



"*Liberos!* True Children of Mary " **First Religious Profession of the Three Novices in the Province of Italy**

BARI, Italy - It was a day of great celebration on September 22, 2019 for the Province of Italy of the Montfort Missionaries. In the Mother Church of Santeramo in Colle (Bari), the town where the novitiate house is located, three novices, namely Antonio Bettoni, Salvatore Scalese and Mario Cerovac made their first religious profession.

During the Eucharistic celebration that was presided by the Provincial Superior Fr. Mario Belotti, SMM, the 3 novices professed before the whole Church the decision "to put themselves on a path that leads them to love with the same heart as Jesus... not because they were the first to love God ... but rather, they were conquered by God"(from the homily).

Relatives, several confreres and the entire Christian community of Santeramo were emotional and full of joy as they gathered around the newly professed and made them feel all their affections and closeness in this significant moment in their vocational journey. After the Mass, everyone gathered in the garden of the novitiate house for a convivial moment as they proceeded with a fraternal lunch.

On Saturday evening, the first profession was preceded by the renewal of the consecration to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary. In the novitiate chapel, during the prayer of Vespers, Antonio, Mario and Salvatore, with an act of love, entrusted to Mary the gift of their lives to Jesus Christ, wanting to depend on her as slaves of love. In his short homily, Fr. Mario Belotti said, "Someone who is in love and lives in true love is not ashamed to say, *I feel that I am a slave of love.*" This is what the 3 novices wanted to say in front of us today. After the consecration to Jesus through Mary, in a moment of profound intimacy, the provincial superior gave each novice a statue of Our Lady of the Way that may guide them throughout

their lives, and then blessed their cassocks. They wore it the following day during the rite of the profession, girding the wool cord they braided themselves during evenings of their novitiate, and the large rosary.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Lord for inspiring Antonio, Mario and Salvatore in following Christ more closely. To the 3 novices, we warmly say, "Welcome to the Company of Mary!".

Alessandro Molé
Novice