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As the Year of the Priest comes to an end

To end the Year of the Priest, the Écho Montfortain offers you a number of testimonies:

- ✧ *that of our holy Founder by Fr. Battista Cortinovis,*
- ✧ *that of a seminarian by Brother Kristijan Žlender of the International Scholasticate in Rome,*
- ✧ *that of a Daughter of Wisdom by Sr. Desneiges Giroux,*
- ✧ *that of a confrere by Fr. Mihovil Filipović,*
- ✧ *that of a Montfortian Associate by Mme Jacqueline Deschênes,*
- ✧ *and finally that of an Archbishop by Mgr. François Gayot.*

So we have a good sampling of the whole People of God!





Ordinations to the Priesthood

On 18 July 2009, in Blantyre (Malawi) : Paul Lonely MASHONGA.

On 20 March 2010, in Boyacá (Colombia) : Álvaro Pulido BAUTISTA.

NEW GENERAL BURSAR

On March 15, 2010, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council (*The Montfortian Today*, 232), named Father Adriano DALLE PEZZE, of the Province of Italy, as Bursar General.

Until the month of June, communication from the bursars of the entities should still be addressed to Father Luiz Augusto STEFANI, who was Bursar General until now.

We thank Father Luiz Augusto Stefani who has been willing to serve in this capacity over the past few years.

Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and the Year of the Priest

A New Consecrated People

Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716) is known above all for Marian spirituality, which however is not understood as a simple devotion made up of a few specific practices like the consecration to Jesus through Mary, or the rosary, or some other similar exterior gestures. The Marian dimension, which is certainly at the centre of his teaching, is rather a pathway, the most excellent pathway to go to Jesus Christ and to be conformed perfectly to him, in order to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, for the sole glory of God.

The path of holiness which Louis-Marie proposed is traced within a perfect ecclesial horizon, where one is called to live faithfully one's baptism, to grow in communion with God, and to work in charity for bringing about the Kingdom of God in souls. Jesus Christ is the one teacher, model and guide, with all his love for us, which he shows even to the cross. Mary is given to us as a mother, so that by living as her children, and by having her same spirit in us, we may become living copies of Jesus Christ, children of the Father in the Holy Spirit.



The spiritual experience of Montfort, from which his teaching flows, is the response to a priestly vocation which he felt from his youth. His thirst for perfection, his burning zeal and his total availability to God, did not find better fulfilment simply in his choice to become a priest. He wanted to be formed in the seminaries of the Sulpicians, experienced masters in the preparation of the priestly model planned by the Council of Trent, in a spiritual environment marked by the wisdom of holy men like Bérulle, Olier, Eudes and so many others.

Well prepared by his studies at the Sorbonne, Montfort wanted however to favour the *science of the saints*, made up of theology and spiritual experience; and he wanted to be a preacher of popular missions, going from parish to parish, to respond to the great needs of the Church of his time, which had well formed bishops and priests, but a people who still needed to be instructed, above all in the countryside. In obedience to the bishops, and always in the context of an official pastoral ministry, Montfort made himself the *special mediator* between the doctrine of the schools and the language of the people. He was brilliant in this role of translator, creating and rediscovering signs and symbols, proposing exterior practices as well, capable of conveying profound content in a way that was simple, understandable and easy to put into practice.

This was his priestly ministry, interpreted in a manner that responded to the specific needs of the Church. The importance given to the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist found expression in their preparation through catechesis and preaching, by the service of the Word, and by solemn liturgical celebrations for the masses: missions for the people, spiritual exercises, processions, the construction of Calvaries, the restoring of churches.

From his personal experience, Montfort drew some instruction for a style of life, a priority and a spiritual sensitivity which he proposed to the missionaries which he wanted to have with him, but which are valid in all times and applicable to all those who are pastoral agents in the Church. His *Prayer for Missionaries* – in the form of a medieval *Oratio* – is a true theological treatise on mission, in its Trinitarian context, in its Christological centeredness, and in its ecclesial inspiration. He asks for apostles ablaze with fire, free with the freedom of God, abandoned to Providence, detached from everything, free as the clouds, responsive to the inspiration of the Spirit, who remain like contemplatives on the holy mountain who is Mary, active and ready for every great undertaking for the glory of God, so that “the world might be renewed and the Church reformed.”

These great ideas are taken up again by Montfort in the rule which he wrote for his missionaries, but, in the *Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* (nn. 56-59) they are proposed for all the faithful, who are invited to let themselves be formed by Mary, to be the “apostles of the last times” who might go throughout the world with the cross on their shoulders, the rosary in their hands, “baying like dogs” to announce the truth of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the spiritual teaching of Saint Louis-Marie, presented in its theological foundations, and above all from its Marian dimension, casts light on the priestly dimension of the life of all the baptized, what is called the common priesthood of the faithful. The Year of the Priest cannot exclude this reference, since the Second Vatican Council puts the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood in relationship with the common priesthood of the faithful, saying that they “are are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ” (*Lumen Gentium* 10).

In the line of Berullian theology, Montfort places as the foundation of his doctrinal construction the mystery of the Incarnation, with the role of Mary on the first level. The Word is made flesh in Mary; human nature assumed in the person of Christ, the supreme and eternal Pontiff between God and the world, according to the *Letter to the Hebrews*, is the foundation of its priestly existence. In his *Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* (nn. 16 ff.), Montfort presents the Incarnation as the work of the Trinity who takes the initiative and accomplishes the redemption of humanity, but who does it after asking the consent of Mary, a consent that is free and in fact determinative, and also representative of us all. In this moment, Mary was the dialogue partner with God in the name of all humanity. The *Ecce venio* of Jesus (Heb 10, 7) corresponds to the *Ecce ancilla* of Mary (Lk 1, 38); the great bridge between God and humanity, at the moment of the Incarnation, rests from the human side on the consent of Mary.

