

Summary of educative transformation experiences published on assumpta.fr 2016

English version



“The last word of love or of truth is never spoken... we always desire more ...”

(Notes intimes 154/06)

*Reaffirm our charism of transformative education in all our apostolic actions.
(Transformative Education 2006)*

Through the educative transformation experiments published on www.assumpta.org we can admire the Assumption charisma in work and contemplate its beauty, its dynamism. Yes the Assumption educative charisma is alive and gives life.

But, still more, it is our own way to answer God's and world's call, our specific way to incarnate the Gospel.

This summary is the evidence of the huge work carried out in the Congregation all over the world to appropriate again this educative charisma quite more, to define it for today.



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Liturgy at the Assumption, an essential tool in the dynamic of transformative education

Education for transformation draws on the realm of interior experience. ... a displacement that brings the person to see everything in the light of faith...
(Pre-capitular document of Transformative Education. General Chapter 2006)

Last November, a liturgy session brought together some 50 Sisters of the Assumption, coming from 24 countries, from 4 continents. The theme: *"All my springs are in you"*¹ renews the desire to deepen not only the spiritual but also the pedagogical meaning of this ensemble we call *"contemplative pole"* or *"liturgical life"* of our Assumption existence.

According to the Second Vatican Council, the liturgy *"is the summit towards which the action of the Church is directed, and at the same time the source from which all its virtue flows"*; is the actualization of the mystery of Christ², the celebration of life³, the place of transformation⁴.

Marie Eugénie and Thérèse Emmanuel, whose bicentenary of birth we celebrate this 2017, have accorded the liturgy an essential place in our life and mission. From the very beginning, the invitation to deep spiritual experience found a place through a variety of forms of celebration: Eucharist and Reconciliation, Liturgy of Hours (Divine Office), Personal Prayer, Adoration, and many other forms of Liturgical celebration.



All these modes of prayer have their roots in the wide field of the Bible, the Tradition of the Church, and in the spiritual treasure of the cultures to which we are sent.

Since our origins this transformative experience has been a source of joy, of flourishing in our relationships and a strengthening of our missionary passion.

Liturgy is therefore, an essential aspect of the Assumption pedagogy, a space of interiority in which the values of the Gospel increase the life of God in us and, at the same time it is a repeated call to change. It translates into praise and thanksgiving our gratitude to God, who continues to actualize salvation in history. It allows our voices to be inhabited by the supplication of suffering humanity.

¹ Psalm 86

² "Sacrosanctum Concilium" Document n. 10, of Vatican II, 1963

³ Orientations of the Latin American Youth Pastoral, CELAM

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church 1066-1075



The transformation to which we are invited is directed to the very depths of our being, in which "the gaze of God sees each one as unique without ever detaching it from all the multitude of unique others"⁵. It develops spiritual intelligence and transforms our whole being: the senses, intellect (ideas, concepts) and emotional intelligence (symbols, images, feelings), as well as many other forms by which we approach the reality⁶.

This experience educates us in contemplation, this way we learn to see the world and all reality through the gaze and heart of God. It thus works within us to shift our frame of reference, our points of view, our habits of thinking ... and leads to commitment and action⁷.

The liturgy at the Assumption roots us in reality and gives us a taste for simplicity, as the first pupils tell us: "*The spirit of the Assumption is really something special, it makes for a breadth and freedom of spirit, joyful serenity ... no "white eyes or twisted necks" ... No small devotions, which risk creating a childish piety, but the great prayer, united with intention to the great office recited by our Mothers; the love of the Mass, the heart of all Christian life ... Each evening, a short visit to the chapel closing the day, giving us the habit of coming for a few moments before the Tabernacle...*"⁸

We create the conditions that facilitate this experience, according to different contexts and cultures, in a rich and varied way...

In the **Assumption of Querétaro (Mexico)** we worked to make this contemplative dimension across the curriculum. For example, at the end of the Human Rights chapter, students had researched how these rights were respected in different countries. Then we prayed around the world map: each one located the news and lit a candle on the site. She presented the people affected to Jesus.

In the end, every country enlightened by the light, had become familiar. We felt a connection with those realities. It was impossible to look as we had before on what was happening there. As a follow-up to the ensuing commitment we proposed missionary groups to reach out to poor populations on the outskirts of the city every month; here students could visit families and organized games or other activities for children.

⁵ Document « Individu et société » CORREF p 24

⁶ The theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner. For ex. Musical-rhythmic and harmonic, Visual-spatial, Verbal-linguistic, Bodily-kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalistic, Existential...

⁷ Pre-capitular document of Transformative Education. General Chapter 2006

⁸ Testimonies in « L'éducation du caractère » p. 204-205

At the **high-school of Chad, in Africa**, we organized a "clean up operation", on Holy Thursday, in our dusty neighbourhood, which is without sanitation. We wanted to signify by this gesture the gift and service lived by Jesus. On return from this action a group had already drawn water so that everyone could wash their hands and feet. Then, sitting on mats, we shared the bread in thanksgiving and singing. This gesture left a strong positive impact among our neighbours, whether Christians, Muslims or from traditional religions...



In Lyon, a **professional college** with a great cultural and religious mix, we organized a celebration for peace: young people selected texts and songs from their religions or philosophical convictions. We were reflecting on letting go of our prejudices and engaging in nonviolence. An olive tree planted in the garden reminds us of this daily.



All these "liturgical" moments and spaces that we invent with creativity in our different realities over the world are irreplaceable learning experiences: they integrate curriculum and liturgy; faith and life, contemplation and passion; utopia and reality; interiority and transformation.

Some of the sisters who participated in the session spoke up:

"Since I was child the celebrations and symbols attracted me, and I recognize that they have awakened my religious vocation. When I was a teacher at



the Assumption, I learned - through the sisters - to understand, love and give meaning to the gestures and words of the liturgy. Today this aspect of our lives awakens the desire and creativity to transmit the same taste to the people with whom I work and to the new generations of sisters. When I look at my life I realize that the Word of God is alive, that it gives me vitality and orientation. I find in it comfort and strength "(Sister Rosario Vega, Puebla, México)



"Liturgy is the source of my spiritual life, a space of interior transformation where my passion and my zeal for the Kingdom are renewed. It is an expression of the Adoration of God, the absolute and centre of my life. The preparation of the liturgy is a service that demands all that we are, our talents and creativity, so that the praise of the Lord is the homage that - in the name of humanity - we offer him through song, symbols, gestures, beauty and harmony. Immersed as we are in society, our praise carries within it the situations of joy and suffering of our people, our environment. The liturgy is the great means of presenting to God the humanity that He wanted to divinize through the Incarnation "(Sr. Cristina Massó, España)

"The liturgy shapes, transforms me and gradually unifies my life in following Christ in the Assumption. Indeed, whenever I prepare it, sing the Psalms, or proclaim the Word of God, I become aware of a word, a word, a verse, I decide to live it, and I feel gradually transformed by it". (Sister Clementine Myriam PANGA, Kinshasa, Congo)



"... in the middle of the day, in the midst of human activity, I stop to join the sisters and pray with them, turning to Him who works through me. It is an opportunity for me to let go of what I am doing, to return to my humble place as co-creator with Him. ... Adoration: it is a time of prayer when, contemplating the host, fruit of our work which has become the Body of Christ, I contemplate the saving work of God in my life and more widely in the world ... And when events and people worry me in an exaggerated way, when I feel in me the illusion that I am the only one to be able to save the situation, I bring myself before the Lord and give it all to Him so He can take his place of Saviour and I, mine. This makes it possible to distance myself and remain free. Through these two examples, I note that the axis of transformation lies in the fact of experiencing hour after hour that God is God ... (Sister H  l  ne Roug  , France)



At a time when so many situations of conflict arouse in us the *fear-defence-attack* impulse, the liturgy invites us to go beyond our "self-reference"⁹, to look at the God of all and in all, that spacious God¹⁰ who opens a space in Himself for all to exist. He thus frees us from the impulse to power and to do which seem so indispensable, so we can learn to *be what we are*.¹¹

We can welcome the other in their essential beauty, in their mystery, without wanting to control or determine them. Thus we are gradually transforming ourselves into the image of God, so that by our side all can find a space to be what they are, and together we will be *reconciled humanity*¹².

