

Up sails!

THE INTERNATIONAL LETTER OF FAITH AND LIGHT N° 55, MARCH 2023



On the way to Easter



Summary

Editorial

- With Jesus, in the Passion and Resurrection 3

Reports

- The Holy Spirit lights the flame of Faith and Light in Pamplona 4
- Italy: New faces 6
- Egypt: A treasure to share 8
- Great Britain: Most influential women of 2022 9

Testimonies

- I love you just as you are 10
- Rest in peace, Kevin 12
- The baptism of Paola 14
- The "Heart of Europa" beats faster 15
- In Ukraine, the Emmaus Centre 18

For our reflection

- Benedict XVI loved Faith and Light 21

International news

- International agenda 25
- International solidarity 25

Family album

26

Marie-Hélène's letter

- Smiling, the sign of meeting 28

Annual paper subscription: 20 €

Cover: Kiev's churches under the snow

Faith and Light international 3 rue du Laos 75015 Paris France
T. + 33 1 53 69 44 30 - international@foietlumiere.org
www.foietlumiere.org/en

Editorial director: Raúl Izquierdo
Chief editor and layout: Corinne Chatain

Editorial

With Jesus, in the Passion and Resurrection



Raúl Izquierdo
International coordinator

Dear communities, dear friends of the Faith and Light family.

Many of you, in your Christian tradition, are preparing in this Lenten season to experience the Easter of Jesus, his death and resurrection. It does not matter whether in your Christian tradition this feast is celebrated earlier or later, it is its significance for our lives that is important.

In the desert, Jesus is tempted by evil, and we experience this daily. It is the temptation to be gods, to choose the easy way (which is often not the best way), to have power and strength above all else. Jesus proposes precisely the opposite path, as he clearly shows in the gesture of washing feet, as if he were the servant of others. And he also reminds us that *"if you do not do as I do, you have no place with me"*. Oh, what radical words, so different from what we are told every day in so many places: to be the most beautiful, the richest, the most famous... Those of us who have Faith and Light are already so beautiful!

These days we are preparing to accompany Jesus to Jerusalem. First in his passion. An unjust trial, without defence, he is already condemned, humiliations with slaps, spitting, mockery... blows and assaults of all kinds... and finally death on a cross, as for the bandits and the criminals. On top of that, the flight of his apostles and the betrayal or denial of some of them. We must stop and contemplate this passion, which today is the passion of many men and women all over the world: wars, victims of psychological and physical abuse of all kinds in schools, at work... the situation of women in so many countries and cultures, the desperate immigration of so many human beings, addictions, people without support and stigmatised by mental illness... So many passions, so many men and women are crucified today.

But we cannot stop there, because Jesus is risen! Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,

yes, yes, yes, yes! The Gospels tell us how some of the disciples, women and men, witnessed this event. An event that gave them joy, peace, courage and the desire to tell everyone about it... This is the mission. The encounter with the risen Jesus leads to mission, to the gift of self to others, to service, to the transformation of the world and its unjust structures, to the proclamation of the Good News. We are disciples who come from Easter, we accept the cross but we live the Resurrection, because neither death nor the cross are the end of history, even if we have to go through it. We are therefore ready to live the feast that we know so well how to take care of in Faith and Light. We are communities that welcome suffering and pain, but also and above all the desire to live and a lot of joy, because we are certainly no longer alone, God does not leave us!

Our Faith and Light prayer ends with this: Help us to always stand, with Mary, at the foot of the cross, close to the crucified of our world. Help us to live from your Resurrection. So be it, amen!



The Holy Spirit lights the flame of Faith and Light in Pamplona



Continue meeting in small communities, do what the Holy Spirit inspires you to do. It was with these words that Faith and Light was born at Easter 1971 in Lourdes at the feet of the Virgin Mary, after a pilgrimage in which some 12000 people participated, a third of whom had an intellectual disability.

It is said that to recognise the authenticity of a Christian movement, it is enough to look at its closeness with Mary. There is, therefore, no doubt about the authenticity of Faith and Light, in the sense of closeness with Jesus, since the movement was born under the mantle of his Mother.

"From that moment, the Holy Spirit accompanied the journey of your Movement and many Faith and Light communities were born in many countries on the five

continents", explained Pope Francis last year on the occasion of our fiftieth anniversary.

These words can be applied to the birth of any Faith and Light community anywhere in the world. This is what happened in Pamplona. The Holy Spirit proposed the birth of a community as early as June 2019 (see photo), with the aid of María, Jaime and their family from the "Talitha Qumi" community in Madrid and later, with the help of Cuca and Jorge, vice provincial coordinators for "Terra et Mare". The Spirit lit a small flame that is still alive despite the pandemic.

The community meetings in Pamplona take place in the parish of Santa María de Ermitaña. The first thing that we do is the time of welcome. Then we attend Sun-

day mass together because *"the communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist, especially in the context of the Sunday rest"* (Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, 318). And then we enjoy a lunchtime aperitif where each family brings something with much affection. It is a time when we can share a closer conversation with each other.

Since the beginning, every time that this embryonic community meets, on a regular basis but not yet monthly, we feel that the Lord is having a private audience with those who have an intellectual disability (who are amongst his favourites, amongst the weakest and the most vulnerable), their families and their friends. It is like going on a trip with the Lord and our children. Or as if Jesus were back in Bethany with Martha, Mary, Lazarus

and the Faith and Light community.

This is why these meetings must be – and are – times full of joy and love, where we strengthen the bonds of friendship with Jesus and with other community members because the Lord has devoted this time to us alone. And because in these meetings his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, soars.

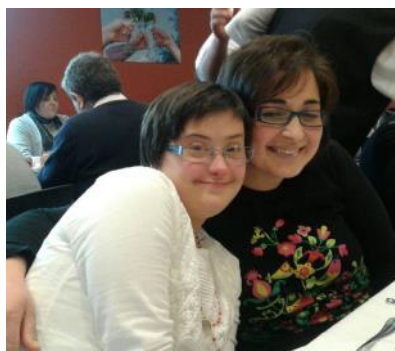
Jesus said: *"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them"* (Mt 18, 20).

And in these "private audiences" or "trips" with Jesus, the people with intellectual disability (in our case, mainly children) teach us to love him with the simplicity and innocence of their hearts, which is so often lacking in their parents and friends, who are often "disabled" to love like them.

As Saint John Paul II said to Faith and Light in 2002: *"By welcoming all these little ones afflicted with an intellectual disability, you have recognised them as favoured witnesses of the tenderness of God, from whom we have much to learn"*.

