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REGARDING THE MAIN THEME OF THIS ISSUE

"The Assumption and the prisons"

Congratulations and thank you to all those who took the initiative to contact the Sisters who work among the prisoners and ask them for an article for Partage Auteuil. An initiative of this type is praiseworthy and something to be imitated.

Now, assiduous readers of Partage Auteuil, see who among the Sisters have something to write about a common apostolate or theme. Contact them and ask them to send us their articles which will be published and read with great interest by all.

For the next **PA** due in **June 2000**, the articles have to be in by **March**.

VISIT TO THE VISITATION

On one of the hills of Vilnius, between the old city and the station, stands the old convent of the Visitation. Its baroque dome stands out nicely on the horizon. Yet, when one gets nearer, it is a different impression: high walls topped with barbed wire, next to the church, sad gray buildings... It is the "high security colony for rehabilitation through work" of Vilnius. The Visitation Sisters expelled by the czar in the middle of the last century never returned here, but the church of the convent still stands in the central courtyard and has regained its original purpose partially: a chapel was fitted out in the cupola eight years ago.

The chaplain, who is a friend of ours, said to me one day: "Come to the Mass sometime." I went, trembling a little... and for over two years now I am there every Thursday afternoon to share with my brethren the bread of the Eucharist and the bread of friendship.

These brethren were a little difficult to tame... Everything separates us: their culture is that of the soviet boarding schools and the gulag, for they are all repeat offenders and many are "professional" prisoners since their adolescence. Their language: a not very literary Lithuanian sprinkled with Russian swear words (which they carefully omit in front of me). A woman religious and a westerner besides, is a sort of "martian" for them... I need to discover everything: their past, unique to each one, generally woven of misfortunes and misdeeds, their total lack of any religious culture, the prison universe in which they live, with its own culture, its caste system, the continuous tensions between administration and prisoners, etc.

My time there is very limited: mass, and a short hour before and after for talking to those who come. We talk of their family, if they have one, sometimes of their past, sometimes of God. They ask for news of the sisters or other people who have visited them, a few ask for material help (soap, clothing, a telephone card). With a small group I give rudiments of the course of "Mental Health". If the priest is not there I lead the prayer and do a "catechesis".

I cannot speak of a "project" - the chaplain, for that matter, does not think in those terms. The pastoral of the prison milieu is embryonic in Lithuania,

but I hope that next year, we will be able to have a meeting of people who are working in the field. Our presence is above all a friendly one. It is a question of creating bonds with people who are enclosed in a dehumanizing universe. Two or three times a year a small celebration is organized. I invite young people of the parish and, as much as possible, all our community shares in it. In addition to the pleasure of seeing girls...the prisoners are happy to have simple contacts with people from outside.

Are there results, fruits? If this were what we sought, we would have stopped going long ago, I think. A handful of prisoners are reached (some 30 out of 900). We know that some of our "parishioners", released recently, have already committed another offense, like so many others. One can really not speak of "conversions". Yet I see their faces change. Closed, expressionless, distrustful at first, they become friendly, relaxed, smiling. I am touched by their gestures of politeness and even of "galanterie" towards me even though they are living in such a universe. It seems to me that if we can make it possible for them to have human, healthy friendly relationships for three hours a week, to open themselves to the great universal church community and to express their hardly-begun religious seeking, if sometime a word or an attitude makes them glimpse the love of God for them, we are not wasting our time. A Visitation happens.

Sr. Benedicte

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PRISON MINISTRY

Background to the series of articles:

When on sabbatical in India last year it was of special interest to be taken round the women's jail by the kind request of Sr. Philomena, who ministers there. The Superintendent is a remarkable woman who has been in charge for over seventeen years.

The idea of sharing what we do in prison with the Congregation evolved. Then we heard that the sisters in Rome, West Africa and Vilnius were working in prison. Finally we received the fascinating educational project from Madrid presented to the Congress at Auteuil in 1998. Maybe there are more sisters doing this apostolate in other parts of the world?

Introduction:

My interest in and concern for prisoners goes back to childhood, overhearing that a group of catholic women had campaigned to save mothers giving birth in prison so that the child should not be stigmatised by having prison on their certificate.

Other factors fanned my interest culminating in a student teacher in the Training College saying that a child in her class had her father in jail but she pretends that she thinks it's hospital. 'Mummy, do they have birthdays in prison?...Oh, I mean hospital...I will never use that word prison again. I am sorry!' The students started giving Christmas and Easter parties for members of a wives and children of prisoners' club.

Local shops in Kensington were most supportive with toys and food and even allowing a visit to Father Christmas one year. The local riding stables supplied a pony for rides round our garden at Easter which was a special treat.

Part of the experience for me was learning to beg. The attitude sadly of so many is let criminals rot. Without being either condoning or sentimental one soon realises the agonising and tragic backgrounds of so many inside.

Oxford 1991-1998:

In the UK the prison system as well as the buildings are in a constant much needed process of reform and updating. More people per head of the population are imprisoned in the UK than in any other European country. The penal system and being 'tough on crime' is sadly used by the political parties to gain favour with the public. A very large percentage of crime is drug related in some form or other and of course prisons also have drug problems inspite of constant vigilance on the part of the authorities.

My first work was in a new prison (of over 600 inmates) in the "Visits

Centre". This meant welcoming wives and children on arrival before they went through the different security checks prior to entry. It also meant playing with the children in a corner of a large visitors' hall so that wives could talk more easily to their husbands, or the men to their partners.

Shortly after this I was asked to join the ecumenical chaplaincy team as the Roman Catholic priest needed extra help. This was in a therapeutic prison where the men received help to face their crimes and were challenged to address their offending behaviour. Group therapy, art and drama workshops were held. Help was given to the men to understand the effect of their crimes on their victims.

The Protestant church in England is by law the Established church. The team leader is of course not a catholic but all the christian denominations worked very much as a team. The chaplains had to see everyone who came into the prison and this made a good point for contact. Those of the other great world faiths had to receive the support they required and visits by the Imam or Rabbi etc., were arranged. The Chaplain had to see that Muslims got the right food for the fast of Ramadan for example. Prayer meetings were organised by the Quakers and shared by Catholics. The priest came a long way on Saturday morning for Mass and the liturgy was made as lively and relevant as possible. There was time for a refreshment after Mass and for discussions. Confessions were also arranged. The chaplains visit the inmates on each wing and often more contacts could be made in this informal setting. Instruction was given as requested. After security checks outsiders could join the inmates for services. There was a nice chapel and Christian discussion groups took place. In a UK prison it took courage for a man to go to church and they could be scorned for doing so.

A regular meeting was held for the chaplains and for a part of their meeting they were joined by representatives of the prison. Arrangements were made to bring in outside speakers to inspire the men. The Christmas and Easter festivals were periods for extra religious programmes and celebrations. It was recognised that religion could play an important part in the therapeutic process. The Alpha programme and Kairos organisation are in prisons which is good and groups are led to meditation.

The chaplaincy team also had the responsibility of ministering to the prison staff. There was the sad task of giving help and support care if a suicide occurred.

The prisoners realised that one came into the prison because one cared for them and really wanted to help them to help themselves. It is a challenging but worthwhile ministry. It can also be good if one can in a few cases at least, keep in contact with men after their release. This post prison period can be very hard for ex-offenders and too many do not get the necessary support to save them from further offences and returning to jail.

Sr. John Mary

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JAIL MINISTRY

"He sent me to bring Good News to the poor". (Is. 61:1)

I got inspiration for this ministry from Jesus' own example and attitude towards the poor and oppressed class of the society.

Aim:

To promote human dignity and basic values to the rejected and marginalised groups of people, enabling them to integrate life and faith formation.

"Jesus Fraternity" is an organisation based at the Pastoral Orientation Centre in Cochin. It is a collective endeavour of people coming together in the name of Jesus of nearly 6,000 people who are shut up in about 44 prisons in Kerala.

Many among these people are led to crimes, due to drinking habits and drugs. Poverty in many families, negligence of children, create disappointment, depression and guilt feelings among many youth. This hinders the personality development of many.

We, the "Jesus Fraternity" members work for the spiritual renewal of the imprisoned through regular visits, correspondence, counselling, legal aid, etc. There is Holy Mass and confession on special occasions and pamphlets on various topics are distributed. These unfortunate members of the society

are being prepared to re-enter the society as better people, by conducting frequent retreats, entertainments based on biblical themes and prayer services. Besides these, they are being helped to be reconciled with their families and society through self-awareness programmes. The jail authorities and prisoners respond very positively to this ministry.

