

# Up Sails!

THE INTERNATIONAL LETTER OF FAITH AND LIGHT N° 51, MARCH 2022

---



## Ukraine in our heart





## Summary

<b>Editorial: Ukraine in our heart</b>	3
• Letter from Oksana Lipetska	4
• Prayer Vigils	5
• The birth of Faith and Light in Ukraine	6
<b>Reports</b>	
• Jesus, Light of the Andes! "Come and See"	8
• River of peace: On the river of peace	10
• Birth in Abidjan	12
• Peru: Day of celebration!	13
• Cyprus welcomes Francis	14
• Middle-East: Renewal!	16
<b>Testimonies</b>	
• The assumption of good news	17
• "Super Chico"	18
• A mum from Cyprus	19
• Elizabeth Kavanagh	20
• Salman	21
<b>The International Day of persons with disabilities</b>	23
<b>For our reflection</b>	
• "That's it!"	26
<b>International news</b>	27
<b>The Feast of Light across the world</b>	28
<b>Family Album</b>	29
<b>Marie-Hélène's letter</b>	
• The Attitude of "others"	31

Annual paper subscription : 20 €

Cover: Faith and Light in Ukraine

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

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

## Ukraine in our heart



**Raúl Izquierdo**  
International coordinator

**W**ar has begun in Ukraine. Dark and uncertain times lie ahead, where it seems that the language of bombs, bullets and manipulated information has overtaken any attempt at mediation and dialogue.

At the same time, we know of so many other wars in multiple locations around the world.

We add all of these to our prayer for peace. This is what I suggest we do. Nothing more; nothing less. Let us all pray at home, but also in community. Alone, online or through WhatsApp; but let us pray. Praying for peace is a prophetic and humble gesture; an almost subversive one because we wish things were different and we put all our hope in the One who first loved us. There are situations in which we cannot do much, but we know that God loves life and wants his sons and daughters to live in peace. We trust. We wait. On many occasions we have witnessed Faith and Light as a sign of peace in the midst of conflict.

As it states in our Charter: Faith and Light believes that people who are weak or have a disability can become a source of unity in society and in every church - and also between churches and between nations.

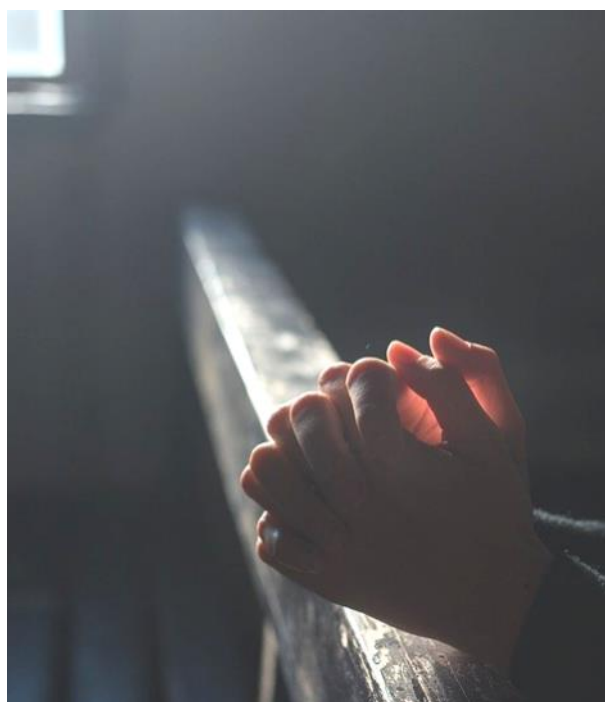
In Ukraine there are 39 Faith and Light communities. Ukraine is in our hearts. Their fear is our fear; their uncertainty is our uncertainty, and their blood is our own. When a brother in the family suffers, we all suffer. When a brother cries, we offer our shoulder and our whole life if necessary. We also join

in the suffering of the communities in Russia and neighbouring countries in this situation.

May God help us to be peacemakers. May he influence the minds of decision makers to stop the war in Ukraine and around the world. May violence not have the last word. May each of us be a peacemaker through our words, deeds and actions.

**Give us the Holy Spirit,  
according to your promise,  
so that he will make us instruments  
of peace and unity,  
in this world of war and division.**

(Extract from the prayer of Faith and Light)





---

## Ukraine in our heart

### Letter from Oksana Lipetska

Provincial coordinator for Ukraine



*To all our dear friends in international "Faith and Light", that keep Ukraine in their hearts and prayers. Thank you very much for your support!!!*

*This morning 24/02/2022 unfortunately, Putin's soldiers crossed the borders of Ukraine and began shooting at our city's and at civilians.*

*We have imposed martial law. The war has begun. Russian troops are carrying out simultaneous attacks along much of the border with Russia and Belurus.*

*The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation began intense shelling of our units in the east, fired rockets and bombs at airfields in Boryspil, Ozernoye, Kulbakin, Chuguev, Kramatorsk, Chornobayevka, as well as military facilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. At the same time, artillery shelling of the territory and settlements of Ukraine along the state border and on the border with Crimean began.*

*What does this mean for community of "Faith and Light" in Ukraine?*

*Most of the Ukrainian Faith and Light communities are located in the West of the Ukraine. This is an area that is far from the front line.*

*But, we are worried about the two communities in Kyiv (the capital of our country). Now Russian troops are trying to break into Kyiv, attacking around the Kyiv region.*

*We are worried about all Ukrainian, our relatives, our friends from those regions. We are worried about all of Ukraine. There is no justification for what is happening.*

*We try to keep calm and cool. We are preparing to be able to help each other in need.*

*Our strength is in unity and cohesion.*

*In our prayers, we remember our sisters and brothers from the Russian "Faith and Light".*

*We know they do not approve of the actions of their president and do not support the aggression to Ukraine. The war is for everyone big pain and despair.*

*We ask our international family to continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and stop Russian aggression.*

*Every day we will try to pray for peace with members from our communities on zoom. We have limited access to zoom and the possible times will vary. But, we can't say for sure, but we will try to give the opportunity for those of you who want to join us. We will pray in Ukrainian. So, if you join us, it will be great, but if not, we trust in your good intentions and support. We encourage you to pray in your communities.*

*We really depend on God's mercy.*

*Thank you for your prayerful participation. We need each other!*

February 24, 2022



## Ukraine in our heart, Prayer Vigils



*Every evening since the beginning of the Russian invasion into the Ukraine, Ukrainian Faith and Light communities have been proposing that other communities in this international movement pray for peace. Among them, members from Russian communities.*

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion into the Ukraine, Ukrainian Faith and Light communities have been gathering, via video, every evening to pray for the end of the war. Very quickly, friends of this Christian movement, present in 86 countries across the world and bringing together intellectually disabled people, their families and their friends, wished to share in this. *"And because Faith and Light is an international movement and we are friends with the Russian communities, they too have joined this daily time of prayer via video",* said Uliana Roy, a Ukrainian and a member of Faith and Light for 20 years, on Tuesday 1 March 2022. Lithuanians, Poles, Canadians, Americans, Italians, Czechs and Slovaks also join them.

