

Up Sails !

The international letter of Faith and Light N 63, December 2024



Christmas 2024



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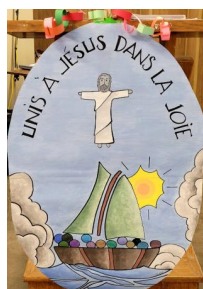
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Merry Christmas!



Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
International coordinator

Merry Christmas!

Not the big neon lights in the streets and department stores, which blind and dull the senses. But that of the little candle lit in the middle of this cot, which reminds us that God really is in the middle of our nights.

Merry Christmas!

Not in the big, excessive gifts, but in the small details of each day, and in giving generously of myself, my time and my life.

Merry Christmas!

Not the pomp and circumstance, the television advertisements and gigantic posters, but the Angel's announcement to the shepherds, which gave them real inner joy, so that they left what they were doing to set out in search of the child who had just been born.

Merry Christmas!

Not that of the powerful and self-confident, who support their throne with money, violence and lies, but that of the Magi from the East, who trusted in the light of a star and placed their trust in God rather than in their own wisdom.

Merry Christmas!

Not of meals and dinners full of everything and empty of what's important, not of ostentation and luxury, but of sharing what we have and a table full of hugs and listening, forgiveness and gratitude.

Merry Christmas!

To all the men and women who are looking for Jesus at this time and every day of their lives.

To all the Faith and Light communities in the world, may you celebrate a true Christmas, with your eyes, hands and heart wide open. God loves us so much that one day he went down in history, just like us. Can there be any greater joy?

Merry Christmas, united in Jesus!



If we dared!

And what if the Province of “Paris and Le Levant” came to Lisieux for a weekend of meetings and reunions, adventure, discovery, laughter, sharing and prayer under the gaze of Saint Theresa?

But the coaches will all be taken by the Olympic Games; people are on holiday on 6 July; the weather is not good... It's a lot of organisation...

But what if we DARED? If we entrusted EVERYTHING to Saint Theresa ?

The challenge was met! It was a great pleasure for 213 friends to visit Lisieux. Guided tours of Les Buissonnets (Saint Theresa's childhood home), the cathedral and the Carmelite convent were on offer. A flower workshop gave us the opportunity to offer our intentions in bouquets to the intercession of Saint Theresa.

We shared a vigil in two parts: the first was festive and light-hearted; the second contemplative, profound and moving during the washing of the feet. The next day, we visited the Basilica. During the mass celebrated there, we took part in the procession of offerings.

The warm welcome from the Hermitage nuns was a major factor in the success of the weekend, and we would like to thank them for their support. Many thanks.

Our weekend favourites:

- *"I'd been to Lisieux before, but I hadn't grasped the message of Saint Theresa, I've discovered her, thank you".*
- *"Oh, I didn't know you, it was so nice to have this weekend together."*
- *"But why didn't we leave on Friday? We would have had longer!"*
- *"What a team effort!"*



"For once, the five-minute delay announced by SNCF will allow Faith and Light to settle in quietly".

Everyone went home happy and enriched with friendship and stars in their eyes, while singing and dancing Catherine Luquin's "La petite voix". And what if we were to do it again soon in Nevers? ■

Provincial team of Paris and the Levant.

The “little way” of Saint Theresa

Our participation in the mission congress of the diocese of Caen in Lisieux on 28 September 2024



A mission conference has been announced in our diocese. We are convinced that the life of "the Petite Voie", our Faith and Light community, founded in 1990 and the only one of its kind in the diocese, needs to be publicised. So we're signing up to run a stall on the afternoon of the event.

The stand featured a large-format illustrated history of Faith and Light, our banner, leaflets, guidelines, 'Up sails' (the quarterly newsletter of Faith and Light International), Ombres et Lumière (the magazine of the OCH Foundation), an information sheet on how the 'Petite Voie' works, and origami hearts for visitors to make their own.

Surprise! Surprise, surprise! At lunchtime, our stand became a banquet table! Welcoming life as it happens can be a bit overwhelming, but at Faith and Light it's



essential! Everyone enjoyed themselves and we put everything back with a happy heart!

Report from France

People were passing by quietly, looking at the signs and leaflets. Some were emboldened, others were happy to find the "Faith and Light" they've heard about... *A simple welcome can arouse interest and a desire to go further.*

People with disabilities, with their boundless enthusiasm, are the ones who linger most naturally. Some of the parents calmed their enthusiasm by bringing them back to reality: the diocese is huge and only has one Faith and Light community, which is in Caen... Two nuns expressed their astonishment: "There's nothing in Lisieux? In Pont L'Evêque? Were they expressing regret or a budding interest? Sister Sophie, interested, took a leaflet with her and some information about our community. A friend from l'Arche discovered our existence and promised to join us when her health permitted. A young man looking for a community agreed to talk to a brother from Mondaye Abbey.

The fruits remain hidden... However, since that day, we have seen signs:

- At our next meeting a month later, our chaplain was accompanied by a mother and her little boy from the town of Vire, 60 kilometres from here.
- At Ste Thérèse church in Caen, where we go regularly for our meetings, the parish team asked us to do a "report" on Faith and Light for their bulletin.

This wonderful day ended with a solemn Mass in the Basilica of Lisieux celebrated

by our bishop, Mgr Jacques Habert, and a large number of priests to mark the commissioning of the 15 new parishes in the diocese.

