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EDITORIAL

« *Liturgy, Beauty, Art...* »

“Liturgy, beauty, art”, the audacious theme of this number of Partage Auteuil! The words naturally group together, and it is good to begin with “Liturgy”, as the privileged source, in our Assumption life, of the two other dimensions: the place of harmony, of creativity, of celebration of the presence of God in our lives and in the life of the world... The liturgy: the art of living as “praying without ceasing”, the art of living in a beautiful manner?

We are well aware that this dimension of our religious life, missionary and communitarian, was so fundamental for Marie Eugenie and the first sisters that they were ready to die from fatigue rather than renounce it! Faithful to this intuition, has not the Congregation continued to give an important place to all our liturgical life, and invested itself in constant research and adaptation? A particular momentum was given to this “aggiornamento” around Vatican II, when several sisters participated in ecclesial and monastic reflection groups. The years which followed were marked by moving from “large houses” towards small communities more inserted in the heart of neighbourhoods, of parishes, of basic ecclesial communities. This was an enormous change in our community and apostolic life, but it was also certainly a liturgical evolution – or revolution! The accounts of our “mothers” about this period are for me a source of an immense admiration before their flexibility and their capacity to adapt to so many novelties!

In 1977, an international session on liturgy at Auteuil brought together sisters from different Provinces. The two letters to the congregation of Sr. Clare Teresa, on the liturgy, written in 1991, were another important source for deepening our sense of the liturgy.

Since then, inculturation has not stopped progressing, in the Church, and amongst us. The diversity of our liturgical “customs” has not ceased to grow, bringing to our prayer the great richness of the peoples and the cultures to which we belong. Has not the moment come to revisit our common tradition which has been enriched by all the colours of the nations? To be ready, more delicately and very respectfully, to listen to one another, sharing that which, in our prayer and our liturgical celebrations, is a source of life, of beauty, of

meaning for each one of us and for those who join us? To seek together how the liturgy enriches our charism and makes fruitful our mission of education?

This summer the provincials of Europe decided to initiate a reflection along these lines, and organised a three-day liturgy workshop at Auteuil, bringing together sisters from our different Provinces as well as two Augustinians de Notre-Dame de Paris. It was a short time, but it enabled us to share our desires, our questions, our convictions.... A time which re-established us together in the choice to celebrate the liturgy, placing it at the heart of our life... A time of “aperitif” from which we left with a great desire that this experience wouldn’t simply rest amongst us, but would be able to become a point of departure for a larger communal research.

Also, the echoes of the liturgy workshop which you will find in this number are marked by happiness; they have the character of beginnings. May we seek together in the coming years this rediscovery of our rich tradition, and may it be a research which updates our liturgy!

Marie Sophie d’Oultremont
Tournai Community, Belgium

1. ARTICLES

SONG AND MUSIC IN CHURCH: TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF LISTENING

Jean-Claude CRIVELLI, c.r.

1. *Let us start off from Pythagoras!*

Born in the first half of the sixth century BC in Samos in Asia Minor, Pythagoras leaves his hometown at the age of 40 to immigrate to Crotona in southern Italy. There he began to preach wishing to introduce a new rule of life and to found a community therein, both religious and political whose impact would be considerable, the first model for other associations that would be set up in Trent, Metaponto, Sybaris, Syracuse... but whose fate was to perish, perhaps with its master, during a popular revolt.

One of the main merits of Pythagoras is, according to Aristoxenus, to have “elevated arithmetic above the needs of merchants”. Of what was for the Egyptians but a set of empirical yields, established for utilitarian purposes, he produced the first demonstrative science. What was really original in him was to envisage number in a religious and mystical perspective and it is religion which, liberating mathematics from its utilitarian use opens the way to abstract speculation...

Beginning perhaps from considerations on musical harmony which boils down to mathematical proportion, he arrives at the idea that “numbers are, so to speak, the principle, the source and the root of everything.” (Theon of Smyrna). Such a thought should, in this way, conceive the production of the world on the model of the harmony of numbers.

Legend has it that Pythagoras consecrated his last words to music and told his disciples: “Work on the monotonous” – which is situated beyond the harmony perceived by the ear. The ‘vocation’ of music, an activity par excellence that comes from the Muses, is to reveal the harmony of the universe. The “musical person” is he who listens to the universal harmony, works at harmonizing his own actions and that of others, particularly the activities of the city; therefore, to unify them. The human being is musically built.

It is interesting to see how Gregory of Nyssa describes the order of chants in the Christian assembly: “put the women by the choir of virgins (south side) and the men by the choir of the “monks” (north side) to obtain a well

distributed and harmonious psalmody, sung by choirs that are in unison and yet melodious thanks to alternation” (Life of Macrina)¹. And that is how humanity, as well as the individual person, is being built.

John Blacking explains in his famous work *“How musical is man?”* that the Vendas of South Africa taught him the place of music in existence.

All music is folk music in the sense that music cannot be transmitted or be meaningful without association between individuals. [...] Music touches human feelings and social practices too deeply and its structures are too often caused by unexpected explosions of unconscious brain activity for it to be subjected to arbitrary rules like the rules of a game. Many of the key processes of music, if not all, can be detected in the constitution of the human body and in the exchange structures of the human bodies in society. (...)

One very often overlooks the importance of creating listening in discussions on musical aptitude and yet it is as fundamental for music as it is for language. What is interesting in child prodigies is not so much that some children are born apparently equipped with exceptional gifts but by the fact that a child can react to the organized sounds of music even before he is taught to recognize them. We also know that children who are not prodigies can also be capable of reacting even if they might not have a positive attitude regarding music and do not seek to replicate their experience (...)

I express the idea that a perception of sound – whether innate or acquired or both – should be found in the mind before appearing as music.²

As for Christians

From all this I desire that we retain that the human being grows and structures itself – as a being for self and for others – in favour of listening.

– The latter is listening to the world as “cosmos”, that is, as an organized, harmonious universe: the human being becomes microcosm by listening to the macrocosm.

– Yet he is already in possession of the key of this quest for harmony – which is a quest for unity – since birth: naturally every child of man is born as a draft and promise of a microcosm. It is question of a task to accomplish for which we have already received something.

¹ Quoted by VALENZIANO

² *Le sens musical*, 1980, Paris, Minuit, passim 7-21

– Biblical revelation allows us to go further. Man is not only “*imago mundi*”: he is also created in the image of his God. More still, discovering that this image is broken by sin, it is in Christ that he can recover it. He is the perfect image of the Father – “the perfect copy of His nature” Heb. 1:3 tells us – since He is the Beloved Son. How can we become sons and daughters if it isn’t by listening to Him who is the Word? “From the cloud a voice was heard: ‘This is My Son, My chosen one, listen to Him.’” (Lk. 9:35).

Seeking to take up again the images capable of interesting their contemporaries, the Christians of old represented Christ as the new Orpheus. Thus in the catacombs of St. Domitilla a fresco shows a Christ-Orpheus which, through the harmony of his lyre, charmed the animal world, especially the lambs. “The word of Christ is divine and therefore comparable to the marvelous song of Orpheus. The lamb that listens is the attentive faithful.”³

2. Music as “sacramentum”

From the connection we have established between speech and music, we could define music as a kind of “analogue” of speech. Both affect the world in a “symbolic” [in the Greek sense of “*sumbal-lein*”] and “sacramental” way. Both, bringing together scattered elements – those of a torn, broken human existence, those of a broken world – to give them meaning, create new entities, a regenerated, transformed – macro and microcosms – universe.

Let us start from the well known Augustinian formula: “*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum etiam ipsum tanquam visibile verbum*”⁴ (*Tract. in Ioh* 80, of 15, 3). In this case, Augustine speaks of baptism, of water (*elementum*) revitalized, renewed by the word and thus capable of being life-giving. What word? The sacramental formula? The faith professed by the ecclesial community? The Scriptures which are their source? All of that, certainly, but even more and especially, the Word welcomed in faith, the voice of the Father listened to and which produces its effect: to gather together what has been dispersed, harmonize what is not right, give meaning to what has none, unify what is divided. As many actions that manifest the “musical” role of the word that is listened to, welcomed. I think of two texts:

³ F. TRISTAN, *The First Christian Images (from symbols to the icon, 2nd – 4th c.)*, 1996, Paris, Fayard, 382.

⁴ “The word adds itself to the material element and becomes a sacrament which is also like a visible word”

Is. 55:1-11 evoking the mystery of the creative and re-creative word – and the “*Veni Sancte Spiritus*” [*“Consolator optime, Dulcis hospes animae, Dulce refrigerium... Lava quod est sordidum, Riga quod est aridum, Sana quod est saucium”*].

But one must listen: “Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart as in the desert” (Ps 94) and “... the sheep hear his voice...he calls each by name, and leads them out” (Jn. 10:3).

Variations on the theme of listening

The human being is born of listening. He is born because he is listened to...and spoken to.

Two quotations from Jean-Louis Chrétien⁵:

The first hospitality is nothing more than listening. That is what we can give, body and soul, even on the road and by the roadside when we can neither offer roofing, nor warmth, nor shelter. And it can be given at any moment. It is the condition of all the other hospitalities because bitter is the bread we eat without the word shared, hard and heavy with insomnia the beds we lie on where our fatigue is not welcomed or respected. And the ultimate hospitality, that of the Lord, is it not to fall vertiginously into the luminous listening of the Word, listening to Him so as to speak, speaking so as to listen to Him? Listening is replete with eternity.

The magnitude of this hospitality comes from its humility.

It is the first, certainly, but no one ushered it in.

No man has begun to listen. We can only offer it because we had always received it already. It becomes one with the very transmission of the word. To speak, I must be able to hear myself. But to hear myself, one must have, in a considerate manner, that is, by going before me, listened and spoken to me. We were listened to even before speaking. Between our ears and our voice there have always been other voices and other listening. The hospitality of listening therefore has something unremarkable about it in the sense of what they said in the past, a common furnace, that is, common. It is in a common place, better still, it is what makes all community possible that we welcome the other. In real listening, I take the place of another man and no one ignores that there is no attentiveness without a certain effacement.

⁵ *L'arche de la parole*, 1998, Paris, PUF, ch. 1 *passim*.

