

# #ASSUMPTA

Religious of the Assumption magazine

December 2021 - N°6



“Do not be afraid, for I bring you great joy.” (Lk 2:10)

# summary

"Each one of us has a mission on earth" (Marie Eugénie's credo)



## #ASSUMPTA

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# editorial

*“Do not be afraid, for I bring you great joy.” (Lk 2:10)*



The times in which we live are very complex; fear and fragility seem to have driven out courage and enthusiasm for life. This pandemic has made it difficult, if not impossible, to do what used to be normal - to be together every day with an open heart and to reach out to others with kindness.

When we encounter the mystery of Christmas, however, our eyes are opened to what is essential and, renewed; we see the importance of life in all its dimensions, in all its horizons.

In the Prologue (Gospel of John 1:1-18), the author draws our attention to the “word becoming incarnate in our humanity”; God takes “form” in our humble lives. “The Word became flesh” (Jn, 1:14); and I particularly like the second part of the verse, “... he came to dwell among us”... dwelling in our past, in our times, in our contradictions and frustrations and to transform them into real opportunities for rebirth.

Sometimes we feel powerless and unable to face the new “urgencies” that arise - social and ecclesial - as if they were places where it is impossible to be.

Let us look instead to Him, the Word. He has chosen to dwell in our time, and to ask each of us to witness the power of this salutary event.

In her chapter of 28 December 1879, Mother Marie-Eugénie tells us,

“I feel inclined to recommend to you when you go to adore the Child Jesus in his cot, to think always, or at least often, that this child is the Eternal One, the Almighty, that the one who is there so small, so lowly, is the Immortal King of the ages.”

If the Son of God threw himself wholeheartedly into the world and its affairs, we too must feel fully immersed in what is happening every day and share with confidence the expectations and hopes of

people, especially the poorest.

He came to inhabit this place of ours, the Earth, with all its humanity, to embody the beauty and difficulty of daily life, welcoming God's gift with joy and simplicity.

An ancient Christmas legend comes to mind,

“On the night of Jesus' birth, the angels brought the Good News to the shepherds, and they went to the cave with various gifts. Each one had brought what he had - some the fruit of their labour, others something precious. But while they all gave generously, one very poor shepherd had nothing... nothing to offer, and while everyone competed to present their gifts, he stood aside in shame...”

After a while, Joseph and the Virgin found it difficult to receive all these gifts, especially Mary, who also had to hold the Child. Then, seeing this shepherd with empty hands, the Virgin asked him to come closer and placed Jesus in his hands.

When the shepherd received the Child Jesus, he realised that he had something he did not deserve, that he was holding in his hands the greatest gift of all times. He looked at his hands - hands that had always seemed empty - they had become the cradle of God.

He felt so loved that, overcoming his shame, he began to present the Child Jesus to others, because he could not keep the Gift of Gifts to himself.

Each one of us is invited this Christmas to overcome our difficulties, to rush to the grotto, with open hands and a heart full of joy to welcome the Child Jesus.

**SISTER CARMELA PACENZA**

Province of Europe

*Original italian*

# general community

## *Interview of our Superior General, Rekha Chennattu, in the magazine Vida Nueva*

“we still have a long way to go to ensure the rightful place of women in the Church.”

**R**ekha's humility is her strength. A passionate biblical scholar of John, this consecrated Indian understands the leadership of Jesus from the Johannine body, with friendship at its core. This is how she lives it in her daily life as Superior General of the Religious of the Assumption, serving more than a thousand sisters in 33 countries.

**Which way is the wind of the Spirit blowing for the Religious of the Assumption in this post-Covid era? Has this pandemic shaken you in your projects and presences as an institute or have you continued with your plans as usual?**

The pandemic has forced all of us to face an unprecedented global crisis, turning upside down many of our planned projects and programs. We have had no choice but to respond creatively to the consequences of the pandemic for today as well as for tomorrow. I embrace this situation as an opportune moment to explore new ways of making Assumption presence and mission more meaningful and relevant. The real challenge is to discern the “new forms” of the Assumption charism that will make us a source of positive energy and prophetic hope for a better world. As the saying goes, “when the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind.” This new way of life makes God's healing presence, God's justice and compassion more visible in these trying times.

**There are more than a thousand religious, present in 33 countries. A real ‘multinational’. How do you lead a congregation without falling into business criteria, but also without turning your back on the demands of today's world? An expert in leadership in religious life, do you think that consecrated men and women continue to lose themselves in wanting to carry the weight of the management of their works when they should rather be the soul?**

I do not consider myself an expert in leadership in religious life, but I understand leadership as our participation in the project of God. Leaders are called to





General Community Chapel

empower the members to be at the service of God's mission. Based on John's Gospel, I have been proposing a covenant-friendship model of leadership as the best paradigm of animation in religious congregations. Leadership is understood as a loving service rendered among friends and disciples of Jesus (Jn 15:13-17). This Johannine model of animation brings an aspect of reciprocity to leadership roles: we serve "one another" as covenant partners in God's mission. In such an atmosphere, relationships are mutual and collaborative rather than hierarchical. The charism of leadership, rather than control from above, inspires teamwork and whole-hearted commitment. It is an animation from within to build up a community for God's mission of creating a more humanized world. Leaders then do not feel their mission burdensome, but their animation becomes a grace-filled experience of giving life in abundance to all its members. While this friendship model provides space and freedom for each member to make her or his unique contribution, it also calls for accountability. It implies integration of firmness with compassion and justice with mercy. It is not easy, but not impossible when we "walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8).

**Leader and woman: How do you value the steps Pope Francis is taking, especially in the appointments of the last year? Necessary? Sufficient? Can you imagine voting in a Synod?**

I am inspired and challenged by Pope Francis's way of animating the Church. He is concerned about the wellness of all peoples of God. The poor and marginalized, including women, have a special place in his heart. His desire for greater participation of women in the decision-making process is evident in his recent appointments of women to positions previously held exclusively by men. While I appreciate every step Pope Francis has taken, I feel that we still

have a long way to go to ensure the rightful place of women in the Church. I have full confidence that we will get there, slowly but surely. My experience as a member of the Federation of the Asian Bishops Conference has been quite extraordinary, an experience of communion in which cardinals, bishops, theologians are reflecting together without any hierarchical order. Each one has his/her place, and each one's voice is listened to with respect as disciples of Jesus. I was a participant at the Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization in October 2012 without the right to vote, and I look forward to the day when all participants will have the right to vote in the Synod. I would say women should play the role of "opportunity seekers" in the Church and take every opening as a favourable moment to make their unique contribution to its life and mission.

