

Up Sails !

The international letter of Faith and Light No. 68, March 2026



On the way with Jesus...

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Annual print subscription: 25 euros



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Director of publication: Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
Production and layout: International Secretariat



Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
International Coordinator

‘When did we see you?’

**“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one
of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine,
you did for me.”**

(Matthew 25:31-46)

Chapter 25 of the Gospel according to Matthew is a call to attention for all those who want to follow Jesus, because it puts in the Master's mouth a direct link between our behaviour towards other human beings, especially those who suffer most, and towards Himself, to the point that Jesus affirms that what we do to the least of these, we do to Him. And what we do not do to the least of these; we do not do to Him.

Thus, to give food and drink to those who are hungry or thirsty is to give food and drink to Jesus Himself. The same is true of welcoming strangers or those who have nothing, those in prison or those who are sick. In this impressive chapter of the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that whatever we do or fail to do for these people, we do or fail to do for Him.

And what about Faith and Light?

In this reading, Jesus is also addressing us, the members of Faith and Light communities.

We will certainly have to review the way we behave towards other members of our community, especially ‘the least among us’. And who are the least among us in our communities? Because it could be anyone, not just someone with an intellectual disability.

According to the passage from the Gospel according to Matthew, first there are those who hunger and thirst. There may be people who hunger and thirst for food and drink, but also to be listened to or taken account of. There is also the hunger and thirst to be loved and cherished, to have friends or to be part of a family with brothers and sisters.

And what about the stranger?

Perhaps we can think of people who come to our community for the first time. How do we welcome them?

Are we open to others, or do we withdraw into ourselves away in the comfort of our community?

Matthew also speaks of those who are in need. We can think of people who seem to contribute little and hardly speak, all those who lack resources, abilities, skills, but who could develop them if they were helped and supported. Those who have nothing or very little, not even sympathy or generosity, but who are part of our communities.

Finally, there are those in prison and those who are sick. Beyond the real suffering of so many human beings in prison, we can also discover people trapped in their own prisons, chained to their fears, their hatred, their traumatic past or their negative experiences.

And the sick, who are always present, people suffering from physical or spiritual pain, unexpected medical diagnoses, or even death itself, which always comes in the end, even if we think it only happens to others.

In this Gospel passage, Jesus reminds us once again that whatever we do for these people, we do for Him, and whatever we fail to do for them, we fail to do for Him. No more, no less.

May the meditation on this passage help us to discover who, in my Faith and Light community, I need to be closer to at this moment, and may we put in place concrete and real steps to achieve this, in the form of time given, accompaniment and, of course, prayer.

United in Jesus.

Raúl Izquierdo García
Faith and Light
International Coordinator



News from the Capricorn Africa Province

Greetings to everyone from the Faith and Light Communities in Capricorn Africa. There has been much activity, where Faith and Light is active in the following countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Africa and Zimbabwe. Communication with these countries has been strengthened.

We are committed to reenergising the communities in the province. To this end, I visited several of them and organised various formation sessions to bring together representatives from each community in South Africa and Zimbabwe. We were delighted to be able to meet in the best possible conditions despite our limited resources.

Unfortunately, I was unable to travel to the DRC for logistical reasons, but the good news is that I have been able to connect

and talk to the Faith and Light leaders in that country to let them know they are very much a part of the province. The Vice Provincial Coordinator, Bruno Ngoy, shared experiences of losing beloved members, facing accidents, and the journey to full recovery for those affected. Despite their difficulties in getting together, due to the various tensions in the country, they remain hopeful and we continue to hold them close in prayer always.

Two Formation/provincial gatherings were also held quite recently: The first one took place from 26 to 28 September 2025 at the Norbertine Priory in Kommetjie, Cape Town. I led this meeting with the coordinators of the four communities in South Africa, in the presence of other



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members. The weekend was devoted to prayer, discussion, sharing of the positive aspects and challenges within their respective communities, team building, revisiting the Charter and Constitution, priorities, and looking towards the future plans. We also had an opportunity to have a time of fiesta with the St Martins Community and celebrate the countries Heritage Day celebration in music and dance.

We are also delighted to share the great news that the Fish Hoek Community held a discernment and Elize Harris was called into the role of Community Coordinator to accompany the community as they officially asked to be recognised after a period of more than 2 years in formation whilst building the foundation of a community life in Faith and Light. **Congratulations Fish Hoek Community!**

The second provincial gathering in Zimbabwe that I facilitated from 3 to 5 October 2025, took place in the Harare region, where nearly 100 representatives from the communities of Harare, Kwekwe, Bulawayo and Gweru gathered in a humble yet magnificent setting in Kwekwe, in a true spirit of Africa.

We were also delighted to welcome Reverend Brian Munobvanryi, the new chaplain of the Gweru community, to the meeting. All delegates were given various handbooks such as the Charter and Constitution and the 2025-2026 guidelines. They discussed and shared their challenges including on fundraising, the reasons for their involvement in Faith and Light, the spirituality of the movement, the role of the chaplain, and worked on developing priorities for each community for the coming year.

Throughout the weekend, there was deep sharing, lots of music, dance and simple instruments such as an ordinary plastic tub, could become an instrument of joy. The need is always to find the gift within and to share it, as well as discussing how to overcome the challenges experienced in the country, and individual community needs.

It proved to be a time of openness and understanding of what Faith and Light's mission is to the world and to the Communities in Zimbabwe. The Jesuit community were very supportive, thanks extended to Fr David Harol-Barry, and Artkin Muwishi, Lorraine Lunga and the



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communities of Kwekwe for logistical support and preparation within the country, on-site organisation, meals and refreshments, which contributed to everyone's well-being.

