In the

Footsteps

of St. Louis Marie de Montfort

Autumn 2005
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General Chapter of the Company of Mary – May 2005

The New General Administration

The General Chapter of the Company of Mary was held in Rome from 1 to 20 May this year. A General Chapter is a gathering of the Major Superiors and other delegates from the various entities that make up the Congregation, which takes place every 6 years. Its purpose is, first of all, to elect a Superior General and the Council that will assist him for the coming six years; and, secondly, to discuss issues affecting the life of the whole Congregation and to draw up guidelines or "orientations" for the life of the Congregation in the coming six years. According to the Canon Law of the Church, canon 631, the General Chapter has supreme authority in the Congregation according to its constitutions. It can therefore make rulings and decisions which are binding on the whole Congregation.

At this year's General Chapter, a completely new team was elected for the General Administration of the Congregation, since Father William Considine and the rest of his Council (with the exception of one member) had already served in this capacity for 12 years. The new Superior General that the Chapter elected is **Father Santino Brembilla**, a 59-year-old member of the Italian Province, who has been working in the mission of the Congregation in Peru for the past 25 years. He will be assisted by four Councillors: **Fr. Donald LaSalle** (52) from the United States Province, **Fr. Matthew Jenniskens** (64) from the Dutch Province, **Fr. Joseph Philor** (51) from the Haitian Province, and **Fr. Olivier Maire** (44) from the French Province.

Every General Chapter of the Congregation is preceded by a Provincial Chapter in each of the Provinces of the Congregation, whose purpose is to prepare for the General Chapter (electing delegates to attend the General Chapter, and discussing issues that will be raised at the General Chapter), and to address issues affecting the whole Province. In our own Province of Gt. Britain and Ireland, the Provincial Chapter took place in Liverpool from 23 to 25 February. It was preceded by an Assembly of all the members of the Province on 21 and 22 February. One of the major issues addressed for our Province in particular was the provision of proper care for the older members of the Province – we are getting older, and more and more of our members are past retirement age.

There is to be a second session of the Provincial Chapter in December, to discuss the "Orientations" issued by the General Chapter for the Congregation for the next 6 years. These "Orientations" address issues such as the Structures of Government and community living in the Congregation, our Financial situation, the process of Formation and ongoing training, the situation of our ageing members, and most especially our Mission in the Church, with a special section devoted to sharing our spiritual heritage with the People of God (the Laity). ◘

From the Provincial's Desk

A Meeting for the Future of the Company of Mary

In May of this year, forty-two religious of the Company of Mary were called together for three weeks. They came to Rome from all over the world as delegates to the **General Chapter** of our congregation. There they prayed together and worked together as a large community for a most important purpose. They had to discover the greatest challenges which face the congregation; and they sought to offer to the Company of Mary a clear plan which would make its mission fruitful during the next six years.

They also had to elect a Superior General and a Council of four assistants, who would accept to put this plan into action.

At the General Chapter of 2005, I was one of two confreres present who had been at more general chapters (five) than anyone else. Fr. Ronnie Mitchell was also at the general chapter; however for him it was for the first time.

Certainly there was a very varied group of Capitulants; some were from long established provinces and others from the newest general delegations of the Company of Mary; some Capitulants were well into their third age and others had scarcely ten years in perpetual vows; they came from Northern Europe and both Americas - and they came from Asia and Africa. Together they made up what was to prove an extremely rich and energetic mixture of talent. They were at the same time a wonderful witness to the great spirit of brotherly community - and they showed such delight in the fact that they were able to meet each other, most for the first time. They definitely learned very quickly how to work together.

It was never a holiday, we even worked on Sundays. However, I am convinced that the fruits of the dedication of the confreres at the general chapter are very great. This will certainly become evident when we can study together, and seek to make real in our own province, insights that the chapter has given to us.

Fr. Santino, elected on the first ballot as our new Superior General, has told me that he will come to visit the province in December. He hopes to be able to stay with us, perhaps for two or three weeks, maybe he will even be here to celebrate Christmas with us.

