

# Up Sails!

The international letter of Faith and Light N° 58, October 2023

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## Together in Rome





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## Call and fragility

**RAÚL GAVE THIS TESTIMONY AT THE ECUMENICAL PRAYER VIGIL ORGANISED IN ROME ON 30 SEPTEMBER BY "TOGETHER - GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD" FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 18 TO 35, IN THE PRESENCE OF POPE FRANCIS (SEE PAGE 13, ANGELA GRASSI'S TESTIMONY).**



**Raúl Izquierdo**  
International coordinator

**B**ut we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Cor, 4: 7-8)

The first time I met Faith and Light I knew nothing about people with an intellectual disability. When I was 17 years old, I was a catechist in a parish and the parish priest asked me to participate to a meeting of families with "special" children. I went there, full of prejudices and barriers, to meet a reality that separated me from my own. When I arrived, a girl with a disability shook my hand and I went with her to that meeting. From that moment on, God wanted my reality, my story, to be united with that of the people who made up that group called Faith and Light.

The Faith and Light community to which I belong is in Salamanca, Spain, and it is the place where I live my faith with other people. It is a community of simple people who love life. At the centre, Jesus, who unites us all, and at the heart of it, some people with intellectual disabilities. Around them, there are other people who are very different in age and personal situations, with other types of disabilities. And we all try to share our fragility and help each other to discover the gift they represent. The cross is present, because there are people and families who suffer and have suffered a lot, but we also know that pain and death do not have the last word and that we are called to be witness communities of the Resurrection of Jesus in the places where we live, we are called to be Easter communities.

As time went by, my call to live my faith in a community of Faith and Light took root, growing through different experiences and getting to know the international dimension. I discovered that what I was living with my community in my parish, in my town, in my

country, was being lived by others all around the earth.

I discovered that there were people with an intellectual disability in every corner of the world and that there were other Faith and Light communities. And whatever their language or country, I found out that we all share the most important and essential thing: to live and celebrate together the faith in Jesus with people with an intellectual disability.

I also discovered that the family of Christians went far beyond my status as a Christian Catholic : there are Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Coptic Christians... This is the dimension of ecumenism, a source of richness for our communities. It is a dimension to take care of with attention and tenacity, not without difficulties, and that we welcome as a challenge in our movement. I also came to know that Faith and Light was a way of living the faith that could fit into any country and cultural situation. When Jesus is the center of our communities, diversity multiplies the gifts





and we understand that with five loaves and two fish we can eat to bursting, and there can even be leftovers. Then diversity can be a richness and fragility a treasure. But this needs to be worked on because it is not so obvious.

Now I live the double dimension on which I was asked to give this testimony: firstly, being part of a small community in which we share faith and life, celebrating, spending time together, supporting each other and strengthening our bonds, and secondly, knowing that I am part of an international family present in more than 86 countries. Both dimensions are so important and so complementary. For 5 years I have been at the service of Faith and Light as international coordinator, accepting the assignment of the General Assembly that asked me to do so after a process and discernment. But each and every one of us is responsible for our faith and our communities, and from our call, from our history, from our personal circumstances, whatever they may be, we are called to open our heart and hands and ask Jesus, what do you want from me, what do you want me to do with my fragility, what do you want me to do with the fragility of others?

I have had the immense good fortune to meet people from many corners of the world who are searching for God and living their faith in their own culture, in their own historical context so different from mine. I have met families with children with an intellectual disability from African, Arabic or American countries. It is an enormous diversity, sometimes overwhelming, but I have been discovering that it is part of our richness. It is so, as long as we accept that something greater than ourselves unites us. And for me, it is God who unites us, who binds us together, who summons us. It is God who makes us a family, who makes us brothers and sisters. It is God who, beyond diversity, makes us one around him. And it is God who makes it possible for our fragility to be a gift when we look at it with the eyes of Jesus.

Yes, this fragility is unbearable for the world. This fragility of our friends with an intellectual disability is intolerable for the canons of success and beauty of our cultures. Humanity fears and panics about fragility. But in the eyes of God, fragility is the condition for his presence and strength. Without fragility, God has no place. Without weakness, there is no room for God's strength. That is why the mission of Faith and Light must be prophetic in the midst of history today, which does not tolerate fragility. Do we ourselves accept our fragility? We always try to make it up, to disguise it, and we become experts in using masks in order to try to get some crumb of affection or recognition, showing to others someone we are not. This is called fear. And precisely, God tells us again not to be afraid. And today I place in God's hands my fears and yours, my frailties and yours.

May God grant us, in the midst of our wounds and frailties, the gift of discovering his Love and Grace in them. May Jesus help us to be men and women who welcome the fragility of others, with respect and joy. And may the Holy Spirit give us his gaze of wisdom and courage to bear witness to who we are in the midst of the reality in which we each live and in which we are called to be witnesses of the Gospel.

# Summer camp

**M**y husband, Werner and I from Denmark, participated in the zone summer holyday in Caslebar in Ireland. It was great and Ann Emmott arranged a zoom prayer meeting with Ukrainian Faith and Light friends worldwide, Maureen O'Reilly, Wendy Wilcox, Pat Cudd and many others took part. We were singing the Communiy song for them on their Indipendence day 24.8. And Fr. Donal Lucey and we prayed for them at our mass at Irelands greatest Pilgrimage ace, Knock. Ceeli Horsburgh, Scotland, went to mass at the same time and thus united in prayers. To my big surprise and joy, there were people, who had been more than 40 years in Faith and Light, and some of them, I had met in Ilkley, England for a Formation Session in 1986! It was here Catherine Holden from Alberta, Canada taught us the Community song, we all love to sing now.

The summer holyday camp was very well organised, Bernie Noonan and her team had made a marvelous job, helped by Ann Emott, so everybody felt at ease and seen.

Bishop Brendan Kelly was so kind to come and meet us one day to manys joy, not the least to me and my husband. Hannah O'Brien, an old friend, too came to visit us.

