

**CONTRIBUTION OF MONFORTIAN MISSION – A STUDY****A. Innaci Raj\* Dr. S. Kunasekar\*\***

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**Abstract**

The Objective of the paper is to study in detail about the Montfortian Education Projects and Montfortain Spirituality. To understand his deep concern for the poor and human values and his vision of formation a new society for the special children and rag pickers and street children. It also talks about his skills of spiritual writer and the founder of religious congregation.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. MONTFORT**

Louis was born on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1673 in a place called Mont fort – la- cane in France. His family name was Grignion. Today he is more popularly known as Montfort. Montfort's father Jean Baptist was a lawyer and his mother Jeanne Robert, a house wife. The family was a big one as Montfort had many sisters and brothers. They were 18 children and Montfort was the second one. They were not well off Mr. Jean wanted Montfort to follow his footsteps by becoming a lawyer. He was very independent in his thinking, very motivated in his life as he decided within himself to spend his life as he decided within himself to spend his life for 'God Alone'. From his childhood days he was deeply devoted to God and to Mary, mother of Jesus. He often talked of them to brothers and sisters God was the moving force of the family. Due to

the size of the family the Grignion family had to work more to feed the family. God did not work miracles to feed this saintly family. Mr. Jean Baptist had to shoulder the entire responsibility. As a father, he felt the pain and the struggle of bringing up a big family. The story is long; but the message is that we live in a world where children are unable to reconcile with their parents live in peace. Montfort teaches us to care for our parents and share their pain. Montfort knew as a boy the saying of God, "whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me" -Mt. 25/35 -46 (From the Bible). The God of the Bible says, "I have set before your life and death, a blessing and a curse. Therefore choose life" Montfort chose what does not die. The message of the Upanishads in that there is only one. All is one. As Montfort got ready to bid good – bye to his parents and the near

one, he symbolically crossed the Cesson bridge to a new life of dedication and total trust in God. He was so convinced that God was his loving father that he gave away all the money he had to the first beggar he met and exchanged his new clothes with his. We see in the life of Montfort that he consciously developed his skills and god – given talents and used them for spreading the message of god.

### MONTFORTIAN EDUCATION

Montfortian education is one where the students are given opportunities to develop all the gifts and talents that God has given to them. Montfort wanted to erect a cross but to build a Calvary with the help of the people. He constructed a Calvary. His entire life was filled with instances for repeated trust and faith in God. When he was rejected, misunderstood, he doubled his trust and faith in God and mother Mary. His motto was ‘God Alone’. He was exhausted, tired and worn out by numerous arduous and our Journey and his hard work. It was on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1716 he died.

“For you who walk there is no road, the road is made by walking”.-Antonio Mar Chado. The Brothers of St. Gabriel Claim their **Origin** from St. Louis Marie De Montfort of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The knowledge of the roots of their origin in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is scanty. The first Brother **to Join** Montfort was Brother Mathurin in 1705. The other Brothers, he met later on were called Jean, Pierre, Jacques, Nicholas, Phillippe, Louis and Gabriel. A school was started in Oct.1714. In July and August 1715, Montfort spent almost 6 weeks in place called La Rochelle, France, to open a school for boys, then one for girls. He entrusted the latter to Marie Louise Trichet, The first sister in the congregation he had started “**Daughters of Wisdom**”.

### THE MONFORTIAN MISSION

“If we do not risk anything for God, we will never do anything great for Him”

-St. Montfort-

St. Montfort founded 3 congregations to serve the people of the world. The company of Mary, the Daughters of wisdom and the Brothers of St. Gabriel grew and spread, first in France, then throughout the world for the cause of the Education and rehabilitation of the poor and needy. His approach of “total consecration of Jesus Christ through Mary” had a strong impact on Roman Catholic Mariology both in popular piety and in the spirituality of religious Institutes. He had done great service as an educator of children and of youth. As a founder, spiritual leader and active social service worker, he deserves our admiration. The essence of montfortian education given by the Montfortians brothers is to help the young to develop into upright, creative and loyal citizens, imbued with love for God and compassion and concern for humanity and nature. It is to instill in the pupils the values of love, freedom, forgiveness, honesty and justice. It trains the students holistically, that is, to be concerned with the total development of an individual as a person. This is the quintessence of Montfortian education. It aims at developing the body, mind and spirit to the greatest extent of student’s community and brother’s community as well. At the end of the nineteenth century, the brothers of Montfort crossed the frontiers of France to establish themselves in Canada and in several countries of Europe, today their missionary activity extends to all the continents in a spirit of fidelity to the church and to their origins. St. Montfort is undoubtedly a giant of holiness in the church. But sadly, for many this man from Brittany (France) was

