

Up Sails !

The international letter of Faith and Light N° 59, January 2024



**Happy New Year 2024
and a beautiful Epiphany!**



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Dear Magi



Raúl Izquierdo

International coordinator

I suppose their Majesties from the East are very busy these days preparing gifts for young and old alike, as they did more than two thousand years ago with that child who had just been born in a manger in little Bethlehem. Guided by a star, and like good astrologers, you knew how to find that family in the midst of the darkness and the cold. And according to Matthew's Gospel, you worshipped him and gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh.

So this is what I ask of you for our communities of Faith and Light in every corner of the world:

- **THE GOLD of valuing each person as a treasure**, of knowing that each human being is a sacred story in which God has placed his caress and his Spirit, above their abilities, disabilities or incapacities (which we all have).

- **THE INCENSE of a community life** that is a witness in the midst of the world to the Love of God and that lives its vocation with joy and commitment, thus being an attractive perfume, a credible fragrance and a delicious aroma, which invites us to live life and faith as a feast.

- **THE MIRRA of authentic relationships**, beyond appearances and conventions, made of gestures and details, gratitude and the ability to ask for forgiveness and to forgive, like a good oil that heals and repairs, that takes care of people and helps to strengthen bonds.

What I ask of you may be a lot, but we, the communities of Faith and Light, pledge to do our part to make it happen. Each person, whether they are from anywhere in the world, whether they have been in a community for a short or long time, whether they have a

coordinating role or not, will do their best to make Faith and Light like gold, frankincense and myrrh for those who need to receive these gifts.

Finally, dear Magi, as you know, our Faith and Light communities are a bit like the family you met that night in Bethlehem, made up of that holy couple with their baby, a few animals and some shepherds. We don't make the headlines either and we don't have a lot of material resources. But we have the treasure of our friends with disabilities, who bring us closer to the heart of God.

As you know, that region, which was already experiencing violence and conflict in the time of Jesus, is still more or less in the same state. It seems unbelievable that after so many years, the same land that the child Jesus walked on is still suffering the death and terror of its inhabitants today, caused by bombs, bullets and the interests of both sides. And alongside them, other areas of the world continue to suffer from war, such as Ukraine and so many countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. And violence in so many countries in the form of discrimination on any grounds, so many forms of abuse of women, so many "civilised" forms of control, subjugation and slavery. Forgetting those who suffer the most, supporting people with illnesses, our attitude towards so many groups who are left out.

May our communities be Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh for humanity.

United in Jesus,
Raúl Izquierdo García
International coordinator of Faith and Light

Friends on the journey !

We set off from all over the world to go to Lisbon. It was inside a bus on a Friday that the adventure of the Folgosa / São Pedro Fins Faith and Light community began. World Youth Day 2023 was one of its greatest challenges.



The day began with a mass celebrated by Father Domingos Areas in the parish of São Pedro Fins, where we had the opportunity to meet young Taiwanese and South Koreans in a spirit of absolute communion. After a lively three-hour drive, we arrived at the same time as thousands of other people. A small school in the parish of Graça warmly welcomed all the members of Faith and Light from Portugal. Old friends met up again with great enthusiasm at the prospect of seeing the Pope. In the afternoon, we went to the Parque Eduardo VII where the Way of the Cross was to

For our friend Álvaro, who is quadriplegic, it was unforgettable! Some young people carried him on their shoulders so that he too could see the Pope. It reminded us of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem!

take place. Before the start of the procession, the community was able to speak briefly with the President of the Portuguese Republic, Marcelo Rebelo Sousa, and see the Holy Father pass by in his popemobile. In an overexcited atmosphere, hundreds of thousands of young people shouted "We are the Pope's youth"!

The Way of the Cross was one of the most moving moments of the WYD. The Pope got us thinking about the world's problems, including war, unemployment, mental

health and social media addiction. At the 12th station, we prayed that the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and the dreamers should count as much as the active and productive members of society.

On Saturday, we took part in a music activity and a painting workshop, during which friends made a banner with the name of the movement.



Report in Portugal



As the motto of this WYD was "Mary arose and went in haste" (Luke 1:39), we also left in haste for the Parque Tejo, where almost a million and a half young people had gathered for several kilometres along the banks of the Tagus. We enjoyed a warm evening followed by a peaceful night under the stars. Some of our friends were worried: "What if it's cold? What if we didn't have enough beds for everyone? What if... what if... what if...". At the same time, expectations were high and it would be an unforgettable experience: more than a million people sleeping under the same sky created by God our Father! We woke up at around 7am to the music of the famous priest and DJ Padre Guilherme, who got everyone moving!



The high point was Sunday morning, with the Eucharist presided over by Pope Francis, a real celebration of communion and fraternity, where everyone shared the purest of things, Love. Everyone then sang and danced to the WYD anthem in several languages.

This adventure in Lisbon came to an end on Sunday, and we left with the Pope's words in our hearts: *"Go and get everyone, young and old, healthy and sick, righteous and sinners: everyone, everyone, everyone". In the Church, there is room for everyone. Dear boys and girls, I invite you to think about this beautiful thing: God loves us, God loves us as we are, and not as we would like to be or as society would like us to be: just as we are. He loves us*

with the faults we have, with the limitations we have and with the desire we have to move forward in life". In his last homily, Pope Francis asked young people to love their neighbours as they are, and not just when they look like them or are nice to them, but also when their differences bother them, assuring them that with Jesus it is possible to love, to break down walls and prejudices, bringing to the world the light of Love that saves.



When we returned home, we were very tired, but full of energy and grace, with the certainty that God's love is for everyone, everyone, everyone, and that the light of Jesus is the light of love that saves! ■

Carolina Oliveira
and Maria João Barros

*"See you at WYD
in Seoul in 2027,
and until then, don't be afraid!"*

Time for a holiday in Ireland!



From 21 to 25 August 2023, our first holiday in Ireland since 2008 was a great success, with around 100 people coming from Ireland, England and Denmark.



Midge, from Leeds, spoke about the gift of Faith and Light, and the following day, Deacon Steve, from England, gave a talk on the spirituality of the movement.

We then held a number of workshops (knitting, crochet, jewellery making, nail painting, music, arts and crafts) as well as outdoor games to keep everyone entertained.

As we were by the lake, we had some great walks.

During the week, we made St Bridget's crosses out of green pipe cleaners, blessed by Father Donal Lucey. He told us to hang them above our door as a sign of protection. We welcomed a charming Danish couple, Inge and Werner. Werner who sang us some lovely



Irish songs.

