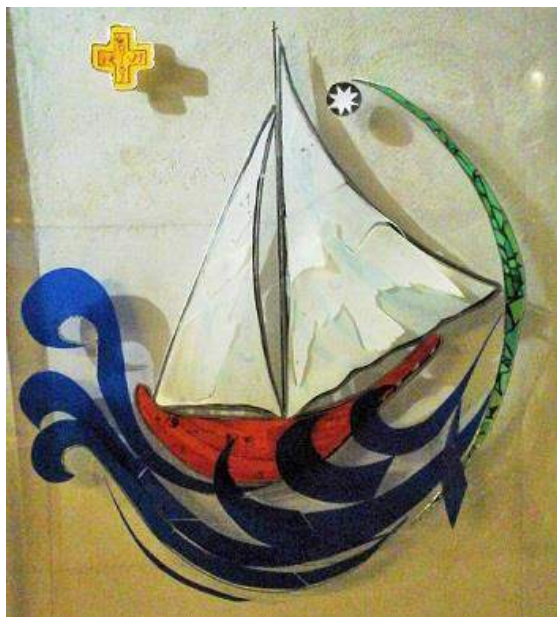


Summary of educative transformation experiences published on assumpta.fr 2016

English version



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

(Notes intimes 154/06)

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

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

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

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



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The school of Our Lady of the Apostles in Rwaza:

a model school¹



The school is situated in natural surroundings conducive to the blossoming of life and all its ecological dimensions; they form part of our daily life. Humanity seems to have a symbiotic relationship with nature and with everyday life; we find ourselves continually challenged to comply with the demands of development for an elementary survival and to suggest concrete actions in our environment to improve the things which are not helping the quality life with regard to the basic needs of the human race¹ (water, food, living conditions, energy, sun, air...)

How in this context, through education, do we form an ecological conscience?

When it is a question of damage to our environment on planet earth as well as the question of climate change, and to the loss of biodiversity, of resources and local life, the sense of responsibility differs, depending on whether one lives in an industrial country or in the south.

However, humanity is exposed to certain natural risks and the infrastructures are exposed to natural catastrophes. (climate change, erratic seasons, prolonged droughts, flooding, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions)

The school has always wanted, in a modest way, to struggle against deforestation, harmful for nature and for humanity, struggle to eliminate erosion by making radical terraces. (the school is situated at a height of 2000 m.) There is also the political will to protect the environment and to manage the forests responsibly.



¹ The 500 young people are in a boarding school situation which offers them all favourable conditions for learning. They are therefore in school day and night except for the holidays (9-12 months.) This big community does what it can to improve the environment.



The Biogas² project: a project for a healthier and better life

It is in this framework that a project was being thought about in 2004, and since 2006 this project is working in the school. Taking account of the assets already in place; a two hectare property, cattle breeding, a community of 600 people, of whom 500 are young people who follow courses with scientific options. (Maths-physics-chemistry; Maths-physics-geography; Physics-chemistry-biology)

The concrete actions are written down in the strategic plan of the school (exercise 2008-2013) and are based on the texts of the General Chapter of the Religious of the Assumption in 2012.

- **Intellectual formation and awakening of the psychological conscience.**

- Explore through film a truth which disturbs so as to increase knowledge of the relationships between people and nature and to realise the impact of human activity on the environment and on the planet.

- To increase the awareness of the direct impact of the actions which we have taken on the environment, deforestation and bush fires.

- Awakening our consciences with regard to the things we buy or consume.

- Release the psychological curb on prejudices surrounding industrial waste and make the community aware of the benefits for people and for clearing up the environment.



- **Strengthen the impact which the school has by:**

- The production of a biological fertilizer which has potential for agronomy.

- The production of ecological energy to counteract air and water pollution.

- The display of our innovations and the welcome to other schools when they have their class walks.

² Biogas rests on a universal reaction to the recycling of natural waste. Three families of bacteria live

In symbiosis in an anaerobic setting, that is to say that they are deprived of air and oxygen, giving off methane and carbonic gas from waste organic matter. The principle of biogas is to raise up these bacteria so that the emissions of combustible gas may be picked up.



- Community work (upkeep of the road which leads to us (1 km) laying out of the garden, flower pots, care of the buildings and surroundings.
- Our contribution to the well-being of the staff and students (meals, boarding) and our responsibility for the care of goods that are for their use.
- Our contribution to the well-being of our local people by buying and using local produce.
- Setting up a purification system and treatment of water thanks to the

emissions of ultra- violet rays

- Setting up an association of poor women by the offer of land, fertilizer from biogas so they can cultivate and their produce can be bought by the establishment so that their condition of life is improved.

- **Concrete actions and responsibilities for the vulnerable people around us.**

“Live simply so that others may simply live” (Ghandi)

- We have taken care of 15 vulnerable people: with the collaboration of the local council
- We have identified people who are isolated & without resources: every Movement of Catholic Action, and each of our 12 classes takes care of one poor person, that is to say that they visit them in their homes each week-end and supply their basic needs (food, clothing, toiletries) they do the housework and tidy up the surroundings. They contribute to the
- Mutual Health Society for a few very vulnerable families
- Make the students more aware of the respect & dignity due to each one in the community (the poor, the handicapped, the orphans) in collaboration with the student section of Caritas, which the students have joined & established: contributions from the parents are managed by a team.

Marthe Marie Nzabakurana
Rwanda – Tchad Province



February 2016

Notre Dame de Mongré (Villefranche sur Saône),

an environmentally responsible institution

The school at Mongré accommodates about 2,000 pupils, from nursery up to leavers, and is situated in Beaujolais, near Lyon, in wine country. Having been founded by the Jesuits, who later entrusted it to the Assumption Fathers, the school became part of the French Assumption network in 1996. Today it is supported by the RAs and is implementing the Assumption Apostolic and Educational Project (PAEA in French)

At every stage, pupils take part in school trips to protected areas, visit local businesses involved in sustainable business, take part in panel discussions, put on exhibitions, protect the biodiversity of their school grounds, etc. At the end of each project, the pupils write articles which are initially published on the 'Green Mongré' website, and then compiled in an annual journal.

A 'label' expressing the will to commit to consideration



All these efforts are part of an **outreach programme** launched in the Rhone-Alps region. From primary school right up to graduation, all 2,000 pupils have had their consciousness raised on environmental issues. The upper school (lycée) has been involved in the project for several years and was awarded **the 'Eco-responsible Institution' label in 2008**. In February 2014 the middle school (collège) was designated as an institution involved in the process of sustainable development (E3D). This eco-label is given to primary, middle and upper schools (both technical and professional) as well as apprentice training centres (CFAs) which are taking part in the international educational initiative towards sustainability.

The initiative specifically takes into account the relationship between the environment, society, the economy, and other elements specific to sustainable development; it is presented to the school board or governing body, to be written into the educational structure and involve one of the different regional partners chosen according to criteria adapted to the needs of the school or institution.

Schools and institutions which are part of the global sustainable development movement (E3D) involve the whole educational community. Obtaining the eco-label is seen as starting out on a path rather than as an achievement, because it shows willingness to commit to continuous improvement.

Encouraged by this label, for the last ten years the institution's administration has also invested in the management of buildings and resources in respect of protecting the environment (choice of heating, working closely with food producers on what is served at the school, etc.)



The dynamic of the project

The theme of **sustainable development** first appeared in the field of National Education in France in a 1977 circular. Since 2007, more widespread attention is being paid to the problems in general.

Sustainable development is written into almost every school curriculum and across many different disciplines, particularly those that involve topics such as water or energy, so that we can expect to see it in history, geography, language classes and civic education. Numerous educational resources are produced for every level.

Schools are also asked to bring these issues into specific events, such as green classes (an opportunity to look at biodiversity, or consider redistribution of resources), meetings with businesses in the context of vocational orientation, events with local partners. Several hundred national awareness campaigns have been launched, combatting climate change, encouraging fair trade, biodiversity, food, health, energy, waste sorting and recycling, etc.

Mongré aims to support its teachers in this process by suggesting they highlight and expand their teaching with meetings, conferences and outings in tandem with sustainable development professionals. Moreover, major cross-cutting projects which involve the entire institution, are thought through and organised by representatives of the wider community (eco-delegates, teachers, members of admin staff, management) brought together in a steering committee.