My husband had not been to such a Faith and Light meeting before. What touched

him the most, was the loving care for our coremembers. He himself had a big wish to go to the Atlantic Sea and sing a "Song for Ireland" and Bernie made his wish come true, Thank you!

There were lovely workshops. I was happy to learn to make The Saint Brigids Cross, to hang over my door for protection of our home. There were talks of " Faith and Ligth as a gift" and " The Spirituality of Faith and Light."

How we old ones should try to spred new seeds of love to young people, so this wonderful movement can continue. Every evening there was song and dance before evening prayer.

Simon Gough, an irishman Terry and my Husband once a week meet and sing irish songs in Denmark, so Werner surprised them entertaining them in their own language with songs they loved.

God bless you all!

INGE SWITON-RØNNOW  
Responsible for Vesterbro community



Ann, Mgr Brendan et Inge





# Farewell to Wildflowers

**ON 18 SEPTEMBER, A BEAUTIFUL FAREWELL CEREMONY WAS HELD IN GATINEAU, QUEBEC. AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC, THE COMMUNITY HAD TO CLOSE ITS DOORS. FOR THIS FAREWELL, THE COMMUNITY ORGANISED A BEAUTIFUL CEREMONY.**

Last Saturday, the members of the Wildflowers community met at Louise Sauriol Major's home.

After the weather report, the meeting celebrated Jacques Huppé's sixty years of priesthood and his invaluable support over the community's 49 years.

During this last meeting, hosted by Mireille, each member shared their fond memories. Mimes were part of every meeting, enhancing the spiritual aspect and bringing a lot of joy.

The Wildflowers community has borne much fruit for each of its members, as well as at the provincial and international levels. We think of Henri Major and Louise, Claude Gravel and Denise, Guy Dumas, Pierrette Gagnon, Mireille and Lucie Lachance...

Thank you for all this fruitfulness, which has served the mission of Faith and Light.

A magnificent bouquet of flowers was presented to Mireille and Lucie to thank them for their commitment as leaders of the community.

It was a wonderful celebration of the life of the community, rounded off by delicious desserts.

Thank you, Fleurs Sauvages, and continue in faith and in light!



SIMONE



# Announcement and Sharing day

Last September, on a beautiful sunny Sunday, the Barka community from Bydgoszcz (Poland) gave a testimony of Faith and Light in the basilica during a parish retreat and then invited the parishioners to visit their lovely stand set up on the square. It was a wonderful time of sharing, joy and encounters leading to God, faith and light!

The attractive stand featured tea bags with the Faith and Light logo, sweets of all kinds and shortbread cakes also bearing the Faith and Light logo! Each visitor went home with a bookmark featuring the Faith and Light prayer.

Well done for your ingenuity and congratulations on your generosity!



# Jesus walks with us



**W**e had a wonderful Provincial Meeting 2023 on the theme: "Jesus walks with us"... with almost 40 people. We included with us the communities that were absent.

On Friday evening, we start the meeting with a song, a prayer, the theme and a visual of Jesus on the move. On a small card, each person draws what represents them and writes their name. Valérie then asked us to introduce ourselves, to say what we love and what we bring to Faith and Light; then we put the drawing that represents us next to Jesus on the visual.

We realise that a third of the participants are people with disabilities, a third are parents and a third are friends. What a grace! We rounded off the evening with prayer, a snack and a campfire.

On Saturday morning, Abbé Pierre Desroches came to celebrate Mass. His homily

and subsequent words always open our hearts to love and forgiveness. Our conscience opens up to divine understanding. Normand's surprise arrival with Loudia filled everyone with joy.

The Annual General Meeting followed, hosted by Roger, our Treasurer. In the section dealing with the Provincial Team report, it was mentioned that two discernments had taken place this year: Patricia and Juan were re-elected to be in charge of Holy Family and Roger was elected to be in charge of the Vigil. Thank you for your yes.

Patricia and Valérie were our representatives at the international meeting in Strasbourg and we thank them.

Simone then read a letter from Régine Lessard, leader of the Marguerites of Alma, announcing the end of her community. Régine is also stepping down as vice-coordinator.

Valérie tells us that the Crossbreed and the Ewes of St Clément are in the process of merging.

Further to the email we received, Mireille confirms that the Wildflowers of Gatineau have celebrated the life of their community with a final meeting. Mireille, Lucie and Marie-Claire will be joining Holy Family.

Mireille remains vice-coordinator. We are grateful for all the fruits that these communities have generated.

The afternoon began with Marie-Thérèse Fortier, leader of the Eves of St-Clément, who spoke about her journey with Faith and Light and her decision to leave the community. We welcome and offer our gratitude to her, her sister Hélène and her mother Monique. We entrust everything to Jesus who walks with us.

Then, to introduce speaker Louis Charbonneau, the Star's "heart-person", we watch a



short extract from the report "My jungle", which raises awareness of the differences of which Louis is a part. He tells us that people who are different have abilities and strengths, that they want to be respected, recognised and loved like everyone else, and he answers our many questions. Thank you, Louis.

Then, full of enthusiasm, Valérie, Patricia, Emilia and Andrew share their experiences of the international meeting in Strasbourg, France. Information was given on priorities and discernment, and several anecdotes were told.

And there's the evening fiesta! Everyone got involved with singing, music, dancing, a game with animal families, etc. We had a lot of fun and a lot of laughs! We rounded things off with a delicious snack.

Sunday morning began with the Gospel of the day: the workers of the last hour, mimed by members of the Star. Roger then led us in a reflection on the Gospel in small groups.

Rita, from the Star, informed us of her wish to start a new community with families from Lebanon. She asked for our prayers and was assured of the support of the provincial team. We live in hope.

Thank you to Nathalie and Sébastien and to Gaétane and her daughter Nathalie for their moving testimonies.

We surprised Roger (treasurer) by paying tribute to all

his involvement in Faith and Light.

The birthdays of the month are marked by Loulou, our specialist, who has made a card for those who celebrated in September.