Listening lives from the unheard

I listen to what I do not know more than what the other is telling me, there where I can share with him the surprise that is coming. To listen, one must, according to the strong expression of Peguy, “be vigilant”: it is only in this way that what we listen to reaches us, everything that is above, because the man who is vigilant, in control of his possibilities will never see the already known arrive and will listen only to the known.

Being with the other, granted the unprecedented, does not mean at all that I am, like a psychologist or a hermeneutic, on the look-out for the unsaid in his words, nor that I take at the same time, an overhanging and controlling position. There is something quite different. To hear the unheard in what the other says forms this patient, laborious journey which sometimes wanders and returns, with the improvised and tender in the act of attentiveness towards the singularity of the event which requires his word. It is only from there, from this always inceptive fraternity where what has to be said gives the tone, that the words of the other become audible, that is, respected. Their stammering, their awkwardness, their inadequacy, their contradictions no longer hide it, they are no longer privations nor deficiencies with respect to the sovereign word, they have meaning. But this meaning has nothing in common with that of a symptom that I would decipher, outside of myself, in a supposedly expert manner. It witnesses to the agonistic dimension of speech, it manifests that any act of speech is a hand to hand with silence, with that which cannot be said and yet will be said.

However, this tense listening to the unheard is anything but a silent contemplation. We are all ears only if we are all lips just as one is all lips only if one is all ears. Heidegger has thoroughly shown that to speak is to listen and to listen is to speak. To bear with the other that which gives him voice cannot happen except by bringing my own offering of breath and of meaning.

One sees here that real dialogue is born in a listening community where each one listens to the unheard: to listen to the other is to listen in oneself what the other listens to in himself.

Liturgical questions and other reflections

When a soloist intervenes in an assembly – reader, psalmist, organist, president..., – who do we listen to? How does the “*ekklésia*” become a community of listening?

In a society saturated with sound, what role should music play in the liturgy? Because we know that in the “traditional societies” music was rare. Thus, the situation has changed. We address ourselves to other ears.

In any case it would have a therapeutic (heal the listening) and initiatory (open to the listening of the unheard) role

... when one sees the musical programs of our parishes! They are sometimes the certified true copy of variety shows!

... or the sound systems of our churches: the system chosen (or rather sold!) is conceived to immerse the assembly into the sound, that is, into noise!

One copies the Disco halls.

What music in Church would be capable of harmonizing the heart of the faithful, of generating it, of gathering together the whole being (to “recollect” it), to unify it, to reconcile it with itself and with others...so that it may become a living offering to the praise and glory of the Father? What music so that we may become beings of silence and of listening?

3. Around the three “motifs”/ themes when one speaks of music and of liturgy

- participation
- chant as mystery
- silence⁶.

To participate

1. Actively participate: one of the great axes of the liturgical renewal of this century (cf. SC 14); a notion that flows from the baptismal priesthood. The Christian liturgy is participation in the *mystèrion* which implies a mystagogic type of activity (cf. “Mystagogy and songs”).

2. However *mysterion* does not mean mysterious in the vulgar sense. The Christian mystery is not on the side of impenetrable obscurity! God is not mysterious because He is incomprehensible. Even when He is “beyond all...

⁶ I will take hereafter three reflection forms edited in 1997-98 for the Document *Universa Laus* II.

alone unutterable...unknowable...towards you every being that thinks your universe raises a hymn of silence" (Gregory of Nazianzen).

Besides, *Christian rites should be drawn up so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify. The Christian people, as far as is possible, should be able to understand them with ease and take part in them fully, actively, and as a community* (SC 21). As a consequence, to hide the mystery under the veil of a foreign language, of a strange music or "reserved", will not make it more appreciative than what it really is.

3. The mystery of the Christian God is that of a Person. It is the same for God as for any human person: the more we know him, the more we open ourselves to his inner being. *Come and see* (Jn. 1:39). A God who allows himself to be sought and found in a familiar presence.

But to open oneself to this, one must not be at the centre. *The essence of all essences is the "breath" manifested in the syllable OM. To perceive such an eternal and primordial sound is possible only by blocking one's nose and ears, in isolating "earthly" sounds and words* (Corrado Bologna, *Flatus vocis*). Asceticism is necessary for this. One must take the mystical path. *Let this voice resound in the intricacies of one's body, in the caverns of the mind.*

4. Therefore, to participate consists first and foremost in allowing another voice resound in me, to live, little by little, in consonance with it. To participate is to allow the other to act, he who is the direct source of all action. Thus, to listen is to act. The *homo laudans* is first of all a *homo audiens*. Christian praise is a "giving thanks" since it is question of returning to the source the word of grace welcomed. *Behold the hour wherein life returns to the source* (Hymn already quoted *The Word in Silence*).

5. To participate is to always respond to a covenant initiative that does not come from me. Liturgical chants is ministerial: it carries the Voice to my ear and sends back the echo.

The Logos of God, despising the lyre and harp, soulless instruments, regulated our world by the Holy Spirit and especially this microcosm, man, his body and his soul. He uses this polyphonic instrument to celebrate God and He Himself sings in harmony with this human instrument... For you are for me a zither, a flute and a temple, a zither by your harmony, a flute by your breath, a temple by your reason, so that one vibrates, the other breathes and these house the Lord (Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptic*).

6. If these beginnings are admitted, then, in order to improve them, one can determine the practical processes of music and of song in the celebration. For example: – the vocal behaviour of the soloist, cantor, psalmist, at the heart of the assembly.

- The way a choir performs a motet or any other piece to be listened to by the assembly.
- The performance of the organist in his different interventions (accompaniment, prelude and interlude, solo pieces).
- The verbal manner, sung/spoken, of the priest in the dialogues, prayers, and other interventions as main celebrant.

Mystagogy and songs

1. At the beginning of the world, there is the primordial sound, the source of all energy expanded in the Big Bang, as well as vibratory structures constituted thereafter. Such a “sound”, following the example of the *Logos*, is presented as the *instigator* of all things (Cf. A. Tomatis, EcUn).

Then, is not the return of “sound” to the uncreated source from which it was uttered, the basic movement that rules the created universe: a movement that, in the incarnate *Logos*, becomes thanksgiving, sacrifice of sound. “The sacrifice of sound is at the base of all worship wherein there is song and music” (J. Gelineau, Con 222).

2. The “*sacrificium laudis*” – from the psalm 50, v. 14 and 23, until the Christian Eucharist – is paradoxically accomplished in silence. Song then appears in its ministerial nature, as a pedagogue and a mystagogue: it places one on the path of sacrifice, it calls, it introduces, it leads until the moment in which it abolishes and effaces itself. “The Word in silence is consumed for us” – sings the hymn of Good Friday in the Liturgy of the Hours in French, while awaiting, in the hope of the new Song, the Alleluia of the Kingdom.

3. But, not to fail in such a purpose, to retain its essentially mystagogic character, “the song of the Spouse, the music of the Church should permanently beware of multiple temptations...old demons are always there to turn the sound from its just end” (J. Gelineau, *Concilium* 222).

One understands the lack of enthusiasm of the Fathers regarding the place of music in Christian worship! Which then is the song that pleases God? “The praises of Him we want to sing is the singer himself. You want to praise God. Be what you say. You are His praise if you live according to what is good.” (Augustine, *Homily on the Old Testament* 34, 6 CCL 426).

4. Just as faith comes from listening – *fides ex auditu* – thus the song is equally by priority a “hearing”: “the ritual of singing sometimes has no other function than to manifest this priority” (Hameline, Cat. 113). Then begins for the wise the chain of “repeat” and of “listening again”, the “*fidei canora confessio*”, the “poetic sound of faith”. It is really a matter of wisdom. *Psallite sapienter* (Ps 46:8). “In the dual sense of tasting what is good and discerning what is to be understood as delight and promise” (Hameline, Cat. 113).

*Quoniam potest exerceri sapienter a sapientibus musica*⁸(Augustine). In the act of singing, the *ekklèsia*, at the same time Spouse of the Word and wise virgin, awakened (upright – vertical) by the voice of the Spouse, lets herself be led forward in the mystery of God and of human interiority. “Come from Lebanon, my promised bride; come on your way” (Sg. 4:8) – says the bridegroom – “Come! Maranatha!” – say the Spirit and the bride. (Rev. 22, 17, 20).

Songs suit beings of desire, those whom the Father draws to Him. Like all liturgical rites, songs belong to the order of the Kingdom, to what is given in abundance – *non necessitate sed delectatione*, comments Amalraire of Metz. It is “the means of possessing already what one hopes for, and of knowing unseen realities.”(Heb. 11:1).

Silence and gestures (vocal and other)

1. Silence. Place of the word – the true word is heard and not the verbosity! “In the beginning God created heaven and earth...” It is from within silence that God speaks, that He creates heaven and earth by the power of His Word. Silence, is the appropriate space to kindle this saving incarnation of the Word which is among others, music and song – but also all the gestures and signs of the liturgy.

The place, that is, also the origin of the word: comes from silence; and what allows it to exist: silence as condition of the word. *It is better to keep silent and be than to speak and not be* (Ignatius of Antioch).

At the proper time a reverent silence should be observed (SC 30), taken up again by the Instruction *Musicam sacram* n.17 – so true it is that there is no

⁷ Litt. « the confession of faith through song », but we would rather say « the sung faith of Christians ».

⁸ Only the wise devote themselves to music in all wisdom.

music without silence. Joseph Samson (1957) wrote: “If the song is not there to make me pray, let the singers keep quiet. If the song is not there to pacify my inner tumult, let the singers leave. If the song does not have the value of the silence it breaks, give me back the silence.”

There is but one God, manifested by Jesus Christ, His Son, who is His Word come out of silence (Ignatius of Antioch).

Silence is the sacrament of the world to come; words are instruments of the present times (Isaac the Syrian, 7th c.).

2. Here we must meditate on the kenosis of Christ (Phil. 2), the obedience of the Son (Heb. 5), the immolation of the Lamb (cf. Rev.). The way chosen by the Word is silence. He the Word accepts to become non-word. “The Word is consumed in silence for us” (already quoted in “Mystagogy and song”).

Silence remains the privileged matrix of Revelation. But not just any silence! Not a mere absence of noise or a malfunction in a succession of images and of sounds (as in the television)! But an attitude of mind and heart – which allows on the one hand the coming of the Word in us and on the other, follows this revelation of the Word to taste its presence and communicate its strength. One understands better now the quotation of Isaac the Syrian: *silence is the sacrament of the world to come*.