Lord, help us to love you like those with an intellectual disability love you.

JOSÉ ÁNGEL GUTIÉRREZ
Correspondent



The province "Terra et Mare"
is made of
23 communities



New faces

MARIE-HÉLÈNE MATHIEU IS ALWAYS TELLING US: INVITE, INVITE NEW FRIENDS! IF WE WANT OUR COMMUNITIES TO RENEW AND BE REJUVENATED, WE HAVE TO BE CREATIVE AND KNOW HOW TO KNOCK ON THE RIGHT DOORS, LEAVE OUR COMFORT ZONE. STORY OF A QUITE SIMPLE COMMUNITY MEETING IN ITALY REJOICING IN WELCOMING TWO NEW FRIENDS.

We met at the San Giustino oratory for the monthly meeting and classic pizza party. Two young girls, Arianna and Veronica, from the youth ministry, came for the first time to get acquainted with our community. They spontaneously helped us to set the table then, when the pizzas arrived, they served them with us. Before starting to eat, we said the usual *grâce* with gestures that we all know...



We ate, chatted and, as is usual, celebrated the birthdays of the month: Rita, Angelo, Emanuele. Among the cakes, a special candle: the Faith and Light candle that shines a light on us and guides us and to toast, a drop of limoncello.

Then, we all made a circle and Mattia proposed the game with a ball of wool. You throw the ball keeping the thread in your hand. Whoever catches it, introduces themselves, says their first name and what they like. Then, holding the thread of wool, he throws it to another person and so on until everyone has been called. The dynamics of this game show what Faith

and Light is made up of: a network of intertwined friendships between people with disabilities, their family and their friends.

Nives and Emanuele then proposed a game taken from this year's Guidelines: they gave out coloured smileys, felt tips and pencils and explained to us that we had to draw a happy smile if we liked the meeting and a sad smile if we didn't. At the end, these smileys were displayed and to our delight, all the faces were smiling and joyful. Faith and Light is joy, happiness and friendship. At Faith and Light, we are all the same, we are united by bonds of loyal friendship.



We ended with the community song that involves everyone because it is catchy and is easy to learn, both the gestures and the words. We sang it slightly slowly to teach our new friends who watched and copied us.

With all these activities, we showed our new friends what our meetings look like. We also showed some photos from this year's summer camp in Cesenatico to explain what a camp is and what we do.

The meeting ended with a special blessing from Don Marco Bove, our chaplain.

Our new friends were happy to have come, they said that the evening was very nice and it was easy to see the group was united. We hope that they will return because we need new blood and new strength to continue our journey.

Onwards and upwards! Godspeed! Any new friends will be welcome. As the name of our community "Messengers of joy" says: we are sending messages of joy and peace... Our joy is contagious!

FEDE E LUCE



A treasure TO SHARE

MANY OF YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOLIDARITY EFFORT ASKED OF PROVINCES ACROSS THE WORLD TO HELP PROVINCES IN DIFFICULTY AND WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY THANK YOU. THIS PILGRIMAGE WAS ABLE TO TAKE PLACE, THANKS TO YOU, FROM 6 TO 8 OCTOBER LAST YEAR IN THE TOWN OF KING MARIOUT, WHICH WELCOMED THE HOLY FAMILY WHEN THEY FLED TO EGYPT.

This sentence is not new for many of you and, personally, I have already heard it many times, and I have drawn many logos around it...

But every time that I go to a different province, I discover a new treasure...

This time, I accompanied the "Egypt North Sudan" on the pilgrimage to King Mariout, in Alexandria, in the presence of 450 people and with 10 people from Sudan taking part.

The Sudanese faced many challenges to reach Alexandria and take part in the discovery of the treasure.

The invitation to the pilgrimage was extended to the Church. We had the pleasure of the attendance of the Patriarch of the Catholic Church, Ibrahim Isaac. We were very happy with his presence and his words.

I feel in the depths of my soul that we are very rich with our real treasure... Jesus.

The treasure that we discovered there was sharing and answering the call of Jesus to be present for the other one.

AMGAD EDWARD
Vice International Coordinator



Most influential women of 2022

THE BRITISH BBC HAS LISTED THE NAMES OF THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN 2022. ON THIS LIST IS THE NAME OF HEIDI CROWTER, 27 YEARS OLD, WHO HAS DOWN SYNDROME. SHE FIGHTS FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. PORTRAIT.



I want pregnant women to have the right information about Down Syndrome. I want people to keep up with the times and see us for who we really are!

Heidi has been working for several years in Great Britain to prevent mothers expecting a child with Down Syndrome from automatically having the right to have an abortion shortly before a natural birth.

Heidi has just published a book, "I'm Just Heidi", in which she tells her life story. The first part, "The Surprise Package", was published in 2003 by her parents, Steve and Liz, and these two books are a wonderful testimony of a life worth living.

Heidi is very good at expressing herself and often talks to the media on camera. She works in a hair salon

where she is responsible for the children's corner and mainly takes care of the salon's social media presence. She is married to James who also has Down Syndrome.

Heidi is an active Christian in the evangelical Baptist community. In an interview, she declared that her favourite Gospel text is in John (3,16) : "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life". Heidi explains that it is very important to her that she is fully accepted in the Christian community. All her activities are marked by her love for Jesus and her faith.



This book can be found on the DayOne website

<https://www.dayone.co.uk/products/im-just-heidi>

8 £



SR NATALIE BECQUART
Photos : Vatican Media

Testimony

I love you just as you are

ALEJANDRA POLO HAS BEEN A YOUNG FRIEND IN FAITH AND LIGHT SINCE CHILDHOOD! SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE "EL VISO" COMMUNITY IN SALAMANCA, SPAIN AND AFTER TAKING PART IN THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MEETING IN 2017, SHE AGREED TO TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COORDINATOR FOR THE "IBERATLANTIC" PROVINCE (SPAIN WEST). INTERVIEWED BY A SPANISH TELEVISION CHANNEL, SHE TALKS ABOUT ALL HER LOVE FOR FAITH AND LIGHT.

In Faith and Light, we discover that there are no prejudices. No matter if you are big or small, if you wear glasses or not... Because God loves you just as you are. And he shows it. We who belong to a Faith and Light community, we believe that he shows us this through the very special eyes of people with an intellectual disability.

How did I come to Faith and Light? The one who led me to Faith and Light when I was three years old (I am now thirty) is my aunt Berta. She has Downs Syndrome. Through her, it was God who approached me and who guided me to people with a disability. This makes me think of what Jesus said to his disciples: "You do not know now what I am doing "and who could guess that Jesus would wash the feet of his disciples, *"later you will understand"*.

