

MONTFORT GLOBAL ASSOCIATES (MGA): LAUNCHING OF WEBSITE – 8.5.2021

Inaugural Address By Br . John Kallarackal SG, Superior General

Greetings to you all from Rome; that I thought is a safer way of greeting you all, as we are literally globally located in different time zones! Needless to say, that it is certainly a matter joy for me to be a part of this assembly of Montfort Associates from the different parts of world, gathered for a great significant event: The Launching of the Website of MGA. Incidentally 8th May is a significant day in the lives of relatively older generation like mine, because we used to have our First Profession always on 8th May. So, today is the 55th anniversary for my group! Before I think of a message for the occasion, let me in the first place express sincere thanks to Wilson, the Chairman of MGA for his kind invitation to do the honour of inaugurating the Website, and thank Thomas Kappen and George Nellamattam for their warm welcome and kind words of introduction.

Since I had the pleasant privilege of inaugurating the first Meeting of the Montfort Global Associates on 28th April, 2018, the Feast of our Founder and inspiration, St. Louis Marie de Montfort, and again participating in the 2nd Global Meeting held in Kerala on 30th December 2019, before the outbreak of the pandemic, it's a good feeling seeing you all once again through this modern means of communication.

I recognize so many familiar faces among the MGA Members, not to speak of all our Brothers who are present in goodly numbers, including 5 Provincial Superiors from India. Having been associated with the MGA from its birth, I certainly feel confident to say that Montfort Global Associates has grown significantly, not only in terms of its membership but also in terms of its reach out, the quality of programs being planned and executed, the frequency of the meeting of the Executive Members, the content and layout of the MGA News, etc.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Founding Fathers, the present General Convenor, Chairman and the Executive Members, for the time and energy they invest in making this movement alive. As Gerard Ford rightly said, *“Coming together is beginning, staying together is progress and working together is progress”*. I must say a special word of

congratulation to MG Jacob, the Editor of MGA News for making it interesting, informative and up-to-date. Since I recognize our uncle Joe Pathyil, who was not only my Headmaster in 1961-62, but a good friend for the past few decades, on behalf of all the readers of MGA News, I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation to him for the well written memoirs of different personalities of yesteryears who have contributed immensely for the growth and development of our large Montfortian Family.

As I mentioned during the launching of the MGA in 2018, my sincere appreciation to all our friends from the USA who came up with this novel idea of coming together as an organized Association to relive the past memories of your association with the Congregation of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, which has nurtured you, made invaluable contributions to making you who you are and what you are today, while recognizing the contributions you yourself have made towards the growth of this Congregation.

With the couple of interactions, I have had with the leadership of the MGA, I must admit that I feel delighted to see that the spirit and charism of St. Louis Marie de Montfort are not only alive in you, but you make every effort to proclaim and propagate it wherever you are. And as the present leader of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, I wish to thank you for this positive attitude.

The fact that St. Montfort continues to inspire and influence thousands of people the world over is ample proof that what the saint preached and practiced over 3 centuries ago is relevant even today. Montfort's motto – DIEU SEUL("God Alone") indicating the primacy of place he gave to God and the absolute trust he had in the divine Providence, his tender devotion to Mary expressed in the frequent recitation of the Holy Rosary, his love of the Cross, his preferential love for the poor, his exhortation for continual prayer as a means of attaining Wisdom, etc., are all simple means he used to live the Gospel values in a concrete fashion. These are values that can easily be practised by each of us in our own milieu.

Permit me to take a few moments to update you on what has been going on in the Congregation in the recent past in terms of encouraging and promoting the Associates Movement. Interestingly, the abbreviation of the

Montfort Global Associates and the Montfortian Gabrielite Associate Movement are the same: MGA. As you are all aware, from the very beginning of Religious Life, men and women have associated with Religious Institutes. However, Lay Associates as a movement has developed organically in response to the desire of Religious Institutes to share their mission and spirituality with the laity, coupled with the desire felt by many individuals to grow in their spiritual life and to share in the mission of these Religious Institutes.

Partnership with the laity is one subject that figured in all our General Chapters, starting from the 29th, held in 2000, which gave a clarion call to the whole Congregation to facilitate networking with the Montfortian Family, other religious groups and with Lay Associates. The 30th General Chapter reiterated the same desire, drawing inspiration from the powerful words of Pope St. John Paul II, addressed to the Montfortian Family in 1997: *“The Montfortian Spirituality and charism are treasures of the Church. It is our responsibility with the whole Montfortian Family and others to promote them”*. The 31st General Chapter went a step further and invited the Congregation to carry this Associate Movement to a new level saying, *“Catholic adults, coming from different backgrounds, who feel a call for a deeper Christian commitment according to Montfortian Spirituality, could take individually, a private commitment in link with the Congregation”*. The last General Chapter, the 32nd, gave a new impetus to the Montfortian Gabrielite Associate Movement, mandating the Central Administration to constitute an International Commission for Partnership. I am happy to announce here that this International Commission has come up with an MGA Charter, and has also recently launched a new Website exclusively for Partnership: www.fsgpartnership.org.

I make a mention of this in order to see the possibilities of linking the Montfort Global Associates website, www.mga.life with the Congregational websites to have easy access to more of resource materials and global connectivity. I am sure you must have heard from Bro. Mani Mekunnel, about the Website for Montfortian Education International, www.meinet.org, with the new features of the MEF Global Directory, which gives a panoramic picture of the mission of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel in the 32 countries of the world. I am sure Bro. Varghese Theckanath will share with you about the Websites of Montfort Social

Institute and Gabrielite Secretariat for Justice and Peace, during his intervention. The Congregational Website www.stgabrielinst.org is being updated and will be in full operation shortly.

