

Up Sails !

The international letter of Faith and Light N°61, June 2024



**Let us take care
about our communities**



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Editorial

Taking care of the communities means taking care of people

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

- *Daddy, Daddy, what does a plant need to grow?*

- *Well, my son, warmth from the sun, plenty of water, good soil and a lot of attention.*

- *And what does a person need to grow up?*

I thought about it for a while. A lot of ideas came into my head to respond to my son and I realised that our needs weren't that different from the plant's, and I said:

- *The warmth of the sun, plenty of water, good soil and a lot of attention.*

Even today again, I say to myself that a Faith and Light community needs the same things to grow. This reflection is an invitation to take care of our community and the people who are part of it.

THE WARMTH OF THE SUN

We need warmth and light, because we need God's embrace. But of course we need to be in places where we can really feel that warmth and light. The Holy Spirit already warms our hearts to give us impetus and courage when we need it, and to give us the light of understanding and wisdom when we need it too. A community that celebrates God with faith, according to its religious tradition, will naturally radiate warmth and light.

WATER IN ABUDANCE

The Gospels tell of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman who was at a well to draw water. In reality, the woman was thirsty, but she was drinking water that makes you thirsty. Jesus offers her another kind of water, water that truly quenches her thirst. The water Jesus gives fills life and fulfils expectations. But you have to be thirsty. Are we really thirsty? Because God gives himself to us according to our thirst. So, thirsty, we seek God by all means and we take the decisions to find this source of water.



Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
International coordinator

A GOOD SOIL

Soil is essential, whatever the seed to be planted. Without soil, there are no roots and life has no chance of germinating. A house is always built from the ground up. That's why we need good soil to establish our community in which each person, with their frailties and wounds, is loved by God. Respect for those who are different from me, the value of life, brotherhood, forgiveness and joy are all part of good soil.

A LOT OF ATTENTION

And what about attention! It's about the relationships between people. Attention is made up of gestures, words and details, hugs and songs, smiles and glances. It encourages us to take care of each other, to say a word that might help us or make us think, to have fun with each other. Caring also means encouragement and support in times of difficulty and joy.

- *Dad, I'd like to be a gardener to look after the plants in the garden.*

- *Ha, ha, ha, ha, I think that's great. That's how you train for life, because people are always a bit more difficult.*

May this be a good time to take care of each other and our communities, with will and determination. And if we lack it, may we ask for it with insistence and faith.

Best wishes to the members of all the Faith and Light communities.

Joël's Baptism at La Pirogue «The Canoe» Saturday March 30, 2024

One day, a friend from the community came to announce that she was going to ask for confirmation. We explained Joël what that meant and he spontaneously asked to be confirmed too. When we asked Joël « do you want to be baptized?» he replied, «I love Jesus».



The Faith and Light community « La Pirogue» was born in September 2012 and was recognized in February 2017 in the presence of the provincial coordinator of “France entre deux mers”. Monthly meetings take place on the 3rd Saturday of the month in a parish hall and end with early mass on Sunday at 6 p.m., in Sainte-Bernadette church.

Joël LESINK became a member of The Canoe in 2015, following the death of his parents. We knew that when he was born, he had been entrusted to child welfare care and that he was adopted at the age of 12 by a couple in their fifties who were not able to have children at that time. They used to welcome Joël during weekends and holidays, they loved him very

much and wanted to give him a future. One day his mother told me: «with my husband, we said to ourselves that if we did not adopt him, no one else would, given his handicap». We knew that his parents were Catholic and took Joël to mass when they were still able-bodied. But we knew nothing about Joël's background concerning the Church. We first inquired with his diocese of birth, which confirmed us that this child had not been baptized.

Joël worked in a ESAT (Establishment and Service for Assistance through Work) and after he retired in 2021, he moved into a residential home for the elderly in our Poitiers -Ouest district. He participates in the monthly mass at home and regularly comes to our Faith and Light meetings. One day, a friend from the community came to announce that she was going to ask for confirmation.



We explained him what that meant and Joël spontaneously asked to be confirmed too. When we asked Joël « do you want to be baptized?» he replied, «I love Jesus».

Testimony

With our chaplain we thought it was a good reason. And, after an exchange with the priest of our parish, he was able to enter the catechumenate in June 2023.

The 2023-2024 guidelines « in the footsteps of Jesus in Galilee» has been a great help, with the large map of Palestine at the time of Jesus permanently displayed in the catechesis room where we meet, to complete Joël's Christian education.

Joël was present at the Decisive Call last March with children from the catechism class



and was baptized at mass on Easter night 2024 with six other catechumens from our parish. The following Saturday, a vigil was organized by a theologian from our diocese. Joël, a neophyte, participated enthusiastically: he placed a paper dove in front of the icon of the resurrection. He made his first Communion during the Pentecost vigil, in the presence of our small community and the parish, where he is fully integrated.

Seeing the joy on Joël's face reinforced our belief that Faith and Light can be an alternative family for those who have often had a difficult start in life. When the natural family no longer exists, our role as a community, is to listen to their desires, to accompany them with kindness in their life journey and sometimes even in their spiritual journey. What a joy! ■

Danièle LAVAUD
Coordinator of La Pirogue « The Canoe »

A short testimony from Joël after his baptism

I liked it when the priest called me by name. On the day of my baptism, I was at the front with some other people and the priest said "Joël, we're going to start with you". Then he explained to me how to kneel.

