



L'Écho Montfortain

N° 507 – English Edition – June 2001

A WORD FROM FATHER GENERAL

In this issue of the *Écho*, we offer the second part of Father General's conference given at the meeting of Formation Personnel in February of this year, on the demands of Formation today. In the first part, printed in the last *Écho*, Father General spoke of "A Worldwide SMM" and "Internationality".

DEMANDS OF FORMATION IN THE SMM TODAY THE NEW SITUATION OF THE SMM

3. *Inferiority and Superiority Complexes*

Again, looking at the situation of all the entities around the world, from oldest to youngest, smallest to largest, the General Council has encountered indications of what might be termed an '*inferiority complex*' or a '*superiority complex*'. By this I mean that some confreres have essentially convinced themselves that the only thing that awaits them is the dissolution of the province and then death! If they yield to the '*complex*', they cede all attempts at meaningful ministry, joy and enthusiasm for the Congregation, of sharing with young people and laity. Yet some aging or small entities have a rich gift of witness, holiness, experience and wisdom. Some have even chosen to risk whole new programs of recruitment and formation at great apostolic and personal cost.... (Consider e.g. France, USA, Canada, Great Britain and Ireland). An '*inferiority complex*' limits the beauty of truth in an entity, and distorts or blocks God's plan.

On the other hand, some might be tempted to live a '*superiority complex*', presuming that numerous candidates and newly ordained priests *guarantee* a strong future and a long history. Nothing is guaranteed! We are the servants of God, and not God. I was very struck at the 1999 General Chapter by the simplicity, realism, humility and hope of the capitulants from France.... The Grandmother of all other provinces, perhaps once upon a time with a history of seeing the whole Company in terms of France, but now poor in numbers yet open to the future and rich in wisdom...

If the future of the SMM is a worldwide future, with well functioning international collaboration and coherent witness, then we must try to avoid repeating some of the mistakes of the past. Numbers, resources, money and power are only an illusion, a '*complex*'. Humility, hope and cherishing the gifts of each person and each entity will go much further in building the Company of Mary of the future.

Perhaps some of the youngest confreres do not realise that, until about 25 years ago, *all* of our Provinces were quite poor financially. The World Wars had wreaked havoc. Provinces saved each penny; confreres wore cassocks until they turned green and fell apart; every single donation was cherished. Slowly, by a curious combination of no more scholastics (and therefore no more formation expenses!), and good investments in the stock markets, little by little, income grew.... But I sincerely believe that all this 'wealth' is a mixed blessing. On all continents many confreres

now think wealth is their due and their inherited right; few understand the immense sacrifice and hard work that went into slowly gathering the fruits of hard-earned labour. I often think of Mother Marie-Louise de Jésus, who at the end of her long life, when *La Sagesse* had developed into many institutions and hospitals across France, with a large Motherhouse, she used to reminisce with affection of the first nights she spent at the Maison-Longue in St. Laurent, sleeping on the floor, with rats scurrying about. She was much happier then...

4. Renewed Desire to Appropriate and Deepen Montfortian Spirituality

I will not say much about this point today simply because I think it is evident that over the past 20 years or so there has been a renewed interest in and respect for our Montfortian spiritual heritage. Remember the work of Père Louis Pérouas over 30 years ago to ignite the interest of the three Montfortian Institutes in their common roots; the work of Père Marcel Gendrot and his collaborators; the efforts of Père Gérard Lemire to support the Stages Montfortains, Footsteps of Montfort, Dictionary of Montfortian Spirituality; the Montfortian Month, and countless retreats and sessions... Often it was the lay people and the Holy Spirit who urged us on! Our General Chapters of 1987, 1993 and 1999 were all born and bathed in a context of renewed interest and respect for our Montfortian spiritual heritage. Pope John Paul II, by his pilgrimage to St. Laurent and his public support for the teaching of St. Louis Marie has given many of us courage and renewed pride.