Pupils put together articles about all our eco-citizen activities, which encourages others to get involved.

One of the most recent activities was the planning and implementation of a 'Mobile Phone Free Day'. Posters promoting the day were created. Rhône Alpes Environmental Health (SERA) helped the eco-delegates to conduct a survey among their classmates. Videos were made, based on screenplays the pupils created. All of them benefitted from mini-conferences and some got to go to the Centre Documentaire to carry out research on the harmful effect of electromagnetic waves. Local radio and newspapers interviewed the pupils.

(illustration below is one of the posters created by pupils)



Strong points identified

- Election of two eco-delegates from each class (CM2/last year of primary, collège and lycée)
- Multi-faceted approach to sustained development from nursery school through to school leavers
- Communications through local media
- Close working relationship with the Religious of the Assumption network, of which NDdeM is a part
- Print run of 2,000 for Green Mongré
- Green Mongré website <http://vertmongre.wordpress.com> which comprises more than 200 articles and has recorded over 140,000 visits
- Creation of an organic vegetable garden and a natural oasis in Mongré park
- International exchange programme with the community of Notsé in Togo
- Awareness campaign against food wastage
- Introduction of food from organic and/or local agricultural sources to the canteen



- Evaluation of best practice by monitoring carbon transport ‘footprint’ with the support of solar energy company HESPUL
- Car-pooling awareness campaign in every class
- Reduction of energy consumption, and recycling paper

Living together in and out of our school

Hubert Reeves, scientist and director of research at CNRS (National Centre for Scientific

Research), wrote to us on the creation of our natural oasis, saying:

“You have committed to action for biodiversity. And action is what counts! Your actions will still be evident, rooted in your Natural Oasis, when all these words have faded away. Bravo!”

Because we believe that our activity can be maximised by pooling our efforts, we have partnered with several local sustainable development activists such as the Mairie, CAVIL (an association that brings together the surrounding municipalities), regional associations etc., but also, since 2012, Hubert Reeves’ national association.



Source: Cécile Lecocq Hubert, professeur documentaliste and teacher of philosophy.

(In the French education system, a professeur documentaliste is a teacher-librarian, who works closely with the centre of documentation and information (CDI



March 2016

A journey together to sources to recreate our Educational Assumption Charism for today

2nd meeting of sisters in schools– EUROPE



We had the pleasure of meeting in Como, Italy, this was the second meeting of sisters in schools from Europe. We were 18 sisters representing several countries and realities: Belgium, Spain, France, Italy and Lithuania; we were representatives from those places where the Assumption works in transformative education through schools, inspired by the charism of Marie Eugenie.

In addition to enriching exchanges the objective of this meeting was to work together to build a little tool based on our charism for use in our local missions.

We were welcomed by a beautiful environment: Como is a school located within the walls of a basilica and ancient abbey, "St. Carpofo" which is full of the history of the city and also full of Congregational memories.

Straight away the welcome of the community there made us feel in a family atmosphere. The decoration of the rooms and corridors in the building bathed us in the educational work being done concerning the ecological encyclical Laudato Si, "Earth, a love letter from God to us" was chosen as a "slogan" for this school year. Most of the drawings and paintings were made from recycled materials.

After these discoveries, we started our discussions by sharing the challenges and the hopes alive within us, as well as "what makes us feel we are *wise persons* within each of our contexts. Here are some notes:

- Challenges: continue to work together, to walk together "sharing our mission" lay and sisters together. Bring teachers, sisters, students all together into the richness of our charism. Make a joint project respecting our differences. Aim to transform violence among students into something positive. Deepen roots, cultivate fruits. Build bridges.



- Hopes: unity in diversity. Find that small changes gradually have an important impact on the whole. Based on a "solid stone house" such as the house of Saint Carpofo, continue to build with our small stones.

- What words of 'wisdom' are rooted in the Gospel and charism? Have wide horizons, continue to live openness to others. Keep contact with *the source* in everything we do. Continue this effort to grow together.

After this Veronique shared with us the process underway in Assumption schools in France; this aims to arrive at what they call "foundational values" which is a way of reinforcing the fact that the Assumption charism is carried by both lay people and sisters

In order to do this she traced the history of our "Educational & Apostolic Project in the Assumption" (PAEA) and how it has become a unifying inspiration for institutions and projects.

All together the "permanent members" of Assumption-France felt that this project with its clearly stated values was not enough. A new step of the way was therefore opened up: it was necessary to enquire about the explicit references to the source, the charism of Marie Eugenie. It was then that, with a team of experts, the Permanent Group (sisters / lay) did a re-reading. They identified *the incarnation as the fundamental value of the human and spiritual experience of Marie Eugenie that has marked the educational project of the Assumption ... This dynamic of incarnation changes the paradigms of our understanding of humanity and the world ... it inspires the fundamental values of our action..*³.

Living this experience together has actually allowed us to develop the idea of shared responsibility. We then asked ourselves how this "fundamental value" is able to transform the way we act, each individual was asked for personal work where they could recognize this, enriched by the experience of a collective intelligence. Each one is called to live constantly open to whatever comes because with the Incarnation, said Veronique, "everyone will have a word to give us that can question us and move us forward"



After sharing this wealth of experience, we had personal reflection time to "return to the source", we did this in dialogue with Marie Eugenie, through one of three preselected "Chapter Instructions". We were asked to find the core values of Assumption education through these texts. Then, in three groups and then in assembly, we shared them:

"The spirit of the Assumption. Faith and Love of the truth" (3 May 1878)

Faith is a gift of God in me which invites me to cultivate the interior life. His Word allows me to truly know myself, to learn to "taste and feel things inwardly, and to unify myself." "Everything is connected": intelligence, affections, and relationships. It teaches us to make the connections between all the dimensions of our life. In the European context, it is an invitation to dare to say "I believe in God" despite all the density of our life, a call to focus on the meaning beyond form and ritual. In the spiritual life and in the educational process we are not changed by others, we are helped to find within ourselves the resources for our own transformation (empowerment).

"Love of neighbour and the spirit of sacrifice" (21 April 1878)

The Assumption is a kind of resurrection, invites us to "free ourselves from what is earthly, not to stop there with currents that go against charity, even if it breaks us ... overcome obstacles ...": The other name of sacrifice is the gift of oneself, forgetting oneself ... Today it means: going beyond the importance of personal well-being and individualism; we allow others to be what they are themselves...



"The spirit of the Assumption, the natural virtues" (26 May 1878)

The natural virtues are values that we use in normal life. This means working on ourselves before planting them in others through education. Some important virtues: rectitude, uprightness, goodness, simplicity ... Living these natural virtues gives glory to God. They are the foundation of the supernatural virtues.

³ From "La valeur fondamentale" Assomption-France 2013 document

After this rich sharing, we continued working in groups trying to build educational tools. We were searching for keywords, their theological sources Marie Eugenie, and how this translates, into our realities today, with some examples. These tools were shared in the assembly, and we tasted the creativity and variety of experiences that we are living in our different contexts!

We also shared what is done in our establishments for March 10, celebration for Sainte Marie Eugenie. With joy we found that this year 2016 will be marked in many places by the bicentenary of Marie Eugenie and Thérèse Emmanuel, already close!

At the end of these days together we have hearts full of gratitude: Marie Eugenie continues to speak to us in our contexts and renew her invitation to "love our times."

We lived in a very warm familial atmosphere marked by simplicity and openness to one another; we leave enriched by her vision believing that there are always other ways of understanding the charism thanks to the different contexts in which we are rooted. There are also new ideas to live and transmit. Realities and contexts become closer and more familiar. There is a transformation in the way we see one another, leading to a new way of seeing and acting every day, which strengthens our sense of body and the bridges between us.



"... The last word of love or truth is never told, we are fed every day without ever being satisfied; We always want more ..."

Sister Ana Senties r.a.

Secretary of Education

April 2016

Assumption Transformative Education in Spain

– a deep, profound, human-spiritual experience ...

