



L'Écho Montfortain

N° 506 – English Edition – March 2001

A WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

*From 4-25 February, at the scholasticate of the Italian Province in the Via Prenestina, formators of the Company of Mary from around the world met together for the first time in 16 years. It was a graced and life-giving meeting for all the participants, and I believe it will bring new depth and energy to the life and mission of the entire Congregation. We dedicate almost this entire **Echo** to this meeting, in order to give you some idea of the content, spirit and future thrusts it offered. As the Word from Father General, you will find the first part of a conference I gave to the formators on “The New Situation of the SMM Today.” The rest will be printed in the next **Echo**.*

DEMANDS OF FORMATION IN THE SMM TODAY

THE NEW SITUATION OF THE SMM

I would like to structure my reflections around five points. These reflections are the fruits of many visits, meetings, reports and dialogues over the past seven and a half years: experiences shared with many of you by myself and the General Assistants. I believe these points resonate with much that you have read and heard about the entities during the past week. Now I would like to examine the new situation of the SMM more *from the perspective of the Congregation as a whole*.

1. A worldwide SMM

The Company of Mary is currently present – to a greater or lesser degree - on every continent. This new presence includes not only foreign missionaries in pastoral activity, but now also candidates in formation, young native born religious, new ministries inspired by the charism (e.g. the itinerant mission team in Cebu, the catechetical-spiritual centres in Indonesia, the eventual Montfortian Marian centres in India, Philippines, Malawi...). With the passing years, this new presence will also include aging and elderly local confreres. We are becoming more and more a worldwide congregation in its members, its mission and its structures: simply look at the faces and histories of the confreres around this table! In many countries the early insertions of the SMM aimed at founding the local churches and building up the diocesan clergy. Welcoming local candidates for the Montforts, and learning how to create a new communities and ministries truly inculturated into the local church... this is a relatively new undertaking for the SMM.

A worldwide SMM presents great richness and variety: to discover new facets of the spirituality of St. Louis Marie expressed in the images and visions of vastly different cultures, to coordinate efforts across continents for mission and justice. The combined energies of **the Montfortian Family** – Brothers of St. Gabriel, Daughters of Wisdom, Montfort Missionaries, our Secular Institutes and lay associates around the world – create a staggering potential for witness to the Wisdom of Love and service to our brothers and sisters. A worldwide Congregation is made up of many parts, and each entity must first sink deep and solid roots in its own culture and local

church. However, from their earliest contacts, young candidates ought to learn that they will form part of a larger family, a worldwide Congregation. I cannot stress enough the importance of learning to speak well other international languages, with all the time and sacrifice that that implies. Already there is a need for preparing a new generation of experts in various fields: theology, Montfortian spirituality, and formation but also in missiology, management and finance. These new leaders cannot be considered the private treasure of one Province or Delegation! Various entities with crying needs and the General Curia and Administration have the right to share in this gift to the Congregation.

2. Internationality

At first glance ‘*internationality*’ might seem to mean the same thing as ‘*worldwide*’, but I believe they are quite different. For me ‘*worldwide*’ implies that there are Montfortians present on each continent; ‘*internationality*’ opens a whole conversation between entities that share and collaborate together in various combinations and undertakings. Internationality opens out to areas of formation, mission, spirituality, structures and government.

I believe that the new reality of the SMM all around the globe calls us to embrace the invitation and the challenge to work and to live as confreres *in various international, inter-provincial, inter-montfortian family situations*. Already we have a certain body of experiences, going back 25 and 50 and 100 years. We must learn from the successes and failures of the past, and from the struggles and hopes of the present. Even during the past week, several among you witnessed to the enormous patience, comprehension, openness and flexibility needed to form a truly international community or team. History shows that one must be ready to forgive, to start over, and to commit to the common journey while resisting the temptation to go one’s separate way. On the other hand, with favourable conditions and mature, prepared and willing personnel, *much good and much good witness* can come from international endeavours.

To allow the confreres and the Congregation to embrace this invitation and challenge to internationality, we must develop concrete plans and guidelines to prepare formation personnel capable and desirous of welcoming, respecting, dialoguing and understanding young people from other cultures. We must help all the candidates to welcome and respect those who are different from the dominant culture (if there *is* one dominant culture...). Collaboration among the Provincials and Delegates will be incarnated in structures or teams or houses of formation that truly allow planning, staffing, evaluations, verification to be shared by all the entities involved. All this requires almost limitless patience, honesty, humility and wisdom... and a faith in the future of the young people and the SMM!

