Up Sails!

Faith and Light International Newsletter No. 69, June 2026

Summary

Editorial by Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
Come, Holy Spirit 3

Gems
Lebanon, Easter flower crosses 5
Poland, art workshop 6

Reports
- Italy. An evening at the theatre 7
- France. Fashion show in Bordeaux 9
- Canada. The family is growing 10
- Lebanon. Mother's day 11
- Cyprus. Pilgrimage to Tinos 12
- Norway. Being together in joy and mourning 13
- Ukraine. Along the Sheperd's Path... 15

Testimonies
- A family came from a community, in Mauritius 18

For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné
- When is the anniversary of Faith and Light? 21

Family album 23

International news 24

International Agenda and Solidarity 26

Friends of Faith and Light
- The « Bon Coeur 21 » association 32

Marie-Hélène's Letter
- Disabilities and Resurrections 32

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Editorial

Raúl Izquierdo García
International coordinator

Come, Holy Spirit

On the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them.
He said to them:
"Peace be with you."

(John 20,19)

The Gospel of John describes a scene that we have surely read many times, and about which I would like to write a few lines. The context is well known: Jesus' disciples, both men and women, are locked inside a house, overcome by fear. Why are they afraid? Just a few days earlier, Jesus had been captured, subjected to public scorn, first in a trial conducted by the Jewish authorities and then by the Roman ones, without any guarantee of justice or defence, then to public mockery and humiliation, beatings and insults, and finally to death on a cross, a punishment inflicted on criminals and those who questioned Caesar's authority. In other words, the dream of those who followed Jesus had been shattered. The project on which they had based their lives had collapsed and their teacher, their friend, had died on a cross. But it seems that, despite the various occasions on which Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection, they continue to doubt and remain full of fear. What or whom are they afraid of? Anyone who might endanger their own lives. It could be the Jews or the Romans, or both at once.
The disciples were not gathered to celebrate a prayer vigil or a community moment filled with peace and joy; rather, they were shut away, in hiding. It was necessary for the Holy Spirit to manifest himself to set their heart alight and transform their fear into courage. Then they go out and begin to bear witness according to the gift or charism that the Spirit grants to each one, for the common good. What was once cowardice is now a missionary impulse, the desire to share what they have experienced, the joy of speaking of Jesus.

And in our communities?

The Holy Spirit is present in our communities, with the same strength as more than two thousand years ago in Jerusalem to Peter, John, Thomas, James, Mary Magdalene… For the Holy Spirit did not manifest himself in the centres of power and influence of the time, nor in the religious schools or theological circles of the day. Nor did he do so in military garrisons, nor in places filled with wise men and scholars. He revealed himself at the very heart of the fragility of men and

women who felt disoriented, vulnerable, intimidated. Men and women like us, with their limitations and their wounds, who desire to encounter God.

In Faith and Light, we may feel tempted to withdraw into ourselves and experience our belonging to our community as a warm and safe refuge, where everything we experience revolves around ourselves. It is true that it seems more pleasant to stay warm at home, without making too much noise, for fear of disturbing the neighbour upstairs.

But the Holy Spirit has intervened in our history so that we do not follow Jesus out of fear or in a purely private way. We are called to let ourselves be set alight by the fire of the Holy Spirit and to go out to where other people also need the warmth of God's love.

In Faith and Light, like so many Christians, we are called to bear witness to what we do and who we are, in the streets and squares, during our studies or in our professional activities, in our families and in any public event of daily life.

That is why I dare to pray that every Faith and Light community may receive the gift of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and that you may feel His presence, experience Him, and live it with immense and contagious joy. I am sure that our friends with intellectual disabilities will help us in this, for they have a radar for welcoming the Spirit of God.

Then, come Holy Spirit!

United in Jesus.

Raúl Izquierdo García
International coordinator

Gems...

Let us admire the beautiful flower-decorated
Easter crosses made on Palm Sunday by
the Saint Dominic Savio Community in Lebanon,
ILA Trinity Province.

Gems…

What a joy it is to introduce some of the artists from the Dominki-Bis Community in Jaworzno, Province Poland South!

Małgorzata

Roksana

Marcin

Kamila

Marcin

Roksana

Marcin

Małgorzata

Katarzyna

An evening at the theatre with our friends from Faith and Light in Milan

A long-standing friend of Faith and Light had told a group of friends know that the play « Aggiungi un posto a Tavola » (Add a place to the table) was running at the National Theatre in Milan, starring Giovanni Scifoni and Lorella Cuccarini. This performance was staged to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the creation of this wonderful musical.

On your marks, get set, go! Let's go and get the tickets for Faith and Light, a group made up of members from the Gratosoglio, Cesano Boscone and San Giuseppe della Pace communities.

