



INDIAN MONTFORTIAN COMMUNICATION

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PROVINCIAL

A Look towards the Future

The Word "Jubilee" is derived from the Hebrew Word "Jobel", which means "ram's horn", since it was precisely that horn which was used as a trumpet, whose sound indicated to everybody the beginning of the jubilee year. The book of Leviticus, in the code of holiness, is the source which tells us of the significance of the jubilee year, a year of liberation "par excellence", which is at the end of seven weeks of the fiftieth year. (Leviticus 25:8-10). The Old Testament biblical literature in a vision on the eschatological future announces in typical apocalyptic language the final and definitive liberation of God's people.

In this Jubilee year we have chosen the theme "Gratitude to God alone." It is not only the gratefulness but also to look to the future with hope. The province assembly rightly invited us to reflect on the theme "Dare to be Free and Faithful", in line with the Acts of the General Chapter 2023 "Dare to take risks for God and for humanity our creative fidelity." It is time to find ways and means to look to future with Trust and Hope in the providence of God.

During this jubilee year inspired by the Acts of the General Chapter, we aim to achieve the following things. First and foremost, we revitalize our Montfortian identity by offering ourselves to Jesus through Mary as Missionary-Disciples whose heart burns for the Master and for the people through our living of the Baptismal promises in the path of the Incarnate Wisdom. Secondly in our Vice-province we live authentically the four pillars of Montfortian mission: Evangelization, Mary, Availability and Acting together. We try to discover modern means of evangelization in our mission. Thirdly we utilize the modern means of communication to transmit our charism especially to the youth and promote vocations to Montfortian life in collaboration with our lay associates. We establish and strengthen the lay associates in our Missions. Fourthly as the jubilee year calls us for renewal, we take a total responsibility for our own spiritual renewal constantly updating and deepening our Union with the Divine. Fifthly with Fraternal love we dare to work together. We carry out our responsibilities through Effective and Careful management of our resources and implement the Administrative Directory and Directory of Administration of Temporal goods of our VICE PROVINCE. We become true Witnesses by being accountable and transparent at all levels: individual, community and entity. We surrender ourselves to Jesus the Incarnate wisdom through the school of Mary and shape our future by utilizing our strengths and capabilities in the given context of our Montfortian Consecrated Life.



Fr. Sebastian Raj SMM
PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR
VICE-PROVINCE OF INDIA

THE INDIAN VICE PROVINCE ASSEMBLY 2024: A JOURNEY TOWARDS DIAMOND JUBILEE

The Indian Vice-Province has just celebrated the Golden Jubilee of our presence in India which was a moment of grace and joy in thanking God for all the blessings. It also calls each one of us to continue our journey more effectively by renewing our way of life towards the Diamond Jubilee. Province Assembly of the Indian Vice Province took place from 07 to 10 May 2024 at Nirjhari at Carmelaram, with the theme DARE TO BE FREE & FAITHFUL it was in tune with the Acts of our General Chapter 2023. This Assembly gathering was a significant one to continue our journey as true Montfortians with the purpose of learning from history, live for today and hope for tomorrow. It was a heartening moment for us with the presence of all the confreres of the vice-Province and in the presence of the Superior General and his team. It was well animated by Dr. Robin Seelan SJ an erudite scholar who applied creative and spiritual methodology to discover the potentials of our vice province and build a vibrant entity with concrete action plans for the coming Ten years from now.

THE FOUR STEPS applied during this assembly was to be *Filled with gratitude* and allow the Spirit to guide us in our discussions and deliberations. Secondly Focusing on the present to discover *where are we now?* Thirdly finding the way towards the future by exploring *Where do we need to go?* focusing on Shaping the future by Taking pro-active steps and initiatives, Evolving Province Priorities thus planning for the next ten years *How do we go?* Our gathering was a spiritual conversation during the sessions discussed on elements pertaining to our self, Province and the Mission.

