



Gabrielite

News Bulletin

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THANK YOU

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Dear Readers,

Kindly send the News, Articles, Photos from your respective Provinces latest by 10th June 2025.

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The next Gabrielite News Bulletin will be published in June 2025.

**- Bro. Louis Anthonysamy, SG
Incharge of communication**



Brother Bernard Guesdon, the former archivist, and Brother Sébastien NDABUNGANIYE, the new archivist, at the entrance of the archive of the Generalate in Rome.

Editor's Note

I am pleased to present the 217th issue of the Gabrielite News Bulletin, which brings together news, views and inspiring reflections from the Provinces and the Generalate.

This edition highlights significant events from the Generalate, such as the Silver Jubilee celebration of Bro. Bernard's dedicated service as archivist, the visit of the Superior General to Brazil, and Bro. José Valdir Moreira's final vows. It also highlights the meeting of the three central administrations of the Montfortian Family in France and the visit of the newly appointed Bishop of Iringa to the Generalate.

From the Provinces, we have rich contributions that reflect our mission activities:

Province of Pune: Silver and Golden Jubilee celebrants share their life experiences, gratitude for their vocation to Religious Life.

Delhi Province: The Montfortian Gabrielite Associates recount their recent gathering at Montfort Inter College, Lucknow.

Province of Trichy: Reports on the installation of the new Provincial Administration at their Provincial House in Trichy.

Province of Ranchi: Besides news from Montfort Sadan School in Kolkata, the province announces the launch of a new mission in Bangladesh.

North-East India: Provincial Bro. Maria Soosai writes a short biography of Bro. M. A. Thomas, which offers a glimpse into the life of a Legend.

Province of Spain: Highlights the recent Montfortian Gabrielite Associates meeting held on International Women's Day.

Province of Thailand: Reports on various activities of the province, including first professions, formation session for the young Brothers and Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Province of East Africa: This section shares events such as the visit of Provincials from Trichy and Senegal and the inauguration of the Grotto of Our Lady at Dar Es Salaam.

Province of Senegal: Describes their active role in organising a diocesan pilgrimage for the Jubilee Year of Hope and the visit of the St. Gabriel Solidarity delegation.

This edition also includes a thoughtful article by Bro. Déogracias IKASA on Poverty and Food Security in DR Congo, which analyses how our Montfortian mission can effectively respond to such challenges. We have included an inspiring interview with Bro. Henry Martineau from the Province of France, who walks the memory lanes of his missionary journey in Brazil. In addition, Bro. Mathew K. from Istrana writes about the recent activities of the Institute Ca' Florens Istrana and his meaningful visit to India.

A Time for Hope

As we march toward the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, Pope Francis reminds us that hope dwells in every human heart as a desire for good, even when the future is uncertain. Hope is not passive. It gives energy, direction, and meaning to our actions. Many symbols help us grasp the meaning of hope, like the season of spring, which brings renewal, the rising sun with its promise of a new day, the seed with its potential, and the anchor that holds firm in turbulent waters. Each of these reveals a different dimension of hope. By nurturing hope in our hearts and communities, we stay open to grace, grounded in faith, and united in the mission to build a better world.

I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of everyone involved in the publication of the GNB_217. We extend our sincere thanks to the translator Bro. Marcel Chapeleau. A special word of thanks to Bro. Jean-Marie Thior and Bro. Varghese Mandapathil for their Proofreading. We thank all the Provincial Superiors, Secretaries and News Reporters from the Provinces who have contributed news items for the successful publication of the GNB.

Have a good reading!
Bro. Louis Anthonysamy, SG



present to honour the archivist and historian. The mass was presided over by Father Antoine Pooda, chaplain of our community, during these weeks.

The mass opened with the hymn of the Jubilee 2000, Christ Yesterday, Christ Today, and ended with the well-known Magnificat 'My soul proclaims the Lord', followed by the customary photo of all the participants gathered around Brother Bernard in the chapel.

After the mass, to lead up to the aperitif, a short 8-minute video prepared by Brother Paul Texier was screened, presenting the various faces of Brother Bernard. Firstly, the Bernard born in Mouchamps, then successively Bernard Montfortian Gabrielist at the novitiate in Boistissandeu (Ardelay), Swiss Bernard in Fribourg (School of Faith), the African Bernard from Senegal and the Congo, and finally Roman Bernard: in short, an eternal Bernard in our memories and in our hearts.

Celebration of Brother Bernard Guesdon's 25 years in Rome

On Saturday, March 1, 2025, the Generalate community celebrated Brother Bernard's 25 years of service as archivist of our General Curia in Rome.

Although the sun had been lazy all day, and a fine rain had occasionally tried to make itself felt, Brother Bernard, the sunshine of the day, was well surrounded. The entire community Brothers and Sisters, and also a good number of Brothers of Christian Instruction from Ploërmel, two Sisters of Wisdom from Via Merulana and a large delegation of Montfort Missionaries were



Before presenting him with an icon of Saint Bernard, Brother Dionigi Taffarello, Superior General congratulated and thanked Brother Bernard. Bro. Dionigi said "On behalf of the entire Congregation and the Montfortian Family, on behalf of the entire Generalate community and all those present here and on my own behalf, dear Brother Bernard, I thank you for everything you have done over the past 25 years and for the way in which you have done it, and thank you for the example you have set for us through your testimony."

This was followed by a meal for about forty people, as abundant as it was delicious, interspersed with a song composed by Brother Jean-Marie Thior and performed with the assistance of Brother Sébastien Ndabunganiye.

Bro. Sébastien NDABUNGANIYE, SG



25 years of Brother Bernard Guesdon's Service in Rome: Message from the Superior General



Dear Fathers, Sisters and Brothers

It is with great joy that we gather here today to celebrate and thank our dear Brother Bernard Guesdon for his 25 years of valuable service in Rome as archivist of our General Curia.

Today, at this time of celebration, we would like to express our sincerest thanks to Brother Bernard, whose service and dedication have enriched our community and the entire Congregation to an extent that deserves to be celebrated.

After 32 years of missionary service in Senegal, Brother Bernard, with a great spirit of obedience, agreed 25 years ago to come to Rome for a new mission: that of archivist,

not with a fixed-term contract (which is unfortunately often the case today in our congregations), but with an open-ended contract... And he did it for 25 years, without ever complaining, without ever asking to change community or mission, because he approached this delicate mission with great passion and love.

Brother Bernard has done meticulous and passionate work as an archivist, carefully preserving our history and our most precious documents. His professionalism has been truly exemplary, and his research into the different aspects of our founder's history and the origins of the congregation will remain important and useful for the whole congregation and the Montfortian family.





remain engraved in our memories, thanks to his commitment to celebrating life and the important moments in each person's story.

Finally and most importantly, I want to emphasise how Bro. Bernard always put others first, showing a genuine interest and loving attention that made each of us feel unique and valued. This selflessness is a wonderful example of how we should behave towards each other, recognising and accepting the value of each person. He never put himself at the centre of the attention, he always put others first.

It is with gratitude and admiration that we thank Brother Bernard for all that he has given to our community. His legacy of service, simplicity, communion and concern for others will remain a model and a source of inspiration for us. Thank you, Brother Bernard, from the bottom of our hearts.

Dear Brother Bernard, another aspect of your life as a Brother of Saint Gabriel that has always impressed us is your passion for the saints, for their lives, but above all your passion for our founders, Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, the Blessed Marie-Louise Trichet, Gabriel Deshayes. You have always tried to learn from them the aspects that can help us grow spiritually and as Christians.

From the latter, and from your patron saint, St Bernard, you also learnt a great devotion to the Virgin Mary, whom you prayed to and sang to frequently.

The simplicity of his life is no less important. In a world where materialism and selfishness often prevail, Brother Bernard chose to live humbly and soberly, reminding us that true value is found in spirituality and sincere human relationships. His constant focus on community life strengthened the bonds within our community, making every shared moment an opportunity to strengthen community relationships.

Fr Bernard also emphasised the moments of joy and celebration in our community. With his talent as a singer, his skill in the art of rhyming, his keen eye for photography and for special moments, he made every celebration memorable. These are occasions that will



That is why, at the end of this message of thanksgiving, I would like to quote a famous text by St Bernard on the role that Mary can play in our lives, a text that certainly also inspired St Louis-Marie de Montfort: 'In dangers, anxieties, uncertainties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. May she never be far from your heart. And to be sure of obtaining the favour of her prayers, do not neglect the example of her life. By following her, you do not go astray; by praying to her, you do not despair; she holds you, you do not collapse; she protects you, you do not fear; she guides you, you do not grow weary; she favours you, you succeed'.

This quotation is also intended as the prayer we all address to Mary, that she may always be your guide, that she may protect you and give

you the health you need to continue to bear witness to your passion for Christ, for the life of a Religious Brother that you have always lived with fidelity and passion.

On behalf of the entire Congregation and the Montfortian Family, on behalf of the entire Generalate community and all those present here and on my own behalf, dear Brother Bernard, I thank you for everything you have done over the last 25 years and for the way in which you have done it, and thank you for the example you have given us through your witness.

Bro. Dionigi Taffarello, SG
Superior General



Visit of the Superior General to *Brazil*



From the 30th January - 6th February, our community was visited by Brother Dionigi Taffarello, our Superior General. He knows the Brazilian Gabrielite sector well, having accompanied it for about ten years, to the point that, as he himself says, real emotional bonds have been created between him and the Brothers of Brazil. Therefore, it is with great joy that we welcome him, taking the opportunity to benefit from his wise advice and guidance to grow in our community and spiritual life, renew our missionary commitment and reflect calmly and clearly on the future of our presence in Brazil.

