

**INTERNATIONAL
BULLETIN
Lay Fraternity
CHARLES DE FOUCAULD**

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Blessed Foucauld's hermitage in the Assekrem



Powerful invaders occupied his country.
The king was bloodthirsty, surrounded by corrupt courtiers.
Religion was prisoner of those who held exclusively the key of
knowledge.
The temple itself was a supermarket and a place of traffic.
The little people were overburdened by taxes collected by the
occupant.
Beggars trailed in the streets.
Life was hard, very hard for the little people.

Are we so sure that times have changed?
It is in these times when all despair was permitted
that Jesus was born
And the hope of the poor concentrated in Him.
Then Hope is not dead!
Good, bright, blessed Christmas.
And may its light shine in your hearts
All along this New Year.

Claude Rault
Bishop of Laghouat and Ghardaia (Algeria)



The Gospel speaks to us of a little *star* of Bethlehem which, amongst the multitudes of stars, the Magi from the East distinguished as a sign from God. Charles de Foucauld addresses God and writes something like this:

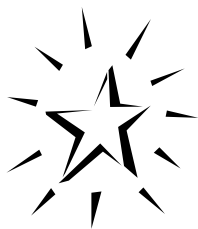
"Oh, how you know to show them Your star whenever they need it! Thus this star of the Magi, letting us see how You deal with every person of good will, does proclaim very loudly: Trust ... Hope!

All of this proclaims that You are always with us; all this tells us loudly that we must not get discouraged in temptations, darkness, doubts, and uncertainties:

You will guide us as You guided them ... their star shines for us... their example calls out to us "HOPE".

May you walk in Hope, with all the fraternities, towards the International Assembly in Bonn.
Let us keep our delegates in our prayer.

The international team
Gislene and Roberto Delgado
Shilanand Hemraj
Gertrude and Peter Mbuchi
Antoinette and Henri Roberti
Emad Zakir
Jean Pierre Dupont



EDITORIAL

In preparation of the theme "dare to meet", we offer an article by a Belgian theologian on the importance of meeting others as a means of self transformation. It is the experience made by Jesus, the people who have met Him and us who meet Him today.

On the same theme, an article by Hemraj, representative from Asia.

To be a universal brother requires of Charles de Foucauld a profound respect for man deep down to his root, his culture.

This is the attitude shown by the members of Benin, Burkina, Malawi, Tanzania, in the reports of their meetings and their weeks of Nazareth.

It is also what Emad, representative of the Arab world, aspires to for his country Egypt, presently in the process of change over.

"We dream of a homeland that embraces every man, whatever the differences, a country that respects freedom, guarantees justice and provides a life of dignity for all".

Continental meetings have been held in Europe and Asia.

May we in 2012 develop true and warm relations in our fraternities, our families, our living environments.

I. DARE TO MEET

To meet others, to discover oneself, to be healed, to go toward the other

The founding experience of Jesus and Christians

We discover ourselves and we are transformed through our human relations. Some are more powerful than others! For many men and women to meet Jesus was a staggering experience, which transformed their lives and gave them a new dynamism. It is the story of Saul on the road to Damascus: when the Resurrected appears to him, his life is overturned; from then on, under the name of Paul (he is no longer the same man!), he will soon become the Apostle of the pagan nations. It is the story of every Christian: none of us is born Christian, but perhaps we become one when we meet the Risen Lord personally and this basic experience enables us to act from then on with the spirit of Christ. The mission of the Christian is born from this relationship.

The Gospel stories - and in particular that of Luke - do not say anything else. When Jesus shares meals with well known sinners, they are transformed, so that He can say: "I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners, so that they change their mentality (*eis metanoian*)" (Lk 5:29-31)¹. When Jesus crosses the path of overburdened people, they are delivered from their demons or their diseases (they are almost synonymous!), and they want to testify of what happened to them (Lk 8:39, for example)². After receiving Jesus in his home, Zacchaeus will at last treat his former victims fairly and act with generosity (Lk 19:8). When they discover that the Resurrected has warmed their hearts by going over the Scriptures with them, when their eyes open at the sharing of the

¹ See also 15:1-2 and the parables which refer to it.

² Luke notes, on many occasions that the witnesses of Jesus' actions give glory to God (5:25-26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15:18). As shown in 7:16, this expression must be understood in the sense of public witnessing. If Jesus asks those who want to talk about Him to remain silent (Lk 5:14; 8:56; etc.) it is probably so as not to give rise to misunderstanding on his messianic identity; there is no need for this silence after the Resurrection.

bread, the Emmaus companions return immediately to Jerusalem to tell what they lived (Lk 24:33-35). Besides the story of Luke, chap. 4 of John is to be noted: at the well of Jacob, the Samaritan woman discovers with Jesus the source of living water; this discovery is for her so important that she leaves her pitcher on the spot and runs to the city to tell people what happened to her, so that many Samaritans have faith in Jesus.

How is it that these meetings produce such powerful effects? Is it not because Jesus meets each person in the most intimate of himself, speaks to the heart and is thus revealed to himself? But how could Jesus offer this to others if He had not been affected by similar meetings and been himself transformed? Such is the virtue of any authentic human encounter: whoever the people involved, it happens both ways, and leaves no-one unchanged. More exactly, it is probably when I let myself be touched by the other that I am able to bring him something. The more I read the Gospels, the more I am convinced that Jesus was, from this point of view, a "master in humanity"³. I therefore propose a very simple path for reflection: discover first in the Gospel how meeting others transforms Jesus, then see how this same meeting transforms others and end with what it means for the mission of Christians.

How meeting others transforms Jesus



In the synoptic Gospels, the baptism of Jesus in the waters of the Jordan River (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; cf. Jn 1:29-34) appears to trigger his public activity. For Mark at least, only Jesus saw the Spirit descend on Him and heard a celestial voice tell Him: "You are my beloved son, I am pleased

³ "Here is the man," says Pilate to the crowd (Jn 19:5). For the Gospel reader, could not this sentence, apparently banal, suggest that Jesus is the most human of men? Similarly, the title 'Son of Man', often used by Jesus himself, may be understood – beyond its reference to Dn 7:14 and its eschatological dimension – as 'pre-eminently human, the one who fulfils the human destiny'.

with You"⁴; This invites the reader to interpret the scene in the sense of a personal awareness of His identity as messiah and of the special relationship the Father wants to keep with Him. This awareness triggers His action: immediately after His baptism, Jesus goes to the desert, and then He starts to announce the kingdom of God (Mk 1:12-15). It should be added that what Jesus submits to is a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3), given to a large number of persons: Jesus mingles with the crowd of sinners, one among others, and it is at the heart of this experience of solidarity with a failing humanity that He discovers both His identity as Son and His mission. He will soon address his preaching to the same crowds in distress. Meeting on equal footing with people who recognize their weaknesses, relationship with the Father, awareness of His messianic identity and His mission: to Jesus, this seems to be one entity.

