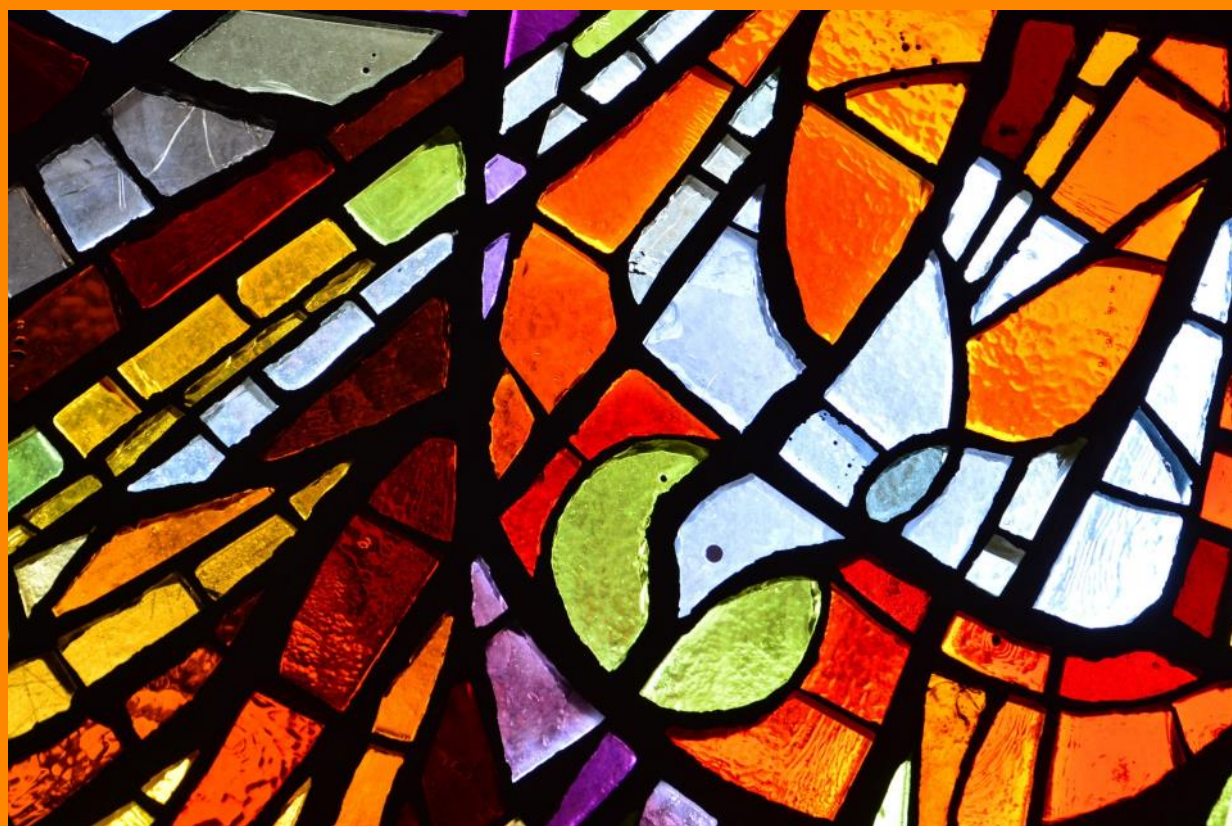


# Up Sails!

THE INTERNATIONAL LETTER OF FAITH AND LIGHT N° 52 JUNE 2022



## Pentecost 2022





# Summary

## Editorial

- Faced with pandemics, time for vaccines 3

## Reports

- United in service and friendship 4
- Fashion show 5
- I can do all things through him who strengthens me 6
- Small news from Southern Cross 8

## Testimonies

- Adea's confirmation 10
- What is the meaning of Paolo's life ? 12
- Called to be leaven 14
- Palm weekend in Santa Severa 15
- He is risen, He is truly risen 16
- Farewell, Father François 18
- Congratulations, Arianna 20

## For our reflection

- A story of twins 21

## International news

- New coordinators, new councils 22
- International agenda 24
- International solidarity 24
- The new website 25

## Family album

26

## Marie-Hélène's letter

- A treasure to hand on 27

Annual paper subscription: 20 €

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

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

# Faced with pandemics, time for vaccines



**Raúl Izquierdo**  
International coordinator

**O**ur friends with intellectual disabilities are one of the best vaccines against any pandemic. They are a safe vaccine, I have experienced this personally. These vaccines do not have negative side effects and are free of charge. It is just a matter of will and choice.

At Faith and Light, we need courageous men and women who look at others in the eye when they speak, who build, who carry, who contribute and who suggest. We need people who want to live with their problems and their wounds. People who accept mud as part of life.

We need people-vitamins nearby. We need people ready to learn and teach, to give and receive.

I look at Jesus in the Gospels and I discover the VACCINE in capital letters. And when I open my heart to this vaccine, to his call to follow him - me, you, us - by continuing his mission, we are a bit like him in the midst of the pandemics. This is why we need JESUS, today and always, we need the vaccine of his love and his forgiveness.

Are we, Faith and Light, not called today to be a vaccine in the midst of the world?

Faced with the pandemic of extremism, the obligation to only choose between black and white, faced with the pandemic of confrontation, tension, betrayal of brothers, destructive criticism...: the vaccine of the sensitivity of the artist who finds nuances and semi-darkness, who puts himself in the place of the other one, who tries to understand in order to unite, who knows how to lose in order to win.

Faced with the pandemic of isolation, of the “every man for himself” culture, of being

social zombies, of permanent navel-gazing...: the vaccine of the joint project, of the dream together. Creating a group of friends, a community, a family. Actively listening, building bridges.

Faced with the superficiality of relationships, appearances, anaesthesia and the dishonesty of one’s own image on networks and on so many forums...: the vaccine of rediscovering the importance of relationships in life, of real meetings between people, unadorned, unmasked, without pretending that everything is great, welcoming the frailty of the other one. The vaccine of authenticity.

