



# L'Écho Montfortain

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## WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

This summer various persons casually said to me, “The Doctorate of Montfort is dead now, isn’t it?” Somewhat taken back by the question, I strongly answered, “No! It is not dead!” Two years ago the Superiors General of the Montfortian family wrote you a letter that explained that for now – at least in the current situation – the formal process in Congregation for the Causes of Saints would not proceed further. Perhaps the key words were “at least in the current situation”. In the somewhat veiled language of the Roman Curia, that does not mean that title of Doctor for Montfort is dead.

The 2001 Letter of the Generals continued: “Our commitment to live and to make known Montfort’s spiritual heritage cannot cease. We must continue to promote in a systematic way new initiatives both within and beyond the Montfortian Family, with a view to the long term... There is a rich field in the unfolding inculturation of Montfortian spirituality in our varied countries. There is ample space and promise in developing further the many facets of Montfort’s experience: God who is a Trinity of Love, Wisdom, Mary and her relation with all the baptized, new forms of mission with the poor, holiness of life and pastoral involvement of laity – all in the evolving context of Vatican Council II.”

Even if personally someone might not be concerned about the *title* Doctor of the Church, the desire to share and fructify the treasure of our heritage with the world around us can be a source of energy and hope for each one of us. Just during these summer months there have been an amazing number of events that show the life, holiness and mission that are inspired by the Montfortian spirituality. From 28 June to 6 July the 3rd Latin American Meeting on Montfortian spirituality was held in Paipa, Colombia, on the theme *Mary in the Bible, Montfort, and Popular Religiosity*. Participating were 90 laypeople and religious from Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti, Peru and Colombia. This was followed by the Montfortian Month retreat that had as its principal theme *consecration*. Some 25 persons from across Latin America benefited from this deeply spiritual experience. Elsewhere in this *Écho*, you can read about the SIM held this summer in France for SMM confreres, and the effect that a prolonged contact with Montfort and his writings had on them. The Daughters of Wisdom organized an international program in Rome and France called *Sagesse Vivante*. It was for sisters who had already spent many years working in ministry and mission. I had the chance to be with these sisters at several points during their programme, and I was deeply touched by the way their lives shed light on Wisdom and how the Wisdom of Love shed light and meaning on their years of faithful service.

In early August in St. Laurent, *Les Ami(e)s de la Sagesse*, the Friends of Wisdom, associated with the sisters, gathered some 200 strong for a session and pilgrimage to celebrate

the 300th Anniversary of the Daughters of Wisdom. Laypeople and sisters came from Canada, France, Belgium, Italy, United States, Haiti, Madagascar and the Philippines. It was a vibrant discovery of the past tradition and history, of the present solidarity and missionary force of hundreds of people all over the world, of the future potential for justice and love when baptized Christians let themselves be transformed by Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom.

Next year in St. Laurent for the second time there will be a gathering of hundreds of people from a wide variety of groups that take their inspiration from St. Louis-Marie. In 2004 there will also be a five month session to prepare a new generation of formators for the congregations of the Montfortian Family. Is the Doctorate of Montfort dead? No. Is interest and hunger for Montfortian spirituality dead? Most certainly not!

It helps to focus this interest and hunger, in our prayer, our lives, our various apostolates and ministries around the world. It helps to focus this interest and hunger, in order to respond to and enlighten those who distort Montfort's words for a limited or partial truth. I still find myself seized by an expression of the heart of our heritage, written by Archbishop François Garnier of Cambrai, France: "We must continue to write on the present day impact of the message of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort.

From Mary to Christ, to bring balance to the Marian cult.

From Christ to the Trinity, to enter into the mystery of God.

From the Trinity to Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to rediscover a sacramental life.

From Baptism to the service of the most poor, to show the truth of our conversion."

In our Montfortian parishes, schools, hospitals, shrines, pilgrimages, magazines, prayer groups, in our communities, infirmaries and formation houses, we still have a lot to discover in the treasure of our spiritual heritage... And we still have a lot to share with the men and women of today.