I also remember receiving the water on my head and he said, "Joel, I baptise you in the name of the Father [...] and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". And he put sweet-smelling oil on my forehead.

I love God. I feel protected. At Faith and Light and at Mass, I'm in God's house. I live what I said, "I love God".



Faith and Light Legend, Dolores Wilson turns 90!



Dolores providing formation to the St. Patrick's community in Rockville, Maryland

Our beloved Dolores “Dee” Wilson turned 90 in May. Though she is small in stature, she is a mighty advocate for the differently abled. Enthusiastically, she has brought the joy of Faith and Light to many in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area for 37 years and has diligently served Faith and Light in varied capacities during those years.

In 1986, she founded the first Faith and Light community in Washington D.C. The St. Anne and later the Our Lady of Peace communities were both founded by Dolores whose core members largely consisted of individuals who lived in two group homes for the persons with disabilities run by Bethlehem House, Inc. (a non-profit organization that was also founded by Dolores). Devotedly, she served as the live-in director for Bethlehem House for 32 years. She has dedicated most of her life to improving and enriching the lives of countless individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. She embodies the Faith and Light tenet of doing “with”

and not “for” in friendship with people who have disabilities, some of with whom she has lived with for over 30 years.

Dolores has served people with disabilities and their loved ones through several different vocations and positions. She was a founding staff member at the Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute, a school for children and young adults with disabilities that opened in 1959. She worked at the school for 25 years, serving



Dolores and Tom, resident at Bethlehem House

Testimony



Bethlehem House

in the roles of educator, administrator, and eventually principal for 12 years.

She left the school when she was asked by Cardinal James Hickey to open an Office for Persons with Disabilities for the Archdiocese of Washington, where she served as the director for 22 years. She opened Bethlehem House during her tenure as the Archdiocesan Director of the Special Needs Ministry.

Dolores is especially zealous for Faith and Light. She served as Vice Provincial Coordinator from 1998 through 2021 and USA East Provincial Coordinator with Fred Seagren from 2006-2010. She has hosted a

multitude of provincial and area wide meetings and assemblies. Members of her communities attended the International Pilgrimage in Lourdes in 2001. Additionally, many Washington area Faith and Light community members looked forward to the regional gatherings hosted by Dolores and her communities including the annual Advent and Palm Sunday celebrations. These celebrations always included re-enactments of the Christmas Story and The Stations of the Cross, followed by a lunch, and fun activities.

Many USA East Faith and Light Communities have been formed, nurtured and discerned by Dee. Her legacy in Faith and Light continues to thrive. Dee is well known in the Washington DC disability and spiritual communities and has been a charismatic leader in both of those worlds. Her spunky enthusiasm and warm, welcoming smile are her trademark. Her personal faith and light continue to radiate and shine and are contagious to anyone who has the privilege to know her.

Paula Kearney,
Secretary USA East Province



Photo : Macel Raymundo

François, the olympic torchbearer



I am François Ancé, I have been a member of Faith and Light for some thirty years, after the birth of our son Paul, who has Down's Syndrome.

My wife Caroline and I set up two Faith and Light communities in Nantes (Effata and NOE-Nantes-Oecuménique). I was the national treasurer of Faith and Light France for 17 years, and I was also in charge of international initiatives (Let's be different, OCH caravan, 2001 and 2022 Faith and Light pilgrimages, etc.).

These responsibilities are time-consuming and tiring, but above all they are exciting because of the encounters...

And I discovered the joy of being at the service of our brothers and sisters with intellectual disabilities!

A former top-level swimmer, I've been an 'ablebodied' swimming referee for around fifty years, a federal referee for persons with disabilities for around thirty years and an international Paralympic para-swimming referee for around ten years. I'm also a federal delegate in the fight against doping.

The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games began for me in 2012, when I helped put together France's bid and built training modules for para-swimming referees. From 2016 to 2022, I trained 175 referees and offered around 20 of them the chance to sit on the swimming jury at the Paralympic Games!

On 5 June, I was one of the torchbearers for the Olympic flame, an emotional moment: solemn and proud to be part of this human chain carrying the flame from Olympia to Paris, but above all representative, because through my humble person, it is all the judges and referees who are being honoured for their skills, their voluntary commitment and their ethics. ■



Ombre e Luci celebrates its 40 years

This is a Christian magazine for families and friends of person with disabilities. The original French version, "Ombres et Lumière", was created in 1968 by Marie-Hélène Mathieu, co-founder of Faith and Light and founder of the OCH (Christian office of people with disabilities).

The Italian magazine was born out of the experience of parents and friends belonging to an international movement "Faith and Light", which took its first steps in Italy in 1973 in preparation for the 1975 Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome and which would mark its official birth in Italy. Right from the start, it was possible for people to get to know each other, communicate and share their experiences, and above all it was a source of richness for the human soul.

It is through a small self-published newsletter called "INSIEME" (Together), created immediately within the association, that this way of life began to be known and spread, breaking down barriers little by little.

This newsletter began to develop more and more thanks to a small mimeograph machine, with the aim of reaching every

single person to say that it's always possible to meet people, by opening up to everyone...