Faced with the fact of saying and doing the minimum. Faced with the conformism that involves accepting four crumbs of freedom, of not going beyond “this is how it is”, of being sheep in the flock...: the vaccine of excellence that involves giving the most and the best, of not giving up, of fighting and struggling to be better in all that we do. Knowing that if I make a mistake, I can recognise it and move on.

Faced with a dream of being more beautiful, richer, more powerful and more famous...: the vaccine of living life to the full every day, valuing the small details, being grateful, living the routine passionately as if it were a “celebration day”.

As opposed to complaining about almost everything, being grumpy, feeling the victim of everything, and for everything...: the vaccine of the good mood and positivity. Discovering opportunities where others only see problems.



# United in service and friendship

A DAY OF FORMATION FOR THE COMMUNITY COORDINATORS AND COORDINATING TEAMS FROM THE "JESUS, LIGHT OF THE ANDES" PROVINCE (CHILE, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR AND PERU) WAS ORGANISED BY GUILLERMO RIVERO, THE PROVINCIAL COORDINATOR AND HIS COORDINATING TEAM. IT TOOK PLACE ON SATURDAY 26 MARCH ON THE FAITH AND LIGHT INTERNATIONAL ZOOM PLATFORM.

The theme of the day was "United in service and friendship". The central themes were:

- "Responsibility in Faith and Light", by our vice international coordinator, Elvira de Gomero.
- "The person with disabilities at the heart of our communities" by our vice provincial coordinator, Maritza Regalado.

Both topics have aroused great interest. The first was studied in working groups whose conclusions will be sent to the province team. For the second theme, a questionnaire was sent to the participants who will also send their responses to the provincial team.

The provincial treasurer, Héctor Fiestas, did a presentation on finances and gave a reminder of the commitment of the communities to Faith and Light International. He gave a short explanation of the report that he sent to the communities via their respective vice provincial coordinators. He was available to any-

one who had any questions.

Some communities hosted the day with presentations, songs, dances, games...

Formation days are very important and necessary for the smooth running and continuity of the communities, because through them, the more experienced coordinators prepare the new leaders who will take on responsibilities.



YOLANDA SEMINARIO  
Vice provincial coordinator  
Peru



# Fashion show

THE PANORAMIC RESTAURANT 'LE PERCHOIR' IN PARIS WELCOMED A RATHER SPECIAL FASHION SHOW: PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES FROM BORDEAUX'S EIN GEDI SCHOOL PLAYED MODELS TO APPLAUSE.

**T**en models with extravagant clothes bump into each other on the red carpet of "Le Perchoir". Lucia is the queen of England and greets the crowd by copying the wrist turn of *Queen Elizabeth*, Augustin is Professor Sunflower with his flowered hat... They do not have an air of superiority and do not walk like arrogant robots. They go the wrong way, drop their hats, walk in a crooked line, burst out laughing... and get a huge round of applause in a good atmosphere. These are the pupils from the Ein Gedi school, an establishment for different children.

## A procession to finance the education of pupils

Henriette and Matthieu Neny<sup>1</sup>, who introduce the procession, created this school in Bordeaux five years ago so that their son, Eli, is properly cared for. The Ein Gedi college-high school has the name of an oasis in the Holy Land where travellers quench their thirst before continuing their journey. But personalised education is expensive, approximately 13 000 euros per child per year. And the Nenys insist that this does not cost more than within the national education system.



To find funds, the founders and the teaching team vie to be the most ingenious. This year, the teachers of visual arts and theatre teamed up to launch a fashion show whose profits are intended to finance education.

Stéphanie created, with the pupils, costumes worthy of the theatre, Marie interspersed the procession with a very funny poetical text. The restaurant was loaned, the team and the Bordeaux pupils found friends and friends of friends to stay with in Paris... Assessment: complete success. *"How joyful they must have felt to be applauded for once"*, says Sandrine, mother of Maxence and Augustin who were in the pro-

cession. *"We are thinking about the follow up"* announces Henriette with relish, who is already thinking about what will be next, a "heroes race" and a theatre show in June.

OLIVIA DE FOURNAS  
for Famille Chrétienne



<sup>1</sup> Matthieu and Henriette Neny were coordinators of the province France Entre deux Mers

# ”I can do all things through him who strengthens me ”

THE ASSEMBLY IN IRELAND HAD TO BE ORGANISED VIRTUALLY AGAIN BUT AFTER LONG MONTHS OF SEPARATION, ANN EMMOTT, VICE INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR, WAS ABLE TO GO TO IRELAND AND NORWAY TO LEAD THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES. “IN REAL LIFE”! IN HER REPORT, WE FEEL ALL THE JOY OF THE LONG AWAITED REUNION.

## In the United Kingdom

At the end of February, I facilitated my first virtual provincial assembly for the UK Province – England/Gibraltar/Scotland and Wales. The new province had gone through much renewal and discerning of the future of Faith and Light in their countries. It is a much smaller Province now largely due to aging communities which is all part of our life cycle, but also other challenges which we have needed to face over these past three years. However, they remain very strong in spirit and vision.

Even though the assembly was virtual, there was still much life coming through the screens from the communities. Someone said to me the new Faith and Light logo is like a boat sailing into the future. I believe this new province truly has this vision, with a renewed energy and sense of mission to go forward. Karen Donnan was affirmed as the provincial coordinator for a second mandate. Her new team has many new faces who bring a range of wonderful gifts. A huge thank you to the



Karen

old team who put so much time, care and love into everything they have done.

## In Ireland

In March, I travelled to Ireland to facilitate the provincial assembly. A few days prior to the assembly the organiser was told we were unable to have the accommodation we had booked, as there was an arrival of Ukrainian families. I can truly say we were overjoyed to hear this news. We were given somewhere else in the grounds. As I ar-

rived it all seemed very silent as the families had arrived at 4.00 am that day. The following day I had time to just watch the children quietly playing on the grass with balls. The mothers were very closely watching them. I cannot imagine what they have witnessed in their young lives, but I prayed that as each day is born, they will feel inclusion, friendship and love. Bernie had crocheted little Ukraine gifts for delegates to buy, afterwards she gave the money to the manager for him to spend on the families. He was so grateful.