The Holy Spirit was certainly with us during this moment of grace for the congregation. He was invited by all the prayers of all those who took part in the chapter and by all, including our associates, who pray for the Company of Mary.

If the Company of Mary is to make real the plan, which the chapter has given to it, the confreres need your continued prayers. We all work towards the same goal: we seek to bring the world and its people closer to Christ and to his Kingdom through the spirituality of St Louis Marie de Montfort. The religious of the Company of Mary are determined to do their part but they will only succeed if your prayers support them.

F.W. Scragg, smm, Provincial ◘

Some changes

Because Father Bob Ellwood has not been very well, we have had to make a few changes to the production of "Footsteps". For the moment at least, Father Paul Allerton, the editor, has taken on also the management of "Footsteps". This means that **all correspondence should now be addressed to him at the following address**:

"Footsteps"
Montfort House
Darnley Road
Barrhead
GLASGOW
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This includes any donations you may like to make for the support of our printing costs, etc., as well as any changes of address or other requests.

Father Allerton will also, for the moment, take charge of the fund for Father Charlie Beirne's education programme. Father Charlie is truly grateful for all the help given him in the past by our Associates, and we ask that you continue to support his work among the poor children in Uganda with your donations. Please send all donations to Father Allerton at the address given.

We are not sure yet whether "Footsteps" will continue to be dispatched from Liverpool, or whether it will be dispatched in the future from Barrhead. Hopefully, this will make no difference to your receiving it. Please pray for Fr. Ellwood that his health may improve. Thank you all. ◘

A Visit to Africa

Father Paul Allerton, the editor of "Footsteps", recently visited Africa to give retreats to our confreres there, and to help our students there in their understanding of Montfortian Spirituality. Here he shares with us some of his impressions.

I had the great good fortune this year to be invited to give retreats to our African confreres, and a week of Montfortian Spirituality to our scholastics there. Our "African Delegation" (as it is called) was set up officially on May 1st 2001, in response to the increasing number of African members of the Congregation, and the decreasing availability of "foreign" missionaries. Previously, there had been a number of "Provincial Delegations" or Missionary Regions, administered (and largely staffed) by one or other of our major Provinces. So, for example, the British and Irish Province had for a number of years a "delegation" in Malawi, where three other Provinces were also involved: the French, Dutch and Italian Provinces, each with their own "delegation". Similarly, the Belgian Province had a delegation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, while there were small groups of missionaries in Uganda and Zambia.

Until relatively recently, it was the policy of nearly all religious congregations with missionaries in African countries, to refrain from recruiting candidates among the Africans for themselves. Rather, all the missionary efforts were directed towards building up the local churches, including the formation of a native diocesan clergy. However, as the number of African priests grew, it was seen as more and more desirable that the Religious Life should also be established among the Africans themselves, and so most Congregations began recruiting African members. The Company of Mary was no exception, and eventually it became necessary to establish training programmes for these candidates in Africa itself. Since there were candidates coming from various countries (Malawi, Congo, Uganda and Madagascar – the large island off the East African coast), the first thought was to establish a bi-lingual formation programme (English and French). This, however, proved quite difficult, so it was decided that all the formation on the African mainland would be provided in English, while the candidates from Madagascar would follow their own programmes in Madagascar itself.

A Novitiate was established in Uganda (Mbarara), and a Scholasticate (senior seminary) in Nairobi, Kenya. Pre-novitiate training and assessment was to be done in the various countries involved. After only a few years, there were enough young men entering the Congregation from the various African countries, that the decision was taken to establish the "African Delegation". All the former Provincial missionary delegations were dissolved, (with the exception - for the time being - of the Italian Delegation in Malawi), their members, for the most part, being seconded to the new African Delegation. At present the members of the delegation number about 30, of whom 23 or 24 are of African descent – from Malawi, the Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia.