Another decisive step in the progression of Jesus' awareness is His meeting with the Syro-Phoenician (Mk 7:24-30) or the Canaanite (Mt 15:21-28). When this woman implores Him to heal her daughter, Jesus at first responds in a brutal manner: "it is not good to take bread from children and throw it to small dogs". Even if the diminutive reduces hardness, this latter expression has racist connotations and Jesus probably just expresses the mentality received with His education. The woman replies however with no hint to the insult. On the contrary, she continues to express her confidence, and Jesus yields: "O woman, great is your faith; what you want will be done for you" (Mt 15:28). This short story tells how a pagan woman in distress transformed Jesus. Here, one can speak of a conversion! Somehow, when Jesus says: "the demon is out of your daughter" (Mk 7:29), the reader can hear as in echo that the demon of his prejudices is out of the heart of Jesus himself. So far, He had understood His mission as limited to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 15:24); now, he has crossed a new frontier, to meet every human being. And, indeed, from then on, the Gospel of Matthew shows Jesus performing for crowds of no specified origin (vv. 29-31) healings similar to those He had already made in favour of Jews; for

⁴ For Luke, Jesus sees the Spirit come down on Him, but the celestial voice is heard by the people present. In Luke's story, the writer does not specify who has seen the Spirit or heard the voice, but he mentions that Jesus is praying.

Marc, Jesus heals a deaf mute in pagan territory (7:31-37), and then He multiplies the loaves for the Gentiles (8:1-10) as He did for the Jews (6:30-44).

The story I have just mentioned has emblematic value. If the meeting of the Canaanite woman allowed Jesus to broaden the understanding of His mission, other meetings are also changing its outlook. Often enough⁵, indeed it is said that Jesus, perceiving the misery of crowds or of an overburdened man, is "struck with compassion", and this is when He starts to act to relieve them. The Gospels show Jesus as a sensitive man, touched by the people he meets and especially by their distress. At the start of the action of Jesus, there is the truth of the human relationship.

How encountering Jesus transforms people

If Jesus allows Himself to be transformed by the people He meets, they, in turn, become different and discover they are capable of the best. This is what the Gospels say when they tell that Jesus heals the sick and drives out demons. This is His most typical activity, and this task is so urgent that He performs it even on the day of Sabbath. Where He passes, "the blind see, the lame walk properly, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise and the good news is announced to the poor" (Mt 11:5). This activity shows that Jesus is indeed the one who opens the Kingdom of God: He announces it by His preaching, and at the same time He gives the signs. When He heals the sick, he does what he says: He wards off misery, He makes people happy with the happiness of the Beatitudes. Would this not be health in the full sense: not only the absence of disease, but also harmony of an intense life, full of meaning, of an existence in relation with others, a life which can be hard, but is ultimately happy because coherent?

How does Jesus bring back health to those he meets? The Evangelical stories of miracle have a stereotypical aspect which prevents from answering the question with confidence. Beyond the supernatural aspect of things, which eludes us, the quality of relations that Jesus tie with the people would have played a great

⁵ Mt 9:36; 14:14; 20,34; Mk 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Lk 7:13.

role their healing. Many diseases are said to be psychosomatic. Our morale, our psychic balance, our inner harmony more or less disturbed have a direct effect on our organic health. When Jesus meets the rich man, "he looked straight at him with love", says Marc (10:21). This look of love, hope, compassion, deep trust, does Him not offer it to others? Those who cross Jesus' path must feel understood, met in the depth of themselves, loved unconditionally, without any form of judgment. They discover themselves in the eyes of Jesus. This must be a wonderful revelation: they are thus not the detestable or despicable beings, incapable of fidelity to the law, whose image society constantly throws at them and that they have internalized! Perhaps for the first time, they become aware of their own dignity. They feel grow in them a desire of service and brotherhood. An infinite confidence begins to build in them. As a consequence, the symptoms of the disease disappear: at last, their life has meaning, and they feel well in their skin! Perhaps this is how we can understand the sentence Jesus addresses to them: "Your faith has healed you." It is not an intellectual adhesion to a creed, but a trust in which they could abandon themselves. Jesus welcomed them with such humanity that they found confidence in themselves, and it is this positive force that transformed them⁶. This is the fundamental experience of conversion, which enables to walk on new roads to hear what God says to the heart, to utter words of life, to see far and wide

Indeed, all those Jesus meets do not experience this healing experience. The one who looks at Jesus while judging Him in advance ("It is by Belzéboul that He drives out demons", Lk 11:15, for example) or wants to use Him for his own interest, this one does not allow Jesus to touch him, and nothing happens. When Jesus meets a man with a paralyzed hand, some Pharisees observe Him to see if He would cure him in full Sabbath, and the Evangelist can only comment: He is "sorry for the hardening of their hearts" (Mk 3:5). He cures the cripple, but for them, it is as if He Himself was paralyzed. To receive healing from Jesus, there is no need for merit or observance of the law. It is sufficient to accept a relationship of trust.

⁶ The personal transformation produced by a psychoanalytic cure is similar; the psychoanalyst himself doesn't heal, but the quality of his ability to listen allows the patient to find within himself the strength to rebuild himself.

But without that trust, Jesus can do nothing: in Nazareth, where He is not welcome with that trust, there can be no miracle (Mk 6:5). On the contrary, when His family holds Him for mad and wants to get hold of him (Mk 3:21), He distances Himself from them (vv. 31-35); When it becomes clear to the people in his village that He cannot offer them his gift of healing, their initial admiration changes to homicidal violence (Lk 4:16-30). A relationship perverted by the other's will to monopolize is deadly. But is this not the law of any human relationship?

As the Gospel recounts so often: Jesus heals those who accept to enter into a real relationship with him. Or, more precisely: by the quality of the relationship that He offers, He reveals to them or awakens in them life forces that they already have. The healing offered by Jesus is the reconciliation of man with himself and revelation of his profound self. But is it enough to live a moment of well-being, if it is to be reacquainted the next day with loneliness and misery? Jesus' concern is to relieve those who cross his path, but he also wants to give them a lasting happiness by offering them a place in a network of human relations. He has reputation of being "a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Lk 7:34); in other words, conviviality is for Him an important value, even if the friendships He keeps provoke the anger of the "righteous". Jesus doesn't want to act alone. He gathers a team which accompanies Him in all His activities and to which He will gradually offer the essence of His teaching. In the same line, Jesus touches the leper to the purify him (Lk 5:13). This gesture is symbolic, because leprosy is the impurity by excellence, and the leper is kept away from society; after Jesus has touched him, the patient can resume contact with the world, and he takes pleasure in this. Another significant episode is the healing of the blind man Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52). Sitting on the road, he starts to yell: "Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!" but he is scolded by the crowd. He is not allowed to talk! These are followers of Jesus who tell him: "Cheer up, get up, He is calling you". Jesus tells him: "Your faith has saved you". As I wrote above, it is his trust that transforms him. Immediately, he recovers his sight, and the narrator adds: "and he followed Jesus on the road." In other words, he became His disciple, he is now part of the community of Jesus. The Evangelist thinks probably baptism or

"enlightenment", which is both discovery of the world with the eyes of Christ and entry into the ecclesial fraternity.