**For many years, Rome sent out the message that religious life was 'dead' or 'dying' in the face of the lack of vocations in the West, the commitment to the freshness of the new movements... Has this perception changed at all?**

Religious life will never die, but it will undergo radical changes in the process of its natural evolution. Much has been changed in religious life since I made my first vows with declining numbers, aging profiles, diminishing apostolic presence in educational and other institutions. There seems also to be an identity crisis for some, a crisis in finding meaning in consecrated life in our changing cultural, religious and socio-political contexts. An important question is how to make sense of what has been transpiring over the past decades, and how to preserve a realistic and resilient hope in redefining the identity and mission of the consecrated life for our times. A society that is more interested in building walls than bridges, polarized and prone to violence, needs the charism



or charisms of consecrated life. Our international community characterized by the Gospel values of inclusivity, forgiveness, justice, and mercy will be a prophetic sign of hope for our times.

**More than a few charismatic families are putting their trust in Indian religious as general superiors. India is spoken of as the future of the Church, but it is rather the present... Don't you think so?**

Even though the Christian population is less than 2.5% in India, the church makes a significant contribution in the building up of the nation. I do not know whether India is or will be the future of the Church, but we have developed a contextualized theology that responds to the concerns of our people and the challenges of our times. As a Superior General from India, I have the golden opportunity to share with the whole Congregation – the fruits of my theological formation, our radical option for the poor and marginalized, the richness of our multi-religious and cultural contexts, and our integral and holistic spirituality.

**You belong to the Syro-Malabar rite. For a Westerner, it is something exotic and unfamiliar to say the least. What does this Eastern rite bring to the Latin rite? More spirituality? More freshness? More openness to dialogue with other religions?**

I think both the Rites – Eastern and Latin – enrich one another. The Eastern Churches do have vibrant, joyful, and participative liturgies. We grow up by breathing in the air of faith and have a sound faith formation for a period of twelve years starting from the age of four. For example, on the last Holy Saturday, my little niece who is just nine years old called me to ask: "Is the Resurrection of Jesus real?" This is the kind

of faith tradition that we have inherited. I think the more rooted we are in our faith, the deeper we can be in communion with the peoples of other religious traditions with mutual respect and reverence. We also have a long tradition of harmonious inter-religious living in Kerala (South India).

**J. BELTRÁN**  
Vida Nueva Magazine

# general community

**“The real is the beautiful transformed with love, and the wonder of new life, turn on right now.”**

**A**n old song composed by Gregory Norbet, OSB goes “Anything happens if we are open to see that creation is coming alive. The real is the beautiful transformed with love, and the wonder of new life, turn on right now.” These lines present to us an invitation of an attitude necessary specially during this time of crisis and pandemic. For some, these might echo their own experiences amidst this difficult times where they discover new graces and possibilities with great creativity. Indeed, in each moment of our life and in every opportunity, God reveals something new. Creation is in a process of being completed each day.

The online session organized by the International JPIC Secretariat of the Assumption Family entitled: “A world on the move: Migrants-Refugees-Displaced-Victims of Trafficking” has been an important step to sensitize us, to form us and to know how our sisters and brothers of the Assumption try to respond to this reality in the mission countries where we are present. We have lived the experience that it is possible to unite ourselves for a “ Wider WE” as Pope Francis invites us today.

The program was designed in two parts. The first part was accomplished through Zoom Sessions using the Process: See, Judge, Act and celebrate this world in motion. We were 21 Religious of the Assumption Sisters who participated, as members of the secretariat, or as representatives of each Province of the Congregation, in addition to the laity and communities who joined or followed the session in the open spaces.

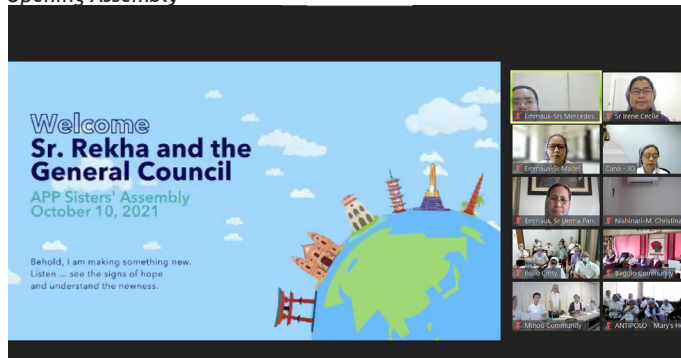
José Luis Loera Aguilar, coordinator of the Casa Refugiados Program in Mexico, spoke about the Movement of People today and the issues at stake. Sr. Sophie Ramond, RA gave a biblical approach to migration, experienced as exodus and exile. Her talk, “In a world on the move, the conditions and modes of Christian existence. A biblical approach” has strong contemporary resonances. Finally, Father Fabio Baggio, Under-Secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development, presented a synthesis of the Magisterium of Pope Francis on the theme of migrants and refugees.

The Superior Generals: Sr. Rekha, Sr. Felicita, Sr. Marie Françoise, Sr. Anne and Father Marcelo AA Assistant General, encouraged us to continue this path of commitment to the poorest and most vulnerable. The content and the presentations and

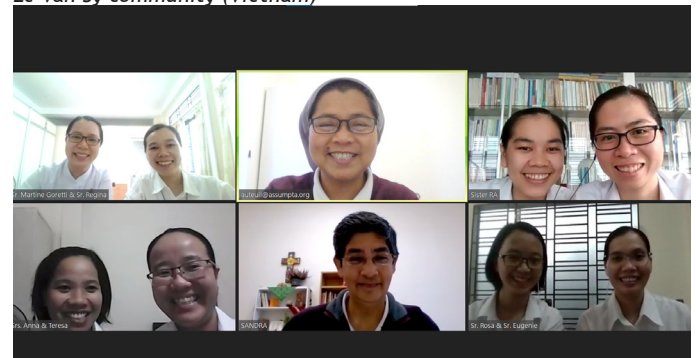


The animation team of the JIPC Assumption Family session 5-10 July 2021

## Opening Assembly



## Le Van Sy community (Vietnam)



## Takamatsu Community (Japan) with the Kindergarten teachers



## Meeting with the Provincial Council



experiences presented are available on YouTube.

We are now in the second stage of the program that aims to try to embody the calls or lights received in our respective mission fields. For this objective, 14 inter-Assumption groups were formed by regions according to the Continent and region of the participants. This is already producing great diversity : actions together, prayer assemblies, awareness meetings, formation sessions or transmission either by Province or inter-Assumption where this has been possible.

As Sister Rekha told us in her opening message, we hope "that the session will lead us to a paradigm shift in our apostolic options. Let our searches stimulate new reflections in our local contexts, inspire creative responses, and deepen our commitments to God's choices." Let's try in our "small sphere of action".