On Sunday 22 February, we met up with other friends near the theatre. The excitement was at its peak. At 3.15 pm, with our tickets in hand, the usher showed us to our seats in the row reserved for our large group.

The show begins! Right from the opening song, we started singing along with them. The theatre was packed. On stage, young actors - both girls and boys kept delivering

double entendres. Every punchline drew a roar of laughter!

With Clementina in love with Don Silvestro, we had a really good time! They brought us immense joy; and from our seats at the very top, we had a clear view of the performers.

We had met the actor Giovanni Scifoni in Pompeii, during the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Faith and Light in Italy. What a deeply moving moment it was to see him again that afternoon at the theatre!

The show lasted three hours, with a fifteen-minute interval, and we couldn't stop saying how delighted we were. Once the show was over, the lights came up and everyone stood to applaud and thank them for this magnificent performance.

We went outside and waited for the actors to come out for a souvenir photo with the two leads: Giovanni Scifoni and Lorella Cuccarini. It was wonderful to see them up close, and they were very approachable; the other actors were brilliant too! We were happy and remained fascinated by the show, then we took another photo together outside the theatre; a lady kindly agreed to take our photo.

Report from Italy

It was with a heavy heart that we left to go home; we said our goodbyes and took the metro. Thank you to Maria Neri for giving us the opportunity to see this show and spend a lovely time together.

What can I say? It was fantastic: we, the friends of Faith and Light, were delighted, and above all, our young people were over the moon!

Flora Atlante
March 2026

https://www.fedeeluce.it/2026/03/05/aggiungi-un-posto-a-tavola-la-musica-che-unisce/

Attending the musical « Aggiungi un posto a Tavola » with friends from Faith and Light and featuring Lorella Cuccarini was truly SPECTACULAR... captivating, entertaining, and full of harmony.
The choreography, sets, and music were magnificent.

Unconditional welcome, solidarity, and openness to others symbolize a spirit of sharing that multiplies resources. The story teaches us to overcome distrust and prejudice, building a united community founded on love and forgiveness. ***Teresa***

It was a wonderful experience. Going to the theatre with Faith and Light, and much more besides, is a privileged moment I would not have missed for anything in the world. The children felt the same.
The show was captivating, hilarious, and exciting. We laughed a lot.I was delighted to see the photos of our friends alongside the actors. An experience to be repeated whenever the opportunity arises. ***Elvira***

I have been living in Milan for seven years now, and once a month we all spend the weekend together at the Casa Comune. For the month of February, I suggested to my friends that we go and see the show "Aggiungi un posto a tavola" because, during the Faith and Light pilgrimage to Pompeii, I had met Giovanni Scifoni and I had really liked him.

We had a wonderful time; the songs and dances were magnificent. At the end of the show, together with the Faith and Light friends who had also come to the theatre, we waited for Giovanni and Lorella Cuccarini to take a photo together.We were overjoyed because Giovanni remembered the experience in Pompeii and all the many friends from Faith and Light! ***Silvia***

Fashion show in Bordeaux

On Thursday 26 February, an original show took place at the foot of the cathedral: The "**Fashion Show of the Extraordinary Participants**". Many curious visitors came to admire these people with disabilities who stepped into the role of models for this fashion show unlike any other.

This educational project, led by Stéphanie, an art teacher, was made possible thanks to everyone's participation over several months; the costumes, based on several themes, were created by the students with the help of a Montessori educatorfrom the Ein Gedi school, an innovative middle and high school for young people with intellectual disabilities.

(https://www.ecole-eingedi.fr/)

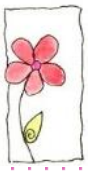
The family is growing...

On 1 March, the new community « **Our Lady of Egypt** », was officially recognised and became a member of the Province **Canada East**.

Our friend **Ihab Boulos** has agreed to be the community coordinator, with great emotion and joy! A mime performance followed by a lovely tea party brightened up this wonderful day!
Thank you to our Lord and the Virgin Mary for blessing us and helping us to continue on our journey to grow in faith and bring light to this world.

Rita

Mother's day



Lebanon celebrated Mother's Day on 21 March the first day of spring.

Pilgrimage to Tinos

We are beginning our own Holy Week from Tinos (*), holding hands, walking together towards the Resurrection,
with 40 years of Faith and Light behind us and the gaze of Christ in our heart.

(*) Tinos in Greece is part of the Cyclades archipelago, in the heart of the Aegean Sea.
The island's church of Panagia Megalochari is one of the most popular religious pilgrimage destinations in Greece.
For Orthodox Christians, it is the equivalent of Lourdes; thousands of people visit this imposing church to worship the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary.

