

## **Montfort EurHope: Mission in Prison**

**PUGLIA, Italy** - *A group of lay people living the 'Holy Slavery' of love pledge to share among the prisoners the freedom from the Gospel. Their guide, Father Giovanni Maria Personeni, SMM, 50 years old tells us about it.*

### **1) Can you describe your activity among the detainees?**

There are about 25 volunteers in the prisons. Most of them are consecrated to Mary according to the spirit of Montfort and members of the Association of Mary Queen of All Hearts. They take care of the prisoners in Altamura, Trani and Bari. They are a group of young people and adults. They provide their services through projects approved by the Department of Justice such as: Creative Writing Project "I listen, I read and I think"; guide for reading books and even sports journals; cinema laboratory with projection of films and documentaries; musical, theatrical and multimedia laboratory; time of prayer and sharing; library service; manual and creative laboratory and especially personal interviews.



### **2) How this activity started?**

From the experience of the group of Montfortians consecrated at the Regional Center of Trinitapoli (BT), then stimulated by the words of Pope Francis in the year of Mercy and also by the Tercentenary celebration of the death of Montfort, following the preparatory paths to the Consecration to Jesus by the hands of Mary. We have understood that the consecrated person, as understood by Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, can not fail to serve in works of charity and mercy for the good and the salvation of the brothers. The idea of the Church as a "big country hospital" fully embodies the ideals of Montfort.

### **3) What is the good news that comes out of this experience with the prisoners?**

The good news for the Church itself is that Christ is present in these places of suffering, in those hearts wounded by life, by sin, but open to joy and to the love they have never received. The times of prayer and liturgy are lived with enthusiasm, with the heart. Seeing a prisoner reading the True Devotion to Mary or asking questions about the consecration enflamed my heart - it is like a Mother who is with her children.

### **4) What link do you see with Montfort and his mission?**

Montfort looked for the poor, the least and the last, to serve them in body and spirit. The prisons today, especially the ones in difficult conditions, are the transposition of these "general hospitals" in which, at the time of Montfort, the undesirables of the society were locked up. Moreover, it is the same spirituality of Montfort that in all his writings presents the last degree of the spiritual life as that of the mission and the apostolate (see AES 30. VD 56 59.114.265).

### **5) What are the projects of this activity in the future?**

May it be a sign and a witness of consecration for all of us, in prisons and as a service among Montfortian spirituality groups. Montfort loved to live in the peripheries where Christ is incarnated in the weakness and misery of the flesh. Today, Christ calls us too... devotion to the Virgin is the balm that heals the wounds of our existence. And Montfort understood that.