This Spiritual life, which grows in us through the liturgy, educates us and transforms our personality by giving us a deeper understanding of God's project and his way of acting; it puts us at the service of our foundational dream "*a social state in which no one is the oppressor of the other*"¹³.

Sister Ana Senties r.a.
Secretary of Assumption Education

February 2017

At the Assumption in Daloa, Ivory Coast, the pedagogy of closeness and the welcoming attitude are assets providing a transforming experience for the new members

⁹ Pope Francis in many speeches where he invites us to overcome our egocentrism ...

¹⁰ "I felt immersed in the immensity of God" ... experience of MS 1st Holy Communion

¹¹ '... be what you are as fully as possible'. MME Letter 1563, in 1842

¹² Letter to the Colossians 1, 20. Prologue of the Rule of Life of the Religious of the Assumption

¹³ Marie Eug  nie, letter to Father d'Alzon in 1844

“It is about our family spirit. Wherever we are, we need to try and create a climate of simplicity and friendship which is itself formative. It awakens confidence and freedom, it strengthens them and puts them, fearlessly, at the service of the other...”¹⁴



Three very full days have built bridges and have provided a space for mutual welcome and welcome back, so beneficial for the old and new members of the education team 2016-17 of Notre Dame of the Assumption (CNDA) middle and secondary school in Daloa.

The first day, called the **Team Day**, gave us a chance to appreciate the joy of fraternity. Thanks to the prayer prepared by Sr Rufina, we all took the time to look at each other and wish each other well. One after the other, we all took the time to formulate blessings. It was a rich time, because it wasn't always easy to recognise what was good in the other and tell them directly. It

really was an exercise of mutual compassion.

After the individual introduction and sharing of news, the old members who were present took time to share with the new ones the Tradition and the practices of the house, to allow them to integrate gradually.

The second day was dedicated to the formation on the **Assumption Charism**. After the prayer facilitated by Sr Béatrice BAZIE, we followed with great interest the first stage of the journey that plunged us into the Reference Text¹⁵. We will never cease to discover the riches of this *little white book*. This gave the new members a chance to learn and begin to make the Assumption heritage their own. For the old members, this provided a chance to renew themselves. The journey will continue throughout the year. During the formation, the new members expressed a desire to learn more about both the historical and the family context of St. Marie-Eugénie.

The third day was dedicated to the **Advice for the beginning of the school year**: after the prayer, which allowed us to revisit the previous days, there was an exchange around the results and the outcome of the previous school year, so that we could make the necessary arrangements for the new year 2016-17. The day ended with a festive meal to celebrate both the 100% pass rate of our students at the last BEPC exam¹⁶, and the launch of the 2016-17 school year with the Education Team.

Furthermore, this year there was something special about the welcome of the new pupils at the CNDA: the presence of the first generation of second year students in the classes A and C, which opened for the first time last year. It is precisely the second year A and C students who lead the ceremony on the 28th of October.

Here is the welcome speech delivered by a pupil:

Dear old members of the Education Team,



14 Pre-capitular text of transformative education 2006.

15 Text issued from the International Educational Conference, Paris 1998.

16 Final secondary school exam to obtain the 'Certificate of first cycle studies'.

dear old pupils,

to all of you who are new, good evening.

The traditional welcome ceremony for the new members of the Education Team and for the new students of the CNDA of Daloa is a integral part of our desire to live together, in a family spirit. Like in our African families, we are always happy to welcome strangers and this little ceremony is an expression of our joy to welcome you in our beautiful school.

Therefore, without farther ado, we will ask you for your news, but first we will offer you something to drink. Surely, coming from so far, you will be thirsty. I invite the girls to bring something to drink for the newcomers [...]

Now that you have had to drink, what are the news?

(On behalf of the new arrivals, Ms Béatrice KOUAKOU gives some news of the families and of the area).



Thank you Madam for these good news. Here everything is going well too. Our school year has started well, as you can see. We are very happy to have you with us. Feel at home!

To you, my little sisters of the 6th year¹⁷: you certainly wished to come here at the CNDA, and your wish has been granted. Congratulations for having passed the admission exam for the 6th year. Welcome! As you may already have seen, here we work honestly; we live in a family spirit, we strive for honesty as well as for the best results at the end of the year... The pride and renown of our school are built on this. We hope that you will rise to the challenge!

The middle school Our Lady of the Assumption opened its doors in 1959, it was founded by the Religious of the Assumption, and ever since, it has never ceased to work for the integral education of generations and generations of women. Our motto is UPRIGHTNESS - SIMPLICITY - WORK WELL DONE. With St Marie Eugénie, foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Assumption, we wish you a good and fruitful stay among us.

In Africa, when a family grows, there is always great joy. Everyone looks at the newborn, on whom all the attention is focused. Everyone gives them all the love they need. You can be sure that the same happens here, at the Assumption: today we welcome you among us! Feel at home.

Yes, at the Assumption, we are like flowers that gladden the life of the education team and of our parents. Let us be flowers that develop, through their behaviour, into good fruits. Uprightness, simplicity, honesty, work well done... are the values that we will cultivate throughout the year. Let us say NO to cheating, lies, laziness!

¹⁷The first year of secondary school.

In the image of mother Marie Eugénie, let us love well deserved success!

To you, new members of the education team, that the Grace of our Lord may accompany you and inspire you with words that are just and right, to provide us with quality teaching.

To you, little sisters, know that it is through hard work that you will obtain good results, like the 100% pass rate at the BEPC exam in 2016.

Like the manioc, that is processed from its raw state to obtain the attiéké, may you let yourselves be moulded by the Assumption. May you be exemplar in this corrupt society. May you be the salt and light of the world through your character.

To you, Religious of the Assumption, thank you for this great gift that you have given us by opening a high school (second secondary cycle) where we are the first generation of pupils!



Thank you for keeping us in your school to improve even more our character and virtues, so that, one day, we may be women worth gold, not because of the riches that we may have accumulated, but because we will have acquired the moral values that our country, the Ivory Coast, needs to advance. Simply because we will be leaders. Then, dear mothers, that the Father may grant you, during this new school year in which our family has doubled, to.

Koffi Affoh Marie Pascale,
élève en classe 2C (Seconde)

The Assumption Institute of Querétaro - A humanizing and transforming 50 years

Love for our times and for our earth invites us once more to redefine our mission. Inspired by the dynamism, creativity and passion shown in the educational experiences, we recognize that now is the favorable time to receive anew our mission of education. (Fiche General Chapter 2006)

Querétaro is a city in full development, rooted in the pre-Hispanic, colonial and revolutionary past of Mexico. It is located at the crossroads of historical and cultural paths, as well as of old and recent migrations, that make its population fruit of an intermingling of the traditional Queretanos, the Mexicans working in the economic, technological and industrial progress of the region, the peasants and indigenous people who have been seeking better living conditions, and many other families from the country or abroad.

