

Montfortian Gabrielite Associate (MGA)



CHARTER

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Montfortian Gabrielite Associate (MGA) Charter

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Foreword

Dear Brothers and the Montfortian Associates,

I am happy to present to you the **MGA Charter** during this Extraordinary Mission Month of October 2019. As stated in the *Preamble* of this document, the Montfortian Gabrielite Associates Movement has been in a process of evolution in the Congregation of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, to be in tune with the teachings of the Church, and its efforts to give the laity its rightful place.

It is only common knowledge that 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 29th General Chapter held in 2000, which gave a clarion call to the whole Congregation: *“Wherever possible, at all levels of the Institute, we will establish the required structures to facilitate networking with the Montfortian Family, other religious groups, lay people...”* (cf. § 2.1). 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*” (cf. § 36). The document entitled “**Partnership – General Guidelines**” brought out in March 2009 was the first attempt of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel to give certain structure to the Montfortian Gabrielite Associate Movement in the Congregation. No doubt that this document gave certain clarity to the different Provinces to launch or to strengthen the Movement in their entities.

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*” (cf. § 27). The theme of the 32nd General Chapter, “*Fraternal Life and the Communitarian Dimension of the Montfortian Mission*” gave a new impetus to the Montfortian Gabrielite Associate Movement, mandating the Central Administration to constitute an **International Commission for Partnership**. The **MGA Charter** you have in your hands today is the result of the reflections carried out by this International Commission for Partnership, under the leadership of Bro. Dionigi Taffarello, the Vicar General.

I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation to all the members of the International Commission for Partnership, and in particular Bro. Paulose Mekkunel, who took time to formulate the Charter with his long experience in the field, and with the contributions of Bro. Paulraj A., who did a lot of research into this topic of the Montfortian Association Movement. As Pope Francis clearly stated in his Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People in 2015, *“Around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a ‘charismatic family’, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons to share in the same charismatic reality”* (cf. III. 1). So, it is my earnest hope that the MGA Charter will help the Associates to move forward with clearer goals and with renewed enthusiasm in practicing and promoting the Montfortian charism and spirituality and sharing in the mission of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel.

Bro. John Kallarackal, SG
Superior General
18th October, 2019

Preamble:

Montfortian Gabrielite Associates, as an organization, has been in a process of evolution in the Congregation of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel since quite some time. It has become a reality in most of the Provinces of the Congregation, each having its own specificities. Time has come for it to be unified and strengthened with an organized structure and form. It is with this conviction that we embark on this project of writing a Charter for MGA based on the lived experience of it in the Congregation.

Montfortian Charism, ever since received through St. Louis Marie de Montfort, was lived in partnership with lay people of good will. Marie Louise Trichet, Mathurin Rangepard and companions were the early followers and collaborators of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. It eventually led to the formation of the Religious Communities of **the Holy Spirit and the Daughters of Wisdom**. Marquis de Magnanne, Madame de Bouillé and René Joseau, are the significant lay people, who made it possible for Montfortian Charism to take shape and continue in history after the death of Montfort.

As these Religious Congregations spread their wings in the course of time and reached across the world, partnership with people of good will continued to be part of their way of being. Following the invitation of Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Canonization of St. Montfort in 1997, to the Montfortian Congregations to make the Montfortian

Charism (*this great treasure*) more fruitful¹, the Congregations took up Partnership with laity as a theme to be studied and developed. It was the 29th General Chapter (in the year 2000) that gave us the direction to realize the concept of partnership in four stages:

- Formation of leaders for Partnership;
- Sharing of the Montfortian Gabrielite mission;
- Sharing of the Montfortian Gabrielite charism;
- Sharing of our spirituality and identity².

The succeeding General Chapters have been guiding us with regard to its importance and the way to go about it. The International Commission for Partnership³ met twice to discuss it and the present effort to formulate a Charter is being done under its guidance.

1. The Name

Montfortian Gabrielite Associates (MGA), is a Christian Association of people who are spiritually oriented and are willing to share the Charism, Spirituality and

¹ Letter of Pope John Paul II to mark to 50th anniversary of the Canonization of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (1997).

² Brothers of St. Gabriel Message from the 29th General Chapter, : *Montfortian Missionary Dynamism for a Just Society Towards the Kingdom*, No.2.9; Cf. also the *Message of the 30th General Chapter*, No. 36; *Message of 31st General Chapter*, Nos. 22-31; *Acts of the 32nd General Chapter* Nos. 3.5 and 5.6

³ Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, *Acts of the 32nd General Chapter, Strategy 5-a No. 3.5.5.1*

Mission of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel – Called to be *Lay Montfortian Gabrielites*.

2. Vision of the MGA

The MGA is a deeply committed group of Christians, who are Montfortians in their spirit and spirituality. Being close partners of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, they participate in the mission of the Congregation and become an inspiring presence of Christian life in the Church.

3. Mission of the MGA

Along with the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, the Montfortian Gabrielite Associates are engaged in the world, through the privileged field of education, to transform humanity into a fraternal community of the children of God – The Gospel vision of the Kingdom of God⁴.

