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International Team
And
Arab World Meeting

News from the « Fraternities »

Bread of Life with Ch. de Foucauld
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Editorial

Dear brothers and sisters,

The end of the year is fast approaching meaning that the Centenary year is also coming to its conclusion. For many countries this has been a year of jubilation, activities and hard work celebrating our dear Blessed Br. Charles. It has been a year of spiritual growth and an opportunity to spread the message of the Gospel on the path of our spirituality.

For the International Team it has been a very special year, not only for reuniting for our biannual meeting, but especially because meeting in Lebanon opened up for us new horizons. It was an experience where friendships were forged and where sharing became a true fraternal encounter. We came face to face with a reality that means so much in the world of today - Christians and Muslims living together in peace. This is the reality of Lebanon: a jewel of natural and historical beauty and an oasis of peace in a region gone mad with war and hatred. You will find more about this experience in the pages of this edition of the Bulletin.

Our main article is called, "Mercy in Charles de Foucauld" by Fr. Jimmy Bonnici and it unifies the culmination of two celebrations dear to us this year: the centenary of Br. Charles' death and the year of Jubilee that Pope Francis dedicated to Mercy.

News and articles poured in for this edition; rightly so as this has been an exceptional year. Therefore we have decided to make this issue a bumper-size one.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those who helped with producing this International Bulletin. They are the "worker-bees" who work silently but willingly. I thank Rania Chaiban (Lebanon) and Hernán Ramirez.
(Colombia) for co-ordinating the French-Spanish and English-Spanish (and vice-versa), our team of translators Annie Bijonveau, Françoise Creevey, Françoise Roche, Johanna Hohenester, Nicholas Prodigson, Hernán Ramirez, Maria Ratiba, Elena González, Raquel Perez, Isabel Zacares and Luisa Solana, Vincent and Danielle Ribier who correct the French version and Rania who compiles the booklet in the 3 languages ready to be printed. Last but not least I thank my husband Claudio who is always there with his calm sagacity whenever I push the panic button to restore sanity, balance and the computer.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas. Let us give a home to the child Jesus in our hearts and may we, like the pregnant Mary his mother, carry Him with us wherever we go throughout this coming year. Let us identify with His littleness and His vulnerability. It is a grace from God that we can embrace this Mystery of Joy, the Mystery of the Incarnation: God born into poverty and lowliness. That is where we have to look to find Him and Brother Charles leads us there.

Wishing you all Courage, Peace and Joy

Sylvana

Let us be small within by humility, small outwardly by abjection: God so willed to be the smallest, to take so much the last place, that no mortal could ever have descended lower than Him.
Mercy in Charles de Foucauld
Fr Jimmy Bonnici

The choice of Pope Francis to dedicate this year as a special Jubilee of Mercy is neither devotional nor an option of the Church. Rather mercy is crucial for a correct understanding of who God is\(^1\), it is urgent in the current historical context, and it is essential for the credibility of the Church in its mission in this historical context. There is an intertwining of the personal experience of Pope Francis – his motto reflects his personal experience of God’s mercy \textit{Miserando atque eligendo} – with that of the Church: Pope John XXIII in the opening speech of the Council declaring that the “spouse of Christ prefers to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity”.

Mercy is understood as the best way to be witnesses of the true nature of God. Pope Francis took this decision in the face of the rising tide of fundamentalism and brutality of terrorism, and ongoing reality of war and corruption\(^2\), and destruction of the environment with its impact especially on the poor. Rather than a strategy to tackle these realities it is lived as a challenge and an opportunity for the Church to be authentic, to be true to itself: thus the issue of credibility\(^3\).

\(^1\) “‘It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way’. Saint Thomas Aquinas’ words show that God’s mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence.” Pope Francis, \textit{Misericordiae Vultus}, 6.

\(^2\) “May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy. I direct this invitation to conversion even more fervently to those whose behaviour distances them from the grace of God. I particularly have in mind men and women belonging to criminal organizations of any kind. ... Corruption prevents us from looking to the future with hope, because its tyrannical greed shatters the plans of the weak and tramples upon the poorest of the poor. It is an evil that embeds itself into the actions of everyday life and spreads, causing great public scandal. Corruption is a sinful hardening of the heart that replaces God with the illusion that money is a form of power. It is a work of darkness, fed by suspicion and intrigue.” Pope Francis, \textit{Misericordiae Vultus}, 19.

\(^3\) “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching...
As we journey with the Church in this special year of mercy and in the anniversary of Bro. Charles we are called to discover through him the face of God, appreciate how he grew in holiness in his historical context and how he challenges us on the level of credibility as a fraternity and as Church. Having the privilege to be hosted in Lebanon, sharing in some way the life of the fraternities in this privileged geographical area we come closer to the life of Bro. Charles and his journey. It is for this reason that Islam will be a privileged co-traveller in this conversation.

1. Who is God for Brother Charles?

Conversion process
What brother Charles receives in his childhood years in terms of Christian faith seems lost but is in fact rediscovered in later years. But the journey to rediscover his faith is in itself an experience of the merciful creativity of God. Every time that Charles speaks of his conversion, he remembers the tenderness of God and he cannot do otherwise but sing the mercy of the Father who waits and receives with open arms his son who left to a distant land and got lost in the “region of dissimilarity” as Augustine would say.

When meditating in Nazareth Luke 15, 1-7 (parable of shepherd carrying the lost sheep) he wrote:

   It is my story, my God, it is in this way that you sought me, found me, brought me back, guilty and soiled, to the fold and placed me right next to you, not in the sheep pen but in your own room, “in abscondito vultus tut” [in the secret of your Presence Sal 31, 20; Augustine, Confessions, 13,8],... how good you are, my God.4

When he reflects on the parable of the prodigal son, he writes:

   “My God, you are so good! This is what you did for me! I was young and I went far from you, left your house ... and went to a foreign land,

and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.” Pope Francis, Misericordiae Vultus, 10.

4 PICCOLA SORELLA ANNUNZIATA DI GESÙ, Charles de Foucauld e l’islam, Magnano (BI) 2005, 69.
the land of the profane, of unbelief, indifference and earthly passions ... 
Your first grace, ... was to let me know famine, material and spiritual famine; ... you let me suffer from spiritual famine through a deep desire for a better moral state, a thirst for virtue and a need for moral well-being. And then, when I turned so timidly towards you, and prayed that strange prayer, ‘If you exist, let me know you’, Oh God of goodness, who has never ceased to work within me and around me at every moment since my birth, who has brought me to this moment, with what tenderness you ran to embrace me and with what swiftness you once more gave me the robe of innocence ... How good you are my Lord and my God! What are my duties towards this greatly beloved Father? First of all to love Him, then to love Him and finally again to love Him, because love contains everything.”

What stands out in his experience of conversion is not only his direct experience of mercy but the absolute turning from focusing on creatures to focusing on God. Moreover he comes to know God as Father and know himself as desiring God with the possibility of an intimate relationship with God. For the first, his contact with Islam was crucial. For the second, his encounter with Jesus of Nazareth.

Conversion through Islam
Brother Charles refers to his being seduced by Islam. We know how he was touched by “those who follow the prophet Mohammed” through their moments of prayer. There he becomes aware of the existence of God as God (this makes him pray: “God, if you exist, make me know you” February 1886). Moreover he becomes aware of the absolute distance between everything that is created and God. It is through this awareness that the centrality of adoration can be appreciated in Charles de Foucauld.
In his second letter to Henry de Castries (8 July 1901) he writes:

Yes, you are right, Islam shook me profoundly ... the sight of such faith, of people living continually in the presence of God, made me glimpse something greater and truer than worldly pursuits: “Ad maiora nati

5 Charles de Foucauld e l’islam, 69-70
... I set about studying Islam, and then the Bible, and while the grace of God acted, the faith of my childhood was reconfirmed and renewed.\footnote{Charles de Foucauld e l’Islam, 24.}

But although his contact with Islam was crucial for his search for God, it was his pilgrimage to the Holy Land (1888-1889) that shaped his relationship with God as he fell in love with “Jesus of Nazareth” who humbled himself and became little. It is Jesus who invites him to “Come and see”. It is through this perspective that we come to understand Foucauld’s understanding of the mercy of God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus states: “My Father ... is greater than all” (Jn, 10,29); “If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 Jn 3, 20). As the little sister Annunziata di Gesù states “That God is equally great and merciful is also constantly proclaimed by Islam, from the first sura of the Koran ... and at the beginning of each prayer: Bismillah ar-rahman ar-rahim (in the name of God most Gracious, most Compassionate. ... The term rahma, 'mercy' is actually the tenderness that the expectant mother feels for the baby in her womb and when the baby is born she cares for him, protects him, breastfeeds him, nurtures him”.\footnote{Charles de Foucauld e l’Islam, 32.} But she also goes further to bring out what is peculiar in the Islamic faith. Given what they state on God – that he is always Other – there can be no “ifs”, there can be no dialogue with God, the book of Job would not be possible in Islam, neither Jesus cry on the cross quoting Psalm 22, 2. This is due to Islam’s fear of diluting the unicity of God\footnote{Cf. Charles de Foucauld e l’Islam, 33.}. What attracted Charles to Islam was this “simplicity of dogma”, “simplicity of hierarchy and morality”. In Islam everything becomes unified in one and unique God. And the way to pray is through absolute respect to God: “Indeed, the Islamic prayer, out of absolute respect for God and for what He has eternally established, cannot express itself except as a liturgy of praise and worship, reciting the Quran in the position that best expresses humility and submission, that is, through prostration (cf. Coran 32, 15).\footnote{Charles de Foucauld e l’Islam, 37.} Brother Charles
would appreciate this attitude of “admiration, contemplation, adoration, respect, love without end” that also belongs to Islam. He brings it to a synthesis through his Christian faith – specifically his relation with the ”Father” – in his *Prayer of Abandon*. He composes this prayer as he meditates the Jesus on the cross while waiting, as a Trappist, for the decision either of solemn vows or dispensation. The day after receiving the letter from the abbot general and the possibility to follow his personal vocation, he wrote to his fellow Trappist Fr Jerome about his sense of abandonment:

> The future is unknown. God leads us through such unexpected roads! How I was led, tossed about for six months, Staoueli, Rome or the unknown. We are the dry leaf, the speck of dust, the foam bubble. Let us only be faithful and let ourselves be taken with a great love and a great obedience wherever the will of God pushes us; in this way we will give to His heart the greatest possible consolation until a last waft of this blessed wind takes us to heaven.¹⁰

In front of the immensity of God and his overabundant mercy, the human being can only express joy and life, full of astonishment, humility, silent veneration, what Scriptures call “fear of God”, “beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1,7). This trust and adoration of God is the root of the three Abrahamitic religions although each have their own specific characteristics. In Charles de Foucauld this deep sense of adoration of God is nourished by his reading of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. He can contrast the nothingness of all that is created and joy of being immersed in God alone: “Forgetting all that is created to lose oneself in the immense and only good.”¹¹

This means first of all **purifying desires.** Rather than eliminating them, elevating desire to let it be attracted by the One who fulfils and expands our desiring. It is not escaping from reality but entering into the true reality, immersion in the abyss of the love-lover-loved, of being exposed to the

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¹⁰ Letter to Fr Jerome, 24 January 1897, quoted in *Charles de Foucauld e l’islam*, 41.
¹¹ Letter to de Castries, quoted in *Charles de Foucauld e l’islam*, 48.
living love and to live, on this earth, transformed by this same love, source and nourishment of every love, source of communion and reciprocity. This also means the journey through the desert – not only physical but above all spiritual – the aridity we live through our life. As St John of the cross states: “love does not consist in experiencing great feelings, but to have great nudity and to suffer for the love of the loved one”.