We pray for continued growth to revive all the communities as the Holy Spirit leads. May Jesus guide us and hold us close.

Thank you to all the communities, who through solidarity support were able to play a huge role towards making our formation sessions become a reality in our province, where they were needed most. And to the South African communities for stepping in, to ensure we can contribute towards the goal of giving in many ways.



Encouraged by everyone's generosity and international support, we are wholeheartedly committed to the mission of Faith and Light in our province.

Blessings and much Love to all. ■

Jacinta Munro
Provincial Coordinator
Capricorn Africa



Holidays...



January is summer in Brazil; temperatures range between 30 and 35°C and many people are on holiday.

It was in this context that, in the mid-1990s, a group of coordinators from the state of São Paulo, together with the national coordinator, decided to organise a holiday break. Everyone immediately accepted the idea and preparations began so that, at the beginning of 1999, the first Faith and Light holiday in São Paulo could take place.

This holiday was such a success that it has been renewed every year, except during the pandemic. In 2026, we celebrated the 25th edition with great joy, thanks to the participation of more than 150 people, who came either to enjoy a day out or to stay together for four wonderful sunny days at Chácara do Abacateiro (a holiday camp for children) in the city of Cordeirópolis, in the state of São Paulo.

During the stay, as well as enjoying the swimming pool and football pitch, we offered many activities: craft workshops, ballet performances, sharing groups, morning prayer sessions and afternoon rosary prayers.



We also participated together in Holy Mass, celebrated on site, as well as in the traditional dances, parades and bingo games that enlivened our evenings.

These were wonderful days and everyone returned home refreshed and happy, looking forward to meeting again in January 2027. ■

Jussara and Renato Batista
Provincial Coordinators
Bridge of Friendship
(Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay)



Report from Mexico

Provincial Meeting Our Lady of Guadalupe September 2025

Last September, the communities of the Our Lady of Guadalupe province held their annual provincial meeting in the city of Chihuahua, where the Joaquín Gallo community, which was the first to settle there, celebrated its 35th anniversary. People with disabilities, parents, friends and chaplains from different regions of the country (Guanajuato, Mexico City, Tabasco and Veracruz) were present. The meeting took place on the Church premises, where everyone stayed and where almost all the activities took place. There were about 70 people.

On the first day, Thursday afternoon, we welcomed everyone and told the story of the Joaquín Gallo community, in the presence of mothers, friends with intellectual disabilities and friends who had been there since the beginning of our communities and are still part of it today.

They showed old photos and gave

us a beautiful example of fidelity, brotherly love and friendship, which are the foundations of our communities. We paid tribute to Father Joaquín Gallo S.J. (†), who created this community (which bears his name), and also to Fr Juan Manuel Mata (†), who accompanied Héctor and Rosy Bustillos (†) who founded the community, for many years.

The day ended with a beautiful Holy Hour, presided over by Father Carlos Piña, the new chaplain of Mexico City, who guided us during the time of recollection before the Blessed Sacrament.

Friday began very early. After a family-style breakfast, a discussion on fidelity in Faith and Light was led by Ale, Oly and Elisa, vice provincial coordinators.

Elsa, a friend of Faith and Light for over 35 years, concluded the discussion by sharing her testimony of fidelity in the communities.

Then we left the house and made a short pilgrimage to the Guadalupe Shrine. But as it was very hot, we decided to pray the Rosary, with the mysteries of Faith and Light, inside the church. At the end of the Rosary, Mass was



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celebrated by Father Tony, provincial chaplain, and Father Carlos.

At noon, a picnic was organised in the park where participants enjoyed traditional Chihuahua burritos while chatting.

Later, we boarded a small tourist train, driven by characters from the Mexican Revolution, which told the history of Chihuahua and described the city's iconic buildings. We also visited the museum of Pancho Villa, an important figure who initiated the Mexican Revolution and lived in Chihuahua.

At the end of the tour, we stayed for a while in the city centre, where we visited the cathedral and enjoyed some free time to rest, eat ice cream and buy some souvenirs of the city. Later, a bus came to pick us up and take us back to the Retiro house, where we experienced another beautiful and symbolic moment: the washing of the feet, a time of reflection, prayer and unity among all the participants.

Saturday began very early with Mass, followed by many activities. First, Denisson, the vice international coordinator from Brazil, presented a formation theme on the Charter and Constitution.

Then José Ángel, Diana and Nadia spoke about the youth meeting in Aracaju, Brazil.

The three participants in this international meeting enthusiastically recounted their experience and motivated us to continue seeking young friends for the communities.

That morning, we received a very special visit: about twenty young friends came to spend a day full of activities with our friends with disabilities. They played, sang and danced all morning.



After lunch, a series of workshops was organised, where everyone could choose what they wanted to learn. There were craft workshops where participants created colourful logos for Faith and Light; cooking classes where they made delicious biscuits; singing and dancing workshops, which are always very popular; and a workshop on finances, where various options for raising funds for the communities were presented.



Report from Mexico

Afterwards, discussion groups were formed, where everyone could say what they had enjoyed most about the meeting and give their opinions.

The day ended after dinner with a party and music. Many friends, relatives and even chaplains shared their singing and dancing talents, providing an evening full of entertainment. Each community wore traditional costumes from their region and traditional sweets were shared.

On Sunday, the last day of the gathering, the sending off Mass and the big celebration for the 35th anniversary of the Joaquín Gallo community took place at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Everyone arrived as pilgrims and was welcomed by the chaplain, Father José Luis Sierra, S.J.