Bishop Brendan Kelly visited us one afternoon. We had the opportunity to take a guided tour of Knock, where we attended a beautiful mass followed by lunch. Afterwards, we visited the magnificent Kylemore Abbey.

The week was punctuated by festive evenings: a typically Irish one with dancers, bagpipes and lots of local music, a karaoke evening and a special 'Faith & Light's got talent' evening. A couple, Herbie and Janice, were on hand all week to manage the music and songs. They were wonderful and very patient. Everyone was able to participate. What a wonderful week! ■

Bernie Noonan
Provincial Coordinator



Our hearts are filled with gratitude

The Polish community « Barka » in Bydgoszcz has just celebrated its 20th anniversary. To mark the occasion, it went on pilgrimage to pray for all the Faith and Light communities!



In September, we went to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Bydgoszcz, and in October to the Shrine of the Holy Cross in Kcynia.

We feel a lot of gratitude for the gift of Faith and Light, both for the people who founded our community and for those who are a part of it today. We pray for the creation of new communities in our province and around the world. We think of you and send you our friendship. ■

Barka Community, Bydgoszcz,
Poland

The Barka Polish community in Bydgoszcz sends its regards to everyone. In August, we began the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of our community. We went on pilgrimage to various shrines to return to the roots of Faith and Light. We visited the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelisation and that of Saint John Paul II in Torun. It was also a time of joint celebrations, conferences, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and a pleasant time over coffee in a pleasant atmosphere to share and remember what community means to each of us.



“Mat Jesus a Galiläa” Meeting Jesus in Galilee

Our coordinating team has launched a research project on the land of Jesus. We have located on a map the different regions, towns and villages mentioned in the stories of the Bible. The aim is also to learn about the customs, specialities, songs and dances...

In September, we introduced the theme for the year, "Meeting Jesus in Galilee". As the months go by, a Jesus figure will accompany us and all our meetings will include traditional songs and dances. Each time we try to place the context of the story on the map.

Materials: Candles from our community since 1984. Jesus figurine, fabrics, map of the Mediterranean countries. The October meeting was a joyful one, with everyone happy to be together again. Together, we created a floor chart using blue fabric for the Mediterranean, and green, brown and beige fabrics for the countries around it. We tried to place the names of the countries in the right place. Memories of holidays spent in one of these countries helped us to locate them better.



One question came up: how do you travel from Luxembourg to Israel?

By plane 5 hours, by car 45 hours and on foot 830 hours! We made a path from Nazareth to Jerusalem out of fabric,

built Jesus' family home out of wooden blocks and put up an enlarged photo of the temple.

In the house we placed Jesus as an adolescent with Joseph and Mary. While a leader read the Gospel of Luke 2:41-51, the figurines were placed on the path with the people of the village.

Materials: Candle. Figurines of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, villagers. Blue, green, beige and brown fabrics. Map with the names of the Mediterranean countries. Wooden blocks. Photo of the Temple. Wooden boards.



In November, we explored the theme of Jesus' search for his way at the age of 30, when he withdrew into the desert to reflect and pray.

Meditation with the hands: following the rhythm of his breathing, we prayed with the fingers of both hands: Je-sus Chris-tus.

We built the first part of our

painting on the floor. The river Jordan where Jesus was baptised by his cousin. The story is summarised with the figure of Jesus in the "water" of the Jordan.



Then the picture changes again: Lake Gennesaret and its surroundings. Brown, beige and green fabrics. Story from the Bible: Luke 5:1-11. We place the figures. They represent the people who come to see and listen to Jesus. He gets into the boat with Simon the fisherman and talks to the people. The net is thrown into the water near the boat. The net fills with fish. At the end of the story, each person takes a fish, colours it, writes their name on it and puts it back in the net.

Action: Everyone picks a fish from the net, looks at the name written on it and hands it back to its owner with a gesture or a friendly word.

Materials: Candle. Cloth. Figurines, wooden boat, net, panel representing fishermen, coloured paper fish. ■

Reebou Community
in Ettelbruck (Luxembourg)

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the little ones



Faith and Light celebrates the 30th anniversary of its birth in Croatia

On 14 October 2023, at the national shrine of Saint Mary in Marija Bistrica, around 700 members of the Croatian province gathered together. There were also many guests, members of Faith and Light from Slovenia, from L'Arche community - Korablja from Croatia and Barka from Slovenia, Brother Ulrich from Taizé and the vice international coordinator Angela Grassi. The highlight of the event was the Holy Mass celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio Mgr Giorgio Lingua, while the Bishop of Sisak, Mgr Vlado Košić, addressed a message to the members of Faith and Light and the pilgrims. People with disabilities and their friends from the Noa

community in Županja acted out the Gospel of Luke 11:27-28, other members of the community (families) joyfully took part in the ministry, singing and praying, and the Faith and Light chaplains concelebrated. At the end of the Mass, Archbishop Giorgio Lingua, Pope Francis' emissary to Croatia, gave a closing address and blessed the people with disabilities, their relatives and friends, saying: "I greet you with the words of Pope Francis, spoken in the Vatican two years ago on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the birth of Faith and Light in Lourdes, which corresponds to the beginning of your adventure. Pope

Francis said: "*From that moment, the Holy Spirit accompanied the journey of your Movement and many "Faith and Light" communities were born in many countries on the five continents, carrying a message of love and welcome. This message is the heart of the Gospel! It reminds us that any person, even and especially the smallest and frailest, is loved by God and has their place in the Church and in the world. It is "the Gospel of smallness", as St Paul reminds us when he writes to the Corinthians: "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were of noble birth. But God chose*

Report in Croatia

what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (I Co 1, 26-29).

That's why all of you, members of Faith and Light, as well as your family and friends, carry the message and the heart of the Gospel: The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the little ones. Remember one thing: Jesus on the cross was like many of you - suffering physically and spiritually. Imagine that he could no lon-



ger speak or walk, he was tied up, but he could still do one thing: Love! Even if circumstances prevent us from doing many things, nothing and no-one can stop us from loving. This is what Jesus whispered last: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Even as he was dying, he continued to love. So it is with these thoughts that I bless you. I bless each of you who is

called to give what you are and what you have, remembering that nothing is insignificant if it is done out of love. I bless you, parents, who are called to bring out the inner beauty of your children, like God who looks not at appearance but at the heart. I bless you, dear friends, who are called to be close to those who suffer, showing them God's presence and his love. Through your love, everyone should encounter God's love.



