

ROOTED
IMPASSIONED
AUDACIOUS

TRANSFORMATIVE
EDUCATION
IN THE ASSUMPTION

International Education Gathering
Manila – March 2018

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From Sr. Martine Tapsoba, RA

Superior General

Excerpts from the Opening and Closing Remarks delivered on the occasion of the International Education Gathering, March 1-10, 2018, Manila, Philippines

20 YEARS AFTER... CELEBRATING TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN THE ASSUMPTION (ROOTED, IMPASSIONED, AUDACIOUS)

Education is a foundational theme, for all communities, countries and cultures, to become human and develop in order to have a place of dignity in society.

Education is so important to us that it brought us together at Auteuil (Paris), in July 1998, the first International Educator's Congress on this theme, a Congress whose fruits have been put together in the booklet that we have come to know as the Reference Guide, that continues to accompany our way of educating, until today.

In the meantime, tremendous progress has been made, great opportunities have been offered to us, but also new challenges that push us to be in continuous discernment so as to make the right choices. The crises in some parts of the planet affect others as well. The globalization of problems even changes the way one understands oneself and one's place in the world; it invites us to find local solutions in resonance with what others are suffering. It is imperative for us to form men and women for our time, bearers

of convictions, driven by passion and audacity, as the subtitle of this gathering says so well and as an irrevocable injunction, that already lives in us and is tracing a path for us. This defines a way of being, to carry out the educational project of the Congregation. For everyone, young and old alike, we all know that we are all called each day, according to the invitation of Saint Marie Eugenie, to become more and more who we are "... as fully as possible", a fullness that can only come if we remain attached and connected to our sources, with faith. Our mission of education makes us men and women in constant search, heirs of past generations, called to be challenged by the novelty of everyday life. The return to the sources, the welcome of reality and the openness of the heart, will lead us to remember the path we have traveled since our origins, to give thanks and to "celebrate".

Every day can be an opportunity to celebrate life, our lives, the lives of the youth and adults we accompany, those of our collaborators and partners whom we represent here. This gathering is an invitation to believe that with the spirit of education that is ours, the Assumption can contribute to building societies that are more humane and more adapted to the times marked by its own richness and issues. The educational charism of the Assumption is a unique and irreplaceable gift for our people; it depends on us to continue to live this with the strength and fervor that was there from our beginnings and will bring us together with our brothers and sisters today, there wherever we are missioned, in a new and significant way.

A conviction certainly lives in us: transformative education is a reality. We have experienced this in our respective missions. However, the educational task is so important and demanding that it involves constant renewal, so that the fire that burns in us will not fade or die out. Let us comfort ourselves, then, by the marvels that we have witnessed, and even more by the convictions and intuitions that were born or have been confirmed by the work together and the sharing among us. We will always need to cultivate patience for the sower, perceptiveness for the artists, creativity for the poets, precision for the technicians, freshness for the beginners ... to persevere in search for what is best for all. Let us enter the logic of small beginnings and humble but effective little steps. It will be necessary to continue nourishing our faith, to keep hope and to manifest love in our mission of education, in an engagement that takes us body, heart and soul, through everyday life.

Faced with new issues and realities that confront us, we can continue to meet the needs of our communities by being attentive to concretizing, incarnating and enriching the charism of which we are the depositories and guarantors today. We know how to count on the One who sends us, God. Let us have faith in His action and move forward with courage by counting on each other. Attentive to the signs of the times, let us draw our inspiration from the audacity of the pioneers who have traced the furrows for us.

INTRODUCTION

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2018 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION GATHERING

20 years after the First Assumption International Educator's Congress held in Auteuil in 1998

The concept of this event was borne out of a process that reread and appreciated the experience of the International Education Commission in 2013. Among many other good and valuable realizations, the recognition of the vital importance of an experiential coming together of sisters and laity in a meaningful encounter where there would be the possibility of learning together, exchanging best practices, sharing concerns and challenges and dreaming towards a future that would incarnate God's desire for the Assumption, became very clear. The conviction that a "live-shared common experience" was still irreplaceable despite all that virtual reality is able to make possible today. For the Assumption – it is still the personal – face-to-face experience that matters.

Thus, an International Ad Hoc Team was put together to put flesh into this inspiration. This Team crafted a proposal and in 2015, the Plenary General Council gathered in Guatemala approved an event that would take place in 2018.

The choice of an event that would bring together some representatives from the different Provinces/Region including the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption of South Africa, was favored. It would limit participants to enable interactive-participative processes, emphasizing the capacity of participants to contribute and to transmit the experience as preferred criteria for one to be part of this event. The term "gathering" in English was used to emphasize the idea of bringing together important and vital parts of one body allowing each part to affect, interact and relate with each other.

More than receiving information, the importance of learning, searching, finding together and being enriched by each other became the more significant reason for this event.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE GATHERING

A CELEBRATION OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN THE ASSUMPTION

1. The RETURN TO THE SOURCES as an important way to remain rooted in the essentials of our charism, in all our apostolic/educative works;
2. A participative, interactive and inclusive gathering – that will prioritize providing for a shared-common experience that will be reread together in dialogue and meaningful conversations;
3. An opportunity for each Province/Region to make time and space for a contemplative gaze on the Assumption Mission of Education as lived and expressed through the years in the Congregation, in their respective contexts;
4. A kind of learning climate that will expand one's soul and spirit tapping potentials and other intelligences that may yet be hidden but may just be awaiting some opportunity to be awakened (ex. Gallery walk in silence, Entheos workshop, etc.);
5. An occasion to allow one's vision to be enriched by others (cultures, world views, perspectives and ways of thinking and being), at the same time appreciating the resources within (oneself, one's community, one's congregation, etc.);
6. An event that will be open to the action of the Spirit and to transformation in each participant, in the Congregation and in the WORLD and will affirm the vitality of the Assumption Charism expressed in the mission of education and its relevance for the world today.

THE PROCESS

PRE-GATHERING – PREPARATORY WORK FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS ---

Remember a Personal Experience of Transformation – to reclaim the importance of personal transformation in the educator as a vital means in the mission of education in the Assumption – participants were asked to reread one’s experience as an educator, identifying one’s most powerful experience of personal transformation

Prepare a Visual Exhibit that will form part of the Assumption Transformative Education Gallery – tracing the evolution of the expression of transformative education in each Province/Region, through the years

Revisiting of Congregational Documents – re-read Marie Eugenie’s Vision of Education, the Reference Guide as well as the Pre-Capitular and Capitular Texts of the General Chapters of 2006 and 2012, respectively

GATHERING PROPER

1. Organizing the Gathering in three (3) main parts:
 - a. Re-ROOTING in the SOURCES of the Congregation;
 - b. Celebrating the PASSION for the mission of education through the years;
 - c. Humbly identifying calls and AUDACIOUSLY blazing a trail for the future.
2. Providing for a Process of Discernment to accompany the Gathering – that called for silent contemplation, intense listening and provocative questions that allowed for displacing one’s center in favor of being open to the movement of the body and identifying points of confluence and convergences

3. Employing a method that made it possible to return to recurring themes in diverse ways throughout the Gathering and enabling participants to progressively focus on what is essential for Assumption Education today
4. Providing and utilizing a variety of activities that will engage all types and forms of intelligences: morning and evening prayer, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist, a visual gallery; a pilgrimage; exposures; workshops; group reflections and exchanges; journal writing; an art activity center, assemblies, panel presentation, video viewing, space and time for free inter-personal sharing.

POST GATHERING

- Transmission of the Experience through sharing highlights and significant moments that marked the participants
- Annotated showing of the official video documentation of the Gathering
- Putting into action the concrete calls in the respective Provinces/Region

AN INTRODUCTION

PROLOGUE TO THIS DOCUMENT

At the end of the international gathering, the delegates share the conviction that Assumption educators around the world, sisters and laity, form one body, marked by the richness of their uniqueness and differences. The charism of the Assumption is alive and is in movement. Each of our Provinces lives it through different projects, with its specific color that is most valuable, but all move towards the same direction, called to strengthen and celebrate unity. The experiences and discoveries have been many, far beyond what words can capture, but it is important, as a prologue to these documents, to name a few. They are part of the ground in which Assumption education can take root and flourish.

THE TREASURE OF THE CHARISM

To return to the sources is to draw from the well of life, each time to receive new light, new breath.

We are able to give new vigor to our roots when we humbly accept to seek our food from what we have come to know as "foundation texts" and "founding experiences." From these sources, we receive a new perspective on reality and become capable of participating in the construction of the present and the future. We remember these big projects that began with littleness and poverty.

The necessary movement of going back and forth between the sources and our today, requires personal and community study, reading, and writing, in order to create, innovate, in fidelity to our origins. We are a community in constant search, a community where God has not yet said His final word, of His love and creation.

To return to the sources is to cultivate in us the pride in a charism that is

current, like a treasure that does not belong to us but has been deposited in our hands and for which we are all responsible.

EDUCATORS BY VOCATION

The mission that Marie Eugénie leaves the great community of the Assumption as a heritage and a legacy is that of education. Every work, every act, has its educational consequence, because it puts the one who lives it, in relation with others and with the world. To understand one's whole life as an act of education and to receive all works as a mission, transforms the way one takes part in the project of the Assumption. The educator constantly lives this double movement of gift and welcome: the project nourishes and energizes the educator; in return, the same educator serves the project, drawing from the common vision a kind of passion, learning to see reality with the eyes of God. Finding the meaning of one's life and existence, can help everyone find and fulfill one's mission in the world and in the society.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

This mission of education in the Assumption assumes the features of transformative education. But what kind of transformation? What is the object of transformation? Who are we transforming? And why?

By working on this vision of education, the educator realizes that the first object of transformation is the educator himself/herself. By engaging in a process of personal transformation, the educator opens a gap for the light, that will in turn enlighten others. This transformation is ongoing and gradual and is never completed. This process of transformation is synonymous to movement.

What transforms the educator? One's experiences, one's encounters, one's ability to be changed by the other and in particular by the person one accompanies. Sometimes it is a difficult passage, even a suffering that needs to be assumed, or a painful lack that leads to a happy transformation --- the Paschal Mystery.

This transformation, which is first and foremost, interior, is combined with personal questioning, the constant search for coherence between one's faith and one's way of life, the capacity to let the project of the Assumption reorient one's choices, the availability to change one's ways. It is born of a contemplative and positive gaze, of care for the interior life, of the encounter with Christ, which must be maintained and sustained as the embers of a fire which, as it continues to burn within, does not cease making one change and become different.

To accept this transformation implies an act of faith and abandonment. It cannot happen without a faithful re-reading which makes it possible to discover from hindsight, the strength and the stages of a true and real "interior passage": *what happened to me? what were my feelings? how did I act? what am I called to now?* --- self-discovery, self-acceptance.

It is an eminently personal journey that, paradoxically, reinforces the sense of community, because each one, both the educator and the one accompanied, educators among themselves, receives the other and takes part in the transformation of the other. Constantly each person is at the same time learner and mentor, master and disciple ...

FROM THE CONTEXT

To constantly search for a new expression of the charism, while remaining faithful to the sources, requires one to take a very particular look at the challenges of the contemporary world. Because it is from this, rooted in the present, that one finds new paths. Love one's time to know how to discern life, to read the reality in order to understand its problems, to listen to the calls of the present so as to find an adequate response ... so many attitudes that are the cement of a possible social transformation.

Transformative education is rooted in a particular time and space. Thus, it necessarily starts from a context (family, society, world...) that the actors of education must "understand" and "feel", as Marie Eugénie liked to say; analyzing and finally having the courage to listen to other ideas other than

their own to discern and search for the type of commitment that may be most authentic, appropriate and adequate. Another need is to listen to the needs of the "people" to whom we are sent, the concerns of young people. To accompany a person, to be by their side, it is important to know persons "from the inside" and to lead them to get to know themselves, have access to their own identity, so that they can love themselves well, and be open to others and to the world around them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOUNTER

Transformative Education leads each person to receive the other and to give oneself to the other. Our time is one of accompaniment and dialogue for better discernment.

The capacity to love the young and consider people's culture as a riches is essential and indispensable for any process of education that is to be beneficial to all. Every young person, every man, every woman - needs a "place of encounter" where one can have the freedom to be oneself, to express one's joys, one's fears and one's dreams. The possibility for our communities to become these "oases of encounter" rests on the capacity to receive, to listen without judgment, to respect. Welcoming a reality to enter a new, unexpected and unpredictable way of life, involves taking a risk and sometimes letting go of one's own certainties.

The ability to collaborate with others, to work in a team and to receive from this team the strength and the new direction that will allow us to move forward is another aspect of this centrality of the encounter. Together, we are much richer.

To give time to listen to the other, to walk with the other according to the other's rhythm, to see what is beautiful and good in the other, is also to do away with wanting immediate efficiency to enter a slower pace of discernment. It is aiming at fruitfulness more than brilliant and easy success. Education, for it to be transformative, cannot look only at short term results.

Then the taste of another facet of the encounter is born: the joy of sharing what we have discovered, the capacity for wonder and community celebration, the solidarity that comes from the road traveled together. These make for solid foundations of community.

FOR THE KINGDOM

"My gaze is fixed on Jesus Christ and the extension of His Kingdom," wrote Marie Eugenie. She dreamed of a society founded on evangelical values, a society "in the making", the construction of which she took part of, in the measure that she was able to. The educator in the Assumption shares this same passion for social transformation, through education, in view of the establishment of justice. Faith puts the educator in action and beneath these processes of personal transformation and accompaniment of persons, is the vision of the coming Kingdom. Faith leads one to love the poorest and smallest in our world, following Christ. To educate is a way of collaborating in the building of the Kingdom and sharing the mercy of God with those who need compassion and love, in fidelity to the mystery of the Incarnation.

To live all these, the educator relies on re-reading and the interior life¹. Thanks to these, one becomes able, in the light of Christ, to seize the moments of surprise that lead to wonder and to take up the things received as gifts to enrich one's experience. In silence and with some contemplative distance, one listens to God who speaks through one's life and through the lives others. One allows God to humanize one's heart and one's actions. One also finds one's strength in the community life of sisters and laity, woven in simplicity, friendship and joy. It is the ground from where one takes the momentum to seek, to experience, to engage, to share, to accompany, to celebrate ... in order to be what one is meant to be in the heart of God, "as fully as possible".

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Cf. « Some Important Definitions » : Interiority

OUR SOURCES

MARIE EUGENIE: A "VISION" OF EDUCATION A RETURN TO THE SOURCES

Sister Véronique Thiébaud, RA

What characterizes the path of Marie Eugenie, from her birth to her death, is this constant seeking, searching. We are undoubtedly more familiar with her youth, that we know better than at other moments, because we have been accustomed to speaking about this when we speak of our Congregational family history. We see in her the importance of the values received from her mother, the social and political concerns of her father, that she heard from conversations in the living rooms of their houses in Metz and the Château of Preisch ... and later, as an adolescent, the search for meaning, with a "discovered" faith, which led her to see a connection between the service of God and social commitment but also the refusal of worldliness and narrow-mindedness. This search continued to be present in the Assumption, that was yet at its beginnings, in the writing of the Rule that was already being lived even before its having been written.

If it is evident that at the end of her life, Marie Eugenie's thought about the Assumption and its project became clearer, one finds, in the texts of the Origins of the Congregation, the roots of a project that will progressively grow. Here are some constants, among others, that can be drawn from these texts.

1. THE DESIRE FOR AN "ACTIVE FAITH"

In a text from her Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes), dated 1837, Marie Eugenie writes: *"I love justice, rectitude, purity, humility, detachment from self, ardent charity... for themselves, and I want to acquire them for their own worth rather than to please God. – But I have reassured myself*

in saying that in loving these virtues, I love God.”¹ ... She adds that God cannot be separated/detached from those things.

We can thus note, from the beginning of the journey of Marie Eugenie, that there is no faith without a resulting action... to the point that she will write to Fr. d'Alzon, on 19 July 1842: “we are not concerned with controversy, but with active faith, faith dominating judgment and taste as well as feelings.”².

To form towards an active faith, that enlightens judgment through the Gospel and which leads to choices, a discernment, one can say that, for her, this is the aim of our educational activity. In other texts that we know, Marie Eugenie underlines the importance of having convictions, “which, sooner or later, will bear fruit”³. Today, completely in line with this thought at the origins, we like to speak of coherence, of commitment, of consistency in what one does. When we accompany the young and even the adults it is to allow them to attain this interior unity.

2. UNDERSTAND AND ‘FEEL’ ONE’S TIMES

In a letter to Fr. d'Alzon, quoted earlier, she risks to develop her thought on the work she is about to found: “Our thought about this work and its principal rules is very simple. We have found by experience that the instruction given to women is ordinarily completely superficial, and consequently useless for their children and without any link to their faith – indeed their studies, if they are prolonged, nearly always turn against their faith. Going beyond what we personally have experienced, we know that they have totally false ideas about their dignity and their duties, being ashamed to do anything at all useful, to really attend to their spiritual life and their children; they glory in being seen, being indecently dressed, attracting compliments that they would reject if they realized how much they dishonor them; attaching a value to their position and to their

husband’s fortune to a point that is degrading. In a word although they are pious, they are very ignorant of their religion, of all its truths, its history, of that which would make them understand the Christian social spirit. I add that few young women have been taught about the seriousness of life, of the importance of the smallest steps at the beginning; few have been strengthened against its reversals and its sorrows and taught to do something about the miseries they do not see; to give way when it is only a question of their own pleasure, but never to bend when it is a question of their duty.”

This echoes what she had already said to Msgr. Gros, probably in 1841: “The dominant idea in the foundation of this undertaking of ours was that of an inspiration of zeal and it was this that decided my vocation. Daughter of a family unhappily without religion, brought up in a social circle which was still less so, left motherless at fifteen, and, through the workings of chance because of my position, having had many more contacts and greater knowledge of society that is usual at that age, I had been able to understand and feel how unfortunate from a Christian point of view, had been the class to which I belonged. (...) Men never set foot in churches. Women go only at two o’clock for the crowds and fashions. Their habits and prejudices make them immune to any serious ideas. Their sons go to grammar schools, but the question of the daughters remain. Up till now these have been educated in fashionable boarding schools or by governesses. I dare not tell you my sober opinion of these, such as it is before God, from what I know of them through my childhood companions. For the rest, to my knowledge, the effects of both kinds of education have been deplored to the non-believing parents themselves.”⁴

Understand and feel...two attitudes that we are invited to develop, two attitudes that converge in the complementarity of the head and of the heart ... This observation made by Marie Eugenie about her times is a call for us ... A call to take time to study our times, to contemplate it, to “understand” it by using the full potential of our intelligence, by analyzing

1 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. d'Alzon, 19 July 1842, n°1556

2 Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, 25 May 1878

3 Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, 25 May 1878

4 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Msgr. Gros, n°1504

the causes, and to « feel » it, not to remain in the “a priori” (theoretical), to let our heart beat to the rhythm of our contemporaries, to commune with their aspirations and their struggles.

3. WOMEN, “EDUCATORS OF THE WORLD”

One can note women’s role in women’s education in her project, those whom heaven “intended as educators of the world”⁵, according to Marie Eugénie. Still, in the same letter to Fr. d’Alzon, she cites her mother who drew inspiration herself from Mme de Staël⁶, by saying that women should be like “the cotton wool (padding) placed between crystals (sheets of glass) to keep them from shattering”⁷.