Then the sending is as follows: three "heart persons" hand a small card drawn to each participant, blessing him or her. Each person undertakes to pray all year long for the person whose name is written on the card. Another "heart person" gave us a card representing Compostela with a thought.

A special thank you to Sylvain for the music... Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone...

Let's give thanks to God, to Jesus and Mary for this magnificent meeting, they are with us...

The provincial team: Simone, Suzanne, Roger, Mireille and Valérie



# The Boat on holiday

**J**une 2023 at last! We were able to organise a camp in our favourite place: the Abbey of Our Lady of Scourmont in Chimay.

There were twelve of us: six different people, one mum and five friends. It was an opportunity to experience these moments in pairs, as proposed at the "Rainbow" retreats. So there were times for sharing as a group and special times in pairs! A wonderful experience! Everyone was delighted!

We spent the camp with Saint Francis of Assisi... And he was actually there... He welcomed us on the Friday evening and showed us his Canticle of the Creatures using a powerpoint... Yes! He's a trendy saint!

On Saturday, he programmed a film for us that told us about his life and showed us his values and interests: poverty, simplicity, fraternal life, joy, nature, prayer...

Then we were given the chance to play a game in pairs: we had to dress up a large Saint Francis drawn with photos on the different themes mentioned. It was fascinating!

After dinner.... Oh yes! I forgot to mention how well received we were at the abbey from every point of view: delicious meal - great times of prayer... So, after dinner, we explored Chimay and the surrounding area on board a friendly little train.



A notre retour, après un bon goûter, un moine a répondu à nos questions sur la vie en communauté à Chimay.

As you can see, there was a lot going on!... But don't worry, there was plenty of free time: naps - walks - drawing mandalas...

On Saturday evening, we settled down for a lovely evening of singing, dancing and sketches, washed down with a good Chimay beer for those who wanted it (of course, the lighter the better!).

Sunday... Our last day! We set off in pairs on an exciting treasure hunt in the countryside, followed by a large-group sharing of the fruits of our discoveries.

At 11am we attended mass with the monks. In the afternoon, a final siesta, tidying up and cleaning up. And at the end, a wonderful celebration of thanksgiving for everything we had experienced at the camp.

Before heading home for good, we stopped off at the tavern for a well-deserved nightcap!

And that was it! Thank you Jesus! Thank you Saint Francis! See you next year!

ELISABETH CHAUVON  
For The Boat  
Grand Large N° 34





# Camp in Kluang

I'm writing this account of our summer camp with a mixed feeling. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> day of passing of our very dearly loved friend, Jonathan Lee while trying to account for the summer camp.

It was 2019 while attending a retreat together, Magdelene and I spoke casually over lunch that our Faith and Light Communities in Singapore and Malaysia need bonding and fellowship time together... A summer fun camp was the plan.

We said goodbye at the retreat, and not too long after, Covid came and fast forward it's 2023. Magdelene and I re-connected again, and we started planning for Summer Camp in Kluang Johor Bahru in Malaysia.

It was a wonderful journey as it is a great teamwork from our project team, consisting of Magdelene Yip, Agnes Marsh, Lucy Ong, Diana Low and myself. Many zoom / google meet sessions, over 4 months - working out budget, activities, telematch games, location, transport, T-shirt & tote bag orders, designs, catering etc. Special credit to Fabienne Tan and Carmen Tan who helped with developing the visuals and designs for our Outing.

A total of 32 participants (17 from Singapore across all 3 communities and 15 from Malaysia). On 22 Sep 2023 our Malaysian members traveled down from Kuala Lumpur and

Singapore members traveled up to meet at Oasis Convent (Canossian Convent retreat centre) in Kluang, Johor, Malaysia. We began with lots of warm welcome and ice-breaker games and we had a beautiful candle Rosary session at the beautiful grotto of Our Lady! The next day we embarked on an outing to UK Agro Farm and super lunch together, before gathering back in the Convent for telematch games... all played together.. screaming like children with excitement. Another highlight of the camp... we lit colorful sky lanterns to the sky carrying our prayers to God. We ended our camp on the third day 24 Sep 2023 with morning mass at the local church before heading back to our homes. We left with our hearts warm and filled with love! We look forward to more fellowships celebrating the lives of our core members with special needs.

ADELINE KHU  
AND MAGDALENE YIP



Jonathan Lee Thien Shui, birth 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1983 and demise 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023. One of the founding members of Mother Mary's Bouquet community, Malaysia.



# Slovenia celebrates 40

The Slovenian province of Faith and Light has just celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We organised a pilgrimage to Slovenia's most famous shrine: the national shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Brezje. There were around 900 Slovenian pilgrims and a small group of Faith and Light friends from Croatia. Our bishop, Mgr Anton Jamnik, and 23 community chaplains celebrated a Mass during which two autistic teenagers made their First Communion.

After mass, a festival was organised, during which our friends with disabilities showed off their many talents by singing, dancing, playing an instrument, reciting and acting.

During the celebrations, three stands featured products made by people with disabilities, as well as our book Faith and Light, published in honour of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. One of the stands was dedicated to the October 2023 elections. The celebration in Brezje took place between 11am and 6pm.

The event was widely covered by the Slovenian media, particularly the Catholic media. The Slovenian Catholic newspaper Družina published a detailed article and the Slovenian Catholic radio station Ognjišče gave an interview.

We thank God for this wonderful festive event. It was a joy to see so many people with disabilities celebrating with



their families and friends. The blessing of Mary Help of Christians was with us.