People with disabilities from the Noa community in Županja, together with their friends, mimed the Gospel of Luke 11:27-28.

The celebrations then continued with 4 communities from Zagreb who performed the creation and growth of Faith and Light in Croatia over the last 30 years.

The first Croatian community, created with the support of Faith and Light Slovenia, boarded the boat and other communities followed until the boat was full, under the protection of Jesus and Mary.

A mother, a person with disabilities and two young friends

Report in Croatia



spoke about what it means to be part of the Faith and Light community: it means living in a community full of love, coming out of isolation, being accepted and knowing that you are not alone, being yourself, developing self-confidence, activating your potential, focusing on the things you can do, living in simplicity, discovering the spiritual beauty of people with disabilities, experiencing the closeness and love of God together, like one big family. Provincial chaplain of Faith and Light, Reverend Robert Jugović explained that when he was young, he didn't know how to approach people with disabilities. He was prejudiced against them, but that changed over

the years, especially when he became a member of the Noa community. For him, Faith and Light is a heart that beats, rejoices and wants to feel close to others. Every community should be blessed by a priest who is not prejudiced, but who comes, sees and stays. Faith and Light is a great gift from God to the whole world. Angela Grassi, international vice-coordinator accompanying Croatia, passed on to everyone the words of co-founder Marie-Hélène Mathieu:

"Make everything you do in life a celebration and a joy! Encouraged by these words, may all our imperfections and insignificance, wounds and weaknesses in Christ, be a place of encounter, love and joy! ■

Zrinka Zubić
vice provincial coordinator



Provincial assembly Southern Cross



I returned from the July international meeting full of hope, refreshed and revitalised and I would say the same of the Southern Cross Provincial Assembly.

Our Assembly was held at the Passionist Retreat Centre in Melbourne from 13 to 16 October 2023. There was a full contingent from New Zealand, representatives from the Australian communities and our international vice-coordinator Valerie. Elaine and Phil from the nomination team were also present.

The theme of our Assembly was "Together we celebrate our past, our present and our God". Mary de Leijer, our Provincial Chaplain, had prepared the Friday evening prayer, the Sunday ecumenical service and a very moving liturgy to celebrate our past.

Angels were pinned to the cross for all our members who have entered eternal life. An



angel was pinned to "our Mary" who entered eternal life on 29 July 2023.

The members listed below were discerned to form the Provincial Council for the next four years.

Frances Trip, provincial coordinator; Tracy Tohl, vice-provincial coordinator for Australia; Margot Fletcher, vice-provincial coordinator for New Zealand; Jos de Leijer, provincial treasurer and Pamela Barker, provincial chaplain.

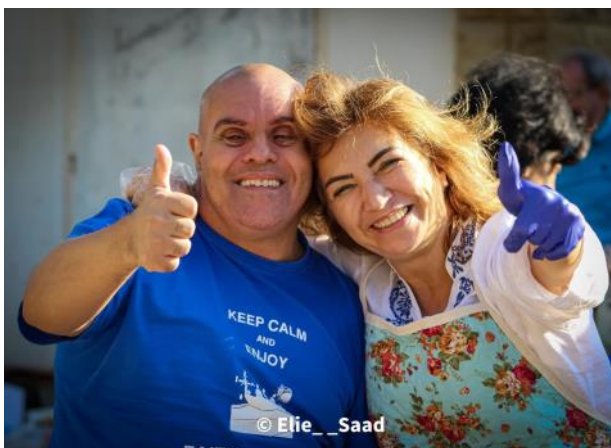
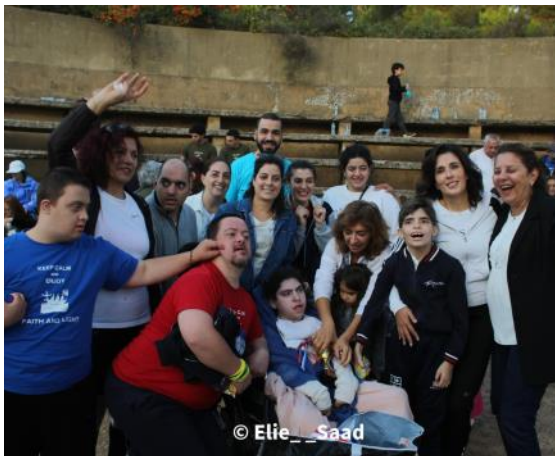
It was four days of peace, joy and celebration. ■

Pam Barker
Provincial Chaplain



Sports day and Master Chef event

On Saturday 21 October 2023, Georges Al Kassir, vice-coordinator of the ILA Trinity province (Iran, Lebanon and Armenia) and his team from Haut Matn, organised a sports day with a Master Chef competition to choose the best vegetable salad!



The following groups took part:

- Sainte Thérèse – Mansouriya,
- Saint Sarkis et Bacchus – Dahr El Sawan,
- Saint Jean – Beit Mery,
- Notre Dame de la Délivrance – Bikfaya,
- Saint Georges – Daychounieh

In conclusion, the winners are :

- The best salad: Dahr El Sawan.
- Preparation: Bikfaya
- Sporting spirit, enthusiasm: Daychounieh
- Competitive spirit and coordination: Mansouriya
- A spirit of love and commitment: Beit Mery.

The 2023 winner is the Daychounieh group



Report in Lebanon

This annual tradition, which usually involves four communities in the Haut Matn region, took on a new dimension this year with the addition of a fifth community. During the "Top Chef" competition, teams had to make the best salad. A variety of games also offered unique opportunities for all, whether the youngsters were in wheelchairs or able-bodied. As vice-provincial coordinator, this first experience was truly incredible.

I hope that other regions will take inspiration from it, because this event encouraged everyone to take part, enabling people with special needs to showcase their strengths and abilities.

Georges Al Kassir,
vice provincial coordinator



Jessica, my daughter, is 32 years old, has a profound disability and this is the first time in her life that she has taken part in a sporting event. It's the first time we've bought her running shoes and the first time she's had a team to support her (fan club). What a wonderful experience! What a joy to be part of it all!

I praise God to be part of the Faith and Light family, what a Grace! Thank you Faith and Light for changing our lives for the better.

