

Up Sails!

THE INTERNATIONAL LETTER OF FAITH AND LIGHT N° 53 SEPTEMBER 2022



Becoming like little children





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Becoming like little children



Raúl Izquierdo
International coordinator

Dear friends,
We have the feeling that summer is gracing us with its last smiles and farewells. It won't be long till our days are once again busy with projects, meetings, planning, work, school. While at Mass with my family a few days ago I listened again to the reading from Matthew's Gospel where Jesus says to his disciples, "Unless you change and become like little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven." And those words struck a chord in my head and in my heart as I thought of my Faith and Light community "Abba", having just returned from a few days' holiday with them, my family in faith. These days were spent in rest, in sharing our lives, in everyday tasks and in prayer, in an atmosphere of simplicity and joy.

This holiday in the company of my community and the reading from Matthew have prompted two reflections that I will share with you.

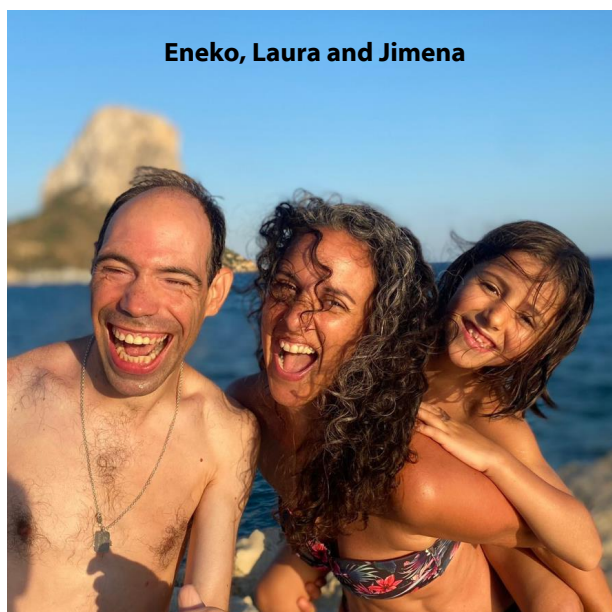
Become like little children

These words of Jesus to his disciples, who were already skilled in various professions, are strange. The disciples at that particular time appear to have been intent on having influential positions when the time was ripe. This is the mindset of our "world" too: to be important, famous, to use our positions in order to bask in the limelight or gain advantage. Jesus changes this dynamic, which is so widespread in every period of history, in a manner that stuns his contemporaries and should stun us too. The one who would be great must become small. Jesus proposes a descending path: humble oneself, serve, be there for others. At

the end of his life he reminded us of this once again, through a more radical action: he washes his disciples' feet, just like slaves would do, and asks them to do the same in the future. Are we in Faith and Light familiar with this, we who have done and celebrated it so often?

During the holiday with my community, three people with an intellectual disability left a deep impression on me: Eneko, Guillermo and Iván. Eneko has a beautiful smile, open, almost permanent; a smile so natural and authentic that when it appears it dispels anger and ill-humour. Guillermo has his character [just like the rest of us], but when he laughs, the floor and the walls of the house shake. He is liable to laugh on any pretext, at any time; his laugh is contagious, and it heals.

Iván's gaze is penetrating and determined. With his beautiful blue eyes he expresses what



Eneko, Laura and Jimena

is harder to say with words. His eyes look at you and love you, look at you and encourage you, look at you and tell you he feels good being with you. He looks at you and doesn't judge you.

A smile, a peal of laughter, a gaze. This is what I want for myself and for you, the smile and the laughter and the gaze of Eneko, Guillermo and Ivan. They're ahead of me on the road to becoming like little children and maybe that is the reason why they are also closer to God than I am.

The essential

Next year, in July 2023, we will hold the General Assembly of our family of Faith and Light. An occasion to share, to grow, to dream, and of course to discern together as we elect the people who will be called to serve Faith and Light in the various international posts. We must prepare for this, without taking our eyes off what is essential for Faith and Light: the life of the communities, and thus of the people who make up those communities. Because structures and responsibilities and documents are good if they contribute to the life of the communities.

Therefore it is important to try to remain focused on what is essential and avoid being side-tracked. Nothing is more important in Faith and Light than belonging to a community. Provinces, countries, international level... only serve a purpose if they contribute to the life of the small communities. And in this way our communities will be places of smiles and laughter and welcoming gazes.

And as we focus our attention on what is essential, we must not lose sight of the one who first loved us and who has called us. Our eyes are fixed on the eyes of Jesus Christ.

Now and always and in the future. If our eyes turn away from his, we lose the vision of who we are.

*Jesus, grant us the grace to live
out our commitment as service and not power,
help us to understand your ways*

*and your teaching,
as you did for your first disciples,
do not let us stray from what is essential
for Faith and Light.*

*Continue to call us if you see
that we are sometimes deaf or blind.
Give us the gaze, the laughter
and the attention of our friends
with a disability and so many gifts.
Make us into children,
capable of astonishment,
of the will to keep on learning,
to have confidence in others,
to trust and to forgive.*

*Never let us lose the ability to laugh,
make us selfless and welcoming
in the way we see others.*

*Prepare our hearts for the General Assembly
of July 2023 and many other events.*

*Let us never take our eyes away from your
eyes.*

Amen.

I embrace each one of you.