The healing performed by Jesus is also revelation of the face of God. Indeed, "the power of the Lord (this is God) is at work to make Him perform the healings" (Lk 5:17). After having cured a paralytic, Jesus says: "My Father is always working, and too must at work" (Jn 5:17).



To the paralyzed He heals, Jesus also says: "Your sins are forgiven" (Mk 2:5). We should consider here what forgiveness means in a deep sense: the ever living love of God for the sinner, whatever he may have committed. When healing the sick, Jesus is committed to the cause of his Father, that is, for that of the Kingdom. He heals them from a perverse or destructive image of

God. Alas, we know that such images never cease to haunt men⁷. In showing compassion and kindness of a God infinitely close to us, Jesus restores His true face.

When a human being meets Jesus and lets himself be welcome, he is therefore restored in his dignity, in his own image, in his relation with God, in his health. It is this experience that allows him to live in turn positive relationships with others and act as Jesus. From there the mission of Christians is born. Because, if Jesus sets no condition to the love He offers those he meets, He hopes that they will progressively enter His mentality and adopt a behaviour similar to his own. How could one who has been forgiven a colossal debt have no pity for one who owes him a small sum (Mt 18:23-35)?

The mission of the Church and Christians

When Jesus brings together a community of disciples, it is "to be with Him and to send them preach with power to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14-15); in other words, He associates them to His own task, with a double ministry of preaching and healing. The disciples accompany Him everywhere, and He sends them two by two to the towns and villages, with a specific task: "Heal the sick you

⁷ See M. Bellet, 'Le Dieu pervers', Paris 1987.

will find and tell them: 'The Kingdom of God has come near you'" (Lk 10:9). This mission, which is already that of Jesus himself, foreshadows that of Christians. The only task of any community who claims to follow Jesus, is to do as He has done first: announce the kingdom of God and heal the sick, using the same means as Jesus: show compassion for the suffering, engender trust, suggest a warm and true relational network.



Prepared by the experience of community life of the first disciples with Jesus, the Church was born of the Paschal event, which ends with the experience of the burst of the spirit (Ac 2). The program of the young Christian community is exposed in the summaries of the book of the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16). Note in particular: the living memory of the person and the action of Jesus (the teaching of the Apostles) and the celebration of His Passover (the fraction of bread), fraternal relations (which include a demanding material solidarity), the work of healing (the signs and the wonders). When the disciples live together and are borne by the breath of the Spirit of the Risen Lord, the Kingdom of God begins to take shape, and this is why the community attracts more and more people.

As Her Lord, the Church preaches the Kingdom and relieves the overburdened. The Acts tell of the healings performed by the Apostles, Philippe and Paul. Where the disciples of Jesus go, the paralyzed or bedridden man regains his freedom (3:1-10; 9:32-34; 14:8-10), the one who is tortured by an unclean spirit is delivered (5:16; 8:7), the dead come back to life (9:36-43). The disciples act by the Spirit of Jesus, and the miracles attributed to them are strikingly similar to those of the Master. And the deaf mute, the blind, the leper? The book of Acts and the letters of Paul do not tell of the physical healing of these people. And yet! Don't these writings tell of how scared people receive tongues of fire and begin to announce the living Christ (cf. Ac 2), how a blinded man is illuminated by the light of the Risen Lord (cf. Ac 9), how the separation between the pure and the impure is abolished, so that Jews and Gentiles are part of a same Church (cf. Ac 10)? There is a transposition, which invites to other transpositions for the ecclesial life of today. To live in a

Christian community must be good for those who are concerned. But what in our society causes people to be crippled and subjected? What inner demons keep them in slavery? Beyond physical leprosy, in the process of elimination, what are the social or moral leproses (racism, exclusions of all kinds) bedevilling our culture?

For the book of Acts, the Christian community is a place of healing because it brings in contact with Jesus: "It is in the name of Jesus Christ" (3:6) that Peter made the disabled man of the Beautiful Gate get up and walk, and it is again what Peter and John told the Sanhedrin: "it is through the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – whom you crucified and whom God raised from death, it is thanks to Him that this man is there, before you, healed" (4:10); still in the same line, Peter said to Aeneas: "Jesus Christ heals you" (9:34). Through the therapeutic action of the Church, it is the power of Christ that is at work. However the paths that go from one to another can vary.

The story of the healing of a paralyzed man in Capernaum (Mk 2:1-12) tells how the sick man is carried to Jesus, inaccessible because of the crowd. Jesus is in the house: we can recognize an image of the Christian community gathered around his Lord in this scene. The door is blocked? They go through the roof. They have to be motivated, in order to place in Jesus the last hope of healing this man, himself unable to move. "Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man: "your sins are forgiven" (v. 5). What is the faith of the crippled man himself? The text does not say! He is literally brought by the trust of the others, who led him to Jesus.



The reverse route – from Jesus to the Christian community – is suggested by the history of the "good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30-35). The fathers of the Church explain: the Samaritan is Jesus himself who, struck by compassion for the suffering man, approaches and takes care of him. In this perspective, oil and wine represent the anointing of the sick and the Eucharist, which is also the viaticum for the dying. In any case, the Samaritan leads the patient to the hostel,

which is the Church. From now on, the mercy of Jesus is delivered through the perseverance of the Christian community responsible for the care of the frail and injured by life. Beyond the particular ministry of some, the care of afflicted people is the essential mission of the Church as such.

They are Christians who, through their faith, carry the sick to Jesus, and Jesus entrusts them to the Christian community, which is itself led by His Spirit. It is always Christ who saves, but He does so through the human commitment of his disciples. And also, let's not forget it, through medicine!

Conclusion

The concept of "human relations" in our societies and our experience is critical: without these relations, who would we be? To my knowledge, this concept was of little importance in ancient societies, except for the Greco-Roman theme of friendship. Even the familial and marital links seem to have been more functional than real interpersonal relationships. Evangelical narratives, however, emphasize the quality of relationship of Jesus in a surprising manner and associate it with his healing activity.

The interpretation of the Evangelical stories I propose may appear too psychological, too human, not supernatural enough. I believe it is yet defensible. Who actually is God, and how does He act? Each one of us, no doubt, imagines Him in his own way. But let us remember what we read in the Gospel of John: "No-one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has unveiled Him to us" (Jn 1:18). To know who is God, to understand His action, we must turn to Jesus, the man Jesus, since our human eyes cannot see anything else. We should not oppose the human and the divine, in Jesus or elsewhere! Human relations through which men and women are cured in contact of Jesus are the mediations of the action of God, who begins to open His Kingdom to them.

Body of Christ, the Christian community has only a single mission: to continue for new times and all over the earth the work

that Jesus began in Palestine, twenty centuries ago⁸. At the heart of its program is necessarily, as for Jesus, the development of true and warm human relations. To meet others in a reciprocal attitude of deep listening, so have the grace to discover and to accept oneself, be healed, transformed positively and go toward others: it was for Jesus as for his first followers a basic experience. Would we not be called to live this same experience in our Christian communities of today?