The assembly was one of much joy and peace. As we met in groups discussing the Priorities for the next four years, which is an important part of the new nominee's mandate, it was evident how good it was to talk and listen again in person.

Bernie Noonan was discerned as the new provincial coordinator. We thank the new provincial team for accepting their calling to their new roles. And we gave grateful thanks to the old team





Mary Cosgrove passes the torch to Bernie

dance of musicians from all the countries which brought many blessings. We shared the power point that covers accompaniment so clearly and simply with pictures and words “the road to Emmaus”. With the help of friends from Denmark, and Tony from Sweden with the voting and counting, we affirmed Birgitt Aarrestad from Norway for a second mandate. We give thanks to the new team for believing in the process and saying yes to God’s call. Grateful thanks were given to the old team for all they have given to their communities, countries and province.

The Faith and Light prayer as never before felt so powerful in all the Provincial assemblies.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all my Provinces for their openness to the calling from God. It was a joy to work alongside the nomination teams, thank you for accepting the roles and preparing in a prayerful way. Philippians 4 Verse 13: *“I can do all this through Him who gives me strength”*.

ANN EMMOTT

Vice international coordinator

who have been so faithful to the life of Faith and Light in Ireland.

In Norway

In April I was off again to travel to Norway to be present at the Northern Lights province: Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Sweden. What a joy to arrive after many setbacks due to covid. It was very evident the heart of our assembly were our communities and friends. We were blessed with treasures to share. It was such a joy to have such an abun-



Birgitt

#### United Kingdom

- England : 6 communautés
- Scotland : 1
- Wales : 2
- Gibraltar : 1

Ireland : 17

#### Northern Lights

- Denmark : 4
- Estonia : 2
- Norway : 12
- Sweden : 7

## Small news

Our first Provincial Council meeting for 2022 was held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.

It was so good to communicate with one another again but I must admit Zoom doesn't quite make it for that personal contact we enjoy so much at our Council meetings and in our communities.

Reports were presented by the Provincial Coordinator, Chaplain and Vice-Provincial Coordinators. Unfortunately, there seems to be a common thread coming through from quite a few of our communities of:

- Ageing.
- Ageing core teams and difficulty in recruiting new members to the core team.
- Not enough parents and friends who are able to take on leadership roles.
- Covid fatigue.

Very few of our Australian communities have been able to meet. Our New Zealand buddies have coped a little better, with not as many lockdowns in their country.

Two of the Mandates of this Provincial Council are:

- What does it mean to be Faith and Light in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this part of the world..?
- what is our mission and message?
- Explore different ways of being community in the



changing times in Faith and Light.

Your Provincial Council is certainly exploring the second of these two Mandates and would be happy to receive any thoughts you may have.

With International borders closed in both countries and quarantine restrictions in place, the difficult decision was made last year, to have 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in our own individual countries.

New Zealand was all set to go. Then wham, the week before the Camp the country went to Stage Red.

Never let it be said that Faith and Light communities are not resilient.

Bookings were able to be moved and preparations are being made to hold the 50<sup>th</sup>

celebration the first weekend in May for all New Zealand communities.

Tracy Tohl (Vice Coordinator) has worked very hard, collecting and collating material for a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary book from past and present communities in Australia. A decision was made to add New Zealand communities to this publication.

We have been fortunate to have been given an opportunity to access an online Retreat organized by L'Arche International at La Ferme, Spiritual Centre in Trosly. The Retreat was organized to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Faith and Light. *Jesus, you have called us to follow You.* Scripture reflections on the prayer of Faith and Light. It will be led by Tim Buckley and Faith and Light Denver, USA.



New Zealand communities have celebrated, yet grieved the passing into eternal life of two of their early members – Doreen Swinburne who was the first National Coordinator in New Zealand and Eila McDonald a foundation member of Kimi Ora. May they Rest in Peace.

We continue to hold in prayer those members of our communities who are not well. May our loving God, hold them in his hand.

I was privileged in December to celebrate with and lead the Liturgy for the closure of our community "Blessings" in the southern highlands of New South Wales.

Blessing community met for many years at Bowral in the southern highlands of New South Wales. For the last period of time, they have been meeting at Hartzler Park Retreat Centre under the spiritual guidance of their Chaplain Sr. Dain Inglis and lead by their wonderful coordinator Sue Jackson.

It was a faith filled celebration of their community's life and they intend to continue to meet informally for lunch or a coffee on a regular basis. Remembering that leadership in Faith and Light is a servant role, I was able to say to Sue and Dain: *well done, good and faithful servants.*

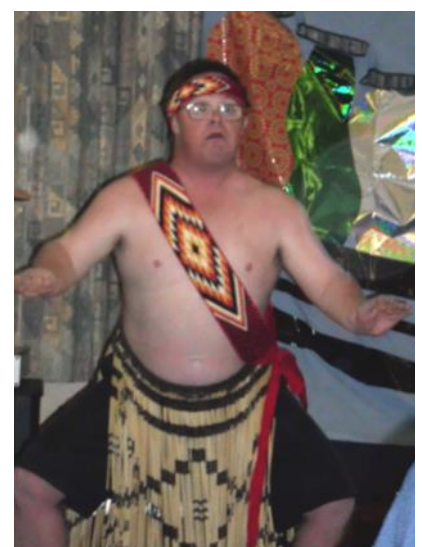
In this world of darkness, may you live in hope and "continue to shine in the World like Bright Stars"

PAM BARKER  
and the Provincial Council



Number of communities

- Australia : 5
- New Zealand : 5



---

## Testimony

# Adea's confirmation

**I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU A LONG JOURNEY, THE JOY AND THE EMOTIONS OF THE SPECIAL DAY WHEN MY DAUGHTER, ADEA, RECEIVED THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION IN ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL IN TIRANA, HERE IN ALBANIA.**

**A**dea Maria was born on 19 February 1994. We left the maternity ward without having a clear idea of what our baby had: she didn't suckle, she was almost always asleep. Gradually, we noticed that her development wasn't normal. We began to see a doctor. When she was two years old, the doctor told us that Adea had, in addition to kidney problems, intellectual developmental issues. At three years old, the psychiatrist diagnosed average intellectual slowness (at that time, the term "autism" did not exist in Albania).