THE FOCAL POINTS: The following areas which were reflected to arrive at towards concrete suggestions and implementation for the future of the Vice province:

1. Context and Mission which focused on our call and mission
2. Our Strengths & Capabilities which are helpful for mission, community, and self-growth
3. Our Opportunities in the area of Finance especially on self-sufficiency, Formation, Mission and Administration.
4. Our Spirituality & charism to live in the context of our communities and Apostolic life.
5. The Acts of the General Chapter which is a guideline for us to build our Province focusing on the On-going formation.
6. Statutes to deal with the issues of the province with concrete policies and guidelines
7. Priorities to visualize the province in its Diamond Jubilee year 2034 and tangible action plan for the next ten years.

Our interactions were productive and to propose concrete action plan and prioritize the urgent needs of the province and mandate to be given to the new administration with a clarity to have the clarity of vision and move in to the mission.



THE FEELING OF GRATITUDE AND HOPE:



As it was rightly expressed in the concluding remarks that we had two feelings: feelings of gratitude and feelings of hope. We were deeply grateful for many things, more specifically for the presence, inspiration, directions and guidance of the Holy Spirit during this Assembly, for some clarity towards our future, for the presence of the Superior General and the General team, for every confrere here whose love for this 'company of Mary' was so vivid in all. There is a feeling of Hope, for there is openness to the Spirit, vibrancy in the confreres, and a desire to do more for the Lord in the Montfortian way and to take forward our Vice province to a new height and towards prosperity in the Mission of Wisdom Incarnate and in the Spirit of our founder Father De Montfort with the guidance of our Blessed Mother Mary.

Fr. Michael Sahayaraj SMM

Concluding remarks by Fr. Robin S. Seelan SJ

Dear Fathers,

As we come to the end of this Province Assembly, I have two feelings: feelings of gratitude, and feelings of hope. I am deeply grateful for many things, but to be more specific, for the presence,



inspiration, directions and guidance of the Holy Spirit from the time of the preparations to this moment of concluding the Assembly, for the graces of good health of mind and body to all of us here, for some clarity towards our future, for the presence of the Superior General and the Counsellor, who brought in the Universality dimension of the Society, for every confrere here whose love for this 'Company of Mary' was so vivid in all. I am also feeling hopeful at the end of this Assembly, for there is openness to the Spirit, vibrancy in the confreres, and a desire to do more for the Lord in the Montfortian way.

What did we do these days? We did a number of things at these levels, and I am hopeful that we all have been enriched in these levels: at the inspiration level, at the clarity of thought and purpose level, at the energy level, at the liberos level, at the spiritual level, at the intellectual level, at the mission level, at the temporal level, and at an integration level. Based on these levels, I have a few reflections to offer as we conclude,

1. The foundations

Two words that struck me quite strongly throughout were Liberos and Devotion. Both these words were used quite liberally during these past three days. And I want to say that these are quite foundational to every Montfortian. The word Liberos is a very powerful word, for Montfort seeks that every Montfortian should be 'free for God and His service'. The second word Devotion, especially the Marian Devotion, is at the core of every Montfortian. But what is devotion? Can we just reduce it to singing hymns to Mary and praying to her for healing and protection? Or can we just honour her without actually being inspired by

the way she served the 'kingdom of God'. She became the 'servant of the Lord (Lk 1:38), and lived that servanthood till the end. Are we not called to do the same? One of the hand-outs of Montfortian spirituality, that I found in your website has this to say:

According to Saint Augustine, "to honor and not imitate is nothing other than lying flattery." Mary wants to be a model, not just a refuge. She is not a protective and possessive mother, who looks her children into infantilism; but a mother who helps us grow towards maturity and pushes us to take risk. Welcoming her among one's own things, like the disciple that Jesus loved, means above all assimilating her attitudes: courageous faith, in her freedom and self-giving, responsibility and presence in history, where God's plan is implemented. Trusting or consecrating oneself to her means living one's baptism in her company, with evangelical coherence and radicality. (Handout of Montfortian spirituality, No. 5)

I strongly think that our 'devotions' have to be re-understood. We cannot be satisfied with simple praise of our Lady without becoming 'risk takers for humanity' just as she did. Mary's courageous faith is what we need today. Mary operated from an 'abundant mind-set'. She never considered herself a victim.

