



# L'Écho Montfortain

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## WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

How do you celebrate 100 years of Montfortian presence in a country, 100 years of mission in the style of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort? This January I spent five weeks in Colombia visiting all the communities, leading up to the Opening Eucharist of the Centenary Celebrations in Colombia.

To celebrate a Centenary is to remember the first Montfort Missionaries who arrived from France in 1904, later reinforced by the Dutch. The Holy See, at the request of the Archbishop of Bogotá, entrusted to the care of the Montfortians an immense region of more than 360.000 Km<sup>2</sup>: the Prefecture of the East, a territory without maps or roads, stretching out from the mountains eastward across trackless plains to Venezuela and Brazil. Although the population of native indians, farmers and cattlemen was relatively small, the tiny band of missionaries had a superhuman task of visiting them by foot, horse and river – often suffering from tropical diseases, swollen rivers and bandits. Those founding missionaries not only proclaimed the Gospel; they also aimed at social and human development in all its aspects. Among the pioneers were priests who were also architects, engineers, linguists and educators. They built churches, schools, hospitals, theatres, roads; they constructed mission parishes and towns. With good reason St. Louis-Marie de Montfort was acclaimed patron of Villavicencio, the largest city in these immense plains. From 1905 the missionaries were joined in this extraordinary task by the Daughters of Wisdom. Soon it will be 100 years of service and zeal for both the confreres and the sisters in the Colombian lands.

To celebrate a Centenary is to remember the Colombian vocations – fathers, sisters, brothers – who for some 70 years have taken up the mission work begun by the French and Dutch confreres. Hand in hand with fortifying the Church and civil society was the work of building up the Company of Mary in Colombia, the efforts of professors and formators at the seminaries in Choachí, San Juanito, Albán and Bogotá. To celebrate is to remember the seeds planted by the Montfortians in what would later become other ecclesiastical jurisdictions. During the opening Eucharist of the Centenary in the cathedral of Villavicencio, as a genuine testimony to the efforts and memory of the Montfortians, over 120 priests and deacons and 7 bishops from dioceses and vicariates founded by the SMM joined the overflowing assembly to thank the Lord and the Colombian confreres for their work in establishing the local Churches.

To celebrate 100 years of missionary presence in the spirit of Montfort is not to fall into nostalgia or to mourn a golden age. The present and future generations of Montfortians must maintain a concrete desire and choice to undertake new works in this new age, with the same spirit of risk and boldness that inspired the confreres and sisters who went before them a century

ago. The Colombia of today struggles against violence, corruption and injustice, against guerrillas, para-militaries and drug traffickers. The displaced persons, the indians, the poor wait with all their heart and soul for comfort and Good News. The spiritual heritage of St. Louis-Marie offers wisdom, faith and love from the hearts of Jesus and Mary to the men and women of today. And what I say about Colombia is true for so many of our countries around the world.

One hundred years is a long time. One can feel quite old at 100 years, ... or one can be filled with the life and hope of the Holy Spirit. During my visit in Colombia I participated in a simple Eucharist, outdoors under the trees, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of religious profession of Fathers Aurelio Rozo, Eladio Arias, Aleginio Vaca and Héctor Parrado. The Parrado family was present, including their 86 year old mother, who led the singing for the Mass! At the offertory she began the hymn “*O Lord, we offer you our youth*”! I was deeply touched by this – a woman of great age, surrounded by confreres who had already lived full missionary lives, proclaiming their faith and hope in the future, and re-committing their lives and energies for the service of Reign of Jesus through Mary. A few weeks later Señora Parrado died unexpectedly. But I believe that we both continue to pray that the spirit of Montfort will long live in the confreres of Colombia and throughout the Congregation.

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

## **OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS**

### **A NEW MONTFORTIAN BISHOP**

On 7 January last, the Holy See announced the appointment of Fr. Thomas MSUSA as Bishop of Zomba (Malawi). Mgr. Msusa is 42 years old. He made his first vows in the Congregation on 8 September 1991, and was ordained priest on 3 August 1996. He has been Superior of the General Delegation of Africa since December 2002. His Episcopal ordination will take place in Zomba on 17 April. Until the appointment of a new superior for the Delegation, Fr. Blaise JAILOSI, the vicar to Fr. Msusa, will fill the post.

