

# **Montfort, the Educator**

Bro. Lawrence Joseph, s.g.

## **1. The educational situation**

During the seventeenth century many noticed that the children of the poor tended to be antisocial and libertine for want of instruction. The need to provide them with education was keenly felt. Between 1650 and 1700, there were a number of important attempts concerning primary schools and these influenced the pedagogical thoughts of Montfort.

In 1654, Fr. Jacques de Batencour, a parish priest in Paris, published a treatise on pedagogical organization entitled 'The Parochial School' and this work marked the birth of modern pedagogy. Taking inspiration from the book "The Parochial School" Fr. Charles Démia founded charitable schools in Lyons in 1667. He wanted to make Christians of the homeless children roaming the cities. Before the end of the century, sixteen free institutions, administered by the Department of Schools, were established in Lyons. At the end of his life Démia published a book entitled "Rules for the Schools for the City and diocese of Lyons". This book is a compilation of pedagogical practices that Démia had instituted in the schools founded through his intervention.

The third attempt was the foundation of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by St. John Baptist de la Salle and the establishment of several charitable schools, including the one in Paris in 1688. The method and teaching used by the Brothers, as well as the pedagogical characteristics of their instruction were the subject of a publication by John Baptist de la Salle in 1720, under the title "The Administration of Christian Schools". Montfort studied closely the method followed in these schools.

## **2. Montfort a good teacher**

Montfort taught his younger brothers and sisters; he not only taught them the three R's, but also trained them in prayer especially in the recitation of the rosary. When Louis was studying at the college at Rennes, he was chosen by Fr. Julian Bellier to teach catechism and to visit the poor and sick in the hospitals. The College of Rennes left its mark on Louis the deepening of the interior life and the beginning of an active, concrete and popular apostolate.

While at the Seminary of St. Sulpice (1695-1700), like all the other Seminarians, Louis was enrolled in the Association of Prayers founded in 1649 by Fr. Bourdoise "in order to obtain Christian teachers for poor children." The masters of St. Sulpice made the older seminarians teach catechism to children. They were about seventy engaged in preparing children for Communion and Confirmation. They went on teaching them even afterwards. On Sundays and feast days, they preached sermons to schoolboys and gave lessons in various boarding schools..

From 1701-03, Montfort was one of chaplains at the Poorhouse of Poitiers. Like most poorhouses of the period, there was a charitable school and also a factory. There the children of

the inmates between seven and thirteen years old and a few illiterate adults, who wished to learn how to read and write, were taught their letters. The chaplain was by right their schoolmaster. From 1704-1705, Montfort was the Director and as such he had to direct the school as well as the factory where the children were being trained in various trades. He had to supervise their education even after a schoolmaster was appointed.

### 3. Montfort, the founder of Charitable Schools

Montfort loved children and he wanted to teach them. “Father de Montfort’s main preoccupation during the course of his missions was to establish schools for the boys and for the girls.”<sup>1</sup> Fr. Clorivière S.J., who wrote Montfort’s Biography in 1785, tells us, “Being full of his Divine Master’s spirit, he always loved little children tenderly and whether in town or in the country, he liked to be surrounded by a crowd of them to whom he was teaching the elements of the Christian faith... As Apostolic Missionary who wanted to extend God’s Kingdom to its extreme limits, he used to say that ‘Cchools are the nurseries of the Church’, that in them the children, being pruned and tended with care, became able to bear good fruits and that for want of this first culture, they would always remain sterile and unfruitful”.

Among the eleven means that made Montfort’s mission fruitful, Fr. Joseph Grandet, the first biographer of Montfort (1724) has mentioned as the first “the establishment of Christian schools.”<sup>2</sup> Fr. Clorivière S.J. says, “Wherever he preached a Mission, one of his chief cares was to provide the parishes with good teachers, both men and women.”