"Interchanges and belonging, assuming the richness of this ongoing fusion" is one of the important priorities of our educational community, says Jorge Burkle, the present Director General. This happens by underscoring the community's sense of social commitment, an education that helps to break down prejudices, to learn to value the other and to make it easier for each one to find their place and make their contribution.

The school, which now has a little more than 1,100 students, is celebrating its 50th anniversary in this school year 2016 – 17. "A profound renewal movement is unfolding, uniting fidelity to our own roots with openness to pedagogical innovations that promote an integral education that is committed to the environment," explains

the directors of the different sections and departments at their weekly meeting. This moment together allows them to share the activities of the different departments: pastoral work, sports, administration.

Impassioned to give each person - student, faculty, staff, parents – the opportunity for spontaneous expression and commitment, those responsible for the pastoral, administrative and educational animation of the school shared with us some features of the educational project:

"Faithful to the Assumption charism, which is our philosophy and source of inspiration, we have highlighted different methodologies that promote the educational vision of St. Marie Eugenie and the first sisters. The pre-school makes use of the Montessori method which allows each child to develop their personal skills in harmony with their peers and the environment. In the primary and secondary the personalized method of Pierre Faure is used, which finds its root in a deep personal formation that leads to a consequent social commitment. In the baccalaureate, it draws on the synthesizing interdisciplinary approach that specially characterizes the pedagogy of Edgar Morin".

Parents who are involved in the different areas of participation and decision-making in the school, tell us how important it is to be open to the rapid growth of the metropolis, while holding on to the principles and foundations of Assumption education: "not to be infected by the contagion of individualism and the consumerism of a rapidly developing society, not lose the identity of our being."

Teachers and parents are looking for ways to contribute to the sustainable development of the city taking care of natural resources such as water, green spaces, searching for ongoing solutions.





The alumni, who come back in large numbers as teachers or parents, are convinced of the strength of the community spirit that emanates from the school. They want to "return to our roots, the learning and solid practices that formed us and that we want today for our children."

And it is true, the school has been and continues to be innovative in participatory and integrative methodologies, such as the "social service" where students and teachers are involved in weekly, monthly or other actions according to their age, supporting different projects with the elderly, the orphans, , migrants, etc.

The "UN Forum" is an activity opening up to internationality that has been going on for more than 15 years in the secondary school. The

students reenact the different situations faced by the United Nations in the different countries with their problems simulating what happens in the General Assembly, FAO, UNICEF, ILO, etc. This endeavor develops in them documentary and computer research skills, delving into geography and discovering the different regions of the planet. It thus makes them aware of the great problems to which we are committed as Assumption at an international level: ecology, migration, the causes of justice and peace.

It seems to us that it is a way of "loving our times", of "broadening our gaze", of "working to transform society", as the Assumption has always done since the beginning.

An alumna shares: "... I was marked by the methodology that was used in school, where we, as students were responsible for our learning. The teachers guided and nurtured us. We dedicated a good part of the time to "personal work" during which we worked on themes that referred us to bibliographical investigations. The teachers then returned our work with corrections and comments. This type of methodology taught us to be responsible, to plan and manage our time.

From there, we 'pooled' together the different topics we had researched on with the teacher verifying the group's understanding of the topics. We developed skills for public speaking, teamwork, and the production of educational materials done with each one's creativity.

In high school, I remember that the teachers led us to specially form a personal opinion. They gave us certain elements of analysis and in every academic activity we always had to express a personal opinion. This exercise helped me build a personal judgment and learn to objectively argue about any topic in oral and written form.

Another aspect present in the pedagogy of the Assumption that marked me deeply was the weekly social service to the poorest. During the Christmas and Easter missions we visited marginalized communities, accompanied by the Sisters of the Assumption. In those experiences I learned from the humility and simplicity of the people, and I discovered that the love of God has many faces. This kind of experience has helped me to commit myself today to the Church, to evangelization and to serve others using my personal training and talents." (Ana Julieta Padilla, alumna)



"To humanize and to transform" continues to be an ongoing task that allows us to re-express the educational charism that St. Marie Eugenie and the first sisters received and designed as a way to "love their times". This anniversary renews us and urges us to continue to recreate it! It is a grace in this bicentennial year!

Sister Ana Senties, r.a.
 Secrétariat International d'Éducation Assumption

April 2017

An experience with an “Assumption flavour” at the hall of residence Marianum in Padua (Italy)

The town of Padua hosts one of the most renowned universities in Italy. In 1956 (60 years ago!), the Religious of the Assumption opened the student hall of residence Marianum, to provide accommodation for students from other parts of Italy and from abroad.

There are five sisters in our community, all engaged in this educational project, based on the charism of St Marie Eugénie. Generation after generation, our project continues to adapt to the needs of the young women who come here to live and run the activities of the hall.

The keywords to become part of the Marianum are: **active participation** in the social life of the hall, **personal responsibility** towards each other, **community life**, being **the protagonist** of your own life, discovering and **bringing to fruition your own talents**, taking care of each one’s **spiritual dimension**, in the wider sense of the word. These concepts are put into practice organising the young women into groups, where they can get to know each other, learn to express themselves and carry out group activities (e.g. organise a party, facilitate prayer, suggest a film, a show or a visit to the museum, run a book club, etc).



Another way to support education at the Marianum is to offer talks around an annual theme, chosen by the girls themselves every academic year. Over the last few years the themes were: travel, the other, bioethics, time, relationships, beauty. The aim of the talks is to develop these big themes through small meetings with academics or other people in order to evoke questions and make the students think and exchange opinions.

The two following accounts will allow you to catch a glimpse of our life:

“I have just packed my luggage to leave the Marianum. I packed all the unexpected and precious Monday morning smiles from the sisters and the other guests of the hall of residence, the evenings spent watching films, the Monday evening prayers, which allowed me to recollect and reflect after a frantic day at the university; all the informal meetings in the corridors, the outings for an ice cream or a couple of pints on Wednesday, the town university ball, the talks, the moments of formation offered by the hall of residence, which open the students’ horizons, allow them to widen their views and share around current themes, related to our stage in life. I packed the wisdom of the ‘elder’ sisters, their help, their readiness to listen, and most of all their friendship towards the younger ones, my dearest friends, with whom I have shared this journey from the beginning, the laughter, the tears, the madness, the intimate secrets shared. I take with me my roommate, whom I met here, and I now dare to call ‘sister’...

In this moment I have the impression I am leaving everything behind, but no! I am taking all these things with me, engraved in my memory, part of the person I have become thanks to the experience at the Marianum. My most heartfelt thank you. This is what the Marianum is to me”.

(Sonia, a student from the north of Italy, resident in the hall of residence for five years, PhD in psychology at the University of Padua).



“Dear Marianum girls,

Many of you probably do not know me, my name is Sara, I have lived at the Marianum for about three years. Yes, I say ‘lived’ because for me the Marianum has been a lot more than just a place to sleep Monday to Friday during term time. The Marianum for me has been a home.

... I have been lucky and in these corridors I have met a very large number of girls completely different from me in their culture and way of thinking. I have had the pleasure of sharing my room with special, unique people. I was brave enough to allow myself to plunge into the Marianum.

This letter, dear girls, is addressed especially to you, that we call the ‘invisible girls’, who will live this new experience in a place that you don’t know yet: this place is too beautiful not to be lived to the full... Do not deprive yourselves of any of the experiences that the hall of residence has to offer! Don’t

be prejudiced against the spirituality group, go at least once to the theatre, read at least one of the books in our library, take part in the activities organised by the spare-time activities group, and don’t miss the Thursday night films! Be attentive to the other girls who share this space with you! (I have realised that emptying the filters after washing up the dishes is a concept too difficult to grasp for many, but if you don’t do it, the filter will be clogged up after only one week. There are also those who will try to heat up their milk in the kettle and will devastate the kitchen!)