**Jesus of Nazareth**

Although he found Islam attractive, it is Jesus of Nazareth that he takes as model: the one who is “poor, chaste, who does not resist evil and suffers everything with meekness, forgives and blesses.” He is struck by the words of Fr Huvelin: “Jesus of Nazareth has so much taken the last place, that no one can take it from him”.

In front of divine transcendence he lets go in trust and adoration. In Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem he discovers the true mystery of God. Although his absolute otherness remains, God here enters in time and in the human condition. God reveals himself “greater” in the very place where he makes himself “smaller”, in his letting go of every greatness and power in order to come at the service of human beings and take care of them with passionate love. Foucauld discovers the God who, out of his love which is incomprehensively gratuitous, chooses weakness and folly, folly for Jews, for pagans, blasphemy for Muslims, the humble God that takes the initiative to lower himself down to earth (humus).

In Nazareth he Meditates the fact that the “incarnation has its source in the goodness of God”: “… The infinite humility contined in this mystery: God, the Essence, the Infinite ... becomes a man ... the humblest of men... Always, for myself, seek the lowest place, to be a slow as my Master,... the lower I go the more I will be with Jesus”. 12 Thus the understanding of the holiness of God in de Foucauld is the mystery of God’s mercy, his way of lowering himself to love us. Meditating on the wrestling of Jacob with God, Brother Charles concludes:

> How good you are, my God! You so great, what weight of goodness, really infinite, makes you incline continuously towards

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12 Retreat at Nazaret, November 1897, quoted in *Charles de Foucauld e l’islam*, 56.
what is so small! ... This proves that you delight in doing acts of goodness, and the more these acts have something immense, infinite, the more they please you. ... Let us imitate our divine model ... Let us find our delight in doing acts of goodness, and the more our charity will be great, incomprehensible, foolish in the eyes of the world, the more true, the nearer to divine charity: let us approach as much as we can towards the least among men; *let us become small as much as possible as the Word, as Jesus, let us, like Him, definitively establish on earth our place among the smallest in the last place. Let find, like the Word, like Jesus, "our delights" among the smallest*.\(^{13}\)

God’s way of loving is his descent. Thus he puts the following words on the mouth of Jesus: “Regard this *humility* for the good of humanity, and learn to become small to do good, to be the first to go after souls as I was the first to go after souls.”\(^{14}\)

2. **How does brother Charles live this truth?**

Given that this is who God is, then this is what Charles wants to live and to imitate. This is why Fr Huvelin can introduce him as the one who “makes of religion his love” (27 April 1889). In his various meditations of the visit of Mary to Elizabeth he also draws the consequences for his lifestyle. This means that one should be ready to take the first step in a gratuitous way, being ready to journey, an urgent exodus, to be sent without tunic or links, in order to reach the other and take care of him/her, to save, in the name of God of Jesus, who, through pure grace, comes to visit us (cf. Luke 1,78-79).

On December 1, 1901 he celebrates the first mass in the chapel which he called “fraternity”, the place he wants to be open to whoever knocks:

> Good or evil, friend or enemy, Muslim or Christian, [in] a fraternal and universal love which shares the last bite of bread with any poor person, any guest, any unknown who turns up, and which receives every human being like a most beloved brother.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{13}\) Meditation on Genesis 32, 22-33 in 1896, quoted in *Charles de Foucauld e l’islam*, 58.

\(^{14}\) *Charles de Foucauld e l’islam*, 59.

\(^{15}\) Letter to de Castries – 23 june 1901, quoted in *Charles de Foucauld e l’islam*, 96.
For Charles, to be interested in the other is not a strategy for an easy assimilation. He gives priority to building relationship, welcoming, brotherhood, universal brotherhood. The way of living this imitation of Jesus of Nazareth becomes especially evident in his way of relating with the Touareg.

Isolated missionary

His understanding of the mercy of God becomes his way of being. Rather than a strategy, he understands that his mission among Muslims and others is first of all holiness, to live the life of Jesus, his goodness. This becomes evident in a letter he wrote to Rene Bazin four months before his death (29 July 1916). In the context of colonialism, Rene Bazin had asked Charles de Foucauld on the life of missionaries amongst the Muslim populations (Vie du missionnaire parmi les populations musulmanes), and on how to make these people “French” (Comment franciser les peoples de notre empire africain). Foucauld is more interested in the first question – existential – than the second dealing with political philosophy. Yet this letter, as commented by J.F. Six, reveals various insights that have their origin, above all, in Brother Charles’ understanding of God in Jesus of Nazareth (besides his Republican leanings). The following are a few insights that can enable us to translate “mercy” in concrete terms.

- **Time is greater than space**
  In the work of evangelization, de Foucauld believes that we need **time**: we should work in the perspective not of immediate results but in terms of centuries. This is especially so with respect to the change in mentality. Thus two important words are highlighted: time and prudence. **Time**: He trusts that those who will come after him will find them better prepared. “Before you reap you need to sow the seed. Before sowing, you have to prepare the land for absolute trust”.
  **Prudence**: “To try to do more will compromise everything for the future”. This gives a sense of perspective and criteria for discerning the concrete decisions to take on how to be a missionary in that particular context. This reflects also the patience of God he experienced in his own life.
Moreover, when Pope Francis speaks of the principle that time is greater than space, he also reveals an attitude that gives priority to make a first good step in the right direction – however small and limited it may seem. This contrasts with the other attitude that seeks to conquer immediately. In this letter, Charles de Foucauld describes how he seeks to convince by his way of life, by the example of goodness, rather than by way of conquering, which is typical of a colonial mentality (*Convaincre vs vaincre*).

**Priority of relationships for the missionary**

“My life is to be as much as possible in relation”. This phrase can sound strange for someone who describes himself as isolated missionary (*missionnaire isolé*). It is important to note – in contrast with the first biography published – that he does not seek to be a hermit but to live as a missionary in solitude. More than geographical this is the spiritual and sociological solitude where he lives amidst a population that do not know Christ and where there are very few missionaries who live like him. So, when he is asked to speak about missionaries of his sort (distinct from the style of White Fathers and others who run schools, parishes, charities etc.), he does not describe what others do but what he does. His emphasis is on establishing relations based on love, wisdom and justice.\(^{16}\)

He seeks to build relations that have a deep sense of respect of the other. His starting point is not dogma/preaching (emphasis of the Young Louis

\(^{16}\) « We have to make ourselves accepted by the Muslims, to become for them a dependable friend, to whom one goes when in doubt or in pain; on whose affection, wisdom and justice one counts absolutely. It is only when we get to that point that we can do good for their souls. Inspiring absolute confidence in our authenticity, in the righteousness in our character and in our higher education, giving an idea of our religion through our goodness and our virtues, being in affectionate relationships with as many souls as we can, Muslim and Christian, native or French, is our first duty; it is only after we have accomplished this for long enough, that we can do good», Letter to Bazin, 19 July 1916.
Massignon) but to make oneself loved by them, become friends to all: to give a hint of our religion through our goodness.

It means building friendship without expecting anything back (gratuitous love). His living this to an extreme – he had no followers/converts during his life – shows to what degree he tried to live this principle.

He describes it as the propaganda of goodness, of love and of prudence (propagande de la bonté, de l’amour e de la prudence). Propaganda during that time did not carry connotations of manipulation but of sharing one’s thoughts/opinions.

**Wisdom and Justice**

He is able to denounce both the mentality of the French – sense of superiority, domination, a presence that seeks personal profit from the people dominated with no interest in their real good – and mentality of people in Northern Africa – inferiority of women, slavery. He also speaks of his trust in the ability of progress of the peoples concerned and thus lays emphasis on this necessary progress so that eventually the French and these peoples reach “reciprocal recognition”. Only then can they speak as equals. This explains his emphasis on appreciating their language, sayings and wisdom as well as instruction, education, rights/justice. His goal is to reach the stage where the French and the locals can speak as “equals” and the road towards that stage is “progress”. He understands this progress on three levels: “Intellectual, moral and material progress” and combines the principles of the French

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17 “Civilians seek mostly to augment the needs of the natives, to extract from them more profit, they seek only their personal interest; the Military administers the natives by leaving them to cope on their own way, without seriously seeking to help them make progress ... In this way we have had more than three million Muslims for over 70 years for whose moral progress we do virtually nothing, from whom the million Europeans living Algeria are absolutely separate, without any interaction between them, very ignorant of everything that concerns them, without any close contact with them, always regarding them as foreigners and most of the time as enemies”. Letter to Huvelin, 22 November 1907, quoted by J.F. Six.
republic and the gospel commandment “Love your neighbour as yourself”.

Conclusion
In this way Charles de Foucauld becomes a living example of what Misericordiae vultus demands with respect to mercy as the cornerstone of the credibility of the Church. He lived the insight shared with Huvelin in 1909:

“My apostolate must be the apostolate of goodness. In seeing me one should say to oneself, 'Because this man is so good, his religion must be good.' If I were to be asked why I am so gentle and good, I must say: ‘Because I serve one who is much more good than I am. If only you know how good is Jesus my Master’.

As J.F. Six concludes:

“Only holiness, that is to say, inextricably, a loving relationship with God and all human beings, inextricably, can touch hearts, today or tomorrow, now or in centuries to come: this is the fundamental thought of Charles de Foucauld”.

References

PICCOLA SORELLA ANNUNZIATA DI GESÙ, Charles de Foucauld e l’islam, Magnano (BI), Italie. 2005.
A LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF THE SAHARA

Dear friends of the Spiritual Family

I am writing from Adrar where Brother Charles stopped on his way to Tamanrasset, coming from Beni Abbes. At that time there were only barracks... and Adrar now has a population of nearly 100,000 inhabitants. South Sahara keeps getting populated, with a great harmony between the populations. I have just accompanied a Polish priest, Marek, who has chosen to come and live alone after completing Arabic studies in Rome. He was already well accepted in the Diocese. Please pray for him.

We are looking forward to welcoming a Canadian priest for Tam, which would reinforce a presence which seems to be diminishing... This worries me considering the fairly large number of Christian migrants and the importance of a Foucauldian presence in this “founding” place. I would like to draw the attention of the whole “family” to this future. If we are not vigilant enough, we may act in a hurry and risk jeopardizing it.

This year has many occasions for different celebrations, the most important one being in Algiers, presided over by Cardinal Philippe OUEDRAOGO, followed by a very modest celebration at Tam on 1st of December.

At present there is no news about my succession... Thanks to God and to precious collaborators, men and women, I keep going, albeit limping a little... trusting in the future whatever it has in store for me.

In fraternal communion in the Love of Jesus.
+ Claude Rault, Bishop

“Whatever you do to one of these little ones, you do it to me,” Jesus said. There is not, I believe, a word of the Gospel that has made a deeper impression on me and transformed my life more.”
A MESSAGE FROM POPE FRANCIS TO THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF BLESSED CHARLES DE FOULCAULD

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the death of Blessed Charles de Foucauld,

His Holiness Pope Francis gladly unites in thanksgiving with the responsibles and members of the groups inspired by his spirituality.

The Holy Father hopes that, following the example of Blessed Charles, the spirit of Nazareth may enlighten the life and the ordinary and everyday relations of many.

May the example of the one who, following Jesus wanted to be the "universal brother”, open to welcoming everyone, help us to discover, while respecting the religious tradition of each person, the importance of being close to the poorest and most abandoned so as to grow in humanity. "Every Christian has to consider every person as a beloved brother," he wrote.