3. *In all life, silence says God... Be the voice of silence at work. Incubate life; it is she that praises God. It is enough to be and you will hear the thanksgiving of being and of blessing* (Patrice de La Tour du Pin). It is enough to be: the only posture that delivers us from chatter, the abundance of songs, “itching” gestures. Remain *in praesentia*: standing, awake/resurrected by the Spirit, before the Divine Majesty. *I have set my soul in silence and peace* (Ps. 130:2) – in the humility and audacity of the believer.

Specifically with regard to musical service: singing and music are “to be consumed in moderation”! A necessary *castitas* imposes itself. Abundance leveled. Casual transitions offend silence. It is through silence that all action should begin and be accomplished.

4. Silence has a gesture. Not so much a quantity as an inner quality that captures those who speak, sing, play, prostrate, walk... It leads to a whole spectrum of participative attitudes, it allows praise, it sustains the voice of the Spouse. It is the breath of the “*ekklessia*” which itself takes it to its primordial source – when the creator speaks the world.

How can one tell, from the time the liturgy is truly lived, when it rises as the divine song of Silence, enters the porticoes of recollection, its ineffable power of reconciliation? Everything becomes supple before the redemptive demands of crucified Love: gestures are interiorized, words become silent, songs heard, colours magnify the seasons of the soul, incense raises its prayer, and all matter offers the depths of its heart as an altar to the Spirit (Maurice Zundel).

THE BEAUTIFUL HEALS

+ Godfried Cardinal DANNEELS

My dear friends, our society is out of breath. Certainly we should not see too dark a picture, but the scenery is not really bright. In the panorama we have before us, there are many dark corners. I invite you, first of all, to reconstruct this landscape in broad strokes.

Our society is out of breath because it lacks gratuitousness. It focuses on the useful, the economic, the technical and scientific, on formal and greedy communication. It is particularly lacking in gratuitousness and in generosity. Yet we are not bad people, but perhaps we have missed a train.

Our society lacks hope. Several years ago, people said: "This time we really enter into the industrial society," and then we were told - and it was true – "We enter the leisure society" and now we hear: "We enter a depressive society". It is not really the economic society that is in crisis - it is, yes - but the real crisis is that of the man who is afraid of the present, by the almost complete obliteration of memories, by a blockage vis-à-vis the future. We terribly lack an eschatological expectation.

We also lack interiority. If we think we are 'interior', it just means that we are turned in on ourselves, living from day to day in a vacuum. Our psychology simply records the outside temperature, like a thermometer, without being in any way a thermostat. We record, we submit ourselves to, we live mainly in terms of the whimsical thermometer of public opinion and of the media. Poor people who missed the challenge of interiority!

We also lack, - I just put it in another way - we also lack memory as if the world had started only last night or this morning. We lack imagination, we have no plans. Life in society is like unleavened bread or a cheese without holes, if you allow me the comparison. The fact of being so lonely, so isolated in our world, locked in our psychology as in a cage, means that we become hyper-responsible for everything. Since we have cut ties with that which transcends us, with others, with nature, with the world, with the environment, with God, since, without knowing it, we declared ourselves gods, in this divine solitude, we also inherit divine missions. We must do everything ourselves, repair everything, allow everything to be done.

This hyper-responsibility leads us into a kind of Promethean frenzy: we want to solve all problems by our own forces. We grew up, we became adults. The child died in our hearts. On the one hand, it's exciting, on the other, completely depressing! When one loses a child in his heart, one loses himself. This hyper-responsibility that we cannot satisfy, also leads to aggressiveness against ourselves and against others: he who is isolated like a cat in a cage, which cannot go out, struggles. And if he cannot fight others, he fights himself. From there comes this frenzy of liberated sexuality, that centres on itself, because, if sexuality is especially attention to the other, when it is perverted, it simply becomes, even if it is addressed to another, a battle against a mirror.

In our society, we also lack universality. We are strong in communication, or at least information. We know pretty much everything, and almost immediately. However, we are not universal because we remain convinced that: "My truth is the truth." As we are billions, so there are billions of truths, which obviously remove the very notion of truth. Here we are in the realm of subjectivity triumphant. If my truth is the truth, if I make my own the privileges of truth - including the duty to impose it - it leads to a violent society, violence against oneself, violence against others, violence against everything.

To complete the picture – it must not be extended indefinitely – there is the escalation of the word to the detriment of symbol and of beauty to the detriment of the symbolic image. We live in a period where everything is said, but where little is shown, where everything is explained, but where no one shows anything. This of course creates a deadly dull.

THERAPY

There you have a brief overview and it is gloomy. Our society, through a kind of endemic reaction, creates therapies for itself, short-term therapies. I merely enumerate them without lingering, as they are not really important. One of the therapies that society fosters is self-medication, obsessive absorption of drugs: tranquilizers in the evening, stimulants in the morning. It fosters its own antibodies which are, I believe, bad antibodies. One does not cure a disease by a surplus. One does not cure a pathology of meaning by some technical means, be it medical and therapeutic. We cannot cure

qualitative ills by increasing quantity. Even if it's the first thing that comes to mind, medication is nevertheless bad.

Another auto-therapy of our society is drugs and alcohol. The treatment of our ills – and of those of our society -, since these are illnesses of a person, should be a treatment of the subject himself and not a treatment of the fringes only, of the body, of its tissues. Alcohol and drugs do not heal the subject at all; they touch only the tissues.

One also calls upon the wisdom of the East, and one dreams of a universal religion that will also be a therapeutic religion. The characteristic of this last auto-therapy is that it demands no effort, no conversion. One enters therein as one enters a sanatorium: one just has to submit to treatment. Obviously, it is the opposite of every religion and especially of Christianity that demands conversion first of all. Religion is not a kind of spa.

Finally, another auto medication that our society fosters is the warmth of sects, of small groups. Their secret consists in this: in this big world, so difficult to embrace and to master, the solution is miniaturization. Sects are one of these. The scale is reduced: few dogmas, only two or three – above all no big catechism like that of the Roman Catholic Church – , but three pages, some rules of life and nothing more. Certainly not twelve articles of faith or a bible of seventy-two books but only a few texts; little dialogue but a firm and clear leadership. This “mini” format characterizes the sects.

These are the auto-therapies that, I believe, have no future. However, they are there and must not be disregarded. When one is sick one tries all kinds of remedies. I would be the last to cast a stone on those who engage in these practices. It is not a question of condemning but of sympathizing.

But does a real therapy exist? I believe so. I will summarize it in one word: the real therapy for our times to heal the shadows of the landscape we have just evoked is hope. What is sorely lacking in our society is precisely hope! True, many things are necessary: faith, charity, generosity, solidarity. But hope is particularly lacking in our society. This does not only produce heart problems but could lead to a heart attack which could mean immediate death. If other things are missing, one could certainly have a heart attack, but medicines exist and as long as one is close to a hospital it is not necessarily deadly. But hope is

not found somewhere at the outskirts of civilization, it is the heart muscle, the myocardium. If this muscle stops, life stops. So we need a strong shot of hope.

Hope is the same thing as gratuitousness but it is not utopia. What is the difference? Utopia is a hope founded on my own efforts, my own capacities. The utopian waits for something completely new but he is convinced he will do it himself. The one who hopes also waits for something completely new but this newness comes from elsewhere; he cannot achieve it on his own strength or his own initiative. Utopia is effort and tension. The most recent example and probably most known of human history is Marxism. Its objective was to change society, to found the perfect society, very necessary moreover, through our own means, by force and by violence. Certainly one who hopes does not remain passive but he knows that there is something miraculous in the newness to come, that the society of tomorrow will moreover be given to us.

In other words, the affirmation of transcendence is always implied in hope. It is impossible to hope without transcendence. In other words, it is impossible to hope without God. Hope comes from elsewhere, not from my intelligence, not from my technical skills, not from my merits. It is an energy that arises from life and from society in the same way as a source springs forth. Every source has something surprising; one does not exactly know where they come from. All of a sudden they are there. A source is unpredictable. It is very different from a tap. One does not open a source, one discovers it. If you permit me a comparison, utopia is a tap, hope is a source. It implies somewhere the existence of transcendence.

THE BEAUTIFUL

Let us get to the essential of what I want to say. Beauty is not only a form of hope; it is the metamorphosis of hope. The beautiful is practically synonymous with hope and with gratuitousness. I am also firmly convinced that the beautiful has a therapeutic value and that it is the therapy adapted to our times. I am convinced that Dostoyevsky was right when he wrote: "Beauty will save the world". But, let us be clear. Beauty is not only what is aesthetically beautiful. That is a shape. The beautiful is much greater, more enveloping, more transcending than the aesthetically beautiful. The beautiful is what the Greeks defined as: *kalos kagathos*. *Kalos* means beautiful and *agathos* means good; *kalos kagathos* is therefore the mixture of both. The

word that best corresponds in our language is noble. Human nobility – that is the beautiful. Let us not be mistaken then. If Dostoyevsky says that: “The beautiful will save the world”, that does not only mean that “art will save the world”. That means that “human nobility will save the world”. Beauty is its radiance.

But why is the beautiful so therapeutic for our time? Let us return to the sombre points of the panorama mentioned earlier. The beautiful is the antidote. First of all, the beautiful implies faith. Faith is the memory. It is the act of rooting oneself in something that preceded us. He who focuses on the beautiful necessarily enters into a tradition, into the beautiful others have created before him. There is no beauty without memory, without a link with the past. There never is any amnesia in the beautiful. The beautiful did not begin last night. Nothing is beautiful in the real sense of the word that does not take the past into account and that is not linked to it. Our era suffers from being cut-off from what preceded it. This cut concerns not only the history of art, but all the beautiful things men have created before us. The beautiful constitutes a therapy, a healing from the isolation of modern man who has forgotten everything resembling someone who comes out of a coma, unaware of what happened to him.

The beautiful links me to my past, to the past of humanity. It gives man and society a solid foundation. It is also the only way of arriving at a certain peace, certain serenity. If I have nothing to lean on, if I have nowhere to sit on, I float. Modern man who has forgotten his past is a cosmonaut in his capsule – he floats, he is connected to nothing and must, at all times, hold on to something to find some stability. The beautiful anchors us in the long history of those who went before us. All real art carries in its genes, in its DNA something of the past. Even if it gives the impression of being totally new, it has already been invented. That is why one finds in modern art evident traces of primitive art. Our passion for these forms comes from the fact that primitive art is our grandfather, or even our father.