During the summer of 1996, some Franciscan Sisters arrived in our town; we were curious about them as we had never seen nuns. They lived in our building and we got to know them better, to establish a good relationship and to share our problems. At that time, I was 26 years old, my brother had died in a car accident and I was in a very difficult psychological state. I was physically exhausted, I had to work and Adea still needed me. My younger one year old son was crying for me. And the whole family had to be taken care of. The Sisters tried to help me and advise me. With my daughter, I went to mass every day. The Sisters asked me if I was Orthodox. I said that I was Bektashi (an Islamic religious order) but that I liked the Catholic faith. In the village where I was born, the majority of the population is Muslim with an Orthodox minority, we have always lived in harmony.

At four years old, Adea walked with a lot of difficulty and did not speak. The Sisters invited me to go with Adea to the games that they were organising for the other children but it was very difficult for her to take part.

One day, the Sisters suggested that I take her to Italy for a medical examination. I had to



go with her and leave my family... We went by car. Adea could not cope with the journey, we had to stop constantly and she did not want to get back in the car, she cried a lot. We finally arrived in Palermo, at the convent that welcomed us affectionately. After going into hospital, Adea began speech therapy and physiotherapy; we found a kindergarten with normal children where a nun took great care of Adea. She was very happy, she hurried to get there and every Sunday, we went to mass. The Sisters asked me if I wanted Adea to be baptised and I said yes. The Sisters organised a beautiful celebration with many friends. I was happy because I could see that something was changing. I would have liked to stay in Palermo but my family needed me. After nine months, we returned to Albania.

Where we lived, Adea had no opportunity to go to therapy or a kindergarten. So, we moved to Tirana. We had heard that there was a special public school. My daughter attended this school from the age of 6 to 18 years old, but there was no visible improvement.

After finishing her education, Adea remained at home for nearly two years. Caritas directed me to a centre run by nuns. They worked with professionalism and dedication;



---

it was like a family. But it closed after six months.

Very quickly, we got to know about the Faith and Light community, which we really liked. There were many friends there and young people who loved us and we regularly took part in meetings, it was like a large family.

Adea wanted to do her confirmation. Every Saturday, I took her to the cathedral for the catechism. My daughter met many young people who were also preparing. But I was worried: would she be able to follow the catechism or would she be a burden for the others? Adea followed and listened attentively to the word of God.

The day of the confirmation was approaching and we had to choose a godparent. It was difficult because, coming from a Muslim family, I did not have Catholic relations and in our district, everyone was Muslim. We finally chose Albina, a friend from the community, and she accepted joyfully.

On 9 June 2019, my emotion was great at seeing my daughter in the middle of this group of young people. The evening before, I did not sleep all night because I was so anxious. Albina said to me: *“Don’t worry and trust in He who is greater than us.”* And that is what happened. Surrounded by friends from Faith and Light and her godmother, Adea was fine, she smiled, her eyes shone and her heart beat joyfully. After the ceremony, we had a celebration in the Caritas offices: my daughter was happy, she opened the presents and embraced all the friends...

I want to give thanks to God who gave me the strength to confront all these difficulties, to thank all those who have helped and supported Adea throughout all these years.

Thank you to each one of you and may God bless you!



OMBRE E LUCI  
February 2022



# What is the meaning of Paolo's life?

**A**t nine years old, Paolo does not speak and I am sure he will never speak even if the sound of his voice is often heard. Words do not make sense to him, like images and figures. He appears to have no access to means of communication. However, through work and energy, we have managed to put in place some autonomous equipment, verbal stimuli... enormous victories!

He needs constant help and monitoring because he does a lot of silly things. He is fascinated by water, he jumps, runs, flees all over. He does not know how to play but he likes watching light and sound objects.

Despite this, we communicate a lot with Paolo. He is mad about music, he vocalises. When we touch him, he gives us his hand to stroke, hugs us and pinches the skin on our hands. He is cheerful and his smile communicates. He has an incredible energy. Paolo, generally, seems to be happy except when he shows anxiety: then he bites himself and pulls his hair.

He is very sensitive to how we come into contact with him. His apparent indifference may suggest that he does not want to be approached. However, if we take care of him without trying to attract his gaze, without giving him time to touch us, without singing or speaking, he suffers: he is on the verge of tears. Some are more inclined to go to him, to tease him with kindness, to go that extra mile to get a look, a smile.

## What can we expect from Paolo?

I have long questioned the meaning of his life. It has made me grow on a difficult journey that is rich in humanity. But does someone's life only have meaning because it serves others? Paolo is not a "child doctor" wanted by God for our salvation. Therefore,



what is the meaning of Paolo's life? What is he called to do?

Paolo feels that we love him, I think, but how can he love? His reactions are linked to seeking comfort. It is good if he is on form. It is hell if he isn't. I have never seen in him a gesture of compassion or understanding of another. It is one of the main characteristics of autism. Everything revolves around him and I sometimes feel like his slave when he forces me to get up ten times a night without understanding that he is making me suffer.

How do we take him on a path of charity? It is impossible, because this word has no meaning for him and this reality is absorbed without ever being returned. We can expect nothing from this side.

## How is his inner life nourished?

How do you pray without language? How do you access the Word of God without understanding either words or images?

Nothing bothers me more than someone who, because Paolo smiles during a song, wants to

---

believe that he has mystical impulses! No, he smiled at a tune he knows or a particular sound. It is true that it is touching to see him smile sometimes when we sing Ave Maria, probably because it reminds him of a happy moment.

Why not admit the terrible reality of his disability that cuts him off from the measure of man that enables him to be charitable as well as to seek God? Given that he cannot have a part of it or be aware of what he is losing, would his life be less valuable than another? Would his life be less dear to God than that of a saint?