KRISTINA ET DAMIJAN MLINARIČ  
Former provincial coordinators



Slovenia  
Is made of 42 communities



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## Testimony

# Together

**AN ECUMENICAL PRAYER VIGIL ORGANISED BY THE TAIZÉ COMMUNITY TOOK PLACE IN ROME ON SATURDAY 30 SEPTEMBER IN THE PRESENCE OF POPE FRANCIS. YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 18 TO 35 FROM ALL OVER EUROPE AND FROM ALL CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS WERE INVITED TO TAKE PART. FAITH AND LIGHT PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE EVENT! \***



**O**ur international coordinator Raúl Izquierdo pushes Edoardo's chair. My friend Edo walks with mum Nadia towards the altar in St Peter's Square. Dragen and Lovro, with their Croatian colours clearly visible on their T-shirts, carry the Holy Bible in procession. Matej and Damijan follow the icon of Mary and then wave the Slovenian flag. Daniele in the role of the Good Samaritan, Igor close to the Holy Father, Stefano playing the Levite. Marco, one of the thieves. Many of my friends mime the Gospel. Matteo, silent beside me, asks me to translate when they speak English or sing in other languages. Marco Bove, our international chaplain. All together, pilgrims of peace with many other Christian associations.

Tears of joy. That's how I remember TOGETHER. After months of preparation, which weighed particularly heavily on Fabio Bronzini, Daniela Guglietta and above all Angela Gattulli, our indefatigable president of the Fede e Luce Italia Association, the People of God Gathering was an explosion of emotions.

Seeing Roman friends opening their homes, Slovenians and Croats travelling for hours

without complaining, but singing and praying together in a bus decorated with a large luminous cross and driven by brothers, songs that unite and a thousand smiles when you don't know the languages of others, the Taizé brothers following each stage with their usual simplicity and away from the spotlight: everything was special.

Faith and Light played an important role with those who took part in the procession, with the mime performed in perfect costumes and with great passion, a painting by Amgad Edward (from Egypt) depicting the encounter with the other, with Leonardo Mazzarotto at the lectern. Months ago, Faith and Light said yes to the invitation from the Taizé Community, without understanding what it was all about. We issued the invitation and, even though we had a thousand concerns right up to the last second, the miracle of Faith and Light once again manifested itself.

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\* See the video

<https://www.facebook.com/fedeeluceonlus/videos/362574526189530>

Pope Francis urged us to live by listening to his Word, because "God speaks to us in a thread of silence". The square full of young people welcomed his messages in a touching silence.

We organised one of the morning workshops in the Church of the Holy Apostles to reflect on how diversity can transform our lives. Faith and Light members from Cyprus, Albania, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia came together. We listened to each other and prayed together, giving thanks for the presence of friends, relatives, people with disabilities and young people.

We bore witness to the Gospel of fragility before representatives of different Christian denominations, and in return our hearts received a great deal of energy in line with what Marie-Hélène Mathieu asked us at the General Assembly in Strasbourg: "*Turn everything you do into joy!*" Finally, after many tears and smiles, one moment particularly struck me: on the train, on the way back to Milan, a young woman thanked us because we reminded her, in a world of hostility and pretence, of "real relationships". "Keep it up - she told us - never change". TOGETHER called us to live the Gospel of joy with lightness. And we, as the Faith and Light prayer says, want to say yes.

ANGELA GRASSI  
Vice international coordinator



Josephina, Marios, Despina et Marco de Chypre





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## Testimony

# My priority is God

**MGR ROY, BISHOP OF PASIG (PHILIPPINES) HAS BEEN APPOINTED PROVINCIAL CHAPLAIN FOR "COLORS OF ASIA". HE SUCCEEDS MGR ROLANDO R. AUGUSTIN. CLOYD VILLEGAS, PROVINCE COORDINATOR, MET HIM FOR US.**

### Introduce yourself

My name is Roy Maderazo Rosales from the Diocese of Pasig. I have been parish priest of the Church of the Holy Rosary in Pasig, chairman of the diocesan Cultural Heritage Commission, chairman of the Pasig Diocesan Museum, treasurer of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and chaplain of the Milflores Faith and Light community since 2009.

### What brought you to Faith and Light?

It was 2009, I was invited by the young people in our parish when I was the parish priest at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Pasig to attend one of their celebrations and give a reflection about the Gospel for the young people, the parents and those who have intellectual disability. I accepted this right away because I was so delighted and thrilled that there is a group like that in my parish. When I attended, I saw the special children who were so much fun to be around because they brought me joy and I also saw their happiness in just very simple things. I was offered to be the community chaplain of their group and I didn't hesitate and I immediately said

yes.

### What is/are you past and current responsibilities in Faith and Light?

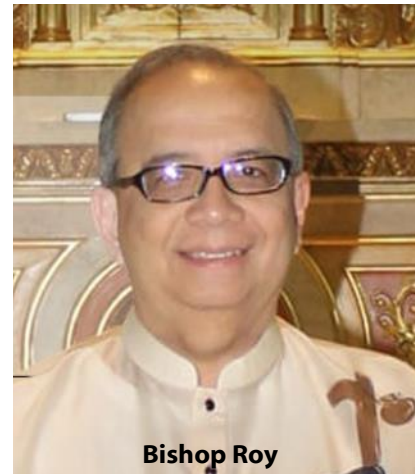
I am the community chaplain for Milflores Community in Pasig since 2009 and even if I move or be assigned to another parish, I will still be the chaplain they desire and I always and will gladly accept it because I have a huge heart for the young people, especially our special children.

### Describe your experience in solving a conflict between people in your community.

I usually solve conflicts between people in our community through dialogue. I talk to them personally and settle issues with only the concerned persons. In Milflores, I have not experienced any personal issues between members because we treat each as a family members.

### How has your own Faith and Light community helped you to grow?

Faith and Light has helped me grow in my faith by being simple and trusting to God. I admire the simplicity



of the members and their complete surrender to the will of God. Always "Thy will be done, O Lord."

### How do you set priorities in life and in the community?

First priority is God, above all. Always surrendering to God my needs and desires. When you prioritize God, everything will be easy for you to love and trust the Lord. Your life, work, service, and even your worries will be answered and



Bishop Roy with its community

will go smooth because of Him.  
In the community, I prioritize bringing the members to have an encounter with Jesus, let them live the Gospel and integrate it to the Church.