### **PERPETUAL PROFESSIONS**

In Mysore (India), on 8 December 2003: Francis Showri BULIPE.

In Manila (Philippines), on 8 December 2003: Roy Sabulao MILLANO and Norwyn Villaruz BAYDO.

In Lokutu (Congo D.R.), on 27 December 2003: Jean-Trésor BAFENGO TOSWEOKI.

### **ORDINATIONS TO DEACONATE**

In Manila (Philippines), on 14 December 2003: Roy Sabulao MILLANO and Norwyn Villaruz BAYDO.

In Lokutu (Congo D.R.), on 28 December 2003: Jean-Trésor BAFENGO TOSWEOKI.

### **ORDINATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD**

In Huaycán (Peru), on 29 November 2003: Luis SALVADOR ÁVILA.

In Putussibau (Indonesia), on 7 December 2003: Maria Laurentius ARISTHON.

In Port-au-Prince (Haiti), on 11 January 2004: Kaze EUGÈNE and Jackson FABIUS.

# VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS

## SITUATION IN HAITI

There is no point in describing the situation in Haiti, since it is changing every day and when you receive this *Echo* the situation will have changed. But there is one thing that will not change: the precarious situation and suffering of the people and of our confreres. They need our fraternal support and our solidarity in prayer.

## COURSE FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMATION

A course of the International Montfortian Institute has been in the planning for a long time now. It was due to last at least five months, not counting preliminary language classes for participants. Because of problems in obtaining visas for a number of the participants, the length has had to be reduced. The course will now run from 15 April until 11 July. The participants (Daughters of Wisdom, Brothers of St. Gabriel and Montfortians) will be in Rome until 7 June, when they will go to France for the rest of the course. If all obtain their visas, we foresee the presence of 15 confreres.

## COMINGS AND GOINGS AT THE GENERAL HOUSE

The General House community was enriched by the arrival of a new member on 28 February: Brother Jean Désiré Rakotonandrasana, who joins us to share in our life and give help in the various tasks of the community. Thanks go to the Delegation of Madagascar who agreed to lend us this young confrere.

Father General will leave Rome on 14 March for Belo Horizonte (Brazil), where there is to be a meeting of the superiors of the entities involved in the common formation project in Latin America. He will be back on 22 March. He will go to Malawi for the Episcopal consecration of Mgr. Thomas Msusa on 17 April.

Presently we are in the middle of the season of Canonical Visitations. Fr. Hub Louis is currently making the visitation in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Gt. Britain & Ireland. He will be back in Rome towards 7 June. Fr. Miguel Patiño, after taking part in the meeting in Belo Horizonte, will go to Argentina. He will be back in Rome on 14 April. Fr. Jean-Louis Courchesne will spend the month of May in France and will return to Rome at the beginning of June.

## SAINT LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT : THEOLOGICAL VALUE OF A SPIRITUALITY

*We hope that by now everyone has seen and read the Letter written by Pope John Paul II "To the Religious of the Montfortian Families" on the occasion of the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary. We reprint in the Écho an article written by Fr. Battista Cortinovis, Postulator for the Cause of the Doctorate of St. Louis-Marie, that was published in the Osservatore Romano on 20 February 2004.*

The Letter that John Paul II has sent to the "Religious of the Montfortian Families" concerning the spiritual doctrine of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort deserves a further look for deeper study.

Published by *L'Osservatore Romano* on 14 January 2004, the document bears the date of 8 December 2003, to recall the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first publication of the *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary* (1843). Since this writing of Saint Louis-Marie has had a great influence on many members of the people of God, the faithful as well as their pastors (and first among them all, John Paul II himself), this anniversary is of interest not only to the “Montfortian Families”, but to the Church as a whole.

### ***The significance of a response***

What is more, this Letter of the Pope appears to signify a first response to the petition presented some years ago to obtain the proclamation of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort as *doctor* of the Church. This petition was signed by the three Superiors General of the Montfortian Family, but also by the Bishop of Luçon, in whose diocese the tomb of the Saint is located, thus in the name of the People of God of this local Church. The same official request was accompanied by the support of Cardinals and Bishops, of Episcopal Conferences, Religious Institutes and thousands of faithful from every part of the world.