Testimony from Manca Kastelic. This Polish member of l'Arche took part in one of these prayer vigils: *"it was heart-breaking, beautiful, surreal at times... Some Ukrainians had to*

*leave during the prayer due to ongoing attack alarms. Among them, a translator. A woman from Moscow then stepped in to replace him and translated into English for us..."*

This link offers an opportunity to keep a fraternal time of prayer between the Russians and the Ukrainians, even if it is very tenuous. Uliana Roy, also a former vice coordinator of the movement in the Ukraine, insists: *"This is not a common prayer with the Russians. This may seem ridiculous and naive to you, but we have been seeing our war dead in the news for several days and we simply do not have the spiritual strength to say that we are organising something with the Russians..."*

The Ukrainian, who took part in the retreat organised in 2017 at l'Arche in Trosly-Breuil, in the Oise (60), on the initiative of Jean Vanier, to bring together the Russian and Ukrainian communities on the theme of peace, wants to maintain hope. *"Perhaps one day, when the war is over, we will take part in common prayers but today, it is more that the Russians are joining our prayer."*

GUILLEMETTE DE PRÉVAL  
ombresetlumiere.fr – 1er mars 2022

---

## Ukraine in our heart

### The birth of Faith and Light in Ukraine

Born in Canada, of Ukrainian immigrant parents, Zenia Kushpeta grew up among the diaspora of Toronto who had always dreamed of a free Ukraine. Having an artistic temperament, she threw herself into a musical career in the early 1980s. She was on a quest to find meaning in her life. She entered l'Arche community, Daybreak, close to Toronto. Meeting Rosie turned her life, in a radical way, upside down. Rosie had just joined l'Arche after spending many years in an institution. Most of the time she had been imprisoned on a little cot under a mosquito net found in the combination "living room-dormitory" that she shared with a dozen other children. She did not talk, she did not walk, she could not eat by herself and she continually cried out in pain. One day, Zenia came and sat down near her. Rosie seemed to be in a world of her own, unreachable. Little by little, a bond was formed between the two young women. They became friends. Rosie was the origin of Zenia's commitment with l'Arche, which lasted many years.

In 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine gained independence. For the first time, Zenia was able to visit the country of her roots to try to contribute to its reconstruction. Arriving in Lviv, Zenia was a shocked and grieved witness to the situation in which all the people lived – particularly persons with disabilities. The conditions in psychiatric hospitals and institutions were tragic. The conditions in psychiatric hospitals and institutions were tragic.

It did not matter to her the almost miserable material conditions in which she lived. In 1992, she was "missioned" by l'Arche-Daybreak to found the first Faith and Light communities in Ukraine. The first years were filled with challenges. Persons with disabilities were relegated to the bottom of the social ladder: despised, ignored, rejected. With a group of young people, Zenia began to visit families. The first was Myron's family. Myron was a young man, twenty-five years old, who practically did not talk and who refused to look anyone in the eye. His family was invited, along with many others, to



a parish for the first Faith and Light meeting. Myron began to smile and make friends. His simplicity and his big heart won over all who approached him.

When, in 2007, I was invited for the celebration of the anniversary of the movement, I was astounded by the vitality of the Faith and Light communities. I have never seen as many young people, so dynamic and so close to the persons with disabilities; parents amazed and delighted to see the new abilities of their child



---

stimulated by all these friends. An unimaginable joy! We spent four days together on an old military base in an immense forest near Lviv. The commanding officer, a father of a child with disabilities, put the whole base and all its staff at our disposal. Everything seemed good to them, the meals based around potatoes, beets, cabbage, etc., and the large dormitories holding sixty people. Revealing extraordinary talents, a grand spectacle regrouped the five hundred participants into three military divisions. Instead of arriving with their aircraft carriers, their submarines or their tanks, each division presented its banner: love, peace, joy. Prophets for a new world, our brothers and sisters with disabilities were jubilant. "From their swords they have forged ploughshares and from their spears, sickles. One nation will not draw their sword on another, nor will they train for war any more."

MARIE-HÉLÈNE MATHIEU  
"Never again alone!,  
The Story of Faith and Light"



# "Come and See"

FORTY SIX YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE "JESUS, LIGHT OF THE ANDES" PROVINCE MET VIRTUALLY ON 25 SEPTEMBER FOR AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MEETING. THEY WERE FROM ALL COUNTRIES OF THE PROVINCE: CHILE, COLUMBIA, ECUADOR AND PERU.

Continuing our annual programme and responding to the call from Faith and Light International to give greater importance to the young friends, present and future, from our communities, the long awaited meeting of the young people from the "Jesus, Light of the Andes" province was held on 25 September. I entrusted the preparation of this meeting to a team of young people and I accompanied them. Two young friends who have taken part in international youth meetings were appointed to this team, thus giving them the chance to share their experience: Erika Roxana Gonzales Vergara (Guardamar 2017) and Luz Marisol Rojas Guepud (Itabirito, Brazil 2019). Fredy Rizald Zeballos Cueva and Ysabel Milagros Paniagua Acuña from the San Martín de Porres Community also joined this team.

The aim of the meeting was to introduce Faith and Light to new young people (share the treasure received), to renew the commitment of the young people who take part in community meetings and to strengthen the bonds of friendship between young



people from different communities and people with an intellectual disability. "Come and See" was an invitation to young people to discover for themselves the call from Jesus to be part of a communi-

ty. Forty six young people were present.

First thing in the morning, young friends and young people with an intellectual disability met via Zoom. I said a few words of welcome and greet-



ing. Our dear Angelito, Ángel David Fiestas Rosas, a friend with disabilities, addressed the participants to share his experience in Guardamar.

Ysabel Paniagua, a young friend and Gustavo Martel, a young person with disabilities, recited a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving for friendship and also for our limitations because these are what put us on the road to meeting the other one. After a few songs and a game to break the ice, Erika introduced the young people to what Faith and Light is and what our communities look like. She accompanied this presentation with her testimony about being the sister of a young person with a disability.

Fredy spoke on the theme prepared to be deepened in small groups: "The person with disabilities transforms us". Through his testimony, he showed us how this experience of transformation happens within our communities. The participants were invited to small Zoom rooms to deepen the theme and the people with an intellectual disability stayed to take part in games and mimes that helped to show their spontaneity and express the joy of belonging to a community.

After sharing in small groups, we met to share short testimonies about the way in

which Faith and Light has transformed our lives.

The meeting ended with a celebration where we all danced and celebrated the joy of the friendship found at Faith and Light.

GUILLERMO RIVERO PALOMINO  
Provincial Coordinator



## The communities in the province

- CHILI: 4
- COLOMBIA: 1
- ECUADOR: 1
- PÉRU : 12



# On the river of peace...

TO CELEBRATE THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FAITH AND LIGHT, THE "RIVER OF PEACE" (ITALY NORTH AND GALILEE) PROVINCE ORGANISED A PILGRIMAGE INVOLVING ALL THE COMMUNITIES FROM PIEDMONT TO GALILEE.