"I heard their cries". (Ex. 7:3)

We, the members of the "Jesus Fraternity", see Jesus in the prisoners whom we visit. Before going to the prison, we gain our strength from God, we trust Him completely, we find comfort in the uncomfortable situations, and walk through the way of sacrifice in order to meet our suffering brethren. We prepare ourselves through prayer and fasting. The aim of the "Jesus Fraternity" is that we join in the sufferings of the prisoners as much as possible. The prisoners feel looked down and rejected by the family and the society. The joy and excitement that they experience when they see us makes us happy and cheerful.

We directly witness to the wonders that take place in the prisoners when we share the Word of God with them. Some of the prisoners start a new way of life once they are discharged from the prison. We discovered some positive changes in some of the employers of the prison, including the authorities. The changes were observed in the ways that they dealt with the prisoners.

We succeeded, to some extent, to comfort the prisoners, to love them, to listen to them, to empathise with them, to make them aware of their faults and to make them repent for their sins. We also provide them with the possibilities of living their lives by hard work.

The situation of the prisoners, who are discharged from the prison, is really pitiful. Because the society and their own family, including their wives and children, are unwilling to accept them. Society keeps them apart for the reason that they have been prisoners. Their names are replaced by "Prisoner". They are deprived of job opportunities and some of them are taken back to the prison by the Police because they are suspected of one crime or another. Unemployment causes some others to wonder and commit crimes and they are forced to go back to prison. Still some others

become mentally sick. In view of the renewal and rehabilitation of the above-mentioned prisoners, "Snehashram" (home of love) was founded in Trichur, Kerala.

"Snehashram" provides a family atmosphere to the inmates. Formation for sharing, humanness and holiness is given to them who had been broken by selfishness, hypocrisy and inhuman life. "Snehashram" has neither walls nor gates as it is a house open to all. Here the inmates are taught how to live spiritually, how to earn their living and how to live doing good to others. "Snehashram" succeeded in making some of the inmates who felt guilty, rejected and hopeless in life, witness of Jesus. Some of the prisoners who are in the jail are longing to go to "Snehashram". When these people are convinced that they are loved and cared for, they give up their tendency to commit crime. In short, we, the members of the "Jesus Fraternity", try to share God's love with the prisoners and to make Jesus known to them.

I am very grateful to God for giving me this opportunity to participate in the liberation work of Jesus - "to bring Good News to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison". (Is. 61:1-2)

Sr. Elsy Kattackal



MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE PRISONERS

I started visiting Yerwada Women's Jail in Pune from June 1997. There are about 300 women prisoners in this jail. They are charged with cases of murder, smuggling, prostitution, etc. Some say that they are mere scape-goats brought by the treacherous hands of others. I began my contact as part of Women's Welfare Centre directed by Sr. Philo. We realized that many prisoners have a tendency to brood over their misery than to use their time in constructive ways. So with the intention of putting their time and talents for creative purposes, the Women's Welfare Centre started their work in the jail. Together with some social workers of the same organization I render my time and talents to the needy in the jail. We all visit the jail twice a week to teach language, yoga, dance, embroidery, adult education,

counselling, etc. Along with our formal teaching we also listen to their grievances, help the illiterate ones to write letters to their families, visit their families, etc. We provide them reading materials to relieve them from their boredom.

I meet different sorts of people in the jail. They are:

- those who find it difficult to accept that they are guilty
- those who have accepted that they committed the crime
- those who are revengeful
- those who are very forgiving
- those who are concerned about the well-being of other inmates
- those who are very worried about their family, children, etc.
- those who question the goodness of God. "Why can't the Almighty hear my cry"?
- those who seek God in their desperation.

My work started in the jail as an English teacher. I have an international group of women to learn English. The foreigners need to know English as they don't know the vernacular either. Many of the foreigners know English well. (Many foreigners who stayed a longer time in jail learned the native language also). The few who neither know English nor the vernacular are having a hard time as they are not able to communicate to others especially to the authorities and doctors. When one of the foreigners suffered from toothache I made her learn by heart her problem in a few sentences in English so that she will be able to communicate it to the doctor.

I have many enriching and striking experiences in jail. Once I was struck by some old women who told me to do something for the four young and pretty girls who just came to the prison. They were caught from a brothel. However, the old women felt pity for them and asked me to do something for their rescue. It touched me as they were able to express their kindness towards others forgetting their own misfortune. They never thought to let others also suffer as they themselves.

In another occasion I remember our visit to a lady who is locked in one of the rooms. She is suffering from schizophrenia and never used to smile or talk to people. All are afraid of her and never visit her saying that she is insane and may attack us. I felt pity for her and once together with our sisters Philo and Sherly visited her. At the end of our chat she was all smiles.

In the jail there is a group of inmates who gather everyday to pray. Their prayer comes from their heart and they pray for their friends and foes alike. I felt that they don't have enmity towards anybody. This group of people must be an inspiration for all those who find it difficult to forgive others.

What must be the greatest pain of a prisoner? Yes, it is the feeling of rejection by their kith and kin. Some go through a lot of agony as they don't receive letters or visits from their close ones. Many families don't want to own up their prison member fearing for their family reputation.

Each time I visit the prisoners, I ask myself how can I be an instrument of joy, peace, hope and courage to those prisoners? How can I reduce their boredom? I realized that there are many ways. I assure them that I am with them in their agony, that I understand even their unspoken words. Yes, I see that my mission is to bring them hope in their despair, courage in discouragement, joy in sadness, forgiveness and love in hatred, optimism and confidence in pessimism and positive thinking in negative thinking.

These are some of my experiences with the prisoners.

Sr. Asha

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CHRIST IN PRISON

"I was in prison and you visited me". (Mt. 25, 36)

For twelve years I have been working as a volunteer in a Roman prison, "Rebibbia", in the men's wing which contains 1600 prisoners.

I had begun doing this work when I was in Togo. I had heard the desperate cry of these abandoned brethren, the poorest among the poor.

Every week, I spend the day on Wednesdays, and a part of Saturday, in the prison. The chaplains and educators of the prison organize activities and I take part in them. I try to be faithful to these times because I know well that our service is above all our presence in their midst. This presence must be

consistent and fraternal, respectful and discreet. One must be with them, to be able to do something for them.

I do not want to know whether the offense of which the prisoner is accused is serious or minor. What interests me is to discover, little by little, through a deep and regular listening, the man, in order to see what is there that one can build on, for a start.

The prisoner needs to be listened to, not in order to be judged, not in order to be condemned, but to be understood, to be helped to rise from his despair and from his revolt. He asks, without saying it, to be taught how to begin to claw his way back up again.

My being a woman facilitates trust. And when the prisoner begins to dialogue, even laboriously, he can begin to reread his past, question his conscience, heal his memory, often wounded since childhood and youth by his family or his environment.

As woman and as religious, my heart receives the mystery - sometimes overwhelming - of each person with love and I carry it in my life and in my prayer. The conversation cannot be improvised if we wish it to be change-provoking and not banal. Conversation with a brother in trouble can only flow from our communion with God and our humble and unceasing supplication.

Our educating, according to the pedagogy of Marie Eugenie, aims above all, at redeeming the person: awakening in him, as son of God and image of God, the sense of his dignity, bringing to the surface awareness of his responsibilities toward family, toward those he has made to suffer and also toward himself for all the evil that has resulted.

The conversation is sometimes personal, sometimes with small groups who request it. Dialogue opens to hope, encourages not to identify oneself with one's faults and errors, develops trust in the hidden possibilities in each person to begin a new life. We try to help them to discover - or rediscover - the true values which give meaning to our lives and sometimes it has happened that we have heard someone say to us: "It is a good thing I came to Rabibbia!".

In this work, I am not alone. My Community accompanies me. The prayer

and the sufferings of the old or sick sisters, the interest and the collaboration of the entire house.

The parish also helps: movements and organizations are becoming aware of the problem and all that has helped toward the reinsertion into society of discharged prisoners.

Mutual esteem and good relations with those who make up the Administration of the establishment have grown with time.

Relations with the other educators - in trust and candor - are also very positive, since we are all occupied, together, in the formation and reeducation of the inmates.

I try not only to dialogue in a friendly way with the police officers, but to enrich and deepen our conversations and coordinate our action regarding each person.

I try to follow up those who leave prison and are struggling to reenter society. These perhaps have the greatest need of encouragement and support.