quite often a forgotten saint especially the first 2 centuries after his death. That was the reason why it took almost 231 years to declare him as a saint by church. Pope John Paul II is one of the luminaries whose spirituality was shaped and influenced by Montfort. Pope John Paul II in his addresses to the 3 congregation founded by St. Montfort's refers to the whole body of Montfort's spiritual work as, "a lived tradition" of remarkable ascetical and mystical works depth, expressed in a lively and ardent style, which often appeals to images and symbols." The system of education in a progressive society must be in direct proportion to the people's life at should be a system that irrigates mind, intellect, culture and spiritual life in all their aspects through its life giving process of inner growth and outer expressions. Over the years Montfortian witnessed in our students an unparalleled knowledge base, vibrant dynamism, an acute consciousness about the world around them, a focused ambition and a sustained commitment. It is an invitation to everyone who enters into the family of St. Montfort to be a source of inspiration and ray of hope to motivate to students to excel in every sphere of good learning and living.

### THE VISION OF St. MONTFORT

The First vision of St. Montfort is a paragon of simple living and high thinking. Second an exuberant, focused commitment of our governing body. The third, the determined hard work and meticulous implementation by the Montfort an family and team of teachers. He founded 3 religious congregation missionaries of the Company of Mary (Montfort fathers) Brothers of St. Gabriel (Montfort Brothers) Daughters of

wisdom (Mont sisters) Montfort wrote many books and letters.

The most important ones are

- ❖ True devotion to many
- ❖ Love of eternal wisdom
- ❖ Letter to the friends of the cross
- ❖ The secret of the Rosary.

His motto was God Alone. He totally believed in the hidden presence of God in his brothers and Sisters.

- To equip them with needed skills for dignified living
- To promote peace, justice and protection of greater brotherhood / sisterhood
- To foster a strong religious and professional formation of the brothers
- To create solidarity with the poor and to promote a socio-economic justice
- To implement the Montfort an education
- To establish at the community level, collaborating in the parish and diocesan activities and making our institution available to the drop outs and others needing our help by way of coaching classes for weaker sections.
- To pool together the extra resources available in the community for common use.

### MISSION VOWED LIFE

They need to overcome the unhealthy tendencies such as expressive ways of life, love of comfort, desire for money, which are becoming prevalent among us. It is felt that the existing communities and institution can be adapted towards the realization of the new vision of the mission.

- ❖ Brothers living the Montfort an charism.
- ❖ Brothers witness of fraternity.
- ❖ To live in solidarity with the poor by promoting socio-economic justice.
- ❖ To promote 'ecology – harmony by sustainable development'
- ❖ To translate the vision into reality
- ❖ To share 'Evangelical mission' of Jesus

- ❖ To serve the poor and the marginalized
- ❖ To envision a loving ministry of an 'holistic education' for a 'greater brotherhood'
- ❖ To promote 'international collaboration'
- ❖ To provide outreaching extension services to underprivileged.
- ❖ To promote social the rights of the people.
- ❖ To respect and appreciate the multinational differences
- ❖ To become actively passionate for the humanity and for the entire creation, promote inter-faith dialogue and communal harmony and create a just and fraternal world. Deeply rooted in God, their mission proclaims to the world that in Christ all are brothers and sisters. Their daringness, commitment to the Gospel values, strength of character and Simplicity of lifestyle, make them prophetic witnesses of the kingdom of God in the world today. "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way" - Minnie Louise Haskins

### **THE RE-FOUNDATION OF THE MONTFORT BROTHERS OF GABRIEL**

The Montfort Brothers also owe their gratitude to another important person called Fr. Gabriel Deshayes. He is also recognized as the re-founder of the congregation. In the year 1814, he opened a training house for Brothers, the purpose of which was to train Brothers to run schools. In 1817 he called this movement of Brothers he had started as 'The Brothers of Christian Instruction'. This group later came to be called Brothers of Ploermel. He took the motto 'God Alone' to guide him and the Brothers. It was in 1821, Fr. Gabriel Deshayes Joined the Montfortian movement and he became the superior general for all. He was a man gifted with dynamism, creativity and lot of foresight. He wanted to give a new impetus to teaching brothers within the Montfortian

group. In 1825 Bro. Augustin was appointed as the General Director. From then on the Brothers began to play more and more responsible roles and involve in decision – making. Father Gabriel, the devoted and dynamic refounder died on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841 at the age of 74. When he died there were 99 Brothers and 135 Novices preparing to become Brothers. Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel went to only two countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one was Canada in 1888 and the other was Egypt in 1890. But the real expansion or exodus began at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the summer of 1708, Fr. Montfort went on his own to give a mission at valet (France) a parish 15kms away from Nantes. Montfort taught the people how to pray the Rosary. Next mission was at vertron in Nantes itself. In December 1708, Montfort preached a mission at St. Fiacre.

### **Fr. Montfort, a spiritual writer**

Fr. Montfort was a mystic and missionary. He was keen on guiding people in spiritual life. To share his experience and to guide people, he wrote a number of letters and also a number of books. The complete works of Montfort have been published first in French and then in English, Italian and Spanish.