But internationality in formation is not an end in itself... It becomes an instrument, a capacity to undertake new forms of evangelisation, to address new and divers ‘*areopagoi*’ with creativity and flexibility... I believe that today this is a way of being *Liberos* – men free with the freedom that comes from God. One of my fondest dreams is that what you accomplish in formation over the coming years will create a new generation of confreres from a diversity of nations, many of whom might be capable of living and working together for the good of the Church... in new missionary undertakings, in sharing Montfortian spirituality with lay people, in witness and presence at the places of Montfortian heritage like St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, Pontchâteau and Montfort....

To be continued in the next Echo Montfortain...

William Considine
Superior General

OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS

PERPETUAL PROFESSIONS

On 8 December 2000, in Bogotá (Colombia), **Orlando CASTRO GONZÁLEZ**.

On 8 December 2000, in Andraisoro (Madagascar), **Crescent Robert RAFAMANTANANTSOA** and **Paulin RAMANANDRAIBE**.

On 9 December 2000, in Mbarara (Uganda), **John Mary AHIMBISIBWE**.

On 6 January 2001, in Zomba (Malawi), **Louis NKUKUMILA**.

ORDINATIONS TO THE DEACONATE

On 9 December 2000, in Andraisoro (Madagascar), **Crescent Robert RAFAMANTANANTSOA**.

On 9 December 2000, in Antsobolo (Madagascar), **Paulin RAMANANDRAIBE**.

On 10 December 2000, in Mbarara (Uganda), **John Mary AHIMBISIBWE**.

On 13 January 2001, in Mangochi (Malawi), **Louis NKUKUMILA**.

ORDINATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

On 13 August 2000, in Peru, **José Angel JULCAHUANCA PARIATÓN**.

On 9 December 2000, in Manila (Philippines), **Nelson CABAÑERO**.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE RENEWAL OF FORMATION IN THE SMM

The General Council has decided to build on the good results of the Formators' Meeting, along with new initiatives around the SMM, and the reminder of Pope John Paul II in *Vita Consecrata* that all of us, regardless of age or experience, are called "to grow humanly and as religious... that there is no age at which a person has completely achieved maturity" (Cf. VC 69). Thus, the General Council has named as members of a **coordinating committee for the Renewal of Formation in the SMM**: Fr. Ivo Libralato, Fr. Olivier Maire, of the African Formation Delegation, Fr. Donald La Salle (USA) and Fr. Marco Pasinato (Italy). Over the coming years they will work with other confreres to assure a fruitful dialogue among entities that could result in the approval of a new *Ratio* at the General Chapter of 2005.

VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS

THE CAUSE "MONTFORT DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH"

The International Colloquium on Montfortian spirituality, held in Rome last October, brought about a considerable positive reaction in Roman church circles. And we must add the study published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the review of the Italian Jesuits, which sets forth the value for today of Montfort's doctrine. The echoes of this in the media were good. On the international level, initiatives in favour of a Doctorate for Montfort are continuing. In France, a number of bishops have already written their petition to the Pope (about 70 of the 110, it would seem).

What can we foresee? It is better not to say. But, at any rate, we can say that the dossier is still in the hands of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and that the consultants have given their replies. Now we are waiting for the calling of the assembly of the Cardinals who will be members of the "plenary session", so that they can give their *votum*. This assembly is foreseen for March or April. After that, if the *votum* is favourable, the dossier will be sent back to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, where the *Positio* will be prepared.

"BETWEEN THE TWO FEASTS"

Between the two feasts of St Louis Marie (28 April) and Blessed Marie-Louise (7 May), we are invited to pray with the whole Montfortian Family for our common mission in the Church.

LETTER TO ALL THE CONFRERES

At the end of their meeting in Rome, the Formation Personnel wrote the following letter to all the confreres, to share with them their experience of this blessed occasion.

Many of us were strangers to each other. Our nationalities, our languages, and our cultures were so different!. However when we came together here in Rome on February 4 and were introduced to each other, we discovered that, at a deep level of our life and apostolate, **we were all united**. A common tradition and the same mission **in the footsteps of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort** had brought us together. We, 27 confreres from 15 different countries, with ages ranging from 34 to 70, met at the Italian scholasticate for a **meeting on Montfortian formation**. For three weeks, we reflected in prayer and sharing on the important task given to us by the Company of Mary, namely guiding and accompanying young - and even older - candidates along the Montfortian path to consecrated missionary life.