"Abba" community, time of prayer

Peace I leave with you

(John 14:27)

In the prayer of our international movement there are words: *"We want to live in a covenant of love in this big family you have given us, where we can share our sufferings and difficulties, our joys and our hope."*

Before the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine, we recited this prayer hundreds of times. Already six months ago, these words came to life in a very special way and became more active. Letters, words of support, reassurances of prayer and offers of help began pouring in from all corners of the earth. It was so valuable to know that the eyes of the world are now turned to Ukraine.

Due to the martial law, the life of our Ukrainian communities has been shaken - we have lost security, confidence in the future and completely lost the ability to plan.

If meetings could not always take place, then the community could only dream of camps - many guest houses are full of refugees, many have no shelters; also, many communities could not raise funds for the camps.

A great gift for 4 communities from Transcarpathia (the extreme western part of Ukraine) was the offer of the Hungarian communities to

organize the camp on the territory of Hungary.

Edita Kral (the founder of these communities in Transcarpathia), Endre Csany, our vice-international coordinator, Peter Gulyash, responsible for Hungarian communities, Caritas of Hungary with Fr. Gabor, members of the Hungarian communities and many benefactors together took care of the camp: raised funds, paid for accommodation and transport costs - did everything so that our com-

munities could feel safe and recover.

The camp lasted a week from August 6 to 13, in the small village of Balatoncsicso near the famous Lake Balaton. A total of 66 participants from the communities camped: "Rocky Castle" (Khust), "Apple Orchard" (Tyachiv), "Messengers of Joy" (Mukachevo), and "Grapevine" (Uzhhorod city).

The theme of the camp *"My peace I give you"* helped participants to think about God's presence and the sources of



peace in our communities.

During the week, we had wonderful experiences being together for: joint Liturgies and Adorations, filled with the themes of the days, crafts, prayers and exercises, games, rest on the lake, a trip to the Benedictine monastery in Tihán - they helped us get to know the neighbouring country and its inhabitants better.

During the camp, we had two incredibly important and pleasant meetings.

On one of the excursions to Keszthely Castle, there was a meeting with two Hungarian communities who were camping nearby, "Little Goats" and "Wheat Flower" and our Vice International Coordinator, Endre.

We discovered we knew enough songs that we were able to sing together, each in our own language.

There was time for joint games, greeting each other and blessings.

We were given tickets to various museums located on the territory of the castle, so we could all choose where to go, and at the same time be together all the time (Hungarian and Ukrainian communities) and have a good time. It was great to get to know the Hungarian communities a little bit.

Another good meeting took place at our camp site - Peter, who is responsible for the Hungarian communities, and his family spent the whole day with us. We sang a lot - it was a great time, because the guests came to us with guitars and musical instruments.

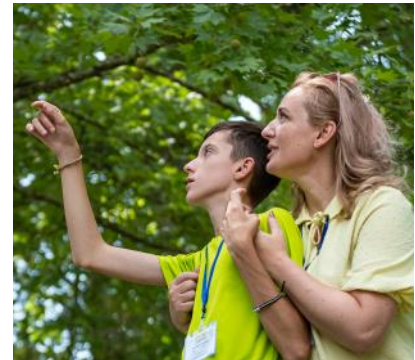
Together with Peter, we prayed the Liturgy in the Byzantine rite, which was served for us by a Ukrainian father living in Hungary.

And Fr. Gabor from Caritas spent the afternoon with us on the lake.

We had a good time together, and it filled our hearts with peace, which we take with us to Ukraine.

Thank God for this opportunity and solidarity with us. With great joy we embrace everyone who joined this camp and we thank you. Faith and Light is a gift, a gift for all, no matter where we are in the world.

OKSANA LIPETSKA
Provincial coordinator, Ukraine



50 years, a cause for celebration!

ON SATURDAY 7 MAY 2022, THE TOWN OF ATH ECHOED TO THE SOUND OF A HAPPY CHORUS OF "HIP HIP HURRAY". COMING FROM WITHIN THE WALLS OF THE SCHOOL OF ST. FRANCIS. BUT WHO OR WHAT WAS THE OCCASION FOR THIS MERRIMENT? A GREAT SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT PERHAPS, OR A COMPETITION WIN, OR THE VISIT OF A COORDINATOR...? THE ANSWER IS A LITTLE MORE COMPLEX THAN THAT — AND FAR MORE INTERESTING

No finishing line to be crossed here, no explosion of joy at the end of a superhuman effort. But a verve and enthusiasm which seem like second nature to these merry-makers. A whole community, a community of Faith and Light, enjoying a time together — just as they have done for the past 50 years — where all are served and cherished for who and what they are. All the many friends of Faith and Light contributed to the success of the occasion, and their hard work was coordinated with great energy by Sister Anne-Marie. All answered the call with one heart.

As usual, so that its message would be heard loud and clear, Faith and Light spared no effort for their guests who had -every from all over Hainaut. Gradually the rooms filled up with the various Faith and Light communities of our province, seven in all.

Invited to the Wedding Feast

And so the mood was already a lively one when the



jolly troupe of actors "KT-âtre" arrived on the scene, led by Friend. Philippe Pardonce. The actors gave a spirited performance which took the form of an original and humorous take on the Gospel parable of the wedding feast. The subject was ideal for the message of Faith and Light, reminding the audience of the privileged place which God has reserved for each one of us and perfectly illustrating the joyful manner in which those who are most fragile receive the Love of

God, making them shining witnesses of faith in Jesus.

Following this, the guests moved to another table, the Eucharistic table. Mgr Guy Harpigny was present to celebrate this Good News with all the Friends of Jesus. Each Prayer Intention was followed by an invocation of Easter joy and lively and joyful songs. Everyone was able to "let their hair down".