**The Charitable School in Nantes:** There was a school attached to the General Hospital at Nantes. Since 1696 it was taught by Louis Danto whom Montfort recruited for his own society of Brothers later, under the name of Brother Louis. This is the same Brother whom he called to La Rochelle where he stayed two years from 1714 to May 1716, when he returned to his former post as is proved by the acquittance roll of the hospital. During his absence he was replaced by Bro. Philip.

**The Charitable School in La Rochelle:** Montfort thought of starting a school in La Rochelle mainly because of the religious ignorance of the young and the strong influence of Protestantism. After thinking deeply over the matter, he submitted his plan to Mgr. Champflour, the Bishop, early in 1714. The approval was complete. There were plenty of schools at La Rochelle, but they were paying schools and directed by teachers of suspect belief and beyond Episcopal control. An agreement was made concerning the foundation of charitable or free schools, under the Bishop’s control, where teaching would be given by men and women of very sound doctrine.

The young people of the town of La Rochelle would have to be instructed in religion. During the second half of 1714, Montfort did not hesitate to buy a building in need of restoration. He himself became architect and entrepreneur. But the most important task was to find and train good teachers. That is why Montfort “himself went to the school every day to train the teachers in his methods of teaching and to provide a model for these disciples.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Joseph Grandet, Biography of Montfort, p. 385,

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 383, 384

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Charles Besnard, Biography of Montfort, Vol. II, pp. 110-111.

The school was opened in January 1715. “Montfort” says Cloriviere, “put three masters with a priest at their head who was to watch over their conduct, say Mass for the children at the end of their class and confess them at least once a month”. But who were those masters? Brothers surely, though in Montfort’s time, only one can be identified with certainty, Louis Danto, mentioned in Montfort’s Last Will as Brother Louis of La Rochelle.

Montfort took great care of his school; he drew up the rules for admission, the timetable of the various classes, the syllabus to be followed, the prayers to be said, a list of rewards and punishments. Fr. Cloriviere says, “The prudent Missionary entered into the smallest details, as if he had spent all his life in teaching children... The benches were placed in the form of an amphitheatre, so that the master could see everyone at a glance and that nothing could escape his watchfulness. Montfort visited his schools every day, to train the master and the pupils according to his own method of teaching... For the Boys’ School, Montfort could find, among the many among the many persons under direction, the right men who would be able and zealous enough to take the work.”

**The Charitable School at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre:** Besides La Rochelle and Nantes, there was only the school of St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where we could be sure that there was a Montfortian Brother during the Saint’s life time. Fr. Baraud has said expressly that the first master of the school at St. Laurent was Bro. Mathurin. We note that Bro. Mathurin is no longer named as auxiliary to Montfort’s Missions after 1714 and that he joined Fr. Vatel and Fr. Mulot at St. Pompain only in 1718. Most probably he taught in the school of St. Laurent from 1714 till 1718.

**Land and house donated at Vouvant for a charitable school:** From Montfort’s biography and from his Last Will, it is very clear that, if possible, a school was to be started at Vouvant.

#### **4. Montfort’s Educational Principles**

1. The primary goal of the schools was the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Like his contemporaries, Montfort felt that schools were the nurseries of the Church, where children like young saplings carefully pruned and cultivated, eventually became fit to bear good fruit.
2. In his schools the child is loved as a son or daughter of God. Montfort profoundly loved children and young people, in imitation of Jesus, who ordered the Apostles to let them come to him. His passion for catechizing the poor flowed from Jesus’ burning love.
3. These schools must give free education to the poor of Jesus Christ. Montfort was partial to the poor and he wanted schools that were charitable and free, that could receive the poor and ensure their access to education. He instructed the teachers “never, either directly or indirectly, under any circumstances, to request money or gift of any kind from the children or their parents.” (Besnard Vol. II, 110-111)
4. In these schools order and silence must be maintained so as to improve the education. A minimum of organization and order is necessary to ensure a good education. To this end, he established rules for classes, admission requirements, a schedule of classes, and programmes for study and piety. (RW 275-292)

