



MONTFORT BROTHERS OF ST. GABRIEL PROVINCE OF NORTH – EAST INDIA

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REFLECTION

The Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, Province of Northeast India is one of the sixteen Provinces of the Brothers of St. Gabriel in the world, eight of which are in India. The Province of Northeast India has thirteen communities and fifteen schools in the Northeast Region of India.

Inspired by our Rule of life and Constitutions, Montfortian Education Charter and the General Chapter exhortations, we Brothers are doing everything we can in the areas of renewable energy, biodiversity, afforestation, water management, waste management, relief to people who are in need, living simple lives, practice ecological spirituality and engage in ecological education.

The publication of the encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (2015), the release of *Laudato Si'* Goals (2020), launch of *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (2021) and the Montfortian Action for Total Sustainability -MATS (2021) have given us an opportunity to align our existing initiatives with the massive global movement of the Catholic Church and that of the initiatives taken by our Congregation globally. It is an opportunity for us to strengthen our initiatives and invent new, concrete, visible, long-term projects being caught up with The Montfortian Education Charter- 2010 and the 32nd General Chapter, which **challenges us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution.**

The seven goals, grounded in the *Laudato Si'*'s concept of integral ecology, include: response to the cry of the Earth, ecological economics, adoption of simple life styles, ecological education, spirituality and emphasis on community involvement and participatory action. Earth and its resources are God's gift to us. Therefore, it is important to be respectful towards this gift and use it sparingly. We as brothers and sisters being belong to each other, and are part of the creation. Hence, we need to be aware on the integrity of creation.

In *Laudato Si'*', Pope Francis recommends planting trees. Trees are the lungs of the earth. They "inhale" the carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels and exhale oxygen. When trees are strategically placed, their shade cools us, our homes and our communities. They reduce storm water runoff in cities and towns; they reduce soil erosion, moderate the immediate climate of cities and downtowns, provide windbreaks and purify the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Education in 'environmental responsibility' can encourage ways of living which directly and significantly affect the world around us like: avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, keeping off the appliances whenever not in use, Re-using something instead of immediately discarding it."

Pope Francis reminds us, "The future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize." We in the Province of Northeast have tried to engage every Brother, Teacher, Student and anyone associated with our mission, in

promoting total sustainability, considering the global climate emergency that threatens the balance of our eco system.

In the words of Pope Francis, “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change...”. Responding to the impassionate appeal of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, by answering “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” through concrete actions and passionate commitment, the Bro. Varghese Mandapathil, the Provincial Superior with his council has whole heartedly embraced the ‘Laudato Si action plan of the universal Church and the commitment of the Congregation in achieving the Laudato Si goals during the seven year long journey.

We have been created as God's image and given dominion over the earth which does not justify our absolute domination over other creatures. We are called not only to till the earth but oversee and preserve it. We can take from the abundance of the earth whatever we need for our living. However, we have the responsibility to preserve it and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations (Genesis 2:15).

As per Sabbath law, rest is obligatory for human beings as well as animals used for work. The oppressive tendency needs to be abolished be it towards human beings or animals (Exodus 23:12). Psalms tell us that creatures by their very existence bless and give glory to God (Ps 19, 103). God loves his creation. According to Genesis, he saw that it was good.

Human life is based on three essential and closely linked relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth/creation itself. These relationships are ruptured by sin (as human beings by their arrogance wanted to be like God, and refused to acknowledge their creatureliness).

The world came into being because of God's choice and not by chance. It was his free choice based on love. Every creature is the object of the God's kindness, who gives it a place in the world. God's love is the prime mover in all created things. Therefore, every act of unkindness toward any creature goes against human dignity because all forms of life are sacred and precious.

In conclusion it is important to see the earth as a gift belonging to everyone. According to the Bible, those who cultivate the land were bound to share its fruits, especially with “the poor, with widows, orphans and foreigners in their midst” (Leviticus 19:9-10). Ours is a shared existence, a shared inheritance where the resources are meant to benefit everyone, for the common good, the good of each one and the good of all.

Therefore, as Pope Francis beautifully puts it, “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvement and talents”

Bro. Varghese Mandapathil SG
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