And finally, the picnic. The dining-room was full, but there was a bowl of delicious soup for everyone. Of course, after

moving from table to table all morning, people were now feeling the need to stretch their legs. Not to worry: the organizers had thought of everything: all stood up and coloured balloons were released, a thousand and one colours to celebrate differences. And continuing the fun, the music and dancing started up, with folk and even country music. And the amusements didn't end there: there was a singing workshop, a do-it-yourself workshop, a games area.

And to finish off the day, all the friends were given a slice of cake and a gift-bag with a treasure inside. Before the communities headed back home, Father Xavier Nys, Faith and Light chaplain, told the guests not to forget to slip a smile, joy and prayer into their backpacks. Which sums it all up perfectly: those are the ingredients for the secret recipe of friendship. And it really is secret. You're probably missing a little touch of this or that in your search for this authentic friendship. But rest assured: the friends in Faith and Light like to share, so come and say hello from time to time and they will pass on their know-how.

NATASHA COOSEMANS
"Aiguillages"



Faith and Light reigns at Knock

THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE « IRISH CATHOLIC » NEWSPAPER FOLLOWING THE PILGRIMAGE WHICH WAS FINALLY ABLE TO TAKE PLACE IN PERSON LAST MAY AFTER TWO YEARS OF VIRTUAL PILGRIMAGES. A LOOK BACK AT THIS DAY OF GATHERING AND CELEBRATION.



Members of Faith and Light sing a hymn at the end of the Mass

Saturday May 21 saw the annual National Faith and Light Pilgrimage to Knock shrine.

Fourteen communities from all over Ireland travelled by bus and car, which after two years of virtual pilgrimages provided an added element of rejoicing.

Founded by a French couple who had two sons with intellectual disabilities, Faith and Light came out of the difficulties they had in bringing their sons on a pilgrimage to Lourdes with their parish, the boys being refused as a result of their disabilities.

Arising out of that incident, groups of parents and children with special needs started meeting and planned a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1971. On their return from Lourdes, they continued to meet in

small groups for a gathering of friendship, prayer and festivity.

The pilgrimage to Knock saw all of this and more, with lunch in the "Rest and Care" Centre followed by a banner procession to the parish church where Mass was celebrated by Fr Fergal Cunnane, Provincial Chaplain, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Bishop-Emeritus of Galway, who has had a long association with Faith and Light and Fr Stephen Farragher, Chaplain to the Ballyhaunis Faith and Light community

JASON OSBORN
The Irish Catholic



Bernie Noonan (Provincial Coordinator) presents the Faith and Light candle to the new Provincial Chaplain, Fr Fergal Cunnane.



Members of Faith and Light enact the Gospel story "The Road to Emmaüs" at the celebration of Mass in the parish church of St John the Baptist.



Procession of offerings



Universal prayer



Fr Fergal Cunnane, Provincial Chaplain of Faith and Light was the principal celebrant and homilist at the mass, that was concelebrated by Bishop Brendan Kelly and Fr Stephen Farragher, the deacon was Rev David Irwin



Affinities and support

This is how we feel about each other in our movement. We are like members of one family. Having come together in friendship, grown stronger with time, we find that these bonds have revived our movement and further strengthened our fraternity in faith because Christ is always at the heart of our actions.

Two years without meeting face to face because of the pandemic... and at long last an opportunity granted by our Lord Jesus Christ to come together for a fidelity day.

We were all very impatient to see each other again. Our community, "Milflores", celebrated its 19th anniversary on 9 and 10 April in Bolinao, Pangasinan by the sea (less than seven hours by road from Manila). All appreciated the friendship which was so evident during these days because this was the first time we could meet. We were also keen to forget our stress and to enjoy a "family reunion" with the members of the community. Needless to say, no one skipped the games, or the photos, or the meal...

In the evening, the community gathers to celebrate the anniversary dressed in Luau or Hawaiian costume. It started with an opening prayer, followed by a short story about the history of Faith and Light -



Milflores Community. There is also a TikTok Dance Competition to the tune of "Paru-Paru G". All the members really liked it because they dance without the feeling of discomfort and they were very cooperative together with their family member. There is also an awarding ceremony and everyone received a Faith and Light keychain. There is also a Karaoke session and of course each (adults only) can have a very cold Smirnoff or San Miguel Beer Apple as part of socialization. The night is concluded with group picture and greeting everyone a "Happy 19th Anniversary".

Brief history of Milflores

"Milflores" started up in Pasig in July 2003 and the young people of the youth



Parish Council were invited to help out in running a workshop and activity for children. They were initially a little fearful as they had never had the opportunity to come into contact with persons with an intellectual disability. But everything changed when they met and interacted with them. They found the experience with Faith and Light enjoyable and enriching and they started to do a lot in the group. Unfortunately, the community ceased in 2007 because of the low number of people attending meetings and for personal reasons of the community coordinator. In 2009, the young people met and decided to revive the community. They contacted the person who was now coordinating the Faith and Light communities in the Philippines and the initiative received the support of all. Thus in that same year the Faith and Light community rose from the ashes.

Today, as we mark our 19th anniversary, we remember those who were with us. Throughout our journey each person has always shown real commitment, and when anyone has a problem the others rally round. We are all in the same boat and we keep on paddling so that we always go forward and so that no one feels alone. We continue our journey with Faith and Light; we share the Word of God and the happiness it brings us.