Indeed, for him it is by loving others that we learn to love God. "The love of God, the love of others, is all my life, I hope" (April 24 1890).

May the witness of Brother Charles of Jesus in his humble and hidden life, given over to the service of others, encourage young people to discern the call of God and respond with joy in leaving all to follow Him, free of the desire to be rich and powerful!

Entrusting to his intercession, during this Jubilee Year of Mercy, peace and reconciliation among peoples, the Holy Father gives wholeheartedly His Apostolic Blessing to all those who live his spirituality, as well as those who benefit of his inspiration.

From the Vatican, June 22nd, 2016
Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of His Holiness
THE CENTENARY IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

A special Saturday in Strasbourg …

We attended the celebrations in Strasbourg where the diocese feasted its native son coinciding the celebrations of the centenary of his death with his birthday on 15 September 1858. A commemorative plaque was placed in the Foyer Notre-Dame on rue des Echasses where he lived with his sister and grandparents after the death of his parents.

Then, we went to the protestant church St Pierre le Jeune to listen to texts written by Charles de Foucauld and to witnessing by the spiritual family, starting with Weronika, a Little Sister of Jesus who has also lost her heart for Jesus of Nazareth. She recognized herself in Charles de Foucauld because of his contradictions, the lack of closure in his life and the road travelled with Jesus in order to become brother/ sister …

Then we heard the testimony of Michel of the priests' fraternity who with enthusiasm and scholarliness spoke about Abbé Huvelin who was baptised in Colmar in 1840 and who accompanied our universal brother so well.

Lastly, Christian and Elisabeth of the Lay Fraternity who have dedicated themselves to following brother Charles in order to be apostles through goodness, in the world of agriculture for him and in the neighbourhood for her. Also both of them as a family get involved in the parish and the Fraternity. It is, they told us, the mission of Christians to have for all mankind the feelings of the heart of Jesus.

Then we got together at the church St Jean of the monastic fraternity of Jerusalem to listen to a talk by Claude Rault, the bishop of the Sahara. Rault's diocese is 4 times the size of France with a Christian community of about one hundred people coming from 18 different nationalities in an Algerian territory which is home to 4 million Muslims. His bishop’s seat is his car …
What does one do under these circumstances other than practise a pastoral care of goodness without borders. Simply being a presence of the love of Jesus. Our vocation impels us to encounter others in order to learn from them what we do not know. This sharing of humanity, he told us, allows for meeting within the differences.

Charles de Foucauld spent a lot of his time and energy in immersing himself in the culture of others. His dictionary in 4 volumes and all the Tuareg poetry, which he collected, are a proof of his efforts! It is in this double desert, a desert within a desert, where he could not celebrate the Eucharist since he was alone, that he searched for his God.

In the course of his homily, Claude Rault quoted Rania, a young Muslim who used to visit the Bordj before she passed away in an accident. To his question: Who is Charles de Foucauld to you?, she had answered: A man who had everything and who left everything to obtain what he did not have … Claude Rault added, to obtain that place he was dreaming of but that he could not take away from Jesus. Surely, he found at the end of his life what he did not have and which he had searched for in a long spiritual quest: the face of Jesus, which he loved so much.

After the talk, we had the opportunity to watch Agnello’s performance. It was pleasant and moving at the same time. Thank you to the actor with many faces and to Francesco who accompanies him with his musical instrument “the hang” like a real conversation partner whose sound evokes different situations and conditions of the soul. It underlines, completes and carries us with it … It was a beautiful performance which achieved its aim: a knowledge and emotion that one experiences while hanging on to it without noticing.
Then we left the church for the Catholic church St Pierre le Jeune to assist the Eucharistic celebration hosted by Mgr Gralhet, the archbishop of Strasbourg, and by Mgr Claude Rault who had come especially to honour the centenary of Brother Charles' death.

*The entire Sahara greets you!* he said at the beginning of his homily to the large congregation that had been attracted by Charles the Foucauld who was born in Strasbourg: Little Sisters of Jesus, of the Gospel, of the monastic fraternity of Jerusalem, priests from the Priests' Fraternity, lay people, including members of the Lay Fraternity and of the Union Sodalité.

Everybody was there, fraternally. This was confirmed at the moments of giving the Peace when smiling faces reach shake nearby hands and to say that we belong Christ. It was a joy to see friends again and to meet Frederieck who represents the German fraternity; we hugged each other, I who had come from the west and she who had come from the east and on this Saturday, 17 September 2016, Strasbourg was the centre of the world for us …

I ended the day with our “cousins” from the monastic fraternity of Jerusalem who received me for their prayer of praise and for the night.

It was a lovely afternoon and a time to remember! Thank you very much to everyone who prepared it, especially to Marc Helfer who was the driving force behind this day.

*Annie Bijonneau*

*Jesus entered the world forsaken and despised; shortly after, He is persecuted. Let us wait for persecutions and when they reach us, let us rejoice in sharing the fate of Jesus.*
Walking with Brother Charles following Jesus, from Viviers to Notre Dame des Neiges

For the seventeen pilgrims, coming from the four corners of France, from Lille to Nimes, from Tours to Mulhouse, between 40 and 75 years of age, it was: five days far from the tumult of daily life; five days where the rhythm of our steps and the silence of the group invited us to meditation; five days of many varied encounters with those who animate this territory.

We crossed the Ardèche from east to west, from the Seminary of Viviers to the Abbey of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, passing through landscapes as wild as they are grandiose. It is difficult to limit oneself to a few images to retrace the multitude of the highlights lived during this week. In all subjectivity, we will mention:

The variety of lodgings that welcomed us, and sharing with our hosts of an evening at a time, who presented us each time with a different facet of life;
The contemplative dimension with the visit to the monastery *La Demeure Notre Père* and its hermitages;

The Eucharist in situations which were renewed each time, in the middle of nature or among the small community of Loubaresse with its warm welcome,

For the Eucharist in the open air: "This morning, after a few hours of walking, we go to the side, on a ridge path. The sky is bright, the landscape majestic, the group is gathered. At the moment of the doxology: "For to yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever." Jesus is there, we celebrate Him. This gesture of offering to heaven, in this mountainous space, goes to the ends of the earth to reach all men!"

The start of each day with a spiritual time beautifully prepared by the animators,

The beauty of the landscapes crossed, often rough and arid, revealing a wild nature under a faithful sun that accompanied us from the first day to the last.

On the "desert" day we all scattered around in the mountain, tasting the beauty of this wild nature and this encounter in a heart-to-heart with God in solitude.

On this day of silence: "*Our solitary march begins on a stony and steep path. I end with this quotation in the heart* "*My soul thirsts for You, let me know Your roads*."

The weather is beautiful, nature is splendid, I walk at my own pace, happy to have this solitary time at my disposal. I put into practice a recent proposal: to awaken our five senses to taste the wonders that surround us. I am surprised by what I discover: the beauty of the places, the multicoloured vegetation, the swallows, the dozens of furrows crossing the valleys, the butterflies that go from flower to flower. The silence, at rare times disturbed by the song of the cicadas. The perfume of the broom and of the different plants. The taste of the raspberries that one can pick, the taste of the meal offered, the water that restores strength. On the body the burning heat of the day and the freshness on arrival.

A serene, peaceful day and the answer to my quote will be given to me on the last day by a note I received at the Eucharist at Notre Dame des Neiges".

Brother Charles was really by our side, to live with us this pilgrimage (7th to 13th August), animated by L.S. of the Gospel Joëlle, and Danielle, Jacqueline and Jean Claude from the Lay Fraternity.

Monique, Marc, Danièle, Vincent
The Centenary in Rome: "Proclaiming the Gospel with our Lives"

"... Our whole being must be a living predication, a reflection of Jesus, a perfume of Jesus, something that proclaims Jesus, that makes one see Jesus, that shines like an image of Jesus...”

This famous excerpt of Charles de Foucauld, taken from his meditations on the Gospel, inspired the title for two days of meeting, listening and prayer held in Rome at the Pontifical University of St Bonaventure of the Conventual Minors the 10th and 11th September 2016, on the occasion of the Centenary of death of Blessed Charles.

It was an occasion for all the Spiritual Family of our "universal Brother" both in Italy and abroad to get together and grow together, also in the presence of many who, although of members of the Fraternity, have found in him a master and father in the Faith.

The first morning was dedicated to three presentations. Two presentations were given by two important Italian academics, Fr. Mauro di Guasco (lecturer at the University of Piedmont and at the interdiocesan Seminary of Alessandria), and Mons. Pierangelo Sequeri (Dean of the Faculty of Theology for North Italy and of the Pontifical Institute John Paul II), both of whom have been linked to Brother Charles for decades. The third presentation was by Sr. Antonella Fraccaro of the Discepolo del Vangelo, the last family of Br. Charles to be formed in Italy.

In his talk, Prof. Guasco sought to throw light on the historical period in which Br. Charles lived - the last 30 years of the 19th Century and the first years of the 20th Century - concentrating on the cultural, religious and political aspects of the France that he knew. Those times were characterized by an intricate relationship of conflict between the French State and the Catholic Church.

On the other hand, Prof. Sequeri spoke to the assembled audience of almost 600, of the contemplative dimension of the life of Br. Charles, pointing out the relevance of the spirituality of Nazareth. The thirty years of hidden life were not a preamble to the Incarnation but a Real Presence
as it is in this period that the Son of God learns the joy for a life that is born, the suffering for the pain of a dear person: a new experience for God who knew but as Man had no cognition of all this.

And so it is for this that Br. Charles goes into the desert: not to be far away from us and be tranquil, but because the desert is full of people that nobody encounters, that the Church itself has forgotten. It is there that he takes his presence as a Christian and the presence of Jesus incarnate, the Eucharist. For this reason Europe could be the new desert that awaits people who truly live a love story with Jesus, who open themselves up to become familiar with those who are outside the ecclesial apparatus, in order to construct together with them and around the Eucharist, the new Church.

"... unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain and yields a harvest." (John 12,24)

Beginning with the this verse, so dear to Br. Charles, Sr. Antonella went over the entire spiritual experience of Blessed Charles right until his death, at the hands of a young bedouin on the 1st of December 1916.

Yearning to be a brother to all those who are forgotten, he died alone, giving his life to those among whom he lived, according to his words, "a life not made of drama and audiences, but a hidden life, abject, poor and collected, like that of our Lord in Nazareth, a life that no one wants to imitate".

“You dedicated only three years to teaching the truth to the world, oh my God, to found your Church, to prepare your disciples; but you deemed that it was not too much to dedicate thirty years to teach mankind the example of humility, lowliness, the hidden life.”

This is what Br. Charles writes while meditating Mark 6, 1-6 and it is about this hidden life in the Italian Church, that in the afternoon we were given many different testimonies.

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Little Brothers and Little Sisters from various religious families addressed the conference, as well as members of the Lay Fraternity, men and women who meet among themselves and walk in the Foucauldian spirituality. Among these, a diocesan priest from the town of Vicenza in Italy, Gianantonio Allegri, who related his experience of his kidnap by the terrorists of Boko Haram while he was a missionary in Africa; mons. Domenico Umberto D'Ambrosio, the Archbishop of Lecce and member of the fraternity of "Little Monsignors", and finally, the married couple Potenz, who live their life as a married couple and parents in the spirituality of Brother Charles.

The evening ended with a theatrical show about the life of Blessed Charles. The convention then ended on Sunday morning with a Mass at the Trappist Abbey of Tre Fontane. It is in the wooden sheds, next to the Abbey, on land generously conceded in the 1950's by the Trappist monks that Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus (1898-1989) founder of one of the first families of women inspired by Blessed Charles, started the first fraternity in Italy. During these last decades lay people, religious, priests, bishops (including several Fathers gathered in Rome for Vatican Council II) and popes gathered here to light up their lives with the spirituality of Blessed Charles de Foucauld: a seed thrown to the earth and who died in the solitude of the desert to yield fruit which the Church and the world will harvest for centuries.