In the Faith and Light communities, you can experience friendship and get to know people with an intellectual disability (often combined with a physical disability) and their families, parents, brothers and sisters. Friends join them so that, despite differences and difficulties, we can all seem to forge links...

What a joy it is to break down the barriers and fears that exist in society and to

succeed in establishing relationships of mutual friendships to help each other, get out of the house, spend an evening or a day together in a family atmosphere, or even a weekend, take part in a summer holiday... and feel part of an extended family.

The magazine "Ombre e Luci", attached to the association "Fede e Luce" (Faith and Light), was born in 1983 (*) in Rome, with the need to reach out to other parents with the same difficulties, as well as friends, teachers, educators, priests, nuns, therapists, doctors... with the aim of raising awareness and tackling various subjects and questions about the world of disability.

The main aim was to make these parents and children feel that they are not alone, that in the shadows and trials that life throws at them, there is light and that it is possible to establish real friendships; that we are all in the same boat, that it is possible to sail together, each with our own abilities and without prejudice!



(*) Born in Treviso in 1933, Mariangela Bertolini is a teacher and mother of three children, including the severely disabled Maria Francesca (Chicca). She was one of the pioneers of Faith and Light in Italy. She founded and directed Ombre e Luci from 1983 to 2014. Website <https://www.ombreeluci.it>



Festive mass « All that I am is yours »



On Sunday, 25 February 2024, a festive mass was held to announce the recognition of the Saint-Georges community in Deychounieh, whose motto is: "All that I am is yours".

The mass and recognition ceremony were presided over by Bishop Boulos Abdel Sater, parish priest of the Maronite diocese of Beirut, assisted by Father Mansour Ghanem, Father Elie Ghazal and Father Tony Abi Azar, in the presence of community leaders, families and friends, as well as a large crowd of believers.

After a beautiful sign of the cross, the celebrant asked the members if they were ready to commit themselves to this community. After a unanimous "yes", everyone expressed what Faith and Light means to them: *"an ecumenical movement, a way of life, a daily journey. Its spirituality revolves around Jesus who loves us, loves the poor and welcomes our fragility. It's a spirituality of friendship and fellowship »*.

They continued: *"to live out our faith, being a light to the world, as our Lord Jesus Christ commanded; to be witnesses to the changing relationship between the Church, society and the family and to contribute to better integration of our brothers and sisters with an intellectual disability"*.

Then they explained the meaning of the logo: *"A black cloud and a stormy sea give way to a brilliant sun, which conveys comfort and peace, because Jesus is there, asleep, in this boat. A dark cloud and a stormy sea give way to a brilliant sun, which conveys comfort and peace, because Jesus is there, asleep, in that boat"*.

Then, together, they took up an extract from the Faith and Light prayer to renew their commitment: *"Jesus, you have called us to follow you in a Faith and Light community. We want to say 'yes' to you. We want to live a covenant of love in this family that you have given us, to share our sufferings and difficulties, our joys and our hopes. Teach us to follow you along the path of the Gospel. Help us always to stand with Mary at the foot of the cross, close to the crucified of our world. Amen. »*

Finally, the celebrant blessed them: *"May the blessing of the Most Holy Trinity rest upon you and confirm your promise, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the righteous saints, to grant you the graces you need for your commitment. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, glory to him for ever. Amen." ■*

Jean Alkassis,
Provincial coordinator ILA Trinity



Retreat in Ukraine

«I will raise my flag very high ! »



From March 15 to 17, 2024, a retreat took place in Ukraine in the village of Briukhovychy (Lviv region), on the theme «The king lives in my heart and his flag is joy» for people with intellectual disabilities, their parents and friends from 27 Faith and Light communities. In total, this event brought together more than a hundred participants from Kyiv, Ternopil, Zakarpattia, Kamianets Podilskyi and Lviv.



The retreat «I will raise the flag high!» is aimed on the one hand at parents and on the other hand at people with intellectual disabilities and their friends.

«A retreat is a time for introspection, to become aware of everything you have accumulated over time. Reconsider your values, dust off some of them, take some in your arms and be happy that they are in such good condition, plant others and enjoy your garden, water it and maintain it. This is what a retreat is», shared with joy Natalia Syrotych, psychologist and art therapist from Kyiv.

Report in Ukraine

«Retreats are very important for us because they give the opportunity to be together, to share our difficulties and our joys. At a time when there is so much fear, sadness and airborne alarms, we sometimes want to close ourselves off, to go underground... Being together gives courage and strength to get through the trials that we are all experiencing. It is a place to remind us that the Faith and Light movement does not die when war breaks out but that it exists and will always be there», **said Oksana Lipetska, a friend from Lviv.**

Everyone had the opportunity to get to know each other better and build friendships. Natalia Syrotych invited everyone to participate in several particularly interesting games, art therapy sessions and Ukrainian singing evenings. Every day, we thanked and glorified our King through prayer and dance, and through our active participation in the Divine Liturgy, presided over by the provincial chaplain, Fr. Volodymyr Bytiuha.