## Sunday 19 September

It was the turn of two communities from Milan, "St Joseph of the Peace" and "Milan Centre". These two communities, accompanied by Father Mauro, met in the parish. They prayed, meditated and sang. Each participant received a small cardboard boat containing a candle that, once lit, lit up the eyes and warmed the heart of each person. We were guided by the theme: "Go, I am with you". There were also testimonies, including my own: *My meeting with Faith and Light has been and is still a signposted road in my life. One of the aspects that has always amazed me and that I experience is the loyalty in friendship, a quality that is becoming increasingly rare in today's world. The other aspect is that when we are together amongst friends "all is well". We do not see the differences; we are not embarrassed by behaviours that are at times strange. For my family, Faith and Light has been a way out of isolation and suffering because it is a place where we can live times of sharing. Finally, my son, Francesco, celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, just like Faith and Light! Maybe it is just a coincidence but maybe*



*God wanted them to move forward together?*

ELISA STURLESE

## Milan Gratosoglio 26 September

*We met at St Barnabas church in Gratosoglio, there were 100 of us (with masks, obviously!). We experienced this celebration, happy to meet everyone. Then, we told the story of Faith and Light and sang... One family testified about the importance of Faith and Light, like Matthieu, who love to come as a family because they feel at home. And finally, as always, we met to eat and chat, all happy to see each other again after two years of the pandemic. The joy was so great that even the rain could not stop us from celebrating and sending our boat candle holders out on to the river.*

NORA BUCCHERI



## Veneto, 17-25 October

*Finally, the boat crossed the "River of Peace" province to arrive in Veneto! For the first stage, on 17 October, the "Rays of Sunshine" community from Conselve met to celebrate, in its turn, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Faith and Light. It was a great joy to see each other again, to celebrate together, to pray and give thanks for how far we have come. We also heard the story of the birth of our movement and testimonies about the gift of Faith and Light in our lives. Faith and Light is a treasure of friendship where each one of*



*us feels welcomed and loved for who we are.*

*For the second stage, on 25 October, a small group from Conselve went to Chioggia, to the Shrine of the Virgin of the Nativity where we entrusted the boat from the "River of Peace" province to Mary. Its journey in Italy was at an end. The boat, departing from the springs of the Po, has reached the sea where a new journey is beginning to our friends in the communities of Galilee!!!*

LUCIE FANTE





# Birth in Abidjan

IN 1998, A SMALL FAITH AND LIGHT COMMUNITY WAS BORN IN ABIDJAN ON THE INITIATIVE OF A LEADER OF L'ARCHE IN BOUAKÉ. WITH THE 2002 CRISIS, THE COMMUNITY WAS BROKEN UP. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF LAST JULY, CLOTILDE KPA, MUM OF LILYA WHO HAS A DISABILITY, HAS WORKED HARD ON THE CREATION OF A NEW COMMUNITY. IT'S DONE, THE COMMUNITY WAS CREATED ON 7 NOVEMBER. ABOUT THIRTY PEOPLE, INCLUDING SIX WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND A CHAPLAIN, MET IN THE PREMISES OF THE ST JOHN COMMUNITY.

It all began on Sunday morning at 9am with the Eucharist with the Brothers of St John. After the mass, a snack was arranged in the hall of the Bethany Priory.



Father Thibault and Clotilde

Then, we had a time of welcome and stuck our names on our shirts.

We introduced and explained what the Faith and Light movement is to all the participants.



We then had a time of sharing on the theme of the month. And we organised a relay game.



Brother Valentin David arbutus

Back in the meeting room, we were able to watch the mime of the Word of the month, relived by the children.



We ended our meeting with a time of prayer and scheduled the next meeting!



# Day of celebration!

In 1983, the current Bishop, Isaac Martínez Chuquizana, discovered Faith and Light and became the chaplain of the first community in Peru, "Our Lady of Lourdes". Since then, we have always benefited from his presence and his accompaniment. He nourishes us with the Gospel and strengthens us with his conversations about the spirituality of Faith and Light.

Bishop Isaac has fulfilled various missions (see "Up Sails!" issue 50). He is much loved. He leaves the imprint of his devoted and loyal service, his deep love for what he has done and which has borne much fruit.

In 2009, he was elected International Chaplain. For ten years, he was very present through his messages, his continuous accompaniment of the communities across the world, through his call to relive our history and to faithfully live our identity and mission.

On 23 October 2021, he announced that he had been appointed bishop of the diocese of Cajamarca in the north of Peru by Pope Francis. The communities celebrated. We jumped for joy and we gave thanks even if the "Jesus, Light of the Andes" (Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and Peru) province was going to lose its province chaplain who, through his accompaniment, had strengthened us and



made the communities grow.

His appointment has been a reason for general rejoicing for Peruvians because we know he is so close to people with disabilities. Aline, a young girl, said: "Faith and Light has its bishop!"

The long-awaited day arrived: on 7 December, the day of the episcopal ordination of Father Isaac. We were moved to see someone so close, the crozier in his hand, surrounded by his family, his bishop and priest friends and our disabled friends who had a prime position in the offertory procession.

Livestreamed, we followed this solemn ceremony in our homes. More emotion when, in his sermon, he mentioned the people with disabilities to whom he dedicated his service and for whom he requested respect and the duty to offer them a dignified life: "I am called to carry out the same mission as Jesus and his apostles".

In his message, the Apostolic Nuncio to Peru, Nicola Grasoli, highlighted the qualities of Monsignor Isaac: his humility, his simplicity, his loyalty, his dedication to his ministry and his commitment to the cause of the rejected and forgotten. He said that he was the bishop that the Holy Father was looking for and that he had been following him in his mission for two years. Our hearts were even more touched when he highlighted his commitment as International Chaplain of Faith and Light.

On his coat of arms, there is an image of Mary for whom he has a special devotion. On the bottom left, there is the Faith and Light logo, a testament to his deep love for Faith and Light.

We have no doubt that in his new diocese, he will help with the birth of new communities driven by his motto "Having the same feelings as Jesus Christ". Initial contacts have already been made in two parishes.

The Faith and Light communities are praying that Jesus will continue to bless him and that his Light will guide your path as shepherd of your new diocese.

ELVIRA GOMERO  
Vice international coordinator

# Cyprus welcomes Francis

FAITH AND LIGHT CYPRUS EXPERIENCED SOME MOMENTS OF JOY AND EMOTION DURING THE VISIT OF POPE FRANCIS, FROM 2 TO 4 DECEMBER 2021. COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAD THE CHANCE TO PRAY WITH THE HOLY FATHER AT THE LARGE MASS CELEBRATED AT THE NICOSIA STADIUM, AS WELL AS AT A MEETING WITH THE CLERGY AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF ECCLESIASTICAL MOVEMENTS AND ASSOCIATIONS IN CYPRUS.



**T**he motto of this apostolic visit: "Encourage one another in faith" makes reference to the apostle Barnabas "son of encouragement" (Acts 4, 36) and suggests the importance of mutual comfort and encouragement, essential dimensions for dialogue, meeting and welcome that are salient features of the life and history of the island.

Pope Francis arrived in Cyprus as a "pilgrim" following in the footsteps of the original great missionaries, in particular, of the saints Paul, Barnabas and Mark. "For what the earliest Christians gave to the world with the gentle power of the Spirit was an unprecedented message of beauty. This country has inherited a particular responsibility in that

*regard, namely, to be a messenger of beauty among the continents. Cyprus radiates a natural beauty that must be protected and preserved. I would even say that this island represents a pearl of great price in the heart of the Mediterranean,"* the Pope emphasised.

At the large mass, in his homily, the Holy Father commented on the healing of the two blind men (Mt 9,27-31). He told us that like the two blind men, we are also travellers, often plunged into the darkness of life. He encouraged us to give Jesus the opportunity to heal our hearts, to bear our wounds together, to joyfully proclaim the Gospel!

