

Up Sails !

The international letter of Faith and Light N°62, September 2024



Let us pray for peace





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Annual paper subscription : 20 €

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Editorial

The war

Beloved communities, dear friends of the Faith and Light family, we live in difficult times, when the world is subject to many conflicts that end in war. They often stem from unhealed wounds, greed for money or territory, revenge or need to be above others. In addition, wars unfortunately profit from the sale and trafficking of arms, and most of their consequences are disastrous: they destroy homes and cities, break up families and communities, injure or kill many human beings and, above all, deprive nations and peoples of all hope. The imprint of war remains for a long time in the hearts of those who experience it.

Ultimately, war is the failure of dialogue and empathy, of the vision of the common good and of humanity itself, as God created and dreamt it, made for life and happiness.

Human beings, called to collaborate with creation, end up destroying it, because they are capable of both the most generous gestures, full of love, devotion and service, and the most despicable and wretched actions. War distances us from God's dream for the world, from his will, from the Kingdom.

But let's not think that war only concerns certain countries, because we all go to war from time to time. It is true that Bombs and



Raúl Izquierdo García
International coordinator

bullets can kill, but so can the words of appalling criticism that come out of our mouths, without mercy, just to let off steam or to get back at someone. There are words that also destroy and kill, or at least produce acute pain. Within our communities or families, there can also be situations of war, waged with the weapons of reproach, indifference or bad criticism. We are then no longer able to listen to each other or look each other in the eye, and we no longer see in the other the brother or sister that Jesus asks us to recognise.

That is why today, at the beginning of this editorial, I would like to pray for peace. For peace in the world and for peace in our communities. For those who suffer violence in the form of bombs and shrapnel, and for those who suffer criticism and scorn. Let us pray together for peace, but let us be aware that we can also create or sustain wars. Let us close our eyes and open our hands, asking God to make us peacemakers in every situation. And let us make a special request for the Faith and Light communities who live in the midst of war in so many places around the world. Their suffering and fear are ours too. Let us also ask God for the light to recognise conflicts, the wisdom to understand them, the gift of discernment to know how to make the best decisions and the courage to implement them. And also the gift of joy and friendship, which can resolve many conflicts, sometimes just by looking into each other's eyes.

Greetings to all the communities.
United in Jesus.

Thy will be done

Holiday camp in Puszczykowo



Our camp has given us many wonderful experiences. It was marked by this sentence:

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

This phrase made us reflect on our vocation, which is to reach Heaven, even if we take different routes to get there.

We welcomed Father Waldemar Graczyka, vice-rector of the Poznam seminary, and various seminarians. Each of the meetings was an opportunity for us to have many interesting exchanges, for which we are very grateful. In the evening, we took part in another community service: the washing of feet, where we experienced the humility of Jesus, which considerably strengthened our bonds.

We had a great time admiring our singing and dancing talents. ■

Community Więcborskie Rykotki



Blessed times !

Greetings to all the members of the Faith and Light communities in Capricorn Africa.

Since the beginning of 2024, there was a great deal of activity in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Africa and Zimbabwe. Communication was stepped up and the provincial coordinator, Jacinta Munro, visited as many communities as possible and held various formation sessions in South Africa and Zimbabwe, which generated a lot of enthusiasm. Jacinta was also able to be present in some communities during the elections for community coordinators, where she was able to guiding everyone through the process.

Unfortunately, she was unable to travel to the DRC for logistical reasons, but the good news is that she was able to speak regularly with the Faith and Light coordinators in that country and helped to generate enthusiasm and strengthen links. This led to a time of mini-formation on 25 August 2024, led by Bruno, the provincial vice-coordinator. The communities present experienced a blessed and special time of reflection on the spirit of Faith and Light and on how to grow communities, leaving time for renewal and revitalisation as they looked to the year ahead.

Two other formation sessions also took place recently. On the weekend of 26-28 July 2024, Jacinta travelled to Zimbabwe to run a training session in Gweru. The journey from Cape Town to Johannesburg, then to Bulawayo by plane and the 5-hour drive to Gweru were quite tiring but well worth it.



Community coordinators from Zimbabwe

All the delegates were given various manuals such as the Charter and Constitution, the history of Faith and Light and of course the 2023-2028 priorities, all of which were discussed in detail. During these sessions, we reflected on how the movement began in Zimbabwe, the challenges faced in the country and the individual needs of the communities. It was with great joy that we discerned a new vice provincial coordinator, Lorraine Lunga, who was welcomed into the role for the next four years.

It is interesting to note that Jacinta's return journey was even more trying than the trip to Gweru, as her plane broke down and the journey took 9 hours instead of 2 until she was able to return safely to Cape Town. Similarly, the international vice-coordinator, Marie-France, was due to attend the formation session in Gweru but, due to flight problems, she was unable to arrive on



time. With no choice but to return home to Mauritius, she accompanied the Zimbabwean communities taking part in the formation course in prayer.

On Saturday 14 September 2024, the South African communities met in Johannesburg for their formation session on the theme "United in Jesus", which coincided with the launch of the new guidelines. Between 30 and 40 community representatives attended, along with parents, friends and people with intellectual disabilities of all ages. It was a wonderful time of singing, prayer, reflection, group sharing, dancing, craft ideas, music and gifts to share, as well as deepening our foundations and roots by learning from each other. One of the highlights of the day was the session led by two people with disabilities, who taught us how to use YouTube and WhatsApp to communicate more easily with each other. The day ended with a handwashing ceremony led by Stuart (Lay Preacher of the Methodist Church) and Reverend Cecil Rhodes (Permanent Minister of Edenvale Church), followed by prayer and blessings.

The Province of Africa Capricorn is looking forward to being even more united with Faith and Light throughout the coming year, thanks to the projects underway to grow the movement in the province and in neighbouring countries.