Of course, we are well aware that we are only a small drop in the life of the diocese, but it would be such a shame if it were to evaporate; some might suffer, or even die of thirst...

But this mission congress is taking place in Lisieux at the home of Saint Theresa, so you can be confident!



All united in the service of the Mission. ■

() The Mission Congress brings together thousands of Christians once a year to reflect on the ever-changing question : "How can we offer the Gospel to today's society?"*

Everyone is invited to take part in workshops, conferences, round tables, daily masses, concerts, shows, a village of stalls and refreshment stands, and to share their faith...

<https://congresmission.com/>

Birth of a community: A shared desire of belonging

23 November 2024. An initial gathering was held in Barangay Katipunan in the chapel of Our Lady of Fatima with members of the local parish, to explore the possibility of starting a Faith and Light community.



This first meeting took place in a warm atmosphere, with families, volunteers and supporters all eager to find out more about Faith and Light. We introduced the movement by reminding everyone that "Faith and Light believes that every person's life is unique and sacred. Even the most destitute is called to be a source of joy and peace in the Churches and in the world. The communities want to bear witness to God's tenderness for them and their families".

With a shared enthusiasm, the group wanted to create a community to support each other. This is not only a joyous occasion to get together, but also an opportunity to honour the visionary efforts of Sister Leila Abou Rjeily, a nun from the Congregation of the Holy Family. Her dedication to Faith and Light is at the root of this gathering. Her efforts to form new communities have enabled many families affected by their child's disability to find a place where they would be welcomed, valued and loved unconditionally.

Convinced that the community can change lives, Sister Leila has been able to motivate a

number of people to join this new group. Here are a few testimonials from the participants:

"It's wonderful to see so many open hearts coming together".

"We felt an immediate connection with everyone, as if we were already part of something bigger."

"The kindness and enthusiasm we have experienced today is inspiring. This could be the start of something really special for our community," said Mama Ging Quintos, who agreed to become the correspondent.

The high point of the day was a time of prayer, during which everyone was able to ask for blessings for the future. Future meetings are already planned, to help the community discern its path and forge new relationships.

With faith as its anchor and light as its guide, the fledgling community is looking forward to making its vision a reality over the coming months! ■

Cloyd Villegas,
Coordinator of the province Colors of Asia

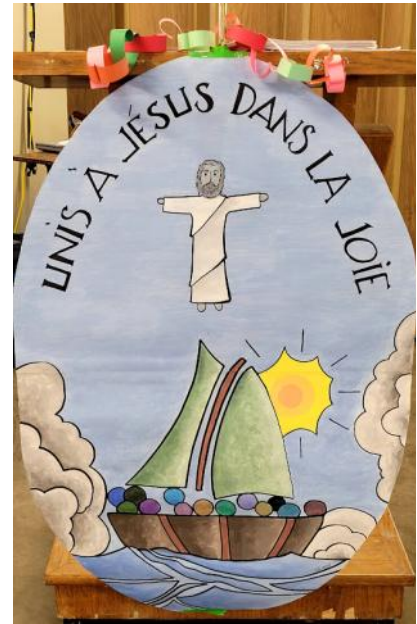
Joyfully united in Jesus

Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

What a wonderful Provincial Meeting we had... Around 80 people gathered in Montreal to celebrate together on the theme: "Joyfully united in Jesus".

In the basement of St-Donat church in Montreal, a great team arrived early in the morning to set up the room and prepare to welcome the participants. Many thanks to each and every one of them! We had a very festive one-day provincial meeting, with a large number of communities taking part. From the moment they arrived, the joy of the reunion mingled with the

joy of meeting new people. A word of welcome, thanks from Simone, a prayer and a blessing from Abbé Pierre Desroches, and the meeting was off to a good start. Yolande explained the significance of her beautiful image of Jesus, who welcomes us all, above the Faith and Light boat. Then each person introduced themselves in turn. Then the community "l'Étoile" (the Star) sang



songs and suggested humorous sketches. We had a lot of laughs. We were delighted to welcome the new Lebanese community of Saint Maroun. We offered them our support and our prayers, aware of the trials that Lebanon is currently going through.



The Saint Maroun community

We then listened to the word from Abbé Pierre Desroches, who prepared us for the group sharing session: *“United in joy in Jesus, what does this mean for me, in my life and as a member of Faith and Light?”*

To conclude the small groups, Mireille read message from Raúl, international coordinator, which at the beginning of the guidelines. He calls for unity despite our differences.

Then we prayed in four languages: Father, make us one.

The meal was an opportunity to talk to each other, and the atmosphere was always a joyful one! Loulou, our expert member in memory, took care of celebrating all the birthday guests. Everyone took part in the games organised by the “Star” community. We had a great time. Singing and dancing are always part of the celebration.

Emilia and Andrew, vice international coordinators, gave us an update on the meeting of the international coordinating team and the Board of Directors, which took place in Portugal at the beginning of November.

When Roger, Euclid and Paul finally arrived, we were able to make the heart



Andrew and Emilia



garland suggested in the guidelines. Each person was given a trip of paper to form a heart, which we joined together!

