



L'Écho Montfortain

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A WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

(Second and final part of the conference given at St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre on 9 August 2001. The first part of this text was published in the Écho Montfortain of last April. The themes of holiness and baptism were addressed in that part).

Prayer

Another pastoral priority that Jean Paul sees for the new millennium is prayer : a Christian life distinguished above all in *the art of prayer*. The Holy Father talks of need to learn the Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer (n. 32), and the need “for our Christian communities to become *genuine “schools” of prayer*, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help, but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening, and ardent devotion until the heart truly *falls in love*.” (n. 33). But Montfort unfolds for us precisely such a school of prayer where we can seek and acquire the gift of Wisdom, where we can be moulded in Mary in order to be changed into the likeness of Jesus. Anyone who reads and loves Montfort soon discovers how he was nourished on every word that came from the mouth of God. With St. Louis Marie we learn to listen to the word of God and put it into practice, to keep it and to give it flesh. With St. Louis Marie the Rosary, that extraordinary, daily, endless school of prayer opens up for us: love and contemplation, shaped by the scriptures and events and needs of each day; presence of Jesus and Mary in every hour of the day; grace and power of all the mysteries of their lives active, healing and transforming in our life.

We who walk the spiritual path of St. Louis Marie and Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus, with humility, but also with confidence, we can help others grow in the art of prayer, even as we continue our own journeys... Prayer united with real life, Word made flesh each day in our flesh and blood, ordinary life as sacrament of the presence of the Divine, all this is part of the spiritual heritage of the Montfortian Family.

Witnesses to Love

From the other pastoral priorities mentioned by Pope John Paul, I would simply underline this final one: the world has need of spirituality of communion and of genuine witnesses to love. The Holy Father goes to the centre of the discussion by speaking of the experience of St. Thérèse de Lisieux. She wrote: “I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was aflame with Love. I understood that Love alone stirred the members of the Church to act... I understood that Love encompassed all vocations, that Love was everything” (n. 42).

It is amazing how often and how powerfully St. Louis Marie de Montfort uses the direct and powerful image of the heart... whether in describing the love of Jesus or the love that we can offer to the Lord. The cross at Pontchâteau, with all the small hearts nailed to the wood of the

cross; the heart on the statue of Our Lady at Montbernage; in beautiful line in *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, n. 132: “Let us offer Eternal Wisdom the irrevocable gift of our heart. That is all She asks for.” Men and women who live in Montfort’s school of holiness, who come to know the tenderness and beauty of Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, who live a tender and true devotion to the Mother of Jesus, such men and women – us! – we are learning day by day to become people of the heart... of the heart of Christ, of the heart of Mary, of the heart handed over in love to God and to our neighbour.

In this, let us thank the Lord for the immense charity and service to the poor, the sick, and the needy that is already undertaken all over the world by those who are walking St. Louis Marie’s path of holiness. Many of you here can tell stories of love and sharing, beginning in your homes and foyers and extending out to parishes, hospices, refugees, foreign mission posts. You live in the mystery, in the beating of the Tender Heart of God. In a global society that so often brutalizes or exploits the defenceless and the poor, in our families, parishes and religious communities that so often are closed in on themselves, bitter, without élan or hope, to become a person of the Heart is to incarnate the Wisdom of Love.

What must we do?

Having looked at some of the ways in which our Montfortian heritage seems to resonate with and enrich the Holy Father’s pastoral priorities of the new millennium, we can again pose the question: *What must we do?* In a certain sense I remember St. Louis Marie himself, who journeying to Rome to see the Pope, hoping to receive a mission to the far distant forests of New France –Canada, was instead told by Clement XI to return to France... that Montfort had ample fields of apostolic activity right there! Return to France, but to work in a new way, more solidly and full of confidence as a creative evangeliser, who would found religious communities and write the *True Devotion* and other texts... To say that perhaps first and foremost each of us must look to the micro-world within us and around us –family, parish, work, religious community, then to larger circles of the local church and dioceses, of groups and associations of Christians, of civic or governmental organizations... There is a vast field for our Heart of Love, for a people committed to walk a path of holiness and prayer in today’s world with today’s people. We are already doing much, but there is so much more to accomplish...always remembering that at the centre of any activity or program is a PERSON, Jesus the Lord.