A friend from **Odessa, Sister Mykolaya Turianska** shared her thoughts with us: *«For me, retreat is a living sign from God. He reveals a new face of His tenderness, His attention, His kindness. His loving face filled me with even more love. I had a wonderful time with a friend with a disability doing these exercises, we were able to look at each other, learn to love each other and just be»*



Our entire lives are imbued with rhythms and vibrations inextricably linked to our activities. Friends with special needs are more sensitive than others to the sounds in their environment. Our physical and mental well-being depends on how we experience these rhythms. That is why Maria Kostyukova offered a wonderful rhythm therapy for friends, during which everyone was able to listen to the rhythms and sounds of various musical instruments, feel the peculiarities of their own body, express their emotions and feelings through song, dance and movement.

«Retreat is above all a cry of the soul to open up and show oneself to the whole world. We pray, we have a varied program and even music lessons. Our friends help us. During this time, parents can also relax and chat together», **Yulia Kurylyak from Lviv, with disabilities,** tells us with emotion.

Report in Ukraine

The first two days of the retreat were led by Father Taras Zheplynsky, chaplain of the «Ascension of Hearts» community. Parents shared their thoughts and experiences, participating in a small sharing group to talk about the situation in their communities. Their meeting with psychologist Natalia Syrotych was very warm and particularly refreshing. They talked about endurance, resilience and learned calming techniques.

«We talked a lot about resilience, which is now the main quality of a Ukrainian that helps us hold on because war is not a sprint for which you have to gather all your strength. War is always a marathon, we must run today, tomorrow to move forward. We must not exhaust our energy from the start. This is the only life we have and we must live it!»

Resilience gives us a lot of strength to hold on, overcome our daily worries, move forward together towards victory and make the choice to run this marathon with our special needs children.

«Resilience is a quality that can only be developed collectively, within a community. To be resilient, you just have to decide to be! It's fantastic! During the retreat, we learned to take care of our resources and our strengths to continue running...», **explains Natalia Syrotych.**

On Sunday, one of our guests Sister Emmanuila Kharyshyn came to meet the parents. She spoke of the community as one body, with our friends with disabilities being

the heart. Each member, whoever they may be, is essential to bring the body of Faith and Light to life.

«The retreat is useful for us parents because we gain a lot of knowledge, we gain perspective on our situation, how to control our emotions, understand others and respond to our children», **said a mother, Magdalyna Keik.**

The retreat ended with a feeling of gratitude and a desire to build an even longer and closer relationship with God in our communities.

We sincerely thank the entire international family of Faith and Light for this opportunity to rejoice, sing, dance, give thanks and praise our Lord in times of war! Because as the psychologist said during the retreat: *«It is not the life that we have chosen, but the only life that we have. And we must live it!»* We lived every moment of the retreat intensely, marveling at the time we spent together in the Faith and Light family.

«The King lives in our hearts, let us be witnesses to him». ■

Olena Perets,
interim coordinator
for the province of Ukraine



Half a century of existence!

The province « Mounts and valleys without borders" celebrates 50 years of Faith and Light



To celebrate 50 years of Faith and Light, the Province of Mounts and Valleys without borders set off on a pilgrimage caravan in November 2022. One community would visit another, which would then take over to go and meet another, enabling us to get to know each other better and to forge links in a spirit of friendship, sharing celebrations, games and happy meals.

The distances separating us, the isolation of the past years due to the pandemic and fatigue sometimes overwhelmed us, but they didn't stop us. One step at a time, we travelled the long road of 18 months, supporting each other, right up to the day on 1er June 2024, when all the communities came together in Saint Maurice in Valais, with the warm presence of Angela Grassi.

That day, there were 170 of us "Messengers of

Hope" gathered around the theme of Noah's Ark. We played with the stages of the year's Guidelines, made animal masks, shared a festive meal and sang. Noah was able to gather his troops... and each community sang a song on the theme of an animal: so the camel, the pig, the wolf, the flea and many other animals invited themselves to our party with masks, fancy dress and dancing!



Report in Switzerland and French Jura



Finally, we celebrated a joyful Eucharist as we listened to the story of Noah's Ark. Then the Gospel of the calmed storm reminded us that we had to row together, not putting Jesus behind us, but letting ourselves be guided by the breath of the Spirit. At the moment of the Sending, everyone sang: "Take me on your boat, I would like to leave with you, Yes Jesus, I'm going on board with you".

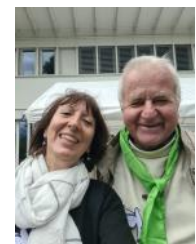
What a wonderful day we spent together, warmed by the love the Lord has shown us through our friends at Faith and Light, and encouraged to continue the journey!

Each of us resumed our journey with renewed hope in our hearts.



We'll leave the last word to a participant who wrote to us: "A huge THANK YOU for having offered us a beautiful day of friendship, of re-encounters, of joy and of celebration and for having reminded us how good it is to love and to know we are loved by our friends from Faith and Light (and by God!). This celebration was a beautiful image of a lively and joyful Church! ■

Provincial coordination
with the team organising the day



Banneux 2024

We could call Banneux the "little Lourdes", a place of devotion to Jesus through Mary that has remained simple, intimate and close to our area. This is the place where Mary appeared to Mariette Beco eight times in 1933. We've been there several times as a community, for meetings, pilgrimages and holiday camps.

This year, all the Faith and Light communities in Belgium were invited to a big weekend of meeting, celebration and prayer, bringing together just over 300 people.