Being together in joy and mourning

Every year, the representatives from our ten Faith and Light communities in Norway meet at a charming place called Solsetra (in Hovden, in the south of the country) to share a weekend together.

It is important to meet each other, to sing, dance, play and pray together and to get inspired. We also have our General Assembly during this gathering. This year we emphasized the three words in the headline: Together, joy and mourning.

Together

Together: At Solsetra we do everything together. No one is there to cook, clean or make beds for us. As in our Faith and Light groups we help each other, work together and listen to each other.

One of our priests, **Katrine T Skjerdal**, gave a very interesting lecture. She has received a scholarship from the church in order to study how young people with developmental disability experience being in church.

She leads interviews with these young people who are attending special groups and choirs designed for them. She highlights the importance of being together, having fun and having their individual tasks.

Together with these young people she will make a book, easy to read with lot of photos. Katrine will come back to Solsetra next year to present the final results of her study and hopefully show us this book. **Kari Eika** brought her new book and told the story about her dear brother who started a Faith and Light group in Norway. Born in 1959 with Down's syndrome the

Katrine T. Skjerdal

«experts» told it was best for him to leave his family and live in different institutions from the age of five. It changed the little boy's life and made him deeply depressed. Things are nowadays getting better for this group in Norway. But Kari asks in her book: Are we really listening to them?

Joy

Joy and happiness is essential in Faith and Light all over the world. Many of our "special friends" are experts in showing and sharing joy, others may have difficulty in showing feelings at all. We had a short introduction to how joy is described in Galatian 5.22-23. Joy is something to share, love, protect and is one of the 9 "gifts of the Holy Spirit".

Grief

Grief is part of human life, and lots of our "special friends" experience loss of their loved ones. In one of our groups they felt that grief could dominate their group meetings. Some of "the special friends" would always share their grief and gained much attention. Others wanted the same attention, and the meetings could be rather sad instead of joyful. The leaders decided to make a "grief group" for three "special friends" so they could focus on their own grief and probably come a bit further in dealing with it.

They made a plan for the group based on the same themes they have in ordinary grief groups in the church. Together they made an album with photos of their loved ones, used cards showing feelings, visited the graveyard and talked about what they had lost and what they still had. Everything was written in their albums so they and their family and friends could read it again and again. The group members were very grateful to be in the group. These days they will have a follow-up meeting after 4 months.

We deeply recommend such groups ! ●

Anne Mette
Provincial coordinator
Northern Lights

Kari Eika et Britt Dahl

Along the Shepherd's Path: Formation That Transforms Hearts

On 25–26 April 2026, a beautiful event took place. In the picturesque Transcarpathian region of the "Ukraine" Province, 33 participants gathered: friends, children and their parents from the Faith and Light communities of the west of the country for a time of formation. As always, they radiated the most essential values lived within the community: light, peace, joy and love.

The theme was: "The Lord is my Shepherd." Truly, the Lord is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His flock. He never abandons even a single sheep but goes in search of it, finds it, heals it, and cares for it as long as needed. Our Shepherd became one of us, humbly gave Himself for the salvation of humanity, and then, like the Lamb who was slain, appeared risen! The joy of His glorious Resurrection accompanied the friends and parents of Faith and Light from the very first hour to the last - throughout all the time spent together - and, we hope, will remain with them in their daily lives, in their homes and families as well.

"Community nurtures a sense of vocation: just as Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus on the Way of the Cross, so a friend, through friendship, helps another - and in fact receives a great gift, just as Simon did when he realized he was carrying the cross of the Lord Himself," shared Olena Bushchak, a guest from the "Veselka" community (Lviv), who is always warmly welcomed.

After watching a part of the movie "The Passion of the Christ", everyone was deeply moved by the sufferings of Jesus and reflected on whether they would have been ready at that moment to serve God like Simon; and whether they are ready each day to serve those who carry their own crosses - supporting parents, friends, and other companions.

Father Yevhen Fizer, the devoted chaplain and shepherd of the Mukachevo community "Messengers of Joy," delivered meaningful and heartfelt homilies during Mass. As

"Each member of the community is very important.
And the friends in 'Faith and Light' are not volunteers or helpers, but essential persons in a place where they are loved and truly valued,"

Olena Bushchak.

participants recalled before departing, his calm voice may you feel sleepy, yet at the same time you want to listen to every word, because his wisdom so simple and profound leaves a lasting impression. Father Yevhen also offered a beautiful example of fidelity to one's vocation.

Each person has a purpose the reason for which they were created. Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus chose as her mission to pray for those in need, since she lived in a cloistered monastery and could not go out to preach or serve in distant lands. In this way, she fulfilled God's will and served others, even if not in a "typical" missionary way. There is no good deed that Jesus does not accept and bless. So let us not hesitate to follow the example of Saint Thérèse and, in our own way, bring comfort to our Good Shepherd.