Marie Eugénie had a high ideal of the role of women. In the text quoted in the previous paragraph, one can note that she objects to the deficiency of the education they receive and the need to give them something different. Here are some of her reflections addressed to Fr. d’Alzon:

- “Far from thinking that the education of women should be made up of superficialities, I believe that is precisely what can be omitted . . .”⁸
- “Their great knowledge is what they are least taught: to read, to write and to speak their own language simply and fluently.”⁹
- “If other studies are going to be really useful to women, if they are going to raise their moral dignity, they must be imbued with Christianity.”¹⁰

Marie Eugénie echoes another document from the Foundation Text which may be good to reread when reflecting on the sources of our educational

5 Marie Eugénie, *Counsels on Education*
6 Mme de Staël, born Germaine Necker (1766-1817), an author known for her novel *Corinne*. Allusion also to Mme de Staël in the books read by the young Catherine O’Neill.
7 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. d’Alzon, 19 July 1842, n°1556
8 *Ibidem*
9 *Ibidem*
10 *Ibidem*

charism: the Introduction to the Constitutions written by Fr. Combalot, probably in 1840, before separating himself from the Assumption. In this text, Fr. Combalot evokes “the immense heritage of mercy and of virtue” that women have received, underlining as well that “the primary/initial education belongs only to them”¹¹. Fr. Combalot evokes here the vocation to motherhood, that for him is passed on by teachers who offer a kind of spiritual motherhood. We can note here that the accent is placed on the education of women as educators.

4. THE PLACE OF THE POOR

In this same Introduction to the Constitutions, Fr. Combalot refers to the deliberate choice of the first Sisters to turn towards the poor. They “insistently asked”, he says, to “join the fatigue of the Sisters of Charity” to other works. He specifies: “You have wanted to give at least part of your life to those whom Jesus Christ called His friends and His brothers. You have wanted to be allowed to leave your retreat at times to serve them in their sufferings and to bring to their wretched houses the children you are called to educate. This is because you have understood that you could do good to the rich only by opening your heart in love of the poor” this is a way, he says, of going against worldly ideas and of giving the example of service to the poor for the young girls who doubt their very existence. He concludes: “Rejoice then, my daughters, that your vocation calls you to become servants of the poor”.

Marie Eugénie makes herself the intermediary of this desire to be close to the poor particularly in a letter to Fr. d’Alzon, dated 26 July 1842: “To finish answering your letter of June 27th, I would like to tell you that one of the things I consider very important for our sisters to keep their love for the working class, about which you once talked to me, is the practice of practical poverty. In my report on Studies I also insist that even our most distinguished students should cultivate a positive attitude towards manual work, an attitude I am consoled to find in our choir sisters. This created in

11 Fr. Combalot, *Introduction to the Constitutions*

us a bond of solidarity with the poor, the only thing that makes us able to understand their fatigue, their pains ... The term "practical fraternity" is original. It is an invitation to concretely share the situation of the most humble, to open oneself to their needs and to hear their cries, to leave our selfishness to render a form of service to someone.

In the Counsels on Education, this is what Marie Eugenie writes: "Egoism and self-sacrifice, there lies the whole mystery, the principle of good and evil in earthly things."¹²

For her, education consists in "drawing souls as much as possible away from their natural egoism so that they may give themselves without reserve to doing God's will, in all that is good, holy and generous, in all their great and small duties, in all that love of virtue may ask of them."¹³ It is a way of fighting against egoism. In this sense, Fr. Combalot spoke of a fundamental revolution that can be accomplished in souls: "Your mission for the children of the wealthy is to bring about a radical change in their souls ... to help them understand and appreciate evangelical poverty ..."¹⁴

Through the expression "practical fraternity", Marie Eugenie affirms from the origins, the need of experiencing the living conditions of the poor. Not only to talk about it, or to be intellectually "sensitized" about the world situations but to share their condition, to experience it, to meet them ... it is the very essence of what we now call "immersion" – like the AMA, the social services, intercultural encounters – which are based on a shared experience.

5. AN INTELLIGENCE THAT IS BROAD AND DRAWN FROM THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

In a letter of 5 August 1844, Marie Eugenie writes, regarding the foundation of the Assumption Fathers: "Since we founded this work, and

above all since I have better realised through contact with others that our spirit is not at all the same as that of other Religious (male and female), I have desired with an ever-growing ardour that it would please God to found in his Church orders of men with a similar spirit, perhaps even with a comparable style of life so as to give to young Christian men and above all to young priests a character at once stronger, broader, and more intelligent, in one way more Christian, and in another way nobler and freer."

This last expression could summarize what she wanted to sow in the minds of others through education. This intelligence, large and free, can only be found in a strong contemplative life and in the work of faith: "*To make our studies Christian, we must then make a serious study of Christianity, (...) We must identify with the spiritual life of the Church, understand her Office, recite it each day, enter by way of the catholic language into possession of what we can attain of the peaceful development of the faith in matters of the intelligence.*"¹⁵

In her Credo (probably written to Fr. Lacordaire, but difficult to contextualize even if one recognizes therein the signs of the beginnings of the foundation), Marie Eugenie, after having recalled that her vision is a social vision with this question "*Can you conceive the beauty of a truly Christian society?*";¹⁶ also reminds us that man's dignity is rooted in his capacity to render glory to God, to render Him homage: "*It pains me to hear this earth called a land of exile. I consider it a place of glory for God since here He can receive from our free and suffering wills the only homage that He does not find in Himself.*" She continues, "*To make Jesus Christ, liberator and sovereign of the world, known, to teach that everything is His, that, present in our souls by the life of His grace, He wishes the great work of the Kingdom of God in each one of us, that each one of us may enter into His plan ...*"

Finally, she does not hide the origin of her thought, the foundation which

12 Marie Eugenie, *Counsels on Education*, 1842

13 *Ibidem*

14 Fr. Combalot, *Introduction to the Constitutions*, 1839-1940

15 Marie Eugenie, *Letter to Fr. d'Alzon*, 19 July 1842, n°1556

16 Marie Eugenie, *Letter transcribed in the Origins 1, 2nd part, chapter 11, «Credo of Marie Eugenie»*

is also the aim, from where she sets off and towards which she goes: Jesus Christ. ... "As long as we approve the direction of the arrows and find that I aim at the goal, I do not feel obliged to say where I have fixed my gaze to obtain this success, but it is all in Jesus Christ and in the extension of His Kingdom."

A big question for us. Towards what, towards whom, does our gaze turn when we educate? What is the purpose that is over and beyond us and for which we take the means to serve? It is an intimate question that is rooted, first of all, in our relationship with the Lord, but it has an important impact on our mission of education.

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ENLIGHTENED BY OTHER WAYS OF SEEING AND OF THINKING

Enlightened by the interior life, this intelligence, this way of seeing the world, is inevitably, for Marie Eugenie, enlightened also by other ways of seeing and of thinking.

Whereas Fr. Combalot, in response to some of her requests for books, forbids them, this is what she writes to him: "You arrive a bit late with your prohibition to read Fr. Orsini. I have finished it, and even if it does not please you, nor me neither, however, do not say so much evil. There are interesting researches in it and it is a book that will please many. I wish, my dear Father that you do not always forbid me from reading everything that is not exactly according to your ideas.

Mine are enlightened and are completed by the contact with opposing viewpoints. My mind falls asleep by being with people of the same opinion. The errors of books of disbelief, their paradoxes, the poverty, the incompleteness of their system, have perhaps had greater weight than all the positive proofs of the apologists. The "Emile" is one of the books that has made me relish Catholicism the most.

In the other order of ideas, it is the same. I cannot understand well or relish a way of seeing if I have not compared it with other ideas. It is by

excluding ideas I have criticized that I acquire the ideas of what one should say or teach. Without that, I have no ideas at all and I become soporific in my mental laziness. With the confidence I have in you, and my submission with regard to your advice, the disadvantages of what I read cannot be so great especially since they are not bad books that I ask to read.

Let me hope then that you will give up always telling me: do not read this, do not read that ... So far I have tried very hard to do so because I thought you demanded it out of obedience. But if it is a general way of enclosing me in a very narrow circle of readings allow me to tell you that it is not a good way for what you want to make of me." ¹⁷

Similarly, she considers her reflection on education only in confrontation with those who are more experienced than herself. In the Counsels on Education, she names, among others, Mme. de Lambert, Mme. Necker, Mme. de Rémusat, Aimé Martin, highlighting that, while keeping a critical distance, their work must be "the object of our serious attention". *"We will have to examine them together," she explains, "to judge their principles... to compare their views with our own", because "we should take this into account."* ¹⁸

One can note that Fr. Combalot himself, dreaming of the flowering of a multiplicity of congregations dedicated to teaching, envisaged this sharing of ideas which immediately brings forth much riches: *"I also think that in many teaching orders, still insufficient to meet the demands from young people all over the globe who seek French education, some "rivalry" of numbers is no bad thing! Educational orders can share their teaching experiences and put their studies in common just as the Sisters of Charity do, and thus be able to give a religious education which will be truly uplifting and regenerating for families and society."* ¹⁹ We can see here the seeds of inter-congregational work!

17

Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 30 December 1837, n°15

18

Marie Eugenie, Counsels on Education, 1842

19

Fr. Combalot, Introduction to the Constitutions, 1839-1840

For Marie Eugenie, « to Christianize the intelligence », meant broadening it, giving it deep roots, planting it in the fertile soil of the Gospel so that it can open up and bear fruit in persons giving of themselves. This is what differentiates the Assumption from other educational institutions of the time since she addresses herself “ more to Christianizing and developing the intelligence, more to the will, to render it capable of renunciation and sacrifice”²⁰

“To Christianize the intelligence, is also to allow passion and sense to be formed in the mind. In that way formation is not based on the quantity of things learned but on the way they join the heart, how they are connected to each other, how they are linked to the Gospel: “What enlarges the character and the intelligence in study, what coordinates the things learned, serves as the aim, as the link, as the reason? In a sense, it is a philosophy, in a larger sense, it is a passion.”²¹ The passion that Marie Eugenie chose is that of faith in the Gospel. The things learned are worthless if one does not perceive the meaning or the purpose! The intelligence of the heart and of the mind leads to the harmony in the person between her effectivity, her will and her faith.

In this framework, one must also underline the place of realism and of convictions. It is a question of “preparing a child to face all the duties of life.”²² It aims at “the knowledge of life” to which the child is destined. “You should be aware of what her future will be, what she will have to do... to know the world, even its bad side.”²³

OPENNESS

Here is a small glimpse of the road that can be taken through the sources of the thought of Marie Eugenie. One could take a lot of other routes, bring out other nuances. And every time we embark on this road of

rereading, personally or in community, we understand better where transformed Marie Eugenie and inspired in her the desire to participate in the transformation of the world, knowing above all that it is His work. To enter into a path of personal transformation is the first step to make us capable of contemplating, welcoming and being at the service of life, in the persons we accompany, who, will be agents of transformation themselves. It is undoubtedly for this reason that, following Fr. Combalot who, already in the Introduction to the Constitutions, pointed out the importance of humility, Marie Eugenie often returned to it: “It must be done courageously by the means of faith, – the poor and powerless means that Jesus Christ used, – only concerned about doing all that He destines for us and abandoning all the successes of time and eternity.”²⁴ ... “It is then on humility, self-forgetfulness, selflessness, that the work of sanctification for the educational institutions rests. There is no exception to that ... For the communities to do this good act, unity, self-forgetfulness, generosity, zeal, prayer and especially a very great foundation of humility must reign therein.”²⁵

In another Chapter, that of 23 May 1884, Marie Eugenie takes again many of the elements we have already highlighted. And this document can be part of the texts to reread as one draws from the source.

The development of the faith appears as a means for the transformation of persons: “In this mission of education, our first duty, in the Assumption, is to enlighten the mind with the light of faith. It is that everything that is taught to the children strengthens their faith, goes towards developing in them the life of faith.”²⁶ This transformation ultimately aims, at the transformation of their actions: “The second is probably more difficult: it is to form Christian characters, to prepare in the child all that will make of her

20 Marie Eugenie, *Notes from Conversations*, in “An Educational Project of the 19th Century”, p.67

21 Marie Eugenie, *Letter to Fr. d’Alzon*, 5 August 1844, n°1627

22 Marie Eugenie, *Counsels on Education*, 1842

23 Marie Eugenie, *Counsels on Education*, 1842

24 cf. *Transcribed Letter in the Origins 1, 2nd part, chapter 11, “Credo of Marie Eugenie”*

25 Marie Eugenie, *Chapter Instructions of 8 July 1877, “The good that can be done through education rests on humility and self-forgetfulness”*

26 Marie Eugenie, *Chapter Instructions of 23 May 1884, “On Education”*

a true Christian, that is, with a certain generosity, a certain humility. (...) It is a root that will not bear many flowers and fruits if the character, the works, the life do not change based on convictions."²⁷

The source of such an education is contemplation, from which they must draw untiringly: « This cannot be done if one looks at them as an acquisition, by necessity of an employment, without putting in one's heart, one's intelligence, one's will, if one does not seek before God how one could enter the good in a child, how one could renew that nature. Be sure that all the children are capable of being renewed. We have often seen amazing transformations." The contemplative life is the source of a new outlook: "We must see God in the children" .

Let us be humble then, rooted in Christ, drawing from Him as from a source. Only then will the work of our houses develop "outwardly, as a well-filled basin spills out through its channels". We will, in turn become a source!

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Chapter Instructions of 25 September 1892, "On Education"

Fr. Combalot

Introduction to the Constitutions

OUR SOURCES

THE ASSUMPTION INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS' CONGRESS

July 15 – 26, 1998

Auteuil-Paris, France

Sister Josefina Maria Magat, RA

Congress Theme: Together we want to commit ourselves in "Shaping the Society to Come"

This Congress took place 159 years after the foundation of the Congregation. It had for its goal – to systematize the pedagogy of the Assumption and to establish and strengthen ties among the education teams of the different continents in view of responding to the challenges of the third millennium. There were 30 delegates from Europe, 13 delegates from Africa, 22 delegates from the Americas and 14 delegates from Asia, for a total of 79 participants with 1 priest, 27 lay partners/friends and 51 sisters.

The Congress had a PRE-CONGRESS PHASE (1996-1998), the actual CONGRESS PHASE (July 1998) and the POST-CONGRESS PHASE (1998 onwards).

The Congress identified FOUR STAGES TO SYSTEMATIZE THE PEDAGOGY OF THE ASSUMPTION:

1. Identifying the Principles, values or elements of our pedagogy today that inspire the actions and experiences that are presented
2. Confronting these Principles, values or elements with the texts, the thought, the vision of Marie Eugenie
3. Identifying the Challenges of the third millennium by:
 - a. Looking at the world today
 - b. Looking at the Church
 - c. Looking at our own experience

4. Shaping the Society to Come:

- a. A vision of Man, of Women, and of Society for Assumption – “no one more than us has been founded in view of this future society, whose coming our desires seek to hasten.”¹
- b. The implications of Assumption principles for us as educators today
- c. The coherence among the various principles

PRE-CONGRESS PHASE (1996-1998)

“As you know, the dynamics of the Congress has been shaped by our desire to clarify our apostolic projects and our actual educational experiences, in the light of the thoughts of Marie Eugenie and the Congregation...”²

FROM THE LETTERS AND CHAPTERS OF MARIE EUGENIE

To familiarize the participants with her writings which are considered foundational, especially as she speaks of her history, the development of her vocation and her thoughts regarding the newly established congregation

FROM THE REPORTS OF THE PROVINCES

To acquaint the participants with the life of the Congregation in the different Provinces

FROM THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESSES

Africa – An Assumption Educational Project 1997-2002 with four (4) Orientations

Americas – A final synthesis: “Marie Eugenie - her life, vision, and charism- is an inspiration for our being and our educative acts.”

Asia – Inculturation is the expression of the pedagogy in Asia

The GOSPEL must become CULTURE – the root of our thinking and living, shaping our worldview and directing our decisions. We continue to dialogue with cultures, with religions, and with the poor... and mutually discover the GOD of LIFE.

Europe and the USA – Vision: To Humanize Man and Transform Society

CONGRESS PHASE (JULY 1998)

1. Shaping the Society to Come by Sr. Cristina Maria Gonzales, RA

- Through the Art of Education
- The Beauty of a Truly Christian Society
- Our Educational Project and the Kingdom of God
- Five Calls of our World:
 - i. Abolish Exclusion
 - ii. Peace
 - iii. Dual Citizenship (one's nation and the world)
 - iv. Alliance between Culture and Science
 - v. Humankind's Spiritual Thirst

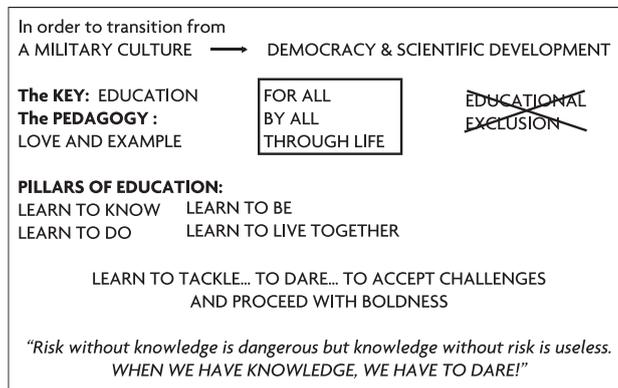
2. A Look At the World Today – Education at the start of the new millennium by Prof. Federico Mayor, UNESCO Director General (1987-1999)

3. A Look at the Culture of the Church Today

- The Mission of Christians at the Dawn of the 21st Century by Fr. Claude Marechal, AA

¹ Letter of Marie Eugenie to Fr. D'Alzon, 25 March 1848)

² From the letter of the International Team to each participant dated March 10, 1998 to explain why they are sending the three documents: (1.) Conclusions of the Continental Congresses, (2.) Reports of the Provinces, and (3.) Some Texts of Marie Eugenie).



WITH THE DIVERSITY AND UNIQUE RICHNESS OF THE DIFFERENT CONTINENTS, THE MISSION IS NOT EXACTLY THE SAME.

Synods will address the uniqueness of each one in terms of evangelization for the 21st Century. However, there are still some common elements and major characteristics that need to be considered for all. The following are proposed for the Mission of Christians today:

- a. Deploy the full breadth of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- b. Acknowledge Jesus Christ as Unique Savior while appreciating the value of other religions and attitudes.
- c. Inculturate the Faith, enriching without diminishing.
- d. Root Christianity but also rediscover Christian roots in order to find New Life.
- e. Link together more closely personal experience, life witness, and ecclesial communion.
- f. Promote Christian communities that share their experience of faith that are rooted in the WORD and the EUCHARIST, that take Gospel priorities

very seriously, and that involve, more than today, different ecclesial vocation.

"You have come from many countries and continents... Continue to contemplate the glory of God, the love of God, and you will know how to build a Civilization of Love." John Paul II, WYD

4. The Output of the Congress – EDUCATION IN THE ASSUMPTION – A REFERENCE GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

1. MARIE EUGENIE (1817-1898) Her Response to the Challenges of the Day
2. Today's Challenges – Assumption Responses
3. Education in the Assumption – a philosophy, a passion, a steadfast character...
4. Fundamental Principles of Assumption Education
5. The Assumption Educator
6. Some Elements of the Educative Anthropology of the Assumption
7. Methods
8. Some Words and Expressions by Marie Eugenie The Educational Process

POST-CONGRESS PHASE (1998 onwards...)

Each Province looked for appropriate and effective ways for the transmission of the Congress. The Reference Guide became a fundamental resource of the Congregation.