As a consequence of this first mystery, which is the prototype of all the others, not only for the historical life of Christ but also in the time of the Church, Montfort emphasizes the participation of Mary in the redemptive work of Christ. It is particularly in

the scene at the foot of the cross that Jesus makes explicit the dynamism of the presence of Mary in the spiritual journey of every Christian (cf. Jn 19, 25-27). This mother is told: *Behold your son!* , and every disciple of Jesus is told: *Behold your mother!* Therefore, every believer, on the model of Mary and to the extent that he or she lives in her same spirit, participates in the supreme and eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. A priest, as the Council explained, who consecrates us with a view to forming a spiritual temple, in order to offer – by means of our works – spiritual sacrifices and to make known the marvellous deeds of God. By persevering in prayer and by praising God, we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, and we bear witness to Christ (cf. LG 10).

This description of the priestly identity of every believer corresponds to the ideal which Montfort proposes to all the baptized. The “true devotion” which he teaches is a school of holiness, which accompanies the Christian from his first conversion until the perfection of holiness. The same practice of “total consecration” of oneself to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary, seen as a renewal of the promises of baptism, is a progressive path of being conformed to Christ and of transforming our life. The offering of oneself as a spiritual sacrifice recalls the Eucharist, celebrated and lived in daily life. It is not by chance that the *Treatise on True Devotion* ends with instructions which must guide the person who has made the consecration in his or her way of living the Eucharist, because it is the summit of communion with Christ.

Mary is the “woman of the Eucharist” in her entire life, for having offered her virginal womb to the Incarnation of the Word, for having believed and spoken her *fiat* like the *Amen* spoken by the faithful person who receives the Body of the Lord, in order to offer oneself entirely, as a living monstrance, as a sacrificial offering (cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 53 ff.). Montfort has us ask for the same heart as Mary’s (*True Devotion*, n. 266), so that we may be a worthy offering alive in the sacrifice of praise of our priesthood.

Lastly, the apostolate consists in “making known the wondrous deeds of God” and in “bearing witness to Christ,” another necessary dimension of the priesthood of the faithful. Just as Mary brought Christ to the world in the Incarnation, it is still by you that Jesus comes into hearts during the time of the Church and even to the end of time. Always – for Montfort – a mature faith must move toward mission, by making known the goodness of God to others, by working for the salvation of others, by hastening the coming of the Kingdom of God into the world. It is the exercise of this missionary state which he so strongly felt and which cannot be separated from the priesthood of Christ. By participating in this *munus sacerdotale* (priestly service) let us take upon ourselves the earthly realities, insofar as our weakness allows, but also according to the effective power of the Spirit, called to become the agents of transformation, to make of the entire world a pleasing offering to God.

Fr. Battista Cortinovis, S.M.M.

The Birth of a Vocation

Five years have already passed since the word “priesthood” and the person of the “priest” have begun to play an important role in my life, even to the point of changing it completely. In my view before then, the priest, in addition to being someone who was educated, responsible, devoted to speaking about God and “doing the Mass and sacraments,” was also a person who was different, separated from common experience and a “normal” life. I labeled them as those who were already predestined from birth for this sacred function in the Church. Of course, these images were the fruit of my ignorance and made the figure of priest remote in my life.

All of that changed when, dissatisfied by how I was living, I began to search for the meaning of my life. During the period of my coming close to the life of the Church and the discovery of spiritual life, the Lord himself worked through various persons, after a time of living in a new way, and I discovered my vocation unexpectedly. There began to grow within me, without my expecting it, a voice, the thought of a call to the priesthood. I thought that perhaps it was a fantasy caused by a spiritual enthusiasm I was living.

So my first reactions were based on my labels which I used to place on priests, and therefore I said to myself: “You are not made to be a priest; you have no predispositions; there is no sense in all this,” and similar things! But the incomprehensible pedagogy of God did its work, and in time I was drawn to a serious meditation and to a discernment on priestly service and its significance. In fact, this is how my first vocation and its acceptance on my part were born. Just then, a meeting with the Montfort Missionaries took place, and with it the second step of my vocational journey.



The encounter with Montfort, who was unknown to me until then, left a big impression on me; so did his life and writings. The presence of Mary, with her privileged place in Montfortian spirituality was like a confirmation of God’s work in all that I was experiencing.

In fact, I perceived the involvement of Mary in the events of my call from the beginning. Entering and living in the community of Zagreb, under the guidance of the Fathers who accompanied me in the maturing of my vocation, particularly Father Mihovil, I felt at ease and ready to continue formation. In the meantime, I experienced another significant event in my life: the consecration to Jesus through Mary, another great gift. In June 2007, I entered the postulancy in Verona under the guidance of Father Marco, in order to undertake new challenges. With the discovery of the consecrated life as a life-style, at first still hidden from me, but then experienced, the centrality of the priesthood, so important from the beginning, little by little moved to second place. Now the “*sequela Christi*” emerged within a religious community, where we lived as brothers following the example and the charism of Father de Montfort. Little by little, I began to understand that the culmination of the vocation was not priestly service, with all the benefits and fruits it could offer to the Church, but first this – the encounter with the Lord (“to remain

with him”) in the freedom of the children of God. It is from this that all activity and mission flows. Not that the image of the priest takes on lesser value; rather, it assumes a deeper significance, illuminating the image of Christ as “high priest”, but at the same time poor, chaste and obedient, at the service of God and humanity, the one who gives himself freely and totally.