Afterwards, a festive lunch was held in the main hall of the parish with a variety of tacos and music.

At the end of the day, everyone left with renewed and recharged spirits, after a fun and enriching experience, motivated by the desire to continue supporting our

communities and friends with disabilities.

We thank the international team, the entire provincial coordinating team of Santa María de Guadalupe, and all the participants, because without them, this meeting would not have been possible.



We thank God for allowing us to experience this meeting and we continue to let the Holy Spirit guide all communities, always accompanied by our beloved mother, the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. Amen. ■

Gaby VAZQUEZ,
Provincial Coordinator
Santa Maria de Guadalupe

We would like to extend our special thanks to an anonymous donor from Norway, who provided financial support for our meeting.

Dear friend from Norway, thank you!

Thank you! Thank you!

May God bless you and reward you even more than you have so generously given us !

The Feast of Light

in Poland

The Feast of Light in Libiąż: a celebration of joy, presence and unity

This year, the Feast of Light in the Faith and Light communities of the Southern Poland province took place on 31 January in the parish of St. Barbara in Libiąż. It was an exceptional moment of joy and encounters, reminding us that each of us is invited to bring light where it is lacking.

This extraordinary event brought together more than 200 people from 16 communities in different cities, including Jasło, Tarnów, Krakow, Czarny Dunajec, Wadowice, Bielsko-Biała, Trzebinia, Jaworzno and Libiąż. Community members, their families and friends were present, all wishing to experience this joyful moment of celebration together. Members of the 'Barbórka' community led the meeting, and

members of other parish groups in Libiąż, such as the Beloved and the Family Oasis, also participated in organising the event. Their help was invaluable.

The meeting began with a welcome message from the provincial coordinator, Arkadiusz Pisarek, followed by the lighting of the candle of the province Poland South, followed by the candles of each participating community.

We then attended Holy Mass and learned about the life of Helena Kmieć, a parishioner from Libiąż and Servant of God, who died while serving as a volunteer missionary in Bolivia. The festivities continued at a primary school.



The Feast of Light

in Poland

This year, the theme of the Feast of Light was 'Angels, Messengers of God,' in line with the theme of the 2025-2026 Guidelines, prepared by the four Polish provinces. As we read in the Guidelines: 'Throughout our common journey, spiritual guides, God's helpers, the angels, accompany us.'

The celebration began with a convivial meal accompanied by the essentials of any community gathering: coffee, tea and cakes. We then gathered in the school gym, beautifully decorated for the Angelic Star Academy, where each community had the opportunity to present an original performance. Each community was able to share its unique talents. We heard a beautiful poem by Beata Kołodziej entitled 'Colourful Angels' performed by angels. Songs were presented in different ways: sung, mimed or accompanied by dance.

There were Christmas singers with a colourful star, a mime with beautiful props representing the creation of the world. All the performances were accompanied by an angelic presence – we could feel as if we were in heaven where joy, peace and love reign among the angels!

Angels are signs of God's presence and love. They bring hope, peace and good news. In the daily life of communities, people become angels who know how to listen, accompany, smile and love unconditionally. Every gesture of tenderness, every moment of shared joy and every outstretched hand becomes a ray of light.

Light is stronger than darkness, and love is stronger than fear. Together, we form a community where everyone is important, needed and loved.

May every day of our lives look like this Feast of Light and fill our hearts with joy. May we, like angels, be messengers of Light to one another and to all the people we meet each day. ■

Izabela Rabiasz
Vice international coordinator



The Feast of Light

in Ireland

Testimonies from Cuan Íosa, Sligo

- * Meeting other parents who understand without needing words.
- * A nod of the head takes on new meaning thanks to the intention behind it.
- * Volunteers who allow us to take a break and who make a significant contribution.
- * A peaceful atmosphere and a place where we can relax.
- * The managers and volunteers put a lot of effort into crafts, art and theatre activities. This shows that they appreciate and respect the members.
- * They make an effort to get to know people and know how to bring out their strengths.

- * There is an atmosphere of joy at every event.

Testimonies from Emer Mc Nulty

- * Being in an environment where I can be myself.
- * My spiritual side is recognised.
- * My voice is heard.
- * I enjoy going there and having the opportunity to help.
- * I look forward to every meeting.



Emer is in the wheelchair in the centre

The Feast of Light

in Lebanon



The Feast of Light

in Ukraine

The Feast of Light is a very special celebration for us, the Faith and Light family, because it concerns the grace of encounter. The encounter between God and humanity. Jesus is the gentle light of the Heavenly Father, who gives life to the whole world.

It is also the encounter between people. Just as one candle lights another, our hearts are set alight and warmed by love with every encounter.

That is why we love to celebrate this feast. Because it is good to be together and to be with Jesus. We cherish these moments when we come together and are there for one another. God is with us.



“May all who read these lines be filled with light. The light of joy, the light of courage, the light of patience, the light of love, salvation and victory. Light always triumphs over darkness!”

Zoryana, excerpt from ‘Gift of Love’
(Ivano-Frankivsk)

“The Feast of Light is about sharing light and conviviality.”

Yanochka
from Vesnyanka (Kiev)

“This feast is about love and joy. Because the Faith and Light community comes together. It is an encounter with Jesus, the most important encounter in life.”

Roman, ‘Vesnyanka’

“This year, and especially this winter, we realise how important light is. Without it, we are both cold and in the dark. We wait for the light so that we can enjoy life to the full. It is the same for Simeon, who waited for years for the Light to come into this dark world.