The dissemination of the Reference Guide was accompanied by proposed ways of using this guide with suggested activities and questions.

“TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN THE ASSUMPTION”¹

Sister Ana Senties, RA

In 2006, in the international educational context, there was already talk of transformative education. This historical context was marked by globalization, interplanetary mobility, the multiple possibilities of communication through the diverse types of connection and social networks. It was a demanding historical moment, in which many educational currents strove to enter the logic of efficiency and competitiveness, of excellence wanting to «be more», but above all to have more, buy more, live better and more easily, to the detriment of many marginalized regions of the planet, some of them excluded from these developments ...

At that historic moment – in 2006- «we recognize that it is the favorable time to receive and redefine our mission of education»², and we redefined it for the first time as *Assumption transformative education*. In this context of mutation, transformation of our societies and education, we expressed with conviction that we also sought transformation: a transformation in the light of the Gospel.

Some elements:

1. Marie Eugenie had already thought about education in terms of transformation: she wanted education to be a means to come to social

transformation, a society transformed by the gospel, a “social state where no one had to suffer the oppression of another”³.

For her, transformation is a process whose origin is inside each one, that is, it is a process of personal transformation, rooted in a historical and social context: it “sees and feels what society lives” ... and feels the need to commit, to “contribute my grain of sand, my drop of blood”. This process goes through the interior life of each one, through a deep conversion. Her Intimate Notes, her many letters and writings are testimony to this process, which will be the battle of her whole life.

In many chapters she invites the sisters to enter this process, the first actor and craftsman of which is Jesus Christ. He, who presents himself in us by grace, wants to work in each one, for the great work of the kingdom of God⁴ ... He invites us to let him work in us ... let him heal, build, set us free...

“... You know what the word Easter means. How the apostles were transformed! How weak they were ... they became strong, full of faith, determination and ardor! ... the feast of Easter can produce all those effects, effects of transformation and passage ... each one knows where the terrain of struggle and triumph lies, what are its fragilities, its attachments.”⁵

God does not act alone, He requires our consent and our inner work: Marie Eugenie invites the sisters to reread, to see «the effects of this transformation», to discern the interior places that are called to conversion, and to recognize the triumphs...

2. The 2006 General Chapter took up again this aspect of the “founding spark”⁶. The pre-capitular document⁷ is a synthesized and

1 Quoted in this way only once in the Reference Guide of 1998, in chapter IV on the fundamental principles of Assumption education: “The education that Marie Eugenie proposes is a transformative education for the whole human person. It favors the development of the freedom that gives each creature its peculiar form according to God’s designs on it and allows it to discover its vocation to actively engage in the transformation of society. It allows the person to find within the resources of their own transformation, makes them capable and responsible for their own empowerment.”

2 Cf. Pre-capitular document of the General Chapter 2006

3 Cf. Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. D’Alzon, 27 February 1844, No. 1610 “... a social state (...) where the Christian principle tends to exclude from everyone the oppression of others ...”

4 Marie Eugenie, undated Letter to F. Lacordaire cited in the Origins, vol 1

5 Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, 13 April 1879, “Holy Day of Easter”

6 Expression of Pope Francis to speak of the charisms in the Church

(Letter in the Year of Consecrated Life 2015)

7 Pre-capitular document, General Chapter 2006

updated reformulation of the founding intuitions expressed in the manuscripts of Marie Eugenie, as well as the innovative methodologies that the first sisters used in their classes, in the activities they invented beyond the school curriculum:

associations, visits to the poor, personalized accompaniment, family spirit, prayer life, etc.

The pre-capitular document offers us, then, a reformulation that gathers testimonies and texts from older documents...⁸

3. A philosophy, a passion, a commitment⁹

Some elements of the pre-capitular document that we want to “enhance”.

We are not established well enough for me to dare to express our aim as I understand it, in a contemplative life enlightened by religious studies and source of an active life of faith, of zeal, of liberty of spirit. For me the real aim, the real character of a work is in the interior consecration to such and such a divine mystery, towards which it is like an on-going act of praise. I believe that we are called to honor the mystery of the Incarnation and the sacred person of Jesus Christ, also the adherence of the Blessed Virgin to Jesus Christ: it is the same for our views on education¹⁰.

Education in Assumption springs from the vision of faith that we have expressed in “Philosophy and Passion”.

Education contributes to:

- The humanization of the human being
- The transformation of society
- The coming of the Kingdom

8 For example: “*The Origins*” (4 volumes), “*The spirit of the Assumption in education and teaching*” (1909), “*The education of character*” (1946), which, in turn, collect words of Marie Eugenie and unpublished testimonies of the first 60 years of Assumption education...

9 Cf. Pre-capitular document, General Chapter 2006,
10 Letter of MME to Fr. d’Alzon, 27 August 1843, L. 1590

Our vision is based on our faith in God, the master educator, who has created the human person as a being in a state of becoming, gifted with potentialities and the capacity for growth.

We believe that we are called to collaborate in our work of education in the Project of God the Creator by helping people to discover the possibilities in themselves and to develop them. It is a question of helping what is already present there in them to germinate (St. Augustine).

We believe that the image of Christ at work, in one or the other page of the Gospel, still expresses our vision of education today.

We believe that we are called to love as God loves: to see the good in every person.¹¹ This is the specificity and the demand of our educational vision. God by loving us calls us to life, to love, and brings us from a state of chaos to one of peace and harmony (Gen. 1: 1-2). The friendship and family spirit specific to the Assumption mark our educational action.

We believe that we receive our educational vision from God, as the fruit of a loving, contemplative gaze on the world; following Christ, we are attentive to see what is coming to birth; this way of looking reduces neither the other person nor the world, to what appears at first sight, but sees beyond. One of our ways of knowing the world is to seek to understand it. We set up a reciprocal link between love and knowledge.

We believe that for us, the community is the place of birth, of rooting, of discernment of the vision which is proper to us. This vision is not a static given, but the fruit of our common prayer, of our effort to live together in love and the purification of our gaze, which strengthens our inner liberty.

In fact, we believe that it is in the community that the transformation begins which we are aiming for in our educational work.

Our vision of education, however humble and modest it may be, seeks for transformation of situations and persons. We endeavor to contribute to the reorientation of the world towards a greater justice and solidarity. We work to bring together all things in Christ, to create the truly Christian society of which M. Marie Eugenie speaks¹².

We believe that our vision of education and the aim which we pursue is a wisdom which allows, in a world that is parceled out and fragmented, the re-establishment of the unity of the person. We know that we are committed to persevering in this effort¹³.

In the Assumption, our passion for education is rooted in God's project of love and passion for his creation:

- A passion for humanity, created in his image, a passion revealed in the Incarnation of the Word, who has walked the path with us.
- A passion to give to humanity the fullness of life: the flourishing of each, communion between persons and union with Him.
- A passion for the creation which He has entrusted to humanity to provide for their needs while inviting them to respect it and live in harmony with it.

Our passion becomes more urgent and acute today because too many individuals and peoples are suffering and that is intolerable for us. The world situation presents profound contrasts compared to this project of love of God for his people. And we want to act to transform this situation which is so painful. God has the right for his project to be respected.

Our passion springs from the conviction that Christ is calling us to collaborate with Him and with others to realize the plan of God. Thus: -

- We commit ourselves to the human person, who bears within him/herself the seeds of life, potentialities for development, who is educable and who evolves.

- We commit ourselves to our times, because for us it is a matter of faith that this is the place where God speaks and reveals himself today...
- We commit ourselves to the care of creation, which God has entrusted to humanity.

Like M. Marie Eugenie, we love the Church and we believe that she is the privileged "place" where at one and the same time, we deploy and nourish our educational task.

A TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY:

We change through love... Transformative Education is a process of liberation. As a created being, human persons are unfinished but are called to the greatest possible fullness. Transformative education gives them the capacity to actualize their potential, the possibility of constructing their own destiny. They learn to act on their own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings. It is an education that allows persons to discover their vocation to commit themselves for the transformation of society.

Education for transformation - a process of conversion

While listening to Lacordaire in 1836, M. Marie Eugenie experienced the radical conversion of her heart and mind. It was a conversion of heart that caused her to desire to share her love, her freedom and the promise she found in Christ and in the Church.

It was a conversion of mind that convinced her that the intellect must be trained and formed in such a way that it animates and directs the will to approach all reality, personal and social, in the light of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ.

Education for transformation draws on the realm of interior experience. Transformation has two parts: the first is the reason, expressed through insights, judgments, and decisions; the second is the affect (the emotional), expressed through symbols, images, and feelings. It involves experiencing a deep shift in the basic premises of thoughts, feelings, and

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Maire Eugenie, undated Letter to F. Lacordaire, cited in the Origins, Vol 1
Marie Eugenie, Counsels on Education, 1842

actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. It is a shift that brings the person to see everything in the light of faith.

Education for transformation - a process of humanization of Society

Education for transformation involves a change of perspective which has three stages: contemplation, immersion and action. It begins in contemplation where we learn to see the world and reality through the eyes and heart of God. This is the perspective of God, a perspective of love: "wisdom that consists in looking at things positively."¹⁴ It brings about the transformation of our frames of reference, points of view, of habits of mind, of worldviews.

Then comes the perspective of reality. One day we are brought face to face with the sufferings of our world and we are challenged. When we are confronted with injustices, poverty, violence, exploitation, exclusion, the destruction of nature, the manipulation of life, we are moved to denounce these realities which are not coherent with the project of God for humanity. We are inflamed with the urgency and the importance of writing the Gospel in the structures of society.

A new way of seeing leads to a new way of acting. In solidarity with other persons of good will, we now approach everything human in a new way. We join in the search for a new ethical frame of reference inspired by the Gospel, which can shape thought, lead to action and inspire decisions. We act to shape a society where there is more justice, more humanity, more solidarity. We build a future where the Gospel and the values of the kingdom which Jesus lived and proclaimed, can continue to shape the heart, the mind, the life of each one of us.

WE PRIORITIZE SOME PEDAGOGIES:

A pedagogy that seeks interior formation, wisdom

The pedagogy of the Assumption is directed towards the awakening of interiority, the formation of habits rather than isolated acts. It is a continuous process of conversion to the Gospel.

Interiority implies the knowledge of what inhabits us, this universe of our desires, our feelings, our deep love ... The birth of convictions and the meaning of our life, the whys of our decisions, critical judgment, the discipline of thought. Interiority facilitates the harmonization of all these aspects of our inner universe, essential condition for a healthy alterity, for a constructive dialogue with others. It is a challenge for us to offer these pedagogies not only by word but by example and testimony..

It is a way of life, a way of seeing, reflecting, acting, made of curiosity, respect and humility, a habit of reflection, of asking questions and reflecting on situations in a broad context: "give birth to convictions." Assumption pedagogy is directed towards a formation that comes from within, which gives reasons for living and acting.

A pedagogy of proximity

This is about our family spirit. Wherever we are, we have to try and create a climate of simplicity and friendship, which is in itself formative. It gives rise to confidence and liberty, strengthens these and puts them fearlessly at the service of the other. It is a pedagogy which humanizes: that is to say, which restores the image of God in the human being and puts him or her in communion with their fellow men and women. This is our way of building the Kingdom.

To educate in this way, we are called to develop in ourselves a capacity for empathy, "so as to see, listen, feel, love, so as to understand what is going on in us and around us...". It is a question of seeking to understand the setting and the circumstances of others. We are reminded of Christ before the crowds: his compassion, his love, his will to love with a love which

puts him in solidarity with others, their destiny, their sufferings, their aspirations, their joys.

A pedagogy of project

Here we are thinking of projects drawn up by the young. We see the importance of enabling young people to be capable of thinking, of drawing up, bringing to completion their personal or community (collective) projects so that they become responsible for their own formation. This way of doing things favors the personal initiative in young people and puts us before the challenge of supporting them in the search of their personal mission: Each one is called to participate actively, starting from his or her own vocation, to spread the Kingdom of God and so work to transform society according to the Gospel¹⁵.

This pedagogy requires accompaniment to learn to re-read experiences ... it is a vocational pedagogy ... that "favors the development of the freedom that gives each creature its peculiar form according to the designs of God upon it and allows it to discover its vocation to be actively engaged.

4. The way continues: General Chapter 2012

In 2012, the expression "Assumption Transformative Education" will be further developed: Transformative education is, rather than a theme, the foundation of our mission ... a mission shared with the laity. It is the "transversal theme" that cuts across all our priorities: communion, contemplative identity, leadership, Assumption Together¹⁶.

The "Ecology and Migrations" leaflet, which included the challenges of the environmental and migratory crisis, invites us to commit ourselves more boldly to work for transformation, both on a personal level and in social structures:

- To promote pedagogies that transform our notions about the "good life," the quality of life linked more to the qualities of relationships than of the quantity of possessions...
- To educate ourselves in attitudes and the competencies necessary for dialogue, respect, and nonviolence ...

The book "Towards An Eco-Assumption" whose terminology was a decision of this General Chapter, expresses our vision, our attitudes, responses, commitments, experiences in this sense; it shows the richness and diversity of our international network; the vitality of the charism and its capacity to re-create itself in a variety of contexts. It is an invitation to go and meet the Assumption in other cultures and situations, entering into a broad view, other ways of explaining the world, to see it as others see it, as God sees it ...

The General Chapters of 2006 and 2012 have expressed the urgent call to return to the sources, to take a greater ownership of the charism, and to continue updating the "founding spark" of the Assumption in our concrete contexts.

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*Cf. Reference Guide, Education in the Assumption, 1998
Letter of Promulgation of the General Chapter 2012, by Sr. Martine Tapsoba*

SOME ASPECTS OF THE VOCATIONAL PATH OF MARIE EUGENIE

Through her letters to Father Combalot, between 1837 and 1839

Sister Véronique Thiébaud, RA

Most of those who come to work in the mission of the Assumption, came because, one day, they may have felt in one way or another, called. One can call this “chance” experience, some kind of a Providential call, that allowed them to discover that they had a place in this project. As educators, all of us have a mission to accompany others in their vocational paths, at times meandering like theirs ... This demands that we accept to move forward at the pace of the other, to read with him/her the signs of God in his/her life, to help discern the calls ... On this road one must accept that we do not know, that we hesitate ... before finding the sliver of light at the turn of the road. In fact, our paths are not all straight. The constant back and forth between the source of this mission in the Assumption, the path of Marie Eugénie, and the streams flowing from it, our own existential paths, is one fruitful act. It is thus interesting, among thousands of other possibilities, to explore the letters that Marie Eugénie wrote to Fr. Combalot from 1837 to 1839, while her future was taking shape, step by step, to see what they say about her vocation, her journey... a path that undoubtedly can help us to accompany other vocational paths while assuming our own ...

We know the account of the meeting between “Mlle. Eugénie” and Fr. Combalot, during Lent of 1837, the immediacy of which makes us smile sometimes. Having asked Eugénie if she loved the Blessed Virgin, Fr. Combalot tells her that he can do nothing more; then he changes his mind ... He becomes her confessor and while he speaks to her of his project to found a Religious Congregation for the education of young girls, Anne Eugénie brings up, without convincing him, her lack of experience, her youth, her lack of knowledge of religious life... Despite a certain originality, which escapes our human reasoning, Eugénie quickly

recognizes in this encounter a way that echoes her own search. She finds therein a possibility to find the “source” and she writes to Fr. Combalot: *“Was not my soul broken with dryness when God sent me to you? (...) It is you who led me to the source of life. You gave me the nourishment of your tender and strong affection ...”*¹ In the same letter she insists on the fact that if she had not met Fr. Combalot, she would have undoubtedly gone to look elsewhere, on more or less idolatrous paths, for the answers to these questions.

So... what happened between these first moments and the 30th of April 1839, the day when Mother Marie Augustine and Mother Marie Eugénie met to form the first « community » of the Assumption? Was the “interior journey” of Anne Eugénie easy?

1. A path of personal responsibility

A. RE-READING OF THE IMPORTANT STAGES

We can immediately say that one of the characteristics of the journey of Marie Eugénie is that it was not a straight path, but be that as it may, it was one that did not allow her to lose her way. In her letters to Fr. Combalot, as in her Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes), we find the traces of the meanderings that characterized this journey.

We can recognize 3 important moments in the vocational path of Marie Eugénie: her First Communion, her conversion and her Confirmation. There is like a gradual path, an “*ascent*” towards accepting the call. In a conversation with the Sisters regarding the beginnings of the Congregation², Marie Eugénie describes the strong impression left by her First Communion: “*it was the first vocation call*”, she concludes. She also writes to Fr. Picard that “the first movements of (her) vocation came to (her) under the vaults of Notre-Dame during the conferences of 1836”, referring

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Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Combalot of 4 April 1837, n°27
Marie Eugénie, Conversation regarding the beginning of the foundation, 30 April 1881, cf. TF2

to the moment of her conversion. She adds that *"it was still something vague, undecided, the desire to consecrate (myself) to God's and the Church's cause without knowing where or how"*³. Regarding her Confirmation, in the previously quoted conversation, she says: *"on that day my vocation was set"*. She often returns to the moment of her Confirmation, as to the moment when her vocation took root, speaking of it as *"the door to a new life"*⁴.

This capacity to reread her life and to name the essential turning points is striking in the young Anne Eugénie. It is a key for our own vocational itineraries. How do we re-read or help ourselves to re-read? How do we set the pillars of the moments that have marked our life?

From the moment of her Confirmation, despite her resistances, Eugénie regularly evokes a desire which, in some ways, becomes more and more certain. In June 1837, she writes to Fr. Combalot: *"I hope more and more every day that nothing will hold me back ..."*⁵ Then in August 1837, when she saw her vocation put to the test by her family: *"As for me, I trust my energy more. I see that neither scorn, mockery, coldness, reproaches from neither my friends nor the world with its successes and pleasures have seriously shaken my vocation."*⁶ And even if she took time to rest a little in Lorraine during the summer of 1837, she affirms that same summer: *"I will entrust myself to His goodness upon my return to Paris and I will begin boldly to do what is necessary to finally belong to Him totally."*⁷

B. ATTRACTIONS, AVERSION, INDIFFERENCE IN THE FACE OF THE WORK

We must not think that Marie Eugénie, the strong and determined woman that we know, had a simple vision about the work that Fr. Combalot wanted to begin, from the start. She incidentally writes later to Msgr. Gros, evoking

3 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. François Picard, 8 November 1862, n°1509

4 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. d'Alzon, 28 juillet 1842, n°1557

5 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 21 June 1837, n°2

6 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 August 1837, n°4

7 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 14 juillet 1837, n°3

the moment when Fr. Combalot spoke to her for the first time of his project that she feels a "very lively zeal" despite her aversions and she explains herself:

"It (the work) seemed to me to be destined to bring about the good for which I longed. He told me, with the authority of a confessor, that I must dedicate myself to working for it. I must admit, Father, that I found it hard, but if God was calling me, how could I one day, account for the souls that only my selfish cowardice prevented me from helping?"

