

Chronicles of the 2011 Montfortian Chapter Issue #2

MONDAY 9 MAY

To paraphrase a saying of Jesus, one could say that «the constitutions are for the Montfortian, not the Montfortian for the constitutions!» To be true to Montfort's charism today, certain changes have to be made. We started off the day with a presentation by Don La Salle suggesting 16 modifications to our constitutions. These can be organised as follows:

- 1. Formation.** Before, each entity looked to this. Now, the situation has changed: we have international houses of formation which offer new challenges.
- 2. Structures,** mainly the structure of vice-provinces. In fact, certain entities with older personnel don't have the resources necessary to hold a chapter, so new forms of organization are needed.
- 3. Representation at the General Chapter.** Father Santino brought to our attention the fact that in 2005, 1000 confreres were represented at the General Chapter by 45 delegates. In 2011, we are 53 delegates to represent 878 confreres! The only way out, is to reduce the numbers of delegates who come by right. It is towards that that suggestions are made.

A good time was spent in workshops and in general assembly to react to those propositions.

During the afternoon, we discussed the whole matter of internationality in our congregation, especially concerning formation houses (international novitiates and scolasticates) and works we are involved in.

TUESDAY 10 MAY

One of the aims of the chapter is to bring out a certain orientation in the congregation for the next six years. Through different documents (*lineamenta*, etc), the General Council has already asked us to think that over,



Committee working on the Proposition for Mission: Frans Fabry, Tom Poth, Enrique Gonzalez, Syriaque Ciné, Olivier Maire, Marco Pasinato (absent from picture: Georges Madore)

towards an orientation in the line of our mission. The committee that had been created to work on a concrete proposition presented its work to the assembly. A long discussion

followed, some stating their opinion, others suggesting elements to be added or taken out. The committee took note and will make another draft.

After that, Olivier Maire made a brief presentation on the spiritual accompaniment of lay associates. Great needs are felt in that domain. The creation of an *Institute of Montfortian Spirituality*, for the formation of lay associates, had been asked for at the last General Chapter, but never took form. We are forced to acknowledge that the formation of lay associates is often added to other tasks.

The afternoon was occupied with work on different topics:

- Modifications in the structures of our entities: province, vice-province, general delegation: how to organize these structures in ways that make them really differ.
- Internationality: new challenges appear, both at the level of formation and collaboration between entities.
- The ad hoc committee on the «proposition on the mission» presented its new draft. After some discussion, the assembly agreed on it, once minor changes would be brought.

WEDNESDAY 11 MAY

In the morning, we addressed two financial questions: the *per capita* which is a contribution

of each confrere to the General House, and the organisation of Mission procures. The amount of the *per capita* has not changed for many years. It was suggested that that be adjusted in certain ways and that it be maintained



as a symbol of each

confrere's belonging to the congregation. As for mission procures, their possible collaboration in the future was discussed.

Around 4:00 p.m., the capitulants left either by car or train to go to the Trastevere section of Rome, where we met members of the Sant'Egidio community. This is a community of lay people founded in 1968 by Andrea Riccardi, who was then an 18 year old student.. The group now has 50,000 members spread in 70 countries. Their «creed» is to believe in the transforming power of the Gospel. This brings its members to get involved «where things must change!» We were first welcomed at the *Modesta Valenti Centre*. This woman

(Modesta) was a poor homeless person who died at the Termini Station, in the presence of an indifferent crowd! Sant'Egidio reacted to this by organizing this centre for homeless people. A 1000 meals are served there three times a week. We then went to the House of the Community which has been in fact the first convent of Reformed Carmelites in Italy. This is where we can see a picture of the Saint who gave its name to the community. Some members of Sant'Egidio shared with us their experience, especially in Malawi and Mozambique where they care for persons afflicted with AIDS. We were also informed of their work as mediators in different

armed conflicts throughout the world

(Mozambique, Guinea, Niger).

Finally, we had supper with them, and then

went to the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere to

join with them in their evening prayer. This

visit had a real Montfortian flavour, and

was received as a call to believe

in the transforming power of the Gospel.



Evening prayer with Sant'Egidio at Santa Maria de Trastevere

THURSDAY 12 MAY

A fundamental element of a congregation is formation. A large document was presented to us by Don La Salle. The «*Ratio Studiorum*» presents all the elements and steps of formation, written out in 177 pages! The capitulants are invited to present their suggestions and comments to the committee who wrote it.

Afterwards, the committee in charge of writing down the proposition on mission presented its last draft. A large consensus was made as to the main orientation. We will stress what we are as «messengers». As Montfort tried to describe this messenger in his «*Prayer for Missionaries*», we will try, through reflection and concrete action, to understand what we should be in to-day's world. The committee noted a few adjustments before the final draft is made.

During the afternoon, we engaged into the preliminary steps for the election of the new General Team. The present members of the General Council shared with us their experience of the last six years. This was done with frankness, revealing to us the challenges and difficulties, but also the joy of meeting confreres throughout the world, and discovering their work.

We then discussed the three following questions in workshops:

1. The three main challenges that the next administration will face.
2. Three qualities required as Superior General, in the present context.
3. Three qualities required of members of the General Council.

FRIDAY 13 MAY

We started off the day by hearing a presentation from Don La Salle and Matthew Considine on the «Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults». We know for instance the damages brought to a child who is victim of sexual abuse. We must now bring about a mind set and a policy which aim first at protecting the person rather than an institution. This can be done in concrete ways through formation and the establishing of concrete rules.

Afterwards, Father Santino presented us with different documents concerning:

- complete revision of our constitutions, so they be adapted to to-day's situation;
- a proposition that the *per capita* be paid in Euros instead of dollars;
- a reflection on «working together» at all levels;
- a common proposition to be voted by the three Montfortian families (Montfortians, Daughters of Wisdom and Brothers of St-Gabriel) expressing their unity and willingness to work together.

At the Eucharist, we took time to name all the confreres who died since the last General Chapter and prayed for them.



The committee on International collaboration presents its report: Don La Salle (USA), Antonius Tensi (Indonesia), Louis Nkukumila (Malawi), Paul Arnel Lucero (Philippines)

In the afternoon, the committee on «international collaboration» presented its report. The members stressed both the richness but also the challenges encountered in present experiences. Finally, four areas were pointed out where international collaboration can be implemented:

- formation;
- a team on Montfortian spirituality;
- collaboration of the Northern entities, among themselves and with entities of the South;

- possibility of an International Mission Procure.

Lastly, Sister Micheline explained to us the details of tomorrow's program. It is a process towards the election of the Superior General. This process involves prayer, straw votes and the «*murmuratio*». So, please, all of you, get away from your computers and pray for us!

G.M, secretary to the Chapter