The Holy Spirit saw his desire and led Simeon to Jesus. It is always the Holy Spirit who brings people to Jesus. Our mission, then, is to desire this encounter with Him, to want it more than anything else. ‘Jesus, come to us. Enlighten this world with our faith and Your light.’ ■

Father Volodymyr
Provincial Chaplain

Short poem *With eyes full of joy and hope,
*And peals of laughter,
*The echoes resound so clearly,
*In the songs that fly away,
*At the carnival that we love so much,
The holy Feast of Light.

Stepan
‘Skeliastyj Zamok’, Khust



The Feast of Light

in Italy

A celebration of light and hope.

On Monday, 2 February, the Germoglio di Speranza (Sprout of Hope) community celebrated the Feast of Light. The celebration began at 6:30 pm with Mass, celebrated by Don Francesco Ingrande at the Sacro Cuore in Santa Maria di Gesù parish in Mazara del Vallo, where the Candlemas ritual took place with the blessing of candles representing Christ, who drives away the darkness of sin and death.

The Feast of Light is a feast adopted by the Faith and Light movement and celebrated throughout the world. The Catholic Church commemorates the day Jesus was presented in the temple, 40 days after his birth, when the old man Simeon designated the Child Jesus as 'the light that enlightens the nations'.

The elders considered sunlight to be the most useful thing in the world. Perhaps this is why Jesus calls his disciples the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus said to them, 'You are the light of the world.'

Jesus' disciples must be a light to the world. How? First, the true light is Jesus, who tells us, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' (Jn 8:12).

When disciples follow Jesus, they themselves become the light of Christ for others. In practice, those who lead honest lives show others that such a life is possible, even in this world full of temptations, torment and indifference.

The members of the community were welcomed by the angel of Samson's mother (Guidelines chap. 3), played by our dear Antonella, with a hug and a smile, which they in turn passed on to their neighbours. This gesture can help heal the wounds caused by rejection, indifference, loneliness and humiliation. ■

Alberto Alagna
Germoglio di Speranza Community
of Mazara del Vallo



The Feast of Light

in Syria

Families belonging to the Faith and Light movement in Damascus marked the Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, with a celebration centred on inclusion, joy, and community, following the Divine Liturgy at the Church of Our Lady of Damascus.

The service was presided over by Mor Youssef Absi, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Melkite Greek (Rûm) Catholic Church, and was attended by a number of priests, accompanying friends, and the families of Faith and Light in Damascus.

After the liturgy, the celebration continued in the church hall, bringing together people with disabilities and their family members. The programme included dances, songs and a shared meal, a “meal of love”,

reflecting the movement’s emphasis on fellowship and human connection.

The event was not an isolated occasion. Faith and Light families meet regularly to support people with disabilities, assisted by a group of 20 to 25 accompanying friends from diverse professional backgrounds. Together, they provide psychological support and help foster social inclusion.



The Feast of Light

in Syria

Speaking to SyriacPress, Claude Samaan, the national coordinator of Faith and Light families in Syria, said the movement began its journey in the country in the early 1980s. Today, it includes 48 families spread across Daramsuq and its countryside, Homs, Yabrud, Hama, Hasakah, Qamishli, Latakia, and Tartus.

Founded within the Church, the Faith and Light movement seeks to integrate people with disabilities into society and to secure their rights through an approach rooted in love and joy. It also works to highlight their abilities, emphasizing that they are active and valuable members of their communities.

To that end, the organisation has held art exhibitions featuring works created by people with disabilities, with proceeds supporting its activities, and has presented artistic performances across several provinces, particularly during Christmas and Easter celebrations.

In its quiet consistency, the celebration, and the ongoing work behind it, offers a clear message, genuine love is expressed through action before words. People with disabilities, Faith and Light emphasises, are not on the margins of society but at its heart. Through faith, joy, and shared effort among families, volunteers, and the Church, new spaces of hope are created, affirming dignity, strengthening inclusion, and positioning Faith and Light as a human bridge between difference and love, where giving becomes a way of life. ■

Article from syriacpress.com
31/01/2026



The Feast of Light

in Peru

It is with great joy that we share some moments from the celebration of the Mass of Light, during which the communities of Lima gathered to give thanks to God for the gift of life, our vocation and our shared mission.

It was a special time of encounter, prayer and communion, where we renewed our commitment to be a light in daily life, through simple gestures of love, fidelity and service, especially to the most vulnerable.

It is a special opportunity to give thanks for our vocation and mission in Faith and Light, and to remind ourselves that Christ is the light that illuminates our lives and our journey as a community.

We thank all the communities in Lima for their participation and testimonies.

May Christ, the light of the world, continue to light our way. ■

Guillermo Palomino,
Provincial Coordinator
Jesus, Light of the Andes
(Peru, Chile, Colombia)



The Feast of Light

in Portugal



The Feast of Light

in Mauritius

Our communities gathered at Notre-Dame de Mont Roches to give thanks to the Lord during Mass. In connection with the Gospel passage, 'You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world,' our brothers and sisters remind us that the light of Christ depends neither on performance nor strength, but on an open and trusting heart.

After the celebration, a pancakes sale gave us the opportunity to raise funds to support our activities in a wonderful spirit of sharing. ■



in Brazil



The Feast of Light

in Madrid, Spain

On the theme 'The light that illuminates our path', the communities of Madrid gathered at the Nuestra Señora del Recuerdo school.

We presented ourselves as a regatta of boats, each one symbolising a community, with its name.

Mass was celebrated by several chaplains, with the help of wonderful altar servers.



Then we gathered in small groups, each representing a coloured lighthouse.

