



L'Écho Montfortain

N° 510 – English edition – April 2002

A WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

Dear Confreres,

*Last August some 250 members of the Montfortian Family – religious as well as lay people from a wide variety of groups that take inspiration from St. Louis-Marie – gathered to reflect on the challenge of Pope John Paul II to evangelise the New Millennium, “**Put out into the deep!**” They consciously chose to accept this call for mission in the spirit and footsteps of Montfort. I would like to share with you the conference I gave at the close of the week’s sessions. For us Montfort Missionaries, particularly called by God to proclaim his Good News in every age and to all peoples, the question, “**What must we do?**” ought to haunt and stimulate our imagination and our actions. Indeed, my hope is that each of the points to follow will raise questions and challenges for the life and ministry of each confrere and each community.*

*William Considine, smm
Superior General*

St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre – August 9, 2001

As we come to the last day of our gathering, echoes from here and there reveal that we find ourselves feeling a spirit of unity, fraternity and love. Others have used the words simplicity, gentleness and peace. Perhaps the word **family** best sums up the communion among those who have found a path of life in the teachings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. But we also find ourselves very much a part of the Church that seeks to welcome, embrace and evangelize the New Millennium. As Pope Jean Paul II wrote in his letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “Conscious of the risen Lord’s presence among us, we ask ourselves today the same question put to Peter in Jerusalem after his Pentecost speech: **What must we do?**” We ask ourselves **what must we do?** After the graces, the insights of these days in St. Laurent, **what must we do?**

I find the Holy Father’s reflections on this question filled with wisdom and light. Listen to what he writes: “What must we do? We put the question with trusting optimism, but without underestimating the problems we face. We are certainly not seduced by the naïve expectation that faced with the great challenges of our time; we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: *I am with you!*” (n. 29).

Pope John Paul continues, “It is not therefore a matter of inventing a new program. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program that does not change with shifts of time and cultures,

even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This program for all times is our program for the Third Millennium.”

At the heart of what we have shared together in these days, and the impulse that will send us forth on mission is not a formula but a Person. I think that this is fundamental to our way of seeing and acting as we face the new millennium with our fellow human beings... we shall not be saved by a formula, but by a Person.

Let us look for a moment at how the first disciples came to believe in the Person of the Risen Christ, after the shattering, as yet incomprehensible defeat of Jesus’ arrest, torture and death on the cross... Perhaps we have grown accustomed to thinking of the disciples’ transition from failure and death to victory and resurrection as something accomplished in an instant, in a few hours... Indeed, when we celebrate the beautiful Liturgy of the Easter Vigil, we pass in one or two minutes from total darkness to burning fire, to lighted candles everywhere: Light of Christ, Light of Christ, Light of Christ! Quick, neat, sure and certain! Christ is risen! Alleluia!

But I would suggest that the apostles and disciples had a much harder, much slower and more soul-searching transition to make... not accomplished in an instant or in a few hours. Bit by bit, encounter by encounter, first the women disciples at the tomb: Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, then Peter and John, Cleopas and his broken hearted companion on the road to Emmaus, again Mary Magdalene in the garden, the apostles and disciples locked in the Cenacle, again with Thomas, later at the Sea of Tiberias, once by 500 disciples at the same time... and many other encounters not written down in the scriptures... bit by bit, slowly, slowly... each disciple begins to come to the extraordinary, unheard of thought: “He is alive!” Those unimaginable encounters with the Risen Jesus, the experiences and stories that one disciple would repeat and share with the others, remembering what the Teacher had said and now – only *now* – understanding it in a new light... bit by bit, by the light of the Spirit, they help each other to believe, they strengthen each others’ experience and conviction that “HE IS ALIVE!”

I would suggest that since the disciples were frail humans just like we are, this did not happen in an instant, without confusion or doubt or incredulity... No, coming to TRULY believe in the Resurrection is more like the long, slow dawning of a summer’s day... You can hardly tell when the night ends and the faintest hints of light begin... slowly, slowly, bit by bit, almost imperceptibly, from darkness to light... from death to resurrection... Slowly, slowly there is the awareness that “He is alive – and I am alive!” “Jesus is alive and I am alive in him!”

I have taken the time to share this with you precisely because in this new millennium we shall not be saved by a program but by a Person – and that Person is Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Mary, who in solidarity and love bore all our infirmities and sins and brought them to the wood of the cross. But we – each one of us – help the others to meet this Lord Jesus and to believe in him. Our great task is to live in such a way that my awareness, my belief, my conviction that “He is alive and I am alive!” that that becomes obvious and clear, a point of light that no darkness can extinguish. We are witnesses to the Lord Jesus, and witnesses to one another. “He is alive, and I am alive! Together let us live as his witnesses!”

Let us return to the question: What must we do? In his Apostolic Letter, Pope John Paul indicates certain pastoral priorities. He says that they must be adapted by the local churches to the circumstances of each community, and yet harmonized with the neighbouring churches and the universal Church. I would like to reflect on some of those pastoral priorities with you now: how they challenge the Montfortian Family and yet how they also find depths of experience and wisdom in the spiritual heritage of St. Louis Marie.