*I felt I had been overwhelmed with countless graces, without which I could never have known God by the gift of faith which I alone in my family had received. There must be some plan of God in the experience I had acquired, in the mercy which has preserved me through it all, through my independence and my varied contacts. I would be able to be useful because of all this and because of the talents which education had given me and which I was bound to consecrate to God since so far, they had only contributed to my vanity."*⁸

From July 1837, she confirms her attraction, to Fr. Combalot: *"Our Lord has given me much attraction for your work."*⁹ and a bit later during that same summer: *"I am afraid to lose, through this kind of lukewarmness, and through this continuous self-centeredness, the grace of my vocation of which I begin to understand all the grandeur better. Because, if as I believe, your work can be useful, I do not see any greater benefit, any more amazing grace that God can grant us, than that of making use of us to do this good, to associate us in a way to His merciful Providence, and to consider it as a merit for us, a cooperation that He did not need."*¹⁰

She keeps herself, however, from being too attached... *"Your work will or will not happen, God knows. Do not worry for me. I have not attached my happiness to this or that. I see myself as belonging to you and this idea*

8 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Gros, n°1504

9 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 14 juillet 1837, n°3

10 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 24 August 1837, n°5

pleases me. I will not seek to serve God and the Virgin in one of the existing orders, even if it seems to me very holy. It is not from that angle that I would turn my efforts, but towards the virtue of indifference so recommended by St. Francis de Sales. No, I shall try to really uproot from my heart any preference for one thing or another, that I may as well be the last Sister of your order or the first, indifferent to the tasks that will be given to me, and equally ready to serve God as a lay person in any position, or as to enter into the most contemplative life, if that is how your Institution would become, which I do not think it will, whatever happens.”¹¹ In other words, she leaves the work “entirely at the disposition of (her) God”¹² and she gives us a beautiful example of indifference!

She knows however, that determination, a consequence of zeal, is her strong point: “...I know that once decided, nothing would cost me to try to imitate Jesus Christ in His mission as Savior of these poor souls that ignorance separates from Him even more than ill will.”

C. STRONG INITIATIVE

The determination of Anne Eugenie led her to assume responsibility for her life. It is she who takes the lead and lays the groundwork for her own formation: “I would really like, she writes to Fr. Combalot, that you consent to let me make my Novitiate in one of the existing convents if it is possible to enter therein without the obligation to stay. That would teach me a lot of things and the separation from my family would begin, which I really want, whatever it may cost...”¹³ And her letters witness to the time she spent looking for a convent in Paris that would accept her to begin a life “separated” from the world ... the first step will be taken when she enters the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament. They are not the community that appeals most to her but Anne Eugenie is in a hurry to commit herself

in the religious path, thinking also that this would gain for her the merit of “protecting” her from her family.

Once again, she has the initiative when it comes to envisaging real formation, suggesting even the places: “This novitiate project which you have always pushed back so far, that was only held with this sense of impossibility, that I, myself felt, to break away without any reason. If your will remains the same, I do not see any other means to make it possible except through that, at least in appearance. See, while you are in Bordeaux if you can obtain through the Archbishop, or through your influence, if I could be received in any convent without staying in it, or take the postulant’s habit there, with freedom regarding my studies and my interior life. Say that it is a young girl who, for her honor, for her piety, needs to break with the world but does not however want to become a religious. It is better that it not be in Bordeaux because of your Lent.”¹⁴

Other places emerge later and it is still Marie Eugenie who gives the pace when she talks about Côte Saint André in May 1838, in a letter to Fr. Combalot: “These past three months, we will choose between the convent of the Augustinians and that of the Côte as a boarder in either.”¹⁵ She even has concrete ideas on the choice of the place: “I confess that if we could make it possible regarding my family, I would prefer Paris to establish this novitiate of which you speak about, after Easter.”¹⁶

We can highlight the important place of the will and determination, which is the foundation of her perseverance, even with some hesitations...

2. Determination does not preclude questioning

Indeed, despite these desires to move forward and the confidence she shows

11 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 21 November 1837, n°11

12 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 21 September 1838, n°42

13 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 19 September 1837, n°7

14 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 22 March 1838, n°25

15 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 13 mai 1838, n°36

16 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 29 September 1838, n°45

in this sense, questions remain constantly in Anne Eugenie as evidenced by this excerpt from a letter of November 1837, when she will go to the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament: *"I can not still be sure of my vocation as you are. It always amazes me to see you speak about it so decisively as if God had instructed you about it face to face, and above all this time that you do not want to see as pitfalls the fulfillment of family duties and the suitable life that was offered to me. For the past days my soul is very agitated - regrets, sadness, concerns, indecisions, fears of the future. Everything goes by turns. I am irritated by your authority, then I quiet my reasoning to submit myself..."*¹⁷

In her Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes), we find even this passage (visibly addressed to Fr. Combalot): *"You believed me capable of belonging to God, of serving Him in the state of virginity and you spoke to me of an educational institute. This is great, I know, yet it is not that to which I feel called."*¹⁸

In addition to the fact that she saw herself rather at the service of the poor, other objections sometimes came up.

A. THE ATTRACTION OF THE WORLD

In June 1837, she writes that there are "astonishing" reasons¹⁹, *"that they owed to themselves, that oblige myself to give myself entirely to Him. But instead of that, she adds, I am very unfaithful. I regret a thousand things that serve only to separate me from Him: friends who do not know Him and who keep me from serving Him, all the ease and commodities of life which unceasingly bring me back to myself and make me lose a lot of time."*²⁰

In 1838, she writes with much lucidity: *"My love for pleasure, for absolute freedom of mind was so great that I needed great graces and even a chain*

*of marvelous circumstances that began after the death of my mother, perhaps even after the bankruptcy, to lead me to the two vows Our Lord made me make and which He will give me the strength to keep faithfully all my life, I hope."*²¹

We could multiply the citations which show that the young girl is constantly struggling against the attraction of the worldly life that her family proposes with the feeling that that these could make her hesitate. It is a struggle that is engaging as seen in this other letter: *"This time, I found myself very courageous when your letter arrived, because I was resisting, with a stiffness of which they knew me, the nights of dances that they wanted to multiply for me and which I greatly desired."*²²

She sometimes reproached Fr. Combalot of being too harsh with her on that point.

B. THE OPPOSITION OF HER FAMILY

In her correspondence, Anne Eugenie evokes several times her difficulty of losing the affection of her family, as in this letter of 18 August 1837: *"It is not for myself that I am afraid. Everything is the same to me. ... my reputation... would cost me less to lose than their affection."*²³ There again we can multiply the examples of this suffering which does not, however, remove anything from her resolve: *"See what you want me to say, to do. I will do it point by point."*²⁴

What seems to cost her a lot is to see her own (family) suffer. She even asks herself if she should not put first her love for them and the care she could give them: *"Should I not sacrifice my desires, my hopes, my vocation even to make sure that my brother, who is still young, and who could receive new impressions, a more agreeable family life? - Should I not*

17 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 3 November 1837, n°9

18 Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes intimes) n°154/05

19 The beginning of the letter is missing, and it is impossible to know what the question is.

20 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, June 1837, n°1

21 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 21 September 1838, n°42

22 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 August 1837, n°4

23 Ibidem

24 Ibidem

sacrifice even the joy of seeing you, of serving a useful work, and the hope of entering in an order more to my tastes, under your direction, and which, at my age, I myself would easily adapt to its customs? If at my father's last hour, there are, only people by him who will not think at all of procuring for him the help of the Church, and that he dies without the Sacraments, would I not experience much remorse on my conscience? And despite all your promises, as a religious occupied perhaps at the other end of France, will my family ask me on time to be by him? And shall I myself guess the moment? - I am still his daughter and nothing can stop that. My father hardly sees anyone. He would be very embarrassed to take me to social gatherings having isolated himself from them since his difficulties. and after having served and cared for him, if I survive him, and he is nearly 60 years old, devote myself to God?"²⁵

As usual, obedience being her recourse when she does not see clearly, she asks Fr. Combalot what she should do and he having answered that she should resolutely enter the convent, she responds, at the moment of going to the Benedictines: "I feel like I am taking a decisive step. My family leaves me free, while blaming me, but the truth is, they are hoping to see me soon enough disgusted with my projects."²⁶

However when the time came to join the convent, she feels resistance: "When I wrote that I was carefree regarding your decisions, and ready to enter here or not to enter, following your judgment, I believed it with the best faith in the world and I congratulated myself that God gave me back two things one as easy as the other. But when it was time to act, it was no longer the same. I had a heavy heart, was greatly troubled, and another word would have perhaps kept me away. Finally, God did not allow this word to be said, and I could catch my breath again since I left those whose reproaches or sadness I feared much more than absence."²⁷

The place of her family will be important to the end: "Today I received a great encouragement, my tutor and the cousin with whom I was staying They have not yet forgotten me, alas, my God, it will come, and whatever Mrs. C. says that one should not regret such transient affections, human nature is weak, and when she had given everything that was possible to her, it was nevertheless worth something."²⁸ Or... later... "If I pretend the need of taking distance to test my vocation, I am told that if I am not decided, I am crazy and absurd, and worse, to sacrifice my friends to being in a cloud - and if I say I am, I am asked the Order I have chosen and then I am forced to silence."²⁹

To her father who resists, she will always, in any case, put in opposition her total freedom, claiming that Fr. Combalot has no excessive influence on her. "I have always assured myself that you had not pushed me to the decision I took, and that you had told me about all the sacrifices involved. If in this I have lied, God will forgive me, for it is at least certain to me that it is not your influence that made me decide. Today, I am free, free as the wind before men and before God, because I can, without failing in my vow, renounce to continue. But if I like to talk about my freedom, it is to put all into your hands."³⁰

C. HER PERSONAL WEAKNESS AND THE STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNITY

Conscious of her contradictions, Eugenie never saw herself stronger than she was... and she bore with sorrow, for example, the responsibility of being Superior, having always doubted her skills to exercise this charge: "I will surely never be good at being a Superior, though you would hope I would."³¹

And at another moment: "We will talk about your new acquisition, of my daughter, as you say; but I hope you did not tell her that. She can only be

25 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 1er October 1837, n°8
26 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 3 November 1837, n°9
27 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 14 November 1837, n°10

28 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 November 1837, n°12
29 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 21 March 1838, n°24
30 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 August 1837, n°4
31 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 August 1837, n°4

my Sister, until you are assured that you cannot find anyone better than me for this corner of your building, and until you know if I am as good at the work as you hope. It is not so much my inability as the flaws of my character that make me doubt it, my negligence, my lack of the spirit of order, of the rule."³²

This feeling of weakness led Marie Eugenie to often ask for the help of Fr. Combalot: "I need you very much for my spiritual advancement"³³; "Father, you must help me, I cannot do anything by myself."³⁴ She is aware of not being able to advance alone."

It is undoubtedly this feeling that makes her repeatedly mention the moment when she will have Sisters. In an undated fragment of a letter, Eugenie writes: "What dries me up now is not having an outpouring of fraternal charity. Also, it is pleasant for me to think that one day, with you, my beloved Father, and with the Sisters that you will give me, I will be able to speak of the mercies of the splendors, the wonders that delight the intellect and the mercies that touch the heart. When I am sad, shaken, I will find refuge in their Christian love, in their strength and in their charity, and in your heart, where I will always dare to seek refuge. And in my turn, when I shall be rich, my treasures will not be for me alone, but my Sisters in Jesus Christ will rejoice with me."³⁵

A very present desire to live in community and to lean on others...

At another time, evoking Josephine de Commarque (Mother Marie Therese), that Fr. Combalot had "recruited" in Dordogne: "Since I last wrote to you, my dear Father, I have received many letters, yours first, and then the replies of Miss de Commarque and of Fr. Sibour. I read them all, so I may talk to you about them. Our Josephine is very deeply attached to you and to your work. She writes to me with much warmth and with this fervor

of faith and love that always seem to fill her. I love her very much, this dear Sister. What I did not bring to you at once, is the virtue she promises us, and of which she speaks as a small thing: perfect obedience? - Regarding the rest, she says that she knows nothing, that she is worthless, but she does not however hesitate to believe that God calls her."³⁶

It is important to note that, from the outset, the community is present in the thought of Marie Eugenie, as an essential condition of the work to come, as a richness which she cannot do without.

It is interesting, from the point of view of our educational mission, to see that Marie Eugenie's vocational path leaves room for doubt. In this sense, she is close to many young people whom we accompany - and to ourselves - the many attractions of our society, the family resistances, the personal feeling of our inadequacies, do not spare us either... We can rely on her experience to accompany the young or the adults whose journey is entrusted to us today. It joins the path of our hesitant quests, our winding paths and reminds us that, whatever the obstacles we encounter, we are responsible for our existence.

3. Leaning on God and on Christ

A. THE "LONG WORK OF GOD'S HAND"

In a letter dated 21 September 1838, Anne Eugenie traces her journey and rereads it in faith: "because since my First Communion, made with fervor and good faith, although a little lightly, I think that the grace of Jesus Christ has kept me, despite my being so distant, and that I have hardly called upon it by prayer and merited by works. Since that time, it seems to me that I have always had a background of faith, of attention and respect in the few acts of religion that I practiced and a great desire to live better as a

32 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 30 December 1837, n°15

33 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 6 December 1837, n°13

34 Marie Eugenie, Letter to l'Abbé Combalot, 19 septembre 1837, n°7

35 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, undated fragment, n°23

36

Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 10 November 1838, n°52

Christian. All this, it is true, with great ignorance, so much lightness and independence that I might have lost that desire, if I had understood how far it went.”³⁷

In the same letter, she adds, “I am forced to confess, when I think about it, that everything was possible if I had been abandoned to my first tendencies at the ages of ten or eleven.” (...) It is to that point that I have to go back to find the chain of the mysterious acts of Providence...”

And she is able to reread without bitterness the unfortunate episodes of her life: “I noticed these days, in my meditation, that God had given me this great grace to always take away from me what I was attached to in the big as in the little things. This is what made me supple and flexible. Again it was only on the outside, and it was to you, my dear Father, that I had to submit this virtual independence where I completely took refuge. If I consider this long work of the hand of God on a rebellious soul, do I not find an amazing quality of love as well as a kind of proof of His designs in me?...”

Eugenie builds everything on her trust in God which she says is even perhaps too big! She considers Him as a friend, listening to all her thoughts... It is before Him that she can present her feelings in a sincere way.

She recognizes what He has already done: “God is too good to me, He has spoiled me, He has given me more than I would have ever dared to ask.”³⁸ And she asks Him for what she needs: “For me, as soon as I am in the convent, I will ask Our Lord for perseverance and calm...”³⁹ “I ask God for the grace to never allow my constant will to fail in a work that can only be difficult.”⁴⁰

She is sure that God will support her in everything - “I must have all the more confidence, that as I separate myself more from my natural support,

God will support me, as I have always felt it so far”⁴¹ - and it is the Father whom she recognizes in Him: “It seems that I have experienced a kind of joy to enter here in the House of my God which already seems to me more

than any other the Father's house.”⁴² Thus her desire to live in him grows ever more: “I would now like the fruit of our efforts to be the interior spirit, the attention to the presence of God, the habit of the intimate prayer of a soul attentive to the grace of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us.”⁴³

She precedes us on this path of learning confidence and abandonment. At her school, we can also learn to enter into this act of faith.

B. CHRIST... “IT IS HIM ALONE THAT I WANT TO LOVE”...

At the same time, the love of Christ marks the “vocational journey” of Marie Eugenie. It marks her spiritual experience and consequently that of the Congregation. We know it. She was first attracted by the humanity of Christ, which remains in the spirit of the Assumption through its rootedness in the Mystery of the Incarnation.

In the letters of Marie Eugenie to Fr. Combalot, from 1837 to 1839, and her Intimate Note (Notes Intimes) of that same time, she speaks much of God. But when she speaks of Christ, these are always key moments, moments of passage. Very soon after her conversion, we find in her Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes): “But as for what is of Jesus Christ beyond these things, I would still desire something, my senses would like to see, touch, revere His holy Humanity, to kiss His feet and to shed tears on His wounds.”⁴⁴

In Marie Eugenie we perceive the desire for a perceptible/sentient connection with Christ, with the crucified Christ. The abasement of Christ, His humility, touches her deeply. In the text quoted above we find: “In

37 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 21 September 1838, n°42

38 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 8 February 1838, n°16

39 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 3 November 1837, n°9

40 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 29 March 1838, n°26

41 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 7 May 1838, n°33

42 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 15 August 1838, n°40

43 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 8 November 1838, n°51

44 Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes) n°153/01, Paris, April 1837

coming to us by an ineffable abasement, He sanctified our materiality, it is also ignited by holy desires which can only be satiated by an equally sensitive union as the heart desires it to be intimate and the mind spiritual." Note, however, that this attachment to Christ will not always be sentient. The spiritual life of Marie Eugenie will also go through deserts. Very early on, she differentiates attachment to Christ, which can fill us, and attachment to other men and women which is always incomplete, unfinished, inconsistent (they often feel weak in front of this attractiveness of the world). Having done this, she feels called to being united with Christ at every moment: *"Turn towards God who loves you by knowing you, who loves you despite all your miseries to the point of offering Himself and dying for you and ordering you to unite yourself to Him. He only asks for your love. You pretend to have a loving heart, fill it then with this love, dedicate it, and may it not be separated even for a moment from Jesus Christ."*⁴⁵ She aspires towards a permanent union.

In the meanderings of her questions, when she hesitates between staying in the world and entering into this project of God, when she is afraid to hurt her father, it is the love of Christ that is stronger... *"When I think of the pain that I cause mortal men⁴⁶ (her family), I ought to rather think of the pain I give to Jesus Christ if I leave Him. For Jesus Christ loves me, He calls me, He draws me by the sweet odor of his perfumes."*⁴⁷

The love of Christ is what she comes back to when she is tempted by other paths.

Despite all the temptations she experiences, that of entering into the habits of the world, in its consolations, that of not feeling being an "educator" and seeing herself more as a Little Sister of the Poor⁴⁸, her spiritual experience will lead her to see that everything is possible, despite

her doubts, if she gives herself to Christ: *"And yet this is so, because if my humble sacrifice is complete, God will bless it, like their grandiose thoughts. Perhaps I will do great deeds, perhaps I shall have saints for children, and perhaps they in their turn will have great influences of salvation. All this is possible, if I only know how to die quite perfectly to myself so that Jesus Christ may live therein, the God who deigns to descend there. Then He will put there what he deigns to reward, what wonders of love! Before that, one only has to abase oneself and adore."*

To the point of saying... *"(...) O My Jesus, it is your holy madness that saves me – one must be foolish for God. That I may only have more merit, a better will, a better intention. O My Jesus, I want to be crazy for you, I want to do everything for you. Blessed are you because you have been so foolish for me, and that you have come to become a scourge to save me, bread to feed me and to listen to me."*⁴⁹

Just before the foundation, as she prepares to tell her father the next day that she will leave for Savoy, to the Visitations of the Côte Saint Andre, she writes to Fr. Combalot:

*"Christ is the Spouse of my soul. It is Him alone that I want to love. I would like to learn to please Him and to try to render my soul worthy of His divine love. Do I then need to always live in contact with these things and those people of the world that a natural attraction and the sad customs of my past life render still more dangerous for me?"*⁵⁰

And a few months later, when the date of the foundation approaches, she explains how the love of Christ allowed her to overcome her resistance to found the work that Fr. Combalot was talking about. It was Christ who seduced her: *"For me, my dear Father, I felt that the love of Jesus dominated everything in my soul and that this was what attached me to a*

45 *Ibidem*

46 *In the summer 1837, Marie Eugenie goes to Lorraine where she met some members of her family.*

47 *Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes) n°154/04*

48 *Cf. Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes) n°154/05*

49 *Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes) n°154/13, [Small ticket, a little smaller than the previous one, written back and forth.]*

50 *Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 1st May 1838, n°30*

work that I still felt willing to pursue without any charm of trust or affection. I felt terrible struggles at the thought of those whom I love in the world. Just remembering them makes me experience so much strain, but I believe however that Jesus carries it, and I like to be able to tell myself that it is Him alone. Perhaps finally, I have learned not to demand too much, since the best soul for me, the one I love most sincerely and deeply, also seemed to me to fail for a moment.”⁵¹

The Christ she reproaches herself of not loving enough – “Because, I don’t love the Cross of J.C. enough to have all the peace that His love gives”⁵² - is also the one she wants to give and attach herself to: “I entrust my heart into the hands of Jesus Christ and I calmly trust that He will make it better. I feel so happy, that I believe I truly have love, and that I reassure myself of all my imperfections. What dries me now is not having an outpouring of fraternal charity”⁵³

Thus, she offers herself at the moment of her arrival at the Visitation: “I offered myself to God as a true novice, begging Him to no longer allow that there be in me anything that is not from Him and for Him, to give me the heart of a true spouse of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴

And it is in her love that she draws the strength to follow the path of her vocation: “It seems that my love for Jesus Christ has been enlarged to facilitate the execution of the promises of which I have made you a guardian.” At the same time, I have more freedom of spirit than I have perhaps ever had. I no longer want to torment my soul, nor plunge it into confusion, but I want to make it walk calmly in the path God traces for it, through your lips.”⁵⁵ And again: “I give all of myself to the Beloved. I ask Him forgiveness with all my soul, then, at your word, I will go, without any other disposition, throw myself with full confidence in His arms (...) There

I renewed my vows, my resolutions. I asked Our Lord to transform me into Him. I really threw myself on the adorable bosom where the blessed disciple had rested.”⁵⁶ He is finally the source of her desire to live with God: “Let us live all for God but joyfully and sincerely.”⁵⁷ One can imagine that this first attachment to Christ calls Marie Eugenie to desire with all her heart His presence in her, the extension of His Kingdom in her and in the world. He is the fertile ground, the base of this desire ... Christ is like the source from which springs her way of being even in the concrete choices of her life.