Malawi

In July, after flying on 29 June to Nairobi, and from there on 1 July to Malawi, I gave a retreat to a group of about 10 at the Montfort Pastoral Centre in Nantipwili, not far from Blantyre, the commercial capital of Malawi. I was surprised to find that the temperature there was actually somewhat lower than what I had left behind in Scotland, and overcast most of the time, to boot! It has to be remembered of course that Blantyre (and Nantipwili) is in the Southern Highlands of Malawi (about 3,000 ft above sea-level). Despite the cloud cover, that part of Malawi has had no decent rains for a couple of years, and the people of Malawi are in danger of famine, along with so many others in sub-Saharan Africa. This fact, added to the universal prevalence of AIDS-HIV, and the general poverty of the country (Malawi is reckoned to be the 6th poorest country in the world), would, you would think, make the population miserable – but one of the most striking things about the Malawian people (and other African peoples) is their cheerfulness in the face of so much hardship. Not for nothing is Malawi called "the warm heart of Africa"! The smiling faces of the two children in my photograph bear witness to this.

After the retreat at Nantipwili, I had the opportunity to spend a few days at "Montfort Cottage" – a modest holiday cottage on the shores of Lake Malawi – and I thought I was in Paradise! This has to be one of the most beautiful places on earth, and there the weather lived up to what we imagine Africa to be like – warmth and brilliant sunshine all day long.

Then I went to spend a few days at Namitembo Mission in the Shire Valley, where the two remaining members of the British and Irish Province in Malawi work: Fr. Owen O'Donnell and Fr. Frank Loughran, who work alongside a Malawian diocesan priest, Fr. Philip. Fr. Frank is now 90 years old, but still takes a full part in the work of the mission. He has been in Malawi now for 62 years, and has no intention of dying anywhere else!

Namitembo is fairly typical of the missions cared for by the Company of Mary in Malawi. It has several "out-churches", where there are "small Christian communities" established, which take responsibility for the daily Christian lives of the Catholic people. The missionaries themselves go to one or other of these out-churches at the weekend to celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments, but the upkeep of the church buildings and the schools, and the daily prayer-lives of the people are largely in the hands of the local community. At the mission itself, there are also various projects established to aid the people. In Namitembo, for example, there is a maize-mill to which the people from all around come to grind their maize into the flour from which they make their staple food, *nsima*. There is also a trade school, where the young people can be trained in various trades, and have the opportunity to learn word-processing, for example, on the computer. This trade school is largely funded by help from a parish in Seattle, USA.

Namitembo has both a primary school (with more than 1,200 pupils), and a secondary school (with perhaps 250 pupils). While primary schooling is more and more available for most children in Malawi, secondary education is still only available for relatively few.

Almost all Europeans who visit Africa are impressed by the singing of the African people, and I was no exception. The Sunday liturgy in Namitembo was a delight, even though, because of all the singing and dancing (very graceful liturgical dancing), it lasted for 2¼ hours! Clearly everyone was involved in this joyful celebration, and afterwards they lingered outside in their "Sunday best", talking with their friends and acquaintances – it seemed to be quite difficult to get them to go home! If only we had the same problem in our own country!

Uganda

From Malawi, I flew back to Nairobi with Fr. Blaise Jailosi, the Malawian superior of the African Delegation, to stay one night before going on to Uganda (there are no direct flights between Malawi and Uganda). After landing in Entebbe (the airport for the capital of Uganda, Kampala), we were met by Fr. Charlie Beirne, who had just returned from his leave in England, and he drove us the 250 km or so down to Mbarara in the South-West, where the Delegation has its novitiate. On the way we crossed the equator from North to South; but again I was surprised at how relatively cool it was, even on the equator.

Before we began the second retreat in Mbarara (attended by the members of that community, as well as 5 or 6 of our confreres from the Congo, who had come by bus through Rwanda!), I had an opportunity to go to the Queen Elizabeth National Park to see the elephants and other wildlife there, including wild boar and antelopes of various kinds. It is quite an experience to see a wild elephant at relatively close quarters – but you don't get out of your vehicle if you value your life!