*"Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinangalingan
ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan." Jose P. Rizal
("He who does not know how to look back at where he came from
will never get to his destination.")*

I decided to begin with a quotation from our National Hero, Jose P. Rizal, which captures my sentiments as I try to reread my experience of Assumption Transformative Education during our visit to the province of Spain from January 8 to February 15, 2016!

Many know that Assumption in the Philippines was borne out of Assumption, Spain. For this reason this visit was particularly poignant for me. In my heart of hearts I carried a deep sense of gratitude for the gift that the Assumption is for me and for my people. And I take this opportunity to acknowledge with profound gratitude the courage of the first sisters who, in 1892, braved the long and perilous voyage by sea to undertake this mission in the "far--east" (certainly far from Europe), to the rather unknown archipelago of the Philippines – and who instilled in their first students – a sense of responsibility and active love for God and for country! I felt it is important for me to contextualize my sharing with this background and to express my joy over discovering the roots, so to speak, of Assumption in the Philippines.

Having visited only nine (9) of the twenty-two (22) communities, I cannot claim to be exhaustive. My account therefore is one of a deep personal experience of learning and growing in my knowledge of and appreciation for Assumption transformative education – which, I believe, is our humble, dynamic response to the needs of our world today.

I shall divide my experience into three – inspired by a framework proposed by one of the leading authors of "transformative learning" – Patricia Cranton: the landscape (what I found that has expanded my perspective); the encounter (the meaningful exchanges, the relationships that were forged); a renewed perspective (convictions that were deepened, strengthened or reoriented, inspired by the experience)!

The Landscape

It was a joy to enter the "door" of the Province by the place where Assumption first set foot in Spain – MALAGA! The welcome, the climate, the scenery was delightfully warm and charming! It certainly felt like SPRING in January! And this will mark the entire experience of six (6) weeks even in the cold of Leon.

The sisters provide both the symbolic and real roots in the Province whether it be in the formal school setting of La Asuncion in Pedregalejo, Malaga; in Leon; in Cuestablanca; in Miracruz, San Sebastian; in Santa Isabel; in





groups.

Gijón – or in the social apostolates in Hortaleza as well as in Contruences – or in El Olivar, Collado and Cuestablanca where the “elders” enjoy the living memory of lives given to God and His mission.

The province is steadfast in its intention to provide a wholistic, integral, transformative education of quality and standard with a very committed group of lay partners who assume the mission as their own.

There is a sense of freedom, joy, spontaneity and celebration that support and facilitate formation, growth and learning among all sectors and

“*Misión Compartida*” (shared mission) is in the DNA of the Province – working with others, working together – is the way of being and doing... It is the air that the Province breathes animated by a structure that ensures that it continues to become better and better... at the service of God, the Church and the Kingdom!

“*Movimiento Asunción*” (Assumption Movement – not a very accurate translation) is what provides for an appropriate accompaniment at every age for all those with whom the Assumption is in relationship.

The field was rich and wide --- Assumption Transformative Education is rooted on fertile ground notwithstanding the challenges that the country faces in the socio-political arena.

“*Titularidad*” (ownership of mission), more than the team that accomplishes its task of accompanying the Academic Institutions of the Province with excellence – it is the sense of body-ownership in the Province that made a very strong impact on me. It certainly must have been years of laborious, purposeful work, but the fruits are consoling. The Province speaks an inclusive language that is understood by all; there is a growing sense of active participation and responsibility among all sectors, in the building of the life of the Province; common formation sessions, shared leadership and animation as well as recreation together foster a sense of COMMUNITY at the service of mission.



The Encounter

It was a joy to meet such a broad and varied array of persons – each one with a burning desire to engage in genuine conversation and make meaning – each one with a deep love for the Assumption and its mission!



Whether it be with the friends and colleagues of the sisters in their various places of mission; the various commissions/working teams of the province; or the Animating Teams (Equipos de Dirección) of schools, the process of Assumption Transformative Education is at work.

This “inside-out” movement that involves and engages all those involved in the process – educators, learners, families, wider community, etc... – is palpable and evident. Exchanges were deep and profound – touching essential elements of faith

and life... *“why we do what we do... what is the reason for all that is happening around us... what has changed in our environment and in the people we serve, live and work with... how can we do what we do well, better... what will help us overcome difficulties...”*

My world of colleagues and partners has expanded! I celebrate the blessing of knowing and touching hundreds of fellow-educators among our sisters and friends in the Province. I rejoice and give thanks for all those with whom I share the quest for relevant and meaningful responses to the realities of today.



A Renewed Perspective

Assumption Transformative Education in Spain, as it should be everywhere, begins with the experience of reality that is interiorized - made to touch the DIVINE – and reflected upon – that allows one’s encounter with reality and with all the opportunities that are available – to modify, improve and make more authentic, one’s perspectives and judgements and strengthen and deepen one’s convictions – so that one may choose words and actions that are life-giving and that contribute to building communion for a better world.

The process is on-going, active and dynamic and thus is never ever finished. At the same time, it is important to realize that each moment is a part of a much wider movement and therefore never absolute, even as it is truly real.

The Visit of the nine (9) communities gave me a glimpse of the reality that the Province of Spain is today! A Province deeply ROOTED in the charism – that is blessed with sisters who have given themselves to mission – the work for the Kingdom – having lived numerous ruptures/paschs in their lives, and still willing to discover the new forms of mission that is before them now and in the coming years. It is also a Province where the love and service for the local and wider Church is generously given and appreciated.

The Province is also very much aware of its own internal and external realities and positions itself strategically, with REALISM according to its possibilities in the wider ambit of Catholic Education (FERE – Federación Española de Religiosos de la Enseñanza) and Religious Life (CONFER - Conferencia Española de Religiosos) in the country.

At the same time, it is a Province that is not afraid to reinvent and be RELEVANT – to learn from, be completed and enriched by others and to risk, going further --- transcending boundaries that limit its horizons --- trying “untried and untested waters” without the fear of making mistakes – because a faithful and wiser hand leads its way. It did this in 1892 --- and it is still doing this today!



My heart wells up with immense and profound thanksgiving for the gift of Assumption Transformative Education that is in the Province of Spain today ... and for the indelible experience that is deep, profound, human-spiritual ... that has strengthened the conviction in me that our mission is not an end but a vital means --- to extend the Kingdom...

“You will know life and be acknowledged by it according to your degree of transparency— your capacity, that is, to vanish as an end and to remain purely as a means.” – Dags Hammarskjold

Sister MarJo Matias

General Council

May 2016

..To open oneself to the reality ... to go over and beyond textbook knowledge...

An Educational Activity of the Social Studies Department of Assumption - Minoo



Osaka’s Kamagasaki district rarely makes the news. And as Japan’s largest slum — the name does not officially exist anymore.

Approximately 25,000 people are there. Geographically this area is near the urban center, however far from the modern image of Osaka which is the second largest city of Japan. Now the country’s tallest terminal building looks down on this district and its residents. Kamagasaki is a nameless place with people in the society.

Since Japan’s post-war rapid economic growth, and particularly in the 1960’s, Kamagasaki has been a destination for the poor, in the hope of work as a day laborer. And Airin Labour and Welfare Center is a key location and gathering point. Always some older men sit and wait with all their goods; each and every one of them patiently hoping that the day will be a good one, and that they will get some work.

But at the same time, it is a place filled with humanity amidst extreme poverty.

Yet in its terrible poverty, Kamagasaki has a distinct sense of community, along with an openness rarely found in the big city. People smile and talk with each other. They share their food just bought by the earning of a day's work. People always look out for one another.

The students have their study tour in this district once a year. The object of this activity is to see the reality of the society and understand human rights. The staff of the social studies department has made the plan and started this project since 26 years ago. The girls learn about this day laborers town and join the activities to support them as they volunteer, to go for the midnight patrol or the service of giving free meal.



We give this

experience to the girls as the opportunity to understand human dignity. From their textbooks, the students learn that "human rights is the universal right which all people have" and "to respect human rights" means "to respect others as human beings". However, here in KAMAGASAKI, there is a big contradiction: homeless people who cannot get a job because they are aging or injured by an accident... Sickness and unemployment cause economic depression. People live by the free meal they get once a day and the aluminum cans or

cardboard boxes that they can gather for recycling (but the income for this is not enough to get a meal for the day).