Jacques VERMEYLEN

II. IN PETER'S FOOTSTEPS...

Our fraternities were invited to reflect on the theme "dare to meet". 'Others' makes us think of those we perceive as different, outside our family circle; *to meet* means to respect, to accept and to love the other.

It is not that easy! Let us think for a moment of the transformation of Simon Peter who, as we read in Acts 10, was chosen from the beginning as the one from whom "the gentiles were to learn the good news and so become believers. And God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them (*for the Gentiles, for those outside the Law*) by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he has to us (*the chosen people, his people under the Law*). God made no distinction between them and us, since he purified their hearts by faith" (Ac 15:7-9). God comes to meet everyone.

Peter had to learn to live up to this demand of the Gospel. Surely, he had already shown broadmindedness, when at Joppa, he (and no doubt, his wife also – 1 Co 9:5) accepted to stay in the house of another Simon, a tanner (Ac 9:43) – who was considered

⁸ If we stand with this principle, many practices of the Church seem relative, if not disputable. For a reflection on what this means for the way of life and action of Christian communities, see my article entitled 'L'essentiel et l'accessoire. Quelles priorités pour le catholicisme au XXI^e siècle?', in J. Debelle (dir.), *Rue de la Prevoyance*. Essays on the ideas of Pierre de Lochet, Brussels, ed. Feuilles Familiales, 2001, pp. 187-208.

impure by his very profession of working with the skins of dead animals!

Acts 10:9-29

Next day, while they were still on their journey and had only a short distance to go before reaching the town, Peter went to the housetop at about the sixth hour to say his prayers. He felt hungry and was looking forward to his meal, but before it was ready he fell into a trance and saw heaven thrown open and something like a big sheet being let down to earth by its four corners; it contained every kind of animal, reptile and bird. A voice then said to him, 'Now, Peter, kill and eat!' But Peter answered, 'Certainly not, Lord; I have never yet eaten anything profane or unclean.' Again, a second time, the voice spoke to him, 'What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane.' This was repeated three times, and then suddenly the container was drawn up to heaven again.

Peter was still at a loss over the meaning of the vision he had seen, when the men sent by Cornelius arrived. They had asked where Simon's house was and they were now standing at the door, calling out to know if the Simon known as Peter was lodging there. While Peter's mind was still on the vision, the Spirit told him, 'Look! Some men have come to see you. Hurry down, and do not hesitate to return with them; it was I who told them to come.' Peter went down and said to them, 'I am the man you are looking for; why have you come?' They said, 'The centurion Cornelius, who is an upright and God-fearing man, highly regarded by the entire Jewish people, was told by God through a holy angel to send for you and bring you to his house and to listen to what you have to say.' So Peter asked them in and gave them lodging.

Next day, he was ready to go off with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Jaffa. They reached Caesarea the following day, and Cornelius was waiting for them. He had asked his relations and close friends to be there, and as Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, fell at his feet and did him reverence. But Peter helped him up. 'Stand up,' he said, 'after all, I am only a man!' Talking together they went in to meet all the people assembled there, and Peter said to them, 'You know it is forbidden for Jews to mix with people of another race and visit them; but God has made it clear to me that I must not call anyone profane or unclean. That is why I made no objection to coming when I was sent for; but I should like to know exactly why you sent for me.'

One late afternoon, Peter went up on the roof to pray. But his thoughts were on non-vegetarian food, because he was hungry and meal was delayed. The smell of dishes being cooked by the ladies below (in fact, they were the ones praying; their love-filled cooking being their prayer) made Peter to have that strange vision of a collection of all kinds of animals, with reptiles and birds, big and small, pure and impure! And the voice came: Eat this! “Never”, he said. But the voice insisted: “What God has made clean, you must not call profane!” (10:15, cfr Mk 7:19).

Now, this dream-vision of hungry Peter is part of a beautifully structured narration in Acts 10:1-11:18. It is meant to impress on the reader that because of God’s initiative the first disciple Peter was made to make the first step in encountering the outsider, the ritually impure, idol-worshipping Gentile! It starts with the presentation of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Caesarea (quite similar to the humble centurion of Capernaum, who approached the Master, Luke 7:1-10) and his vision-call to invite Peter (10:1-8). The next scene is in Joppa, where Peter has his food-vision on the rooftop (10:9-16). Meanwhile the messengers have arrived from Cornelius, and after being told, “Go with them without hesitation [literally WITHOUT MAKING ANY DISTINCTION – dia-krinomenos]”, Peter already opens up and (certainly at the promptings of the other Simon’s family and his own wife) he offers them hospitality for the night (10:17-23).

On Peter’s arrival at Caesarea it is Cornelius who comes to “meet” him (10:24-29). Not very polite for Peter to say, “Normally, I would not have visited a Gentile like you!”; but it is to clarify that it is an order from God that one should not call any fellow-human profane or unclean (v.28 repeating what was first told about food stuff in v.15 and applying it to humans). Cornelius confirms that this bold encounter is really from God by telling again the whole vision-call (10:30-33, repetition of 3-6). Then, when announcing the good news, Peter emphasizes that, indeed, GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY, and that anyone is acceptable, and that Jesus is Lord of all, and that everyone who believes in him receives new life! (10:34-43). The effect of the all-embracing proclamation is the

coming down of the Holy Spirit on the Gentile hearers, followed by their baptism and joyful table-fellowship of both Jewish and non-Jewish believers (10:44-48, see 11:3).

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on gentiles too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

What happened for the first time at Caesarea, had to be reported to the first community in Jerusalem. The conservative members made objections (*die-krinonto* – they were STILL MAKING DISTINCTION in their hearts and minds) (11:1-3). Peter told them about the divine directive given to him in the dream-vision at Joppa (11:4-10, repetition of 10:10-16), followed by the clear mandate about going along with the messengers of Cornelius: “The Spirit told me NOT TO MAKE A DISTINCTION (*dia-krinanta*) between them and us” (11:11-12). Then the subsequent happenings in Caesarea are briefly reported: the vision-call to Cornelius, the message by the apostle Peter and its equalizing effect in experiencing the same gift of the Spirit (11:13-17). Therefore, the community of Jerusalem makes a grateful confession in the form of a universal concession: God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life! (11:18). And this is echoed years later in the Council of Jerusalem, where Peter testifies: “God, giving them the Holy Spirit... HAS MADE NO DISTINCTION (*die-krinen*) between them and us” (15:9). Thus, the Acts of the Apostles, through this universalizing Act of the Spirit, challenges us to make our journey from Joppa to Caesarea, in order to encounter fellow-humans who are different from of us in many ways, but who make us realize that we share gifts of the Spirit that bind us in love.

III.INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2012

The secular fraternities are organizing an international Assembly (IA) every 6 years. The next meeting will take place in Bonn, in Germany from 3 to 13 August 2012.