Here is the real message of God within Faith and Light communities. Indeed, when we arrive, we have no idea what we are going to discover about ourselves, knowing that we all have our disabilities. Some are more visible than others but if we allow ourselves to be touched by people with disabilities, by their simplicity, by their naturalness, we will gradually discover that we all have a place in the heart of Jesus.

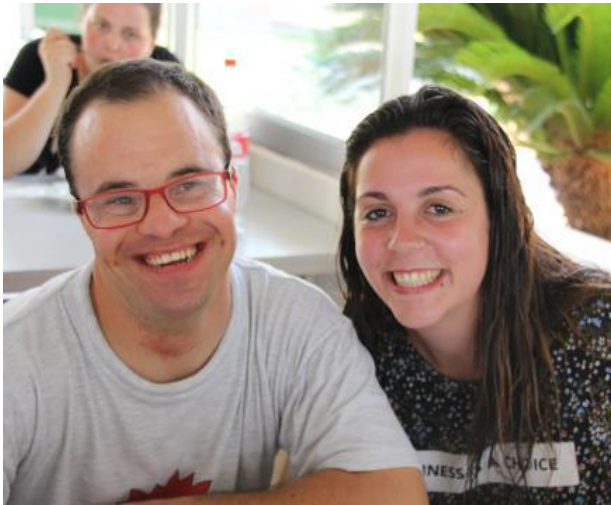
The people went to Lourdes at Easter 1971 for a pilgrimage, not knowing what God was preparing. Faith and Light was born because one family with two severely children with several disabilities decided to go to Lourdes. But they were asked to take their meals in their room so as not to disturb the other pilgrims. Returning home, they told those around them what they experienced and asked: "Is this what God really wants, that our



differences and the difficulties that we experience prevent us from living our faith?"

In Faith and Light, we are always discovering, through the people with a disability, that God did not choose the wisest, the most beautiful or the richest, but on the contrary, he goes to the unloved, those who society rejects. Moreover, we see during his life, Jesus approached the most fragile, those considered the most vulnerable. How can Lourdes be a place that rejects those with an intellectual disability?

And this is how Faith and Light was born fifty one years ago. Last year we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary. In Salamanca, it has been



twenty seven years, when I said that I am thirty, it's all there.

In the Gospel, Peter said *"No, you will never wash my feet!"*. Faced with a person with a disability, how many times have we not expressed our fear, how many times have we avoided approaching them because of the unknown? However, God replies: *"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me"*. Through these words, Jesus is telling each one of us *"if you do not accept the one who is different, if you do not seek to meet people beyond appearances, if you reject those I love the most, you have nothing to do with me anymore"*.

Through Faith and Light, Jesus shows us that there are no different levels between us; we can all contribute something. We are all at the service of one another. We have a universal language, the language of love, of the love the people with a disability give and that does not need words.

One of my most beautiful memories is of the day when a person with disabilities washed my feet. I could see through his gaze the eyes of God on me. It is that letting yourself be touched by someone who was rejected.

Faith and Light is a place that allows people with disabilities to use the many gifts that they have received. We are invited to discover that these people have magic, that they love us just as we are.

Faith and Light is a place open to families, where parents can go forward together, sharing their suffering and understanding one another.

Finally, Faith and Light allows friends who wish to share their faith, to do so with people with disabilities and their families.

We, the young, live a lot through networks. When we meet a person with disabilities who shows us that they love us just as we are, regardless of appearances, we realise that life has more meaning without all those filters that we place on ourselves.

If we have discovered that people with disabilities are a gift, why don't we announce it forcefully to the world? Jesus does with us what he has done with his disciples, he asks us to tell the world that the people with disabilities have their place in the Church and in society.



Testimony

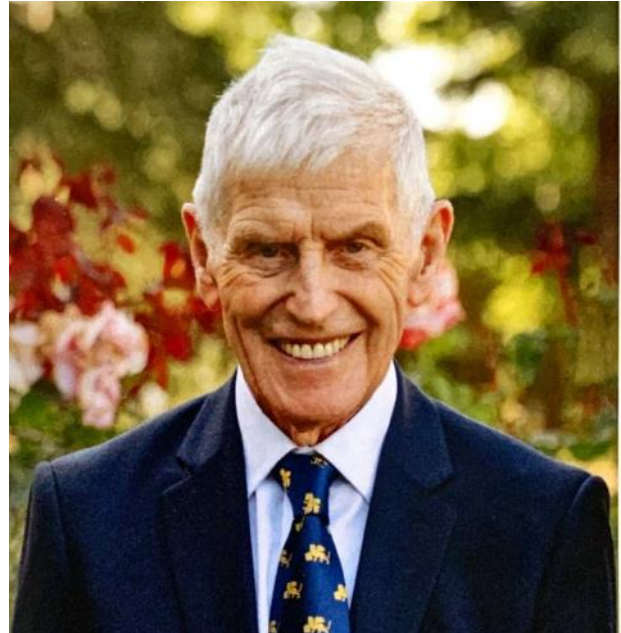
Rest in peace, Kevin

A couple of days before Christmas, on the 23rd December, we gathered in the little parish church of Stowmarket in the south east of England to celebrated the funeral Mass for Kevin Keating. We were there to pray for Kevin, to reflect on his life and give thanks for it. But also to surround his wife Pat and their large family.

It is that time of year when autumn has given way to winter and the last of the summer leaves are floating languidly to the ground. It is that time of year when nature reminds us of the 'seasons of life'. The natural rhythm of life takes us through gestation, birth, growth, death and renewal. But as the leaves turn, wither and fall, we know they have done their job. In their prime they were fully alive and provided nourishment for the tree, made life pleasant for us and provided shade in summer days. Much of what they were is now within the tree. These decaying leaves should not let us forget the joy they gave us when they were fresh and green.