I found this way of living the priesthood particularly in the figure of Montfort.

In September 2008 I began the novitiate year with the direction of Father Efreem as novice master and Father Milenko as *socius*. It was really a year of grace which has changed me a lot in terms of my personal and community dimensions. I was able to deepen so many aspects – human, spiritual and apostolic, which mark and will mark the life of a Montfortian missionary priest.

I was strengthened at last in the choice of this pathway which culminated in first profession on 20 September 2009 in Santeramo. After that, I left for Rome with my confreres, for the new international scholasticate where I am right now, following the first year course in philosophy. Looking back, I am very grateful to God, who has surrounded me during these years with so many people, particularly numerous Fathers whom I have had the chance to get to know and from whom I have been able to learn so much, whether through their word and counsel or through their lived witness. Beginning with the first Fathers who welcomed me to the community in Zagreb, with the formators in the postulancy and novitiate, and now the Fathers who follow us in the scholasticate. As students we have the good fortune to be near to the community of the General House with Father General, for an exchange and an immediate contact with the current situation in the life of the Congregation. I am not forgetting the visiting Fathers who pass through the house, whom I have gotten to know even if only for a short time. On the whole, I have been able to take in and get to know from all of them the particular characteristics of a Montfort Missionary today and their ways of living Montfortian spirituality. I can say that I am becoming ever more conscious of the grace and the gift which God sends to his people through his ministers and those who choose to dedicate themselves to God’s work of salvation in whatever state of life. In the end, the Lord entrusts to us this universal duty according to our capacity and at the same time a responsibility to which every Christian is called to adhere to and not to flee. But, in order to be dedicated to this service with one’s whole person, everyone called must feel like a beloved son of the Father, remaining in the intimacy of his being with Christ whom he recognizes as his Redeemer and as “the way that leads to the Father.” If we do not start from this personal encounter, we risk becoming like dried out trees without fruit. In order that this might not happen we have our own privileged aid in the school of Mary.

This secret, as Montfort calls it, was revealed also to me; now it’s my turn to apply it to life every day. May her maternal care guide all of us toward the “full knowledge” of her Son!

Br. Kristijan Žlender, S.M.M.

Testimony on Updating of the Message of Montfort Among his Spiritual Sons, the Montfortians

(1958 – 2010)

Have you realized that a computer is like a human person, or more, that a person is like a computer? Both of them are programmed! The computer has programs: Microsoft Office Excel, Microsoft Office Word 2003-2007. The human person also has its programs. Let us go look at Montfort who, well before the invention of computers, lived with his programs: Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, the Trinity, Mary, the Cross, the Consecration, the Rosary, Providence, the Holy Spirit, Liberos, Contemplative Prayer, Mission.

Montfortians are called to live the precious spiritual programs that Montfort gave them as an inheritance. For my part, from the age of 17, so for 52 years, I have been in contact with the Montfort Fathers and Brothers. It was in 1958 that they arrived in our Parish of St. Vincent de Paul, North Bay, Ontario, Canada. So it is since then that I have been exposed to the programs of Montfortian spirituality as they were actualized in their lives, and I have been influenced by them. There are programs activated in the Prayer for Missionaries where we feel the burning momentum of Montfort which he has handed down to this little Company of Mary.



So you are invited to sit down in front of the screen of your computer in order to click on the programs who are witnesses for me.

Click on the first activated program :

Liberos! Free priests, able to risk something new, who love according to your ardent heart, docile and attentive to the inspiration of the Spirit (cf. PM 7 - 10)

I arrived in Papua in 1969, so 10 years after the foundation at Kiunga, in the Western Province. I worked there in collaboration with the Montfort Fathers, who are my brothers and friends, for 22 years. I was impressed to see all these missionaries who wanted to enter into the program of the Prayer for Missionaries (7-12) bequeathed by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. They proved that they were “free to let go” in order to establish the local church in a context in which everything needed to be done. Their witness of missionary life was the true and first evangelization to establish the Reign of Christ-Wisdom in Papua. They flew with great docility to the mountains, the plain, wherever the breath of the Spirit sent them. Their priestly ministry, their pastoral activities, which they desired to be “à la Montfort” were filled with their love for Christ-Wisdom manifested in their ability to undertake something new, their practical boldness, their competence, their availability and their universal love for the different tribes. A laborious and difficult work made secure by the Montfort Brothers, the collaborators with the Fathers, provided a remarkable support in the mission. These missionaries, from the first string, radiated a goodness and a joy that was contagious. Their witness of a

simple and happy life touched me a great deal. It is through their contact that I developed more deeply my missionary spirit. Since then, they have passed the torch to the coming generations and the foundations of evangelization are progressing ...

In the Philippines, where I worked for 13 years, I also worked with the Montfort Fathers, who are my friends and brothers. They too have entered into the spiritual program of Montfort completely with the impact of their predecessors, the founders and pioneers with a very Montfortian soul. I have seen the great radiance of the Filipino missionaries when they have animated just as Montfort did with the adaptations necessary for our society of today. They too are called to live trusting in Providence ... to risk something new, to evangelize with the burning flame so desired by Montfort. Their pastoral activities shine forth everywhere in the Philippines but especially in the areas of Manila and Cebu. Without a doubt, Montfort must recognize in them their apostolic fervour, their boldness, their fraternal love of ordinary people, their zeal for making Christ-Wisdom known and loved through Mary.