Many thanks to all the communities who were able to play an important role in enabling our formation sessions to take place in our province, where they were

most needed. We remain committed to continuing the work of Faith and Light with even greater commitment, thanks to the opportunities offered by generous donors.

Blessings and much love to all. ■

JACINTA MUNRO,
Provincial coordinator of Capricorn Africa



Report in France

Faith and Light Ireland in Trosly Breuil

Since 2006, Faith and Light Ireland has organised an annual retreat in Trosly, France, for people with disabilities and young friends. The theme of the retreat "Come and See" (John 1:39) is an invitation to experience community life with people with disabilities in beautiful surroundings. Each day there are talks by a member of the Arche community, the Eucharist, sharing groups and plenty of free time where we can simply 'be' together. On the last evening, during the fiesta, people dress up and put on a play, a song or a mime to express what has touched them during their stay. This year, 28 people came to Trosly.

Here are some of their testimonies :

An opportunity to slow down



Kiara, with Mary Catherine and Eanna

In 2024, I experienced my second retreat, having taken part for the first time the previous year. When I finished work on the last day, the sense of peace I felt was wonderful. It's easy to be on holiday mode wherever you go, but the sense of peace that a week at Trosly brings is something more profound.

Our time at Trosly gave me the opportunity to slow down and be with others, to appreciate the little things we can take for granted and to reflect on my faith too. What touches me most is how we have become such good friends. I felt comfortable being myself and accepted as I am. I have had the privilege of being with people from whom I was able to take a lot, because

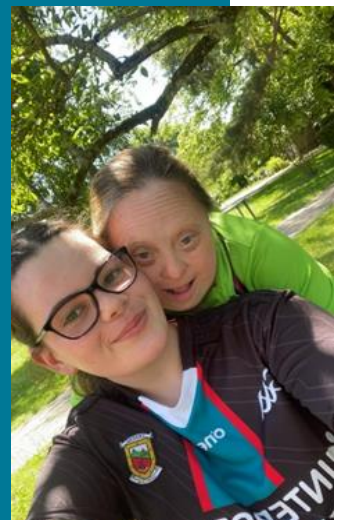
of their life experiences, their attitudes and their faith. The week stayed with me in many ways.

Kiara Mellett,
21 years old , Student-teacher

I will always cherish this time

Before I left, I didn't know what I was waiting for because I had never participated to a retreat, I felt a lot of emotions like excitement, nervousness and joy.

I really enjoyed Declan's daily talk which has called me to stop and reflect on life and who I am. I have little time for this at home due to study and work. Not having distractions such as television has allowed us to connect more with the people around us. It also gave time and opportunity to talk and really get to know each other.



Andrea and Mary Catherine

I particularly remember one of Declan's talks where he talked about the size of our faith and how we all have a seed of faith within us, even if it's the size of a hazelnut, and we can make it grow if we want to.

One of the moments that had the greatest impact on me was meeting Brigid, one of the guests at l'Arche Cork, who has a talent for drawing. She drew a portrait of me and then asked me to come and visit her one day. I'll always treasure that time together. I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity to experience this moment that I'll never forget. It's reassuring to know that I'm going into the right profession as a social worker and I've loved being able to support people who need help. I really hope to come back one day!

Andrea Dunleavy, 21 years old
Social studies student



Andrea with the group from l'Arche Cork along with Brigid Mulcahy on the far left who painted her portrait.

He got up and danced !

It was my first retreat too. I didn't really understand what this place had to offer me, but I was grateful for the experience, invited to Trosly by my parish priest. But afterwards, I felt a sense of happiness and peace. When I came home, I had clearly understood how we could all be



Mairead and Derek

happy in life. Every minute of every day, everyone had a smile on their face.

It didn't matter who we were, where we came from, everyone was just happy to be there. The most touching memory for me was when I played music and one of the person with a disability who didn't speak got up and danced. I knew he was happy. This experience also made me grow in my own faith. It made me realise that God is always with us and that he sometimes shows himself through others.

Mairead Haverty, 21 years old
Student teacher

The most beautiful gift

Trosly is like a second home to me. I come here every year. We've shared so much over the year through musical theatre and dance. The highlight for me is always being with friends. That's the greatest gift of all: sharing our gifts and talents.



Michael and his friends

Every year, we are invited to rediscover this beautiful place, the Trosly farm, to have fun and laugh together. We also have plenty of time to reflect and return to Ireland full of hope and joy. This retreat is the perfect place for me: we come together to see the light that shines in everyone.

Michael Gannon
Poet with Down's syndrome

Gary's smile



Eanna and Gary, ready for the party

Going to L'Arche in France over the last two years has been a formative experience for me. Coming back to Trosly, I knew it was going to be a special month; the highlight was accompanying Gary, a young man with special needs. We had so much fun together! And on the last night we all cheered when the manager offered us Gary's favourite dish, Burger and Chips! Gary had a big smile on his face. He touched us all so much. Now I feel more motivated to continue my studies as a specialist educator.

Eanna Callinan, 20 years old



Would you also like to visit Trosly Farm, alone or in community, for a retreat or a formation session?

Do you have a shedule ? That's great. If you don't have one, the Farm can help you set one up.

Contact :
accueil@lafermedelarche.org

An unforgettable stay in Ipoh

Each year, Faith and Light Malaysia and Singapore organise an outing together.

In 2024, our stay took place in Ipoh, Malaysia. Our project team excelled at budgeting, planning activities and managing transport, meals and shopping around Ipoh. In total, there were 34 participants, including 21 from three communities in Singapore and 13 from Malaysia.

On 11 July 2024, the Singapore members flew to Ipoh, while the Malaysians travelled by train and car. We stayed at the La Salle Centre. We began our stay by playing games to get to know each other, then we took part in the "durian festival". The durian, often nicknamed "the king of fruits" for its imposing size and unique flavour, despite its strong and distinctive smell, is a culinary experience in its own right and a symbol of South-East Asian culture. The durian festival is a huge fair and funfair. It's all about street food (fried food, sweets, colourful drinks and big cakes)...