Now, the earthly phase of Kevin's life is done and much of who he was is in his family and those he nourished as a husband, a father, a grandfather; in the people with whom he worked as a teacher and headteacher; in those whose lives he touched through Faith and



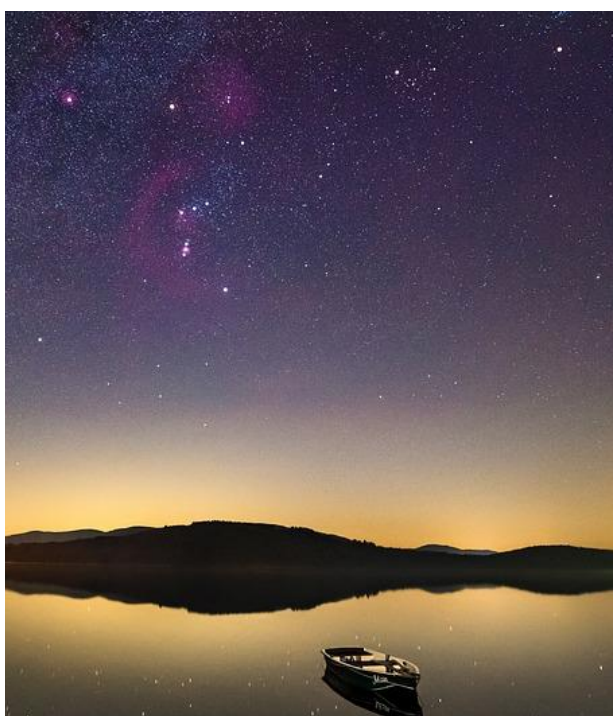
Light as community leader and national coordinator.

When a young man, Kevin felt the call away from his first job as a ship's radio officer to the teaching profession; to be an educator. At the funeral liturgy his family spoke beautifully of how he understood education. Clearly, he understood it, as the word implies, to lead people forth into life; to prepare them to take their place in the world and use the gifts he believed were in every person. For Kevin, this was something to celebrate. And so, his classrooms were joyful places; fun would be a natural ingredient of his teaching. He understood education as a humanizing vocation; not just about teaching subjects or dispensing knowledge, but about helping to form people. After that great pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1971, where Faith and Light was born, a few people worked tirelessly to spread the news in this country and many communities were formed after a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham.

Faith and Light was still in its infancy in this country when Kevin became national coordinator. He went on to serve three terms in that role he embraced with energy, enthusiasm and that sense of joy that characterized his style of teaching. He travelled around England, Scotland and Wales, often accompanied by his family in their VW van that he converted into a people carrier by fitting old aircraft seats. He would be present at gatherings, retreats and summer celebrations. He hosted the international meeting at Wood Hall, Wetherby in 1982 where the Faith and Light charter was agreed and represented Great Britain at other international meetings in Rome and S. Domingo.

Kevin believed in the innate dignity and beauty in every human being. He revealed those gifts to his family, in his school and to the many people whose lives he touched in Faith and Light – that great movement that changed lives and led many of us to a better understanding of what it means to be a pastoral minister. The book of Daniel has words for Kevin and people like him: *They shall shine like the stars of heaven forever* (Daniel 12.3).

BISHOP DONAL LUCEY



Kevin was straight talking and fun loving. I remember Ipswich version of singing in the rain, minibuses piled high with their 7 children, balloons and banners for Lourdes, mince with everything at summer celebrations, his ability to cut to the heart of what was important at Trustee Meetings.

*What a blessing to have shared these moments and more with him and Pat, his wife and wingwoman!
May he rest in peace!
Jane*

It is with sorrow that we hear of Kevin's passing. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this time of loss. Our heart goes also to his Faith and Light community and all Faith and Light in England.

*We give thanks for his life and for his devotion to Faith and Light.
May our Loving God bring comfort to everyone and may he rest in peace.
Much love and prayers.
Angela*

*He was indeed a true servant of God, and he and his family have given so much of themselves to Faith and Light, and indeed people with disabilities in many ways. Please be assured I will keep Kevin and his family in my prayers.
Wendy*

*Kevin was the first national coordinator for England - before national coordinators were invented, a real founding father for Faith and Light in this country. May he rest in peace.
Bob*

Testimony

The baptism of Paola

In this year of 2022, "Les Coquelicots" have a treasure to share with you!

This young community "has been sailing" on the shores of Lake Geneva in Switzerland for the past four years.

"Les Coquelicots" met on 6 February, of course for the Feast of Light in common with all the communities around the world, but especially around Paola, a young thirteen year old member. Indeed, on that day, during the parish mass, joyfully led by the group of young people, Paola received the sacrament of baptism and the first communion.

Her mum, Daniela, prepared her with the help of Father Guy, our chaplain, and her godmother, Natacha, also a member of our community with her daughter, Antonia.

For this occasion, Paola received a beautiful painting upon which each member of the community had glued a piece of white material with their name on it so as to make a beautiful sail for the Faith and Light boat.

We then shared a festive and generous aperitif at the invitation of Daniela and David, Paola's parents.

Yes, we can testify to it, we came and we saw the Light of Jesus shine in the eyes and the heart of Paola and all the members of "Coquelicots" gathered there.

BÉRANGÈRE CHAPPUIS

Switzerland is made of 14 communities



Testimony

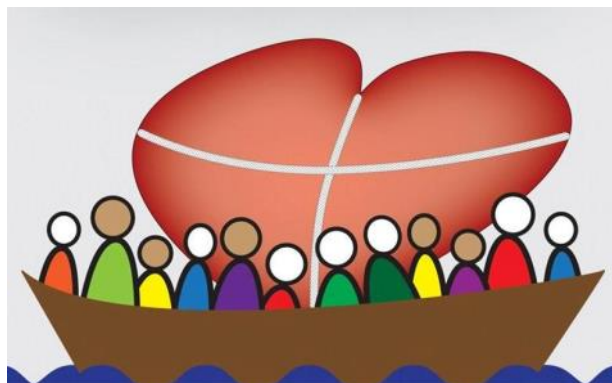
The "Heart of Europe" beats faster

We had the "last" general assembly for our province at the end of May last year. On that Ascension weekend, thirteen communities from our four countries (Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Luxembourg) came to Steyl in the Netherlands. Our mandate as coordinators of the "Heart of Europe" province was coming to an end and the nominating committee did not find a successor. It was a long and difficult task. Many were called but sadly, none could be found. We all felt our poverty.

Consultations with delegates and our committee took place in a calm atmosphere. After the prayer, members were able to deliberate in small groups on three questions. "Do we dissolve the province, yes or no? Do you agree to find a contact person for your country? Can the "Heart of Europe" transfer the balance of our funds to the international level?"

The majority agreed to put an end to the province and everyone agreed to find a national contact person for the international secretariat. Our treasurer was authorised to deposit the contributions for 2023 and 2024 from all the existing communities with the international level. The proceedings were then over. Was this the end of "Heart of Europe"? We hoped that our province would not perish. Others felt that it was a difficult decision even if they would have preferred not to take it. Other communities, and us, were very sad that the majority of them wanted to leave our province. We felt our poverty more than ever.