In many ways, Uganda is quite different from Malawi. For one thing, the staple diet there is largely bananas – not the kind we eat as fruit, but what we would probably call plantain, which needs to be cooked before it can be eaten. The people in Uganda seem to have adopted European dress more readily than those of Malawi, and the land seemed to me to be greener; though perhaps that part of Uganda has not been so affected by the drought that has afflicted much of Africa in recent years. But the local people seemed to me to be just as warm and cheerful and welcoming – and again their liturgies were enlivened by much singing and dancing. At the end of this retreat, we celebrated the baptism of a little girl, who, along with her 2- and 3-year old companions, was completely absorbed in the dancing – they learn to dance very young all over Africa.

Mbarara is the place where Fr. Charlie Beirne runs his campaign, with the help of so many of our Associates, to provide schooling for poor children, often AIDS orphans. And such help is desperately needed – it seemed to me that, though perhaps a little more affluent (if one can use that word in Africa) than Malawi, Uganda is also a very poor country by our standards, and education is clearly the key to a better life for most of the people.

Kenya

After the retreat in Mbarara, it was back to Nairobi in Kenya, where I was due to give a week of Montfortian Spirituality to the Montfortian students in the scholasticate, followed by their annual retreat. But first, I was taken to the Nairobi National Park, where I was able to see more of the typical African wildlife, including giraffes and zebra; though we were not lucky enough to come across any lions or other big cats.

Another experience I enjoyed was attending Sunday Mass at the Salesian Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Nairobi. Once again the participation of the people in the singing and the rest of the liturgy was remarkable, and the sense of joy in the celebration was palpable. We had to get to the church pretty early to be sure of a place!

Nairobi itself is much like any other big city around the world, with its towering

office blocks and busy shops. But the economic difficulties experienced by most African countries were evident in the poor state of the roads and pavements. However, the signs of poverty in Nairobi were nothing compared to what I was able to observe when we went out (at the end of the students' retreat) to Thika, the scene of Elspeth Huxley's "The Flame Trees of Thika". We had gone to see the Fourteen Falls, a spectacular waterfall rivalling in width (though not in height) the Niagara Falls; but what struck me more than anything was the sight of so many poorly-housed and poorly-clad people in those areas away from the capital. And Kenya is one of the more developed countries of Africa!

Once again, the weather in Nairobi was distinctly unlike what I had expected of Africa – I had to wear a sweater most days, and we had several days of drizzly rain. Again, though, Nairobi is in the highlands (in fact, it is 5,450 ft above sea-level), so that, even though it is only just south of the equator, its climate is relatively cool. It was the only place, apart from Namitembo in Malawi, where I was bitten by mosquitoes!

A new phenomenon that I observed since my last visit to Africa in 1993 was the ubiquity of the mobile phone! It seems to be as popular among the better-off people of the towns and cities as it is here in Gt. Britain. But in Malawi in particular, it has been a great boon. Telephone landlines in that country are rare – apparently it was common for the telegraph poles and wires to be stolen – the poles for firewood, and the wires for other purposes. The coming of the mobile phone has truly revolutionised communications in Malawi, to the great benefit of the remoter mission stations among others. The two missions that the African Delegation of the Company of Mary cares for (Sitima and Namitembo) have never had a telephone before – now they can be in regular contact both with each other and with the rest of the delegation.

I am truly grateful to Fr. Blaise Jailosi and the members of our African Delegation for giving me the opportunity to visit them, and see something more of our mission in Africa. I hope that I was able to give them something worthwhile in return. Please continue to pray for the growth of our Congregation there. ◘

The Cross in the Teaching of St. Louis Marie de Montfort

September 14th was the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, a feast which originally is said to have commemorated the finding of the relics of the Cross of Christ in Jerusalem by St. Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, and their solemn veneration as the instrument of our salvation. Today it is one of those special occasions when we recall the great love shown to us by Jesus, when he chose to die on the Cross to save us. It had a special significance for St. Louis Marie de Montfort in 1710, for it was that day that he had chosen for the blessing of the immense Calvary he had caused to be built, with the help of thousands of people, on the Magdalene Heath outside Pontchâteau. But it was to be a day of the Cross in another way for him, for the blessing of the Calvary was forbidden by order of the Royal Court, and a few days later the order was given for it to be demolished. This was a tremendous disappointment for St. Louis Marie, but he accepted it, as always when he had to suffer setbacks, as a share in the Cross of Jesus himself.