The next few days were full of interesting activities. After breakfast, we visited the Fantasy House TrickArt, which features incredible 3D magic and illusion tricks. After lunch, we explored various tourist attractions and did some shopping. The afternoons were devoted to games and entertainment, and we ended each day with a prayer vigil and a rosary.



On the final day, Sunday 14 July 2024, as part of our Faith and Light programme, we attended mass at Saint Michael's Church in Ipoh. Afterwards, we had breakfast in a nearby restaurant and said our goodbyes to some Malaysian members who were returning by car and train. With a little time to spare, we visited a shopping centre before packing up and heading home.

As we were leaving, we shared our memories and impressions of the three days and looked forward to meeting again next year. ■

Diana Low
Vice provincial coordinator of Colors of Asia



The Disability awareness Night

On the same day and at the same time in around forty French towns and cities, a major inclusive, joyful and unifying event revealed the talents of people with disabilities to the public, as it does every year. It was yet another opportunity to show that the place of disability is changing for the better in society and in people's minds (photo Michel POURNY).



Created on the model of the Music festival (Fête de la musique), the « Disability Awareness Night » (Nuit du Handicap) is organised every year on the public squares where hundreds of people with disabilities showcase their cultural, artistic and sporting talents... A festive event that's unique in France, free and open to all.

Convinced that **difference is a strength, a richness, and even a driving force for performance in our society**, we want to change the way people, particularly young people, look at disability. And we want to make the most of people with disabilities.

All year round, the Disability Awareness Night works with specialist establishments and sporting and cultural associations to give people with disabilities the chance to showcase their performances, and, since

2018, it has been helping to change the way people look at « disability ».

A few highlights

- Disabled shows: dance, concerts, theatre, sketches...
- Wheelchair courses, white cane courses, cecifoot, dance, adapted sports with the « Fédération Française de Sport Adapté », « Handi Sport », « Handi Danse »...
- Handi'dogs demonstration.
- Escape game to raise awareness of disability.
- Introduction to sign language.
- Discover Braille writing.
- And throughout the day, there are testimonies, refreshments and art exhibitions...
- In the towns that are organising Disability



awareness Night, a team of volunteers, who may or may not be in a vulnerable situation, work throughout the year to prepare for the event.

Participating towns :

Aix-en Provence, Amiens, Anzin, Bailly-Romainvilliers, Bischheim, Boulogne-Billancourt, Buhl, Carmaux, Charleville-Mézières, Compiègne, Dijon, Granville, Issy-les-Moulineaux, Lyon, Marseille, Montivilliers, Montpellier, Munster, Orchies, Orléans, Ouistreham-Riva-Bella, Paris, Pujols, Quimper, Saint-Brieuc, Saubion, Sens, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Verneuil d'Avre et d'Iton, Versailles, Vichy, Vierzon.

And also: Fort-de-France (Martinique) and in Guadeloupe: Bouillante, Gourbeyre, Les Abymes, Trois-Rivières, Morne-A-L'Eau, Saint-Louis (Marie-Galante).■



Next meeting: Saturday 14 June 2025
 nuitduhandicap@gmail.com
<https://nuitduhandicap.fr/>

Joy, friendship and emotion



A community holiday camp (from 5 to 10 August) was held in Central Switzerland, in the homeland of the the country's patron saint, Nicolas de Flüe. The participants came from four communities of the province « Mounts and valleys without borders ». The theme of the week centred on the life of Moses and the liberation of the Hebrew people from their servitude in Egypt. Day by day, we followed the steps of this people under the responsibility of Moses and guided by God.



We sang songs adapted to the theme. One morning was devoted to the artists' workshop, where each participant was able to make a "burning bush" and take it home on Saturday. But we had to find the Sinai and Red Sea mentioned in the Bible story, so Gabrielle organised two outings. We went to the mountain pastures around Melchsee and walked along paths and tracks.

In a charming chapel, chaplain Bernard Schubiger celebrated a mass, the reading of the day was the story of the Transfiguration... The mountain is still present.



We didn't cross the sea on dry land, as we took a boat to Lucerne to visit this town of character, then returned to Bethanien by train and car. On Friday evening, on the esplanade of the Bethanien house, we gave a performance on the life of Moses. Each of the 22 participants played the role of a character, and the performance was punctuated by song and dance.

Then a group of about fifteen people from South Korea joined us. And with them we danced in a circle of Korean origin. They were staying in Bethanien and had come to the place where Saint Nicolas de Flüe lived.

All these people work in the field of disability in Korea. At the end of the evening, each of us was filled with emotion. On Saturday morning, the sending-off Mass was celebrated in the magnificent wooden chapel of our holiday home.

This week of sharing was an opportunity for some wonderful encounters in the city of Lucerne, on the train and in our home. This house inhabited by the Dominican sisters and the Chemin Neuf Community is open to all our differences. Love of neighbour and concern for others are very much in evidence among the nuns, as they are among all the members of the Chemin Neuf Community, and also among the salaried staff.

A big THANK YOU to everyone! ■

Jean-Louis Benoît
Photos : Gabrielle Luchinger



Report in Norway

On holidays together



From 28 June to 1st July, around one hundred people from most of Norway's communities met in Birkeland, in the south of the country, at a Christian school and conference venue.

People with disabilities, their families and friends enjoyed an interesting, fun and varied programme over the four days:

- several mimes of biblical episodes, magnificently staged by the participants,
- various workshops, in which participants were able to put their creative and artistic skills to good use,
- a concert with a Norwegian singer songwriter and artist, an active member of one of our Faith and Light communities,
- a boat trip on the nearby fjord, where we admired the splendid views of the various islands,



- a religious service in the neighbouring church, with the local congregation. Our Faith and Light bishop, Mgr Stein Reinertsen, preached at the service. He then joined us for lunch,
- a wide variety of music, song and dance,
- ... and lots of good food and desserts to share.