A province that saw its baptism 13 years ago was now coming to an end. We have accompanied "Heart of Europe" from the start. Hetty Gommans was our great leader. First of all, she was an interim coordinator then she was firmly at the helm for eight years. It is incredible what she gave us all! She had the support of the whole team. With her, three vice coor-



dinators (for the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg), a province chaplain and two representatives from Austria, gave the best of themselves.

The province grew and prospered. Many were our committee meetings, celebrations with pilgrimages, weekends with all our communities in Steyl, Banneux, Tainach and especially Weisendorf, where we held elections.

We were sad because the province was not going to continue. Farewell to back-to-meeting days, pilgrimages, meeting days, the new logo, our banner, the beautiful CDs in Dutch, German and Spanish and so many bonds of friendship beyond the borders. Were we going to lose all these bonds? Many (and some of us too), thought that this was the end because if the structures of Faith and Light break down, the province was going to break down...

You might also know this saying: "It is the end", said the caterpillar. "No, it is the beginning of a new life", said the butterfly!

When Sister Christiane from Brussels Carmel learnt that "Heart of Europe" was going to disappear, she made us understand that the structures may disappear but the Spirit of Faith and Light remains! (For four years, her community has supported us in prayer.) And yes, she is right!

From left to right: Nicole Stoffel-Reding, vice-coordinator for Luxembourg et secretary for the committee; Heidi Grell, translator and member of the nomination committee; Denise Schwartz, our treasurer ; Hetty Gommans, former provincial coordinator, long-time translator and interpreter in the provincial committee; Trudi van Rijt, vice coordinator for the Netherlands; Hubertus Franckenstein, responsible for the nomination committee; Astrid Hofmann-Nartz, representative of Austria, Sam and Bert Colyn-Sertyn, province coordinators; Jos Rosenhart, chaplain and member of the nomination committee; Marie-Thérèse Puhl, vice-coordinator for Germany; Georg Haab, representative of Austria. Sr. Therese Mangen, member of the nomination committee, is not in the picture.



Six months later, the bonds between our communities have not been broken, quite the contrary! There has been new life because a WhatsApp group began to take shape in Germany, the Netherlands and Austria. We also joined it and when all the contact people were found, the four countries came together once again as a single large family. Who would have dreamt of that?

Never before had there been so much communication, prayer, meetings, photos and activities transmitted. Some "dormant" communities have found a new lease of life and are now closely connected! Thank you for this first miracle, Holy Spirit! A new community was created in Germany and officially started recently!

Faith and Light is more alive than ever. Something totally new was born from our state of poverty. We have never been as close to each other! We continue to travel together, even if no longer physically, certainly in friendship!

Something we never would have dreamed of happened. Officially, "Heart of Europe" no longer exists, but the communities are meeting up again. "Man proposes but God disposes!"

So sometimes, we really think that everything will cease to exist because the communities are becoming very old, (some are celebrating their 40th anniversary), or have become so small (no new members), that they will even-

tually cease to exist. And yet... it carries on. There isn't a new coordinator for the "Heart of Europe", but perhaps the Lord knows better? He never abandons his flock.

One of our very dear friends from Faith and Light once said: "We are praying for new priests but no-one comes here... perhaps there are vocations in Africa or elsewhere. This is also possible in Faith and Light!"

Leafing through "Up Sails", issue 54, we read the reactions after Tim Buckley's wonderful retreat. Thanks to the Ferme de Trosly, participants from the Far Eastern provinces were also able to take part. And indeed... we proposed to Anna to take part. She wasn't (yet) a member. She then found a Faith and Light community in Korea. She offered her services as a translator for this region. We had tears in our eyes reading this. She has been our friend for almost 40 years and she knew of Faith and Light through our conversations. In March, she wrote to us: "God works miracles. How did I know I was going to join Faith and Light. God has his own time to work in us, in all things." May the Holy Spirit work in her and around her so that Faith and Light may flourish even more there too!

What we failed to do for "Heart of Europe", finding a successor, has happened in Korea. We are so grateful that Our Lord has also guided Anna so that Faith and Light may continue to grow! This is the second miracle.

What God started in Lourdes is incredible!

The late bishop Klaus Hemmerle, from Germany, gave a sermon in Lourdes referring to Mary: "What Jesus says, do it! What he does, say it! What Jesus gives, take it. What he takes, give to Him !"

SAM AND BERT COLYN-SERTYN
Former "Heart of Europe" Coordinators



Testimony

The Emmaus Centre



SITUATED IN LVIV, THE EMMAUS CENTRE (EMAYC IN UKRAINIAN) CALLS, IN ITS OWN WORDS, THOSE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, FRIENDS. IT STRIVES TO PROMOTE AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY IN WHICH EVERY PERSON WITH DISABILITY IS VALUED AND ACCEPTED. IT BELIEVES THAT EVERYONE, WITH OR WITHOUT DISABILITY, HAS A UNIQUE VOCATION AND A GIFT FOR THE WORLD. IN THIS VERY PAINFUL TIME OF WAR, EMAYC IS COURAGEOUSLY PURSUING ITS MISSION AS BEST IT CAN. PHOTOS AMAYC.

The spirituality of EMAYC is rooted in the words of the Gospel: *God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong* (1 Corinthians 1: 27-28). EMAYC wants the world to hear that the greatest value of each person is not in their intellectual abilities but in their heart and that no-one is put on this earth by chance.

A bit of history

The EMAYC Centre has common roots with the Faith and Light and L'Arche communities. Zenia Kushpeta, a Ukrainian Canadian, created the Faith and Light and L'Arche communities in Ukraine.

In Canada, Zenia was a promising pianist. However, after meeting some people with dis-

abilities, she gave up her career and dedicated herself entirely to their service.

After the dissolution of the USSR, Zenia came to Ukraine with the dream of founding a L'Arche community. However, creating such a community in 1992 was difficult. The families with children with disabilities were often ashamed to go out with them. Many of these people lived in orphanages, psychiatric institutions and other places out of sight. Also, Zenia helped to found the first Faith and Light communities in various parishes in Lviv. Today, there are 39 spread across the whole country.

Zenia understood that it was essential to change Ukrainian society: support families, spread the vision of Faith and Light and L'Arche throughout Ukraine and break the stereotypes about attitudes towards people with disabilities. With this goal in mind, in 2001 Zenia created the EMAYC centre at the Ukrainian Catholic University.

