africa two new parishes have been opened in Congo and one in Burundi. The projects for implantation in Mexico and in Vietnam advance. In Haiti, two dioceses have accepted new missions. Two missionary communities have been created in Kalimantan (Indonesia), and in PNG there is a strong request from Bishop Rozario, smm, to come to work in his diocese.

- The General Administration – Father Luizinho and/or an assistant – has visited, before the confinement in Italy, nearly all the entities, in order to reinforce unity and fraternity. The welcome everywhere was fraternal, but especially in Asia, with all its cultural manifestations.

- Zoom lets us travel in this period of confinement: eleven meetings with all the members of the General Council have taken place by internet, which has allowed us to communicate with the USA, Indonesia, Italy, France, Portugal, Great Britain, Belgium and Germany. Other very important meetings have done with Peru-Brazil, PNG, the Philippines, Colombia and Ecuador.

BRIDGES ARE BUILT IN SPITE OF OBSTACLES



SOME CONVICTIONS

- The future of our Congregation is tied to our crossing of borders, to our capacity to leave our territories. The lived experiences of these last three years show the solid foundation of this dynamism: the future appears brighter in the entities who have launched themselves in this adventure.
- To live as Church, we must have an ever larger vision of the mission, to leave our cultural habits and traditions and dare to go toward the adventure of the Other and the other, even if that is difficult and can paralyze us; joy and life are at the end.
- To build bridges between us is a source of evangelical enrichment and fraternal joy if we prepare ourselves for it spiritually, culturally and theologically.

There have also been INSTITUTIONAL CROSSINGS

These crossings have been more than marginal changes. They have provoked veritable transformations of culture of Congregation or of entity. And that has strengthened the entire body! The General Administration Team is the first to seek out this new participative culture.

- Since the last General Chapter, 20 new persons responsible for entities have been placed in their tasks, which shows our capacity to renew ourselves institutionally even if this is not always easy in certain entities.

- In the region of Africa, a strong accent has been put on a better, more participative leadership (commissions), and in the integration of the young confreres into responsibilities. Meetings on different levels have taken place (but COVID has blocked several of these attempts). In the region of Latin America, there have been many initiatives moving toward greater participation at meetings, toward a collegial taking charge of the future and reflection on the Montfortian mission.

- In certain entities like Canada planning for the future has been mapped out and the involvement of lay people in the animation of our works is underway. In other entities the property patrimony has been reduced (UK, for example) and communities have been restructured and adapted to the number of confreres. The Montfortian presence in Argentina has been stopped.

- Entities have been able to put in place a more centralized and effective organization for the administration and transparency of finances. PNG acquired its autonomy in relation to the Diocese. In Malawi, institutions have been reorganized (TV, printing).

- Certain entities have tried to ameliorate their financial self-sufficiency and taking charge of a greater autonomy regarding

their finances. In Indonesia, houses that allow swallows to make their nests, an important source of revenue (medicine, food...) have been constructed; creativity is not lacking! In Madagascar they are looking to produce rice. In the Anglophone General Delegation of Africa real estate investments permit stronger revenues. In Peru an agro-forestry project allows them to finance formation; in Colombia a reforestation project serves to help take charge of expenses. But for other entities, financial self-sufficiency remains difficult outside of parish revenues and the economic situation is still precarious. To be underlined is the economic creativity of our three confreres in Poland and the efforts of Belgium to move beyond their financial difficulties.

- The relationship between certain entities and the general administration has been made more fluid and clearer, which allows for a more vibrant animation. The entities of Europe which have received missionaries freely share their experience; they rediscover a dynamism and joy.

- For several entities priority has been placed on concretely putting into place the resolutions of the General Chapter and discussing these at various meetings (Malawi, Indonesia and Colombia, for example).

- The work of the General Commissions – eight have been created – is a cornerstone of this crossing. At the same time there is a setting up of a more participative governance and the means to set forth common ideas to all, new institutional points of depart... 33 confreres and 5 lay persons have been involved even if COVID has not allowed for regular work.

+ *Mission Commission*: there has only been one meeting to define the objective: to share good experiences that are lived everywhere so that a “Montfortian” style of being a missionary might emerge.

