



## **The Virgin Mary, praying woman**

**FATIMA, Portugal** - The Marian Days with Montfort were held once again on October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, with the theme “The Virgin Mary, praying woman”. The meeting that was organized by the Montfort Missionaries, under the responsibility of SMM Fathers Carlos VIEIRA, Luís OLIVEIRA and Luís FERREIRA, was held in Fátima.

During these two days, around 200 Portuguese, Brazilian and Spanish participants, in addition to learning more about the role of Mary in the economy of salvation, and getting to know, sharing and living the Marian spirituality of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, had the opportunity to pray. The organization sought, as has become customary, to create an environment of proximity between what is said and what is experienced. In addition to the reflections presented by the speakers, there was the Saturday Eucharist presided over by the Patriarch of Lisbon, Msgr. Rui VALÉRIO, SMM, the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary at *Capelinhas das Aparições* on Saturday night and the Sunday Eucharist in the Sanctuary grounds.

It was, therefore, in this truly Montfortian environment of “hospitality, internationality and tenderness”, that the participants had the opportunity to question the speakers, or even witness their lives, especially on Saturday afternoon where there was space for sharing the Marian experience, with or without Consecration according to the method of Louis de Montfort.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reflection, we had Fr. Luiz Augusto STEFANI, SMM, former Superior General of the Congregation of Montfort Missionaries. “Prayer: What is it? Why? How?” put us at the heart of the matter. More than talking about how, the most important thing is to pray. For Christians, there is no survival without prayer. We need to improve this time we are with the Lord. Jesus prayed like any Jew, at the right times and times, but He was different from them because he looked for isolated places and different moments to be with the Father. The “Our Father” prayer is the fruit of this originality. We can learn from Him and let the Holy Spirit act in us.

Archbishop Rui VALÉRIO SMM, in his Eucharistic homily touched on this point: the work of the Holy Spirit and Mary in us. Basically, as Montfort tells us: “I don't think a person can have an intimate union with Our Lord and perfect fidelity to the Holy Spirit, if they don't have a great union with the Blessed Virgin”. This is the foundation of the spirituality of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort. “All our perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus.” Imitating Mary means following the creature most in line with Jesus.

Father Luizinho, as he is known among his confreres, also described different types of prayer that we can do, namely Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Psalms and Contemplation.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Reflection was made by Sister Ângela OLIVEIRA, ASM: “Mary, praying woman”. All his reflection came from a painting of Mary holding a tabernacle on her lap with her arms open. Mary opens us to the mysteries of Jesus Christ. She loves because she is loved, seen by God, as someone under someone's care. And it is also, in this attentive look that she receives from God, that she can be a mediator, intercessor for every Christian. Maria knows that only her son can meet our needs. She is not a point of arrival, but a path, just as she did with her cousin Isabel. After the Annunciation, he hurriedly got up and set off on his way, the Visitation.

Before the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, there was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reflection given by Father Ricardo FIGUEIREDO of the Patriarchate of Lisbon: “The Almighty did wonders for me: the Virgin Mary and the theological dimension of Christian life.” Mary is the model for the Church (Lumen Gentium 1) because the light of Christ shines, as the Moon is to the Sun. She is a model of faith, hope and charity. And Montfort realized this. This saint of ours lives the Consecration through the hands of Mary as a mission. “It is the creed of the Church. I believe for You. It is an I believe in you, not because you believe that something exists or because you believe in someone, but I believe that your arms support me, hold me, protect me”, said Father Ricardo.

On Sunday, Father Luiz STEFANI, SMM, made the 4<sup>th</sup> Reflection: “The prayer in Montfort”. From Pope Francis' address to participants in the General Chapter of the Society of Mary (Montfortians) in 2023, he highlighted the characteristics of Montfortian spirituality: welcoming multiculturalism and maternal tenderness. Montfort's entire life was a prayer because he sought, found and came to Wisdom. The sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, the Mystery of the Incarnation and Mary, are central to Louis-Marie's prayer. His life was a mission and a mission that was prayer. Even the desire of a small Company was prayer, as is well expressed in the Embraced Prayer. The ultimate end of all devotion is Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom. Consecration is the maximum expression of total consecration. It's about consecrating your whole life. All my life. So, all life is prayer. The last words of Saint de Montfort: “I am between Jesus and Mary”.

After two days of sharing, it ended with the renewal of the Montfortian Consecration of all participants, presided over by Fr. Carlos VIEIRA, SMM.

At the end, Fr. Amílcar TAVARES, SMM, Superior of the Delegation of the Montfort Missionaries in Portugal, gave final thanks to the speakers, all the participants, as well as the sisters where the days were held, and the *Canção Nova* channel and the *Ecclesia Agency* for publicizing this initiative.

After this, the organization also thanked Fr. Amílcar TAVARES, at the end of his term as Superior, who was one of the great supporters after the break forced by the Covid 19 pandemic. I would also like to thank him and the entire organizing team.

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