5. The education must be actively geared toward the spiritual life. The teaching of catechism was a must. In his Rules for Catechetical Instruction (RM 79-91), Montfort gives a method, which is dominated by three concerns: “memorization, characterized by questions and brief, clear responses: attention to students, using little stories, praise, and rewards, and questions directed toward many different students and placing of these lessons into the heart by prayer and tender exhortation.”<sup>4</sup>

6. For Montfort the Gospel was the Rule of Life for himself and for his students. A number of his hymns testify to his concern to show that the Gospel is the rule of conduct for the Christian. The God, that Montfort presents, is rooted in the Bible. It is a God who is faithful to all his promises (H. 7:3) and slow to anger (H. 51:10), a Father (H. 7:& 117:3), who worries about all his creatures, even sinners, and who overcomes all iniquity by his great goodness (H. 14:31). The Trinity is the point of departure for Montfort’s missionary catechism. God Alone is the most frequent formulation in his works; we find it in one form or another more than 130 times, especially in the hymns. He is conscious that all proceeds from the Father (LEW 19; SM 9). The mystery of Incarnation is central to Montfort’s spirituality.

7. Montfort’s pastoral ministry involved liturgical participation especially in the sacraments of confession and communion, after the renewal of baptismal vows. (RM 56). He encouraged people to enter into the mysteries of Christianity by means of processions, songs, mimes, pageants, and times of silence. He tried to touch the heart and the emotions as well as the mind. Dramatization is notable in a number of his hymns.

8. It should be noted that Louis Marie’s desire to educate in the faith was also expressed in spiritual direction. Hymn 10 speaks about its importance. Montfort spent a considerable amount of time in his absorbing labours of spiritual direction.

9. Educational institutions are, first and foremost, societal institutions. They reflect the religious, political, scientific and business state in which the culture finds itself. Montfort would agree that “transformation, liberation, justice and social solidarity presume the guidelines and goals of an education based on the Gospel.

### Conclusion

St; Louis de Montfort really loved the poor and children. This love led him found Charitable Schools. He also took great care to form and train teachers. He placed some of his Brothers as teachers in these schools. In the course of history the Brothers got themselves separated from the Fathers, and formed an Institute of Brothers of Christian Instruction.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Louis Perouas, Louis Grignon, the poor and the missions, p. 91

## 5. The Generalate of Fr. Gabriel Deshayes (1821-41)

When Fr. Gabriel Deshayes was elected Superior General, there were only 7 Priests, 731 Sisters and 4 Brothers, of whom Bro. Elie alone was in charge of the parish school. During the next 20 years all the three units progressed and in the case of Brothers it was a phenomenal growth. Before coming to St. Laurent, Fr. Deshayes had already founded a congregation of teaching Brothers as he felt that the parishes could be renewed through schools. That congregation later got amalgamated to a similar congregation founded by Fr. Lamennais. The combined unit came to be known as Brothers of Ploërmel.

**7.1. Fr. Deshayes' action in favour of the Brothers:** Fr. Deshayes recruited many young men and started a Novitiate for Brothers in St. Laurent. In 1823, he prepared a Statute for the Brothers. Further he got an official recognition from the government. By the royal decree of Sept. 17, 1823, the Congregation known as Brothers of Christian Instruction of the Holy Spirit was approved as a charitable association for the education of young people in the departments of Vendée, Maine-et-Loire, Dux-Sèvres, Vienne, and Charente-Inférieure. On Sept. 24, 1824, 42 Novices made their First Vows. Because of the increase in number of Brothers, Fr. Deshayes entered into a financial agreement with the General of the Sisters. Fr. Deshayes started or took over schools in quick succession: 1822 – 2, 1823 – 9, 1824 – 12, 1825 – 9, 1826 – 3, etc. From 1822 – 40, 76 schools were started, of which 47 were in existence when Fr. Deshayes died.