You who have already been touched by St. Louis Marie and Blessed Marie of Jesus, whether in your schools or hospitals or parishes, in prayer groups, in the Hospitalité, or fraternities : more than ever believe that at the start of this new millennium, YOU can be the heart and hand of God, you can be a messenger of Good News, you can establish and extend the Reign of Jesus through Mary by the witness of your life.

Just as the Good Father de Montfort left behind him all sorts or groups to continue the grace of the mission – charitable schools, hospices, confraternities, prayer groups – small cells, leaven of the Kingdom, leaven of holiness, leaven of Jesus and Mary, so we too are called to develop and expand our centres of love and holiness.

And more – it is time to find ways for our cells, our leaven to join more together, to reinforce the energy, the life in the yeast! To encourage or mutually interaide efforts of living, inculturating, sharing the treasure of Montfortian spirituality. Perhaps, like the first disciples at Easter, we can find ways of helping one another – to pass beyond national or cultural frontiers, beyond divers religious accents or sensibilities, beyond the wounds or misunderstandings of the past - to become **evangelisers**, to become **disciples** who inspire and sustain one another with our growing conviction: “He is alive! And I am alive in him!”

I would like to conclude with a prayer that was dear to the heart of St. Louis Marie, and is at the heart of our being sent forth on mission to “put out into the deep”.

O Jesus living in Mary,
Come and live in your servants
In your spirit of holiness,
In the fullness of your might,
In the perfection of your ways,
In the truth of your virtues,
In the communion of your mysteries:
Subdue every hostile power,
In your Spirit
For the glory of the Father. Amen!

*William Considine, smm
Superior General*

OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS

INDONESIA BECOMES A GENERAL DELEGATION

On 2 June 2002, while Fr. William Considine, Superior General, and Fr. Charles Voncken, Provincial of the Netherlands, were present in the entity, the Dutch Delegation of Indonesia officially became a General Delegation. In all the communities of the entity, the confreres prepared themselves for this change with a special novena, invoking the help of Mary and of St. Louis Marie de Montfort on the Montfortian Family in Indonesia. The present superior is Fr. Piet Derckx, and his councillors are Frs. Ignatius Widodo, Joep van Lier and Konradus Hancu. To assure continuity in the change of status, their term of office has been extended up to the end of 2003.

It was in 1938 that the Province of the Netherlands took on responsibility for this territory in the name of the Company of Mary. As political tensions prevented the entry into the country of replacements from the Netherlands, the United States province sent several confreres there between the years 1960 and 1974. In coming editions of the *Écho*, you will be able to read a history of this rapidly growing delegation.

FIRST PROFESSIONS

In Kanathi, India, on 31 May 2002: James BALAPPA, Kiran Babu JALAHAM, Jeevan GABRIEL, Gregory VINOD, Basil RAJA, Gnana Prakash CHOWRAPPA, Ignatius Francis JOSEPH, Lawrence Anthony Raj CHOWRAPPA, John Baptist Anthon CHINNAPPA, Jerin Francis KILLIYOOR, Vana Chinnappa PASALA, Balraj AROGYASWAMY.

PERPETUAL PROFESSION

In Manila, Philippines, on 16 March 2002: Reynaldo BULLAS.

ORDINATIONS TO THE DEACONATE

In Manila, Philippines, on 14 April 2002: Reynaldo BULLAS.

In Rome, Italy, on 20 April 2002: Gianluigi SCUDELETTI.

ORDINATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

In Rome, on 20 April 2002: Angelo SORTI.

In Toamasina (Tamatave), Madagascar, on 28 April 2002: Didier Célestin RASATAMADINIVOLA, Kiky Bruno RANDRIANASOLO, Jean-Baptiste RALIVANIRINA, Hary André RAKOTOSON, Alexandre RANDRIAMIHARISOA, Séraphin-Marie RAZAFISOANIAINA.

In Ruteng, Indonesia, on 8 June 2002: Aloisius BANGGUR, Rafael BREOK, Stefanus SUKRISNO WIDODO.

NEWS FROM MADAGASCAR

Some confreres probably do not know the difficult political situation existing in Madagascar. Since the elections which took place last November, the country has been split in two: one part following the newly elected president, the other following the former president who did not accept the result of the elections. In these extracts from the letters written by Fr. Claude Boichut, Superior of the Delegation, to Fr. Ivo Libralato, we get a picture of the situation of our confreres... Reading this account, let us remember also all those places where our confreres are living in a state of anxiety, that we hardly ever talk about because they are situations that we have grown used to, for example, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo.