During the personal interviews and community meetings we had with Bro. Dionigi, we were able to talk about everything that makes up our life: health, spiritual life, the different aspects of community life, our involvement in CECOM (Centro Educativo e Comunitário São Gabriel) and in the parish community, GAMOS (Gupo dos

Amigos de Montfort) and vocational animation.

If we take into account our small number, the lack of candidates, and the age of Brother Daniel, we can only recognise the fragility of the Brazil sector, without losing hope in a future that, although uncertain, does not depend on us alone. Each of the Brothers in Brazil is therefore preparing for different eventualities. As pilgrims of hope, as Pope Francis encourages us to be, we have complete confidence in the decisions that the Lord will inspire our superiors to make.

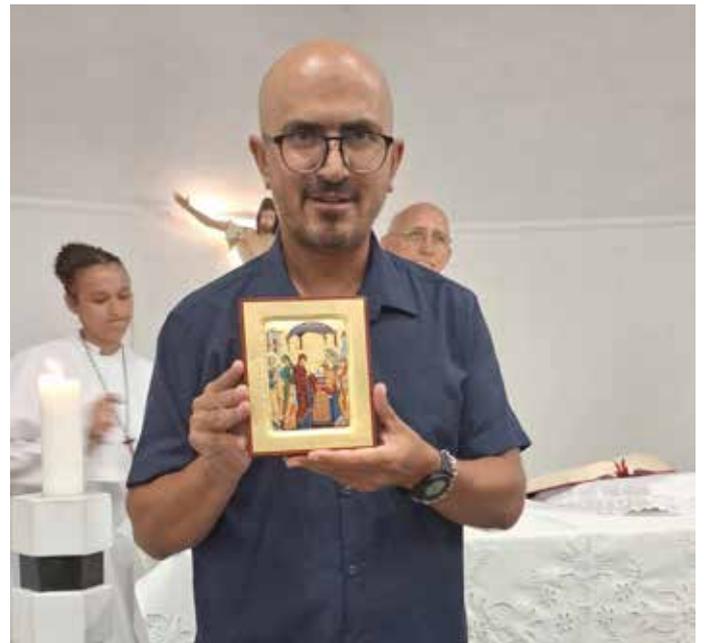
We sincerely like to thank Brother Dionigi, who despite the heavy responsibility he bears, did not hesitate to devote an entire week to our small community. We regret that Brother Jean Marie Thior was unable to accompany him on this visit and eagerly await his next visit in October.



Final Vows of Brother José Valdir Moreira

The Superior General's trip had been scheduled such that he could receive the final vows of Brother José Valdir Moreira.

Brother José Valdir began his training in 2014, going through the various stages of pre-postulancy, postulancy and novitiate in the community of Nova Contagem; Brother Marcos Rodarte Junior was his main formator and novice master.



He took his first vows on 8 December 2016. It was Bro. Dionigi, who had received his first vows. From August 2023 to August 2024, Bro. José Valdir stayed in France to learn French and took part in the session and retreat organised by the Central Administration for French-speaking Brothers in Kinshasa.



This ceremony took place on 2 February, during the mass for the feast of the Presentation, which is also World Day for Consecrated Life. The mass was presided over by Fr Carlos, one of the

priests of our parish, in the basic community 'Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal'. For this celebration, Brother Marcos had prepared a leaflet so that the community could accompany him in the best possible way. It had been carefully prepared by the liturgy team and, in particular, by the choir team made up of the children and teenagers of Gamo Mirim (Group of Montfort), the Friends of who had prepared and performed the songs with the greatest care. The celebration of perpetual vows is always a moving ceremony that touches the hearts of the participants and leaves a lasting impression. It is also a small seed sown at random, but which, God willing, may bear fruit in new vocations.

After the celebration, we organised a get-together for all those who had taken part in the ceremony and who had come in large numbers to show their friendship and pray for Brother José Valdir. Our gratitude to all of them for their presence and the support they give to our community.



VISIT OF THE APPOINTED BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF IRINGA (TANZANIA)



On Thursday, March 13, 2025, Father Romanus, the newly appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Iringa, accompanied by his Tanzanian compatriot, Father Luciano, visited the community at the Generalate and shared an evening meal.

Prior to his appointment as Bishop, Father Romanus was the parish priest in Rujewa, where our Brothers from the Province of East Africa are present, and with whom he maintains a good relationship. His visit to our General Curia following his appointment as bishop demonstrated his desire to further strengthen his ties and collaboration with the Brothers of Saint Gabriel. It was also an opportunity for him to meet our Superior General, Brother Dionigi Tafarello and other members of the Central Administration.

Bro. Sébastien NDABUNGANIYE, SG



Meeting of the 3 Central Administrations 2025

The annual traditional meeting of the three Central Administrations of the Montfortian Family took place from March 20 to 25, in St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre under the responsibility of the Daughters of Wisdom. St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre is a Holy land full of history for the Montfortian family, being the birthplace of the three congregations; Montfort Missionaries, the Daughters of Wisdom and the Brothers of St. Gabriel.



This year's meeting began with a three-day retreat led by Sister Marie-Reine Gauthier, Daughter of Wisdom, on the theme: 'The love of Jesus Christ, Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, our hope'.

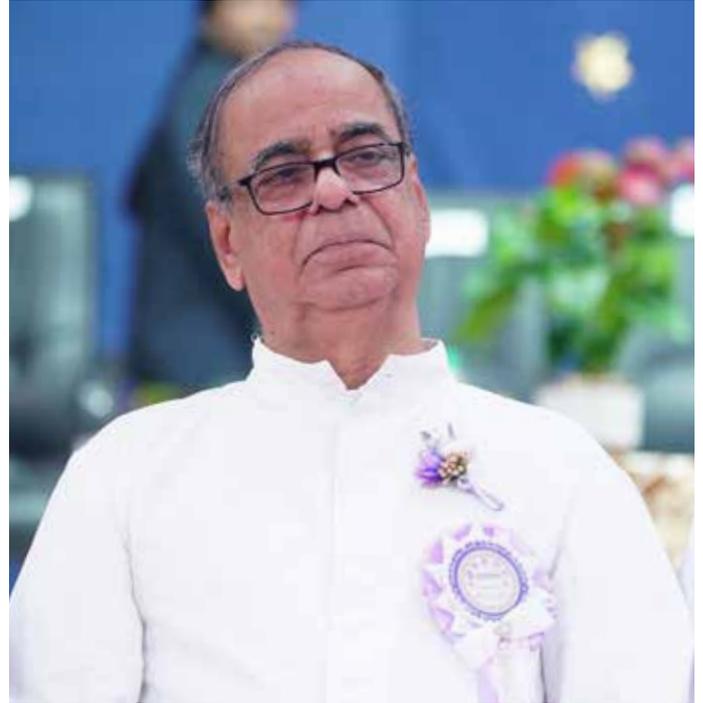
The meeting continued with a time for sharing on the life of the congregations, a session with the three Provincial Superiors of France (Bro. Yvan Passebon, FSG, Sr. Isabelle Retailleau, FDLS, Fr. Paulin Ramanandraibe, SMM), and a fraternal visit to Pontchâteau.



The next meeting will be organized by the Brothers of Saint Gabriel.



A Celebration of Faithful Commitment: Embracing Simplicity and Service in Christ



Today, as we celebrate the Diamond Jubilee and Silver Jubilee of our religious profession, I am drawn to reflect deeply on the essence of dedication, commitment, and detachment. The Scripture passage from Proverbs 30:5-9 beautifully encapsulates the guiding principles of this life:

“Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar. Two things I ask of You; do not to me before I die: remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed

me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny You and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.”

These words, written centuries before Christ, remain profoundly relevant even today. They remind us of the dangers of worldly attachments, the unequal distribution of wealth, and the temptation of power and riches. In a world fraught with violence, greed, and materialism, this message calls us to embrace simplicity, humility, and contentment.

For those of us in religious life, the vow of poverty is central to our commitment. At the time of our first profession, we were reminded of how to use the resources of the world wisely and with a spirit of detachment. May this call to detachment from material possessions inspire not only religious communities but also all people to lead lives of integrity, generosity, and faithfulness.

As I mark this joyous occasion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to His Eminence Cardinal Poola Anthony for his gracious presence and for leading this celebration. Your presence is a visible sign of God’s blessings and encouragement for all of us.





I also thank my sisters and relatives, especially those who have come from Vakathanam and Mannanam, for their unwavering support since the time I joined this society as a candidate. Your love and prayers have been a source of strength throughout this journey with the Lord.

My sincere thanks go to the All Saints community and staff for their meticulous planning and efforts in making this day truly special and memorable. Your dedication and hard work are deeply appreciated.

Finally, I thank each one of you, dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, friends, and relatives for enriching this celebration with your presence and prayers. Your support and love strengthen us in our commitment to God and His mission. May God continue to bless us all abundantly, and may this celebration inspire us to renew our commitment to living lives of simplicity, service, and love.