All the activities revolved around the theme of "Zacchaeus"; the songs, mimes, games and teachings were designed to help us understand that despite our faults and our smallness, Jesus seeks us out, calls us and invites himself into our homes. If we make room for him in our hearts, then we become "Zacchaeus".

At the end of the weekend, we had fun bringing this image to life by placing mirrors reflecting



our faces at the bottom of some treasure chests.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the songs sung by the Totem band, the exchanges during the meals, the evening of talents, the moments of prayer and the many workshops organised to suit everyone's tastes. I particularly enjoyed meeting another community. To get to know them, we played the game of recognising each other: we were each given a piece of paper with a first name and three clues, and the aim of the game was to find the person we had identified. A great example of a game to be repeated on another occasion.

Thank you to the support team for giving us the opportunity to deepen our links with other members of Faith and Light and also with Jesus! ■

Christian Delvaux
Copain Partage community
and editor of the "Grand Large" magazine

The Milflores community celebrates its 21 anniversary!



The Milflores community celebrated its 21 anniversary in Los Banos, Laguna, a place known for its natural spas. The site has been used free of charge thanks to the generosity of a member of the community who owns it. The theme of May's guidelines served as a guideline for the celebration.

The members arrived early in the morning and started swimming in the afternoon. They had a meal followed by the celebration, honoured by the presence of Mhadelle, one of the vicecoordinators of the province Colours of Asia and former community coordinator.



Since its creation 21 years ago, this community has inspired several coordinators to take on greater responsibilities at the provincial level. Cloyd, who was one of the first young members of the community, is today coordinator of the province Colours of Asia. At his side today are two vice-provincial coordinators: Mhadelle and Cathy, who were also coordinators of the Milflores community in its early days.

All the friends took part in a dance workshop, while the parents shared their life experiences inspired by the theme of the Gospel: the wedding at Cana. The celebration ended with our most vulnerable friends sharing their thoughts on what they had learnt in the dance workshop.

Then everyone sang the song *Panalangin sa Pagiging Bukas Palad*, which means "Prayer for generosity ».

The evening was followed by singing, dancing, swimming and games.



God has sustained this dynamic community, which continues to inspire other communities in the province and to generate leaders for the international community as a whole. ■

Khing Macaranas
Member of the Milflores community

Easter message from Angela Grassi

A glance, a helping hand, the certainty of not being alone, of being accompanied. This is the message of this reinterpretation of “Christ and the Cyrenian”, painted by Titian Vecelio in 1560.

As part of the “Divine Creatures” exhibition, this vivid painting on display at the Diocesan Museum in Milan features people with intellectual disabilities, their families and carers. A magnificent exhibition that brings famous paintings to life, highlighting people with disabilities, capable of guessing the mystery, expressing with their eyes and expressions what the painters had in their hearts centuries ago.

In this painting, Gabriele portrays Jesus, while his father Angiolino interprets Simon of Cyrene (photograph by Adamo Antonacci, author of the works presented in this exhibition, and which he has allowed me to use in this message).

I have chosen this painting for my Easter message because, over the past few months, my life has been on a rollercoaster, with unexpected joys but also heavy sorrows.

As Tania, says, a young girl with Down's syndrome, in the video accompanying the painting, *«Jesus turns to Simon. Their eyes meet, so when we contemplate this scene, time stops for a few moments.»*

Tania continues: *«The cross should not be carried by Jesus alone, we should be helped. Simon turns to Jesus and whispers, "I'm here". Sometimes parents ask themselves Why they had a child with disabilities? In this exchange of glances, gentleness and love emerge.»* Also, *«Jesus' hand on the stone reminds us of Golgotha, but also the firmness of the soul. The rays of light around Jesus' head represent the presence of God.»*



*Interpretation of "Christ and the Cyrenian"
Titian Vecelio in 1560*

Feeling supported gives me strength and serenity to face new trials. «The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord», says the Bible.

Job is with me during this time. Beyond tiredness, the light of Easter gives courage and hope. Faith and Light offers us opportunities to look to the future with confidence, organizing formation sessions for young people from different countries, and working on numerous other projects.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, He fills us with unexpected graces, He always knows how to surprise us and helps us to grasp beauty, even where we only see suffering.

Let us trust in the sign of his immense love and pray to become daily messengers of peace. If only the world would listen to the most fragile ones, then Love would be victorious. So let us be builders of peace in our homes, in our communities and in our towns. ■

With all my friendship,
Angela Grassi

Letter from Don Marco Bove « The gift of the Holy Spirit »



When we talk about the birth of our Faith and Light communities, we usually say that no one had foreseen it; it was actually the Holy Spirit who inspired its beginning, at the end of the great pilgrimage to Lourdes at Easter 1971.

These days we are living a new Pentecost, remembering the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and Mary, gathered together in Jerusalem, at the beginning of the Church's history.

Every new beginning, when inspired from above, gets the strength to walk in history, provided that it remains faithful to the initial inspiration and listens to the Holy Spirit's constant promptings.

When we celebrated our Jubilee (the first fifty years of Faith and Light) a few years ago, we recognized that the Holy Spirit has never ceased to accompany our journey and that of our communities.

That is why we have tried to respond to His inspirations, asking for the light and courage to remain faithful to our vocation in Faith and Light.