**7.2. Education of the deaf and that of the blind:** In 1810 Fr. Deshayes wrote: “Always alone and isolated in the midst of society these unfortunates (the deaf) cannot communicate with those around them, and still less gain any knowledge of religion whose comforting promises and help are so necessary to lighten the burden of their wretched existence. Can anyone consider their distress even for a minute and not try to think of ways to relieve these poor people in their plight?” He first introduced the Daughters of Wisdom to the teaching of deaf girls. Then the Brothers were introduced first at La Chartreuse, Auray and then in Loudun, Orléans and at Lille. In 1841, he started an Institute for the blind at Lille to be managed by the Daughters of Wisdom. Later on the Brothers also started schools for the blind.

**7.3. A separate community mainly for the teaching Brothers:** In 1935, the Brothers, Novices and Postulants put together numbered 132. Among the Brothers there were two groups those who were teachers and those who were looking after material things. There was some tension between the two. Fr. Deshayes thoughtt of having another community. In 1797, Fr. Supiot had bought the house of the “Bertonderie” in St. Laurent for the Sisters. Later it came to be called Supiot House. In 1835 this house free. On Oct. 15, 1835, the teaching Brothers (with a few who were doing manual work) numbering 33 came to stay in Supiot House. Later Fr. Deshayes paid the Sisters the cost of the property. One priest made the suggestion that this house could better be named St. Gabriel's House and Fr. Deshayes agreed to it. 42 Brothers, who were working in different schools, were also attached to this house. Bro. Augustin was appointed Director and Bro. Simeon Asst. Director. Both were to function under the authority of Fr. Deshayes himself.

**7.4: A new Rule:** In 1930, Fr. Deshayes wrote a new Rule for the Brothers. In 1834, he started to revise this Rule. He consulted Bros. Augustin and Simeon. At the insistence of Bro. Augustin, the Rule stipulated that after the death of Fr. Deshayes, the Brothers would elect a

Superior General from among themselves. Fr. Deshayes signed the altered Rule on Jan. 7, 1837. It was approved by the Bishop of Luçon on April 9, 1838. This was Rule was kept as a secret.

**7.5. Formation of a separate congregation:** Fr. Marcel Sibold, s.m.m., in an article, has stated, “From the beginning of his generalate Fr. Deshayes paid much attention (and also with what zeal!) so that his confreres did not deviate even an inch from the goal set by the Founder, including the itinerant Montfortian missions. He worked for fully realizing the original idea of Fr. De Montfort: institute with religious vows, and thus merit in the History of the Montfortian Missionaries the title of being the authentic second Founder.” In a similar way, Fr. Deshayes definitely deserves the title of Second Founder of the Brothers of the Holy Spirit, who later came to be called Brothers of St. Gabriel.

**7.6. After Fr. Dehayes' death:** Fr. Gabriel Deshayes died on Dec. 28, 1841. “On March 12, 1842, Bro. Augustin announced to the 99 Brothers who belonged to St. Gabriel’s House that by a secret document to be made public after his death, Fr. Deshayes had decided that henceforth the Brothers had to choose a Superior General from among themselves, at the first annual retreat. On July 6, 1842, Bro. Augustin sent the second Circular Letter to the Brothers, giving the calendar of operations: from 11-14 September, they would study the statutes left by Fr. Deshayes. From the 14<sup>th</sup> of September evening till the 21<sup>st</sup> morning, time would be devoted to the Retreat; on the 21<sup>st</sup>, the elections would take place.” (Bro. Michel Taillè, Magazine, Sept. 1976) The elections took place as scheduled and Bro. Augustin was elected General and Bros. Simeon and Abel Assistants. Bro. Augustin was the General from 1842-52. During this period the congregation developed. Towards the end of this period, Bro. Augustin applied to the Government for approval of the Congregation for approval for the whole of France under the name of Brothers of St. Gabriel. Bro. Augustin came from Auray and he was very much attached to Fr. Gabriel Deshayes and considered him as the Founder.