"On green pastures He gives me rest, He leads me to still waters. "Psalm 22:22.

The Lord desires no harm for us but longs to nourish and bless us: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). His generosity is also reflected in the way the Faith and Light communities continue to grow. New members and children who have grown older join the circle of friends and, like pieces of a puzzle, add bright colours to the "picture of emotions," as ten-year-old Sasha Danko, the son of one of the friends, beautifully expressed.

All these colours harmonize, each one is unique, irreplaceable, and incredibly important. This little flock holds onto one another, supports each other, and when one grows weary, the others do not allow them to drift away from the Shepherd and get lost in the dark forest of problems and fears. Such is the simple yet challenging mission of friendship. The little flock stays

Report from Ukraine

Dear friends, remember your value. Every tear and every smile of yours is shared by the whole community. Every good deed - whether seen or unseen - is a support for all of us and a treasure beyond any riches. Be angels of goodness and carry the Good News to the world!

Friend of the "Rocky Castle" Community (Khust, Ukraine)

Maria Brovdiy

close-knit, supporting one another, and when one of them is at the end of their tether, the others do not let them stray from the Shepherd and get lost in the dark forest of problems and fears. This is the goal of friendship: simple yet demanding.

«Throughout these days, we experienced a deep sense of unity and grace. Together we participated in the Holy Mass, lifting our hearts in sincere prayer and thanksgiving. Our voices joined in song, filling the space with warmth and faith, as each hymn became a shared expression of hope and love. We learned together - through talks, reflections, and simple conversations that opened our heart and built understanding.

There was also so much joy: in smiles, in laughter, also in quiet moments of support, and in the feeling of being accepted just as we are. These were not just activities, but living encounters—moments where God's presence could be felt in community, in friendship and in the beauty of being together. Each shared prayer, each song, each word spoken or heard became a small step along the Shephed's path, leading us closer to one another and to Him.»

Vice international Coordinator
Olena Perets

A family came from a community

In Mauritius, many families with a member living with a disability continue to experience a sense of isolation, often exacerbated by a lack of information and society's perceptions.

Yet, for over 40 years, Faith and Light has offered a practical solution: creating communities where everyone, whether children or parents, can find their place. Still little known to the general public, the movement now wishes to raise awareness and make its mission better known.

What Faith and Light has given me is the strength to know that I am no longer alone," says Corinne Duval-Latreille, national coordinator and a committed mother. This experience, shared by many parents, lies at the heart of the project: breaking the isolation by creating a second family, founded on trust and shared experiences. "We speak the same language," she explains, highlighting the deep connections that are developed within the community

Structured and accessible meetings

The meetings, held once a month, follow a specific framework inspired by international practice. Each year Guidelines are proposed, with themes such as 'angels' for 2025–2026, to support the communities on their spiritual journey.

Each meeting is divided into four parts. First, the "check-in or sharing circle" a key moment where everyone shares their experiences:

"It's a space where we can talk about what we're going through […] and learn from

In 2023, provincial meeting in Thabot

others." Next comes the Gospel reading, made accessible through visual aids, mimes and even the use of sign language or pictograms to help understanding. Workshops play a central role: dance, music, sensory or creative activities. "Children learn a great deal through their senses," explains Corinne Duval-Latreille.

So many lives transformed!

Many parents have come to know the Faith and Light family and have grown alongside their children through this journey. This week, "La Vie Catholique" magazine is offering some of these parents a space to share their experiences within the committee.

Corinne Duval-Latreille,
National coordinator of the movement

Patrick Lamoureux and his family

"I discovered Faith and Light after Mass, thanks to a friend who told me about it and invited me to join this community," shares Patrick Lamoureux, a committed parent. In 2018, he joined the community in his parish at Sainte-Marie-Madeleine. For Patrick, this community offers so much, whether to parents or children with disabilities. "Friendship, sharing and spiritual education are central elements of life within the community," explains this father.

For him, this space teaches his children to be loved, but also to be independent. Not to mention that many of them also learn to live independently and find employment. The question "why is this happening to us?" often arises when a child has a disability.
But Patrick Lamoureux says that Faith and Light helps many realise that their child "is a gift in their life as a parent." His 39-year-old daughter has changed and is now more fulfilled after joining the community. "Zordi li lir Levanzil, li fer gato, li sosializ plis. E li ena kamarad" (Today, she reads the Gospel, bakes cakes, goes out more and has friends), says Patrick happily.
At the provincial retreat held every three years, she finds it much easier to reach out to others.