The beautiful is therefore fundamentally therapeutic because it implies a certain memory, a certain faith – faith is memory. The beautiful also implies the fact of being linked to a future. It is a culture of the future and a vision on the future. Now there are two really great depressing temptations: on the one hand the absence of imagination, the obsession of the past, the lack of renewal, a kind of bad classicism, and on the other hand, reckless trust in

novelty. The beautiful creates a balance. It prepares the future, it introduces it, announces it, anticipates it because it is not reckless, nor is it void of imagination, always on the lookout for what is coming. It is deeply imbued with hope.

The beautiful constitutes a therapy in a third way: it has the force for our times to trigger the action, to awaken the energy. The beautiful sets in movement because it is symbolic. Every beautiful thing is symbolic and every symbol is a lever capable of making me act. I do not remember who said: “give me a symbol and I will change the world”. Anyway, it is true that with a symbol one can change the world. The symbol, by its versatility, by the fact that it puts its roots in archetypal images, in the archaeology of our human knowledge, fosters energy. The old definition of beauty – in theological and scholastic philosophy – is that it comes from what is true. The beautiful is the halo around the sun, there where the sun is hottest and brightest. And if you think of what is true, the halo or the true is the truest, the force that makes me move. I burn my eyes when I look at the perimeters of the sun, there where it gives out its strongest energy. This is not in its centre. The beautiful contains an immense force to mobilize; it is the prelude of charity. To give and to show something beautiful to people makes them incapable of doing wrong and even less capable of not doing good. Nothing is better at moving us than to see something beautiful.

You have probably noted that the beautiful is thus like the synthesis of faith, of hope and of charity. It is linked to the past by faith, it anticipates the future by hope and, at the same time, it is charity by making me act now. It is therefore profoundly therapeutic. A cure of hope of faith and of charity – of the true, the good and the beautiful – is profoundly therapeutic for man. The beautiful heals all our wounds. It heals first of all the obsession with the useful, the obsession with the purely economic, the purely technical, pure calculation. There is nothing more therapeutic as showing something beautiful. That is why it is absolutely necessary that we have in our cities and villages, besides technical sites, power plants, telephone stations or other places, places consecrated to beauty. I have not yet seen anyone, on a Sunday evening or in summer, go sit with others by a power plant. One normally chooses a place by a statue, a sculpture, a beautiful building.

The beautiful is therapeutic because it triggers, in society and in man, a contemplative dimension. A culture without beauty is a culture that totally

lacks contemplation and interiority. The beautiful is in the order of seeing, not of manipulation. It is there for one to go around it, not to go and touch it. It tends to destroy itself when touched. It resembles the miniatures in gold leaf of the Middle Ages: if one puts a finger on them the lustre of the gold disappears, the thin sheet crumbles. The beautiful is to be contemplated. It is of the order of the eye and not that of the hand. The eye is the organ nearest to the object it sees; at the same time that it is the most respectful. You cannot be closer to me than in my eyes and yet I do not touch you. A culture without beauty is a culture without contemplation. It is a closed culture. Beauty is useful only to “go around it”, to look at it.

The beautiful also evokes the culture of the universal. It breaks isolation. It is above all a language everyone understands beyond languages and signs everywhere in the world. Even if you do not understand a play, you can be deeply moved. Go to Epidaurus in Greece and attend the Antigone of Sophocles. You will understand almost nothing and yet you will understand everything. That is an extreme case – in a foreign language –however, the way Oedipus or Antigone speak and ‘cry’, the way in which the choir of old men cry out and sing tell you everything. The tragedy of Oedipus who gouges out his eyes because he has been the victim of a destiny that fell upon him when he marries his mother and kills his father without knowing it, is understood by everyone and everyone sympathizes. This is worth more in terms of art in which language does not play a strong role or very little: painting, sculpture, music. In this way the beautiful creates a culture of the universal. It breaks the solitude of man, his confinement. It opens doors and windows. Incompatible with violence, it soothes and calms. It makes me ‘coincide’ with myself. The beautiful consists in the reconciliation of opposites and of harmony. Paradox is possible therein. The contradiction of opposites that exclude each other is reduced to an acceptable paradox. That is why God is supremely beautiful as we know Him. The God of Christians is at the same time infinitely elevated, majestic and infinitely close. While distance and closeness are not compatible, transcendence and immanence are summed up and synthesized in a single Being; from there His extreme beauty.

The beautiful is likewise deeply therapeutic because it creates a link between me, others, the world, history, nature, the cosmos... it reattaches me, recreates links, binds me. It is deeply religious.

UNIVERSALITY

Finally, the beautiful is the word accomplished and completed. It has the versatility of the symbol that synthesizes opposing aspects, can be interpreted in different ways, says many things in one blow which, to express in words, one would need a whole dictionary. If I were to ask you to explain in words what is a spiral staircase you would need at least ten lines. There are five in the Larousse. But there is a simpler way of saying all you want to say. Make use of a sign or of a symbol. If you go out to sea, you will be drawn and you will be afraid at the same time. In the Bible, the sea or water is used both as a symbol of life and as a symbol of death. Baptism is celebrated with water because it signifies both birth to a new life and death to another. Symbol is versatile and global, not analytical. The beautiful grasps something at one go, at a glance.

In short, the beautiful is therapeutic because it involves memory and therefore faith, because it implies the future and therefore hope, because it makes me act and is a source of charity. It heals the wounds of the economic, of the useful; it heals the wounds of manipulation in us by opening us to contemplation; it heals the wounds of isolation by making us universal. It is understandable everywhere, it is felt everywhere. It is incompatible with violence and frenzy. It gives rest and calms. It creates links, it reattaches, it gives points of reference and above all, it goes beyond the simple word because it synthesizes in the paradox, different versatile meanings. It simplifies by making understandable what is complicated. In a word, it does everything. Moreover, it is the most beautiful name one can give God: Beauty.

A PATH TOWARDS GOD

I wonder if the beautiful is not the path par excellence to find God. God is obviously true, good and beautiful. But for our contemporaries, the door of truth sometimes opens with difficulty because they have an innate sense of scepticism. What is truth? We are all little Pilates when we ask ourselves that. In the first place, truth does not seem to interest us. It is inaccessible and when one finds it, it is suspected of pretension, of arrogance. Even though God is true, I do not know if our contemporaries will easily go to Him through this path. We have little interest in what is true. The question of God, however, is very crucial for humanity and for its development. To go to God

through the door of the good is also difficult. If God is good, He is too good for me. I am incapable of doing well and in our days, ethics is also a difficult port of entry to God. We are deeply convinced from experience, and also a little from fear, that we are incapable of living in an ethical and moral way. A perfect God discourages us and a God that is truth is beyond us.

But if one enters through the door of the beautiful, all the resistances give way. Try it with the young. Speak to them of God as the source of truth, of the great truth – it will be sleep assured. Speak of God as an example of morality and they will all be in a bad mood. But show that God is beautiful in His Bible, in His creation, in man, in couples, in Jesus, in works of art, in icons, in Renaissance art, in the little Roman churches...Show them beauty in God saying that He is beauty itself, – I don't say that that will convert them all – but at least there won't be any resistance.

There is but one theologian of our era who tried, as far as I know, such an approach to God, who focused on God through the beautiful and that is Hans Urs von Balthasar. The others ranked themselves in the order of the true, of the moral, of goodness or of the good. But real theology is also aesthetic in the strong sense of the word. It is, moreover, the title of the works of Urs von Balthasar: aesthetic theology. True, it is not aesthetic in the artistic sense of the word; it is the fact of feeling something, of being moved, of being seized by something. I do not advocate that theologians abandon the ways of truth and of the good to go to God. They are also very important. But if we provided our contemporaries with something to make a passage towards God by the beautiful also, we would have done a great work. But in the theological courses, even if one must not neglect the critical sense and the search for the true, there are still far too few bridges between theology and literature, art or history. How is it possible that God, who is the source of all beauty, hardly appears as such in theological research?

I conclude with a simple example. When I was a professor at the seminary, I had to give courses on sacramental theology on the sacrament of penance, of confession and of reconciliation. I asked myself how to speak to the young about confession. I felt the resistance. I had the idea – and I always do this in other circumstances – of reading with them the great literary works on the fault, on culpability, on redemption, on expiation...to show them that confession is not only what happens in a confessional but that it occupies an immense space in the history of humanity. It is not just a small Catholic

theological treatise but a problem with which the ancient Greeks had struggled with for centuries without ever finding the solution. It is that the idea of fault, repentance, remorse, vengeance, violence, forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation, is so fundamental in the heart of man, so close to his spinal column! And my students told me: "We never would have thought of that". My colleagues asked me why I wasted three months on literature. I simply answered like the American who was asked why he went to the moon: "Because it is there". So I answered: "Because these writings are there".

2. LITURGY WORKSHOP - EUROPE

Auteuil, 10-12 July 2010

Origin and aim: the provincials of Europe wished to organize a workshop on the liturgy with the aim of helping our communities to deepen our liturgical life as an essential element of our charism. This work will serve as the base to deepen these tracks in community. We invite you to the same task as ours!

Sr. Diana accepted to open the session. We were **15 sisters** representing all the provinces in Europe. There were 2 Augustinians of Notre Dame de Paris as well. There were no specialists among us but the desire to take time to reflect on this dimension of our religious life.

Working method:

Each one took the time to prepare: reread the circulars of Sr. Clare Teresa on the Liturgy, while comparing this reading with our daily experiences.

After the introduction by Sr. Diana, we shared this experience of the liturgy.

We took the time to find together the desire of Marie Eugenie at the origin of the Congregation in terms of its liturgical life.

Two texts guided us. You will find them in "Etudes d'Archives" N°1 p.9-18:

- ◆ the letter to Mgr Gros and a letter to Father d'Alzon
- ◆ n° 66 of the Rule of Life.

This sharing gave rise to convictions, findings and questions that can guide our joint reflection depending on the concrete reality of the community.

We liked very much this very simple pedagogy. It provided a flowing movement towards the essential and gave an impetus towards the addressing of the issues.