I look after the families, as far as I can, in order to facilitate or make possible, relationships between the prisoner and his family, seeking reconciliation.

We have often had the joy of seeing a family come together after a long alienation. In this work of pacification, we have often experienced that the children play an important role.

With the priests present in the establishment in different roles, a catechesis was organized, offered to all who wish to assist, without distinction of religion, race, or nationality. Our aim is to help them discover the values that are the foundation of a successful and socially acceptable human life.

For a few, these spiritual meetings continue even after they leave prison.

All that I have tried to share here in speaking of my activities, has happened and goes on little by little, slowly. A path is created or progresses, if it is animated and sustained by a great passion, the passion for the Kingdom of God among men.

Personally, this prolonged experience has helped me a great deal. I feel deeply that I am Church, present in this place of desolation and of suffering, with all the other volunteers, priests, religious women, lay people who work with me.

In my prayer, I carry and present to God the anguish, the hopes, the tears

and the revolts of all these brothers. I ask Him insistently for His help in order to act prudently and discretely in the tasks entrusted to me. I ask Him for light and counsel to be able to bring to each one the Good News of Christ, the only one which can give liberation and new life.

Sr. Maria Ancilla Turcato
Quadraro, Rome

**O.C.D.I. Parish of Sts. Peter and Paul
"The School of Life" (prison) Sector**

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRISON OF NOTSE
AND THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN SINCE 1980**

I. Historical background of the prison

The prison of Notse which is situated in the Naho Prefecture, has been in existence for many years, rigorously dominated by the rules of the Togolese Regime although today this has changed a lot thanks to the process of Evangelization. Today it is known as "The School of Life" and the prisoners are known as "our detained brothers". Because, if we look at the world in which we live, anyone can be a prisoner without wanting or desiring it.

Here is a witnessing given by one of our brothers detained in "The School of Life". This testimony was given on the course of a conversation. "The School of Life, what does that mean for you?" "It is a place of re-education, a place of change, of renewal for the future, of conversion...to be useful for our society when we leave this place. It is a place to renounce wrong, to become a true Christian. At "The School of Life" we come to live love; to share the Word of God and prayer, to share the little we receive."

Based on our experience, our detained brothers are forgotten. Some think that they are evildoers, but no. They are people like us, despite their life; they want to change, to be converted.

II. In the "School of Life", the Word of God is one of the activities

Since 1980, the Association of St. Anthony (a lay association), under the direction of Ms. Elizabeth, took a step towards this enclave in the guise of an apostolate. Each year, during the patronal feast, the team gives out gifts in kind. This authorization to enter the "School of Life" helps us to proclaim the Word of God. It was a great joy for the detainees to discover that someone was interested in them both spiritually and materially.

Later, in 1990, Sister Elizabeth, an Assumption Sister, was requested by the Swiss Embassy in Togo to follow up Rudolph, a Swiss national who was in the prison of Notse. Then, when she left Notse, it was Sister Marie Edmond and Ms. Elizabeth who continued to visit him until the moment of the strike. At that moment, the prison was opened and everybody left.

With time, the prison re-opened but with greater restrictions. However, the Caritas office of Notse continued its evangelization through visits and then in 1993 a team was constituted to work in the prison. Its role is:

- to proclaim the Word of God - Evangelization
- to help our brothers through garden work
- to help through creative arts: basket-weaving, etc.
- to look after the health of our brothers

III. The composition of the Team

The Team is composed of:

- Religious of the Assumption
- Friends of the Assumption
- Legionaries of Mary
- Students and Teachers

The team members are very active. Thus, Father Leon and Sr. Marie Maxime gave a lot of thought to the question of manual work: the creation of baskets, trays, rosaries, in order to learn a trade and foresee the future of the prisoners upon their liberation.

Sr. Luzia had the same idea and Sr. Yveline sought for a market in France which brings in a lot of income to our brothers. "What would we be without the Church? Like most of our fellow prisoners, forgotten by the

world!" one of our brother detainees once said to me. And alas, our clients have also refused our products resulting in a standstill in the work since 1996.

After the departure of Sr. Luzia, Sr. Godelive took up once more the activities in creative arts with the help of Caritas Germany through the intermediary of Caritas Togo. She buys the materials for the volunteer workers and now the sale is on an individual basis and at a low price so that the objects may be saleable. Misery infuriates, complaints increase and in the midst of this situation we feel shame to come before them and proclaim God's Word. But what can we do? God arranges everything, we trust in Him and after the rain comes the good weather.

The main problems are:

- malnutrition due to a daily ration that does not improve
- health : no mats to sleep on
- overcrowding : limited space for 130 to 140 prisoners.

Brothers and sisters, God is love and God has given us a heart to love our brothers as He does, to live in communion with Him and with our brothers. Is it truly "like Him" that we wish to love our brothers? God has given us a lot of things as well as the freedom to share these with our suffering brothers.

Let us carry our brothers in our prayer and assist them materially.

The Team of the "School of Life" of Notse
the Community of Sisters, Ms. Elizabeth and Sr. Godelive

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VOYAGE OF NO RETURN

Faced with the future and at the threshold of the 21st century, before a world of antagonisms and contrasts: globalization - individualism, competitiveness - exclusion and marginalization, human rights - violation of persons, the sensationalism of communication - isolationism of the person...one must have the courage to pose a question: "Whose side are we on?"

It is perhaps from this that sprung forth, like a spring of water, a theological attitude that the Province of Spain has continued to sustain for the past seven years in its activities in the prisons of Madrid: Carabanchel, Alcalá, Meco, Soto del Real (the biggest in Europe), Aranjuez and which, through the NGO "Encounter and Hope", tries to reach other prisons in Andalucía, Barcelona and Zaragoza.

This option for the excluded of our world has introduced us into the kingdom of 'no FREEDOM' wherein the human person is deprived of the greatest gift God has given us - LIBERTY - and this deprives and impoverishes them to the point that they cannot even 'cry out' their own indigence. Yes, we have noted that, even in the best of cases, the prison is an unjust and repressive system.

In prison the person reaches rock bottom and he/she either sinks definitively, or, if he/she finds a fraternal hand emerges and rises higher. This is our mission.

OUR CHALLENGES

- how to awaken self-esteem
- how to heal deep wounds and traumas inflicted on them by life itself
- how to facilitate individual 're-structuring'
- what sort of training to give them so as to enable them to re-enter the world of work
- how to motivate those who have enough training to enroll in a university correspondence course
- how to help our brothers, maltreated by life, to discover or rediscover their

divine filiation

- how to change the mentality of those who militate in favor of terrorism
- how to improve the quality of life and reduce the harm of drug addiction and AIDS
- how to provide them with a place to die with dignity
- how to penetrate the complexities of cultures and beliefs
- how to legalize their situation and re-integrate them in society upon their release

We have to take into account that Spain is the door of Europe and people come in from the East, the West and the South. In the prison of Palencia alone there are more than 80 nationalities.

Aware of our limitations and that the prison where one 'loses one's life', we try to respond to these great challenges moved on by the power of the Spirit who acts in our weakness and we seek in this way to make of the prison a place of renewal of persons sure of the promise of the Gospel "he who loses his life, gains it".

In the different prisons in which we work there are daily more than 50 volunteers, lay and religious. In an extensive program we give courses on:

- SELF-ESTEEM
- HUMAN VALUES
- PERSONAL GROWTH
- RELAXATION TECHNIQUES
- TAICHI
- SCHICUNG
- SHIATSU
- VARIOUS SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS
- LITERACY PROGRAMS
- SPORTS
- ATTENTION TO INFANTS (BABIES BORN IN PRISON)
- VARIOUS FORMS OF THERAPY FOR DRUG ADDICTION
- PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP: TUTORIALS
- PRAYER GROUPS
- THIRD DEGREE PROCESSES AND PROCESSES FOR SETTING FREE
- REQUEST FOR PARDON
- LINKS WITH ENTERPRISES

- EXHIBITING THEIR WORK
- SALE OF MERCHANDISE, etc.

We give a lot but it is nothing in comparison with what we receive from those men and women whom society calls 'delinquents'. Very often they surprise us with the intensity with which they live the values of the KINGDOM:

- SOLIDARITY
- DETACHMENT
- TOLERANCE
- LOYALTY
- SINCERITY
- COMPASSION
- PARDON
- THEIR PROFOUND INTERIOR LIFE
- THEIR ABANDONMENT INTO GOD'S HANDS

Some persons are like another page of the Gospel fulfilling what the prophet Hosea says: "I will lead them into the desert and there speak to their heart".