From the 6th of September till the 13th of October, we had the virtual Canonical Visit to Asia Pacific Province. The wonder of this new technology – Zoom – made possible our entry into the lives of our sisters in the nineteen communities of the four countries of the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan. The theme chosen by the Province for the visit was: "Behold, I am making something new! Listen, see the signs of hope and understand the newness..." We navigated together this new form of closeness and communion and yes, we listened, we saw, and we allowed ourselves to be renewed, and we recognize God's faithful journeying with this Province. We discovered the richness of each culture, the complexity of their diverse realities as Asian people, and the presence of both the long tradition of Assumption and the new calls in our different insertions. We sensed their love for Mother Marie Eugenie and for the Congregation. We affirmed their commitment, together with their lay partners, "to make Jesus Christ known, loved and served" through Transformative Education.

We heard a lot of stories of goodness, communion, and solidarity. The sisters and lay are driven by the spirit of being gifted to give.

What is also inspiring for the Congregation is the desire of this new Province to continue exploring the journey of becoming fully ONE Province. The challenges before them might be overwhelming, but their steadfast faith in God and their capacity to transform challenges into blessing are their deep source of strength and hope to move forward. We were touched by this deep spirit of faith that enables them to face adversities and difficulties with inner strength, courage, gratitude, and hope. The nuances of the Asian soul present in each country, including interiority, silence, interconnectedness, deep communion with the cosmos and prayer of the heart, awakened our desire to deepen the way in which all these aspects enrich the charism of the Congregation.

The possibility of participating in a Zoom Formation Session is a gift of this pandemic period. We are so grateful for the contribution of our dear Sr. Rekha in the SEDOS Mission Symposium Session 2021. Her talk was about the Biblical Trends in Mission for our Times. She presented the Biblical Foundations of Mission covering the Holy Scriptures from the Old to the New Testament. She emphasized that Mission is God's Project. It was a beautiful way to express the love of the Congregation for the Universal Church.

On Saturday, October 16, two years after the launch of the Communications Plan, the Communication Commission met with the various commissions and services of the Congregation - Education, JIPCS, Youth-AMA, BGSD, Archives, Finance, and the General Secretariat - in order to evaluate its functioning and to agree on the necessary adjustments. The meeting was held in Auteuil with a member of each commission.





Logo of the International Communication Commission



The meeting led by Sr. Mercedes was based on the synthesis of the questionnaire sent to each commission and service. In two years, there has been the creation of a new web page translated into three languages, the launching of the Magazine #Assumpta (three times a year) and the Assumpta magazine (supposed to appear once a year in November). The commissions have contributed greatly to these various publications. Due to the pandemic, only two magazines could be printed. We are waiting for a return to normal before printing and sending out the following copies. For the same reason the Assumpta magazine with feature articles is ready for printing but has not been edited. The CGP 2022 will be an opportune moment to see together what we are committed to.

This meeting allowed us to have a more global vision of Communication as it is lived in the Congregation and of the complexity that it represents. Communication is at the service of communion and mission (Capitular Document Lourdes 2018). This is why the commissions are the main providers of documents. The major challenge is to regularly feed the communication channels in order to make known the life and thought of the Assumption on the digital continent. The ways are diverse: a video or a photo accompanied by a brief commentary with a message for the web page; a longer article to share an experience or a reflection in the #Assumpta Magazine; a brief commentary or a reflection on a document of the Church or the World, with an Assumption approach to bring our experience and our way of seeing or to express how these subjects are in line with our realities or with our charism.

The challenges are numerous but we are not losing enthusiasm! By putting ourselves to work, we will encourage the referent sisters of all the commissions whose task is sometimes heavy. Communication serves Communion, Participation and Mission, the three key words of the Synod on Synodality (Opening of the

Synod. Address of Pope Francis October 9, 2021).

For this, we will continue to walk together, to form together ... to communicate more with each other. Tutorials developed in the three languages by Mercedes and Almudena will be available on youtube. A strategic plan will help us to focus on the essentials and to live more interconnected.

We end this paragraph by saying a big Thank you to the sisters who translate or proofread the documents. This is a real service to the Congregation!

Just two weeks after the visit of the Asia Pacific Province, we have begun the canonical visit of the Province of India. It will take place from October 24 to November 26. The visit began with a two-hour assembly to welcome and introduce each community. The Province is composed of thirteen communities in four states and nine dioceses. We are entering a new world again, in a Province born just after the Second Vatican Council in 1968. You will read more about it in the next issue! Sr. Rekha was able to go to India on October 28, so the visit is semi-presential, semi-virtual.

We also look forward to the International Formators' Session from the 1st to the 10th of December, it will be another graced moment of common formation as a Body Congregation. Fifty-six formators or sisters belonging to formation teams from all the provinces are expected.

Let us continue journeying together towards newness, welcoming surprises, witnessing the power of life, and dancing with delight, for God makes all things NEW, everyday!

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

# education

## *Interiority: Educating for introspection*

“... it is the path of truth that leads us to freedom.”

**H**ow much do we know about silence in school? Do we know how to bring calm to our students? Do I transmit peace to them? Is there a ritual for introspection in my classroom? Are we cultivating it?

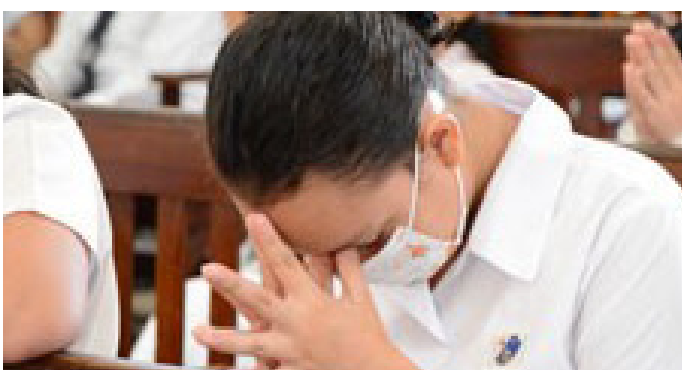
Religion has used the word 'interiority' as a synonym for spiritual life and prayer; while the notion of personal growth straddles between the psychological, the sapiential and the religious, interiority is associated with self-awareness. It also refers to that inner place where the possibilities of each person remain hidden and unpredictable. Interiority is our intimate space, not to be confused with the private or the secret.

Intimacy is that which is interior, that which is recognized within oneself, that which belongs to the true self, to the deepest part of oneself. Private, on the other hand, refers to what is simply not shared or what no one else sees but oneself. It is important to make students see this nuance from a young age, since privacy leads to selfishness and intimacy to friendship.

Only silence leads us to our intimacy, to our deepest self, that is, to our inner self, opening us up to the experience of who we are. Silence expands our consciousness, since it makes us enter into it and recognise what is happening within us. It makes us aware of our misconceptions and beliefs, helping us to channel our energies to free ourselves from the outer self with which we identify. It is only through silence that we can clearly become aware of what is happening within us.