Today we want to express our joy for the gift of our communities and invoke once again the Holy Spirit, so that He may guide and direct our journey, according to God's will and so that we may be witnesses today to God's love for the smallest and the most fragile.

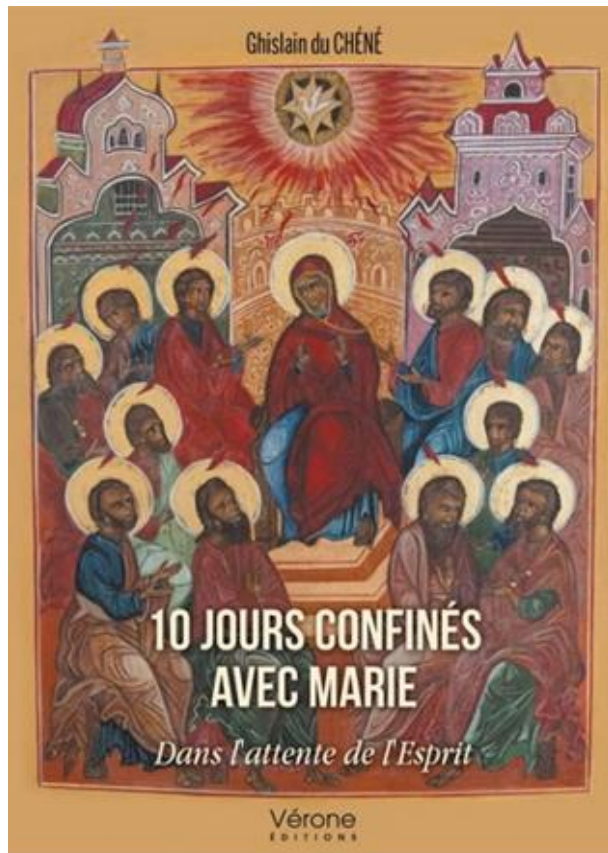
«Send us, Lord, your Holy Spirit, in order that He may enlighten our steps, grant us strength in moments of weariness and fill our hearts with His peace. Amen.»

Don Marco Bove
International Chaplain



For our reflexion, Ghislain du Chéné

10 day retreat with Mary



Since 2018, the Catholic Church has commemorated Mary Mother of the Church on the Monday after Pentecost. This liturgical novelty introduced by Pope Francis underlines the close link between every baptised person, the whole Church and Mary.

The date chosen for this memorial, the day after Pentecost, underlines the importance of the role played by Mary during the 10 days following the Ascension.

During this period, it was Mary's task to watch over the disciples, to prepare them for the coming of the Holy Spirit and to maintain the unity of the community, this little nascent

Church. She who did not speak much - according to the Gospels - had to take on her responsibilities and, with the help of Peter and the apostles, lead these ten days which occupy very little space in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1, 13-26). I found it a bit short, so I started a meditation to try and immerse myself in this atmosphere, and it inspired me to write a book about it.

What have been my sources of inspiration? I can think of at least three: first and foremost, the Holy Spirit, the texts of the Bible that have enabled me to give a foundation and finally Faith and Light, which has led me to go to the ends of the earth.

I have the advantage over the 120 disciples gathered in the Cenacle of having received the sacrament of confirmation and I hope that the Holy Spirit has helped me not to say too many stupid things...

I also think that He helped me to find the right passages of Sacred Scripture to accompany the spiritual times and testimonies during these 10 days.

Faith and Light also helped me a great deal to organise these days as if they had been one big ten day retreat.

I must have dreamt too much about seeing Mary preach one!

Such events include teaching, prayer, sharing in small groups, testimonies, festivities and celebrations (Masses, washing of feet, etc.)

There is also, of course, the election of Mathias, which is a bit like the elections at

Faith and Light : names are put forward, discernment is made and lots are drawn (but at Faith and Light, there is a vote).

There is a rather special character, Lazarus, who has an intellectual disability. Lazarus lived with his sisters Martha and Mary, who had not married in order to look after their brother. Lazarus bears a striking resemblance to my daughter Julie, who has Down's syndrome! Julie is a great girl, who has a very special relationship with Jesus; she prays like few of us do, she finds it very hard to hear the Passion stories that make her cry, and she jumps for joy when Easter arrives! Lazarus (you will have realised that Julie served as my model) always sits next to Mary, who speaks to him quite often. ■



What the book tells us can be summed up in what Mary said to the disciples on the first day:

"What I'm going to say to you during these few days of confinement while You wait for the Holy Spirit is everything I've kept and meditated on in my heart all these years, nothing more.

I don't know - even if I have my own idea - But we're going to use it to the best of our ability to prepare you for this outpouring of the Spirit that you're waiting for so that you can go out on mission and proclaim the good news of Jesus.

I'm only here to remind you of the events and teachings of my son Jesus, to put them back into your hearts so that you can follow in his footsteps. Once that's over, I'll resume my life under John's protection. You will hear no more about me, my mission will be complete. I am only an instrument in the service of the Word, I am not important. I will show you the way to my son, I am only the messenger; my greatest joy will be to see you take the path that leads to him and to his Father in heaven. I'll be at your disposal whenever you need me, and You can always come to me for advice when you're in pain or distress. I'll point you in the same direction as the star that guided the Magi to Bethlehem."