In between the various points on the programme, we enjoyed some free time to relax and make friends.

During the camp, we organised a lottery with many interesting prizes. It was a lot of fun for everyone, and rewarding too: the winnings from the lottery were donated to the Solidarity of Faith and Light international and allocated to two projects in Africa.

After lunch on the last day, a group of happy participants left, having enjoyed four days of happiness, rejoicing, well-being, joy, solid biblical teaching, close Christian fellowship and meeting new friends. Many of them expressed the wish to return to a similar camp another year. ■



Mgr Stein Reinertsen
and Britt Dahl

Dag Pagander,
Treasurer of the province Northern Lights

Special report in Georgia

Rejoice in hope !



to pray, to sing, to speak from the heart and to share our life experience within Faith and Light. That's what we did this year, from 17 to 19 July in Georgia, the only one of the five countries in our province that is still accessible. We chose as our theme the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans: "Rejoice in hope" (Romans 12:12), because what we need most at the moment is hope and the joy it brings.

What can we do in the face of war and aggression, the relentless drift away from democracy, when international relations and movements like Faith and Light are repressed? What can be done when all efforts are in vain and the situation only gets worse? When hope seems to be disappearing...

The "Between the seas" Province (Czech Republic, Georgia, Lithuania, Russia and Slovakia) realised that, in order to survive, it was necessary to meet,



We began the meeting with a mime, remembering that Jesus called each of us by name to get into his boat, and that with him we are not afraid of the storm.

We asked asked Tim Buckley (Faith and Light Denver, USA) to talk about hope during a videoconference on Zoom despite the 10-hour time difference: for Tim, it was morning and for us, in the evening.



Special report in Georgia

Maria Cecilia, his wife, had also prepared some group activities to help us understand the subject better.

A Lithuanian mother, Danute, transcribed the phrases from Tim that touched her the most: "Hope will help me to do things in everyday life. Prayer is an act of hope because God will always be there"...



During the sharing groups, we discussed hope, ageing communities, the possibilities and limits of responsibility, how to tell others about Faith and Light and the mission of Faith and Light today. Let's hear more from the participants:

"I experienced such a deep friendship and such a strong sense of belonging to a family that it's hard to put into words. No matter whether we came from different countries or were seeing each other for the first time, the experience of being a family was very



profound. I understood that a community is a living, growing organism, with its own pains and wounds, but that at the same time, if it is open, it heals, it is nourished and grows. I understand that there is hope in pain. And that each of us is important in the community. We and our communities really need meetings like this!

Inga, friend from Lithuania.

"I loved everything about it: the excursion, the sharing group, the mass and the painting on the bag. But the meeting ended too quickly! The mime was interesting, when we all carried Inga". **Justina, friend with disabilities from Lithuania.**



"I'm pleased to have been able to discuss serious questions about the life of our movement and to have had the opportunity to share our joys and concerns. A big thank you to Faith and Light International for supporting us financially. I am truly grateful to be part of this wonderful family! **Tana, a friend from Slovakia.**

"For us, it was the first time, so there were a lot of new emotions. It was great to meet



Special report in Georgia

people from different countries, to feel close to each other in spirit, and to realise that you're not alone in this world. These few days have left us with warm memories and renewed hope. And now I want to hug everyone. **Nadezhda and Misha, mother and son from Russia.**

"The meeting left me with a deep sense of peace. I was encouraged to see that our communities, although small, remain open to Jesus Christ and continue to welcome the poor. It was comforting to talk to representatives of communities in other countries. These personal meetings enable



overcome the divisions and conventions and remind us that we are all children of God".

Pavel, Russian friend, now living in Georgia.

"Throughout the meeting, we felt God's presence close to us.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your hope, for being together, because Faith and Light is a tiny but very real drop of love and hope in a dark and divided world!"
Silvija Knezekyté, Coordinator of Between the Seas Province.



"As a community chaplain, I am delighted to have had the opportunity to take part in this meeting. I hope that the young people from our communities who were not able to come will one day be able to meet up with Faith and Light friends from other countries and have an international experience. It was important to meet up in Georgia and I admired the Russians who made such a tiring train journey... I was invigorated on several occasions by Mitja, who asked people important questions and often made me laugh. I found him to be an excellent Russian teacher!

I was somewhat surprised by the theme of hope. This word was not part of my somewhere inside me, but well hidden. Through the Bible text, the preparation activities, the group sharing and the



Special report in Georgia

conferences, I realised the importance of hope in these times of war and uncertainty. I needed to be reminded that "what we experience today is not the ultimate reality", that "hope is rooted in the promise of love's full embrace" and that it consists of "knowing that God is at work".

In my impatience, I was eager to hear that "without true hope, we cannot be peaceful". Thank you to all the organisers of this event, thank you for all your efforts and thank you for the theme of hope! It is thanks to your hope that the meeting was able to take place. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to visit important places in Georgia. It was a pleasure to meet in a country where Christianity took root so early in human history! **Jindrich, chaplain of two communities in the Czech Republic.**

"In July, my mum and I went to Georgia. It was the most important moment of the



summer. An international meeting was to be held there. People from Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Georgia and Russia came to the meeting. At first, I was really scared because there were so many foreigners and everyone spoke different languages, but a friend of mine who was taking part in the meeting wasn't afraid to get to know people. As time went by, I also got to talk to a lot of people and we talked about everything!

People laughed, joked, discussed their problems and helped each other out with advice. We realised that we were friends. We spoke different languages but there was always someone to help with the translation.