**What would be your contribution to the community and to the province?**

My contribution to the community and the province is my presence. To be always with them and prioritize the needs, difficulties, and listen to their joys and struggles. From there, you will understand each person and will give my spiritual advice not just by giving reflection to the Good News but also enlightenment.

**What are your areas for growth?**

Prayer and dialogue with God, especially in silence. It is only when we are silent that we hear the voice of God and able to communicate with Him. Presence with the members. I will try to be always present.

**Thank you bishop Roy.**





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## Testimony

# The joys of commitment!

**F**ive years ago, a phone call from someone I didn't know asked me if I was ready for the Province to discern on me to succeed Geneviève Gizard as coordinator of the Province of Paris and the Levant. At the time, I was a community coordinator and fairly new to Faith and Light. Once I'd got over my astonishment, I said "yes" after giving it some thought, but at the same time without really knowing what it would entail, and then the province trusted me.

It's been a whirlwind commitment, and I could never have imagined all the graces I've received over the last five years! I've got to know so many wonderful people with disabilities, family and friends, sailing together.

I like to use the image of a boat, which some of you will recognise (!): it's been windy, sometimes we've had to row, sometimes frail boats that have had to be patched up and finally set off again straight ahead. There were plenty of rays of sunshine, and some boats were at the end of their lives, but the pieces of wood salvaged were fundamental to the construction of brand new boats. There have been flat calm spells that jeopardised the voyage, in particular with the Covid crisis, but there have sometimes been large festive gatherings of boats with our provincial activities, and it all came to an end with this magnificent armada in Lourdes last year at All Saints' Day! So many treasures discovered and shared!

Of course, Jesus is always present in each of our boats: isn't he even more present in the hearts of our Community? "Through Him, through Him, through Him lives the Community" as the song goes. How fortunate we are, then, at Faith and Light!

I would never have discovered all these riches without having committed myself fully to them: what a gift, and one that I am passing on with great confidence to Blandine Mattei, to whom I wish all the best so that she can dis-



cover all the richness of Faith and Light.

I wish her all the best as she discovers the graces to be received over the years.

VALÉRIE AMICE

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## Testimony

# A prophecy

**DON MARCO BOVE, INTERNATIONAL CHAPLAIN, RECOUNTS HIS EXPERIENCE AT FAITH AND LIGHT, WHERE - AS HE SAYS - HE WAS WELCOMED WITHOUT ROLE OR LABEL, JUST IN THE SIMPLICITY AND JOY OF BEING TOGETHER.**



I don't think it's an exaggeration or a misnomer to talk about the "Gospel of Faith and Light", because what we experience in our communities is both a beautiful experience of friendship and encounter and, at the same time, an experience of the Gospel. And when it comes to the Gospel, the problem is not so much to develop grand theories, it's simply about life.

In fact, the Gospel is neither a doctrine nor a theory, it's a life, the life of Jesus. And at Faith and Light we've discovered that it's possible to live simply, in the day-to-day of our relationships, in meetings, in celebrations and in prayer.

But what is the Gospel of Faith and Light? Saint Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth: *"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God*

Since its beginnings, Faith and Light has come a long way, not only in the world, but also in the Church, gradually becoming aware of itself and its task, of the fragile and precious gift it has gradually become for this world of ours.

Even for me as a chaplain, the encounter with Faith and Light occurred during my formative years at the Seminary at an end-of-year party, and it was a gradual discovery. I had been asked to welcome this rather strange group to the seminary premises, so when they arrived, it was exactly the opposite that happened: it wasn't me who welcomed them, but I was welcomed so simply, without any role or label, in the simplicity and joy of being together. And since then, over forty years later, I've always stayed.





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*chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Cor 1:26-29).*

These words describe very well what we experience at Faith and Light, because God's choices always go against the grain. Our world always chooses and prefers what should be put on a pedestal; it chooses strength, beauty and competition. But God chooses what everyone else considers to be "foolish and despised"...

At Faith and Light, where there are no wise or powerful people, we discover that every human being is of great value, and that there is no one who does not have his or her own poverty, wounds and limitations. But everyone is loved and welcomed as they are, without having to hide, disguise or be ashamed. Everyone has the right to be themselves, and it's important for everyone to see their own beauty revealed.

This is the Gospel, the good news of God's love for all his children. At Faith and Light, we try to live all this out, and more than just proclaiming it in words, we try to make it a reality every time we meet, with the joy of welcoming each other and being together.

In the Church and in today's world, everyone must be able to find their place, especially the smallest and most fragile. For this reason, Faith and Light is an important sign and has a truly prophetic task: that of revealing to everyone the face of a God who chooses the little ones and confounds the wise of this world; but also within the Church, it reminds everyone of the centre of the Gospel and how it can be proclaimed.

We presume to believe that Faith and Light is a sign of the Gospel and that the Spirit has entrusted it to us today as a gift and a task. Perhaps we are not always able to live it out and bear true witness to it, but we are more than aware of this prophecy and, with all due humility, we are also a little proud of it.

DON MARCO BOVE  
Ombre e Luci n° 129





## Testimony

# Everyone does their bit



**E**very year at our community camp, one evening is devoted to the game of "Challenges". We have an hour to complete thirty seemingly impossible challenges: walk around a tree a hundred times, drink ten litres of water, add up all our ages, name flowers beginning with each letter of the alphabet... Really impossible?

Of course, we don't all have to do them, but we can participate by drinking 25 cl of water, or going round a tree three times, or naming a flower... Everyone contributes their talent, strength and imagination, and the results are impressive: this year, we did it in 45 minutes!

Our game is a fine application of the motto "there's strength in numbers". Each person contributes what they can, even if it seems

insignificant, such as "staying still for a minute".

The participation of everyone is essential to achieve this tour de force, everyone contributes their stone, whether it's a pebble or a rock. Everything is important. I often think of the cathedral builders who achieved prodigious feats simply by hoisting a block of stone, or melting glass for stained glass. It would take an artist several months to create a sculpture to complete a tympanum. The cathedral is therefore the result of decades of hard work by hundreds of craftsmen, not forgetting the hundreds of innkeepers, carters and others who were also indispensable.