When the girls see this reality of our society, they are confronted with the big question that challenges and even contradicts what they learned from their textbooks. At the same time the girls recognize in themselves that they also have their prejudices about homeless people and the place of KAMAGASAKI. They notice that people here are human like themselves but that their human rights are not respected.

This year, they joined the service of giving free meals as part of the volunteer group. There were more than 400 people who were waiting for this service while at the background one can see the modern beautiful shopping building.

After this experience one of the social workers gave them a conference in the Assumption Sisters' house. This opened their eyes to the reality and the prejudices that people in general have (including themselves) and helped them understand better what is at the heart of this social problem, the impoverishment. He shared about the old people who cannot walk to the place of the free meal; the man who died while waiting for the free meal; especially during the winter, the reality of the death was always very near to them.



Then he guided the students to the immersion experience. They saw and felt the severe reality of the old, day laborers' life. After this experience, they shared with each other their feelings and recognized the prejudices that they had before.

I would like to mention the reason why we continue with this educational activity. Now the Japanese government is carrying out the project to develop artificial intelligence (AI) to be able to reach the standard level for the entrance examination of the national university (it means very high intelligence level). However, one scholar said, "AI cannot go over or beyond the humane, because the humane has the ability to imagine the invisible that the letters do not express. I think that we, humans, have the capacity to imagine and the insight



to go into the words. The students have learned so much more than the words --- "this district of the day laborers, KAMAGASAKI", "the homeless". We hope that the girls continue to develop this capacity to read over and beyond the words and see the presence of the humane who live together in the society.

Hiroyuki OKAMOTO

Social Studies Department Teacher of Assumption Minoo

Spiritual experience and educational mission

The more they grow in the experience of God, the greater their desire to work for the extension of his Kingdom (ref. Rule of life 63)

In the Assumption, our own spiritual experience energizes our commitment to our educational project, with its objective of transformation. We see a world of the future transformed in accordance with God's plan for humanity⁴.

Sadia Diana and Mercedes⁵; Ricardo⁶ and Alicia⁷ from the **Central America - Cuba Province**, share their experience with us.

1. How would you describe your spiritual experience?

Diana: Prayer is for me, -par excellence- the place of strength, faith and hope in order to "go towards", that is, I find there the food to be and to be able to do. Without prayer I feel empty as though something were missing inside me.

In the school, where I have been sent, my experience of God is enriched through the Morning Prayer and the Eucharist with the children, also through the various spaces of formation, retreats and issues that we are able to deepen. Another thing is the mission in Holy Week: we get in small groups (sisters, students and teachers volunteers). This is an experience that fills us with life.



Sadia Mercedes: the root of my spiritual experience comes from my mother, an Assumption educator, and the legacy she has left us, her children, as we were educated according to Assumption principles. When my daughter was being born, my



mother -who was beside me- invited me to trust in God, the best medicine. I did not know we were in danger but the doctors had told her. Thinking of Mother Marie Eugenie my mother did not hesitate to ask the Lord very simply for the health of both of us: "*Mother Marie Eugenie, my daughter is educator, part of your work, if you grant life, also grant life to her daughter, to be a comfort to her, and to fulfil the mission God entrusted to her in this life.*" I'm sure God heard the prayers to Mother Marie Eugenie.

Ricardo: Through the school Facebook page, I was given the opportunity to know God & his son Jesus. This offered a daily message about the gospel. It tried to sum up in a few words what the word of God tells us for today, helping us understand the signs of the times and translate them into everyday life: how to find Jesus in the poor, the immigrant, the persecuted and all that threatens us remaining unbeatable & trusting in God's protection. This has led me to

⁴ Reference Text, introduction

⁵ Diana Chavarria (Religious of the Assumption) and Sadia Mercedes Trujillo Leon (teacher) works in the "Mother Maria Eugenia " School in León, Nicaragua

⁶ Ricardo Cuellar Portillo working at Assumption College , San Salvador , El Salvador

⁷ Alicia Private (Religious of the Assumption) works in the "Centro Maya Asuncion " in Petén , Guatemala

investigate what people familiar with the Word, -theological or humanistic- bring to those who are on this side and who wish to cross to the other side⁸, strongly binding themselves to the helm of the boat in which Jesus leads humanity.

Alicia: Immersed in this reality, God calls me to *take off my sandals* and admit that I am treading on *sacred ground*⁹: the *sacred land* that is heritage of work done here by the sisters for 30 years; the *sacred land* of the Q'eqchi' culture, which is a source of great wisdom concerning living in harmonious relationship with the cosmos; the *sacred land* of the daily struggle of these young people, women, peasants, teachers, pastoral workers, to live their faith in depth and fulfil their dreams of personal fulfilment and transformation of reality through the gospel.

The Word that God has given me resounds in me more and more inviting me to live 'I AM WHO I WILL BE'. I hear the promise that He continues to give to this people, for each family, each young person He is the one who remains and gives meaning to every experience, however hard it is, He continues to act to UNLOCK and give life to the fullest. I hear His word as an invitation to me reflect on His PRESENCE, in a movement of mercy and consolation.



2. How is your experience rooted in history and in the specific context which you live?

Diana: My experience of God certainly comes from my family. In my current mission it is revitalized when I help students and staff to become aware of the reality of our peoples, at all levels: their struggles, sorrows and joys. This makes me see and feel Jesus in his Paschal Mystery. All this has strengthened my faith and allows me to share this Paschal way day by day with others. Each gathering speaks to me and leads me to God.



Sadia Mercedes: The Lord gave us (my husband and me) the grace of the sacrament of marriage, and gave us the precious gift of this daughter of whom I spoke, we call her Avril Eugenia, (my husband chose the first name and I chose the second one because of the miracle of Marie Eugenie. After this, my husband became ill with cervical amyotrophic sclerosis which lasted 3 years. The Lord allowed me to care for him with the eyes of mercy, understanding this was a gift to our marriage, remembering the promises we had made to each other. In its final stage he received spiritual help and the sacrament of communion. I felt the closeness of Christ to him. Throughout this process the Sisters were present, the Assumption staff and the Educational Community giving me words of support. Thanks to them and my

family I never felt alone. I felt all this as the manifestation of God's Mercy.

Ricardo: I have found that each of the evangelists wrote his Gospel from a concrete reality that was enlightened by God and His Son Jesus. It was like that in their time! It is like that now! I realise that to read and explain the Gospels is very educational and forms us for life. It helps us understand what God has always been and that He will always be with us because we are his children.

⁸ We see an Assumption that moves out toward an encounter, that takes risks, and that commits itself to explore new forms of presence, leadership and organization, at the service of life. An Assumption that, in the Church and the world, lives and offers the gift of its charism with missionary joy.

An Assumption that manifests the love of God for humanity and all of Creation. An Assumption that witnesses to universal sisterhood and brotherhood through a life of contemplation and community in which "inter" opens pathways of solidarity, exchange, and shared gifts. "Let us cross over to the other side." Mk 4,35b

⁹ Bible, Ex 3

Alicia: This year I have been sent to the community of San Luis, Petén in the north of the country, a place historically marginalized. Most of its population are migrants, who have come looking for a piece of land or fleeing the civil war that ravaged the country for 36 years. Currently, is being affected by poverty because the companies are there to exploit the natural resources of the department, also because of drug trafficking and the lack of opportunities for education, access to health care and decent employment.

I thank God because he has come to meet me today through being deeply touched by the life of this people and the experience of feeling part of this community, the Assumption family going to the *other side* trusting in Christ's faithfulness.



3. How does your spiritual experience nourish your life today?

Diana: Today, I can say that this experience has continued strengthen thanks to the community which is a space offered for personal encounter with God, including prayer, both personal and communal, the Eucharist and adoration. It also helps me prepare in community to live the experiences of Holy Week. My experience grows when I am able to share topics of Christian formation with students, or in meetings of pastoral team and "Children's Missionary Assumption". It is a fact that it helps to deepen our charism and spirituality bringing great richness, where God continues to reveal himself to me.