Since one of the objectives of the Montfort Global Associates is to find ways and means of being effective partners of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel in its mission, let me take this opportunity to renew my appeal for volunteers in our mission-ad-gentes, to extend your services in the vocation promotion programs and in our Houses of Formation, in sponsoring the education of poor children, etc. On behalf of the Congregation, I wish to acknowledge with thanks the services of several of our Associates who have been already partnering with the Congregations in the past, without mentioning the individual names here, lest I miss out some names!

My renewed congratulations to all those who have contributed towards the MGA Website. It is my fond hope that this new feature will be a sign of vitality of the MGA that allows us to look to the future with hope, with greater connectivity, better communication and building up of closer and stronger relationships... Thank you and God bless.

Bro. John Kallarackal, SG
Superior General

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Superior General Fratelli di San Gabriele, Via Trionfale 12840 00135, ROMA, Italy

Ph. +39 389 517 9422 (Mobile) Ph. +39 06 30 35 901 (Office)

Ph. +39 06 30 35 90 213 (Room) Fax: +39 06 30 35 90 208

Email: jnkallarackal@gmail.com Skype: john.kallarackal

Website: www.stgabrielinst.org

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On Gratitude - Address by Senior Most MGA Jo Pathyil

I left the congregation in January, 1967. I was in Rome and was due to fly to Canada on January 31. I went to see Reverend Brother Romain Landry, the Superior General. I started by asking for his blessing. He embraced me and told me how he and the congregation was grateful for my services to the congregation, especially the province of India.

I was taken aback by his words. I told him I was beholden to the congregation for my formation, for my education, for entrusting me with responsibilities, for the nurture and consideration of local and major superiors. Bro. Landry said that all what I said was true. But I had given my youth and my talents in the service of the congregation. We had a long chat. I told him how during my formation I was led to believe that anyone who left the society even from a house of formation, was betraying one's calling, and that the Novice Master had once mentioned that one of the early Superior Generals had an apparition of Our Lady who promised him that anyone who dies in the congregation was certain to get to heaven. There was an implication that the reverse might end in perdition. At least that was the attitude of the Brothers in India.

Bro. Landry, a Canadian, was thankful to me genuinely for my service. Second Vatican Council had brought about many changes in the mindset of priests and religious. In France and in the rest of Europe, as also in Canada, it was not uncommon to see former Brothers teaching and administering schools of the Brothers. Brothers in India would have thought of such an appointment as unthinkable. But I remember several professors and lecturers and tutors in Jesuit colleges were former Jesuits. I had asked my mentor Fr. C. Leigh S.J. about this. His reply was that the Jesuits had trained these people and it would be a pity not use them in Jesuit institutions. And other Jesuits did not fear the influence of former Jesuits. However, at least in my time, Brothers in India did not have the courage to have anything to do with the "traitors".

Obligation of the former Religious to the Society that educated him, that instilled values in him, that formed him spiritually, is obvious. As Bro. Landry said, the congregation will not be diminished in acknowledging

that the former Brothers served the congregation, for however long or short a time. Gratitude should be mutual.

The present Superior General is fully cognizant of this mutual indebtedness. If I may reveal something: a short time after Bro. John was elected Superior General, he called me to say that he would like to visit me and spend some time with me. I was very pleased to welcome my ace student. We spent a couple of days in intense communion, the content of which will remain with us. I am grateful for his confidence and his regard, and his fraternal solicitude. In my turn, I have been concerned about his cardiac issues, since I have had experiences with that too. But we hope and pray that he will remain healthy and hearty for many more years.

(Joseph Pathyil)

May 8 -A memorable date

Let us begin with the late 30's: The only Tamil medium High school that the Brothers ran was St. Antony's High School Coonoor. The Juniorate was attached to the school. The Novitiate and Scholasticate were in the same campus. Coonoor, a jewel of the Nilgiris, was a favorite summer residence of the British Raj. From March to June, there was no other place like Coonoor to enjoy the salubrious climate. Temperature never goes above 20. The parks and gardens are in bloom; the hiking trails are picturesque, the tea estates, the falls, and mountain ranges are breath taking.

Almost all the Brothers working in various parts of India came to Coonoor in summer for a few days of relaxation. For the seniors it was a good time to spend a few days with their friends and exchange news. Everyone knew everyone . They had their annual retreat in the first week of May. At the end of the retreat the postulants would shed their civilian cloths and wear a soutane with Rabat bleu, shed their family name and would be given a new name. The novices would pronounce their first vows and receive a mantle. Others would renew their annual or three-year vows. Those who were professed for six years would take their vows for perpetuity. The ceremonies that accompanied the religious event were solemn. As the congregants sang "Veni Creator Spiritus" goose bumps covered the body. One was about to take a life changing step.

From the early 40's May 8 was a special date in our calendars. "Obediences" , (appointments and transfers) were announced on May 8. When the novitiate shifted to Eachinkadu in 1952, the tradition continued. Even though all the Brothers did not attend the annual retreat in May, the postulants and novices had their ceremonies on May 8. I do not know if that tradition still continues.

May 8 is etched in our memory.

(Joseph Pathyil)

The "prayer marathon" that Pope Francis which kicked off on May 1 will stretch around the globe during the Marian month of May.

The intention for the daily Rosary, to be led by a different shrine each day, is the end of the pandemic. Specific intentions related to the pandemic will also be included. The Rosary will be broadcast each evening at 6 pm Rome time (12 EST).

And today May 8, the launch of MGA Website coincides with the Rosary Marathon of the day with prayer for people involved in Communication ie. May 8 from the Shrine of Our Lady of Luján (Argentina) with Prayer for people involved in communication – And the MGA Website is all about sharing , caring and action through communication.