This meeting made me realise how important it is to communicate, because we have a lot in common and we need each other. **Marusia, aged 12, friend from Russia.**

"We had the opportunity to taste Georgian cuisine, learn traditional dances and make a souvenir bag. We prayed together, shared with each other and had some wonderful Masses. In our free time, we walked around the magnificent campus, and the bravest of us were able to swim in the pool. The programme was well organised. Many thanks to our charming interpreter Nina, without whom we would often have been lost. The days went by so quickly that suddenly it was time to say goodbye! It was very emotional, but we hope to see each other again one day.

Miriam, a friend from Slovakia.



Farewell Red river

Jean and Huguette Mallais, who have been coordinators of the Notre-Dame de la Rivière Rouge community in St-Boniface for many years, send us a summary of their last meeting. Together, they celebrated the life of their community, which has borne much fruit... We thank Jean and Huguette and all the members who have given life to this community. We were delighted to have them with us. We wish them all the best for the future. United in Jesus and in Joy.

Simone, Suzanne, Roger, Mireille, Valérie

Good evening Simone,

The last Faith and Light meeting for Our Lady of the Red River community was due to take place in June. For a number of reasons, this event had to be delayed until today.

This afternoon, we welcomed the members of our group to our home for a barbecue. Although the unbearable heat (38°C) meant we couldn't sit outside, we were still able to celebrate inside... We sang, talked about the past, chatted and pointed out that, although the end of our group is a somewhat sad event, we rejoice that the community has been alive and vibrant for several decades and that it has been able to make a difference in Winnipeg's Franco-Manitoban society. We've also said that many people have had the chance to flourish, express themselves and grow within the community. In short, we were all proud to have been part of this small, intimate group.

So it's official: as of 6 p.m. Winnipeg time on Sunday, August 25, 2024, the Our Lady of the Red River community is no more.

Thank you for allowing us to sail with you over the last few years.

Good luck to you all and may the Lord continue to guide you on your journey. ■

Jean and Huguette Mallais

Here is the last group photo



Servant of my neighbour

Alain's testimony at the Sunday Mass on 13 November 2022
Faith and Light Jubilee in Lourdes in 2022

Almost two years ago, the coordinators of the community Saint Martin were planning a pilgrimage to Lourdes. I was asked to help meet the needs of vulnerable people.

After a period of reflection, I finally agreed to put myself at their service despite my doubts, my questions and my discomfort with people with intellectual disabilities.

I prayed a lot to the Lord and the Virgin Mary to help me overcome my fears and anxieties.

On 26 October, the eve of my birthday, I set off, accompanied by my wife Christiane, Lucienne and Claude, for whom I was the referee, and members of the communities of Cherbourg, Valognes, Caen and Sées.

We were going to join 3,500 people from all over France and Belgium.

I realised from the very first evening, during the washing of the feet, that I was becoming a servant of my neighbour.

Throughout those four days, I felt gradually transformed by the testimonies I heard, the songs, the faces shining with happiness, joy and tenderness, the incredible atmosphere of each day.

I saw a young man climbing down the stairs on his bottom to go and sing and celebrate with the others. On many occasions, I couldn't hold back my tears, the emotion was so great. Christiane and I were marked by Claude's profound remembrance of the Chapels of Light. I thank the Lord and the Virgin Mary for opening my eyes and making me see that the real treasure was among us.

I would like to quote the Bishop of Brussels, who told us: **"What I see today is the world upside down and the Gospel right side up"**, and Claire-Marie, a young consecrated woman with Down's syndrome, who was abandoned at birth :

« Blessed be the Lord for creating me! » ■

Alain Roger,
Saint Martin community in
Cherbourg-Octeville

"The Easter crib was created in response to a request from an Italian friend, a pastoral animator at a Cherbourg secondary school. Before this request, we didn't know about this crib; for us there was only the Christmas crib. In the Middle Ages, the Easter crib was a way of depicting scenes from the Gospel for people who didn't have access to the Holy Scriptures or who couldn't read. In Faith and Light communities, this representation helps the hearts of the community to better understand the Holy Week."



Easter crib

“Up sails !” Keep sailing !



When I read "Up sails!", I feel part of the international Faith and Light family. I feel a connection with members of every community in every corner of the world. I am strengthened in my conviction that belonging to a community enriches the lives of families, but also of friends and clergy. Life without community becomes poor and colourless. In community, I deepen and strengthen my faith in God.

What also strengthens me are the articles in "Up sails!", in which I read other people's testimonies and reflections on the fact that Jesus is a light, that he illuminates the darkness of life, that he gives courage and that he gives meaning to life. My life can also be a light for others in the community and those around me.

I was delighted to learn from "Up sails!" that the Faith and Light movement, which exists on every continent, operates in a very similar way everywhere.

Meetings, elections of coordinators, pilgrimages and celebrations are all the same. We share the same concerns and the same joys.

Thanks to "Up sails!" I'm learning all sorts of interesting things. I read, for example, that during the pandemic, the provincial assembly of the communities in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador was held using the Zoom platform. The delegates elected the new provincial council online. I found the theme of the formation session led by Maria Silvia interesting: the community, a source of spiritual growth for each member.

I've noticed that communities from all over the world go on pilgrimage to pray in holy places. For example, communities in the Central American region go to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico (here in Poland, communities also go on pilgrimage, celebrate their jubilees with the Mother of Jesus and, through her intercession, ask for graces for people with disabilities, their families and friends).

The "Le Rocher" community in Belgium dreamed of a beautiful pilgrimage and a celebration of their 40th anniversary, but Covid didn't allow a big party with guests. So they celebrated their anniversary alone, logging on online and reading the greetings and congratulations from friends in different parts of the world. I'm so encouraged by this and it confirms that we love being together, celebrating life and drawing strength from each other. I discovered that Faith and Light is a big family and that the community is a house of prayer, joy and celebration together.