*Rosaria Pasqua*
A Garden in Ravenna

On the 7th October in Ravenna (Italy) a public garden was named after Charles de Foucauld, on the occasion of the centenary of his death.

One finds this verdant area at the heart of the neighbourhood on via S. Agata. It was chosen for its proximity to the centre of the town, rich in Christian history and in a popular zone inhabited by people coming from all walks of life and of diverse cultures. The simple ceremony of the naming of the garden took place in the everyday life of the neighbourhood in the presence of the inhabitants of the place, people who happened to be passing by, and those who are close to Blessed Charles:

In the centre, under the plaque: the Archbishop Mons. L. Ghizzoni, to his left Fr. A. Mandonico and to his right Ms M. Baroncelli. To the extreme right Ms L. Molducci and near her wearing the sash with the Italian colours Mr. M. Cameliani who represented the Mayor.
Christians and Muslims, together to witness to the richness on the encounter on the example of Charles de Foucauld.

There were present the municipal commissioner, Massimo Cameliani, the president of the local council, Livia Molducci, the archbishop of Ravenna Mons. Lorenzo Ghizzoni and Fr. Andrea Mandonico (vice-postulator of the canonization process of Brother Charles). All those present, in presenting the figure of Charles de Foucauld, underlined his message of universal brotherhood which he personified and which he wanted to transmit to everyone he encountered in his life. This message is also relevant for us today, when we are called to build a society more based on fraternity and solidarity. In this spirit, the plaque that was uncovered during this ceremony, carries the words that Charles wrote to his cousin Marie de Bondy: *I want all the people here, Christians, Muslims, Jews, non-believers, to look on me as their brother, the Universal Brother.*

This is the first time that in Italy a public place has been named after Charles de Foucauld, thanks to the dedication and commitment of Ms. Mariangela Baroncelli Molducci of the *Jesus Caritas* (House of Payers S. Teresa d’Avila) in Ravenna.

The afternoon ended with the presentation of the book *Contemplative nel mondo. Una nuova idea di vita consacrata, (Contemplatives in the world. A new idea for a consecrated life) a text edited by Fr. Andrea Mandonico, and is a collection of the Green Bullettin, written by L.S. Magdeleine of Jesus, foundress of the Little Sisters of Jesus, on of the first families born out of the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld.*

*Discepolo del Vangelo*
CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY IN GERMANY

With the responsibilities of all the branches of the Spiritual Family Charles de Foucauld in Germany (Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, Little Brothers of the Gospel, Fraternity Jesus Caritas, Fraternity Charles de Foucauld, the Priests' Fraternity, the Lay Fraternity) we decided not to organize a central activity, since the majority of the members of all the branches are already rather old. Instead we considered it important to organize something easily accessible to everyone to make Brother Charles known.

For this purpose a small team prepared materials for a retreat in everyday life. It turned out to be a 5-week project that could be carried out either in groups of the fraternities of any branch, in the parishes, individually or with someone from another place ... at any time of the year. Most did it during Lent; others will do so before December 1st. However it can also be done next year or repeated in the future. The theme is, "Paths of a burning desire from the Lord's hand - Praying we are walking with Charles de Foucauld."

We sold almost 2500 copies, not counting what was sold in bookstores.

Every week there is a notebook with something about the life of Brother Charles according to the theme of the week (in search of myself, of God, of my place before God, of Jesus, of humanity), a unique evangelical pericope for each week and for each day, a small commentary, a meditation track and a quote from Brother Carlos. Once a week the participants gather to share, pray together and introduce the following week.
Another initiative was to prepare individual stamps with motifs of Brother Charles, to use for personal correspondence.

A third project was to open the annual Nazareth month of the Priests' Fraternity held in Aachen during the summer to the entire Spiritual Family. With Kuno, who is in charge of the Priests' Fraternity, I animated this month first with a personal retreat of a week, followed by three weeks of excursions around Aachen, meetings in the parish communities (sometimes Kuno and I gave the homily at the Masses with reference to Brother Charles), visits to social projects in the city, sharing between the participants, daily walks and surely enough the daily elements of the Foucauldian spirituality, Adoration, the Eucharist, sharing about the Gospel, talks about various subjects, etc. I prepared a quotation from Brother Charles for daily meditation, as supplementary spiritual nourishment.

During the month of May we had, as every two years, the Catholic congress, celebrated this year in Leipzig, the atheistic capital of Germany (15% Protestant, 4% Catholic). Members of the whole Family were there to attend a Stand in the centre of town and animate some hours of Adoration. A Little Brother of the Gospel animated a visit to the most important places of the city, highlighting the most significant ones for the revolution of 1989 and linking them with the spirituality of Brother Charles.
Regarding the activities for 1st December we are planning meetings and conferences in the different dioceses. Some are for particularly for the members of the Family and others open to the public.

Marianne Bonzelet

MALTA- Celebrating the Centenary of Charles de Foucauld

The Maltese fraternity joins the spiritual family of Charles de Foucauld to celebrate this important anniversary through various initiatives. We began by an adoration on 13th November 2015 to mark the beginning of the Centenary Year.

Last July we organized a meeting for members and friends at the Poor Clares Monastery. The Poor Clares first came to Malta from Nazareth after they were expelled from there in 1914. Charles de Foucauld lived in a shack in their yard and following their expulsion they kept their link with him through correspondence.

In September four members of the Lay Fraternity and a priest from the Jesus Caritas Fraternity attended the conference organized by the Italian Fraternity in Rome. It was a strong and deep experience for us all. We appreciated the sharing we had with those present, the excellent talks about Br. Charles and his spirituality, the witnesses, the musical performance about his life and the Holy Eucharist celebrated by Cardinal Coccopalmerio and a number of priests from different countries.

Through out the year we held other initiatives and published monthly articles in the local Catholic newspaper about various aspects of the life of Charles de Foucauld. Another important event was a visit to the women’s section at the Correctional Facility. We showed a power point about the episode of the woman accused of adultery emphasizing the
mercy of Jesus. We ended the visit with spontaneous prayers and finally recited the Prayer of Abandon. This was a gesture by the Fraternity in the Jubilee Year of Mercy. We hope to keep up this contact.

In November we had a Seminar with the participation of Br. Thommaso Bogliaccino and Little sister Carmen Vassallo of the Gospel with the theme “Witnessing the Gospel with our Life.”

We hope all this will help to increase awareness about the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld which we are sure is very relevant today and beneficial to all who come in contact with it.

As conclusion to the Centenary Year, on 2nd December the Archbishop of Malta will concelebrate with priests, members and friends of the Fraternity of Brother Charles.

Doris Borg

CENTENARY of the DEATH of BROTHER CHARLES in BRAZIL

In Brazil, we are celebrating the centenary of the death of Brother Charles amid political and social uncertainties. The president democratically elected by the 50 million voters has been deposed by a ‘white coup’, democratic only in appearance, organised by big business, the medias, the judiciary and the National Congress, essentially corrupt.

We live under the sign of uncertainty with respect to the social conquests of the last 15 years and under the threat of implementation of neoliberal policies which penalize mainly the most vulnerable.

In this context, the Fraternity of Brazil has experienced the Centenary ‘hoping against all hope’ to promote debates, reflection, times of prayer and a large participation.
The Centenary was officially opened with a mass on the 1st December 2015, celebrated in the National Sanctuary of Our Lady of Aparecida, in São Paulo, gathering the whole Foucauld family of Brazil.

To help us prepare for that date, we, the Lay Fraternity, made use of Jornadas de Nazaré (Days of Nazareth) a sort of novena with reflection and prayers that accompanied us in the days leading to the celebration.

Since we are a country of continental size, each regional fraternity organises the Centenary according to the wishes of each region. In São Paulo, where most fraternities are concentrated, there was a celebration and sharing in a place called ‘Cathedral of the Street People’, where there is an ongoing work with beggars. There we have co fraternized and celebrated with people in distress.

As part of the celebrations of the Centenary, in March, during the two weeks preceding Holy Week, at the City of the Angels Foundation, (Sitio dos Anjos), at Ribeirão Pires São Paulo, we held a ‘retreat of Nazareth’, in this year oriented towards the young and their questionings in dialogue with our spirituality. In addition to the young who came mostly from the suburbs, we had the friendly presence of young Bryan from the Fraternity of Venezuela who made an appreciable contribution with his testimony. The possibility of a project arose for a fraternity of the young people of the suburbs of São Paulo, a challenge that our times impose on the youth who, although eager to participate, often face obstacles due to adverse situations.

In July, during the theological week organised by the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo part of the theme was dedicated to the Centenary. The Lay Fraternity participated in the debates and directed a workshop.

In September, the São Paulo Lay Fraternity organised a conference ‘Charles de Foucauld, prophet of the frontiers’ which was held in the
Faculty of Theology of Saint Benedict, in São Paulo. The themes ‘The Spirituality of Nazareth’, ‘The Fraternity and lay men and women’, ‘The Fraternity, sign of the Kingdom’ were presented by the members of the Lay Fraternity. On the same day, the ‘Association of the Friends of Charles de Foucauld in Brazil’ was launched, Its aim being the diffusion of the spirituality and dialogue with all people interested who do not belong to any group of the Foucauldian family.

Besides these events, we produced promotional material, leaflets, a DVD about Brother Charles and the Brazil Fraternity.

On the 1st of December 2016, we shall meet again in the National Sanctuary of Aparecida for the closing of the Centenary.

In this difficult year for us in Brazil, the Lay Fraternity has participated in the movement for the respect of our frail democracy and the fulfilment of social rights; for us this is announcing the Kingdom. We keep working as ‘yeast in the dough’ in our parishes and in the social movements as we have always done. We are not ‘dumb dogs and sleepy guardians’.

*Anilda Maria Gonçalves*
NEWS FROM THE FRATERNITIES

AFRICA:

BURKINA FASO

We offer thousands of thanks to the Lord for this year of grace that He has given us with the centenary of the birth in heaven of our Blessed Brother Charles. We opened the centenary year with the following topic:

Blessed Brother Charles de Foucauld and his message for us today “One hundred years with Charles de Foucauld; Charles de Foucauld one hundred years later.”

The members attended the planned activities regularly. And it is with joy that they participated in them.

Some activities attended by a great number of persons:

- December 2015: opening mass of the centenary celebrated in the Cathedral of Ouagadougou. It was presided over by His Excellency Bishop Philippe Ouédraogo and was followed by a fraternal banquet. After this opening, members in different dioceses and parishes went on living the centenary as they pleased.

- June 25th 2016: erecting the first stone on the Warmini site: we have a dream to build there a spiritual centre devoted to the Blessed Brother

Final prayer after erecting the first stone.  The water tower kindly donated by a benefactor. Village child taking water from the tap.
Charles. On the previous day, we were blessed with a drill which brought joy to the inhabitants of the village.

August 6\textsuperscript{th} to 13\textsuperscript{th} 2016: Retreat/ Nazareth week: it was held at the theological seminary Saint Peter and Paul in Ouagadougou. The animator was Father Blaise SOME from the dioceses of Diébougou. It was attended by 113 participants who came from Benin, Cameroun, Niger and different dioceses from Burkina Faso. The topic was:” With Blessed Charles de Foucauld, let us contemplate God’s mercy.”

The closing mass was celebrated on December 4\textsuperscript{th}. Thanks be to the Lord.