### ***This motto “Totus Tuus!”***

This is not the first time that John Paul II expresses his appreciation for the person and the spiritual doctrine of Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. Without mentioning discourses addressed to particular groups, on the occasion of audiences or specific encounters, and limiting ourselves only to official documents, it suffices to recall the quotations from this Saint cited in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (n. 48) and in the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (nn. 8 and 15). Not to forget the episcopal coat of arms of the Pope with its motto *Totus tuus!* which is inspired from this very *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary* by Montfort.

It is however the first time that a document of the current Pope enters into a detailed analysis of the doctrine of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, where he not only appreciates its value in a global way, but indicates its theological significance and ecclesial import in an ample historical and spiritual context, citing and even refuting the reservations advanced by those who are not sufficiently familiar with the teachings of this saintly spiritual author.

The Letter thus allows the fundamental theological characteristics of the spirituality of Saint Louis-Marie to emerge.

If, in effect, this spirituality is commonly called “marian”, this ought not lead one to think that it is a simple *devotion*, almost as if it was a question of some optional feeling toward the mother of Jesus. On the contrary, the Christocentric aspect of all Gospel spirituality is strongly brought to mind according to the formula: *through Mary to Jesus!*

And it is a Christocentrism based on the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation, which is itself the revelation and historical manifestation of the mystery of the Triune God (cf. n. 2-4).

Mary is thus contemplated “in the mystery of Christ”, as Vatican Council II expresses it in the very title of chapter VIII of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*. From which follows, as in the present pontifical document, the contemplation of Mary in the mystery of the Church, “pre-eminent member of the mystical Body and Mother of the Church” (n. 5).

Another new element of great importance in this Letter of the Pope is that the reading of Montfort’s writings is placed not only in relation with the Mariology of Vatican Council II, but with the entire ecclesiology of the Council. The universal vocation to holiness and the path toward the perfection of charity are reflected in the spiritual itinerary traced by Montfort, which invites conversion and the “total consecration of one’s self to Jesus by means of Mary” in order to arrive at perfect conformity to Jesus Christ, in faithful docility to the Holy Spirit, for the glory of the Father (n. 6).

### ***The eschatological dimension of the Church***

Also the eschatological dimension of the Church is present in the spiritual doctrine of Montfort. “The pilgrimage of faith” of Mary, “sign of sure hope”, and of the Church herself, invites each believer to live the today of the Church, immersed in one’s own time and culture, as *the apostles of the last times*, which is to say of *these* times, which are given to each one as the *unique* time of salvation, therefore the last, beyond any interpretation of a millenarist character (n. 7-8).

The parallel passages from *Lumen Gentium* and the *Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary* are the most evident characteristic of the style of composition of this Letter.

The Pope invites us to read Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort in the light of Vatican Council II, for a correct interpretation and in order to harmonize his language with the theology of today, something that is normal indeed for an author who wrote 300 years ago.

However this parallel reading at the same time reveals a surprising concordance of contents, the real fruit of Montfort’s visionary intuitions as a fine theologian of his time and a wise spiritual teacher, but even more as a Saint, docile to the Spirit who guides the Church in every age.

From here derives Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort’s impact on the church of today, and his fruitfulness and vision for the Church of tomorrow.

Many faithful have understood this and, silently, they have chosen him as their spiritual *master* on the path of holiness.

Among the numerous Blessed and Saints proclaimed in these last years by John Paul, many among them were nourished on the teachings of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort. As their biographies are published, one discovers this bit by bit, something that had remained unknown till now.

Spiritual master, but also *doctor*, as many have requested? The Letter of the Pope sheds light on numerous aspects of the theological teachings of Saint Louis-Marie for which the Church feels a particular need in the near future: the radical importance of faith for modern man and woman, the Trinitarian dimension of Christian life, an indispensable Christocentrism, the role of Mary in understanding the depths of the mystery of the Incarnation in all its consequences, the priority commitment for holiness in the Church, the apostolate (or commitment to evangelisation) as the consequence of maturity in faith, and many others.

### ***The rediscovery of the doctrinal value***

Up till now, Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort has been principally known as a spiritual author, and has been judged by some to be *devotional*. Today theologians are re-reading him in a new way, letting the value of his doctrine emerge, explicating his intuitions or developing approaches that he had barely outlined. John Paul II, with his Letter, encourages this research, while himself entering into the subject. He witnesses once again not only to his admiration for Saint Louis-Marie, but also to his conviction about the fruitfulness of such a work for the good of the entire Church.

