

# #ASSUMPTA

Magazine of the Religious of the Assumption

December 2020 - Issue N°3



**“Courage !  
Do not fear!  
Here is our God:  
He will come  
and save us.”  
(Is. 35,4)**

# summary

"Each one of us has a mission on earth"



## #ASSUMPTA

Year 2020 - Issue n°3

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*"We have been struggling all night and have caught  
nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets".  
(Lk. 5:5)*

# editorial

## *Plan for Resurrection - The new Normal - Marie Eugenie of Jesus and Hope*

**W**e are increasingly aware that we are going through a time of crisis; we are immersed in a scenario of profound changes with important consequences for all of humanity.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has taken us by surprise without being prepared and has come to fill us with confusion, insecurity, fear... revealing a dramatic reality that affects us all, on the one hand, almost without making any distinction, although on the other, it highlights the injustice and inequality of the world we have built.

The experience of confinement, of silence, of lack of freedom, of fear and uncertainty; of powerlessness and pain, is, however, a time when God is also at work in each person, in the world and in Creation... We must recognize this action and hope that our lives are truly changing. This time has brought us the opportunity for new life, for resurrection and for re-invention by being creative, finding solutions for living, relating, learning, communicating, sharing, supporting, celebrating and living our faith.

The Light has illuminated our experience of indecision and darkness through so many people: men, women, youth and children who in one way or another are being light in their communities, in their families and in their workplaces; they are giving hope from great and small actions: caring for the sick, researching health solutions accessible to all, seeking economic alternatives, educating and accompanying the development of the new generations, especially the poorest and most abandoned of the earth.

They are an inspiration for us too to decide to define at once a plan of life, a plan of hope, a decisive commitment of life, passion and dedication, giving ourselves totally and as Marie-Eugénie of Jesus reminds us: "I have decided to give myself, not to lend myself to Jesus-Christ". (ME, Letter to Father Gros, 1841, n°1504).

We would hope that our "new normality" would break with our old normality. The one which installed us, accommodated us, distanced us from pain, blinded us so as not to see the injustices and hardened us so as not to feel the pain of so many brothers and sisters... It is time for a new dawn, time for a new life, time to fill us with hope and to transmit it!

Let us see our world with a new look, let us allow our heart and our guts to be moved and from a renewed passion "let us love our time", yes let us love it without limits and let us be creative to live and make possible a full life for all, from our warm and human relationships, from decisive and committed decisions, and from our concrete responses through our mission of transforming education.

Marie Eugenie knew how to see the reality of her time with realism and courage; far from fleeing from it, she loved it and felt strongly the call to transform it from a passion for Jesus, and the conviction that education would be the means to transform society, highlighting in her life faith, trust in Providence, the desire for union



with the Lord, love of service and fidelity to her vocation.

COVID-19 is once again revealing to us the reality of our world, of our time, of the human being. Now it is necessary that we also ask ourselves: "How am I living this time? How am I loving it? What can we do: "God has done so much for me that I want to do something for His name." (ME, Intimate Notes, n°154/10)

It is fundamental to connect with the Source, only from God and for God can we live with meaning and hope, with passion and dedication, with love and freedom, the great calls of our time and the answers we must give.

Since this time of Pandemic began I have seen that behind all this there are opportunities for life:

The person:

More than "protecting" and "distancing" us, it is fundamental to strengthen the interior, the sense of "the experience of God"; to strengthen relationships, the emotional dimension, love, tenderness, solidarity. For the body to learn how to feed and nourish itself, physical activity, rest, work; to form thought through study, reflection, analysis... As daughters of Marie Eugenie, we must follow her example of deep faith, a categorical prayer that should impel us to work in the midst of this hard reality, with firmness, fidelity and passion centered on Jesus Christ and the extension of the Kingdom.

Our mission of transforming education:

During the last few years we have been reflecting, sharing, enriching, updating this fundamental dimension of our charism. The world and educational responses changed overnight since March of this year, something we never imagined and for which we were not prepared. From diverse realities and with great differences in opportunities between the countries of the North and the countries of the South; between educational institutions with resources and public education systems in conditions of precariousness and abandonment by the States of underdeveloped countries, we see how the gap of inequality between children and young people in the world today is widening. It is there, in this interconnected world, where today we can find an opportunity and an option for life, for justice, for equity and for hope from our educational actions, and from our creative responses that generate life.

This third edition of our magazine #Assumpta opens our eyes, through our experiences, reflections and contributions, to face this new world that recognizes itself as different, after being shaken by the pandemic that has exposed the darkest shadows of a selfish, ambitious and arrogant society that needs to be transformed.

**SISTER ODESSA HERRERA**  
**Provincial of Central America and Cuba**  
*Original Spanish*

# general community

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**By sharing  
in the  
Congregation,  
this allows us  
to be more  
supportive  
through specific  
actions and  
prayer**

**A**dvent is approaching and the summer months already seem far away. Here in France, we have entered a new period of confinement, though less strict than the first to allow as much economic activity as possible.

As we've said, we are going through a deep social, economic and health crisis. The provinces are working hard to support their missions, mainly schools, social work and houses of welcome. The sisters see that, together, lay people and sisters are going out of themselves and being creative in reaching out to the peripheries around them. The sisters admire the generosity and self-sacrifice of the teachers, administrative staff and parents of the students.

By sharing in the congregation, this allows us to be more supportive through specific actions and prayer. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, in paragraph 169 of his Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti, writes that "it is necessary to work so that these experiences of solidarity which grow up from below, from the subsoil of the planet – can come together, be more coordinated, keep on meeting one another... they are sowers of change, promoters of a process involving millions of actions, great and small, creatively intertwined like words in a poem".

Starting in March, our programme had to adjust to the new reality of the pandemic. For the annual retreat, we went different ways:

**Sisters Rekha, Françoise and Sandra** went to the Abbey of St. Jacut de la Mer in Brittany. For each one of them, it was a grace that renewed them physically and spiritually. The atmosphere of silence, combined with the beauty of the sea, enabled both the spiritual journey and the enjoyment of walks to admire nature. Travelling to this place helped them discover some of the geography and cultural diversity of various other regions of France: the Pays de Loire, Brittany and Normandy; a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Notre-Dame Pontmain (Our Lady of Hope) where the Virgin Mary appeared in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian war, and Mont Saint Michel, admired on their way back to Paris.

**Sister Isabelle and Sister Marthe** joined the sisters from Belgium for a retreat at the Benedictine monastery of Wavreumont. The theme of the retreat was "You have chosen us to serve in your presence... The way of the Servant". It was led by Sr. Jeannine Harvengt, Salesian of the Visitation. Repeatedly they were able to recognise how much Marie-Eugénie had drawn from the rich and beautiful spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales. A deep spiritual experience seen from the aspect of God's infinite gentleness and goodness.

The sisters tasted the happiness of being called to serve the Lord and to let him act in them. For Saint Francis de Sales, the disciple who walks on the roads of the world, often rough and dusty, will always need to let the Lord wash his or her feet. May our God give us the grace to die and live in this service, because the foundation of our fellowship, our human solidarity and of our initiatives is the charity of Christ.

Let **Sister Irene Cecile** tell us about her retreat: "Blessing upon blessings! One great blessing I had during this pandemic was the 8-day Retreat with the whole Province of Asia Pacific facilitated by Fr. Francis Gustilo, SDB. It was a Holy Week Retreat followed by Triduum and Easter Celebration. The themes developed, prayed with Scriptures, with personal experiences, and with the Rule of Life, were: Friendship and Betrayal; Authority and Submission; Stillness and Hope; Life and Light. It was a real grace-filled retreat for all of us. Contemplating on the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and on our realities in the world, COVID 19 and its implications - the suffering of many people, the daily increasing number of those infected, getting sick and dying, and the varied sacrifices, led us to deeper communion with God and with one another. The Holy Week Retreat was a strong, meaningful, and palpable experience of being one with Jesus Christ

in praying: "Into your hands Father, we commend our spirits." Easter is God's act. An experience of New Life is God's merciful saving grace and tender compassion."

Let's listen to **Sister Isabelle** telling us about her immersion at the Campus de la Transition in Forge, during one week at the beginning of August: "Arriving at the Château de Forges in the late afternoon, I felt a fraternal atmosphere, a desire to 'do things together'. During gardening or cooking activities and free time together, I met young people from very different backgrounds, most of them engineers either at the end of their studies or with professional experience. They are at the Campus because of their desire to use their talents in a meaningful project. This quest generally begins with a heightened awareness of the social pressures and standards of "successful living" which slow down or even suppress anything new or creative. How can we free ourselves from these pressures? How can we let each one's inner potential unfold? How can we regain a sense of the common good? This is the starting point of all education: accompanying growth, learning to think for oneself, to distance oneself from standardized thinking, and to trust one's intuition.

During my stay, I often heard the expression "do what your heart tells you". I realized that it is not always simple to listen to your heart. Serving according to one's heart creates a transparent and friendly community atmosphere. Not that sacrifice is absent; it was even a topic of debate one evening following a television series of the French television channel called "Arte" on the conditions of the working-class from the 18th century to the present day. Running counter to a system of industrial growth, outside the law, in order to preserve human rights and the environment requires real self-sacrifice and one must

be ready to act consistently. Trying in community to do so makes one think that it is possible; moreover, it brings real joy and happiness. From a feeling of powerlessness, one begins to glimpse possible fields of action: together and in cooperation, each one is indispensable.

Meeting with passionate young people who put all their energy into taking care of the planet, who choose a simple life and establish links with local action groups gives a vision of hope.

I wondered why I felt so joyfully free during these days spent at Forges. The reading for that Sunday in August from the prophet Elijah, who recognized God's passing by in the murmur of a gentle breeze, followed by Psalm 84, made me understand: "Mercy and faithfulness have met; justice and peace have embraced... The Lord will make us prosper and our earth shall yield its fruit. Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps". It is the discovery, always to be re-discovered, that God is always "other". It is an experience of Church open to every initiative of good will; a liberating way out of a clique or exclusive group. All of a sudden the re-connection with nature becomes part of my life and gives me another bond with the world.