2. Becoming a Missionary

In many of us, the desire to be a missionary is much vivid. As said in the Rule, the Montfortian missionary's model is Jesus who said: "The Lord sent me to preach the good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). Many of your missions are in the midst of the poor and simple people and this is truly remarkable. And I believe most of you are good preachers too. But what is preaching? Is it

just the employment of words? Words of wisdom is what we need. And there can be no wisdom if we don't read, if we don't analyze our current situation, and if we don't really read the 'signs of the times', we may be 'outdated missionaries.

3. Deep sense of belonging

I notice that there is a great love among all of you towards your congregation, and this is wonderful. In your small groups, I notice how passionate you all were towards your Society. There is a strong feeling of being co-responsible along with the province and general administrative structures. This is highly commendable. And this is the reason why you all took active part in the various processes of the Assembly. I am truly wonderstruck at the number of persons who are all worried about 'registration of the Maria Bhavan property'. We need to take care of all our 'temporal goods'. I am sure we are aware that we need this property, so that our missions can flourish, and our people may benefit. So, who are our people? We need to clarify this more in the coming months and years. The Social teaching of the Church talks about 'option for the poor'. Your founder St Montfort also had a special love for the poor. And this, I think, should dominate our future discourses.

4. Creative Fidelity

There were many suggestions on new missions, which is a heartening sign, a sign of enthusiasm. From the many sessions we had, I understand that some missions are disheartening, and there is also a sense of frustration among some of us, which is quite natural and understandable. This can sometimes be an impediment for us to offer ourselves generously, creatively, and with great love. At the same time, humans are the only

species on this earth that has the capacity to be creative. 'Where your focus is, there your energy goes'. If our focus is on our obstacles alone, and if we view them with 'negative' eyes, then we will get stagnant. Maybe some of us need to ask, if we are on our path of becoming 'professional grumbler' or 'incorrigible optimists. We are not positive about everything, and we have to face the storms of our life. But we are not going to be cowed down, because 'courage' is a gift that we have received from our Lord through Mary. When we have this element of courage, we will strive to be creative. Maybe this 'creative dimension' didn't come out strongly in this Assembly, but if we truly dare to be free and faithful, we will surely become creative. It is a 'creative fidelity' that the Lord is asking of us today, which was well explained in the Acts of the General Chapter 2023.

5. Joyfulness

A fifth element that I noticed among many is a sense of joy. This was displayed by your punctuality, active participation in all the sessions, and wonderful exchanges of friendship among many of you. Being religious, and having completely abandoned everything to God, can we be 'sad' Montfortians? Surely not. Mother Teresa is said to have said this to her MC sisters: "a sad MC is a bad MC". Our first witness to the world is to joyfully embrace our kind of life, our strengths and vulnerabilities, and our mission and its hardships. What will then help us to increase our joy? Kind words, appreciation, expressions of gratitude. I think these need to increase among you all. To begin with, let there be self-appreciation, for we share what we are. It would be also good, both for body and mind, to 'let go'.

Could I let go of my past bitterness, unforgiveness, shame and guilt, anger, pain- however hard and harsh they might have been? Let go to rediscover how joyful person you are. Having a grumpy face distorts our true beauty. When you begin appreciating others, a new 'vibe' is created, and that can make a great difference in us and others.

6. Learning

A person who doesn't learn is equivalent to being dead! He's just waiting to be buried. We all need to be intellectuals. Your founder wrote a lot and this intellectual dimension cannot be missed in any of our ministries. Fr General spoke of 'depth' yesterday, and we need to have that same depth- to begin with an intellectual depth. We cannot go around with 'blissful ignorance'. We have enemies around us, and if we are too naïve, we will lose ground. Yes, we believe in Providence, but we also believe that God has endowed us with the gift of intellect too. I have a feeling that we might be moving towards a 'false saturation' thinking that we have learnt sufficiently. We need to create an 'impact' in this society, and so let's raise our standards- our standards of thinking, praying, and relating.