Thus, in all that concerns vocation recruitment as well as initial and ongoing formation, we SMM *simply must* – as the Holy Father tells us - “make this treasure bear fruit; it cannot remain hidden...”. We must select and prepare candidates and new members who truly are convinced, consumed and enflamed by the spirituality and charism of St. Louis Marie. We do not want ‘generic types’ of vocations, those called to diocesan priesthood or seeking social advancement. We want young men called by God to preach the Good News in the footsteps of the poor apostles, true children of Mary, *Liberos* from all things, yet loving slaves of God who is Love.

As God sends us such young men they, along with all the other confreres, will enter and grow and be transformed in the love of Jesus in Mary. More and more I am convinced that **our consecration to Jesus Wisdom through the hands of Mary** is the heart and soul, the defining reality, the burning centre of what it means to become a Montfort Missionary. Perhaps for too many years we have lost this connection, this focal point.... In the new situation of the SMM today, we must rediscover this treasure and incarnate it each day of our lives, together with our brothers in community.

5. Refoundation of Montfortian Consecrated Life

Whether you choose to name it ‘*refoundation*’ or ‘*creative fidelity*’, I believe the reality is that the new situation of the SMM and of religious life all over the world is in the middle of a complete change of epochs, a *crisis* and a time of *apocalypsis* or revelation of *something new*. We are living in a time of radical, major change in the history of religious life. Trying to recognise this situation, entering into it with faith and courage, selecting candidates and forming them in light of this tremendous new and changing reality: this must become a major new element in doing formation in the SMM today and tomorrow. I know very well that many confreres will have great difficulty understanding this concept, and will suffer great fear and anxiety once they might grasp it.... Nevertheless, I am convinced we must examine this new situation and journey into it together.

I find very helpful an image of Fr. Simon Pedro Arnold, O.S.B., theologian of the CLAR. He suggests that the present moment of religious life is like being **in the middle of a curved tunnel**: at this moment we can see neither behind us, nor ahead of us! We are at the middle of the curve.... We must get used to the dark, and prepare ourselves for the future. In deepest truth, the tunnel is an image for the **dark night**; it is a time of purification, humility and modesty... a time of *impasse*. Only God will break the *impasse* and transform us into the new creation that will be God’s gift and surprise.... Padre Simon Pedro further suggests that perhaps the *grandiose* time of

religious life is over, and that now what will emerge will be a small, prophetic witness – like the ‘*anawim*’, the poor of Yahweh, who wait upon and trust in the Word of the Lord, like Mary of Nazareth.

I believe there is much truth and grace in this way of seeing the new situation of religious life. Perhaps in some countries and cultures the ‘old’ way of envisioning religious and priestly life is still in force (numbers, certainty, power, respect...). But even there it will change, I think. Already in most of our countries, to become a good religious involves sacrifice, folly, uncertainty, perhaps danger, and throwing oneself into the arms of God. All this will affect the way in which we select candidates and the way in which we accompany them to walk in the middle of the dark tunnel...

To continue a bit more with the thinking of Padre Simon Pedro... This is a time to return to the fundamentals and yet to respond to the most urgent appeals of our world for life and love. We would do well to remember the words of Psalm 127, “*If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour...*”: the experience of God and God’s healing and transforming love must be at the heart of each vocation, and at the heart of each young confrere in formation, and at the heart of all our planning and programmes... else, in vain do we labour. Also we might remember the words of Qoheleth, “*there is a time to tear down and a time to build up...*” All times are not equal, and we must *look carefully* and *see* the situation... *see* what is solid, and build the new expressions of religious life on what is solid – on the spiritual attitudes of our Founders – and not on false, transitory levels of accretions.

I believe that the new situation of the SMM, and of the consecrated life all over the Church, calls us to live more and more the reality of the ‘*anawim*’, the small and poor community who waits, confident that God is with them, but not at all sure where he will lead them. This is not at all a bad company to travel with. Montfort lived and died with empty hands and a heart full of promise on this same road... Marie-Louise Trichet knew it very well. But most of all... most of all... it is the route of Elizabeth and Zechariah, of Simeon and Anna, of Joseph and Mary.