Marie-France et Judex Violette

Experiencing a transformation

It's the same story for Marie-France Violette, who is now the vice international coordinator of Faith and Light. Lucas's mum, she discovered the association through her husband Judex, who opened the doors to the community at the parish of Roches-Brunes.
"Being part of the community means experiencing a transformation," explains Marie-France, who emphasises that this brings healing to the heart of parents. "Often, when you have a child with a disability, the questions, the judgement and the stares push some people to isolate themselves, but Faith and Light helps these parents to see beyond that," she shares.
Marie-France Violette confides that within the communities, everyone speaks the same language, because they experience the same realities and know true love through their children. "These children don't know how to pretend; everything is authentic and true," explains Judex Violette. This committed father also says to dads, who are often less involved than mums, "don't be afraid, come and see how the children live, how they express themselves and experience things like nowhere else."

Moving towards independence

Personal fulfilment is also experienced through a spirit of sharing and caring for others. "After Mass, we make pancakes and cakes to sell, and the money goes to international solidarity for the countries that need it most," explains Judex Violette Member of the Board of Directors of Faith and Light, he explains that these are realities they witness first-hand, which become a school of life. This commitment, experienced both as a member and as a leader, led to the creation of the "Centre de la Trinité", a place that offers these young people with disabilities a space to build professional skills discover different career paths and progress towards independence in the labour market.

J.B.
Article from the Mauritian magazine La Vie Catholique, 23 April 2026.

For our reflection, Ghislain du Chéné

When is the anniversary of Faith and Light?

As we all know, we love celebrating birthdays!

At every meeting of our communities, we give everyone who has had a birthday in the past month a lovely cake with candles, accompanied by lots of applause and singing.

In my community, which is called 'Graines de Moutarde' (Mustard seeds), we add a song once everyone has blown out their candles: "How wonderful he/she is, xxx, how wonderful it is to be a mustard seed!"

And when someone's birthday falls in August (for us, that's the holiday period, and there are no community meetings that month), we celebrate it when we return from holiday. It took me a lot of negotiation to organise that, because, as you may have guessed, I was born in August!

We also celebrate the anniversary of Faith and Light – usually every ten years – often through international pilgrimages (1981, 1991, 2001) or by involving two provinces (2011–2012, 2021–2022). But do we ever think to wish Faith and Light a happy birthday every year? And if so, what is the right day to celebrate it?

One might say Easter Sunday, but on reflection, shouldn't it rather be Easter Monday? That famous final day of the first pilgrimage, when the organisers insisted that the pilgrimage – organised with such effort and which had gone so well in every respect (even if it is said that 'Alleluias' rang out through the streets of Lourdes on Good Friday…) – should not end just like that, without a follow-up…

And so our founders (accounts differ depending on who wrote their memoirs… let's say it was both of them together) said: "Carry on meeting in your community, and we shall see where the Holy Spirit wishes to lead us."

The Faith and Light pilgrimage was over; the Faith and Light movement was born!

But Easter Monday is not a fixed date… we do not all celebrate Easter on the same day, depending on whether we follow the Gregorian calendar or the Julian calendar, as Orthodox Christians do. But in Lourdes, in 1971, Easter Monday fell on… 12 April!

Let us be faithful messengers of joy on this 12 April to wish Faith and Light a happy

anniversary. Let us add this date to the anniversary calendar in each of our communities!

For my part, I don't need a reminder, as another major event took place on 12 April… Faith and Light was celebrating its 17th anniversary that day. It was 12 April 1988 and it was Julie's birthday!!

In 2001, during the international pilgrimage to Lourdes, we celebrated Julie's 13th birthday! ●

And 12 April 2026 marked the 55th anniversary of Faith and Light; so, even if it's a bit late, let's wish a **happy birthday to our beloved movement** with this lovely, mouth-watering cake!

Family album

Mary Grimes

On the 19th May in St. Brigid's Church, Dunleer, Faith and Light Ireland said goodbye to one of its most inspirational figures - Mary Grimes. Already a mother of eight children, Mary's life changed dramatically on 31 July 1981 when her ninth and youngest child, Mary Catherine, was born with down syndrome.

Mary was a woman of steely determination. When she discovered that there was no preschool in the area that welcomed children with disability, she decided to begin such a pre-school herself. She also helped found the Dunleer Faith and Light community and in later years, she and Mary Catherine attended the neighbouring Kells community.

Mary and her daughter, Mary Catherine

Mary also held leadership roles in the local special Olympics branch and in many other parish and community organisations. She even appeared once on national television correcting the tv presenter who had her facts wrong in relation to the historical significance of her local town.

Mary served as National Leader of Faith and Light in Ireland from 2006-2014. During that time she travelled to Madrid to the International Meeting where she was delighted to meet among others, Marie Helene Mathieu.