Haifa Roukoz,
Community of St Georges Deychounieh

I'm a member of the Notre Dame de la Délivrance community in Bikfaya. I'm 31 and I took part in the Faith and Light sports day, playing ball games and running. We also had a good salad and sandwiches, which were so good! At the end, we were given medals to congratulate us on our efforts.

I loved this event because the games were fun and everyone won! It was a great day, and it was lovely to share it with other Faith and Light communities.

Patrick Hochofski



The day was my first sporting day with people with disabilities. I was inspired by the determination and enthusiasm of each participant. I discovered a competition full of joy and love, where winning was less important than sharing.

Closing the event with a meal made the day even warmer.

I hope to live again this wonderful experience, where diversity becomes a source of happiness and communion.

Charbel Merhej

Reunion of the Morning Star Community

Sunday 12 November 2023 was the meeting of the Morning Star Community in Ivory Coast. Twenty people were happy to get together for this first meeting after a four-month holiday.



Capernaum, healing and freedom: the theme of the meeting highlighted the need for a faith that overcomes our daily limitations.

After a few songs, some weather reports and a snack, Brother Valentin (the community chaplain) read out the word of the month before the parents and some of the adults retired for a time of sharing.

Two questions fuelled this sharing: the first was to talk about the everyday events that can discourage us in our mission of evangelisation. The second was to name the people who carry us on a stretcher. The parents were able to discuss the difficulties experienced in the family or elsewhere when we are parents of a child who is different, but also our faith in Christ, which strengthens us in hope. According to the testimonies of some parents, Faith and Light enables both parents and children to take responsibility for themselves and to flourish. During this time, people with disabilities, scouts and some friends took part in the artists' workshop and prepared the mime (Mark 2:1-12). During the workshop, each person

drew the outline of their foot on a sheet of cardboard and cut it out. The foot-shaped sheets were laid out on the floor, forming a path at the end of which was a sheet bearing the inscription FAITH. Each member walked along the symbolic path of their faith in Jesus



Christ. Before the prayer that marked the end of the meeting, the mime on the healing of the paralytic helped us to understand that faith in Jesus allows many miracles to happen.

So it's with a strong and renewed faith that we look forward to meeting again in December to celebrate Christmas together. ■

Thank you Lord !

The « Barque de Cataglou » community outing at the end of the year. It's quite simple, because our means are modest: a short distance to cover, from Noisy-le-Sec to the monastery of Saint-Joseph de Brou sur Chantereine, thirty-two friends who are very different but who feel they are part of the same family, eight cars, a park where we can rest peacefully, the gentle, smiling welcome of the sisters whose mid-day service we share before the picnic.



But above all, the joy of being together, of laughing and playing, the joy of being simple, of telling each other why we like to get together, the joy of hearing that there are plans for the future and of noting in particular the big "Sport and Faith" event in Vaujours on 25 May 2024, where we will be and for which we will be preparing.

So many reasons to thank the Lord!



All together

This year, our provincial day took place on 21 October in Moate, at the magnificent Carmelite pastoral centre. Everyone was excited when the bus left... we had not met our communities for a year!



The Dublin Faith and Light community offered everyone tea/coffee and a biscuit on arrival. The banners and balloons were set up, the sacred space was prepared, and the tables and chairs were laid out. After many hugs and greetings, it was time to begin our meeting. Our theme for the day, chosen from the roadmap, was "A place of joy and solidarity", and that's exactly how I would describe the meeting. We began our meeting with a mimed song... We sang a lot throughout the day. Unfortunately, we didn't have any musicians that day, but that didn't matter because we sang louder. Each leader shared news about their community... Some are doing very well and others are having difficulties. We prayed for the communities in difficulty. We also heard the

financial report. A tombola organised during the meeting raised 236 euros for solidarity. We talked about the code of conduct, the General Meeting in Strasbourg, the retreats at Trosly (for young people and adults) and next August's holiday in Ireland. As we are planning to go to Lourdes in July 2025, everyone discussed ways of raising funds for this trip. For the meal, we used local caterers to prepare and serve dinner. It was delicious.

At the end of the meeting, we went to the nearby chapel, which also belongs to the Carmelites. Father Fergal Cunnane, our provincial chaplain, celebrated a beautiful Mass. The Gospel of the wedding at Cana was mimed by our friends with disabilities. We prayed for the communities in Ukraine and all the countries at war. It was a beautiful day and certainly a place of joy and unity.

Bernie Noonan,
Provincial Coordinator



The armour of God

October was one of the most eagerly awaited months in the Milflores (located in Pasig, near Manila) because this year they had four occasions to celebrate.

1. On the theme "Ang Karunungan ay Biyaya Mula sa Panginoon at Hindi Maaring Masukat sa Anomang Aspeto" (Wisdom is a gift from God and cannot be measured in any aspect), the community welcomed the Reverend Father Adam Gregor Arellano, who came to meet everyone and give a teaching on Jesus in the Temple. He watched the mime of the Gospel performed by members of the community, each dressed in a costume from the time of Jesus.



2. Father Adam readily accepted the role of new chaplain to the Milflores community, as the previous chaplain, Father Roy Maderazo Rosales, was recently appointed chaplain of the Couleurs d'Asie province. Alleluia! Amen!



3. During the time of sharing, each parent received a rosary blessed by the Bishop of Pasig, Mgr Mylo Hubert Vergara, who is sensitive to the situation of people with disabilities. The artists' workshop was an opportunity to make pretty paper flowers. The rosary and the flowers are symbols of the Holy Rosary, celebrated in October.



The day ended with a time of prayer, when everyone laid the paper flowers before Mother Mary and took the time to entrust their personal intentions to her.

Report in the Philippines



4. Rather than wearing Halloween costumes and masks, the children and friends with disabilities from the Milflores community wore clothes and costumes of saints, martyrs and angels, and played a few games with our priests, parishioners, parents, friends and church servers from our parish, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. **A real parade of saints!** ■

Cloyd Villegas,
Provincial coordinator of Colors of Asia



We too have our place in the Church!

After two years of confinement, the little boat of Faith and Light of Boulogne sur Mer has taken to the open seas again, and enjoys meeting up one Saturday a month in a Christian spirit to share friendship, to pray together and celebrate life.

On their return from Lourdes (2022), Benoît and Pascale Cuvelier got in touch with former of the



community. A core group of leaders was formed, and the meetings could once again take place. The members of the community were happy to meet again in the parish hall of Saint Patrick. It's a party!