6 April: Here in Brickaville, we are at the beginning of the first barricade blocking Tananarive with a metal bridge to which a container has been welded. Since 1 March the telephone lines to Brickaville have been cut. We have to go to Tamatave to receive or send messages.

The ordination is still set for 28 April in Tamatave... It will be complicated and onerous for the families of the young priests to come to Tamatave to assist at the ordination, and difficult for them to go to their own parishes for their first Mass... The booklet containing the proposed new Ratio for formation, which we put together here, has been sent to all the confreres... We live from day to day whatever turns up, and we are avoiding a perpetual state of nerves. It is Easter...

10 May: I was in Tamatave both before, during and after the ordination on 28 April. It took place in the church of St. Louis Marie. So I am writing to confirm that our Bishop ordained that day 8 priests, 6 of them Montfortians, one diocesan priest and an OMI. Of course it was an important moment for the young church of Tamatave and for our Montfortian delegation. We all thank God, as you do, for this gift. We are experiencing great joy as we wait for the young priests to return from saying their first Masses in their own areas; we miss them right now, because we had got used to their deacon's ministry... Because of the difficult situation in the country, many of the family members were unable to come for the ordination.

Here, in both Brickaville and Tamatave, we are still living with anxiety, without knowing what the future holds. For the moment, after the investiture yesterday of Marc Ravalomanana in Tananarive, the 5 other provinces have seceded and declared independence, not accepting any other President of the republic. So we find ourselves still in a state of economic blockade, which, for some, has become a source of revenue as they bring in all kinds of products by hand and on foot, especially petrol.

It is difficult for us to meet in Council; yet we must find a way. I think that some day soon, Orazio, who was not able to get to the ordination, will be able to go by aeroplane to meet with the rest of the Council, Paul and Jean-Baptiste, who are both in Tamatave... We are still cut off by telephone, since the beginning of March; so we have no Internet here; we have to go to Tamatave to send and receive messages, and now there are new barricades between Brickaville

and Tamatave. Mail is a rarity... On this feast of our Blessed one, we are united in prayer with the whole Montfortian family.

20 May: The telephone has just been restored. It is fortunate because we were right in the middle of 36 hours of non-stop rain due to a cyclone in the North, so that the section of road between Brickaville and Tamatave suffered 65 mudslides. In some places mountains of earth slid onto the road. There is no need any longer for other barricades! So we find ourselves, both in Brickaville and Tamatave, cut off from Tana, because flights for Tana have been cancelled... Tomorrow I am off on a round for a week by the waterways; that will afford me a change of barricades! Yesterday, in the parish, we had 80 young people making their first Communion, and 36 Baptisms. At every Prayer of the Faithful, we pray that the two leaders will get round the negotiating table. Please join in our prayers.

Claude Boichut, s.m.m.

VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS

MGR. GERARD-J DESCHAMPS: A WELL-EARNED RETIREMENT!

At just about the same time that the first Montfort Father to arrive in Papua New Guinea (Fr. E. Lausier) was dying, Mgr. Gerard-J Deschamps, the first Bishop of Daru-Kiunga, retired. Mgr. Deschamps was among the pioneers of this mission. He had worked in Papua since 1960. First appointed Prefect Apostolic in 1961, he was ordained Bishop on 21 January 1967. In January 1999, he agreed to leave the diocese to which he had devoted his life and to go to serve the Church as Bishop of Bereina in the same country. He returned to Canada on 6 June last. Those who know him have no illusions: still full of energy, our confrere the Bishop will have a very active retirement!

A 'STAGE INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTIAN' (SIM) IN 2003

Between 1991 and 1997, several confreres had the opportunity to experience this session of spiritual and Montfortian renewal, designed especially for those confreres who had already had several years of ministry. We propose to offer this experience in July and August 2003, in St-Laurent-sur-Sèvre and other Montfortian places. It is intended that, this time, the language of the session will be English. Frs. Gilles Dallaire, René Paul, Thomas Poth and Olivier Maire have agreed to organise it. They may call on other confreres also.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Father General visited the Philippines from 5 to 14 April. After a month in Rome, he left again for Indonesia, where he stayed from 27 May until 15 June. He presided over the celebration for the erection of the entity as a General Delegation on 2 June, and then went to Ruteng, to where the novitiate had just been transferred. He will take a holiday in the United States from 26 June to 30 July. **Fr. Hub Louis** was in Africa from 21 April to 5 June. He visited the confreres in Nairobi, Mbarara and Malawi. **Fr. Ivo Libralato** will go to Haiti for the month of August, to attend a meeting of formation personnel for Latin America and a meeting of the Superiors of these entities... The other confreres in the General House will be absent at certain times during the coming months, for personal activities or holidays. All will be back together at the beginning of September, to complete the preparation of the EGC which is to take place in Bangalore (India) from 3 to 12 October.

OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN

Father Emilio NOZZA (1929-2002)

He died unexpectedly on 16 April 2002 in Namwera (Malawi), aged 73 with 53 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1948 and was ordained priest on 13 March 1954. His whole life was the realisation of his childhood desire to be a foreign missionary. He was eight years first of all in Madagascar, then spent the rest of his days in Malawi. While working with great zeal among the people of the country, he was also a Regional Superior and Councillor, services which he rendered with humility and disinterestedness. He leaves behind the memory of a simple man, upright and hard-working, whose only care was the building of the Kingdom of Jesus. He had a deep belief that the Blessed Virgin was the one preparing hearts for the proclamation of the Gospel by the missionaries.

Father Joseph Hubert (Zef) JENNEKENS (1921-2002)

Died on 30 April 2002 in Brunssum (Netherlands), aged 81, with 59 years of religious profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1942 and was ordained priest on 7 March 1948. After his ordination he taught at our technical school at Bunde for one year. In 1950 he went to Malawi where he worked in various parishes. After more than 20 years of pastoral work in Malawi, he was for several years a pastor in Germany. In 1984 he returned to his home parish in Beek (Netherlands) and made himself available to assist in pilgrimages and various prayer groups. His health deteriorated through cancer and he was well cared for in a clinic in Brunssum. He was a good entertainer and loved music, flowers and photography. He was a trustworthy and dedicated confrere, listening to and praying for those who sought his help.

Father Edmond LAUSIER (1913-2002)

Died on 1 May 2002 in Trois-Rivières (Canada), aged 88 with 58 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 15 August 1943 and was ordained priest on 2 February 1949. He was already 20 when he began his secondary studies with a view to becoming a Montfort Father. For eight years he worked in the native American mission in Tzouhalem, British Columbia (Canada). Then he was the first Montfortian to arrive in the new mission of Papua New Guinea in 1958. He was its superior for 10 years. In very difficult conditions, he prepared the foundations of a new Church which has today become the diocese of Daru-Kiunga. He worked there for 30 years, and then, on his return to Canada in 1989, he was first of all made a curate in the parish of St. Vincent de Paul in North Bay. From 1996 onwards, in Drummondville, he welcomed people coming for direction or the sacrament of Reconciliation. He always wore a smile wherever he went, always had a good word to say, and transmitted a climate of peace and cordiality. His simple presence built up the community. Discreetly, in his everyday tasks, he was one who gathered people together.

Brother NORBERT (François Sparfel) (1921-2002)

Died on 4 May 2002 in Cholet (France), aged 81 with 57 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 19 September 1944. He lived in various communities: St-Laurent, Montfort, Pontchâteau, Chézelles, La Gardiolle, Le Rody. A practical man, with many talents, and a conscientious worker, he was in turn baker, then farmer and gardener. But it was work in the vineyard that gave him most pleasure. This brief word from his superior spoken at his funeral, by itself can sum up the being and the action of Brother Norbert: "You were a man of prayer and you astonished us wherever you went."

Father Piet van OOSTEN (1925-2002)

Died on 15 May 2002 in Valkenburg (Netherlands), aged 77, with 55 years of religious profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1947 and was ordained priest on 15 March 1953. He studied mathematics at the university of Leiden and taught this subject first of all at the Minor Seminary and after its closure at other secondary schools. On his retirement, he worked for some time in the archives of the General House in Rome. After his return to Holland he lived in Voorschoten (Beresteijn) and was bursar and superior of the Montfortian Community for several years till the time the property was sold. While in Beresteijn he had to undergo an operation for cancer, but he continued doing his pastoral work with great dedication. The last months of his life he spent in Schimmert and Vroenhof, an example of prayer and community life. He never complained about his serious illness and retained his serenity in the face of suffering.