In 1852, Bro. Simeon became the General. He wanted Bro. Augustin to write to the Government asking the government to keep the original name of Holy Spirit. There was a bitter opposition. For fear of a split, Bro. Simeon also did write to the government and by the royal decree dated March 3, 1853, the Congregation was approved for the whole of France under the name of The Brothers of Christian Instruction of St. Gabriel.

## **8. Our Mission chiefly in the field of Education**

“The beginning of the Institute of the Brothers of Saint Gabriel goes back to Saint Louis Marie de Montfort... The Institute devotes itself mainly to the mission of education.” (Cons.

1) “Faithful to its tradition in education, the Institute carries out its mission mainly through teaching at all levels.” (Cons. 88) “There will only be left for the community of the Holy Spirit the house at Vouvant, which was given to me by Madame de la Brulerie by an agreement, the condition of which Fr. Mulot must fulfill; and the two pieces of land given by the Lieutenant of Vouvant’s wife, and a small house given by a good lady of rank. If there is no possibility there, it should be put at the disposal of the Brothers of the community of the Holy Spirit to conduct charitable schools.” (Montfort’s Last Will) Our origin goes back to Montfort as successors of this community to conduct charitable schools. It is through this particular mission entrusted to us that we have historical association with him.

From the beginning to this day education is considered as our main field of apostolate. “To be a complete Gabrielist, it is necessary that to the virtue of the religious, we join the knowledge of the teacher and the enlightened zeal of the catechist. Nevertheless we must not forget that the Congregation must prepare its members to be teachers and catechists.” (Constitutions and Common Rules- 1874)

Our present Constitutions have several articles dealing with the mission of education. “The Institute dedicates itself to education, particularly that of youth, poor children, those who are abandoned, maladjusted or handicapped in any way.” (C. 89) “In fidelity to the missionary charism of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, the Institute sets a high value on its favoured mission of educating the young and adults to faith.” (C. 90) “The Brothers contribute to the blossoming in these schools of an evangelical spirit of freedom and love, and aim at orienting human culture towards the spreading of the Gospel. They help the young to develop their personalities as baptized people, to discover the meaning the meaning of their life, and to become aware of their responsibilities towards their fellow men.” (C. 91)

“The primary mission of the Brothers is to become witnesses and builders of the Kingdom. As Brothers, we want to be witnesses, for the world, of the universal Brotherhood in Christ, and we want to work towards its realization in our privileged mission: education in general, and work with the handicapped and the marginalized.” (Message of the 30<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, No. 22) “Let us be attentive and close to the poor, to the little ones of this world: ‘All those by the world rejected on your love have greater claim’ (Cant. 149,1)...” (Message of the 30<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, No. 35) Now it is for us to take seriously the demands made by our Rule and also by the General Chapters.

\* \* \* \* \*

St. Louis Mary Grignion de Montfort and the Brothers of St. Gabriel

Bro. Lawrence Joseph, s.g.

## **1. The education context of the seventeenth Century**

In 1654, Fr. Jacques de Batencour, a parish priest in Paris, published a treatise on pedagogical organization entitled 'The Parochial School' and this work marked the birth of modern pedagogy.

Fr. Charles Démia founded charitable schools in Lyons in 1667. He published a book entitled "Rules for the Schools, for the City and diocese of Lyons". This book is a compilation of pedagogical practices that Démia had instituted in the schools founded through his intervention.

1.3 St. John Baptist de la Salle published a book in 1720, under the title The Administration of Christian Schools".

1.4. Mgr. De la Poype, the Bishop of Poitiers, was much taken up by the method conceived and practiced by Fr. Démia at Lyons. He codified that method in a booklet destined to the charitable schools.

1.6. Concerning Secondary Schools, Toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuits controlled more than 120 colleges, where they followed the Ratio Studiorum and pursued their own pedagogical direction.

1.7. Elite groups of students were invited to participate in confraternities, which originated in Italy and was spiritually renewed through the Company of Jesus.