Silence is the place that allows us to know our motivations, beliefs, values and ideals; it is the path of truth that leads us to freedom. Have you ever had the experience of the serenity that prevails when we calm down?

Silence calms, soothes, pacifies, unifies; it soothes our physical, mental and psychological restlessness and opens us up to the experience of looking at



*Sixth graders from the Colegio La Asunción de León-Nicaragua in Eucharist.*



*Seventh grade students of the Colegio La Asunción de León-Nicaragua in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.*

ourselves and letting ourselves be looked at by God, knowing that we are under the loving gaze of this God who never looks away, since he is part of our being; he is deep within our being.

As well as living silence individually, we are called to live it as a group, and in this way it becomes a deep source of interpersonal bonding and understanding. It is therefore necessary, in our daily life and with our students, to look for periods of silence and, if possible, spaces where students can share praying in silence with others. It is in this sense that Holy Mary praised silence...

Considering that the great challenge of Marie Eugenie's life - and therefore of her choices at every moment - was to work to resemble Christ, she compares herself to a painter who has to observe his/her model carefully in order to reproduce it. She invites us to serenity, to distance, to simplification, to calm, to silence so that God may come to give us only what is desirable, only what is lasting...

Is there silence in our classrooms? Silence is the great absentee of pedagogy, as it is not considered to be an instrument of communication, nor as a fundamental experience of the human being. The school does not teach the inherent richness of silence; it focuses its attention on speech and its oral and written articulation, but omits the communicative and expressive value of silence.

Neither the child nor the young person is prepared for silence; for them it is something new, strange and problematic that must be hidden immediately. They are not prepared to live together in silence, nor are they prepared to discover the teaching that silence carries within itself; I am not talking about the external and imposed silence that gives the educator the power to silence the students, as some teachers still do when they sing this nursery rhyme with the students, "The owl. The owl goes shh... goes shh. All silent like the owl that goes shh." I'm talking about silence, which is absolutely essential for contemplating the world and interiorising it, not imposing it.

Silence and contemplation go hand in hand. Without inner silence, it is not possible to contemplate reality. Contemplation presupposes an attitude of calm and receptivity; it teaches us to see the world and all of reality through the eyes and heart of God, leading us to the transformation of our frames of reference, our points of view, our habits of thought and our metaphysical vision of the world as expressed in the Transformative Education of the Assumption.

Only silence allows us a lucid and transparent contemplation of the other. The other is fundamentally manifested through a face, eyes and facial expression. Have we noticed that in our classrooms, the students and we, as educators, talk and talk, rarely expressing our fears, our anxieties, our illusions...?

If we want to understand and communicate with our students, then we educators must learn to listen to them, to hear their silences, the pains of their soul,

the cries of their insecurities and fears. The voice of silence becomes pedagogically necessary in a world so full of noise, in order to arrive at an increasingly humanising dialogue.

What can we do to work on interiority with our students?

- Practice the pedagogy of silence and interiority through the daily prayers we do in the classrooms, catechetical meetings, faith education, Eucharist, contacts, guided hours, etc.
- To become educators who create a climate conducive to the interiorisation of learning.
- Linking learning to the personal experience of students in the different disciplines.
- Ensure that in the learning strategies used, the student is always at the centre, the course is never repeated; time must be lived and the experience must be relevant.
- We can take into account the place, the layout of the tables, the nature, the music.
- Encourage environments where students seek calm, and perform a ritual at the beginning and end of classes.
- Be aware of and adjust your own posture and that of your students; authority is exercised through posture.
- Be aware of your own gestures and movements and capture the student's attention.
- Pause, control the tone of voice and practice self-observation.

Finally, the silence that is asked from the students must come from the teacher him/herself; therefore, it is important that when entering the classroom or starting the lesson, the teacher welcomes with a smile, with security and a great deal of inner calm, to take the pulse (state) of the group-class's predisposition, and its degree of motivation. It is impossible to educate or to influence without a close relationship with each student.

#### **MARIO MENDEZ**

Reference person

Province of Central America and Cuba

*Original Spanish*

## Being an AMA also sheds light on career options

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**“... I left for Ecuador, in search of meaning, in search of life.”**

*Eugénie Sentucq is 27 years old, she is currently an engineer-architect and works in London. French, she went to Ecuador as an AMA in 2015 and has returned several times since. This experience has profoundly transformed her personal and professional life.*

I decided to go as an AMA in 2015. I had just lost two very close friends, Mathilde through illness and Maxime by an accident after a night of drinking. I was 20 years old; I had succeeded in everything up to that point and had just been granted a place at a school of engineering and architecture in Paris. I had never imagined that I would experience such a loss. However, I had always felt that there was an anxiety in my heart that was lying dormant, but I had always managed to quell it through my multiple activities and my insatiable quest to understand, learn and meet people. Born into a Catholic family in Bordeaux, I heard about AMA through friends. After a weekend of immersion with the sisters in Orleans and a few days of preparation, I left for Ecuador, in search of meaning, in search of life.

When I arrived in Guayaquil, I began by helping the catechists at the Assumption College. But Mother Gina soon understood that I wanted something else, and she arranged a meeting with the director of the Jesuit NGO Hogar de Cristo in the slums of Guayaquil. I was then 'hired' to design low-cost bamboo houses for the slum dwellers. I can now say with certainty that my professional vocation came from this experience.

During those months, I walked the streets of Monte Sinai, inspecting houses, meeting families who lived in unbelievable poverty. How could anyone live in a house with cardboard walls and a septic tank in the middle of the living room? Drugs, especially heroin, are the scourge of these neighbourhoods; I saw lost children, barely 12 years-old, with empty eyes, slumped along the walls in the streets. How can you allow drugs to steal your consciousness in this way? I was deeply touched by all these encounters.

During my mission, life in the Assumption community did me a lot of good. I appreciated very much the setting





offered by the rhythm of prayers together, giving a kind of sweetness to the hardness of my days. I remember so many moments of sharing; this communion which continues today does me a lot of good.

At the end of my mission, I returned to France to continue my studies in architecture and I knew that one day I would return to Guayaquil to help. At that moment, I promised myself never to get used to poverty, never to get used to these differences, to always get up and look for ways to do good in the world.

Two years later, in 2017, I went to Bristol as part of the Erasmus programme. I started writing my dissertation, which I wanted to be focused on a topic that could improve the living conditions of the slum dwellers in Guayaquil. I was fascinated by the diversity of building systems associated with Guadua bamboo - a species of bamboo endemic to equatorial regions that has extraordinary physical properties. So, I focused my research on bamboo and discovered that bamboo had a chemical property which, when in contact with lime, allowed the silica in its cells to form a cement-like product with remarkable binding properties. Making concrete out of bamboo! Isn't that wonderful?