On Friday 3 December, the Pope met some migrants dur-

ing an ecumenical celebration. After listening to the testimonies of four young migrants, the Holy Father expressed his emotion, an emotion similar to that of Jesus when he cried: "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and revealed them to infants" (Mt 11, 25).

"I too give praise to the heavenly Father because this is happening today, here: God is revealing his Kingdom, his Kingdom of love, justice and peace, to the little ones". He added that we understand better all the prophetic power of the word of God, who through the apostle Paul said: "You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and



*also members of the household of God'*(Eph 2, 19).

Pope Francis concluded his speech with an appeal to overcome the indifference experienced in the face of the suffering of the migrants.

THANK YOU, Holy Father for this apostolic journey to the periphery of the Mediterranean!

GEORGES MOUSSAS

Even before the visit, members of our communities swung into action to lend a hand: translation of various documents into Greek, preparation of booklets, sending out of invitations, rehearsals of songs for those who were part of the choir. Small services given with much enthusiasm and which allowed us to prepare ourselves spiritually for this great event.



Faith and Light was invited to take part in the meeting of Pope Francis with the priests, nuns, monks, catechists, associations and movements on Thursday 2 December. Marios Hadjirosos, the national coordinator, represented the movement.



On Friday 3 December, the "Our Lady of the Graces" and "Saint Charbel" communities gathered around a large sign that welcomed the Pope to Cyprus and took part in the large mass presided over by the Holy Father in the Nicosia Stadium. An opportunity and a blessing for those who were able to be there during these times of pandemic!



Joséphine Yamaki, a member of the Board of Directors, on a large screen during the mass at the Nicosia Stadium

# Renewal!

**F**ew weeks ago, I experienced something new. Something more human... It is the spirit of renewal in Faith and Light provinces in the Middle East. And I felt the words of Jesus (I made all things new for you).

Some may think that we change a group of people who have responsibility for others...

In fact, these people made us more human.

As with each renewal, I felt a little pain to leave the old team... But with pain, life is born, and growth comes.

In the Middle East, we celebrated four general assembly's from six provinces, accompanied by me.

For the province of north Egypt and Sudan, Ashraf Zakhary was elected as provincial coordinator for the province and with him a new council. Also, Magdy Fawaz, the provincial coordinator in Egypt center (Minya), and with him a new council. In north Lebanon, the province "ILA Trinity", Jean Kassis was elected.

As for "South Lebanon and Jordan", Bashir and his wife Mary were elected as a couple.

Thank you to everyone who said YES to Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus, who gave us the spirit of renewal.

AMGAD EDWARD  
Vice international coordinator



Amgad and Ashrad



Antoinette, Amgad and Jean



Magdy Fawaz



Mary and Bashir

We would like to warmly thank the former coordinators and their teams:

- Egypt North Sudan: Sarwat Rady
- Egypt Centre: Sahar Replat
- Lebanon North: Antoinette Makhoul
- Lebanon South: Micheline Imad

# The assumption of good news



**MARIE-AMÉLIE SAUNIER LIVES IN LYON (FRANCE). SHE IS MOTHER TO FOUR CHILDREN, INCLUDING PAUL, WHO IS AUTISTIC. WITH HER FAMILY, SHE IS PART OF A FAITH AND LIGHT COMMUNITY.**

**T**he month of January has barely begun and our energy has already been drained. Classrooms are closed, the queue at the pharmacy, the home help for Paul is sorely lacking, plans are shaky. We wish each other a happy new year with cynicism and irony. Like everyone, these pressures weigh me down. Our fragilities are laid bare. They sometimes distress me. What will happen to the most vulnerable in a society that is breaking down?

Without the motivation of my teenagers, I would have remained in the warmth of home on a Sunday afternoon, but they wanted to meet the Faith and Light friends. So, I let myself be carried away by the boldness of our community, by the antics of our chaplain playing a wise man with his sunglasses on, by the laughter and the hilarious reflections of our great young people with a childlike perspective. We had a beautifully simple and happy time. We were delighted for Marie, hired by the "Café Joyeux", for Guillaume who came back to see us, for a birth, an engagement; for the birthdays prepared carefully by Louis-Sorin. We had even talked about our planned pilgrimage to Lourdes during the year, with a show, stunning artwork and the element of madness that characterises our meetings.

Faced with the anxiety and fear of disability, we offer the assumption of good news. This questions the world. This goes beyond the world. Our difficulties and our fragilities are very real and clearly visible but our trust and our hope in God keeps us going.

Isn't this just what the world needs today?

To all those who are unsettled, weakened or depressed by the current situation, we who have experienced it, let us dare to bear the good news of a God, close by, who does not walk away from us when we suffer difficulties. So, with my whole heart, I wish you "HAPPY NEW YEAR" dear friends!

MARIE-AMÉLIE SAUNIER  
Ombres et Lumière, 11 January 2022





---

## Testimony

# "Super Chico"

**THIS SMALL FIVE YEAR OLD BRAZILIAN BOY, WHO HAS DOWN SYNDROME, HAS ONCE MORE CONQUERED COVID DESPITE MANY UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS.**

**K**nown on Instagram as "Super Chico, the little Brazilian boy with Down Syndrome has just given a beautiful lesson in courage and hope. It all began in November with the well-known symptoms: cough and shortness of breath as well as a urinary tract infection. With these symptoms, the little boy was taken to hospital immediately. As his condition continued to deteriorate, it was necessary to intubate him.

"When "Super Chico" first caught Covid 19 in July 2020, his condition improved quite quickly. However, this time *things seemed to be much worse*, Dani Guedes Bombini, the mother of the little boy, told the local paper, "Fantastico".

Indeed, the situation was serious because, according to medical data, Covid 19 leads to a four times higher risk of death in people with Downs Syndrome than for the rest of the population. The case of "Super Chico" was critical because he suffers from chronic kidney failure and a congenital heart defect..

However, the little boy showed that he was a true fighter. After two weeks of being intubated, he began to breath on his own. When we began to wake him up, his mother said to him: *Chico, get your rucksack, we're leaving!* and he laughed. *I will never forget this scene*, said the nurse who had accompanied the little boy in intensive care. He left the hospital wearing a superhero cape to a standing ovation from the medical personnel. His mum shared the good news on Instagram and thanked everyone who had prayed for the little boy's recovery.



### The story of "Super Chico"

"Super Chico" was born prematurely and spent the first six months of his life in hospital. It was there that he was first called "Super Chico". Due to kidney, heart and thyroid issues, he had to have seven operations during this time. Over the next few years, the child underwent ten other hospitalisations and several blood transfusions. The story of his fight became an inspiring essential phenomenon for parents across the world. His mum's Instagram profile, on which she tells of "Super Chico's" battles, now has 240000 followers.

RICARDO SANCHES  
Aleteia 1 January 2022

---

## Testimony

# A mum from Cyprus

**M**y name is Agathoula. I have two daughters and one son, called Savas, who have a disability.

My beautiful journey in the Faith and Light family began a few years ago when my friend, Maria Kekkou, spoke to me about the Faith and Light group. At first, I did not accept the invitation and I was quite hesitant. After some time, about a year later, Maria talked to me again about Faith and Light on the occasion of the traditional Christmas celebration, which all the communities were taking part in. Savas and I decided to go to the celebration, we bought a small present and off we went.