Therefore, here are a few suggestions:

1. You need to go and watch the sunset from our terrace more than once.
2. You need to do your revision at least once in the garden in the summer! It will reconcile you with study.
3. You need to set off the alarm at least once, we went out all quiet. It will be difficult to recover from the shock of seeing Sr Anna or Sr Orietta in their pyjamas, but you will be fine...
4. You can’t leave the hall of residence without having discovered that Sr Renate sees in each girl a model, or without having heard more than once the extraordinary laughter of Sr Maria Teresa, or without watching Sr Ileana knitting or sewing, without catching one of Sr Anna’s affectionate looks or smiles, or without chatting at least once with Sr Orietta for over two hours...
5. You can’t leave university without more than one friend having left a permanent trace in you.

These are just a few small things that each girl at the Marianum should do, I think, but there would be so much more to say!

... And don't be too sad if sometimes you have to say goodbye to some friends. You know that university years are like that, people come and go, but nothing happens by chance!... This place allowed me to discover part of my potential...

I wish you just to be able to take full advantage of this beautiful moment in your life.

Good luck to all, Sara”

We bear this conviction: that the charism of St Marie Eugénie that we live here, summarised in the sentence: “It is folly not to be what we are as fully as possible”, comes true every year... and the mission continues!

Sr Orietta and the RA Padua Community



May 2017

Assumption Forum: Celebrating the Bicentennial!

The annual forum of Assumption-France and Assumption Together was dedicated this year-2017- to celebrating the bicentenary of the births of St Marie Eugenie and Sister Therese Emmanuel and the theme was “**Faces : a means of Solidarity** (Fraternity).

Each year the forum provides the opportunity for exchange and mutual enrichment between the 17 members of the network-1 Belgian and 16 French. This year the network welcomed many friends and sisters of the Assumption from the different communities throughout France and Belgium and a special delegation from the educational establishments of the Province of Mexico.

The opening address of the forum was given by Mr Jacques Grosson. To introduce the theme he asked whether we knew the famous koan “what was your face like before your parents were born?” Zen masters gave their pupils these short enigmas-or koans- to exhaust their thinking powers. Let go of

‘why’ or ‘how’ because there is no answer. So, too, the title of this forum: Faces: a means of solidarity. We could exhaust ourselves thinking about it. So then – our faces – those known, perceived, scrutinised, loved, formidable, weary, energetic, painted, paleAnd don't forget the expressions of hate or fear when at a specific situation we reveal our true selves.

Remembering last year's Forum about Ecology we could think of the faces of the earth with agricultural lands abused, degraded, exhausted or land which has been mined, ripped open, fractured in the extraction of shale gas. Then there is the awe inspiring landscape of the snowy Alps or the Landes Causse Mejean and its trout rivers. Christian Bobin writes (in



'The Wonder of the Earth ' 1991) that if you want to see paradise you need only look at a face suffused by a smile; he invites us to search together for some faces which open for us a path of friendship.

He finishes by inviting us: **"Let us look together for some faces that are for us paths of brother and sisterhood"**.



In Conference for two voices - "Wings and Oars - Marie-Eugénie and Thérèse-Emanuel" - given by Sr. Thérèse Maylis and Véronique Thiébaud, we examined the faces of our two foundresses and how they see the richness hidden in the faces of others ...

Some passages:

"These two faces each bear a story. Differing in their education, their experiences, both have known questions about life, destiny, death. They were young girls in search of meaning ". We were invited to re-read **our own roots**.

These two names, these two faces, with their different roots and characteristics, journeyed together. Reliving a bit of this story of friendship between them, we were invited to read again the key encounters of our life, the fruitful encounters: "to read in the other the presence of the divine ... To contemplate the other because they tell us about God... "

Both of them recognized: "Our bond is Jesus Christ ..." They then developed a common project where they were looking in the same direction ...

They were going to experience that being anchored in what unites, helps us to see what separates us as a richness. They learned to recognize the qualities of others ... and develop the ability to see what is good in the other ...

This bond that united them in Jesus Christ led them to contemplate Him, especially in the mystery of the Incarnation. They invite us now **to identify the face of Christ that attracts us**, and that urges us to commit ourselves ... "

After this very intense time, we shared moments discovering the different "Assumption faces": first during meals, then while on pilgrimage "In the footsteps of Marie-Eugénie and Thérèse-Emanuel in Paris" , we were all divided into 15 groups. Each group visited the most important Parisian sites for our foundresses. In each place, a sister and a layman helped us discover the grace of the place: Notre Dame, St Sulpice, St Eustache, Rue Férou, rue Vaugirard, Auteuil, Lübeck ... we walked more than 8 km where we had the joy of travelling together.

In Lübeck there was a **permanent exhibition entitled "The Realities of the Assumption Today"** which opened up a panorama of what is being lived all over the world.

At 9 pm there was an artistic and musical evening "Variations concerning the friendship between Marie Eugénie and Thérèse Emmanuel" which helped us relax after this intense day.

On Sunday, 15 Workshops helped us better understand the importance of encounters in our lives, and the challenges and joys in our world today. Some themes of the workshops were: Roots and Vocation / Foundation / The Rule in writing / Friendship and spiritual anchoring / The world, lights and shadows ...

We ended the encounter with a Eucharistic celebration in which we took up symbolic objects for the Assumption of Marie Eugénie and Thérèse Emmanuel: the hive and the boat.

Here are some of the universal prayers, which summarize well the meaning of our meeting:



"The first sisters expressed their desire to" dedicate themselves to extending the Reign of Jesus Christ, "marked by missionary attraction ... Today, let us recognize the new missionary places that are often close to us, build new solidarities, fight against the fear of foreigners ".

"Thérèse Emmanuel and Marie Eugénie had often to confront each other ... yet they carried together everything that has touched the foundation of the Congregation ... Let us thank the Lord for the meetings that make us grow, welcome with joy the opportunities to build sincere friendships where we live and act. "



At the end of the meal we shared the birthday cake!

Here are some testimonials:

" The difference between words and lived experience! In the Assumption we can often describe through programmes what can be lived". "Sentences, enthusiastic words that we spell out throughout the year with conviction. But we always need a time to re-energize, a space to live the Assomption fraternity, this is the time of the Forum! meetings, smiles, glances exchanged, people from different backgrounds who all look in the same direction. Permanent invitations to see each other again next year. Laurent Coiret, Head of Establishment – Chambéry

"The Assumption Forum is like taking a break alongside a spring of life. It is an opportunity to meet beloved faces, our paths crossing over these last few years: colleagues, school leaders, sisters, friends on the journey. There is the joy of seeing each other and the pleasure of meeting new people animated by the same faith with the same benevolent gaze on the world. Thanks be to the

Assumption for allowing me to remain linked to the great Assumption family. Albertine Michel, Assumption Together – Chambéry

"It is always with great joy that I take part in the Forum Assomption-France. It is the joy of finding people I know, the joy of discovering new ones, the joy of friendship! The spirit of the Assumption is there, alive and well, at the heart of our communities and our schools. Marie-Eugénie watches over us, for sure! Amélie d'Aboville r.a. Assumption - Bondy

"Joy,," that is the first word that comes to me. The joy of being gathered together as a family. I really liked the "treck" in the footsteps of Marie Eugénie. She gathered us together and accompanied us in this joyful fraternity that we lived in the light of beautiful spring sunshine! I liked being here. I liked being with all of you ". Catherine Rivoire, Mongré – Ville-Franche sur Saone

"I was participating in the Forum for the first time and it was a very good professional and human experience: meetings that marked us and we had a good time together. As a clinical psychologist, I work at LPP St. Joseph in Lyon and I really enjoyed knowing and understanding the spirit of the Assomption and how the other establishments function, which despite the geographical distance and differences, share the same values in which correspond to my own: welcome, openness, benevolence ". Jagoda Faure, Assumption - St Joseph, Lyon

Sisters Ana Senties et Soeur Danielle Romet r.a.