In any case, I believe that the future of any true religious life, any genuine Montfortian consecrated life that dares to claim that it walks in the footsteps of St. Louis de Montfort, must become a life inspired by ***God Alone*** and upheld by ***God Alone***. It is not a matter of prestige, nor of upward social mobility, nor of self-direction nor self-preservation. It is, as the Letter of the Capitulants tells us: “To open our life and our soul to Christ means to allow ourselves to be seduced by him and to desire to be in communion with his destiny. It involves following him in the total gift of himself to the Father.... To follow Christ is above all to desire to become Christ, to let ourselves be configured to his being... Like Christ, we want to make a gift of our entire being to God, so that our deepest identity might be that of a son of God in Christ and like Christ” (*Open to Jesus Christ* n. 9-10).

Along with Montfort we ask:

“Great God, make yourself the Master
of all my heart so that I may love,
of my spirit so that I may know,
of my tongue so that I may delight,
of my senses and my abilities
so that I may act or suffer,
of my goods, of my sufferings
and of everything, so that I may serve you”

(*Cantique 141*, v.14)

William Considine, smm
Superior General
February 2001

OFFICIAL NEWS ITEMS

FIRST RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONS

On 28 April 2001, **Alonso Antonio LAZO OROZCO** (from Nicaragua), and **Armando NOVOA PIRAQUIVE** and **Edinson Orlando HERRERA BEDÓN** (both from Colombia) made their first Religious Profession in the Company of Mary in Paipa, Colombia.

On 31 May 2001, **Prasanna KUMAR DAVID**, **Roshan PINTO**, **Philip AROKIARAJ ANTONYSAMY**, **Madalai MUTHU SELVARAJ**, **Isaac CHINNAPPA**, **John Lawrence Maria SUSAI**, and **Francis Xavier Antony JOSEPH** made their first Religious Profession in Mysore (India).

On 31 May 2001, **Dillon ARANTE**, **Francisco TACIO**, **Francis Neil MENDIOLO**, **Regienald DE LEON** and **Melvin ORDAÑEZ** made their first Religious Profession in Manila (Philippines).

PERPETUAL PROFESSIONS

On 25 March 2001, **Jean Jacques SAINT LOUIS** and **Marcel Maxime SOLIDE** made their perpetual Profession in the Company of Mary, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

ERECTION OF NEW GENERAL DELEGATION

On 1 May 2001, the General Delegation for Formation in Africa was officially modified to become the **General Delegation for Africa**. The text of the decree follows:

DECREE

The Superior General, with the deliberative vote of his Council, in accord with Constitutions nn. 169 & 170 modifies the **African Delegation for Formation** to become the **General Delegation for Africa**.

Those **confreres already forming part of the African Formation Delegation**, i.e. at the scholasticate in Nairobi, the noviciate in Mbarara, the postulancies in Kisangani, Congo and in ICS, Balaka, Malawi, as well as those working in various parishes or ministries (both Africans and expatriates) shall continue to be members of the General Delegation for Africa. Unless otherwise agreed, the **members of the current Provincial Delegations in Malawi of Holland, Great Britain & Ireland, and France** shall also become members of the General Delegation. With the act of modification, those Provincial Delegations will cease to exist. The **Italian Provincial Delegation** in Malawi affirms its desire to walk together with their Montfortian confreres who live and work in Africa, and express their will as the Italian Delegation to be a part of the General Delegation for Africa. However, this process will take time for its gradual realisation. Some Italian confreres might choose to remain directly linked with the Italian Province.

In accord with the Constitutions, the confreres of the General Delegation for Africa shall **maintain their Juridical Dependence**: in their Province of origin for the expatriate missionaries, in the Congregation as such for the African confreres. During the time of their stay, all confreres (both African and expatriate) will exercise their **active and passive voice** exclusively in the General Delegation. (Cf. Const. 173, 174; Statute 60). For the whole of their stay, all the religious (both African and expatriate) depend on the Superior General and his Delegate (Cf. Const 173 d).

To respect fraternal and historical bonds, the Mother Provinces are asked to continue to offer interest and support to the new African Delegation to the extent possible, through the Mission Procurators. *cont...*

The mandate of the current Delegate of the African Formation Delegation, **Fr. Claude Sigouin**, normally would continue until 2003. In order to facilitate the time of transition, to clarify

contracts with the Bishops, to arrange for the transfer of properties to the new Delegation and other legal business, to prepare Statutes and policies with the members of the new Delegation, while assuring the essential ongoing work of the formation houses, Fr. Sigouin and his Councillors, Frs. Blaise Jailosi, André Babusia and Thomas Msusa, will continue their mandate in the new General Delegation. Fr. Charles Beirne will continue as Bursar of the General Delegation. In 2003, we shall proceed with the normal consultations and nomination of the Superior of the Delegation and his Council.