Don Bosco, the Salesian priest who founded the Patros, loved bringing young people together and developing their gifts. One day, he saw a boy sitting against a tree, watching a group practising to create a circus show. He invited him to join in, but the boy said he had no gifts. "What can you do?" asked Don Bosco. "Nothing, sir, just whistle". "Well", he replied, "come and join the group and you'll be the one doing the sound effects".

It was just a tiny stone, and along with all the other stones, it helped to create a youth movement that is still alive after 200 years!

CHRISTIAN DELVAUX  
"Grand Large N°34 (Belgium)"





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## Testimony

# Seeing the unseen

IN AIX AND GARDANNE, IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, MARIETTE AND MURIEL TALK ABOUT THEIR ENCOUNTER WITH FAITH AND LIGHT, WHICH CHANGED THEIR LIVES. SOPHIE LECOMTE INTERVIEWED THEM FOR THE FRENCH RADIO STATION RCF.

Sometimes it only takes a few minutes for a life to be turned upside down and never be the same again. That was Mariette's experience over forty years ago, when her 23-year-old daughter was cycling to work when she was hit by a car.

She was in a coma for five weeks before being diagnosed. Terrible! Irreversible! Her daughter Bea was left with serious after-effects and a severe disability.

*"At first it was very difficult to get involved, you didn't want to enter this world at all, it wasn't because of ill will or fear, it was above all ignorance and I didn't want to enter the world of disability, it wasn't a funny world!"*

With her husband, Mariette was finally convinced and took part in a pilgrimage in 1981. It was an intense moment that transformed her, and one that Mariette cannot remember without emotion.

Between sobs, she explains: *"Faith and Light amazed me, there was such an atmosphere! Everyone there was smiling, and I remember this mother with a severely disabled child who had a beaming face, and I thought it was impossible for her to smile like that with a child like that! It was unbelievable! Seeing all these people with such heavy burdens in their lives, so open and smiling, it moved me and my husband, and we came away from the pilgrimage feeling different"*. Then Mariette takes a deep breath and says with a mischievous air, *"From Faith and Light I retain the smile and I tell people when you don't know what to do, you smile and it relaxes you!"*

Muriel nods in agreement. She heard about Faith and Light through her two cousins with disabilities. She says: *"I saw the good it did for the families present, who could share what they were going through"*. She is a great believer in this spiritual nourishment for people with di-



sabilities, who *"must not be distanced from what the Lord wants to give them"*.

Having taken one of her cousins into her home, she wanted to set up a community in Gardanne, but hesitated to do so on her own. So she prayed from 2017 to 2019, and with the help of her parish priest, a Faith and Light community was born.

*"The Gardanne community has brought me a lot of joy, because as people join us, we see a transformation in their own lives. We experience very powerful moments of sharing and friendship, and seeing people's eyes light up is a very positive thing"*.

Mariette adds: *"Seeing your child loved by someone, seeing that someone was paying attention to my daughter, that's what moved me the most at Faith and Light, because nobody looked at her in any other way, for many people she wasn't interesting"*.

Faith and Light's mission is to make people with learning disabilities visible and to integrate them as fully as possible. ■

For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

## Free man, you will always cherish the sea

This well-known line from Charles Baudelaire's poem "Man and the Sea" is a good illustration of the Mediterranean Days held in Marseille (France) in the presence of Pope Francis from 17 to 24 September. All the countries bordering this ancient "Mare Nostrum" of the Roman Empire were invited to come so that the mosaic of peoples, cultures and religions that make up the Mediterranean can build and share the same hope. Pope Francis called on Marseille to be a port of hope.

As 14 countries bordering the Mediterranean (17 including the Black Sea, the fifth shore of the Mediterranean) are Faith and Light countries, it was natural for our movement to be present at this major event with a stand, next to that of l'Arche in the village of the Mediterranean meetings, on the esplanade de la Major, Marseille cathedral.

Our emblem represents a boat with the apostles on the sea; the sky is dark, but the sun is breaking through the clouds; as for Jesus, he is sleeping at the bottom of the boat. How many situations could this emblem represent, if we think of all the boats that have plied the Mediterranean? As these days are being spent in Marseille, I've chosen a few examples linked to the city, but there could be many more...

In the first century, driven out of Palestine during the persecution of Christians, Mary Jacoba, Mary Salome and their servant Sara are said to have landed on the Mediterranean shore of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. Martha, Mary Magdalene and their brother Lazarus, the future bishop of Marseille, are also said to have made the journey. Today, many boats still take to the sea to flee persecution...

Thanks to these first Christian refugees from Palestine, France very soon became a Christian land and was even called the eldest daughter of the Church, a title recalled by Pope John Paul II on 1 June 1980 at Le Bourget: *"France, eldest daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your baptism?"* It is true that many missionaries set out



Sophie and a dad in front the stand

from France and, leaving Marseille by boat, it was traditional for them to go up to the Basilica of Notre-Dame de la Garde to entrust their mission to the Good Mother. Saint Charles de Foucauld certainly followed this tradition when he left for Syria or Algeria, after having gone to the grotto of the Sainte Baume and lit a candle in front of the relics of Saint Mary Magdalene.

We could also mention Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who prayed in the Basilica de la Garde in 1887, on her return from Rome, before returning to the Carmelite Order and becoming the patron saint of the missions.

I was thinking about all this as I listened to Pope Francis' homily in the Marseilles stadium, when he commented on the "thrill" felt by Elizabeth and John the Baptist at Mary's greeting: Brothers and sisters, I am thinking of the many "thrills" that France has experien-





ced, of its history rich in holiness, culture, artists and thinkers who have inspired so many generations. Even today, our life, the life of the Church, France and Europe need this: the grace of a revival, a new revival of faith, charity and hope. We need to rediscover our passion and enthusiasm, to rediscover a taste for commitment to fraternity, to dare to take the risk of love in families and towards the weakest, and to rediscover in the Gospel a grace that transforms life and makes it beautiful.