Compiègne Community

“Let’s Make, Not Break”

The Kids Kabin Project in Newcastle, England

Kids Kabin is a children’s charity based in Newcastle upon Tyne. We use creative arts and practical, hands-on projects to give children living in disadvantaged communities a chance to achieve. We work with schools during the day, developing creative projects to complement the curriculum. Then in the afternoons, evenings and school holidays we run creative and practical workshops on the streets using our innovative mobile workshops, at our main centre in Walker and in community venues across Newcastle upon Tyne. We also run wild camps and bike rides in Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

A view of its history

In 1993 three Sisters of the Assumption were sent to Walker, in the east end of Newcastle upon Tyne. After some months of reconnaissance, they chose to settle there.

Even before we had time to unpack, ‘the nuns’ were objects of curiosity, and our small space was invaded by children who were only subdued by the offer of occupation out of limited resources of paper, crayons and games. It was the beginning.

Sometime later, the Sisters felt it was the moment to reflect about the new project. What had they learned? What was this agenda material? From observation and the ‘invasion experience’ it was clear that local children needed a place of their own and people who would give them recognition, time and attention, and something to do. Indoors, these children were happy to draw, paint, model and play. Despite poor concentration levels, there was the possibility of bringing, for short spaces, some order into the chaos, a chaos which reflected the background of their lives. Outside, their play was often destructive and harassing, like removing, drain covers, upsetting fruit stalls, smashing windows and breaking into cars.... From out of all this, came the idea: Why not replace this destructive tendency by creativity?



A simple slogan was formulated as a rapid response to a concrete situation. It may also be seen as a natural response from the Sisters whose mission is that of education. Like all successful educational systems, theirs was founded on the acknowledgement of the value and uniqueness of each person, the desire to help them develop their potential and use their gifts to contribute to a better, more just and humane society. This is just as applicable to the situation in which the Sisters now found themselves as it was when first formulated and practised in the nineteenth century, and as it is currently being played out in many cultures and forms of education today. The name given to it is ‘transformative education’. Some happy expressions dating from its origins illustrate the freedom within which the system is designed to work. Referring to young people, here is one: ‘Direct their flight, but don’t clip their wings’, and another: ‘It is madness not to be oneself as fully as possible’.

Kids Kabin tries to include and integrate. Those young people living with multiple risk factors and chaotic lives are likely to struggle to achieve at school. This results in ongoing patterns of exclusion or non-attendance with these young people seeing themselves as failures next to many of their peers. We aim to rebalance this by enabling those excluded children to achieve in front of their peers:



- Kids Kabin welcomes all children and these children attend Kids Kabin voluntarily
- Children need the freedom to express themselves at Kids Kabin
- We want to focus our work on those children most at risk of social exclusion
- The most socially excluded children display the most difficult behaviour
- Many organisations exclude those people who display the most difficult behaviour

- We do not want the behaviour of children at Kids Kabin to put off and exclude others
- We aim to create an environment of mutual respect and positive relationships

Between 1994 and 2000 Kids Kabin focused on the 8-12 age range. Then in 2001, alongside the new building, we started working with 13-16 year olds – ‘the senior sessions’. Increasing the age range was a justification for the development of purpose-built premises. However, between 2002 and 2006 we had been struggling with our work with teenagers. We found that they were no longer interested in the creative activities that we specialised in. We had tried to develop more vocational courses and adapt the programme accordingly. We had given them responsibility for planning; we had introduced a range of new and different activities. However, we were still having limited success. We actually found that the teenagers were less engaged, more difficult to enthuse and less creative than the 8-12 year olds.

After a wake-up call from a funder in 2006 and the self- reflection that resulted from it, we looked in detail at our strengths, weaknesses and other new ideas. The young volunteers’ initiative was already under way. We had also been discussing the idea of replicating the ‘old Kids Kabin’, the shop unit, in other parts of Walker or in the west end of Newcastle. We knew that the Kids Kabin model would work elsewhere and we drew up a plan to develop three satellites between 2007 and 2010. This was a very ambitious idea, which came into its own in 2013. Now these satellites are fully established.

Trailers are hitched to bicycles and taken to other areas in Newcastle. There is a mobile bike repair trailer, mobile kitchen, mobile pottery etc. These are set up in the street, in community centres and church halls. The system is immensely popular and engages the help of parents as well.

Some testimonies of the volunteers:

“I am serving in Kids Kabin in Newcastle. An art and craft centre for kids. It is a venue where kids can create and be part in activities that will take them away from bad influence of streets and also help them be better adults in the future. There I see how lucky those kids. They are provided with things to ensure they will have a good life and have better future. The United Kingdom, although it is a first world country is also suffering



and in trouble in many aspects of its society. I am called here to serve with a purpose beyond boundaries and differences". Spencer from the Philippines)



"During this year at Kids Kabin I have discovered plenty of new skills. For the first time in my life I have tried to do pottery, woodwork, bike repair and I have fallen in love with these sessions. I never knew that I like bike rides, but I found out this year. I use the bike everywhere. I began to cook a lot and the children like very much to cook with me, because I am trying to do different international cuisines with them. I have discovered that I am becoming stronger in challenging situations and I have some skills to

work with "difficult" children, and I can influence them. Very often I put myself in a difficult situation that develops my skills and find a way out from that situation". Igor Kornij, from Ukraine)

"My international volunteering year here in Walker was fantastic! I am so grateful to God for sending me here to work in Kids Kabin and other neighbouring projects within the area. As a teacher, it enhanced my skills more in the variety of activities such as arts, dance, music, drama, woodwork, glasswork, pottery, cookery, sewing, and bike repairs, hands-on projects to give children living in disadvantaged communities a chance to experience and achieve something good for themselves, indoors and outdoors. As we work in the streets, it gives me courage to share my gifts and talents with them, my skills and knowledge in implementing the goals of Kids Kabin in action surrounded by the values and respect towards each other. I enjoyed so much working with the staff and my co-volunteers in my community with different groups of kids like school groups, after-school kids, street kids and children with special needs. It makes my heart sing for joy and thanksgiving..." Felma, from the Philippines



<http://www.kidskabin.org.uk/>

Sister Christine Charlwood r.a.
Will Benson
Assumption English Province

THE ASSUMPTION COMMUNITY IN GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR: “BUILDERS OF A NEW HUMANITY”

It all started more than 60 years ago, when a group of ladies from Guayaquil met an Assumption school in France. They noticed a different way of educating girls: a harmonious development of scientific knowledge, reasoned and profound yet without neglecting the Christian vision and based on the spirit of solidarity and sensitivity to the reality surrounding them.



Thus, in 1957, the Community of Sisters of the Assumption arrived in Ecuador. They settled in a neighborhood called "Centenario", south of Guayaquil. However, after a short while, they moved to the North at "Mapasingue," a poor and uninhabited area. One family friend donated this property.