In St. Louis Marie's writings there is a very close link between Wisdom and the Cross – as he says in his famous dictum: "Wisdom is the Cross, and the Cross is Wisdom" (*The Love of Eternal Wisdom* [LEW], no. 180). In this article I would like to examine what he has to say on this great theme of his personal spirituality, the spirituality that he passed on to us and others in his missions and his writings.

Whenever Montfort spoke of the cross, it was always in reference to the Cross of Jesus Christ himself, or the sharing in the sufferings of Christ which are the lot of every Christian. And just as he assures us that the suffering of Jesus was something that "he chose to endure to prove his love for us" (LEW 154), so he saw all the suffering he himself had to endure, and indeed all the suffering any Christian meets with in his or her life, in terms of love rather than merely in terms of self-discipline or asceticism (although he would not deny their value from these points of view either). He himself suffered the Cross, above all, for love of God, and he recommends to all that they view the cross in the same terms: "Let us *show our love for Jesus* in the best way, that is, through all kinds of crosses" (*Letter to the Friends of the Cross* [LFC], no. 12).

St. Louis Marie's teaching on the Cross is found in systematic form principally in three works: *The Love of Eternal Wisdom*, the *Letter to the Friends of the Cross* (LFC), and the *Wisdom Cross of Poitiers* (WCP). In addition to these, some of his hymns (notably no. 19 and no. 102, both of which are on "The Triumph of the Cross") echo the teaching especially of chapters 13 and 14 of LEW. His *Letters*, particularly nos. 14-17, 20, 32-34, also contain reflections of his teaching in LEW and LFC, with a bearing in particular on the link between Wisdom and the Cross. There are other less prominent references throughout his writings, notably *True Devotion to the Blessed*

Virgin, and *The Secret of Mary*. From all this, it is evident that the theme of the Cross is interwoven throughout his teaching, and indeed has to be seen as a major theme of his spirituality.

St. Louis Marie's understanding of the Cross flows from his understanding, in the light of the Old and New Testaments, of God's plan of love, life and salvation for humanity. To realize this plan, God chose to become flesh ("incarnate") to redeem the world (LEW 42-46; 70). And, in order to achieve this redemption, the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, chose to suffer and to die in place of man, enduring all the sufferings involved in this "to prove his love for us" (LEW 70; 154, and chapter 13 in general). The manner of his redemptive death was crucifixion – death on a cross – a particularly barbarous form of execution usually reserved for the worst criminals by the Roman authorities of the day. The cross therefore becomes, because of the love with which his death on it was accepted and endured by Jesus, "the greatest secret of the King – the greatest mystery of Eternal Wisdom" (LEW 167). It is a mystery in several senses: it might be expected "that this Wisdom incarnate would appear glorious and triumphant… [and would] crush all his enemies and win the hearts of men by his attractiveness, his delights, his magnificence and his riches… But O wonder!… He sees… a cross… [and] he decides that that will be the instrument of his conquests…" (LEW 168. Cf. Heb 12.2). But it is a mystery also in the sense given to the word by what is known as "The French School of Spirituality" (of which St. Louis Marie is generally considered to be a part), namely that, though it has an historical and unrepeatable aspect, it is an expression of the interior dispositions and sentiments of Jesus which endure and with which the Christian can enter into communion (cf. LEW 169-172). This is the basis of St. Louis Marie's teaching on "The Cross and ourselves", which forms the substance of the *Letter to the Friends of the Cross*, as well as LEW, chapter 14.2-3 (nos. 173-180) and what he writes on "mortification" in LEW chapter 16 (194-202). Through communion with the mystery of Christ's Cross, it becomes "the sign, the emblem and the weapon of his faithful people" (LEW 173).