## **2. Montfort became a good teacher**

2.1. In the Family School that was undoubtedly organized with the help of the parish priest of Iffendic, Louis was asked to teach his younger brothers and sisters. He not only taught them the R's, but also trained them in prayer especially in the recitation of the rosary.

2.2. When Louis was studying at the college at Rennes, he was chosen by Fr. Julian Bellier to teach catechism and to visit the poor and sick in the hospitals.

2.3. While at the Seminary of St. Sulpice (1695-1700), the masters of St. Sulpice made the older seminarians teach catechism to children..

2.3. While at the St. Clement's Community in Nantes (1700-01), Montfort performed the mission of a catechist and his sense of organization led him quite naturally to this ministry.

2.4. From 1701-03, Montfort was one of chaplains at the Poorhouse of Poitiers. The chaplain was by right their school master. From 1704-1705, Montfort was the Director and as such had to direct the school as well as the factory where the children were being trained in various trades.

## **3. Montfort the founder of Charitable Schools**

Among the eleven means that made Montfort's mission fruitful, Fr. Joseph Grandet, the first biographer of Montfort (1724) has mentioned as the first "the establishment of Christian schools." (Grandet, pp. 383-384)

**3.1. The Charitable School in Nantes:** There was a school attached to the General Hospital at Nantes. Since 1696 it was taught by Louis Danto whom Montfort recruited for his own society of Brothers later, under the name of Brother Louis.

**3.2.** The Charitable School in La Rochelle: Montfort, during the second half of 1714, bought a building in need of restoration. He himself became architect and entrepreneur. The school was opened in January 1715. Montfort took great care of his school.

**3.3. The Charitable School at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre:** Fr. Baraud has said expressly that the first master of the school at St. Laurent was Bro. Mathurin.

**3.4. :** **Vouvant:** Land was donated to Montfort to start a school at Vouvant.

#### **4. Montfort's Educational Principles**

4.2.The primary goal of the schools was the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

4.3.In his schools the child is loved as a son or daughter of God.

4.4.These schools must give free education to the poor of Jesus Christ.

4.5.In these schools order and silence must be maintained.

4.6.The education must be active geared toward the spiritual life.

4.7.For Montfort the Gospel was the Rule of Life for himself and for his students.

4.8.Montfort's pastoral ministry involved liturgical participation

4.9.It should be noted that Louis Marie's desire to educate in the faith was also expressed in spiritual direction.

4.10. Transformation, liberation, justice and social solidarity are goals of an education based on the Gospel.

#### **5. Montfort, the Founder of the Brothers of the Community of the Holy Spirit to conduct charitable schools**

**5.1.Montfort's plan:** For the schools for boys, Montfort chose several Brothers who followed him in his missions after 1705 and carried out the tasks of singing master, catechist, and schoolteacher.

**5.2.Montfort recruited Brothers as his disciples:** Montfort recruited Mathurin, John, Pierre and Jacques, and others still, most probably. At his death we know the names of seven of whom four had made their religious professions.

1. Bro. Mathurin Rangeard (1687-1760) was a native of Bouille-Loretz in Poitou. He was born on Nov. 7, 1687 and he wanted to be a Capuchin. In 1705 in the Church of the Penitents, Poitiers, Montfort recruited him. He remained as a faithful Brother to Montfort till Montfort's death and even later till his death.
2. Bro. John joined Montfort in 1707, while Montfort and Mathurin were staying in St. Lazarus Hermitage. He looked after the material concerns. After Montfort's death, he might have left for his native place.
3. Bro. James (Jacques Marie Burgard) joined Montfort in 1708. He accompanied Montfort during 23 months at a stretch. In 1714, he brought the Pontchateau statues to Nantes. His signing converted the parish priest of St. Pompain. Some of the writings, especially the Secret of Mary, have come down to us through him.
4. Bro. Peter (Pierre) joined Montfort in 1709 at Vertou. He is not mentioned in the Last Will.
5. Bro. Nicholas is mentioned for the first time in 1711. In 1714, he accompanied Montfort during his journey to Rouen. He took his vows on June 9, 1715. After Montfort's death we do not know what happened to him.
6. Bro. Gabriel stayed with Montfort only for a short while. He took the vows on June 9, 1715. He was with Montfort in St. Laurent when the latter died. Most probably he taught in the school at St. Laurent. We have no further information about him.
7. Bro. Louis joined Montfort towards the end of Montfort's life. He took his vows on June 9, 1715. When Montfort died, Louis was in La Rochelle, and in 1716, he was replaced by Bro. Philip.
8. Bro. Philip joined Montfort towards the end of Montfort's life. He took his vows on June 9, 1715. He worked in the charitable school at La Rochelle.