This first experience was unique. We were all together: young, old, priests, people with disabilities, taking part in a celebration full of songs and joy, whose main event was a mime about the birth of Jesus. We were all together as if we were one.

It was a new feeling for us to be in an environment filled with joy. Leaving this celebration, I said that I would become an active member of this group with Sava.

To this day, we belong to the Saint Charbel of Strovolos community. It has become our second family. I cannot describe mine and Sava's joy at belonging to this community. Every month, we look forward to the meeting, to reflecting on various subjects, playing, singing... organising other activities such as outings, trips, summer camps...

One of our most intense experiences was our stay, in Greece, on a wonderful farm. We experienced unique moments with other communities, with other Faith and Light people. We had the opportunity to see that we were not alone, that there were other companions around us. I was particularly impressed by the contact that we had with members of other



In the foreground  
Agathoula and Savas



communities, exchanging personal experiences with the Greek communities.

We, parents of children with disabilities, need to have fellow travellers like those we meet in the communities and to walk hand in hand, together with Faith and Light.

---

## Testimony

# Elizabeth Kavanagh

**ELIZABETH WAS AN ENGLISH WOMAN, WHO IN THE 90S, WAS THE ZONE COORDINATOR FOR NORTHERN EUROPE AND ACCOMPANIED SOME ENGLISH SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES. A WONDERFUL LEADER AND FRIEND.**



**J**ust after New Year's Eve, Elizabeth phoned me and several other Faith and Light friends to wish us a blessed new year. We talked about how she in 1975 took part in the int. Faith & Light meeting in Rome, where they met Pope John Paul II. I promised to send her a photo of this, but I think she never saw it, as she unexpectedly died on 8.01.22! A big chock to all of us and a big loss! After the meeting in Rome Elizabeth returned to Bath in England and started the longest lasting Faith and Light

our daily lives. We prayed and blessed each other, too. By Elizabeth's death, we have lost one of the daily life's heroes and I am grateful to have been her friend for about 30 years! May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

INGE SWITON-RØNNOW  
Danemark



group together with her friends. One of them was David Kavanagh, they were good friends for many years and then, when they both were about 50 years old, fell in love and celebrated a marriage together with lots of Faith & Light friends. They celebrated silver wedding among Faith and Light friends, too. In fact they lived Faith and Light every day! Elizabeth was so humble, kind, skilled and a woman of prayer, always ready to put other people forward and help them and she was a faithful friend. I met Elizabeth in the end of the late eighties. My good friend Berit Keszei told me to pay attention to Elizabeth at the election for a zone coordinator for Faith and Light Northern Europe. Elizabeth was elected and from that time on, our friendship grew. We were also in the same little sharing-group, which Fr. Joseph Larsen started after the Int. Faith and Light meeting in Canada. The group was meant to help us to live Faith and Light Spirituality in

A true Faith and Light friend has suddenly and unexpectedly left us and gone to heaven. Elizabeth was not only a member of our organization, but she was Faith and Light! She was always gentle, warm, caring and saw to the needs of others. For many years she was the zone coordinator for Northern Europe, a wonderful leader and friend.

Then together with David she continued being active with Faith in Light in Bath. I remember their wedding. What a feast with all the Faith and Light friends participating. A real fiesta! The day she left us was very dark and rainy, at least here where I live and I thought the angels were crying because she was dead. The next day it was sunny and bright and it felt as if God and the angels were happy to welcome her to them in heaven. May she rest in God's good hands.

BERIT KESZEI  
Sweden

---

<sup>1</sup> See the booklet "Faith and Light in Daily Life", containing the letters of Father Joseph from 2000 to 2007, available from the International Secretariat.



---

## Testimony

# Salman

AT THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY, IT WAS THE TURN OF PATRICK FONTAINE, A FRENCHMAN AND FORMER LEADER OF L'ARCHE INTERNATIONAL, TO PUT PEN TO PAPER TO TELL US ABOUT AN ENCOUNTER THAT TRANSFORMED HIM. THERE ARE ENCOUNTERS THAT LEAVE A SOFT AND WARM MEMORY, BUT THE EXPERIENCE THAT PATRICK TELLS US ABOUT IN THIS EPISODE OF "THE LIFE INSIDE" (LETTER FROM LA FERME DE TROSLY), IS THAT OF A SHOCK. OF A CRY. OF A CRY THAT SOWS, OF A PAINFUL STORY, BUT ONE THAT BEARS FRUIT.

TIM KEARNEY

**O**n 5 February 2006, I disembarked early in the morning at Kuwait City airport. Yamin and Nadia, Muslim assistants from l'Arche, accompanied me. Majdoleen, formerly from l'Arche in Syria, welcomed us joyfully: she had finally convinced us to make this visit with a view to setting up an Arche in Kuwait...

We were on a tight schedule. We met the group who were interested in the project and a few potential donors. Then, we were driven to the hospital, to the long stay paediatric department.

The reception area resembled a luxurious hotel, the wards were brilliantly equipped. Majdoleen led us from room to room to greet the children she knew. We stopped longer in one of them. Big and beautiful, it was probably assigned to a rich family. Beside a mountain of soft toys, a child's hospital bed with high sides. There, the sleeping body of Salman, about 9 years old. Majdoleen explained to us that, almost abandoned since the discovery of his disability, he had almost no visitors. Small white mittens covered his hands so that his uncoordinated gestures did not injure him. Fed by a nasal tube, his sense of touch was therefore limited to nappy changes, carried out by carers, whose niqabs only give a glimpse of their eyes.

I gently lowered the side of the bed and Salman immediately woke up. Seeing us, he smiled. Very quickly, he crawled to the edge of the bed and lost his balance. So that he did not tumble out, I put out my hand: he moved forward a bit more, reached for my wrists, then in a few seconds was in my arms. He had quite clearly become an expert in this strategy of putting himself in danger in order to be picked up...

The time that followed was delightful. Clearly, Salman enjoyed our presence: happy to grab my glasses and send them flying, happy to be passed from arms to arms... The visit went on for longer than planned. We soon had to end this suspended time: other meetings awaited us. I therefore carefully put Salman back in his bed and gently raised the side, then we slowly left the room walking backwards, closed the door and began to go down the stairs...

This was where a terrible and chilling cry stopped us. Fifteen years later, it still rings in my ears and brings back the same emotion in my guts. From his room, Salman was screaming his distress, his abandonment.

There were four of us on the stairs. Three Muslims and one Christian, petrified by this cry. We exchanged a look, silent and choked up.

---

*We were united,  
joined by our common humanity,  
by Salman's distress.*

We were united, joined by our common humanity, by Salman's distress.

We were overwhelmed by this pain, transported in this instant, beyond ourselves, our differences, our cultural boundaries, our religious identities.