CLOYD VILLEGAS,
Vice Provincial Coordinator



Everybody dressed in Luau

The Philippines is part of the province Colours of Asia together with Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and India

Philippines: 7 communities

Malaysia: 1

Pakistan: 1

Singapore: 2

India: 1

Hope and Light

IN THE LAST NUMBER OF UP SAILS!, WE APPEALED TO YOUR GENEROSITY TO HELP SET UP NEW COMMUNITIES IN PERU. THANKS TO YOU, TWO COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN FORMED. BRAVO AND THANK YOU TO THE SMALL MISSIONARY TEAM. STORY OF TWO BIRTHS.

The life of the province of "Jesus, Light of the Andes" has been boosted and enriched with the creation of two new communities in the city of Cajamarca, situated in the north of Peru, 850 km from Lima. On 5 October last, we were all overjoyed by the Holy Father's speech to the members of Faith and Light International on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. He encouraged us to continue to allow ourselves to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, to "be a sign of hope for families who are experiencing the birth of a child with a disability, so that no one will be closed in on himself, in sadness and despair."

Fast-forward to December 2021; the Pope's speech is still fresh in our minds and hearts: with the support of Mgr Isaac Martinez, newly-appointed to his latest role, a team was set up to make the initial contacts with a view to bringing Faith and Light to the families of his diocese. This was a true Christmas present for us.

On March 11 I was received by Bishop Isaac Martinez in Cajamarca, and he offered me accommodation and the facilities necessary for publicising the vocation and mission of



Faith and Light through radio programmes, visits, announcements in the parishes and meetings with priests.

This first visit yielded results. We met people and families who were interested in Faith and Light and willing to make a commitment. We remained in touch through the internet, making preparations for our next visit and the creation of the two new communities. We decided to travel to Cajamarca as a small Faith and Light community: Angel Fiestas [a person with an intellectual disability], Hector [a dad], myself [a friend], accompanied and supported by Elvira de Gomero [vice international coordinator], enthusiastic and faithful accompanier of

our province of "Jesus, Light of the Andes".

On 1 July we were met at the airport by Bishop Isaac and we eagerly began making preparations to meet and welcome the families who would be attending this first long-awaited and long-dreamt-of meeting.

On Saturday 2 July, in the Christ the King School, we were greeted by a large poster with the words "Welcome, Faith and Light Cajamarca." Evelyn with her big smile, Hector and Angeli to, accompanied by Elvira, welcomed the families with much affection. From the word go, our new friends with intellectual disabilities felt loved and welcomed. In the small chapel, in a

prayerful atmosphere, we read from the Gospel of John, chapter 15: "Love one another as I have loved you." The new community began its life under the protection of Our Lady of Sorrows, patron of Cajamarca. After the thanksgiving, we walked in pilgrimage, hand in hand and singing, to the room which had been set up for the meeting. It was a wonderful and unforgettable moment.

We introduced ourselves with the help of the game of "pass the ball of wool"; the ice was now broken and we started to get to know each other. We were no longer strangers and had become a sign for each other of the love of God.

The video "a short history of Faith and Light" was shown, and we re-lived the beginnings of Faith and Light, explaining what we are all about and illustrating our movement's mission over these past 50 years.

Families and friends shared their emotions, their needs, their hopes and especially their wish to have a place where they can be loved and respected as they are. We concluded the meeting with prayer and a celebration of commitment.

Evelyn Bacigalupo, interim coordinator of the "Good Mother" community, was given the first copy of the Guidelines for the journey ahead.

Next day, our small missionary team found itself in Our Lady of the Nativity parish to



assist at the birth of another new community. We were greeted by the Parish Priest Father Merano, who bade us welcome and offered us his full support. We joyfully welcomed the families in a lovely setting prepared for the occasion. The parents spoke very honestly and movingly about their situation and expressed their need for a place where they could feel accompanied on their journey. Two young friends were present, and this added an extra sense of friendship and accompaniment to the meeting. It was all beautiful. A second community had just been born.

In both communities, it was clear that the parents took encouragement from the spirit of Faith and Light, and they wanted to know more about it. Faith and

Light truly touched their hearts.

This beautiful experience has revealed to us the enormous need and the silent suffering in the lives of families affected by disability. They need to be within easy reach of a community where they can find friends who accompany them on their journey.

We will continue to bring the good news of Faith and Light. We know that there are many families looking for a place where their hearts can be healed so that they can discover with greater clarity the gift which God has placed in their children.

"Go out into the whole world."

GUILLERMO RIVERO PALOMINO
Provincial Coordinator

Get up!

In May last, we held a formation session for the young people of Faith and Light in the whole of Portugal.

The theme, "Get up", was based on the passage in the Gospel of Luke. "Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth."

The aim was to encourage the young people to embrace the challenge of their mission in Faith and Light.

Plenary sessions were held on the Charter and the Constitution, "Vocation, accompaniment and commitment", "responsibility and leadership" and on the international family. There were also testimonies on life in l'Arche.

Interspersed between these were periods of sharing in small groups, workshops [music, do-it-yourself, games, prayer, organisation of holiday camps...] Naturally, there were parties and times for relaxation, prayer times. The course concluded with a celebration of thanksgiving and sending out.

These were intense days of personal growth. Many links were forged and these fanned the flame of the Faith and Light movement in the hearts of the young people. They headed back home with this message: Young people, carry this flame into your communities and make it shine brightly!

C.D.



