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Gathering of Montfort Associates in France

SAINT-LAURENT-SUR SEVRE, France - On December 7 and 8, in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, under the direction of Fr. Éric MANIRAKIZA, SMM, national director, took place the national meeting of the Marian Fraternity Montfortaine. There were 122 participants for this big two-day meeting. It was a gathering of all the people who made their consecration to Jesus through Mary according to the Father of Montfort. They wanted to live a moment of grace with Montfort missionaries and other members. It was a rich weekend filled with faith and devotion. The program of the meeting included: teaching, fraternity, discovery of the Montfort Inheritance, prayers and celebration. Forty-two participants made the consecration to Jesus through Mary, a solemn commitment that marks their spiritual life for the first time.

Teaching

Teaching, for adults and young people, was a real breath of inspiration. Sr. Chantal RABIER, FDLS, on Saturday morning, spoke of "the consecration of oneself to Jesus through Mary". In the afternoon, Father Michel SIMONNET, SMM presented the theme: "With Montfort, being pilgrims of hope". After each intervention there was a time of sharing in small groups, where everyone was able to share with others their experience of faith and hope. Many testified to the depth of these exchanges, which touched their hearts and nourished their spiritual journey. Fr Paulin RAMANANDRAIBE, SMM and Salomé, animator of the Montfortian Youth, accompanied the young people to explain to them what the consecration is to Jesus through Mary and

the Baptism. Two young people prepared themselves to make their consecration to Jesus through Mary.

Fraternity

Beyond the teachings, this gathering was a real place of fraternity. Laughter, exchanges and prayers mingled in a joyful conviviality, particularly during meals shared in the “Olivier Maire” hall. It was a real moment of human and spiritual communion. Among Montfortains, we recognize ourselves. The "elders" renew their commitment that newcomers, young and old, have integrated into this large Montfortaine family. Everyone has found their place. This was facilitated by the organizational team: Fr. Eric MANIRAKIZA, Sr Chantal RABIER, Deacon Claude TIGNON and his wife Marie-Line, Dorothée HATUNGIMANA, “*Militantes de la Sainte Vierge*”, Br Ernest MANGA, FSG, Hélène CAILLEAUD and the Montfort Missionaries of the international community of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre.

Discovery of the Montfort Inheritance

On Saturday afternoon, it was time to discover the Montfortian Places in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre. It was also the occasion for an immersion in the historic places cradle of Montfortaine spirituality. The tombs of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort and Mary-Louise of Jesus, founding figures of this spirituality. The Mother Houses of the three Congregations: Montfort Missionaries, the Daughters of Wisdom and the Brothers of Saint-Gabriel, were places of prayer, common life and mission. This anchoring in the historical and spiritual roots of the Montfortian Family offered each participant the opportunity to re-discover their Christian and Montfortian identity. By contemplating these high places, it became obvious that the memory of the saints is a living source which nourishes the Church of today.

Prayer and celebration

The Saturday evening marked an intense moment of grace, with a vigil of worship and praise at the Basilica of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, open to all. The music and the voices of Fr Willi SELMAN, SMM, Pierre-Louis, Agnès and Caroline, laity engaged in Pontchâteau accompanied the assembly in a fervent prayer. Everyone has renewed baptismal commitments, in front of the Bible, the baptistery and the statue of the Virgin Mary. This was followed by the signing of the Covenant Contract on the tomb of Montfort. Father Eric MANIRAKIZA concluded this evening with a blessing from the Blessed Sacrament.

The next day, the solemn Mass in the Basilica was the summit of this weekend, because 42 participants, united in ardent faith, made their Montfortian consecration for the first time. This celebration was the expression of a choice of life to give everything to Jesus through Mary.

Everyone left with fervor, nourished by the Word of God to be light of the world. By following the example of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, all have chosen to engage in a life of evangelical radicality, confident that with Marie who is the easiest way, short and safe, we will arrive to Jesus.

Fr. Olivier NANTENAINA, SMM