The **date for the modification** of the African Formation Delegation to become the General Delegation for Africa shall be **May 1, 2001**.

Given at Rome, 18 April 2001

SEAL



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

APPROVAL OF NEW STATUTES FOR ASSOCIATION OF MARY QUEEN OF ALL HEARTS

By a decree of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, dated 26 April 2001, the two Montfortian Associations which existed until that time (the “Confraternity of Mary Queen of All Hearts” and the “Association of Priests of Mary Queen of All Hearts”) were re-united in one Association, to be called the “Association of Mary Queen of All Hearts”, in accordance with the decision taken by the Extraordinary General Council of October 2000. New Statutes for the Association were approved in their original French version at the same time, also in accordance with the decision of the Extraordinary General Council. On 22 May 2001, the various Indulgences proper to the Association were confirmed “in perpetuity” by the Apostolic Penitentiary. The new Statutes, with the list of indulgences, will be sent to all Major Superiors of the Congregation, and National or Regional Directors of the Association, in due course. But the General Council intends, over the coming months, to begin enquiries regarding the present situation of the Association around the world, with a view to a better organisation of its operation and its link with the Company of Mary.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW GENERAL BURSAR

At its meeting of 24 May 2001, the General Council named **Fr. Francesco AGLIARDI**, of the Italian Province, as General Bursar. Born in 1950 and ordained in 1976, Fr. Agliardi has spent most of his ministry as a missionary in Peru, where, until his return to Rome, he was bursar of the Delegation. In order to have time to undertake language studies and familiarize himself with his new tasks, Father will fully enter into his functions only at the end of December 2001.

100 YEARS OF MONTFORTIANS IN MALAWI

The immense African sky was the brightest blue, and soft clouds passed over the assembly. The sun shone high above the wonderful trees, planted by the first missionaries 100 years before, and over the valley to the magnificent hills. A Centenary of missionary activity deserves to be celebrated with joy and thanksgiving – and April 28th a vast number of priests and religious, as well as hundreds of parishioners of the Nzama Parish, gathered to commemorate the 100 years since the first three SMM began their mission work in Malawi here on this site. The Eucharist was presided by Bishop Alessandro Assolari, smm, Bishop of Mangochi. Archbishop

Tarcisius Ziyaye of Blantyre, Bishop Rémi Ste-Marie of the local Dedza diocese, and also the bishop-emeritus of Dedza joined him. Father General and Sr. Barbara O’Dea, superior general of the Daughters of Wisdom, headed the large and joyous contingent of nearly every Montfort Missionary and Daughter of Wisdom working in Malawi, augmented by representatives of former missionaries from Italy, Holland, Great Britain & Ireland, Canada and the USA.

In a beautifully fitting way, the celebration began at the parish Lourdes Grotto, where Sister Barbara and Father Bill unveiled a plaque with the names of our pioneers in Malawi: Frs. Pierre Bourget, Anton Winnen and Auguste Prézeau (1901) and the first Daughters of Wisdom to arrive in 1904, Srs. Lucie Marie, Ste. Thérésine, Marie Reine and Eulalie de St. Pierre. The procession then advanced with great joy to the altar set up in the open air in front of the Church. The African spirit and style of celebration vibrates with movement, colours, song and dance, so that the Eucharist becomes an intense experience of faith and life. Processions for the Word of God and the offertory gifts were enhanced by the fine choirs, dancers and drums, and soon everyone - from superiors general and provincials to the youngest parishioners - were swaying to the songs of praise.

Very touching, among many special moments, was hearing the meditation song after the first reading: in a gentle, reflective way the choir sang *Kufika kwa Yesu, Tisankhule njira ya Maria* – the Chichewa translation of *Pour aller à Jésus, allons, chrétiens, allons par Marie...* Here in the heart of Africa still after 100 years the people were singing the words of St. Louis de Montfort’s hymn, words translated into so many languages around the world! Another striking moment: the bishop of Dedza introduced a very elderly gentleman who was the son of the first Catholic couple married in the Nzama mission so many years before!

