



L'Écho Montfortain

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WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

Easter Saturday, April 17, 2004. The closer one drew to Zomba, the tree-lined former capital of Malawi, the more the roads were filling with thousands of Christians on foot and bicycle, in buses, lorries and mini-vans, all heading for the episcopal ordination of our confrere, Thomas Luke Msusa, as Bishop of Zomba. The liturgy was celebrated in the open air, in a beautiful field with the mountains in the distance. More than five thousand people from all the parishes and organizations of the diocese, choirs, several groups of dancers in colourful dress, scores of men and women religious, seminarians, priests, the Papal Nuncio, two archbishops and ten bishops added to and absorbed the joyous mood of the people. The President of the Republic of Malawi attended in a special tribune with his state ministers and retinue. And at the centre of all this, our smiling, humble, peace-filled confrere, Thomas.

The liturgical celebration lasted six hours, yet because of the endless variety of songs, dances and processions that enhanced the rite of ordination, the time passed quickly. Surely everyone was moved by the sight of twelve bishops laying hands on Thomas, then his head being anointed with Holy Chrism and finally, having received the ring, mitre and crosier, being led to his episcopal chair. His pastoral staff or crosier was carved in wood by a Malawi artist; it is a simple shepherd's staff made beautiful with figures expressing the unity of all tribes and peoples in the Trinity.

Personally I retain memories of three special moments in the celebration. First, a moving procession to introduce the Liturgy of the Word, with dancers, a brazier filled with incense, and a woman who carried on her head a basket wrapped in a beautiful cloth. Normally the basket would carry maize, the corn that is the staple food in Malawi. But this time it contained the Bible, the Word of God that is the food of life to nourish and sustain God's people. Then, after the readings, came the moment when the bishop-elect is presented to the consecrating bishops and the Papal Bull is read. Together with the Vicar General of the diocese, I took Thomas by the hand and we escorted him across the field and up to the altar, a gesture of the Company of Mary sharing our confrere with the wider Church. I had been present at his priesthood ordination in 1996, and now we were passing him on to a new and more demanding service. Lastly I remember the marvellous sight after communion when the various parishes and groups came with song, dance and great rejoicing to offer their gifts and wishes to the new bishop. But what a procession! People coming forward dancing and holding on high chickens, rabbits and goats... some even carried a huge bed on their heads as they moved through the crowds – practical gifts for a Montfortian religious who now had to set up household as a bishop!

Ambuye Msusa – Bishop Msusa – is the seventh Montfortian to serve as a bishop in Malawi in the 103 years of our presence there. At the end of the Eucharist he addressed the people urging unity and love among all the tribes and groups of the diocese and country

(his motto in Chichewa is *Akhale Amodzi* – that all may be one); he also forcefully pointed out the need to help the poor and to change situations of poverty, like hospitals and schools, right in Zomba. He spoke with such assurance and calm authority that I was reminded of that morning's reading from the Acts of the Apostles: "*The priests and elders were amazed as they observed the self-assurance of Peter and John and realized that the speakers were uneducated men of no standing. Then they recognized these men as having been with Jesus...*" And Peter saying, "*Surely we cannot help speaking of what we have heard and seen*" (Acts 4, 13.20).

At one point in the ceremony, seeing the immense joy and happiness of the people, Archbishop Paul Bakyenga of Mbarara in Uganda (where we have our novitiate), said to me, "This is not a celebration because of just one day. This is the fruit of years and years of missionary presence, and seeds planted by the Montfortians in Malawi". I think that our good friend, Archbishop Bakyenga, is right. For all the brothers, sisters and fathers who laboured in Malawi and in the mission fields in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, may God continue to bless the fruit of their faith and love! For each one of us, regardless of age or health, may we remain missionaries to our deepest core, and say with Peter, "*Surely we cannot help speaking of what we have heard and seen*".

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

OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS

GENERAL DELEGATION OF AFRICA: NEW ADMINISTRATION

Following the appointment of Fr. Thomas MSUSA as Bishop of Zomba (Malawi), and after consultation with the confreres, the Superior General has appointed Fr. Blaise JAILOSI as superior of the General Delegation of Africa. His Councillors are Frs. André BABUSIA, Andrew KAUFUFA and Charles BEIRNE.

FIRST PROFESSIONS

On 31 May 2004, in Manila (Philippines): Elmer O. NAMOL, Federick B. YUMANG, Benjie T. MANZANO, Efren A. BANTILAN, Jose R. FABABAIR, Sherwin Y. NUÑEZ.

On 31 May 2004, in Kanathi (India): Amalraj Kulandhaisamy, Nepolean James Raj, Richard Dass Arogia Swamy, John Kennedy Gasper, Nagavara Aswani Kumar Maddala, Chinnappa Gnanappa.