Father Blaise SOME. On the preacher’s desk, the cloth made on the occasion of the centenary. The aim of this activity is to make people know the Blessed Brother Charles de Foucauld wherever this cloth is used. Those who buy it receive a leaflet on the life of the Blessed C.deF.

Participants of the retreat wearing robes made from the centenary cloth.
If you knew how much I desire to finish my poor and miserable life, so badly begun and so empty, in the way in which Jesus said on the evening of the Last Supper that "there is no greater love than to give one's life For those we love "... I am unworthy but I desire it so much!

Cardinal Philippe, back from the World Youth Days, came to celebrate the Eucharist with the participants. A view of the priests together with the cardinal.

Kere Rose

MADAGASCAR

The Lay Fraternity of Madagascar is happy to share two important events in the history of our following Jesus with Brother Charles de Foucauld.

1 – Nazareth for the youth

To celebrate the centenary of Br. Charles de Foucauld, a Nazareth retreat with young people from 16 to 30 years was organized in a parish where our fraternity is active. It was held from the 7th to the 11th September 2016. It brought together 47 persons of whom 34 young Nazarenes, 6 leaders and helpers (1 Jesus Caritas priest, 1 Little Sister of the Gospel, 3 members of
the National Team and one adult young member) together with 7 followers of “Marthe” from the 3 fraternities of the host city.

7th September : Welcome

8th September : Life of Br. Charles de Foucauld (power point presentation)
Spirituality of Nazareth (Silence, poverty and contemplation)

9th September : Prayer in the spirituality of Nazareth (the place of the Gospel, of Adoration and the Desert)
The Apostolate of kindness and its fruits (service, compassion, sharing and helping the poor)

These themes were followed by moments of reflection and sharing between 4 groups of about 9 persons.

The Eucharist, one hour of Adoration followed by vespers completed each day of Nazareth.

10th September: The Desert day consisted in a 14km walk in 4 hours. Each kilometre was an occasion to meditate on a station of the Cross with Br. Charles (Stations of the Cross of Br. Charles in MALAGASY produced locally with Right to Publish from the bishop of MAHAJANGA)

An evening was organized with the host parish youth and the main priest

They gave us a warm welcome.

11th September: Final mass in the host parish followed by 2 hours of evaluation and a meal with the guests of the parish.

The total budget of 300 euros was paid by the Lay Fraternity of Madagascar, while transport was left to each participant.

It was a strong experience of sharing and encounter with the other in spite of the difference in culture and origin. It was also a time of discovery,
immersion and deepening of the spirituality of Br Charles which has compelled them to keep going firmly with the fraternity.

2 – Continental Meeting: WEEK OF NAZARETH

The Panafrican continent meeting was held in MADAGASCAR from November 26 to December 4, 2016.

There were 15 delegates from many countries and some members of the International Team.

The theme focused on "Br. Charles de Foucauld: A man of his time and prophet for today". (More on this in the next issue)

A retreat of the Jesus Caritas priests of MADAGASCAR was held at the same time in the same place.

A solemn final mass of the Centenary was celebrated on December 4 in the presence of all the members of the big family of Fr Charles in MADAGASCAR.

We thank you for keeping us in your prayers to support us in this event rich in fraternal meaning and values.
SOUTH AFRICA- Divine Mercy

At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective. – Pope Francis, announcing the Jubilee of Mercy

One of the Lay Fraternity members, Frank Kubheka, attended the 31st World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland during July 2016. The theme of the 31st World Youth Day was: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7). As a motto for the meeting in Krakow, Pope Francis chose the fifth of the eight Beatitudes, given by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount on the shores of the see of Galilee. The Word of God teaches us that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Act. 20:35).

Mercy expresses the disposition we should have towards every human being. We are expected to show mercy towards our neighbours always and everywhere. Three ways of exercising mercy towards our neighbours: the first-by deed, the second-by word, the third-by prayer.

In the Diocese of Johannesburg, we celebrated a Divine Mercy Walk on Saturday 08 October. Many Parishes participated organising their respective celebrations by having a mass or supporting a charity or undertaking a Divine Mercy Walk. I attended a walk at the Holy Trinity Church in Johannesburg close to the university where I work. We collected and donated a variety of food and clothing to a Shelter for women and children in the area where the church is located. Everybody gathered quite early in the morning and we all walked to the Shelter where we spent the morning with the families, interacting with the mothers and children. Father Graham Pugin said prayers before the commencement of the walk and addressed all of us at the shelter and said prayers for the mothers and children residing at the shelter.
Mercy does not just imply being a “good person” nor is it mere sentimentality. It is the measure of our authenticity as disciples of Jesus and of our credibility as Christians. The Divine Mercy message is a very specific life plan because it involves action. Forgiveness is probably one of the most obvious, yet most difficult to action. We are expected to perform at least one act of mercy every day.

My favourite definition of mercy is how Father James Keenan describes it: “Mercy is the willingness to enter into the chaos of another”.

*Lay Fraternity-South Africa*

**Frank Kubheka in Poland**
AMERICA

North America Meeting, Boston 2-4 June 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last June we had the great experience of coming together to celebrate the Centennial of the death of our brother Charles de Foucauld. The Boston lay fraternity hosted this event for 50 people representing many different lay fraternities from North America. This annual meeting began on Friday evening and concluded Sunday mid-afternoon. As part of the Retreat, we had morning and evening sung prayer, Sunday Eucharist and an hour of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. We also had small group discussions (5 per group).

The plan which began to percolate in the hearts and minds of the Boston Lay Fraternity in the Fall of 2015 was a desire to investigate and know more about this holy man of the desert. As we prayed and discussed what we felt we wanted to accomplish for the monumental moment in the charism of the family of Charles of Jesus, several topics and ideas came forth. The title of the weekend: "Charles de Foucauld, the past, the present and the future", was a hope on our part to lead everyone into a more profound experience of Charles and to ask ourselves what in Charles’ heart touched something in our own heart.

The Retreat/annual meeting had four wonderful speakers; the first, Ashaki Taha-Cisse, is a Muslim woman who was the guide for the Boston fraternity when they visited the Boston Mosque in 2015. Ashaki spoke to us about Islam and her faith. The second speaker was Father Lenny Tighe, a member of the Boston Lay Fraternity and one of the most profound followers of Charles and an authority on Charles' life and the subsequent blossoming of the charism of Jesus Caritas. Fr. Lenny spoke to us about the uniqueness of Blessed Charles and his spiritual awakening to the Heart of Jesus which eventually took him to the people of the desert. The third speaker was Ciro Piccirillo, the present co-responsible of the North American lay fraternities. Ciro gave us a personal witness of
his ongoing journey of discovering this holy man of the Gospel whose humility, universal brotherhood and service to others, inspires Ciro to live a life as a husband and father, as a successful medical doctor which closely adheres to the Heart of Jesus, and His message of inclusive love and charity. Our fourth speaker was Mother Olga, the founder of new community, the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, a contemplative community which is inspired by Charles de Foucauld. Mother Olga spoke about meeting "the other", accepting a person where they are and who they are. Mother Olga gave some personal reflections on one to one experiences which are holy moments of connection and universal love. She inspired us on our faith journey in the footsteps of Charles of Jesus.

As the local responsible, I had the great joy of spending the weekend meeting new people and renewing friendships and hearing these wonderful speakers. I can attest to the "Master of the impossible", this Jesus who made everything come together in a most satisfying way. Our first miracle was because we outgrew (in number of participants) our original retreat place, we were forced to consider moving to another site, which God provided. In our new retreat center there were fewer stairs and it was easier to get to everything. By far though, the biggest miracle was the sense of continuity with each of the speakers, the quality of their knowledge and deep faith, and the joy which everyone experienced being with one another.

With gratitude,

Taras Leschishin, Boston Lay Fraternity
Fraternity of Brazil: A Place of Sacred Hospitality

"... We must love the stranger more than ourselves, not only as much as ourselves, as our neighbour, but more than us and this because he isthe guest of God."

Louis Massignon

It has been a little over two months from my visit to Brazil. Of course, I needed to and had to share this experience. Nevertheless, I needed to let it rest a little. This caution is new and a rarity in me. Sign of maturing? I do not know. But what I do know is that I put my best friend's advice into practice: "Live and set it free." Now I come back to it and I want to do it in the sense of our spirituality.

Me in Brazil? What for?

Everything started at the American meeting of our Lay Fraternities, in Caracas, the birthplace of the Liberator Simón Bolívar, in February 2015. That story is already known. A commitment made at this encounter was "We must motivate the young people to participate in our fraternities". Our brothers and sisters from Brazil, took up the word and organized "A Nazareth Retreat." Special guests? Youths! Then, the idea cropped up: "Let's invite Bryan from Venezuela to the Retreat" Why? It is obvious, he is young, 27 years old and more than that (I think) he is fairly positioned in the fraternity and its choices, life, etc. No special elements or atypical qualities. This is what fascinated me most. I went to Brazil on the strength of who I am, Bryan. You, the Brazilians, looked at me as if through my own eyes and it was wonderful.

With open heart

"You're our guest! Come without fear of being happy." It is with these words that Renato Bicudo organized my visit to Brazil. I must say, I left without a dollar in my pocket; I left only with an open heart ready to be welcomed. This was an apprenticeship for me. I have rarely had to
make "an act of abandonment". Abandoning myself totally to God and to the hospitality of others, for me meant to make an exercise in trust and humility. I am not accustomed to depending on others financially, however, that week was my time to welcome the generosity of others and to receive. For my Brazilian brothers and sisters, it was their time to offer themselves and to give. It was God's time to give and to receive. I went empty-handed and returned with my heart full. How delicate, how many good gestures, how much affection! Many thanks to all and everyone, but especially Renato and Benedito. I came to the conclusion that: The Fraternity of Brazil, is a space where "Hospitality" is sacred". I felt like a "Guest of God". And it was a beautiful discovery particularly in this year when we commemorate the 100 years of the final sacrifice of our brother Charles.

Shared daily life

For those who do not know or do not understand our charism and our spirituality, seeing my photos posted on "Facebook" they might think I was just visiting or holiday. But no, I was simply experiencing a core aspect of our being: "Friendship". To visit, to get to know, the mobilize myself for the beauty of Sao Paulo and go to the very feet of the Christ Redeemer was only the excuse; the backdrop for meeting and sharing. If only strangers knew the profound revelation of God in every conversation, in each embrace, in each encounter, in each cross road, they would live their daily lives with more awareness.

I close my eyes and appreciate the hours of long conversations with Renato, Benedito, Regina, Roberto, Gislene, Vidal, Airton, Priscila, "Chico Pacheco", and many others who, although not of the Fraternity, welcomed me into their hearts with so much sincerity. How do I know? They talked to me about their lives, their anguish and their dreams. I could see the sincerity in his eyes. What more could I ask for? This same cause, "Friendship" was what led Louis Massignon 100 years ago not to
forget his great friend Charles de Foucauld and by whom today, 100 years later, we can know the hidden and silent life and death of that man of God. All because of Jesus.

The Nazareth Retreat

A privileged space. A reunion with friends known in Caracas and an opportunity to meet many others. I must admit that those who participated had great depth. Very good people. The presence of young people, my contemporaries, was very valuable. Each one of them contributed the best part of themselves: their own personality. Deep, analytical, extroverts, observers, workers, worried about their own reality, critical, cheerful, funny, to the visitor from Caracas: Burda de panas! (very friendly, very pleasant, more than good!) Each one of them, managed to relate to me aspects of their lives with which I felt very happy. This initiative has a continental importance in our Fraternity.