Thank you.
Bro. P. T. Joseph, SG

A Silver Line

I am delighted to talk about how God accompanied me (sometimes carried me) throughout my life until this day. And as I stand at the crossroads of what is sometimes called 'real life,' I want to extol the importance of surrendering to the Divine. Surrendering to the Divine personally means to me what Mary said to the Angel Gabriel, "Let it be"; what Jesus said to John the Baptist at the River Jordan, "Let it be"; and what Jesus again said to God our Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Let it be." At a crucial point in my life, I also said, "Let it be," which you will understand as we traverse through the graph of my life in a few moments.

As a 13-year-old boy, little did I know my parents' intentions. They came from impoverished backgrounds, and neither of them had been to school, but they allowed me





to follow my vocation. Perhaps they thought I would never experience poverty if I joined Religious Life.

Looking back on my life, especially as a 23-year-old at my first profession, it is a slightly uncomfortable experience for the 47-year-old that I have become. I was travelling on a well-trodden road, moving smoothly toward the conventional and sought-after ministry of being the head of an institution.

However, talent and intelligence have not yet inoculated anyone against the caprices of fate. One will never truly know oneself or the strength of one's relationships until both have been tested by adversity. Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, I had to press the reboot button of my life, losing everything except two things God had given me: my life and my vocation to Brotherhood.

An exceptionally short-lived career as a community superior and school principal imploded, leaving me devastated. The fears that my parents had for me and that I had for myself had both come to pass. By every usual standard, I was the biggest failure I knew.

At that dark phase of my life, my only prayer was: "Lord, now my life is in Your hands... please lead me." There's a hymn in *With Joyful Lips (Hymn Book)* that says: "Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard You calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if You lead me." Though I had sung this song countless times, its meaning struck me only when, in the early hours of the dawn, I heard a knock at my door. It was the Provincial standing there, asking, "Will you go

to Africa as a missionary?" After a series of high-voltage meetings, where resistance and current were directly proportional. I finally said, "Let it be."

I started the journey without knowing the destination. Destiny seemed more accurate than the destination itself. I had to create a road where there was none. It demanded enormous courage to believe in Jesus' exhortation: "Enter through the narrow door." Ironically, that was the only door open to me while the rest were tightly shut.

I always had a tendency to go against the dictum: "The best way of avoiding problems is to do nothing." My focus was not on what I had become but on what others had become because of me.

Among the numerous definitions of success, the one dearest to me is: "Success is a byproduct of enduring failures." My struggles in life gave me an inner security that no position or post ever could. I realised that I had a strong will, and my experiential knowledge helped me believe that I am *energy*, *energy* that changes its form but is never destroyed.

So, given a Time Turner, I would tell my 23-year-old self that happiness lies not in acquisition or achievement but in the journey itself. Life has no rewind button, only repair. Success is not instant; failure is not constant. This liberating discovery enables me to proceed without fear.

Bro. M. Joseph, SG

Province of Delhi



MGA Meeting at Montfort Inter College, Lucknow

The MGA meeting of Montfort Inter College, Mahanagar, Lucknow, was held on January 26, 2025 at the residence of the Brothers. We, the MGA members, along with the Brothers of the community, gathered in the chapel after the Republic Day celebration in the school.

The meeting commenced with a hymn sung by all the members present.

Talk by Bro. T.T. Mathew

Brother T.T. Mathew delivered an insightful talk on 'The Year of Prayer' that preceded the Jubilee Year 2025. He elaborated on the meaning and significance of prayer in our daily life, especially as Montfort Gabrielite Associates. Ten key points drawn from Notes on Prayer by Pope Francis and the pastoral aid Teach Us to Pray were explained with befitting examples. He underscored the statement of Pope Francis. "Prayer is the breath of faith. Prayer is faith's most specific expression." He added that prayer is the spiritual oxygen we all need.

He explained further with Biblical texts that the most fundamental reason why we need to pray is that Jesus himself prayed. In the Gospels there are eighteen different occasions where we find Jesus in prayer. He also emphasised on the centrality of daily family prayer and the need to bring up our children in Christian faith and

tradition. The most common family prayer is the Rosary. Quoting St. John Paul II he added, "The Rosary is also, and always has been, a prayer of and for the family. This prayer was particularly dear to Christian families at one time, and it brought them closer. It is important not to lose this precious inheritance. We must return to the practice of family prayer and prayer for families, continuing to use the Rosary" (Rosarium Virginis Marie, 41).





“Prayer is the breath of faith. Prayer is faith’s most specific expression.” – Pope Francis

He further highlighted the significance of the Rosary from the writings of our founder like ‘The Secret of the Holy Rosary’ and ‘The Treatise on the True Devotion to Mary’. St. Louis de Montfort said, “Recite your Rosary with faith, with humility, with confidence and with perseverance.”

The members expressed their gratitude to Brother Mathew for his inspiring talk.

Rosary cum Prayer Service

All participants joined in singing the Rosary. This was followed by the recitation of a prayer taught by Saint Louis Marie de Montfort "Consecration to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom through the Hands of Mary". A special prayer was also made to the Holy Family, taken from Amoris Laetitia.

Discussion on Outreach Activities



A discussion was held on visiting places where members could assist people in need and contribute in any possible way. Various suggestions came up, and finally, we agreed to visit St. Francis School for the Hearing Impaired at Thakuganj, Lucknow, sponsor a meal for them, and make them happy with some recreational games. This visit is scheduled for February 2025.

Fellowship Refreshment

The meeting concluded with a refreshment provided by the Principal, Bro. Jinu Abraham.

Mrs. Cicilia Francis

Province of Trichy



Installation of the New Provincial Administration – Trichy (2025-2028)

The Province of Trichy welcomed its new Provincial Administration with a solemn prayerful celebration on March 25, 2025. The installation coincided with the feast day of our Congregation, adding deeper significance to the occasion.

Provincial Council Meeting

Earlier in the day, the Provincial Council gathered at Villa Montfort, Trichy, to reflect on the past six years of service and express gratitude for the Brothers' dedication and support. The meeting also marked the official transition to the new administration.

Solemn Eucharistic Celebration

The Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Rt. Rev. Dr. Bernard Justin Gnanapragasam, Bishop of Jaffna, was the day's highlight. During the



Mass, the newly appointed Provincial, Bro. John Britto, along with his Councilors, participated in a special prayer of commitment, holding candles as a sign of their dedication. The congregation also renewed their consecration in the spirit of Montfort.

Following the Mass, the outgoing Provincial, Bro. Irudayam, expressed his gratitude for the years of service alongside his team. The new Provincial, Bro. John Britto, acknowledged the challenges ahead and emphasised the importance of unity and trust in God's guidance. His Lordship also shared words of encouragement on leadership in Religious Life.

The ceremony concluded with a group photo and a moment of fraternal joy, symbolising the continuity of our mission. We express our heartfelt thanks to the Central Administration for its unwavering support and guidance.

May the new provincial administration be blessed with wisdom and strength as they lead the Province forward.

Bro. Irudayam, SG
The outgoing Provincial.



THE VISION TAKES FLIGHT



A Warm Embrace: The Beginning of a Sacred Missionary Zeal in Bangladesh.

In a momentous step towards fostering faith and service, the Montfort Brothers of Ranchi Province, led by Bro. Jacob Panjikanan and Bro. Rajesh Barla, inaugurated a new mission in the Diocese of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, on Sunday, March 09, 2025.

A Grand Welcome by the Diocese

The arrival of the missionaries was greeted with warm hospitality. Most Rev. Gevas Rozario, the Bishop of Rajshahi, Rev. Fr. Premu Rozario, the Parish Priest, along with esteemed Priests, Sisters and the faithful community, extended a heartfelt welcome to the Brothers on 09 March, 2025. In a solemn yet joyful ceremony at Andharkota, the local Parish Church, the Bishop blessed their mission and encouraged them to be beacons of Christ's love in the region.

The Church as a Home: the Community Rejoices

The local villagers, young and old, gathered in large numbers in the church to witness the commencement of this holy mission. No celebration in Bangladesh is complete without the mesmerising beats of traditional music and the grace of folk dances. The local community honoured the missionaries with a traditional





welcome as part of the welcome ceremony. The rhythmic steps of the dancers, dressed in decorative costumes, narrated the story of their land, their struggles, and their unwavering faith. Bro. Jacob and Bro. Rajesh, with humility and devotion, embraced their new mission with their commitment to English education, women's empowerment, healthcare, and faith formation.

Bro. Johnson V. George, SG





MONTFORT SADAN, KOLKATA

On the 2nd of January 2025, we had a religious gathering at Dishari, Baruipur. Many Religious men and women from the Baruipur Diocese gathered for the programme. We had a holy Eucharistic celebration led by the Bishop, followed by a short cultural programme. We had many events like singing, group games, gift exchanges, and cutting the cake. Also, we enjoyed a group dance, after which we proceeded to the fellowship meal.



Annual Sports Day was enthusiastically held at St. Montfort's Sr. Sec. School, Baruipur, on the 18th of January. The programme began with the arrival of the Chief Guest Mr. Palash Ch. Dhali, IPS and Guest of honour Mr. Nazrul Hoque Sepai Ex. DI of Secondary Education. The school's playground was swarming with zeal, passion and excitement. The students displayed their skills and talents through drills, energetic sports events, band displays, March past, etc.



They mesmerised the audience with their energetic performance. All in all, it was indeed a good experience for children and their parents. The winners who made it to the victory stand felt proud of being awarded the medals and certificates and appreciated by the chief guest.

