



### **Marche Montfortaine 2024: View of a man from the Philippines**

*A few weeks before his death, Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort (1673-1716) made an act of faith. It was to implore God to give missionaries for his Company and Wisdom through the intercession of Mary. 33 penitents walked as pilgrims, 2 by 2, from Saint-Pompain to Notre-Dame des Ardilliers in 1716. Now, 308 years have passed since this founding event. From July 15 to 21, 2024, the Marche Montfortaine took place in Poitiers and La Rochelle. This year, the theme was “Marie-Louise de Jésus, first Daughter of Wisdom from Poitiers to La Rochelle”. A pilgrimage on the first steps of Père de Montfort and Marie-Louise de Jésus in these 2 emblematic places. In recent years, La Marche has become increasingly international. During this 41<sup>st</sup> edition, a Montfortian missionary from the Philippines was taking part for the first time in this faith walk at the school of Montfort. His name is Fr. Roy MILLANO, SMM, a former missionary in Papua New Guinea. We interviewed him.*

#### **In what context did you decide to take part in this march in France?**

Taking part in the *Marche Montfortaine* is within my Sabbatical program as suggested by the general superior.

#### **What Impressed You?**

EVERYTHING. France is the home of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort. It is like a Holy land to the Montfortian family. Anything that connects to Saint Louis' life and mission is like a Gospel that is worth knowing with utmost consideration. I followed Saint Louis' life and spirituality mostly through written documents, but it was different when those documents came to life as it where in the very place where those insights of the founder were born.

Joining the *Marche Montfortaine* is like reliving the life and mission of Saint Montfort. Tracing those places of his life and mission is like a fresh encounter with the man I love. His vision and

ideals became alive in me; including those crosses and graces that molded him as an apostolic missionary. Those moments make me realize that Saint Montfort is not just another story in the book. He is real! He is a man of God trying his best to respond to the signs of the times to the need of the Church. Concretely, it was a moving experience to see, to touch the original red Cross planted by Montfort at Montbernage.

**What experience did you retain from this Montfortian walk that could help the congregation in its mission?**

Back in my formation years, to trace Montfort's footsteps was only a dream, given the many limited circumstances. It took 25 years before this dream became a reality. This happens at a time when I almost give up dreaming. This reminds me of Montfort at St. Lazare with Mathurin and John praying for the grace before meal in an empty dining table, when suddenly food came from their neighbor. Montfort says, "providence will make you wait but will not allow you starve". It was indeed a wonderful gift to my jubilee year as Montfortian. God's providence goes beyond time and space.

Another aspect that caught my attention in the *Marche Montfortaine* is the organization part. It was really the fruit of the true collaboration of the Montfortian family. Worth noting is that there are more lay than religious. Organization was so smooth and orderly; like the place to stay, and where to visit, transportation, the food and other support system are superb. What adds to my amazement is that many of the participants are like regular members of the event. In other words, *Marche Montfortaine* has become part of their year's timetable. Some are first timers, but most participants are regular ones. To my surprise, many are not so young, but they move as if in their primetime.

On top of this is the joy that enveloped in every activity especially during table fellowship. In addition, of course it is the concert that serves as a crowning moment of the Marche. I must confess of my struggle with the French language but through the Montfortian hymns in the concert, my heart connects deeply to the richness of Montfort's spirituality. I believe the entire activity is more than just physical movement but a strong indication of how the founder's spirit after more than 300 years is still very much alive.

**Do you have a message to pass on?**

If there is, a message that has become clear to me in this activity is the ideal collaboration. Montfort in his earlier year's mission indicated this already. What is happening in the *Marche Montfortaine* is a concrete indication of a clear direction that Saint Montfort wants us to navigate. It is very hard for me to end this short note without thanking everyone for allowing me to be part of this wonderful event; not least to this is the generosity of some members for their extra effort in translating to me the essential part of the entire event.

I am also encouraging every Montfortian to take this activity, *Marche Montfortaine*, a must even once in a lifetime or miss entirely the treasure of our heritage.

*Fr. Roy S. MILLANO, SMM*  
(Interview by Fr. Olivier Nantenaina RAMAHENINTSOA, SMM)