They are behind bars but often freer than us who are not imprisoned; delinquents, but justified before God; considered as the scum of society but builders of a new world.

Thus it is not surprising that he who embarks on this adventure undergoes a change of life and of mentality.

It is not surprising that one finds in this atmosphere a profound experience of God because He reveals His wisdom to the simple. Nothing is more gratifying than the discovery of this spring of living water...in the desert of our world.

Yes, he who undertakes this adventure embarks on a VOYAGE OF NO RETURN.

Sr. Hortensia



THE CELEBRATIONS OF MARIE EUGENIE 'S FEAST AT RWAZA

Dear Sisters, dear friends

We come to share with you the celebrations of Our Mother at Rwaza here. Surely, seeing the title of this article, you ask yourself "Why celebrations and not celebration - how many celebrations?" Do not be surprised because in Rwaza, this feast was celebrated in two stages: the first time on March 10th by the School and all that it includes, the second March 14th by the Alumni of the Assumption of the vicinity.

A. At the School

At the School, the preparation of the feast began a month before, in a community meeting, then with the professors. We wondered how we were going to celebrate this: last year, after the sad events in the Northern region, we only celebrated among ourselves in community. We opted therefore for a contest "Marie Eugenie" which included questions about her and about all the Assumption as well as poems in Kinyarwanda, in French and in English. To further stimulate the students, those who won would have rewards. You can imagine, they did not spare their efforts nor their time! They called on all their talents. You should have seen them assiduously reading the documents about Marie Eugenie, asking questions of all the sisters they could reach. The professors themselves set themselves totally to the preparation of the contest and corrections. You can believe that everybody was studying!

The test began a week before the 10th with prayer every morning with a word about Marie Eugenie, her life and her "work": the 10th of March seemed slow to come.

Finally the "day" came. Each one was prepared with solemnity. You should have seen the Group Scolaire of Rwaza with its decorations: posters, drawings, garlands placed the day before, from the Convent to the big "Amalia Stadium" in which the games were held. Mass was at 10, but from

9 o'clock nearly all the professors and all the employees were there and impatient to begin, while the students were still adding flourishes here and there so that all would be perfect.

Monsignor, our Bishop, arrived on time, and everyone was waiting in the multipurpose hall where we usually have the feastday masses. Some students were lined up for the entrance procession. A beautiful liturgy followed and each class was in charge of one part of the Mass. A marvel of singing, dancing, prayers accompanied the offerings... We were really athirst for a gathering about Marie Eugenie. Monsignor made a beautiful homily centered on love, not a love as the youngsters see it, but like that of Jesus Christ and of Marie Eugenie who followed Christ and accepted the mission to which we owe this feast of the Education at the Assumption which has no equal.

At the end of the Mass, we went down to the Study Hall (under the polyvalent hall) to see the exposition of drawings of all the classes. Each had a theme that only the art professor could describe, for one would have to be an artist to try. While we admired these subtleties (with explanations from a student at each stage) the students arranged themselves on the stage in order to welcome the guests and the teachers and begin the games without delay. We assure you that we made up for last year as far as joy, creativity and diversity; each game was different from the others. Songs, dances, poems left no time to be bored. "Marie Eugenie" said Monsignor in his allocution, "must be full of joy today, not knowing where to look, for all over the world, the Assumption is at the feast. But especially" he added, "I think she is looking at Rwaza." It was beautiful and alive. We would have gone on until evening without having enough, but as always, the guests had to get home and we could not let them go hungry, so we went, each according to his or her category, to the rooms where a simple, fraternal meal awaited us. There, the joy continued, words about the feast, about Marie Eugenie, dances for those who had not danced on stage...

You wonder, obviously, what we did about the contest: the results were to be given that day. During the festivities, the three first plus the professor who had painted the portrait of Marie Eugenie (which had been used during the procession at the closure ceremonies of the Centenary of Marie Eugenie's death) had their prizes. The others were given in the evening, and imagine: the more than 170 who entered the contest won!!!

We ended the day in the same atmosphere as it began, in elation and thanksgiving. It was a beautiful day and not a drop of rain although it was the rainy season. Marie Eugenie could not allow our joy in her honor to be interrupted.

B. The Alumni

First of all why the alumni? Because among our alumnae there are some who have husbands, and also they have found helpful friends who have accompanied them on the path of Marie Eugenie.

With the Alumni group, therefore, the feast began at the same time as with the students but this time without contests but with reflection on how and when to celebrate. With the school? It is big and would swallow up the group of alumni. They would not have enjoyed themselves as they wished. Besides, March 10 was a Wednesday, not the holiday the school had, for most of them. The 14th, a Sunday, was chosen.

The day was simple: a morning of recollection with Marie Eugenie, on the theme chosen by the 'preacher' (a sister): prayer. Very well adapted to the group for the most part fathers and mothers of families, so well that echoes are "sister was able to touch our realities, that will help us in our life".

The morning ended with a midday prayer together and we (sisters and alumni) met with some students invited to learn about life after studies for Assumption students. They had prepared a fraternal repast for the group. There, the alumnae had a chance to explain to their colleagues (alumni) the origin and reason for their coming together as well as their aim: "To pursue the idea of Marie Eugenie to transform society through the Gospel, as women and graduates of the Assumption".

The alumnae were very grateful for what they had already reached, for the entire Assumption, the community which has helped them to come together and which accompanies them. They thank Marie Eugenie for being close to them and close to Rwanda. They hope to continue with a precise activity they will define in the future.

There, dear sisters, dear friends, what we wished to share with you of our celebrations for Marie Eugenie. We remain very united with you and grateful for your usual support, and we count on your prayer for a lasting peace in Rwanda so that we will be able to continue faithfully the work of

Marie Eugenie in our small field.

The Community of the sisters of Rwaza

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**THE CENTENARY OF MOTHER MARIE EUGENIE
AT NOTSÉ - TOGO**

Friends of the Assumption, really, at the heart of the African continent? Yes! M.M.Eugenie's word has come true: "I see the earth as a place of glory for God". This idea aroused enthusiasm, and soon after receiving Sr. Cristina's letter to friends and sisters, we met and shared it. Three cheers for the photocopy machine which made it possible for us to give a copy to each one, as we sought what we could do. Two proposals were chosen:

- Meet once a month to share the Gospel of Saint Luke.
- Visit our neighbors and those who are not of our religion.

Certain encounters are not lacking in spice: "Your Jesus does not cure us any more than our fetishes do", the village people retort ("paganos" in Latin). But Cyrille, the manager of the Marie Eugenie farm, is not discouraged. He has put his trust in Christ and is preparing for baptism.

Another activity begun was the preparation of the "Marie Eugenie Week" from March 4 to 8, 1998.

And first of all, the preparations: a program on Radio-Maria on February 22, with an interview of the sisters about Marie Eugenie, the Assumption, the communities of Togo, the formation of the young vocations until their religious profession, the Message of the Feast being prepared, etc. In the same line, an article on Mother Marie Eugenie and the Assumption was published in the catholic newspaper of Togo, "Présence Chrétienne".

All too soon, March 4th arrived. In the afternoon, a goodly number of young people assembled in the large courtyard of the church for the "Grand Jeu" Marie Eugenie. Divided into joyful teams, animated and guided by the Friends of the Assumption, the postulants and the sisters, not less eager than

their teams to win the first prize!

The next day, a fine prayer vigil, which began with a candlelight procession. Two sisters spoke of Marie Eugenie and of the life of the Assumption: a young professed sister, Sr. Marie Madeleine, and an elder sister, Sr. Anne de Marie Immaculée.

Saturday, March 7, Sr. Luzia and her team of the O.C.D.I. went in the morning to the "school of life" (that is, the prison of Notsé, with more than 120 inmates) with a good festive meal, with joy and singing... and a poem written by them on Marie Eugenie. The seminarians of "propedeutique" and the secondary school students competed in singing, poetry, and drawings on the theme of the centenary. At the level of the Province, the Postulants of Notsé won the first prize for their hymn. It's true! Do not forget that we are a formation community and our postulants have worked a great deal with Sr. Yveline to prepare their theater soiree "Marie Eugenie, Woman of Faith, Woman of Action" with the girls of the foyer. Some were wearing the "pagne Marie Eugenie" for the folklore dances, others dressed as sisters of the Assumption with wimples and veils. There they were, on the evening of the 7th of March, talking with M. l'Abbe Combalot, in a black cassock, as he interviewed the sisters of today. All complete with slides and gestured songs. An electricity blackout did not discourage the spectators who waited for an hour for the light to return (from the generator). The youngsters of the Catholic secondary school N.D.A. closed the evening. It was 1 a.m.! Marie Eugenie had really put down roots in Notsé!