Haus Venusberg
Haager Weg 28-30, 53127 Bonn-Venusberg
. Tel: 0228 / 28 99 1-0 Fax: 0228 / 28-99-1 - 59
E-Mail: info@Haus-venusberg.de
Internet: www.haus-venusberg.deVenus

Invited to this meeting: the members of the international team in function, the members chosen to replace them, (this choice will be endorsed by the Assembly), the regional responsables of the continents, a delegate from each country where the fraternities are present, a moderator and translators.

The theme to be discussed is: "Dare to meet". This theme has been studied and worked through in many countries. Reports have been included in the latest IC.

At the Assembly, we have planned times of prayer, work, exchange and conviviality. Each country will have the opportunity to present his country fraternities. To explore the theme, speakers will talk about "Dare to meet" in relation to the charism of Charles de Foucauld, also in relation to our daily life and in the context of the local society.

Germany fraternities have offered their logistical support on the spot and during the preparation. Marianne Bonzelet is in charge of travel formalities. This is a huge help.

The financial component is very difficult. We have appealed to your generosity, because some fraternities are unable to afford the travel of their delegate. What to do when the fraternity of an African country consists of 8 unemployed women or when in a fraternity of ten, only one member has paid work and earns US \$ 40 per month!!!

You see that to speak of solidarity is not a vain word!

Sunday, August 12, 2012 will be an "open door day". You are cordially invited. Details will be given later but you can already book this day in your calendar.

We propose to support the efforts of preparation for this Assembly its proper conduct with our prayers. This meeting concerns all members of the fraternities in the world.

Lord.

Teach me to meet the other
listening and with respect for what concerns him.

May I look for what is essential in his life,
What concerns him, what fills him with wonder.

It is through a long journey together
that we discover one another with our true face.
I know that I shall never finish
Discovering him through the meeting.

Lord, help me to become a man
And to live my life in an unlimited space
where the whole world can be welcome
and where Your Presence is alive.

Make me close to it
and teach me to be the smile of your kindness.

IV. NEWS OF THE CONTINENTS

A. AFRICA



BURKINA

FORMATION DAYS AT OUAHIGOUYA
FROM WEDNESDAY 3 TO SUNDAY 7 AUGUST 2011

THEME: "Review of life based on how we live the spirituality of Br. Charles day-by-day"

Moderators: Fr Ernest SOME of the priests' Fraternity and Little Sister Colette of Jesus

Participants: 14 members of the Lay Fraternity and 4 priests from the Priests' Fraternity

1. **"The meditation of the Gospel"** led by Fr. Ernest SOME.

According to Fr SOME we must read and live the Gospel. We were therefore given some passages of the Bible to use as reference. These were namely:

- The Gospel, **as the Word of Life**: John 6:63, John 6:68, Heb 4:12
- **Believing in the Gospel**, Mark 1:14-15
- **Giving one's life for the Gospel**, Mark 8:34-35
- **Listening to and practising the Gospel**, Luke 8:21
- **Being with and becoming filled with the Holy Spirit**, Acts 1:8

The moderator concluded, "If we do not live the Gospel, Jesus does not live in us". After this brief talk Fr. Ernest SOME asked the participants to form small groups and answer some questions that might help. These are the different questions:

1. Do I read the Gospel? When? How?
2. Name one or two instances in my life when I have preached the Gospel without words
3. Name one or two facts in the life of a Christian in which I saw the Gospel proclaimed without words
4. In my life, what have I done for the sake of the Gospel that goes against the normal current?

2. **Review of life:** Moderated by Little Sister Colette

She informed us that there are several forms of review of life:

- **Personal**
- **In the Community**
- **In the family**
- **In a group**

The review of life can be done daily especially in the evening (at night): in relation to a single event, (how did I live it?); in relation to all those times when God became present.

After this some documents were distributed, however we worked mostly on one entitled "**spring cleaning**" over which we reflected individually for twenty minutes and then in small groups and eventually in a plenary meeting. Here is the content of the document:

"The Spring Cleaning": the need from time to time to review and revitalize our **Commitment**.

Each one could prepare by answering the following questions:

- What suits me well in our Fraternity (the pace of the meetings, praying together, the organization...)?
- In my / our life experience, what in my opinion, goes in the direction of our spirituality, our mission?
- What does not suit me, what do I find difficult?

- In my opinion, what in my / our experience, does not conform with the life that I / we have chosen or with the spirituality of the Fraternity?
- What do I propose in order to improve our life together?
- What am I willing to contribute?

Conclusion

After two days of reflection and a day of desert, the thoughts in the box below were selected to serve as a road map for each member on his / her spiritual journey.

1 BE PRESENT TO GOD

The means by which I come into the presence of God:

- I. Personal prayer;
- II. Participation in the Eucharist;
- III. Adoration of the Eucharist;
- IV. The review of my day.

2 BE PRESENT TO ONE ANOTHER

The Fraternity is the perfect forum where I make my commitments and fulfil them day-to-day in all circumstances:

- I. Dedicate time to attend meetings of the Fraternity;
- II. Give whatever I can to support the solidarity of the group;
- III. Give value to reciprocal visits, and always maintain contact with one another.

3 DO THE REVIEW OF LIFE

Set a regular time to review my life in relation to the commitments I made.

I cannot imagine love without a compelling need of resemblance and especially to share all the sorrows, the difficulties, all the hardships of life."

Charles de Foucauld

BENIN

The Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld in Benin organised the 3rd African edition of the Nazareth Week from Sunday 28th August to Sunday 4th September 2011 at the Parish of St Anthony of Padua in SEGBOHOUE, a village about 50 kilometres away from Cotonou, not far from Benin's historic city OUIDAH where the first SMA Missionaries arrived 150 years ago (18 April 1861 – 18 April 2011).

The theme of the week was **FATHER, I ABANDON MYSELF INTO YOUR HANDS** (cf. Luke 23:46) an extract of the Prayer of Abandon of Br Charles of Jesus. The talk was given by **Father Léon COMLAN BALLO** from the Diocese of LOKASSA, parish priest of Our Lady of Mercy in HOUEDOGLI. About twenty brothers and sisters from the Lay Fraternity participated of whom a brother from Cameroon **Joseph YESSI** is the coordinator of the African Lay Fraternities.

Joseph YESSI presented the first topic with the title '**The life of Nazareth, why and how does one live it?**'

To keep in mind: Nazareth means that God is with you in your everyday life (cf. Little Guide of the Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld). Fraternal friendship helps us increasingly become universal brothers revealing God through our own life in the footsteps of Br Charles in imitation of the hidden life which Jesus lived in Nazareth before starting His divine ministry for the salvation of mankind. At Nazareth, God became extraordinarily ordinary. Three essential elements characterize a Nazareth Week:

1. Fraternal life based on the Gospel
2. Rediscovering and/or deepening the message of Br Charles
3. Reviewing together how we live the demands of the Fraternity (Review of life, listening to the Word of God, Adoration, Prayer and the Eucharist).