Sadia Mercedes: in the context of my educational work, the experience of God gets stronger every day, whether in the encounter with the Word of God when praying with my students, or in the Eucharist or the retreats for the school staff at the beginning of each year and before the Holy Week, also in the deepening of Assumption Charism. I have been able to feel a sense of solidarity with my co-workers and the experience of mercy by visiting some of them who have been ill. All this has enabled me to feed myself spiritually.

Ricardo: through Facebook page I can bring a little hope and counselling with the weekly message. I am collaborating with one of the institution objectives which is to build a social network for education and provide a solid religious formation.

Alicia: through daily experiences, such as we lived a few days ago in the celebration at the Maya Centre Assumption: we used a prayer called Mayejak, inspired by the Q'eqchi Mayan spirituality ' which is made at important moments in the life of the community



Three elements touched me deeply:

- **The offering to God:** from whom we receive everything. First, we are called to give all to him in the service of the community. A prayer that I say constantly is ' Lord, may my life be an offering.'
- **Becoming Community and purity of heart:** this prayer involves a whole inner preparation over several days. It is not taken lightly. Whole person enters into communion with God and with the others; so it is important to take care attitudes, care about the way we see and treat each other.
- **In harmony with all creation, with our ancestors, with the world:** in this prayer we ask permission from the land to use its resources, to trample the earth and work the land. We got ourselves in communion with our grandparents, with the universal Church, and in my case, with the whole

Congregation, with the Assumption in the world.

Participation in this prayer has been for me a profound grace and a commitment.

Building bridges, shorten distances, weave links...

"Missions " as an experience of transformation

A few months ago, I returned to the place that I had always known as 'home' since I was 10 years old: the **Assumption High School of Queretaro (Mexico)**, where I grew up and where I discovered my vocation. It is here that God now calls me, this time to share in the exciting mission of education or, to put it more fittingly, to "build bridges between you and me." Is this not what Pope Francis invites us to do when he speaks about 'cultivating the culture of encounter'? 'Building bridges' is the image that comes to me when I think of education, the one that inspires me best when I try to capture the experience of God that I am living here...



Mexico is a country of contrasts and deep contradictions. It is a people that has "suffered" much though remaining rich with a great hope, as Pope Francis so accurately remarked during his visit here in February. For example, we currently have more young people under 26 years than at any period in our history. They comprise about 30 million of the population. Among them, more than 20% who are between 15 and 29 years old are jobless and are not integrated into the school system either.

Given this reality it is essential that those who have the opportunity to go to school, become aware of their social responsibility. It is important that they become aware of the great need to re-weave the shredded social tissue of our country torn by the outbreak of so much violence in these recent years.

This need, 'to build bridges and to reweave torn social relationships', is one of the great tasks facing the Assumption in Mexico today. What Marie Eugenie has to say before this situation is very clear when she says that the Congregation must help students "...get out of their selfishness...(and for this to happen) it is necessary to put them in touch with the misery (of the poor) that they just know by name. Charity serves to balance the knowledge of Science. And they must learn the good that comes from bringing the rich to be in relationship with the poor"



I think Marie Eugénie would be very pleased to her vision of education being lived out today the Assumption of Querétaro. This school year, about 100 students from the high school and college have expressed their desire to be "missionaries". We, teachers and sisters, join some of them in visiting places where we would share with the people some weeks of Missions, specifically in the villages of Saucillo and San Ildefonso.

The experience of seeing, touching and becoming part of a reality so different from their own is slowly becoming the best 'Situating Learning' that transforms them deeply in the way they perceive the other, as they go out of themselves, to "build bridges", to span distances by creating bonds. Young people develop the ability to sharpen their vision, to ask questions and especially to discover the different 'other': someone who has a name, a history, dreams, someone close, one who has feelings, and with whom one can become an extended family. Together they can seek the common good of the one country they share with that communion so badly needed today.

In fact my experience of God today is summarized in welcoming the gift of witnessing opportunities that often unexpectedly spring up and the transformations that like little seeds in the ground are cultivated by "the culture of encounter". This gift and shared task we live with many lay people who generously offer their gifts to this shared mission.



Sister Carmen López r.a.
Querétaro Community, México

July 2016 – 1

Spiritual experience and educational mission

Transformative Education Experiences Always in the Process of Progress...

My experiences in the field of education have fascinated me for more than the 33 years I have been a Religious of the Assumption. I have been teaching and managing Pre-Primary and Primary schools in **Tanzania**.

Urged on by my Faith and love of God I am full of passion to educate the intelligence by drawing the best from what is "unspoiled" in the children, so that they grow and become good persons and will be able to effect positive changes in the future society of which they will be part.

Through educating children in schools I have witnessed the growth and development in each child in every way. In them I have seen the development of the language of the head (thinking), the language of the heart (feeling), the language of the hands (doing) as mentioned by Pope Francis (Question and answer); he is concerned about education these days being too technical and concentrating only on the head¹⁰.



¹⁰ "There are three languages: the language of the head, the language of the heart, and the language of the hands; education must go forward by these three ways; instructing in how to think, helping students to feel well; accompanying students as they do [what



In actual fact I have also discovered that educating is a life giving work that brings about a Godly character in us. For me, in giving without counting the cost, I have received, because at times the children are awesome and innocent. But I must also say that I have experienced that the patient work of education is difficult work that it takes time to see the rewards.

However when I look back I am strengthened and even more motivated by the very positive impact I see in these children having contributed to their moulding, some have become doctors, engineers, teachers, accountants, and prominent reliable leaders in our society today. Some have come back to work with the Assumption Sisters and they say they are persons they are because of what they received from us and that is straightforwardness, responsibility, confidence, commitment and courage.

I have really experienced the joy of *“giving myself to Jesus Christ and not lending myself to Him”* St. Marie Eugenie I am grateful to God to have had the opportunity as a Religious of the Assumption to experience the fullness of life.



Sr. Adria Bibiana Kimario
Iguguno Community, Tanzania
Mwandu Primary School (government) and St. Marie Eugenie Primary

they have learned or are learning to do].” He added, “The three languages must be in harmony: that the child, the student think [about] what he feels and does, feel that which he thinks and makes, and do that which he thinks and feels.”

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/21/pope_francis_educate_openness_to_transcendence_mercy/1188569

Spiritual experience and educational mission

Fostering the love of God in a multicultural and multi-religious institution:

Two testimonies by teachers from the Assumption Saint Marc - Saint Aignan school in Orleans

In our school we have fourteen classes in our primary school, and fifteen in the College.

A particular feature of our institution is the diversity of backgrounds of our students – diversity in culture, and in religion, with a fair proportion of Moslem students and many who present with learning difficulties. In addition, we have a class of ULIS (Unités Localisées pour l’Inclusion Scolaire) in the primary school, and another in the College, specifically for handicapped students.



Elisabeth RUGRAFF & Angele Kubwayo r.a., within this context, how do you hope to reveal God through your mission as a teacher and as a sister?

Elisabeth: ‘I teach in the primary school of the Assumption in Orléans. The most immediate way I can bring the presence of God into my work is through my relationship with my students.

My faith gives me the conviction that each person - each one of my students - is created in the image of God. This belief leads me to entrust my thoughts & actions to the Lord, so that through me

He might be revealed. Of course it is not easy: often I can feel overwhelmed by the task, but I do feel that when I spend time with Him in prayer, God will sustain me in all I do.

Equally, my work allows me to give thanks for the life of each of these students, who show progress despite the serious difficulties faced by some.

Often such children are amazingly trusting towards the one who cares for them.

I myself am learning how to trust this force which I see in them regardless.

I learn to sow in trust, when God is there to take care of the result. For me, this “letting-go” is a real test, an effort.

Moreover, many children here, who have little chance to venture out into the wider world, have retained a sense of wonder which is a joy to behold when they are taken on various class excursions.

Another place in which I sense the presence of God is in the life I share with my colleagues. We have a real feeling of community. It is true our paths in faith can be very different. Some would call themselves non-believers. But we find it in our shared concern for the growth of our students, and our sharing also the difficulties we encounter; in the overall spirit of our Catholic school, with the inspiration and presence of the sisters a true witness for us all.

Occasionally it allows us to broach subjects touching on essentials of life. With my faith, I see how we are brought together by God to have a community which supports our teaching mission.