Sunday March 8th was the great day! Our Sisters from Sokodé and Abomey had joined us on the eve. At 9 a.m., the parish mass, presided by our bishop, Mgr. Pierre Seshie, organized by the seminarians and with the diverse chorales, happy to pray with us and share our joy. The entrance procession carried the Assumption symbols in solemnity: the cross, the star and the ship of the Church, executed in teak wood by Désirée, one of our friends.

During the Mass, the "transmission of the heritage" took place, following the Ewé custom. Each sister and each of the Friends receives the three symbols which remind him of the word of Marie Eugenie "if one opens your heart, one should find in it three loves: Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Church". The Friends receive also the "Path of Spirituality" of Marie Eugenie which they are invited to follow.

After Mass, a picnic for the parish organized in the courtyard of the church, with Monsignor and some invited guests at the table of honor. A little pig raised here, roasted and decorated, was a great success, as was the cake with 100 candles which refused to let themselves be blown out!

In fact, the flame did not stop at Notsé, for, after the repast, a funny cortege of cars, Mobylettes and bikes accompanied Monsignor's Pajero to the Marie Eugenie farm.

At the site chosen for the construction of the Marie Eugenie School (at the moment, 2 classes under thatched roofs) the 58 small students of primary grades 1 and 2 were waiting for us, with their parents, friends and teachers. They had built a flowered arch to welcome our pastor who was to bless the first stone. The children sang and rhythmmed "Marie Eugenie, we are before you, Marie Eugenie, you have many children, Marie Eugenie, pray for us!" Tam-tams and bells accompanied these young voices. Our bishop, received in the traditional manner, conversed with the parents who wanted this catholic school for their children, about the aims of the school.

Then we go on towards the farm, singing "if you want to build a new world..." Monsignor is visibly happy to find himself in the country. He gives thanks with us for all the good work done in a year: work which has already given a good harvest and made it possible for several students to win the price of their studies. He blesses the house and the fields, and after greeting all the farmers, we return to Notsé, overwhelmed by all we have lived. This will continue the next two days at Sokodé.

The seed "Marie Eugenie" set down in Togolese earth during this centenary will grow and bear good fruit. The word of Marie Eugenie draws us to do everything so that "our earth may be a place of glory for God!"

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ECHO FROM ZINDER ON THE FEAST OF THE CENTENARY OF MARIE EUGENIE

The jubilee year of the Centenary of the death of Marie Eugenie was well celebrated at Zinder.

We were preparing the feast of our Parish under the patronage of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in October and our pastor was already announcing to our Christian community that this would be the centenary of the death of the Foundress of the Sisters of the Assumption. Several times during the year, the priests mentioned Marie Eugenie, speaking of her thirst for God and her zeal for the Kingdom. March 15 was chosen for the parish celebration, and the preceding week was an agitated one.

The priests first offered us a beautiful large portrait of Marie Eugenie. It will have pride of place at the ceremony on the 15th and at the celebrations the following week. On Monday, March 9th, beautiful vigils with the priests. On the 10th, our Bishop, Mgr. Guy Romano, came and we had the happy chance of his celebrating the morning Mass, which was beautiful.

Then it was the 15th, Sunday. The entire parish was festive. Many Christians came with new clothes cut in the Marie Eugenie print fabric (pagne). The sisters and even the fathers did the same.

To the ringing of the bells, the procession-dance entered the Church carrying Marie Eugenie's portrait in solemnity. It was enthroned at the foot of the altar. In his homily, Father drew a parallel between Marie Eugenie and the Samaritan woman: both women thirsting for God, both worshipers, who had well understood that true worshipers do so in Spirit and in truth. Marie Eugenie, like the Samaritan woman, proclaimed Christ and showed great zeal for the Kingdom.

After the Mass, the adults among the Christians were invited to the sisters' where they discovered and admired posters which presented Marie Eugenie and the Assumption in the world, "soda" of friendship was shared in joy and each one received a holy card of Marie Eugenie on which the vocation group had affixed the prayer to her.

In the afternoon, the young Christians and the children of the parish met to

continue the celebration. A group of children presented a short play recounting the life and mission of Marie Eugenie.

THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT BENJAMIN WILLIAM MKAPA OF TANZANIA TO IGUGUNO, SINGIDA

It was on the evening of the 3rd February 1999 when two distinguished ladies came to our community. Both are District Officers in the area - one for Education and the other for World Vision. What news they brought to us! That the President was visiting the Iramba District on the 24th February 1999 and that our parish had been chosen by the Region to welcome him. He would arrive at 11:30 a.m. at the Parish Hall, with the Regional Officer and some of his Ministers let alone all the security officers.

Later on he was going to have lunch in the priest's house and we were the ones to prepare it in our house. After his lunch he would have his rest in the priest's house and we were also the ones to prepare the room for him. My

goodness!!! We got very excited, happy and somehow ill at ease. We imagined all the soldiers, the security officers, the ministers, etc. who would come with him and how the whole place would be filled with all those people. We asked ourselves what we were going to do! And how was it going to be! It was our first time to have such an event in Iguguno. Moreover, some members in our community had never seen the President before. They had only seen him in pictures and newspapers!!!

The Preparations

Three days before the actual day, the preparations started. That is to say, they started officially. There was a good division of labour. The government people levelled the main road which had been damaged by the El Niño rains. The Primary School pupils cleaned all the surroundings and very specially the platform where the President would be giving his speech. They also planted trees and watered them in the New Sec. School where the President was going to lay the foundation stone. The villagers cut down the bushes by the road and pruned the long grass near the road. We thoroughly cleaned our kitchen as the President's food was going to be cooked there. We also prepared the room and made the bed where the President would have his rest. The food committee came a day earlier to prepare the things they needed for the cooking. They slaughtered a cow, a goat and fifteen chickens. The security soldiers were going up and down checking the safety of everything.

The way the government administrators explained things frightened us. They told us not to be near the President at all and the priests were told to move out of their house when the President was there. They even taught them to walk in a special way and never to hang around. Those who had special responsibilities such as the cooks and servers were given enough practice so as not to make mistakes when serving the President. The receiving committee was told to make very good preparations so that they could welcome the President very well. They took one of our big cushions from our community room and our refectory table for the President. We decorated the table in the priest's refectory as best as we could. In other words, it was us who had the final touches on the decorations. He had his lunch there sitting on our cushion.

The Day Itself

By 9:00 a.m. the parish was full of all sorts of people. The drumming groups, the police, the school children, the parishioners and the villagers with small green branches in their hands ready to wave to the President when he arrived.

At 11 sharp, the President arrived with all his escorts. We all welcomed him with joy while waving our branches. He passed shaking hands with the leaders of the Party and the Government, and also with our parish priest Emmanuel Mikindo. Then he went into the Parish Hall to hear the reports of the Districts. After that he came out and shook hands with some children and the drummers. As he was going to get into his car, he saw some of us and the other priests. He came and shook hands with us saying: "Tumsifu Yesu Kristu", the Christian greeting of Tanzania. After that he went to lay the foundation stone in a new secondary school which is to be built about four kilometers from us. This took him only half an hour. He soon came back to us and at one o'clock they had lunch. After lunch he rested for half an hour in the room we had prepared for him. Then he went to pray in the Church. As he was coming out of the Church he looked at us graciously and thanked us.

What was touching is the way he prayed in the Church. He went right up near the tabernacle and prayed there quietly. The parish priests and all of us plus some parishioners were there with him. At the end of his silent prayer, we prayed with him the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father. Lastly, the parish priest blessed him. We found this very nice.

We came out of the Church and we had some pictures taken with him in front of the priest's house. When we came out, the postulants and the candidates remained behind. Maybe they were a little bit shy with everybody looking at them. So, when we were ready for the picture, they were missing. Then we saw one of them in the middle of the crowd and made sign to them to come and join us. They understood and came hurrying. As they were kneeling in front of us for the photograph, one of them would have nearly fell on the President had not one sister held her up. The President looked at her and laughed and we all laughed.