A deep spiritual experience of Montfortian internationality and formation

For ourselves, the daily rhythm of plenary sessions, sharing in groups, trying to grasp the meaning of a translation, celebrating the Holy Eucharist, coming together around Mary in the evening, meeting individual confreres during breaks, making pilgrimages together “in the footsteps of Montfort” here in Rome and at Loreto ... all these “events” were a concrete and deep spiritual experience of Montfortian internationality and formation in which we want to let you share.

Profound joy because of encouraging growth

Enlightened by “provocative” conferences given by confreres and outsiders, and helped by challenging questions put to our workshops by a steering committee of three confreres, we were progressively guided into the **complexity of Montfortian formation**. This reflection had to be done continuously in the context of our fast changing modern world and in the perspective of a Church and a Montfortian Congregation that constantly try to assess the significance and to discern the true and false values of those rapid changes. We **found a cause of profound joy in the encouraging growth** that, at this moment of our long history as Company of Mary, takes place in some of our younger entities. Although the primary responsibility for formation rests with the candidate himself, we became more aware of the **serious duty of formators and even each confrere**, in these entities and elsewhere, **to fully support the promotion of vocations and the formation** given to our candidates. This witness is above all realized, we felt, in a **daily prophetic and exemplary way of Montfortian life style** that makes us models “after the heart” of our Founder.

Updating our Montfortian formation program

We spent much time in trying to improve and update the **Ratio Institutionis**, the document or “program” that our Congregation uses in order to guide all members during their journey of growth at all levels, **from Pre-Novitiate until death in the Company of Mary**. We did not *rewrite* that Ratio, but we tried to produce all the material necessary for an updated edition, that will be produced later by a drafting committee, to be appointed specifically for this purpose by the General and his Council.

Great pain of having no new vocations

Another important element of our being together was the **reading and reflection on the reports from all our entities**, those **represented** at the meeting because they have *candidates in formation* and those **absent** because they experience the great pain of having *no new vocations* at this particular moment. As formators we obviously spent a large amount of our time on *all issues concerning the present Montfortian formation and its future*. However, in no way did we forget the second group of entities, those countries that are agonizingly going through a **time of dearth or total absence of Montfortian candidates**. Father General expressed as his personal conviction that

no confrere or entity seems to have the right to *surrender* to no other attitude than await “the dissolution of the province and then death”. We fully agreed with the words he added: “Some aging or small entities have a rich gift of witness, holiness, experience and wisdom”. In the past, they have often **given their best forces** to support and carry out our specific Montfortian mission in many parts of the world. Even now, **they continue to do so by generously making confreres available for Montfortian formation and other forms of apostolate** being undertaken in other entities. This continued service to the whole of the Congregation is for all of us a **source of deep respect and profound gratitude** to all those concerned. Especially we thank you, the sick and elderly confreres in our midst, for the powerful way in which you continuously support the Company of Mary and particularly our efforts as formators. **Undoubtedly your silent witness of prayer and sacrifice greatly benefits our whole Montfortian family!**

Waiting and trusting in the Word of the Lord, like Mary

As formators of the Montfort Missionaries we took time to reflect on the history of the Company of Mary and on what is presently happening in our different entities all over the world. We had to admit, in all humility, that we are indeed entirely **unable to understand God’s mysterious ways for our Congregation.** We came to realize that what is being experienced, in the ‘unpredictable’ modern world of today, in regard to our “older entities”, might some day happen also in our “younger entities”. We are therefore all invited to courageously and confidently face “the reality of the *‘anawim’*, ... the poor of Yahweh, who wait upon and trust in the Word of the Lord, like Mary of Nazareth, ... the small and poor community who waits, **confidant that God is with them, but not at all sure where he will lead them**” (Quotation from Fr. General’s conference to the meeting: “Demands of formation in the SMM today”).

Return to our Montfortian sources

In the past weeks, **we tried as Montfortians to return to our sources**, the rich heritage left to us by our beloved Founder. **We have found consolation, motivation and strength in his prophetic words** addressed not only to us formators, but to all of us, wherever we are living and working as **brother, father or lay associate, trying to bring about the reign of Jesus through Mary** after his example. In our poverty, we listened in faith and hope to our Founder, saying today to us:

“You are only a little flock ... You are of little account ... you are poor ... you are weak ... Entirely dependent as you are on God’s Providence, it is up to Him to support you and to increase your numbers ... Do not, therefore, be discouraged because you are few in number ... God will provide all that is necessary ... ” (LCM 1 - 4)

The deepest desire of Montfort’s heart

We **remembered** Montfort’s letter to his spiritual director when he was still a young priest. His deepest heart desire was anew set afire in our own hearts:

“I feel a tremendous urge to make our Lord and his Holy Mother loved, to go in a humble and simple way to teach catechism to the poor ... and to arouse in sinners a devotion to our Blessed Lady” (Letter 5).