Judging by how they behaved and how they experienced the retreat, I can say that the Fraternity in Brazil is a very decent and healthy space for young people today. After my visit, we created a WhatsApp group and we have maintained contact, I have learned that they have already met several times as "Youth of the Fraternity". How much joy to know about these steps that are taking place. Let us pray for this fire to spread to the rest of the continent. What will we encounter at the 2017 American meeting?

Final point and follow up

I did not intend to give an account of the details of my visit to the country that looks towards the Atlantic ocean in this letter. However I do hope that I have described the impression that this experience generated in me as a youth member of the Fraternity. It was a Grace of God. It was also an opportunity of binational exchange between Brazil and Venezuela that strengthens the relations of the Fraternities of both nations. It was also a theological place of hope that gives witness of how alive it is, and
with this I close this writing: the message of Jesus in the Foucauldian sense in the Fraternity of Brazil. Thank you, Lord, thank you!

Bryan Barrios Grafe
Fraternity of Venezuela- bryanbarrios2@gmail.com

COLOMBIA

OUR COMPLEX CURRENT SITUATION

I want to take advantage of the opportunity of this international bulletin 96 to inform our brothers and sisters that, between December 8 and 10, we will hold a new national meeting of the Colombian Foucauldian Family, whose central aim is to celebrate together the centenary of the death of Charles de Foucauld or as we say in this part of the world "la Pascua de Carlos de Foucauld," in the city of Ibagué, where the Brothers of Jesus started a Fraternity 10 years ago. We will share about how the life of Br. Charles has been a source of grace for each and every one of us, and we will probably explore new alternatives to strengthen our journey as a Spiritual Family, especially those of the Lay Fraternity, who have become quite dispersed.

We ask for your prayers so that the Spirit may help us find good ways, even more so now that we live in a country convulsed by unexpected responses in its search for peace. The national Government has produced a proposal towards an agreement to end the armed confrontation with the country's oldest guerrilla movement, but in the midst of a muddled and manipulated campaign, the popular vote which was sought as an endorsement mechanism did not support that proposal. Surprisingly, the current president, who promoted that agreement, in the same week of that surprise result, received the Nobel Peace Prize. Many interpret this award as support by the international community so that these efforts do not perish but rather that they will culminate in the definitive signing of a
definitive ceasefire agreement with this armed group and that it is the beginning of a long road to peace that we still have to travel. Now talks have resumed, in order to try and reach a new agreement, in an environment of uncertainty. Hopefully by the time you read this letter in the Bulletin, we can have good news from Colombia for the world.

Hernán Ramírez

(Since this news the peace agreement was modified and approved by the Parliament and the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.)

HAITI

A good friend asked me through Sister Armelle to send a report on how we have lived the passage of cyclone Matthew.

A nightmare dragging behind mournings, tears, dead people, loss of livestock, fields, houses, tools, boats, fishing nets, churches, schools, hospitals, roads blocked, collapsed bridges, a destruction of the environment in addition to the one that an overabundant number of my countrymen had already started for tens of years past. Our vegetal cover, evaluated at less than 2.5%, would have been unable to resist a major cyclone like Matthew. This reminds me of a reflection by an American: “Haiti is one of the few countries in the world which destroys itself physically.” This can be seen with sorrow and I admit if it in the case of one’s own country is devastating! The regions most stricken are in the zones in the South, the Grand’Anse, the South-East, the North-West and partially the West, just to mention a few. The areas affected will have a major impact on the other non-affected zones at an agricultural level due to their importance.

Our fraternities in these areas share the fate with all the rest. At Torbech, the roofs of our houses have been shattered. The environment has become a desert, no more trees. At Jeremie, our brothers live in the open after the devastation of our fraternity. For four days we were, like the General
fraternity, without news from our brothers; at last this evening, a friendly nun told us that she saw them; (thank God no dead people). Communications are interrupted, there is no way to contact them, either by telephone or by road. At Leogane, the environment is in a disastrous state; some damage in the village of Nazareth, but our little girls are well. But at Saintard, where our Centre of spirituality dedicated to Father de Foucauld, apart from the damage caused by the sea for the fishermen who have lost their boats, fishing nets, motors, we can say that God has operated a miracle! In its fury, when retreating, the sea has destroyed the dam that we had built to protect ourselves from the sea. The sea invaded our conference room, carrying lots of pebbles, but without damaging anything and advanced towards our refectory which, according to human logic, should have been crushed, but it stopped in front of the building! I must tell you that, to protect the yard, we had, with faith, erected a statue of Our Lady dedicated to Our Lady of the Sea and a crucifix just next to the building that the furious waves of the sea did not reach.

The friends who know me will make fun of me because they know that I don’t care about religious flippery and I don’t speak of miracles easily. I have always taught that God is the primary Cause but He acts through secondary causes. In truth, I find no human logic to understand or explain this phenomenon and we thank God for this marvel and ask all those who do not believe in miracles to pardon us. I also recognize that, at times I don’t see any where others do. In this particular instance, I believe. In this, our parish priest and his two assistants, our Little Sisters, are actual witnesses and share my opinion.

While we assume the consequences of Matthew which are heavy, very heavy, and will be even heavier in the coming months, we are back to work to save what can be saved. I had the privilege to visit Hiroshima in Japan, and witnessing how their people went back to work gives us courage. We have a thousand reasons to fold our arms and moan as our
pains are great and the efforts needed are titanesque! As Father de Foucauld, we say: ‘Never go back’!

We thank all the families and friends from all over the world who have shown sympathy and solidarity. In particular, all our friends in France, Guadalupe, USA and Belgium. Thank you to different Ambassadors, in particular the French Embassy.

Haitians, men and women, let's look forward, it is the right direction!

And to you Lord, thank you for who you are, the God who loves all the Haitian people, suffers with it and strengthens our solidarity, help us to show your face, to all those who are discouraged, place your hand in our hands and let the light of your mercy radiate on us, believers and unbelievers, on all men of good will, especially the victims all over the world.

Brother Franklin
Port au Prince 8.10.2016

URUGUAY

Dear brothers and sisters,

In Uruguay we miss a lot our brothers and sisters who departed from us recently: Eulogia, Pedro and Dora; and, on the other hand, over the years, we and relatives in our care have faced illnesses, operations, bone fractures.

On the other hand, changes in ecclesiastical hierarchies have given us new opportunities. Different lay groups have promoted meetings and an Internet network has been formed, "Cristianos en Red" (Christians on the Net). Between this organization of which we form part as Family de Foucauld, and the initiatives of the Lay Section of the Episcopal Conference, we feel supported.
We are three women, those who remaining from the group of fraternities of the 60's, and we usually meet with the companions of the Association of the Faithful, and when she comes to Montevideo from the Brazilian border we also meet with one of the Little Sisters of Jesus. The group of young people, who are not so much, still meeting and three of their members are very committed to form a base community in their neighborhood. Some of our brothers and sisters chose to join Sodality. In a word, we are working broadly as a Spiritual Family.

As for the fraternities outside Montevideo, we have communicated with the brothers and sisters of Colonia del Sacramento who have attended some of our days and, through informal contacts, we have learned that the fraternity of Salto is not meeting.

At the beginning of September we participated in a meeting for "Cristianos en Red." We thank Gloria from the Association of the Faithful who encouraged us to participate, as well as Jorge and Gustavo who prepared the material. Nelly, who is convalescing from an heart operation collaborated with Gloria in the organization. Jorge introduced us to the other groups and a friend of the Family developed a synthesis on the role of the laity in the Church, according to Lumen Gentium and about our responsibilities in the construction of the world according to Gaudium et Spes.

During that day we felt very at ease and together with brothers and sisters of other groups of Church we reflected about the situations that we live and the more and more urgent necessity of communication, mainly personal and direct, with those who surround us. I was struck by the reference made to the responsibility of being seriously informed of the environment in which we live.

As for the celebration of the centenary of Brother Charles, we have decided very little. The idea is to present Brother Carlos in a meeting.
with friends a few days before the first of December. One person from each group would share their experience and we will also present a video. These days, different proposals have appeared on our computers. One must make a choice. We have not yet decided where we are going to celebrate the Mass on December 1st.

Returning to the subject of communication, we feel lacking. We have friendly relations with people from outside our country, which we do not always nourish. We thank those who continue to write to us despite our omissions. In my case (Raquel) I read with interest the communications that come to us and when I have to translate something (I love it), I do it with attention and a special affection for those who live in such difficult situations.

Writing this I remember the expressions of Pope Francis. He told the youth, "Make trouble." And also "Listen to the old people." But if we the old people do not talk ... even if we say silly things……

Raquel, from the Fraternity of Montevideo

VENEZUELA

In what way are we concerned by the murder of Charles de Foucaud one hundred years ago?

With this question to ponder, we have gathered, almost half of the members of the lay fraternity in Venezuela, in San Felix, for our yearly meeting during the first week-end in September. We have been hosted by the parish community, most of whose members live up to their Christian commitment (San Buenaventura). We have shared the Sunday Eucharist remembering Brother Charles.

We are faced with the very deep grief of three of us, several children of whose were the target of unpunished violence; a culture of death is being set up with several different roots coming from very far. We have decided to offer projects of formation as well as suggestion that will lead
us “to follow a path of hope, through renouncing, exposing and announcing…” keeping in mind the line of the next international encounter.

Taking on the animation of the Nazareth weeks in Bojo, San Felix and Parapara (West, South Est and centre of the country) has been the first commitment since Joselito passed over: we celebrate his life, that of the brothers and sisters before him and the memory of the” ancient ones in the fraternity “who accompany us from afar.

**ASIA**

**INDIA - RETREAT IN BANGALORE**

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**Retreat with Brother Charles 10 – 12 Oct, Asirvanam, Bangalore**
The friends of Blessed Charles de Foucauld in south India came together for a retreat to prepare ourselves for the centenary celebration. We were forty of us including Little Sisters, Little Brothers, Sisters of the Sacred Heart, three priests and most of us lay people. It was time to reflect key message of Brother Charles to us, to pray and to be together in a simple surroundings. Brother Mani, Sr. Mariyananda, Hemraj, Pushparaj, Jyothis Sahi and Fr. Sagayanathan lead us through their short reflections to taste and search for the hidden life of Jesus in our times and the small group reflections gave us the opportunity to share our experiences and to encourage one another. God emptied Himself, became low and came to live among us and we prayed that we continue doing that in small and big ways where we are. As a new person in the group this was an immense strength and inspiration which was also felt by all of us in the group. At the end we had a little time to plan for the centenary celebration with the extended community in Bangalore.

William Gali

VIETNAMESE FRATERNITY OF CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

Hello our sisters and brothers,

We are very happy to introduce our Vietnamese Fraternity to you. There are six people in our Fraternity. The first person is a seller. He is the only man in our Fraternity. Next, two people retired from work. We have two people who teach at junior high schools. The last one is a baby sitter. She is the youngest in the Fraternity. We live in Ho Chi Minh City in Viet Nam. We have a meeting once a month. We meet in the presence of the Lord and with the help of the Gospel and the writings of Brother Charles. Besides we share everything in our lives. We help one another to live better and follow the Lay Fraternity of Brother Charles.

These are some words to introduce our Vietnamese Fraternity. We hope we will keep contact with you.

Thanks- United in prayer
Vietnamese Fraternity

Editor’s note: It is with joy that we welcome news from our sisters and brothers in Vietnam. Separated in space but united with them in the spirituality of Brother Charles and the Gospel, we keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

EUROPE

Germany

Charles de Foucauld, a modern desert father for our time?!