This same desire of Christ will pursue her after the foundation: “Quasimodo April 26, 1840. I strongly felt in this retreat that I do not contain myself enough in the peace and presence of Jesus Christ (...) Keep my joy through inner fidelity to Jesus Christ and confidence in him. To think more often of the consecration that makes me like one of His sacred vessels, totally anointed by the Holy Spirit of which I had received with such a great impression on this day: to better enjoy, better appreciate the great treasure that I have in Jesus Christ who calls me to be all His. To make myself faithful to this vocation which draws me to remain always at His feet to adore Him, love Him, serve Him, thank Him.”⁵⁸

Later, in 1862, we find her speaking of Jesus Christ as the “end” and the “means” of the spiritual life: “Jesus Christ is my way as well as my life. He has given me all that He is and there is no time when he does not want me to use Him, His merits, His [642] virtues, His thoughts, His prayers, His strength, His heart, to fill in for my infinite weaknesses and failures.” A bit further: “Go to Jesus Christ through Jesus Christ; that should be my life so that it may be as God wants.”⁵⁹

In rereading this path of Marie Eugenie, we discover that by the strength and the power of attention and contemplation, we come closer to Christ.

51 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 28 February 1839, n°79

52 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, June 1837, n°1

53 Marie Eugenie, fragments of an undated Letter to Fr. Combalot, n°23

54 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 15 August 1838, n°40

55 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 December 1838, n°55

56 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 27 December 1838, n°58

57 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Combalot, 18 December 1838, n°55

58 Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes) 156/01 [following the notebook]

59 Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes (Notes Intimes) 224/01, Retreat of June 1862

He gradually becomes the means, the one we look at and fill ourselves with, and the end, Him to whom we come closer and closer, the one towards whom we walk.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we note that the path of Marie Eugenie, with its meanderings, echoes many paths of our times. She can be close to us. She can be close to the young in their hesitations, their questions, until the moment of a definitive choice.

One can say that through the experience she had of God – Providence and that of her desire to love Christ, Marie Eugenie passes through all the stages of the spiritual life:

Experience of being led, of contemplating in her the work of the Other

- Experience of freedom, of choice... she said "yes" to what was going on in her, to the work of someone else
- Experience of doubt and of uncertainties, in a day to day path, rooted in the present
- She experienced that He to Whom she said "yes" to is with her in all the aspects of her life... He gives meaning even to things she did not see the meaning of.
- Finally, it is an experience to which she put words. What is striking with her is that she can talk about this experience... there are moments in which she speaks of her experience as she rereads this years later, but she is also capable of naming the experience when she actually undergoes it. It is perhaps a sign of a settled/balanced spiritual life, able to put words to it, or in any case, to be able to share it.

WORKSHOPS

"COUNSELS ON EDUCATION" ¹

Facilitated by Sister Cecilia Manrique, RA

FIRST PART:

SOME ASPECTS THAT ARISE FROM READING THE TEXT²

In 1842, Marie Eugenie, at the request of the Sisters and with faith in her mission as foundress, writes the Counsels on Education for them. *"I will talk in the measure that the ideas come to me, on the aim of education, the means, the difficulties of each age... the studies and the way of making them useful."*

1. The Context:

Passionate, woman of her times, she is open to the educational ideas of her environment and cites women (Mme. de Lambert, etc...) *"Whose works must be the object of our attention ... to compare their ideas with ours"*.

She analyzes in depth all the causes of the social situation and family context of her environment where the pursuit of wealth, power and prestige prevented many from seeing their social responsibility.

Following the metaphor of the two cities of St. Augustine she thinks that the cause of the social evils is selfishness and that the renewal of society

1 See the complete Foundation Texts pages 368-382.
The Counsels on Education have recently been the object of study, especially in the following:
- *Studies from the Archives (Études d'Archives) n° 5 - An Educational Project of the 9th Century, pgs. 38-42 - Sr. Thérèse Maylis, December 1988*
- *For a hermeneutical phenomenology of "Counsels on Education" Sr. Inés Fernández. 1991*
- *CIE - Counsels on Education - PPT (Intranet) Sr. Ana Senties*

2 *The citations are all from the first text quoted. They are more complete and detailed in the "Counsels on Education", presented at the Manila - March 2018*

will be through love and the gift of self, orienting the students towards the path of Truth and Goodness. *"There are only two cities (St. Augustine): selfishness and self-giving. This is the whole mystery, the whole principle of good and evil, in the things of here below..."*

Through education, she wants to open the young, to the Beauty of the Kingdom and the sense of social responsibility even if this sometimes means going against the current of some of the expectations of the family... *"I have my reasons to assure you that there are hardly any families for which teaching young women is not reduced only to all kinds of selfishness. ... When it is question of forming the heart given to what is good, genuinely Christian, the teachings of the family present so many obstacles like natural selfishness."* Open to all, she thinks that the students coming from unbelieving families: *"are the ones she would most desire to see come because they are the ones who need it most."*

2. Mission and vision of education:

Marie Eugenie supports a philosophy and a pedagogy in keeping with the Christian vision designed according to the Gospel and the Kingdom, of society and its transformation. She invites us to enter into Jesus', to continue His mission and to be incarnate in this world *"to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. "My approach will be to remain as close to Jesus Christ as possible, in order to see everything in/under His light."* That same year she wrote to Fr. Lacordaire: *"To make Jesus Christ liberator and sovereign of the world, known... is, for me, THE BEGINNING AND END OF ALL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION"*, a radical transformation of society, «more desirable than easy to accomplish».

3. End and objectives of education:

Her aim is to educate women in a Christian way so that they may be good daughters, spouses and mothers, aware of their influence on the family and the social environment. *"The aim of education ... is to prepare a person for all the obligations/duties of life"*

"May our greatest ambition be to educate, at least some of our alumnae so that they may overcome their shortcomings and those of their families thus managing to enter into Jesus Christ's project."

4. Meaning of the person: discover and develop their potential

According to Marie Eugenie, we are called to collaborate in the Project of the Creator helping persons to discover and develop their potentials: *"God gives everyone what they need to fulfill their duties... the project of God for each person is varied. What we have to desire is that each one fulfills it."* For her it is important to educate persons for life and for the future, knowing the reality, "the world: *"... education requires a greater knowledge of the life to which the pupil is destined than of the pupil herself. You should be aware of what her future will be, what she will have to do, so as to realize the future difficulties of certain things which at the present moment could seem of little value, ... You must, therefore, know the world, even its bad side, a knowledge... you lack to a certain extent. However, without this knowledge you might fall over a stumbling block, where you see nothing but flowers."*

Marie Eugenie believes in the capacity of women to transform society *"they whom heaven made educators of the world."*

5. The educator:

- A relationship that is **personal, close** but not on an equal footing: *"... I do not want equality to be established between them and us. We should govern these young souls, as it were, by the truth, calm, wisdom and the light we find in Jesus Christ and which we share with them, enlightening them gently in all they speak about."*
- Your educational relationships must be based on the **attitudes** of:
 1. Resoluteness/firmness: *"it is important to have a resolute authority ... that engraves/inscribes solid habits"*

2. Truth: *"tell her the truth, teach her how to practice it ... not to give in to selfishness"*
 3. Flexibility/adaptability - *"authority should be exercised and modified according to temperaments and ages"- like our Rule: "gentle rather than severe"*
 4. Unity of criteria: *"do you know what is more important, more difficult and that cannot be learned nor studied through the intelligence...? It is perfect unity in our behavior with the children" that values teamwork, consistency, complementarity each one's contribution... «It is more favorable for education to have an inferior style, but uniform among all the educators.»*
 5. Responsibility *"The responsibility of the conscience of a house of education falls on those who direct it."*
- To educate from within with freedom of mind/spirit:
 1. It is not just a question *"of fighting against exterior faults" or of teaching from "appearances" but of bringing out the "natural virtues", "the frankness of a more generous character": "Believe in the strength/power of Christian practices in the divine essence that the Sacraments put in the depth of the soul and base your hope on this foundation when nature does not seem to offer anything on which to build."*
 2. It is a question of making the seed already present in each person to sprout (St. Augustine) despite the appearances. *"in the depth of the worst natures, there is always something good; let us believe it, let us look for it perseveringly. In the obvious/ apparent character defects... let us believe that God's grace can be present."*
 3. To respect the path and vocation of each person: *"...God's Project for each one is varied; we must desire that it be fulfilled by each one."*
 - To educate through example, love and trust requires ---
 1. Patience and perseverance: *"... they will be exposed to discouragement. I want, however, that faced with these obstacles they do not lose neither the faith, nor hope nor love,... I assure you that they will feel strong to obtain what no one could have imagined."*
 2. Proximity and trust in persons: without any doubt, Marie Eugenie wanted to give an education that was closer to the students than that which was given at that time: *"Your faith will be communicated to the girl, she will have hope like you, she will try to respond to that trust ... discouragement, bitterness will have no place in her soul when she feels your appreciation and esteem ... in her life she will always remember your lessons and promises"*
 3. Above all, love: *"But for this, you must love her and to love is not always easy especially when the defects, which are naturally repugnant, are in the person we want to love."*

Conclusion:

LOVE THAT NEVER SAYS "IT IS ENOUGH":

We can say that the education that Marie Eugenie conceived of is first and foremost rooted in the faith and in the love of Christ. It is a pedagogy that humanizes and invites a more positive outlook on persons and on the world, that engages us in a personal and social transformation based on the Gospel. *"Jesus will teach us..., the secret of a final effort which will help us conquer a pupil's defects. I express myself badly for He teaches us much more. He will show us that none of our efforts should be the last, and that zeal, no less than the divine love from which it comes, can ever say: It is enough."*

SECOND PART:

Workshop Proper – reflection and exchange/sharing following the “Compare-Validate Method”

Saint M. Eugenie
“Love of her times” and what she said... TODAY, what does she tell us?

↓ HOW ARE THEY ALIKE? ↓

(Give THREE ideas that are important, key elements for education in the Assumption taking into account her Counsels)

↓ HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT? ↓

Reflect taking into account the following aspects: the educator, the family and its context, the way of educating

Exercise for deepening: (using the whiteboard or corkboard and post-it)

Marie Eugenie knew how to analyze the pedagogical ideas of her times to situate herself and establish her own educational project.

Today the philosophical-pedagogical currents are numerous and diverse. Some have a major impact on our particular environment. It can help us to reflect on them so as to situate ourselves:

Enumerate and analyze what are the socio-educational, psycho-pedagogical and methodological currents that have greater influence and acceptance in the society in general and in our own social and educational environment.

From among these, which are the most akin to the Educational Project of the Assumption? In what aspects?

Which methodological innovation lines and strategies are we already implementing in our local educational mission and what are the criteria?

WORKSHOPS

LOVE ONE’S TIMES

The importance of the context

Facilitated by Sister Ana Senties, RA

Rooted in a specific context and listening to reality, have always been key elements in the pedagogy of the Assumption. Today as yesterday, we contemplate reality to discern from the Charism and from the Gospel,

- The cries of the Earth and Humanity
- The forces of life and transformation

...and so we continue to respond through our projects and by our actions in order that our earth becomes “a place of glory for God”¹

1. Listening according to St. Marie Eugenie and our first sisters

‘*To listen*’ ... a fundamental attitude of Marie Eugenie and our first sisters is also a challenge for us today.

The immense cultural ruptures and mutations of our world, the ecological disaster, the migratory crisis, and many other problems challenge us to express a *new word* born of the dynamism of our Charism² and our own experience of transformation. A word capable of being believed and that gives hope in the future and passion to build it.

As a disciple, to listen: The disciple is an “*echo*” of the Word received from his/her own reality. He/she is called to be present to this, so the Holy Spirit can bring to birth a new word. By his/her consent, this gives rise to a unique harmony, not yet perceivable. The true ‘word’ is a birth ... it is not surprising that it needs gestation³.

1

Letter of Marie Eugenie to F. Lacordaire. Origins vol 1

2

Pope Francis. Letter in 2015, Year of the Consecrated Life

3

Regine de Charlat. “Trouver sa propre parole de Foi”

This is a way for us “to love our times”, as Marie Eugenie invites us, in an attitude of search, discernment, and conversion.

WHAT MARIE EUGENIE AND OUR FIRST SISTERS ‘HEARD’ FROM LISTENING TO THEIR TIMES...

1817-1898: in the 81 years of Marie Eugenie's life, seven political regimes followed one another in France. It was troubled times, though from the point of view of social, philosophical, artistic and ecclesial life, it was rich in change and innovation.

Such a historical upheaval brings about profound changes in a culture and destabilizes the structures of society - its government, social order, economy, education - and its Church.⁴

SOCIAL CONTEXT

“Up to this day, the education of the girls in the family, in houses of education, in convents themselves, has been nothing but the theory of selfishness in action. Far from destroying this fatal flaw it has everywhere and at all times been nurtured.... It has not been understood that what needs to grow is the intelligence, the heart, the womanly life, growth in virtue (education) such as it is and falsely given by either carers, parents or by circumstances. Up to now the educational aim has been a vanity of success, praise and pleasure in rewards ...”⁵

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

“We have experienced that the instruction of women was superficial, and without connection to their faith, and therefore of no use to their children,.... They have false ideas of their dignity and with their endless piety, they are ignorant of the nature of their religion, of its truths, its

history, and that which would make them understand the Christian social spirit.”

“I add that a few girls have been educated about the seriousness of life”⁶... this conviction was missing, they were able to read books of all kinds, we had teachers of all beliefs. It was impossible to reach our age with a certain culture of spirit....⁷

ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

“...The members of this Church, I did not know them ...I dreamed of finding in them apostles, I found only men ..”⁸

“... My heart beats in the name of my contemporaries, illustrious defenders of the faith... I dreamed of being a man to be like them, very useful. I told myself that they would save their homeland by saturating it in the Source of the truth ...”⁹

FAMILIAL CONTEXT

“Daughter of a family unfortunately incredulous, educated in a society that was even more so, an orphan at 15 years old... I could understand and feel - speaking as a Christian - the profound misfortune of the society to which I belonged ... It seems to me that anyone who loves the Church even a little must feel urged to try by all means, to penetrate this society with faith in Jesus Christ ...”¹⁰

“I was brought up in an unbelieving family that belonged to the liberal opposition to the Restoration. My mother, however, wished to see me a Christian, and her great and energetic character led her to imprint upon

4 Reference Guide, *Education in the Assumption*, 1998
5 Marie Eugenie, reflections on education, No. 1512

6 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. D'Alzon, no. 1556, 1842
7 Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instruction of 28 April 1889
8 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Lacordaire, 13 December 1841, No. 1501.
9 Marie Eugenie, Intimate Notes, No. 154/10
10 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Gros, No. 1504

my education a character of renunciation which always seemed to me more Christian than many forms of religious education.”¹¹

BIRTH OF A “NEW WORD” WHICH CONCERNS THE PERSON, SOCIETY & EDUCATION

“It pains me to hear this earth called a land of exile. I consider it a place of glory for God. Here He can receive from our free and suffering wills the only homage that He does not find in Himself. ... present in us by grace, he wants to work in each one of us for the great work of the kingdom of God, ... each one enters into His project ... there will be only one flock and one Shepherd. The Son of Man will draw everything to Himself. On the other hand, who would dare to doubt that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is the goal of the world and that it is good to devote oneself completely to Him?”¹²

“I see the need for development, the moral rehabilitation of our world.... I believe that the will of God is a social situation where no one suffers any other misfortune than the disasters of nature, that is to say, where Christian principles work in each one so that they no longer become the oppressor of others ...”¹³

“We must ask God that His Kingdom come ... a social reign ... through education, we help to provide this great wonder ..”¹⁴

2. Personal Reflection and Sharing

- What do you hear as you listen to your context (social, educational, ecclesial, of your own history and experience ...) in the light of the Word of God and Assumption educational charism?
- What worries you, or reassures you, what discourages you and encourages you?

- In all of that, what is awakened in you as desire and passion, as an experience of transformation ...?
- Express in words, symbols or drawing, the intuitions that come to you...
- Share with others (small groups by language)

3. Going further:

The book “Towards An Eco-Assumption”¹⁵ serves today as a background for our reflections, exchanges and commitments, because it is born precisely from our awareness, as Assumption, of the urgencies of our time and our desire to support and encourage ourselves to give new answers.

Following our foundress, this document is an invitation to:

- Love our times and continue our commitment to the transformation of society
- A wide vision: expand our mental structures, push our limits, discovering the different realities to which we are committed as Assumption, enrich ourselves, displace ourselves...
- Marvel at the vitality of the charism around the world, which is recreating and responding to all these problems.
- Re-energize and communicate hope...
- Commit to contribute our share: believe that our projects and actions, our gestures, no matter how small, are adding to so many initiatives of life and that really transform the course of history ...

You can focus your reading and reflection with the articles on Marie Eugenie and the Assumption charism (chapters 3 and 4)

11 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. Lacordaire, 13 December 1841, No. 1051

12 Marie Eugenie, undated Letter to Fr. Lacordaire, cited in the Origins vol 1

13 Marie Eugenie, Letter to Fr. d'Alzon 1844, No. 1610

14 Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, 3 December 1882, “Advent»

15

Printed in 2015 at the request of the General Chapter of 2012, this anthology is a work of collaboration thanks to the participation of over 40 sisters and friends from all four continents. It is an expression of the richness of our internationality and the interculturality of the Assumption.