### What's the point?

For a long time, we gave up taking Paolo to Mass, not without guilt. It has to be said that he does not behave absolutely as he should: is it reasonable to go and drink from the font, run without stopping, shout because it causes an echo... Not to mention that he shows no interest in what happens during Mass. His presence prevents everyone from praying. Of course, the parish needs to know him better in order to accept him but we, the parents, are tired of explaining, of justifying his behaviour, of continuing to support this struggle. I admit that the presence of Paolo at the mass is too emotional for me. He goes there with his friends from "À bras Ouverts" and during Faith and Light meetings.

At home, Paolo is excluded when we try to pray as a family. It is already a challenge with little ones (but it seems to be the same with the big ones!) So, with Paolo in the middle, everything collapses. But I often put on a CD of beautiful songs in his bedroom and we sing with him.

At the Faith and Light meetings, I really like the time of prayer, a moment of contemplation where others take care of my children and I have Paolo sat between my legs. It is a bit sporty but it is short, simple and we are both together.

### And the sacraments?

Paolo is baptised and unless he believes that he is a being filled with God by the miracle of his disability (!), why has he not been able to have his first communion? Is the excuse of saying he does not understand anything about what he is doing despite our efforts enough to deny him?

After all, God is not a concept but a person and so, it seems to me that communion is precisely the only way, not for him to understand, but to meet Christ.

What should we make of what a priest once told me and which, incidentally, touched me: *"God does not need the sacraments to meet whoever he wants. He acts as he wishes well beyond the sacraments"*.

What about Confirmation? Does he not need the Holy Spirit more than others to grow? Doesn't this sacrament, that sends us as witnesses of Christ, make sense for a child like Paolo? Why do the Orthodox give these sacraments together to new-borns and why is it so complicated to do so for children with disabilities in the Catholic Church?

MARIA AMELIA  
Ombre e Luci



## Called to be leaven



**T**he Faith and Light international coordinating team<sup>1</sup> met via Zoom from 4 to 6 March. For this meeting, it chose a very beautiful theme: “Called to be leaven.”

Jesus, in Luke 13, 20-21, told us: “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

Pope Francis, when he received a representation from Faith and Light in October 2021, also spoke of leaven: “*Within Christian communities, I invite you to have the evangelical style of leaven: do not isolate or shut yourself away but take part in Church life in the parishes and districts, bring your experience and bear witness to the choice of God for the last, the small and the excluded. May the spirit of communion and friendship that is part of your charisma, always make you instruments of reconciliation and peace, especially where there are conflicts and divisions.*”

What does ‘to be leaven’ mean? The Bible gives us numerous examples:

- the widow of Zarephath who agreed to give all that she had left to eat for herself and her son to the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17, 8-16);

- the prophet Jerimiah who was only a child with no speaking skills but who agreed to carry the message from God to the world (Jerimiah 1);
- the Virgin Mary who responded with a total yes to the angel who came to announce that she was going to bear the Saviour (Luke 1, 26-38).

We see that the widow of Zarephath, the prophet Jerimiah and Mary have much courage. Despite the risk to which they expose themselves, they agree wholeheartedly to do their part in bringing about the Kingdom of God. They know that they are small and vulnerable but do not ask for spectacular results, success nor power in return. They simply let the leaven act.

To be leaven requires that we overcome many fears: the fear of failure, the fear of being ridiculed or losing control of our life. However, if we succeed, an unsuspected wealth may rise in our lives and in those of many of our sisters and brothers.

Dare we be leaven?

JOËLLE KIELWASSER  
Vice provincial coordinator, Belgium



---

## Testimony

# Palm Weekend in Santa Severa

**W**e, three communities from Rome, met up to celebrate Palm Sunday together. We had not been able to see each other for three years for this traditional meeting.

The San Gaetano residence welcomed us, as always, with great willingness for an emotional weekend, especially on meeting old friends again and discovering the faces of new friends. We deepened the story of St Peter: we did a mime on some Gospel passages that show him beside Jesus, beautiful episodes like that of his calling first of all as a disciple then as the head of the Church and the most difficult, his denial.

Each passage was represented by a symbol prepared during a practical activity: the heart, the cockerel, the rock.

In small groups, we wondered together what part of Peter resonated in us and what symbol represented us the most at that moment.

On Sunday, after the traditional walk by the sea, we performed the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem with the olive branches followed by the Mass celebrated by Father Luc.

ANTONIETTA PANTONE  
San Gregorio Community



---

## Testimony

# He is risen, He is truly risen!

Angela Grassi, vice international coordinator, accompanies the three provinces from Italy, which also includes Cyprus, Greece, Albania, Galilee, Croatia, Bosnia and Switzerland. For Easter, she sent this letter to all her provinces.



**S**o much pain this Lent, so many images of war, devastation and despair. So many ordeals for the men and women, the children and the old people in a Ukraine that is only asking for peace and tranquillity. And how many other wars are continuing in the world, without our days being affected...

Too much pain leads to a refusal to listen to other negative news. Closing our eyes and turning our heads away. But we are those who light the lamp instead of cursing the darkness. We know that the Lord of peace is close to those who are suffering, even in the most terrible moments. We are those who do not turn their heads away.

I am writing to you after the Holy Thursday Mass. Every time, I find myself thinking, in silence before the tomb, how much Jesus humanly suffered: how many lacerations on his

flesh, how many blows, the pain of the nails, the crown of thorns. A pain encompassing that of every tortured body, of every body torn apart by wounds, of all illness and all despair.

Every time that we say the Faith and Light prayer, we are asking to be at the foot of the cross with Mary, "close to the crucified of our world". And the image of the cross contains all human suffering.

This prayer has been said every night since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis. Many people have gathered remotely, to bring comfort and hope to those who cannot leave the country bombarded and bent by famine and destruction. Friends from Russia have been the first to join in and many of them now carry on every Monday and Thursday with friends from all over the world, from Lithuania to Canada.

How much peace these looks have given me even this evening! How much hope! As long as there are people who are able to pray together, choosing unity and not division, this desperate world of ours will be able to find hope once more.