After submitting my dissertation, I went back to Ecuador last year to experiment with this "bamboo concrete". I went back to "my sisters" in Guayaquil and to my little room.

I accompanied them on their various missions at the weekend and on weekday evenings in their prayer groups. I especially love washing up! The rest of the time I was making bamboo concrete mixes. At the end of my stay, we were able to compare 20 cinder blocks of different bamboo concretes. Padre Vega was delighted with the results, the NGO had never heard of the possibility of making concrete without

industrial cement, it was a great adventure.

I now work in London in a small design office, learning and digging, calculating and trying to unravel the mysteries of materials.

These experiences have made me aware of being alive, and that my role is to welcome this life, not to undergo it, because - as Zundel says - in my hands all of creation has been entrusted to me, and I have to give it this dimension of love without which it means nothing.

Nowadays, I sometimes have difficulty with ecclesiastic institutions. If I am disturbed by disagreements, I keep in mind that the Church named the Gospel 'the good news' meaning the discovery of life as a treasure entrusted to me. I want to give my life a dimension of love to give it meaning. Jesus Christ could well be the person who understood everything and who came to tell us so. I understand the Holy Spirit more as the breath of my life that connects me to those with whom I am in communion, and I feel it in my heart.

**EUGÉNIE SENTUCQ**

AMA Province of France  
Original french

# spirituality

## *What is the Church's understanding on digital evangelisation?*

**“The culture of social networks and the changes in the forms and styles of communication pose significant challenges to those who want to speak about truth and values.”**

**W**hile Pope Paul VI already used the term “Means of Social Communication” in his message for the “World Day of Social Communications” celebrated for the first time on 7 May 1967, it was not until 1983 that the Internet, as we know it, came into being. In the 1990s, the Internet began to enter our homes.

In 1975, in the exhortation of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI had already encouraged the use of the means of social communication, saying, “When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect (...) In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes.”

In the mid-1990s, the Internet entered our homes, and John Paul II began to speak of the pastoral work we must do on the Internet. In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* of the same year, he said, “The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a “global village.” (...) it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications.”

Pope Benedict XVI, who has written the most about the Internet, taught us how to evangelize on social networks, “To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one's own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the

Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically.” (2011)

But he also warns us that “The culture of social networks and the changes in the forms and styles of communication pose significant challenges to those who want to speak about truth and values. (Extracts from the messages of the 45th and 47th World Communications Days).

Finally, Pope Francis invites us to go further. He teaches us to witness and communicate with our eyes, tone of voice, gestures and words. He urges us not only to build bridges and show that the Church is a home for all, that God's love is universal; these bridges also lead us to meet others. He encourages us to make sure that the Christian message travels, thanks to the digital environment, “all the way to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

To do this, we must:

1. Keep up to date with trends and be present on social networks, actively listening and sharing.
2. Translate the Gospel message into the communication style of young people through short, well-structured speeches in simple and direct language.
3. Use the new media: audiovisual is the most current.

**ALMUDENA DE LA TORRE**  
Communication Team  
*Original Spanish*

# archives treasures

## *Meet Mother Marie Joanna of the Incarnation (General Superior from 1921 to 1953) and Sister Marie Luce of the Ascension*

A triple centenary took place in 1921 in our Congregation: the death of Mother Marie Celestine, of the election of Mother Marie Catherine as Superior General and of her death. Mother Marie Joanna, Mother Marie Catherine's Assistant, ensured the transition at the head of the Congregation until her own election in the spring of 1922. This Archives treasure opens a door on the collection of documents relating to Mother Marie Joanna, Jeanne Saleur, 4th General Superior of the Congregation (1922-1953) whose life is closely linked to her twin sister, Lucie, who later became Sister Marie-Luce. We are pleased to present to you some of these documents.

### **Handwritten notes on the youth of Jeanne and Lucie Saleur**

By means of a handwritten notebook of Mother Marie Joanna, dating from 1965, we have access to several details about her youth. Jeanne and Lucie were born on April 19, 1874 in Sermaize-sur-Saulx (Marne, France), on Good Shepherd Sunday. Mother Marie Joanna recalls the first expression of her vocation: "Around 1880. When I was six years old, a lady in the street interrupted her conversation with my mother to ask me: 'And you, Jeanne, what are you going to do when you grow up? - I'm going to become a nun'". After having attended the school of the Sisters of the Christian Doctrine, Jeanne and Lucie were still young at the Assumption of Saint Dizier. They lost their mother at the age of 14 (two months after the death of their grandmother who lived with the family). Mother Marie Joanna wrote: "Papa sent us to boarding school at the Assumption, and we went back with him every Sunday to work on the Brevet Élémentaire exam which was taken in Châlons sur Marne in 1891". The admission document for this exam can be found in our archives.

Next came "a few years in our pretty house built on Papa's plans. Relationships at the Convent. And with our friends at the Convent (...) Papa's business is not going

Certified photo of Mother Marie Joanna



well, he wants to start a company, which cuts into his income. We only have my mother's brother's family (...) Our education is finished, we have to organize our life at home with our father, but after two years, Dad confronts us with reality; we have to make a living. The decision was quickly made. I will get a job with a family as a teacher and Lucie will stay with Papa." A youth marked by the brutal realism of life. Jeanne therefore went to work in the North of France. Mother Marie Joanna describes then how, again because of limited financial means, Lucie and their father moved from the family house, that had to be rented, to a smaller house, "but fortunately near the Convent of the Assumption". Lucie also had to work for a family, with their father agreeing to go to a nursing home in his old age. "It all happened like that, but a few days later a telegram was sent to me in the North, and the same telegram from Lamalou-les-Bains was sent to Germany to Lucie: "Father passed away. What to do" (signed by his servant). Our father did not like the retirement home and took the train with his servant to Lamalou-les-Bains (then Montpellier, Hérault) where we had gone with him every year since our childhood... Our answer to both of us was the same: "Take the dear deceased back to Saint Dizier" (...) The funeral took place in the church of La Noue, in Saint Dizier. The twins were 21 years old. After some time, Jeanne joined the Religious of the Assumption whereas Lucie was married for 20 years to a man who had had 7 children from a first marriage: "she dedicated herself to them as if they were her own and was for her husband the faithful companion and the firm support he needed. She herself had a daughter, Solange, who was "a real link between them all" but who died in 1911, still very young, in Bordighera, where Lucia's family came to spend a few months each year to be closer to Mother Marie Joanna (Jeanne), who was superior there. In 1919, Lucia's husband died of a heart attack. As her husband's children were all grown up, Lucia joined the Ladies of Calvary where she cared for the poor and sick for six years. Deafened and weakened by the difficult living conditions of the Ladies of Calvary, Sister Marie Luce obtained permission to enter the Assumption, where she spent the rest of her life until her death in 1953.