From this arose the documents:

1. Convictions
2. The Context of the Liturgy
3. The Daily Office (The Liturgy of the Hours)
4. Liturgy and Education
5. The Eucharist

We only worked for 3 days! You will note that the documents concerning the Liturgy of the Hours are more elaborate. They were worked on more than

those on the Eucharist and on Education but it seemed important to open these two points for reflection... It is a modest sharing that gave us all the taste of the joy of this gift of the Liturgy for a solid religious life.

The simple, fraternal and open atmosphere of listening and of sharing in truth gave us joy and “revitalized” us...a big thank you to each one!

Our gratitude goes also to the team of Partage Auteuil for providing these ‘pages’ for a simple fraternal sharing!

Sr. Josiane Emmanuel
Northern Europe

2.1. OPENING of the WORKSHOP

I am happy to welcome you to Auteuil, where we are all ‘at home’. Your session seems to be very interesting. It could even be captivating because the liturgy is certainly a fascinating topic in itself.

I would like, first of all, to thank you for having asked me to introduce this session on the liturgy because it gave me the opportunity of reflecting on the place of the liturgy in our religious life. I enjoyed doing it and even if I cannot attend the session, I have already renewed my own understanding and my experience of the liturgy.

It is clear that I am neither a liturgist nor an expert on the topic, so what I will say is not based on any sort of authority. Neither do I think it necessary to give you reflections with the aim of motivating you. This would be to preach to the “choir”, as we say in English (in French: “preaching to the converted”)! You are already motivated otherwise you would not have taken time from your holidays to come to this session! Neither will I quote from this or that text of our Congregational sources, from the Rule of Life, or from the writings of Marie Eugenie even if we know that they are fundamental. I know that you have taken our Tradition into consideration and that you have studied and/or read the letter of Clare on the Liturgy.

What I would very simply like to do is to sow some seeds that I find interesting in the hope that they can find fertile ground here to sprout and bear fruit for our life in the Assumption.

Religious Life, Liturgy and Humanization

The word « humanization » is a word I have read or heard most often this year. I would also like to share with you some points of view on the relationship between these three elements: religious life – liturgy – humanization.

The Word of God creates History and our human community.

The Word creates History, creates my history, creates our history. It is “the humanizer» par excellence! The Scriptures certainly have a central place in the liturgy. When we are in choir, we truly proclaim to each other this Word. To listen to the Word sung by our sisters shapes and creates our human community.

The Word of God reveals the nature of our humanity.

Speaking on a Gospel passage of St Luke (11: 5-15) Guy Lafon makes us discover what the text reveals: the fundamental state of our humanity: *“Briefly, what is revealed in the demand is not only the object that we ask for and about which we can, moreover, be mistaken, but it is the situation in which we find ourselves, and it is a situation of need.”*⁹ And again: “this state can be defined thus: the request teaches us that we can do nothing without the others”¹⁰.

This passage shows that, in fact, humanity functions in the dynamic of the gift. *If there is humanity, there is gift, and gift that carries with it all we need!*¹¹ Whoever asks receives! The Word brings into existence this way of being... we are persons who at the same time receive and request!

Each morning, noon and evening, we present, in the liturgy of the hours, our human situation (beings both needy and gifted), when we begin with: *“O God come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me!”*

⁹ Lafon, Guy. La Table de l’Evangile XX p. 63

¹⁰ idem

¹¹ Idem p. 66

Religious Life as Fertile Gap/Distance

This author also notes in this passage five simple words: “and *I say to you*”. In fact, they introduce a Christian anthropology. Jesus notes a contradiction, an alternative, **a gap** between what the others say and what he himself says...

Father Jean-Claude Lavigne¹² describes religious life as a distancing for life. *A gap is more than a difference. It is a distance one chooses to live, from the world which one cannot nor wants to leave totally*¹³. Every Christian is called to live this spacing in terms of values and of practices. The religious wish to incarnate it not only in terms of values but also in their way of living the daily practices and in an “institution” (which is a project in and for society), in an institution with specific organizations (and thus limited, at times fossilised and mind-numbing) of schedules, of customs...¹⁴

Our religious life should manifest some of our convictions on our humanity, on us, on humans all the more so since ME wished, as she avows, to honour the mystery of the Incarnation!

I think of the numerous concrete ways by which our “humanity” is taught and even healed¹⁵ through the liturgy: repetition, school of de-centring – re-centring, use of time, passage of time and History, remembering, involvement of all our senses. To love the liturgy, is to love the times of prayer offered through songs, silences, movements, colours ...¹⁶

To end, I will give you a small gift that I prepared for you based on the book of Jean-Claude Lavigne. I hope that it will inspire you in the understanding of this session as a mission because its fruit will serve not only our communities but all believers.

It is through the liturgy and hospitality that the monasteries are at the service of persons in search for peace and of those who seek to found their actions on

¹² Lavigne, Jean-Claude. That they may have life in abundance. Ed. Cerf 2010

¹³ Lavigne. Idem p. 77

¹⁴ Idem p. 78

¹⁵ Cardinal Danneels speaks of the Beautiful that Heals. “The beauty of our liturgies and of our chapels can heal.”

¹⁶ Lavigne, Idem p. 124

*solid elements. It is in that way that contemplation becomes action and mission.*¹⁷

Have a good session!

Sr. Diana, Superior General

2.2. Document 1: CONVICTIONS

Today, like Marie Eugenie and the first Sisters, we are called, personally and in community, to choose again to make the liturgy the centre of our lives. Like Marie Eugenie we understand that the Liturgy:

- ◆ Draws and directs towards God
 - ourselves and those who join us in our prayer
 - beauty and the aesthetic dimension to be nurtured as being an opening to the Mystery of God
 - joy and praise/ joyful detachment

- ◆ Strengthens the spirit of Faith
 - It requires an ongoing formation so that what we sing and what we listen to nourish us
 - It Christianises our intelligence and
 - It helps us to enter into the Mystery of the Church-
 - It educates us to make the most of time
 - * *it saves us from activism*
 - * *it helps us to move from chronos to kairos*
 - * *the liturgical cycle makes us move on and directs us*

- ◆ Makes the apostolic mission fruitful

It is one of the foundations of our training as educators
It purifies and enlightens our outlook on daily events and on our work
It helps us to immerse our mission in praise and thanksgiving

¹⁷ Idem. P.132

- ◆ Forms the community
 - The Word of God moulds us
 - The liturgy is a place of mutual welcome and charity

- ◆ Is a mission
 - Received from the Church
 - It is a work – *Opus Dei* (we can expect it to be tiring)
 - It is a privileged place of evangelisation and catechesis

The experience of our communities shows us that we have our own way of celebrating the liturgy: with a monastic foundation and open to various forms of prayer, internationality, inclusion of those who come to pray with us, formation in prayer, integration of the life of the world, inculturation, creativity.....

2.3. Document 2: THE CONTEXT OF THE LITURGY

Convictions

The liturgy is not separated from the rest of life.

“There is a style of contemplative life in which... both the daily organisation of material things and personal choices are directed towards the search for God in all things... The celebration of the Office in choir is a fundamental aspect of our style of contemplative life.”¹⁸

This fundamental aspect is affected by the wholeness of our lives: each of our choices has an effect on our way of carrying out the liturgy.

Observations

- ✓ We have the tendency to separate the liturgical celebrations from the rest of our activities.

- ✓ The liturgy is a reflection of our community relations.

¹⁸ Sr. Clare Teresa, Letter on the liturgy, part, page 2

- ✓ We live in the midst of many concerns (use of our busy time, GSM - Global Service of Mobile communication, internet etc...)
- ✓ A multiplicity of sounds and words makes interior silence, listening and giving the right answer, difficult.

Some points for reflection

- ✓ How do we prepare ourselves for the Office?
- ✓ What place has silence in our personal and community life?
- ✓ What is our experience of the Great Silence? How does it help our life?
- ✓ Apart from the liturgical celebrations, is there any personal or community liturgical time in our daily life? For example prayer at meals. How do we carry them out?
- ✓ How do we express fraternal charity in the liturgy; how do we build it up in community?
- ✓ What place do we give to beauty in our lives and in that of the community?
- ✓ What place does Spiritual Reading have?
- ✓ How do we prepare the Office (singing practices, station.....)?
- ✓ What gestures? What attitudes....
- ✓ How to cultivate a spirit of praise

2.4. Document 3: THE DAILY OFFICE

Convictions

We love the Daily Office. We hold to all the hours of the Office because we realise that they are the “framework” of our contemplative life.

We accept the Office as a gift from God and a mission entrusted to the Church.

Marie Eugenie insisted on the importance of “understanding the Office” in its structure and richness. This demands an ongoing formation and an effort for continuous renewal.

We feel that we celebrate the Daily Office in a special way, according to our charism. The documents of the Congregation will help us to discover this identity: Letter to Mgr. Gros; Letter no.1556 to Fr. d’Alzon; the chapter on the spirit of the Assumption of 12 May 1878; Sr. Clare Teresa’s letters on the liturgy etc...

Observations

The celebration of the liturgy is a paradoxical situation: peace and tension, happiness and responsibility, communion with and separation from the world, creativity and tradition etc.

Some of the Office is felt to be heavy, especially the Office of Readings.

Today, more than in former times, we are assailed by images, words and information. Our senses are very strongly stimulated. Our connection with our times is changing. Inevitably, this reverberates on our celebration of the liturgy.

Questions to discuss in Community

The Office of Readings:

What meaning does it have? What is our experience of it (strengths and weaknesses)? How does it nourish our Faith? When do we say it? How do we choose the second reading?

Midday Prayer:

How can we join in when we cannot celebrate it with the Community? What means can we take? What importance do we give to the review of the morning?

Vigils of Sundays and Solemnities:

How to better bring out the meaning of this Office: the role of lighting; how can we accentuate the importance of the Resurrection?

Ongoing Formation

What tools have we in our Communities to help our formation?

How do we understand our own liturgical tradition?

What musical training would be useful for each Sister?

How to proclaim the Word of God?

How to understand the Psalms, the hymns and the readings better?

The Office and Interiority

How to carry out the Office in our own context? What rhythm?

What place do we give to silence?

How are our senses both touched and calmed?

How to work on the introduction to the Office (invocation to the Holy Spirit, opening, Invitatory etc)?

How can we bring the world into our celebrations?

Make the Office “lighter”?

Why does the Office sometimes seem heavy to us?

What means can we take to enjoy its richness?

Creativity and tradition

How can we take into account the gifts, the ages, the strengths and the weaknesses of our communities?

