

Dear Sisters and Dear Friends,

In these times of COVID-19 or post-COVID, depending on the country, we come to give you news from Auteuil. In her last circular, Sr. Rekha recounted the first months of the pandemic, with its share of worries and glimmers of hope in this situation so unprecedented.

Since Pentecost, our chapel has reopened its doors to the parishioners, "after 77 days," remarked the celebrant of the day! In a quantitative way, this figure is very real, but symbolically, he wanted to awaken our faith in this "figure of God", to contemplate his work and to recognize his signature in the history of humanity which is ours!

It is a bit like when Jesus tells Peter that he must forgive "not up to 7 times, but 77 times" (Mt 18:21-22), thus indicating to him the perfection of Gospel love which has no limits. This time has made our love creative to go beyond the limits of space and of the pre-established order, in order to invent life where we are and to live an even deeper communion.

Indeed, here at the Mother House, these new ways of being and doing have created other links with the neighbours. For example, in the evenings, when we showed our gratitude to the nursing staff with applause, simple bonds were forged between us and the neighbours, from window to window or from window to balcony. Relationships in the neighbourhood became warmer. On Easter Day, the Midday Service was held outside in the garden with Manuel's family. We were surrounded on all sides by neighbours who participated in our liturgy, either from their windows or just on the pavement behind the garden gate!

The sister who had prepared this prayer had done everything to give the Resurrection a colour of Joy, marked by our internationality: songs in several languages and spontaneity of movement, instruments ... Thanks to all those who knew how to maintain these bonds of good neighbourliness. As naturally as it is, we celebrated together the Resurrection of Christ, our own resurrection! We hope that these relations will find new developments in the coming days.

The Laudato Si week still remains in our memories with a liturgy that opened up to environmental realities. Yes, we were in contact with nature and its challenges, through praise, symbolic acts and intercession.

On the day of Pentecost, during the **morning prayer**, we meditated on the Gospel of the day, Saint John chapter 20. In the chapel, guided by Sr. Rekha, with a musical background, we tasted the Word of God, borrowing something from the Indian tradition. The desire arose to live from time to time this form of meditation to enrich our approach to the Word of God. A meditation of full presence to oneself, to God and to the reality that surrounds us. It is another way of reaching our interiority.

« *On the day of Pentecost, they were all together in the same place...* » Acts 2,1. As for the disciples, since Pentecost, nothing was as it was before. It is a Pentecost like no other. Nothing is or will be like before, we began to speak of a before confinement, an after... We were gathered together in an international community extended to the Christian community to celebrate Pentecost. We are witnesses to the love that unites us in our diversities ... our communities and our liturgical celebrations are a reflection of it.

In fact, our two communities were able, through Zoom, to meet several communities in different provinces (2 per continent). We experienced how communication can be an instrument of communion.

Thank you to all of you who made these exchanges possible through your availability and sharing.

On the Congregation's web page, the sisters shared news of the **Preparation Session for Perpetual Vows**. The theme chosen was "Returning to the sources... at the service of life". Given the circumstances, we organized the session in three parts:

The first stage, with the sisters present in France who had arrived for the session just before the total lockdown. This stage was done as a personal work. The sisters were accompanied by email, skype or WhatsApp. We were also able to have common meetings by skype.

The **second phase** began on May 13, 2020. We took advantage of the easing of the requirements of lockdown, to gather the 6 sisters present in France at Auteuil. Having little time difference, the sisters from Rwanda and a sister from the Ivory Coast joined us by zoom.

Unfortunately, circumstances did not allow our sisters from the Philippines, Vietnam, Madagascar and Cuba to come, nor to follow by Zoom. The time difference, the need for translation and the accessibility of the means of communication made this difficult.

With Sr. Véronique, we first of all revisited the sources of the congregation, from the origins to the writing of the constitutions. In the second part, we deepened the history of the Congregation through the Generalates, from Mother Marie Eugenie to the present day.

The other privileged subjects, dealt with the theme of consecration, a special way of deepening the Word of God and our Rule of Life in a precise context: the eve of perpetual vows!

The 8-day retreat, animated by Sr. Christine Gizard, a Sister Spiritual Guide from Lyon by zoom, followed this first week.

The deepening of the formula of vows was a strong and concrete moment because we had the joy of listening to the testimony of Sr. Cécile who had just celebrated her jubilee of 25 years of vows. The words of Sr. Cecile: fidelity, simplicity, total gift and renunciation had a depth that made the formula of vows come alive.

The **third stage** of the session lasted ten days, from 11 to 21 June. The group was enlarged by welcoming four other young sisters who are in France: Marie Cécile, Francesca, Ada Luz and Eliane. Given the closing of the borders and the impossibility of traveling, we wanted to give them the opportunity and the joy of building relationships within an intercultural community.

Our gratitude goes to all those who contributed to the smooth running of the session, without sparing their efforts: the sisters who intervened, the provincials who sent the sisters or who allowed them to follow on site or to benefit from a tailor-made formation, the Province of France who welcomed the sisters during the period of confinement and helped us to manage the unforeseen, the community of Auteuil who continues to spread the stakes of their tent so that each sister feels at home.

The centre will not open until next September, but already some staff members are back to prepare for the new school year.

Wisdom leads us to cancel all the trips planned for this year. As a general community, we are working on a new organization for ourselves and for the Provinces.

We plan to make the annual retreat this summer. We hope that Sr. Irene Cecile will soon be able to return to Paris! She is making all the necessary arrangements.

We keep in our prayer the many challenges on the health, social and economic levels. Let us pray for our political leaders, that the common good and international solidarity may prevail, for the lonely and isolated elderly, for those whose professional future is uncertain and for young people. ...

We want to live with you in the days to come, watching for signs of God's presence and of His *loving hand* that leads us.

It is on this note of hope that we embrace you,

Your sisters,

Rekha, Sandra, Isabelle, Marthe and Irene