Having left school at a young age, Mary quickly adapted to the technological age of emails etc and was a very competent leader. At her side at every gathering was Mary Catherine. Mary took her lead at times from her daughter. When Mary Catherine became tired at National Council meetings, Mary sensed that others too were tired and needed a break to clear their heads. A wise woman!

At her funeral Mass the family chose the Gospel of the Beatitudes and the priest spoke about Mary's strong and yet gentle presence.

May we learn from Mary to continue the movement towards inclusion of people with disability courageously and gently, in the footsteps of Mary Grimes who blessed us and our Faith and Light family in so many beautiful ways.

Fr Fergal Cunnane
Provincial chaplain of Ireland

International news

Joanna Kuriata

Joanna Kuriata has been elected **coordinator** of **the province Poland West.** Our warmest congratulations! We pray that Joanna may be blessed with all the grace she needs. May the Holy Spirit strengthen and guide her throughout the next four years.
Joanna takes over from Justyna Antoniewicz, whom we warmly thank for the years of dedication she has given to the province, first as vice coordinator and then as coordinator.

Bruno Bureau

Having served successively as community coordinator and then vice provincial coordinator since 2017, **Bruno Bureau** took on the role of **Coordinator** for the province **France West** on 3 March, succeeding Denis and Catherine Blanchard. Thank you, Bruno, for your willingness to serve this wonderful mission.
Our heartfelt thanks to Denis and Catherine for their remarkable loyalty and their constant presence in the service of the province over many years!

Frédéric and Sophie Cacheux

Last-minute announcement

Frédéric and Sophie Cacheux were elected **Coordinators of the province Sparkling East (France)** on Saturday 30 May during the Provincial Assembly held in Portieux (Vosges in France).
We would like sincerely thank Daniel and Anne Gallien for their dedication to the province in the various roles they have held.

Gianni Guerra

The **Seas and Volcanoes** Provincial Assembly met from 22 to 24 May in Mascalucia (CT) in southern Italy.
Gianni Guerra was elected **Coordinator of the Seas and Volcanoes Province** for a four-year term, succeeding Vito Giannulo. A huge thank you to Vito for his eight years of service!

Gianni Guerra et Vito Giannulo

International news

France Center province

Myriam Blanchet

Guillaume Bourgeois

Since their birth in Lourdes in 1971, the Faith and Light communities have been very close to Mary. It was therefore natural that Christine and Michel Tillé organised a weekend at the Shrine of Our Lady of Montligeon in the "Perche" region, between the towns of Alençon and Le Mans, to mark the renewal of the provincial team. During the weekend of 25–26 April, which was so important for the Province, **Myriam Blanchet and Guillaume Bourgeois** were elected as **co-coordinators of the France Centre Province**. Thank you for their YES and for a four-year mission.

They succeed Michel and Christine Tillé, after eight years of unfailing commitment; we extend our warmest thanks to them.

The Provincial team has also been largely renewed to support this dynamic Province, represented at Montligeon by over 70 people from 28 communities. This provided an opportunity to experience moments of thanksgiving and celebration that are so dear to 'our community hearts' (an expression referring to people with intellectual disabilities). An invitation to reflect and pray for the communities awaiting provincial elections.

The vitality of a Province is essential to the future of our communities and of Faith and Light. The Province is the heart of life in our communities.

Vincent Boo
Vice international Coordinator

International agenda

May-June 2026

Formations and retreats

- **3 May: Formation and retreat** for communities in Cape Town, South Africa
- **15–17 May: Katimavik in Slovakia,** province Between the Seas
- **19 May: Online meeting** for community coordinators, province Iberatlantic (Spain)
- **22–24 May: Online formation** for community coordinators, Province Our Lady of Guadalupe
- **23 May: Online formation** for community coordinators and their teams, province Jesus Light of the Andes

- **5-6 juin** : **Retreat** for parents, Ukraine
- **12 June**: **Online formation** , province Land and Sea (Spain)
- **19–20 June**: **Retreat** for communities, province USA East, Loyola Retreat Centre, Akron, Ohio

For more information

Meetings and provincial assemblies

- **22–24 May: Provincial Assembly**, Seas and Volcanoes, Mascalucia (Sicily)
- **30 May: Provincial Assembly**, Sparkling East, Portieux, Vosges (France)
- **5–7 June: General Assembly**, all Italian provinces, Seveso
- **6 June: Provincial Meeting**, Land and Sea, Madrid (Spain)
- **6 June: Provincial Meeting**, Danube (Romania, Hungary, Serbia)
- **13 June: Provincial Assembly**, Colours of Asia, Pasig City (Philippines)
- **23 June: Online meeting** of treasurers, Iberatlantic (Spain)