From the history of the “Prayer of Abandon” (cf. Luke 23:43) presented by Father BALLO, we highlight the following:

The Prayer of Abandon of Br. Charles, which was originally handwritten, was printed for the first time in 1946 and has been recited in its current form every evening by the Little Brothers and

Sisters since 1955. Then it spread throughout the entire Spiritual Family of Br Charles of Jesus.

Br Charles de Foucauld (CDF) read the Gospel and prayed with the words of the Gospel. He formed sentences based on the Gospel (Luke 23:46).

Abandon in the Christian life takes the form of obedience. Obedience is the consummation of love, the child always remains a child to its mother; God never abandons us.

We abandon ourselves to God in all states of life: religious life, married life or other:

by the vows he expresses in front of his superiors, the Religious surrenders himself/herself into the hands of God. Abandon is to allow oneself to be led.

in married life, when a man and a woman say yes, they abandon themselves to GOD in love, life goes on irrespective of the joys and sorrows. The last word belongs to God.

In the case of Br Charles of Jesus he knows how to wait for a response from his superiors and from the Church, allowing himself to be guided by God. For him, it is filial love in complete confidence, he wants to be a universal brother and gives himself in all seriousness.

If I convert, God forgives me. Thus I am in the joy of the present moment. The prayer of abandon means unremittingly putting back the fruits of our abandon into the hands of the Lord.

MALAWI

We have announced the birth of a fraternity in Malawi. Here is a letter that KOSHI has sent to us:

Dear brothers and sisters,

through this little message, we would like to share with you the evolution of our Fraternity here in the parish of St Benedict in NANTOMBA-DOWA in the diocese of LILONGWE, MALAWI.

Indeed, the Fraternity is doing well in the two zones of the parish, but especially in that of St. Therese of BESSERA mainly made up of locals. Here, the commitment of the Fraternity in the area's activities is remarkable. The Fraternity has not wasted time in shaping itself since its inception last February. We fraternise with

each other! Many things remain still to be understood. And it goes on from day to day ... it's a lifetime. It is the Spirit of God alone that speaks and touches our hearts, as it should.

After his conversion, Br Charles himself would start again and again. The brothers and sisters realize that NAZARETH must be lived according to the spirituality of Charles, especially in the vicinity of the most abandoned and helpless. Moreover, our parish zone does not have the Blessed Sacrament, we cannot do the adoration as in the first zone. We have underlined the fact that the adoration of the Eucharistic takes place also during Mass. In addition, we were pleased to welcome Hosea who is a former member of the Fraternity of the Diocese of Uvira in DR Congo. He was reunited with his family after years of separation due to the war in DR Congo. Nevertheless, the members ask that the effigy of the fraternity be worn. By the way, according to the experience of the Fraternity in Bukavu, the effigies are sometimes given during a Mass held for this purpose. We believe that the upcoming 1st December may be an appropriate moment if our parish priest agrees. By then it will have been 10 months that they are observer members!

Finally, among others, the major difficulty lies in the English documentation of the Fraternity.

To conclude, our first Retreat for the fraternity of BESSERA will be held the on the last Sunday of this month with the theme: "Following Jesus of NAZARETH".

*United in Prayer
Antoine*

TANZANIA

The Fraternities of Tanzania met at Mwanza, on the 15th and 16th July 2011

2 members from the Fraternity of Arusha, 1 from the Fraternity of Dar es Salaam and 9 members from the Fraternity of Mwanza.

The topic was: The Lay Fraternity - a Calling and a Place for Prayer Reports:

Each group prepared a report on the life of their fraternity.

What emerged is that they are faithful to the Eucharist and Adoration, they are anxious to help others who are in difficulty

(prisoners, children in difficulty), and they are committed in the work of the parish.

The two main problems encountered are leadership and participation in the Fraternity in the hope of getting financial aid from the members or from the religious who accompany the Fraternity.

Life of Charles de Foucauld:

Charles de Foucauld,

- a model of the amalgamation of prayer and commitment,
- an example of ecumenism through his love for the Muslims,
- encouragement to invest in simple contacts.

This meeting could take place because since 2007 the members are conscious of the need of a contribution which allows such activities.

According to the report sent by Elvis Mitti.

B. AMERICA

Gislene and Robert (Brazil), who are the representatives of the American Continent in the international team, are very busy preparing for the Assembly of 2012.

They have visited several Latin American countries and are ensuring that each one chooses a delegate while establishing a solidarity fund through which some countries can help others financially so as to pay for sending their respective delegates.

C. ASIA

The Responsibles for Asia met at Bangalore from 1st to 3rd December 2011 in order to get together, to bring each other up-to-date on the life of the Fraternities in the various countries and to plan future projects.

D. THE ARAB WORLD

The Responsibles for the Arab world: Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon have planned to meet in January in Cairo to reflect on the future of

the Fraternities and to decide on a candidate who would represent the Arab world in the international team

ALGERIA

This is the letter that Thérèse and Jean sent for the occasion of 1st December.

Dear friends

*The 1st of December is a day of celebration for all of us: in celebrating Charles de Foucauld we think of each other!
We highlight some words sown by Charles de Foucauld*

"Our entire existence, our entire being must shout the Gospel from the rooftops ... it should be a living sermon"

"Those who have distanced themselves from Jesus should, without book and without words, come to know the Gospel by seeing my life... Seeing me, one should see who Jesus is. "

"It is the prayer centred on the Eucharist and Adoration which is the source of fraternal life to be lived at the heart of the world: to be a presence for God and a presence for humankind. "

*"Let us be the friends of those who do not have any friends."
To be a universal brother requires of Charles de Foucauld to have a deep respect for others right down to their roots, their culture.*

*"Even if God wants that one remains rich it is in order that he becomes the treasurer of the poor, to live in poverty himself and to only make use of riches in the service of souls and bodies"
A very good Feast to all! You are very much in our thoughts.*

*Fraternally
Thérèse and Jean*

EGYPT

Here is the letter sent to us by *Emad Zakir*
Representative of the Arab world in the international team

Hagaza 10/02/2011

Dear friends,

In these days Egypt is going through a difficult period in its history ... very similar to the pains of a difficult birth.

In my opinion, this popular revolution is the result of economic, social and political factors which the vast majority of the Egyptian people have suffered for several years ... They have endured poverty, unemployment, inequality of income distribution, political repression, the marginalisation of many sectors of society especially the young people and corruption in all its forms. It is truly sad that out of the 85 million who form the Egyptian population more than 40% live below the breadline! And that 70% of the Egyptian government's revenue goes to only 30% of the people, while the remaining 30% is distributed among the other 70% of the population. This is an inevitable result of the selling of influences, of the dictatorship, of profits gained at the expense of the poor and simple people who form the majority of Egyptians ... it is a real people's revolution. The protestors of Tahrir Square in Cairo represent the Egyptian people in all its components, Muslim and Christian, poor and middle class, rural and urban, young and adult, men and women. Behind them rally all the Egyptians from all the regions of Egypt, who dream of a dignified life, rid of the dictatorship, and corruption, enjoying equal rights and duties, in a society where social justice and freedom of expression reign ...