*William Considine, s.m.m.  
Superior General*

## **OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS**

### **GENERAL DELEGATION OF INDONESIA – NEW ADMINISTRATION**

On 10 June 2003 the Superior General appointed a new Superior and a new Council for the General Delegation Indonesia. The new Superior is Fr. Ignatius WIDODO, and his Councillors are Fr. Konradus HANCU, Br. Yusup GUNARTO and Fr. Josep PUTRA DWI DARMA WATUN.

### **FIRST PROFESSIONS**

On 31 May 2003, in Kanathi (India): S. Alexander, Ruban Moses, N. Jason Antony, J. Judis Valan.

On 21 June 2003, in Paipa (Colombia): John Ramiro QUINTERO CASTAÑEDA, Leonardo de Jesús BERNAL VELÁSQUEZ, Luis Manuel MORA RODRÍGUEZ.

On 8 September 2003, in Lavaud (Haiti): Jules Frégo ANTÉNOR, Rébert BELDORIN, Claude CINÉ, Lanès PHANOR, Luçon RIGAUD.

On 21 September 2003, in Santeramo (Italy): Roberto CARLI, Alessandro GUERINONI, Giovanni PIZZULLI, Marco Rafael SILVA BAPTISTA (Portugal).

## **PERPETUAL PROFESSIONS**

On 17 August 2003, in Fandriana (Madagascar): Jean Désiré RAKOTONANDRASANA.

On 8 September 2003, in Lavaud (Haiti): Kaze EUGÈNE, Jackson FABIUS.

## **ORDINATIONS TO DEACONATE**

On 9 September 2003, in Port-de-Paix (Haiti): Kaze EUGÈNE, Jackson FABIUS.

## **PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS**

On 31 May 2003, in Bergamo (Italy): Andrea PESENTI.

On 31 May 2003, in Bogotá (Colombia): Edmer Iván SALGADO GONZÁLEZ, Ever Julio VEGA BENAVIDES.

On 2 August 2003, in Antananarivo (Madagascar): Martial RAMAMONJISOA, Jean Claude RAMANDRAIVONONA.

On 8 August 2003, in Ruteng (Indonesia): Antonius TENSI, Herman Joseph NUWA NUPA.

## **VARIOUS NEW ITEMS**

**The Extraordinary General Council** will meet in Rome from 7-17 October. Among its major topics will be the new Project for Montfortian Formation (Ratio), and the launching of preparations for the General Chapter of 2005. **The Committee for the Ratio** will gather in Rome from 17-23 November.

Plans are well underway for the **Session for New Formators** to be held in 2004. This five month programme to be held in Rome and France is meant to prepare new novice masters and formators for the Montfortian Family in our spirituality, history and way of life. It will be preceded by a three month language course in either French or English; the actual session will be from 15 April till 15 September 2004. At present we expect 13 SMM confreres to participate, along with 8 Daughters of Wisdom and 8 Brothers of St. Gabriel.

## **STAGE INTERNATIONAL MONTFORTAIN (SIM)**

From 2 July till 30 August an international group of seventeen confreres participated in the SIM, on ongoing formation experience for SMM that included sessions on Montfortian spirituality, the Footsteps of Montfort, and the month's retreat in preparation to renew the Consecration. This SIM was conducted in English, and confreres came from Malawi, Uganda, India, Philippines, Indonesia, France, Canada and the United States. The coordinating Team was composed of Frs. Gilles Dallaire, René Paul, Tom Poth and Olivier Maire. A truly diverse group, the participants ranged in age from 31 years to 75, one ordained three years and another forty-nine

years! The group was delighted to have Bishop Gérard Deschamps, former bishop in Papua New Guinea, as a fellow participant. His fraternal warmth and simplicity, and his great missionary experience, were much appreciated.

An English speaking group, mostly coming from Asia and Africa, will have some challenges in France with the food and the customs, and those coming from the teeming streets of Bangalore or Manila found the super-quiet streets of St. Laurent a bit strange. But by the end of their stay, all the confreres had learned a few words of French and could certainly express their gratitude and appreciation.