The solid faith of many Ukrainians; the gentle face of the province coordinator, Oksana; the tenacity of Uliana (with whom I have worked for two years on the international council); the intercessions of a Downs Syndrome girl often dressed in traditional costume; the tenderness of a mother beside her child in a wheelchair (of those who, even if





Oksana, Ulyana and her husband

they wanted to, could not flee to other countries); the soft voice of friends who propose songs to share together, in different languages: it all remains imprinted in the heart.

Here, in each one of them, the Lord is risen. He is alive and present. You can see him. Give us, Lord, a simple and tenacious faith like that of those who find in you the courage to stay and hope against all despair.

You, the Risen One, light up our steps. Guide us in our journey, help us to remain a true family, in which we do not give up but remain close to those in difficulty.

Lord Jesus, lift the stones that oppress our hearts, do not let the evil take place and give us your peace.

Happy Easter!



ANGELA GRASSI



---

## Testimony

# Farewell, Father François

FATHER FRANÇOIS BARRE WAS THE FORMER FAITH AND LIGHT CHAPLAIN OF THE FRANCE “ENTRE DEUX MERS” PROVINCE. HE WAS VERY WELL KNOWN WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. HE WAS A PRIEST IN LANGON, A PARISH PRIEST IN LOUPIAC WITH THE CHAPLAINCY OF THE CADILLAC PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL AND THE DIOCESE EXORCIST. CONFIDENT, HIS DOOR WAS ALWAYS OPEN, DAY AND NIGHT. A HEART AS BIG AS A HOUSE. IT WAS ALWAYS THE WELCOME FROM THE FATHER IN HEAVEN WHEN FRANÇOIS WELCOMED US! HE WAS WELCOMED BY THE FATHER AT THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY. ON THE DAY OF HIS FUNERAL MASS, VALÉRIE VIDIL TESTIFIES.

**I**n this congregation, there are a lot of members and leaders of Faith and Light, province, regional and community leaders... I am here before you and I am also representing the members of my community who are absent.

I am going to start with a little song: *“Ma petite est comme l’eau, elle est comme l’Eau Vive, venez, venez, entrez dans ma communauté, jamais, jamais, vous le regretterez”*. (My little one is like water. Living water, come, come, come into my community, you will never ever regret it)

Your magnificent smile makes your blue eyes shine with a thousand sparkles! Your arms wide open when we arrive that close to hold and embrace us. François, you are a song, you are thousands of songs that have interspersed our lives in Faith and Light. To welcome, to thank, to announce in order to celebrate life, camps, regional and provincial meetings, during the OCH procession, pilgrimages and meetings in Lourdes...

François, it is the right word and the pun, it is everyone hanging on your every word waiting for their paragraph. As a kindly cartoonist, with the stroke of a pen, you capture each person, our gifts and our quirks. Everything was seen and we were completely loved.

François, the historic chaplain of Faith and Light from the “Entre deux Mers” province. A name known to everyone. You preached retreats particularly at the province pilgrimage



to Lourdes. In 1998, you went as part of a delegation to Canada for the international meeting. Your homilies, embers where you always started from everyday life, the ordinariness of our lives, anecdotes to open us up to the Kingdom of God, to infinity, to the greater than us. Your life and your teachings remind us of the fraternity, relationship and love of our neighbour. Whoever he was, wounded, in his psyche, in his intelligence or in his body, from here in this land of the Gironde you knew and loved so much or elsewhere. You constantly questioned yourself and us.



François, you are a man of culture, you loved beauty, art, music and theatre. Everything was a pretext to talking about the Love of God. You liked to create and make beautiful celebrations, even the simplest had to respect the *liturgy and having meaning*.

François, you are a player, you love all games. Belote on Thursdays at Loupiac and the table open to all friends of the "Demeure d'Accueil" community and the psychiatric hospital. Those memorable parts with Pierre and Robert. Dice games at camps and the olympiads.

François, the gentleness, your requests for hugs, affection for your relatives, your dear family, your friends, your brothers from the Church. Your vicarages have always been places of unconditional welcome to everyone, in all circumstances of our lives. In Fargues with

Eliane, how many of us have you welcomed, consoled over a hot coffee and a good meal?

François, like your patron saint, you are a friend of the animals, your two donkeys, your goat, your cats, Scarlett the acrobat, with many numbers that only drank from the jug on the kitchen table.

François, the diocese exorcist, surrounded by a team in your image, with Annie from your parish in Fargue, Sylvie from the Cadillac countryside, Bernard from Relais, Guy from Secours Catholique and me from Faith and Light. Your listening and your knowledge of the tormented human soul worked miracles and we were, despite the unknown of these meetings, certain of being in our place because chosen by you.

François, how to thank you. You have greatly shaped the woman that I am, in all areas of my life. You have accompanied me since that retreat in 1985 in Artigues near Bordeaux, to prepare for my first Faith and Light pilgrimage to Nevers. With Luc, you engaged us, you concelebrated our marriage with our uncles, you shared with us the joy of the births of our children, Noémie, Julien and Baptiste, you accompanied our mourning, celebrated our joys, you are part of our lives.

On behalf of all members of Faith and Light, we say thank you. We know you are welcomed in the Kingdom, surrounded by your dear parents, by all your relatives, by all your friends and all those that you have accompanied in your ministry as a Priest.

VALÉRIE VIDIL



---

## Testimony

# Congratulations, Arianna!

**ARIANNA, A FAITHFUL MEMBER OF FAITH AND LIGHT, HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MEETING IN SPAIN IN JULY 2017. AFTER FINISHING HIGH SCHOOL, ARIANNA WENT TO UNIVERSITY. IT TOOK HER 9 YEARS OF PERSEVERANCE TO REACH HER GOAL BECAUSE OF NUMEROUS HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT PREVENTED HER FROM FOLLOWING HER COURSE LIKE THE OTHER STUDENTS. BUT SHE SUCCEEDED AND WITH WHAT RESULT! BRAVO!!!**

**M**y name is Arianna, I have a disability, I belong to the Faith and Light community "Messengers of Joy" in Milan, Italy.

I would like to tell the story of a dream, longed for and often hindered, which came true a few weeks ago.