Much-loved Chaplains

Father Gaël Rehault



Father Gaël died on 19 July at the age of 51. He suffered for very many months from an illness which caused him to lose control of his hands, legs and speech. We owe him a great deal: he served as chaplain to the "Etoiles" community in the parish of St. Ambroise in Paris, from September 2003 to August 2009.

Then, on being appointed to serve in the parish of Cergy-Pontoise, he took up the role of chaplain to the "Gaudete" community (province of Ile de France Ouest) as soon as he arrived in September 2009. He had even come especially to make their acquaintance two months earlier during one of their picnic outings. At the time, "Gaudete" had only been in existence two or three years and Father Gaël accompanied it faithfully and energetically until he left Cergy in 2019. The community owes him a great deal and is very grateful to him. Thanks to him several young people from "Gaudete" received their confirmation along with the youngsters of the parish chaplaincy which he also accompanied. He had arranged for those young people to come and meet "Gaudete" and spend the day getting to know them. On the day of the Confirmations they all felt at home with each other: no hang-ups or barriers, just real fraternity.



Wednesday 2 June

The priesthood of Christ by which I have been marked is much more than a list of actions: taking initiatives, celebrating, anointing, praying, teaching catechism, running meetings. How to be a priest with no hands, no feet, no voice? I look at Jesus and I see him on his Cross, his feet and hands fastened by the nails, saying barely a word. Isn't this the moment of his life when he is more than ever and supremely a priest?

Father Jean-François Labrière

A member of the Congregation of the Assumptionists, Father Jean-François Labrière was 92 when he returned to the Father on 26 July last. Father Jean-François was a man totally dedicated to the poor and he understood their sufferings. To be in his presence gave hope. With his typically Breton character he had the perseverance which comes from faith. He had worked for many years with Secours Catholique in Paris before taking up residence on the Je Sers barge with Father Arthur at Conflans Sainte Honorine.

This barge was built in 1919 and became the chapel for bargemen under the patronage of St Nicholas in 1936. He celebrated Mass and carried out all the other religious and social tasks proper to the Chapel's mission as a place of welcome and support for the most deprived. The chapel is still thriving!

Many of the members and communities of Faith and Light knew him as he accompanied summer camps in Rambouillet and led Faith and Light retreats in Combs la Ville over many years.

He was a much-loved chaplain to "Arche de Noé", a community which meets on the barge-chapel "Je Sers". "Arche de Noé" will never forget him!

It was thanks to him that members of the parish of Cergy-Pontoise joined Faith and Light and in 2008 set up the Gaudete community, which he sponsored and vigorously supported. Gaudete is very grateful to him for this.

He spent his retirement in a care home in Herblay, near Conflans Sainte Honorine, and he stayed in touch with the Faith and Light communities of "Arche de Noé" and "Gaudete".

Always extremely kind and attentive to the little ones, Father Jean-François will continue to accompany us from the Father's House, and will carry on his mission to all who are suffering, though in another way. He is certainly praying for us!

DIDIER OVAZZA
Vice International Coordinator



To be one of the Least of the Brothers and Sisters with Jesus

One had the impression that this was Father Jean-François' vocation; this at any rate was how it was expressed. It could doubtless be traced back in part to his childhood and family life. He was born in 1929, that year of deep economic crisis which pushed millions into extreme poverty. A family of Bretons, Breton-speaking; a loving and courageous mother who occupied a constant place in Father Jean-François' heart all through his life and who could neither read nor write nor speak French; a dad who was originally a sailor but was forced to become a seaweed gatherer as a result of an accident. So they had to subsist on what he earned from the seaweed, algae gathered on the beach, loaded on to barrows which sometimes toppled over in the waves, and was then sold for a low price to a near-by factory. This meant living mainly on potatoes grown in a field which they leased or borrowed and on haricot beans which they stored over the winter. There was very little else. They often went barefoot. This poverty was compounded by sickness, tuberculosis, multiple sclerosis, death; the family was not spared! And yet they always looked to the Lord.

How did this small boy manage to pro-

gress, learn French and later go on to the seminary where the language spoken was Latin? The village school-teacher had seen his potential and persuaded his parents to send him to school. He continued his studies as a teenager, in spite no doubt of numerous deficiencies and the inevitable difficulties of adapting to a world so different from his own; but he succeeded. He became a priest, probably thanks in part to his strong character born of the need to fight for survival.

Having joined the Congregation of the Assumptionists, "Father Jean-François", as he now was, soon started working for "Secours Catholique"; here, mainly at night, he was available to talk to all comers. This world of the night is extremely diverse, and is often a world of people in despair. He was as likely to come into contact with priests as with prostitutes. This work extended over many years.

By the time we met him he had reached the age of retirement. He had joined the "Je Sers" barge, this special parish, headed by Father Arthur who was ever available for the penniless and all of life's "casualties", and extended an especially warm welcome to those with a disability, who were always given pride of place during the different ceremonies. Another presence on the barge, always discreet, was that of Father Larsen, Faith and Light's international chaplain; it was he who introduced Father Jean-François to our movement. And it was here perhaps that Father Jean-François experienced the final flowering of his vocation. For him, the words "least", "weakest", had come to mean a person with neither the power to judge or discern for themselves, nor the power to make decisions, but who is totally reliant on the good-will of others. These were children with a handicap which they had done absolutely nothing to cause; he was touched by their complete naturalness and by their need for affection; and it gave him joy to help them to laugh, smile, sing, dance. And their happiness "infected" their parents.