Click on the second activated program :

The symbolic animals applied to the sons of Montfort (cf. PM 21)

It has already been three years since I am in Rome. I am in contact with the Montfortians of the General House, who are my brothers and friends. I am also called to work in collaboration with them when my services are needed in the area of formation. The activated program of the Prayer for Missionaries (n. 21) invites them to live and to radiate the compassionate Christ-Wisdom, to desire the courage of a lion to go to the north and south, to the east and west in order to be a presence that is comforting, motivating and joyful among confreres of all cultures. They are invited to use the strength of an ox to accomplish their task as Superior General, Assistants General, Bursar General, and Montfortian Brothers, all in the service of the Congregation. They are also invited to adopt the agility of the eagle through their contemplation of God.

My encounters with them attest to and confirm that they want to keep ardently activated this spiritual program given as a heritage by their Father and Founder Saint Louis Marie de Montfort.

Click on the third activated program :

Hymn 22: My choice is made! I'll roam through the world ...

Being Canadian, during my holidays and periods of study, I meet a good number of Montfortian friends at home in my country. And I travel in the countries where the Montfortians work – to name a few: Haiti, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Congo, Malawi, Kenya and Papua New Guinea. Here in Rome, during international sessions which I animate with a Montfort Father, I make new acquaintances among them, and my circle of friends from diverse cultures gets bigger. I discover in them also their efforts to live the activated “Liberos” program of their founder.

I recognize them as Montfortians by their openness, their active participation, their boldness, their zeal, their practical ingenuity and their ardent desire to be Evangelizers “à la Montfort” walking with Mary.

It is to the extent of their profound communion with Christ-Wisdom, walking with Mary, that these missionaries can identify themselves with Montfort when he said:

“If you do not risk something for god, you will do nothing great for him.” (St Louis Marie de Montfort to Mother Marie Louise of Jesus and Sister de la Conception, Letter 27)

Click on the fourth activated program :

Liberos ! priests, true children and servants of Mary (cf. PM n. 11-12)

How sweet to the heart of Montfortians is this Perfect Devotion to the Virgin Mary! Consecrated to Jesus through Mary, throughout their lives they want to deepen this Marian program. They have recourse to her, their Spiritual Mother, their sister in humanity, in order to live through her, with her, in her and for her. United to the living faith of Mary they become filled with it in order to deepen their communion with Christ Wisdom. It is through the hope of Mary that they find their dynamism and their missionary momentum. It is united to the Charity of Mary that they live their universal love all burning in their hearts. This burning flame is contagious because, thanks to their evangelization and their fraternal encounters, a good number of lay people are deciding to follow “the 33 days of journeying with Montfort” as a preparation for the consecration. How many moving witnesses have I heard from Montfortians who shared with me their way of living their consecration to Mary! How many times have I seen Montfortians walk with the rosary in their hands, just like their spiritual Father, Louis de Montfort.

This is what I have seen with the eyes of my heart, heard with the ears of my heart. Through contact with them, I have been encouraged to deepen my relationship united to Mary whom I appreciate so much today.

I feel quite privileged as a Daughter of Wisdom, a Daughter of Montfort, a Daughter of Marie Louise of Jesus, to be in contact with, influenced by, touched by the evangelical, sapiential, marian and apostolic witness of the Montfort Fathers and Brothers, who are my brothers and friends encountered throughout the course of my life.

End of the viewing of programs activated on the screen!

By Sr. Desneiges Giroux, fdl

My Priestly Experience

Twenty years have passed since my first religious profession, and fourteen years since my ordination to the priesthood.

First of all, I would like to recall the beautiful experiences of formation in Verona, before the novitiate. This was my first experience in a Montfortian religious community. In this community, there were brothers and priests, young and old, and at that time there were also Daughters of Wisdom. There one lived in a true family climate. I also remember the experiences at Caritas, in town, language study, and still other things in the community. All of that helped me to understand Italian culture better in its different aspects.

The period of novitiate and first profession was for me a source of an immense joy and a great enthusiasm for the future. In Rome, at the university, we breathed an atmosphere of internationality, a world in miniature, rich in experiences. I have to remember the very beautiful pastoral experiences in the parishes where I taught catechism to children who were preparing for confirmation. During those years the preparation for the Jubilee also took place, with the diocesan synod. As a student I had some experiences which I gladly remember: the popular mission in Loretto in 1994, the pilgrimage in the footsteps of Montfort, the community vacations in the mountains, the study of English in London, etc.

After seven years of studies, I came back to Croatia. Father Milenko and also Father Zdravko came back after me. In these first years, I experienced the action of Providence, who inserted me in pastoral work for the local church, and who allowed me to receive help in organizing the house of the future community, founded in December 2001. Father Ivan, who at that time was in the diocese of Dubrovnik, joined us about a year later.

Our work developed in two directions: an apostolate with lay people in our house and with those outside the house. My experience until now revolves around contacts with numerous prayer groups, movements and associations. I led various spiritual exercises and a popular mission with Father Milenko in 2000. That same year I also participated in World Youth Day. From 2002 to 2005 I worked as a military chaplain, and I had diverse experiences with pilgrimages. I also had experiences in other countries: in Germany, Hungary, Poland. Recently I had some very beautiful experiences in summer camps with young people and their families. The diffusion of Montfort's writings in Croatia has produced many spiritual fruits, and we have arranged with the Associates of Mary Queen of All Hearts the translation and printing of the *True Devotion* in the languages of Macedonia, Hungary and Albania. We are also thinking of translating it into other languages.