### **The Love of Eternal Wisdom**

While Montfort was staying in under poverty and misery at the pot-de-fer-street, Paris during 1703 – 04, he meditated a lot on the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and also on the mysteries of Christ. According to Montfort the mystery of Incarnation provides us with a large numbers of tableaux for loving contemplation.

### **The True Devotion to Mary**

Montfort says, True Devotion consists in a full appreciation of the privileges and Dignity of our Lady.

### **Montfort, a founder of Religious Congregations**

1. He founded Company of Mary, Montfort Fathers (Rule of the Missionary priests of the Company of Mary)
2. The Daughters of wisdom, Montfort Sisters and
3. Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel

#### **His mission**

1. His love of poverty: It was that poverty Montfort had chosen his best loved virtue.
2. His love of the poor: Montfort not only loved and cherished the poor as his brothers, he held them in the greatest respect as his lords and Masters
3. His humility: He was never more pleased than when he was humiliated or insulted; He knelt down to receive them.
4. His patience and gentleness: He endured many things with heroic patience

### **Fr. Gabriel, the Re-founder of St. Montfort Brothers Congregations**

Fr. Gabriel Deshayes was born in the Deshayes family in Dec. 6, 1767 in Beigon. The family was quite well – off. As a boy Gabriel looked after sheep. Even at that tended age he was very generous. In 1782, Gabriel joined St. Servan minor seminary near St. Malo. Throughout his life, Gabriel was fascinated by the figure of St. Vincent de Paul. The French Revolution broke out in 1789. In 1792 Gabriel was ordained as a priest.

#### **Clandestine Ministry (1792 – 1801)**

Fr. Gabriel walked through the whole of Brittany and began his ministry as an outlawed priest, exposed to the gravest dangers.

#### **His deep concern for the poor**

In Auray there were ruined families, many unemployed people and quite a few beggars.

He had a great trust in Providence and did not bother about lack of finance. Fr. Deshayes distributed alms to the poor earned also provided work for the unemployed, towards the end of 1806, Fr. Deshayes established, with the help received from Dr. Gel, Fr. Deshayes wanted to eradicate begging from Auray. The one who was found begging was denied help from the office of charity. By this method Fr. Deshayes succeeded in eradicating begging.

#### **Providing work for the unemployed Poor**

Fr. Deshayes was keen on providing work for the unemployed poor. He went to Rome in a horse – drawn carriage. On Dec. 27, 1824, the pilgrims were at Toulon. The Daughters of Wisdom at the military hospital received them warmly. The Montfortian family had the intention of introducing the cause of Beautification of Fr. Montfort testimonies from witnesses were already collected, the miracles were noted down. But the revolution destroyed a number of papers.

### **Fr. Gabriel, Father of the Hearing Impaired**

Fr. Deshayes established a number of schools for the hearing impaired, who were more or less outcasts, rejected by society, very often considered to be stupid or idiotic. At the time of Fr. Deshayes, the education of the hearing impaired was a novelty, Fr. Del' E pee' was the first person to start a school for the hearing impaired in Europe. In 1760, he started the school in Paris. Fr. Gabriel introduced the Daughters of Wisdom with the mission of teaching the deaf and the blind. He appealed to king Louis xviii for approval and support for the Auray Institution. Fr. Gabriel died in Dec 28, 1841.



The main principles taught by St. Montfort are:

1. The ardent desire to possess wisdom (Jesus Christ)
2. The continual prayer Disciplined life style
3. To Jesus through Mary

#### His main Principles are

1. Goals of Montfortian Associates
2. To live the Montfortian Spirituality
3. To make it known
4. To spread it every where
5. To co – operate with the Brothers in the mission for Education, Justice and Peace

#### Montfortian Associates

1. In the present world there is a deep for God among people. People who want to share and deepen the Montfortian spirituality associate themselves with the montfortian and thus become associate members.
2. A description: A ‘Montfort Associate’ is a person who desires to live the Montfortian charism.

#### Their vision

To empower children to be the leaders of tomorrow with clarity of thoughts, high ethical values and love for humanity. It was Emerson who said, “Nothing great was achieved without enthusiasm”.

#### Nut shell

Birth	:	
31.01.1673(France)	:	
Died	:	
28.04.1716	:	
Sainthood	:	
20.07.1947	:	
Continents	:	6
Countries	:	32
In India	:	15
States	:	
Brothers	:	Over
1200	:	

Institutions : Over 300

In India the mission was started in the year 1903, at Tindivanam, villupuram District, Tamilnadu. The Congregation has been doing a yeoman service for the cause of education and rehabilitation of the poor in India under 7 PROVINCES over 100 years. More than 300 institutions are in India and with the help and support of 650 Montfort brothers, they have been serving for the deprived classes with dedication and commitment.

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