Yes, that's what we're trying to do at Foi et Lumière: rediscover the taste for fraternity during our meetings, dare to take the risk of loving the weakest by going to share our treasure to the ends of the earth. Soon, in October, a family from Lyon will leave to try to start a community in Wallis, a small island in the Pacific Ocean evangelised by Saint Pierre Chanel, who also had to leave Marseille after a visit to the Good Mother

I've rediscovered a Marseilles tradition that combines a boat trip and a blessing of the lights, symbolising both the arrival of the Gospel by sea with the Holy Marys and the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and it lasts a week! Our Festival of Light on 2 February could join in with this great Marseilles celebration!

The visit of Pope François to Marseille was an exceptional event, and the visible presence of Faith and Light was much needed:



we were able to meet our accompanying bishop, Mgr Jacques Benoit-Gonnin, who still remembers our pilgrimage to Lourdes, and Mgr Theodoros, Archbishop of Athens and former community chaplain. Thank you to Sophie Alexis for all the hard work she put into preparing the event with the Marseille communities, to Marie-Laure Wateau, coordinator of the Rhône-Azur province, and to everyone else! ■



# International news

## Jacinta Munro



Kathryn and Jacinta

Last August, Jacinta was elected coordinator for the Africa Capricorn province (South Africa, DRC Lubumbashi, Zambia and Zimbabwe). She succeeds Kathryn Morgan, who has held this position since 2014.

Many thanks to both of you!

## Maruša Horvat



Angela Grassi and Maruša

Here's some good news from the province of Slovenia! We have a new provincial coordinator! Her name is Maruša Horvat. It's been a pleasure to work with you over the last four years, and even more so to meet you in person in Strasbourg this year. We're sure you'll get on well with Maruša, she's a lovely person, you'll see.

Bless you and take care.

Kristina and Damijan Mlinarič

## Just release

### The most beautiful continent



This book, with its many photos, retraces the history and life of the Faith and Light communities that Ghislain du Chéné met in Africa and the Indian Ocean. It is not a book of personal memories, but a work of memory and testimony; it is important to remember the road travelled, and Ghislain is the witness of many things that happened in this continent and which deserve to be known to value the work of all those who made Faith and Light grow in these countries. A fascinating story, full of life! A beautiful lesson in hope and joie de vivre.

**A4 format, 104 pages. Available in English and French from the international secretariat: €8 (excluding postage)**

## Called and sent as Peter



Relive or discover the highlights of the international meeting in Strasbourg in July 2023.

**A4 format, 32 pages: €2 (excluding postage)**



## International agenda

- **29 September - 1 October:** training session for all leaders in Slovenia, Stična
- **13-16 October:** "Southern Cross" provincial assembly (Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia).
- **14 October:** Croatia celebrates its thirtieth anniversary with a pilgrimage to Marija Bistrica.
- **21 October:** the OCH Foundation celebrates its 60th anniversary in Anger, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Paris and Toulouse. Registration <https://www.och.fr/evenement/60-ans-cette-annee/>
- **21 October:** Irish provincial meeting, Moate.
- **21-22 October:** training session for young people from the "South Lebanon - Jordan" province.
- **27-31 October:** pilgrimage and meeting of the communities of the Netherlands, Banneux, Belgium.
- **2-5 November:** "France Est Pétillant" provincial retreat on the theme "Laudato Si", St Jean de Bassel.
- **10-14 November:** "Rainbow" province (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Seychelles) celebrates 50 years of Faith and Light, Roshill, Mauritius.
- **17 November:** meeting of the Board of Directors of Faith and Light International, Zoom
- **13-20 November:** holiday camp for communities in Mexico, Cancún.
- **2-4 December:** meeting of communities from the various islands of the Seychelles, Praslin.

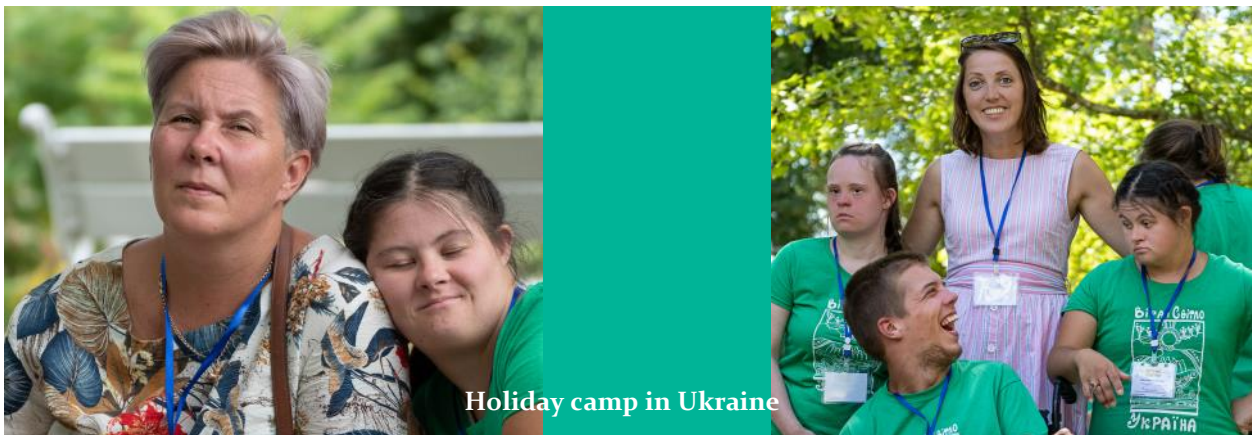
## International solidarity

### A project to support in Ukraine

Next March, we are organising a retreat for people with disabilities, their parents and friends. It will be a big event where parents can come with their children, but the programme will be separate for parents and separate for disabled people and their friends. We plan to organise this event for 100 people over 3 days. It will cost us around 3,500 dollars. We are looking for sponsors and benefactors. We would be grateful for any support, including prayer!

Alyona Perets, secretary of Faith and Light in Ukraine.