The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a grand feast for all the parishioners and guests, with traditional African dances and also the very contemporary Alleluia Band. To insure that the effects of the Centenary celebrations endured longer than this one day, the sisters and confreres in Malawi had contributed to rebuild the original maternity hospital and clinic. Also, our confreres had preached a parish mission in the various villages to renew the faith of the Christians.

In his speech at the end of the Eucharist, Father General told the assembly, “This year the church of Malawi celebrates its first century of Christianity – and it is here in Nzama that the first Montfort Fathers settled down on the 25th of July 1901. This is why the Montfort Family from Malawi, but also from Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Rome, as well as many ex-missionaries who have lived much of their lives in Malawi, this is why we have gathered here in Nzama to honour those priests, sisters and brothers who brought the Good News to the people of Nzama, and from here to the whole southern part of Malawi. At the same time, we want to honour and to thank the people in Malawi who received our first missionaries 100 years ago.

“The first missionaries to come to Nzama were Frs. Pierre Bourget, Anton Winnen and Auguste Prézeau, who later became the first Bishop of the Shire Vicariate. It was an international group: two French and one Dutch.

“It must have been very hard for our three pioneers to live in a place so different from France: another continent, another language, and another history... At the same time, it must have been very hard for the local people to understand these white men! – their way of life, their speech, their way of dealing with the people. The fathers did not behave like the tax collectors or the district commissioners, who just visited the villages and continued their journeys. These strange white people apparently wanted to stay in the villages, to share their lives with the people for better and for worse. They took care of the sick, cleaning and treating wounds; they built schools to teach the young and the old; they visited the people wherever they lived; they ate and drank with the people. Like their Founder, St. Louis de Montfort, those three pioneers were very near to the people, trying to speak their language, walking among them every single day in order to know them personally. Each day they had a special time set apart to treat all kinds of diseases. The healing of the sick took up a lot of their time, but this work of mercy prepared the people to open their hearts to the Gospel

message. Later on the care of the sick was taken over by the sisters, and that gave the fathers and brothers more time for building and administration.

“The people in Nzama saw the interest of the priests in their daily lives, and slowly they opened their hearts to the Good News. But the first catechumens were baptized only in 1905, after a four-year catechumenate!

“From 1903 until today, all together 300 Montfortians have worked in Malawi. Montfortians were named Bishops and administered different dioceses. Great efforts have been made for localisation, by training local priests and handing over the administration of dioceses. Many schools and hospitals have been built, and the Brothers and Sisters have given the best of their energy and love to make them outstanding places of learning or healing. Today perhaps fewer Montforts are directly involved in parish work; others are involved in mass media and communication, social advocacy and prison chaplaincy, retreat work and preaching.

“Some years back we started to recruit Malawians to join our ranks, in order to keep our Montfortian spirituality alive and strong in Malawi, and to deepen the faith of Christians in the *second* hundred years of the Church. But more and more our vision and our concern are not only for Malawi, but also for the whole of Africa.

“May I take this opportunity to thank you, the people of Nzama, for welcoming and accepting the Montforts in 1901. Thank you for having listened to and responded to the Gospel of the Risen Christ. From here, from Nzama, Christianity spread to the whole Southern Region of Malawi, and in a certain way, building the Church in Malawi gave inspiration and courage to the Montforts to go into Mozambique, Congo, Zambia, Uganda and Kenya. Thank you for bearing with us! May God continue to bless you!

“To the entire Montfortian Family working in Malawi, sisters, brothers, fathers, lay associates, I offer my sincere congratulations and thanks. Let us continue to work together as sons and daughters of one great family. Today we remember our Founder, St. Louis Marie de Montfort, and in a few days we shall celebrate the feast of Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus. Let us follow their example to live near to the people, taking their struggles and aspirations and making them our own.”