Dear Father Jean-François, you kept nothing for yourself and you always had something to give. You were always looking for solutions for everyone, and there seemed to be no limit to your energy and your courage and your ingenuity when it came to finding what was best

for each person. Always there, present, ready to listen, to console; and one always felt better for having spent time with you. "Take everyone as they are," you used to say.

And on the day you were admitted to hospital for the last time, just as you were about to be lifted into the ambulance and still wide awake, you pointed to the sky one last time and murmured, "That is where i am going."

Of course we will miss you, of course there will be a vacuum, a seat which no one can fill, but when the prayers of the "little ones" and the lowly ones whom you loved have carried you up to Jesus and the Virgin Mary, do not forget us, remain on our path. And now we bid you "farewell" in your native Breton: "KENAVO".

FRANÇOISE LAMY
Coordinator of "L'Arche de Noë"



Faith and Light in Albania



It all started with a flash of intuition on the part of H el ene and Bertrand from l'Arche in Brittany who for years had been accompanying a group of parents of children with disabilities and teenagers with the support of the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld. The group used to meet in the "House of Stars", in down-town Tirana, where they held activities and spent time together. H el ene and Bertrand realised that the time was not ripe for setting up a l'Arche home but that Faith and Light might well be appropriate.

They got in touch with Father Theodoros (who was chaplain to the Kimata province in 2016) and he, together with a delegation from Faith and Light Greece, travelled over to meet the Albanian group. A few months later I found myself on a plane to Tirana along with Pietro Vetro, the then coordinator for Kimata.

This was not my first time, as "assistant missionary coordinator", to be dropped into a new setting in front of total strangers to present Faith and Light. But I felt that this time was different.

When I arrived at the "House of Stars" I didn't even have time for a coffee before being surrounded by parents, children with disabilities, friends, volunteers, sisters, priests... The

time flew by amid questions, answers, laughter, discussions, stories of individuals and of events from the country's history. When the moment came to say good-bye, no one would leave without first knowing the date of the next meeting. So we settled on a date in May, and all not only promised to be there, but also to invite along other families and friends, neighbours and acquaintances.

The numbers for the May meeting were so great that it had to be held in St. Stephen's cathedral. On our arrival we were greeted with the community song which they had translated into their language!

As meeting succeeded meeting, I was struck by how this diversity led to astonishment, increased awareness, and sharing!

Diversity

The community brings together members of different faiths (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Islamic, Bektashi) and they coexist harmoniously. At one meeting, when I asked if this diversity could be a problem, Fatmir, a Muslim dad, replied, "Don't you pray for your family, for peace in the world? Well, what and whom do you think I pray for? I feel good

when I come here to the community, my son feels good; should I stop coming because I'm in a cathedral?"

In 2018, the whole community was invited to meet Baba Mondi, the religious leader of Baktashi muslims. He welcomed us into the mosque to share an afternoon together, giving us an opportunity to get to know each other better and discover that we have many things in common!

Astonishment

At each meeting I met new friends, parents, young people, priests and nuns, and I liked finding out how they had come to Faith and Light and who had "lured" them in.

I would like to recount three stories that illustrate what Faith and Light means to the Albanians: Afrim and Kristian are two mildly handicapped boys, they are friends and are always together. Father Lauri met them and invited them to a meeting. The two friends get on so well that they arrived at the following meeting with their mothers who didn't know each other but who have now become inseparable friends, even attending meetings when their sons are not there.

Entela and Mario are colleagues of Gentjana, one of the very first friends of the community. After every meeting Gentjana would return to work happy and radiant, and so her colleagues were curious and would ask her what she had been doing. She kept telling them about Faith and Light, and in the end, though suspicious, they went along to a meeting. They haven't missed a single meeting since then, and on 2 July 2022, Entela was elected coordinator of the community!

Greater Awareness

The end of the dictatorship saw the arrival in Albania of groups and associations from all parts of the world and all religious affiliations, but as Elidon (a friend) put it, "Faith and Light is different: no one tells us that we must do this or that. We come along, we introduce ourselves, and we receive the tools needed to build up the community."

In the early stages of this adventure, Albina and I would always have a word before each meeting: she would ask me for advice and I



would explain how my community ran our meetings using the guidelines. With the help of the team she translated them and they adapt their activities and prayer times to suit the different religious practices of the "House of Peace".

Sharing

I asked the members of the Kimata province to accompany me to Albania, and they came from Italy, Greece and Cyprus. I smile when I think back on the comments and the emotion of the Albanian mothers when they met them for the first time.

In parallel with these developments, delegations of friends, young people and parents from the "House of Peace" were now taking part in formation sessions, parties and holiday camps, and in the election of the new Kimata coordinator. Not only did these joint events create bonds of friendship, but they were also an opportunity to discover (for the Albanians) or to rediscover (for Kimata members) the gift of Faith and Light and to carry it back into their own communities. It



Entela (centre) community coordinator and the Italian team

was as if the grace received during these encounters were constantly circulating and keeping the light shining brightly even in those places where it seemed to be going out!

Three formation meetings were planned for the Recognition and the election of the first coordinator of the new community; but the pandemic struck after the first of these. I was afraid that Covid-19 would scatter the members. But on the contrary, the bonds and the importance of Faith and Light in everyone's lives were such that the friends and parents thought up new ways to meet and continue to share friendship.

In autumn 2020, we and Don Marco proposed celebrating the recognition because it was clear that the pandemic would not end any time soon. But they opted to wait and continue with the remote formation because Recognition is a major landmark and should be shared with all those friends who had accompanied them since 2016: celebrating alone would not be the same.