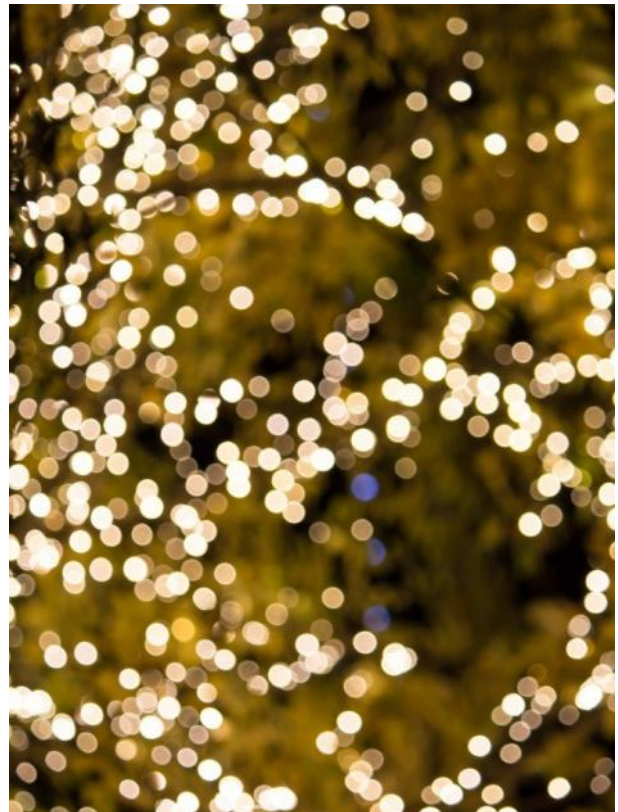
"Beyond"...

It was a common spiritual experience that we had. Common and painful.

Sometimes, only the cry of the poor person has the power necessary to shatter what separates men, to seize them, to unite them. The meeting with Salman had this immediate effect and a great fruitfulness in the long term, in the dialogue and interfaith friendship with in L'Arche.

PATRICK FONTAINE

Letter from La Ferme, Issue 11, January 2022



To receive "Inner Life":  
<https://lafermedetrosly.fr/la-vie-interieure>



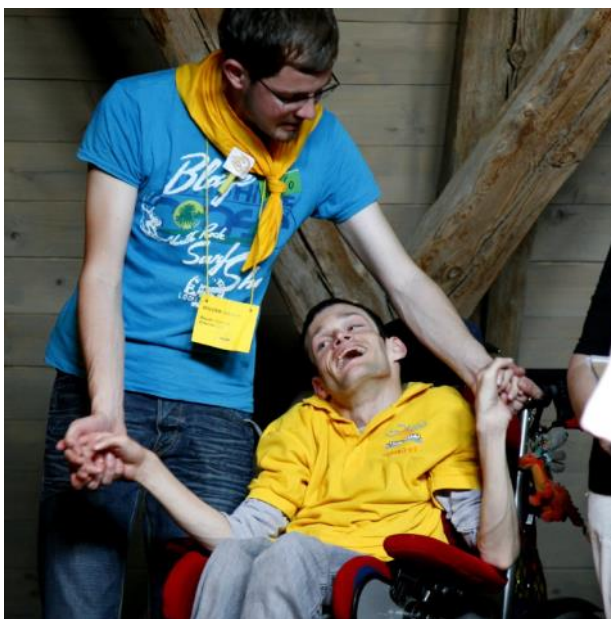
# The International Day of persons with disabilities

At the beginning of December 2021, Monsignor Donal Lucey, a community chaplain in England, celebrated a mass for the International Day of Persons with disabilities (which lasted the whole week in his diocese). In his homily (reproduced in part below), he encouraged everyone to take part in the synodal process undertaken by the Catholic Church: *“I would like to hear it said that we want to be a welcoming community; a place where all are welcome.”*

All Faith and Light communities, be they Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox or Protestant, should contribute to this reflection: *“What is the Church we dream of for the third millennium?”* If we do not do it, we are missing a great opportunity to make ourselves heard... So, let’s go, Yalla!



**W**e mark the beginning of the Disabilities week in our diocese with this Mass today. It is good to be here; to have this time in community as the Body of Christ and to celebrate all the gifts within that body and the dignity and worth of every human being.



There are truths that should be stated over and over again, lest we forget the beauty that lies in them and the affirmation that is revealed through them. But also, as Pope Fran-

cis is asking the Church to do now, to look at those truths through a new lens, so that they would speak to the world in which we live and be uplifting and liberating for that world. One of those truths needs to be heard today. The truth that, every person is precious. Every person. And that preciousness is innate. We are precious precisely in our humanity. That preciousness does not depend on what we can or cannot do.

That truth needs to be stated over and over again, because we live in a changing world. Here, the Christian voice is prophetic. The Christian is inspired by a ‘deep amazement at human worth’ (Redemptor Hominis). And this is a constant in a changing world.

Our voice becomes more important in a world that is losing its sense of God. That great anthropological truth about the worth and dignity of every human being, and the truth that it is an innate dignity that never depends on what we can or cannot do, is a prophetic challenge to that world which is losing its sense of God. When the sense of God is lost, the sense of human dignity is also a casualty. Pope John Paul II said in *Evangelium Vitae*: ‘the criterion for personal dignity, which demands respect, generosity, service, is replaced by the criterion of efficiency, functionality and usefulness: others are consid-



---

ered, not for what they are but for what they have, do, or produce. This is the supremacy of the strong over the weak’.

In his latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis is asking us to promote a culture of life in all its totality – that the principle of the sanctity of life is not a selective one: the sacredness of life is not derived from, or dependent upon, virtue or merit. It applies to all human beings, at all stages of life, in all circumstances and contexts.

This week invites us, indeed challenges us, to create and atmosphere in our parishes that includes, empowers and liberates people with disabilities. And it comes at a time when the whole church is asked to engage in a synodical process, to discern how we can journey together into the future. The Pope has called for a deep discernment and prayerful listening.



It is a time for all our parishes to ask, what kind of community do we want to be? I would like to think people would say, we want to be a welcoming community; a place where all are welcome. If we are not a welcoming community, we are not a catholic community.

You know, Jesus was a liberator. He liberated people, he freed people, he raised up, empowered, revealed to people their beauty: he was life-giving. Maybe as a church we lost sight of that.



And there is that great story in the gospel where John the Baptist is in prison and is having his doubts about Jesus and he sends messengers to ask, are you the one who is to come, or must we wait for another? And Jesus says, you go back and tell John, the blind see, the lame walk and the poor have the gospel preached to them (Matt 13:52). I don’t think we should interpret that in our time as expecting miracles of physical cures. But to do what Jesus did, liberate and empower people. We liberate people with disabilities when we emancipate, free, allow them to be ordinary in their extra-ordinary bodies.

I am talking about an inclusion that empowers the gifts and dignity of every person and welcomes and values difference. Every person with a disability should have access to the total life of the local church; be a full participating member of the local Eucharistic Community. A celebration of the Eucharist that excludes or segregates people with disabilities is not a celebration of the real body of Christ: the real body of Christ is a broken Body.

DONAL LUCEY

---

## ANTONIETTA'S TESTIMONY

**A MEMBER OF FAITH AND LIGHT IN ROME, ANTONIETTA DISCUSSED POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. INTERVIEWED BY THE OSSERVATORE ROMANO, ANTONIETTA TESTIFIES.**



In this message from Pope Francis, I was struck by the presence of the word “friendship”, repeated many times. For me, friendship is fundamental. That means that I count on someone and that this someone can count on me. This is also what happens with Jesus.

The presence of friends in my life has not been obvious: at school, at catechesis classes, I did not always find friends easily nor places where I was truly welcomed.

I realised that Jesus was my friend when I had my first communion. He reached out to me, he wanted to be with me despite my issues. The same thing happened on the day of my confirmation.

