

SG 10-2020  
Rome, 21 March 2020

## SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Dear friends, brothers and sisters,

The celebration of the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord is for the entire Church the inauguration of the *"fullness of time"* (Gal 4:4), which is to say the fulfillment of promises and preparations. Mary is chosen to conceive the One in whom *"dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily"* (Col 2:9). The divine response to the question *"How can this be since I have no relations with a man?"* (Lk 1: 34) is given by the power of the Spirit: *"The holy Spirit will come upon you"* (Lk 1: 35).

It is in the context of this celebration of such great importance that the consecration to Jesus through Mary is made or renewed in the Montfortian Family. This year, I invite you to meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation, on our commitment as consecrated persons, as disciples of Jesus Christ, in the historical moment in which we are living.

In the *"Prayer to the Virgin for Europe"*, we address this supplication to her:

*"Mary, Mother of hope, walk with us! Teach us to proclaim the living God; help us to witness to Jesus, the only Savior; render us willing to help our neighbor, welcoming to those in need, artisans of justice, passionate builders of a more just world; intercede for us who work within history, with the certitude that the plan of the Father will be accomplished".*

It is a prayer, a supplication that surpasses European frontiers. In reality, it is a commitment, a program of life for the entire Montfortian Family, especially in these days when fear brings us closer to one another due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus).

We are called to witness to the incarnate Word, to be *"willing to help our neighbor, welcoming to those in need"*. With responsibility and creativity, we must find a way to show our closeness and our affection toward the sick.

We want to be *"artisans of justice, passionate builders of a more just world"*. That is why we keep watch that no one become a victim of racial, cultural or social prejudice, and that each person receive the conditions for health treatment all the way to healing. How will poor countries deal with this illness? With what resources?

It is the occasion to recall the words of the Lord: *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,*

*naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited. Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Mt 25: 34-36, 40).*

In celebration the feast of the Annunciation this year, I invite you to redouble your prayers for those who suffer in multiple ways in today's world. We address our prayers and we witness our nearness to those sick from the coronavirus, to the migrants in Turkey, blocked at the borders with Greece, and also for the 900,000 refugees in the Sudan.

The bishop of Ars-Belley, Monseigneur Pascal Roland, has declared: *“More than the epidemic of coronavirus, we ought to be afraid of the epidemic of fear. This worldwide crisis at least offers us the advantage of remembering that we inhabit a common home, that we are all vulnerable and interdependent, and that it is more urgent to cooperate than to close our borders”* (Cf. <http://www.lafedequotidiana.it>).

In this same line of thought, how can we forget the message of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, the true cry which resounds even today: *“Open to Jesus Christ”*.

Let us confront fear with creativity, and let us celebrate the Annunciation of the Lord with concrete gestures of fraternity. To all of you, let us remain united in prayer. Good preparation for the Passover of the Lord.

Faternally,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a smaller, more complex mark.

P. Luiz Augusto STEFANI, S.M.M.  
Superior General