+ *Communications Commission*: was set up as well as an *Editorial committee for the Echo Montfortain*. This now has a new format and has collected the contribution of all the entities. The flow of information between the Generalate and the entities has been substantially augmented. Workshops by Zoom and sessions in person for reference persons for communication among the entities have been organized (Latin American and the Caribbean in 2019).

+ *Formation Commission*: was constituted and contributed to the editing of the second volume of the Ratio and of the Montfortian Ritual for religious profession (approved by the Congregation of Worship).

+ *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission*: if there are initiatives in numerous entities (Anglophone General Delegation of Africa, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia...), the commission is still in gestation. It wants to be a place of information and sharing of experiences from all the Montfortian realities.

+ *Economic Commission*: its objective is to help the Bursar General. The commission has contributed to setting up different solidarity funds (for formation, COVID); to appeal for gifts. It has supported the research of the entities to stabilize their legal status and establishing a system of solidarity for elderly or sick confreres (India, Anglophone General Delegation of Africa).

+ *Associates Commission*: allows us to make precise who is called a “Montfortian associate” and the demands of this commitment. There is also a monthly bulletin –Jesus Living in Mary – which is available in seven languages.

+ *Spirituality Commission*: ought to dynamize the entire Congregation, which often remains apart from this problematic. The commission organizes each year the “Rencontre Montfortain”

in Rome; the journal “Spiritualita Monfortana”, and seeks ways to enrich the FIM Session for participants sent by the SMM.

+ *Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons*: weeklong formation sessions in Colombia for the Latin American and Caribbean entities have been organized. Three-day formation sessions at the international Novitiate in Montfort sur Meu (France) and at the scholasticate in Haiti have been offered. Meetings of formation and information during visits to Madagascar, Malawi and Ecuador have been realized. The consciousness of all the confreres to the gravity of this subject has been presented everywhere.

SOME CONVICTIONS

- Congregation is reinforcing itself, but it remains fragile in several regions of the world which need the multi-dimensional support of all: in human resources, in finance, in formation, in expertise... and in prayers!

- All the confreres have the desire, with their own singular personality, to involve themselves more in the future of the Congregation, and this is a “Good News” which gives hope. The field for mission is immense and requires the talents and the enthusiasm of each and every one.

- The culture of the Congregation is changing progressively, but we must intensify our co-responsibility, source of joy and effectiveness. This demands that each of us re-examine his obedience and his exercise of authority.



There have been CROSSINGS IN FORMATION

Formation is first of all the transmission of a heritage – the Montfortian tradition – which must be adapted to contemporary culture and to the challenges of our different local and national societies. It allows us to cross the border of time and generations. We must form confreres so that they might adapt to a world and a vocabulary that changes rapidly and to a mission that evolves greatly. It also permits an evolution of our competences and our comprehension of the world; in that, it is a pathway toward others.

- The opening of the Novitiate in Italy was a good sign. It brought together young men from Italy, Croatia and Poland and remains open for the rest of Europe. Also, the presence in Italy for his studies of a scholastic of GBI, of Philippine origin, is another positive sign. The international Novitiate in Colombia also is a bearer of hope; this year it welcomes Haitians, Colombians, a Nicaraguan... Formation in India involves cultural diversity because the candidates come from different States and it is a challenge. A Scholasticate is taking shape for the first time in PNG.

- The place of Mary in the formation of each Montfortian is important, but how to form them to share this with lay people, with young people? How can we be innovators and not mere followers in this domain? The specific courses at the “Marianum” for the scholastics in Italy show a real gain in this domain. Mariology sessions are also given in India.
- The study of the Montfortian texts is the cornerstone of the Tradition and of modernity. They must offer us our “vertebral column”. The 3rd edition of the complete works of Montfort in Italy, the 2nd edition in Colombia, and the 1st in Portuguese have seen the light of day. In Indonesian, the “Treatise on True Devotion” has been translated (2019) and there should follow the translation of the “Secret of Mary”. The commentaries on the *Cantiques* in the Netherlands have contributed to making known this part of Montfort’s work. The university colloquium and the book on Montfort and the Montfortians that was held in Belgium goes in this same sense.
- The formation of formators is one of the evident priorities for the future of the Congregation. We must help the formators to let the “burning adventure” of Montfort be discovered, with a modern pedagogy and means for the youngest. Sessions of formation took place in the Philippines (2018), in Indonesia (2018), in Colombia and Ecuador (2019). In Madagascar, certain confreres followed courses in an inter-congregational institute to form formators. The “Cursos para los Formadores de America Latina” (CUPAFAL) continues to offer its services to the Latin American and Caribbean entities: Zoom conference in August 2020, course in September 2019 for the young confreres.
- The accompaniment of the young confreres is very important. In the whole Congregation, where there are the stages of formation, the confreres are very attentive to this demand, heavy

with consequences for the future of the mission and the Congregation.