Roger explained to us the symbol of the garland: all the hearts united together, including those of the absent communities, are united in Jesus in prayer and symbolise Faith and Light. Once we'd enjoyed a hearty dessert, we exchanged words of thanks, and then headed to the church chapel for mass.

A big thank you to Sylvain, Sylvie and Mireille for the

musical entertainment, the parishioners were delighted by our presence. And so ended our provincial meeting...

Let's give thanks! The joy, fellowship and simplicity that persons with disabilities (Heart persons) bring us are a great treasure. They are prophets...

Many thanks once again to everyone for your presence, your participation and the services you have provided. Let's continue to move forward together, united in Jesus and in joy... ■

Simone, Suzanne, Roger,



To our brothers and sisters from Lebanon

إلى إخواننا وأخواتنا في لبنان

These days, many of us are following the news from Lebanon because we have friends and family there, like you, dear brothers and sisters of the Faith and Light communities. I can imagine your fear and insecurity, your frustration and anger, but I also know you and your courage. One of the most important symbols of your country is the cedar, which already appears in biblical narratives and symbolises strength, spiritual greatness, dignity and courage. You are like that, but there are events that shake even the values of a historic tree like the cedar.

Faith is like clinging to a solid rock. God is unchanging and is always with those who call him, even when they do not feel His presence. His Spirit is sent in times of great need, in the midst of the greatest difficulties. For nothing and no one can separate you from the love of God, dear brothers and sisters of Lebanon, not pain, not sin, not even death. Indeed, God puts his eyes and his heart of a merciful father and mother on his sons and daughters who suffer the most, who need him the most, as a good father or a good mother would do.

I pray for you and with you. War and violence, however powerful, are not stronger than God's love for his people. May hatred not fuel your existence, nor the desire for revenge, but may the profound joy of being loved be above all else. Your Faith and Light communities are beacons, offering precious and clear landmarks in the middle of the storm.

Just over 6 years ago, I was elected international coordinator in Lebanon, and since that General Assembly, Lebanon has always been in my heart, in my thoughts and in my memory. The great international family of Faith and Light entrusted me with the mission of serving it as coordinator. I accepted this responsibility because I trust in the One who called me and I know that His Spirit is there to rekindle the heart when it weakens, to bring joy when sadness invades the soul, or to give peace even in the midst of conflict. That is what I ask for you and your people at this time. And I unite my prayer with that of so many communities and places that are also facing situations of war and uncertainty.

May God be your certitude.
United in Jesus.

Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
International coordinator of Faith and Light



إيمان ونور فرحي بلونة - Community "My joy", Ballouneh

He holds Ukraine in his hand



My name is Olha, I'm a member of the Vesnyanka community in Kiev and I'm visiting Great Britain.

Ann Emmott asked me to share with you what I experienced with my son Lubomyr last August during the summer celebration of the Lighthouse of Light province in England. It was fabulous. Everything was perfect. The trip went very smoothly, with train tickets sent in advance.

Dear Brother Bob met us at the station. Ann made us a hot chocolate as she welcomed us to Hinsley. And during the celebration, the spirit of Faith and Light was very much in evidence: "A world where every

neighbour is a friend."

Our new friends were very kind, ready to help us in any way they could, curious to learn about Ukraine, our country, our community and ourselves.

It was very moving to see Ukrainian flags (at the end, they even gave us one). The theme was "He holds the whole world in his hand" and "He holds Ukraine in his hand" was added to the original version. One of the symbols was a paper palm. We had to write our intentions on it. I was very happy to read on one of them words of welcome in Ukrainian and I regret not taking it back with me at the end.

In Ukraine, we each have our own songbook; here I liked the idea of projecting the lyrics on the screen and there were lists of songs prepared in advance (by a very dedicated person, Jeremy).

I regret not participating in the 'necklaces' workshop today, because the necklaces and bracelets we received as gifts reminded us of the skilful fingers and kind hearts that made them. A drum concert was organised, which is very unusual. Faith and Light has talents, and I've already told my friends in Kiev about the performance at the celebration. I really enjoyed the Irish prayer. What a great idea, paper photos to remember the event!



Everything has been so carefully planned.

I'm particularly grateful and if we are in Britain next year, we would be happy to take part in this meeting again. The only thing we regret is the short duration of the celebration. ■

May our faith light up the world!
Sincerely,

Olha and Lubomyr

Olha and Lubomyr also give a poignant account in this video produced by l'Arche: "Finding belonging in the midst of war : Olha's story."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLH3gS3Fo_g



Messengers of God

It all began with a warm and joyful welcome to the Faith and Light community “Our Lady of Deliverance” in Bickfaya.



It was the start of a wonderful adventure. Every week for the last 28 years, I've come to draw my joy from the inexhaustible source of this community. Faith and Light is a place where I have grown in love and patience, and where I have learned the meaning of service. In this community, everyone feels free to be themselves and is loved as they are. At the beginning, like most people, I came to 'do good'.

Gradually, I've come to realise that it's the most fragile people who do me good and who have helped me to overcome my fears and hang-ups.

People with disabilities are God's messengers who help us to discover our hearts.

Sharing joy, friendship and faith, that's what Faith and Light is all about! ■

Asma Bou Raad
Our Lady of Deliverance of Bikfaya, Lebanon

In the heart of God

Last year, Michel and Christine Tillé, coordinators of the France Centre province, organised an inter-community weekend retreat in four sectors of their province, entitled "Let's enter into the heart of God", to discover or rediscover that God loves each and every one of us, just as we are.