In recent years I participated in the "Edith Stein" school for formators / educators. Also, the loss of Father Luka was a significant event because it was he who welcomed me to the mission in Zagreb. A seed dies and others are born: there are now four Croatian Montfortian students. The link with the movement *Consecratio Mundi* has also expanded my experience, especially my regard for the mission through the spirituality of consecration according to Montfort.



In making a list of all this, even if it is in a disorderly way, I would like to say that I am very satisfied with my priestly ministry. I look toward the future with enthusiasm. The one thing that I don't like is not having finished the thesis for the licentiate in pastoral studies at the Salesian Pontifical University and at the "Edith Stein" school. In writing this witness, I am thinking also of a possible change. I have been in the same house for thirteen years and in all that time I have been in charge for four years, and then the superior for nine years. Having full confidence that Providence will give me commitments for the praise of God and the service of people, I make myself available for the projects of our Company, in Croatia and in the world.

Fr. Mihovil Filipović, S.M.M.

The Olympics of Life

Official Partner: The Montfort Missionaries Of the Shrine of *Marie-Reine-des-Cœurs* in Montreal.

In a strange way, life resembles the Olympics. First of all, to desire to adopt a discipline, to love it with all your heart, to involve yourself, to practice it, to give yourself to it without counting the cost, daily and continually, to suffer sometimes... despite all, to stick to the route with total confidence and to reach the great good fortune of the Olympics of Life.

My life has been marked by the Montfort Fathers who have allowed me to stay on the track as God's athlete. They have contributed to my religious and spiritual training. My thoughts, my Christian and human feelings have been without a doubt greatly influenced by and shaped by the Montfort Fathers, those persons impassioned by God. They have helped me to welcome Christ so that he might become the heart of my existence, the centre around which my life turns, in order to hope finally to reach the podium of medal winners in the Olympics of eternal Life.



This warm welcome from the Fathers which gives so much of what is important, and their listening which passes spontaneously from the ear to the heart, are undeniable. The gift of faith of the Fathers at the Shrine of *Marie-Reine-des-Cœurs* is exceptional. Their lively way of keeping us on the Christian Olympic track clearly merits a gold medal. They offer us celebrations which are so beautiful, solemn, of the highest quality. Their teaching is characterized by a constant fervour. What to say now of the wealth of resourcing! ... pilgrimages, conferences, retreats, days of recollection, everything liberally sprinkled with a humour which brings a smile to us in the midst of the cares and anxieties of daily existence. In addition, the power of their preaching, with a rare eloquence, have always impressed me and challenged me greatly. By going to the Shrine of *Marie-Reine-des-Cœurs* in Montreal and the Montfort Fathers, I have discovered with wonderment the profound spirituality of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, the tireless apostle of true devotion to Mary.

The Montfort Fathers have also showed me how to recognize the Word, to develop a faith which is lively, joyful, filled with hope and love. By responding to the promises of

my baptism, and as a Montfort Associate, I am destined from now on to be a missionary, and the proclamation of the Good News must be my passion.

Before the end of the Olympics of my own life and its unveiling, I want to give thanks to the Lord for so much goodness, and for all those good Montfort Fathers placed on my path. They are my beloved brothers, and I am gratified to be a part of this beautiful Montfortian Family, with whom I am journeying for many years at this Shrine dedicated to Mary.

Mme Jacqueline Deschênes, Montfort Associate,
Shrine of *Marie-Reine-des-Cœurs* in Montreal

Extract from a conversation between Brother Buteau (Brother Tob) and Mgr. Gayot, S.M.M.

His Excellency Archbishop François Gayot, S.M.M. is President of the National Episcopal Committee for Peace and Reconciliation (CENPR) and President of the National Episcopal Committee for Migrants and Refugees (CENPMR). The son of our mother Maman Marie and a great friend of the National Centre for the Foreign Apostolate, Mgr Gayot is a witness to Christian faith and a great communicator. From his office he has agreed to respond to some questions for the readers of the paper "Haiti-Observer" and the friends of the National Centre.

1. BT - *For the edification of our readers, would you please tell us how, in your youth, you heard the call of the Lord to the priestly and religious life?*

1. + F.G. - Certainly, for this call represents for me the foundational event which has given direction, continues to give direction, and will continue to give direction to the whole of my existence. That said, rather than presenting a theory of the priestly and religious vocation, I prefer to give you, among many other things, two concrete examples to show you how diverse are the ways to arrive at a vocation.

For St Paul, thrown to the ground on the road to Damascus, it was a case of a lightning vocation which would cause him to change from being a persecutor of the Christians to being one of the most fervent preachers of the Gospel message. This was how this apostle received his extraordinary call to proclaim to the nations the unfathomable mystery of Christ.

For St Vincent de Paul, in his case as well, an astonishing event was to determine his vocation: it was through an unexpected shaking of the floor of the hospital where he was staying that his vocation as "Father of the poor" was to be unveiled.

One could give many more examples, but these seem to me to be sufficiently significant to show how the Lord, in his infinite goodness, reveals the particular vocation that he wishes to give to such and such a call in his plan of salvation. Here it is a question of special vocations where the accompanying signs are particularly impressive, but in a general way the stages of progress towards a vocation are very much simpler.