This is the heading under which the annual meeting of the German "Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld" took place this year. We meet every two years at the Adam von Trott Foundation in Imshausen to maintain contact with our Protestant brothers and sisters of the "Kommunität Imshausen" (Adam von Trott was very committed in the resistance against the Nazis and developed ideas for a free and common Europe). Here it was also that Little Sister Madeleine, founder of the "Little Sisters of Jesus", stayed for a period of time while in search for a location for the Little Sisters in the Eastern part of Germany. This year also marks the end of the mandate of the German responsible, Christoph Knecht, whom the fraternity warmly thanked. Theresia Kruse was chosen by the members of the "Fraternity" as the new responsible of the German Lay Fraternity.

Martin Edmund Güttner

Celebration of the Transfiguration in Moscow

This is a very important celebration held by the Orthodox 13 days after us Catholics. As happened last year, I received an invitation from the Saint Philarete Institute to join our brothers and sisters of the Fraternity of the Transfiguration. They had planned a celebration on the theme of hope,
with many round tables on specific subjects such as Christian Unity, Mercy, Education, or the Church and the media, among many others.

I participated in the round table on Mercy and cited our experience of parents of a handicapped son. I presented our association “Arc en Ciel” (Rainbow) thanks to which we have been able to open two houses for our children when they become adults. I also participated to the round table on Christian Unity.

The following day, Sunday, the liturgy was held in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and Father Georges said the homily, inviting us not to fear, to keep going with faith. This was a little wink for me: I hesitated before getting on the trip, and in the cathedral, I found myself next to a mother with handicapped twin girls in a pushchair... And at the time of communion that we are not allowed to take, someone came to tell me that she had heard me the day before and that she was going to bring my message of hope to her sister who has a handicapped child and is very depressed. I wanted to say, like Charles de Foucauld: “thank you my Lord, how good you are!” I could then offer my thanksgiving as if I had really taken communion.

*The icon presented to the fraternity of the Transfiguration.*

_to be merciful is to incline one's heart towards the wretched, the wretched spiritually, intellectually, materially ... towards the wicked, the fools and the ignorant, the poor, the sick, the suffering ... towards all the unfortunate_
Unity is already on its way, as noted one person in the assembly, in spite of the differences and the obstacles. The Christians themselves work on it and this year, even more than in preceding years, I could experience it and felt almost at home in the different groups I encountered.

During the Agapes which gathered us after the liturgy (we were over 2000), each one could express his thanksgiving with words, music, even dancing. Personally, I had a mission: to offer the Russian fraternity an icon painted by Dieter of the German fraternity! This fraternal gesture was most appreciated and warmly clapped. I was very moved and so was Anna, my interpreter... A French woman who brings to Russians an icon painted by a German, this does not happen every day! Father Georgy, whom some of you know, very much appreciated the gesture and the icon.

May Dieter who painted the icon and Marliese who encouraged him to finish his work be warmly thanked!

I thank all those who welcomed me, particularly Anna and Andrei, my Russian “children”, Marina and Alexey, dear to my heart, Dimitri who took the time to kindly talk with me, Julia who took me to St Petersburg and its fraternity which took turns to show me the marvels of their city,
Nina who offered me lodging. And of course Fr Georges without whom nothing of this would have happened. Let the ones I don’t mention not hold it against me; they are so many, but their faces are now in my heart. They all showed me great kindness and I am very grateful.

I shall go back to Russia and I would like to persuade other brothers and sisters to join me to live the enlarged Fraternity.

*C prazdnikom! Bonne Fete! Annie Bijonneau – France*

**MALTA- Annual Retreat 2016**

The Malta Lay Fraternity held its annual weekend retreat on the last weekend of October. Facilitating the retreat was Fr Jimmy Bonnici, the outgoing Rector of the Seminary, where the retreat itself was held.

We were around 30 retreatants, some of us Fraternity members, others friends who attend regularly, as well as some new faces. The majority of us are retired (the oldest a 94 year-old lady), along with some younger people. This seems to be the trend in Europe, even as all of us do our best and pray to attract more young people to this very relevant spirituality...

Among us, four middle-aged married couples, as well as a number of singles. We were a good medley of different people. Among us there were both professional workers and very simple folk, whose ‘Nazareths’ differed considerably, but for whom this retreat was an important time of encounter with God, with ourselves and with others.

The theme chosen was ‘**Where do you dwell?**’ – a question posed to Jesus by John the Baptists’ disciples, who subsequently followed him. But it was also a question posed to each of us by the Lord. Fr Jimmy followed Dr Bonnie Thurston’s new book, ‘Hidden in God’ for the main traits of the retreat. Dr Thurston is an ordained minister of the Disciples of Christ Church in the United States, and she is very interested in Charles de Foucauld. It is refreshing to read her book, for to me she
seems to depart from the usual way we in Fraternity usually do, and she goes deeper into the Foucauldian spirituality.

At the start of the retreat, we were first invited to find our bearings, and remember the important places along our life; and thus become more aware where each of us is at present, in order to respond to God’s invitation as addressed to Adam in the Garden of Eden: ‘Where are you, Adam?’. We were each trying to be aware of the place and state we were in so we could move forward from where we actually were, whatever our past had been.

We then ‘visited’ the three main contexts inhabited by Jesus and by Charles de Foucauld – Nazareth, the Desert and the Public Life, exploring their respective dangers but also the graces we find in each ‘place’. It was indeed a time of grace for all of us from which we all left more strengthened and encouraged.

Most of the afternoon of Saturday was spent as a desert experience. After Fr Jimmy’s talk, we all embarked alone on a time of desert (three hours of solitude with God and with our limitations, striving to live this total dependence on Him for inspiration, direction and survival). Another high point of the retreat was the night spent in adoration at Jesus’ feet before the Blessed Sacrament, with the retreatants taking an hour each all through the night.

Let us never despair, neither for ourselves nor for others, for any other, no matter how steeped in vices, no matter how all good feelings seem to be dead in him; let us never despair, not only when it comes to salvation, but also to the possibility of an admirable sanctity.
The concluding Sunday Eucharist is always a joyful and fraternal celebration where each of us puts in a container a paper where we write a phrase or Gospel verse which has struck us during the retreat, offer these at the Offertory, and then take one at random at the end of Mass to accompany us on our way

I ended up taking the parable in Jn 15:1ff – ‘I am the vine, you are the branches...’

Anna Pace - Malta

Terrorism in Europe

Last summer Europe was hit by a sequence of terrorist attacks. One of them happened during a mass in a church near Rouen in France. The celebrant Fr. Jacques Hamel was murdered and Guy Coponet, who was attending the Eucharist with his wife Jeanine, was severely injured but, thank God, survived. Guy and Jeanine, now aged, were among the founders of the Lay Fraternity of Rouen.

In response to the letter of solidarity of the International Team for a series of attacks in Germany, Thomas Kirchmayer from Ingolstadt made the following comment.

Social exclusion, suffering and war unceasingly cause physical, mental and emotional trauma affecting both victims and bystanders and makes them resort to terror and extremism again. A vicious cycle indeed! How can we escape? It is all about awareness and good relations with everyone, living close to them as family, neighbours and colleagues. That is where peace, reconciliation and healing get a chance to grow. In terms of this I love to remember Brother Charles' model of being a universal brother, all the more in troubled times.

But likewise I suppose it's time to speak up more clearly about the so called democratic nations and their involvement in a hidden war for which nobody would hold them to account: Wasting human rights and mother earth for reasons of cheap labour and an unceasing flow of
resources in order to feed the markets' needs. Pope Francis' unrivalled analysis clearly outlines the hidden dictatorship of money and consumption.

Deprived and marginalized people desperately look for relief. That's when extremists of all kinds start to play their role in the game. Let's refuse the game to unfold its impact on us.

Thomas

THE ARAB WORLD :

ALGERIA

News from Algeria of the “Lay fraternity of Charles de Foucauld”

The family of Charles de Foucauld in Algiers came together on Friday, 16th September to share a rich day of events to celebrate 30 years of the fraternity.

Priests, lay people (15 persons) came together at the table to live the gospel yet again through the experience and the gift of life offered to God by Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

The aim of the programme of the day was to be close to current events in view of the fact that the day before, all Muslims in the world and especially in Algeria had celebrated l’Aïd El Kebir or El Adha (sacrifice). This celebration commemorates the strength of Abraham’s faith, his complete confidence in God. In Judaism, the son to be sacrificed is Isaac, Ismaël for the Muslims who call Abraham “El Khalil” or beloved servant. Moreover the Koran mentions clearly that Abraham was one of the prophets to whom a writing was revealed. “One finds these truths already in the first writings, those of Abraham and Moses” (Koran 87: 18-19).
The Lord sends the angel Gabriel who, at the last minute, substitutes the child with a sheep to serve as a sacrifice. To commemorate this devotion of Abraham to his God, all Muslims in Algiers, practicing and non-practicing, slaughter a sheep, goat or veal to eat one part and to give the other part to the poor or to people who are close to them as a tradition and out of gratitude to Abraham, father of a multitude of nations.

The story of Abraham and of the sacrifice is a test that teaches us to go further in our trust and complete abandonment to God as the bible tells us “God takes care of those who abandon themselves to Him.”

An abandonment that cannot keep us from thinking of Brother Charles who gave everything out of his love and trust in God.

In one of his meditations on the Gospel, he wrote: “My God, you will not leave us in the dark if we need light … You will watch over us and lead us by the hand without us noticing and if our souls need light, you will always provide it.”

A trust in God through Abraham allows us to live and share with our families, neighbours or friends, believers or not, Christians or Muslims, this heritage of fraternal love that unites us. Through the sacrifice of Abraham’s son, we face the sacrifice of Jesus. He gave His entire human life to give us life since God is a God of life and not a God of death.

Often, despite the challenges of life, we receive a strength from above through our trust in God that lets us continue on our path in hope, joy and peace.

After the adoration and the meal, our afternoon was spent together sharing stories of the meeting in Lebanon, a grace of God that united those who are very far apart. This was a topic which let us make a revision of life and prepare the programme of the celebration for 1st December which is going to be filled with events such as: singing “The Last Place” of Charles, Couscous in the gardens of the nunciature since Algeria has just welcomed its new Apostolic Nuncio Mgr Luciano Russo
who occupies this double post representing Tunisia and Algeria succeeding Mgr Thomas Yeh Sheng-nan, of Taiwanese nationality, who had occupied this responsibility from 2004 to 2015.

The programme will also include a talk by Dominique Casajus entitled “Influence and Linguistics” about the scientific work of Charles de Foucauld, as well as a video of Antoine Chatelard on the death of Charles and a performance titled “Like a traveller in the night”.

As a conclusion, life in Algeria for us Christians of this country and in this country, amongst our brothers remains a life of contemplation and adoration of this God who acts in everyone we come across every day, at work, in the street or in our families. This is a message of a real presence of God who lets us live every moment as a moment of visitation where each one of us presents Jesus to those whom we embrace in a “Free Hug”. Through this we make them participants in the real life of God, that is a life of love which unites and makes us all sons of Abraham and universal brothers.

Maria- For Algeria

LEBANON

We have lately experienced many interesting events in Lebanon, starting with welcoming the International team in the beautiful Lebanese mountains in July. The actual encounter lasted 10 days followed by another encounter with the representatives of the Arab World: two from Egypt, three from Algeria and three from Damascus and obviously the members of the Lebanese fraternity. We have shared news for two days and we have met Father Fadi Daou, the founder of “Adyan” Association (http://www.adyanvillage.net/). He shared with us his testimony about the relation between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon.
On the third day we went on a journey with all the spiritual family of Br Charles de Foucauld. We celebrated the holly mass in a small old village in Lebanon, we visited the Beiteddine Palace where the ancient emirs used to live, we also visited the magnificent old cedars in Barouk. We ended our journey by enjoying lunch prepared by little sisters and we listened to a testimony presented by little sister Elishwa who lives in Iraq and who was visiting Lebanon.