Holiness

The pope says that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to *holiness* (n. 30). The great re-discovery of Vatican Council II (and yet still to be completely discovered!) is the universal call to holiness. The Church as the “mystery” of the people “gathered together by the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” We are holy because we belong to the Holy One, the three times Holy. As the Good Father de Montfort passed from hospital and poor house, from village to village, his aim was to make people holy: all ages and classes and types of persons... Holiness – even deep, burning holiness and charity – was proposed to the simplest of persons with simple, sure and easy means to journey very far indeed to being transformed into the likeness of Jesus. I myself – along with so many of you – can witness to how beautiful and how powerful the spirituality of St. Louis Marie is to invite people to become seduced by the Wisdom of Love, and to desire to respond with ever more faithful and total love. With Mary all this is easy. With Mary all this can be proposed to and lived out by peasants and professors and popes! Montfort teaches us and guides us along the paths of holiness, while never leaving the paths of this earth, with burning charity for the poor and the little ones all along the way. I do not think that one can be a true disciple of Montfort if one sins by action or omission against the poor, the marginalized, the little ones. Montfort paints the rainbow, the pallet of all the colours of God who is Love in such a way that one is constantly drawn into this mystery of the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As Pope John Paul said to us last year in an audience at the end of the Congress on St. Louis Marie held in Rome: “Now I also thank the Lord *for enabling me to experience...* that when the believer accepts Mary into his life in Christ and the Spirit, he is brought into the very heart of the Trinitarian mystery.”

Baptism

John Paul writes in the same Apostolic Letter, “To place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity” (n. 31). Now for us who know and love Montfort, this ought to set in motion all kinds of resonances and harmonics! St. Louis Marie’s whole apostolic thrust was oriented to help people take their Baptismal life and commitments seriously. His parish missions were preached and celebrated so that the Renewal of the Vows of Baptism was the highpoint. The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a daily living of the vows and promises of Baptism in Mary in order to bring on the Reign of Jesus through Mary. Baptism by water and the Holy Spirit, Baptism by which we die to ourselves and are washed and reborn and risen with Christ – this is the heart of Montfort’s pastoral and apostolic approach.

In one of the ancient rites of Baptism, the catechumens entered the Baptistery from the West, the direction of night and darkness. Facing toward the darkness they renounced Satan and his works and they turned their back on him! Then they turned toward the East, the direction of the day and the light, and they accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour. They walked down into the font and walked up as a new creation, baptised in Christ. For those of us today who take Montfort as their teacher and guide, it is for us to discover in the very real and concrete world of today: what must we renounce, what must we reject, what must we turn our backs on, in order to embrace and be embraced by the Risen Christ? Sovereign absolutes of materialism, consumerism, upward mobility, prestige, pleasure, power, beauty, health, success...? What must we accept, whom must we turn toward and embrace? To Jesus, the brother of the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned...? To Jesus, who called happy the poor in spirit, the sorrowing, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the peacemakers, the persecuted...? In the ancient times, in the Paschal Night of their Baptism, the new Christians had to walk through the bath of regeneration

from darkness to light, from death to life, from Satan to Christ... In the same way, in our own hearts, families, parishes, communities and nations, we must learn to turn from selfishness, divisions, and materialism to the service, community and praise of a truly Eucharistic people.

Pope John Paul says that it would be a contradiction for the Baptized to settle for a life of mediocrity. I hear in this statement the truth of the Gospel and a strong echo of St. Louis Marie de Montfort... Because what does Total Consecration to Jesus Wisdom mean, what does the perfect renewal of the vows of Baptism mean, what do the words we speak to Mary mean, "I surrender and consecrate to you, body and soul, as your slave, with all that I possess, both spiritual and material, even including the value of all my good actions, past, present, and to come. I give to you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me, without reservation, in whatever way you please, for the greater glory of God in time and throughout eternity" – if not TOTALITY, always more, the journey of a lifetime, consecrating my existence and consecrating it anew each day, the handing over of ALL – the complete opposite of mediocrity!

Again, in the short, easy, sure path that is Mary, do we not find a Montfortian school of holiness that calls us and invites us always to "the more", to "totality", to offer all that we are and that we have this day, and then to all that we are and have tomorrow... for all the todays and tomorrows of our life... And that for the glory of God, not for ourselves, in complete imitation of the Word of God who became dependent on Mary...

(to be continued)

OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS

The Secretary General, Fr. Paul Allerton, has asked to be relieved of his responsibilities in Rome in order to return to his province of Great Britain and Ireland. On February 11, 2002 Fr. Paul left Rome for his new assignment of preaching at Montfort House, Barrhead, Scotland.

PERPETUAL PROFESSION

On 11 January 2002, in Cumaral, Colombia, **Benigno ZORRO CORREDOR**.