On January 19th, we invited Fathers, including the Bishop, who cares for our spiritual activities and spiritual nourishment of our community by offering Holy Eucharist every Tuesday and Friday.

On 21st of January, we celebrated the birthday of Bro. Jayapal Reddy the local superior of the community. In the morning Bro. Pradeep conducted a short birthday prayer service in honour of the Birthday celebrant, we wished him, prayed for his life and mission. In the school, teachers organised a short birthday celebration in the afternoon with cake cutting and a melodious birthday song. Also, in the evening nearby community Fathers were invited for the celebration. We had the Holy Eucharist followed by fellowship dinner.

Bro. Pradeep Horo's birthday was celebrated on January 26. We had a beautiful celebration with the school staff. In the community, we had a birthday prayer service conducted by Bro. Jayapal Reddy, followed by dinner.





A Beacon of Love and Faith: The Legacy of Bro. M. A. Thomas

A shining light among us that lit up the Montfortian trail brightly for the last 64 years has left the earthly presence to find its heavenly abode, leaving us all in heartbreaking sadness.

Bro. M. A. Thomas was a dynamic fatherly figure who brought happiness and life to all, especially the Hearing impaired. The scripture “I have done my best in the race. I have run the full distance and have kept the faith. And now there awaits the victory prize for me” would reflect the time that he spent here with us quite literally.

Born on 30th April 1939 at Koduserry in Eranakulam District of Kerala, Kerala, to Mr. Anthony Morely and Mrs. Elisha, he was one of the six children in the family. His divine calling, along with his commitment and devotion to his Religious Life, enthused the late Bro. M. A.

Anthony and his nephew Bro. M. P. Anthony to become Religious and join the Montfort Brothers congregation.

Recruited by Bro. Stanislaus and Bro. Crescentius, he joined as a candidate at Coonoor, Tamilnadu, and made his first profession on 12 April 1961 and the Perpetual Profession on 23 December 1967 at Coonoor. He started his teaching career in 1964 and served many schools in Tamilnadu and the North East.

He was a strict disciplinarian with a humane touch, a great administrator, and an efficient Principal who made a difference in the lives of many students, staff, parents, and Montfort Brothers, including the people with disabilities who had the privilege of being inspired by him during the many years of his active service to the Society by astutely guiding their careers and building their lives.





Bro. Thomas M. A. and Bro. Thampy Alex (IND).



Bro. Martin and Bro. Thomas M. A.



Bro. Varghese Mandapathil and Bro. Thomas M. A.



Bro. Martin and Bro. Thomas M. A.

Jesus said to them “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Matt: 4:19. Appreciating the life that he has chosen and having the passion to increase the number of Brothers have made Bro. M. A. Thomas walk hundreds of miles. As a result, he successfully recruited many candidates for the congregation of Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel in the North East Province. As the Secretary of the Diocesan Commission of Education, Diocese of Shillong, he was at the forefront of formulating education policies after his many visits to the Diocesan schools under his charge to understand the aspects to be improved. He has contributed immensely to raising the standard of education in the Diocese. He was also extremely hard working for the success of the Brothers’ Mission in the North East.

It is rightly said, “Goodbye is not easy. Memories always pierce the heart, and no words can say it all”! May the peace which comes from the memories of the love we have shared with Bro. M. A. Thomas during his sojourn on this earth and the assurance that we have another intercessor in heaven, comfort us now and in the days ahead.

Our beloved ‘Appan’, as he is affectionately called, has passed over to his new life to find the Lord’s reward of Eternal Peace. Let his Soul rest in blissful peace in the company of Jesus, Mary, St. Montfort, our founder and Marie Louise Trichet, and Father Gabriel Deshayes and all the saints in heaven.

Bro. Maria Soosai S, SG
Provincial Superior.



Forming together in a shared mission

The 8 March marked the world Women's Day, during which we prayed through Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Church, our Sister and our Mother.

On the weekends of 8 and 9 March, Brothers, Associates and Collaborators met in Zaragoza to spend two days reflecting on Mary.

After starting the day, Brother Alejandro gave a talk on Mary in the life of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort. He invited us on a journey through the life of the saint and through the churches and shrines where Saint Louis de Montfort venerated Mary. He began by presenting the love of St Louis Marie: Mary, the Cross, Jesus the wisdom, the Holy Spirit, and the poor. Of all these devotions Mary and the Cross were present throughout Montfort's life: from his childhood to his death.

As we followed his development in the Marian faith, we also visited the holy places that housed images dear to Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort: during his time in Rennes, Notre-Dame

des Miracles et des Vertus, in the church of Saint-Sauveur; Notre-Dame de la Paix in the Carmelite convent; Notre-Dame de la Bonne Nouvelle, in the Dominican convent; Notre-Dame de Paris; Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, in the town of Chartres; the shrine of Notre-Dame de Sous-terre; the chapel of Mary in the church of Saint-Sulpice and Marie Reine des Cœurs, in Montbernage; Notre-Dame de Lorette, in Italy; Notre-Dame des Ardilliers, in Saumur; Notre-Dame de la Croix, in the village of La Chèze; Notre-Dame de la Sagesse, at the hermitage of Saint-Lazare; the Virgin Mary of Calvary in Pontchâteau; Notre-Dame de Toute-Patience, in La Séguinière; Notre-Dame du Chemin, the sculpture he always carried with him.





The theme for the rest of the day was the 10 virtues of Mary, as set out by Saint Louis-Marie in no. 108 of his Treatise on True Devotion to Mary: profound humility, living faith, blind obedience, continual prayer, universal mortification, divine purity, ardent charity, heroic patience, angelic gentleness and divine wisdom.

A video with images and biblical texts introduced us to the first three virtues. The next three were worked on in a prayer workshop. The last four were presented in the form of a 'film' with icons depicting the main Gospel episodes about Mary. The images invited us to contemplate the scene and then to find the most visible virtue in each one.

The last activity of the weekend was an hour of assembly to discuss issues common to the group:

setting up the future team of animators and formators for Shared Mission, following up the cause of our martyred Gabriélistes Brothers...

Then the Eucharist brought us all together around the altar. A fraternal meal served as a farewell to these days.



Province of Thailand



From Jubilees to First Professions: A Season of Grace in Thailand Province

From October 18 to 20, a three-day session on Development was organised for the school administrators by Bro. Joseph Surakit Srisrangkulwong, the Director of Saint Gabriel's College, Samsen at Tara Mantra Cha am Resort. To facilitate the sessions, two experts were invited to conduct the development courses and some exercises so that all the co-administrators could get to know each other better. The SG Alumni Association supported the expenses of the three-day sessions. All the participants were very happy with the knowledge and activities they received from the experts and with the sharing they did. Self-awareness is the keyword for this seminar.



As every year, on Saturday, November 2, at 17:00, the Brothers Cemetery at Sriracha was blessed. Fr. Joseph Yod Senarak, the parish priest of the Sacred Heart Church, Sriracha. He was the principal celebrant of the mass, along with other priests.

And the following morning, Sunday, 3 November, there was the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Bro. Peter Arwut Silaket and Bro. Peter Siam kaewprasit at Del Rosario Chapel, Assumption College Sriracha. These two Brothers had their first Professional on November 20, 1999. His Excellency Bishop Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana, the Bishop of Chiangmai Diocese, presided over the



ceremony. Brothers and teachers from the school where these two Brothers worked also came to congratulate them, together with friends and relatives, alumni and their present students. After the Mass, all enjoyed chinese lunch.



On November 11 morning, Brothers, teachers, parents, alumni, and students had the thanks giving mass on the Feast day of St Martin de Tours, the religious name of Brother Martin de Tours, one of the five Brothers who came to Thailand as a missionary in the year 1901 from France. They first started the mission at Assumption College Bangkok. Later in 1920, Rev. Brother Martin de Tours started St. Gabriel's College at St Francis Xavier Church. It was a school for boys.

Brother Martin de Tours is considered a genius in everything. Apart from his daily teaching, he was an architect, an artist, an astronomer, a craftsman, etc., but above all, he was a simple religious man. As Rev. Brother Hubert de Liege wrote in his 70th Anniversary book of Thailand, " Brother Martin de Tours insisted on regularity for the community members. He had a deep respect for his superiors. An exemplary religious for mortification, charity, piety, and zeal for the salvation of souls. He was looked upon as a Saint by all those who knew him."



The body of Rev. Brother Martin de Tours after his death.

The TUK DAEND or RED BUILDING was constructed 104 years ago by Brother Martin de Tours. In 2020, it received the Honorable ASA Conservation Award for Architecture and Community Heritage Conservation Award from HRH Princess MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN .

Rev. Brother Martin de Tours passed away on March 3, 1976 . He was a missionary in Thailand for 32 years. May his soul rest in peace. May his holy and exemplary life inspire us to carry out our mission faithfully.



On January 16, there was a gathering of retired teachers of St. Gabriel's College Samsen at the school Alumni Hall.



Bro. Dr. Peter Witthaya Thepkorn received the bouquet of congratulations from the President after graduation this year.

The Formation Commission organised the 2nd Junior Brothers Continued Formation for 14 young Brothers at Provincial Center (GPC) on January 27 and 28. It was planned to strengthen



the vocations and reform their Religious Spirit. Fr. Yod Senarak and Fr. Supiti Ruam Aram were the resource persons.