We propose the next four articles to nourish your personal reflection and exchanges:

- "The eschatological dimension, hope » (3.b.2 Ascensión González, r.a.)
- "Transformative Education and JPIC-S Commitment in the Assumption: two closely related themes" (3. d.5 Ana Senties, r.a.)
- "Marie Eugénie and the Kingdom: Social Consequences of the Gospel" (3. d.2 Mercedes Escobedo)
- "Transformative Education at the Service of the Gospel" (4. a1 Véronique Thiebaut, r.a)

WORKSHOPS

JOYFUL DETACHMENT

A Paschal Movement

Facilitated by Sister Véronique Thiébaud, RA

Joy is one of the characteristics of the spirit of the Assumption. It marks our educational projects, our relationships, the life of our diverse communities. The risk with joy is to reduce it to external manifestations, as exuberant as they are. One might think that this joy is simply reflected in the family spirit, in the ability to maintain a certain cheerfulness in all circumstances. Certainly, this is part of this "spirit of joy" or its manifestation, but that is not enough to define the "joy" of which Marie Eugenie speaks (Cf. Introduction of the Workshop). The simple rereading of our personal experiences of deep joy shows us that it is not so simple to live. It also highlights the fact that one can experience some joy at the heart of a difficult experience or after having gone through it.

Joy is not just a matter of circumstances or conditions (see steps 1 and 2 of the Workshop). In reality, joy is the fruit of real spiritual work. It is in the context of her reflection on what characterizes the spirit of the Assumption that Marie Eugenie uses the expression "joyful detachment". This expression allows us to go further in the understanding of joy that she is talking about and envisioning for those living the spirit of the Assumption. In order to grasp what it is about, one can proceed to a careful reading of her Chapter Instruction¹ on this theme, which is part of a series of Chapters that we have come to know as the Spirit of the Assumption, given in 1878. We can say that at this moment, Marie Eugénie felt capable of presenting a synthesis of her thoughts, the fruit of the experiences of the first 39 years since the foundation of the Congregation.

1

The Chapter Instructions were the teachings given by Marie Eugénie to the sisters every week. Most of these texts are in the Archives, put together from the notes of the sisters and reread by Marie Eugénie.

WORK ON THE CHAPTER INSTRUCTION²

The introduction of the Chapter presents joyful detachment as a way of practicing the evangelical virtues that is proper to the Assumption, as “one of the practical consequences of the spirit of the Assumption”. Since it has practical consequences, this inner disposition therefore conditions our way of acting, interacting and being in the world. It is not only a pious intention. Marie Eugénie continues as follows:

The spirit of the Assumption tends towards a joyful detachment from earthly things and a going beyond trials and difficulties without complaining or wasting our time over them. There is, in joyful detachment, an ability to “rise up”, to distance oneself, one would say today, to detach oneself, perhaps, not to remain stuck in difficulties, like a man whose feet would sink into a swamp and take root there.³ And all that this interior project leads to is the mystery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, union with the Virgin “ascending above the earth. She calls us “to rise with her to a celestial life by placing our thoughts and affections in heaven.” Joyful detachment inevitably raises the question about our attachments: where do our feelings, our thoughts, our affections go? To God? In a movement of adoration, born of the trust that we place in him? Or towards our weaknesses, our limits ... carried away in a movement of sadness and despair? Marie Eugénie gives her answer: she places joyful detachment on the side of adoration “which means, that in adoring these sovereign rights of God we anticipate His will with perfect confidence in Him.”

At first (see Steps 3 and 4 - GR 1), Marie Eugénie emphasizes that God is Father. It is the very being of God that makes the confident attitude of joyous detachment possible: “Since God is a Father, let us trust him, let us go to him who is infinite goodness and whose mercy prevails over justice..” He is “good”, he is “infinite good”, “infinite wisdom”; “There is no

moment when one cannot throw oneself into His arms.” The certainty that God accompanies our every step and that in all circumstances, He is there, makes us able to cross the difficulties of life with “detachment”, to let go and cast off what could impede our path.

And how does this fundamental trust manifest itself in the life of a believer? (See steps 3 and 4 - GR 2) It leads the person to joy rather than sadness and desolation, the ability to take things from the perspective of goodness rather than lamenting continually. In our concrete way of speaking, to consider life, to engage in it, setting aside complaints and murmurings, to develop love, service, truth: “*In this world, we encounter difficulties, embarrassments, sorrows, without ceasing. Do not add more with complaints about the crosses, about the inconveniences we find in this or that. It would be so much lost time that we could use to fill ourselves with truth, love, and work in the service of our Lord.*” In other words, let us leave our selfish concerns and get out of ourselves to go to others,

Joyful detachment is part of a vision of people that is extremely positive – “endowed with intelligence and freedom”. (See steps 3 and 4 - GR 3) It summons the human being to creativity, to always look for solutions rather than looking at dead-ends. Instead of getting stuck with the inconveniences, embarrassments, difficulties, the person is called to unceasingly seek for the remedy to offer, the way of working to bring one to the service of God in all: “*I believe that, in joyful detachment, the spirit of the Assumption leaves aside lamentations, as a Prophet says, and instead seeks what God wants us to do, to make the most of what is happening for His service and glory.*” This state of mind urges us to be constructive, to speak only to get things done, to engage with all our freedom and strength on the side of life.

In other words, it can be said that it helps us to fight one of the evils of the century of Marie Eugénie which is still relevant today: egoism, egocentrism, withdrawal into oneself (see steps 3 and 4 – GR 4). “*Why not animate all our thoughts, all our words, all our works with a desire for zeal? It would free us and put us in the position to give of ourselves joyfully to all*

² Marie Eugénie, *Chapter Instructions, 19 mai 1878, “Spirit of the Assumption IX - Joyful Detachment from Earthly Things”*

³ cf. *Image used by Marie Eugénie in her Chapter Instructions of 29 février 1880*

that pertains to the service of our heavenly Father. As we get rid of words, useless thoughts, complaints, lamentations, worldly affairs, we get more of the kingdom of God, we fill ourselves with better things, we seek more the word of faith that can do good, we speak more often to God and of God. There is everything to gain; and if there is anything to lose, it is a certain need to return to oneself. For this need, we must ask God to remove this from us." It is therefore a matter of emptying oneself to fill oneself with God, as in a paschal movement that crosses death, the desert, to pass into life. It is a question of making our lives useful in the service of God and of our brothers and sisters, of deploying our being in this service rather than narrowing it down by focusing on itself.

SOURCES OF JOY ACCORDING TO MARIE EUGÉNIE

In working on this theme of joyful detachment, one can be interested in what Marie Eugénie says in other chapter instructions. For her, without a doubt, she draws from the contemplative life, as *"the happy and secret light that comes from within."*⁴ *"There are joys for children," she writes, "there are some for strong souls, there are those who are born with a more intimate contact with our Lord, of fidelity to his grace. The best joys, the deepest joys come from there ..."*⁵ She sees in our spirit an indispensable feature of adoration and praise to God: *"Joy comes from there as from its source, a deep and permanent joy since it is sourced in God."*⁶ So it is not the circumstances of an easy life filled with well-being that shape the joy in our hearts, but it is the prayer of praise, a gratuitous attitude, which anticipates and gives birth to it.

In this sense, this joy is linked to the ability to empty oneself, to make space and to "go out" to the other ... it is founded on humility: *"A second characteristic of our spirit that would be good for us to keep coming back to, is charity; but charity cannot exist by itself without humility. How would*

*you like to have rapport, contact, union among people who are all filled with themselves? It is necessary to be empty of oneself to constantly bring to others a pleasant, smiling face, and to give them joy."*⁷ Elsewhere still: *"Joy is borne out of humility and charity and this is indeed our spirit, daughters of the Assumption, and it is this holy joy which brings us to praise, to blessings, and to 'thanksgiving.'"*⁸

For Marie Eugénie, evangelical contemplation is the surest way to immerse oneself in the joy of the Lord (see step 6 of the workshop). She proposes to focus on two liturgical seasons: Christmas and Easter.⁹ In a chapter of January 1883, which is good to take the time to reread, she proposes the contemplation of the cave of Bethlehem, a humble and hidden place where one finds the source of joy: *"Here, therefore, is the source of the true joy, the Child Jesus in the stable,"*¹⁰ Jesus, poor and small, whom we may seek to resemble. Contemplating the mother of Jesus, placing all her joy in the son she receives, is another way of contemplation to obtain joy.

On April 5, 1874, in another chapter instruction, the resurrection is presented to us as a path to joy. Between the joys of the beginnings of our spiritual life and the joys promised in the hereafter lies this time of patience, of the more arduous spiritual work, *"where we must seek our Lord with great generosity and follow Him until He becomes the only light of our intelligence - and believe that it is necessary to work so as to arrive at having no other enlightenment than those which come from the faith."*¹¹ Here is what Marie Eugénie wishes: *"May He (Christ) become the strong and ardent love of our heart, so that we may seek him in all things and because of Him, love all (...) the time, during which Jesus Christ must become like the shape of our life."*¹² Joy is linked to the strength of love, to

4 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. D'Alzon, 25 juin 1847, n°1862

5 Marie Eugénie, Chapter Instructions, 13 août 1891, "On the Spirit of the Assumption - Praise, Love and Joy"

6 Ibidem

7 Ibidem

8 Ibidem

9 Cf. Marie Eugénie, Chapter Instructions, 5 janvier 1883 : "Christmas and Easter are the two liturgical seasons that the Church consecrates to spiritual joy."

10 Marie Eugénie, Chapter Instructions, 5 janvier 1883, Joy, the Spirit of Christmas

11 Marie Eugénie, Chapter Instructions, 5 avril 1874. « The Resurrection »

12 Ibidem

the ardor of the heart, to the passion for Christ that becomes the love for all. Thus, she can conclude: *"The joy of the soul arises above these contradictions, above these trials, above these little things where one finds criticism and complaining. The joy of the soul arises in the hope that accompanies and guides love. It takes its place in this peace of heart where we begin to enjoy in Jesus Christ, risen, the eternal kingdom where one day we shall see him in all His glory."*¹³

Take time to contemplate the child in Bethlehem and Mary who places her joy in Him or contemplate the Risen Christ, who calls our hearts to be impassioned for Him and those who follow Him, whose hearts burned with joy as they encountered Him as the disciples of Emmaus, enable us to let the evangelical joy gradually shape our heart.

LINKS TO OUR MISSION OF EDUCATION

At the end of this journey, it is good to think about the link of this reflection on "joyful detachment" with our mission of education. Everyone can look for this and give their personal answer, specify where they have been touched, what they savor and what calls them to go further. And we can note some elements, as an example or an invitation ...

- The educator called to work on oneself:
 1. To live humility and to empty oneself so that the other, the one that one accompanies, finds his/her place
 2. To always see what is positive rather than obstacles in situations; to be inventive to make way for the passage of life
 3. To contemplate Christ and let oneself be seduced by Him, so that He may be the source of all of one's actions and words
 4. Leave one's personal interest or one's "little problems" to give the other the first place

- Accompany persons towards joyful detachment
 1. Learn that the obstacle or difficulty is not the end of the road
 2. Help people to become aware of their capacity – intelligence and freedom
 3. Develop interiority in the aspects of praise and adoration
 4. Formation to loyalty and fidelity
- To be detached from oneself to be able to enter a kind of happy simplicity
 1. Decentering oneself from one's own needs and demands; to free oneself by being satisfied with little
 2. Savor the facets of life: the present moment, nourishment, events, the rhythm of the seasons...
 3. Consume less so as to share more and make life for others possible
 4. Aim for the usefulness of one's own life for the common good and not for personal success

And many other things that the Spirit will teach and reveal to all those who will embark on this journey of joyful detachment!

WORKSHOP PROCESS:

Form four (4) small groups – the contents for each stage is found in the text above.

STAGE I

Invite the participants to recall a moment when they felt deep joy. What provoked this joy? What image could be used to describe the feeling? What lasting traces did this experience of joy leave in them.

STAGE II

Present images asking the participants to choose, coming from what they know of the thoughts of Marie Eugenie regarding joy, what image best expresses joy for Marie Eugenie, and which image least expresses the joy that Marie Eugenie speaks of.

After these two (2) stages, a time for free sharing in small groups may take place.

STAGE III

The chapter on joyful detachment is introduced; then each small group receives an excerpt from this chapter and a question that corresponds to the excerpt. The small group shares and writes the answer (s) to the question on a colored circle sheet.

- GROUP 1 : What are the characteristics of God that make joyful detachment possible? (Excerpt: From "I told you so ..." to "Does not everything take us there?")
- GROUP 2 : What are the human attitudes that best convey joyful detachment? (Excerpt: From "This disposition is fine ..." to "... work at the service of our Lord.")
- GROUP 3 : What abilities is the human person invited to develop to live joyful detachment (Excerpt: From "It's Right ..." to "So we do not waste the precious time of life in continual lamentations.")
- GROUP 4 : What would you call and define as "evil of the century" (which goes through the centuries!) That joyful detachment challenges? (Excerpt: From "One of the great evils of our time ..." to "What are the actions that are done for him?")

STAGE IV

Share the responses from the work on the text.

STAGE V

Presentation on the Sources of Joy according to Marie Eugénie

STAGE VI

Time for Personal Contemplation: each one chooses an element of contemplation from the presentation on the Sources of Joy

STAGE VII

Small group sharing : How do the discoveries of this workshop help us, enlighten us for our work of education? (the full text on joyful detachment will be distributed at the end of the workshop)

WORKSHOPS

PERSONALIZED CHARACTER FORMATION

Facilitated by Ms. Mary Ann and Ms. Mara Eala

BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION:

In the 6th Chapter of the Reference Guide that was the fruit of the Assumption International Education Congress (AIEC) of 1998, some elements of the Assumption Educational Anthropology¹ were identified. Among the Points of Departure articulated is that every human being is educable and unique. And further on in the same Chapter, the document refers to the importance that Marie Eugenie gave to the “education of character.” It is from these affirmations that this workshop has been conceptualized in an effort to share how this is concretized in a school setting that is Assumption College, San Lorenzo.

The Education offered at Assumption College, San Lorenzo has taken to heart the importance of the formation of CHARACTER² that recognizes the uniqueness of each student. To this end, mentors try to look for ways to incorporate this in the school program and do not hesitate to tie-up with other Learning Institutions that may offer ways to deepen and further this important aspect of education in the Assumption.

This workshop hopes to share how the ABILITY-BASED LEARNING PROGRAM which was patterned after Alverno College³ is adapted as a way of carrying out the personalized formation of character in the Assumption. The objective is always to provide learners with the abilities that will enable

them to live the values that the Assumption espouses – in this way form their character and influence their decisions and choices.

Animation Strategy – RALLY ROBIN : PAIRS

This is a way by which to structure participants’ engagement. In pairs, participants take turns responding orally. First, the facilitator/mentor poses a problem or a question to which there are multiple possible solutions or responses and provides think time. Second, participants take turns stating responses or solutions.

PROFILE OF TODAY’S GENERATION OF LEARNERS

It is important to know who the learners are and their typical characteristics:

Generation X – those who were born from 1965 – 1976

- Resilient
- Independent decision-maker
- Security seeker
- Resilient
- Uses technology to connect with their children

Millennials (Generation Y) – those who were born from 1977 – 1995

- Collaborative
- Accepting of diversity
- Opinionated
- Entitled
- Uses technology to connect and to communicate

Generation Z – those who were born from 1996 – 2003

- Citizen of the world with no boundaries
- Inclusive
- Independent
- Lives in the internet

¹ Education in the Assumption, Reference Guide, Chapter VI, SOME ELEMENTS OF THE ASSUMPTION EDUCATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY, A COMMON VISION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN, AIEC, July 1998.

² Character - Please refer to the section of this booklet on “Some Important Definitions”

³ Since the early 1970s, the Alverno College faculty have been developing and implementing ability-based undergraduate education. More recently, educators at every level – elementary, secondary, undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional – have become involved in an effort to redefine education in terms of abilities needed for effectiveness in the worlds of work, family, and civic community.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION – focuses on uniformity or what is best described as a “one-size fits all” Formation. Each one gets the same information and content using a uniform method, usually lectures and is expected to remember and return the information and content received as a measure of success. There is not much room for differences even if this reality does exist. Effort lies in trying to fit and conform.

versus

PERSONALIZED CHARACTER FORMATION – identifies core abilities that need to be learned and acquired by learners today and find appropriate means, methods and activities to develop these, always mindful of the uniqueness of each one way of learning. Character is formed by developing these abilities and identifying a set of values towards which one’s character is oriented.

Assumption College undertook a long community process to identify the abilities to develop and the values to espouse in the community.

ABILITIES TO BE DEVELOPED

- Empathy
- Leadership
- Communication
- Discernment and Critical Thinking
- Creativity and Innovation
- Self-Direction
- Collaboration
- National and Global Citizenship

SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW TO DEVELOP SOME ABILITIES TO FORM CHARACTER

Empathy – responding out of concern for others’ feelings and realities

Honesty Store – These are put up to develop integrity as well as raise funds for worthy causes such as for sick members in the community and victims of armed conflict. Various items, usually food, are placed outside the classroom. There is a box where one’s payment can be placed. No one monitors the “store.” Usually, the amount collected from the box at the end of the day is more than what it should have been if people paid the amount prescribed for each item.

Collaboration – learning, solving problems, achieving goals with others

Kaisa (Filipino word meaning “oneness”) – This is meant to develop sisterhood and a sense of community. Students from one level are partnered with students from other levels. The students participate in a variety of “getting-to-know-you” activities, express their appreciation for each other through letters and share a meal together.

MIX – PAIR – SHARE : WHOLE GROUP

Participants mix and pair up when prompted. A question is posted and both partners think about their response. One teammate is randomly selected to share his/her ideas. Then, the other teammate shares his/her ideas.

National and Global Citizenship – the interest and knowledge of national and global realities for the common good

KAPIHAN (Filipino word meaning “Coffee time”) – this is a forum for adult facilitators, mentors staff and administrators which is conducted three times a year. The main aim is to raise awareness on current national and global socio-political and environmental issues. This is done through the invitation of resource speakers or panel discussions.

Self Direction – aspires for self-knowledge and takes responsibility for continued learning and growth

Growth Mindset – YET – Over 30 years ago, Professor Carol Dweck of Stanford University became interested in how students respond to failure and which, if any, character traits could be used to determine which students would succeed in school and in life. The product of her research is a concept now known as Growth Mindset. Growth Mindset is the belief that anyone can learn and improve, with the right amount of effort and the right kind of strategy. The concepts of growth and fixed mindset have been backed by research on brain plasticity (that the brain is capable of changing) and have created waves in the field of Education in recent years.

Today, educators acknowledge that greater attention must be brought to the language that should be used when talking about challenges, failure, effort and success. One such technique teachers can use is harnessing the power of the word 'yet'. That is, instead of allowing students to fall back on fixed mindset statements like «I cannot do this!», «I do not get it!», teachers can shift the language and therefore the mindset of their learners by teaching them to attach the word 'yet' to the end of their sentences (i.e. «I don't get it YET», «I can't do this YET»). This way, students learn to recognize that learning is a process. While it may sometimes be difficult or take longer than expected, they can learn anything with hard work and the right kind of guidance.

ACx (Assumption College Experience) is a synthesis course that stimulates reflection on the three pillars of Assumption education: Academic Excellence for Service, Faith and Spirituality and Social Responsibility, and challenges students to effect change within themselves and their respective spheres of influence. Students examine three Essential Questions: Who am I? How do I address my strengths and challenges? and How do I respond to the needs of my community/ country/world? Classics such as Shakespeare's Hamlet and Hugo's Les Miserables, contemporary literature and current national and global issues serve as the vehicle for students' inquiry. Furthermore, they are

encouraged to use social media in a positive way through a module on Online Civic Engagement. Also, a module on making relevant presentations and giving effective talks helps to prepare them for university and the world of work. Students document their reflections, insights and progress in a Growth Portfolio. The course culminates with ACx talks (patterned after TED talks) in which students articulate the personal impact of their Assumption education.