Three more optional days were reserved to those who wanted to spend more time in Lebanon. In addition to the beautiful touristic sites in Lebanon, we visited the little sisters of Jesus in Tyre (south) where we spent a day with them in a camp for Palestinian refugees, we also spent a day with the Little sister of Nazareth in another camp for Palestinian refugees in Dbayeh – Beirut, the sisters live and share the hard and tough life of the refugees in the camps.

In both cases the sisters by their lovely and friendly presence are witness of God’s love.

In August, five members of the fraternity visited the sisters in Hermel a small village in Beqaa where the population is 100% made of Shiite Muslims. The sisters have been living there for 60 years ago and they have friendly relationship with their neighbors. The goal of our visit was to meet with a group of Christians from nearly Christian villages who are in relation with the sisters trying to live the spirit of Nazareth through the sisters. This group is very interesting in creating a small lay fraternity. It is to be noted that this same group met with the international team in July when the latest visited the area Hermel they specially shared the difficulties they lately lived with their Muslims friends.

Finally, concerning the centenary, the lovely contribution offered by friends from another group of prayer was more than welcomed to help us realizing and performing a scene about Br Charles life on theater by the end of December. Their help was much more needed because we are incapable of doing that by ourselves as lay fraternity or even as the
spiritual family. This step is very important because it’s a way to spread the spirituality of Br Charles among the youth. After all who knows how the spirit work? The Scene will be performed on stage on the 2nd and 4th of December. The theater has the capacity of 350 chairs. We are expecting a big number of people to join us.

*Lay fraternity Lebanon*

**News of Syrian fraternity in 2016**

The Fraternity of Damascus began the centenary with a Mass celebrated by Mgr Joseph Absi at the Church of Our Lady of Niyah, followed by a day of spiritual and social activities.

We visited churches especially to talk to groups of youths and those active in the Church to make known the Spirituality of Charles de Foucauld among others, the parish of Our Lady of Damascus, the Students of Don Bosco College, the youths of the Orthodox parish of St Elias.

We spent a half-day with the Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld which we spent with the Jesuit Father Fouad Nakhlè, who gave us a teaching on Mercy which ended with a Mass.

In July some of our members participated in the encounter with the International team in Lebanon.
We celebrated the fifth anniversary of the foundation of the fraternity in August by a Mass. Certain groups that we had visited before were present as well as others whom we could not visit but who already know the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld.

We are also preparing for a recital will take place on 28th October with the blessing of Mgr. Joseph Absi together with different groups of the Luna Choir Association. The songs will be about the spirituality of Brother Charles as well as songs based on his writings.

_United In Prayer_
_Iman from Damascus_

_We are the dry leaf, the grain of dust, the flake of foam. Let us only be faithful and let us be carried with great love and obedience where the will of God is pushing us ... until one last breath of this blessed wind carries us into heaven_
INTERNATIONAL TEAM AND ARAB WORLD MEETING

The International Team of the Fraternity travelled to Lebanon during the first half of the month of July 2016 to hold its biannual meeting and meet the delegates from the fraternities of the Arab World: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

It was a precious occasion to discover a country unique for its religious diversity which comprises Christians, Muslims, Sunnis and Shiites, to mention the most important only. It is the only country amid the Arab countries where Christians are citizens with the same rights as the others. Within the religious sharing of power which ensures the political stability of Lebanon, the Constitution entrusts them with the Presidency of the Republic and the command of the Army.

The diversity is not without its contrasts, particularly in a part of the world subject to so many tensions. The civil war which ravaged Lebanon for about fifteen years ended in 1990 and the country has since regained its normal way of life. Some tensions persist however. We became conscious of this with the army...
check-points along the roads and the flags of Hezbollah, the armed Shiite party, displaying a green machine gun over a yellow background.

The diversities and the desire to live in peace led many people and organizations to make a commitment in favour of cooperation and solidarity. We met Father Fadi Daou who introduced us to Adyan, a foundation for interreligious studies (1). In Tyr, we visited the Shiite foundation Imam Sadr for education, health and women's autonomy (2). For good reason, Pope Jean Paul II said that “Lebanon is more than a country, it is a message of freedom and an example of pluralism for the East as well as the West!”

We met many other people during our stay. We had the pleasure of participating in the yearly meeting of the Lebanese Spiritual Family. We visited two refugee camps for Palestinians and Syrians where the Little Sisters offer their friendship and services. We met the Little Sisters of Jesus of Hermel, a town which is entirely Shiite, and their Christian friends of the neighboring village of Ras Baalbek. They told us about their daily life in this country they love. These brothers and sisters, together with Iman and Maha of the Lay Fraternity of Damascus told us about their faith in the Resurrection with the radiance of light in their eyes and peace in their hearts.

Thank you Lebanon, thank you sisters and brothers of the Arab World.

Sylvana and Claudio Chiaruttini
TESTIMONIES FROM THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE ARAB WORLD MEETING IN LEBANON

The encounter in Lebanon was very special. A family spontaneous love gathered all the members and abolished all borders and obstacles. with love. United in prayer. Iman- Syria

« The encounter in Lebanon was a blessing and a beatitudes message: Humility, sweetness and simplicity in our sharing that lead us to think that Peace in the world is not impossible.”

In fraternal union with all the brothers and sisters met in Lebanon. Maria- Algeria

« Fraternity, sincerity, kindness and prayer were the fruits of my stay in Beirut. » I am thinking a lot of you. Médina- Algeria

I will always remember this feeling. The feeling of love towards another person who lives on the other side of the world. From now on, every time I look at the world map, i see you shining... rays of love.

Thank you for being brothers and sisters. Michael- Egypt
In a troubled world, our meeting was blessed with hope. I was encouraged by the commitment for fraternity that goes beyond prejudice and scars from the past. I also touched by the witness of those who live the Gospel in challenging contexts and by the confidence of the young. **Father Jimmy-Malta**

I am still amazed by the fast and special interaction and communication with each other. I then discovered that I belong to a big family that goes beyond all obstacles in order to share common aims / goals in every single detail of true life despite all differences... Our presence and our sharing were very rich. They encouraged me and supported me to go back to my country carrying the flame of hope. **Maha-Syria**

My happiness was so big to discover and to know the Arab fraternities and Lebanon, this beautiful country, where Christians and Muslims live together in peace and tolerance. Thank you...
for the welcoming and for the evangelical hospitality. **Youssef Yessi-Cameroon**

The time I spent with you was short but pleasant. Listening to your experiences was pleasant to me. It introduced me to another perspective of living the brotherhood due to the different circumstances and conditions. **Father Youssef Assaf- Lebanon**

This was an occasion to welcome each other in the experiences and the suffering of each one. In our current world troubled by violence and false news about what is happening our meeting was a small witness to solidarity and closeness towards those on the periphery of society, inspired by the words of Pope Francis.

**Antoinette Boutros- Lebanon**

*Antoinette & Y. Yessi*
Letter to the Lay Fraternities Charles de Foucauld
Deir Al Harf- Lebanon
July 2016

Gathered in Lebanon,

We embrace you with affection and we share with you the love we have received here by the Fraternity and the people of this beautiful land.

As you know, we met as coordinators of all the continents to think and work together on different subjects. We met in the presence of the Lord and with the help of the Gospel and the writings of Brother Charles and of Pope Francis, we meditated on the mercy of God to renew our lives in the Fraternity.

As International Team, we chose Lebanon for our meeting for several reasons:

1- In this centennial year of Brother Charles, it seemed significant to mark the presence on this land full of life and depth in the history of the Fraternities.

2- Lebanon is a country that has inspired us. It is a country where Christians and Muslims have learned to live together. And as Brother Charles says: “I started studying Islam, then the Bible; and while the grace of God worked, the faith of my childhood was confirmed and renewed.”
3- Our challenge is to take on the most difficult realities of the persecuted and oppressed and we believe that in the heart of the desert one can better sense the reverberations that come from different continents of the call to solidarity and to be fraternally close to the life of the people.

We had the joy and the privilege to meet the delegates of the Fraternities from the Arab World (Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon). They shared with us their testimony of faith and hope, sometimes lived in the difficult conditions which are well known. They deeply moved us and greatly encouraged us to continue persevering in our testimony of the Gospel following the example of Brother Charles.

With Pope Francis we share the urgency that truth, justice and peace are the pillars of our contemplation and of our struggles.

Through the country reports presented by the representatives of the different continents, we shared on the suffering brought about by wars, the plight of refugees, the situation of migrants, children who are abandoned or subjected to hard work, the unemployment of youths, farmers who are threatened, indigenous peoples who are oppressed, workers denied of their rights, homeless families, parents who lose their children to drugs or sexual exploitation, the daily victims of violence of any kind. We also tried to give voice to the silent cry for meaning and life of those who live in societies where people have everything but feel empty.

“Because ‘we have seen and heard’ not a cold statistic but the pain of a suffering humanity, our own pain, our own flesh. This is something quite
different than abstract theorizing or eloquent indignation. It moves us; it makes us attentive to others in an effort to move forward together.” Pope Francis- Bolivia 2015.

We know that this suffering will never end and cannot be ignored. For this we join the cry of the excluded of the earth and call the Fraternities to prepare for the next General Assembly on the theme:

"Let us walk in hope … Renouncing, Denouncing and Announcing"

We reaffirm our support to all the Fraternities exhorting all brothers and sisters to persevere in the pursuit of holiness so dear to Blessed Charles of Jesus.

Fraternally

The International Team : Claudio and Sylvana Chiaruttini (Europe), Joseph Yessi (Africa), Adriana and Luis Torres (the Americas), Rania Chaiban (the Arab World), Fr. Jimmy Bonnici, accompanying priest.
The website
The site www.charlesdefoucauld.org is online in the French version, but there are a few pages in English. You are invited to supply information and announce your activities. To do so, please contact Antoinette on: antoinette_roberti@yahoo.fr

Subscriptions
It is really desirable that those readers, who can afford to do so, contribute financially to the International Bulletin. The amount is € 20 every 2 years. The payment of subscription may raise problems of a financial and logistical nature (such as bank charges); therefore we recommend that you take the necessary steps to simplify the matter.

For the subscribers of the English edition:
You are advised to combine the subscriptions for each country so that the members pay the subscription into the account of the Fraternity in their own country. Then the national secretariat will deposit the total subscriptions into the International Account specifying “Subscriptions for the International Bulletin.” They will then send a list of the names and addresses of the persons concerned to Claudio Chiaruttini at the email address: chiaruttini@t-online.de
Here is the account for the deposit:
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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.

Send articles and news for the Lay Fraternity’s Bulletin to the email: courrierfscf@gmail.com
Brother Charles you encourage me to get to know Jesus Christ better by reading the Gospel over and over, by trying to imitate the Lord who lived without much comfort and who looked for ‘The last place’.

Brother Charles, you taught me what it meant to be humble, what sense it has to remain poor in order to receive gratefully the simple things life offers. Pray with me for the young who feel insecure and for those who find no guiding light.

Brother Charles, you lived your life with so little possessions; yet your door was open to those in need of friendship. I am grateful to you for teaching me to be close to people who might need me while remaining simple and humble like Jesus in Nazareth.

Thanks to you, I can better accept my frailty and I learn to abandon myself to the Lord. You help me to nurture my relationship with God.

Nicolas- Mauritius Island