The spiritual dimension is present on the Campus; it is linked to a deep respect for nature, to the awareness that everything is linked, to contemplation and silence, to attention to vulnerability. It opens one to gratitude and kindness.

I have felt, tangibly, a part of this quest for a good life for all, Fratelli Tutti, a journey full of pitfalls but real and which revives hope.

Vacations in the mountains (community of Fleur des Neiges in Saint Gervais) evoke for us the beauty



Wavreumont Abbey - Belgium



Mont Saint Michel - France



Campus of the Transition Forges - France



Holidays Saint Gervais - France



Central America Cuba Assembly



East Africa Assembly



Picnic in Beaune - France



Retreat with the Province of Asia Pacific

of nature which fascinates and inspires us. We become aware that contact with nature rouses us to contemplation and gratitude towards the One who is its Creator. At the same time we experience in sorrow what human beings, consciously or unconsciously, are destroying and how the harshness of the pandemic is contradicting God's plan.

We retain very beautiful memories of the community of the Sisters of Fleur des Neiges, of the service and the listening to others, of the families who were there. The atmosphere created by the community opens the door to meeting the other, all the holidaymakers, alone or with their families. We were also touched by the sharing among the guests, their availability and their mutual help.

The corona pandemic could not take away our hope, our unflinching desire for communion nor our zeal to give our very best in the novel circumstances in which we find ourselves today. As the saying goes, "Love is always creative". We experimented with new ways of being in touch with the Provinces, thanks to the fast-evolving communication technology. In fact, the exchanges between the General Community and the Provinces were more frequent than ever before. Examples include many WhatsApp calls with the Provincials and Sisters, Zoom meetings with the Plenary Provincial Council of India and with the Provincial Council of Ecuador. These were moments of ongoing formation and of exploring new ways of animating and accompanying our communities. We have also reflected on new ways of being RAs today in response to the questions and calls of the present context of our Provinces. We journey together in search of greater communion and deeper commitment to the service of life and God's mission.

**Sisters Rekha and Veronique** could also join the Province of India for the release of the long-awaited history book - The Life and Mission of the Religious of the Assumption in India (1993-2018). It was a moment of grace and celebration.

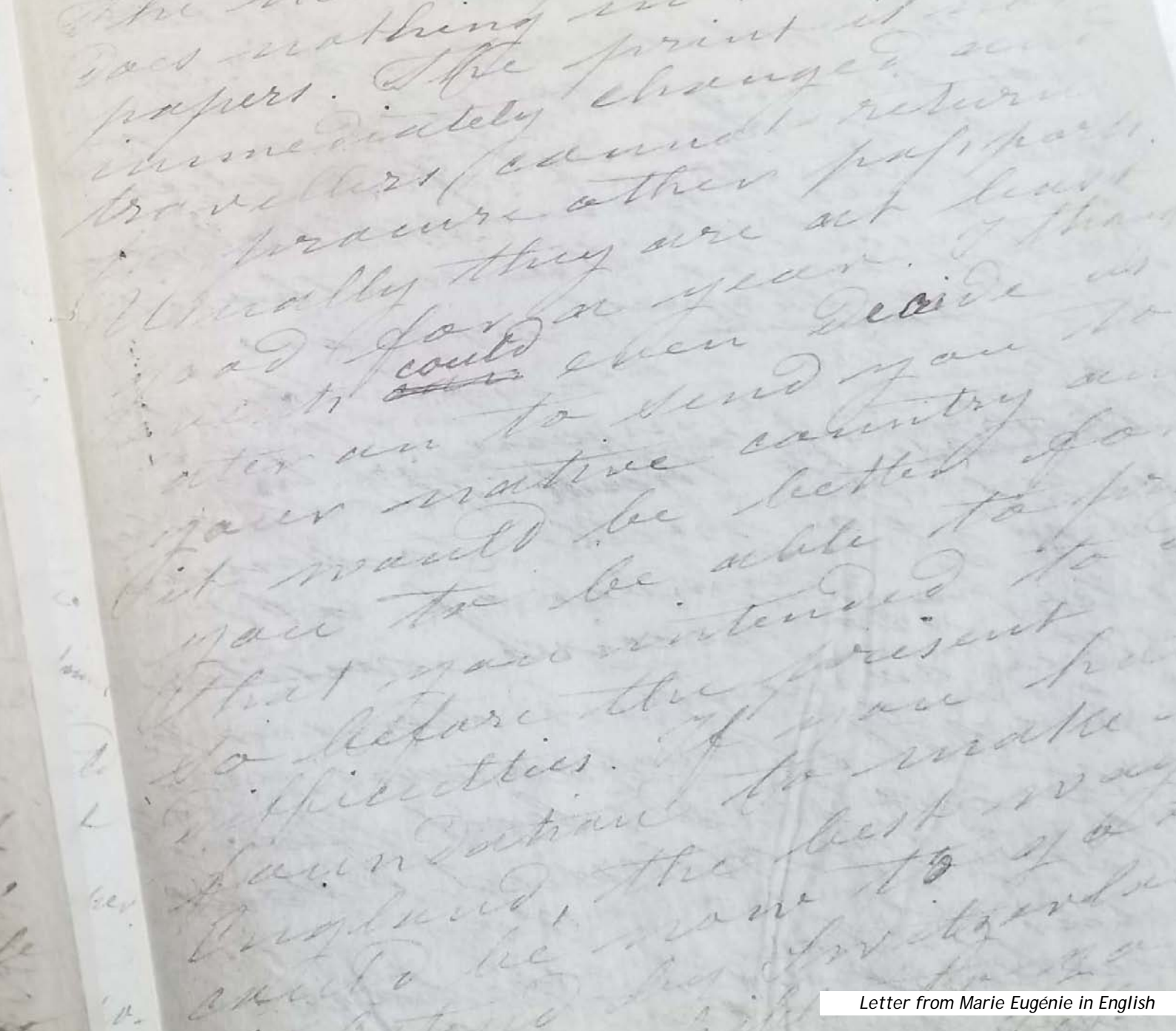
Since September we have visited online the Provinces of East Africa and Central America-Cuba. In November and December we will visit the provinces of Mexico and Europe. The purpose of these online visits is "to strengthen communion, to strengthen religious life and to stimulate mission according to the Rule of Life. [RL no.100].

The Provinces have moved from worrying "How is this going to be possible?" to marvelling at the benefits of technology, and show an ardent desire to learn and to put all their discoveries at the service of Life. Although technology does not replace a face-to-face visit, we were able to experience real encounters. We appreciated the spirit of faith, openness, humility and the willingness to learn, both as Provinces and as individuals.

« See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? » Is 43,19.

May this time of Advent open us to hope, and impel us to renew ourselves to welcome the Saviour of all humanity.

**SISTER REKHA, SISTER SANDRA, SISTER ISABELLE, SISTER MARTHE AND SISTER IRENE**  
General Community



Letter from Marie Eugénie in English

## archive treasures

### **Time of testing... time of renewal...**

Marie Eugénie's era was politically complex. Different regimes succeeded at the head of France, sign of the struggle between the supporters of the former monarchical regime and those of the Republic, led by a democratic ideal. Civil revolts and coups d'état ensued. In 1851, when the rulers of the 2nd Republic were confronted with their lack of experience and a large portion of the population worried about the future, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte regained power by a coup d'état. He proclaimed the Second Empire, thwarting republican pretensions. In July 1870, France got involved in a disastrous war against Prussia. In the Archives, we find a series of documents dating from these troubled times. They help us understand how Marie Eugénie lived through them, just 150 years ago.

## War disrupts the plans

On June 25, 1870, the Congregation's 3rd General Chapter was held in Auteuil. It preceded the dispersion of some of the sisters, who had been sent to safety since war was declared just after the Chapter. The communities of the Assumption in the east of the country (Sedan, Saint Dizier, Reims) were in a dangerous zone. In Saint-Dizier, the Assumption became a military hospital, which means that war-wounded were welcomed in the Monastery. In September 1870, Sedan was the scene of the arrest of Napoleon, discredited, followed closely by the proclamation of the 3rd Republic. Reims, not far away, was also threatened in the summer of 1870. As mentioned in the notes of the Founding texts, Mother Marie-Eugénie, in Lyon, where she gone at the beginning of August, learned of the first French defeats. She therefore returned to Paris, which was also occupied by the enemy. Auteuil found itself in the heart of the storm, and the vast majority of the sisters had to be dispersed in order to protect them. Marie Eugénie worked endlessly, organizing the departures for Poitiers, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nimes and England. The sisters' safety was a priority for her. The Novitiate left for Lyon. The entire Congregation was affected by these events. The sisters, Marie Eugénie the first, saw their programs crumble, their plans modified; they had to face the unexpected. In these times of pandemic, when everything in our world is disrupted, this makes us close to our Mothers.