The first students experienced a new and deep enthusiasm to learn as well as to "unlearn" in order to enrich themselves with the wisdom that this new school provided. They acquired a fuller personality that allowed them to develop their hidden abilities

and to discover more about God, the source of our true happiness.

Hence, the work of the Assumption began: to form solid characters, upright wills, deep convictions, clear ideas that would allow the students to analyze situations and take up positions, engaging in real social action, convinced that they cannot just stand by while God and the world cry out for committed apostles.

Little by little, different groups of A.M.A. were organized: some students as "activists" and others as "collaborators". That made it possible to start catechetical groups, a health and a loans center. The home visits of our high school students to the brothers and sisters in Mapasingue area as well as to other charitable institutions also started. These activities changed over time, according to the local needs. There were other initiatives such as literacy programs for adults, a community store, a bakery, a credit union, a children's dining room and a library. Other students gave mentoring and tutoring service in the afternoons, as well as solidarity social projects in slums and rural areas.

In the 1960s, some Sisters from Belgium, Spain and Central America came to further reinforce the educational team. They continued the integral formation of the students: Mother Pilar Eugenia, Rosa Francisca, Lourdes Mercedes and Mother Marie-Cecile, who was a French teacher. She still accompanies the preschool children today, being an icon in the community and a beloved contact person for many generations of our graduates who continue to come to her for advice. During the 1970s, significant changes were carried out on the pedagogical level of the school, as well as on the social level in the neighborhood of Mapasingue. Mother Paloma Gutiérrez accompanied this process for more than 30 years, giving a new dynamism to the teachers, the students and their families.

As we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we remember many other people who are part of our history and our institution. Some now in management positions, others in support posts that run the school that has now more than 1000 students. Their joy and untiring service continue to impact the children, the youth and the adults. Thanks to each of them, our Assumption education carries on its mission of transforming the young into agents of social change there where they are today.

For example, many of our alumni have participated in the transformation of Ecuadorian politics by integrating the marginalized. One of them has worked so that the new Constitution approved in 2008 has a chapter dedicated to the rights and obligations of young people. For this, they had requested the contribution of our students. She is now the Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Guayaquil.



This year, 2017, the Assumption Community in Guayaquil is celebrating and commemorating 60 years of forming generations of young people who are active agents of their own learning, able to act in favor of the Common Good and the Defense of Life, recognizing, appreciating and respecting the cultural diversity of our people.

We want to highlight this anniversary with a solidarity action by supporting the population in the poor area of Manabí which devastated by an earthquake in 2016. All of our educational community: Teachers, Service staff, Parents, Students and Sisters have mobilized during the weekends of the year to build together 60 homes in Manabí. This action strengthens our friendship and our civic engagement. We are grateful for the solidarity of so many communities of the Congregation around the world who have made this dream possible.

Therefore, after more than 60 years our education continues to be, in this land of Ecuador, liberating, humanizing and transforming. Through the gospel that God reveals to us, He speaks to us and commits us to germinating the seeds of his Kingdom that he has placed in our hands. "Up away, up away Assumption you go with courage and joy..."



Reina María Valladares de Zamora
Social Science Coordinator
ASSUMPTION SCHOOL - GUAYAQUIL-ECUADOR

In México, 2nd Assumption Gathering: “Create, Innovate and Transform!”

We learn together in community,

Creating spaces to promote talent and a quality education.



“It is madness not to be what one is, as fully as possible”

Saint Marie Eugenie

THE SECOND ASSUMPTION GATHERING, “Create Innovate and Transform” took place on April 3rd – 7th. Members of the whole community, old students, friends and close collaborators, generated plenty of experiences and learning spaces, for collaborative work, creativity and innovation workshops for all the school’s students.

This strategy is fundamental in education today, trying to recognize the worth of students and their educational progress, its help to achieve in different scholar projects. It also stimulates and reinforces their academic effort. It makes closer relationships as community while learning from another; it celebrates success, and contributes to the students’ growth.

According to the objectives of the Educational Model of the Assumption Institute and taking into account, the challenges of the reality where graduates will get along, we consider that it is essential to offer to the students inspirational and learning experiences that they could multiple skills, such as:

- Collaborative and interdisciplinary learning
- Social and coexistence skills
- Emotional development
- Cultivate the inner being and spirituality
- Investigation and communication skills
- Logical, mathematics and critical thinking skills
- Good use and exploitation of IT and communication tools

When the students are aware of the talent they have, when they can have the experience of being able to generate solutions of the problems and challenges that they live nowadays, when they can demonstrate their social sensibility towards a world that claims for solidarity and responsibility to transform it in a place with more justice for all, with a framework of Christian values, providing new and human answers for all; then, we achieve the formation of the “the young Assumption” as an honest person and a prominent professional that makes a difference and has an impact in a real and positive way among his or her circle where he or she can influence others.





Within the Bicentennial anniversary of the birth of Mother Mary Eugenie and Therese Emmanuel celebrations, it is very important to maintain updated our educational proposal and highlight that education of students. This education bases on “achieving what they are with the most possible plenitude”, is a shared work of the school and teachers, parents and close contributors, and a wide network of several organizations.

The work of teachers is focused in helping children and teenagers to be the best version of themselves. For this purpose many activities were organized, and were held

with so much happiness and enthusiasm that generated the participation and commitment of all the community:

- Dr. Rodolfo Neri Vela Lecture: The Microgravity: how Life in Space is. A normal day of an astronaut.
- Jorge Font Lecture: “The Feints in Education”, in which he highlighted the importance of preparing mind and soul to launch to life and face “the monsters” that block us towards our goals.
- Other conferences about training topics for parents and children’s development.
- Several workshops for students and adults, with important topics such as: spiritual development and the prayer; positive psychology; contemplative dance; creativity, art and sense of life; strategies of communication and assertiveness in decision making; technology and innovation; culinary skills and food science; promotion of the environment and its care; Math and Physics digital games; science applied to life; robotics and programming, etc.
- Testimonies of graduates that have distinguished themselves in areas such as sports, culture, art, science and spirituality.
- Book Fair and promotion of literacy activities such as storytelling, speeches and signature by authors of books read by students.
- Artistic activities and concerts, design and children’s theatre.

The live transmission from the Radio Assumption cabin came up specially interesting, created by the technology area. It gave young and old students the opportunity to express their opinions about what they have learned in “The Assumption Gathering”.

This great initiative allowed us to celebrate the great opportunity of creating different, stimulating and training spaces, because we know that we never stop learning. Through this great activity we achieved the reinforcement of the collaborative and participative sense among all the community, especially of parents interested on sharing a workshop or a conference. Thanks to them, this Second Assumption Gathering was highly enriched, increasing the variety of learning options for students and adults.



All the community recognizes the work and effort of the team of teachers and executives that make an updated pedagogical proposal, valuable and relevant, to answer with coherence to the challenges of today’s world.

Some members of the Assumption Educational Community, Mexico City

An educational network in Montpellier - a work of solidarity for the reception of migrants

... Christ calls us to collaborate with Him and with others to realize God's plan for the world. Because of the intimate connection between environmental destruction, migration and violence, we will develop strategies that promote a culture of peace, justice, protection of creation and solidarity in everything we do.

(Fiche "Ecology and Migration, General Chapter 2012)

With the influx of asylum seekers in Montpellier, the Office of Solidarity of the Delegation of *Secours Catholique*¹⁸ called for a friendly place to be created to receive all those suffering people. This is how I, with other volunteers, came to be involved in a mission that is meant to be educational, accompanying those who ask for the protection of France.