Exactly ten years ago, after finishing high school, I decided to continue my studies by enrolling at university, choosing among the many faculties "Media Languages", with the hope of becoming a journalist.

As I said before, it was not always easy, I encountered various obstacles, and on several occasions I thought I would never make it, but my desire to achieve this goal was my motivation to continue on this path. Of course, I was supported by my family (my mother Silvana, my father Rosario and my sister Valentina), which pushed me to go ahead and keep believing in my dream. Finally this dream came true, in fact the Saturday before Easter there were the results, my mark was 100/110!

Then there was a big and beautiful party organised by my friends of Faith and Light from Milan: many friends, even if some could not come because of the pandemic, and many surprises!

ARIANNA



Arianna and her parents





For our reflection

## A story of twins

Three times the Gospel of St John talks about Thomas by calling him Didymus (that is to say Twin), without knowing who Thomas was the twin of. The most well-known mention is that of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the Apostles in the absence of Thomas. *But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came (Jn 20, 24).* We have all formulated this now popular expression: “I am like Saint Thomas, I will only believe it when I see it!”, even though Jesus said to Thomas the following week: *Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe (Jn 20, 29).* But this does not tell us who this mysterious twin was...

The two other times that the word of Didymus is mentioned by St John is in a communal context: when Jesus after having waited some time before going to join Lazarus who had just died, Thomas addressed the disciples saying: *Let us also go, that we may die with him (Jn 11, 16).* And then on the shores of Galilee, when Peter suggested going fishing, the six others present – including Thomas – go with him without hesitation.

The notion of community is very strong in these three passages, as if St John wanted to remind us that the bonds between the disciples was very important but at the same time, when we feel close to Doubting Thomas, we have the impression of being that mysterious twin and being part of the community when we agree to believe without having seen.

I remember Aline and Alice, twin sisters from a community in Africa. One of the two, Aline have a disanility. One evening, during a vigil, they put on a show for us during which they had reversed roles: it was Alice who became disabled and Aline no longer was. There was such a complicity between the two sisters that all of us were very touched to see them have fun with our astonishment.

We have all seen the bonds of friendship created in our Faith and Light community, the complicity between friends or parents and the disabled people. When that happens, we forget what the disability situation entails, we only think about laughing and getting on well together... we learn to discover the face and the presence of Jesus in all our brothers and sisters, especially the weakest, we learn to welcome our own wounds and weakness (cf. the Faith and Light prayer). We could almost talk about a twin bond.

Yes, it is hard to believe what we do not see but we are all the Didymus of Saint Thomas, we will all soon learn to shout out: *My Lord and my God!*

GHISLAIN DU CHÉNÉ



# International news

## New reference bishop for Portugal

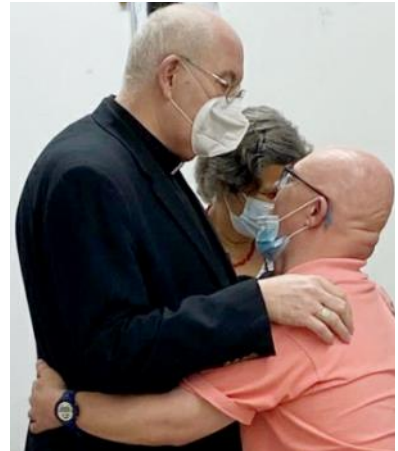
The role of reference bishop is essential so that he can represent us and make us known to the clergy and announce that the most fragile are a treasure for the Church.

In recent years, we have been fortunate to have been accompanied by D. Antonio Couto who has always supported us and who we thank.

Now, it is **D. Francisco Senra** who will accompany us. He really knows Faith and Light because he was chaplain of the Our Lady of Fatima community in Evora for 25 years.

On behalf of the whole province, thank you for your availability and commitment.

Welcome!



## Two provinces from France elect their coordinators



- **France East:**  
Daniel and Anne Gallien  
succeed to Véronique Thépot



- **France West:**  
Denis and Catherine Blanchard  
succeed to Alain and Isabelle Piffeteau



## Between the Seas, new vice provincial coordinators

- **Czech Republic**  
Lukáš Podsedník and Hana Podsedníková  
succeed to Petra Klaskova and Terezie Smejkalova.

### **A new provincial council for "Northern Lights"**



From left to right: Gudrun Klingsheim and Eli Landro co vice provincial coordinators, Norway - Dag Pagander, provincial treasurer, Norway - Anne-Mette Pleijel Johnsson, vice provincial coordinator, Sweden - Virge Nemwalts, vice provincial coordinator, Estonia - Rvd Erik Hviid Larsen, provincial chaplain, Denmark - Birgitt Aarrestad, provincial coordinator, Norway and Ann Emmott, vice international coordinator.

### **New council also for Poland West**



Izabela Kubacka (and her husband Tomasz who is absent), Krystyna Sadowska-Druć, Anna Węcłewska, Tomasz Kujawa, Joanna Kuriata, vice provincial coordinators, Ilona Płonka-Kwiek, treasurer, Justyna Antoniewicz, provincial coordinator.

**Thank you to everyone for your Yes!**



# International agenda

- **4 June:** Luzitana province team meeting, Folgosa
- **10-12 June:** Rainbow retreat for the Belgian communities, Ave-et-Auffe
- **18-19 June:** Luzitana province meeting, Lisbon
- **25-26 June:** Colours of Asia (India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore) province assembly, Zoom
- **1-4 July:** holiday camp for the Norwegian communities and 50th anniversary celebration, Birkeland
- **17-23 July:** first holiday camp for the Slovenian communities, Kančevci
- **24-30 July:** second holiday camp for the Slovenian communities, Pohorje
- **8-14 August:** third holiday camp for the Slovenian communities, Soča
- **13-19 August:** holiday camp for the Croatian communities, Glavotok
- **26 August-1<sup>st</sup> September:** fourth holiday camp for the Slovenian communities, Portorož
- **16-18 September:** UK province pilgrimage, Walsingham
- **23-25 September:** Canada East province meeting, Rawdon

# International solidarity

## Projects to be supported

- Creation of four communities in Peru: 1200€
- Province assembly in Rwanda: 1400€
- Discernment and election in the Rainbow province (Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion, Seychelles): 150€

## What has your contribution to international solidarity in 2021 been used for?

- Egypt Centre
  - Formation session: 600€
  - Pilgrimage and province assembly: 300€
  - Holiday camps: 2000€
- Egypt South-Kuwait
  - Formation session: 300€
  - Holiday camp: 1500€



# The new website

We are pleased to announce the opening of the new Faith and Light International website.