## Auteuil becomes a military hospital

On August 26, Marie Eugénie herself left Paris. About thirty sisters remained there with Mother Marie-Séraphine. A military hospital was organized at the Petit Couvent, which received and cared for the wounded. The annals of Auteuil in 1870-1871, of which we carefully keep the two notebooks, recount these days. They bear witness to this war lived from within: « On Thursday, October 13, I went to the ambulance for the bandages. Around 9 o'clock in the morning, we began to hear the cannon in the direction of the forts of Montrouge and Issy; around 10 o'clock the shots followed each other

with frightening rapidity, we went up to the children's dormitories, thinking that from there we could see from which side was fighting (...) the cannon thundered to shake everything. When I had oriented myself a little, I saw very well with the naked eye, the Prussian guns setting off from a redoubt they had made on the heights of Clamart. I was amazed to see the smoke long enough before hearing the detonation, I was told it was always like that. » In these same annals, we discover how Father Picard narrowly escaped cannon balls during a day he spent with the wounded in the streets of Paris. We meet people welcomed at the Petit Couvent, such as two young civilians, who were hit by enemy bullets while they were working on earthworks in the Bois de Boulogne. A sister recounts about one of the two: "I took him to a room where there was no one yet, so that he could rest better (...) When I returned to see him, I found him crying, hot with tears, his pillow was completely inundated. This poor boy inspired my pity, I wanted to console him, I told him that we would be sisters for him, that we would take good care of him (...) I sent for Sister Marie Jeannette to find out the cause of his tears; he told her it was hunger because for two days he had not eaten anything; not understanding French, he did not know when to go get his ration, and when he arrived, he could find nothing. "

The same books report the numerous inspections to find out the number of beds, to make sure that the patients were accepted. The sisters were inexperienced and did not know the rules for hospitals. They also needed money: "It had been arranged with the mayor of Passy that we would provide bedding, (...) that we would provide our care and all the necessary personnel, and the mayor would undertake to give us 1, 50 francs per day, for each soldier ... "

Paris changed face: "When you haven't seen the aspect of Paris during the siege, you can't imagine it even slightly. Paris, so gay, so brilliant, so luxurious, is today so sad, so dirty, so dreary: you only see soldiers and constables, each one dirtier than the next .. People hang laundry out on the Champs-Élysées... » .

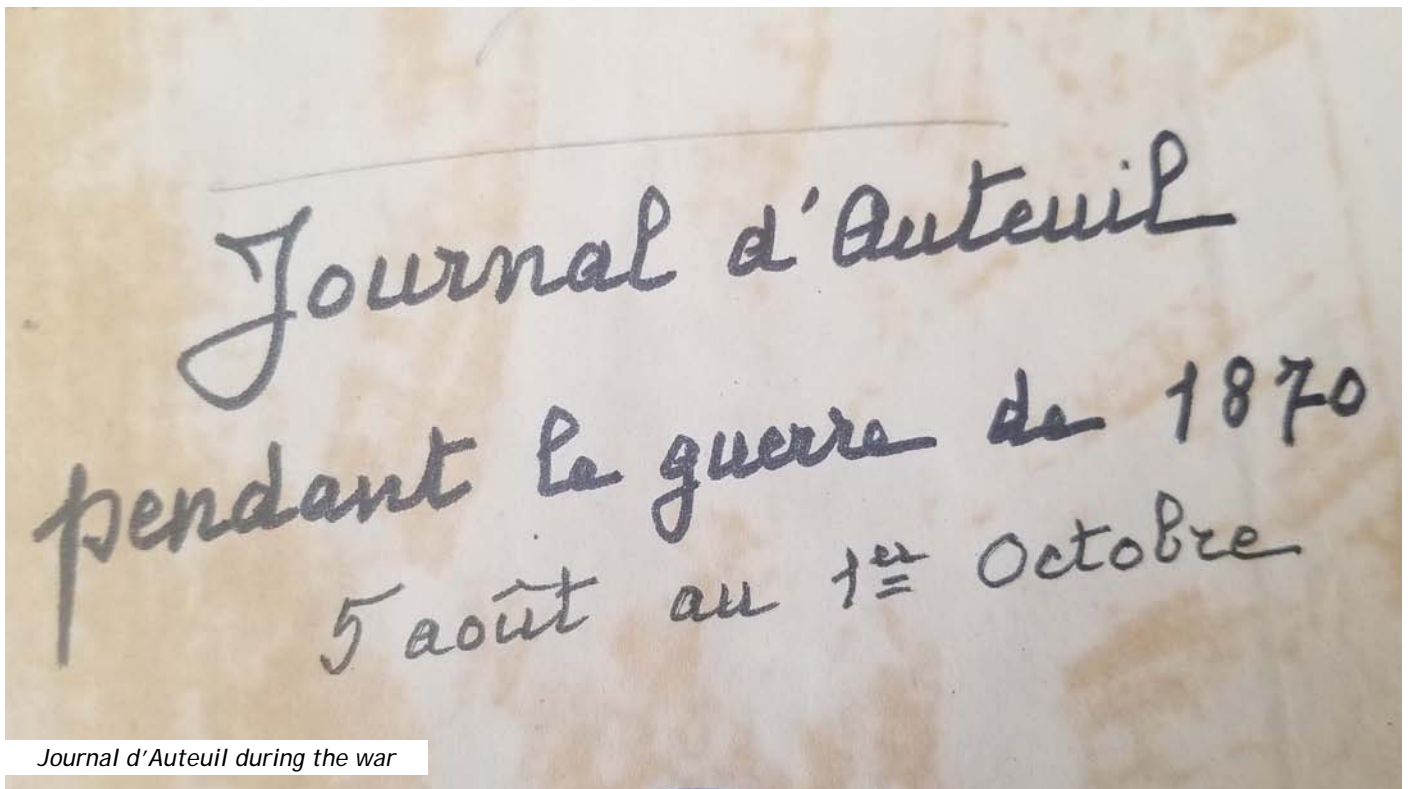
Book of General Chapters

Troisième Chapitre Général.

Tenu au Monastère d'Auteuil.

Le Samedi 25 Juin 1870 à 3<sup>h</sup> de l'après-midi  
après les prières d'usage, la Séance commença  
la présidence de M<sup>re</sup> l'abbé Bayle, Vicaire





Journal d'Auteuil during the war

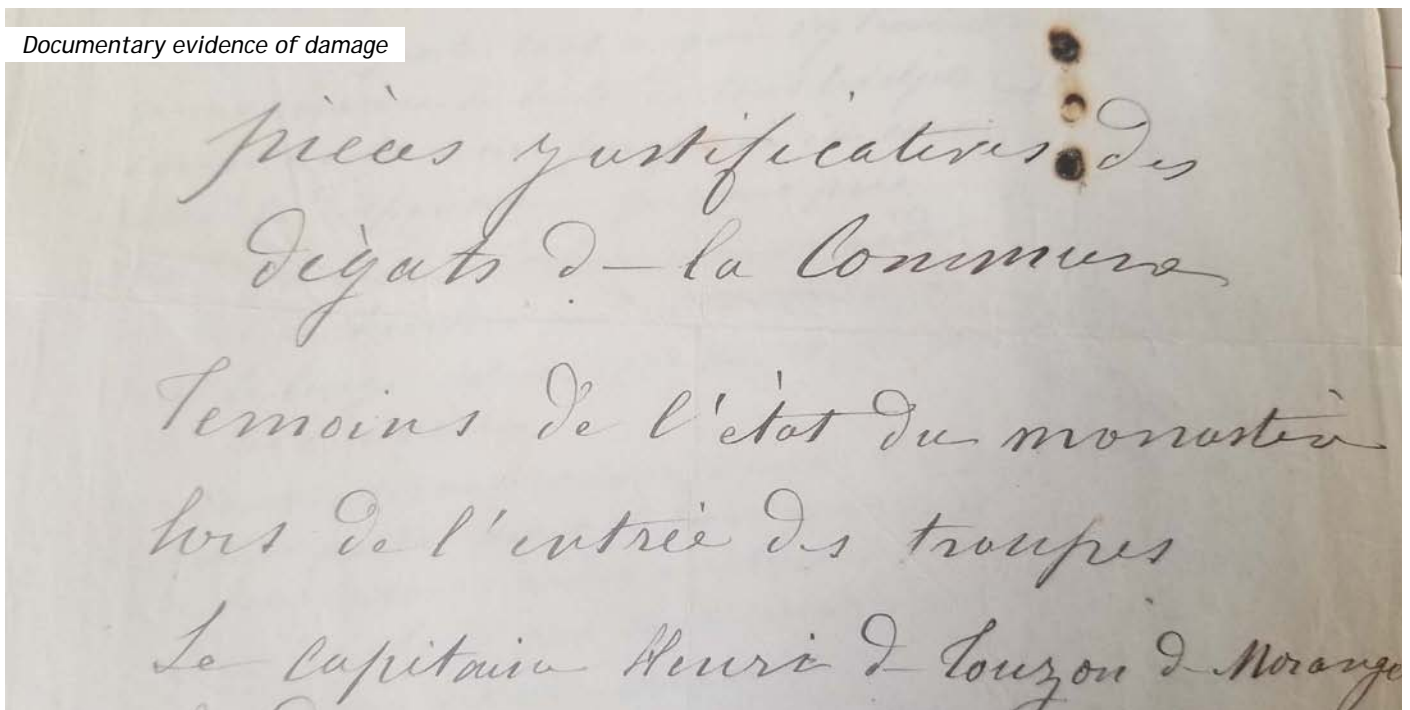
In the heart of Paris, Auteuil therefore lived, at the rhythm of cannon fire and the arrival of the wounded, in great desolation.

The complete transcription of these notebooks from 1870-1871 can be found on the Congregation's website.