In January 2016, after having drawn up a plan of action, we found have premises to open that came to be known as the "Café solidaire". Every Friday afternoon, we welcome between 15 and 25 young men and some women, coming from several different countries: Yemen, Congo Kinshasa, Albania, Armenia, Sudan, Syria, Central Africa, Burkina Faso, Brazil, Venezuela, Nigeria, Palestine etc. Everyone has had to flee their country they are fleeing from war, violations of human rights, and/or religious persecution.



I must emphasize that I am able to live this mission thanks to the community who are able to take part through their interest, (requests for news), by prayer, by welcoming people for meals (including that of Christmas), and by the work of knitting led by Sister H  l  ne Emmanuel: from the hands of these people emerge caps, scarves, blankets, mufflers, every week, to the great delight of the beneficiaries!

Free time is passed knitting, friends and friends of the Community give us balls of wool in all coloursit is truly a community work, and an answer to the Pope's call for those who suffer. I do not hesitate to tell the guests that the whole community is praying for them, they know it and thank me, especially after really difficult times. I do not hesitate to talk about religion ... When Sr. Pascale was sick, I asked them to think of her, and immediately the Muslims got up and had a minute's silence, recollected in prayer ... a beautiful testimony of solidarity!

Our welcome is fraternal, and respectful of the experience of each and every one. Very soon an atmosphere of mutual aid is created and several volunteers have at times suggested trips to get to know the city: there is a power point already prepared, then they walk to discover the main monuments, the names of the streets, and the different centres of interest (library, post office, employment centre, etc.).One couple proposed an outing at the seaside, another, visiting special gardens of the cityBefore any celebration (Christmas, January 1st, Candlemas, Lent), we explain its origin by means of a power point prepared by a volunteer. Around a cup of coffee or tea the different languages are freed up! Many do not

¹⁸ equivalent of CARITAS, France

know French when they arrive, so we need to move them towards the FLE¹⁹ course, and meanwhile communication is expressed through gestures ("real cinema" some say). Games, discussions, songs, music, little spontaneous sketches, all this fosters fraternity.

We make certain we stay connected with various organizations in the city: CIMADE²⁰, the Welcome Network (several we have received have been accommodated in families), the OFII²¹, places where they can eat, Corus (their place of residence), the parishes, the Colleges, the School of Commerce, the literacy centres...

One of the guests is a director and actor (he has already made a film in his home, denouncing the forced marriage of young girls). It attracted participation among the other guests, and several of them mounted a small theatrical piece: "the WALLS", which told their stories, and of their hopes. This piece has been played several times: on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of *Secours Catholique*, during the Migrants' Day on the *Place de la Comédie*, in two parishes (with a debate after the screening), and the video of this same piece has already been shown in two high schools and colleges.

On every occasion, those who wish to come and testify are very available to accompany us. This is also an opportunity for me to help them prepare their story (compulsory for the asylum application) about their journey and the reasons why they left their family. It is from this account that they will be judged at Ofpra²²(or in the case of refusal, the CNDA²³) for the issue (or not) of a residence permit. And when the time for the trial comes, I take them to this interview, as "judge" for its presentation, or in order to be "summoned" to give answers about their history. This first stress can then be mitigated at the right time. This way again, fraternity is played out, an older person having already got their residence card, can welcome someone new to Paris, someone new who does not know Paris at all! It is thanks to several educational experiences of this kind organized by *Secours Catholique* that I can live these special times. Beyond the pain I can share, my role is to restore confidence, and seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus who experienced exile with Mary and Joseph protects and sustains them, I really do believe this a lot.

At the time of the arrival of the people of Calais and Stalingrad (Paris), more than a hundred were accommodated at the Center d'Accueil et Orientation. The Director asked us to find volunteers to teach French. A call for volunteers was launched, and I was able to give one day training to twenty people, using preparatory sheets, and a practical course with those we were welcoming

Each time I am touched by the words, "*what you want others to do to you, do also to others*" (Gospel of Matthew 7:12)



Sister Marie-Monique

Community of Montpellier, France

¹⁹ Course "French Foreign Language" for those who want the French nationality

²⁰ NGOs whose purpose is active solidarity with the oppressed and exploited. It defends the dignity and rights of refugees and migrants, whatever their origins, or their convictions.

²¹ French Office for Immigration and Integration

²² French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless

²³ National Court of Asylum

November 2017

The Assumption at St Mary's University, Twickenham (London)

"Our passion for education becomes the more urgent and acute today because too many individuals and peoples are suffering and that is intolerable for us. The world situation presents profound contrasts compared to this project of love of God for his people. And we want to act to transform this situation which is so painful. God has the right for his project to be respected." (Doc. Pre-capitulaire Transformative Education in the Assumption 2006)

We were invited to come and be 'a praying presence' and to enhance the Catholic ethos of the University. The invitation came from Francis Campbell, a layman, previously UK ambassador to the Vatican and recently vice chancellor at St Mary's. He had accepted the challenge of re-energizing an inclusive and open Catholic ethos at St Mary's. This idea was supported by the Cardinal who was keen to have a truly Catholic university. The province had decided to go there even if it meant closing an existing community. The new community would be alongside young people with possibilities for study, building up the ethos and exploring any other openings that might present themselves.



We arrived over a year ago and received a wonderful welcome. We became 'chaplains volunteers' and officially part of the staff. But the chaplaincy consisted of a new priest, a laywoman on a short term contract and a part time administrator. The new chaplain was also running a parish. It would take time for things to emerge. The first term was a lot about getting ourselves settled in our new home, getting to know people, making links and finding our way around and creating the garden from scratch. Our focus is the university but inevitably we are also making links with neighbours and neighbouring parishes. Carolyn already had work with the London universities chaplaincy as social outreach organiser which puts her in contact with students in all the London universities, it is based at Newman House. We began to find our feet in the Lent term offering sessions on prayer, doing different Ways of



the Cross, Cafod soup lunch as well as the regular evening prayer in the university chapel twice a week, and student suppers after Sunday mass. In the meantime Cathy has started on her doctorate studies and Carolyn is working towards doing something similar. Jessica has recently made useful contact with the new environmental director in St Mary's.

Soon after we arrived, St Mary's inaugurated a Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery. We went to the conference which lasted several days.

Shedding Light on Modern Slavery - Our contribution

It is estimated there are at least 13,000 people in the UK in modern slavery, out of these one in four are children. The exploitation takes many forms, sexual, criminal, labour and domestic servitude, these are the most common.



They may be working in factories, construction, agriculture, car washes and nail bars etc.; they may not be wearing chains but with passports taken from them and fear of the immigration authorities, with threats to life and family, they will be securely tied within. Human trafficking is a market driven criminal industry, it is huge, second largest after the arms trade, and it is growing. Migrations of people fleeing war, famine and dire poverty make recruiting very easy.



These are 'wounds in the body of humanity' (Pope Francis). Many people are unaware that this modern slavery exists, perhaps next door. St Mary's Twickenham has just instituted a Centre for the study of Modern Slavery. Cardinal Vincent Nichols came to the inauguration, he said Mass on the feast of Josephine Bakhita here at St Mary's.

This was followed by a very full two-day conference with speakers from all perspectives. We heard about the gaps in the data, the impunity for slavers, the need for companies to know employment practices in their supply chains, the problem of identifying victims, the lack of investment and training at the local level, pressures and lack of personnel in the Border Force and the Gangmasters Licencing Authority (GLA) which will be playing a larger part in the future, the need for advocacy and legal assistance. A large part of the problem is that issues of slavery and trafficking come under the auspices of 'immigration' whereas really it should be an issue of 'human

rights'.