Here are a few testimonies from participants:



We were delighted to spend a weekend at the "Étoile de la Mer" house in the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel from 19 to 21 April 2024. These few days were offered to the three communities from the regions of La Manche and Mayenne: 'Les Messagers de la joie' and 'Laëtitia', of which we are members. A warm welcome in the beautiful buildings of this house run by the Chemin Neuf, with a view of Mont Saint-Michel.

- Lots of very joyful singing!
- The provincial vice-coordinators came up with some very clever and funny mimes, moving from a negative attitude (sin) to a positive attitude, turned towards others, thanks to God's love.
- Small groups mixed between communities, but where we were placed in pairs: a person 'at the heart of the community' and a companion to make it reassuring. We received a beautiful educational booklet that we could decorate and take home with us.
- Key phrases, mimed, to take us on a journey throughout the weekend: God

loves you - Sin prevents you from welcoming God - Jesus takes away the sin, he is the way, the truth and the life - He helps us to change our lives - With the Holy Spirit, as a community, let's proclaim the Gospel!

- Great encounters with other young people, parents and friends.
- The games were great fun and gave us some ideas for future meetings.
- A beautiful evening with superb decor helped us to enter into the intimacy of God's love and prayer.

It was a great joy for us, as parents, to be able to experience a nourishing, joyful and festive retreat, with our very happy daughter too, and with all our friends from Faith and Light. And the joy of sharing with other communities.

A big thank you to all the organisers! And thank you Lord! God's love is so wonderful! ❤️

Alex and Soizick,
Community Laëtitia (from Laval)



“I enjoyed the whole weekend. I thought it was wonderful to get together and discover other Faith and Light communities. The theme of the Heart of God really spoke to me. When we talk about the Heart of God, we're also talking about everyday life. We're all in the Heart of God to some extent when we live in community. When you're in the dark, you move away from the Heart of God, but when you're in the light, that's faith.” ❤️

Caroline,
La Rebellerie, Lys Haut Layon

“I took part in the "Heart of God" weekend in May 2024 at Melleray Abbey with my two daughters Thérèse and Myriam.

I appreciated the teaching methods and the meaningful resources (songs with gestures, short instructions, colours, decorations, objects, etc.) which enabled us to experience this message of salvation in a very simple way. I really felt touched. I really enjoyed the Saturday evening vigil, where we felt God's love for us. It was one of the highlights of Faith and Light, and I came away feeling light, nourished and fulfilled.

I'll keep in mind this song, sung by two people, which we took up again in community afterwards: *May the Lord bless you today, and help you by giving you a friend. Through him, his love will flow. In him, Jesus will embrace you.*» ❤️

Blandine,
Angel and Lights, from Angers





For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

A beautiful gift?



Illustrator: Feodor Rojankovsky ©Flammarion

I have long remembered a children's book in which the hero, a little bear called Mishka, was hired by Santa Claus to help him distribute presents. But when he gets to the last house, he realises that his bag is empty.

After a moment's thought, he doesn't hesitate for a second.

He will be the present, so he settles into the shoe positioned in front of the tree, and waits to see the surprise of the child for whom this beautiful present is intended.

Do we realise that we ourselves can be gifts to others? When we go to great lengths to ensure that our community meeting is beautiful and successful, that a pilgrimage or a formation session is a wonderful event, that our testimony about the value of our friends or children with a disability in our parish is heard. Perhaps we say to ourselves: we are mere servants: we have only done our duty (Lk17:10)? Of course, but even if we do it out of duty, we must also realise that we receive much more than we give, even if, as Saint Paul says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Because in the end, we receive far more than we give: thirty, sixty, a hundred, for one. (cf. Mk4, 20). To go one step further, could we say that all

those with whom we have committed ourselves as friends in our community are gifts to us? Yes, if we really think about what we are saying when we recite the Faith and Light prayer:

"Teach us to find you in all our brothers and sisters especially in those who are the weakest."

This is undoubtedly much harder for parents to say, especially young parents. I remember going through all the stages from shock to acceptance, and it took at least as long for me to come to see my daughter Julie as a gift... and to discover that her heart was ready to give so much love.

Even if the packaging may seem a little crumpled, the heart of this gift remains intact and ready to give far more love than

we can give on our own. The most important thing is to stay close to them, not to try to avoid them, not to want to change lanes when we meet them. And then, little by little, as we discover each other, our encounters will be illuminated. So the best gift we can receive with as much joy as that of the child who

discovered the little bear in his shoe, is to give thanks to God for the gift he has given us by giving us his Son Jesus Christ, who gave us our children as models:

Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
(Mt 18, 4).

Merry Christmas to you all!



International news

300 Faith and Light members will participate in the 2025 Rome Jubilee!

● The 2025 Rome Jubilee: an event of Faith and Communion

The 2025 Rome Jubilee, announced by Pope Francis, promises to be one of the most significant events for the Catholic Church and the faithful around the world. This event, celebrated every 25 years, is a holy year marked by pilgrimages, liturgical celebrations, prayers and works of charity. The 2025 Jubilee promises to be a time of spiritual renewal and profound communion for believers.