First Profession Ceremony of Novice Alphonso Nattapong Wantaprom

On January 31, 2025, the First Profession of Novice Alphonsus Nattapong Wantaprom marked a significant and joyous occasion for the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel in Thailand. It was an essential step in his dedication to God through Religious Life.



The Eucharistic celebration was held at the Montfort Novitiate in Chiang Mai, presided over by Bishop Francis Xavier Vira Arponratana. Brother Dechachai Sripicharn, the Provincial Superior, received the profession of vows, witnessed by fellow Brothers, family members, and the faithful who gathered to share in this blessed occasion.

On January 29, at St. Gabriel's College Samson, Brothers, Teachers, Parents, and Students celebrated the Chinese New Year with many



activities. They showed their gratitude to their ancestors, who came from China hundreds of years ago and brought many developments and prosperity to Thailand. Without their hard labour, Thailand would not be where it is today.



Tuesday, 25th March, is the Feast Day of our Congregation, the Annunciation. Brother Philip Amnuay Yoonprayong, the Brother Priest, was the celebrant along with other priests. After the Mass, Brother Peter Sakda Sakonthawat, the new Provincial Superior, unveiled the statue of the Annunciation in front of the Annunciation Building. Brothers, priests, sisters, parents, alumni and students attended. The day ended with congratulatory bouquets and words of encouragement from various organisations to our new Provincial, on his first day as the Provincial. We wish him success in his leadership and we pray to God and the Holy Spirit to lead and guide him always.

Bro. Joseph Surakit presented the statue of Our Lady of the Annunciation to our new Provincial.



Bro. Peter Sakda, priests, brothers, sisters, PTA members, alumni, teachers and students came to unveil and bless the statue of the Annunciation at St Gabriel's College, Bangkok.

In his homily, the presiding Bishop emphasised the importance of trusting in God and being His instrument in serving His people, which is an essential calling in the life of a Religious Brother. Congratulations to Brother Alphonsus Nattapong Wantaprom on this first step in his Religious vocation. May God's abundant blessings always be with him as he continues his journey of faith and service. Bro. Achin Tengtrakul, St. Gabriel' College .

Bro. Achin Tengtrakul, SG (*St. Gabriel' College.*)

Province of East Africa

A New Year of Faith, Formation, and Fellowship



Visit of the Provincials of Trichy and Senegal

At the beginning of the year, we welcomed Bro. Irudayam Michael and Bro. Etienne Ka, Provincials of Trichy and Senegal respectively, who were visiting the Province with the main objective of meeting their formees, who are undergoing the Novitiate and Pre-Novitiate Formation Program. We thank them for taking the time to visit us; it was a joy for us to welcome and accompany them on their visit to our institutions and to some places of interest. This visit provided them with valuable insights into the life and mission of Brothers in East Africa, along with exposure to local culture and traditions as it was their maiden visit.





First Death Anniversary of Bro. James N. A.

On February 13, 2025, we commemorated the first death anniversary of Bro. James N.A. with memorial services held at various places. At Boys Town Hyderabad, family members, including his siblings and their families, gathered alongside Brothers from the Provinces of Hyderabad and Pune. Bros. Jean Chrysostome and Anaclet Kabirigi represented the Province of East Africa at this solemn occasion. The commemoration included a Memorial Mass, prayers at the cemetery, and communal meals. Simultaneously, at the Provincial House in Montfort Dar Es Salaam, the local Parish Priest presided over a special Holy Mass in the presence of a number of Religious men and women along with students and staff of Montfort and a fellowship meal afterwards. At Montfort, Rujewa, the Memorial Mass was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Romanus Mihali, bishop-elect of Iringa Diocese, with students, staff, and other well-wishers. It was an occasion to celebrate the life well-lived well by Bro. James and to pray for him. The Provincial Superior released a book on this occasion as a tribute to Bro. James N. A.



Bro. Saturnino Attends 'Talithakum' International Seminar

Bro. Saturnino Corneli Marandu, member of the international JPIC commission and Coordinator of our Kenya mission, participated in a seminar titled "Empowering a Brighter Tomorrow: A Reflection on the Talithakum International Kenya Meeting and the Fight Against Modern Slavery." He reports:

On February 24-25, 2025, Talithakum International Kenya (TIK) held a crucial meeting at the Dimesse Retreat Centre, bringing together congregation contact persons, Youth Ambassadors, government officials, interreligious representatives from Mombasa and Garissa, and other key stakeholders. As a RAHT-Kenya team member, I was privileged to attend this collaborative gathering, which highlighted the urgent need for collective action against human trafficking, modern slavery, and child labour.

The Montfort Brothers have stepped into the light in a world where shadows often lurk. In December 2024, we hosted a youth forum in Kima that focused on piercing through the darkness of covert human trafficking, child labour, and the devastating effects of drugs on the youth. It was not just any forum; it was an opportunity to equip 115 young people from the surrounding areas of Kima village with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to combat these issues in their communities.



Burundian Bishops' Visit



On February 27, 2025, we hosted three Bishops from Burundi: Msgr. Salvator Niciteretse (Diocese of Bururi), Msgr. Georges Bizimana (Diocese of Ngozi), and Msgr. Joachim Ntahandereye (Diocese of Muyinga). They joined us for a meal and toured our campus, extending invitations to establish missions in their dioceses. We were delighted to welcome them and appreciate their support, especially since some of our Brothers come from their dioceses. We are hopeful that one day we shall have our presence in their Dioceses.

Inauguration of Our Lady's Grotto at Montfort, Dar Es Salaam

On March 1, 2025, the Montfort Community in Dar es Salaam celebrated the inauguration and blessing of the Grotto of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The ceremony began at 6:30 a.m. with Provincial Superior, Bro. Jimmy inaugurating the Grotto, followed by a solemn blessing of the Grotto and Holy Mass celebrated by Fr.

Patrick Bwakila, Parish Priest of Yombo Vituka. Attendees included Religious men and women, members of the Louis Montfort small Christian Community, Leggio Maria, and students and staff from our Dar Es Salaam institutions. In his homily, Fr. Bwakila encouraged the faithful to honour Mother Mary and utilise the Grotto as a sacred place for prayer and meditation on divine mysteries revealed through the Blessed Mother.



In his reflective remarks, the Provincial Superior thanked the Almighty for transforming a long-cherished dream into reality. He reminded the congregation of the Montfortians' special devotion to Mother Mary, emphasizing the significance of the Rosary and other devotional practices in their daily spiritual life. Beyond appreciating the Grotto's aesthetic beauty, he ardently encouraged the community to engage actively in spiritual activities within this sacred space. Moreover, he publicly acknowledged Brother Johnson's pivotal role as the driving force behind various campus projects, including the Grotto of Our Lady.

Bro. Jimmy Kalapurayil, SG
Provincial Superior

Province of Senegal



First edition of the Ourous 2025 diocesan pilgrimage

After receiving the approval of Monsignor MOÏSE, Bishop of the Diocese of Boké, the Priests, Brothers and Sisters of the Deanery of Louis BARRY met on several occasions to set up committees to oversee the various preparatory activities. It was not at all easy, and the involvement of the lay faithful was essential. 'How can we accommodate so many people?' This was the main question under discussion. However, by the grace of God, we were able to identify a few accommodation sites, including the school of the Brothers of Saint Gabriel (the main site), the boarding school of the Sisters of Our Lady of Guinea, and some villages such as Ourous, Ourakar, Youkounkoun and Ithiou.

It is important to point out that the first diocesan pilgrimage took place in Ourous. It brought together several parishes and lasted four days, from 6 to 9 February 2025. On Wednesday night, there was already the great Koundara-Youkounkoun march. After taking a long break



in a village called Thiakour, the pilgrims headed for Youkounkoun on Thursday at 10 a.m., where they received a warm welcome from the parishioners of Ourous and other villages. They find Ithiou in prayer, a village that had once refused the first missionaries. Passing through Ithiou is like following in the footsteps of the first missionaries, in accordance with the theme of the pilgrimage: 'Remember those who have announced the word of God to you and imitate their faith' (Hebrews 13:7). From Ithiou to the great Cross, from the great Cross to the Grotto, and so on, they finish with a prayer and then the pilgrims returns to their accommodation.

'The pilgrims' route begins in front of the Marian grotto. Continuing on our way, we arrive at the cemetery where the missionaries and witnesses of the faith rest. This route continues towards the glorious cross, a powerful symbol of salvation and peace. This journey continues in front of the statue of Saint Rose of Lima. We end our pilgrimage in the church, in front of the Blessed Sacrament'.

Throughout the four days, the main activities were prayer, teachings, masses and confession.

We must salute the presence of the Provincial Superior Brother Etienne KA and Mrs Diop at the pilgrimage.

Some images below allow us to touch certain realities with our fingers.





Saint Gabriel Solidarité in Ourous

We had the great pleasure of welcoming a delegation from Saint Gabriel Solidarité in Ourous from 5 January to 15 January 2025. The aim of their visit was to help the Brothers create a favourable environment for learning through painting, varnishing, repairing the desks and benches and the vegetable garden; something that was requested by the school principal.

On 6 January, we attended the welcoming ceremony for students and teachers with a song and a short performance followed by the welcoming speech of the student president and that of the school principal. Afterwards, they visited the classrooms, the schoolyard, the garden and presented the principal with the gifts they had brought for the students.