Animation Strategy – TIMED ROUND ROBIN : GROUPS OF FOUR

The Timed Round Robin strategy is a brainstorming strategy where participants are situated around a table in an academic discussion. Like other brainstorming sessions, participants generate ideas on a specific topic or question. However, with this strategy, there is equal participation among participants as well as multiple discussions taking place.

WORKSHOPS

ENTHEOS EXERCISES

Facilitated by Ms. Ana Valdes-Lim and her Team

Within the International Education Gathering this one-day workshop was intended to integrate and interiorize the experience of the day before where the participants were presented with an exposure to chosen realities of today.

This was to serve as a transition towards the next stage of the Gathering which was to blaze the trail for the future therefore a time that would provide for a climate of discernment and sensitivity to the “signs of the times” and the invitations and calls for the Assumption today.

Entheos is a Greek word, meaning “in God”. It is the root of the word “enthusiasm”; the “*Entheos*” exercises thus mean the practice of living “Joy in God”.

The Entheos exercises lead the participant into a life of uninterrupted practice. One arrives at living life in uninterrupted practice by small mindfulness steps in the present moment. One arrives at living in the present moment by mindfulness while sitting, walking, running, listening, speaking, and responding to others. Entheos exercises anchor in the alignment of our head, hands, and heart. The Entheos practice is living uninterrupted present moment awareness, which is living in joy in God

PART I – TO USHER AUTHENTICITY AND AN UNCLUTTERED MIND.

Prepare the room. Choose a large airy space, that is cool and private. Preferably one that overlooks nature. Choose a spacious, simple, open room and keep it free from clutter.

Have the chairs in a circle to usher an experience of sacredness. Participants must enter in silence.

A “Mandala” at the center is a symbol of unifying simplicity, ushering open inclusivity and diversity.

Do not use a lot of words, start with silence and use gentle music.

Exercise 1: Sitting Gaze Down

Sitting with gaze down. Breathing in and out. A silent meditation to connect to one’s inner being.

We avoid eye contact because when we gaze at the eyes of others, we might be tempted to respond, or engage in a conversation with the eyes, or we may trigger our egos, to impress or seek attention or a connection from another. Eyes gaze down, no eye contact.

Exercise 2: Rising, Standing, and Walking with Gaze Down

Rising to walk, and walking, with gaze down, no eye contact. A walking meditation.

The purpose is to align the body, mind, and spirit in mindful action.

To avoid two triggers of misalignment:

- Over active analytical mind that generates excessive thoughts
- Over active body seeking an emotional experience

Exercise 3: Walking and Weaving in Space with Gaze Down

A walking meditation that brings awareness of the spaces between human beings, not the humans themselves. This awareness develops into an awareness of myself in space as I weave between and among beings. Eyes gaze down, no eye contact.

We avoid eye contact, physical contact, and any engagement because we want to avoid the two common triggers. See the two triggers of misalignment above (Exercise 2).

Exercise 4: Dancing Movement in Space – Gaze Down

A moving meditation that brings awareness of the spaces between human beings, not the humans themselves. This awareness develops into an awareness of myself moving, dancing, twirling, running, changing direction in space as I weave between and among beings. There is a tendency to become over – aware of my “image” or how I am perceived by others. For this reason, the eyes remain gazing down. No eye contact.

We encourage the participant to do the following and to observe whether their ego rises or maintains centered in inner being.

- Run, stop, run
- Change rhythm: walk slow, run fast, suddenly stop
- Turn
- Change direction
- Jump, skip, twirl

Exercise 5: Walking Movement in Space – Gaze Shoulders

A moving meditation that gently lifts the gaze to the shoulders of other beings, but not to their eyes. A meditation that brings awareness of the spaces between human beings, their bodies, and the movement in space surrounding me. This awareness develops into an awareness of myself moving, space as I weave between and among beings and the other beings moving around me. There is a tendency to become over-aware of my “image” or how I am perceived by others. For this reason, the eyes remain gazing down up to the shoulders of others. No eye contact.

Exercise 6: Walking Movement in Space – Eye Contact

A moving meditation with a gentle eye contact, and an awareness of what happens with the eye contact. Is there a shift in the inner being? Does the personality rise and want to impress the other person? Is there an over-courtesy, an over – greeting, or can the participant simply stay aligned with the center being, and simply look at another being without feeling

compelled to communicate or without being over-run by thoughts and emotions.

Exercise 7: Greeting with the small finger – Eye Contact

A moving meditation that allows mindful touch contact and awareness of the subtle energy between two people. This exercise avoids mindless greetings and perfunctory hellos. This exercise brings awareness to the small gestures of the body. Emphasis is on the small, the sacredness of small.

Exercise 8: Greeting with any body part to another body part – Eye Contact

A moving meditation that allows mindful touch contact and awareness of the subtle energy between two people but increasing the “risk” factor and vulnerability of the participant. This exercise opens the participant to choose which body part he/she will offer and accept for touch contact. This exercise may trigger fears, judgments, and inhibitions. This exercise avoids mindless greetings and perfunctory hellos. This exercise brings awareness to the small gestures of the body. Emphasis is on the small, the sacredness of small.

Exercise 9: Walking Holding Hands-Eye Contact

A moving meditation that allows mindful touch contact and awareness of the subtle energy between two people holding hands. This exercise is an intimate exercise, and participants may convey friendship as well as fear. This exercise avoids mindless greetings and perfunctory connections. This exercise brings awareness to the small energies of the body. Emphasis is on the small, the sacredness of small.

PART II – TO USHER HONESTY AND CLARITY IN THE PARTICIPANT'S POTENTIAL FOR SELF AND COMMUNITY EXAMINATION

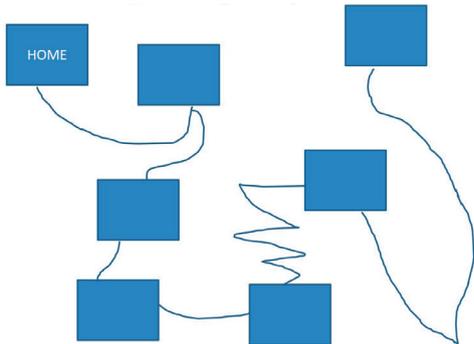
After the meditation, the participant is open to expressing authentically from a mindful-aware center. The participant will be invited to create mental emotional pictures to help her/him navigate the interior landscape of his/her being.

The next exercises do not require talking or sharing. This is a private exercise to deepen one's understanding of his/her situation.

Exercise 10: Create your Life Map on the Wall

1. Using string and post it notes, create your life map on the wall depicting your life as you see it.
2. HOME: Start with the first post it marked home.
3. LANDMARKS: Decide the landmarks of your history. Which events were most transformative?
4. CREATIVE YARN: Use the yarn creatively to depict how that journey was and to show how each event connects one to the other.

Create your life map (last 3 years)



Exercise 11: Create your Life Map on the Wall AND THE ORGANIZATION in which it dwells

What type of organizational structure do you have?

What are the areas of influence?

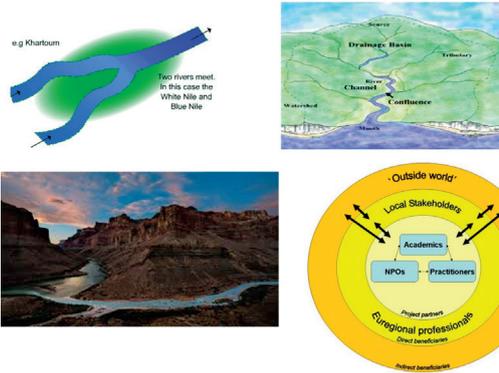
What are the areas of confluence?

Depict it visually using the objects before you: yarn, post-its, markers.

Draw a picture of what your organization looks like.
(Keep it simple) 10 minutes



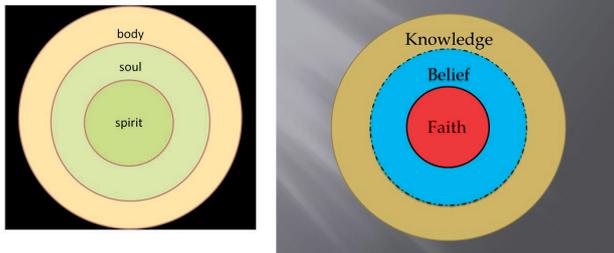
Draw a picture of the communities of influence and confluence (two rivers meet)



Exercise 12: What are your core values, not from the handbook but from your deeper experience?

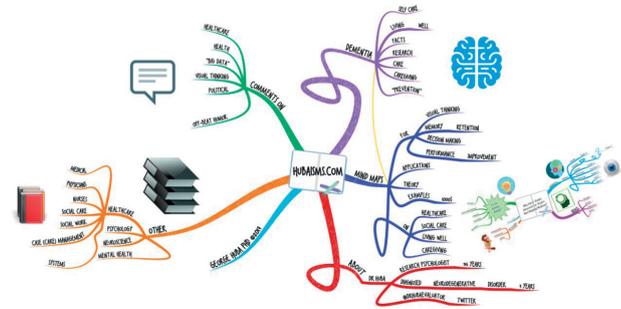
1. What is sacred to your organization?
2. What are your core values?
3. What are your institute's goals?

Give 3 to 7 answers or draw it



Exercise 13: What are the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving your goals?

1. What are your challenges?
2. What geo-political problems do you have? (war, inequality, injustice, poverty, clamity, social class, lack of education, corruption, fatigue)



Exercise 14: What are some of the common challenges?

Put the obstacles and the challenges on the wall indicating these as either Urgent, Critical, Important.

At the end of Exercise 14, common problems and issues emerge. After these activities, the Workshop ended with a rereading of the Experience of the Gathering in the light of the challenges identified above. Sufficient time was given to note important elements to keep in mind as the Gathering moves on to the next part of looking towards the future.

ON THE ROAD TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Some Calls and Concrete First Steps

At the end of the International Education Gathering, all the delegates identified important and convergent points. The Congregation and each Province / Region will see how these can be deepened and implemented.

1. Encourage experiences of interiority to allow each person to drink from the Sources, to encounter God, others, oneself and Creation, discovering that one is a beloved creature of God, fulfilling and committing oneself as fully as possible.

- a. Find spaces, times and places to create a culture of interiority that encourages discernment, the sharing of values, mutual respect and harmonious relationships – in all our works, communities and educational projects;
- b. Look for means to work in an innovative way, with the writings of Marie Eugenie, favoring the development of all forms of intelligences;
- c. Identify and document existing experiences, no matter how simple (such as: spaces of silence, different encounters with the Word of God, with Jesus Christ, with feelings and emotions...). Let these experiences heal, harmonize and transform one's living in the Assumption community, towards a commitment that «reaches out», especially to the excluded in one's society;
- d. Deepen one's appreciation and understanding of the pedagogies of Interior Formation, of Desire and of Wisdom.¹

1

Refer to the 2006 pre-capitular texts of the General Chapter

2. Engage in a “JPICS”² lifestyle and develop an integral ecology.³

- a. Choose joyful detachment as one of the fundamental characteristics of all forms of communities, in a movement towards greater openness, to allow everyone to live as fully as possible (for example: how could “Gross National Happiness”⁴ be translated in the Assumption, develop indicators for quality relationships ...);
- b. Put in place small and simple acts, which permit one to take care of relationships between persons and the environment, taking the ecological, social, economic and moral elements into account;
- c. Favor the experiences of seeking beauty and goodness (in oneself, in others and in nature...) and develop interiority as a way to humanize relationships;
- d. Share, maximize and make the most use of the resources presented in the book «Towards an Eco-Assumption»⁵.

3. Love our times. Develop a pedagogy of experience that counts on the analysis and discernment of reality as fundamental elements, in the formation towards commitment to the transformation of society.

- a. Define, deepen and systematize the pedagogy of the experience;
- b. Accompany vocational discernment, building on the sources of the Congregation, especially the journey of Marie Eugénie and Thérèse Emmanuel;
- c. Form young people, educators and families in leadership: trust and support them in assuming responsibility so that they can give the best of themselves in the service of the common good;

2

Refer to the section of this booklet – “Some Important Definitions – JPICS”

3

Refer to the section of this booklet – “Some Important Definitions – Integral Ecology”

4

Refer to the section of this booklet – “Some Important Definitions – Gross National Happiness”

5

Towards An Eco-Assumption, an Anthology compiled by the International JPIC Secretariat-RA, April 2016

- d. Give priority to accompaniment⁶ in: rereading, self-knowledge and self-esteem, discernment and decision-making.

4. Strengthen the common formation of lay and religious to the Assumption Spirituality, charism and values, in order to carry on the mission of Transformative Education in their particular contexts.

Develop and deepen the relationship between the sisters and the laity.

In the Provinces/Region

- Create new spaces where lay and religious can be formed together and share resources
- Each province identifies the context of formation today to be able to respond to the needs appropriately
- Each Province puts in place a structure or a project of formation
- Consider having a team of formators for this work
- Give importance to formation to accompaniment
- Customize and adapt a formation program according to particular contexts and cultures
- Ensure formation to the mission of transformative education in the initial formation of sisters

In the Congregation

- Create a team in the Congregation for this work ---
- Survey of existing formation, programs and current needs, study and go deeper in the Assumption historical roots and tradition
- Identify elements, available tools and current issues for this common formation⁷

5. Networking and sharing of resources for Transformative Education

- a. Improve and recreate systems for sharing and networking: create a specific hub that will facilitate availability and sharing of resources
- b. Make available and accessible the existing materials and programs of the Congregation to all educators (lay and religious)
- c. Ensure the follow-up of this call in the Congregational level and in relationship with the Provinces/Region
- d. Encourage Educators to continue to share materials, projects and programs
- e. Explore other platforms and ways of inter-province – inter-continental exchanges
- f. Prioritize commitment to the use of existing resources and the available means of communication
 - Study and make use of the existing documents and projects of formation
 - Take time to use the materials available in the Congregational data base

⁶
⁷

*Refer to the section of this booklet – “Some Important Definitions – Accompaniment
Refer to the 2012 General Chapter Documents, Communion 2.3c and 2.5b*

SOME IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

The following definitions correspond to words or phrases that took some significance during the Gathering. It is important to clarify what these mean for us and qualify and shed light on some nuances coming from the experience of the Gathering and our Assumption vision. Aware that there may be many other ways of defining these terms, these definitions do not claim to be comprehensive nor exhaustive.

Accompaniment

Accompaniment is a posture and a disposition that is found in all the pedagogical forms and approaches used in the Assumption. From the beginning Marie Eugénie and the first sisters have made the attentive presence and the accompaniment of the students – be it personalized or in groups – one of the most important forms of support for young people in their personal and vocational growth: *“If the Bordelaises are butterflies, let them fly without cutting their wings, without wanting to reduce their thousand hues to a uniform color; we only care about directing their flight.”*¹

Accompaniment requires respectful and disinterested listening, while bringing some light and criteria for discernment, at the same time leaving the person the autonomy and the freedom to make one's decision. Pope Francis reminds us that accompanying people in this way requires *“freeing oneself from one's own self-referential tendencies that sometimes color educational relationships. In this art of accompaniment, one must take off one's sandals in front of the sacred ground that is the other (see Ex 3, 5). We must give our path the salutary rhythm of closeness, with a respectful and compassionate look, which at the same time heals, liberates and encourages maturity in the Christian life”*²

¹ Character Education p. 135
² Cf. Pope Francis, Encyclical *“The Joy of the Gospel”*, n°169

Character

Character is defined in the 1998 Reference Guide as a person's temperament and individuality taken together.³ In the same document, there is reference to the formation of a steadfast character, forged by the force of the Gospel. Thus, the formation of character in the Assumption refers to the development and enlightenment of the understanding by faith and the training and formation of the will so that it may be capable of renunciation and sacrifice.⁴ Today, CHARACTER is referred to as the core of the person; one's thoughts, will and emotions that determine one's ethical and moral choices, actions and reactions.

Gross National Happiness

St. Augustine, already, placed happiness in the heart of the desire of man: *“Man, before believing in Christ is not on the road, he wanders. He seeks his homeland but he does not know it. What does it mean: he seeks his homeland? He seeks rest, he seeks happiness. Ask a man if he wants to be happy, he will answer you in the affirmative without hesitation. Happiness is the goal of all our lives. But where is the road, where one finds happiness, this is what men do not know.”*⁵

At the end of the 20th century, a small country, Bhutan had a pioneering vision aimed at increasing the happiness and well-being of its people. It was to go beyond the development policies based on economic growth, consumption and the multiplication of assets by a wholistic approach to development taking into account the situation of its people. In the 1970s, the king proposed that Gross National Happiness take the place of Gross National Product (GNP – the economic index measuring the annual production of wealth). GNH, which was incorporated in the country's constitution in 2008, guides economic choices and development options based on four pillars: sustainable and equitable socio-economic

³ Education in the Assumption, Reference Guide, 1998, Chapter VI, Some Elements of the Assumption Educational Anthropology.

⁴ Education in the Assumption, Reference Guide, 1998, Chapter III, Education in the Assumption.

⁵ Augustine of Hippo, Sermon May, 12, excerpts, in A.G. Hamman, *Saint Augustin prays the Psalms*, p. 41, DDB, 1980.

development, environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of culture; good democratic governance. To meet these criteria, the Bhutanese made it their priority to work on the very careful use of the country's limited resources so that all can enjoy fair and harmonious living conditions. Thus, their forest reserves, carbon neutrality, the celebration of their "national cultural treasures" are areas that the Bhutanese are proudly committed to safeguard among many others.

Therefore, one may speak of a form of "solidarity": the passion for others and the desire to be in solidarity with the human community makes one creative enough to find new ways of life. If Bhutan's way of life is not immediately replicable in other contexts, it is nonetheless clear that GNH is an interesting example in the context of a world where global warming is accelerating, resources and their depletion is a global issue, where economic gaps are widening between populations. It seems that GNH makes possible a new relationship with the world, with characteristics close to the spirit of the Assumption: the balance in the rhythm of life, the sense of the common good, the polyphony of cultures, the place and meaning of freedom, the attention to the present moment, the quality of relationships (concepts developed in recent researches in the world of business⁶) with others and the environment. In an Assumption community, in a particular work or ministry, in a working team, these priorities and characteristics can become evaluation criteria for the quality of the community and the fabric of relationships, the capacity to offer people a place of fulfillment and harmony.

Integral Ecology

Integral ecology was defined by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'* (chapter 4), as an environmental, social, economic, cultural and everyday ecology, guided by the concern for justice for present and future generations, and for the common good. Such an approach highlights the

interdependencies between human beings, living beings and the entire creation. It invites us to an individual and collective discernment, to a joyous detachment, that leads one to be converted to solidarity and happy sobriety.

Intelligences

Human intelligence corresponds to the capacity to seize oneself and to grasp events, in search for meaning and order. It is also the capacity for abstraction and imagination; the source of projects and action and is open to truth and being.