MONTFORT MISSIONARIES WHO SERVED IN MALAWI

Rather than give a list of all the Missionaries of the Company of Mary who have worked in Malawi during the past 100 years, here are a few statistics:

Number of members of Company of Mary who worked in Malawi: 300

Percentage of these who remained in the Congregation: 86.67%

Percentage of these who later left the Congregation: 13.33%

The 300 missionaries came from 10 different entities, as follows:

Belgium	Canada	France	Germany	GB/I	Italy	Malawi	Netherlands	Portugal	USA
4	6	56	4	45	46	7	125	1	6

OUR DEPARTED BRETHREN

Fr. Pio SUÁREZ BOHÓRQUEZ

Died on 16 March 2001, in Bogotá (Colombia), aged 70 with 50 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 2 February 1951, and was ordained a priest on 5 August 1956. Three years after his ordination he was sent to Rome to study Sacred Scripture at the Biblical Institute, and subsequently was a professor of Sacred Scripture, not only in the Montfortian Scholasticate in

Colombia, but in the Diocesan Seminary and the University of San Buenaventura, until 1973, when he became Provincial of Colombia. After six years as Provincial, he took charge of the Montfortian Marian Centre in Bogotá, which he directed for the next 20 years. His whole life was devoted to the spread of Montfortian Spirituality, particularly through his writings and translations into Spanish.

Fr. Giovanni LOSA

Died on 21 March 2001, in Bergamo (Italy), aged 80, with 58 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1942, and was ordained a priest on 20 December 1947. For the first twenty years of his priesthood, he served at different times as Assistant Novice Master, Bursar, travelling missionary, and Vocations Director in different parts of Italy. Then, in 1968, he began a new career as a missionary in Malawi, ministering in Nankhwali, Mpiri, Namandanje, Mangochi and Kankao, as well as (for about 10 years) in Kalichero, Zambia. He finally returned to Italy in 1998, where he was working on a biography of Montfort when he died.

Fr. François ROZEC

Died on 25 March 2001, in Le Rody (France), aged 79 with 59 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1941, and was ordained a priest on 16 February 1947. The first twenty-three years of his priestly ministry were spent in Haiti, where he worked in various parishes. When he returned to France in 1970, he became Procurator for the Missions, a post he held until 1984. Then he went to live in the community of Notre-Dame du Marillais, and finally moved to Le Rody, near Brest, where he died.

Fr. Theodorus van DRUTEN

Died on 1 April 2001, in Heerlen (Netherlands), aged 82 with 61 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1939, and was ordained a priest on 19 March 1945. He left for Malawi in 1946, where he worked as a missionary for twenty years in various posts. Returning to Europe in 1967, he worked in parishes in Holland and Germany for the next 15 years; but the call of Malawi was still strong in his heart, and he returned there in 1982, staying this time for 7 years. Finally he returned to Holland, where he assisted in several parishes from his base in Oirschot until last year, when he had to enter a nursing home.

Fr. Hubert ZEEGERS

Died on 14 May 2001, in Maastricht (Netherlands), aged 91 with 69 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 8 September 1931 and was ordained a priest on 20 February 1937. Going to the Congo in 1938, he worked there as a missionary for 26 years, until forced to withdraw in 1964, at the time of the Rebellion. Returning to Holland, he worked as a chaplain in various places, until he retired in 2000 to the Montfortian nursing home in Valkenburg. He died in the hospital at Maastricht, and was buried in Schimmert, the village of his birth.

Brother Julien BERGERON

Died on 17 May 2001, in Nicolet (Canada), aged 83 with 65 years of Religious Profession. He made his first vows on 19 March 1936. His first appointment was to the orphanage at Montfort. It was said that this was not his choice, but that he accepted in obedience and humility; and it was these attitudes which characterised his life, devoted as it was, first to the upkeep of the farms and gardens in Montfort, Papineauville and Nicolet, and later the upkeep of the house at Nicolet, where he spent the last 29 years of his life. It was there that he died after a rather painful illness.

L'Écho Montfortain, N° 507, June 2001 - English edition

Published by the Montfort Missionaries - General Secretariat

Viale dei Monfortani, 65 - 00135 Roma - Italy - Tel: (39) 06 305 2332 - Fax: (39) 06 3550 5742