We then enjoyed a candle painting activity before ending the day with a tasty snack. ■



Testimony from Blanca

(left on the photo)

I really enjoyed preparing the Feast of Light. You truly value the amount of work that goes into making sure everything runs smoothly.

I enjoyed reading in front of everyone.

You do things more intensely when you experience them from the inside.

You could see that people were really enjoying themselves!



The Feast of Light

in Valencia, Spain

My first Feast of Light...

I would like to briefly share my experience of the 2026 Feast of Light, celebrated on 8 February by the Faith and Light communities of Valencia, in our Province Land and Sea.

My name is Noelia and I have been attending the monthly meetings of the *Més Vida* community (which means MORE LIFE in Valencian, the language spoken where we live) for almost three years. Our community is special because it is the only evangelical community to have been established in Spain to date. For me, being part of Faith and Light has been a blessing and a discovery. The same goes for the Feast of Light. It was my first time participating and I had the privilege of joining the preparation team. It was very touching to see people with intellectual disabilities enjoying the feast. At first, some were quite shy, but they quickly gained confidence. We didn't all know each other and some people had never met before. To introduce themselves, each community proposed an activity that particularly represented them. We chose to perform a song, which was a beautiful way to open the feast. We then continued with games and ended with a short meditation accessible to all, while retaining the depth of the message: JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

I would now like to share what my participation in the team preparing this Feast of Light meant to me.

As I mentioned, *Més Vida* is an evangelical community, while the other two communities in Valencia, *Doble Amor* and *Puerta del Cielo*, are Catholic. This experience was very enriching: working together, sharing ideas and spending time based on what unites us, our faith in Jesus Christ. On the day we met to prepare, I

only knew one person on the team, but I felt very welcome and quickly felt like I was part of a family. I truly felt a sense of belonging within this group that was still unknown to me, an experience that prepared and enriched what I then fully experienced during the Feast of Light.

What I appreciated most was beginning and ending by praising God together. We were a good group, coming from different backgrounds and traditions, but we respected the uniqueness of each person and each community. The Lord created us different, and this diversity has a meaning.

I believe that living together, celebrating and learning to respect and love one another, despite our different Christian traditions, can be an example for many: a true model of coexistence and shared mission. This mission places us alongside people with disabilities, allowing us to support them and offer our presence. These very special people give us their kindness and sincere gratitude in return. I have come to understand that it is a true blessing to be united in diversity. ■

Noelia Monteagudo



The Feast of Light

In France



Hello to all our friends around the world whom we meet through Up sails! Thanks to all of you!

On Sunday, 8th February 2026, we celebrated our traditional Feast of Light in the diocese of Saint Etienne, bringing together four communities: Graines d'Amour, La Bergerie, Emmanuel-Forez and Rayon de Soleil. There were 57 of us.

The day began with Mass at St Jean-Louis du Levant parish. Then, we shared a meal that was enjoyed by all the participants.

The afternoon continued with a little activity on the theme of the four seasons, where each community had to mime or sing about a season. The day was heart-warming and full of shared happiness. We were also delighted to have Claire and Franck Gauthier, vice-coordinators of two communities in the diocese, with us.

We will also meet again in the summer for a picnic.

Paul Giraud and Marie-Thérèse Gonon
Coordinators
'Rayon de Soleil' community
St Héand /Chazelles sur Lyon
Province France Loire-Rhône-Auvergne



A day in good company!

I am going to tell you about a day spent in the Faith and Light San Gaetano community in Rome on 18th January.

First, we attended a very lively Mass with prayers, readings and songs at the parish of San Gaetano. They all meet every second Sunday of the month, because it is a group of friends who truly enjoy each other's company.

We began with the reading of the Gospel with Father Benoît and we sang. Then we all gathered in the second room for a group meeting; there were new people, each with a different name: happiness, joy, serenity, cheerfulness, because I, Sara Tosato, am always with Lucia, Francesco's mother, and I love her very much.



Afterwards, we sang the Hallelujah of the Light Bulbs (*) and then had lunch, and those who wanted to, could go for a walk. After that, we rehearsed the play. We then played team games, where we just had to sing the melody of the songs and then mime

them. At the end, we sang *Come un fiume* with Nicolò and we prayed the Our Father with Fr Benoît. After that, everyone went home. ■

Sara Tosato

P.S. I can't wait to be back with my friends from Faith and Light!

(*) children's song in italia





For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

A beautiful Feast of Light 15 years ago!

At the beginning of February, how can we not think of the Feast of Light, celebrated by the communities around the world with joy and enthusiasm.

We organised it with our community and a neighbouring community on 1st February, and it is always a great and beautiful celebration!

But on that day, I remembered another Feast of Light... It was in Lourdes 15 years ago, in 2011.

For the first time, a Council of Coordinators was meeting, and the main objective of this meeting was to launch the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of our beloved movement. There were about a hundred of us, and with great enthusiasm, we decided to do at the provincial level what was already happening at the community level for the Feast of Light.

After this Feast of Light, the provinces celebrated 40 years of Faith and Light with local pilgrimages: each province invited another province and was invited by another province; all these pilgrimages, about fifty in number, took place over a period of two years (2011-2012). The main message of these pilgrimages was joy! We were all messengers of joy, with a beautiful song that we all remember!

I remember with great emotion each of the pilgrimages I attended: Aparecida (Brazil), Loreto (Italy), Lourdes (France), Deir Dronka (Egypt), Sumuleu Ciuc (Romania), Nara (Japan), Johor (Malaysia), Fatima (Portugal), Quebec (Canada), Mexico City (Mexico), Winnipeg (Canada), Hoshiv (Ukraine), Krakow & Warsaw (Poland), Banneux (Belgium), Fish Hoek (South Africa).