Finally, we are fortunate to have a chapel in our building with the Blessed Sacrament present, and a mass celebrated each fortnight. Every Thursday afternoon, a time of adoration is provided and I am fortunate to be able to adore Jesus in the company of some of my students of catechism.'



Angele: 'I am a religious sister of the Assumption, originally from Rwanda.

For the past three years I living in the Orleans RA community & I have been doing pastoral work at this school.

It is not easy to put simply what I bring to the young people and staff at the school from my life as a sister of the Assumption. But after prayer and reflexion I see it as a whole.

I've been taking a catechism class with children who just made their first Communion. I asked them to tell us how they felt after receiving the Body of Christ for the very first time.

One of them said: "Oh! It's the most beautiful day of my life"

Another told me: "Oh! I prayed for my grandmother who died last year, and the Lord heard my prayer!

Another told us: "I felt very good in my heart".

Another: "I loved receiving Jesus... It was wonderful! We prayed again in the evening with my brother & my mum, and I was the one who led "the Our father prayer..."

After this spontaneous sharing, which took place in an unusually quiet moment, I had a sense of deep joy because the children had really lived this moment in a strong awareness of Jesus in the sacrament of the Body of Christ.

From this I realised that they had indeed had a spiritual experience! Then it was my turn to be asked:

"Madame, what do you do when you receive the Body of Christ?"

"When I go to communion (I told them) He becomes "life, presence, light and joy...Jesus comes to me to transform me into Him, so I might bear His face and show His love".

"And does Jesus take all the room in your life? What is the face of Jesus like?" they asked me.

"Yes, I try to allow room for Him to live and to grow, in faith and trust..."

I receive Jesus firstly in his Word, when I read on my own, or at Mass, or when we read together in the religion class, this Word gives me life: nourishes and heals me, letting me know and love God better. It also gives me the strength and the joy I need to continue to love you all, and let you love Jesus Christ...

Even if it is sometimes difficult! –when, for instance, we get angry, when you tap your feet, or refuse to listen while another person is speaking, or when you forget to show respect for one another ...when you fight, when you don't pray!"

With these children, every meeting is an opportunity for joy. I learn much from them- from their spontaneity, from their simplicity, their receptivity, even if sometimes I need a great deal of faith, patience, and love.

I thank God because always it is He who makes grow what has been sown.'



Assumption education: A mission of faith and hope

A Religious of the Assumption and a teacher share their spiritual experience of

“Assumption-Cuestablanca” in Madrid



Four years ago I received the mission to come to Cuestablanca to live in the community and to work at the college. In sharing my experience, I will use the image of a road. To begin with I can share how saying ‘yes’ to the Lord and following him as Religious of the Assumption brought education into my life. Every day, each time I walk out of the door of my community and walk to the college, I pass the chapel. On returning, the path is in reverse; similarly, day after day the three pillars of our life, community, mission and prayer come together.

I teach religion in first year of secondary school and in the first year of sixth-form, and I help in the guidance department. I see all the life which springs up in the college: joy, sorrow, pain, effort, things which are beyond us, amusing situations and situations which require discipline for a change to take place. This Life needs to be gratefully presented before the Lord, the Lord of all life and the Lord of history.

Knowing that a seed is being sown which will be brought to light in the future gives me energy me and fills me with hope. Trying to bring the Word incarnate, the Son, and all the life that He gives, is a challenge in class. Often, when I prepare, I say to myself, “It is so that they will know you Lord.”

College is a place of service, of giving and receiving. What I like about this journey is all the work that I share with my sisters and colleagues to realize the dream of Marie Eugenie: to educate so that these children will transform by Gospel values the world in which they will live.

I ask to know how to listen, to open my heart to the Word and to words, to continue to walk with Him and with my sisters. The call of the General Council to our establishment, after their visit to the College, was to bring out the positive in each student and to enable it to grow. May we know how to help our students to discover the meaning of their life, knowing that this meaning emerges every day and at each moment. May we know how to tell them, with our life which has been given, that we are all a gift and that we can contribute something to the world. We rely always on the help of the Lord, the Master. In His project, we are His collaborators.



Sister Ana Alonso, ra.

Cuestablanca-casita Community. Madrid

I arrived at Asuncion Cuestablanca in a somewhat accidental manner, through various personal circumstances. I have had my comings and goings, but I always end up coming back because, at this moment, I feel that God wants me to be here. It is one of the ways in which I feel I am putting into practice my way of living the gospel.



I feel it in the morning prayer when I try to connect the liturgical season with what we are living in the college: the pastoral programme which we have begun, and also the specific moments with the children from day to day, to put these into the hands of the Father, so that they may want to ask forgiveness, to give thanks, to listen to their hearts, to receive strength to move forward.

I feel this takes me beyond being subjected to a bad attitude or poor academic results. A student approaches me to share how they feel, what preoccupies them, their fears

and their hopes... even if I cannot do more than listen or give some humble advice. It is at moments like these that I believe I am able to be fully who I am, and I like to think that I can contribute my grain of sand so that my students can also become fully who they are.

I do not do great things, but I believe that I have clear values and that I act according to them. I think that how we are when working with adolescents is very important.



Sometimes I question whether I really am where I should be. However, my conversations with some former students, the deep friendship which binds me to my colleagues, the harmony with some of the religious... these lead me to think that, for now, God wants me at Cuestablanca.



When one looks from the terrace, the college cross appears to be rooted in the earth and pointed to the sky. This is a good metaphor for what we try to live as an educational community (photo).

“Put our enthusiasm into serving God and our brothers and sisters with fidelity and generosity.”

With this phrase of St Marie Eugenie we conclude this sharing on our mission at Cuestablanca.

Laura Velay,

Teacher of mathematics and sixth-form tutor

September 2016

Advocacy and our educational commitment aiming to change attitudes and bring about social transformation

"The invitation of Marie Eugenie to "love our times" impels us to turn our attention to those two phenomenon, ecology and migration,... and to network more effectively with those who share the same concerns ... "
(doc "Ecology and Migration" General Chapter 2012)

This month of July 2016, we participated in the workshop of **Vivat - International**¹¹ "Leuven, Belgium edition" it was a workshop for members of this organization from France, Belgium and Holland.

Vivat - International is an NGO based at the United Nations. It was founded in 2000 by the Religious of the Divine Word, other congregations are associated with them and we, the Sisters of the Assumption came to join them in 2008.

Vivat - International holds workshops every year in different countries where their congregations, members or associates, are present. There have already been workshops in Spain, the Philippines, Indonesia, Ecuador, etc. These meetings help us to better understand the vision of *Vivat* and at the same time deepen our understanding of the big global issues contra to human dignity.



Vivat works mainly through advocacy that is to say by actually raising issues at the UN where there are violations of human rights which we witness in our work among peoples who are undergoing different types of injustice. We want to contribute to justice, peace and sustainable development at the level both of the officials concerned and the United Nations.

In order to do this, *Vivat* engages in several different ways:

- Advocacy, either at the UN level or with national and regional authorities.
- Networking with other NGOs.
- Dissemination of information about human rights in different countries by providing elements that allow the thinking to advance, and with it, commitment.

Currently national branches of *Vivat - International* exist in Indonesia, Bolivia, Argentina, India and Kenya.

For congregations involved as we are, participation in *Vivat* can be a visible expression of our commitment JPIC -S¹², or at least, a tool to achieve it.

During the workshop, we deepened our understanding of the significance of advocacy, making *"every effort to influence the decisions of public and private decision-makers as a way to ensure respect for the human dignity of all, especially the poorest."*

¹¹ <http://vivatinternational.org/>

¹² Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation and Solidarity became a priority since 2000 General Chapter

Advocacy is an action that aims to put pressure, to mobilize and sensitize public opinion. It seeks to influence the press, parliamentarians and governments.

As an educational Congregation for us this action has an important place in education for citizenship, because it is urgent to form those attitudes out of which injustice, violence, disrespect and all that is at the origin of situations of abuse and poverty may arise¹³... This invites us to let ourselves be questioned: what is the logic between the thought – and the action ... "...first learn to sweep outside our own door" as Dom Helder Camara says.



It should also help to create an environment where people and projects devoted to the common good, can really happen.