Having Jesus as a friend is fundamental to my spiritual growth and it has increased my inner strength. I know that I have a friend by my side during hardships.

It has been very important for me to find a Faith and Light community where we can share and pray together. I understood that the Gospel does not exclude anyone, that it is for us all.

I am happy that the Pope has written that I am important to the Church, that I am needed.

Of course, due to my disability, I need a lot of things, but I also have my duty as a disciple of Jesus. I know that many in the Church regard us as angels... But I know that I have my faults, like everyone. Being seen as an angel means that I am almost not human. And I want to be recognised as a human being.

It comforts me that the Pope recognises that things are not easy for us and our families and with the pandemic, they have been even more difficult. We have also experienced enforced separation from our friends in the community. Friendship has been sorely tested but we have profoundly understood the importance of friendship and meetings.

I am sure that we all have a wound, a difficulty. In this, we are all equal. In the eyes of God, I already know that this is the case. I hope that society will be more and more like this and that the Church, led by Pope Francis, will be an example for everyone on this path.

Osservatore Romano  
25 November 2021

### Read the message of Pope Francis

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201203\\_messaggio-disabilita.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20201203_messaggio-disabilita.html)

For our reflection

## "That's it!"

Three years ago, with Julie, we attended a Good Friday celebration in a place where there was a replica of the Holy Sepulchre. At the end, a mannequin representing Jesus was taken down from the cross, wrapped in a shroud and placed in the Holy Sepulchre where we could go and pay our respects in pairs. With Julie, we waited patiently for our turn and I was nervous about this moment because Julie experiences the recitals of the Passion that are read on Palm Sunday and Good Friday intensely, so intensely that she cries...

Inside, we prayed silently and Julie, seeing the tip of Jesus's foot protruding, tried to touch it. Once outside, I turned to Julie, ready to wipe away the tears: but no, she was all smiles and said to me: "*That's it, now he can rise from the dead!*". She understood much better than I had: I was like the women in tears and distraught in front of the tomb, whilst Julie was the angel who just said: "*Why do you look for the Living among the dead?*" (Lk 24, 5)

This episode marked me a lot and reflecting on it, I told myself that Julie had understood everything and that she was repeating in her own way – with her words "*that's it*" – the last words of Jesus on the Cross: "*It is finished*" (Jn 19, 30)

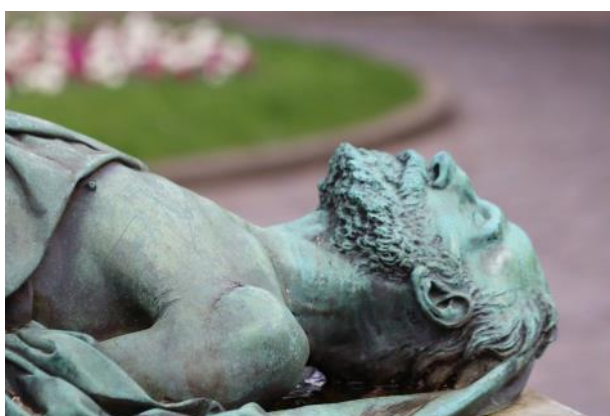
The Word became flesh, He came to "fulfil" his mission. The life of Jesus is framed by these words he said on the cross and that he had already heard within Mary when Elisabeth said: "*Blessed is she who believed there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord*" (Luke 1, 45).

During this time of Lent, let us try to remember all these beautiful stories that our friends with disabilities tell us and how they transform us. A few years ago, we harvested these fioretti; now that we want to share our treasure, this treasure that we have accumulat-

ed for so many years, send us these beautiful stories so that they are known.

Happy time of preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

GHISLAIN DU CHÉNÉ



Send your testimonies, your fioretti :

[international@foietlumiere.org](mailto:international@foietlumiere.org)

or

3 rue du Laos 75015 Paris, France



# International news

## A new province team for "Poland South"



Provincial coordinator: Iza Rabiasz, vice coordinators: Marta and Jarek Szczepaniakowie, Natalia Nycz, Wioletta Tomal, Gabriela Klusek, Magdalena Kamińska, Arek Pisarek - Chaplain: Maciej Ścibor - Treasurer: Magdalena Pokorzyńska - Secretary: Małgorzata Błasiak Warcha.



## A new coordinator for the "Heart of America and the Caribbean" province

On 30 January, the province assembly elected its new coordinator: Julio Espinal. He was the vice coordinator for the Dominican Republic. He succeeds Juan Pablo Duarte.

## International agenda

- **4-6 March:** Vice International Coordinators meeting, Zoom
- **12-13 March:** Formation session for community coordinators from France, Belgium and Switzerland, Zoom
- **15-17 March:** "Our Lady of Guadalupe" provincial assembly, Mexico
- **18-20 March:** "Heart of Europe" provincial council meeting, Medernach, Luxembourg
- **19-20 March:** "France West" provincial assembly, Vannes
- **19 March:** "France Sparkling East" provincial assembly, Portieux
- **25-27 March:** "Ireland" provincial assembly, Knock
- **26 March:** Lent retreat for the communities from "Poland South", Krakow
- **1-3 April:** "Northern Lights" provincial assembly, Sarpsborg, Norway
- **2-3 April:** "France Centre" provincial assembly
- **15 April:** Way of the Cross for the communities from "Our Lady of Guadalupe", via Zoom
- **13-15 May:** Formation session for the Swedish communities, Falköping
- **15 May:** Inter community day for the "France Centre" province
- **20-22 May:** "Iberatlantic" provincial team meeting, Madrid, Spain
- **21-22 May:** Formation session for the young people, "Luzitana" province, Porto, Portugal
- **26-29 May:** Retreat for the Norwegian communities, Lia Gård
- **26-29 May:** "Heart of Europe" provincial meeting, Steyl, Netherlands

## The Feast of Light across the world

Some communities have been able to meet “in the flesh”, others via video and still others have sent happy celebration cards via the Faith and Light Facebook group or their provincial page... A small glimpse.







# Album de famille



**Andrée Boisdron**



We were very touched by the unexpected passing of Andrée at the end of October, she who had served the smallest ones for so many years with discretion and humility. With her husband, Jean-Régis, she was the coordinator of our "France Centre" province until 2014. We pray for her and especially on All Saints Day, which she can now celebrate in the light within an 'innumerable crowd of witnesses'.

Michel and Christine Tillé  
Provincial Coordinators

**Jean-Yves Dartois**



It is with much emotion that we share with you the sad news of the death of our friend, Jean-Yves Dartois, at the beginning of January surrounded by his family.

Jean-Yves and Elisabeth have done much work in Faith and Light, for their "Mariam" community as leaders, for the province as vice coordinator in the previous team and in leading songs at each gathering. Let us remain united in prayer with a special thought for Elisabeth and her children.

Isabelle and Alain Piffeteau  
Provincial Coordinators

**Oviko**



At the beginning of December, our beloved friend, Oviko, left to join the Lord. Pray that he rests in peace. He has taught us so much and loved us so much! Oviko was a member of "The Spring" community in Tbilisi, Georgia.