Christophe Y., the deacon appointed by our bishop, Mgr Olivier Leborgne, to accompany the community, is enthusiastic about the small group's warmth and joy. *"We're still in the simplicity of faith, the simplicity of human relationships... We're not breaking our heads. Our faith is so quickly intellectualised. Here, we come back to the faith of children"*, he emphasises.

Yolène's poem for the community, on the first day of our meetings:

My dear friends of Faith and Light
I am happy to see you again
Friends dear to my heart, helping me to invent my path, which, thanks to you, is strewn with beautiful encounters, tenderness, sharing and sweet friendships
Which will never leave my big heart
Babeth
Marie, you're going to like it here
Believe me, you'll find wonderful people
Who will reach out to you and open your heart again
Where was I again? Ah yes, back to my poem

Babeth, Pasquier, Véronique, Sandra, Anne, Mum, Elie and all the others

Continue to give me joy, support and comfort when things aren't going well

To dry my tears and to give birth in my heart, in place of my tears,

The sunshine that will help me smile again now

My eyes and my heart so precious, a happiness so sweet.

Friend, enchant my life. Thank you

I only have two things to add: stay as you are, don't change a bit

And your love thanks to your big hearts.

Yolène, for the meeting on 25 February 2023

One of the Faith and Light members who has been with us for many years says that he has made some wonderful friends here and is happy to see the small community back on track. "Being together, meeting up with friends, praying together, it's important. We have a great time. We share a snack. And then, after each meeting, there's parish mass for those who want it - we're very welcome there! In fact, it's our wish to open up our little Faith and Light community to the local life of the Church. That's how we came to take part in the diocesan days of the St Benoît Labre diakonia,

where we spent a day with our bishop and over four hundred people with experiences of fragility. Yes, we have our place in the boat of the Church of Boulonnais! ■



With the support of the team : Brigitte, Pasquier, Christine, Benoît and Pascale Cuvelier
Community Notre Dame de Boulogne, France

The Rainbow province celebrates the 50 years of Faith and Light

Two years late because of the pandemic, the islands of Seychelles, Réunion, Madagascar, Rodrigues and Mauritius were finally able to come together and celebrate the 50 years of Faith and Light. It was an opportunity to share the joys and successes, but also the difficulties experienced. The delegates from each country came back home with tools to help them move forward in their missions.



in hand, and Jesus is always at our side to accompany us. ■

Jocelyne Quinot, coordinator of the Rainbow province

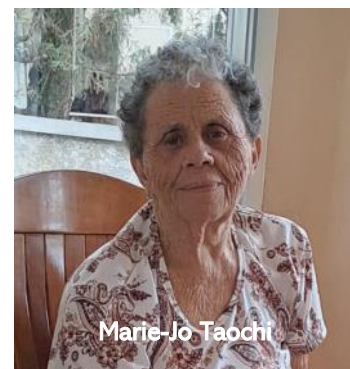
During the meeting, we all shared the same concern: the happiness of the "otherwise able", whoever they may be. There were no barriers between us, we were all brothers, in joy, with a spirit of praise and the desire to serve.

For our Jubilee, the Lord gave us an extraordinary gift: He gave us the means and the opportunity to get together for a few days!



130 delegates from the five countries of the Rainbow Province came together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our movement, a celebration that had been postponed because of the Covid pandemic. It was a great meeting: Jesus, joy, love, fellowship and solidarity were always present! There were many high points,

particularly during the washing of the feet, which is always an emotional moment. The success of this meeting, which took place in a magnificent and spiritual setting: The Thabor and the inter-island seminary, was made possible thanks to a dynamic team and many other persons involved. We continue to move forward together, hand



Marie-Jo Taochy

It was Jesus who called us and we are convinced that our place is in the boat of Faith and Light, a significant image and we all have our place in the Church.

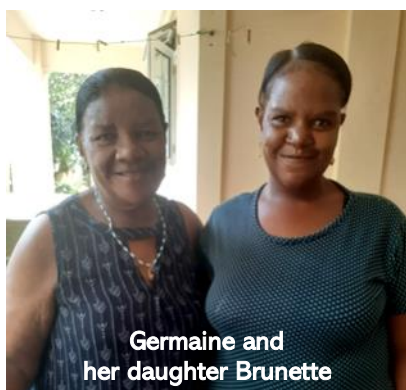
The dedication of each and every one, the comfort given to the most fragile, the exchanges and the testimonies we heard were very heart-warming. ■

Marie Jo TAOCHY
Friend, Reunion

Report in Mauritius

I spent these few days in a relaxing environment surrounded by people from different cultures and languages, like a close-knit family. We were delighted to meet up with people we already knew, but also to get to know new people.

My daughter Brunette felt like part of a family, happy with her new friends with disabilities. She was delighted to be able to take part in the workshops and the party. She can't wait for the next meeting!



Germaine and her daughter Brunette

One of the highlights was the mass with the bishop, who spoke of the importance of Faith and Light in society and in the Church.

Jocelyne and Marie-France also reminded us of our faithful commitment, fraternity, responsibility and the importance of communication.

We're going back home with a lot of enthusiasm in our hearts to share what we've learned with all those who could not take part in this unforgettable meeting. ■

Germaine,
Rodrigues



When Providence guides us

A new community was born in the Pacific islands of Wallis and Futuna on 12 November 2023. We invite you to relive this adventure with us...



In December 2022, Armelle was on a 6-week pediatric mission to Wallis and Futuna, accompanied by her husband Jérôme and their four children. We were warmly welcomed by the people of Wallis and Futuna, and in particular by the parish of the village of AKA AKA, located in the Hahake district. During this first experience in the Pacific, we found out that people with intellectual disabilities stayed at home and rarely, if ever, went out. There is still a lot of stigma attached to intellectual disability on the islands of Wallis and Futuna...

On our return to France at the beginning of January 2023, our community « Enfants et Lumière » asked us to reflect on the Vice provincial coordinator (VPC) commitment and to give our response at the General Assembly on 25 Fe-

bruary 2023. We took the time to reflect and went to a Retreat House called « La Neylière » to give our response...

What a surprise when we arrived to discover the names of the buildings on the sign!



At the time, we thought it was an amusing coincidence, but later that evening, Jérôme wondered whether it might be a call or a sign... it's hard to give an exact or scientific meaning to something that's just a matter of personal conviction. And what if we were called to go back to Wallis and Futuna to suggest the creation of Faith and Light... During the evening, Armelle in turn became aware of this call that we felt. The Faith and Light adventure in Wallis and Futuna was launched!