Advocacy is an attitude that requires constant discernment, a thoughtful and constructive criticism, openness to dialogue, an expanded outlook, a transformation of our attitudes so that we can make commitments for justice, peace and respect of the environment, even if they are small...

Throughout the workshop we had very good interventions and evidence around issues such as:

- Migrants and asylum seekers. The different reception and integration networks.



- Human trafficking in its various forms (forced labor, slavery begging, prostitution, etc.) and the support structures that there are battling against these.
- Climate change and the actions that can reverse ecological disaster.
- The mode of operation of *Vivat* of the UN offices in Geneva and New York.

We also had the chance to share what each "member Congregation" is doing in France, Belgium and Holland: our JPIC -S priority is in our educational projects, whether in the network of schools¹⁴ or in social projects where we are collaborating.

We will share with you some *Assumption social* testimonials from France:

"As part of ATD Fourth World, I go to a Roma camp to take care of children, on Wednesday afternoons with others, there are four of us who are fairly regular, and students to join us occasionally.



Their living conditions are very difficult. The camp ground is a squat, where they can be turned out at any time. There is no drinking water,

¹³ The Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO declares that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

¹⁴ PAEA (Projet Educatif et Apostolique des établissements scolaires en France), voir : <http://www.assomption-france.org/rubriques/gauche/reseau-assomption-france/le-projet-educatif/le-projet-educatif/>

they take water from the firefighter terminal. For electricity: they plug into a nearby pylon. There are no toilets, you just go to the nearby wasteland. In wet weather, the camp is a quagmire difficult to cross. Sometimes children miss school because their clothes cannot dry after being washed. Most are enrolled in schools, but few are regular.

Through educational activities that we organize we try to encourage them to change their situation: we begin with school work, or writing for children. Then we do educational games. During the holidays, we try to organize trips: the Zoo, the nearby park for games". Sister Marie Noel GAZEL



"By teaching FLE (French foreign language) to the CPU (academic boost), I was in contact with young asylum seekers who had to flee their country to save their lives, they and their children. A couple from Bangladesh living in a CADA (center for asylum seekers) shortly before the birth of their baby could meet a family in the parish, they had nothing, Catholic Relief provided baby clothes etc. for them; and through weekly lunches organized for single people, they met the parish priest and parishioners who have then fully adopted them. The baptism of Nathanael was a beautiful celebration hosted by the youth choir followed by a lunch of forty people seated, all become friends of the couple in a few months, and as Sidney told me: "Now we have a family". They are not alone to face the future whatsoever.

Another family from Georgia have two small children 7 and 6 years old, they speak perfect French, they have been schooled in France for two years and even correct their parents who have more trouble learning the language!!! In community, we support them, they call us "Grandma" they have been repeatedly rejected, they do not even have the title of refugees, all their aid has been more or less denied. They still live in a hotel room but



for how long? Dad is sick, mom fights like she can. Lately they were summoned to Paris to present their papers, they wanted to go by train without paying, they have no money. We explained that it was not a good idea to get in the wrong when you want to get permission to reside in France! Mom found a very cheap bus, but you had to pay with a credit card, a computer and a "printing press" !!! We were able to supply them with the help of one of our friends !!! But as Katuna said "I do not want to help", translate, "I will not be helped!" We often admire their feelings and delicacy. They are devout Orthodox. We entrust the future to the Lord! ". Sister Miriam Selz

Yes, advocacy can be effective at the level of "decision makers", but it also happens particularly by everyday gestures of solidarity. These actions "make a difference" and transform the reality of many people by opening up a possible future.

Sister Marie Noel GAZEL, communauté de Montpellier

Sister Myriam SELZ, communauté de la Guille, Lyon

Sister Ana SENTIES, secrétariat international d'éducation

October 2016

“Let us be the makers of the society of tomorrow in collaboration with God¹⁵”

Assumption Centre (La Alegría District – Tenerife)

The Assumption Centre is a non-regulated training¹⁶ centre located in the La Alegría district, in the



Santa Cruz council area, on the island of Tenerife. It sits on the slope on the left bank of the Tahodio ravine, and is situated 2.7 Km from the city centre.

The district was originally a working class centre hosting harbour workers who supplied the boats with coal. After the Spanish Civil War, the population increased sharply, reaching 1640 inhabitants in the 1950s. This increase was due to

migration from rural areas and from other islands towards the main urban centres of the archipelago.

During this rapid population increase, and due to the poor economic situation of the people, the need for new dwellings was met through self-building, after either buying a portion of land, or occupying it illegally. Since the district is situated on a steep slope, the land was considered marginal and of little value.

The youth of the district are searching for opportunities for personal development and training, but their aspirations are frequently not realised because of the lack of resources, and this creates a high degree of demotivation.

These days, there are about 1556 residents in the district. It is an ageing population, mainly retirees with a medium-low economic level, and with different problems due to the infrastructure of the area.



¹⁵ Assumption reference text.

¹⁶ In Spain all training provided outwith the Official Education System is called *non-regulated*, the qualifications obtained through such training are not official.

The Assumption arrived in La Alegría in 1969, with the desire to answer the cultural needs of the district. They created two classrooms for adult literacy and for training children and young people. For almost 50 years now, the Assumption Centre has been working according to the principles of St. Marie-Eugénie of Jesus. We want to become real *craftsmen and –women, building the society of the future in collaboration with God*. Our priority is to welcome people in all their dimensions to *build together a more just and fraternal society*.



Education in the Assumption way aspires most of all to give convictions, and deepen the roots that, sooner or later, will yield their fruit¹⁷:

The Assumption Centre is therefore at the service of education in this area. Today, we have more than 10 workshops aimed at providing an all-round training of the individual, always taking the different types of poverty that have emerged in the last few years as a starting point for their activities, like for example the lack of economic means, or, maybe less alarming but still worrying, intellectual poverty. We look at providing training in all the aspects of life, fostering most of all the development of values that may enable us to open new horizons.

To accompany is for us the key of our *being educators*.

- **Accompany** children in their learning, placing ourselves alongside them, in *their characteristic way of being* and sharing each moment of their lives, nourishing their intellectual and spiritual growth.
- **Accompany** families sharing the daily things, wondering at the goodness of ordinary people.
- **Accompany** adults, offering workshops that encourage personal and professional growth.
- **Accompany in life**, offering our hands to welcome, our ears to listen and our heart to love.

In this was we embody the words of our Mother Marie-Eugénie in every moment: **“Love needs to have in us a nuance of simplicity, openness and great loyalty”**.¹⁸



¹⁷ Chapter of Mother Marie-Eugénie, 22/05/1887

¹⁸ Chapter 21/04/1878

For this reason one of the mottos of the centre is: **“Chose life and take care of it”**. This is the wish of each one of the people that become part of the Assumption Centre.



Our educational team is formed by some twenty volunteers (pedagogues, teachers, workshop instructors, gardeners...) who give their own time to make the project reality. They are the engine, which allows us to open our doors every day and keep welcoming and taking care of life with love, friendship, a

family atmosphere as our stepping stones. We are moved by the desire to be able to form people who may become real *instruments of peace and justice in the world* in which they live.

For our team the greatest joy is to see both children, and adults grow in every aspect, and integrated into society.

Every day we put ourselves in the hands of the Father, so that, like St. Marie-Eugénie, we may keep allowing the Kingdom of God grow within ourselves.



Fali Moreno Rodríguez

Director of the Assumption Centre – La Alegría District

In Kibangay Community, in the Philippines, What was the significance of the Jubilee Year of Mercy for us?

“... Sometimes we cannot find answers to questions about existential pain and suffering. Most of the time, the best we can do is to “cry with the suffering” and make the person feel our consoling presence by listening, and by embracing.” (Pope Francis in the Philippines)



Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., in his book: “The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality”, described beautifully mercy and compassion by contrasting the story of Susanna from the Book of Daniel with the story of the woman caught in adultery from the Gospel of John. In both stories, the women are condemned to die, one innocent and another guilty. In both, the women were saved.

God’s redemptive love is the foundation of all acts and forms of justice, peace, caring for creation and solidarity. Our way of being in the world today, our way of relating with others, our way of nurturing life, and our way of loving our times point to the invitation to live mercy and compassion.