● Theme : "Pilgrims of hope"

This theme of the 2025 Jubilee resonates particularly well in a world facing numerous challenges, conflicts and environmental crises. Pope Francis invites the faithful to be bearers of hope, to become actively involved in building a world of greater justice and solidarity.

● Opening of the Holy Door

In Rome, the start of the 2025 Jubilee Year will be marked on 24 December 2024 by the Pope's opening of the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica, which symbolises the passage from sin to grace for every Christian. The main pilgrimage sites will be Rome's four major basilicas: Saint Peter's, Saint John Lateran, Saint Paul Outside the Walls and Saint Mary Major. Pilgrims will be able to cross their Holy Door.

● A call to conversion and reconciliation

The Jubilee is a time when the Church puts a special emphasis on its mission. particular emphasis on conversion, reconciliation and penance. It is a time to



reflect on God's mercy and to seek to draw closer to him.

● Canonisations of Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati

On Sunday 24 November, Pope Francis revealed that Carlo Acutis (1991-2006), who died at the age of 15, will be canonised at the conclusion of the Jubilee of Adolescents on 27 April. Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901 -1925), who passed away aged 24, will become a saint on the last day of the Youth Jubilee, 3 August.

● Faith and Light at the Heart of Hope April 28 and 29, 2025 will be two days especially dedicated to people with disabilities.

Around 300 members of Faith and Light from various countries are planning to travel to Rome, looking forward to coming together to take part in this exceptional event.

The chosen theme, "Pilgrims of Hope", has a particular resonance for Faith and Light, which has been working since its beginnings to bring hope and light to the most vulnerable.

International news



Faith and Light programme:

- **On Monday 28 April**, crossing of the Holy Door, followed by mass at 5pm. A mime of the Gospel will be presented by Faith and Light Italy at Saint Peter's Basilica.

- **Tuesday 29 April**, meeting with Pope Francis.

Party and stand in the gardens of Sant Angelo Castle, an opportunity to promote Faith and Light. L'Arche will be organising the party with the music group.

- **Wednesday 30 April**, Meeting at 10am at San Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini: prayers, songs and shared lunch.

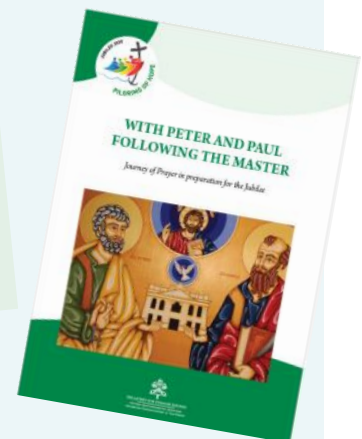
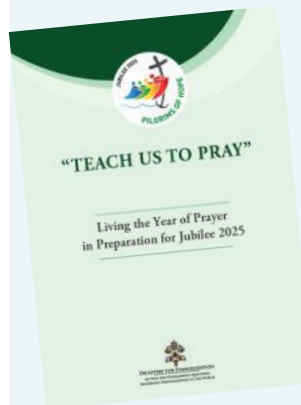
We firmly believe that this high point is an exceptional opportunity for everyone (children, teenagers, adults with an intellectual disability, their families and friends) to have a profound spiritual experience, to feel fully integrated into the great family of the Church and to bear witness to the richness of each person with a disability.

Our communities embody this hope through their commitment to a more inclusive and fraternal society. The Jubilee will be an opportunity to strengthen our ties, share our experiences and draw new energy from our faith.

● Invitation to participate

We invite all Faith and Light communities to prepare themselves spiritually for this great event. Whether you are in Europe, Africa, America, Asia or Oceania, this Jubilee is a unique opportunity to live hope together and to bear witness to God's love for all.

We are called to live this Holy Year as one big family united in diversity and faith. A year of solidarity and hope for Christians throughout the world, who will be invited to work together for a better future.



For more information, please visit the Vatican website

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/fr.html>

The "Teach us to pray" booklet can be downloaded in 8 languages from the website: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/notizie/comunicati/2024/insegnaci-a-prepare-disponibile-sussidio.html>

The prayer booklet in preparation for the Jubilee of **Priests** can be downloaded in 5 languages: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/fr/notizie/comunicati/2024/disponibili-sussidi-preghiera-preparazione-giubileo-sacerdotii.html>

International news

A new provincial team in Ukraine

Congratulations to Marjanka Mikityuk, elected provincial coordinator on 12 October 2024, and her team of vice-provincial coordinators:

- Volodya Sokolovsky - "Ternocvit" region
- Ivanka Saliga - "East" region
- Svetlana Haro - "West" region
- Irinka Biletska - "Colours" region
- Hannusya Danilishin - "Vodogray" region
- Michael Kostyuk - "Dawn" region
- Sofiyka Chopan - "Zorepad" region

May the Lord bless you and guide you over the next four years!

A big thank you to **Oksana Lipetska** and **Olena Perets**, who successively accompanied Ukraine between 2020 and 2024.



Eva and Istvan Komor

Two new coordinators for the province of Danube

Eva and Istvan Komor were elected Danube Provincial Coordinators (Hungary, Romania, Serbia) on 26 October 2024.

We would like to express our gratitude to **Zsófia Wilde-Csany** for her 4 years of service to the province between 2020 and 2024.

Péter Gulyas and his wife **Szilvi** have renewed their mandates as vice provincial coordinators, accompanying the communities in Hungary.