In the weeks that followed, other troubling coincidences

occurred. We were informed that the national gathering of Wallisians and Futunians living in metropolitan France was to be held at the Cuet sanctuary at the end of April, an hour from where we live. We went to the gathering and met Sister Malia, a Futunian, who gave us some valuable contacts on Wallis.

Another interesting story : our church is called Saint Pierre Chanel. Did you know that Saint Pierre Chanel is the patron saint of the Pacific? He died in Futuna in 1841... Finally, a few weeks before our departure for Wallis, two of our friends (who don't know each other) told us that they knew the new Prefect of Wallis and Futuna, who will take up his position at the end of August 2023...

With all these coincidences in mind, we decided to follow this red thread, like an Ariadne's thread...

We arrived in Wallis on 18 October after a 27-hour flight via Istanbul, Singapore and Nouméa, for a period of 3 and a half weeks. We were due to return to mainland France on 13 November. On the spot, our friend Albert, whom we had met on our first trip, welcomed us and got involved with us in this completely crazy project.

A few important dates

Saturday 21st October

The Prefect and his wife invited us to dinner. During the evening, we discussed the reasons for our presence in Wallis. The Prefect gave us the contact details of a member of the Territorial Assembly who might be interested in the Faith and Light proposal.

Monday 23rd October

We meet with Father Soane Malivao. Aware of the need and the merits of Faith and Light for the parishioners, he explained that it would take a long time to set up Faith and Light in Wallis and convince the families to come to such an event. He is also very busy and short of time... He needs a team to support him. We realised at that moment that it wasn't going to be as simple as we'd imagined... Perhaps the Faith and Light day wouldn't take place while we were there? Our spirits are low at the moment, but we're not giving up hope and we're continuing to follow the Thread...

Thursday 26 October

After several unsuccessful attempts by our friend Albert to organise a meeting with the elected member of the assembly, I decided to send her a Whatsapp message explaining the purpose of our request. Within 5 minutes, she replied: "see you this evening at 5pm at the assembly"! We took the time to explain the foundations of Faith and Light.

She realized that we would only be in Wallis for a short time and felt that this day should take place before we left.

Sunday 29th October

We had a meeting with Father Malivao, Albert and Noella, vice-president of the Handicap Federation, who had joined us in the adventure, to see the progress in the project.



To our great surprise, Father Malivao decided to set the date for the first Faith and Light Day on 12 November 2023, the day before our departure!

Week of 30 October to 3rd November

We flew to Futuna, 250 km from Wallis, for 5 days. The very next day, we were welcomed by a dozen people representing physical disability associations on Futuna. The testimony of what we experience at Faith and Light was echoed in our discussions. The president of the

disability federation was delighted with the proposal and introduced us to Father Félicé, who was already involved in the area of disability. Finally, the local television station contacted us to plan an interview about Faith and Light. The team decided to organise an information day on 15 December on the subject, with a view to launching the first Faith and Light Day in Futuna in January 2024.

Week of 4 November to 11th November

Father Malivao, Albert, Noella and ourselves contacted families concerned by intellectual disability and invited them to come and take part in the day. We made the sign representing the "Weather forecast of the heart" and planned the logistics to make the day a success!

12 November 2023

It's the big day! We welcomed 30 people, including 7 families with intellectual disabilities. After an explanation of the day's program, the weather forecast followed, then a time for miming the Gospel, deep sharing with the parents, and during the meal we enjoyed Wallisian dances... We had a wonderful day... And the next one is scheduled for 10 December! ■

Jérôme and Armelle Noguer,
Provincial treasurer
Loire Rhône Auvergne

Hand in hand

The 15 communities of the Dominican Republic have just come together to celebrate 40 years of Faith and Light in their country under the theme "Hand in Hand"!



The meeting was held on 3 December at the Colegio Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia (CONSA) and was attended by all the coordinators and vice-coordinators of the Dominican Republic, as well as our provincial chaplain, Father Juan Tomas Garcia Pichardo. We were also accompanied by Father Abraham Apolinario, who was our chaplain for many years. It was a day of blessings, with a program full of activities such as singing and dancing that reminded us of our beginnings. One of the highlights was the testimonies of those who have remained faithful to Faith and Light. For Alexis and Nazareth, who have a disability, Faith

and Light has given them the opportunity to have friends. One mother, Angelina Lora, said that before she met Faith and Light, she lived very isolated and was afraid of anyone approaching her daughter, she didn't trust anyone, but at Faith and Light, she met a new family. During the activities, we particularly thanked the people who, since the beginning, have devoted themselves entirely to Faith and Light, people who today are still as active within the movement. These include Fanny Tejada de Guzman and Altagracia Mireya Jaquez. We also thanked our provincial treasurer, Consuelo Lenor de Rodriguez, for the

support she gives to the communities.

Our meeting ended with the celebration of the Eucharist presided over by our chaplain, Father Juan Tomas Garcia. At the end of the Eucharist, the vice-coordinators were invited to interact more with the young people in the communities to motivate them and give them the opportunity to participate more.

We all left with the certainty that Faith and Light worldwide will continue to be the boat on which we all sail towards calm waters. ■

Julio Espinal,
provincial coordinator
Heart of America and Caraibes



For our reflexion, Ghislain du Chéné

52 years of joy

In many marvellous tales, there is an unavoidable character, the fairy, who leans over the cradle of newborn babies to distribute gifts. The gift that Faith and Light received from the first pilgrimage in 1971 was joy. Pilgrims could not help but sing in the streets of Lourdes: Amis chantons notre joie (Friends, let us sing our joy) from Good Friday onwards! And this gift has never left us. In July, in Strasbourg, Marie-Hélène Mathieu gave participants in the international meeting this good advice: "Transform everything you do into joy!"



We were messengers of joy for the 40th anniversary pilgrimages in 2011 and 2012, and this joy is truly an integral part of our identity. In the document that defines it (approved at the 2018 meeting in Lebanon), we read: Through various activities (celebrations, sharing, prayer, retreats, training, etc.) that are a source of joy, we learn to welcome and accept our frailties and find rest, consolation and healing.