But my strongest memory of that period is the joy that the provinces felt at being able



For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

to organise these pilgrimages and welcome other provinces: I remember very well what the French from the Sparkling East province told me when they returned from Madagascar... The Madagascans were so proud to be able to welcome a French province and another from Africa.

This opportunity to go out and meet another province is something we must preserve in our heritage; we are always enriched by going out to meet others. So, this great fire that we lit in Lourdes in February 2011 is just waiting to spread further and further!

I am thinking in particular of all the Faith and Light countries where the last embers have died out, such as Haiti, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ecuador and Kenya... Efforts are being made to revive the flame in the latter two countries.

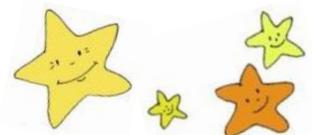


Let us listen to what Jesus said to his disciples:

"He called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two. [...] He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts." (Mk 6:7-8)

This is what Father Joseph Larsen did when he was in the Philippines, and he told us that it worked well!

Our light is just waiting to spread throughout the world; so, with faith (and joy), let's go! What was done a little over two years ago (a community was born on the French island of Wallis, located in the South Pacific), following in the footsteps of Saint Pierre Chanel, is proof that this kind of missionary work can bear fruit. ■



International news

Nives Carioni

From 6th to 8th February, the province **River of Peace** met in Barzà d'Ispra, in the region of Varese. During the assembly, a discernment process took place to elect the **new coordinator for Northern Italy and Galilee**, in the presence of seven people representing the communities of Eilaboun and Shefaram.

Liliana Ghiringhelli has completed her second term, and we thank her for accompanying the province for so long with great dedication and spirit of service.

During the assembly, on the theme 'I say **yes to the Lord**,' the Friday evening vigil was very intense, as were the Saturday reflections led by Don Mauro Santoro, the testimonies of Liliana Ghiringhelli and Sister Camelia El Khoury, and the Sunday Mass presided over by Don Marco Bove, international chaplain.

At the end of a process of discernment guided by the vice international coordinator Angela Grassi, **Nives Carioni**, a long-time friend with a big heart and the soul of the province's summer camps, was elected. Nives was regional leader for a long time, then vice provincial coordinator with her husband Paolo, who passed away suddenly in the spring of 2023. **Nives accepted this mission, confident that she could count on the support of the provincial team**, Angela and her children Alessandro and Chiara. We wish her all the best in her new role!



Ralph et Rana Outayeck

On 22nd February, **Ralph and Rana Outayeck** were elected coordinators for the province of **Lebanon South and Jordan**. They succeed Bachir and Merry Kodsi, whom we all warmly thank for their commitment and dedication to Faith and Light.

My best wishes to the new team, so that life may continue within Faith and Light.

Souleiman Kassouha,
Vice international Coordinator



Ghassan Karam



On 1st March, **Ghassan Karam** was elected coordinator of the province ILA Trinity (Iran, North Lebanon, Armenia). The elections were transparent, fluid and deeply spiritual, with three candidates motivated by friendship and a spirit of collaboration. Ghassan subsequently chose the two other candidates (**Jean Al-Kassis**, the former coordinator, and **Massoud Abboud**) as members of the provincial team. I wish the new team every success, so that life and the mission may continue to shine within Faith and Light.

Souleiman K.

International news

Matthew Ferrary



The Provincial Assembly of **Beacons of Light Province**, which includes Great Britain and Gibraltar, was held on 14th February and elected **Matthew Ferrary** as **Provincial Coordinator**.

Matthew has been very involved for several years, both as a community coordinator and as provincial vice-coordinator. We thank him for accepting these new responsibilities. Matthew succeeds **Karen Donnan**, to whom we extend our warmest thanks.

Marie Colla



We are pleased to announce that **Marie Colla** has officially joined the small team at the international secretariat as a all-round administrative assistant. Marie discovered the world of disability through the Simon de Cyrène association, where she volunteered, and wanted to commit herself professionally to a mission serving the most vulnerable.

Marie is a mother of three young children. Passionate about music and singing, she plays the cello and piano. Welcome Marie to the Faith and Light family!

Aurélie Perque

It is with great joy that I announce the election on 15th February of the **new coordinator** for the **province France North: Aurélie Perque**.

Mother of three boys, general practitioner near Valenciennes, community coordinator, Aurélie has been with Faith and Light for 17 years as a friend. We extend our immense gratitude to **Christiane Moncourt** for her unfailing dedication throughout all these years, her skills, and her human qualities.

Antoine-Marie Izoard
International Vice-Coordinator



Christiane, Aurélie, Antoine-Marie

Guidelines 2026-2027

The next guidelines are being prepared by a team from three provinces: North America West, Canada East and USA East, led by our friends Emilia Quintana and Andrew Dean, vice international coordinators, on the theme 'The Wonderful World of God.'

Family album

Martine Guénard



On Thursday, 8th January, the funeral mass was held for Martine Guénard, who for so many years served the people who were ill or had a disability at the OCH in Lourdes.

The church was filled to overflowing with people who loved Martine, some of whom had travelled from far away: a dozen people came by plane, others braved the snow by car, such as Pierre, who came from Nantes, for example... her family, friends, and people with disabilities or in fragile health.

The Mass was gentle and moving, with powerful testimonies from her children, friends, and grandchildren.