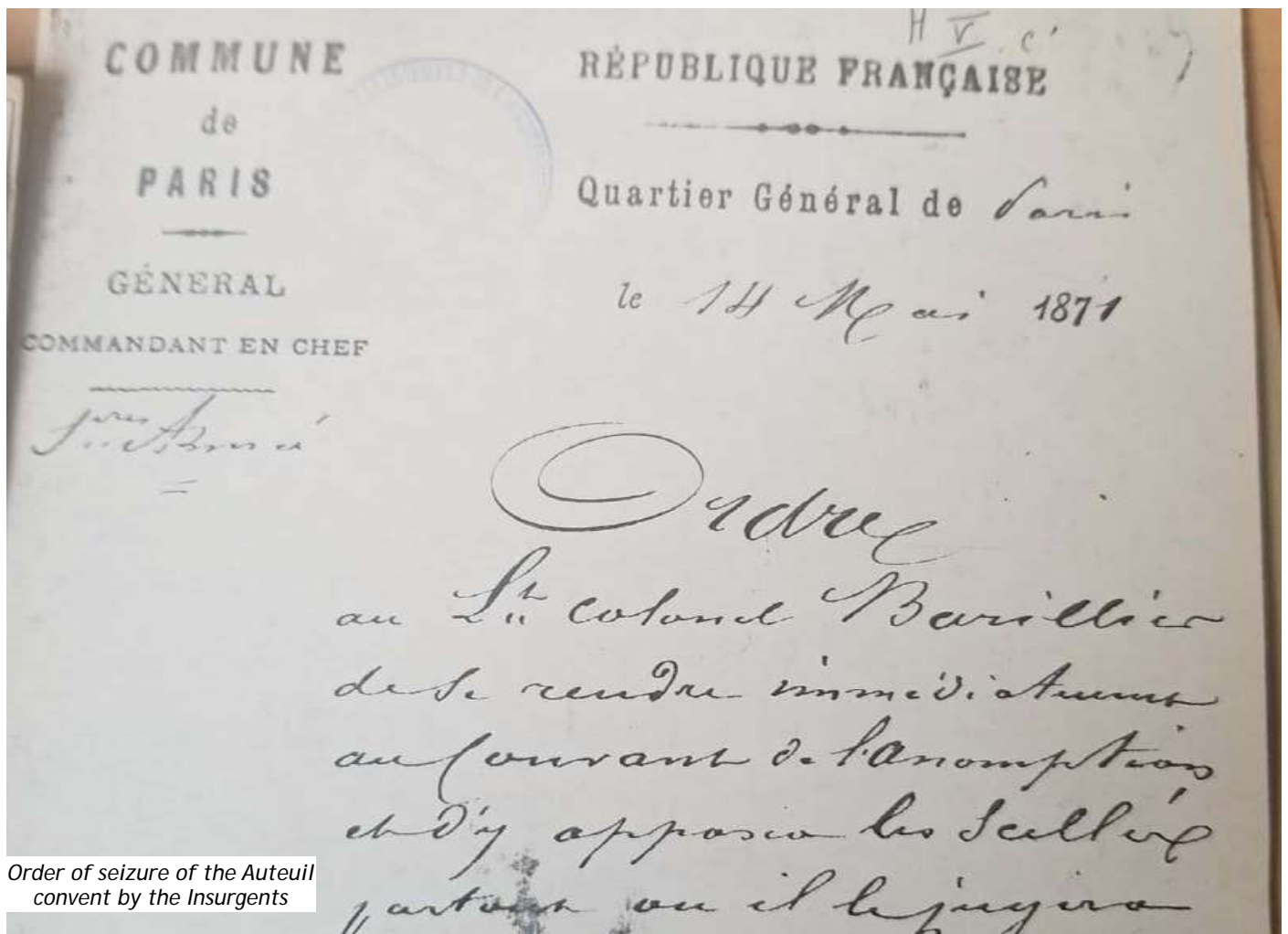
**From Nîmes, Marie Eugénie accompanies the communities "at a distance"**

After leaving Auteuil, "with a heavy heart" as she wrote one day to Father d'Alzon, Marie Eugénie left for the South. She stopped in Poitiers, then in Bordeaux before arriving in Nîmes on October 4, 1870. She remained there for 8 months, which would allow her to stay more easily

in contact with the sisters of the whole Congregation. Her letters to Mother Thérèse Emmanuel and to Father d'Alzon are true historical sources. She sought to keep in touch with events, following the evolution of the war as well as that of the communities. She sometimes remained for days without news of some of them: "No news from Reims" (ME, Lettre à TE, n° 696, September 27, 1870), "nothing very new, my dear daughter, I fear that the situation is still very serious and that on the 1st day we have to leave. Saint Dizier seems delivered from the fear of a battle, there are passing French troops." (ME, Letter to TE, n° 699). "We have received your dispatch, but unfortunately we also receive this morning the disastrous news from the army of Mac Mahon de Sedan. What is going to happen? What



Documentary evidence of damage



Order of seizure of the Auteuil convent by the Insurgents

government are we going to have? "(ME, Letter to TE, n° 701, September 4, 1870) Great uncertainty about the future. They have to live with it. Sometimes the news of a community comes like a ray of sunshine: "I finally have news of the sisters who remained in Saint Dizier, they were not worried in the asylum they obtained at the hospital but their house was inhabited by 700 or 800 Prussians who damaged everything. I only received a few words ... "(Marie Eugénie, Letter to Father d'Alz., N° 3275, September 1, 1870)

Surprise to discover that she sometimes wrote long letters in English to Thérèse Emmanuel: "Good Bye dearest friend, all is quiet here, we are afraid to receive no news more from Paris, they write today, they say it is perhaps the last time for a long while "(ME to TE, letter n° 706, September 13, 1870). The latter was then in Lyon with the Novitiate. During the month of September, her exchanges with Marie Eugénie reported about the search for a place of asylum outside France. She and the novices found shelter, in Switzerland, in Sacconex., Marie Eugénie closely followed the quest, then the journey. She even dictated to Thérèse Emmanuel what to say in the event of a control during the trip. At the end of September 1870, the novitiate arrived at its destination: "We are very happy to know that you are safe. "

### A path of trust and faithfulness

During these long months, Marie Eugénie "has much to think about in order to accommodate so many scattered sisters"; she is constantly concerned about the situation of the communities: "I have no news from

Reims, I hope that since there was no fighting, there will be no violence. "(ME, Letter to Father d'Alz., N° 3277, September 18, 1870)

But perceiving that the sisters are filled with faith gave her comfort: "The sisters of Auteuil are in perfect disposition, full of courage and fervor; Father Picard preached a retreat to them (...) and they participated with all their heart. »(ME, Letter to Father d'Alz., N° 3278, X September 1870.) She rejoiced in the good they were doing and followed from a distance the reception of the wounded in the hospitals. She nevertheless lived the distance with sadness: "For Auteuil I am very touched by the letters from our sisters, they are in the best spirit. Alas! won't I receive more. Often I regret not being with them anymore. "(ME, Letter to Father d'Alz., N° 3279, September 22, 1870)

In 1871 a lull arrived, but the situation remained unstable; a new revolution was feared. Marie Eugénie hoped that for all, "the trials will be a renewal" (ME, Letter to Father d'Alz., N° 3291, May 25, 1871). A means of holding on: trust in God...: "At this moment I don't see any wisdom except surrendering oneself to God, serving and praying to him..." (ME, Letter to Father d'Alz., No. 3294, July 23, 1871)

When she returned to Auteuil in June 1871, she found a monastery which had just been looted by insurgents from the Commune. Lists of destroyed furniture and letters of complaint are also in the Archives.

The founder reread her way of governing, which was subject to unforeseeable events over which she had

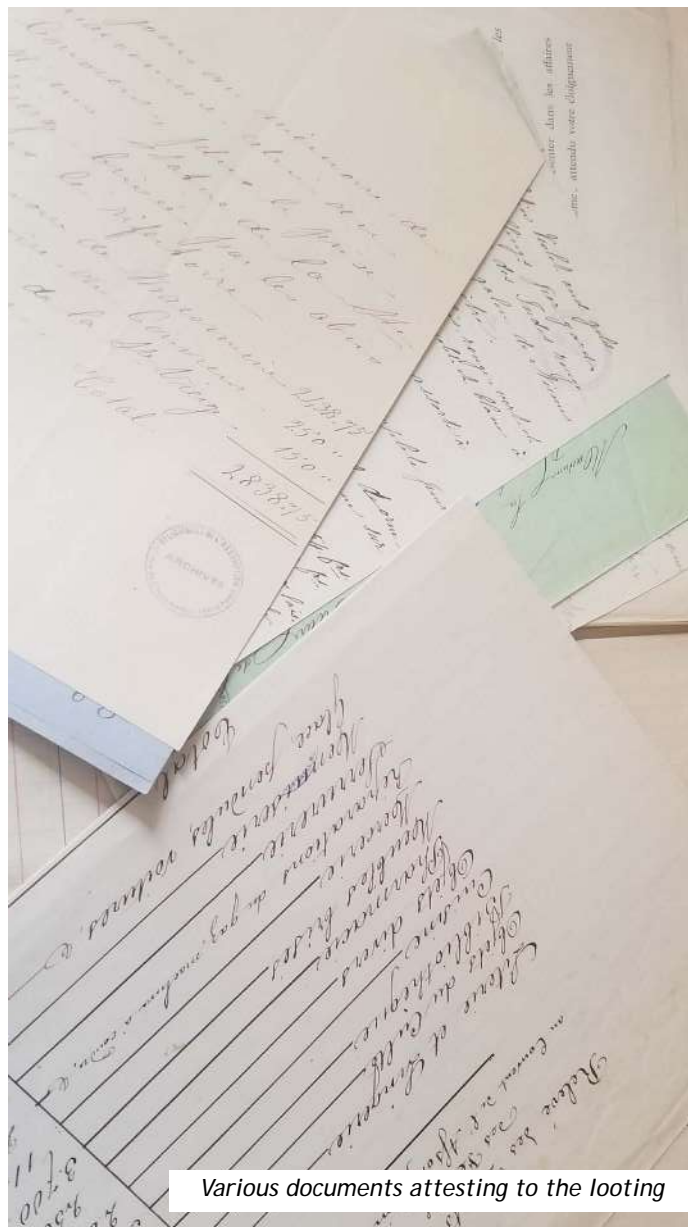
no control: "In the end, I see that government is above all a work of patience; few things seemed to be doing as one would like, and one brings them back to the general good only by going about it as gently as possible, and especially with the least prejudice. "(ME, Letter to Father d'Alz., N ° 3295, August 4, 1871)

During these destabilizing months, she retained - for herself and for the sisters- the call to sanctify each moment of life, whatever they may be, as evidenced by her last chapter for the Sisters of Nîmes: "On the verge of leaving you, I want to point out to you how quickly time passes, the necessity of using for our sanctification each of the moments that are given to us. See how quickly this year (taking half of 1870 and half of 1871) filled with grave and painful events has passed! (...) This is how life goes and from there, the need to sanctify it... So understand, my sisters, the importance and the price of the time that God gives you to prepare your eternity. "(ME, Instr. Of May 7, 1871) She underlined the importance of living in dependence on the body-congregation and always acting as a member of this body. Before concluding by asking forgiveness for her own shortcomings, she insists: "Understand, then, my sisters, how important it is that by sanctifying yourselves, you help to establish, to maintain in the Congregation what should make it true: supernatural spirit, the spirit of poverty, obedience, chastity, the spirit of humility and zeal, in a word the spirit of Jesus Christ and of the Gospel..."