Here are some reflections by participants: “The SIM gave me an opportunity to integrate Montfortian Spirituality. It gave me a moment of rest, and intense prayer moments. It helped me to place Montfort in his milieu, and to relate it with the current situation.” “I was touched and amazed by the legacy left behind by St. Louis Marie in the many places we visited... The SIM gave me an opportunity to meet other confreres from other regions of the world and share with them our Montfortian life experience. I found deep spiritual meaning in Montfort’s spiritual writings.” Another said, “I found that what Montfort did, taught and wrote is a great spirituality. I find that now I must push myself to do, write and speak about this great man, for I am still far from the fulfilment of this spirituality.” Again, another, “The SIM has been the response to my prayer for some time.” “Going through the input material from the resource personnel has helped me to understand Montfort himself. Studying about Montfort at a great distance still leaves an historical and cultural distance, and much of the saint does not come out as real. I am happy to have now visited these significant places, and hear about Montfort from within his context.” And also a reflection on going deeper: “It is my concern that, in so far as studying the French language is not taken seriously, most of us will not be able to do a study of our founder’s writings... I would like to see this language being encouraged in the Delegations, especially among the young Montfortians, for the good reason that every aging man asks: When I get old and die, who will be able to share this treasure with the coming generations?”

## **OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN**

### **Father Bernardus (Ben) van OVERDIJK (1919-2003)**

Died on 26 May 2003 in Funchal (Madeira Islands, Portugal), aged 84, with 63 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1939 and was ordained priest on 19 March 1945. In 1946 he left for Mozambique. He worked at Mariri, at Montepuez, and then at Balama. Father Ben was known in Mozambique for his medical knowledge, especially in the dental field. He was quite preoccupied with poverty in Africa, but he did not care for the Marxist approach of certain people. In 1978 he had to accept that his health would no longer allow him to remain in Mozambique, and that he would return to the Netherlands to assume the post of rector at a home for the aged at Valkensward. Ben did not appreciate change. He was rather conservative, and did not endure tensions very well. He was a missionary to the depths of his soul.

### **Brother Vicente (Luis Antonio MORALES LÓPEZ) (1921-2003)**

Died on 7 July 2003 in Bogotá (Colombia), aged 81, with 55 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 2 February 1948 and his perpetual profession on 2 February 1953. After preparatory courses he went in 1953 to the mission of Sunape, the first mission centre of the Montfortians in the newly created Apostolic Prefecture of the Vichada. He also worked in the parish of Belén in Bogotá, in the former Major Seminary at Albán, at the

house of the mission preachers in Manizalez, and in various parishes in the diocese of Villavincencio. His health was indestructible, seemingly resistant to maladies. He gave many services to the Province in the various residences where he lived, as driver, sacristan, and cantor in religious celebrations in which he also played the harmonium. He was hard on himself, and did not easily forgive the mistakes of others. In his last years he was very faithful to the Rosary, which he would recite many times a day. He was a good religious, respectful of those in authority, who served the Province and the Congregation humbly and simply and with immense generosity.

### **Father Franciscus J. J. (Frans) SWERTS (1924-2003)**

Died on 29 July 2003 in Alost (Belgium), aged 79, with 57 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1945 and was ordained priest on 4 March 1951. Right after his ordination he was named professor at Montfort College in Rotselaar. Then he was named professor of religion at the high school in Nederbrakel. Frans consecrated the greater part of his active life to teaching, in order to spread the love of God among young people. Meanwhile, from 1969 he also served as superior and bursar of the small community of D'Hoppe, Flobecq. Except for a brief interval, he was also provincial bursar from 1976 to 1987. Later, following his retirement, he took great care of the church, Lourdes Grotto and Calvary that were part of the grounds. He was a fervent preacher and much taken by that task. His concern for the Third World, as well as his warm hospitality, were remarkable.

### **Father Reinoldus F. (Nol) DIJKER (1914-2003)**

Died on 30 July 2003 in Nijmegen (The Netherlands), aged 88, with 67 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1935 and was ordained priest on 23 March 1941. In 1952 he left for the mission in Indonesia. In 1963 he left for Litchfield (USA) where he taught exegesis at the Montfortian seminary. In 1965 he was a guest-teacher in Oirschot. From 1966 till 1979 he worked again in Indonesia, at first in Sintang, and later he taught Old Testament in Bandung. In 1979 he returned to the Netherlands, in the community of the Holy Land Foundation, then in Berg en Dal and in Nijmegen. He saw himself explicitly as a connoisseur of the bible, and was critical towards church and world. He took a great interest in the well-being of his confreres. His faith was steady as a rock. Father Dijker was not afraid to die. He knew he would fall into good hands.