It was profound, melodious and joyful, just like Martine herself! The mass booklet contained a quote from Saint Bernadette, who touched Martine's heart: 'She looked at me as one person who speaks to another.' Florence Gros, director of the OCH Foundation, paid tribute to her with these words: "There are some encounters that are unforgettable.

Those I had with Martine Guénard are among them because they were always filled with deep joy.

She died suddenly after a stroke on the evening of Friday 2 January, and my thoughts are first and foremost with her

family, whom she loved so much.

A caring wife, mother and grandmother who was always there for everyone, she nevertheless remained fairly discreet about her family life.

It was largely through the OCH Foundation that we had so much to share and so much joy. She worked there for so many years. First in Paris for the "Helpline and Counselling service", then in Lourdes, where she was responsible for the reception service for people with disabilities and their families, a service entrusted to the OCH Foundation by the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

She devoted all her energy and all her human and spiritual qualities to helping people weakened by disability.

Together with her husband Tim, they created '*La ferme Notre Dame*', which welcomes vulnerable people or those in difficulty, where they were able to share their experiences and commitments. It was in this context that they became part of the Pierre-François Jamet group run by the OCH.

Martine was an important figure in the Christian community of Lourdes and the OCH.

She was an inspiration to many people.

Thank you, Martine!

Florence Gros
Director of the OCH Foundation



Family album

Tim Sweeney



Tim passed away on 16th November 2025. He was one of the first members of Faith and Light. His journey with the movement began in Lourdes in 1971, where he travelled with his mother, Alice, on his very first pilgrimage. Tim was a true advocate for Faith and Light and L'Arche.

From the very beginning, Tim's enthusiasm, faith and joy took him far. He travelled to Warsaw with Father Aidan and Jane Robinson, as well as to several other countries, always representing the heart of Faith and Light with courage, friendship and a deep sense of belonging.

Funeral Mass

Homily by John Sargent L'Arche International

Tim's brother Brendan recalled last week that when they were planning together their Mum's funeral about 10 years ago, Brendan asked Tim if there was anything else he wanted for the funeral, and Tim said emphatically, "keep it short!"

So, I'd better keep it short!

We've gathered together this morning to celebrate and give thanks for Tim's life. We will use the symbols of water and the Easter candle, symbols that were used at Tim's baptism 65 years ago. A few days

before Tim died, Fr Andrew anointed Tim with oil, again echoing the anointing that Tim received at baptism.

When someone is baptised, I emphasise three things that we are doing – firstly we are affirming and celebrating that this person is unique and precious, beautiful and of infinite value – that he is made in the image of God;

Secondly, we are saying that they belong – they belong in their family, they belong in the people of God, the Church, and they belong in the world, they have their place in the world – that they are made in the image of God the Trinity, God who is Relationship.

And thirdly, that we celebrate the person being drawn into the basic pattern of Christian life – that in the waters of baptism, we die with Christ and we are raised to new life with Christ.

And now, at the end of life, we come to celebrate Tim's unique precious life; we celebrate his belonging with his family, with his friends, his belonging in the people of God and his place in the world; and we celebrate his dying and rising with Christ.

Tim's unique precious life - his gifts of humour, musicality, impeccable timing, his songwriting, storytelling, sense of mischief, connection, memory, he touched and influenced 100s people all over the world: For example, Erik, a young German assistant who is now an international business & trade consultant based in the Philippines, posted on LinkedIn:

"This week I lost a good friend – Tim. For six years, he was my next-door neighbour. Over time, we became friends something that wasn't easy for me at first. He was 40 years older, and as a naive 18-year-old, I didn't really know what I could possibly do with him beyond the care we provided in L'Arche. But by spending time with him, following his interests, and just being present, a real friendship grew."

The charism of Faith and Light is to overcome differences in order to transform

Family album

us by revealing the unique value of every person, and this experience is a sign in the world that all belong. Tim lived this charism.

Tim belonged – a community person – he grew up with Brendan and his mum & dad in a close extended family of cousins, aunts, uncles, friends,

He was one of the founders of Faith and Light – in 1971 Lourdes, and was a member for over 50 years; the 141 group at Lancaster University – friends of 50 years, between the ages of 12-17 he was a member of Camphill in Aberdeen; and then in 2007 he came to join us in L'Arche.

Tim loved to be on a journey – and it was the journey not the destination that was important – as soon as he arrived somewhere he was ready to come home! So many pilgrimages to Lourdes, train trips, buses, timetables everywhere, in the last few years he expressed a desire to go to Lourdes on a bus with a bed – and he managed to go to Lourdes 3 times on the Jumbulance (*), the last time just 3 months ago.

And so we gather together to celebrate and give thanks for Tim's life. We remember and tell the old stories. We come together too in sadness to face our loss. We cry together; we grieve together; we comfort each other; we mourn together; And as we face our loss and our grief, we do so in the Christian faith that death is not the end.

Life is changed but not ended. The journey continues. If we have died with Christ we will be raised to new life with Christ.

Jesus says to Tim - and to us - Blessed are you.... Happy are you.... yours in the kingdom of heaven.

John Sargent
L'Arche international

(*) www.jumbulancetrust.org.uk

Agnès Hakizimana



Agnès passed away on the night of 5th December 2025 at Kabgayi Hospital following an illness.

Since 1988, Agnès had been a member of Faith and Light in Burundi, along with her daughter Cosette, who has an intellectual disability.

From then until 2009, Agnès was responsible for one of the communities in Burundi, then she was elected vice provincial coordinator, but unfortunately she was unable to complete her term of office, having left her native country for Rwanda. Her responsibilities did not end there, as she became responsible for the Urumuri community in Kabgayi after the death of Mrs Leoncie. In 2024, she was elected Vice-Coordinator of the Province Eastern Africa, a position she was holding until today...