May the experience of our Mothers in troubled times, help us to go through the upheavals of our time with serenity.

**SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT**

Archivist of the Congregation,  
Original French



Various documents attesting to the looting

*Liste*  
des objets enlevés par les fédérés  
dans le pillage du Couvent de l'Assomption.

ASSUMPTION  
ARCHIVES  
100 RUE DE LA SERRERIE, 13000 NÎMES

<i>Literie et lingerie.</i>	
500	Couvertures en laine blanche à 15 <sup>f</sup> l'une dans l'autre
160	id en laine grise coton ou piqué à 8 <sup>f</sup> id
65	Matelas à 28 <sup>f</sup> id
	Opération et blanchissage de 96 matelas et 220 paill.
6	Edredons à 25 <sup>f</sup> l'un dans l'autre
30	Traversins ou oreillers à 6 <sup>f</sup> id
90	Capis de lits à 3 <sup>f</sup> id
25	Couvre lits blancs, étoffe meuble à 4 <sup>f</sup> id
04	Paires de draps dont 24 neufs à 30 <sup>f</sup> les autres à 15 <sup>f</sup>
68	Serviettes neufs à 1 <sup>f</sup> 50
60	Serviette d'usage à 1 <sup>f</sup>

List of material damaged by looting in 1870

# spirituality

## ***Meditation on st. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 24, 13-35 In the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic***

**Despite the despair and sadness that it brings, we are still called to continue our journey together**

**T**his overwhelming Covid-19 pandemic seems to signal the end of our contemporary age, as it affects globally our social, economic, political, cultural and even religious world. Despite the despair and sadness that it brings, we are still called to continue our journey together. The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, in St. Luke's Gospel chapter 24, 13-35, has enlightened me in a particular way and I would like to share it here with you. First, we will read the signs of the times so that we recognise the presence and will of God. Then we will go to meet this Unknown One who is none other than Jesus Himself. We will then see how the mysterious Revelation of the Risen Christ is taking place. Finally, we will witness to the hope and joy of the Resurrection in the face of this dreadful Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Reading the signs of the times to recognise the Presence and Will of God**

First of all, the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, which happened on the very day of the Resurrection, reflects our current situation. Saint Luke tells us that "On the same day [of the Resurrection], two of them were going to a village called Emmaus ... and they were talking among themselves about all these events" (Lk 24:13-14). According to my personal reading, this "village called Emmaus" of Luke's is, in our context, the one we live in and "these events" refer to the poignant upheavals of the Covid-19 pandemic which the media broadcast daily. When Luke specifies that the disciples on the road to Emmaus were two (Lk 24:13), and that "one of them was named Cleopas" (Lk 24:18) while the other remained anonymous, he invites us to value more greatly the communal dimension of our lives than our individual identities and values. In our Covid-19 context, the health emergency and the cry of vulnerable and badly affected people challenge us to value life and to take a fresh look at others alongside our own problems.

This calls for solidarity and fellowship even when social restrictions force us to withdraw into ourselves. We have to share sincerely and deeply and then let go of all our anguish and desolation. Sharing comforts us and rekindles our hope. In this, modern technology aids our communication, interaction, fellowship, mutual support and openness to others. It also helps us to get through this difficult time,



Sr Patricia

to love our time as Mother Marie Eugénie says. We are therefore called to take a Christian view of our life now in interpreting the signs of the times, especially in the light of St Luke's Gospel (24, 13-35), which I recommend to you so that we can recognise the presence and will of God in today's world.

### **Confident encounter with this unknown one who is none other than Jesus himself.**

During the meeting with this unknown man who approaches and walks with them, the two disciples stop and share with Him what was happening in the city and in their hearts (cf. Lk 24:17-24). In the context of Covid-19, the attitude of these disciples on the road to Emmaus teaches us to take the risk of opening ourselves to others, even if they are unknown to us, and above all to share their suffering, discouragement, and life. In other words, we are called to go out of ourselves, to welcome this unknown Other, to trust Him and to accompany Him. The two disciples walked with this Unknown One in complete confidence; they pressed Him to stay with them, and then, after having shared with Him not only what was happening in the city of Jerusalem and in their hearts, but, even more, reflected with Him, their eyes were opened and they recognised Him. How they leapt with joy: "Were not our hearts burning within us when He spoke to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32). It is through the Scriptures and through Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, that we become strong enough to face this trial of Covid-19. We are called to trust in Jesus Christ and his words, and to rely on each other. A Malagasy saying illustrates this idea: "Mpirahalaha mianala ka izy tokiko, izaho tokiny", meaning: "When two brothers go into the forest, I count on him and he trusts me". In other words, the fraternal support and solidarity that we bear witness to in the presence of Christ help us to face this Covid-19 that darkens our life today.

### **Mysterious Revelation of the Risen Christ**

While the disciples on the road to Emmaus were discussing these events that had turned upside down their hearts, their faith and their entire lives, "... behold, Jesus Himself came and walked with them. But they were unable to recognise Him." (Lk 24:15-16). They were still locked in their past, discussing death and the end of everything. And now, even though Life appeared to them, they did not recognise him. In our distress, let us remember that the Risen Christ, the Master of life, does not abandon us and that He comes close to us. Human-God, Emmanuel, God-with-us, He is the One in whom we can put our trust and our hope.

Then, "when they were near the village, He made as if to go on, but they pressed Him saying, 'Stay with us, for evening is falling and the day is coming to an end'. So he went in to stay with them" (Lk 24:28-29). Jesus, the tireless Pilgrim, invites his disciples to go further, just as he invites us today as we face the darkness of our

lives. At the invitation of the disciples, Jesus makes his home among them and is recognised at the breaking of the bread. Openness to the Unknown, mutual trust and generous welcome reveal the mysterious presence of the Risen Christ and dispel all kinds of desolation and sadness. The joy of the encounter with the Lord sends out these disciples to be his witnesses among their companions.

### **Witnessing to the hope and joy of the Resurrection**

To conclude, the Covid-19 pandemic still affects globally our social, economic, political, cultural and even religious world but, faced with this situation, we are surely called to take the risk of opening our hearts and our eyes to see those around us who are in need, to dare to go to the periphery to be at the service of life. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus in St Luke's Gospel (24, 13-35), we are called to place the little we have into the Lord's hands and to share with others, yes - our distress, but even more our hope and joy, and our life. A Malagasy saying challenges us: "Valala iray ifanapahana" which means: "Let us share even a grasshopper with each other". Faced with this terrible Covid-19 pandemic, the Lord calls us to draw on his creative love, to build a more fraternal world, to help each other, and to witness to the hope and joy of the Resurrection among those who are vulnerable, abandoned and desperate, so that light may shine in the darkness, so that life may triumph over death and good may prevail over evil. Are these not signs of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth?

### **SISTER PATRICIA NORBERTHINE HARINILALA**

Novice Mistress,  
Province of Madagascar  
*Original French*

## *Loving Journey of our ecological conversion*

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**“The world will never die for lack of wonders, but only for lack of wonder”.**  
**Chesterton**

**I**n June 2015, in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, the Pope calls us to live a true ecological conversion. It was at that very moment that the Lord captured us to become servants of our “common home” and of those who live in it.

We had married 6 months before, and we had been walking the Way to Santiago de Compostela for 2 and a half months. The long walk, the sober life with our home in two backpacks weighing less than 10 kilos, the varied and unexpectedly rich encounters and the slow reading of *Laudato Si* brought to light our deep desire to work towards creating the world we desire. Along the way we acquired, bit by bit, “a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion” (LS 220).

Back from Santiago de Compostela, and filled with the zeal of new converts, we wanted to radically change our life in Marseille. However, the return has been hard for Arthur... We had journeyed over 2,000 kilometres at a slow walking pace whereas his work, carrying out studies on road traffic,

enables people to go as fast as possible. The collision was violent and the landing complicated. At the same time, Arthur began seriously to collect information about the state of our world with its ongoing and future catastrophes. The results were alarming and completely in line with the first chapter of *Laudato Si*. The discrepancy between the joy and wonder that had deeply filled our souls during the walk and his analysis of the effects of humanity’s domination of the world was truly painful for him.

Concerned about my husband’s situation, I took care of him. I was also convinced that it was by acting - and praying - that we would find joy and hope again. So I clung to the Pope’s words: “An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures by which we break the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness”. So we tried to focus our attention on the mechanics of our daily life. We were sure that wonder and the relationship with others would be essential assets of our approach... Abandoning the supermarket to shop at a local producer we are happy to see every week; making our own compotes and tomato sauces to celebrate our



*Blandine and Arthur*

ability to use our hands; preferring homemade gifts to engage our creativity and our time in the joy of giving (there is nothing better than knitting and praying for the one for whom the gift is intended!); starting to cultivate the land in a vegetable garden in the northern districts of Marseille in order to rediscover our taste for contact with nature...

The path of sobriety thus lived made us more free. Transforming our way of consumption brought us more joy: "more connections, fewer goods". Homemade things gave us self-confidence: Arthur can make a beautiful shelf... Blandine cooks good vegetarian dishes... Thank you Lord for all these hitherto unsuspected gifts!

Sometimes, these changes of habit were heavy to bear... Then we drew from the source from where our energy springs: wonder before the beauty of Creation and our mutual love as a couple.

We were also convinced that you don't experience an ecological conversion alone. We were inspired by those who had gone before us and had brought effective and just answers to various problems. So we decided to go and meet these people. During this stroll in France, we met many beautiful people who had a coherent, joyful and moderate way of life, who tasted the present moment with calm and dedication. For us they were like little flames of hope in preparation for a great fire.