In addition to the Faith and Light meetings, workshops have also been opened. These are day programmes for people with intellectual disability and assistants. They meet every day and create various handmade products, support their friendship and build a community. The Faith and Light workshops have become one of the Centre's programmes. In 2008, with the help of the EMAYC Centre, the first L'Arche community was created based on these workshops.

Why this name "EMAYC"?

Two disciples of Jesus were walking along the road from Jerusalem to EMAYC. They were desperate and confused following the



Zenia (pink shirt), with her friends



crucifixion of Jesus. During their journey, they met a "stranger" who joined them on their walk, revealed to them the meaning of the Scriptures and shared a meal with them. At the breaking of the bread, the hearts of the disciples burnt, their eyes were opened and they recognised Jesus. They were filled with joy and their life took on new meaning. In the same way, many families with children with disabilities walk along the path of life in despair and loneliness until they experience of the love of their neighbour and the ever present love of God that heals. When we extend the hand of friendship, a community of faith and friendship is created. When we share the joys and challenges of life together, our lives are filled with new meaning and hope is renewed in our hearts.

Breaking down barriers

Many fears, prejudices and stereotypes about people with disabilities still exist in Ukraine. This is the result of the country's Soviet past. To break down these barriers and encourage people to communicate and make friends with people with disability, the EMAYC Centre organises educational activities and training. During these events, the speakers talk about the specifics of communication with people with disabilities, their needs, their gifts and their particular vocation. They are aimed at, but not limited to, students from schools and universities and various youth organisations. The EMAYC team provides training to various state and educational bodies across the country. Their friends with disabilities are always present at these events, they are an important part of the team.

Aware of the lack of vital information about inclusion, the EMAYC Centre organises various educational seminars for teachers, formation for carers and other specialists who work with people with disabilities.

Supporting families

A family is a kind of chain of interaction in which all the members affect each other. It is impossible to help a child without helping their family. To do this, EMAYC organises:

- weekends for parents,
- weekends for couples,
- days for brothers and sisters
- days for grandparents.

EMAYC also offers psychological consultations to help people with disabilities and their loved ones.

EMAYC is also a home

Located on the university campus, the EMAYC house opened in 2013. The friends and assistants live as a community. In the week, each friend attends a workshop or a day programme. In the evening, the community prepares dinner and very often has guests. Every day ends with a time of prayer. The residents





of the EMAYC house also spend weekends and holidays together: they go for walks, have coffee, go to the cinema and travel across Ukraine together. During the year, they actively take part in campus life, which gives them the opportunity for better socialisation and integration into society. It is an unprecedented innovation in Europe.

The activities of the EMAYC Centre do not stop there. There is also the "youth club" that looks for work for people with disabilities, a theatre troupe, "Laughter and Tears", and an adapted sports club.

We are full of admiration for the magnificent work you do. Know too that all the Faith and Light communities across the world are praying with you, for you and for peace. We love you, we are from the same family!



Do you want to help the EMAYC Centre?

- EMAYC Centre
Ukrainian Catholic University
Svientsitskoho street 17, Lviv, 79011 Ukraine - P. + 38 (032) 240-99-40 (# 3107)
- Donation: via Œuvre d'Orient, which will send it to the EMAYC Centre (for this it is imperative to indicate: donation N° 23328).
- Via internet: www.oeuvre-orient.fr – don N° 23328
- Website: <https://emaus.ucu.edu.ua/en/who-are-we/>

For news from the year 2022, here is the latest EMAYC Newsletter in French:
http://drouzi-uh.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Newsletter_nov_2022.pdf

For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

Benedict XVI loved Faith and Light



Pope Benedict XVI had a younger first cousin with Down Syndrome, who in 1941 was a victim of the T4 program, which was an operation to eliminate the intellectually disabled... This is what he said in 1966 : *One of my aunts, who we frequently visited, was the mother of a robust child, a few years younger than me, who was increasingly displaying the typical symptoms of Down Syndrome. The simplicity of his “clouded” intelligence aroused great sympathy and his mother, who had lost a little girl prematurely, was very affectionate to him.*

These words from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, which date from 1996, are exceptional: indeed, he has only rarely spoken about his cousin with Down Syndrome who was murdered by the Nazis. That day was on the occasion of an international conference organised by the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care and the title of the conference was: “The likeness of God in the Human Being”.

This text is magnificent and it needs to be read and meditated on in its entirety; there are beautiful sentences in it, not only about his personal memories, very touching, with which he begins, but also very profound reflections on the way in which every person, and especially the smallest and those who suffer the most, reflect the very image of God. Here is a selection, which gives only a small glimpse of this conference, which should be a reference text for all those who believe that any person, even the most fragile, is an icon of God!

In this way the light of God lies upon suffering people, in whom the splendour of the creation has been externally dimmed; they are in a special way similar to the crucified Christ, to the icon of love, they have drawn near to a special shared nature with him who, alone, is “the image of God”.

In all human beings, but especially in those who suffer, in the intellectually disabled, we love what they shall be and what in reality they already are. They are already children of God—they are in the image of Christ even

though what they will become is not yet manifest.

But I would like here to bear witness to the love the Church bears towards those who suffer mentally. Yes, the Church loves you. She not only bears towards you that natural “preference” of a mother towards the most suffering of their children. She not only adopts a stance of admiration towards what you will be, but also towards what you are now.

Perhaps this explains why Faith and Light has always had a special place in the heart of Benedict XVI. Here are a few examples:

On the occasion of our 40th anniversary, we received a message sent by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State of His Holiness Benedict XVI, while we were in Lourdes to launch the pilgrimages that were going to punctuate the life of our provinces for two years:

On the occasion of the celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the international Movement Faith and Light, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI sends his warmest wishes to the Coordinators Council and to all the members of the Movement, assuring them of his prayer that God makes the work, which began with the Easter 1971 pilgrimage to Lourdes, flourish. Since then, many Faith and Light communities have grown throughout the world. May they repeat to the heart of each disabled person the words of Pope Paul VI: “You are loved by God just as you are” and help them to then continue their pilgrimage in life with peace and joy within, surrounded by brothers and sisters who are happy to share with them the love



that God brings in this blessed way to the smallest and weakest! May the celebration of this anniversary be a joyful message of hope for people with disabilities, for their families and their friends! His Holiness wholeheartedly sends all members of the international Movement Faith and Light an affectionate Apostolic Blessing.