*By Fr. Battista Cortinovia, s.m.m.  
Postulator*

## **OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN**

### **Father Francesco CASTELLETTI (1911 - 2004)**

Died on 2 January 2004 in Redona di Bergamo (Italy), aged 92, with 72 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 1 October 1931 and was ordained priest on 20 February 1937. He filled some very varied roles in the work of the province. He was, among other things, a parish-priest and diocesan chancellor (Noto), a spiritual director and master of novices, the superior of several communities, rector of the church of the Rosary (Reggio Calabria) and of St. Louis Marie de Montfort (Via Prenestina), and chaplain to La Sagesse, as well as having been a Provincial Councillor. At a time when he was already quite weakened, he concerned himself with a group of mothers who had lost a child in tragic circumstances. From a very early age, he was drawn to Mary and to Montfortian spirituality. Throughout his life, he trained several generations of consecrated people.

### **Father Antoine RICHERT (1934 - 2004)**

Died on 3 January 2004 in La Baie de Henne (Haiti), aged 69, with 47 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 8 September 1956 and was ordained priest on 11 February 1962. He spent the greater part of his apostolic life in Haiti. From 1963 until 1968, he was a curate in the Cathedral of Port-de-Paix, in Jean-Rabel, Bombardoplis and St-Louis-du-Nord. After a year spent in France, he was the director of the minor seminary of St. Pius X (Port-de-Paix), curate in the Cathedral, parish-priest in La Tortue and for a short time in Chansolme. Then, after a year's break, he was a curate in Miami (United States), after which he returned to Haiti, where he was parish-priest of La Baie de Henne from the year 2000. It was there that he died suddenly.

### **Father Bernhard GEHRMANN (1930 - 2004)**

Died on 9 January 2004 in Trier (Germany), aged 73, with 46 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 8 September 1957 and was ordained priest on 24 March 1963. First of all he worked in Malawi until 1981. There he built churches and chapels. His great concern was the teaching of catechism to children. After returning to Germany, he did not stop loving his mission with which he kept up a close contact and which he tried to help right up to the end. In his own country, he looked after a number of parishes until his retirement in 2001. An experienced Councillor, he was Vicar Provincial for the last two years. His health deteriorated very rapidly and he died quite suddenly. His temperament and his sense of humour will be much missed by his confreres and friends.

### **Father José Ignacio DÍAZ RIVEROS (1916 - 2004)**

Died on 14 January 2004 in Choachí (Colombia), aged 87, with 67 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 2 February 1936 and was ordained priest on 7 September 1941. He was a curate in the parish of Belén, then on the formation staff in Choachí and at the major Montfortian seminary in Albán. After this he exercised his ministry in a number of parishes in the diocese of Villavicencio, where he was also able to satisfy his natural desire to learn and discover new things. Greatly weakened by a thrombosis, he retired to the Priests' Retirement Home in 1998. Thanks to his strength of character, he succeeded in getting better and was able to walk again. Because of his lovable nature and his good human relationships, he was highly esteemed by all who came into contact with him.

### **Father Michel ANDREZ (1923 - 2004)**

Died on 29 January 2004 in Quissac (France), aged 80, with 60 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 28 September 1943 and was ordained priest on 19 February 1950. He worked first of all for twenty years in Madagascar, where he was superior of the minor seminary in Tamatave. In 1960 he was put in charge of all the free schools in the whole island. From 1963 to 1972, he added to this task the role of secretary to the Bishops' Conference. Returning to France, he was superior of the apostolic school in Pelousey (1974-1981). Then he was a parish-priest in the diocese of Besançon, and afterwards (because of the climate) in that of Fréjus-Toulon. Then he was appointed to the community of Notre-Dame du Chêne (1998), and finally to that of La Gardiolle (2002). Serious health problems did not prevent him working, but, apart from all he did in France, it was the memory of Madagascar which lighted up his face.