As we advanced along the way of ecology in daily life, strengthened by our encounters with these builders of a better world, we asked ourselves: « what is our place in this adventure? »

A great desire has been growing in our hearts for some time. We wanted to become market gardeners. We wanted to return to Genesis, to the creation of the world, to the garden which God entrusted to us so that

all species might live there in harmony, with humans exercising their responsibility to take care of it and pass it on. Market gardening implies reconnecting with Creation, with the rhythm of the seasons, with time as God intended it to be for humanity, with the beauty of biodiversity; it implies giving meaning to our work by becoming co-creators; creating new relationships between producers and consumers and thus fostering a new way of being in the world; working in a job that is essential to life; making things of quality; working practically, working with living things and not against them; it implies being able to work in silence.

And we've taken the plunge. We are currently in our first year of setting up organic market gardening in Seine et Marne, next to the Transition Campus. We are finding that this business is at once fascinating and complex, inspirational and tiring. We are working as a couple: the joy of this "crazy" project enriched by our complementary gifts, humility and forgiveness in the face of our misunderstandings and our anger! We are completely dependent on nature, the climate (especially the terrible drought of the summer of 2020), the bad weather. There are unexpected events, limits, and fragilities which remind us that nature is given to us.

Faced with the crises that our world is going through, we are composed and happy with our choice of life. We try, with God's grace, to create beauty and goodness where we are. A question we ask ourselves every day: "Does the act I am about to perform create the world I love? ».

**BLANDINE AND ARTHUR DE LASSUS**  
*Original French*



# assumption together

## *The covid 19 pandemic and “Assumption Together” from the Central Africa Region: case of Cameroon*

**We dream  
of a fairer  
world where  
relationships  
aim at  
everyone’s  
well-being.**

**N**ow as 2019 comes to its end, a pandemic has spread from China to Central Africa.

Nothing seems to stop the new corona virus, main vector of covid 19. Governments in panic have taken up measures to contain the pandemic's spread. Masks are made mandatory, social distancing and hygiene and biosafety regulations are enforced.

Within a short period of time, contagions are reported everywhere.

The health authorities establish isolated care centres to which patients are transferred and quarantined. The inadequacy between the available sanitary means (screening and care) and the escalating disease generates panic. The patients desert the hospitals to go home to their families, where they use conventional self-medication associated with natural medicine. The media steps in; so much information and fake news.

Economic activity is reduced to the production of basic goods and services during the peak of the crisis. Companies reduce the workforce, put people on lay-off or shut down. There are no new initiatives or investments.

Social life is disturbed, churches are closed. Gatherings of more than 50 people are forbidden. Funerals, dances and celebrations have to wait.

People or communities are confined to their homes due to fear of contracting the disease. Media awareness does not discourage everyone; some sceptics believe that covid 19 is not real.

As a result of the lockdown, Assumption Together has suspended meetings. We try and catch up on the news by telephone. A forum has been created but not all members are connected; we are mutually encouraging each other. Sr. Rekha's message of support was well received and very much appreciated.

Covid 19 raises, some new questions.







Isn't living in a global village a risk for humanity? Will the brotherhood-proximity, the common joy of popular gatherings, the African community meals not be lost with the sanitary crisis? The whole culture is threatened!

The risk of under schooling.

Classrooms are needed to maintain the number of 50 pupils as well as the number of teachers. Will sustainable development objectives be achieved with the emergence of this crisis? Are we expecting a new pandemic or a worsening of the current one given the geopolitical stakes? How will the continuous wearing of masks with approximate hygiene measures affect the situation? How can we live the sacraments in the Church fully in this time of covid?

Covid 19 is forcing us to adopt new behaviors:

- Hygiene and biosecurity ;
- e-learning, video conference;
- Reconsideration of the traditional pharmacopoeia and openness to research. Many independent researchers have published their research on

medicinal plants.

- The Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Douala Cameroon Monsignor Kelda found a potion useful to treat covid and many other diseases which is available free of charge in Catholic health centers. The mortality rate of people suffering from Covid 19 in Cameroon is one of the lowest in the world according to the Cameroon Academy of Sciences, supervised by the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation.

Our dream would be to have a fairer world where interpersonal relationships are focused on the welfare of all. Nations as well as individuals adhere to the vow of St. Marie Eugénie who wished to make the earth a place of glory for God.

### **ASSUMPTION TOGETHER**

Central Africa (Cameroon)

*Original French*

*Images from Internet*



# education

## Response of some of our educational communities to the Covid crisis

“Every day  
God invites  
us to take a  
step further”  
Sainte Marie-  
Eugénie

### CHALLENGE: HOW TO LIVE THE PASTORAL DURING THE CONFINEMENT!

With the lockdown, the teaching teams worked to provide online courses as well as pedagogical follow-up with the classroom as well as other tools proposed by the teachers.

As a School Pastoral Care Assistant (APS), the question for me was to be part of the pastoral proposal without overburdening the students and families who were already very busy with distance learning in the main subjects. Therefore, I was looking for a way to be able to propose without constraining and above all trying to reach everyone where they were in this troubled period.

By sharing with other APS in the Assumption network, I discovered the Padlet tool, which perfectly offered this modularity. I therefore launched into the construction of a padlet starting with Holy Week, proposing a sharing of texts, videos, colouring... in order to provide several “entry doors”. The students and their families were informed by email as well as by the correspondence tool between the school and the families. <https://padlet.com/pastorale13/Bookmarks>

Afterwards I continued to try to expand more and more with various proposals. I have grouped them together with other pastoral resources so that everyone can find something for them (movies, press articles, live video, prayers ...).

Following the positive feedback from the teams of teachers and students and on the basis of this experience, I have launched, for this new school year, the creation of other palettes, including one on interiority (which will be shared by the school's pastoral team in the first instance), one for confirmation (shared with the school's pastoral team), one for future confirmands) and one for the Profession of Faith.

Anne Catherine Miot  
Deputy school pastoral

Padlet Assumption Orléans

The Padlet board is titled "Ressources et Propositions Pastorales" and is organized into several columns of content:

- La Pentecôte: souffrir de l'Esprit Saint**: Includes a video titled "Pour approfondir chrétiennement..." and a document titled "13ROU3892 jeu a l'été? fiche d'activités...".
- Le diocèse d'Orléans consacré à l'intercession de Marie Mère de L'Eglise**: Features a video titled "Le Douzième d'Orléans consacré à l'intercession..." and a document titled "Qui est l'Esprit Saint?".
- 2020-2020 centenaire de la canonisation de Ste Jeanne-d'Arc**: Contains a document titled "Numéro Spécial autour de Jeanne d'Arc" and a video titled "Des milliers de jeunes se ploient sous la bannière de Jeanne d'Arc".
- Jeudi de l'Ascension 21 mai 2020 Belle fête de l'Ascension à tous!**: Includes a document titled "CULTURE RELIGIEUSE" and a video titled "ON VOUS OIT TOUT SUR L'Ascension".
- Le mois de Mai, mois de Marie**: Features a video titled "Pourquoi le mois de mai?".
- Mois de Mai, mois de Marie (maman de Jésus)**: Includes a document titled "Marie aime spécialement la prière des enfants".
- Journée de prière Interreligieuse 14 mai 2020**: Contains a document titled "Invitation du Haut Comité à la Fraternité Humaine".
- Intériorité**: Features a document titled "Météo de nos émotions" and a video titled "Voici une belle méditation d'un Jésus hors du commun".



Visit to familias, Querétaro - México



Sisters from the Tilloli School visit the villages - India

**ASSUMPTION ORLÉANS – FRANCE  
THE COVID INVITES US TO LIVE IN SOLIDARITY**

“Every day God invites us to take a step further” (ME, Intimates Notes nº154/06)

Moreover, this step in the Asunción Vallecas School is called SOLIDARITY.

Located in one of the neighbourhoods most contaminated by the pandemic, and where many vulnerable families live, the solidarity response of the Educational Community has made it possible for life to be stronger than death and for difficulties to be overcome, thanks to the unity and dedication of all.

The lack of space in the school to comply with the rules of distancing, have been overcome by the generosity of some neighbour friends who allowed us to open for free what was once a family business and was now closed.

The computers have appeared through the generous sharing of parents, friends and teachers so that no student must live without the necessary communication for their studies.

The generosity of the management team and the support of all the teachers has facilitated changes in schedules, facilities and methodologies, managing to transform what seemed impossible, making the presence of the Covid to develop more strongly the solidarity in the heart of each person.

The basic needs of food, housing, electricity, water... of the most vulnerable families have been assumed by the “Covid fund” created by the teachers on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The uniforms, the jogging suit, and the books have been obtained

through a network of family exchanges in which some took and others brought what they could share.

The Covid has made our family spirit present, in an atmosphere of simplicity and friendship that is in itself formative. It is our way of making His Kingdom come (Manila International Gathering).

**FROM ASUNCION-VALLECAS SCHOOL- SPAIN**

**IN THE HEALTH CRISIS HAS BEEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO FUEL OUR PASSION AND CREATIVITY.**

In the midst of uncertainty, the economic and health crisis, we are starting this school year in virtual mode. It has definitely not been easy to continue with this mode of school work, the only one authorised from March until today.

One of the main challenges has been to learn to be close despite the distance. In order to bond and be present to the children, the idea of visiting each family, with all the security measures, came up. We take the wrapped school materials home, as a gift from the institution, through their teacher.

It was a wonderful experience, the families were surprised to see us. The time that had passed had made us miss each other very much, so being close for a few moments was memorable, we had tears of joy, unstoppable smiles and the joy of being able to see each other once again.

The meeting was invaluable and gave us hope that these times are only temporary and that we will soon be able to embrace each other again.

« None of our efforts should be the last, and that zeal, no less than the divine love from which it comes, can never say : it is enough.» (ME, Counsels

on education, nº1511, 1842).  
BERNIE ESPIN, Preschool pedagogical coordination  
QUERÉTARO (MEXICO)

### EXPERIENCE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REGION

Some of the challenges generated by the pandemic:

Primarily, continuing to support learners effectively with ICT to deliver online courses, and the creation of the student forum on WhatsApp. Another challenge has been to maintain the payment of staff salaries in order to ensure social balance and the ability to provide for themselves and their families.