**5.3.Montfort thought of a Community to conduct Charitable Schools:**

If Montfort gathered round him, so early in his career, so many helpers it shows clearly his intention of founding a congregation of Brothers destined to the Missions or to the charitable schools.

**5.4.Montfort's Last Will:** Montfort's Last Will contains the following passage, "As the house at La Rochelle is reverting to its natural heirs, there will only be left for the community of the Holy Spirit the house at Vouvant, which was given to me by Mme de la Brulerie by an agreement, the condition of which Fr. Mulot must fulfill; and the two pieces of land given by the Lieutenant of Vouvant's wife, and a small house given by a good lady of rank. If there is no possibility of building there, it should be put at the disposal of the Brothers of the community of the Holy Spirit to conduct charity schools."

## 6. Immediately after Montfort's death

Latest by June 2, 1718, Bro. Mathurin came and joined the two Fathers. From 1716-19, Bro. Jacques was in St. Laurent to look after the school for of boys. On June 20, 1720, Sr. Marie Louise came to St. Laurent to establish the first community. Another property was bought for Fathers and Brothers. The property was registered in the name of Brothers, who were to teach in the parish.

After a retreat the Fathers elected Fr. Mulot as their superior and on June 29, 1722, made their religious vows in the hands Fr. Mulot. Bro. Joseau made his first vows. He looked after the school from 1722-59. Brothers were in La Rochelle and Nantes only for a short period and thus the school at St. Laurent was only one where Brothers taught till the end of the century.

## 7. The Generalate of Fr. Gabriel Deshayes (1821-41)

During the French Revolution, 34 Sisters, 6 Brothers and 6 Priests lost their life. When Fr. Gabriel Deshayes was elected Superior General in 1821, there were only 7 Priests, 731 Sisters and 4 Brothers, of whom Bro. Elie alone was in charge of the parish school. During the next 20 years all the three units progressed and in the case of Brothers it was a phenomenal growth. Before coming to St. Laurent, Fr. Deshayes had already founded a congregation of teaching Brothers.

**7.1. Fr. Deshayes' action in favour of the Brothers:** Fr. Deshayes recruited many young men and started a Novitiate for Brothers in St. Laurent. In 1823, he prepared a Statute for the Brothers. Further he got an official recognition from the government. By the royal decree of Sept. 17, 1823, the Congregation known as Brothers of Christian Instruction of the Holy Spirit was approved as a charitable association for the education of young people in 5 departments. On Sept. 24, 1824, 42 Novices made their First Vows.

### **7.2. Education of the deaf and that of the blind:**

Fr. Deshayes first introduced the Daughters of Wisdom to the teaching of deaf girls. Then the Brothers were introduced first at La Chartreuse, Auray and then in Loudun, Orléans and at Lille. In 1841, he started an Institute for the blind at Lille to be managed by the Daughters of Wisdom. Later on the Brothers also started schools for the blind.