In "Up sails!" I particularly enjoy seeing photos of community life. I see how they celebrate, what games they organise, how they pray, I get to know their churches, their architecture and even the vegetation, when meetings are held outdoors. I'm happy to see people I know in the photos, the founders and some of the former coordinators of the

movement: Marie-Hélène Mathieu, Ghislain du Chéné, Raúl Izquierdo, Corinne Chatain, Maria Silva, Valérie Jaques, Father Isaac Martinez and many others.

The testimonies of friends and relatives help to overcome difficulties, reaffirming the conviction that a child's disability does not prevent them from being a full member of the family and society, that they are worthy of love and that they give that love.

"Up sails!" is a moving reading, when we read the farewells of deceased community members, parents or chaplains. The words of prayer and gratitude for having been together are very beautiful; you can see the enormous value of these people's lives.

I was interested in the different forms of contact between members of the community and between communities. For example: prayers on Zoom, the creation of a YouTube channel to keep in touch, for conversations, to pray the rosary together, etc...

Well done "Up sails! Keep on sailing! You are a source of knowledge, faith, emotion, good examples and practices. You are a link between communities, countries, provinces and continents. You unite and give strength. ■

Zofia Kamińska, Agnieszka's mother
Nazareth Community, Poland



With Jesus at the Olympic Games



Even today, when she has moved to a home for person with disabilities in Villeneuve d'Ascq, she continues to take part in outdoor activities, particularly table tennis, as part of an association open to all. It was in the name of this inclusion, which she has always wanted and defended, that she proudly carried the Olympic flame on 2 July in front of her family and friends. ■

Extract from « Grand large » Newsletter N°38
Faith and Light Belgium

Christine Minot plays table tennis, and is a member of a home for people with different needs at Villeneuve d'Ascq (South of France). For her, her difference has never been a handicap. Her older sister Gaëlle Sebilliau agrees: *"Christine is well aware that there are things she cannot do, but her difference has never been a hindrance, but rather a driving force in her already full life. She fights every day to show that she is capable of being like everyone else, of fitting in and succeeding, and sport is one of her favourite ways of expressing herself."*

Christine is 52 years old and has Down's Syndrome. Living like everyone else, but above all living together, is what her career path reveals, from nursery and primary school to ESAT (Work-based support establishment and service) via IMPro (Medical and vocational institute), each time with active participation in sports associations bringing together students and people with disabilities, and even sharing her workplace for several years while working in a Work assistance centre, her residence with EDHEC students.





For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

Gold medals !

Throughout the summer, we have just witnessed the Olympic Games in Paris, the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad, of the modern era from 26 July to 11 August, followed by the Paralympic Games, officially the XVIIes Paralympic Summer Games, from 28 August to 8 September.

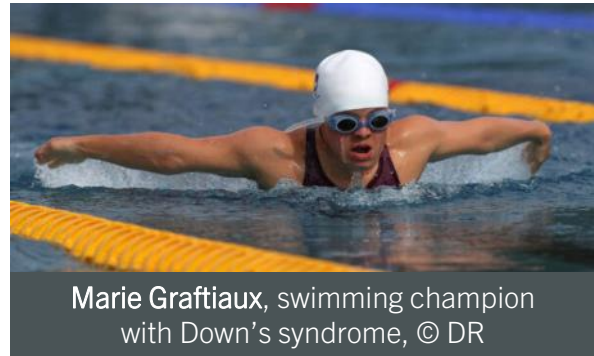
A great deal of effort has been made to ensure that as many spectators as possible are able to attend the various competitions at these Paralympic Games, either on site or on television. I was touched to see that there were as many spectators (if not more, as the price of tickets was lower) in the stadiums as there were for the Olympic Games!

I tried to imagine the work done by the organisers to bring together sportspeople with disabilities who might have the same chances of winning; you can't imagine boxing matches between a blind person and another with no arms... And the result is that, sometimes, you wonder whether you're attending the Paralympic Games or the Olympic Games, because the performances are so far beyond what you could have imagined.

I finally found the real difference between the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games: for the athletes at the Olympic Games, there is life with training to maintain a good level of performance in order to take part in the "sports contest" during the competitions, whereas for the others, the "trials" are something permanent in their lives. I've also noticed that the expression "to win hands down" isn't used at the Paralympic Games...

And then I imagined, seeing no people with disabilities I knew in the various competitions, my own Olympics and I awarded a few gold medals:

- **Gold medal for joy** to all the persons with disabilities in our communities ex-aequo. They show so much joy in their trials and inspire so many people with their



Marie Graftiaux, swimming champion with Down's syndrome, © DR

enthusiasm that we can't help but admire them and seek to be like them, joyful in the face of the beautiful things in life.

- **Gold Medal of Faith** to all the parents ex-aequo. They are always happy to return to the community where they can share their sufferings and difficulties, their joys and their hope.
- **Gold Medal of Light** to all friends ex-aequo. They are always there, quietly, to discover the face of Jesus and his presence in all our brothers and sisters, especially the weakest. This discovery enables them to welcome their own wounds, their own weaknesses, so that God's power can unfold in them. They also have the capacity to reveal to parents the gifts of their children and enable them to develop them.
- **Gold medal for fidelity** to all chaplains ex-aequo. They are witnesses to Jesus for all the members of the community, and they regularly remind us, along with Scripture texts, of everything to do with issues of weakness, such as the words of Jesus: *"Whoever makes himself small like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me."* (Mt 18:4-5).

No silver or bronze medals at Faith and Light, only gold! We can truly make our own the great motto of the Olympic Games: **the important thing is to take part!**



International news

**Welcome
to the new coordinators !**

Capricorn Africa

On 29 July, **Lorraine Lunga** was welcomed into the role of Vice Provincial Coordinator for Zimbabwe for the next four years. **Many thanks!**



East Africa

Blessings and Congratulations to **Immaculée Musanabwina** and **Agnès Hakizimana**, who accepted to take the role of Vice Provincial Coordinators for Rwanda on 19 August.

We would also like to thank **Noah Nsanzumikiza** for his YES in the role of treasurer for the province of East Africa.