Meanwhile the photographers were very busy taking as many pictures as possible. Then we gave him a joint present of a ram. It was from the parish priests, the parishioners and us.

At the end of all this he went to Iguguno town which is very small. There he gave his speech to the people. The place they prepared for him was in a police station. He spoke very well. He mentioned some of the big problems of our area which are hunger and bad means of transport, roads. He explained how he is trying his very best to help and he advised the people to play their part. He then left us for Kiomboyi which is another town of the District to continue his visit.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, it was an excellent visit. Everything was done in a very peaceful way. The President himself was so calm. What touched us most was his simplicity. He was at home with everybody. He went very close to people without any complications. During the meal, although they had prepared a very special dish for him, he chose to eat the local dish which had been prepared for all the other people. Things were utterly different from our expectations. We were very grateful to him. After we had taken the pictures with him, he gratefully shook hands again with all of us.

**MAY GOD BLESS OUR PRESIDENT
BENJAMIN WILLIAM MKAPA!**

With love from us all,
Iguguno Community

**NEWS FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES,
ZIMBABWE, DECEMBER 1998**

It was no accident that the 8th and Jubilee Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Africa, the cradle of humanity. A set of fossil footprints have recently been discovered at Langebaan in S. Africa reckoned to be about 117,000 years old. The ancestors of us all left their mark, footprints, a very early sign of our common humanity on a common journey....

It was no accident either that the Assembly was held in Harare, Zimbabwe. In the '60s the W.C.C. had earned the unpopularity of many by supporting the freedom struggle of the people of Zimbabwe against a regime who were taking their cue from the apartheid regime in S. Africa. In response the W.C.C. initiated a programme, which still continues, to combat racism. The people of Zimbabwe had not forgotten the support they received at a crucial moment in their struggle for freedom from colonialism. It was ironic that the Assembly was being held in a free Zimbabwe yet one of the main themes of the Assembly was the effects of neo-colonialism, the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy and all its attendant consequences.

What, you may say, has all this to do with the Christian churches? Perhaps we need to remember that the first Assembly of the W.C.C. was held in Amsterdam in 1948 among the ruins of the most destructive war the world had ever seen, birthed in Europe yet touching every corner of the globe. In a spirit of repentance and aware that such destruction could not be the will of God, Christians came together in an attempt at fellowship and discernment. They were aware too that in so many ways the Christian churches had more often than not failed to confront the evil of the Nazi system, and more deeply, the European hubris and nationalist rivalry. Had we taken refuge in individualistic piety and collusion as Gospel values were gradually undermined? As the long shadow of the Shoah fell over the Christian churches there was a restatement of the great insight of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, we are all fashioned in the image of God, all alike and each human being has a right to life, respect and liberty. It is not always appreciated that the great declaration on *Human Rights* of the United Nations which also came to birth in 1948, was directly inspired by the

declaration of the W.C.C. some months before. As we celebrated in Harare in 1998 we remembered specially the 50th anniversary of the U.N. declaration of Human Rights. We also became aware that there was so much to be done in today's world as new forms of oppression and old ones such as torture and slavery, are on the increase. In the Visitors' tent I quite often sat next to a charming Frenchman who works in Geneva at the W.C.C. desk for Human Rights. He was not optimistic about what the next century would bring; it will be a continuing struggle. Incidentally his group sometimes meet in Auteuil; he knew about the Assumption. We might also remind ourselves that human rights and the dignity of each human being flowing from the Incarnation of Jesus Christ are one of the great themes of the Pontificate of John Paul II. He reiterates it again in his address for World Peace Day 1999.

The composition of the first Assembly in 1948 was predominantly white, male and European or North American. In Harare in 1998 the emphasis was on women, (the W.C.C. Decade in Solidarity with Women had just finished) multiracial, the young, and above all we couldn't help noticing that most participants were not European or North American. In a similar way, the Roman Catholic Church is waking up to the fact that most Christians are now in what is sometimes called the 3rd World. The fact that we were meeting in Harare also made its influence felt on the proceedings as we were given insight into how world systems look from the point of view of those who so rarely feature in the news, unless it is about wars and disasters, and even more rarely feature in world economic forecasts. The issue of debt owed by the world's poorest countries to the rich was again a dominant theme. There was a rare unanimity of response - the debt should be cancelled so that the world can truly celebrate Jubilee.

Solidarity was a major theme. Whether it be the cancellation of debt, or the effects of a top down concentration of economic and financial power which widens the gap between rich and poor, often called 'globalisation', or with the world's women increasingly subjected to violence, or with indigenous people who so often are the first to suffer from a degraded environment and large scale 'development'. In Harare there were representatives from ethnic and indigenous groups from many parts of the world. We were exposed to the cries of suffering people. I went to various workshops, 'padare' as they were called (a Shona word for meeting place) - on climate change, where I met a Kenyan professor who worked on water conservation and knew our sisters in East Africa, on debt, on Dalit women in their misery, on

victim/oppressor reconciliation in S.Africa run by the Mennonites - how much there is still to do. It was good to meet an indigenous woman from the Philippines who knew our sisters in Baguio, and Dalit women who knew our sisters working for Dalit liberation in India - a small world indeed.

What, you might say, has all this to do with the unity of Christians? One of the great insights of the ecumenical dialogue between the churches which has taken place over the last 50 years is the indivisibility of reconciliation. To be reconciled with God means to be reconciled also with all our brothers and sisters; justice and peace and the integrity of creation flow from our reading of a world created by God and a humanity already redeemed 'by the blood of Christ'. There is also the intuition that the healing of divisions among Christians is intimately linked with the healing of the whole human family. Most mornings, after morning worship, we had a Bible study input on the reading of the day followed by an opportunity to exchange in small groups. One I particularly remember was based on Ephesians 2, 13-22 about Christianity being about breaking barriers, 'for through Him all of us have access in one Spirit to the Father'.

As the century draws to a close, the ecumenical movement so much a feature of it, is in difficulties. There was real concern at Harare that they might be almost insuperable. The Orthodox churches were pointing out that much of the agenda and system of doing things seemed to stem from a reading of the world dictated by the liberal West (for instance the emphasis on inclusive language and the homosexual debate) and other post Reformation squabbles. We were reminded that this was not just the Orthodox having problems, it was an ecumenical problem, the commitment to dialogue and to listen to each other remained. In practice it was decided to set up a working party which would include all the Orthodox churches and an equal number of W.C.C. delegates to look into Orthodox concerns, another of which was the system of voting rather than arriving at a consensus. Other tricky areas were relations with the Pentecostals, some evangelicals, and newer churches, how to strengthen the common commitment and increase accountability of each to the other. There was an effort to restate the 'common understanding and vision' and ways of working towards *koinonia of faith, life and witness*. From the beginning the churches of the W.C.C. have recognised a *common calling*. The Basis to which the churches subscribe is "the World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their

common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." And of course the inspiration of the great prayer of Jesus 'that they may all be one' remains to haunt us all. The scandal of a divided 'body of Christ' continues to impair Christian witness tragically. Are we not already linked, if imperfectly, by our Baptism into Christ?

The main part of the theological dialogue takes place in the 'Faith and Order Commission' of the W.C.C. Mary Tanner was Moderator of this commission till after Harare and it was through her and her links with Hengrave that I found myself there at all. The Roman Catholic Church plays a full part as a member of the Faith and Order Commission. We were assured by Bishop Conti of Aberdeen, Scotland, who led the official Vatican delegation in Harare, that the main reason of the Roman Catholic Church not yet being a full member of the W.C.C. was not principle (we can go along with the Basis very well and we understand clearly that the W.C.C. is a fellowship of churches in no way trying to be a sort of super church) but the numbers problem. As it is so constituted at present, if the R.C.s were to join we would swamp the W.C.C. completely. Questions of membership would be part of the continuing conversation into the next century along with efforts at strengthening mutual commitment. In the meantime, it was proposed that a Forum alongside the existing W.C.C. should be put in place to enable Christian organisations, movements, ecumenical communities etc. to play a part in the dialogue. The experience of the 'padare' we had in Harare, enabling so many voices to be heard, was very enriching and put into a certain perspective the theological debate. Incidentally, I got the impression that there were quite a lot of Roman Catholics around including local ones from Zimbabwe, about 40 R.C. women, several of whom were sisters. What's more, the R.C. presence seemed to be appreciated. (The R.C.s have been involved as official observers since the mid '60s - as Fr. Tom Stransky expressed it, 'when you step on the back of a tiger you think very hard before you make the next move'!) The Vatican delegation included several women, laity, clergy and religious which was pleasing. At the beginning of the meetings there were messages from John Paul II and the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I. The firm commitment of the Roman Catholic Church to ecumenism and the search for visible unity reiterated in 'Ut Unum Sint' was recognised with gratitude. I was glad to be there.