International news

Appointment of two new vice international coordinators

Following the work carried out by the international nomination committee and a proposal by international coordinators Raúl Izquierdo Garcia and Maria Silvia de Jesus Tavares, the Board of Directors approved the appointment of two new vice international coordinators and warmly thanks them for their commitment:



Denisson BARROS VIEIRA (Brazil) succeeds Elvira BRAVO DE GOMERO. He will accompany the provinces of Campo Belo, Hearts of America and the Caribbean, Jesus Light of the Andes, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bridge of Friendship and Reborn.



Vincent BOO (France) succeeds Solange MENAGE. He will accompany 5 French provinces: Centre, Between two seas, « Loire Rhône Auvergne », West, « Rhône Azur ».



Many thanks to the previous vice international coordinators who have invested so much energy and enthusiasm over the years!



Ann Emmott



Amgad Edward



Didier Ovazza



Elvira Bravo de Gomero



Solange Ménage



Urszula Czyrnecka



Valerie Jaques

International news

Great joy! Canada East has a new community!

On this Sunday 21 April 2024, after 6 months of journeying and meetings, the Saint Maron community in Blainville was officially recognised as a member of the Canada East province and of the great international family of Faith and Light; the majority of its members were part of a Faith and Light community in Lebanon. I was very touched by the welcome, the joy, the mutual aid and the faith that radiated from each person. Rita Janian was the initiator of this community and agreed to be interim coordinator for the first year, surrounded by a great coordination team. This new community gives us life and hope, thanks be to God.

Simone Desgroseilliers,
Provincial coordinator, Canada East



Renewal of the Board of Directors of the national association Fede e Luce (Faith and Light Italy)



Pietro Vetro, Mario Ferrini, Angela Grassi (VIC), Claudio Freschi,
Carlo Alberto Borghetti, Luisa Fornasiero, Emi Mammoliti, Marina Galante.



Pietro Vetro, from the province of Kimata, is the new President of the Board.



Thanks to **Angela Gattuli** and **Roberto Bertin**, who have served two terms over the last eight years as President and Vice-President.

The next guidelines in the colours of Africa

When Africa was approached to work on the 2024-2025 guidelines, the news was greeted with considerable enthusiasm...

Coordinated by Marie-France Violette, vice international coordinator for the African and Indian Ocean provinces, the working team is made up of 26 people supported by Jacinta Munro, Coordinator of the Africa Capricorn province.

Putting together this guidelines was a joyous journey through the African countries of the three provinces: Capricorn Africa (South Africa, DR Congo Lubumbashi, Zambia, Zimbabwe), East Africa (Burundi, Kenya, Kivu, Uganda, DR Congo, Rwanda), Our Lady of Africa the Savannah (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Togo).

The exchanges between teams from different denominations in different countries, each with their own culture and language, were a source of immense joy.

This diversity bears witness to the international dimension of Faith and Light. Although the "official" language of an African country may be English, French or Portuguese, the number of indigenous "African" languages that are spoken in a country can be considerable, it has sometimes been necessary to call on the services of translators.

But at Faith and Light, whatever the language, we communicate in the language of friendship, love, tolerance, acceptance, trust and understanding. Our working team drew inspiration from these biblical references:

- **1 Corinthians 12:12-27:** The apostle Paul compares humanity to a single body made up of different members.
- **John 17, 20-26:** Jesus speaks to us of the unity between the Father and the Son. This unity must be the testimony of our belonging to Christ. The presence of God is deeply felt in the life of our communities.

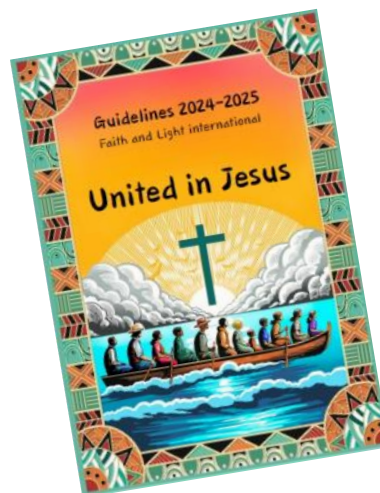
Members are active in their local churches, they are Methodist, Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian or other Christian denominations.

Although there may be differences liturgical services, we recognize the similarities and the fact that Jesus is at the centre of our praise and worship.

Our Faith and Light communities are scattered, sometimes far apart, from

city centres to rural areas. Despite the difficulties, their resilience gives us the strength to remain united with God and each other.

Through this guidelines "United in Jesus", we invite you to feel the rhythm of Africa, that magnificent, colourful continent, which will bring vibrant joy and inspiration to every one of your community gatherings.