May their journey alongside the communities be filled with much love, joy and precious moments. We remain united in Jesus, with all the communities of Africa.

Jacinta Munro and Jeanne Mukamutesa.

“Ile de France Ouest”

We are delighted to announce the election on Saturday 14 September of **Bruno and Florence Magri** (on the left in the photo) as new coordinators of the “Ile de France



Ouest” province. Those who were at the General Assembly in Strasbourg will certainly remember Bruno, who was then Vice Provincial Coordinator.

Bruno and Florence are highly motivated for this new mission, and Caroline and I are delighted and confident to be handing over to them.

Long live to the beautiful province IDFO, and we wish a blessed mission to Florence and Bruno!

Antoine-Marie and Caroline Izoard.

South Poland

On Sunday 29 September, **Arkadiusz Pisarek**, member of the Kubusie community in Krakow was elected coordinator of the “South Poland” province.



Thank you, Arek, for accepting this **great challenge!**

International agenda

- Meeting of the Netherlands coordinating teams on 14 September.
- Formation sessions for communities in 7 Syrian towns between 15 and 30 September.
- Canada East Province Annual General Meeting by videoconference on Wednesday 18 September.
- South Poland Provincial Assembly and election of a new provincial coordinator, in Bielsko-Biała Hałcnów, 27 to 29 September.
- Canada East provincial meeting at St-Donat church in Montreal - September 28
- Ukrainian Provincial Assembly in Bryukhovychi, in the Lviv region, from 11 to 13 October.
- Meeting of the communities of France West in Vannes on 12 and 13 October.
- Annual meeting of the Ohio community, at Hayride Akron, Ohio, USA on 13 October.
- Meeting of the international coordinating team and the Board of Directors in Portugal (Cortegaça), from 1 to 7 November.
- Youth meeting in Brazil (80 participants) from 15 to 17 November.
- Formation session in Cape Town in southern Africa, at St Martins Anglican Church, Bergvliet on 30 November

International Solidarity

Projects to support

- **International youth meeting** for communities in North America, Central and Latin America, from 15 to 17 November 2024 in Brazil. Support expected: €1,000.

Supported projects

- **Meeting and formation organised by the province "Between the seas"** (Georgia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) from 17 to 19 July: €6,000 funded (including €2010 in donations)
- **Formation session in Zimbabwe** from 26 to 28 July: €2,600 funded (including €1,040 in donations received)
- **Formation in Madagascar** (postponed until December 2024): €500 in donations already received for this event.
- **Formation for the young people from Albania, Cyprus, Croatia, Italy and Slovenia** : 550 € funded.

Would you like to make a donation ?

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



Family album

Julienne Tshibwabwa



I am Pierre Mumbu, husband of Mrs Julienne Tshibwabwa, former Vice Coordinator for the Province of East Africa and member of a Faith and Light community since 1995.

I would like to inform you that my wife Julienne is no more! God has called her back to his heavenly kingdom, where she has been resting since 7 June 2024.

On 11 June, we took her to her final resting place in Lubumbashi, accompanied by the prayers of our Faith and Light brothers and sisters who knew Mama Julienne Tshibwabwa.

Professor Pierre Mumbu

Pastor Hans-Martin LAGEMAN

On 8 July 2024, Hans-Martin Lagemann passed away at the age of 84. With him goes a person who always had the person with intellectual disability at heart.

A Protestant deacon, he and a colleague set up a "sheltered workshop" in Ledde, near Tecklenburg (northern Germany). It was 1968, a different era: in rural areas, people with disabilities were sometimes still hidden away

in their homes. Today, the workshop has over 700 jobs and 200 living spaces. In 1986, he and others founded the first L'Arche community in Germany.

In 2008, his retirement enabled him to found the Faith and Light community "Martinsquelle" in Ledde with his wife Dorothea. Since then, he has been a regular participant at national and provincial Faith and Light meetings, often welcoming community coordinators and the provincial council with generosity and kindness.

In 2011, he was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit: he accepted this honour only, as he says: *"...in the name of people with disabilities"*.



The people of Faith and Light in Germany, but also in Luxembourg, Austria and the Netherlands (the former "Heart of Europe" province) are very grateful to him for his committed advice based on his many years of experience and his spiritual guidance in the ecumenical field. Together with his wife Dorothea, he occupies a permanent place in our hearts.

Hubert Bayer-Münch
Community Bamberg, Germany

Father Henk Jozef NIESTEN

Father Henk Niesten has been chaplain to the community "DeZonnestraaltjes" (The Little Rays of Sunshine) in Haarlem since its foundation in 010. From September 2013 to March 2022, he was also national chaplain for Faith and Light in the Netherlands. In this capacity, he faithfully participated in all the meetings of the national council and accompanied us on all our pilgrimages, weekends, provincial meetings and national days. We went together to Lourdes, Banneux, Helvoirt, Heiloo, Weisendorf and Steyl...



He was very popular and very involved in people's lives. He was always cheerful and sometimes did wacky/excentric jumps... With his long legs, which made us all laugh. In the summer, he organised fun excursions for all the members of the community, such as a visit to museum, a shrine or a fellow priest.

Sometimes we would go to 'De Grenspost', where he would show us an interesting film or slide show.

He would also write beautiful songs when there was something to celebrate, such as a special song for our community, 'Little Rays of Sunshine'. With him, we attended funerals and paid tribute to all those who had sadly already left us. The Mass celebrations were always very special; he always had a nice sermon and knew how to captivate the

audience. He also liked to act in mimes, often in the role of Jesus, but he preferred to play the donkey... He always knew how to turn it into something joyful. He stayed involved right to the end, even though he was getting weaker and weaker. We all felt very loved by him. We miss him very much. Dear Father Henk Jozef, rest in peace.