### **Notice on Mother Marie Joanna's the life**

However, what was Jeanne's itinerary? She had become, as we have said, Mother Marie Joanna of the Incarnation. Having taken her perpetual vows in 1900, she came to Auteuil after the General Chapter of 1906 to help Sr Marie Dolores in the Economat. She organized and supervised the move at the time of the expulsions from the Externate in that year. In September 1907, she was entrusted with the foundation of Bordighera where, according to a note written from the testimony of sisters who had known her well: "We found in her that strength which supported us in the duties of our religious life, and, at the same time, that serene gentleness which was able to understand, encourage and forgive everything". She was sent to Genoa (Italy) as Superior in October 1916: "She had a gift for words which touch the soul and force you to reflect and choose. We could always knock on her door with her smile and her deep gaze, the interest she took in everything that was ours, invited us to speak...". It was from Genoa that she travelled to Val Notre Dame to take part in the General Chapter of 1921 which would elect the new Superior General following the death of Mother Marie Celestine on 11 April of that year. Mother Marie Catherine, upon her election, chose Mother Marie Joanna as her Assistant. "Three months later, the two Mothers left for Rome, the Way of the Cross began. Mother Marie Catherine fell seriously ill the day after their arrival, on December 6. She died on 15 December, leaving the Congregation in disarray and without a Superior General. Under these exceptional circumstances, the Vatican gave permission for a postal vote. On April 25, 1922, the feast of St. Mark, the voting envelopes were opened, and God gave the Congregation its 4th Superior General, in the person of Mother Mary Joanna. The election was made official on 19 May 1922. Mother Marie Joanna fulfilled this mission until 1953, going through, among other things, the ordeal of the Second World War which caused a new dispersion in the Congregation following the General Chapter of 1939. There are many documents in the Archives showing the way in which she marked the Congregation during her mandate (correspondence, chapter, important decisions, links with the Roman Curia).



Mother Marie Joanna will's

Feeling that age was diminishing her strength, already preparing her future resignation, Mother Marie Joanna wrote, on July 14, 1951, a moving will of which we hold the manuscript and copies in the Archives:

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so be he.

This is my spiritual testament.

I thank God for giving me birth in a Christian family, for growing up in the Catholic faith, at the Assumption, and for giving me the grace of a religious vocation.

I ask Him to forgive me for my sins, for the abuse of the graces I have received, and I hope for heaven only through His mercy and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin.

I ask all those to whom I have caused pain to forgive me, and I forgive with a great heart, while telling myself that I have nothing to forgive, having always been surrounded by affection and filial respect since I became Superior, and even more so since I was placed at the head of the Congregation, despite my unworthiness.

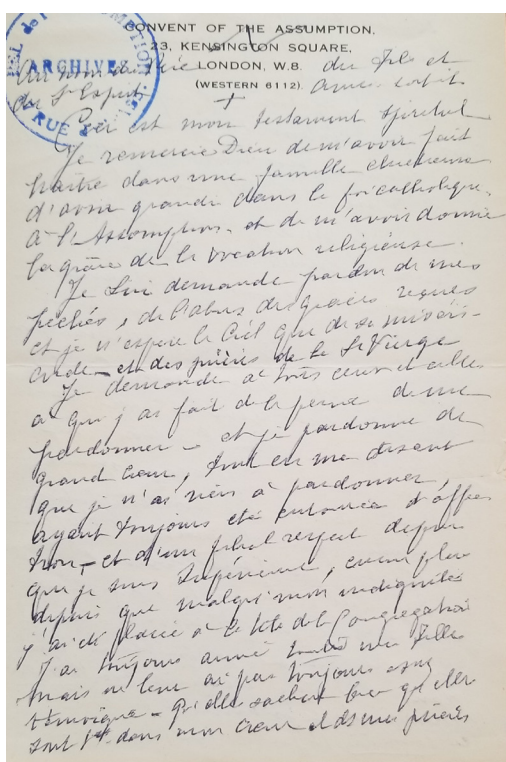
I have always loved all my daughters but have not always shown them enough. Let them know that they are all in my heart and in my prayers.

I beg them all to keep the spirit of Our Lady, the spirit of the Gospel as it has always been in our dear Congregation - the spirit of Our Mothers contained and expressed in our Constitutions, our Rules - the love of the Church, of Our Holy Father the Pope.

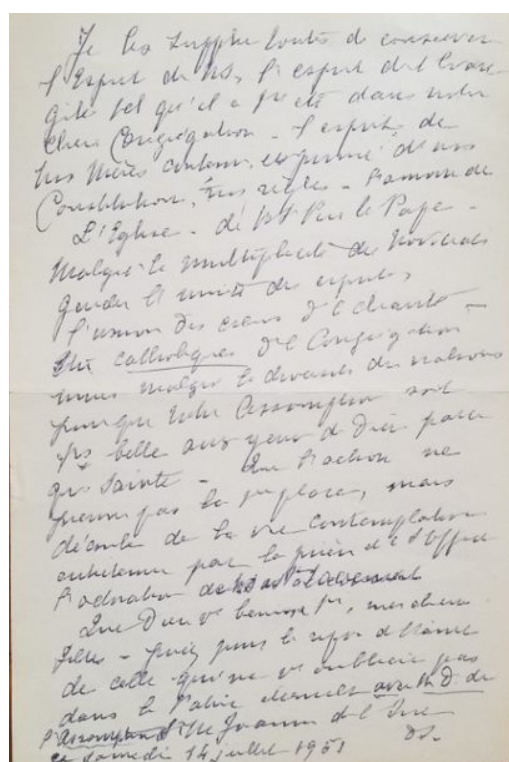
In spite of the multiplicity of Novitiates, keep the unity of spirit, the union of hearts in charity - To be Catholics in the Congregation, united despite the diversity of nations so that our Assumption may always be beautiful in the eyes of God as being holy. May action not take first place, but flow from the contemplative life sustained by prayer and the Office, the adoration of our Lord in the blessed Sacrament.

May God bless all my dear daughters - Pray for her soul rest of the one that will not forget you in the Eternal Homeland with Our Lady of the Assumption.

Sr. Joanna of the Incarnation. D.S."



Testament of Mother Marie Joanna recto and verso





*Decoration Pro Ecclesia e Pontefice*



*Mother Marie Joanna*



*Lucie Saleur - Lescot - Sister of Marie Luce*

# communication

## *Assumption Voices, Communicating through song*

"I want to make my contribution" Mother Marie Eugenie.