At last, on 2 July 2022, we all came together in the baking heat of Tirana, in the cathedral,

to celebrate this seed which, roots firmly planted in the soil, had grown into what it is today: a joyful and thriving community. An example of how it is possible to be together in spite of differences which in other parts of the world are causes of division! It is a community with a solid but active core where all the members are messengers of the good news of Faith and Light!

DANIELA GUGLIETTA



For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

Charles de Foucauld, a Saint for Faith and Light?



On May 15, 2002, I was present with Isabelle in Rome at the Mass for the canonisation of Charles de Foucauld, in memory of my father-in-law, a land army officer who had trained at Saint-Cyr at the same time as the new saint. It was a most beautiful celebration and St. Peter's Square was packed with people — in all, ten new saints were canonised on that day!

The more I read and hear about the holy Brother Charles, the more I think he would have loved Faith and Light; and I believe that from his seat up in Heaven he must be showering us with abundant graces. I say this because of a number of facts from his life, or rather lives, because he lived a number of lives... He was a party-lover, an officer, an explorer, a monk, a priest, a hermit; and in all sorts of places, from Strasbourg to Hoggar, via Morocco, the Holy Land, Syria. It was in Nazareth first of all that he discovered that he would spend his whole life seeking the lowest place, the place that Jesus wanted to occupy so as to be with the poor and the lowly.

The theology of the lowest place is one which we are very familiar with, every time we see our friends with a disability being denied

good seats in church and even access to the sacraments. We very much appreciate the words of Still. James' letter: "Listen, my beloved brothers. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he has promised to those who love him?" [Jas 2:5].

Another aspect of the personality of St. Charles was his closeness to Jesus; he wished to abandon himself to the Father as Jesus did in Gethsemani. All through his life he wanted to be close to those he met in the same way that he wanted to be close to Jesus in prayer, to repose on his heart, like the red heart sewn on his habit. We too can say that in our communities we don't "do a lot for", preferring rather to "be with".

Charles' entire life was marked by a real tension, a tension between on the one hand giving all in order to follow Jesus, and on the other hand, uncertainty about what Jesus wanted of him. He felt the need to focus his attention on Jesus' expectation of him, but he didn't always know what it was that Jesus ex-

pected; which explains the hesitations and the radical changes of direction seen in the various periods of his life: yes, I want to be a monk in order to live with the poorest; no, I don't want to be a priest so that there is no barrier between me and those I wish to be close to; yes, I do want to be a priest so that I can make Jesus present...

The history of Faith and Light is also full of such unexpected twists: many plans to set up communities have come to nought, while others have been created in places where we didn't expect them. For example, as Marie-Hélène recounts in her book "Never Again Alone": Faith and Light was expected to take off in Burundi, but it actually happened in Rwanda [it did get going in Burundi a few years later]. I once travelled to Benin at the

invitation of a group of young people but in the end they didn't do what was expected of them, and then a religious sister met almost by chance was instrumental in starting Faith and Light in the country!

Much more could be said of this great saint, but I'll limit myself to one last memory: on 15 October 2008, just before the vote to elect the new international coordinator, I recall that, just like everyone else, I was handed the microphone and asked if there was anything I still wanted to say; and I can still remember quoting Charles de Foucauld's prayer of abandonment: "Do with me what you will, I am ready for all, I accept all."

St. Charles, watch over us!



Saint Charles at different ages of his life

International news

slovenia



Janez Vrhovnik has accepted to take over from Franci Bavec as vice provincial coordinator for Slovenia.

Province of East Africa

[Burundi, Kenya, DRC Kivu, Rwanda]



Marie-France Violette, vice international coordinator, is passing the torch of Faith and Light to Jeanne Mukamutesa (Rwanda), the new provincial coordinator. Jeanne is taking over from Godeberthe Mukagasana.

Beacon of Light province (Great Britain)

The two former provinces of UK North and UK South have now come together in this new province. Steve Donnan has been appointed as

provincial chaplain. He is a deacon and is married to Karen, who is the provincial coordinator.



The "between the Seas" province



Silvija Knezekyte (Lithuania) has been elected provincial coordinator. She succeeds Olga Drobot (Russia).

Croatia

Dijana Stanic has been elected as provincial coordinator. She succeeds Zvonimir Vnucec.



A big "thank you" to each one of you, whether incoming or outgoing!

International agenda

- **23-25 September:** formation session in Sweden, Vaddholmen
- **23-25 September:** formation session in Slovenia, Sticna
- **24 September:** formation session in Mexico, Zoom
- **1 October:** provincial assembly, "Colours of Asia", on the theme "Come follow me, I will make you fishers of men", Zoom
- **1 October:** Pilgrimage by the communities of Zagreb to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Trsat in Rijeka, Croatia
- **14-16 October:** Pilgrimage by the province of Luzitania to Fatima
- **27-31 October:** Pilgrimage to Lourdes by the provinces of France and Belgium for the 50th anniversary of Faith and Light
- **12 November:** Meeting of the Ireland province, Athlone
- **10 December:** Pilgrimage by the province of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the sanctuary of the same name, Mexico
- **10-14 December:** Meeting of the Board of Directors and the International Coordinating Team, Zoom

International solidarity

Projects to Support

- "Holy Family" [Egypt-North Sudan] formation session: €2000 and the creation of new communities: €250
- Provincial assembly "Campo Belo" (Brazil Centre) provincial assembly: €1 680

What have your contributions to international solidarity in 2022 been used for?

