



Celebration of Saint Louis-Marie in Belgium

MONTAIGU, Belgium - The celebration of the Feast of the birth in heaven of Father de Montfort had been anticipated to Friday, April 26, 2024, in the General Delegation of Belgium.

The Montfort Feast has usually been celebrated in complete sobriety in one of the communities, either in Kessel-Lo (Leuven) or in Genk and most often, only between Montfort confreres. At the great initiative of the Council of the Delegation, this year, the celebration of Montfort had a different color. It was celebrated as Montfort family, that is to say, the Montfort missionaries and all their collaborators: workers and volunteers who work and collaborate with the Montfort missionaries in Belgium. Not only was the festival celebrated within the Montfort family, but also outside the Montfort community. In fact, they had a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel in Montaigu.

It was in the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Montaigu (Scherpenheuvel in Dutch) that the Eucharistic celebration took place which was presided over by Father Nepo JAMES, SMM. But long before that, it all started in the morning with the welcome of confreres from different communities and other guests in Mary's house (hospital center of the sanctuary). In his words of welcome, Father Ghislain KASEREKA, SMM, member of the Council of the General Delegation of Belgium, made known the reason which brings them together, the celebration of the birth in heaven of Father de Montfort. After

which, he gave the floor to Father Jos VAN DEN BERGH, SMM, Superior Delegate, who spoke about the life of Father de Montfort. In his sharing, Father Jos emphasized that Father de Montfort is a great Saint of his time with an exceptional character and personality. He left a great legacy which are his writings, his spirituality and his charisma. As his disciples, all are invited to follow in his footsteps, though he cannot be copied because time and culture are not the same. Each entity or even each Montfortian can live according to the spirit of the founder in the context of the place of his pastoral ministry.

In addition, Father Jos briefly presented the various writings of Father de Montfort. To end his speech, he gave the floor to each Montfortian confrere, starting with the oldest of the group to talk about in three minutes what touches him most in the life and spirituality of Father de Montfort. The different charisms of each confrere and what he is involved in as a Montfortian missionary were discovered.

At the end of this sharing in Mary's house, everyone headed towards the basilica for the Eucharistic celebration. The Montfortians were not the only ones to participate in this Mass. There were also Christians and groups of pilgrims who prayed with them, and all renewed their Consecration to Jesus through Mary according to the formula of Father de Montfort.

In his homily, Father Nepo emphasized the fact that Jesus was always the center in the life of Father de Montfort and he did everything for his greater glory. This is how he always sought at all costs to make Jesus known and the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is part of the initiatives taken by Father de Montfort as a favorable means of bringing the people of God to Jesus. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort was a true witness to the good news and he was very convinced that the best way to help the Christian revive and remember his alliance with Christ is the renewal of his baptismal promises. He said further that for Father de Montfort, Jesus does not live in the highest heaven, but he lives in the poor. This is how he always served the poor and always near the poor. He was called “the good father of Montfort” by the poor in the Poitiers hospital. He was always ready to serve others. He was a true model of charity and prayer.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the attendees shared good wine and a festive meal. The afternoon was focused on the guided tour of the great Marian sanctuary of Montaigu which is one of the holy places of pilgrimages in Belgium in the Flemish part.

The day ended with coffee in Mary's house followed by a word of thanks from all the Montfortians and their collaborators by Father Nepo on behalf of the Council of the General Delegation of Belgium. It was with a smile on their lips, a sign of joy that each one returned home after having been with Father de Montfort on a wonderful day of celebration.

Fr. Aimé KAMANDA, SMM