Two new vice provincial coordinators in Madagascar

Following the discernment that took place at the beginning of December, Perline and Justine have been called to lead the boats in the two regions of Madagascar for four years. We give thanks for their YES and their commitment. We pray that the Lord will accompany them and guide them through this new mission.

Jocelyne Quinot
Coordinator of the Rainbow province





International news

Meeting of the international coordinating team and of the Board of Directors from 1 to 7 November in Portugal, at Cortegaça (south of Porto).

The participants :

- **International Coordinating Team (ICT) accompanying the 51 provinces of Faith and Light:**

Raúl Izquierdo Garcia, Maria-Silvia de Jesus Tavares, Angela Grassi, Souleiman Kassouha, Denisson Barros Vieira, Andrew Dean et Emilia Quintana, Helena Escribano, Adeline Khu, Endre Csany, Karin et Michael Liliequist, Vincent Boo, Antoine-Marie Izoard, Marie-France Violette, Don Marco Bove.

Apologies: Seongmi Kwak.

To find out which provinces and countries are accompanied by the vice-coordinators international (VIC):

<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/about-us/international-coordinating-team>



- **Board of Directors (BOD)**

Antonio Donega Aidar, Michat Abbosh, Raúl Izquierdo Garcia, Maria-Silvia de Jesus Tavares, Antoine de la Taille, Amgad Edward, Judex Violette, Don Marco Bove.

To find out who does what: <https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/about-us/board-of-directors>

- **International secretariat:** Céline Doudelle, Agnès Gravier.

- **Interpreters**

Joëlle Kielwasser and Xavier Nys (French), Erika Gonzales and Nancy Salcedo (Spanish), Matesa Von Hildebrand and Daniel Noble (English), Sebastian Sinski and Marta Wierzchosławska (Polish).

Our invaluable and faithful interpreters have done a remarkable job.

Our heartfelt thanks to them!



This first face-to-face meeting gave the members of the two teams the opportunity to get to know each other, reflect on the different aspects of their mission and pray together!

Over the first two days, the VICs presented the provinces they accompany and the projects planned for the next two years. They also shared their difficulties, hopes and joys. Some spoke of the serious geopolitical difficulties that are disrupting the lives of communities in several regions



International news

communities in several regions of the world. They worked on how to implement the priorities approved at the 2023 General Assembly and considered how to organise future international meetings. One country has been proposed to work on the next 2025-26 Guidelines.

This was followed by a day together (ICT + Board), during which they presented their respective missions. Antoine, the International Treasurer, gave an update on the finances, reminding us of the necessity of the annual contribution requested from the communities, as well as the need to find new donors throughout the world (and not just in France) in order to be able to continue funding the projects of provinces in difficulty.

The international secretariat then outlined the wide range of tasks it carries out, all of which are necessary for the running of Faith and Light.

Over the final two days, the Board of Directors evaluated the first 16 months of its mandate, validated a number of proposals made by the VICs and drew up a schedule of forthcoming meetings. Some names of former leaders were put forward to make up the international

nominating committee which is currently being renewed.

An unforgettable moment marked this week: on Sunday 3 November, the Porto communities invited the two teams to join them for an afternoon of festivities.



Andrew, Emilia et Denisson



Xavier et Endre



Antoine



Céline and Agnès



Don Marco



Amgad and Judex



Helena



Marie France and Souleiman



Vincent, Michael and Karin



Antonio, Michat, Raul, Maria Silvia



Izabela and Antoine-



Adeline and Angela



International news

Sunday 3 November: an unforgettable moment...



The musical welcome on the steps of the Church of N. Senhora da Conceição continued in the parish hall with songs and gestures in-between the presentations of each member of the international team, the board and the various communities of the country.





International news

After an exceptional tea party with many traditional cakes and lovingly prepared dishes, a beautiful Mass concelebrated by **Father José Augusto Nogueira de Oliveira** (Portugal's national chaplain) and **Father Rubens Marques** (the parish priest), filled us with the joy of Faith and Light, all united in Jesus through prayer, with smiles on every face...



A very big thank you to the local team in Porto who took care of the logistical organisation of our ICT-BOD meetings in Cortegaça, and organised this wonderful day with the communities!



International agenda

- Intercommunity retreat of the France Centre province on the theme "Let us enter into the heart of God", Baie du Mont St Michel, 8-10 November
- Consecration of Jamil Nasrat Khoury to the Faith and Light community in Shefaram (Galilee), 22 November 2024
- OCH Foundation conference on "Why we look at disability in a different way", Paris, 3 December, 8 p.m.
- Online Christmas musical performance, North America, 14 December
- Christmas celebration with the communities of Estonia, Kuressaare, 15 December
- Christmas celebration with the communities of Florence, Italy, 15 December
- Christmas celebration with the communities of Cairo, Delta and Fayoum, 20 December
- Christmas recital by the Saint Maron community, Blainville, Canada East, 22 December
- End of year retreat, Spiritual Centre "La ferme de l'Arche", 30 December-1 January
- Diocesan online training course "Christian community and disability in Milan", 27 January
- Provincial meeting USA East (Zoom), 31 January 2025
- Feast of Light in Lancut, Southern Poland, 1st February 2025
- Feast of Light with the communities of the Ile de France Ouest province, Rueil Malmaison, 2 February 2025
- Feast of Light with the communities of Rome, 2 February 2025
- Inter-community day for the Feast of Light, France Centre, 16 February

International solidarity

Projects supported in the last quarter of 2024

- Special support for the 11 communities in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria, Central African Republic and Togo). The province has asked for help because many families do not have the means to cover the cost of transport to the Faith and Light meeting and to bring a meal. Some need medical care and psychological support for their disabled child... Financial support of €3,000.
- A meeting of young people from Latin America, bringing together over fifty participants in Brazil from 15 to 17 November 2024. Financial support provided €1,000

Would you like to make a donation ?