There was honesty around, there was no common celebration of the eucharist, the exclusion of some is no witness, but it is a great sadness all

the same. We had a penitential stations of the cross round the huge blue worship tent one candle-lit evening, instead. The worship that we did share was wonderful in its universality, languages from remote parts of the world, songs from the Guarani, the Syrian Orthodox, Korea, you name it, we gave it a go, trying to get ones tongue round an Ethiopian resurrection hymn, or a wonderful lilting chant from the Pacific, or lively drumming from the Congo...but there was a unity...clay pots filled with water, as we left the tent we splashed ourselves or drank a little. Water of life, we all need it...we all cry when hurt, the Decade of Solidarity with Women were aware of this symbol of suffering when they asked women from all over the world to bring water which was then poured into a great communal pot; in Harare, a pouring out of tears. The sharing of a leaf as a sign of reconciliation, 'forgive me, brother', 'forgive me, sister'...an Armenian blessing given by Aram I, Moderator of W.C.C. and re-elected in Harare, a wise man...and a cry from the heart from Bishop Paride Taban on behalf of the voiceless people of South Sudan, Christians who have been under the siege for the last 40 years. An attempt on his life was reported when he got home after his outspoken address in the Harare Stadium.

We were visited briefly by Mandela who came to praise the contribution of the W.C.C. and equally briefly by Mugabe who harangued us for a while having dashed through the streets of Harare with a comparatively small motorcade and fewer soldiers than usual!

It was reckoned that there were about 5,000 people at the Assembly, about 1,000 delegates and the rest in the Visitors' tent, perhaps about 1,000 from the local churches. I was glad too to see a few interfaith observers and the need to work together with other faiths whenever we find values in common was very present.

We lived for the fortnight in the campus of the university of Zimbabwe, or most of us did, some had booked into local hotels. The campus was in the process of putting in a new communication system so the whole place was crisscrossed with trenches, it was tricky in the dark and muddy in the rain, but somehow symbolic.

As so often in that sort of gathering it is the little personal encounters that remain with one, the human faces, somehow it was as if we were trying to create a gossamer network, a globalisation from the bottom up, a muddy business but little threads of concern and understanding interwoven may be

what ultimately makes the difference.

We have come a long way since those early footprints in the clay of Africa some 117,000 years ago. As we set out on the last year before the Great Jubilee when we will be remembering the Incarnation, Jesus born as a human child among us, as we believe the pivotal event in the human journey, we remember God the Father...of all humanity, one family...And Jesus is with us to lead us in our faith. Maybe we will be able to recognise and turn from our idols, and '*Turn to God and rejoice in Hope.*'

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SPECIAL FEATURE:

SR HELENE MARIE DU SAINT SACREMENT HAS LEFT US

(Sr. Cristina Maria's words of welcome at the funeral mass for Sr Hélène Marie - Lourdes, 4 October 1999)

By these words of welcome, brothers and sisters, I would like to express first of all, in the name of the Congregation, our gratitude to God for having given us Sister Hélène Marie as beloved and loving sister; gratitude for all that God has been for her, for all that she has been for us throughout her life, and in particular during the years when she was our Superior General. Those were difficult years for the Church and for religious life. With each one of us here today present, Sister Hélène had woven a personal and special bond. Let us spend a few moments of silence to thank God for what she has been in our life.

Silence

Sister Hélène would not like me to speak at length about her but about God, her Lord, as she liked to call Him. I recall how much she loved Mother Marie Eugénie. How happy she was to see her beatified. She loved the Congregation with all her strength and her weakness. She loved her family tenderly and with great attentiveness. She knew how to help sisters and friends to discover their qualities and gifts, and to put them at the service of the Kingdom. Praise to you, Lord, for the ardour of her heart and of her

zeal in your service all through her life and now at the end of her pilgrimage on earth!

I would like to close this word by a confession of faith, that of Sister Hélène. At the beginning of her religious life, she had engraved on her ring, the word **OUI** (Yes). *Yes, Father, for that is what pleased You to do in Your goodness.* At the end of her life, another word dwelt in her heart: *The Father knows what you need.* Between these two words lies an entire life marked by life and death, by the Pascal mystery, the mystery of the Eucharist that she had chosen to live. Now she has entered into the Eucharist without end.

I conclude with the very words of Marie Eugenie, words Sister Hélène must have said often, and which we love to repeat in the face of events that catch us by surprise: *God guides us and no hand more loving nor more wise could guide our destinies.*

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The next issue of **Partage Auteuil** will be centered on the person of Sister Hélène Marie. You are invited to send us your souvenirs of her as soon as possible (certainly before **March 2000**).

JUBILEES 2000

Platinum Jubilee

Sr Anne Emmanuel Chansay	29/07/2000	Ciney, Belgium
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Diamond Jubilee

Sr Antoinette Myriam Verheyden	06/01/2000	Ciney, Belgium
Sr María Teresa San Juan y García	23/05/2000	Collado, Spain
Sr Marie Geneviève de Villers de Waroux	23/05/2000	Ciney, Belgium
Sr Ignacia Eugenia Urbistondo	23/05/2000	Guatemala, Guatemala
Sr Claude Emmanuel de Lichtervelde	23/05/2000	Minoo, Japan
Sr Véronique Emmanuel Peyrelongue	01/08/2000	Lourdes Massabielle, France
Sr Clara Cecilia Rodríguez de Rivera	30/08/2000	Cuestablanca A, Spain
Sr Covadonga Martínez-Arcos Gil	30/08/2000	Collado, Spain
Sr Rosa Eugenia Briano	30/08/2000	Viale Romania, Italy
Sr Jeanne Pousse	08/09/2000	St Aignan, France
Sr Agnès Elisabeth Silvestre	30/11/2000	Montpellier, France
Sr Carmen Landecho Zuazola	30/11/2000	El Olivar, Málaga, Spain
Sr Elena Eugenia González Posada	30/11/2000	Collado, Spain
Sr Carmen Arrieta Alvarado	30/11/2000	Santa Familia, El Salvador

Golden Jubilee

Sr Ma Antonia Acosta Acosta	21/01/2000	Cuenca, Ecuador
Sr Françoise Eulalie Miró Luque	28/02/2000	El Olivar, Malaga, Spain
Sr Ana Ma Fernández Arauz	30/03/2000	Hors Communauté

Sr María Concepción Moraza Montoya	31/03/2000	Mira Cruz, Spain
Sr Andrea María Ascanio Mendoza	31/03/2000	La Alegría, Spain
Sr Marie José Araújo Cid	27/06/2000	Teresopolis, Brazil
Sr Francesca Maria Allievi	29/06/2000	San Pietro, Italy
Sr Elizabeth Dove	08/07/2000	Jerusalem, Israel
Sr Gabrielle Marguerite de Mollerat du Jeu	08/08/2000	St Gervais, France
Sr Elsa Gadala Ma. Asbun	08/08/2000	Acogida, Guatemala
Sr María Elena González Posada Cavo	29/09/2000	Teguste, Spain
Sr María Lavinia Eclar	29/09/2000	Antipolo, Philippines
Sr Ma. Dionisia Cañonero	29/09/2000	San Lorenzo, Philippines
Sr Ma. Sinforosa Estoesta	29/09/2000	Iloilo, Philippines
Sr Pilar Emmanuel Wijangco	12/10/2000	Antipolo, Philippines
Sr Inocencia María Vigilar	12/10/2000	San Simon, Philippines
Sr Monique Tourmente	29/10/2000	Lourdes Massabielle, France
Sr María Olvido González	30/11/2000	Auteuil, France
Sr María Teresa Echávarri Osacar	30/11/2000	Seat, Spain
Sr Ma Oliva Pérez Martínez	30/11/2000	San Bruno, Spain
Sr María del Camino Bartolomé González	30/11/2000	Los Molinos, Spain
Sr María del Consejo Suárez Rodríguez	30/11/2000	Teguste, Spain