**7.3. A separate community mainly for the teaching Brothers:** In 1835, the Brothers, Novices and Postulants put together numbered 132. Among the Brothers there were two groups those who were teachers and those who were looking after material things. There was some tension between the two. On Oct. 15, 1835, the teaching Brothers (with a few who were doing manual work) numbering 33 came to stay in Supiot House. One priest made the suggestion that this house could better be named St. Gabriel's House and Fr. Deshayes agreed to it. 42 Brothers, who were working in different schools, were also attached to this house. Bro. Augustin was appointed Director and Bro. Simeon Asst. Director. Both were to function under the authority of Fr. Deshayes himself.

**7.4: A new Rule:** In 1830, Fr. Deshayes wrote a new Rule for the Brothers. In 1834, he started to revise this Rule. He consulted Bros. Augustin and Simeon. At the insistence of Bro. Augustin, the Rule stipulated that after the death of Fr. Deshayes, the Brothers would elect a

Superior General from among themselves. Fr. Deshayes signed the altered Rule on Jan. 7, 1837. It was approved by the Bishop of Luçon on April 9, 1838. This Rule was kept as a secret.

#### **7.6. Formation of a separate congregation:**

Fr. Gabriel Deshayes died on Dec. 28, 1841. "On March 12, 1842, Bro. Augustin announced to the 99 Brothers who belonged to St. Gabriel's House that by a secret document to be made public after his death, Fr. Deshayes had decided that henceforth the Brothers had to choose a Superior General from among themselves, at the first annual retreat. The elections took place as scheduled and Bro. Augustin was General and Bros. Simeon and Abel as Assistants. Bro. Augustin was the General from 1842-52. During this period the congregation developed. Towards the end of this period, Bro. Augustin applied to the Government for approval of the Congregation for approval for the whole of France under the name of Brothers of St. Gabriel. Bro. Augustin came from Auray and he was very much attached to Fr. Gabriel Deshayes and considered him as the Founder.

In 1852, Bro. Simeon became the General. He wanted Bro. Augustin to write to the Government asking the government to keep the original name of Holy Spirit. There was a bitter opposition. For fear of a split, Bro. Simeon also did write to the government and by the royal decree dated March 3, 1853, the Congregation was approved for the whole of France under the name of The Brothers of Christian Instruction of St. Gabriel.

### **8. Our Mission chiefly in the field of Education**

From the beginning to this day education is considered as our main field of apostolate. "To be a complete Gabrielist, it is necessary that to the virtue of the religious, we join the knowledge of the teacher and the enlightened zeal of the catechist. Nevertheless we must not forget that the Congregation must prepare its members to be teachers catechists." (Constitutions and Common Rules- 1874)

Our present Constitutions have several articles dealing with the mission of education. "The Institute dedicates itself to education, particularly that of youth, poor children, those who are abandoned, maladjusted or handicapped in any way." (C. 89) "In fidelity to the missionary charism of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, the Institute sets a high value on its favoured mission of educating the young and adults to faith." (C. 90) "The Brothers contribute to the blossoming in these schools of an evangelical spirit of freedom and love, and aim at orienting human culture towards the spreading of the Gospel. They help the young to develop their personalities as baptized people, to discover the meaning of their life, and to become aware of their responsibilities towards their fellow men." (C. 91)

"The primary mission of the Brothers is to become witnesses and builders of the Kingdom. As Brothers, we want to be witnesses, for the world, of the universal Brotherhood in Christ, and we want to work towards its realization in our privileged mission: education in general, and work with the handicapped and the marginalized." (Message of the 30<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, No. 22) "Let us be attentive and close to the poor, to the little ones of this world: 'All those by the world rejected on your love have greater claim' (Cant. 149,1)..." (Message of the 30<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, No. 35)

### **9. Conclusion**

We have looked at Montfort as a missionary educator. We have seen how Fr. Gabriel Deshayes has contributed to the growth of our Religious family. Now it is for us to take seriously the demands made by our Rule and also by the Message from 30<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. We have looked at the educational principles of Montfort. Now it is for each Province, each community and each Brother to prepare projects to be executed in a time bound way.

\* \* \* \* \*