During the preparation of the vigil for the celebration of the bicentenary of Marie Eugénie de Jésus' birth and the 60th anniversary of the Assumptionist Community of Guayaquil-Ecuador, the sisters asked former students - members of different guitar groups - to help liven up the meetings. Motivated by feelings of nostalgia and with being repeatedly associated with the Assumption and music, their response was a hearty "Yes". This meeting brought back memories and filled us with joy. It was the start of a musical project made up of graduates of different generations, putting their gifts to the service of others. This is how our adventure began.

Finding ourselves in faith, with family, in our own home and with our individual personal histories, enriched the encounter and set the tone to continue the journey. Little by little, we combined the gifts of other former students who were seeking to be part of the small group at the time. Each one, in their own unique way, contributed ideas for the proposed and organised activities. Our first meetings were not only about making music, but also about exchanging experiences that showed a shared affinity. During the first months, we participated in animating celebrations within the Assumptionist family. In this context, we understood that our vocation was to be at the service of others, evangelising through music, which brought us to decide to walk together as a community.

On 30 April 2018, the sisters presented us to Assumption Together as a new community, and we received the image of Saint Mother Marie Eugenie, whom we called "the pilgrim". From that day on, she accompanied us in the rehearsals that were organised in the houses of each member and stayed there until the next meeting. The journey began in the large community where we looked for windows of opportunity such as animating liturgies, prayers, celebrations, novenas and other initiatives in which each member participated voluntarily. To prepare ourselves and to attain harmony, we committed to a weekly rehearsal. The time we spend in community, both in preparation and in facilitation, we do so in prayer and offer it to the Lord as a service to our church.

Our group is extremely diverse in terms of roles and professions: teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, psychologists, mothers, grandmothers, women with personal backgrounds and experiences that have contributed to the growth of the community. As our

aim is the transmission of the Gospel through music, we count on the accompaniment of one of the sisters of the community who guides us in our rehearsals where Christ is our rock, in the same manner as Marie Eugénie used to do. Practice helps us to deepen our faith so that it is reflected in our work. This community experience helps us discover the true face of the Assumption in several aspects that we had not fully explored in our experience as students. In this way, the group tries to really be the pillars of the Assumption charism: prayer, community life and mission.

In 2020, in the midst of so much fear and despair caused by the global pandemic, the time for us to come together and pursue our mission was greatly reduced. This did not hinder our desire to continue making music. So, we found technological tools, social networks and other ways to continue to spread a message of hope and life through song. Such a change has meant an extra effort for all of us, but it is the strength of prayer and mutual support that has kept us going. Through this new experience, we experienced how we became God's instrument to carry his message in the moments when we needed it most. In this way, we have connected with people from different parts of the world who identify with our music, as well as experiencing, through song, that for the Assumption the world is a small place.

The initiative of renewing the message of Mother Marie Eugénie gives us the opportunity to carry the Assumption in our hearts. We share the heritage of a great and powerful love through our actions. The identity of the Assumption always awakens strong and persistent emotions that do not fade over time. We carry the charism of the Assumption like a seal that fills us only with joy even in the most difficult situations. By comforting and supporting each other, our Community of Voices becomes a daily learning opportunity and a means of making our gifts available to others.

Recommencing, discovering, revisiting, deepening, awakening and connecting are part of the foundation and essence that remind us that our passion and desire to communicate is a true calling. Finally, "... when one lives in the will of God, everything becomes service and love"; these are the words of Mother Marie Eugénie whom we welcome to continue our apostolate of music at the service of the community.

**ANA LORENA PETINELLI, MERCEDES DUEÑAS, YADIRA CHONG AND IVONNE GARNICA**

Province of Ecuador  
*Original Spanish*

# Echo of the Archives

“What do you do with your intelligence, your heart, your memory?”

## **The dream comes true**

“What do you do with your intelligence, your heart, your memory?” asked Marie Eugénie in her chapter instruction of November 10, 1872. She often named memory as one of God's gifts: memory of the work of God himself, even of his immense love; memory of his action through each of the sisters, via the Congregation, throughout the world. To nourish our memory, to colour it with the history of the Assumption through the centuries, the dream of a museum has taken shape in recent months. At the end of a path of reflection by the International Archives Team, the sisters who collaborate with the Archives in the house in Auteuil, in collaboration with the General Community and with the support of Manuel Esteves who works in Auteuil, the project has come to fruition: formulation of objectives, exploration of objects to be exhibited, research about the museums of other congregations, drawing up plans, budgets, a schedule... This project was presented by Sr. Véronique and approved by Sr. Rekha and her Council in July 2021. The work began on September 6, 2021; first the electricians and then painters, before the installation of custom-made furniture and various displays.

## **What will this museum be?**

We thought of it as a space where tradition and modernity meet, in the image of our spirit. Simple and beautiful. Starting with the conviction that there is always something new to discover about our history, we wanted it to be a place of information and interaction. The exhibits and displays will be supplemented by information that can be consulted on a digital tablet or computer. A “treasure cabinet” will offer visitors copies of original documents and photos of the history of our Provinces. A space will be reserved for family memories of the Gardiennes Adoratrices (Soeurs de Saint Aignan), the Augustinian Sisters of Notre Dame de Paris with their long history, the large Assumption Family. Finally, the room will be equipped with a screen and a video projector to screen films related to the history and charism of the Assumption.

## **The garden, a place of memory**

Beyond the museum, the house of Auteuil itself is a place full of history and memory.



*Autel de la Vierge de la chapelle avant sa rénovation*

The visit of what was called the “Little Convent” or “Convent of the Immaculate Conception” in the time of Mary Eugenie is one of the essential welcoming rituals when a new session begins. Visiting the cellars and the garden, we realized that many objects remained hidden. We also felt that it was important that its occasional visitors should have access, if they wish, to the history and the identity of this place, in a discreet way. Finally, we wanted to offer every pilgrim of the Assumption the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Mary Eugenie and the first sisters of Auteuil. A memory trail in the garden has therefore been designed, connecting real and tangible traces of history with an information terminal to explain them. Seven locations are planned: (i) the old monastery, (ii) the chapel of the wood (“chapelle du bois”), (iii) the small convent or convent of the Immaculate Conception, (iv) the villa Saint Michel and its rose garden, (v) the family of the Assumption, (vi) the chapels of the house throughout its history, and (vii) the current chapel.

These projects have brought us immense joy because they are the result of great teamwork and fruitful collaboration with the professionals who have helped us. In the study plan proposed in the Education Councils, Marie Eugénie talks about the geography and history taught to children, stressing that “they are made well aware of the remarkable memories attached to each of these places”. Places open a path for us. We grow to realise the importance of being rooted in history, of being in certain places able to read a little about our origins and of knowing how to recognize our heritage in order to express the charism of the Assumption and its identity in the world of today.

**SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT**

Archivist of the Congregation,  
Original French



Cloche à usage liturgique des Augustines du Précieux Sang d'Arras (17ème siècle)



Vestige de l'ancien monastère d'Auteuil

# solidarity

## *Father Fr Francis of Assisi Hategekimana, friend and protector of the Batwa*

**“Let us pray  
for each other.  
Have a good  
life.”**

Three weeks ago, we were saddened to learn of the death on 17 August of Fr Francis of Assisi, a priest from the diocese of Cyangugu, Rwanda. The BGSD had been in contact with him since 2015 and had financed some of his development aid projects for the Batwa. His last email, sent on 30 June, ended as follows, “Let us pray for each other. Have a good life.”

His was truly a “good life”, spent doing good to people in need. Fr Francis of Assisi was born in Rwanda in 1958. He was ordained a priest in 2001. His commitment to the poorest dates back to 2002.

**In an article sent to BGSD on 10 April 2021, he wrote,**

“It all started with the words of our Bishop at the closing of the General Assembly of the diocesan Caritas in February 2002, “Go and see why the Batwa children do not go to school like the others. Their behaviour is worrying, they are called thugs and thieves. Touched by this, I got involved to find out about this community and its way of life. There are many of them in the parish. But who are they? Before the genocide in 1994, we used to talk about ethnic groups in the country. These people belonged to the ‘Batwa’ ethnic group. They lived in very poor villages, near the forests; they were despised and marginalised. After 1994, the law abolished the ethnic groups. The New Constitution recognised these people, victims of social injustice, and designated them as a ‘Community of Historically Disadvantaged People’.

**Education of children, the real priority**

“In my talks with them, they have expressed themselves widely and asked me to help their children to go to school. In September 2002, the diocesan Caritas gave me a little help and I enrolled 165 girls and boys from the Mwezi Parish. In the same year, the American Catholic Relief Service helped me to extend the action in the whole Diocese of Cyangugu. From 2002 to 2012: 975 children went to school, of whom 5 went to University, 76 to Secondary Schools, the remainder to primary schools in the Diocese.”



## Advocacy at the political level

“When I started, nothing was done for them politically. Among my activities - renting fields, distributing seeds and utensils, obtaining identity cards, regularising marriages, training in human rights and cultural activities, etc. - there was also advocacy. It was necessary to draw the attention of the country's authorities to the situation of the Batwa. Little by little, action was taken: free health care, housing development, allocation of small plots of land, scholarships and places at universities and colleges.

## The search for financial support

Between 2011 and 2013, various donor organisations stopped their financial support. Deprived of scholarships, families can no longer send their children to school, especially since a new problem was added. Father writes,

“As an art form and source of income, the Batwa make pottery - making and selling clay jugs and vases. For the protection of the environment, to deal with the problem of erosion. It is forbidden for anyone to destroy the land and extract clay. This is good, but for them it accelerates their misery by depriving them of their only source of income.”

Father Francis of Assisi is looking for other donors, but is having trouble finding any. He also turned to the Sisters of the Assumption. A first project is sent to the BGSD, it will be financed by Assumption Solidarity in May 2016, and it will be followed by a second one in 2017, then by a third in 2019.

## New projects

### In his request for help, Father writes,

“As the number of children attending school and formerly financial assistance being significantly reduced, there is the risk of seeing all the children drop out of school, I think the strategy is to save some of them, by training them to take charge of their own schooling. In our regular talks, this is what they told me, “If we get financial help to start, we can:

1. Raise goats, sheep, pigs, rabbits, chickens;
2. Organise vegetable gardens, rent fields to grow beans and manioc;
3. sell vegetables, fruits, flour.

It is from this exchange that the present project emanated.

With the money he received, Father Francis of Assisi set up a small farm and used every means to help children and families move from being recipients of assistance to being actors in their own development, from immediate consumption to management that includes saving. Ten months later, in his report, Father makes a lucid and rigorous assessment of the project's implementation. He writes:

“From the results foreseen in our project, I foresee six positive effects:

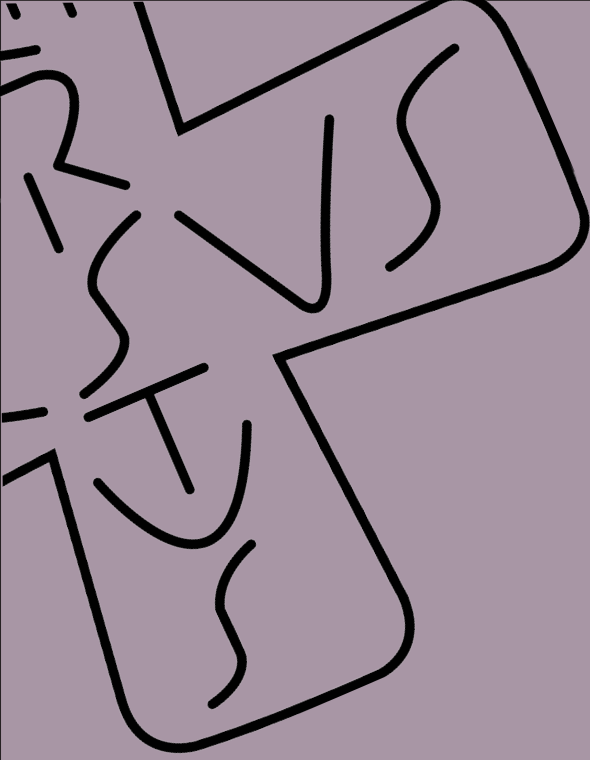
1. Training for work: children and parents have been trained in the breeding of large and small livestock and poultry: good treatment, reproduction, diseases and care of animals. The vet has become our friend and has committed to continue helping us.
2. To serve as role models for others. The distribution of these animals to the child beneficiaries has sparked their interest in the work. This is a lesson for other children in their environment.
3. To give encouragement and a spirit of unity: the child beneficiaries are happy, united.
4. To have an interest in the school: there are only two cases when selling animals to obtain school materials is permitted; otherwise this is forbidden. Except if it is for the sake of school!
5. To love their animals and to suffer from their loss. I see this suffering in them.
6. Denounce cheating and injustice.

Throughout this report, the Father's love for this marginalised community and his confidence in the Batwa's ability to integrate into modern society by pursuing the right means shines through.

To conclude, here is a short testimony sent by his parish priest, “Father Francis of Assisi was a priest who lived the virtues of his patron saint. He sincerely loved prayer and in particular the Mass; he had a special attention for the poor, the sick and the marginalised. In the last years of his life, he assisted disabled children. His last journey was to transfer two children to a Centre for disabled children.”

## SISTER CLAIRE MYRIAM

Responsible for BGSD  
*Original French*



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



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