Commitment of each one of us

At the closure of our meeting, we the formators of the Company of Mary, took upon ourselves a serious commitment, in the light of what we had prayerfully been discussing over the past weeks. We pronounced that commitment during the Holy Eucharist in the following formula:

‘I ... commit myself:

- 1. To be deeply grounded in Montfortian Spirituality and the specific Charism of the Company of Mary as a consecrated Montfortian Religious.**

2. **To foster, in a spirit of communion and collaboration, a sense of belonging to a larger Montfortian family, international, provincial and inter-montfortian**
3. **To be more and more an authentic witness of a prophetic montfortian life style in the Church and the world of today.**
4. **To be fully open to a process of creative fidelity.**
5. **To embrace with passion my mission as formator.**
6. **To implement in its totality the ‘Ratio Montfortana’.**

With Mary praying to the Spirit

In this letter, we have tried to give you some brief insights about what we discussed during these past three weeks. We have described what we experienced as formators who are serving Montfort’s international Company of Mary in the world and the Church of today. We must acknowledge - once more - that we became utterly aware of the fact that **we are only feeble human instruments, and that it is truly the Holy Spirit who is the formator of us all.** Whether a candidate has *just joined* on the journey to the ideal of becoming a Montfort Missionary “after the example of the Apostles”, or whether a confrere has already *gone a long way* on that path, we formators felt that **our formation never ends.** Therefore, during these days of our meeting, we have prayed - with Mary - for all of you, for each one of us who once heard the call to carry out “*great things for God and the salvation of souls*” (TD 214), our intention being “***holy and centred on God alone***” (RM 62). With insistence we have prayed, with Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and with Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus, to the Spirit who alone can renew the face of the earth through Mary, his “beautiful, pure and immaculate Spouse” (PM 25). May we humbly invite you to join in this prayer now:

“Memento: Holy Spirit, be ever mindful that it is you who, with Mary as your faithful spouse, are to bring forth and fashion the children of God. In her and with her, you brought forth the Head of the Church and, in the same way, you will bring all his members into being ... All the saints who have ever existed or will exist until the end of time, will be the outcome of your love working through Mary” (PM 15).

Rome, 23rd February 2001

Formators of Montfort’s Company of Mary

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

SOME COMMENTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

What were the most positive aspects of our meeting?

The fact to be together, the spirit of communion. Fraternity. I feel like a kind of “Pentecost” together with Mary – open to the Spirit. Experience of renewal in the Montfortian spirit.

The feeling of internationality and of belonging to a large family – Sharing with other formators, the awareness of not being alone, and the need of planning a programme of formation more in line with the whole Congregation – Feeling of having done something important for the future – Very good kitchen! I enjoyed the food!

The discussion groups were very enlightening. Some discussions needed much more time... Each participant was very open and enthusiastic to share ideas and experiences... Ideas coming from the groups seem to be inexhaustible... Sharing brought us nearer to each other on various levels. – It needed patience to struggle with different languages!

The liturgies were creative and lively, but most of all, very prayerful... The daily Eucharist and Marian prayer not only brought us closer to God and to each other, but were often real “formation sessions” for the formators, e.g. a prayerful meditation on the Cross of Poitiers.

The familial hospitality of the Student Community at the Via Prenestina... To be in the midst of a formation community at the Via Prenestina, utilizing a Montfortian scholasticate to host the meetings.... The various inputs shed light on my own ministry of formation. Sometimes it is easy to forget the ultimate goal! The climate of peace, joy, youth and respect. ... The experience of internationality and unity in diversity. The sincere concern of each one for the good of the Congregation.

The Steering Committee witnessed very well to “acting together” in their planning. They knew how to be creative in adapting the programme and sessions to the needs of the participants.

The fraternity among us, but also the sensitivity we showed for the things most important to us as Montfortians, e.g. the spirituality / charism of Montfort, the consecration, mission... and also the deep desire to form apostolic men *à la Montfort*.

As an experience of internationality, what were some of the benefits?

I have known and experienced the richness but also the poverty of other entities. It has given me a sense of encouragement to see how the whole Congregation seriously looks at formation. – It has broken distances that existed among our entities.... The spirit of re-foundation is a sign of growth of the Congregation. It has helped me to stress the specific Montfortian spirituality and the commitment of a formator.... The further discovery that internationality is already a fact.