On 7 January, after the raising of the flag and the prayer, the students immediately set off for the painting, varnishing of the table and benches and gardening. It took about a week to finish these activities since the walls had to be cleaned

and some of the table-benches repaired. That day, they worked with the students of grades 5 and 3.

While the team was working at the school, I had to accompany Mr Jean Luc to the Koundara prefecture to deal with a visa issue.



On 8 January, it was the turn of the Year 4 students. They really appreciated this small group, which was easy to manage. In the afternoon, they decided to pay their respects at the cemetery near the graves of the first missionaries.

On 10 January, they continued with the painting. They started with the library, then the





refectory and the dormitories of the boarders. In this way, they have just confirmed their generosity, determination and courage. It must be said that they are brave and courageous despite their advancing age.

On 11 January is preparation day for the parents' meeting and to say thank you to the benefactor team. While the parents are in a meeting with the director in the APAE office, Mr Kobae, the secretary of the parents' office, with the director's agreement, accompanies our friends to a few surrounding villages to get a feel for the realities of the place. Once the visit was over, they joined the parents at the school to interact with them.

In the afternoon, we went to the village of the mayor of the sub-prefecture of Koundara to attend an initiation ceremony. This marked the end of a fruitful day.

On 13 January, a thanksgiving ceremony by the parents was organised. On this day, each parent brought a traditional meal, as mentioned at the meeting, and some of the older girls were dressed in traditional dress. We began with a dance procession starting from the large cross at the church, and then it was time for speeches (from the parents' president, the school principal and the team leader, Mr David). We also went to the year 5 classroom, where the different traditional meals were on display. This phase ended with a shared meal.



In the afternoon, a match was played between the boys and the girls.

On 14 January, we went on a fun day out. The worker is entitled to his wages. After days of hardwork, it was essential and necessary to find a place to rest. After much deliberation, the choice fell on Guigan, a village located 25 km from Youkounkoun. There, we spent a pleasant day. When we arrived in Guigan, we were welcomed by Father Edouard, an Ivorian national. He is the priest who the Bishop sent to this area. He showed us around the church, some families and the town hall where we had the opportunity to talk to some of the local authorities. At around 01 p.m., we had lunch under the mango trees a little away from the village.

On the morning of 15 January, after breakfast, our friends said goodbye. I have very fond memories of them, generous, brave, resilient, simple and kind men and women who are very sensitive to the needs of the children. May the Spirit of God strengthen them now and forever.



Province of Kinshasa



Christmas 2024 in the province of Kinshasa: A moment of fraternity and sharing

Christmas is a reminder that God became a vulnerable child to bring hope. This spirit of welcome and solidarity marked the celebration of 24 December 2024 in the province of Kinshasa, during an exchange of good wishes and a fraternal celebration.

This year, the celebration took on added significance with the presence of Brother Jean Marie Thior, Assistant General. The meeting began with a prayer by the Brother Provincial Superior, emphasising the call to make our hearts a place of welcome and hope.

In a spirit of brotherhood and shared joy, the celebration was punctuated by moments of sharing, prayer, encouragement and festivities. The Brother Assistant General invited everyone to cultivate sincere love and active solidarity for the good of all.

A festive meal and fraternal entertainment concluded the meeting, strengthening the bonds of communion and unity within the province.



An extract from the article written by Bro. Déogracias IKASA, SG



Poverty and food security in DR Congo: What is Montfortian Evangelisation?

With less than five years to go until the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, humanity faces considerable challenges. The objective is clear: to eradicate poverty, guarantee food security and provide quality education for all. Of these 17

ambitious objectives, the Belgian NGO Caritas International is particularly focusing on two issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): poverty and food security.

The situation in the DR Congo: An overview

In 2015, the 192 member states of the United Nations, including Belgium, committed to achieving these 17 goals by 2030. The DR Congo is also part of this dynamic. However, in 2020, a government report revealed that the country ranked 179th out of 189 on the Human Development Index, a worrying sign in a critical context.

Although extreme poverty decreased between 2005 and 2012, it seems to be on the rise again. Several factors explain this situation:



the international economic situation, macroeconomic instability, and worsening conflicts, particularly in the East, Tanganyika and Kasai. Around three quarters of the Congolese population live below the poverty line, a paradox in a country rich in natural resources. However, notable progress has been observed in certain social indicators, such as the reduction in infant mortality, life expectancy at birth and access to electricity.

To combat poverty, the Congolese government allocates almost a third of its budget to a poverty reduction programme. However, this share of funding is decreasing, which could worsen the situation on the ground.

Food insecurity: A growing crisis

The food situation in DR Congo is alarming. More than half (56%) of the Congolese population suffers from hunger, a rate much higher than that of Africa (2.4 times) and the world (5.2 times). Between 2015 and 2019, the number of people suffering from acute food insecurity has exploded, rising from 5.9 to 15.6 million, an increase of 165%.

There are many causes: conflicts, climatic hazards (such as the locust invasion), and the decline of public involvement in the agricultural sector. The consequences of malnutrition are dramatic, directly affecting schooling, with one in five school repetitions due to malnutrition, as well as infant mortality, with 20% of deaths of children under 5 years of age being related to this issue.

What kind of Montfortian evangelisation?

The 33rd General Chapter urged the Montfort Brothers of Saint Gabriel to be prophets for the 21st century. But how can this prophetic presence be embodied in a context of great uncertainty?

Education, which was so dear to Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, could be a key vehicle for this action. But how should we respond to the misery that surrounds us?

Should we be content to remain in our schools and communities, or should we go out to meet the poor, following the example of Jesus, who always opened his heart to the most deprived?

Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort dedicated his life to encouraging others to open their hearts to Jesus. In today's world, the Church remains a driving force for change and the well-being of humanity, while preserving the environment, because the well-being of mankind is intrinsically linked to that of the planet.

In the province of Kinshasa, there is an urgent need to educate people about healthy eating. In fact, 80% of the children attending our schools come from families suffering from food insecurity. 'A hungry stomach has no ears': how can you educate a child's mind if their body is starving? We must re-examine our practices and integrate the promotion of healthy eating into our educational projects, while creating local resources to meet these needs.

A call to action: Nourish humanity, care for nature

Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort emphasised that humanity is the masterpiece of creation, the living image of divine beauty and perfection. However, sin has tarnished this original beauty, clouding the human spirit and reducing its capacity to love and serve God fully.

To restore this order, we must nourish mankind, take care of animals and birds, and protect nature. Harmony between mankind and its environment is essential for a just and sustainable future.

We, the Montfort Brothers, called to live according to the example of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, have a prophetic role to play in this fight against poverty and food insecurity. Our mission is to educate, to act and to bear witness to the love of God through our concrete actions in favour of the most vulnerable.

Bro. Déogracias IKASA, SG

Toys... for the children of the world

F. Henri MARTINEAU



How did this passion for woodworking come about?

The story begins in 1972. I did my second novitiate in Rome. When I finished, I returned for Christmas to the town of Chinon, where I had lived and worked before leaving for Rome. Of course, my teaching post had been filled! I was a French and history/geography teacher at the Collège Saint-Joseph. I was still left in Chinon: I did some substitutions, some supervision; but the rest of the time, I had to keep myself busy. So I set up a little workshop: I did a lot of soldering, a little woodwork, but I didn't have any machines, yet I was making toys, things for children.

In 1974, I suggested a charity raffle to the headmistress of Saint-Joseph secondary school! I told her: 'I'll organise the whole thing: each raffle ticket will have a prize, I'll make them in large quantities and all that will be left is to buy a few bigger prizes...' and that's what I did. I had 1700 raffle tickets printed and I sold... almost 1700! That brought in 15,000 francs (the equivalent today of just over €3300!)

Some time later I went on my annual retreat

to La Peyrouse, and the provincial spoke to us about Brazil... but that was all. In the end, it may have made an impression on me... A few weeks later, during a sleepless night, I said to myself: 'We preach about helping others (I had a catechism class in year 6), but in practice, what do we do? We do nothing.' Sleepless nights are always fruitful, that's when you think the best!

So during the night, I thought about it and said to myself: we're going to make a grapevine candle holder; each child will make their own candle holder, sell it, and we'll send the money to Diamantina in Brazil. That was my plan. At the time, Bro. Gérard Grimaud was in Diamantina. We were also in the same formation group. So that's what we did: the children scraped the vine stocks to prepare the candle holder, removing the bark, so that it would be beautiful. We made the holes, 3 or 4 to put the candles in...! The sum we sent to Diamantina was equivalent to two minimum wages for one employee. It was a good thing! We did it every year!

In 1980 or 1981, I was asked to take on the responsibility of the CCFD in Chinon; to tell the truth, I didn't have much time, between



Why did the provincial ask you to go to Brazil?

I was asked to go to Brazil to set up the carpentry workshop, even though I was more interested in ironwork. We left together, on the same day, with F. Michel Tardy, even though he was a carpenter, and he wasn't the one asked to go... when I think about it, it's something that's beyond my comprehension...

Once there, I must have received some training because I had to learn... a carpenter came to give me lessons... I must have learnt the language too. I knew Assimil by heart, but when I heard people speaking, I didn't understand a word! But I had still acquired a good foundation.

I would like to emphasise one point: my admiration for the pioneers! There are two in Diamantina: Bro. Gérard Grimaud and Bro. René Chéné, and then two others in Passos: Bro. Natal, an Italian, and Bro. Roger Bourcier. The work they did, wherever they were, each one of them, arouses deep admiration in me. We, the successors, only had to continue, and that can never be said enough! I suppose it's the same in Senegal, Madagascar and Haiti, for EVERYONE!