Spring events

- **8 May: Mothers' Day**, an OCH event, in major cities across France
- **23–24 May**: Weekend for the communities of province 'Paris et le Levant', Nevers (France)
- **24 May**: **Spring Festival**, for the communities of Rome
- **13 June: Disability Awareness Night**, in around forty towns and cities across France

Spiritual moments

- **16 May: Pilgrimage** for Irish communities, Knock
- **28–31 May: International gathering** for people with disabilities, Medjugorje,
- **30 May: Provincial pilgrimage** of Poland South, Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette, Dębowiec
- **13 June: Pilgrimage Day** for the communities of Canada East, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, Rigaud
- **28 June: Blessing of the Sick**, province Beacons of Light, St Benedict's Church, Aberford Rd, Garforth, Leeds, England

Coordinators' council in Egypt

OUR PROJECT TO SUPPORT IN 2026

Coordinators' council

Why?

Led by the international coordinator and his team, this gathering provides a space for provincial coordinators to listen and share, offering mutual support and training to better meet the needs of communities around the world. It is a time for reflection, during which coordinators have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the objectives of Faith and Light. Over the course of these few days, a genuine international community is formed.

How?

Through conferences, small-group reflection, prayer, times of sharing and fellowship, the Coordinators' Council enables everyone to reflect and work together to find solutions to the challenges faced in different countries.

The presence of chaplains from various Christian denominations bears witness to the movement's ecumenical dimension.

Who is it for?

110 participants from 32 countries

- The international coordinating team
- The coordinators from the 51 provinces
- 10 chaplains
- 12 interpreters
- 4 guests
- The Egyptian project team responsible for logistics

Egyptian project team

Where and when?

This year, the coordinators' council will take place in Egypt at the Beit el Wadi Centre in Beni Salama, between Cairo and Alexandria, from Tuesday 27 October to Sunday 1 November 2026.

Theme of the gathering : "A hidden treasure"

The chosen theme, "**A Hidden Treasure**", echoes Jesus' parable in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 13:44), in which the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a treasure discovered by chance and capable of transforming lives.
In the image of this treasure, Faith and Light invites everyone to recognise and embrace the richness of encounters with people with disabilities, a precious and often unexpected gift, capable of opening the heart.

Highlights of the programme

- **Presentations** on topics of concern to several provinces, such as the fear of commitment, difficulties in finding new leaders, and an ageing population within communities... These presentations will be followed by working groups to discuss the issues raised.

- **Times of formation** to provide a better understanding of ecumenism, the functioning of nomination committees, discernment in selecting future leaders, and financial management.

- **Practical workshops** offering ideas for facilitating meetings.

- **Times of prayer and vigil.**

- An afternoon of **sharing and celebration with the Faith and Light community of Alexandria.**

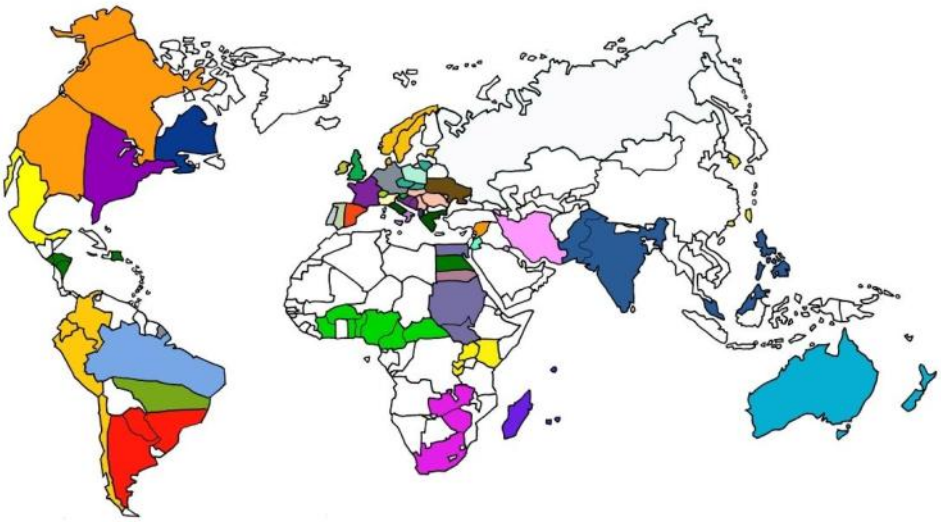
Coordinators' council in Egypt

FAITH AND LIGHT AROUND THE WORLD

1200 communities

51 provinces, 83 countries

38 languages



Two-thirds of the countries where Faith and Light is present are facing severe economic difficulties or political instability.

Would you like to make a donation?