God’s mercy and compassion on us

Each day at Lauds we pray the *Benedictus*, we proclaim our faith and hope in God’s saving tender mercy and compassion that leads to peace. In Kibangay, we are very grateful as a community for the wonderful gift of creation. Whenever we pray outside for our *oraison*, we experience deeply and intimately through creation the words we utter at prayer. Yes, our connectedness with the whole of creation – the movement of the clouds, the embrace of the wind, the rising of the sun, the singing of the birds, etc. make us flow with the breath of life and become fully alive in God’s tender mercy and compassion. We marvel at God’s fidelity, day and night happen each day, the sun rises and the moon appears – signs of God’s lasting covenant even if we are unfaithful, and even if we destroy the gift of creation. Let us allow God to communicate: “God loved us first” to help us to live the grace of being created in His likeness.



Our compassion for one another

“Where there are religious, there is joy.” Another great gift of God to us in Kibangay is the community. We are gifts to one another. We celebrate God’s presence in our midst by being life-giving, joyful, and loving community. I truly appreciate each of my sisters. I live with holy women who inspire me by their kindness, industry, and generosity. Each one is ready to sacrifice for the other, like, whenever a hungry neighbor or a visitor surprisingly arrives knowing that they come from distant places, my sisters are always ready to share the meal meant for them. I am converted by their “Maximilian Kolbe’s spirituality” of offering themselves for the good of the other. Indeed, mercy and compassion is concretely translated into joyful sacrifice and life-giving actions not only for humans but with our other relations with fellow-creatures.



“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.” (par. 91 – Laudato Si)

God hears the cry of the poor.

Before 1995, one of the major concerns of the people in Kibangay was the education of the children. It was a reality that obtaining a secondary education was quite impossible for the young because high schools existed only in the towns or cities. Thus, after graduating from the public elementary schools, a number of pupils did not pursue high school education. Among the primary reasons include the distance of the secondary schools from Kibangay and the financial constraints to send the children to school.

Besides, the majority of the residents were poor. In effect, some elementary graduates ended up marrying at an early age. Others looked for work in the urban areas as helpers or sales girls. There were also those who just stayed home helping their parents in the farm.

The people were able to articulate their desire and requested for the possibility of a secondary school through Father James Mc Guire, who was the parish priest. He listened to the people’s cry and acted upon it with the help of the leaders in the parish and the barangay (village). Finally, in June 1995, Xavier de Kibangay High School was opened and began its operation.

The Assumption Sisters came to Kibangay last May 1998 with the same mission of making Jesus Christ known, loved, and served.

Xavier de Kibangay High School (XKHS) is a Catholic Diocesan School dedicated to Christian Education of the poor and indigenous youth of the Province of Bukidnon. It is the only High School in Kibangay, Lantapan serving the neighboring sitios and barangays (villages). It serves as the feeder school of seven Public Elementary Schools. The school’s motto is: “Good News to the Poor.”



The ongoing story of Xavier de Kibangay High School has always been a testimony that God hears the cry of the poor. The day to day encounters make us grasp a taste of listening to what God’s heart loves.

One practice we have in the school is to do Home Visitation of all the students’ families every year. We do this by grouping the students according to the area where they live and then we schedule the visits once a month for four/five consecutive months. All the sisters and teachers go to their assigned families, with a prepared questionnaire, while the students who will not be visited on that day will do some community service in their respective places.



One question that we asked the families this year was: “How has XKHS (the school) been good news to your family?” The common answers were:

- The school is good news because without its presence, secondary education might not be possible for their children;
- The scholarships for the students because they would not be able to send them to school due to their financial needs;
- The Catholic education - the students are formed, cared for, and disciplined.

There is so much more to say about the richness of our visitation experiences. We leave the homes of our students with grateful hearts even if we sometimes feel hunger in our stomachs. Majority of them prepare root crops, bananas or corn, and other vegetables from their gardens, but it is rare that we experience the sharing of a full meal for the day. But what we receive best from the encounters is the joyful spirit of the poor who put their trust in the God of providence.

Each day in this mission is a journey with a merciful and compassionate God revealing Himself as Good News to the Poor.

Allow me to end this article by inviting you, dear readers, to contemplate

God's personal love for each one of us. Let us pause and muse on St. Marie Eugenie's words: *"Every detail of our life is an object of a Divine thought, and that thought is one of love."*



Sr. Irene Cecile I. Torres, r.a.
Kibangay Community, Philippines

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In Bafoussam, Cameroon

Helping young people find meaning in their lives and to committing themselves to the transformation of society

“Today as always, the Assumption contemplates reality in order to discern in humankind and in society, everything that favours life and leads to an ever greater hope in God, as well as all that is life threatening and which dehumanizes our world and empties it of meaning¹⁹.“

It's not an exaggeration to paint the Cameroonian society today as a society in crisis of moral, economic and human values. This is a society where indifference takes precedence over solidarity, a society where corruption has become the standard of policy management, where the demographic boom contrasts with the pace of economic development that moves at snail's pace, a society where the theoretical dominance of the education system crowds out real transformation, a society that does not give young people the skills needed to be true agents of development and capable of facing the challenges of their time.



Assumption Comprehensive High School which endorses a broader perspective of an *"evangelical struggle against all forms of poverty, marginalization and exclusion, which invests in the long-term work of education to empower people ; which allows itself to be affected by the reality of the poor while denouncing all situations that undermine human dignity²⁰* spares no effort *"to help young people find meaning in their lives and to commit themselves to the transformation of society with all that they are and all that they have."²¹* The school offers a suitable framework for the formation of youth with the support of the congregation and other partners (primarily ACTEC, a Belgian NGO, whose motto is "a job for all.")



The inauguration of a new building housing a medical and chemical analyses laboratory this last January 6th, was an opportunity for the final year students, to show the public the opportunities that the Assumption offers to the educational community for the benefit of a youth which is dynamic, creative and competent in training, expertise and knowledge.

We will limit our discussion to the practical dimension of this formation, which by promoting the integration of young people in their living environment opens wide doors onto the job market. In this way a solution to the crucial problem of unemployment can be initiated.

The acquisition of extraordinary skills by the students of the CPA has been well established given their many demonstrations which have been highly valued by the administrative authorities including those of the Ministry of Secondary Education, religious leaders, parents and others.

¹⁹ Reference Text, chapter 2

²⁰ idem

²¹ idem

In addition to using laboratory equipment with ease and handling chemicals with dexterity, the students of the F7 Section (Biomedical Science and Technology) offer the public a number of finished products which are highly appreciated by local consumers (students, teachers, parents, visitors).

These include bleach, powdered soap and even whiskey. They also conduct medical analysis for pupils, teachers and other outpatients from the neighbourhood who solicit these services at their small application laboratory.



Meanwhile the students of the F8 Section (Medical-Social Science and Technology) administer health care to their classmates, as well as to people from outside who request their services, this as part of the practical work of their courses and the activities of the school's Application Health Centre.



During a recent visit to the laboratory, the Regional Coordinator of Inspectors of the F7 and F8 sections spoke with one of the students. When asked what she could name as a concrete benefit drawn from the training she'd already received, the latter, who incidentally is only in her first year, replied: *"I had a dental infection and I took some pus from it. The analysis of this pus in the laboratory allowed me to determine the nature of the infection which caused my illness. I was thus able to prescribe for myself the medication which made me regain my health properly"*. So we can conclude that if a student is formed to be useful to himself, an important step has already been passed.

The students of the ESF Section (Family, Social and Consumer Sciences) produce among other things, packaged foods which they sell to other students and teachers, as part of their mini-enterprise. They also offer visitors handicraft products such as beaded bags.

The Assumption Comprehensive High School breaks new ground in the city of Bafoussam, with its essentially utilitarian pedagogy *"where various vocations are lived in harmony and complementarity"*.

The skills acquired by learners will certainly enable them to reinvest resources (intellectual, human, physical, material ...) in their living environment. They will be able to ensure their autonomy and become prime actors of development and work towards the advent of a *"prophetic community engaged with the social, economic and political realities where it wants to be light and salt"*²²



M. KAMDEM Dieudonné

Vice-Principal - CPA Bafoussam

²² Idem