### **Father Raymond GRAHAM (1921 - 2004)**

Died on 4 February 2004 in Eastport (USA), aged 83, with 62 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 15 August 1941 and was ordained priest on 1 March 1947. He was a man who was open and affable, and gifted with a great sense of humour. His attention to people and his love of life made him an excellent companion and minister of the Gospel, especially in those areas where there was a persistent anti-Catholic feeling. He was entrusted with various pastoral tasks, and he was even, for a short period, superior of the Collegio Montfort in Rome. He left for the new life as he had always lived: faithful, patient and optimistic.

### **Father Yves BERNARD (1931 - 2004)**

Died on 4 February 2004 in Nicolet (Canada), aged 72, with 53 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 15 August 1951 and was ordained priest on 4 February 1956. He was first of all assistant master of novices in Nicolet for five years. After three years in Montreal as a preacher at the Montfortian Marian Centre, he spent six years as parish-priest of Jonquière. Then after a year of pastoral studies, he was a curate in the parish of Marie Reine-des-Coeurs in Montreal. From 1975 onwards, he devoted himself to the financial management of the houses and works of the province, sharing his skills (which he constantly improved) with the local bursars. He was, in effect, for the past 15 years, the assistant of the Provincial Bursar. He was endowed with a temperament which made him the sort of person who only had friends.

### **Brother RICHARD (Cornelis Hussaarts) (1937 - 2004)**

Died on 16 February 2004 in Eindhoven (Netherlands), aged 66, with 45 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 28 April 1958. A good cook, he exercised his talents first of all in Rotselaar (Belgium), then in the General House in Rome. After a short stay in the Netherlands, he worked in Mozambique, then in Portugal, where he was the Regional Bursar. On his return to his own country in 1994, he worked in the Montfort Centre in Oirschot until his death. Richard was a man who welcomed everybody, who was open to change and ready for any situation. He loved to work with the youth. He was happy to have given his all in the various countries where he worked.

### **Father Camille BREVET (1912 - 2004)**

Died on 27 February 2004 in Cholet (France), aged 91, with 74 years of Religious Life. He made his first vows on 5 September 1929 and was ordained priest on 7 March 1936. First of all he was part of the itinerant mission team of Orléans until 1958, except for the years 1939 to 1945, when he was called up to serve in the army then made a prisoner of war. He was later Provincial Superior from 1958 until 1969. This was, for both the world and the

Church, a dynamic and tormented time: a time of joy and hope, but also of great suffering. Later Fr. Brevet said that his time as Provincial had been for him “an extraordinary spiritual adventure”. At the end of his term of office, he did 14 years in parish work, then rejoined the mission team of Pontchâteau, of which he was a member until 1992. After this he was a member of the community in Le Marillais, then finally in Saint-Laurent.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Spiritualità Montfortana 2*, International Montfortian Centre, Rome, 2003, 222 pages. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of this series published in Italian, Fr. Battista Cortinovis presents the following texts:

- St. Louis Marie de Montfort, doctor of the Love of Jesus in Mary (François-Marie Léthel, o.c.d.);
- The corpus of the writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort (Dorio-Marie Huot, s.m.m.);
- The editions of the writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort (since 1725) (CIM);
- A Montfortian Bibliography (Biographies, doctrine, index of authors) (CIM).

Étienne RICHER, of the Communauté des Béatitudes: *La pédagogie de sainteté de saint Louis-Marie de Montfort*, preface by F.-M. Léthel, Ed. Pierre Téqui, Paris, 2003, 223 pages. This examination of the personal dynamic of the teaching of Montfort is an invitation to recognise its richness and its relevance to today. For the author, the Montfortian synthesis constitutes a genuine pedagogy in holiness, nourished by a contemplative and missionary experience, rich in a dynamic anthropology of the gift of communion, which is both progressive and universal.

Judith Marie GENTLE: *Jesus Redeeming in Mary*, Montfort Publications, Bay Shore, 2003, 232 pages. This book carries a sub-title: *The Role of the Blessed Virgin in the History of Salvation according to St. Louis Marie de Montfort*. An interesting point is that the author is a woman theologian of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church who has always had an interest in Montfort. For her it is clear that Mary, as the New Eve, is mediatrix.

José Luis SANDOVAL ROMERO, s.m.m.: *Serenidad en las dificultades – Luis María de Montfort terapeuta y comunicador*, Misioneros Montfortianos, Bogotá, 2003, 176 pages. (Original title: *Serenity in the midst of troubles*). Montfort seen as a teacher and guide in the art of living human life in its fullness.