Trudi van Rijt
Community Coordinator
"Little rays of sunshine" in Haarlem, Netherlands

Happy birthday! Marie-Hélène

On Tuesday 2 July, we celebrated Marie Hélène Mathieu's birthday a little early in the OCH Foundation's lounge in Paris, well supported by loyal friends from the « Café Rencontre », the OCH team and Faith and Light.

Some small games question/answers led by Florence Gros gave everyone a chance to have their say before sharing cakes and drinks, in a friendly atmosphere. Marie-Hélène was very touched by the presence of everyone and the affectionate messages written in the Golden book that was given to her. At the end of the afternoon, a thanksgiving mass was celebrated in the chapel by Father Christian Maheas, chaplain of the OCH foundation.



Florence Gros, Marie Hélène and Florent Bénard

The friends of Faith and Light

A BRAS OUVERTS

Founded in 1986, « A Bras Ouverts » (ABO) is a non-profit organisation that brings people together for weekends or short breaks, adults aged 18 to 35 who accompany and young people with disabilities.

The association has a number of aims:

- **For young people :**
allow them to spend time relaxing and celebrating, with friends, outside their usual living environment.
For their families :
allow them to "take a break" for a weekend, by taking a rest or devoting themselves to activities that would not be possible with their child.
- **For accompanying persons :**
enable them to open up to difference, to change the way they look at others by discovering the infinite dignity of every person.
- **For anyone you come across:**
help change the way society in general looks at people with disabilities, and bring them a message of love and hope.

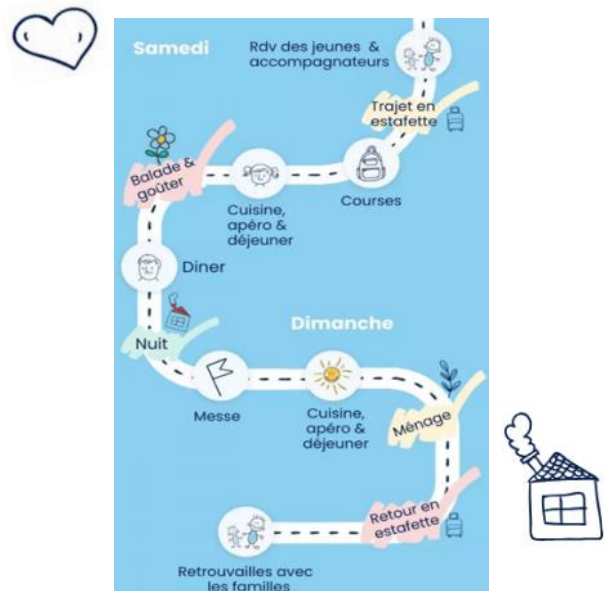
Standard weekend

Weekends are the main activity and the heart of A Bras Ouverts. We leave from 9am on Saturday morning to 6pm on Sunday evening in groups of 3 to 7 pairs, staying in rented houses in the countryside about an hour or two away.

A pair is made up of a young person and a companion who will share the weekend together, taking the time to get to know each other.

Apart from exceptional weekends, such as a festive weekend where the whole group is invited, there are never more than 14 of us on a weekend to preserve a family atmosphere and have time to get to know each person present.

Weekend programme



Lending my home is... Letting me go! The generosity of the homeowners who place their trust in us is one of the driving forces behind the success of ABO, which can now offer activities in warm, lively surroundings. By stepping out of their everyday environment, both the accompanying adults and the young guests have the opportunity to take a fresh look at each other. The spirit of the A Bras Ouverts weekends owes a great deal to these houses, which make us feel exactly like a weekend with friends, on a countryside getaway, cooking together, reading books on the sofa or playing in the garden.

<https://www.abrasouverts.fr/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/a-bras-ouverts/?originalSubdomain=fr>

Marie-Hélène's letter



Bernadette, "good for nothing"

Among the millions of pilgrims who flock at Lourdes, the people with illnesses or disabilities have a special place. Some save penny by penny for these few days that help them to live all year round.

Who did they come to meet? Mary, of course, but also Bernadette, very small, kneeling beside her. Poor to the point of extreme poverty; poor in health; poor in education: if the Virgin had found a poorer child, Bernadette says, "she would have chosen her". Her family was ruined, humiliated and slandered.

On the face of it, Bernadette was not gifted. At the age of thirteen, her former nanny tried to teach her a little catechism and was exasperated by her inability to repeat three words: "You're too stupid. You could never make your First Communion!"

Even after the apparitions, she had difficulty finding her place. At the age of nineteen, she was talking to the Bishop of Nevers about her vocation. Bernadette exclaimed: "But I'm nothing. I'm good for nothing", to which the bishop replied: "You know how to scrape carrots".

When she was accepted into the convent in Nevers, they discovered how fragile she was, how asthmatic she was; she was often bedridden until, as she put it, she was "working full time as a sick person".

One day he was asked to speak in front of the community: "I can't speak. I'm a stone. What

would you get out of a stone? Later, when she was ill, she repeated the same expression: "Always in the nurse's office, always good for nothing".

But she knew how to love. Her heart knew how to listen. The human misery she discovered in herself prepared her to be a vessel of clay to receive Jesus, without putting up any obstacles. The important thing, in the end, is not so much that the Virgin Mary appeared, but that Bernadette, in her weakness, taught us to seek, first and foremost, the kingdom of God.

Faith and Light was born in Lourdes with little Bernadette. We went there for the first time with children, teenagers and adults who were unable to learn the catechism and many of whom would have found it very difficult to scrape their carrots. Some didn't speak, couldn't walk, sometimes even seemed to have no relationship with the people around them. But like Bernadette, they were capable of a profound union with God, because "God hides himself from the powerful and reveals himself to the humble."

At Lourdes, the "good for nothing" are the first to come. People come from all over the world to learn from them: "God sends the rich away empty-handed; he fills the hungry with good things".

Dieu m'aime comme je suis
"God loves me as I am", page 161