**Kokos Christodoulou**

Since December, our friend Kokos has been smiling on us from heaven with the angels. Kokos had a unique place in the Faith and Light communities in Cyprus and especially in his "Hope" community since 1995. With his characteristic laugh, he always



brought a special note to our meetings. We are going to miss you, Kokos, the memories that we have with you will keep us together forever.  
Faith and Light Cyprus

**Greg Baker**



All those who were at the international meeting in Leeds in 2013 remember the wonderful team of young people who welcomed and served us during that week. Greg was one of them. He passed away in January from cancer. We wholeheartedly share the grief of his family and friends but also their hope. May the Lord grant him one hundred fold all that he did for us.





# Album de famille



## François-Marie Cattenoz



We are just sharing with you the sad news of the passing of François-Marie Cattenoz, the brother of Marine Bonamy. Marine and Gildas were vice coordinators for the France West Province.

François-Marie lived at l'Arche in Chambéry. Today, he joins the Father (and his dad). His parents, Jean-Louis and Elisabeth, Jean-Louis and Elisabeth had taken on important responsibilities in France. Robert and Anne Cronier

## Father Osvaldo Napoli

It is with great sadness that we inform you that Father Osvaldo, the former chaplain of Faith and Light in Argentina, then of the "Bridge of Friendship" (Brazil South, Paraguay and Argentina) province, has gone to the house of the Father.

Father Osvaldo got to know about Faith and Light at the international pilgrimage to Rome in 1975. He took part in it with a group of catechists from the specialist catechesis of Argentina. He also took part in the first national pilgrimage to Brazil. Then he created, sim-

ultaneously, two Faith and Light communities in his parish in Argentina.

A pioneer of the specialist catechesis in Latin America and a great apostle of people with disabilities, he introduced an adapted catechism methodology.

Father Osvaldo was 77 years old and in August 2021, he celebrated his 50 years in the priesthood.

His total devotion and his tender gaze for our disabled friends who he loved with much affection and to whom he dedicated his whole life, remain present in our communities. We remember him with huge affection and gratitude.

May the Lord grant him eternal rest and may the light without end shine upon him.

Adieu, messenger of love, peace and the light of the Gospel.

Maria-Cecilia Buckley



## Bénédicte Jollès Drouin

The Community of Saint Augustine (Paris) is sad to announce that Benedicte has been called to God. For more than 20 years, she accompanied the community with great fidelity. Bénédicte was



creative, playful, full of faith and caring for all. In 2019, Benedicte learned of her illness. She made an incredible journey of faith out of it, as the articles in Famille Chrétienne where she was editor-in-chief testify. Dear Bénédicte, the whole community thank you for the time you gave her, the attention you gave her and all the wonders you shared with her. She keeps you in her heart and her prayers.

## Kathlyn

Céline, member of the International Secretariat team, is back in the office after a few months of absence. The reason: the birth of little Kathlyn on 25 November.

They send us their most beautiful smiles!



# Marie-Hélène's letter



## THE ATTITUDE OF “OTHERS”

**A**mong all the daily difficulties, that of the attitude of others with regard to the parents of disabled children and the attitude of the parents of children with disabilities with regard to others comes up very often. Three issues seem quite usual, especially at holiday time when we tend to meet new faces.

*"What do we do when we intimidate 'others' so much that they do not know what to say on seeing our child?"*

Put ourselves in their shoes. Go back to the time when we were not yet a family with a disabled child. How clumsy we felt meeting those who were suffering: this mum who had just lost her child; this friend, suddenly paralysed following a car accident. We were so afraid of hurting them that we did just that, as if the wound did not exist. We limited the extent of the conversations to harmless banalities. Fear also of having to commit ourselves, if the person we were speaking to reveals their suffering and led us to share...

So, let us now try to understand the consternation of the person in front of us. Do not be offended by their apparent indifference. Let us not become obsessed with it. But let us take an interest first, from the bottom of our heart, in their family, their issues, their concerns, their joy, by talking about the small daily problems. In short, it is necessary to win over delicately “to set the tone”, a natural tone. Often, it is our child who will be the bridge between us and others. It is he who



will become the hyphen. The one who we believe to be the obstacle will be the bond of communion.

*"There are all those who, when they see me with Jacques, cross the road to avoid us or simply turn their head away by looking at a poster. We can't say anything to them, of course, but inside what can we do other than suffer and often blame them?"*

There is certainly one more thing to do, it is to take heart and especially not to dramatize it. There is often so much awkwardness in the apparent indifference. There is also so much fear of humiliation in those who humiliate us. We have to love them, even for just a split second, in the flash of a prayer and then... sometimes, when the circumstances

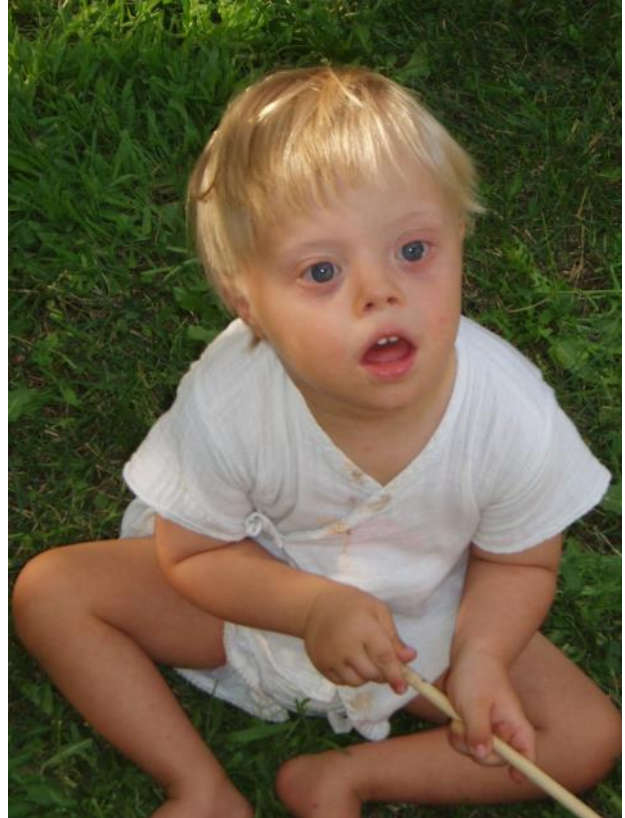


allow, take the first step. It is overwhelming to see that sometimes they were just waiting for that.

*"The most fearsome, you know, are those who show us their pity (we have to say 'their dirty pity'): 'You were unlucky... what a pity, this child was so beautiful... We always wonder how you keep going...'"*

It is true that pity –expressed in a patronising way, a superiority that feels sorry for us – far from helping us, diminishes us, takes away our strength. What we expect is much more understanding, solidarity, active sympathy. Can we do something to awaken these feelings towards us? If we do not want to attract pity, let us not arouse pity. It is a subtle temptation that awaits us all. Do not wallow in our suffering nor savour our sadness.

It also seems that others have a tendency to imitate our attitude. They are with us as we are with our child. How do we see them? In what way are they wounded, disfigured, diminished or in what way do they possess a unique wealth, incommunicable, but known to us? A loving and secret person like there has never been any other, like there will never be another, until the end of the world?



### *Do we see him in its unique richness?*

Those who show their pity are seeking a solution in a conventional attitude. It is not necessary to make them change the convention but to initiate them into the truth of a love.

Those who saw Jesus pass by, weighed down by his cross, the man of sorrows, did not know what to do either. The patron saints of all these shy people could well be Veronica or Simon of Cyrene.

---

"Mieux vaut allumer une lampe que maudire l'obscurité", Editions