Just like those who stayed in France and who devoted themselves regardless of their profession, the commitment of each individual, wherever they are, is very important.

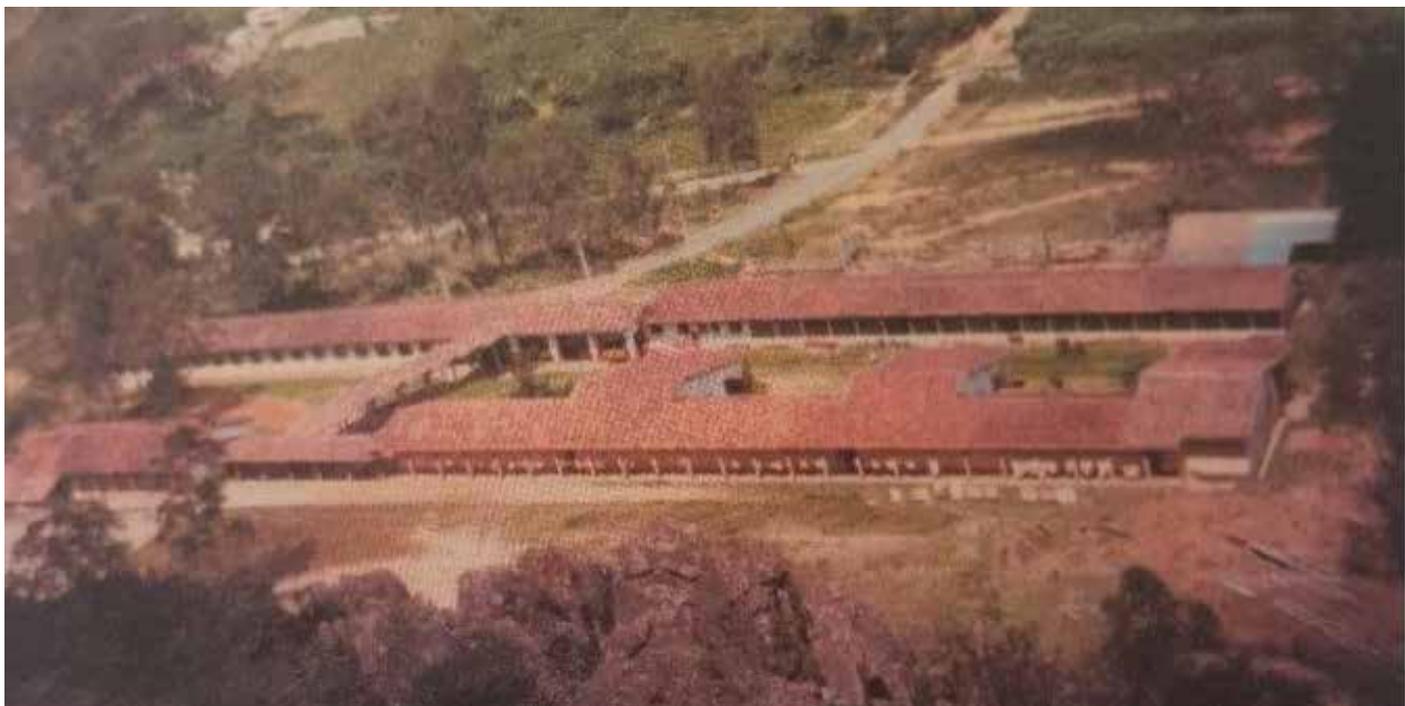
Explanation of a magnificent wooden toy... all in colour!

teaching, making my objects... but I accepted, despite everything. In October 1982, I received a letter from the provincial, F. Camille Couton, who wrote to me: 'Would you accept to go to Brazil?' The answer was already made up in my head... but I said to myself: 'I'll pretend to think about it, it'll make it more serious...' and I waited a week before giving my answer... and of course I said YES... If I had refused, I wouldn't have had a clear conscience.

It really was Providence, as they say...

I remember that in 1954, when I started teaching, I thought: 'I hope they don't send me to the "five hundred devils"!!!' but throughout those years, this notion of being far away had matured in me...! On the other hand, to say that it was easy is another story... of course, I was ready to leave for Brazil, but leaving is never easy. You leave everything behind: you leave your family, your job, your country, it's the same for everyone... You leave with two suitcases and you come back 40 or 50 years later... with two suitcases!





The Etablissement at Diamantina

How did the Diamantina story begin?

It was founded in 1911 by Sister Louise, sister of St Vincent de Paul. The sisters had a college, but Sister Louise was a little apart from the college and was keen to look after street children, both young children and young teenagers up to the age of 18.

Establishment in Diamantina Already in 1911?

Yes, an association was created: the Child Protection Society. They were given a property. Diamantina is a city built on a hillside: it's all sloping, it goes up, or it goes down! The society founded the 'asylum' (a word that comes from the Italian asilo = orphanage) that took in these children; Sister Louisa provided them with food, and they went out to work here and there. When Sister Louisa died, the succession was difficult.

Around 1967, the Brothers had already almost left education in Brazil; the State had taken over and the Brothers' colleges were somewhat surplus to requirements, which is why, after the Second Vatican Council, the Brothers turned their attention to the poor. There were Italian Brothers teaching in Brazil, the French arrived later.

Brother Natal, an Italian, was a bit like Sister Louisa: outside, in Carmo, he was keen to look after street children, then in Passos with Brother Roger Bourcier; in 1968, they founded the CAPP (Learning Centre for the Children of Passos) to look after children who were more or less living on the streets.

How did the Brothers end up in Diamantina?

It was a children's judge who asked the Bishop for a congregation to look after the children in Diamantina. Brother Natal went to have a look, and in January 1969, the Brothers arrived in Diamantina. Brother Jean Launay, who was a teacher, arrived and stayed for a year. It was too hard, and he was replaced by Brother Gérard Grimaud. (photo of the building) The building was named: EPIL, in honour of Sister Louise. It was very large: three dormitories for the boarders with three small houses planned, each with a family to supervise the young people, but this did not happen... there were the workshops (only the buildings) which were fitted out, little by little, by Brother Gérard Grimaud: the printing works, the carpentry workshop, the locksmith's shop, the engine rewind shop and a classroom for extra tuition for the children.



So, how many years did you spend at the EPIL in Diamantina?

After three and a half months studying the language in Brasilia, I arrived in Diamantina around 20 December 1983. I stayed there until 14 July 1990. For two years I learnt and taught carpentry. In August 1985, Brother Gérard Grimaud left Diamantina and I had to take over the management of the Centre and the printing work. In 1990, I couldn't take it anymore and I left for Passos (650 km away); but there I was surplus to requirements... Brother René Chéné taught plywood cutting to several groups of boys, so I had to find something else. I started working with the children, learning woodworking and how to use small machines (wood lathe, drill, sander, etc.) until one day in 1992, a doctor from Poiré sur Vie (Vendée), a former student of Brother Claude Perraud in Challans, visited us and said: 'I know someone in Le Poiré who can help you.' A man who lived near me, who gave lessons at the IMP in La Roche-sur-Yon to children who were behind in school; he made objects and had explanatory booklets. I received the booklets and got to work!

We started by making a sports car, a 24 Hours of Le Mans. That was the children's first job. They had to learn everything: tracing, measuring, using a set square, sawing, sanding, etc. When the job was finished, they came to show it to me. If there was a mistake, they had to find it. If they couldn't find it, I helped them. In short, in the end, the car was finished... What a success for each of these 10-11 year olds!

In 1999, we tried this approach with five girls, who worked alongside the boys. This mix was a very good thing: it stimulated the boys. The girls

even learned how to use the machines, so that when they started their apprenticeships in the workshop, they knew how to measure and were not afraid of the machines.

In 2003, when Brother Roger Drapeau replaced me in the workshop, it was one of those girls, who was then 15 years old, who introduced him to this kind of work.

Once the car was finished, I had to find other models: I thought of the tractor because it had all the secrets of the carpentry profession. And it worked! They all made their own tractor, 26 different parts in all. A sheet to follow for each part, a table with each of the parts as a model and an assembled tractor guided them in their construction. This work took several months. Other objects made were a trailer for the tractor, aeroplanes (a little more complicated than the tractor) and finally a lorry. At that stage, all they had to do was learn how to use the jigsaw. What a joy for those children!

In 2003, I was called back to Diamantina, where I stayed until 2009. I launched the same learning programme for the children there.

In 2011, you returned to France, correct?

When my return was decided, I wrote to Mr Patrick Padiou telling him that I was going back to France. During a meal at his house, he asked





me: 'What kind of machines do you need to work? A drill press, a sander, a circular saw...?'

I arrived in Machecoul in September 2011 (I was 77 years old) and started by cleaning everything out of the old workshop. It was hard! And it's true, I missed the machines.

One day, Patrick Padiou arrived with the machines I needed and even more. So I was able to get started. Unconsciously, I was deeply marked by Brazil and what I had experienced there. I decided to give all my wooden objects first to the associations: Sol'Espérance, which helped us so much in Diamantina, Cœur du monde, whose president is Patrick Padiou, helping children in Senegal, Madagascar and Haiti, Munay helping children in Peru, 'Diamantine ton coeur' helping children in Diamantina and then an association in San Sebastián, working for Madagascar.