You can make a donation at <https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/donate>



Holiday camp in Ukraine

# Family album

## Jack Swain

It is with great sadness that I announce the death of Jack Swain at the end of June. Jack was part of Faith and Light for many, many years. Elaine, his wife, held many positions within Faith and Light, not only in New Zealand but also internationally, and Jack was her faithful supporter.

He had a gift for welcoming and accepting everyone. Rest, Jack, in God's loving arms.

Please keep Elaine and all the family in your prayers at this time of grief.

Marie

## Marie de Leijer



It is with great sadness that I write to tell you that our beautiful Mary entered eternal life on 1 August.

May I ask the international family and Father Marco to pray for Jos, the family and our Southern Cross Province at this difficult time as we mourn the loss of our Mary.

Mary took on many responsibilities within Faith and Light (at community and province level).

At the time of her death, Mary was our Provincial Chaplain.

May our dear friend rest in peace in the arms of our ever loving God.

Pam Barkers

Provincial Coordinator,  
Southern Cross Province

## Mariana Zimmerman



It is with a sad heart that I announce that our dear Mariana, a mother of Faith and Light, has been taken to heaven by the angels. From there she will bless her family and her spirit will be a light in our communities.

A woman of faith, who gave us love and peace, has gone on a journey of no return to be at God's side, leaving a huge void in her community of Santa Rita de Casia and in the communities of the province.

Faith and Light has been blessed by her life and her dedication to service. She participated actively in the life of Faith and Light from its beginnings in Peru with fidelity and generosity.

As a true family, we unite in prayer, imploring for her eter-

nal rest and for the Lord to strengthen the hearts of her family.

Mariana, my good friend, thank you for your friendship, thank you for what we have shared and done together, thank you for everything I have learned from you, I will never forget you, you will live forever in my heart.

May God's love and mercy be poured out on Joseph and his family and bring them comfort and resignation.

My dear Mariana, rest in peace.

Elvira Gomero

Vice international coordinator

## Maria Schilling



*What you do to the youngest of my family, you do to me.*

Dear Maria, your passing away at the age of 98 on 20 August makes us sad, but we are nevertheless happy that you were able to stay with us for so long.

Two years after you took part in the Faith and Light pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1981, you started the second community in Luxembourg.

You remained its heart and



soul right up to the last moment of your life! On 2 July, you were again present at our national day to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our "Espérance" community. Your life and your commitment were a gift for the little ones among us. What you shared with us, especially with our mentally handicapped members, remains engraved in our memories. Throughout your life, you showed us the true way of Jesus' love and friendship. We are convinced that you will be welcomed into heaven with open arms, because you were truly "Faith and Light". Thank you for everything! You will remain forever in our hearts!

**Sara**



Je would like to tell you a lovely story. Sara, the daughter of Erik Larsen (Northern Light' provincial chaplain), took part in a cookery competition on her own. The competition was organised by Cupids Spoon, a movement aimed at boosting the self-esteem of disabled and neglected children. Sara has Down's syndrome. She therefore won first prize: a twelve-day holiday in Croatia and a visit to Rome to meet

the Pope. Congratulations Sara!  
Inge, Denmark

**Louis Charbonneau**



Hello friends of the Faith and Light family, I'm pleased to share this beautiful video featuring Louis Charbonneau, one of the members of L'Étoile who, despite his disability, is constantly helping the less fortunate... For three years, he collected cans and painted birdhouses to sell to autistic children, raising \$1,000... He doesn't hesitate to travel for two hours by bus to do voluntary work; what's more, he coaches a hockey team with 'people at heart' called 'Les Différents!' He's a special person who deserves all our respect.

Suzanne, Canada

Here is the link to the documentary: <https://www.amitele.ca/category/documentaires-ma-jungle/media/ma-jungle>

**Teresa Ataman**

Teresa from the province of Poland West was born on 5 June 1951 in Wrocław. She has just celebrated her 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday. She was a member of the first



Faith and Light community in Poland, founded by the late Teresa Breza. Years later, she was part of the founding group of the Opole "Salt of the Earth" community. She loves guests and celebrations on all occasions... She loves making cards and giving them to friends and even strangers... Pearls and hats are inseparable elements of her outfits.... She loves everyone!  
Joanna Kuriata



## Marie-Hélène's letter



### Walls of division fall...

In a "classic life", there is little chance of rubbing shoulders and becoming friends when you come from very different backgrounds. This was the case for Simone and Yvonne, who lived in almost contrasting realities and whose hearts expanded.

Simone lived cloistered in a tiny two-room apartment with her son Philippe, who was profoundly disabled, blind and epileptic. In the evenings, she worked as an usherette at the Salle Playel concert hall in Paris. Yvonne, a mother of five, was a regular at the concerts, along with Constance, her daughter with Down's syndrome, who was very sensitive to music.

They met in the lobby of the Salle Playel. Simone dared to talk to Yvonne about Philippe, who was have much more disabilities than her daughter. Simone told her about her husband's abandonment, the hard day-to-day life, Philippe's walks in a pram until she got a wheelchair. The words of pity or the gestures of rejection, like the day when, on leaving a station, in torrential rain, in the taxi queue, a woman rushed up to take her place and shouted: "I don't give a damn about your disabled person! And she added: "I was lucky enough not to rebel, but to feel sorry for them. They certainly weren't mean, and if I hadn't had Philippe, how would I have looked at those children?"

Yvonne, who was in charge of Faith and Light for the Ile de France region, was so moved that she asked Simone to take part in the first pilgrimage to Lourdes with Philippe. For the first time, it wasn't pity that they felt for their child, but love. Friends who loved him and let themselves be loved, who helped even with the most thankless tasks. Thirty years

later, the song of the pilgrimage still made Philippe smile.

The young friends who often came to visit him in his tiny flat found it an oasis. Simone, now in charge of a community, could confide: "Thanks to Yvonne and Faith and Light, Philippe and I have been spoiled by life".



"Never again alone", page 181