However, we can also mention some of the blessings caused by the pandemic:

What we note is the great solidarity of all the educational partners (parents, directors, administrative service, educators, teachers and students) in order to favour the supervision of the students. The pandemic has allowed us to become more aware of the fragility of everyone and the need to mobilise everyone for the health security of all by respecting the barrier measures against Covid-19. Throughout these months, we have been able to observe the strengthening of the links between the members of the educational team. Finally and perhaps most importantly, the strengthening of faith: a large part of the population has put its trust in God who, alone, is able to protect us and who protects us effectively. There has also been an increase in prayer in the family and in social networks.

MPIKO HIGH SCHOOL IN KINSHASA (DRC)  
ASSOMPTION POLYVALENT COLLEGE IN BAFOUSSAM  
(CAMEROON)

### LOVING GREETINGS FROM INDIA!

Covid-19 pandemics brought us closer to God, to one another and to nature. Though it was and is a frustrating experience, we have faced it creatively. On 17/18th March 2020 schools were closed down all over India according to the government order in the wake of spread of the Corona virus. So, the academic year 2019-20 came to an end abruptly. Online classes for the students were started during the 1st phase of lock down all over India. It was successful in Kerala but in other states, it was too difficult to reach out to students who were from interior villages.

We share two experiences with you: the first in one of our three schools (Thelpara), and the second where our sisters teach in one of the diocesan schools (Piriaponch).

Assumption Public School in Thelpara, Antonykkad

During holidays on-line audio, video classes were given to the students from Class I-VII. In June we started Class VIII. Along with on-line Classes, we have conducted different competitions on different occasions –speech competition, Patriotic Song, Quiz Competition, Reading Day: June 19th, Independence Day: August 15th, Onam Celebration: August 28th, Teachers Day on Sept. 5th etc. We are happy about the active participation of the students, especially the students of the lower classes.

Piriaponch is a diocesan school.

During the month of June, we started open air classes in the villages due to lack of network connection. But as the migrant workers started coming back to their villages from red zone areas, we had to stop open air classes in the villages. Every month, we go from village



Central Africa

to village with rice packets and money to distribute to children since we are not giving them midday meal in the school. Though it is lock down, school office is opened every day. Since there is no sign of opening the school, again we started open air classes in the villages.

Sr Susan Varghese

INDE

### A HOPEFUL VISION

The quarantine period, during the time of the pandemic due to the new Coronavirus, made us, as Assumption College, revisit the counsel of our Foundress St. Marie Eugene of Jesus, as she herself said: "Let us always keep the spirit that reigned among us in our beginnings: cordiality, simplicity, kindness." (ME, Instr. Of august 8th, 1884)

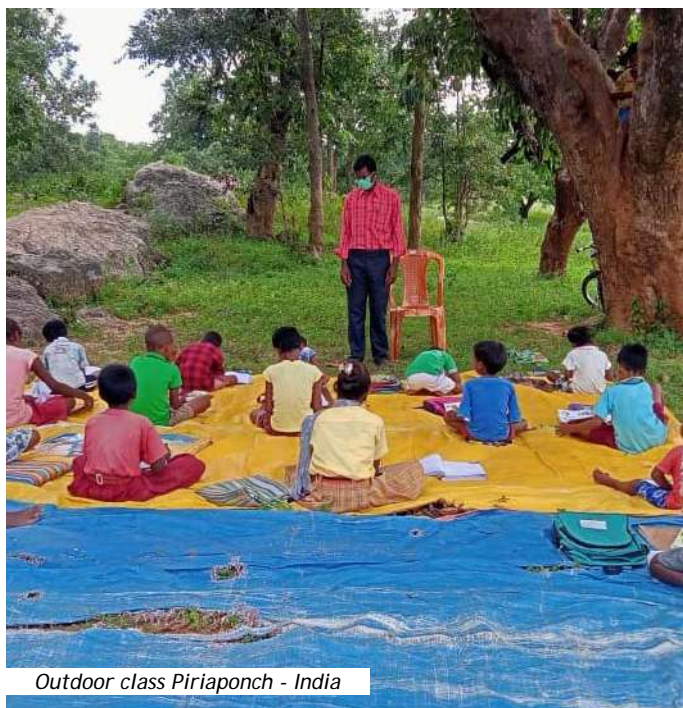
This is how the Asunción family sought to serve our students, who from one hour to the next were deprived of their school life; the cordiality and tenderness already so present in our daily lives became part of the online relationship that was established with the families of our school. Sisters, Directors, coordinators and teachers, first of all, sought to be God's loving gaze, personalized for every need that arose during this difficult time. The classes became much more than a moment of transmission of content. They also became the place of welcome, dialogue and the practice of love.

Our students were able to rethink their life project, bringing new values into it, so we can see that the vision has changed; now the family, the other and one's own faith are present in a much stronger way in each one's reflection.

We tried to strengthen family bonds and family prayer in all our activities; it was like this in all the moments and activities designed by our teachers.

But, of course, the highlight of this time in our College was the "Quintal do Assunção"; a morning where we shared all the experiences and activities carried out in this unique moment of social isolation.

Teachers Cristina Augusta and Ricardo Sebold  
Religious Teaching Team  
COLÉGIO ASSUNÇÃO, SÃO PAULO - BRAZIL



Outdoor class Piriapoch - India



Vallecas - Spain

## *Ecological conversion in a time of pandemic*

**The health crisis (...) would be doubly a disaster if it does not lead to us being able to learn lessons concerning our economic models and unsustainable lifestyles.**

The economic and social consequences of the Covid crisis are often dramatic: in France, for example, the year 2020 has seen an increase in unemployment of nearly a million people. Over this time one in three French people saw their income decrease significantly. Moreover, the forced isolation of many elderly and other vulnerable people has also led to a great increase in psychological suffering.

In the eyes of some economists, entrepreneurs and politicians, the primary objective is economic recovery in order to help create jobs and to be a way out of extreme poverty. But this reasoning is inadequate because it leaves on one side the consideration of the ecological and social roots of the problem. The health crisis is already a disaster; but it would be doubly a disaster if it does not lead to us being able to learn lessons concerning our economic models and unsustainable lifestyles.

Experts debate the links between the COVID 19 crisis and the ecological crisis; links exist between the loss of biodiversity, overexploitation of agriculture - particularly intensive livestock farming - and infectious diseases. In any case, the current crisis calls into question our ways of producing, moving, consuming and living. It highlights our individual and collective vulnerabilities and calls us to new forms of solidarity.

From this point of view, the crisis may, or may not, constitute a springboard for living an ecological conversion. It is this question and this experience that we are seeking to live and explore within the framework of the Campus de la Transition project, anchored in the Forges area, made available by the Assumption, and where I live with about twenty young professionals.[[campus-transition.org](http://campus-transition.org)]. The Campus is a place of training, research into and experimentation in the ecological, social, economic, cultural and civic Transition that we are looking for. It is a non-denominational place, open to the spiritual dimension, in harmony with the analyses of Pope Francis in *Laudato si'*.

Through this project we are experimenting with four dimensions of ecological



*The Campus of the Transition - France*



The Campus of the Transition - France

conversion, which are also four ways of positively orienting ourselves in a complex and uncertain world.[Xavier de Bénazé and Cécile Renouard, " The ecological conversion ", Etudes , November 2020].

The first dimension is the search for consistency: we seek to reduce our ecological footprint, and this leads to choices in terms of heating, mobility, food, consumption, leisure. These efforts underpin our community research into limiting our air travel, collecting rainwater when possible, insulating our homes so as to consume less energy, avoiding buying frozen meals, using soap rather than gel shower, etc. Great creativity is possible, and my experience is to be very stimulated and encouraged by others more advanced than me in certain fields.

The second is the articulation between the individual and the collective : our personal decisions need to be linked to a broader diagnosis, which involves seeking to resolve structural and systemic problems; we seek to change our lifestyles, but also to reflect - with the students and professionals who come for training - on the means of acting at different levels in order to contribute to a transformation of business projects, public policies, etc. This ties in with our apostolic missions as Assumption, in our schools, with students, families, and people in precarious situations: we can help people to act on the roots of problems and injustices by forming ourselves with others, by promoting educational experiences, by developing various forms of solidarity and by contributing to certain advocacy actions .

The third dimension is the concern for the quality of relationships both within ourselves and with others, with nature and with God, for those who are believers. Seeking to adjust our relationships allows us to cultivate an attitude of unconditional welcome for the people who come to us, as far as possible : those who come to Forges often describe their experience as a 'bubble of benevolence' ; it is not about denying or fleeing conflict and human tensions - there are

these of course , but we strive to create the conditions where each one is able to feel welcomed, including those who are least aware of ecological issues, and so to allow everyone to 'find their way'. Our Assumption communities have a precious role to play through their prayerful presence and various forms of human and spiritual accompaniment, through the beauty of the liturgy and the care given to many details in our daily lives which promote quality of relationships.

Finally, the fourth dimension is that which the philosopher Simone Weil referred to as "unstable equilibrium". Our societies are all marked by the uncertainty of tomorrow; it is extremely difficult to project into a future which we are told will be marked by the resurgence of extreme climatic events, catastrophes, water stress, the depletion of certain resources, which are nevertheless necessary and depend on the development of renewable energies, etc. Faced with this situation and drawing from the spiritual source within each of us, allows us to experience a confidence in life, the support possible from others, and overflowing peace and joy .This is also, without doubt, what Marie-Eugenie describes as "joyful detachment".

**SISTER CÉCILE RENOUARD**

Province of France

*Original French*

# echo from the archives

**The Spirit works at all times, be they happy or difficult times.**

**A**t this time when our world is slowing down with its worries and questions, Archives work is a sure way of finding hope because the Spirit works at all times, be they happy or difficult times. A mysterious thread connects all events, people, places and unites them to God. It is this thread, divided into other threads, in multiple colors, that this issue of Echo des Archives would like to highlight.