As regards my own case, I can say that it is a call which finds its origin in my earliest childhood. The first sign, I might say, was around the age of 6, in Port-de-Paix, in the Cathedral, where I was helping to serve at the altar. I said to the Parish-Priest: "I want to

be a priest," and he replied: "What did you say, and where are you?" For I was so small that my head did not appear above the high altar. Then bending down, he saw me and said: "But what was that you said? ... We'll see about that later." Yet this was the very first time that I revealed this call that I had already felt for a long time in the depths of my heart. There followed a long journey through the Paschal Mystery of Christ, making me pass continually from suffering to joy, from darkness to light, from death to life.

So a vocation is not something that we acquire by our own efforts, but a gift received from the Lord. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews emphasises: "each one is called by God" (Heb 5.4). A vocation is ultimately the manifestation of the merciful love of the Lord, freely received in faith and hope. That is how I experienced this love of the Father and how I was able to say: "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will."



2. BT - *What were the various institutes of higher studies you attended after your priestly ordination, and what were the missions that you were called upon to accomplish as a consequence?*

2. + F.G. - Before identifying these various institutes of study, I would like to make it clear that one of the essential characteristics of the priestly vocation is that it is precisely a call received from the Lord in view of a mission to be accomplished. One is "called" so as to be "sent": vocation and mission are intimately linked in the unity of a single process, that of the merciful love of the Lord. It was in this spirit that, first of all, a little more than 2 years before my priestly ordination, my superiors sent me to deepen my knowledge with regard to Liturgy, Sacred Music and Gregorian Chant, and so to obtain my diploma as a specialist in these matters. Then, after my priestly ordination, I was sent to Haiti as a missionary.

After some time my superiors asked me to return to Paris to study general Sociology at the Institute of Social Studies at the Institut Catholique in Paris, on the one hand, and to study Ethnology and Sociocultural Anthropology at the Sorbonne on the other hand.

Having obtained these 2 diplomas, one in Sociology and the other in Ethnology, I was able to take a place in a research team at the School of Higher Studies of the 6th section of the University of Paris, while continuing my studies at the Sorbonne in General Linguistics, and in physical Anthropology, doing research into Voodoo, Plaçage and Créole. This allowed me, on my return to Haiti, to make enquiries over almost 10 years, in all the dioceses of the country, in view of my thesis for my doctorate. After all this research I had to return to France to defend my thesis and gain my diploma and doctorate.

It was at this time that I founded the "Haitian Conference of Religious" and created the

"Institute of Missionary Formation" for the training of members of Polyvalent Missionary Teams. It was also at this time that I was chosen as Provincial of the Montfort Missionaries in Haiti, for a period of 9 years.

For 40 years now, right up to the present time, I have been teaching various subjects, first of all as professor of cultural Anthropology at the Major Seminary of Notre Dame de Turgeau and at the inter-community Juniorate of religious in Port-au-Prince, and later as professor of the Social Teaching of the Church in the Faculty of Management and Administration of the University of Notre Dame of Haiti (UNDH), which I founded in Cap Haitien. At present I am teaching this same subject at the Institute of the Social Doctrine of the Church (IDOSOC), created especially for the formation of lay-people.

I cannot finish this overview without mentioning two important missions:

- ❖ The first was to have been appointed by Pope John Paul II, when I was already a bishop, as a member of the Pontifical Council COR UNUM, a part of the Roman Curia (the Church's central government), for 10 years;
- ❖ The second was to have been appointed a member of the "International Catholic Committee for Migration" in Geneva, and elected a member of the "Governing Committee" of this Committee which had just been raised by the Holy See to the rank of an "International Catholic Organisation" (OIC), in direct dependence on the Vatican Secretariat of State.

I am far from being sure that I have said everything, but I believe that I have given at least the main points of my university profile.

3. BT - *What ministries did you exercise before and after your episcopal consecration?*

3. + F.G. - When I was ordained a priest in France, in the Congregation of the Montfort Missionaries, my first appointment was to the parish of Jean-Rabel, first as a curate, then as the parish-priest.

Then I was sent to Port-au-Prince as an itinerant Missionary to preach the gospel, which I did for six years. I would leave our mission house for 3, 4 or 6 months at a time before returning to prepare other missions. In this way I was able to travel on horseback through all the dioceses of the country, and to meet with the people in the most out-of-the-way and poor areas of Haiti. Through these long ramblings, in the course of my conversations with various people, I discovered a people clothed in hope, endowed with the purest of evangelical values: the spirit of poverty, availability for hospitality, the sense of sharing, etc....

It was in 1966 that I was chosen as the first Provincial of the Montfort Missionaries in Haiti, which I remained until in 1974 Pope Paul VI made me a Bishop and entrusted me with the pastoral care of the diocese of Cap-Haitien. Then, in 1988, Pope John Paul II decreed the erection of a second ecclesiastical Province in Haiti, and made me the first Archbishop of this new metropolitan region.

After my episcopal ministry in Cap Haitien, I continue until now my ministry in Port-au-Prince:

- ❖ On the international level as a member of the International Catholic Committee for Migration;
- ❖ On the national level, as President of the Episcopal Conference of Haiti, I have undertaken the restructuring of the national episcopal committees, notably the "Episcopal Committee for Catholic Education" (CEEC), and have set in motion the

"Diocesan Offices of Education" (BDE). This new thrust given to education extends to the two important domains for which I was responsible: as the one in charge of the Episcopal Committee for the Pastoral Care of Migrants (CENPM) and the National Episcopal Committee for Peace and Reconciliation (CENPR).

4. BT - *In your opinion, what successes are you most proud of from your many years of episcopal ministry in Cap-Haitien?*

4. + F.G. - It is very difficult to respond to such a question, given the extent of my episcopal ministry, whether in terms of time (30 years), or in terms of the number of souls (about 2 million). I would rather point to the different areas of pastoral activity which were dearest to me.

