

MGA Meet 2024

The two-day Montfortian Gabrielite Associate (MGA) Meet was an enriching and spiritually rejuvenating experience for the 19 participants from the various educational institutes of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel across the Delhi province. The meet, held on February 10th and 11th, 2024 at the serene and tranquil Montfort Villa Bhopal, the city of lakes, provided the perfect ambience for the associates to deepen their understanding of the Montfortian spirituality, legacy and mission.

The Meet commenced at 9:45 a.m, 15 minutes behind schedule, as few participants travelling from distant places were delayed owing to late running of trains. However, the minor hiccup did little to dampen the spirits of the eager participants who had been looking forward to this annual event. The inaugural session began with Br. Thampy Alex, the Provincial Superior, extending a hearty welcome to the members. In his inaugural address, Br. Thampy Alex emphasized the significant role that the members can play in being the inheritors and torch-bearers of the Montfortian charism. He reminded that the call to being an MGA member demands living the Gospel values modelled by St. Montfort and contributing one's unique abilities in furthering the mission of the congregation. The Provincial Superior urged the members to make optimal use of the two-day meet to enrich one another through shared experiences and plan substantial ways to carry forward the Montfortian legacy when they return to their respective mission places. His inspirational words filled the participants with enthusiasm and excitement for the sessions ahead.

This was followed by an inaugural prayer service led by Bro. Antony Samy which created the appropriate spiritual ambience. The core feature of this prayer service was the MGA members processing reverently to pay their homage to St. Montfort by placing lighted candles at his statue. This simple yet profound ritual helped the members to reconnect with the spiritual roots and rekindle their commitment to the Montfortian mission.

After the prayer service, the sessions began in earnest, with Bro. Sunil Kumar Ekka leading the first session by delving into the history and various provisions of the MGA Charter. He shared how the Charter envisions the associates as partners in the mission of the Brothers in adopting the Montfortian spirituality and values. His session traced the evolving history of MGA across the Montfortian congregation and first-ever International Meet of MGA members from the three Montfortian congregations held in 2023 at Saint Laurent Sur-Severe, France - the homeland of founder St. Montfort. He highlighted how the meet was historical in binding all Montfortian Associates worldwide into one collaborative mission.

The second session by Bro. Antony Samy provided an impactful glimpse into the remarkable life and spiritual heritage of St. Montfort and his missionary zeal, St. Montfort travelled thousands of miles on foot, braving extreme conditions to spread the Word and Wisdom of God. Bro Antony highlighted Montfort's profound devotion to Mother Mary, especially through the practice of Rosary and his pathbreaking teachings encapsulated in the 'Treatise

of True Devotion to Mary'- a timeless masterpiece in Mariology. The session left the participants awestruck by the spiritual giant that Montfort was. His words, wisdom and model inspire the Brothers and associates even today, centuries later, in unlocking the potential of faith in their mission of serving the people of God.

In order to carry forward the key themes, the remaining three sessions were led by Bro. George Pottakaran, focused on decoding the salient features of Montfortian Spirituality with particular emphasis on True Devotion to Mary. Bro George explained how Montfortian spirituality is essentially Christo-Centric, scripture based, ecclesial focused on mission and nurtured by tender devotion to Mother Mary. He elaborated upon the four principle dimensions, namely Christological, Mariological, Ecclesiological and Apostolic - which captures the core essence of this spirituality.

Drawing extensively from Montfort's own writings in True Devotion and other works, Bro George provided practical suggestions for the members along with Brothers to practice the devotion sincerely. He encouraged setting aside fixed time each day to meditate on Gospel passages, recite the rosary while also examining one's conscience in order to grow in the life of faith, hope and charity. The sessions enabled the participants to gain precious spiritual insights which they can inculcate into their daily routine for personal sanctification vital to animating the mission.

The group discussion session provided the opportunity for the members to learn from each other's experiences in fostering the MGA movement across various communities. The participants shared how regular prayer moments, visiting the elderly and sick, conducting remedial lessons for struggling students etc, have enhanced the spiritual environment. The new ideas emerging through collective sharing such as organizing retreats, maintaining a prayer diary and chronicles, using digital media creatively were discussed. Drawing from the rich perspectives, concrete suggestions were formulated and collated into an action plan which can be implemented across MGA units to revitalize the Association into a vibrant movement it was originally envisioned to be by the founder.

A highlight of the second day was the educational trip to the renowned Sanchi Stupa, a UNESCO world heritage site famous for ancient Buddhist shrines and monasteries dating back to the 3rd century BC. The members were left spellbound at the massive hemispherical dome of the Great Stupa built in dedication to Lord Buddha. The sight filled the members' hearts with profound admiration and reverence at the architectural marvel pioneered by ancient craftsmen which has withstood the ravages of time. The relic tour thus provided not just visual splendour but valuable spiritual lessons rooted in cherishing life's deeper existential and ethical dimensions - very much aligned to Montfortian outlook to life.

As the Meet drew to a close, the participants expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Provincial Administration and organizing team for the meticulous planning and gracious hospitality during the stay at Montfort Villa. Over the two days, the members were nourished both

bodily through healthy and sumptuous meals as well as spiritually through prayerful reflection and meaningful deliberation on themes close to the Montfortian identity. Moving forward with renewed vigour, purpose and a comprehensive action plan, the members now seem determined and equipped to expand the horizons of the MGA movement in their respective communities. Just as their founder St. Montfort traversed thousands of miles fueled by spiritual energy to realize his apostolic dreams, the Brothers too have set out joyfully to bring alive his charism and message in a relevant way to the people today.

Bro. Sunil Ekka. SG.
Convenor, MGA Movement.