4. Membership in the MGA

- 4.1** Membership is normally open to all Christians of good will, who feel called to be associated with the Montfortian Gabrielite way of life and mission.
- 4.2** Those desiring to be an MGA member undergo an initial formation to help them have a general understanding of

⁴ Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel: *Rule of Life, No 63*.

the Montfortian Gabrielite Charism, Spirituality and Mission. It could be achieved through living in contact with the Brothers and their mission at least for a year during which the aspiring member would attend meetings, prayer sessions and Montfortian retreats conducted in the Province for the Associates.

- 4.3** A process of discernment, by the aspiring member and the Committee of Associates appointed for the purpose, be gone through before a new member is accepted into the Association. This decision to accept a new member into the Association should be approved by the Provincial Superior or his delegate.
- 4.4** Once accepted, one becomes a member by taking a pledge to live by the orientations and demands of the Association in the presence of the Province-Coordinator and the Provincial Superior or his delegate. He/she would also formally make the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary as taught by St. Louis Marie de Montfort, as a spiritual expression of this commitment.
- 4.5** Membership is for life. Nevertheless, each member is to renew his/her commitment every year during the annual retreat or any other appropriate spiritual exercise approved by the Province Coordination Committee.
- 4.6** A member may withdraw from the Association for various reasons. This must be done in writing to the Province Coordination Committee, which will examine the issue in personal consultation with the member

concerned. The Committee will then forward the application, with its remarks to the Provincial Superior or his delegate who will confirm the withdrawal. His/her name will subsequently be removed from the registry.

- 4.7** A member is considered **inactive** when he/she has been absent from the activities and the spiritual exercises of the Association for one year or more. The Province Coordinator will take note of it and try to help the member to become active again, failing which he/she will be asked to withdraw formally from the Association.
- 4.8** The membership of an Associate can be terminated for very grave reasons like, getting involved in criminal activities, going against the basic values and principles of the Association. The Province Coordination Committee will study the case and if found true, will submit the recommendation for termination, with evidences, to the Provincial Superior who will formally issue the Termination Order. And his/her name will be removed from the registry.
- 4.9** The Register of Members is maintained by the Secretary of the Committee of Associates and it may be kept at the Province Secretariat of the Association.
- 4.10** Consecrated Lay Montfortians could be the dominant face of the future Montfortian Gabrielites – a call to transcend the present and rise to the unknown future with faith and hope in the Lord who said: *“I shall be with you till the end of time”* (Mt. 28:26).

5. Structure of Governance

Montfortian Gabrielite Association is an international organization, as such, it functions at different levels: Local, Provincial, National/Regional and International.

5.1 Local Level

- ✓ **The local unit** will consist of one Animator (who is usually a Brother), a Coordinator and at least two members. The number of members of the local unit is not expected to exceed ten (a community of ten).
- ✓ **Local unit meeting** will be conducted at least once a month to pray, share, evaluate, learn and plan ahead. It is a way of living, functioning and growing as Montfortian Gabrielites. The MGA members preferably will work in the Institutions of the Congregation, but it is also open to those working outside. A report of the meeting will be maintained by the Local Secretary.
- ✓ **The Local Animator** will be appointed by the Provincial Superior or his delegate. His function will be the spiritual animation of the local unit enabling it to develop as Montfortians committed to its own Vision and Mission.
- ✓ **The Local Coordinator** is elected by the members of the local unit and his term of office will be for three years; he/she can be re-elected. The Coordinators' functions are: to call for regular meetings and to ensure that proper minutes of these are maintained by the Secretary; to

organize the implementation of the collective mission proposed by the general annual body meeting; and to prepare the annual budget, maintain the accounts and explore the possibility of raising funds locally for the mission.

5.2 Province Level

There shall be a **Province Coordination Committee** (PCC) which shall organize and oversee all the activities of the MGA at the Province level. The PCC will consist of the Province Animator, Coordinator, Bursar and a member from each local unit; The Provincial Superior being an ex-officio member. The term of this apex body will be for three years. While the **Province Animator** is appointed by the Provincial Superior, the **Province Coordinator** is elected by the local unit's Coordinators from among themselves. The Bursar is appointed by the Province Coordination Committee. He/she maintains the accounts and looks into the possibilities of raising funds for the mission of the organization.

The function of the Province Coordinator will be to establish and maintain cordial relationship between the local units; to organize the annual general body meeting and keep the records of the same; to give guidance to the local units so as to remain focused on the Vision and Mission of the MGA, while helping them to develop their

own characteristics. He can also explore the possibility of organizing new local units.

5.3 National Level

A National Commission is recommended in countries where more than one Province exist. It can bring in all the Associates on a National platform, share their varied experiences and make it an effective movement in the society. The National Commission, while working under the authority of the National Council, could provide the much needed guiding principles for the growth and sustainability of the organization in the present context of the world. In a country like India where there are 8 Provinces, the National Commission can play an important coordinating role.