Silver Jubilee

Sr Celine Mathew Puthettu	09/02/2000	Bhagalpur, India
Sr Shanti Maria Pazhettu	09/02/2000	Poona, India
Sr Marie Claude Mukandengo	23/05/2000	Cté Int. Rome, Italy
Sr Marie Blandine Nambajemariya	25/05/2000	Mwezi, Rwanda
Sr Ancilla Mukankaka	06/08/2000	Mukarange, Rwanda
Sr Françoise Bax	07/12/2000	Lourdes Notre Dame, France
Sr Cristina Ocaña Enciso	08/12/2000	Huercal Overa, Spain

Sr Nicole Willem	25/12/2000	Auteuil, France
Sr Bénédicte Rollin	25/12/2000	Vilnius, Lithuania

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Perpetual Professions 1999

Srs	María Nicolasa Tobar	
	Lecheguacos, Nicaragua	20/03
	Ana Lucrecia Balcarcel	San Luis,
Guatemala	04/04	
	María Aurora Bonilla	Lourdes , El
Salvador	15/05	
	Veena Pandarukunnel	Poona, India
		17/04
	Celine Joseph Thalanany	Harnout, India
		17/04
	Stella Rose Jose Karamel	Tilloli, India
		17/04
	Maria Rosa Akemi	Minoo, Japan
	28/03	
	Kageyana	
	Marie Madeleine Agonou	Notsé, Togo
		22/05
	Cécile Renouard	Auteuil, France
	10/04	
	Eliana Caro Cardenas	Mexico Cté.
Etud., Mexico	19/05	
	Virginie Kanyala	Bobo Dioulasso,
	05/06	
		Burkina Fasso
	Irene Cecile Torres	San Simón, Philippines
	24/10	

DECEASED SISTERS – 1999

Srs	Adelaida Ma del Paso de la Torre	
	26.01	Aguilas, Mexico
	03.02	María de la Madia Latela
		Rome Betania, Italy
	02.04	Patricia Stewart
		Philadelphia, USA
	08.04	Thérèse Henriette Boyer
		Montpellier, de Bouillane
		France
	14.04	Camino Eugenia Rodriguez
		Los Molinos, Spain
	16.04	Lucie Labenne
		Montpellier, France
	02.05	Maria Berica Crosare
		Rome Betania, Italy
	04.06	María del Pilar Traver
		Granada, Spain
	11.06	María Ludivina Gonzalez
		Tegueste, Spain
	16.06	Anne Geneviève Clavey
		Auteuil, France
	25.06	Sheila Mary Birnie
Catherine		St London, England
	18.07	François d'Assise Poncelet
		Floréal, Belgium
	07.08	Marina Colombi
		Lourdes
Massabielle, France		
	10.08	María Angeles Ruiz Benitez
		Collado, Spain
	13.08	Enriqueta Galmes de Fuentes
		Olivos Acogida, Spain
	21.08	Maria Prassede Marziale
		Padua, Italy
	31.08	Mary Alethea Radcliffe
		St Catherine
		London, England
	29.09	Hélène Marie Bories

Lourdes N-Dame
France
Jeanne Cath. Bosquillon de Jenlis
01.10 Daloa, Ivory Coast
Laetitia María Jáudenes 03.11
Riofrio, Spain
Andrea María Ascanio 12.11
La Alegría, Tenerife



AGENDA OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

November - December

Belén & Césarie: 11 Nov.-15 Dec.	Visit of Italy
Diana & Gertrude: 18 Nov.-11 Dec.	Visit of England-Scotland
Cristina: 26 Nov.-8 Dec.	Visit of Argentina



The International Young Sisters' Session
will take place from **15 January to 30 April 2000.**

Some Sisters responsible for Formation in the Congregation will participate in this session:

Veneranda Maria Mukantagara (Rwanda)
María Leticia Andan (Philippines)
María José García (Spain)

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG SISTERS' SESSION
15 January - 30 April 2000

PROVINCE	NAMES	SURNAMES
East Africa	Nancy	Nyawira Ndiritu
Cen. Am. / Cuba	Amalia de Jesus	Orellana
Cen. Am. / Cuba	Ana Lucrecia	Balcarcel
Cen. Am. / Cuba	María Dolores	Bucardo
Brazil	Ana Lucia	Gonçalves
Brazil	María Aparecida	Nogueira Cabral
Ecuador	Luisa Bersabe	Carreno
France	Anne	Guillien
India	Celine Joseph	Thalanany
India	Stella Rose José	Karamel
India	Smitha	Maliakel
Japan	Maria Rosa Akemi	Kageyama
Mexico	Eliana	Caro Cardenas
Mexico	María Mercedes	Escobedo Solorzano
Philippines-Thai.	Estela Marie	Roceles
Philippines-Thai.	Irene Cecile	Torres
Rwanda	Léonille Marie	Mukabutare
Rwanda	Emerita Maria	Uwambazamariya
Rwanda	Bernadette Marie	Muhimpundu
Rwanda	Marie Laetitia	Byukusenge
Rwanda	Domina Maria	Mukanyarwaya

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

MISE A JOUR DU CARNET D'ADRESSES

• Fermeture de Maisons:

Spain : "Hospitalet", Barcelona
San Sebastian de los Reyes, Madrid
"Santa Maria", Madrid
"El Caserio", San Sebastian

Ivory Coast : Daloa Quartier

Italy : The Betania and Nazareth communities now make but one community in Viale Romania.

• Nouvelles Adresses:

Ecuador : Religiosas de la Asunción
Apartado de Correos 06-01-36
Riobamba Chimborazo
Ecuador

• Changement d'Adresse:

Japan : Assumption Sisters
3-19-17 Edogawa-ku Higashikoiwa
Tokyo 133-0052
Japan

• Correction d'Adresses:

Spain (Huercal-Overa): Religiosas de la Asunción
Arrieros, 12
04600 Huercal-Overa

(Gijón) : Religiosas de la Asunción
Rio Narcea, 1, 1° J-K
33210 GIJON (Princ. de Asturias)

(Sarria) : Religiosas de la Asunción
Avda. de la Asunción, **34**

27600 SARRIA (Lugo)

(Alcobendas) : Religiosas de la Asunción
Marqués de Valdivia,
25, 4° A 28100
ALCOBENDAS (Madrid)

(Salamanca) : Religiosas de la Asunción
Colegio Mayor "La
Asunción" Gibraltar, 18-20
37008 SALAMANCA

(La Alegría) : Religiosas de la Asunción
Avda. José Martí, 16
B° de la Alegría
38001 STA. CRUZ DE
TENERIFE

(Granadilla) : Religiosas de la Asunción
San Francisco, 12
38600 GRANADILLA
(Tenerife)

Japan (Nishinari): Assumption Sisters
4-4-44 Kitatsumori
Nishinari-ku, Osaka shi
Osaka 557-0061

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Tel. (0) **20 7937 6112 / 6434**
Fax (0) **20 7938 1621**

(Hengrave) : Fax (0) 1284 **702 950**

Argentina - new city code (Gerli) : (114)
(La Rioja) : (03822)

Belgium (Welkenraedt): Tel. 8789-1614
Fax 8789-1617

Burkina Faso (Bobo-Dioulasso) : Tel. 974034

Chile : Tel. / Fax 2 283-9900

Spain : Huercal-Overa Tél. 950 134729
Vegas de Coria Tél. 927 434140
Granadilla Tél. 922 770188
Collado Fax (same as the Tel)
Santa Isabel Tel. 91 5285428 (Cté)
(the 2 telephone

numbers marked Cté.

are numbers of the Colegio)

El Olivar Fax 95 2622889
Salamanca Fax 923 219405
Granadilla Tel. 922 770188

France : (Bureau de Solidarité) : Tél 01 40506266

(Cannes) : Tel. 97 06 66 70 (Accueil)
Fax 97 06 66 76 (CIMEM)
93 39 30 05 (Tutelle)

(Montpellier) Tel. 67 63 14 35 (Collège)
Fax 67 54 62 44 (Cté)

(St Dizier) Tel. 25 06 39 39 (Collège)
Fax 25 06 39 38 (Collège)

Guatemala (Acogida): Tel. 362-9129
(Colegio) : Tel. 336-1305

India (Poona) : Tel./Fax 212-6680738

Israel : Fax 972-672-6991 (store)

Italy (Viale Romania): Tel. 06-855-0101 (Communauté)

06-853-54307 (Supérieure)

Japan (Nishinari) : Tel. 6 6567-2549
(Tokyo) : Tel. / Fax 3-5668-9407

Tanzania : (Moshi) Fax 55 51113

• **Nouveaux e-mails :**

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