From my arrival, the foundation of Caritas, with the various sectors which, over the years, came into being: the cafeteria with so many meals served each day; the training of pastoral agents; the sessions for catechetical and liturgical deepening; the dispensaries, the laboratory for medical analysis and the free pharmacies for the poorest people; the sponsorships; the creation of the diocesan Office of Education; the Institute for the deaf and dumb in collaboration with the Daughters of Wisdom; the Centre for Literacy integrated with the Reforestation Project, etc....

In another domain, the foundation of a number of new parishes, the calling at the very outset of the Redemptoristine Sisters to the monastery of Cap-Haitien, whose contemplative presence and prayers were always, and are still, of the greatest importance for the life of the Archdiocese.

We must not forget either the foundation of the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti at the national level, to which I gave myself, body and soul, for 15 years before its construction, to bring the idea forth, to find funding and to set it in motion. Then in 1996 to open the doors of the Faculty of Study and Research (UER) of the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti at Cap-Haitien.

After this rapid survey of the principal fields of action, I would like especially to say that I am proud of nothing, but that I thank the Lord for all the graces he poured out on me throughout my ministry. I am happy to have lived in the midst of the poorest people, and to have shared their life and collaborated in the relief of their sufferings.

5. BT - *Do you have a message for the "Diaspora"?*

5. + F.G. - In a short time we will be on the verge of Holy Week. The Feast of Ester will be at our doors.

This is a beautiful opportunity to wish each and every one: a Good and Holy Journey towards Easter. Do not lose confidence. Our Mother Mary is with us and will not abandon us. Remain faithful to the Risen Christ!

"May nothing separate us from the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8.39).

Thank you to Monsignor Gayot for having agreed to answer our questions.

Brother Buteau (Brother Tob)
For the National Centre

Statistics SMM on 31-12-2009

Juridical Entity	Fr.	Br.	S.	Total
Africa Angl. (Gen.Del.)	14	1	7	22
Africa Franc. (Gen.Del.)	8	1	2	11
Belgium (Gen.Del.)	29	6	0	35
Canada (Pr.)	34	12	0	46
Colombia (Pr.)	50	2	4	56
Ecuador (Del.FR)	5	0	0	5
France (Pr.)	76	23	0	99
GB/I (V-Pr.)	15	3	0	18
General Admin.	7	0	0	7
Germany (V-Pr.)	17	1	1	19
Haiti (Pr.)	51	1	25	77
India (V-Pr.)	45	0	26	71
Indonesia (Gen.Del.)	32	4	64	100
Italy (Pr.)	115	6	5	126
Madagascar (Gen.Del.)	20	5	11	36
Malawi (Del.IT)	17	2	0	19
Netherlands (Pr.)	43	11	0	54
Peru-Brazil (Gen.Del.)	23	3	4	30
Philippines (Gen.Del.)	12	1	6	19
PNG (Comm.Gen.)	9	1	0	10
Portugal (Gen.Del.)	15	1	2	18
USA (Pr.)	24	2	0	26
	661	86	157	904

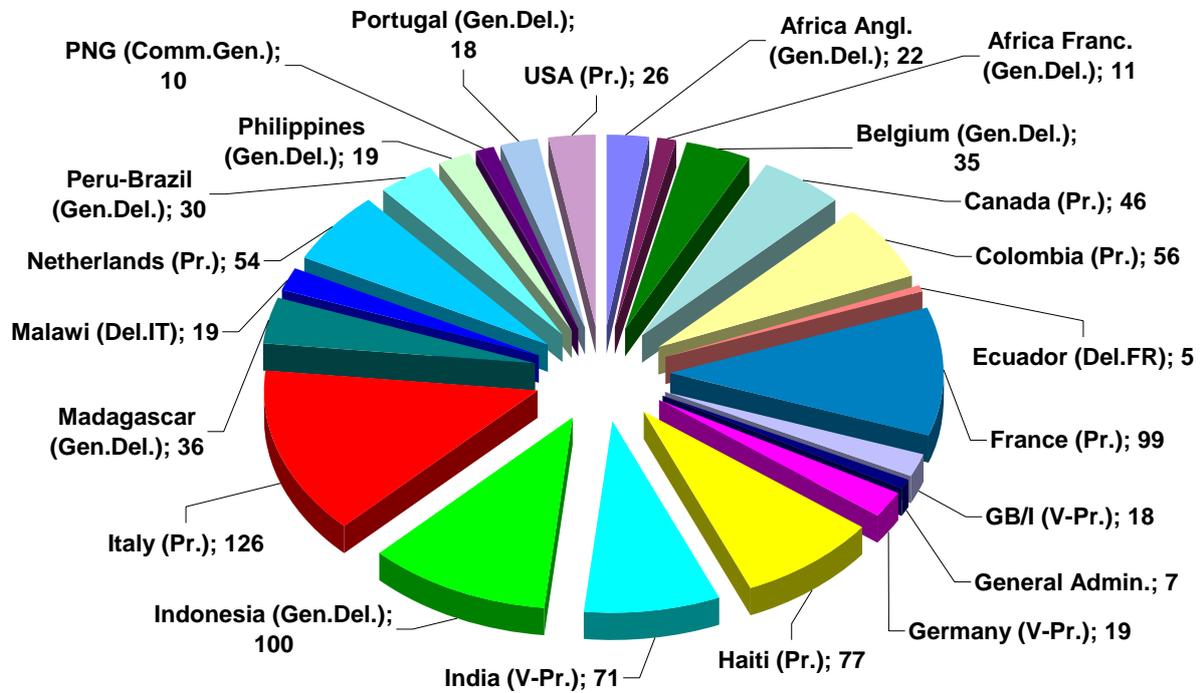
Work Place	Fr.	Br.	S.	Total
Argentina	1	1	0	2
Bahamas	2	0	0	2
Belgium	26	5	0	31
Brazil	10	1	0	11
Canada	40	11	0	51
Colombia	48	2	4	54
Congo (CD)	7	1	1	9
Croatia	4	0	0	4
Dominican Rep.	1	0	0	1
Ecuador	5	0	0	5
France	73	22	0	95
GB/I	15	3	0	18
Germany	23	1	0	24
Haiti	33	1	22	56
India	41	0	26	67
Indonesia	30	3	64	97
Italy	105	6	0	111
Kenya	1	1	8	10
Madagascar	18	4	11	33
Malawi	25	4	0	29
Mozambique	1	0	0	1
Netherlands	37	9	0	46
Nicaragua	3	0	0	3
Papua	7	1	0	8
Peru	25	3	7	35
Philippines	13	1	6	20
Portugal	13	1	0	14
Rome	12	3	7	22
Spain	2	0	0	2
St-Martin	2	0	0	2
Uganda	2	0	0	2
USA	34	2	1	37
Zambia	2	0	0	2
	661	86	157	904