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

Friends of Faith and Light

« Bon Cœur 21 », a very young association founded in 2024

The Association's Origins:

The « Bon Cœur 21 » (*Kind Heart*) association was founded on the initiative of Sylvie, a home health nurse for 30 years who later worked as a respite caregiver under the CESU program, with the goal of providing a break for caregivers (spouses or parents).

It was in this context that Sylvie began supporting Clotilde, a woman in her 40s with Down syndrome, who had just left an unsuitable facility to return to live with her elderly parents. This encounter helped her understand the specific needs of aging individuals with Down syndrome, as well as the families' concerns about their future. Clotilde then expressed a desire to "live with friends."

After numerous consultations with other existing shared-living facilities and meetings with the Jérôme Lejeune Clinic in Nantes, which confirmed the project's relevance, Sylvie founded the « Bon Coeur 21 » association with Servane, the sister of a person with Down syndrome.

The association was created to meet the needs of aging people with Down syndrome by offering a family-like setting in the form of a shared living arrangement where the conditions for optimal care are in place so that this stage of life can be lived in peace and allow for "aging well" at home.

Given the significant risk of developing cognitive disorders (such as Alzheimer's) among people with Down syndrome over the age of 40, this project aims to meet the individualized needs of each resident until the end of their life.

That is why the facility is limited to four

residents, men or women, living together. The first home has been opened in January 2026 in Machecoul (44270) in Loire-Atlantique, France.

LIFE AT THE BON CŒUR HOUSE

It is a simple life that alternates between organizing daily routines, at the residents' own pace, and social, spiritual, and artistic activities. Grocery shopping is done in town, and cooking and housekeeping are handled according to a rotating schedule.

Volunteers offer individual support or group activities; spiritual times are offered at the house and in the parish according to the housemates' wishes.

A paid care assistant shares the housemates' daily life 24 hours a day for two or three consecutive days to support this joyful and fraternal life.

What stands out most at Bon Cœur is the joy of being together and its great appeal, because the house is a true place of coming and going, where those who pass through receive as much as they give!

Website: https://boncoeur21.com

I'm so happy to experience friendship every day and spread joy. I feel right at home here.

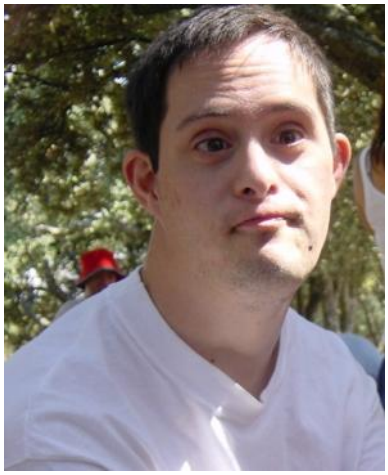
I love the activities offered.

Clotilde

Marie-Hélène's letter

Disabilities and Resurrections

This title is paradoxical. Disabilities, whether minor or severe, are a part of our daily lives. We are promised resurrection, but only "afterward." At first glance, there is a real contradiction… Disability diminishes, devalues, and limits. We fear it for ourselves: "I'd rather die than end up dependent," says a young grandfather. Disability is even more feared for our own children.



Resurrection, on the other hand, is the victory of life over death. It is love triumphing over all evil. It is Jesus who, on Easter morning, rises from the tomb and reveals himself in his glory. Through our faith, we have the grace to believe that one day, with him, we will rise again. We will know this new earth and this new heaven where God will welcome us. "*He will wipe away every tear, […] there will be no more mourning, nor crying, nor pain…*" (Rev. 21:4).

Of this, we are sure. But today, on earth, as we face illness, suffering, divisions, and separations, is it possible to live through so many Good Fridays with an Easter heart?

We are surrounded by people with disabilities and parents who have experienced terrible upheavals in their lives. The trial that has cut deep into their very being often allows other qualities to emerge. Deeply, it calls for communion with others and with God.

Béatrice and Philippe: two lives that seem wasted. He, completely immobile in his wheelchair. She, afflicted by a chronic illness that has taken her from hospital to hospital. Yet, when we first saw them on a television studio, their radiance struck us. How can we explain it? They helped us discover that this radical trial has awakened them to a new lease on life. In the midst of suffering, joy springs from a "yes" to reality, renewed with great difficulty each day.

Béatrice and Philippe also helped us understand that spiritual resurrections need not be separated from anything that can bring relief and healing to our bodies or our wounded psyches. We need competent and wise doctors and psychologists who are close to their patients. We also need well-formed spiritual advisors. […]

If we welcome our sister or brother with a disability, if we humbly recognize within ourselves the fragile and wounded child that we all are, if we call upon the Lord for help, he will say to us "*Here I am*"; he will guide us constantly; he will renew our strength (cf. Is 58:9–11).

Marie-Hélène Mathieu
Dieu m'aime comme que je suis (1998)