5.4 International Level

International Commission for Partnership already exists and is functioning under the authority and guidance of the Superior General and Council.⁵ Being the apex body at the Congregational level, its role is to guide, encourage and to enable the MGA at all levels. It will monitor, guide and facilitate the growth of the movement in relation to the Congregation. International

⁵ Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, *Acts of the 32nd General Chapter*, strategy 5a No. 3.5.1.1

and continental gatherings of the Associates or its coordinating team members are to be promoted by the International Commission for the MGA, and these are to be organized at least once every three years.

6. Mission and Spirituality of the MGA

- 6.1** Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom of God, the Son of the Father and the Brother of Humanity, is at the centre of the MGA movement. His example and teachings guide our life and mission. *“Christ is your only Law. He is, for all men, the Way, the Truth, and the Life”*⁶.
- 6.2** We believe in Jesus’ vision of humanity: *a fraternity of the children of God*⁷, beyond all diversities (the Kingdom of God), and we work towards its realization. Along with the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, working in the favoured field of education, we try to lead humanity towards this vision of Jesus. This education mission can take different forms, especially in our effort to reach out to the neediest in the society.
- 6.3** While participating in the mission of the Congregation along with the Brothers, family remains the primary field of mission for the MGA. Transforming one’s own family into a *“domestic church”*⁸, as desired by Vatican II, the

⁶ Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, *Rule of Life and Constitutions*, p. 135.

⁷ *The Kingdom of God: Jesus’ Vision of a New Society*, George Soares-Prabhu (S.J.) National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1981.

⁸ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, No. 11.

MGA members become witnesses to the world, of the beauty and vitality of the Christian Family Life wherein the Kingdom of God becomes visible.

- 6.4** We, the MGA members, pursue an inclusive spirituality that includes prayers supported by appropriate actions; actions that promote justice, peace and fraternity. We pray with Jesus and live like Jesus, our Brother – a prophetic presence in the world⁹.
- 6.5** In this pursuit of fraternal holiness, as Montfortians, we solicit Mother Mary to play the mother’s role in our spiritual life. *“If all Christians are at one with Mother Mary, their Mother in the faith, this union is for you a favoured way of delving more deeply into the mystery of Christ”*¹⁰.
- 6.6** Being members of the MGA fraternity, we accept each other with their strengths and weaknesses and support each other by assuming their works, sharing in their successes and failures, rejoicing in their joys and suffering with their sufferings, we become part of each other’s lives within the limitations of our family life.
- 6.7** They will unite themselves with all the Montfortians around the world forming a spiritual communion. And they will make their effective presence felt in the

⁹ *Identity and Mission of Religious Brothers in the Church*, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Vatican, October 4, 2015.

¹⁰ Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, *Rule of Life and Constitutions*, No. 8; cf. LEW Ch.17, No.203

Christian community as enlightened leaders who are the Montfortian Gabrielites.

7. Formation

- 7.1** The MGA, as an organization, is to live and work along with the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. It needs to imbibe the values of the Congregation and the ability to live by these in their context of life. A well-organized formation system is a must for the realization of this vision.¹¹
- 7.2** An initial formation to induct the candidates into the Vision and Mission of the MGA and the way of functioning of the organization is to be given before one is formally accepted into it. It could be done through seminars of varying durations and live-in experiences with the local units.
- 7.3** There should be regular coming together of the Associates, at the local and Province levels, for prayers, reflections and retreats. Well planned periodic seminars could be the way of continued formation for the members of the MGA. These seminars should cover topics like the Charism, Spirit and Spirituality of the Montfortian Gabrielites.
- 7.4** Those among the MGA members, called to take up leadership roles should be provided with opportunities to

¹¹ cf. Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, *Acts of 32nd General Chapter* n. 3.5

participate in prolonged formation programmes. Faith Formation, Basic Theology and Spirituality, Collective Leadership Skills and the Role of the Laity in the Church, could be the areas of formation for these leaders.

8. Conclusion

The Montfortian Gabrielite Associates, like the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, are called to the fullness of holiness in Christ, following the Montfortian path. *“And today, one with your Brothers, working in the Father’s field, you partake in this wondrous heritage. With them you share the same light on the Gospel and you are committed to work together for the Kingdom”*.¹²

In this combined commitment to the Kingdom, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we offer our daily life as a love-sacrifice to the Father in union with Jesus our Brother, and Mary our Mother. In the midst of the People of God we are a prophetic community, bearing witness to Jesus Christ, to His teaching and to His mission.

According to Vatican II (Lumen Gentium, 11) family is a “Domestic Church” in which the Gospel is lived and transmitted most effectively. And it is through the witness of the families that the Gospel can reach every place and every section of the society. It is the specific area of mission for the MGA where they participate effectively in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

¹² Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, *Rule of Life*, No. 5

This extraordinary avenue of mission opens up to us, the Montfort Brothers, when we align with our Associates, empowering and enabling them to play the leadership role in their Family Mission.

We, the Montfortian Gabrielites (Brothers and Associates), cherish the Montfortian Charism that has come down to us. Following the promptings of the Holy Spirit we want to live it meaningfully, share it with others in the context of today, and thus ensure its continuance in history.