A rejuvenated, upgraded, colourful and very cheerful look.

Address: [www.foietlumiere.org/en](http://www.foietlumiere.org/en)



**Faith and Light**  
international



Communities made up of persons with intellectual disabilities, their families and friends who meet together to experience friendship, celebration and life!

[Discover Faith and Light](#)

## Find a community



“ Persons with disabilities come to the meeting as people who are waiting for that special moment of gathering, fellowship, prayer and sharing. They are so spontaneous and natural in their gestures that they become our teachers in the transparency of truth and humility.

*Father Louis N. Community  
Chaplain, France* ”

[Join us](#)



### Ecumenical Retreat in Denmark

26 May  
Different churches in Denmark come together in ecumenical celebrations "Himmelske dage" (heavenly days)



### Up Sails! 51

Ukraine in our hearts. Seven pages devoted to our Ukrainian friends, a meeting of young people via Zoom in the province "Jesus, Light of the Andes", [...]



### Ukraine in our heart

We join the 39 communities in Ukraine in our prayer for peace

# 2023

International meeting and General assembly of Faith and Light International

[MORE](#)





# Family album



## Dorotea



Dorotea is the new granddaughter of Endre Csani, vice international coordinator, and daughter of Julia, the vice provincial coordinator for Hungary. Welcome to the Faith and Light family Dorotea!

## Elaine Lee



Elaine, who is part of the "Mother Mary's Bouquet" community in Malaysia, sent us this

photo to wish us a Happy Easter. The eggs were painted by her sister, Claudine. Well done, they are magnificent!

Valerie Jaques  
Vice international coordinator

## A fortunate coincidence!

I would like to thank you for your article about Piotr Dylkowski, published in March 2021 in "Up Sails!" issue 47. I discovered it by chance when I googled his name last year. Piotr was the only cousin of my father...

Following my discovery, I was able to forward your article to all my family, I can tell you that many tears flowed.

The testimonies about our Piotr were very faithful to what we experienced with him. It was still a great joy to see how much he had been able to mark the lives of other people.

Again, a huge thank you, he is now with God and we are looking at us from on high with his huge smile.

Sincerely,  
Mathieu Dylkowski



## The logo

The logo revisited by the "Seventh Day" community in Lebanon. Well done, what a very good idea!



## A collage for Ukraine

Very dear friends of Faith and Light in Ukraine, our thoughts and our prayers are with you. The "Le germe qui fleurit" Faith and Light community in France is sending you this beautiful montage, a sign of their union in prayer with you and for you!





# The letter from Marie-Hélène



## A TREASURE TO HAND ON

We would like so much to share the “treasures” that we have found in the community with those around us. How to do this?

It happens very naturally without us thinking much about it. In our community, we invite many people to simply come... to see: “Come and you will see”. Persons with disabilities invite residents from their homes or co-workers. One young couple brings another. Now they are several, two couples with their little ones. Some people will just pass through, but they will carry with them a picture of what Faith and Light is. \*Others stay. In this way, the community grows.

When we get to about forty members, interpersonal relationships become more difficult. It becomes necessary to look toward the future with the Faith and Light “specialist”. In our history, we have been led to give birth to a new community, to designate a team of volunteers to support the creation and to send reinforcements to a community that has become too small and weak. If we do not give life to others, we risk drying up...

But expanding is an adventure that involves suffering, sacrifices and joys. Once we have forged tight bonds, it is sometimes difficult to convince the members of the community of the merits of the project, of



the graces of giving life to another community or in supporting another community. Resistance is normal, very understandable and requires time and patience to overcome it. It also requires time and assistance to find and raise awareness in a new parish to the evangelical presence of the weakest, to find a first leader, to establish a first coordinating team... Often, it is truly arduous.

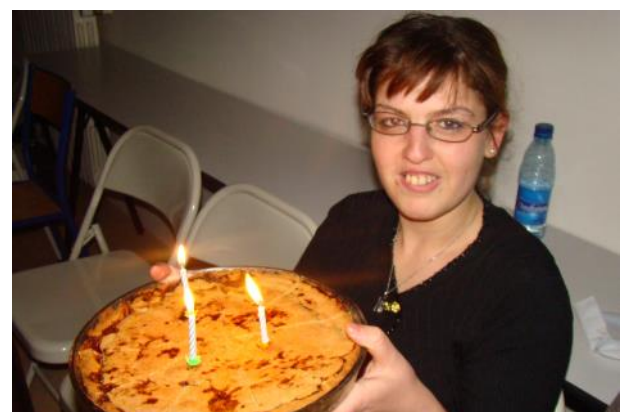
*“We need to take Jesus’ word literally when he says to invite the poor to the feast.”*

Nevertheless, when the new group meets for the first time, we forget all the suffering, in the joy of a birth.

A new community can also be born at the insistence of one person who opens the way. Marie-Agnès, an adult with Down Syndrome, was a faithful and passionate member of her community. When her family moved, she did not rest until there was a new community in her new parish. She personally went to visit the pastor, pestered her parents to get involved, although they thought it was preferable to give their daughter the freedom to act on her own. Marie-Agnès talked about the project everywhere, laid the foundations during a Sunday mass, inviting the parishioners to meet afterwards for more information. The community sails on today many years later.

In another case, it was the loneliness of a young mother from Argentina and her small, severely disabled daughter, found in the street, which was the origin of another group.

Likewise, I think of one young priest, recently appointed to a parish who decided that his first project would be to create a Faith and Light community. It would be the sign of evangelical priority. *“We need to take Jesus’ word literally when he says to invite the poor to the feast.”*



---

"Never again alone, the adventure of Faith and Light" page 257.