Brother Henri spends whole days in his workshop in Machecoul, making not only toys for the children of the world, but also

magnificent little nativity scenes that bring joy to everyone at Christmas, as well as completely original statues and candleholders!

To cover your costs, do you sell these toys?

I give these toys away. First of all, my costs are minimal, as I am given a lot of scrap wood. And then, how could I ask for even one euro per toy from associations that have helped us or come to the aid of children. When you know that with one euro, a child in Haiti is entitled to a plate of rice and schooling for 5 days? No, I really won't charge anything, my work will be free.

How did you live in Diamantina?

The number of children increased little by little; most of them were orphans, or children with family problems, more or less living on the street. We reached 78, the maximum possible. I calculated the cost several times and each



time the result was the same, i.e. one minimum wage per child per month. We received very few donations. We had to live off our work. I always wondered how we managed.

Could you give us an example of a child you took in?

I could give you many, but one particularly stood out. At the beginning of 1990, our educator came to see me and said: 'Brother, do you have a place for a child who risks being killed if he stays at home (about fifty kilometres from Diamantina). Here's the situation: this child, Methuselah, aged 7, had a fight with his slightly older brother. The latter took a gun to kill him. Their mother intervened and she was the one who was killed. Now this child cannot stay at home where he risks being killed. Of course, I accepted the child, who caused us no problems. He grew up, studied, then did an apprenticeship in printing. At the age of 18, he had to leave the Centre. He entered the city seminary and was ordained in 2009. He gave the farewell speech at the mass when they left Diamantina in 2009. My eyes get moist when I think about it!

What would be your conclusion after this report?

I have only one word on my lips: a huge thanks! Thank the Lord for the good that He has allowed the brothers to achieve in Brazil... among other places!

What better testimony than that of our former students becoming our competitors in the profession that we taught them!



What better testimony than that of our former printing school students, around thirty of whom are working in Belo Horizonte, the capital of the State of Minas, and who welcome the children leaving EPIL to earn a living in the big city!

What better testimony than that of these same students who, every year, organise a Christmas party, with presents and festive afternoons, for the children of EPIL!

And finally, what better testimony than that of the alumni or friends, who do not hesitate to come to France (20,000 km return trip) not to visit the country or its capital, but to visit their Brothers! Let us give thanks to God for the work accomplished!



Istituto Ca' Florens Istrana



The Community of Ca' Florens consists of three Brothers. Bro Dionisio Santoro (Italian), Bro Onesphore Havyariamana (arrived in 2024 Burundi) and Bro Mathew Kavumkal who, arrived in 1979 from India.

This Institute was started just after the conclusion of the Second World War. During the war, the Treviso city was utterly destroyed by the bombs of Germany and America. As an outcome of the war, there were many orphan children who had no one to look after them. Then, one Diocesan Priest, Don Leo Alberton, started a home for all these children. As the priest was having difficulty managing it, the Brothers of the province of Italy were offered the charitable activity of looking after these children. The Brothers took charge of it and Bro Dionisio Santoro ran it very actively. In the year 1979, Bro Mathew Kavumkal also joined the team of Brothers to run the Institute for the poor and needy children. It was functioning well till 2014. During the 1st Government of Berlusconi, all the Institutes all over Italy were closed, and we, too, had to close the institute to comply with the rules of the Country.

But, in the year 1980, Bro Mathew Kavumkal, started a project to collect funds and help

poor and needy children for their educational expenses. This marvellous activity is very active even now. It started to function in India and in Khon Kaen, Thailand. Bro Philip Neri, of Indian origin, helped Bro Mathew Kavumkal for many years to work for the children of lepers in that area of Khon Kaen. Later, it expanded to the Philippines, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi and Uganda.

From Istrana Village in Italy to Janho Village in Jharkhand:

Of late, I (Bro Mathew Kavumkal) was inspired to visit the Educational Projects of Bro Markose in the Village of Janho in the District of Latehar in the State of Jharkhand. No words are sufficient to describe the difficulties Bro





Markose. The teachers and the students are facing the challenge of procuring a bright future for their lives. I stayed with them for seven days. I was lucky to have a sheet-roofed shed for my stay there. Every night, rats were running all over the shed. I had my meals with the children, a simple rice. On one Sunday, I arranged for good meals for all the children. I am told that I am the first Brother to stay with them. So, I am very happy about it. I am also glad that I had the possibility to visit about 27 villages spread all over the forest. I am helping many students in these villages with their educational expenses. I express my deep appreciation to Bro Markose, to the teachers and the students of the Birsa Munda High School of Janho.

After my week-long mission in the villages, I had the blessing of visiting the St. Gabriel's Novitiate at Sitagarha of Hazaribagh. I enjoyed taking classes for the Novices for about two hours. I also offered a good festal dinner to the Novices and to the Novitiate Community. I am grateful

to the Novice Master Bro. B. A. Kurian, the Brothers and to the Novices for their hospitality and love.

New Year and beginning of monthly Spiritual Retreat of the Benefactors:

Every month, on the third Sunday, we celebrate the day of the spiritual Retreat of the Benefactors who help the children. This spiritual event started more than 30 years ago. The benefactors from the Provinces of Treviso, Vicenza, Padua, and Venice come for the Retreat. Others are very far away. In times of need, the Diocesan Priests also help us, especially for the celebration of the Mass.

Teaching to construct Christmas Crib





An association called “Associazione Alto Volume” conducted a full-day programme to control the hearing power of two groups of elderly citizens: “Argento Vivo” and “Centro Sollievo”, who participate in weekly programmes at our institute. It was conducted by Doctors and experts in the field of controlling and proposing necessary remedies and helps to the needy ones.

The team of volunteers



An Association called “Associazione Presepistica La Crepia” has conducted a wonderful week-long course for teaching to make Christmas Cribbs was conducted in our Institute. The number of participants was limited to 12 adults who are interested. The teacher hails from the Region of puglia. It was a course appreciated much by one and all. Even the Mayor of the City took part in the inauguration of the Course.

Groups of Scout find Paradise in our Institute



Bro Mathew Kavumkal has a team of efficient volunteers who have cooperated with him for the past 30 years. We are really happy and ever grateful to God for the gift of such faithful and persevering benefactors who offer their knowledge and time for the successful functioning of the project of helping needy students with their education and formation. Bro Onesphore Havyarimana of the Province of East Africa (PEA) has been with us for one year and has also started taking part in the functioning of the project.

Regularly, groups of Scouts from various Parishes of our Diocese organise their outing and make their promises in our Institute. It is an ideal place for many groups.

Bro. Mathew Kavumkal, SG
<https://www.adozioniadistanza.net>

Associazione Alto Volume



THE 49 BROTHERS OF SAINT GABRIEL AND THEIR CHAPLIN

MARTYRS OF THE RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR IN 1936



Rufino Barga Domingo
Brother Anselmo María, 32 years old
Born in Cuzcurrita de Juarros
(Burgos)

In the Novitiate and during his scholasticate he was considered to be very shy but very sensitive, pious, animated and of a good spirit. He was assigned to the vestment area and laundry. His daily task was not easy, given the rudimentary means that were then available to perform those tasks, since all clothing was washed by hand and the smoke created in order to have hot water was very bothersome.

Brother Cyprius wrote of him in 1924 that he was not very open but he was very willing and was full of dedication. In conclusion, he was a good religious person. In his profession, he was charity personified. He attended to all with extreme kindness. He had a certain musical sensitivity and learned by ear, without receiving any lessons, to play some piano and the ocarina fairly well.

An insatiable worker, he had time for everything; he could be found in the laundry as easily as he could be seen helping out in the vegetable garden and in the kitchen. And when the summer heat was at its worst, he had the thoughtfulness of preparing refreshments for the Brothers, with lemon water from the abundant lemons found in the convent's vegetable garden. Even the members of the militia that saw the Brothers working commented: "You will not be mistreated because you are hard workers like Jesus and communists like us". However, that did not save them from death.

Martyrdom: Common narration

From Brother Anselmo María, grant us, Lord, his hard-working and active spirit and good will in the service of his Brothers.



Roman Arrieta Martinez
Brother Santiago, 36 years old
Born in Arrizala
(Alava)

He was assigned to military service in Tetuán and Morocco where he had to endure three long years in the hardest times of the African War. But he rose to the challenge and returned very happily to the community. In 1926 Brother Hermógenes, his Director, wrote of him that he continued to display evidence of a great sense of family and of much gentleness.

His first and only occupation was to be at the service of the Brothers in the kitchen of the Formation House of Can Valls. As head cook, he was an irrefutable artist of daily gastronomy experimenting with Spanish and French cuisine. The Brothers and pupils thoroughly enjoyed his surprise stews and in particular during community celebrations.

He was diligent in combining his work in the kitchen with his daily prayers, frequently in order to ensure the health of his spirit. He appeared to have a stern temperament but he smiled with satisfaction when he saw his hundred pupils, Brothers and students, enjoying and savouring his creations. He had no difficulty in serving a good meal to the henchmen of the F.A.I. when they assaulted Can Valls on the 7th of November and took the Brothers as prisoners.

Martyrdom: Common narration

From Brother Santiago, grant us, Lord, his great docility and his spirit of sacrifice in daily work.

Hope

"Spring will come and so will happiness.
Hold on. Life will get warmer."

— Anita Krizzan