This extraordinary popular revolution has rekindled hope in the life of the Egyptians and revealed the real stuff of which the Egyptian masses are made, something that we had forgotten over the years. This revolution has produced an unprecedented popular solidarity which was unknown after the revolution of 1919. Last Friday the Muslims prayed in Tahrir Square surrounded and protected by their Christian brothers, and on Sunday the Christians prayed surrounded and protected by their Muslim brothers. We dream of a motherland which embraces everyone whatever their differences, a motherland

which respects freedom, guarantees justice and ensures a dignified life for all. I am convinced that Egypt is really changing. The 25th of January is a turning point in the history of Egypt: the wheel of change was set in motion and it will never turn back. I pray that the hopes and aspirations of the Egyptian people materialise peacefully, far from any kind of violence.

Dear friends, I ask you to pray for Egypt, for anyone who aspires for freedom, democracy and a dignified life. Let us pray for those who have shed their blood in their fight on the road to freedom, to defend the poor and the simple people of this country, to build a better future for everyone.

All united in prayer.

Emad Zakir

Representative of the Arab world in the international team

IRAQ

Regarding Iraq, we have news through a Little Sister from Iraq (Alishwa) who passed through Lebanon and who related to us the situation of the fraternities today. She told us that there are no longer any fraternities in Baghdad and Mosul; however there are 7 members from these 2 fraternities who meet every three weeks and who now live in a region which is called 'Karakoch' in the north of the country, a region which is entirely Christian.

SYRIA

These are the photos of new Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld which has just been born in Damascus, together with Mons. Samir NASSAR, the bishop of the Maronites, Fr. Jean Siraj, the future



chaplain of this Fraternity and Little Sisters of Jesus Hoda and Henriette.

Let us all pray for this new Fraternity, especially during these difficult moments in Syria

Fraternally
Fidaa Boutros
Lebanon

E. EUROPE

MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN DELEGATES: OELENBERG 2011

On 13th July the members of Mulhouse welcomed some of us among them and provided us with a much appreciated logistic plan. On 15th July we all arrived at the Abbey of Oelenberg.

For the round of presentations, each participant was invited to compare the Fraternity and/or Charles de Foucauld to an object, a plant or an animal. They were naturally also asked to justify their choice. We were expecting a humorous exercise. However through only a few words it drew out profound and eloquent.

Saturday 16th July, was dedicated to the reports of the different delegations from different countries: Belgium-North, Belgium-South, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Poland, Spain and Switzerland We highlight the presence of the Irish delegation which was absent at Vaumarcus in 2009.

These reports were preceded by a little presentation listing the number and location of each country's fraternities, in total 237 fraternities and 1563 members. Several slots in the timetable were devoted to the use of electronic media (Web page, Site, Facebook, Wikipedia, ...). This is a fundamental and priority issue for the future of the fraternities. To attract the under 40's today, one cannot do without these means or without personal contacts.

At the level of finance, the delegates were reminded of the importance of the contribution as a gesture of solidarity with other continents and as a sign of membership. The contribution

corresponds in principle to the pay of a working day or social allowance from each member. Each country is asked to pay its share at the beginning of the year into the European account which in turn passes on what remains at the end of the year to the International account.

On Sunday 17th July a guest contributor, Raymon Van Ermen, helped us reflect on the theme of the meeting, *Joyful simplicity, sustainable development and Christian life*. Bernadette Masereel concluded with a presentation *Charles de Foucauld, rich, poor and joyful*.

Henri and Antoinette then spoke of the international team with the help of a slideshow. Following this the candidates for the International Team were presented. We thank them, namely Annie Bijonneau (France), Anne-Michèle Stern (Switzerland) and Claudio and Sylvana Chiaruttini (Italy-Malta). We pray especially for the latter two who were elected.

Monday 18th July, Monique shared with us an appraisal of her mandate as European Responsible and Henri launched the theme of the 2012 International Meeting in Bonn (Germany): *Dare to Meet* This theme does not have to be added to those of the different countries, but it can be incorporated if they want to. It is the responsibility of the delegates to take care of it.

France, Spain and Italy each submitted a candidate for the European Responsibility: These were, Pilar Ibanez, Annie Bijonneau and Aldo Aragno. All the delegates present were nevertheless eligible. After an indicative vote and a period of reflection Annie was elected. We thank all the candidates who responded to our call .

The evening was festive, joyful and lively. We enjoyed the culinary specialities brought by each delegation.

Tuesday 19th July, Henri and Antoinette thanked France and Malta who confirmed the distribution indeed the translation of the *International Bulletin*. This allows fraternity members to have first hand contact with the universal dimension of the message of Charles de Foucauld. The cost is of €20 for two years.

We took note of Claudio's report on relations between the St Philaret Institute of Moscow and the Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld.

We then devoted some time to the *final Declaration* which was adopted (see below).

Monique Potevin and Bernadette Masereel.

Final Message from the European delegates

of the Charles de Foucauld Lay Fraternity

Oelenberg, France, 19 July 2011

Initially we want to express our joy in seeing good friends again and discovering others for the first time. Members of the fraternities are our real brothers and sisters of Jesus. In them we see the face of God and experience God's love. Meeting them again makes us forget the tensions and stress that we had in getting ready for the meeting and enables us to leave behind our daily worries.

We studied the situation of the fraternities in the different European countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Malta, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, Ireland, U.K., Switzerland, and their evolution since our previous meeting in Vaumarcus (Neuchâtel, Switzerland) in 2009.

The reports presented by the delegates underline the important problem of our members growing old and of our fraternities not being renewed. How can we reach today's young people? Antoinette and Henri told us what the fraternities are living in the other continents.

The two themes for reflection: for Europe: Joyful simplicity in life, International: Dare to meet. Two facilitators helped us to focus on these subjects in a conference and in workshops.

Charles de Foucauld's lifestyle, his sobriety and his joy, aren't they paths to signpost the road of tomorrow and to make the life of all the world inhabitants possible and joyful, in the North as well as in the South? We are convinced that, as citizens, consumers and people who make savings, we have the tools to get there.

Dare to meet will be the theme of the 2012 International Meeting in Bonn. Human relations confront us with ourselves and

transform us. Jesus himself experienced this and it has transformed him. Meeting Jesus also transforms people. It is in the heart of our life that we seek to develop true and warm relationships. We are invited to live that experience in our fraternities, in our families and wherever we live. You can have access to all these reports on the website given at the bottom of the page.

We have the pleasure of welcoming Claudio and Sylvana Chiaruttini who will represent Europe in the International Team, replacing Henri and Antoinette Roberti, who finish their term in 2012.

We also have the joy of welcoming Annie Bijonneau as European responsible for the next four years. We cordially thank Monique Potevin for her very fraternal commitment and availability. We thank the French team who fetched and welcomed delegates in the railway station and in the airport. We also thank our interpreter Christine Lapanje.

V. ASSOCIATION:



What "Evangelising in the manner of Charles de Foucauld" means.