7. Discernment

Finally, a point on discernment. Our decisions cannot be emotional, not rational, but it has to be 'spirit-filled' and 'spirit-tilled'. Our discernment is always to seek God's will in our particular contexts today, and it has to be sought in a thorough way. The first discernment has to do with our own life-style- am I independent in the Spirit, or dependent out of fear and anxiety, likes and dislikes, on various kinds of groups. Am I a free person, who can offer an opinion for the common good, from the perspectives of the poor, whose voice I need to

be. In the many spiritual conversations, we had in this assembly, I found most of us filled with this feeling of 'common good'. This is exemplary, for this is our call. The second discernment has to do with discerning Christ's mission in today's context. We need to go in search of the people, hear their cries, and respond. The many suggestions that have come on this floor have been more focused on preservation of our properties, and resolving our own issues. Maybe in the months to come, we could focus on the signs of the time, our strengths, our opportunities, and respond accordingly. Periodic meetings, refresher courses and seminars, in this line will be of great help. You might like to consider in the future- a ministry of inter-religious dialogue, ecological awareness, migrants, the elderly, among other realities that you encounter.

The third discernment is to see the impact and influence we are creating through our ministries. How can we make a deeper influence and impact in the larger society? For all these discernment processes, deep listening is needed. I found you all to be good listeners, and we need to strengthen this in the coming days, by using the Triple-'A's of listening: **Attention, Attitude, Adjustment.**

Finally,

Fathers, this was my first experience with the Montfortian Fathers, and I am deeply touched by your spirituality, and hospitality. I deeply admire your simplicity in relating with one another, and the humility you all display, even to the level of obeying my 'physical exercises' requests!

These days were intense days of learning for me- first to know more about your spirituality, second to know about your congregation here in India, and third, to know how to work in a team. I appreciate the Preparatory Committee and Fr Peter Mascarenhas, the outgoing Provincial for their willingness and eagerness and a positive attitude towards the entire preparation exercise. And I am deeply inspired by the encouraging presence of Fr. Yoseph Putra Dwi Darma Watun, the Superior General. His kind words of appreciation and acknowledgment do mean a lot. I wish to express my wishes and prayers to the new incoming team, Fr Sebastian and his councilors. I am sure that they will take this assembly proceedings, as well as the Act of the GC 2023 forward.

Fathers, we are on a mission, and by mission we understand that we are sent. We are sent to the whole world, and so we surely will not like to restrict ourselves to a small world of Catholics alone. Your founder was, as mentioned in another spirituality handout," a priest of Christ, he showed forth Christ in his actions, and preached Him everywhere in his words". As Montfortians, the entire world is longing for you to show Christ in all that you do, in all that you become. As I complete my 'duty' as the animator or moderator of this Province Assembly, I commend myself to your prayers and blessings, and I assure you of my prayers as well.

Fr. Robin SJ.

THE COMMISSIONS

- **Provincial Superior: Fr. Sebastian Raj**
- **Vicar Provincial, Formation & Spirituality in-charge: Fr. Dominic**
- **Mission & Education in-charge: Fr. Esak**
- **Projects, Communication & Constructions in-charge: Fr. Deepak**
- **Finance & Province Bursar: Fr. Nashwin**

Different Committees of the Vice-Province

1. Finance Committee

Fr. Nashwin, Fr. Jerome, Fr. Prabhakar, Fr. Shibi & Fr. Prakash

2. Projects & Construction (Buying properties, Registration of Lands, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Dioceses and other Congregations)

Fr. Deepak, Fr. J. Joseph, Fr. David, Fr. Jesuraj, Fr. Francis Bulipe, Fr. Shibi & Fr. Amalraj