- Assembly of the "East Africa Province" in Rwanda in August: €1400
- Discernment and election in Arc en Ciel Province (Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion, the Seychelles): €150
- Contribution to the funding of the pilgrimage by Egypt-South Kuwait" Province to Assiut in August, with 400 participants: €2 000
- Formation session for the new friends in Luxor with a view to creating new communities: €300



Pilgrimage to Assiout

**Would you like
to make a donation?**

<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/donate>



Assembly in Rwanda



Family Album



Agnès Irturbide



It is with a heavy heart that I must announce that on 4 June Agnès returned to the Father. Agnès belonged to the community of st. Séverin where she was first of all leader, and then, over the past four years, vice provincial coordinator for Paris et le Levant. Let us all pray for her, her husband and their four children, and the entire Faith and Light family mourning her passing.

Valérie Amice
Provincial coordinator

Father David Wilson



Father David was a true friend of l'Arche and Faith and Light.

He went peacefully to his eternal reward on 1 July 2022. He was chaplain to the l'Arche community of Les Trois Fontaines in Ambleteuse (France) for over 30 years. In the final stages of his life we were touched by the way he bore his weakness and continued to communicate through small gestures and smiles. The recitation of the Lord's Prayer remained a high point for him and seemed to offer us a glimpse into the mystery of the presence of God.

Thank you, Father David!

Why talk about Faith and Light at our wedding?

Why would one talk about an association at one's wedding. We have been Christians now for three years. We were baptised at the age of 33, after receiving the gift of faith, first me and then my partner. The next year was eventful [cancer, a diploma, moving house...]; then my partner asked me to marry him, and the best date for the wedding happened to be June 18, the day of the appeal of General de Gaulle. We were thrilled! We are admirers of what he did, and wanted to pay him tribute. We contacted the Anne de Gaulle Foundation, only to discover that the foundation has links with you.

Our reason for doing this is that we believe in helping

our neighbour in whatever way we can and so we try to spread a message of solidarity, love and sharing...

Magali Pinard

Farewell paper version!

I regret to inform you that I am cancelling my subscription to the paper version of Up Sails.

It has been a fascinating adventure — I felt I could almost touch the people featured in these most engaging articles, one more moving than the next. Time will tell whether the electronic version can go some way to making up for the sad loss of the beloved paper copy. If I owe you anything for the recent editions, please let me know. What I certainly do owe you is a debt of gratitude for your faithful and valiant service. A big THANKS for this. Continue your wonderful mission with the necessary Graces of Strength and Perseverance. May many many readers long continue to enjoy the incomparable riches contained in your love-letter "Up Sails": it matters because it lifts up the hearts of many...

Normand Veillette



Marie-Hélène's letter



SOME FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES

A number of communities are in a position to offer weekends and retreats on the Word of God and prayer. Ideal occasions for deepening our spiritual lives.

For three days, far from the hustle and bustle of the world — often in a foyer de charité where a climate of semi-silence facilitates communion with Jesus — thirty or so people, half of whom have a disability and the other half is made up of friends and parents, come together to listen to and discuss the Word of God, to exchange in small groups, to attend themed workshops, to celebrate, to relax together. It can be hard to know who in each couple is the one accompanying and who the one being accompanied — the roles are fluid; all at any rate discover that they are searching for God.

Maria-Cécilia is teamed with Carlos who has a vocabulary of about twenty words. When it is time to pray, Maria-Cécilia is at a loss: what is she to do? Carlos, on the contrary, knows exactly what to do. He takes her by the hand and leads her over to the tabernacle. "Jesus in there. He love me." He sits down on the bench, takes Marie-cécilia's hand and says, "He love you." Then, silence once again. And finally, throwing himself into her arms: "We love."

For those who have not yet received the



Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist, preparation is available. Father Jacques Cuche was a Parish Priest in Paris and started a community there; he was asked to set up or accompany several others. This led naturally to his preparing some people with disabilities for baptism or more often for Confirmation and First Communion, with the support of the Special Catechetics Education service. Those who were present will never forget the joy that reigned on the day when the Archbishop of Paris administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to fourteen youngsters with disabilities. Great was their joy at this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a joy which was felt by all who were with them.

A community cannot sail solo (I like this image of a boat as a description of what we are about.) No, it is part of a flotilla of six to eight vessels (six to eight communities) advancing together, accompanied and supported by a leader. This leader is in turn connected to a provincial leader who organises meetings, formation days, pilgrimages; and the result is a properly connected extended family.

Personal connections are harder to establish in our international family, but they too are essential. Initially there were international pilgrimages every ten years. Their value was considerable; they were open to the entire international family. They enabled us to make our existence and mission known far and wide. We always came home dying to share once again what we had seen. Today, we are united by the Recommendations, a reminder of how we are all related.

The international newsletter "Up Sails" keeps us in contact with each other, from east to west, from north to south. Equally important, the "Announce and Share" day, a yearly invitation to us to share each others' burdens, not only with our hearts but also with our financial contributions. It's also a chance to talk about our communities in our parishes and ask for their solidarity.

A community is made up of all these bonds and all these countless treasures — the people with a disability, the families, the friends, the network of the communities all across the world. And it is amazing to think how what are after all small events that go on there (welcoming, the Word of God, sharing, prayer, meals) are for us a blessing — we receive as much if not more than what we give (love, a listening ear, concern for another person, a little peace).



¹ Never again alone ! The adventure of Faith and Light