- The utilization of formative resources by internet can be a very effective help at all levels of formation. The formation of formators in network on the level of Latin America is an enlightening realization.

- The policy of vocations, with the discernment it involves, must not be left aside even if it is difficult and seems little “worthwhile” in the short term in certain countries, whereas in other countries in Africa and Asia, for example, there are many vocations that must be evaluated and discerned. Thus, for example, in Peru-Brazil and in Colombia a real effort has been made in this domain and it begins to bear fruits. In Asia teams of confreres are going to make young people aware of the Montfortian vocation.

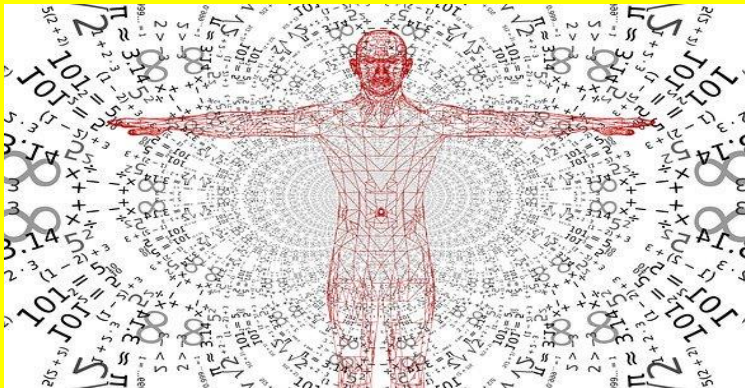
- In Italy a formation committee has been constituted for the accompaniment and discernment of vocations. In Portugal, the center of vocational animation at Fatima is being restructured and the postulants are being welcomed in the North of the country. In the Anglophone General Delegation of Africa, in Indonesia and in the Philippines, a house for aspirants allows for a discernment before the pre-novitiate.

- Ongoing formation must become a habit so that we may remain “connected” to the world and to the Church because new challenges appear: pandemic, violence, bioethics, integral ecology, gender... In Indonesia a team of confreres takes care that each confrere has a program of ongoing formation.

- Spiritual formation has benefited by a renewal in Peru-Brazil thanks to the Montfort Center and the opening of the “Mary Bookstore” in Lima. In several entities one notes a better following of propositions made to enhance the spiritual life.

SOME CONVICTIONS

- We all feel the importance and the difficulties of a vocation policy in certain countries, not to create numbers, but to live and help others live the joy of the Gospel in a fragile and pessimistic world, *en route* to distancing itself from Catholicism. We have the duty not to lower our arms. In other entities vocational discernment holds priority because the candidates are rather numerous.
- Ongoing formation at every age of life cannot be bypassed: whatever might be the age of the confreres, we must form ourselves to be fully missionaries for the world today: as much in missiology, theology, sacred scripture, integral ecology as in the human and social sciences.
- There is a necessity for an equilibrium in formation: to be formed concerns our whole humanity and not merely our head or our memory. We need to find an integral Montfortian formation by supporting ourselves on our documents and putting them into practice in our different mission contexts.
- To give ourselves a solid budget for formation is a human investment for the future. Formation is the keystone of the dynamism of our Congregation and its future.



There have also been CROSSINGS IN SOLIDARITY

- With lay people in general, and with the associates: there are more and more people asking for an accompaniment and wanting to share our mission. Thus, in Ecuador and in Colombia, lay people participate in the mission of the confreres (retreat house, missions, formation...). In Uganda a good group exists and is formed in Montfortian spirituality. The same for the Congo. In the USA, lay people animate the Montfortian shrines, as well as in Canada. In Haiti and Italy, the laity participate with the confreres in parish missions. In Fatima in Portugal at Montfort House, a lay movement is developing. In the Philippines lay groups are numerous and active and are structured in a clear way in the Association Mary Queen of all Hearts. In Indonesia the lay people are very active, but the national meeting which was foreseen for all the groups had to be canceled (COVID). The associates of PNG are very engaged in parish life.