The Wisdom Cross of Poitiers

It is clear that for Montfort, as for all Christian writers, the "cross" in the life of Jesus does not refer only to the means of his execution, the particular form of death he was to endure, nor indeed solely to his death and the suffering involved in that; but refers to all the suffering he would endure ("to prove his love for us") throughout his life as a direct consequence of becoming a human being, thus joining the Word and sinful flesh. But the most obvious instance of his suffering, and the clearest manifestation of the love that inspires its endurance, is the Passion and Death of Jesus, which Montfort meditates on in LEW 155-166. And he portrays Christ as directing his thoughts and desires to that culminating sacrifice throughout his life, seeking, and indeed "longing for" the cross (LEW 170). In this he shows the clear influence of Henri Boudon's book *Les saintes voies de la Croix* (The Holy Ways of the Cross), which, according to his friend Jean-Baptiste Blain, was his favourite book in his seminary days. This "longing for the cross" is foolishness to those who "do not understand the mysterious language of the Cross" (LEW 178), but to those who have understood the love which inspires it, it becomes "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1.24). Hence, the Cross is a mystery of love and of Wisdom, quite opposed to the false wisdoms of the world and of the flesh (cf. LEW 75-83). The link between Eternal Wisdom (Jesus Christ) and the Cross is indissoluble: "Never the Cross without Jesus, or Jesus without the Cross" (LEW 172); indeed, "Wisdom is the Cross, and the Cross is Wisdom" (LEW 180).

Montfort's understanding of the Cross of Christ himself, shapes his teaching on the Cross in relation to ourselves. Just as the Cross is inseparable from the life of Jesus, so it is an inseparable part of the life of Christians: "Eternal Wisdom has decreed the Cross to be the sign, the emblem and the weapon of his faithful people. He welcomes no child that does not bear its sign. He recognises no disciple who is ashamed to display it, or who has not the courage to accept it, or who either drags it reluctantly or rejects it outright. He proclaims, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.' (Mt 16.24; Lk 9.23) He enlists no soldier who does not take up the cross as the weapon to defend himself against all his enemies" (LEW 173). As he writes on the *Wisdom Cross of Poitiers*, "If you are ashamed of the Cross of Jesus Christ, he will be ashamed of you before his Father." And, just as the Cross of Christ himself can only be ultimately explained in terms of love, so the Cross in our lives has to be inspired by love: "When it is well carried it is the source, the food and the proof of love" (LEW 176).

But what form does the Cross take in our lives? We can recognize this Cross very clearly in Montfort's own life. He suffered all his life: from inactivity in the first few months he spent in the

community of Saint-Clément in Nantes, shortly after his ordination; from uncertainty regarding his true path for the first five years of his priestly life; from rejection by those institutions and people who might have been expected to value him and his friendship (the Hôpital Général of Poitiers, the Salpêtrière, his spiritual directors, even his friend Blain); from homelessness or poor lodging (e.g. in the Rue du Pot de Fer); from misunderstanding of, or outright opposition to, his preaching; from disparagement of his character and slanderous reports put about concerning him; from interdict by bishops, despite his unequivocal obedience to them; and so on – perhaps most of all from the crushing disappointment of the prohibition of the Calvary at Pontchâteau. And perhaps in all this he suffered all the more as it caused those whom he loved to suffer with him – his letter to his sister Guyonne-Jeanne, written in 1713, shows his awareness of this: "I never seem to go anywhere without bringing something of the Cross to my dearest friends without any fault of mine or theirs. Those who befriend me or support me suffer for doing so, and sometimes draw down upon themselves the wrath of the devil I am fighting against, as well as the world I am protesting against and the flesh I am chastising" (Letter 26). These sufferings, which could be seen as the inevitable consequences of his radical commitment to the Gospel and the service of Christ, he bears not just with resignation and patience, but with a joy which is foolishness to the worldly-wise "who do not know the value of the Cross and carry it reluctantly" (LEW 179), and with love, seeing in them his path to the acquisition of true Wisdom – he expresses this conviction in his Letters 15 & 16, especially. And he counsels us to accept and endure the difficulties encountered in our own lives in the same spirit. This is the burden of the first 13 of the 14 "rules to be followed" to help us to suffer in "the way that Jesus did", in LFC 41-60. We must even try to *love* the cross, he tells us, not with an "emotional love", which is "impossible to our human nature", but with a "rational love, [which] springs from the knowledge of how happy we can be in suffering for God," or with a "supernatural love", by which "we love the cross we are carrying, by the light of pure faith, and take delight in it, even though the lower part of our nature may be in a state of conflict and disturbance, groaning and complaining, weeping and longing for relief" (LFC 50-53). He makes it clear that he is