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



Family Album

Chantal Kyungu Balange Ngoy

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Chantal, the daughter of Bruno Ngoy Kalume (vice provincial coordinator for Congo Lubumbashi).



Chantal entered the light of the Father on 16 November 2024. She will leave a huge hole in the hearts of her parents and all those who had the

joy of knowing her.

Consecration of Jamil Nasrat Khoury

to the Faith and Light community "Mariam Bawarde" in Shefaram (near Nazareth in Galilee) on 22 November 2024. The province "River of Peace" is united in prayer for this event. Jamil is coordinator of his community, working in tandem with Helwi Hajj.



Simon KHU SUI MONG

Adeline Khu, the new international vice coordinator, lost her father Simon on 30 September 2024. We are wholeheartedly united in prayer with her and her loved ones.

Her dad had recently embraced the Christian faith and was baptised, supported and surrounded by all the members of his family.

May his soul rest in peace in the loving arms of God.



Welcome Francisco !

Teresa Brito, vice-coordinator of the Luzitana province (Portugal) is delighted to announce the birth of her son Francisco on 3 November. Congratulations to the happy parents and we wish them all the best!



Tribute to Tony Wilkinson



Tony, vice-provincial coordinator for the UK North province from 2009 to 2013, passed away suddenly last October. Alongside his wife Sharon, he was heavily involved in the organisation of the International Meeting in Leeds in 2013. We give thanks for his life dedicated to serving Faith and Light and the little ones, for his generosity, kindness and incredible sense of humour. At this time of great sadness, we pray that Sharon and their children will find the support and love of Jesus.

Poem from Sharon Wilkinson

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the tombstone
From the beginning to the end.
He noted that first came the date of his birth
And spoke of the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.
For that dash represents all the time
That he spent alive on earth
And now only those who loved him know
What that little line is worth.
For it matters not how much we own,
The cars, the house, the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.
So think about this long and hard;
Are there things you'd like to change?



For you never know how much time is left
That can still be rearranged.
If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real
And always try to understand
The way other people feel.
And be less quick to anger
And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.
If we treat each other with respect
And more often wear a smile,
Remembering that this special dash
Might only last a little while.
So when your eulogy is being read,
With your life's actions to rehash,
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you lived your dash?

Extract from the homily by Mgr Donal Lucey

- Funeral Mass of Tony Wilkinson -

Every human life is sacred, of infinite value, precious. Every person is sacred. All human life is orientated towards the Divine. Spirituality is something innate in the human condition. There is a sense of awe and reverence for something greater than ourselves. It is not the same as religion. It is a first impulse. Religion is the human response to that first impulse. The religious structures that evolve are meant to give expression to that first impulse, to nurture it, let it breathe, to ground it and allow it to permeate our lives.

I come from the south west of Ireland. I love the ocean. The Atlantic is often agitated and huge waves roll in from the west. The origin of the waves is not visible to the eye, they come from somewhere beyond the line where the sky touches the water. If you fix your eye on one of them, you will notice that as it nears the shore, it grows tall and majestic with a frothing mane, full of power and beauty, capable of carrying an enormous weight upon its back. It grows in strength, driven by the wind and pulled by the invisible force of the moon. As it moves forward, bits of it spill off, but as it nears the shore it reaches its full height, then, it touches the bottom and topples over, spilling its contents, down to the very last drop. These rush through the gravel, hissing and seething, until all that is left is stillness. It has given itself away. Its work is done and it slips back into the ocean from whence it came. There it would be reassembled in some combination of molecules and droplets, and on another day, it would be washed up on some distant shore.

The human being is born in weakness, reaches a point of strength, and returns to weakness, until all is still. In that time of strength Tony gave of his best. He has now returned to the source of his being to be reassembled at eternity's shore, where he will be absorbed into the life of God. There is that potential in every human being, to be absorbed into the life of God; into the family of God, the community of God we call Father, Son and Spirit. So, life is a journey, a movement towards God. The life of a person on earth is not a testing time; not a time for us to prove we are worthy of life with



God. "We are already the Children of God", St. John tells us. And through our lives, in whatever number of years we are given, we are called to be a Word of God for the world. Through the beauty of our lives, through our love and the way we go about things, people will notice the presence of God.

It is the vocation of every human being to make the world better. Because the world was given to us incomplete and we have been trusted to complete it and enrich it. So, the nicest thing that could be said about any of us at the end of our lives, is that the little patch of ground that we occupied during our lives, is better because we have been there.