How do we welcome the people who join us for our prayer? Do we adapt our Office accordingly and following what criteria?

How do we find the balance between tradition and creativity? Between unity and personal expression? How do we train ourselves so that creativity becomes a source of life and meaning?

2.5. Document 4: LITURGY and EDUCATION

On rereading the texts of Marie Eugenie we were struck by the connection between “liturgical life” and “mission of education”. There is a mutual

fecundity between them. Marie Eugenie had the intuition that the liturgy can train us as educators.¹⁹

It seems important to us to think about this aspect in Community.

Here are some points for reflection arising from our discussions during the workshop:

- How to allow ourselves to be transformed by the liturgy in order that our relationships may be filled with joy and praise (in our communities, in our work, in friendships and with our families...)?
- How to share our love for God with the world?
- How do we teach about the liturgy in our mission?
- How does the liturgy colour our mission?
- How does the liturgy influence our mission?
- How do we listen to God speaking to us through our brothers and sisters, creation and world events? What connection do we make with the liturgy?
- How do we make our house “a liturgical space” (welcome, listening...)?

2.6. Document 5: THE EUCHARIST - Rule of Life 65

Convictions

Participating in the Eucharist invites us to offer up our lives.

It is a place of “joyful detachment” enabling us to be a pilgrim people following in the footsteps of Christ. It is essential for our Religious Life.

We wish to renew our Faith, our amazement and wonder at the gift of the Eucharist which creates the Church.

Observations

Some communities participate in the Eucharist in Community, some in various places and others in the Parish community. Certain Sisters are not able to take

¹⁹ Reference – Letter to Fr. D’Alzon 19 July 1842, No.1556 Advice on Education, letter to Mgr. Gros

part in the Eucharist every day. Sometimes it happens that we feel ill at ease in the way the Eucharist is celebrated.

Points for reflection

1. What do we do when there is no Priest to celebrate Mass?
The way of celebrating Sunday and celebrating weekdays is different.
What do you think about that?
2. How can we enliven our celebrations in spite of routine and ritualism?
3. Should we receive communion or not outside of the Mass?
4. How can we go about a communal celebration with our sick Sisters?
How do we take Communion to the sick?
5. What is the place of our Community in the Parish community?
6. How can we build a lively Eucharistic community? (RL. 9)

N.B. We realise that this work is incomplete... it is simply an invitation and a fraternal sharing of where we have reached during the workshop...We would really need a workshop entirely devoted to the Eucharist! It is the centre of our lives and that is why we wanted something to appear...this is just a small contribution!!!!

3. THE LIVED EXPERIENCES IN OUR PROVINCES

3.1. The consecration of the altar of the Chapel of Auteuil

June 2, 2010

HOMILY OF CARDINAL VINGT-TROIS

Dear Friends,

On many occasions we get the impression that the path by which Jesus is leading us is a bit odd. He says: “The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will adore in spirit and in truth,” and not in a place, no matter where. And we are listening to this word of Christ, while we are in the middle of consecrating a place dedicated to prayer!

While the training which long years of meditation has given us has perhaps accustomed us to this formula, in the first instance it is very odd to know that we no longer worship on Mount Gerizim, we no longer worship in Jerusalem, we worship in spirit and in truth. And then, lo and behold, we build churches. And not only do we build them, but we rebuild them, we adapt them and consecrate them. And equally we give them a certain importance, for if they were not important we would not be here. So how can we understand all this? Clearly it is not that we are not capable of praying except in a church. Thanks be to God, all of us are capable of praying everywhere: because no place, no time, no activity leaves us as strangers to God and then as Scripture says “in everything whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you drink, do it all for the glory of God”. And we try to give glory to God as much as we can in every aspect of our life and in all the places of our life.

We realise also that it isn't just convenience which leads us to build. In early times we used pagan basilicas as churches, as a protection against the elements. But we could also have prayed in these pagan places without that leading to a project to construct churches especially for prayer. We could have gone on celebrating in hangars and cinemas. But we didn't!

As we go through the world, or just through some countries of Europe, or just some French villages, we perceive that through the building of churches, something else is being expressed. But what is really being expressed? Have

we re-sacralised these places or is it rather that we have really followed Christ who asks us to adore in spirit and in truth? And what is our need of these consecrated places?

Consecration is an important practice for Christians. We consecrate people: with the oil of chrism we anoint those who are baptised and confirmed, we anoint priests and bishops, and right now we are going to consecrate this place, this altar. We are going to consecrate things! How do we understand this gesture in the context of adoration in spirit and in truth?

Perhaps we can come at the question from a different angle: “the one who says that they love God whom they do not see, and who does not love their brother whom they do see, is a liar” (1Jn) Those who say that they adore God whom they do not see, without ever making visible acts of adoration, are they really true adorers?

Can our human condition - with its bodiliness, its feelings, its intelligence, its different modes of expression, its aesthetic faculties - can it truly come together in an act of adoration that is purely mental and without any physical expression?

We can take another example: we try to be, we hope to be in communion with Christ at all times, and yet we receive Eucharistic communion. Why? Because we are human beings who need the work which is being accomplished in the deepest part of ourselves to be expressed through visible acts and realities.

It is no longer a question then of us saying that such a place is sacred, such a tree is sacred, such a rock is sacred... There is no question of us re-sacralising what God has de-sacralised, by making nature the new sacred universe of modern man: not having a God they adore trees, or beaches, or a purer atmosphere...

That is not our religion. But our religion, which is to adore in spirit and in truth and to be in communion with Christ in the deepest part of our being, can only reach its fullness through the bodily expression which we give it. To constitute a people without ever seeing it is an illusion! To be a member of a Church without belonging to any community is an illusion! To think that you are in

communion with God without being in communion with your brothers and sisters is an illusion!

Our spiritual communion reaches its real plenitude when it transforms our human relationships, just as the prayer of Christians over the centuries transformed the imperial basilicas of Roman cities into places dedicated and consecrated to prayer, defined by prayer, even while they kept the architecture and anything else you care to mention... even the mosaics if you like. But bit by bit, the people who animated these buildings gave them another dimension, which is not to make the building sacred, but to consecrate the people.

A moment ago I sprinkled the walls of this church with holy water, while at the same time I was sprinkling you. Because we are but one: the church the place and the Church the body, and the body is the People. So our devotion is not for the place, nor for the stones; it isn't for the works of art, it is for the person of Christ. And the places, stones, works of art, the intelligent construction of a space, the artistic management of a space, all that contributes to giving flesh to the prayer which rises from our hearts. So it is with great joy that we mark this stage (there have been several, I dare not say how many because I don't know)... this nth stage of the chapel of the Sisters of the Assumption (laughter).

There have been several previous stages, and it is a very important sign, a parable of the life of the Church, which is ever renewing its self expression, which never ceases gathering the elements of the tradition to make of them the present language of its prayer.

The evolution of the place is also a sign of the evolution of humanity. The living Church is a Church which transforms itself. I hope that St Marie Eugenie, here at last behind her wall (laughter), where we are in space and time... although she is neither in space nor in time! - I hope that Marie Eugenie, with her creative and lively spirit, understands that the place of prayer of the Assumption in 2010 can't be exactly the same as in 1860! Not only because the world has changed, but because a living community expresses itself in a different fashion, and expresses itself by different symbolism. It keeps some characteristic traits and there are some adjustments better adapted to the experience of prayer of the community today.

It is then a joy to mark not only the renovation of the church, but the hope that this renovation of a building expresses the vitality of the community and the dynamism which characterises the Congregation not only in its prayer, but also in its daily life. Let us pray with confidence then to the Lord who consecrates this place, not to make it a holy place, but to remind us that we are a consecrated people.

3.2. Anniversary of the Canonisation, Auteuil, 3rd June 2010

Homily of Benoît Grière, AA

Exactly three years ago today, we were in Rome, in St Peter's Square celebrating the canonisation of Mother Marie Eugenie of Jesus. That event, copiously watered by torrential rain, enabled us to get an understanding of a saint whom the Church was proposing as a model for believers.

Today, in this renovated chapel of the Religious of the Assumption, we are commemorating the ever active holiness of Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus in our world, and also the vitality of her spiritual posterity. *"What God is great as our God? Holiness is your way."* says the psalm. Today's Gospel enables us to go deeper into this mystery of holiness.

Let us say at once, if Marie Eugenie is holy, it is because we are also called to holiness. Holiness is not a distinction, a decoration, a reward; before all else it is the recognition of a path opened by a person, a path that leads to God and which enables us to be faithful to God. Today, in celebrating the holiness of Mother Marie Eugenie of Jesus, we must hear once more the call which God is always making to men and women: *Be holy as your Father in heaven is holy.*

The Gospel also enlightens us. Jesus is questioned by a scribe who wants to know the first of all the commandments. As we know, in Judaism, the practice of the law leads a person to purity and holiness. It is by observing the commandments that a person becomes just. Jesus as a pious Jew recalls the law given to Moses. God is unique and we must love Him with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength.

Marie Eugenie discovered this one unique God while listening to Lacordaire preaching from the height of the pulpit in Notre Dame. She understood that

she must give Him “all her strength, or rather all her weakness” to serve the Church. True holiness is something which acts in fragile beings who recognise their weakness and are ready to receive the grace. Like all authentic saints both before and after her, when she had understood that there is a God, she had to serve Him. After that everything was oriented by the light given during this encounter. And today, for us is God the one unique God? Is He really the all of our lives? Careful now! He is not a God who comes to crush our condition or obliterate our sympathies, but a God who gives us life and makes us even more present in the world. Because the God that we love is the God of Jesus Christ, Jesus, the Son of God, who took flesh and completely shared our human condition.

To love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength. This is, following the example of Marie Eugenie, to recognise that despite our weaknesses and infirmities, there is Jesus Christ who is “*living in us*” and who sets us in action to contribute to the extension of his Kingdom. To love God, is to love Jesus Christ and follow his example.

Teresa of Avila, another saint who opens a path of life for us, once had a dream. She saw a child who asked her name. Teresa answered: “*I am Teresa of Jesus*”. The Carmelite then asked the child: “*And You? Who are you?*” and the child replied “*I am Jesus of Teresa*”. I think that Marie Eugenie of Jesus had discovered the Jesus of Marie Eugenie. That is to say someone whom it is possible to recognise when we recognise God as unique and when we keep open the ear of our heart. Marie Eugenie found Jesus because she listened to the Word which God never ceases to give to the world. We are invited to discover the unique face of Jesus which is revealed to us in Jesus. To discover the Jesus of Diana, the Jesus of Therese Maylis, the Jesus of Martine, of Paul and of James...