On the occasion of the pilgrimage of the Faith and Light Board of Directors to Rome in October 2011, we took part in the General Audience in the Paul VI Hall and I had the privilege of being able to meet Pope Benedict XVI at the end of this audience. As in this kind of meeting, the time for speaking is very limited, it is important to get to the point. At the time, I shared a great dream with Sister Marie-Antoinette Dossou, who was the contact person of the "Our Lady of the persons with disabilities" community in Cotonou: that the Holy Father, during his apostolic visit to Benin, could make contact with this community! After introducing myself, I could see that the name of Faith and Light made a broad smile appear on his face. For me, it was the confirmation that our mission around the most fragile among us had a special place in his heart and his prayers. So, I invited him to meet the Faith and Light community in Cotonou. He responded positively. With this affirmation, I wrote to the Apostolic Nuncio of Cotonou to insist because the initial feedback said that sadly, it would not be possible...

*"Providentially, I had the opportunity, following the Audience on Wednesday 26 October, to greet the Holy Father: I told him that I was inviting him to visit Faith and Light during his stay in Benin and he replied: **"It is possible"**. I know that it is not he who sets the programme (which has already been announced and does not include this much hoped for visit...) but I would nevertheless humbly ask you if a small delegation from the community could not be invited to one of the events of this apostolic visit? "*

And this is what Sister Marie-Antoinette told me: *"Let us give thanks to God. He performs and continues to perform miracles on earth. The visit of the Holy Father to Benin from 18 to 20 November that we have just experienced has been a success for which only God gives grace. We ended this great unforgettable event with the Pope in beauty yesterday, the Sunday of the Feast of Christ the King of the Universe. Thank you to the Lord. The community was at the meeting place of the visit to the parish of St Rita of Cotonou. We were well placed within the church on the immediate route of the Pope. He touched our sick, who were well positioned on his route with our sign with the inscription: **"BENIN FAITH AND LIGHT COMMUNITY. THANK YOU MOST HOLY FATHER"***





The next day, 27 October, Pope Benedict XVI invited representatives from the thirteen largest religious denominations in the world as well as four non-believers to come with him to Assisi, 25 years to the day after the meeting organised by St John Paul II, so that everyone could reaffirm their commitment to peace and against violence.

In the afternoon, on St Francis Square, below the Basilica of St Francis, there were several commitments to peace and the Holy Father concluded: *"No more violence! No more war! No more terrorism! In the name of God, that every religion bring Justice and Peace, Forgiveness and Life, Love!"*. Then each person was invited to exchange a sign of peace with their neighbour and doves were released, more or less timidly.

Why were we there? For me, the invitation we received had a very strong meaning! At Faith and Light, we welcome everyone, whatever their religious denomination; of course, our Charter is based on a strong attachment to the values of Christianity and we recognise the icon of Jesus suffering on the faces of our friends with disabilities but this does not prevent us from granting access to our communities to any person wanting to live our values, to experience friendship with people with intellectual disability. I have even seen how much the schematic of our community meetings can work in a Muslim environment in Midelt (Morocco)!

And then, in our communities, we are witnesses to the fact that all people with disabilities are a **source of love** when they are accepted as a person in their own right, a **source of joy** when they are given the place to which

they can legitimately claim, a **source of peace** when their ability to build friendships is recognised. On the other hand, it is the rejection of people with disabilities that is a source of tension and conflict, it is the refusal to meet people with disabilities that deprives us of the graces that they alone can provide for us, it is the elimination of people with disabilities that causes us to fall into the "structures of sin"!

So let us fervently experience this spirit of Assisi in all our communities!

When one of our communities is too tired to be able to carry on meeting regularly, we invite them to give thanks for this new stage of their community life. The friendship between members is encouraged to continue, especially in prayer. When Pope Benedict XVI chose to relinquish his office, this is what he chose to do too. The prayer of the most fragile is welcomed in an altogether special way in the heart of God, we are privileged witnesses to it in Faith and Light! So, I am certain that his prayers for the Church and for the world have been a source of strength, courage and boldness so that the new Evangelisation that he advocated may be a living reality. I know that Faith and Light had a place in his prayers; the Faith and Light communities also prayed for him and have continued to bring to the world the message of this joy that we live in our communities, this joy received as a gift when we share our difficulties and our suffering. *"The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love."* (Ps 32, 18)

Thank you, Most Holy Father, for watching over us for all these years, before, during and after your Pontificate!

International news

Juan Tomas Garcia Pichardo



It is with joy that I present to you our new chaplain for the "Heart of America and the Caribbean" province. Juan Tomas Garcia Pichardo is a priest, he belongs to the Congregation of the missionaries of the Sacred Heart, where he has been the Provincial twice. He lives in Saint Domingo in the Dominican Republic.

He has known Faith and Light for many years. He had the opportunity to take part in a Faith and Light community in the city of Castillo.

He was the Faith and Light chaplain in the Dominican Republic several years ago, but after a few months, he was transferred to Guantanamo, in Cuba, and his duties as chaplain ended.

Once more, he is near to us and once more, he has said yes to the call of our province. Our province has been very happy to have a simple and humble priest who loves our movement.

Julio Cesar Espinal, provincial coordinator

Blandine Mattei



After a beautiful day, the Paris and le Levant assembly elected Blandine Mattei as the new province coordinator. Thank you for saying

yes and thank you to Valérie Amice and her team for their five years of service.

Rania Feleep

The Egypt South Kuwait province assembly elected a new province coordinator, Rania Feleep. We thank her for accepting this responsibility. May God accompany her on this path. A huge thank you to Shinouda Eskander for her ten years of service.



Clara Chen, Tatiana Yang and Gracy Tong

Clara and Tatiana were elected as co-provincial coordinators for the Light of the Orient province and Gracy Tong as vice provincial coordinator. She will accompany the three communities from Hong Kong and Taiwan for a mandate of four years.



**A big thank you to everyone:
to the former and the new!**

International agenda

- 10 March: national meeting of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
- 10-12 March: provincial assembly "Croatia", Đakovo
- 11 March: day of friends, "France West" province, Mormaison
- 18 March: "Lebanon South-Jordan" provincial council, Fanar, Lebanon
- 18 March: "France West" provincial meeting, Nantes
- 18-19 March: "France Centre" provincial council, Le Mans
- 25 March: "USA East" provincial council, Zoom
- 1st April: "France East" provincial assembly, Portieux
- 21-23 April: retreat for the Réunion communities
- 29-30 April: retreat for the Seychelles communities
- 30 April: marathon in Beirut, action carried out by "Lebanon South, Jordan"
- 2-5 May: pilgrimage of 40th anniversary of Faith and Light in Slovenia, Lourdes
- 12 May: retreat for the Rwanda communities
- 20 May: "Ireland" provincial pilgrimage, Knock
- 27 May: "Luzitana" provincial council, Lisbon
- 28 May: "Lebanon South-Jordan" provincial pilgrimage
- 28 May: assembly of the "Iberatlantic association, Zoom

International solidarity

Project to support

The international meeting and General assembly in Strasbourg (July 2023) and will bring together over 150 leaders from all around the world. It is therefore essential that representatives from all countries are able to attend, starting with those that are most difficult and isolated. Many countries are too poor to be able to afford the cost of bringing their leaders to this meeting. Many communities are working hard and with great imagination and courage to raise funds to enable delegates from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central and South America to attend this international meeting. But this will not be enough.