How might we define our joy - which we have received as a gift - in each of our communities? People with disabilities are often referred to by the Hebrew word *anawim*, which means the poor in spirit, those who cannot manage on their own. It can also be translated as "the bent over". Jesus

healed a woman who was all "bent over and absolutely unable to stand up straight" (Lk 13:11). We can easily imagine the joy of this woman after this beautiful encounter with Jesus. This joy is also ours when we see our friends or children with disabilities who are given the best place in our parishes, in our meetings: they realise that they are important and the smile that lights up their faces is extraordinary! Their joy is not an exuberant display, but a beautiful smile that lights up their face. Their joy is not loud laughter - like those who laugh at jokes that are often inappropriate and designed to mock, belittle and humiliate those for whom they are intended - but a transformation that makes them beautiful! We never say that Jesus laughed, but we can easily imagine him with a beautiful, broad smile.

It is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22), second only to love. We must pass it on by announcing our joyful news, for as the Psalm 15 says: "In your presence there is fullness of joy" And if our joy overflows, we will easily be able to announce it: for what the mouth speaks is what overflows from the heart (Lk 6:45).

To conclude, I'm going to tell you a secret... I think that the fairy who bent over the cradle of Faith and Light to give it the gift of joy has the initials MHM!



International news

A few words from the new board members

Antonio Donega Aidar, President of Faith and Light international

I have been part of the Vila Guilherme São Paulo-Brazil community since 1982. In February 1982, my partner Silvana (who is now my wife) and I attended a mass and at the end of it, the priest announced the intention to create a Faith and Light community in the parish. We didn't yet have any contact with people with disabilities, but we were so touched by this call that we set out to find the organiser of the project, and in April we founded the community with Marcia and Luiza (who has Down's syndrome).

Since then, Faith and Light has been part of our lives, in our marriage, at the births and birthdays of our three children (Jussara, Gabriel and Isabel) and at all the parties and celebrations organised in our house. Life in the community (monthly meetings, fourth period, etc.) is always a time of joy for the whole family, not to mention the other big meetings and pilgrimages.

Now a new generation is arriving, with our

granddaughters, and history is repeating itself as they are already taking part in the meetings and interacting with everyone.

God also wanted us to be more present in the mission and we have often been

called to responsibilities in the community, in the region, in the country and in South America.

From the first meeting I attended, I felt that the core members and their lives were a source of spiritual growth. Faith and Light is the place for this growth and we must be the messengers of this good news.



Micha Abbosh, Vice president



and I met them again at their next meeting on the following Saturday.

I have been part of the Faith and Light community Saint Sauveur in Lebanon since 1987. We met by chance. I was at the church where the community was meeting and it was their first Christmas mass. On the way out, they said hello to my sister Rosie,

The Community was looking for a treasurer. I said straight away: "Yes, I'll be treasurer" and to fit in with my new duties I asked my father to make me a wooden chest to contain the "treasure" of Faith and Light.

I discovered this 'treasure' over time, and realised that it was in each of these meetings, in each person, the grown-ups and the little ones... These moments brought me immeasurable joy, and my heart was full of 'treasures'. Thanks to Rosie, this commitment took on a whole new dimension. It was my love for her that made me more committed, and over time I came to understand that this love could contain all the people who, like Rosie, fill me with so many beautiful things.

Antoine de la Taille, international treasurer

My arrival at Faith and Light is as recent - 2023 - as it is unexpected. I joined Faith and Light not because I was particularly close to people with intellectual disabilities - there are none in my family or friends - nor because of my parish, where there is a Faith and Light community... but because of the professional world. It was through the manager of my former team, in the bank where I work, that I met Gérard, the previous International Treasurer, who asked me to take over from him.

With the benefit of a few months' hindsight, however, it's not the date when I agreed to have my name put forward to take over from Gérard that I'll remember as the date I joined Faith and Light; nor will I remember the date of my 'election' (as the only candidate in the running) during the International Days in July. But these days were essential: they gave meaning and a multitude of faces and smiles to a com-

mitment that until then I had only seen as "technical".

No, none of these dates correspond to when I joined Faith and Light. It was last September when, at the invitation of Dominique, whom I had met in Strasbourg, my wife and I took part for the first time in a Mass, lunch and afternoon with the Monique Michaud community in Versailles (in the parish where we were married over thirty years ago, where our four children were baptised and where my brother-in-law is a priest). We discovered a dynamic, joyful, welcoming and caring community that made us want to join.



Congratulations to new coordinators !

A new coordinator for the Southern Cross province



On 15 October, the Southern Cross Province assembly elected Frances Trip (New Zealand) as its new coordinator. She succeeds Pamela Barker, who has become the province's chaplain. Congratulations to both of them!

Elections in the Kimata province



On 26 November, Fabio Bronzini was reappointed for a further four years as coordinator of the Kimata province! Thank you Fabio for your Yes!

Happy retirement Corinne !

The story goes that Corinne discovered Faith and Light at a birthday party. She had discovered the magazine "Ombres et Lumière" during a retreat and had been very moved by the testimony of a mother about her autistic son, Christophe. In 1976, Corinne met Marie-Hélène Mathieu and joined the OCH, where she stayed for 7 years.

With her husband, she founded a community in Paris called "Notre Dame du Sourire", of which she was the coordinator. Then they left Paris for the Ain department (south-east France). There they created another community, "Notre Dame de Lumière", of which they were also the coordinators. They then moved to Lyon and created a community for young children, "Enfants Lumière", from which two other communities were born. She was also coordinator of the Loire Rhône Auvergne region

and of the France South zone.

Corinne joined the international secretariat in 2000 and was our General Secretary from 2002 until October 2023, working on files, e-mails, documents, dreams and hopes.

On 19 October last, on an autumn evening in Paris, we said our official goodbyes to Corinne and saluted her retirement with a Eucharist followed by a cocktail party, completed with speeches, savoury cakes, wine and a few songs. There were tears, hugs and much gratitude. Emotions and so many memories, as we accompanied her through an important moment in the history of our Faith and Light family and in her own.