The presence of Montfortians in different parts of the world, and the quality of their presence, is a richness to be consolidated. It opens us up to new situations that can be very valid for our own entities... The passion of the confreres for formation really enriched me...also the variety of initiatives... I noted that many have the same problems as I do with the young people!

It helped me to expand to the horizon of the whole Congregation.... It allowed me to see that I am not isolated in my little corner, alone with my problems and my community... It forced me to see the importance of learning another language.... I sense something has changed within me, the way in which I’ll approach this ministry of formation.

It opened me more to other cultures and persons who seek to live Montfortian spirituality. It gave me the courage to find renewed élan for the mission in our Montfortian charism... To think more and more as the international Montfortian Family... There are different languages (cultures), but all speak the same language (the love of God and the Montfortian mission).

What were some of the difficulties?

The real difficulty is language! ... Language (yet love has no language)... My inability to communicate with everyone...The language barrier – Communication, especially informal communication with those whose languages I did not know... The greatest difficulty has been the languages – (even if, in reality, it was not a problem!)... I wish I knew French and Italian! I wish I knew English!

OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN

Fr. Jozef WINTRAECKEN (1913-2000)

Died on 25 November 2000, in Valkenburg (Netherlands), aged 87 with 68 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1932, and was ordained a priest on 20 February 1938. After one year’s teaching in Rotselaar, he went to Indonesia as a missionary, where he stayed until 1966, including 3 years in a Japanese internment camp. Ten years as parish-priest in

Winterslag, Belgium, were followed by the same period as Superior, then Bursar in Valkenburg, until his retirement in 1986.

Fr. Maurice LEBLANC (1940-2000)

Died on 7 December 2000, in Vanier (Canada), aged 60, with 38 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 15 August 1962, and was ordained a priest on 16 December 1967. The first twelve years of his priestly ministry were largely devoted to the young and to *Marriage Encounter*. Then in 1980 he was appointed parish-priest of Our Lady of Lourdes in Vanier. He was subsequently, for a long time, a Provincial Councillor, and Provincial Bursar of Canada, exercising in these roles his great managerial ability. In 1996 he returned to Vanier as parish-priest, where, after a valiant struggle against cancer, he died.

Fr. Alexis Le QUÉRÉ (1921-2000)

Died on 11 December 2000, in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre (France), aged 79, with 59 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1941, and was ordained a priest on 16 February 1947. He was a teacher in Pontchâteau, then a missionary in Josselin and La Chartreuse, before going to Haiti, where he spent 5 years. On his return he spent almost twenty years in parish ministry in Angoulême and Évreux, before becoming chaplain to the retirement home run by the Daughters of Wisdom in Pleurtuit. His health beginning to deteriorate, he went first to Paris, then finally to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where he died.

Fr. Henricus DE KROON (1915-2000)

Died 28 December 2000, in Genk (Belgium), aged 85 with 63 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1937, and was ordained a priest on 28 February 1943. He worked for twenty-five years or more as a travelling missionary, then in the Belgian Marian Apostolate, particularly among those who distributed the Montfortian review. Later he was chaplain in various convents and institutes, before becoming a parish-priest in 1986. He retired in 1991 to the community in Genk, where he died.

Bro. Joseph GAUTIER (1920-2001)

Died on 5 February 2001, in Paris (France), aged 80 with 63 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 7 October 1937. He spent most of his life as a Montfort Brother in Tourcoing, looking after the house, doing the cooking and gardening, and the shopping. In 1988 he moved to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where among other things he looked after the sacristy. Then in 1996 he was appointed to Paris to act as door-keeper, a task he fulfilled faithfully until meeting his death as a result of a road accident.

Fr. Peter van EUNEN (1912-2001)

Died on 7 February 2001, in Sittard (Netherlands), aged 88 with 67 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1933 and was ordained a priest on 12 February 1939. Destined for missionary work in Borneo, he was unable to go, because of the outbreak of war, until 1946. He then spent 17 years in various mission posts before returning to Europe. After a further six years as chaplain, he went to Germany to become parish priest in Bonn, where he remained until 1998, when he returned to the Netherlands owing to ill health. He retired to Valkenburg, where he spent the last three years of his life.

Fr. Pedro BELTRÁN (1911-2001)

Died on 2 March 2001, in Choachí (Colombia), aged 89 with 72 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 25 December 1928 and was ordained a priest on 29 December 1935. After some years working in a parish in Bogotá, he taught for 14 years in the minor seminary in Choachí (1942-1956). Much of the rest of his life was spent as parish-priest in various places in Colombia (El Calvario, Guayabal, Acacias, San Martín, Montfort...), until his retirement to Choachí.

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