

RELIGIEUSES DE L'ASSOMPTION
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My dear Sisters and Friends of the Assumption,

Let me wish you all a happy **feast of Marie Eugenie** on the day following my return from the Congo and Cameroon, where the effects of the world economic crisis are most acutely felt, increasing the suffering which already exists in these places.

I feel that, at this time of economic and socio-political crisis, it is a good idea to honour the memory and legacy of Marie Eugenie by reflecting on some of her thoughts written at difficult times in the society of her day, although these were somewhat different from our current ones.

TO WHAT ACTION, WHAT FAITH, ARE WE CALLED ON THIS FEAST OF MARIE EUGENIE 2009?

I suggest that we call to mind some of Marie Eugenie's written thoughts, together with the Orientations of the General Chapter 2006 , as well as one or two quotations from contemporary writers, in particular from Congo and Cameroon .(1)

- **Marie Eugenie lived in difficult times** of revolution and war. She had identified the root of the evil when she wrote to Father d'Alzon on 6th July 1842 “**If, in a few generations from now, this race** (we could say our countries, cultures, economic systems) **has not abandoned its selfishness, has not learnt to make sacrifices, it will be called upon to make even more terrible ones**”

Marie Eugenie saw the root of the evil. Have we, where we are in community and with lay friends, become aware of the structural foundations of the present situation in our country (countries)? (2)

-**Marie Eugenie was able to read the signs of her times** and did not hesitate to say: “**We are the ones called upon to bring about the kind of future for which we long.**” (letter to Father d'Alzon 25th March 1848). Obviously the social context then was quite different, but what is extraordinary is that Marie Eugenie sensed that the charism of the Assumption was in itself an answer to what people of her day were seeking.

For her our faith is confirmed in action. The living out of the charism, of the spirituality and the Vows can promote for our society “new ways of thinking, and new means of action” (3). We must believe in the fruitfulness of our faith, our lives and our education and training programmes. This fruitfulness is a gift of the Holy Spirit. I quote the Preface of this book written by Pastor Simon Olivar Njami-Nwandi: “this faith (an undying faith in Jesus Christ) needs a new form of expression, bringing the Gospel into the public arena, as an energy which will flow through all social structures and all human life, bringing about the humanisation of society (4).

Once again we set before us the Incarnation (see Chapter Christmas 2008) that mystery where God becomes man to save us from all that is inhuman and not in the image of God made man through Jesus Christ.

Marie Eugenie again: she wrote this at the start of the 1870 war “ **Everyday I mean to write to you but events crowd in upon me, so that hearing about them, seeking advice, feeling my heart tightening, praying and thinking, whole days pass without my doing a quarter of what I had intended to do.**” (letter to S.Marie de Jesus 26th August 1870).

Yes, let our hearts be wrung, let our faith shine through prayer, the psalms and in adoration which immerses us in reality.

As always in limited situations, we are called to hope, a theological virtue and gift of God. Our responses in these situations rely on a Promise rather than on our personal abilities and strengths. Perhaps **Marie Eugenie** had an intuition on this when she spoke of **positive actions in a small sphere**” (Letter to P. d’Alzon 19.07. 1842) Even modest results can serve as models for future actions (5).

At the start of Lent we heard the solitary voice of John the Baptist, crying in the desert. It is not the size or extent of an action which makes it prophetic - after all John the Baptist was but one voice crying in the desert! He was alone.

In the current crisis we can be sure that politics, the economy, social programs, and national budgets are not neutral ground. We are in ethical situations; for example there is a moral audit to be done on national budgets where we must ask ourselves what provisions are to be made for the poorest and most vulnerable, children and the elderly. Who is set to gain? What importance has been given to what values? Equal opportunities for all? The future of our young people, the environment, the fight against disease, the lack of drinking water etc..(6)

On this feast day, to give us encouragement in our efforts, let us make our own the arguments in JPIC-S leaflet! The book quoted in this letter exposes “the problem of the collapse of creative energy through the lack of educating and training men and women to see their civic responsibilities”(7)

Let us be responsible citizens bringing the Good News to society both in words and deeds. Together with our Council I again wish you a happy Feast Day. May the Holy Spirit invigorate our hearts with a spirit of solidarity in our actions, in our attitudes and in our decisions.

United in our affection and prayers,

Sr. Diana

(1) J.B KENMONGUE,KA MANA, *Pour la vie en abondance*, Bafoussam, Cameroon-Edition 2002.

(2) Cf. Chapter Generale Letter 2006 “*Justice, Paix, Respect de la Creation et Solidarite*” *Orientation 2*.

(3)JB KENMONGUE,,KA MANA, op cit. p.19

(4)*Ibid*, p.21

(5)*Ibid*, p.27

(6) CF. Jim Wallis, *Sojourners magazine*, Site www.sojo.net

(7) *Ibid*, p.27