

RELIGIEUSES DE L'ASSOMPTION
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10 March 2018
Feast of St Marie Eugenie

Dear Sisters and Friends,

This year the 10th March coincides with the end of the International Education Session which has brought us together in Manila. The closure of this significant event is a good way to mark the feast of our Mother Foundress, to express to her our boundless gratitude and to celebrate the heritage received from her. Indeed, without her the Assumption would not exist, nor its educational charism.

How could we not link her feast and the Education Session which ends in Manila today? The work of the Spirit illuminating her human and spiritual experience, as well as the values received from her family and her culture gave substance to the charism of the Assumption, of which Fr Combalot had had the first intuition. In the years following the foundation, with the contribution of each of the sisters of the first community, the charism continued to take shape. In the same way each new foundation across the world enriches and updates it.

The International Education Session has given us the opportunity of further extending our thanksgiving for the Bicentenary of the birth of our two co-founders, by zooming in on the project which inspired them. We can only marvel at the fruitfulness of this project which without doubt extends far beyond anything they could have imagined. In fact, today the Congregation includes a great multitude of lay people sharing a sense of belonging to the Assumption, linked in various ways (work, friendship, spirituality...), in the freedom that Marie Eugenie desired for all persons

In remembering Marie Eugenie on this March 10th, her rich spirituality and the educational project that underlies the mission of the Assumption, we are celebrating in thanksgiving the gift given by God to the Church and the world through her. The work of preparation in the Provinces and the experience of these ten days of sharing and reflection have allowed a return to the fundamentals of this heritage that has shaped and given life to many generations.

The commitment of Marie Eugenie to education, the formation and accompaniment of persons, had as its objective their transformation, so that they might have a positive impact on their milieu. And she too let herself be shaped and transformed by the events, encounters and the grace of her religious life...

On this feast of St. Marie Eugenie, we celebrate this transformative education which we have inherited. And I think it is also an appropriate occasion to thank God for the education we have received from our families, with its graces and successes, its wounds and its setbacks. All this enriches, influences and completes our way of being educators.

Marie Eugenie's development can be an invitation to ask ourselves how we allow ourselves also to be transformed by our mission of education. To educate really requires us to enter a process of conversion and personal transformation. For educating must also educate us; educating must bear its fruits in us, for us and for others.

According to Marie Eugenie, the personal transformation of the educator should be perceptible in their capacity to live in harmony with Gospel values, and their faith in the possibility of transforming others. It is this that the Reference Text is recalling: *"In the Assumption, the source of educational action is a contemplative*

*attitude and a capacity for conversion and personal transformation.*¹ This is a grace which underlines that the mission is not ours: we are sent.

Through its charism of education, the Assumption shares in the mission of the Church, which itself participates in the mission of God. The entire Bible can be understood as a wonderful love story to which education is the key. For to educate humanity is the great work of God, the teacher par excellence. *"In this He is the first of educators. It is He who traces the way."*² Throughout the ages, God led the people He had chosen as his own; He continues today, through his Church, to educate humanity, so as to bring it back to Him in its entirety. This is how Marie Eugenie herself understood the mission entrusted by the Church to the Assumption: to make Jesus Christ known and loved and to work to recapitulate everything in Him through education³.

Happy to be able to participate in this mission, which is beyond us in many ways, we know that we cannot succeed without the help of God and other people. Marie Eugenie was well-aware of this when she invited her sisters to humility, so that they would not be discouraged by the greatness of the task: *"The good that can be done through education is based on humility and self-forgetfulness."*⁴ The search for this good which benefits families and society stimulates our perseverance.

As the saying goes, *"the child who has his mother will never be short of food"*. We are fortunate to have Marie Eugenie as Foundress and Mother, model of education and of holiness; with her there is no risk that we will run out of provisions for our life and for our specific mission. She has nurtured and formed the sisters for many years by her teaching and above all by her solicitude, kindness and love for each one. It would take many lifetimes to plumb the depths of her writings and to appropriate them, so inexhaustible are they. We are grateful to the Lord for giving her to us.

With the participants at the International Session on Education, let us give thanks for the good work done, for the personal and community experience made possible by all the proposals that have been made, the surprises and even the hints of the Lord. May the transmission which will take place make us even more aware of the unique place each one of us has in the mission received by the Assumption for our world so loved by God and entrusted to our care.

In communion with you in prayer for our humanity in its constant quest for peace, and for the Congregation on the way to the General Chapter.

With my fraternal affection.

Happy Feast to each and all of you!

Sr Martine TAPSOBA
Manila, 9th March 2018

¹ *Education in the Assumption, Reference Guide*, ch.5 The Assumption Educator

² « *Eduquer, conduire au large*, in *Cahiers Croire*, n° 283, Sept-Oct. 2012, p.11

³ Rule of Life of the Religious of the Assumption, n° 76

⁴ Title of a Chapter Instruction of MME, 18th July 1877