The scribe in the Gospel had also heard the rest of Jesus’ words: “*you shall love your neighbour as yourself*”. Love of God is inseparable from love of neighbour and the strength of the saints is deployed in this one, double-facetted commandment. Marie Eugenie founded her Congregation through love of God and her neighbour. The Kingdom of God which was established in her heart by loving listening to the words of Jesus Christ was spread around her by her desire to serve the Church. A strong contemplative life is always missionary. Marie Eugenie offers us a way of sanctity where contemplation

opens out into service of our brothers and sisters. Let us give thanks to God for she who opens a path of holiness for us.

3.3. Abidjan, Ivory Coast

An Echo from West Africa on the Liturgy

Thank you to the editing team of Partage Auteuil for this beautiful initiative which enables us to take even if only a short break to become aware once more of the space we give to the liturgy in our lives. The liturgy is a central element of our life. Marie Eugenie says that it is one of the sources of our life, the source from which we can draw the spirit of the Church. We therefore have reason to manifest a special love for this essential element of our life.

In West Africa, our love for the liturgy is shown through a greater integration in our liturgical celebrations of everything that makes up our life.

We know from the documents of the Province that the Province has offered moments for formation and reflection which to this day not only help us to understand what we live in the liturgy but above all to live more and more a liturgy that is inculturated and to make of it a place to celebrate our whole life. One of the sessions that marked our Province was the Assumption 2000 session held in Daloa in August 2002. It had as theme: the liturgy as the expression of communion and of fraternity.

To prepare for this meeting, all the communities had been encouraged to look for elements in the liturgy on which we had to dwell upon as a Province in view of arriving at a consensus. Several questions were raised about the Divine Office and the Mass. Reflections were conducted in relation to what in our liturgical celebrations allowed or disallowed towards the living of fraternity and peace and how the liturgy is lived as a space for celebrating the divine and daily life.

Suggestions and small means were given to build up communion and fraternity through the liturgy. At the end of this session, a document was

produced from the reflections made and decisions were taken. This document remains to this day the reference for topics related to the liturgy.

Our love for the liturgy is also felt through the space given to this element of our life in our community projects. The communities are encouraged to have a singing practice at least once a week especially in the houses of formation: Postulancy, Novitiate, Juniorate. Rereading in community of what is lived daily in our liturgy and after each big feast is also a means that helps us. In some communities where the number of Sisters is significant like in the Juniorate, an inculturation commission exists that foresees the big feasts and also forms the Sisters so as to help all to prepare well and live the celebration.

From what we know, in the years 92-93, all the communities of the Province and especially the houses of formation (Novitiate, Juniorate), were invited to share their experience on the liturgy in the Province. The reflections focused on:

- ◆ The place of the ancestors and how to celebrate this, how to bring their memory to mind. This research resulted in a beautiful experience revolving around the celebration of the feast of Marie Eugenie, our ancestor. We mention here two points: rhythmic thanksgiving and the transmission of the heritage.
The thanksgiving consisted in expressing the values lived by Mother Marie Eugenie through the drums: joy – faith – detachment... One had to be there to measure what that means and what it is worth to help us live from within such an event.
- ◆ The transmission of the heritage: to signify the responsibility of each and everyone in maintaining the spiritual riches received from our ancestors, we received once more a ‘treasures’ basket containing the foundation documents of the Congregation. Some experiences were gathered together in a small file and made available to all the communities. Therein one can find papers on how to celebrate:
 - the send-off or welcome of a Sister
 - the reception or handing over of the Local Project
 - the exposition or reposition of the Blessed Sacrament with greater solemnity...

Sister Simone Ouédraogo
Juniorate Community

3.4. Pavillons-sous-Bois, France

The Noviciate of Pavillons-sous-Bois

The Noviciate which opened in September 2006 was, initially, European for the novices from the five European Provinces: England, Spain, Northern Europe, France and Italy. But since November 2008 it has become international, with the arrival of Rufine, a novice from Benin, West Africa.

It is this internationality which strikes our visitors, sisters or laity. Today we are 8 in number from 5 cultures, representing 3 continents. We are 4 professed, 3 from France and 1 from England and 4 novices: Eva from Spain, Rufine from Benin, Théonisa from France but of Sri Lankan origin and Isabel from England. This shows not only in our appearance (see photo) but also in our liturgy, which from a French base has also hymns, readings etc. in Spanish, English and sometimes in Fon and Tamil. Our meals, too, specially on feast days also show this internationality. We are intergenerational; our ages are between 26-85. Two senior sisters, M. Angèle and Elizabeth, bring us their experience and knowledge.

We rejoice in the family spirit, characteristic of the Assumption, and share this with our lay friends.

Simplicity and joy are not lacking, we enjoy playing, dancing, doing handicrafts together, music and going for walks. We try to be very open and gradually are growing in freedom of expression which is good for a noviciate.

The Formation is the same as that of the other noviciates in the Congregation, but we have certain characteristics:

- ◆ The chance to be near the Mother House and the presence of our archivist, known to you all, Sr. Thérèse Maylis, enables us to enter into the history of Marie Eugénie and of the Congregation. It sometimes feels as if one is going to meet Marie Eugénie down the corridor. In any case we can admire her writings and touch the things which belonged to her,
- ◆ We have the joy of knowing the General Counsellors (when they are there!) Sr. Brigitte is the one who accompanies us and visits us 3-4

times a year. We like this a lot and we think she does, too.

- ◆ We can discover the different French communities and meet sisters from other Provinces when there are sessions in Auteuil (Young sisters, 3rd Year.....) so we are open to the universal.
- ◆ We are part of two internoviciates: one weekend a month we study the foundation of religious life with about 20 other congregations both of men and women and secondly with the Assumption internoviciate once a fortnight, which gives us the opportunity to get to know the wider Assumption family with its characteristic of internationality and which gives us a pre-taste of Heaven when all people will be together.

Our Apostolates:

- ◆ We are near the Assumption School in Bondy and the first-year novices go to help once a week with a “groupe de réflexion” and with a pupil needing extra tuition. Our links with Bondy Community make it possible to celebrate some of the big feasts together (March the 10th etc.) and each year we have welcomed a group of young college students to live “24 hours with the Sisters”.
- ◆ A group of “Assumption together” was started in 2007 after the Canonisation of Marie Eugenie, and four of the members are now following the “Path of Life”. It is good to see how the spirituality of Marie Eugenie is appreciated by them and is nourishing them.
- ◆ We belong to our parish and have a special link with the 18-30 group and the catechumenate.
- ◆ The 2 second-year novices go to help in two different associations: one goes to “Le Patio” a day-centre for patients with Alzheimer and the other one goes to “Mosaiques9” a centre for immigrant families in the 9th Arrondissement of Paris, which is run by the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

We would like to be more involved in our immediate neighbourhood but have yet to find out how to do this.

We must not forget the responsibilities of Anne as Provincial bursar and of Elisabeth at the level of the French Province (responsibility for A.M.A., overseeing the needs of the school of Forges, member of provincial formation group).

A last characteristic: we have 6 Provincials, a record surely, (the 5 European provinces and West Africa)

So, welcome to all those who would like to join us!

The Novitiate Community

4. FAMILY CHRONICLES

◊ Visits and activities of the General Council in 2011

January 19 and 20

International Finance Team – Auteuil

January 28 - 31

CPAE – Auteuil

February 1 - 28

General Plenary Council – Auteuil

March 14 - 31

Vietnam: Diana

April 15 - July 10

3rd Year Session – Auteuil

▶ **May 2 - 31**

General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption – Rome

May 3 and 4

International Finance Team – Auteuil

▶ **June 1 - 30**

General Chapter of the Little Sisters of the Assumption – Paris

▶ **June 27 - July 21**

General Chapter of the Oblates of the Assumption – Paris

▶ **July 4 - 27**

General Chapter of the Orantes of the Assumption – Paris

◆ Anniversaries of Foundations

25 years of the foundation of Singida - Tanzania

25 years of the foundation of Mwezi - Rwanda

50 years of the foundation of Nyange - Rwanda

◆ Jubilees of Sisters in 2011

75 years

Cristina Maria	QUESADA POLAINA	ESP.	21/01/1936	Riofrio
Marie Jehanne d'Arc	CHANTALOU	FRA.	08/09/1936	Roma
Marie du Cénacle	KOWALSKI	FRA.	08/09/1936	Bordeaux
Guadalupe Eugenia	LAMA ROJAS	MEX.	23/09/1936	Queretaro

70 years

Nieves	AGUILAR ZETINO	SALV.	21/03/1941	Diriamba
Maria Dora	PIETROGRAZIA	ITA.	20/04/1941	Genzano
Maria Palmerina	PIETROGRAZIA	ITA.	21/06/1941	Roma
María de Lourdes	RIVERO ONDOVILLA	ESP.	17/07/1941	Cuestablanca
Emmanuel Marie	DE VILLENFAGNE	BEL..	10/12/1941	Ciney

65 years

Marie	TEISSEDERE	FRA.	01/02/1946	Montpellier
Marie Rose	PARGOIRE	FRA.	01/02/1946	Montpellier
Luz Eugenia	BRIALES SHAW	ESP.	19/02/1946	Tenerife
María Rosalía	HERRADÓN MUÑOZ	ESP.	19/02/1946	London
Pilar Josefa	GARCIA HIRSCHFELD	ESP.	19/02/1946	El Olivar
Elisabetta Maria	FIAMMA	ITA.	23/04/1946	Roma
Marie Sabine	DIESSE	FRA.	23/04/1946	Montpellier
Maria Ilaria	PUDDU	ITA.	30/04/1946	Roma

Lucía María	VALENZUELA CERVERA	ESP.	10/08/1946	Riofrio
María Julita	ALONSO MORÁN	ESP.	10/08/1946	London
Pilar Margarita	ABELLA GURREA	ESP.	10/08/1946	Riofrio
Teresa	DE NEGRI	ITA.	21/10/1946	Padova
Gloria María	RODRÍGUEZ REGUERO	ESP.	19/11/1946	Collado
Elza María	BASILE	BRE.	27/11/1946	Teresopolis