We heard of the need for more support and safe houses for the victims of slavery and trafficking. Bakhita House is doing this but so much more is needed. A young person will arrive at the UK border, he says he is going to stay with his cousin in Birmingham, but he does not have a mobile, nor a contact number. These are signs that he may have been trafficked: he may be warned of the dangers of slavery and exploitation: he may not see himself as a victim as he will have been promised the earth by the traffickers who have 'befriended' him: he may be referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) which is supposed to identify indicators of trafficking, but even if trafficked he will not necessarily get 'leave to remain'; he may prefer the risk.

We were told that the NRM was in need of reform and was not fit for purpose... there is work to be done. There needs to be more work on supply chains, better resourcing for social workers, the Border force and the GLA, more public awareness and policy based on evidence. This is where St Mary's comes in the Centre aims to 'advance human dignity with evidence based study of modern slavery' as well as research and facilitating collaboration. The Conference was a wonderful start. The final speaker was Gary Craig from the Wilberforce Institute who has been working on modern slavery for the last 12 years. He finished by telling us of the specially created Modern Slavery Garden that took prizes at last year's Chelsea Flower Show.

In the garden was a newly bred rose, the Modern Slavery Rose, he encouraged us to get it. We did. We decided to get one for St Mary's too. We had a little liturgy as we planted our rose. 'The Lord hears the cry of the poor.... Every spirit crushed He will save. 'I have heard the groaning of the House of Israel, enslaved by the Egyptians'...' I will deliver you...' O Lord hear my prayer... The rose was liberally sprinkled with holy water and everyone helped to surround the plant with soil and firm it in. Sr Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.



Sisters Christine, Carolyn, Cathy and Jessica

Twickenham Community

English Province

It is possible to awaken children to the interior life...

A great challenge for our times!

How can one access one's inner life in a world where interiority is a stranger fueled as it is by speed, noise and a culture of materialism? How create a connection between the inner and the outer life so as to nurture a fertile interiority?

How can educators today help the youth to discover and live the spiritual dimension of their lives? And first of all to face the challenge owning and naming his/her existential questions? Superficiality diverts us from our own depth, but it is always accessible to the one who seeks it. Marie-Eugénie, foundress of the Sisters of the Assumption, answered a sister complaining how the students were like butterflies: "Oh, but do not cut their wings, just direct their flight!"

St. Augustine points out the challenge : "People go to admire the height of the mountains, the gigantic waves of the sea, the broadly flowing rivers, the limitless horizons of the ocean, the revolutions of the stars: and they leave themselves out of the picture! (Book X, 8, 15 of the St Augustine Confessions).

In his exhortation addressed to the Augustinians assembled in the General Chapter in Rome in 2001, Pope John Paul II affirmed: "You must be the mentors of interiority at the service of the men and women of the third millennium in search of Christ. It is not by the shallow way that one reaches it, but only by the way of interiority. "



It is in this sense that the Assumption Center of Pastoral Education Resources , has reflected on a pedagogy of interiority, which helps students arrive at reasons for living and acting , helping them to develop their inner life in order to allow each one of them to reach his/her true desire and discern the direction of his/her life, in a process of personal transformation.

With these convictions, and enriched by the experience of having welcomed many children to a mountain prayer school, where they opened to me the hidden sources of their inner life, I initiated an interiority workshop, once a month (one hour after class) for the children of CM1 in the Assumption school of Bondy (Seine Saint Denis district).

There were many requests to join, so two workshops were set up to accommodate all. This year 10 children from CM2 have chosen to continue, and another 24 of CM1 are embarking on the adventure. The objective is to awaken their consciousness to gain access and to learn to listen to their feelings, emotions, thoughts and actions. It is where they learn to dialogue with themselves and with others, to taste a silence that integrates them, to discern what makes them grow and what risks harming them.

Children, like our people in this diocese, come from a variety of cultures and religious confessions. The workshops are open to everybody. There is no explicit proclamation of the Gospel, but is an open space where everyone can be helped to be more deeply in touch with his/her life.

What takes place in the workshops? Each workshop has two parts: first, a relaxation exercise using the CD "Calm and attentive as a frog" by Eline Snel, "Happy and relaxed" by Marine Locatelli, or others, with the following points of focus:

- Learn how you feel from observing your breath. Listen to the part our body plays by experiencing that breathing and the heartbeat pulsate together, as we live so does the tempo or the pace goes.
- Consult his/her "personal weather", to learn about the "weather inside".
- Leave the head, feel the body, to learn to avoid reacting impulsively.
- Become aware when attention wanders, to bring it back to the breath; training one's attention is like training a muscle.

In the 2nd part, I introduce some modules of active learning. At the end of each experience, there is a time of reflection following some guide questions: "What have I done? I remember the exercise I did. What sensations, emotions did I experienced? What do I do with them? What does this exercise inspire me to do? What does it invite me to continue? Could I continue having a 'calm time' at home? At the end of the workshop, I give an interiority notebook to the children of CM2, with these questions, so they write what they want to keep in their heart, their body and their spirit.

This training helps children to become aware of several essential points like the following:

- Body awareness: through movement, following the breath, dance movements, being attentive to body sensations, relaxing exercises during stressful situations in daily life. It is primarily to be present to the present moment, to "the here and the now".
- Trust in the other and responsibility towards the other by the activity of being a guide or being guided by another, by turns, while blindfolded. Being guided by others demands having trust in oneself.
- Listen to my body signals, discovering that it is not only making it do what I want, but to see my body as a companion who asks me not to go beyond limits for my well-being. What do I do with what I feel? To feel and make a choice. See and observe, listen and hear, touch and perceive.
- To recognize myself as unique and precious. It is the foundation for the creation of my identity.
- The contemplative dance of blessing, in the gracefulness of gestures, to discover my capacity to bless and to wish good to the earth, to another, to all peoples and to oneself.
- To manage one's emotions. A child once shared with me: "I would like so much to get rid of my sadness!" Working with the "rainbow of emotions" allows them to be in touch with them in an open, nonjudgmental way. Understand that unpleasant emotional states such as sadness are transient; that we can try not to let them invade our inner being, also we can look to our "reserves of joy" to moderate them, or even to make them disappear. In all this, it is a question of learning to feel and to recognize things internally.

What do the children say?

"I love interiority, it calms me down; when I have problems, I learn to let go of them, and this leaves me feeling good ... I become more and more calm, relaxed and light inside. I learn to travel inside my body, I cannot describe it!" Naëlle 10 years.



"Living inwardly helps me a lot in my everyday life; I often practice it at home whenever I'm stressed. I have already tried with my mother and she told me that it worked and she felt well afterwards! We do not always have the chance to do this, it is really magical, everyone should try it!"
Zoe, 10 years.



Développer une attention consciente et le calme intérieur

Sophie Godart, a teacher who has joined us in the animation of the workshops, shares with us her experience: It is helping children to discover the treasures they carry within them, to get to know each other better, to live in their bodies, to tame their breath, to feel they are precious, to accept their emotions. I remember seeing Nadir organizing a concert of happy people, the shared faces of Jade and Kayla, Naëlle's

serenity finally calm and free from the tyranny of the eyes of others. Also the joy of Inès to discover the Rondo Veneziano and to dance it.

I also those moments of sharing while planning with Sister Marie-Geneviève, when we brainstormed ideas, the meeting of minds, feeling the same passion, the same belief in and the same vision of the human being.

What a great adventure! ... I am sure that the seeds planted in these workshops will give birth to beautiful things in their lives. "

Sister Marie-Geneviève POULAIN, r.a.

Community of Lyon, France