She was very active throughout her life and loved to lead Faith and Light meetings.

We keep her daughter Cosette in our prayers.



International agenda

MARCH

- Provincial assembly of France West, in Vannes from 7th to 8th March
- Provincial assembly Poland West, in Poznań from 7th to 8th March
- Provincial Team Meeting of Land and Sea, Spain, online, 8th March (10am to 12pm)
- Sunday of the Paralytic (Mass), prov. Canada East, in the parishes 15th March
- Formation for provincial coordinators, Iberatlantic province, online, 17th March
- Stations of the Cross, province Poland South, Cistercian Abbey in Krakow, 21st March
- Formation for parents and friends in Serbia in Tótfalu, 21st March
- World Down Syndrome Day, all over the world, 21st March
- Communities Mass, Poland South, Franciscan Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi , Krakow, 22nd March
- Treasurers' meeting in Spain, Iberatlantic province, online, 24th March at 7pm
- Week-end of Palms , province Kimata from 27th to 29th March in Bassano Romano, Viterbo (Italy)

APRIL

- Meditation on the Way of the Cross, prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe, (Zoom) 3rd April
- Palm Sunday, sharing day, Ukraine province, 5th April
- Provincial assembly France "Ile-de-France Ouest" 8th April
- Traditional festival of the city of Salamanca, communities of Castille, 13th April
- Formation in Norway, Solsetra, from 17th to 19th April
- Formation retreat for chaplains, Ukraine, Briukhovychi, (Lviv) , from 21st to 22nd April
- Provincial assembly France centre, Marian Shrine of Montligeon, from 25th to 26th April
- Holy Mass for communities in Krakow, province Poland South, 26th April

International solidarity A project to support in 2026

From 27th October to 1st November 2026, the Coordinator's council will gather 110 participants in Egypt, including the coordinators of the 51 Faith and Light provinces, the international team and a dozen chaplains representing the different denominations present in our movement (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican).

To make this event possible and support provinces in difficulty, Faith and Light International needs €66,000.

Find out more: <https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/news/2026>

Would you like to make a donation?

Online on our secure website

<https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/donate/help-us-bring-the-coordinators-together-in-egypt>



Project team in Egypt

Faith and Light's Friends



Welcome to Lourdes



Within the Sanctuary,
discover the permanent office of the OCH Foundation.

You will find

- A warm welcome, a moment of friendship,
- Someone to listen, information, personalised advice,
- Support for your stay in Lourdes (families, groups)
- the service also offers training to hospital staff and carers on the correct position and practices to adopt when supporting people with disabilities.



The OCH permanent office is a gateway to the mystery of Lourdes.

This is a place where people with disabilities and their families, but also all those wounded by life, all those whom society no longer wants to see, are at the forefront; thanks to God, at the OCH, they also have a voice.

For some, words flow naturally. For others, they remain in silence. It is expressed through gestures, postures and glances. It is the voice of the citizens of silence.

But what would words be without a listening ear? And it is on this point that I see the heart of the OCH's mission in Lourdes: a voice that listens, that, thanks to the kindness of all the staff and volunteers, becomes a 'heartfelt harmony', where, beyond our fears, words become doors that we must dare to open in order to understand their meaning.

David Torchala
Director of Communications
Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes

Faith and Light's friends, in Lourdes, a house for you !

Porte Saint-Michel 65100 Lourdes

Tel: +33 (0)5 62 42 79 92

Open every day from April to October
from 9.30am to 12pm and from 2pm to 6pm
(except Sunday and Monday mornings)

From November to March,
contact us at lourdes@och.fr



Foundation OCH. Find us on: www.och.fr

Marie-Hélène's letter



People and structures

Without oil, even the most efficient machinery cannot function.

It's the same thing for any structure in society. To open a school or centre, funding is required. The architecture and layout also need to be suitable. Well-trained staff are needed. We are delighted to see an increase in multidisciplinary teams working to develop the autonomy of people with disabilities, their ability to communicate and their integration into society.

But all these elements together are not enough to create a place where those who are welcomed can grow in peace and joy. The deep motivation of the educators, their attentiveness, their availability and their unity born of a common goal are the oil that keeps the gears turning.

This is true when it comes to a school or a hospital. It is even more true when it comes to a centre for children or adults with disabilities, who are more sensitive than others to everything that is going on around them and especially to what is left unsaid.

For the past thirty years, the state has been financially responsible for the sector of disability. This was probably essential, given the circumstances, but there is something that neither the administration nor funding can provide.

Above all, there must be love, trust in others, and a desire to help them grow in

all aspects of their being. Many educational teams are convinced of this and strive to achieve it.

In the coming years, will there be changes in the guidelines and legislation concerning facilities that care for children, adolescents, and adults with difficulties?



In our opinion, we should promote small-scale, family-type initiatives, encourage volunteering and educators to work closely with families and help them to assume their responsibilities.

Texts are important because they condition part of life. However, they are only a backdrop. The essential thing is people; what they do, what they are.

Where we are, we can be the oil that helps a group become a community. We can be the parents who make their home a small 'church cell' where children grow up in faith in Jesus. We can be the catechists who bear witness to a God they have encountered and in whom they have placed all their trust. We can be those educators who are artisans of growth in love. We can be those friends who know how to marvel, communicate their confidence, their taste for progress and effort.

Our children are in such need places of tenderness, forgiveness and celebration!

Marie-Hélène Mathieu

"Dieu m'aime comme je suis", (1998)