3. Statutes Committee

Fr. Anthony Periera, Fr. Gerard Smith, Fr. John Marie

4. Local Ratio Committee

Fr. Dominic, Fr. Michael Sahayaraj, Fr. J. Joseph, Fr. Francis Bulipe

5. Education Committee

Fr. Esak, Fr. Aswin, Fr. Deepak

6. Safeguarding & JPIC

Fr. Michael Sahayaraj, Fr. Aswin, Fr. Judis

7. Vocation Promotion

Vocation Promoter: Fr. John Marie

Karnataka: Frs. John Marie & Anthony Peter

Tamil Nadu: Fr. Allan & Bro. Daniel

Andhra & Telangana: Frs. Francis Bulipe & Kiran

Kerala: Frs. Shibi & Dominic

North India: Fr. Deepak & Bro. Amit

8. Secretariat and Archives: Bro. Abhilash



Renewal of Religious Profession of Vows

Albert Camus puts it beautifully: *“In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion”*. One of the best parts of the seminary formation is the annual retreats. This year too, we had one week retreat from the 26th to 31st May 2024 preached by Fr. Elangovan, C.Ss.R. Various themes were chosen throughout the retreat. Some of them were: **You belong to God, remain with God, Prayer, Humility, Call and Vocation of Moses, Temptation, Sin and Reconciliation, Holy Spirit, and Mother Mary**. We felt a deep sense of belonging to God in these days of silence, meditation, prayer and introspection. The peaceful and the silent atmosphere around made the whole retreat all the more wonderful. The thought-provoking reflections in each talk and sermon instilled in us the craving for more and more prayer and self-reflection. The most cherishing part of the retreat was the time of adoration in which we completely lost ourselves in speaking to the Lord. The retreat was a spiritually illuminating experience for all the brothers to examine our own life and to know ourselves in the relation with God. This annual retreat concluded with the solemn Holy Eucharist on 31st May, on the feast day of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On 30 May 2024, at 7:00 AM, a momentous event took place at the Maria Bhavan Chapel as the community gathered to celebrate the renewal of vows on the memorial of St. Joan of Arc. The main celebrant on the day of our renewal of vows was Rev.

Fr. Sebastian Raj SMM, the Provincial Superior. He spoke of the essence of true Christian calling and highlighted the faith of Bartimaeus in his introduction. It was indeed a rich, meaningful and prayerful occasion, our faith was deepened through the profound moments of the Holy Mass celebration. Along with him was Fr. Johnson James, who is our Rector, Fr John Lawrance our Administrator, Fr. Peter Mascarenhas, and our retreat preacher Fr. Elangovan CSsR were also present to grace the occasion. Fr. Elangovan in his sermon spoke about the uniqueness of Christian vocation is that “You belong to God and remain with God”, further highlighted the purpose of our vocation is for mission which was very much inspiring and fascinating. The chapel was filled with an atmosphere of reverence as



26 Scholastics who renewed the religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Our reaffirmation of commitment marked an essential step in our journey of dedication to God and the Montfortian mission. We thank God, ask for the grace and blessings as we continue to live out our mission of service and devotion in the spirit of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

The Entry of the Pre-Novices in to Novitiate and the First Profession of Bro. Anthonydass SMM

Entry into Novitiate

On 30th of May 2024 at Sneha Bhavan, the three young pre-novices Bros. Stany D'Souza, Sachin Karketa, and Nihas after a sufficient period of preparation and formation made their entry into the novitiate. Fr. Sebastian Raj the Provincial Superior of the Vice-Province of India accepted their consent to follow Christ radically in the footsteps of St. Montfort through an intense period of formation in the Novitiate. After the liturgy of the word, Fr. Peter Swamy gave a homily on the divine aspect of the call and the importance of listening to God's voice. The novices were given the Holy Bible and the writings of St. Montfort which will guide and illumine their journey of life as Montfortian religious. The ceremony ended with eucharistic blessing by the Provincial superior.