- In order to develop a true relationship with the associates and the youngest confreres, we must commit ourselves to offer them

a formation in Montfortian spirituality adapted to their reality. This is the case in Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, PNG ... and that carries vitality.

-Solidarity begins in the house. It is by reinforcing community life and the sense of the body of the Congregation that we can be real actors of solidarity around us. Thus in India, the intercultural challenge is constant, and the celebration of the intercommunity days “Montfort Yuva Milana” (October 2019 with the theme of fraternal life without borders) permitted, in a festive way, to value the different cultures.

- The aged confreres who have worked so much for the mission have need, with age and sometimes health problems, of a greater support from the confreres. Colombia, as in other entities, has for a long time put in place a house for the aged confreres (a work for which the Vice-Province of the USA actually gives a financial support), where they can truly live their Montfortian commitment to the farthest extent possible. In Indonesia such a house is under construction.

- There are young people in the Congregation; we must not forget them. They require our attention for formation, missionary accompaniment, and to support their initiatives. In Malawi, in India, in PNG, meetings for young confreres have been organized in order to dynamize them and gather their suggestions. In Italy also the young confreres gather together regularly; it is the same in Northern Europe.

- Solidarity passes through economic realities. Thus, a system of security and health for the confreres has been put in place in India and in Anglophone Africa. Solidarity also passes through placing things in common and in economic transparency among us. Certain entities financially support other entities in greater

economic difficulty. However certain entities remain dependent on the General Administration or are in financial difficulty.

- Our spiritual family is not only in the mission; it collaborates with other congregations. Participation in animating the life of dioceses with consecrated life is a real service rendered by confreres in several countries.

- The confreres of Anglophone Africa are engaged in living the experience of different cultures in four countries. This is also the case on the Indian continent, a place of great cultural diversity, in Peru-Brazil, etc. It is not always easy but it is an important sign for understanding and peace in the world. The international communities are signs that move in this direction.

SOME CONVICTIONS

- The Congregation will be alive if the solidarity among us is strengthened even more within each community and each country and entity.

- But we must not close in on ourselves (cf. Pope Francis), but promote solidarity in the whole of society. The mission always has this social and relational dimension.

- Even if there are few young people in certain entities, other entities have many. These young confreres stop us from falling into a pessimistic and negative discourse (and a false one) on the future of consecrated life. They are in need of a support, of our friendship and a solid formation.

- The elders are a treasure to honor. It is for them to sustain the new generations by joyously sharing their experience.



THE MISSION is the horizon of all our crossings

One often speaks of a new evangelization to say that we must, in very continent and every culture, not allow ourselves to fall into a cynical pessimism. The Montfortian tradition pushes us to go out ahead and to go throughout the entire world, crossing all borders.

Many wish for an evaluation of our missionary activity to see if we are up to the challenges that modern life poses, and if we know how to detect the true needs of our countries. How can we advance in this prospective balance sheet in a realistic way?

- To sustain the youngest at the beginning of their ministry is essential, because the mission has become more difficult in a secularized world and the failures can be traumatizing. The first

years of ministry ought to receive the greatest attention. In Northern Europe, meetings of the young confreres have taken place in order to share on the mission; the same thing has happened in India, Anglophone Africa, Italy and Latin America. In Indonesia the second pastoral year of the scholastics is very explicitly a year turned toward the mission.

- The Marian apostolate has been relaunched in several entities, like Belgium, where the bilingual magazine of the confreres is greatly appreciated. The center of Marian formation at Medjugorje, established at the request of the local bishop, is an innovative work with confreres and associates. The shrines of Canada and the USA remain significant locales of Montfortian apostolate and places of renewal for the Christian people. In Colombia and Peru, confreres have been freed up for this Marian apostolate. Zoom is also used to prepare associates for the consecration to Mary in Peru. In Indonesia, an annual review of Marian reflection prepares people to live the month of the Rosary.

- In Pontchâteau – France, a team from the whole Montfortian family and a diocesan priest, and especially the young confreres present on site, invest themselves in the local pastoral activity. They also have a reconciliation activity among families who are suffering.

