



Very Reverend Father Marcel GENDROT, S.G.

(1921 – 2014)

(Superior General from 1969 to 1981)

*Died 8 December 2014, in St Laurent sur Sèvre (France)
aged 93, with 74 years of Religious Profession.*

Father Marcel Gendrot was born in Quedillac (Ille et Vilaine) on 13 June 1921 (he loved to play on the French words, saying that he was not born “*en vingt / en vain*” -in twenty / in vain), the son of M. François Gendrot and Sidonie Sicot. He was the last of six boys to be born to them. His elder brother Jean-Baptiste was to become a Ploermel Brother (the two brothers together were to do a lot of work transcribing the homilies of Father Gabriel Deshayes). Marcel was baptised on 14 June 1921, the day after his birth. His elder brother Louis was his godfather.

His primary schooling “was that of the young people in the country” as he said himself: “You learn very quickly to help each other and to share in the joys, the concerns and the labours of the family.” Then a Montfort Missionary (was it Father Lejanou?), encouraged by Marcel’s two aunts who were Daughters of Wisdom, came to Quedillac and spoke with him, not without ulterior motive, about the Montfort Missionaries. Marcel spoke about it with his mother, who left him free to make his choice. But the curate in Quedillac, his spiritual director, was not of the same mind:

-“I’m going to go to Pontchâteau,” said Marcel.

-“No, Châteaugiron!” exclaimed the curate (the diocesan minor seminary)

-“Pontchâteau!” replied young Marcel...

-“No, Châteaugiron!” replied the curate...

It seemed useless to resist, but that was not counting on “Providence” and on the determination of little Marcel: a short time after this exchange, God called the poor curate to himself (badly-treated appendicitis), and the way was clear... Marcel entered the Apostolic School of the Calvary in Pontchâteau in 1933... This little fact seems to me characteristic of Father Gendrot... Marcel loved his studies but also anything to do with clock-making and the mechanical... In 1939, he entered the Montfortian novitiate in Chézelles (Indre et Loire): it was the beginning of the War; there were 12 French and twelve English novices... the twelve English arrested by the Germans found themselves in Drancy – fortunately no one was dead! Marcel made his first vows on 8 September 1940 in Chézelles. From 1940 to 1946, he was at the scholasticate in Montfort-sur-Meu for his studies in philosophy and theology... Then there was a period of military service in Rennes and Dinan. Afterwards he returned to Montfort-sur-Meu, where he made his perpetual profession on 15 March 1946, and was ordained sub-deacon the following day by his Eminence Cardinal Roque,

Archbishop of Rennes, who also ordained him to the priesthood on 15 June 1946 in the Cathedral in Rennes.

His first obedience saw Father Marcel sent as a teacher of philosophy to Chézelles for a year: 1946-1947. Then he left to study philosophy in Rome from 1947 to 1949 at the Dominican University (the *Angelicum*), where he obtained a doctorate in philosophy with a thesis on "The problem of prudential truth" (cf. *Echo Montfortain*, August-September 1949). From 1949 until 1958, Father Marcel was professor of philosophy in Montfort-sur-Meu, with a brief interruption to make his "third year" in Celles-sur-Belle (1 August to 1 November 1955). He was not lacking in missionary daring in launching the "mission camps" for the scholastics.

On 22 April 1958 he returned to Rome as the Procurator General (representing the Congregation before the Holy See); he was to quickly become also the superior of the General House. In 1964, he was elected Assistant General. His numerous functions and occupations did not prevent him from bringing to a successful conclusion the publication of *the Œuvres Complètes* of St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, which appeared in 1966; a tremendous work! Then in 1967 he published "*Les Chroniques de Sœur Florence*", the first volume in the collection "*Documents et Recherches*", which was to provide the essential texts of our Montfortian history and the "source" biographies of St Louis Marie de Montfort and of Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus.

On 19 March 1969, Father Marcel Gendrot was elected Superior General of the Montfort Missionaries, the successor of St Louis Marie de Montfort. He was also the Superior General of the Daughters of Wisdom. He was to be Superior General for two terms of office until 1981. Starting on that 19 March 1969, Father Gendrot was the "Très cher Père". It needed a man like him to be superior general in those troubled and difficult times of the post-Council period, and especially post-May 1968.