First Profession of Bro. Anthonydass

On 31st of May the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Anthonydass the novice, after one year of intense preparation in the novitiate at Kanathi, Sneha Bhavan, made his First Profession in the presence of the Provincial Superior, Montfortian confreres, diocesan and religious priests, religious

sisters, brothers and lay faithful. It was a grace filled and a joyous celebration. The Holy Mass was presided over by Fr. Sebastian the provincial, the homily was delivered by Fr. Peter Swamy who emphasized the challenges and advantages of religious life based on the scripture. After which Bro. Anthonydass in the presence of the sacred gathering, made his First Profession according to the constitutions of the Company of Mary.

After the Holy Mass there was a short felicitation ceremony. Fr. Judis Valan SMM the Novice Master felicitated the provincial team and thanked the gathering. Fr. Provincial Superior thanked everyone who were present for the celebration and felicitated the newly professed. Everyone congratulated Bro. Anthonydass as he cut the cake. Finally, Bro. Anthonydass thanked everyone present and all those who helped him to become a religious in the Company of Mary.

The celebration ended with a delicious fellowship meal. It was indeed a memorable and meaningful celebration.

Fr. Judis Valan SMM



My New Journey as a Priest in the Montfortian Family

As I reflect on the 7th of June 2024, I am filled with profound gratitude for the privilege of being welcomed into the Holy Orders by the Indian Vice-Province. The ordination ceremony, presided over by Most Rev. Dr. L. Anandam, Bishop of the Diocese of Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu, was a sacred moment at St. Sebastian's Church, R.C. Nagar, Vattanam.

Hailing from R.C. Nagar, Vattanam, an outstation of Our Lady of Voyage Parish, Thondi in Sivagangai Diocese, I begin on this spiritual journey with the guiding motto of

“ALL I HAVE IS YOURS” -TD 233.

The Bishop's homily encouraged me deeply, insisting me to embrace my role as a shepherd among the people, to proclaim the good news of the kingdom fearlessly, and to carry the gift of peace to all whom I minister. His words reminded me of the sacred calling I have received, instilling in me a sense of purpose and courage. The celebration not only gave me personal contentment but also made me witness the joy of the Vice Province adding me in their fold and welcoming me fondly into the Montfortian family.

As I joyfully begin on this new chapter of my life as a priest, I am humbled by the trust placed on me. With gratitude in my heart and determination in my spirit, I embrace the mission ahead, guided by the words of the psalmist: *“Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.”*

Fr. Arokia Jaya Ruban SMM

Experience of receiving the Minor Orders

Lector: The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel.

Acolyte: In the Roman Catholic Church, a person is installed in the ministry of Acolyte in order to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharistic Liturgy.

We being the Montfortians, were glad to receive the Minor orders, Lector and Acolyte. We were well prepared with the classes on Mariology and Montfortian Spirituality. The classes helped us to know more deeply our Charism and Spirituality. Through these Minor Orders, we became the servers of the Altar assisting the Celebrants in the Holy Mass and to distribute Communion to the sick and faithful. In the Spirit of these Orders, we learn to walk in the footsteps of St. Montfort our Founder as he lived happily praising the Lord.

Bro. John Darshan SMM



Birthdays

June

Fr. Norbert	06
Fr. Moses	07
Fr. Nepolean	08
Fr. Santhosh	09
Fr. Reny. P. J	10
Fr. Anthony Peter	12
Fr. John. V. Dias	15
Fr. T. Joseph	15
Fr. David Joseph	23
Fr. John Baptist	24
Bro. Daniel	29

July

Fr. Jerome Gonsalves	07
Fr. Prashant	11
Fr. Joji Kalarickal	17
Fr. Roy Elavunkal	20
Fr. Shibi Jose	26

August

Fr. Kiran	10
Fr. Prakash	13
Bp. Rozario Menezes	30

Ordination Anniversaries

June

05-06-2018

Fr. Prakash
Fr. Ravi Thappeta
Fr. Nashwin
Fr. Jayakumar
Fr. Balaraju
Fr. Arun D'Souza

07-06-1980

Bp. Raja Rao
Fr. Peter Swamy

Death Anniversary

Fr. Divyanathan 11th June
Fr. Gnana Prakash 9th August





Congratulations

Dear Fathers

(The New Provincial Team)