Human intelligence deciphers the universe, analyzes situations, reads history. It perceives the immensity of desire. It is the context of our freedom. Human intelligence is always unsatisfied. It is constantly in search and can only be filled with the enlightenment that communion and communication with God brings. This light comes through Divine Revelation and Faith.⁷

Today we speak of "multiple intelligences." This theory, developed by Howard Gardner and others, suggests that there are many ways of understanding, explaining, and making sense of reality. Gardner's classification proposes eight types of intelligences: visual-spatial, body-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, naturalistic. This theory confirms our belief that "every person is unique and that every human being has a unique value for God ..." and opens up many opportunities for learning, expression, creativity, personality development and the fulfillment of one's personal vocation: "By impressing on each of us a character so diverse, giving us particular faculties ... God wanted to create our personality, our own vocation. He made us by using all these means as he wanted us to hold a certain place in His plan."⁸

During the International Education Gathering, Cardinal Tagle developed a reflection on three other forms of intelligences: emotional intelligence (heart), contextual intelligence (mind) and inspirational intelligence (soul).

Interiority

Interiority is the awakening of consciousness, of knowing one's own inner universe. Exploring one's interiority offers the possibility of answering life's essential questions and finding meaning. For this, one must discover and name one's experiences, feelings, emotions and desires, ideas, convictions ... Interiority helps one to enter into dialogue with oneself and with God who lives in us; it is a way towards becoming aware of one's inner resources and fragilities in order to steer them freely towards their possible fullness and towards the commitment to build a more humane and just world, according to the Project of God.⁹ It is the path that makes the opening to the transcendence possible. A person, that is deeply, interiorly driven, can discover this interior as inhabited by Someone. This enables the person, as St. Benedict says, "to live with oneself under the gaze of God."

Education towards interiority is to provide spaces and a kind of perspective that allows people to open up to themselves. This experience can be destabilizing, doubt provoking, a confrontation with one's fears and limits. Good accompaniment makes it possible to advance in this path. Interiority involves discernment.

Joyful Detachment

Joyful Detachment is a human and spiritual attitude that consists in putting God at the center, being open to the positive aspects of life and relying on trust in God, the Father who cares for all. In the Assumption, it is the fruit of the spirit of worship and adoration, which places God at the center of life and thus decenters the person from one's own interests or claims. It implies a free and responsible decision in favor of Life, a decision that engages the person not to stop at the obstacles standing in one's way

or one's own demands. Through joyful detachment, the person opens up to others and to the world, filled with the conviction that joy is a decision that is dependent on one's personal capacity to believe in possibilities. It is to come out of oneself, to take distance from attachments that may close one in, to learn to love in a broader, deeper, nonexclusive way. Two important, anthropological aspects in defining joyful detachment: "relationship" and "interiority". A capacity for interiority, that draws from God one's strength and self-esteem and those of one's peers so as to cultivate the joyful detachment that is based on the ability to distance oneself from different types of enslavement that may stifle one's existence. By liberating oneself, one is able to grasp the beauty of life and the world, rejoice in it and live some kind of commitment that makes life a "celebration". "It is about speaking - and living - with confidence in the beauty and goodness of the world, and learning and receiving the joy of giving one's life, of being open to others, and to the world."¹⁰

Joyful detachment is expressed in very concrete attitudes or actions of daily life: the absence of complaints or useless words, use of constructive and positive words, creativity and perseverance in the face of obstacles, the ability to bounce back from obstacles or failures, the ability to efface oneself so that others may live, authentic joy, to choose some kind of sobriety as regards consumption, to find the taste of things, to recognize what is given, etc.

JPIC-S

After the Second Vatican Council in 1967, a Justice and Peace Commission was created by Pope Paul VI. In this dynamism, several local Churches¹¹ echoed this call to work for these priority causes. The religious Congregations also created organizations that received the name – JPIC¹²

9 Cf. Reference Guide: Education in the Assumption, Introduction, 1998

10 Sr. Cécile Renouard, *Conference on Joyful Detachment, June 2009*
11 In Europe the local Justice and Peace Commissions, advocacy (United Kingdom), work with the migrants (Belgium, Spain, etc.). In Latin America, the Bishops' Conferences of Medellín and Puebla (1979) where the option for the poor became a non-negotiable priority. In Africa and Asia, priority projects for women and the disadvantaged, scholarship for girls, attention to lepers, street children, etc.
12 <http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/mission/justice-peace-and-creation/>

adding the emerging issue of the Integrity of Creation (preservation of the environment). In the Assumption, in continuity with our charism of "contributing to the evangelical transformation of society..."¹³ this meant participation in the creation of "... situations where no one suffers from the oppression of others"¹⁴ we have aligned our mission in the same movement since 1994. Considering that these themes imply an interdependence among peoples and between human beings and the environment, we considered that solidarity could serve as a link and a response to these questions.

Gradually, this call became an essential focus of our life and mission, that is, the way we understand our evangelical commitment today:

- General Chapter 2000: "The commitment to justice, peace, respect for creation and solidarity, cannot be separated from our mission of education or our vision of social transformation and the social consequences of the Gospel."
- General Chapter 2006: "... as a community, to be in solidarity and the active presence in the field of Justice, Peace, Respect for Creation and Solidarity; develop in our communities and around us the sense of responsibility of the planet."
- In 2008, we joined the International JPIC Secretariat of the Little Sisters of the Assumption. Its mission is to help raise awareness among our provinces and communities around the world.
- The 2012 General Chapter expressed the desire to produce a document on Ecology and Migrations. In 2015 the book "Towards An Eco-Assumption" was published.

13 Cf. Rule of Life of the Religious of the Assumption No. 81, "The sisters wish to play a part in forming communities whose members will become capable of finding in themselves the strength to assume their own history in order to change it."

14 Marie Eugénie, Letter to Fr. D'Alzon, 27 February 1844, No. 1610: "...a social state (...) where the Christian tendency is to eliminate in each one the oppression of the other..."

The transformation of mentalities that JPIC-S brings about, involves teaching, debates and reflections, solidarity projects, "green" actions, the construction of "inclusive" communities, openness to all, intercultural and interreligious dialogue; advocacy, the fight against prejudices, etc.

Pedagogy of Desire

"It is natural for persons to desire happiness," said Marie Eugenie. But, it is not in the order that regards happiness that comes from praise, admiration, success, as this prevents one from reaching true happiness through humility.¹⁵ (November 12, 1876). She often insists on the importance of desire in the spiritual life and in this context, she makes a very important distinction between "the one desire" that mobilizes our energies for positive commitment and "vain desires", which "wear out" our life. The vain desires divide us interiorly, it dislocates us. Among these, are named as follows – the desire to build a house, to earn money, to obtain success, to be cured when one is sick, to be loved and recognized, to be rich and to receive honors. Pleasure, power, all those, for her, are not reasonable desires. Because they center the person on themselves, when they should instead expand and get out of one's being. Marie Eugenie invites us, rather, to remain fixed on the power of the unique and great desire which animates us, to maintain it and to let it guide us. It expands our heart and soul¹⁶, centers us on God and makes us look upward.

The pedagogy of desire is therefore a pedagogy in which the educator accompanies the person on a path of interiority so that one may descend into oneself and make contact with God within and with the desire of which God is the source. Anthropologically, desire is the source of movement and action; it springs from a lack and an emptiness; it talks about the singularity of people and their uniqueness. This therefore asks of the educator to offer spaces of distance, of stepping back and to remain

15 Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, 12 November 1876, Have the spirit of the rule. Seeking Humility in the Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

16 Cf. Marie Eugenie, Chapter Instructions, 23 février 1845, Third Sunday of Lent.

in a position of humility, in the service of the person being accompanied, being convinced that the educator is not the master. Attentive to one's own personal desire, the educator begins by taking this path of interiority that will make it possible for the educator to live from one's own passion, without crushing the other or get one's hands on the other. One must remember, however, that the desires that pass-through persons are multiple, some leading to selfish withdrawal and a self-centered attitude. That is why the pedagogy of desire gives place for discernment, for questioning, to either decide to act according to one's desire or to take some distance from it. For, according to Marie Eugénie, desire, for it to be fruitful, must be transformed into action: work therefore consists in passing from the desire alone, to the desire to "obey" it, to planning and to action.

Pedagogy of Experience

Linked to the mystery of the Incarnation, which marks the mission of education in the Assumption, the pedagogy of experience is based on the conviction that one can learn many things by living them. In this sense, she does not separate life experience and learning experience, knowing that everything that is lived, in whatever field, has the capacity to enrich, if one takes the time to reflect on the experience. Such a pedagogy therefore involves a process by which the learner is the principal actor, such as, immersions in realities different from one's own, encounters, research. Project planning is one of the key steps in this pedagogy: it allows for the discernment of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to implement the project, and then organizes the corresponding action towards the goal. It is important to differentiate the moment of the experience from that of the learning process that makes it possible to derive an enrichment from it. This is why, after the experience itself, the phase of integration and assimilation is the one that makes it possible to maximize learning. It can take the form of rereading the experience that makes it a rich and fruitful source of knowledge and learning. The educator is then in a supportive, facilitating position that allows the learners to listen to what one has experienced, to collect the fruits, to name one's discoveries and

the transformations one has undergone. It can also evoke and keep the questions that arise. This pedagogy also plays a part in the growth of one's self-knowledge. The Gospel story of the disciples of Emmaus is a beautiful illustration of Jesus, the exemplary pedagogue of experience: indeed, more than a teaching, it is the contact with him and the lived experience of breaking bread with Him that allowed the disciples to recognize Him and live the inner transformation that eventually gave meaning to their lives.

The process employed for the 2018 International Education Gathering was built on this pedagogical approach.

Project

"It is certainly by instinct that one identifies the freedom of the power to design projects, to translate them into action" writes Paul Ricoeur¹⁷ In fact, the concept of a project is at the heart of an anthropological reflection on freedom: is man perfectly determined, condemned to endure his life or can he make choices that will lead to his future? Many philosophers and sociologists, like Jean Paul Sartre or Jean-Pierre Boutinet, wish to move out of a purely deterministic vision and believe that man has his fate in his hands: "Man is first and foremost a certain project which is lived subjectively, nothing exists before this project: man will first be what he has planned to be."¹⁸; "The project reflects man's capacity of becoming, what he can be because of his freedom."¹⁹ This project of being is expressed in multiple choices and concrete actions. It goes far beyond the personal dimension because the capacity to project oneself operates in relation to an external reality – the context in which one lives – so that one must learn to contemplate and to receive in order to adapt to it and to consider it when making a choice. On the other hand, the project makes sense when it expands to the community dimension, asking its actors to act in harmony and join forces for the same purpose. The vision that motivates the birth of the project, the ultimate goal that we want to

17

Cf. Paul Ricoeur, Encyclopedia Universalis, definition of "project".

18

Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, 1943

19

Cf. Jean-Pierre Boutinet, A Project Anthropology, Presses Universitaires de France, 1993, p.44

achieve, the cause we serve, must then be shared and discussed within the group. The agreement on what one intends to do and taking the context in which one acts into account, to anticipate the possible difficulties to put in place strategies necessary, makes it possible to determine the means for its realization. From the inventory of available resources, we can then divide the roles for a coordinated and organized action, establish the schedule necessary for the implementation of the project.

Marie Eugenie built the Assumption project from an analysis of her time and the vision that animates it, that of a society transformed by the values of the Gospel. With others, she has put in place a plan of action, through the medium of education. She agreed to adjust her project to the times and places in which it developed. Accepting the questioning that comes along the way both from herself and from others, she taught us that a project is fruitful only when those who implement it are in a continual process of learning, rereading and evaluating their way of doing things and the results obtained, in order to reap from them a learning for the future. Whether our projects are personal or community-based, we are therefore invited to focus on the different issues / steps that will develop them:

- What is the vision that drives us? To which horizon do we direct our gaze and our steps?
- What are the characteristics of our context, which we must take into account when implementing a project?
- What means, what resources do we have? How do we organize and plan for the future?
- How do we re-read the action taken and what lessons do we learn from it?

Rereading

Re-reading is a tool for reflecting on one's personal experience, "to stitch", connecting events, feelings, thoughts and desires ... in order to find an "invisible red thread", a meaning ... In a life where the pace is

becoming faster and faster, where all the aspects of our existence often seem fragmented, scattered, as consequences of fatigue, lack of sense/meaning, dissatisfaction, among others, rereading can be a help to live in interiority, deepen self-knowledge, and thus "become what one is, as fully as possible», harmonizing all the elements of "one's own earth-reality".²⁰ Rereading is an important condition for experiences to bear fruit, to "discover one's mission, one's place in the world".

It is a spiritual exercise that is found in the Bible, in the life of the saints ... It is an essential step to live discernment and let the Spirit grow one's life of faith and guide one's personal life. The people of Israel re-read history to find out how the hand of God has led and freed them...

Marie Eugénie has made rereading a decisive way to develop her vocation and her intuitions. In her writings, we find successive re-readings of her history, her inner world and her relations, but also in looking at the society and education of her time. The texts of her rereading reflect her process of human and spiritual maturation as well as her vision of the person, of education, of society ...

Space

In the context of the 2018 Education Gathering, the word "space" referred to both interior and physical space that is set apart for a specific purpose, be it for silent, personal reflection or for common, shared reflection and exchange on a particular topic. It may also refer to the notion of "making room" – whether it be for differences, for dialogue, for disagreements, for reconciliation or even for transformation and change.

20

Anne Stalé. *Christus Avril 2005*. "The gardener knows from experience that it is better to spend your time caring for good plants to value their qualities rather than striving to pull out the weeds, an exhausting, doomed endeavor. The same is true of the spiritual life: it is better to take care of our earth with its peculiarities, to be attentive to life and to entrust the point of weakness to the Lord rather than obstinately persisting in fighting against: "Even when it comes to one's own animality, man must be the pastor and not the enemy." As our attachment to Christ grows, his example guides us inwardly with simplicity and peace, and he animates us with new feelings: the tendency is reoriented, it becomes the place of a discernment that advances, a creativity that unfolds through the vigilance of a loving heart that responds freely to the love of the Lord.

During the 2018 Education Gathering – making physical space for artistic expression, time for journal writing, time for personal and common prayer – became essential elements in providing a climate that facilitates discernment.

Spirituality

Spirituality is defined as "people's subjective practice and experience of their religion, or the spiritual exercises and beliefs which individuals or groups have about their personal relationship with God."²¹

Today, it is understood as a universal human experience that touches all and is very much related to culture and context. It is a wide and all-encompassing concept that refers to something bigger than oneself while at the same time involves one's search for meaning and interconnectedness with others, with the rest of creation and with God.²²

In the context of the International Education Gathering, the word spirituality resonates with what Guy Le Bouëdec describes as a dimension where one gets in touch with an intimate space where one's unique and deepest identity lives.²³

Likewise, it is the quality of being concerned with the spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. More than a belief system as in the concept of "religion", it is more concerned with growing into a consciousness of and experiencing the divine.

Sources

The "source" is the place where water begins to flow freely, taking unpredictable routes and carrying life wherever it passes. You have to go upstream to find it, sometimes in steep or hidden places. It is the same for the sources of our mission of education. They are at the origin of our

projects, when they were developed and where they found their meaning, in the motivation and vision that inspired them.

Sources may take different forms:

Historical and Spiritual Sources contain the vision of the founder, the motivations behind the beginning of a particular work, the spiritual meaning given to this work, the way of acting and the choices, and the concrete means chosen to put these into action in the institution, in the context that this took place; these "sources" are found in historical documents, letters, teachings, collections of souvenirs, official documents, objects of everyday life ...

Sources that Evolve and are "Updated" over time: these are the projects that were born after the founding period, in the dynamics of the founding charism. We can find the various, evolving shapes and forms, the context that gave birth to them, the motivations of the people involved, the documents describing the vision, the objectives and the means chosen; beyond its concrete conditions of realization and its organization, it is important to find the shared values of a project to be able to engage in it. We all have the responsibility to keep the "sources" of the projects we create so that others can appropriate their meaning.

Personal Sources: founding experiences, important experiences of transformation. We find their traces thanks to the place we give to rereading in our lives; this one allows one to name personal motivations, reasons for choices and to find the spirit of the commitment and its implications, to be renewed in the action.

A regular return to the sources, or rather the constant "back and forth" between sources and daily life allows one to keep the unique spirit of an experience, to live in creative fidelity by daring to decide, to be in contact with the meaning that directs one's actions.

21 Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, article "Spirituality".

22 Cf. Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, November 2012

23 Cf. Guy Le Bouëdec, *The Educative Posture*, Edition L'Harmattan, 2016

Style of Life

In sociology, lifestyle refers to the way in which a group of people or an individual lives: their habits of social relations, their way of consuming, of working, the organization of family life ... It reflects the beliefs, the values, the way of thinking and understanding the world and the vision that one carries in oneself. Marie Eugénie, for her part, spoke of "active faith". In her, inner convictions, intelligence and spiritual experience are inseparable from the action they imply, and they find their fulfillment in this way of acting, or in what one may call a way of life. This term is used in many of the more recent documents of the Assumption; it refers to a way of living consistent with espoused convictions: a way of speaking, acting, entering into relationships, deciding and discerning. Lifestyle involves choices that reflect one's convictions. It presupposes an ongoing state that tends towards becoming more and more coherent. It defines common codes, common values, common practices related to a given group of people.

Vocational Discernment

To discern is to develop the ability to judge things clearly, soundly and healthily. Discernment helps one to clarify landmarks, to grow in true freedom and in a right moral conscience.

For Saint Ignatius, discernment helps to name the deep movements or feelings that animate persons, which he calls "consolation" and "desolation," in order to decide, from an enlightened awareness of the breath of the Spirit, to follow the will of God, which is the best for the person. St. Marie Eugénie affirmed that God has different plans for different people and what He desires is that these should be accomplished in each one. (...) you are to draw souls as much as possible away from their natural egoism so that they may give themselves without reserve to doing God's will, in all that is good, holy and generous, in all their great and small duties, in all that love of virtue may ask of them."²⁴

The Spirit speaks and acts through the events of each person's life to the extent that we can give them various interpretations, because the events in themselves are mute or ambiguous. So that one may clarify their meaning for a decision, a path of discernment and accompaniment is necessary.

Vocational discernment takes into account three directions: self-knowledge, knowledge of God's project and the way it is or it is not realized in the world. These three (3) directions converge towards one's personal call – "in which God can use me in the realization of his Gospel"²⁵ ... along the path of happiness.

EPILOGUE

"CELEBRATING EDUCATION" – IEG THEME SONG

*Music and Lyric Verses by Carmen "Pinky" Valdes
In collaboration with the Assumption Sisters
March 2018*

One, we are one One, we are one, One

English:

Celebrating – education. Rooted in our one God;
Living today with passion; Looking towards the future with audacity.
We are one.

Verse 1:

"Children are like butterflies;
Don't clip their wings
Direct their flight" ¹ and let them fly

Spanish:

Celebrando la Educacion
Enraizados en el charisma de la Asuncion,
Vivimos el presente con pasion;
Mirando hacia el futuro con audacia ... somos uno.

Verse 2:

"There is goodness in everyone; Every color and every kind
Break through the rock then blossoms shine." ²

¹ Paraphrase of St. Marie Eugenie's words
² Paraphrase of St. Marie Eugenie's words

French:

Célébrer l'éducation
Enracinés dans le charisme de l'Assomption
Vivre le present avec passion
Se tourner avec audace vers l'avenir... un seul corps.

Verse 3:

Deep awareness; Letting go
Living in kindness; Darkness to dawn; Drink God's Light, let it flow.

English:

Celebrating – education; Rooted in our one God
Living today with passion; Looking towards the future with audacity.
We are one.

Verse 4:

l'Assomption – un seul corps
Juntos somos uno
Standing Together - "To give Light feed on the Light" ³
Living in God; Rooted in God; Dwelling in the Light
We are One in God
We are one, somos uno, un seul corps ----- ONE!

³ Paraphrase of St. Marie Eugenie's words