Jacinta Munro
Marie-France Violette

International agenda

- Seventh Disability Night in 40 towns in France and the French overseas departments and territories, 15 June
- Annual retreat for communities in Ohio, United States, 21 and 23 June
- Retreat for young people from Faith and Light Ireland, at the Centre Spirituel La Ferme in Trosly, France, 23 to 29 June
- Province of Ireland pilgrimage, Knock, Ireland, 29 June
- Inter-community meeting of the France Rhône Azur province, Gardannes, 30 June
- Retreat of the Irish Province, at the Centre Spirituel La Ferme in Trosly, France, 3 to 7 July
- Meeting and formation session in Georgia for the communities of the province Between the Seas, 17 to 19 July
- « Walking and Praying" hiking retreat, La Ferme Spiritual Centre, Trosly, France, 17 to 21 July
Chaplaincy
- Formation session Province of Saint Mary of Guadalupe, Veracruz, Mexico, 25 to 28 July
- Formation session Province of Africa Capricorn, Kwekwe, Zimbabwe, 26 to 28 July
- Holiday camp for the communities of France Rhône-Azur in Ars, 28 July to 2 August
- Pilgrimage to Lourdes for the communities of Transcarpathia in Ukraine, 9 to 18 August
- Music festival in Helvoirt, Netherlands, 10 August
- Holiday time for Ireland's communities in Lough Lannagh, 19 to 23 August
- Province Beacons of Light Summer Celebration, Leeds, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, 19 to 22 August

International solidarity

Projets to support

- In Georgia, from 17 to 19 July, for 35 communities from 5 countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Georgia and Russia) on the theme "Let us be joyful in hope". Support expected: € 6,000.
- Capricorn Africa Province: formation session from 26 to 28 July in Zimbabwe. Support expected: € 2,600

How the international solidarity was used for ?

- Contribution to the financing of the Feast of Light in two Egyptian provinces: € 1,550
- Support for the organisation of the assembly of the Bridge of Hope province (Brazil): € 645

Would you like to make a donation ?

Online on our secure website
<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/donate>



Family album

Agneta Karlsson

A member of the Floby community in Sweden, Agneta was a dear and faithful friend of the community. She passed away in April this year after a period of illness.

In 2005, she and her family took part in the creation of the community, and she joined the coordinating team. The meetings and people of Faith and Light meant a great deal to Agneta, and her wisdom and warmth were invaluable to Faith and Light.

She considered her son Johannes (who has Down's Syndrome) to be a gift from God and she gave him all her love. Thanks to him, she learned to believe that God holds everything in his hand, that he has a plan for everything, even if things don't always turn out the way we want. Mats, her husband, says: "For me, she showed her love, God's love and the way to the Church in a very special way".



Agneta's funeral took place in the beautiful little Orthodox chapel on the family farm. Almost the entire Faith and Light group was present. Afterwards, everyone gathered to celebrate Agneta's return home to Jesus.

We miss Agneta very much, but we are happy that she is now with Jesus, free of all pain.

Anne-Mette Pleijel Johnsson
Vice provincial coordinator, Sweden



The friends of Faith and Light



The Farm of l'Arche



After an experience of life shared by people with and without intellectual disabilities, l'Arche was founded in 1964 in the village of Trosly-Breuil, in the Oise region. In 1969, L'Arche became international with its first foundation in Canada. Today, the L'Arche communities are part of an international federation that brings together nearly 160 communities in 37 countries around the world, in extremely diverse cultural, religious and socio-economic environments.

La Ferme de l'Arche is a **spiritual centre** open to all, located in the village of Trosly-Breuil. This renovated former Picardy farmhouse offers a setting conducive to meditation and prayer, including a large chapel in the heart of a cloister, an oratory and a library with an interesting collection of books, particularly on theology, philosophy and spirituality.

A place of welcome and rest, La Ferme has 26 rooms spread over several buildings, a communal kitchen, several dining rooms, a conference room and several meeting rooms. The large garden and proximity to the forest of Compiègne are ideal for rejuvenation. Some of the themes addressed during the sessions at La Ferme resonate with the issues facing contemporary society: the

environmental crisis, the refugee crisis, support for victims of abuse, contemplation and silence, interfaith dialogue, personal development, through four types of events:

- Organising and hosting **spiritual retreats and weekends**. Some of these sessions are in English and can be held online.
- Organising and hosting **formation** sessions for members of L'Arche communities around the world.
- **Organising and hosting existing groups** (companies, school groups, etc.), associations, etc.)
- **Individual reception** of people who want to experience a time of silence, reflection, prayer and closeness to L'Arche.

La Ferme of l'Arche is a community of faith, within L'Arche, made up of 14 people, lay people, single or married, with or without disabilities, all committed to serving the mission of L'Arche and sharing a living environment: meals, church services, daily work around the mission of welcoming others, etc. ■

<https://www.lafermedelarche.org/en/home-en/>

<https://www.lafermedelarche.org/en/outside-the-walls/online-retreats/>

Marie-Hélène's letter



The prayer of parents

We love him so much, Lord, but why, why is he like that?

Our hearts are so empty, alas, at the sight of him... What will become of him when we are gone? The world is so ungrateful to these children and we love him so much!

Together, we pray to you Lord, is he not flesh of our flesh! We loved each other, we wanted him, but not like that, Lord, not like that. He was to be our pride and joy...

But you let him be like that. Oh, how difficult it is to believe, to trust, to love! Lord, give us strength.

You, our Father, must understand that parents do not want a child like this. Can he be the way of love that you propose to us? But no, it's not our way! Oh if only we knew the answer.

At least help us, Lord, help us to understand, to keep the faith, to hope, to love. And for his sake, Lord, we ask that he may be happy, that he may be loved and welcomed, that he may come to know you and feel your love. So be it.

*Mieux vaut allumer une lampe
que maudire l'obscurité
(Better to light a lamp than curse the darkness)*
page 95