## **From the heart (core) of our history to the sisters and lay people of our Provinces**

The pandemic encouraged us to find new ways to reach everyone, in their own land, in their "today". There was no shortage of ideas and proposals. Thus Sr Veronique was able to animate, thanks to the Assumption Together Coordinating Team of the Philippines, an online retreat for sisters and lay of the Philippines and Thailand on "Inner peace according to Marie Eugenie". Lecture, guided prayer time, Eucharistic Celebration... A session on the history of the Congregation was done for young sisters preparing for the final vows in Madagascar.. Lay friends of Saint Gervais had a five-day silent retreat with the theme: "With Mary Eugenie, allow yourself be transformed by the Gospel." Experience of communion and journey in depth.

## **A Beehive with lots of workers**

Many people now make their daily or weekly contributions to the production of the "honey" of the Archives. Here, they share their experience:

Sister Marie Claude: « My "work" in the Archives is more an "active contemplation" of a continuous, renewed, incredible work of creation and re-creation of the Lord in our world, over the centuries, through diverse men and women, in equally diverse and endearing countries. And this takes place in history, in the Church, in the Congregation... We meet sisters we know and those we don't know, "great men and women of this world" or "the small and the poor", in tragic moments (expulsions, wars, persecutions) and times of great joy (beatification, canonization, successful projects, new foundations in new countries, etc.) It is also time for a more intimate knowledge of Mother Therese Emmanuel through her notes, and countless notebooks, and beside her, Mother Marie Eugenie, this woman of faith who supports and accompanies her. Both were "foundation stones".



*Online retreat with the Philippines*



*Manuscripts of Thérèse Emmanuel*



Then, through the transfer of the Archives carried out by Veronique, one discovers more writings, plans, photos, etc. Each sister, in her own time, laid "her own stone"; with her gifts, her talents, her limitations, she gave her life to serve Life. »

Sœur Marie : « For me, to work in the Archives of the Congregation is a big grace. I find myself in the hidden sources of our origin. My heart beats when I transcribe the story of the foundation of a Province, for example, when writing about its development through the years, discovering how "It is God who leads everything", through failures, successes, winding roads and small or big miracles... Reading with emotion what Sr. Therese Emmanuel experienced at a certain moment, through the notes of an old sister... Dive into the circulars of Mother Helene who shares her visits, her reflections, her calls to the Congregation... It is like I am standing next to the person who trustfully talks to me ... I am seized with an act of grace... »

Eliane: « I was lucky enough to get to know Marie Eugenie better at her canonization. My husband Pierre and I decided to go to Rome with the group of Sisters. It was a fast decision, like being seized by an irresistible appeal. We had an unforgettable experience in the midst of torrential rain. For several months now, Sr. Véronique asked me to help her in preserving documents from the wear and tear of time, including the many letters of Mother Marie Eugenie. This almost daily contact with the saint makes me closer, more familiar with her. I talk to her, beg her to help me. She has become a friend. Touching her relics is a grace where I measure the sacred character, as if I were touching the relics of Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus or Saint Teresa of Avila. »

Sr. Marie-Yvonne just started her work. She is preparing her article for the next issue of Echo d'Archives.

## "To the Source" network

The dream of connecting the different Provinces with the people responsible for formation at all levels has been growing for a long time. It is part of the Archives' vision as a Resource Centre where everyone could come and drink at the source, be nourished and share from the historical and spiritual heritage of the Congregation. In October 2020, a survey was sent to formators in order to gather desires, resources and needs. The international team decided to meet monthly now by zoom. It will study the responses to this survey and make proposals through the already tested virtual means of communication. We hope to offer online presentations and training on historical documents very soon. A network "Aux Sources" will thus be set up, multiplying the streams that carry the Assumption charism.

### SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT

Archiviste of the Congregation  
*Original French*



Lay Group - Retreat in Saint Gervais - France

# communication

***“We have been struggling all night and have caught nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets” (Lk. 5:5)***

**The desire to strengthen communion and build the Kingdom(...) has allowed us to turn the threat of an imposed social distancing into an opportunity to weave networks of communion.**

**A** social change is dawning after the nights of failed attempts, of paralyzing fears, of digital divides... at His word we have “cast our nets”, because the pandemic could not stop our educational mission from continuing, at a time that it must be more transformative than ever, and neither could we stop building the “Assumption Body” on so many levels. It is difficult to see threats as opportunities and weaknesses as strengths, but regarding Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), it has been revealed that the desire to strengthen communion and build the Kingdom is stronger than the fear of not knowing how to use ICTs, and it has allowed us to turn the threat of an imposed social distancing into an opportunity to weave networks of communion.

The articles in this issue of the magazine have shown us many examples of how ICTs are being put at the service of communion and mission. From the communications team we would like to show you just three of the many lessons learned, and which will undoubtedly continue in our lives once this virus leaves us.

Before continuing, we invite you to think on a personal level, or with others, what have you learned from ICTs during this pandemic? What do you want to continue learning?

We hope that the list of lessons learned, like those we want to continue to achieve, will be long. Here we will point out a few:

## **1. ICTs at the service of communion and mission**

We have experienced how ICTs favour meeting areas that provide opportunities for sharing, deepening and celebrating faith and life, and therefore building the Church in communion. However, this communion does not replace that which takes place when Christians gather around the table of His Body and His Word, so we will not tire of insisting that we must return to our parish and respective communities. But we must not lose other established fraternal bonds with Christians with whom we continue to share prayer, formation or life, because we have common religious sensitivities or ways of thinking. To give an example, Taizé has opened its digital doors in the “real” times of prayer, workshops or song





Images d'Internet

rehearsals, making them accessible to people near and far away. The same thing has happened in many parishes or church movements.

ICTs have allowed our Congregation to:

1. Continue to hold formation sessions;
2. Participate with other communities and laity in celebrations taking place in other countries or territories;
3. Continue the visits made by the General Community to the different Provinces;
4. To bring together young people from all over the world who participated in the bicentenary of the birth of our foundresses in 2017;
5. To establish working groups at the Congregational level in different areas (Assumption Together, JPIC-S, education, youth, archives, communication, finance...), with people from different countries;
6. Share formation resources in our different Provinces

## 2. ICT at the service of universal brotherhood

During the pandemic, the so-called "UBUNTU" philosophy has spread, a word which meaning is rooted in the African wisdom that weaves the social fabric in virtues such as solidarity, loyalty, hospitality, generosity... not only lived within the family with whom we share consanguinity, but also with the extended tribal or village organization. In a word, Ubuntu sums up in one word the universal fraternity to which Pope Francis invites us to in his last encyclical "Fratelli tutti". Ubuntu was the name given to an operating system designed by a group of free software developers. From the technological revolution that took place in the 20th century, two currents have developed the great accumulation of changes and transformations that have taken place in the field of ICT since then: the dazzling impulse produced by the big companies that compete and devour each other (Microsoft, Apple, Google, Facebook...), and the discreet beacon light of the developers of free and open-source software. The latter are engineers, programmers or self-taught people who share their knowledge for the benefit of all, and not the company. During the pandemic many people and groups from all over the world have

turned to free programs and resources to be able to carry out their meetings, gatherings, activities... Large companies have also made many of their resources freely available. Many individuals have also shared for free the educational, pastoral or training resources they have generated on the web. Let us hope that this solidarity continues beyond the pandemic.

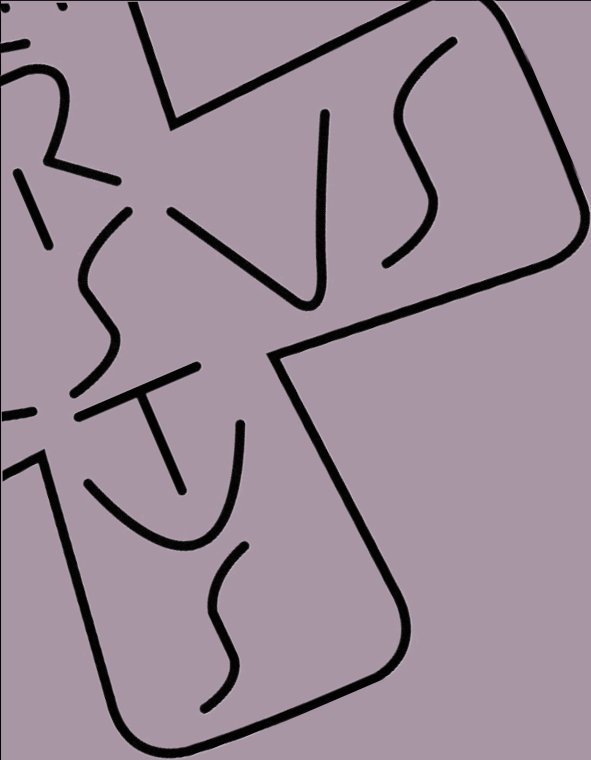
## 3. ICTs are not accessible to all

Unfortunately, we have also noticed that the digital continent also has borders:

1. Political ideologies establish state filters for forbidden content for fear that they will awaken numbed consciences.
2. Lack of infrastructure prevents access to ICTs for people in entire countries or areas with scarce energy resources which are indispensable for technology that works with electricity; or it does not make it possible for the internet to reach all places.
3. Poverty creates a gap in all societies between those who have or do not have money to buy devices that remain expensive.
4. Lack of knowledge also widens the gap between people who know how to use ICTs and those who do not.
5. The rapid development of ICTs not only widens these social gaps, it also deteriorates an environment that cannot keep up with the pace of this development. These are all unresolved issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and in which no investment is being made in finding a vaccine.

Even so, let us not remain only with this last learning. Let us think that the two previous ones will help us unlearn the third one.

MERCEDES MÉNDEZ  
**COMMUNICATION TEAM**  
*Original Spanish*



*Direct their flight, but don't clip their wings*



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