60 years

Heralda María	SICÁN CHEZ	GUA	26/03/1951	Guatemala
María Teresa	GALDAMEZ	SALV.	26/03/1951	Diriamba
Maria Mérida	RECINOS RECINOS	SALV.	26/03/1951	Los Planes
Francesca Paola	LANZARA	ITA.	27/03/1951	Roma
María Cristeta	GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ	ESP.	14/05/1951	London
Ana Josefina	MARCELLO ALONSO	ESP.	14/05/1951	Los Molinos
Maria de Lourdes	MARCATTO	BRE.	24/05/1951	Brasilia
Isabel	VARGAS-ZÚNIGA SANCHIZ	ESP.	11/07/1951	Cuestablanca
Maria Cruz	DE LA CUESTA	ESP.	11/07/1951	El Olivar
Maria Theresia	VELTHUYSE	HOL..	26/07/1951	Tournai
Simone	ROUERS	FRA.	08/09/1951	Montpellier
María del Mar	ESCOBAR NARVÁEZ	ESP.	20/09/1951	Riofrio
Marie St Augustin	CHARCOT	FRA.	29/09/1951	Lourdes
Dolores	MESA SALGUERO	ESP.	30/09/1951	El Olivar
Arantzazu María	VIGÓN SÁNCHEZ	ESP.	30/09/1951	Queretaro
Marisina Segunda	ESTÉVEZ MEDINA	ESP.	30/09/1951	Moshi
Thérèse Margaret	DUROSS	USA.	04/11/1951	Worcester
Julita Maria	HINGCO	PHI.	09/11/1951	Iloilo
Mary	ORMEROD	BRI.	13/11/0951	London

50 years

Florentina María	ORDÁS FLÓREZ	ESP.	16/01/1961	Sarria
Nair	DE OLIVEIRA	BRE.	04/03/1961	Itapaci
Marie Claude	ARRIBERE	FRA.	25/03/1961	Lourdes
María Auxiliadora	CANALES GUTIERREZ	NIC.	25/03/1961	Leon Nic

Remedios Carmen	LOCSIN	PHI.	13/05/1961	Tokyo
Maria Isabel	VILLACARLOS	PHI.	31/05/1961	Baguio
Ana Maria	MELOCOTON	PHI.	31/05/1961	San Lorenzo
Gloria	MARZABAL MARTÍNEZ	ESP.	02/07/1961	Florencio-Varla
Françoise Bernadette	BOUILLOT	FRA.	23/07/1961	Saint-Gervais
Adèle	KANKUYO	RWA.	23/07/1961	Auteuil
Marie Léonie	YUSAY	PHI.	23/07/1961	Antipolo
María del Carmen	PRIETO VEGA	ESP.	23/07/1961	Collado
Fransisko Yosefu	NYIRAMUGIRWANAKE	RWA.	23/07/1961	Kabuye
María Dolores	ASTORGA SALAGRE	ESP.	05/08/1961	Zinder
Valentina	SALVADOR ANDRÉS	ESP.	05/08/1961	Dalias
Maria Alessandra	ZANOLLA	ITA.	05/08/1961	Como
Maureen	CONNOR	BRI.	12/09/1961	London
Rachel Mary	BUTLER BOWDON	BRI.	12/09/1961	Kawangware
Ana Covadonga	CASTRO VIGIL	ESP.	19/09/1961	Tegueste
Jeanne Marguerite	de SALVERT	FRA.	29/09/1961	Montpellier
Maria Tsuneko	TAKAMATSU	JAP.	29/09/1961	Takamatsu
María Noelia	MARTINEZ GUTIERREZ	NIC.	18/12/1961	Diriamba

25 years

Isabelle Eugénie	GORGEU	FRA.	22/03/1986	Puebla
Beatriz	MENGES GONZALEZ	ESP.	09/06/1986	Vilnius
Helena Maria	RODRIGUES	BRE.	27/07/1986	Goîânia
María Dolores	ESPINOZA MORALES	MEX.	02/06/1985	Mexico
Maria Salvacion	ESTIL	PHI.	13/12/1986	Antipolo

◆ From the International Commission on Education

“One does not light a lamp to put in under a bushel; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house...”

Mt. 5:15

The CGP of Abidjan (October 2009) wished to mandate a Commission for a period of three years, 2010-2013, as a *“concrete expression of the priority of our mission of education”* (GPC 2009), echo of the call of the last General Chapter 2006, which invites us, in the document on Education, to **“rediscover our charism of education”** by reminding us that *for us, education is the means for extending the Kingdom.*

The Commission met for the first time in Auteuil in the month of September 2010. Here you have some excerpts from the first letter of the Commission to the Provincials.

We spent time first of all, in getting to know each other.

Ana is Mexican. She worked in schools in Mexico for 17 years, in Chad 5 years and in Cameroon for 3 years. She belongs to the community Etterbeek (Belgium) and is the full time co-ordinator of the commission, as her first mission for the coming 3 years.

Philo is Indian. She has the experience of working at the social action field at the grass root level for 10 years. Since 23 years she is the director of an NGO, in Pune, India for the empowerment of women. She is a member of the Provincial community in Pune.

Cecile is Belgian. She works since 12 years with “l’Institut de l’ Assomption” at Boitfort. She is at the same time involved at the social project of the Etterbeek community of which she is a member.

During 3 days, Marie Emmanuel and Katrin have introduced us to the work done by the previous commission and the findings of the survey conducted in 2007. We are wonderstruck at the rich and beautiful Charism of education lived in the congregation. A lot of beautiful things are already taking place.

The background of our study was the “fiche” on transformative education from the General Chapter of 2006. The councillors also shared with us the expectations of CGP and the General Council of our commission. Then Sr. Therese Maylis helped us to understand the origin of our charism of education according to Marie Eugenie.

Enriched by all these inputs, we have prepared the project of the commission that will guide us for the coming 3 years. We wish to share this with you.

Our Vision

Faithful to the call of the General Chapter 2006...

"... now is the favourable time to receive anew our mission of education ..."

and " Reaffirm our charism of education in all our apostolic actions..."

"... We are all educators by vocation and the community is the privileged place where our vision is born and our educational action is discerned."

General Chapter 2006, fiche on Transformative Education

Convinced that our charism is a gift for the Church and the world we want to put together our diverse talents:

- 1. To express concretely the importance and the priority of our mission of education.*
- 2. Promote a greater awareness that all our apostolic actions are transformative education.*
- 3. Walk together in the realization of our charism of education, so that listening to the world realities we will give the charism a future that will make it truly transformative for the changing world.*

Our objectives

- 1. As commission we want to appropriate the charism, understand it deeply and reformulate it for today. Help the provinces to appropriate the same dynamic in their respective context.*
- 2. Allow the existing resources to circulate in the congregation: information, competence, material and human resources, experiences... etc.*
- 3. By the communication of the lived experiences of the transformative education in the various provinces we want to encourage, acknowledge, and create interest so that the charism become a shared treasure.*
- 4. Provide tools for formation and be available to help the provinces in their specific needs.*

As you can already see, the communication and collaboration with all of you will be important. It is together with you that we desire to move ahead. [...]

Our commission remains open to all your questions and suggestions. You can reach us by writing to: commission.education@assumpta.fr or comision.educacion@assumpta.fr

We count on you to send this initial news to all the sisters in your province, our friends and collaborators. You will be receiving more information in the weeks and months regarding the progress of our work on the website: www.assumpta.fr where a new sector "EDUCATION" that is given to us. Or at the intranet <http://intranet.assumpta.fr>.

*".... To make Jesus Christ, liberator and sovereign of the world known,
Is for me the beginning and end of all Christian education"
Saint Marie Eugenie, Letter to Lacordaire TF p.118*

United in the same mission that is entrusted to us and that we receive as a precious gift, we count on your prayers and your collaboration.

Yours truly in Christ,

*The Commission on Education
Sisters: Philo, Cecile and Ana, r.a.
Auteuil, September 2010*

3. PARTAGE AUTEUIL N° 86

As a follow-up of the topic on the liturgy taken up in this issue of Partage Auteuil, we propose that the next issue be a sharing on the life of a saint celebrated in each of the countries in which the Religious of the Assumption are present, a saint with a proper office in the country.

Send us two (2) pages with an illustration.

In this way we will continue to know and discover each other as Congregation, to share our cultural and religious patrimony ... and to feel ourselves more and more Community and Church.

We will also publish the commentaries and photos of the restructured and renewed Chapel of Auteuil as well as the Way of the Cross.

The articles, translated if possible, should reach us by March 2010

Thank you very much and awaiting the joy of reading your articles!

The Editing Team

4. A WORD FROM MARIE EUGENIE OF JESUS

On Love in the Congregation

“At this moment when we are so many gathered together, it is necessary to strengthen the ties of charity among us and to renew our zeal. Thanks be to God that we have always preserved in the Congregation this real, sincere affection, one for the other, which brings about an intimate unity of hearts. I must recommend to all the Superiors that they ensure very specially that nothing in their houses wound charity which must reign between the sisters, that one should never pronounce words that wound, malicious thoughts, severe judgments, etc., that nothing hurt charity in any way...

You each have your particular gifts in the measure it has pleased God to give them to you: one has received more wisdom, another more talents or more amiability of character or more firmness in conduct ; another a more sensitive piety, because I do not doubt that all without exception, have a share of true piety and of virtue. Well, my dear daughters, all these divine gifts, all these goods must be given to God and to the Congregation with abnegation and a generous heart...

Saint Paul says somewhere: “The stars have different brightness, not all have received the same brightness, the same force. As many stars as there are in heaven there is grandeur and diversity of brightness.” It is also said that each leaf among the innumerable species of plants and of trees on the earth, has its distinct and particular form. The same is true for souls. They shine in different ways, they have a specific form, they have not received universal gifts from God but each one the part sufficient for her to accomplish her mission and render to God the glory He expects.

Humility is what truly safeguards the talents that God entrusts to us. The humility that knows how to make use of what we possess without anxiously seeking for what we do not have. And we would have done enough for God if without losing time at looking at what we do not have, we calmly and humbly use the little we have received...

Never lose then this affection, this union of hearts that make you so happy of being together, this charity which gives such freedom of heart."

*Marie Eugenie of Jesus
Chapter, 26 June 1870*