Raúl Izquierdo García,
international coordonnateur
Full article on :

<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/news/happy-retirement-corinne>



International agenda

- Provincial meeting of St Mary of Guadalupe (Mexico), Zoom, 7 January 2024
- Provincial meeting France Est Pétillant, Nancy, 21 January 2024
- Formation of French coordination teams, Issy les Moulineaux, 27-28 January 2024
- Feast of Light of St Mary of Guadalupe (Mexico) Zoom, 2 February 2024
- Feast of Light for all the communities in South Poland, Markowa, 3rd February 2024
- Formation session for the vice coordinators of the province of St Mary of Guadalupe, Chihuahua
- Guadalupe, Chihuahua, Mexico, 27-28 February 2024
- Retreat for the communities of the Province of ILA Trinity, Lebanon (venue to be confirmed), 2-3 March 2024
- Lenten retreat, South Poland, Krakow, 23-24 March 2024
- Way of the Cross organised by the Province of St Mary of Guadalupe, Zoom, 29 March 2024

International solidarity

Projects to support

- In March, the province of Ukraine is organising a retreat for people with disabilities, their parents and friends. This is a big event for 100 people over 3 days, where parents can bring their children. Cost: 3,500 dollars.
- An international meeting for young people from Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States and Canada is planned for 15 to 17 November 2024. Funding sought for 10 young people from Brazil: €3,700

Would you like to make a donation?

If you are taxable in France you can claim an income tax reduction 66% of the amount of your donation, up to a limit of 20% of your taxable income.

<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/donate>



Family album

Matias



Alejandra Polo, current coordinator of the Iberatlantic province (western Spain), is delighted to announce the birth of her son Matias on 22 December 2023.

Alejandra has been a regular member of Faith and Light since she was born. She took part in the international youth meeting in Guardamar in 2017 and the General Assembly in Strasbourg last summer. Welcome to little Matias!



Daniel Patrick O'Keeffe

Danny, a member of the Faith and Light community in Geelong, Australia, came into the light on 7 August 2023.

One of the first things he taught us was that communication is much more than just talking.

Dan was loved and admired by all who knew him. He lived with his disability with courage and patience, and was an example to us all through his acceptance and endurance.

He had a great influence on those who cared for him and on the nursing team, who, like us, experienced his remarkable character.

He had faith and trust in God and a wonderful smile every day.

We will miss you, Danny.
May you rest in peace.



Friends of Faith and Light

The OCH Foundation celebrates 60 years

A landmark event



In 2023, the OCH Foundation will blow out 60 candles. Sixty years spent following the deep intuition of its founder, Marie H el ene Mathieu, to move between people with disabilities and the rest of society.

A wide range of concrete actions

True to its motto, "the light of an encounter", OCH continues to create connections and provide support for people with disabilities and their families through a dynamic range of actions and services: a telephone helpline, meeting places and a large number of appointments to help people who are too often ignored or sidelined to break out of their isolation.

Dreams come true

The "Ose la Rencontre" (Dare to meet) event, created especially for OCH's 60th anniversary, made a lasting impression through its scope and ambition. It enabled people with disabilities or psychological illness to realise their dream, an exceptional activity that was close to

their hearts, with the help of students or professionals. These young people, more or less close to the world of disability, took the opportunity to share a common passion or simply to demonstrate their willingness to help someone in a vulnerable situation.

Unforgettable meetings

More than 60 meetings took place throughout France and 250 people joined in the adventure! These were all unforgettable moments, full of gentleness, lightness and simplicity, sometimes an opportunity to new friendships. Three of the many dreams that have been featured in a film entitled "Ose la rencontre". It has been available on the OCH Foundation's YouTube channel since 25 December. Don't miss it. ■



Marie-Hélène's letter



Godparents, «guardian angels»

We neglect precious gifts because we know them poorly, or not at all.

On the invisible side, I am thinking of the guardian angels that the Lord has placed beside each of us, and of whom Jesus declared: "I tell you, the angels of these little ones always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:10). At baptism - the most important moment in our lives when we become children of God - the Church suggests that children be surrounded by a godparent. Without replacing them, they are like guardian angels, flesh and blood, responsible for helping parents in their task of educating children in the faith and supporting their godchild in his or her spiritual growth. In Latin, they are called "patrini, matrini" (little father, little mother), and in English "godfather, godmother" (father in God, mother in God). These words signify the spiritual paternity or maternity conferred on them.

Gone are the days when you were morally obliged to choose a godfather and godmother from the family line according to a precise order, which they had to accept. Nowadays, godparents are chosen more for reasons of sympathy, camaraderie or friendship... Sometimes business connections, wealth or notoriety are also favoured...

How can we ensure that this treasure is not wasted? What criteria should we use to choose our child's godparents? If a child has a disability, he or she will need faithful support,

attentive to the spiritual life, more than others. Often parents simply raise the issue with the prospective godparent, leaving them free to refuse if they feel too helpless or unfit for the responsibility.

Another question that needs to be asked here:

"Can a disabled person be asked to be a godparent? How can we go beyond the "accidental", their disability, to reach the essential: the "reality" of their faith, their capacity for commitment and true relationships? In his case, as in that of any other person, it's not a question of pleasing, restoring confidence or even helping the godparent to better discover



their faith. That's not insignificant, but the essential thing is to offer the baptised person a witness, a faith 'awakener', a discreet companion capable of providing real spiritual support if the parents were to disappear.



Some parents might feel guilty thinking: "We chose our children's godparents for reasons that were too human. We didn't ask the Holy Spirit for help".

For their part, some godparents will reproach themselves for the superficiality of their "yes", which did not involve a deep commitment on their part, hence their lack of fidelity over the years.

But "God's gifts are irrevocable". This precious, reciprocal gift that the godparents are for the child and that the child represents for them, is a gift for life. Every day, the Lord invites us to

do new things. Perhaps he is inviting each of us, godfather or godmother, to rediscover the meaning of our forgotten commitment to our godchild? It won't be a question of spectacular gestures, but of small steps that will bring us closer to him or her. And even if the links seem broken, there is still the grace of prayer, which allows us to ask for the Lord's protection and blessing on the person entrusted to us on the day of his or her baptism.

« Dieu m'aime comme je suis, » page 792
God loves me just as I am," page 79



Message from Pope Francis December 2023



People with disabilities are among the most fragile among us. Some of them suffer rejection, rooted in either ignorance or prejudice, which then marginalizes them. Civil institutions need to support their projects through access to education, employment, and places where they can express their creativity. Programs and initiatives are needed that promote their inclusion. Above all else, big hearts are needed who want to accompany. It means changing our mentality a

little and opening ourselves to the abilities and talents of these people who are differently abled, both in society as well as in the life of the Church. And so, creating a completely accessible parish does not only mean eliminating physical barriers. It also assumes that we stop talking about “them” and start talking about “us.” Let us pray that people with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions offer inclusion programs that enhance their active participation.



Link to the Pope's video: <https://thepopevideo.org/?lang=en>