referring to difficulties or trials of all kinds, whether natural or the result of our own or other people's actions: "make the resolution to suffer any kind of cross without excluding or choosing any: any poverty, injustice, loss, illness, humiliation, contradiction, slander, spiritual dryness, desolation, interior and exterior trials" (LEW 54). And the motive for this acceptance of the cross is, far from merely the inevitability of all this, the following of Jesus Christ: "To suffer is not enough; the evil one and the world have their martyrs. We must suffer and carry our cross in the footsteps of Christ: 'Let him follow me'" [Lk 9.24] (LFC 41). To put this into practice requires the gift of wisdom, for "the Cross remains an object of scandal, folly, contempt and fear", which "even today is a source of scandal and an object of folly not only to Jews and pagans, Moslems and heretics, the worldly-wise and bad Catholics, but even to seemingly devout and very devout people" (LEW 174). It is a mystery which "you must learn to practise in the school of Christ, and which can only be learnt from him" (LFC 26). It is something that we need to pray for: "You may, and should, pray for the wisdom of the cross, that knowledge of the truth which we experience within ourselves and which by the light of faith deepens our knowledge of the most hidden mysteries, including that of the cross" (LFC 45).

Besides the trials and difficulties inherent in human life and in the following of Christ as true disciples, Louis Marie speaks of "mortification", which is closely allied to the Cross, and which he lists as one of the principal means for acquiring divine Wisdom. "Mortification" means (literally) "putting to death", and is used in Christian thinking to describe the practices of self-denial which are called for by Jesus when he says, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16.24). It is not a popular idea today, even among Christians, but has always been held to be important, and is certainly so for St. Louis Marie. In his thinking on this, there are clearly certain things that he sees as indispensable – without them, we cannot lay claim to wisdom ("If we would possess wisdom" is how he introduces them), or even to being a true follower of Christ. These imperatives, listed in LEW, include: detachment from what he calls "worldly possessions", if not actually dispossessing ourselves of these; not subscribing to worldly fashions, habits and ways of living; not subscribing to the false "wisdom" of the world or its maxims (e.g. the world tells us today that you have to "have fun"); and avoiding the company of worldly folk, or even of others if it is just a waste of time. It is true that some of these imperatives flow from his own cultural background, as well as from the very radical view he took of the Gospel, but at the same time, he bases them, at least

loosely, on the Scriptures (1 Cor 7.30, Rom 12.2, and 1 Jn 5.19, for example), or on the received wisdom of Christian spiritual writers (LEW 197-200). However, we might need to reinterpret these (which is not the same as abandoning them) for today's circumstances.