ORDINATION TO THE DEACONATE

On 19 January 2002, in Colombia, **Benigno ZORRO CORREDOR**.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL IN HAITI

During a Provincial Chapter held 9-10 January 2002, Fr. Joseph PHILOR was re-elected as Provincial Superior for a second term of office. His Councillors are Frs. Laurent Émilien PIERRE, the Provincial Vicar, Wilner DONÉCIA, Wismick JEAN-CHARLES and Estéker ÉLYSÉE.

VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS

MONTFORTIAN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE – CIM

The Montfortian International Centre (CIM), formerly located in Louvain, is ready to resume activities in Rome. **Fr. Battista Cortinovis** has been named director of the CIM, which will be located at scholasticate of the Italian Province on the Via Prenestina. The main tasks of

the CIM will be the promotion of Montfortian studies on a theological level, including initiatives such as the production and publication of studies, the organization of congresses and sessions of study, and also the development of Montfortian laity. The CIM will promote study and research on St. Louis Marie and his spirituality in a line that hopes to advance the appreciation of Montfort as a doctor of the Church.

CONSTRUCTION AT THE GENERAL HOUSE

In February 2002 we began a long-overdue construction project to completely change the electrical and telephone systems at the Generalate, and to repair and repaint all the rooms. Much of the work was necessary to be in conformity with the European safety codes and to support the necessary computer and Internet lines. To finance this quite expensive but necessary project, every province and delegation was asked to contribute according to its means. Everyone has been very generous toward the House of the whole Congregation. Perhaps the most touching contribution came from part of the African Delegation in Kinsangani, Congo. After so much destruction and suffering from the wars and violence there, they sold two pigs at market to help finance the work in Rome.

BETWEEN TWO FEASTS 2002

Once again we call to your attention the days around the feasts of St. Louis Marie and Blessed Marie Louise, that form a wonderful occasion for the entire Montfortian Family to pray for the life, mission and vocations among the Daughters of Wisdom, Brothers of St. Gabriel, Montfort Missionaries and all our associates. This year the prayer will be from 27 April till 7 May.

OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN

Father Gabriel RIVIÈRE (1929-2002)

Died on 9 January 2002 in Le Rody (France), aged 72 with 48 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1953 and was ordained priest on 18 October 1959. He worked in Malawi for 25 years. He seemed to be made to measure for the mission in Africa. Very close to the people, he helped the local church to take up its own responsibility. Returning to France for health reasons, he continued, first at La Gardiolle, then later at Le Rody, to put his warm welcoming nature at the service of all and sundry. As in Malawi, he showed a particular concern for the little ones and the handicapped. His sudden death leaves a great gap for his confreres and his many friends.

Father François LE GALL (1924-2002)

Died on 9 January 2002 in Brest (France), aged 77 with 26 years of Religious Profession. He was ordained priest for the diocese of Quimper on 29 June 1948. After some years involved in the youth apostolate, he left for Madagascar, where he worked with the Catholic Youth Workers, and became their co-ordinator for the islands of the Indian Ocean and West Africa. It was at that time that he entered the Company of Mary and made his first vows on 8 December 1975. Starting in 1973, he worked for the Apostleship of the Sea, and in 1989 moved to Rome to work as an expert for the Pontifical Council for Apostolate among Migrants, which he continued until 1997. For two years after this, he continued this apostolate in the Island of Reunion. The Holy See bore witness to his care for sailors and their families, in whom he saw, too often, little ones left to themselves. He returned to France in 1999.

Father Andreas (Drees) MOONEN (1925-2002)

Died on 24 January 2002 in Schimmert (Netherlands), aged 76, with 53 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1948, and was ordained priest on 28 March 1954. He carried out all his priestly ministry in Malawi, where he worked for more than 40 years. He was one of the great builders of the Church in this country, in particular in the diocese of Blantyre. He devoted all his faith energy and his many talents to the building up of communities living in the many parishes where he worked. He literally left his heart there. He was just back in Holland for health reasons when he died quite suddenly.

Father Salvatore GARGIULO (1915-2002)

Died on 12 March 2002 in Bergamo (Italy), aged 86, with 69 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 20 September 1932 and was ordained priest on 12 March 1938. Almost immediately he was made a military chaplain and was taken prisoner of war in 1943. At the end of the War, he worked in preaching, formation (in the minor seminary and the scholasticate), and later in parish ministry until almost the end of his life, in a dozen communities of the Italian Province, the last being the parish of St. Louis Marie de Montfort in Rome. Throughout his life, he was noted for his discretion, his devotion, his example and, these last few years, when he had to have dialysis, his serenity in the face of suffering.

Father Ernesto GUZZETTI (1936-2002)

Died on 14 March 2002 in Bergamo (Italy), aged 66 with 48 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1953 and was ordained priest on 21 February 1959. He worked in many areas of the ministry: the minor seminary, parishes, the Marian Centre, preaching, the ministry of the confessional and spiritual direction, especially in Reggio Calabria during the last 15 years of his life. He was superior of a number of the communities which he passed through, as well as Provincial Vicar. He was noted everywhere for his zeal and his passion. Those who knew him as a spiritual director will miss him greatly, for they know they have lost a guide at once affable and attentive.