The apostolate of Goodness

It is the experience of Charles de Foucauld in his personal history: Marie de Bondy is a good and intelligent person, therefore her religion, must be true. Charles transforms this into: " her Master must be good "

Among the Tuareg he could not speak of the Gospel. It is an apostolate based on "seeing" and not on words. It is about giving the other the possibility to blossom, to live better. One must understand what he wrote as a sharing of his experience and not as a moralistic projection of his good example: it is about being gentle and good to show not oneself but Jesus the Master. Today, the apostolate of goodness could translate into: benevolence, non-violence, thirst for justice, respect of the other - any other. Every person carries the mark of transcendence. This apostolate of goodness is characterized by gratuitousness whereas in society, in the Church, one speaks of projects, of evaluations. We want " to be there," to be

able to do less, go for what is essential, live the relationship with each person who asks for love and to be listened to.

Sharing of work in small groups beginning from the issue:

Today and tomorrow, to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ

- The church is no longer 'triumphant.' The mystery of Nazareth helps us to integrate in a changing world. Nazareth does not lock itself up in a place, it invites us to open up to others in their everyday life. To the question: from where does he get his Wisdom? We may think that the wisdom of Jesus does not only come 'from above' , but also from the oral transmission of his parents, friends, relations... In general, we live a dechristianisation. Living the apostolate of goodness (welcome, friendship, reaching out to people in the place where they are) corresponds to this situation. Money and hedonism have become the idols of our times. The Gospel needs to be brought back little by little into our own life. We ' build' ourselves by means of the environment in which we live. We support each other, believers and non-believers together, we evangelise ourselves together. By remaining true to ourselves and listening to the Holy Spirit, at the opportune moment the Lord will give us the means to announce the message and to develop the group development. Specific of Charles de Foucauld are: supplication, continuous conversion, the call to silence, simplicity of life and relationship.

Specific characteristics of the announcement of the gospel in our fraternities:

- listening with the heart (a heart transformed by listening to the Word), in a fraternal dimension (living with the other gratuitously);
- universal vocation incarnated in a people, a place;
- choosing to share with others a life of simplicity;
- universal fraternity: living together with all our intercultural diversities and difficulties;
- listening, goodness, witnessing to the young who are often indifferent to the religious reality.

More than ever, it is important to live our life with a view to making the Church visible. The value of daily life lived in simplicity. Life in the fraternity is also where there is our cross.

Elections: The new team consists of:

Sr. Antonella (Discepole del Vangelo)
Magda (Little Sister of Nazareth)
Giuliano (Little Brother of the Gospel)
with Marianne as Secretary

Dates and place of the next meeting:

The next meeting will take place at Viviers. It starts on 1st April 2013 (Easter Monday) in the evening and ends on 7th April 2013 in the morning.

Theme of the next meeting:

The Assembly has chosen theme Nr. 4: The reading and meditation of the Gospel and the Word of God by Charles de Foucauld – and by our groups?

Mons. Bouvier informed us about the present situation of the canonisation of Charles de Foucauld. He suggested that the cause be presented within the context of new evangelisation.

Afterwards he shared with us his decision to take on as postulator Fr. Bernard Ardura, Premonstratensian, a historian by training, already postulator of the cause of Robert Schumann and who lives in Rome, as the Regulation of the Congregation of Saints now demands.

He proposes to remain vice-postulator of the cause and to maintain a link with the spiritual family.

READING:

Little Sisters of Jesus
Journal of a Fraternity

En Amazonie

Renaissance de la tribu indienne des Tapirapé

(In Amazonia. Renaissance of the Tapirapé Indian tribe)

By Robert Dumont

Edition: KARTHALA

Collection - Signes des temps

ISBN: 978-2-8111-0466-5

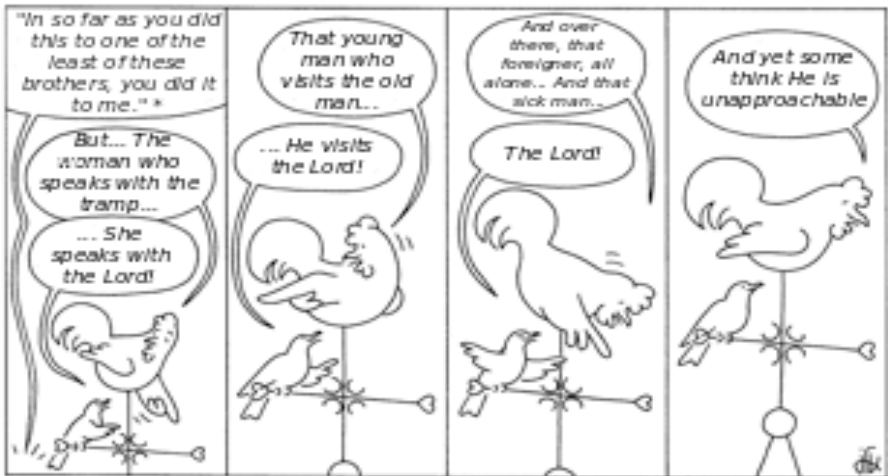


In June 1952 Sister Magdeleine, the foundress of the Little Sisters of Jesus arrived in the heart of Amazonia and on leaving left there three of her young sisters, in one of the poorest regions of Brazil, in the heart of the Tapirapé tribe. At the time, this tribe, reduced to 47 members only was in the danger of dying out. More than fifty years later, the Tapirapé represent a population of more than five hundred members.

Through the Diaries (Journal of the Fraternities), which retrace the life of this Fraternity from June 1952 till the end of 1954, we discover how these three Little Sisters 22-28 years of age buried themselves "without thinking of returning", learnt the language and won the confidence of the Tapirapé to the point that when these latter felt their dignity acknowledged, promptly rediscovered a taste for life and were literally 'reborn' to the extent of establishing a school in their village for their children.

The day-by-day reports of this book reveal to us how these Little Sisters made a quasi-ethnological analysis of this tribe of Amazonian Indians in order to integrate themselves better. They relate at the same time the manner in which the Little Sisters lived in extreme poverty, while contemplating Jesus together with those whose life they sought to share.

As sign of the times it also tells how this attention to the other and the overwhelming interior availability that it requires led to a rethinking of the meaning of their presence. "At that time, we had the desire to bring the Tapirapé to participate in our Christian celebrations to introduce them little by little to know Jesus Christ through the Church. Later we chose not to interfere in the traditional religion of the Tapirapé but instead enter into an inter-religious dialogue with them.



* Matthew 25:40

The site <http://www.charlesdefoucauld.org> is online in the French version, but there are a few pages in English.

If you want to add information or announce your activities please do not hesitate to contact Antoinette on: antoinette_roberti@yahoo.fr

Subscriptions

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CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

068-2472421-15

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These material aspects need not however be an obstacle to the dissemination of the Bulletin, which is an important link between the fraternities around the world and which allows us to become aware of their richness and vitality. The dissemination of the Bulletin therefore remains a priority for the International Team. We would like to intensify the dispatch of brochures to Africa and Latin America and it is with the help of your contributions that we can achieve this.

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