### **Father M. H. Pierre (Piet) WEIJNEN (1912-2003)**

Died on 8 August 2003 in Heerlen (The Netherlands), aged 90, with 67 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1939 and was ordained priest on 23 March 1945. After his ordination he taught mathematics at the Montfortian seminary – Ste. Marie – in Schimmert. He worked and lived in Schimmert until the year 2000, when he was moved to the nursing home for elder religious in Heerlen till his death. Like a mystery angel, he was always tidying things up. More and more he slept in his chair, ready to get in action when he was asked. He had a warm affection for the congregation and for his confreres. He had a naughty kind of humor, relative to himself, but at the same time a tendency to insecurity. He was very devout, almost scrupulous. After his retirement – he cycled through the entire country till late in the evening. He trusted to find shelter somewhere, because he would do the same for others.

### **Brother Louis-Marie (Herman J. BEMELMANS) (1925-2003)**

Died on 21 August 2003 in Maastricht (The Netherlands), aged 78, with 57 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 7 October 1945 and his perpetual profession on 19 March 1951. From 1945 till 1951 he worked in Schimmert and then he moved to Berg en Dal. After working and living a year in Belgium, he returned to the Netherlands, in Hoensbroek, where he lived and worked ten years. In 1967 he moved to Meerssen, where he also took care of the dining room. From 1969 on he lived in Vroenhof (Valkenburg), where he worked as porter and sacristan, among other duties. He called upon the sympathy of many, just in his simplicity and clumsiness. The teasing of others hurt him, he didn't know that this could also be an expression of attention and affection. He was one of the people who made a contribution to the atmosphere in the Congregation just by his work and presence: simple, and full of appreciation and sympathy for each person. The last years of his life he lived in our home for the elderly in Vroenhof. He wasn't a man of many words. He couldn't easily express his emotions. Perhaps he could only express himself while praying. He was very devout.

### **Father J. Andreas M. (Dré) LEMMENS (1924-2003)**

Died on 25 August 2003 in Roosendaal (The Netherlands), aged 78, with 56 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1946 and was ordained priest on 23 March 1952. After his ordination he was appointed to Voorschoten, where he lived and worked as a teacher of Greek and other subjects. In 1968 he became a moderator of the St. Adelbertcollege in Wassenaar. In 1973 he joined the community Het Hoge Steen in Langenboom. In 1977 he worked as parish priest in Griendtsveen, in 1980 in Dongen, and from 1984 till 1992 in Het Schijf. The misery in countries far away could devastate him. He was passionate about everything that took place, close to him or far away. He enjoyed the happiness of others very much. Each new sign of life inside or outside the church he welcomed with all his heart. For Dré life meant closeness. For him there was nothing more beautiful than friendship, and the Eucharist was a real meal with friends and Jesus, the great inspiration through thick and thin.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Fr. Mario Belotti, SMM, *As Free as the Clouds*, Montfort Media of Balaka (Malawi) 2003.**

The book, *As Free as the Clouds*, sets out with the assumption that Montfort's spirituality can deeply influence our apostolate and make us unique ministers in today's church and society.

Then the author accompanies the Montfortian readers through a twofold process. On the one side – through the language of psychology – they are invited to evaluate their actual ministry against some forms of false wisdom that often affect the people who serve in the church. On the other side – drawing light from the Scriptures and Montfort's human-spiritual-pastoral experience – they are helped to uncover the spiritual energy that lies beneath their masks.

Finally, the Montfortian consecration is re-proposed not only as a secret of personal spiritual transformation but also as a school of relevant, wise and effective apostolate. In fact it makes the Montfortians “as free as the clouds that sail high above the earth, filled with the dew of heaven, and moving, without let or hindrance, according to the inspiration of the Spirit...” (PM 9).