That is why we are all gifted in different ways. Tony and those of us who were privileged to walk with our friends in 'Faith and Light' discovered that; they revealed that to us. The gifts may be of the head, the hands or the heart, but they are all equal, all important for the life of the world, as St. Paul tells us in his first letter to the Corinthians. We can safely say that

Tony found his gift and used it well, as a research scientist, teacher, musician and work with people who have learning disabilities. His very presence brought dignity, calm and beauty.

Tony saw a great beauty in the Christian message. And in an age that is becoming more and more secular, let us never forget that the way of life lived by Jesus Christ is a beautiful way to be a human being in the world; a wonderful way to live in a right relationship with our God, our fellow human beings and our world. It is important to live up to the beauty, the dignity and the wonder in every human life.

Now, the earthly phase of Tony's life is done, and much of who he was is in his family and those he nourished as a husband, a father and those he touched in the community here in Loughborough. "*Blessed are you who die in the Lord. You will rest from your labour, for your good deeds will follow you*". And so, Tony, your work here is done and many of us have been the beneficiaries of your Christian heart.

The friends of Faith and Light



The OCH Foundation

at the service of sick and disabled people,
their families and friends

The dads' hike

Each year at the beginning of October, I have the opportunity to take part in the walk organised by the OCH Foundation for fathers of a child with disabilities. This initiative enables participants of all ages to spend a whole day walking and talking to each other in different parts of France on the same day.

What struck me straight away was how, in the space of a few minutes, our little group began to talk very deeply, even though most of us didn't know each other. The magic of disability is at work.

At the beginning of the route, I discovered situations that were very different from what I was experiencing with my daughter Roxelane, illnesses that I was not familiar with, and life paths that were difficult to imagine. And yet, beyond these singularities, the mirror effect between us plays to the full and immediately I feel understood in what I'm sharing in turn.

The words I hear take me back in time. Those whose children are younger than my daughter take me back in time, to the phases I have already been through, the announcement of the diagnosis, the first steps in treatment, the discovery of the administrative hassles. Conversely, those whose children are older give me a foretaste of the next stages, the transition to adulthood, the choice or not of a



suitable establishment, old age and beyond. I listen and sometimes I wish I am not hearing. There's already so much to do in the present moment, but I like to be clearheaded about what comes next.

Exchanging ideas between fathers, between peers, is a very good thing. The modest restraint, which is probably very masculine, is gradually lifted as we go along. Like this father, who shares with a certain embarrassment and at the same time a great deal of gratitude, the fact that it's his wife who does most of the day-to-day looking after of their child. Or another, who confides that his relationship can't cope with disability, the fears it arouses and the different reactions it provokes. As we walk, everyone offers himself the luxury of an escape from the



reality of his family situation, to take a step back. I like to alternate moments of conversation, in pairs or in small groups, with moments when I prefer to walk alone, breathe and enjoy the landscape in my own way. This alternation helps me to recharge my batteries.

As a hyperactive person, I was struck by the words of this father, a young retiree, who told me that he regularly came across parents who were "burnt out" by the energy they had put into their child's disability over the years. Is this the path that really awaits me? He realised that he was going in the opposite direction - he hadn't really been involved in disability until now, but now he was doing so with boundless energy. Our paths converged during this hike. I came away with a few aching legs, but above all with the feeling that from now on I'll be moving forward with, at my side, the imperceptible complicity of those Saturday walkers, whom I may never see again. ■

Guillaume Kaltenbach
Ombres et Lumière (Shadows and Light)
Magazine of the OCH Foundation

Follow Guillaume Kaltenbach and
other reviewers every Monday on
www.och.fr/ombres-et-lumiere/



Marie-Hélène's letter



A call to grow

The Faith and Light communities call us to grow. People with disabilities challenge each one of us, whether disabled or not, to move from self-centredness to giving of oneself, from feelings of guilt to the recognition of our limits, our weaknesses, our vulnerability, and to discover by experiencing that we all need each other. Then our hearts will be transformed, the divisions will disappear, the ghettos will open up.

And so it was for Victor. When he first came to the community with his mother, he was obsessed with his picnic bag. It took all the efforts of his mum and two

youngsters to stop him eating everything before mealtime.

When his mother spoke of Faith and Light, he invariably replied "picnic". He remained at this stage for some time, until one day, when his mother mentioned Faith and Light, he said the word "friend". And then his mum was amazed when, talking to him about the community, she heard him say "Jesus."

Picnic, friend, Jesus...

What a journey!

Never again alone, The adventure of Faith and Light from 1971 until today. Page 147



Christmas letter

But now, Lord, what do I look for?
My hope is in you (Ps 39,7)

The times we live in are marked by profound **expectations** :

- ♦ in places affected by conflict and war,
we long for peace,
- ♦ where poverty and misery still reign,
we hope for bread and dignity,
- ♦ faced by exclusion and violence,
we expect solidarity and forgiveness.

You, Lord, are our hope, for you alone can change our heart and the course of history.

In this time before us, make each one of us pilgrims of hope, capable of cherishing our expectations.

May the coming Jubilee be for us and our Faith and Light communities an opportunity to become a sign of hope and reconciliation in our world today.

Enable us, by drawing on your Word that enlightens and gives peace, to recognise your presence among the humble and the poor.

Help us to break down the walls of division so that we can welcome you where, even today, you are manifesting yourself in the world.

May the Lord renew our hope and give us his peace.

Merry Christmas to you all.

Don Marco Bove,
International chaplain