All donations are welcome, even the smallest ones!

<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/donate/international-meeting-2023>

All donations are welcome, even the smallest ones!





Family album



Bruno Knittel



I am very sad to inform you of the death of Bruno at the l'Arche "Saameya" Residence in Paris on 17 November.

He was surrounded by his Residence, the leaders of l'Arche in Paris and his sister.

He "departed" quite peacefully.

On Thursday afternoon, a time of prayer was organised at the Residence as well as in the evening with the members of l'Arche to bring together and surround those who lived with him, some for over 28 years at l'Arche.

We know that Bruno is now at Peace. He has joined his parents and many other people from his family and friends from Faith and Light.

We remember that he was, with his parents, one of the first members of the "Our Lady of the Magnificat" Community: "He was on his father's shoulders at the 1971 pilgrimage!" recalls Marie-Hélène Mathieu, a member of his community. Let us not hesitate to call on him to present to the Lord our community, the Faith

and Light movement and each one of our intentions. The community is already well represented "on high" and I am sure that Heaven is celebrating the arrival of Bruno with the Father.

Isabelle d'Harcourt
Community leader

Anne-Marie Lauvray



Anne Marie left us so quickly without warning.

Did the Good Lord invite her for Christmas, and as she did not want to say no to him, she responded with an immediate yes? Because that was Anne Marie when it came to serving him. Always available, she went to the weakest; she felt so close to them. Her generosity, her kindness, her listening revealed to us her inner strength and the depth of her soul filled with love.

She meant a lot to the "La Petite voie" community and her departure has left us with a huge void.

She shone far beyond our community: thus, the pro-

vince team shared with us its certainty: Jesus welcomed her tenderly and smiling, repeating these words to her "Come you who are blessed by my Father".

At the end of October 2022, Anne-Marie was in Lourdes for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Faith and Light. We are sure that she is continuing to take care of us and trust in us.

She was the messenger of joy. Communauté "La Petite Voie"

In Croatia



Two joyful events happened this month: two communities that had not met for three years began to meet again. The two communities were without friends and had elderly parents who could not get too involved but who still looked forward to their meetings. New people wanting to revitalise it all and become friends arrived... This is how this month, the life that we thought already over was renewed. I am particularly pleased that one of these communities meets in Vukovar, which, in a way, is close to all our hearts due to the suffering of the past war and the



many wounds that the families still bear in their relationships with their closest neighbours... We know that the little ones can bring peace and friendship where it seems impossible and this is why these events truly bring a new hope and a new light to our province.

Dijana Stanic
Provincial Coordinator

Dare to meet!

On the occasion of its 60th anniversary, the OCH Foundation is pleased to present the "Dare to meet!" project.

The concept: to offer people with disabilities the chance to realise one of their dreams with students or young professionals and spend some unprecedented time together.

How does it work?

Go to the website:
www.oselarencontre.fr
to find out more!



**OSE LA
RENCONTRE**

For our friends from Ukraine



The delegates from the new "Our Lady of Africa – The Savannah" province, who met for a formation session in Cameroon, sent this encouragement card to our Ukrainian friends.

In Gibraltar

The "Upon this rock" community celebrated Christmas in December. We began with a Mass at the cathedral, then we went to a restaurant and had a great day with lots of singing, dancing, food and presents.

On Saturday, we had our first celebration of 2023. We focused the meeting on The Way of Openness to the Church and the World, by concentrating primarily on the words of Jesus when he said: "You are the salt of the earth". A conference was given to us on this theme and ended with a "Faith and Light has talent" show.

A beautiful afternoon enjoyed by all with a prayer fiesta and a snack (always food haha!).

We continue to meet on the 3rd Saturday of each month and between times, we meet every two weeks for a fourth time!



Marie-Hélène's letter



SMILING, THE SIGN OF MEETING

Smiling is the expression of the soul. Sometimes words are complicated: long to say and difficult to say. When the sorrow is too great or the joy too sweet, words stop. The eyes are illuminated by an inexplicable light that, silently, signifies a communion that words can never say so well. It is no longer the lips but the eyes that speak. They tell of the core of the being, the silent consolation, the encouragement that comes from the heart, the acknowledgement that rises from our deepest selves...

Smiling is therefore the sign of the meeting. Simple politeness, when it is only convention, remains cold and its smile, more or less mechanical. Conversation, even animated, can only be made from two alternating monologues... When defences fall, trust awakens, eyes soften, genuine meetings become possible and the exchange of smiles become the impalpable but calming food of hearts.

The language of the smile is so natural that it doesn't even need to be taught. We might think that it is by copying that the tiny child, at around three months, begins to show their contentment and tenderness with their first smile. But the mum of a little girl who has never seen the light told me: "She smiled a bit later than my other children but it came quite naturally to her one day without it ever being suggested that she do it. She knew instinctively, in her darkness, that it was her way of expressing her joy or affection or even her gratitude to those who are in the light".

The smile, which Pius XII said is one of the greatest gifts that the Lord has given man, is even more precious, if that is possible, when it blossoms in those who are injured in their body or their mind. Just recently, Pablo, this small six year old child who cannot speak or move, did



not stop smiling during the hour spent we spent together.

This memory followed me and these lines were born from it. When neither words can offer nor gestures give, poverty is almost absolute. Yet there is still this thing that is more than all others: the smile when it expresses the gift to the other, the invitation to friendship, the recognition, the silent assurance of intimacy. It is often what parents expect most from their child with disability. I can still hear Sabine's dad telling me: "Up to the age of ten years old, we smiled at her so often, watching tirelessly for her response. The day she did, we did not think that such great joy could exist". It was her spiritual soul that was revealed, her capacity for presence and exchange.

Lord, you who has entrusted us with the smile to welcome and give, grant us to be loyal to this language of silence and love.