During his two terms of office, the Cher Père was to visit all the Montfortian communities of the Congregation, which at that time numbered two thousand members; and all the communities of the Daughters of Wisdom, who numbered more than five thousand... An indefatigable traveller and journeys that would leave behind many anecdotes and photographs... Visits that would "reinvigorate" the confreres around the world... he would never cease breathing out this spirit "in Montfort's way"... He would never cease to spread abroad his indefatigable energy (maliciously, it was said of Father Gendrot that he could do at least three things at the same time: write a letter on his typewriter—not the famous "Hermes" that he had had to leave behind at Chézelles—, say his Rosary and recite his breviary while he was on the train...). His holidays were taken up with doing "the footsteps of Montfort", and with receiving pilgrims and visitors to the Cave of Father de Montfort in Mervent (where he would stay with other confreres underneath the chapel). We owe to the tenacity of Father Gendrot our presence in India and in Eastern Europe (the former Yugoslavia). A portion of France in Italy, his Roman activities earned him the honour of becoming a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* on 10 October 1979.

After his second term of office as superior general, Father Gendrot was appointed Secretary General of the Union of Superiors General in Rome (1 January 1982), while at the same time being a member of the pastoral team in a Roman parish (*The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin*). In 1989 he was appointed Apostolic Visitor and Pontifical Commissioner for three years in a Congregation that was experiencing difficulties (*the Oblates of the Virgin Mary*).

Then on 28 December 1991, it was time to return to France. He was appointed superior of the Mother House of the Holy Spirit on 1 January 1992; he was to remain as "*superior of the Holy Spirit*" for two terms of office. Having returned to France at the end of 1991, he quickly returned to Rome for the Beatification of Sister Marie-Louis of Jesus, having been the postulator of her cause (in May 1993). Whether it was for Blessed Marie-Louise or for any other Montfortian causes, Father Gendrot was always able to surround himself with a team

of Daughters of Wisdom (a hearty thanks to them!). His first sojourn in Saint-Laurent would see the restructuring of the House, several volumes of the collection "*Documents et Recherches*", and incessant visits to the Cave of Mervent.

From September 1997 until February 2007, Father Marcel Gendrot lived in the *Maison Natale* in Montfort-sur-Meu. The "*Maison Natale*" is a little like his baby! How much energy did he not spend for the birthplace of our Founder? I daren't open this chapter, for it would need a whole book; "a thick volume", Father Gendrot would have said.

Becoming more and more blind, Father Gendrot courageously left the "*Maison Natale*" for the Mother-House, yet leaving behind a wish: "that this *Maison Natale* may be more and more a house of prayer, of welcome, a missionary house" ... His wish was granted: the *Maison Natale* is today our international Novitiate.

His "retirement" to the Mother House was like the rest of his life: very active; but an action always guided by contemplation... Visits to the "*Maison Longue*", long hours in the confessional in the Basilica, etc. He never missed an inter-Montfortian celebration, whether in the basilica or elsewhere. He was always anxious to be there. His super-active presence was inspired by an intense life of prayer, and especially by the Rosary; this was, without a doubt, his secret of holiness ("O salutary advice! / O marvellous secret! / To become perfect, / Say a rosary a day." H 89, 25).

Totally dedicated to Jesus through Mary, Father Gendrot left us on 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, while the community was joined in prayer and adoration to renew our Montfortian Consecration to Jesus through Mary:

"I renew and ratify today through you my baptismal promises. I renounce for ever Satan, his empty promises, and his evil designs, and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life..."

This day, with the whole court of heaven as witness, I choose you, Mary, as my Mother and Queen. I surrender and consecrate myself to you, body and soul, with all that I possess, both spiritual and material, even including the spiritual value of all my actions, past, present, and to come. I give you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me, without any reservations, in whatever way you please, for the greater glory of God in time and throughout eternity.

Virgin most faithful, make me in everything so committed a disciple, imitator, and slave of Jesus, your Son, incarnate Wisdom, that I may become, through your intercession and example, fully mature with the fullness which Jesus possessed on earth, and with the fullness of his glory in heaven." Amen!