Statistics SMM on 31-12-2009

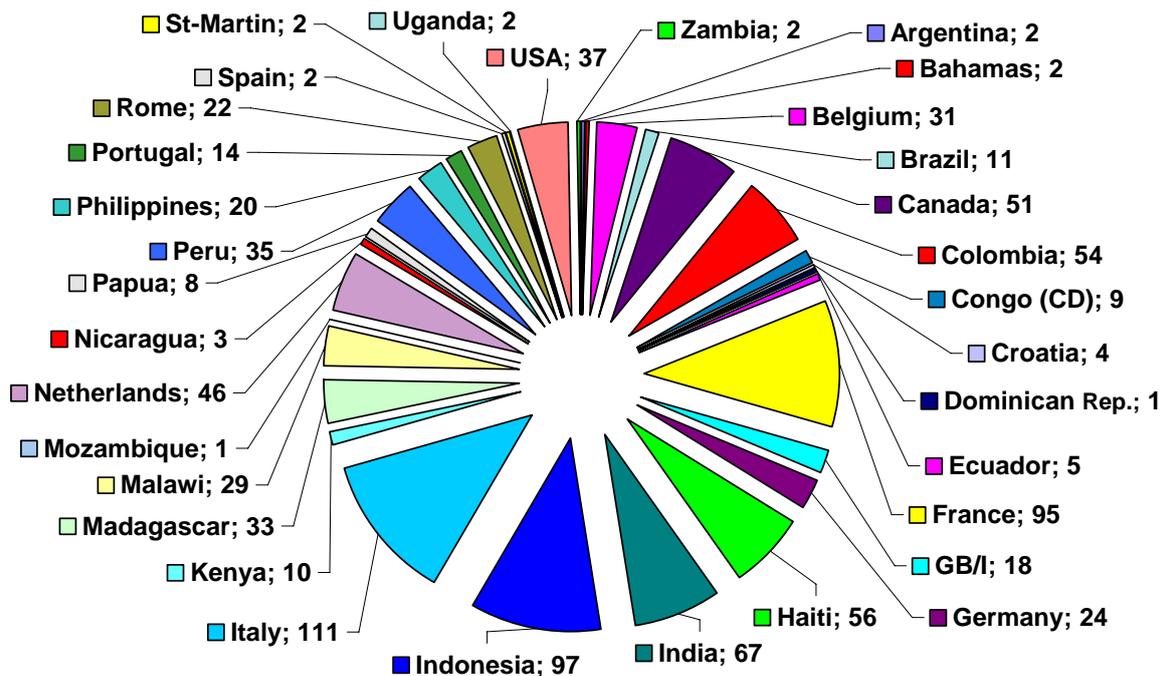
Nationality	Fr.	Br.	S.	Total
Angola	0	0	2	2
Belgium	19	4	0	23
Brazil	2	0	3	5
Canada	36	12	0	48
Colombia	49	2	4	55
Congo (CD)	7	1	2	10
Croatia	4	0	4	8
Denmark	0	0	1	1
Ecuador	1	0	0	1
England	13	1	0	14
France	81	23	0	104
Germany	16	1	0	17
Haiti	51	1	25	77
India	47	0	26	73
Indonesia	37	4	64	105
Ireland (IE/NIR)	1	1	0	2
Italy	144	10	1	155
Kenya	1	0	2	3
Madagascar	13	6	11	30
Malawi	7	1	3	11
Netherlands	58	13	0	71
Nicaragua	2	0	0	2
Peru	13	1	1	15
Philippines	12	1	6	19
Portugal	13	1	0	14
Scotland	4	0	0	4
Spain	4	0	0	4
Switzerland	1	0	0	1
Uganda	1	0	2	3
USA	23	2	0	25
Wales	0	1	0	1
Zambia	1	0	0	1
	661	86	157	904

Statistics SMM on 31-12-2009

Juridical Entity



Work Place



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L' Écho Montfortain
Viale dei Monfortani, 65
00135 ROMA (Tel: +39 06.30.52.332)
echo.montfortain@gmail.com