Then there is the question of *voluntary* penances or acts of mortification – which we willingly take on without any real obligation. He imposed on himself, as we know from his biographies, some very severe (to today's eyes) penitential practices (the discipline, hair-shirts, spiked bracelets and girdles, etc.), and he also seems to have encouraged others to do the same, even selling such instruments of penance during his missions. His teaching regarding voluntary penances is clear: "If we would possess Wisdom, we must mortify the body, not only by enduring patiently our bodily ailments, the inconveniences of the weather and the difficulties arising from other people's actions, but also by deliberately undertaking some penances and mortifications, such as fasts, vigils and other austerities practised by holy penitents" (LEW 201). However, he prescribes that these penances, if they are not quite simple things, should not be undertaken without guidance from a spiritual director or confessor: "For exterior and voluntary mortification to be profitable, it must be accompanied by the mortifying of the judgement and the will through holy obedience, because without this obedience all mortification is spoiled by self-will and often becomes more pleasing to the devil than to God. That is why no exceptional mortification should be undertaken without seeking counsel" (LEW 202). And again, his rule number 14 in LFC, to help us to suffer as Jesus did, says: "If you want to make yourself worthy of the best kind of crosses, that is, those which come to you without your choosing, then *under the guidance of a prudent director*, take up some of your own accord" (LFC 61).

The kinds of voluntary mortification or penance that we might take up are listed somewhat differently in LEW and LFC. LEW prescribes "fasts, vigils and other austerities practised by holy penitents", while LFC gives other examples: giving away a piece of furniture we are fond of; eating some food we don't really like, or in other ways acting in opposition to our own likes and dislikes; seeing less of a person we may perhaps be too fond of, or limiting our enjoyment of things we particularly like; curbing our natural curiosity and our tongues; and even deliberately courting the company of people we don't naturally like, etc. (LFC 61). In all of this, there is certainly an element of exercising self-discipline (as he says in one instance, "thus conquer yourself"), and this is in keeping with not only Christian spirituality, but also that of all the great world religions; but for Montfort this is not the main motive – he begins this number with: "If you want to make yourself worthy of the best kind of crosses, those which come to you without your choosing…" – and these are the things that he has said are to be done for the sake of "following Christ". Then, at the end of this list of suggestions, he returns to his main motive: "If you are truly Friends of the Cross, then, without your knowing it, love, which is ever ingenious, will discover thousands of little crosses to enrich you…" – it is love which again is the motive (LFC 62). Let it be so for us – let us try to show our love for Jesus in the same way. ◘

News from Here and There

Because of the various changes in the production of "Footsteps", we do not have very much news of our Associates to report in this issue. If any of you have any news which you think it is important for us to share, please write to Father Allerton at the address on the front cover.

Fr. Joseph Kelly, R.I.P.

The death occurred on 26 October 2005 of Fr. Joseph Kelly, S.M.M., former manager of Montfort Press, editor of "Queen & Mother", Superior at Montfort House, Liverpool, etc. He died peacefully in Nazareth House, Crosby, where he had been chaplain for many years. Please pray for the repose of his soul.

Our Dead Associates

Sister Evangelista (a Sister of Mercy from Todmorden) – 7th January 2005; Kathleen Kimmance (mother of Allan Kimmance) – 11th March; Sister Maria McNamee – 30th March; Brian Caine (a former Montfort student) – 7th April; Thaddaeus Rooney (brother of the late Father Michael Rooney, S.M.M., and a former Montfort student) – 22nd April; Lilian Flynn – 24th April; John Russell – April; Mollie Bowyer – August; Margaret Biddell – August; James Cairns – 20th August; John O'Boyle (husband of Mary) – 21st August; Michael Flynn (uncle of Fr. Charlie Beirne) – September; Mrs. V. Stanley; Mr. Joe Reynolds.

May they rest in peace.

Your prayers are requested for…

Brother Stan Williams, S.M.M.; Kate; Mary & Norman Lawley; Ada Finlay; Helen Connolly (mother of Fr. Des Connolly, S.M.M.); the Lydon family, especially Stephen who is very ill in France; Mrs. Marjo Stevenson; Paul Snape (former student of Montfort College); John Stanley (also former Montfort student); John & Jane Gately and family; and any others of our Associates who are sick or troubled in any way.

Thank You:

We thank those who have donated monies towards the publication of this Newsletter. We are truly grateful. Please continue to support it. If you wish to make a donation by cheque, please make it payable to the Montfort Missionaries and send it to the address on the front page. ◘