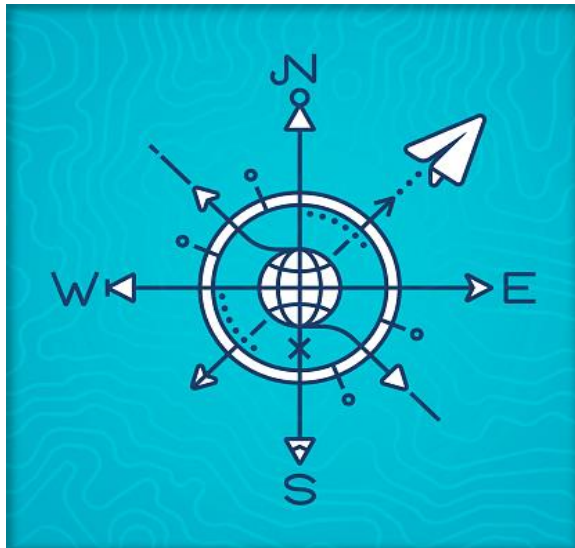
- The experiences of the itinerant mission (Ecuador, India, Indonesia) which take up again the intuitions of Montfort have rediscovered a promising field.

- The confreres in Haiti have a large and beautiful agro-pastoral project for the well being and economic integration of the populations. This project is advancing well. In France, the village Saint Joseph at Pontchateau offers a place to welcome persons in difficulty and to help them re-insert into society.

- In PNG each Saturday an intention for the Montfort Missionaries all over the world is inserted in the Eucharist. In Indonesia each day a prayer is recited in all the communities for the missionary life. Certainly, in the other entities moments of prayer for the mission and the missionaries are not lacking.

SOME CONVICTIONS

- The mission is immense but it renews itself; new types of presence need to be imagined in order to meet those who are far from the faith or the Church.
- The real mission begins in our communities if they are fraternal, fervent, joyful and open (cf. Pope Francis, at the Synod for Youth and *Evangelii Gaudium*, 113-114).
- The mission will be so much more pertinent when it will be “inter”: generational, cultural, national.





There has been a pathway. The testimonies gathered here have let us discover a real vitality. But we cannot rest on our laurels, and there are, we have seen, some areas still too fragile and with difficulties to overcome. And most of all, we must bring the Good News in the manner of Montfort, a manner “afire”.

How do we advance and see that the pilgrimage continues, not only to the next General Chapter but beyond?

According to the inquiry launched in the Congregation by the letter of Father Luizinho in January 2020, two areas must be tackled: finances and formation (initial and ongoing). Some more precise points have been gathered in the reaction of the entities; we take them up to launch the discussion:

- 1.** For certain confreres the four notes of the Montfortian mission are growing weaker: is this true?
- 2.** For others, formation is not integral enough and does not prepare enough for creativity and the missionary enthusiasm necessary in contemporary society: is this true? What is to be done?
- 3.** Ongoing formation is the poor parent of our Montfortian life. How to rediscover the taste for study, for analysis, for reading.... at every stage of life?

- 4.** The publication of the Ratio II was much awaited to help us, but do the documents of the Congregation concretely stimulate us in our ordinary life?
- 5.** We must form the youngest members for management and leadership, for taking responsibility...but we must also allow them to take their place and innovate. How do we assure the passage of taking over between generations?
- 6.** We do not give ourselves sufficient means (finances and personnel) for a solid initial and on-going formation: Is this true? What would we have to foresee?
- 7.** Where are we regarding financial self-sufficiency, taking charge, by the entities of their future? How do we progress in a realistic way, all the while giving priority to the mission? How to help the economically dependent entities?
- 8.** Good transparent management is desired by all, but how to realize this desire concretely? How to make confidence and control work together at the service of the common good?
- 9.** The sale of buildings and the transfer of works to others imposes itself on certain entities, while in others there is the need for construction. What common policy might there be in this complex domain?
- 10.** Other propositions on the subject of finances and formation?

With the request to kindly respond to the questions in a concrete manner.



This booklet, fruit of the sharing of all (response of the entities and reflection of the General Administration) cannot be closed. It does not exhaust the richness of the Congregation. Now it is for each one, alone or in a team, to complete it and add your suggestions, your questions, your propositions.

Fr. Luiz Augusto STEFANI, SMM
Superior General
and the members of the General Administration