PERPETUAL PROFESSION

On 24 April 2004, in Acacías (Colombia): Wilmar E. ROLDÁN SOLANO.

ORDINATIONS TO DEACONATE

On 9 December 2003, in Mysore (India): Francis Showri BULIPE.

On 30 May 2004, in Bogotá (Colombia): Wilmar E. ROLDÁN SOLANO.

ORDINATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD

On 13 June 2004, in Manila (Philippines): Roy S. MILLANO, Norwyn V. BAYDO.

NEWS FROM THE GENERAL HOUSE

IMI COURSE

The participants in the course of the International Montfortian Institute for formation personnel left Rome for Paris on 7 June. The last month of the course will take place largely in the Footsteps of Montfort.

A DEPARTURE

Brother Philip ABRANCHES will leave the General House on 27 June. The confreres in the community and visitors to the house have appreciated his welcoming manner and the many services he has rendered. A big “Thank You” to Brother Philip and the Canadian Province who lent him to us for three years. Back in Canada, he will join the community in Drummondville.

GOINGS AND COMINGS

Father General has been in the United States since 20 May and is due to return to Rome on 20 June. He has been using this time to rest and meet with his doctors. Accompanied by Fr. Hub Louis, he will meet with the Provincials of Northern Europe in Leuven (Belgium) at the beginning of July, before making his way to France for the closure of the International Montfortian Institute course. He is due to be back again in France at the beginning of August for an international meeting of groups inspired by Montfortian spirituality, which will be attended principally by a great number of lay-folk.

Fr. Ivo Libralato will make a visitation of Peru and Brazil from 13 July to 12 August. He will continue, a little later, the visitation of the Province of Italy, adjourned on account of some surgery he had to undergo.

Fr. Hub Louis will leave Rome at the beginning of July. After a brief visit to Holland, he will leave for Africa to make the canonical visitation there. He will return to Europe in August and will immediately leave for Indonesia, whence he will return for the beginning of October.

Fr. Jean-Louis Courchesne will be in Canada from the end of June until the beginning of September. There he will make the canonical visitation and take some holiday time.

Fr. Miguel Patiño left Rome for Colombia on 10 June and will return on 16 July. He will be taking part in the festivities celebrating the centenary of the arrival in Colombia of the Montfort Missionaries, and will attend a meeting of the Latin-American committee for Mission and Spirituality. He will go to Portugal and Spain at the end of August to make the canonical visitation.

Fr. Francesco Agliardi, the General Bursar, paid a visit to Portugal at the beginning of June. At the beginning of July, he will go to Holland for a few days.

THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL COUNCIL OF 2004

The Extraordinary General Council will take place in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre from 5 to 13 October. All the members of the General Administration will obviously be present there.

OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN

Father Georges-Étienne GERVAIS (1912 – 2004)

Died on 8 April 2004 in Nicolet (Canada), aged 91 with 70 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 23 August 1933 and was ordained priest on 4 March 1939. After one year's teaching in the minor seminary in Papineauville, he devoted the next 32 years to giving missions and closed retreats, based in the houses in Nicolet, Lauzon and finally Drummondville, which he himself built. After this he was a hospital chaplain and a parish-priest in two different parishes before retiring to Nicolet. Since he was a very active sort of person, he experienced his later years as a cross and a period of purification before going to be united with the Queen of All Hearts, to whom he was deeply attached and whose praises he had preached vigorously all his life.

Brother Edward Augustine CHAKWIYA (1975 – 2004)

Died in a road accident on 25 May 2004 in Balaka (Malawi), aged 29 with just 2 years of Religious Profession. Born in Njuli (Malawi), he began his training in the Congregation in 1996. After his postulancy and philosophy studies in Balaka, he entered the novitiate in Mbarara (Uganda), where he made his first vows on 15 August 2001. After this he went to the scholasticate in Nairobi (Kenya) to study theology. He had just returned to Malawi for a pastoral year before making his perpetual vows and being ordained priest. Everyone mourns the loss of such a young confrere, who was generous, a hard worker, attentive to others, always calm and showing great kindness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fr. Battista CORTINOVIS, s.m.m.: *Luigi Maria di Montfort*, Collection *I Testimoni 20*, Messaggero publications, Padua, 2004, 119 pages. This little book, written in Italian and offered to a wide public, comprises three parts: 1. A short biography of Montfort; 2. A brief account of the principal themes of his writings; 3. A glossary of the words used in the first part: names of people and places, and other terms which merit an explanation.

Fr. Frans FABRY, s.m.m.: *Le Rosaire nouveau – Rencontrer Jésus*, Œuvres Mariales, Leuven, 2004, 34 pages. In line with the suggestion made by John Paul II in his Encyclical on the Rosary, this is a pocket-size book, very simple and well-presented. It contains an introductory explanation and the complete Gospel texts for each of the mysteries. Published in French and Dutch.