



Newsletter

....a quarterly publication from Centre International, LePuy, France

Embracing the past...

REFLECTIONS ON THE EUCHARISTIC LETTER

"Write the vision down, inscribe it on tablets to be easily read, since this vision is for its own time only." (Hab. 2:2-3)



The Eucharistic Letter is a living tradition. The fifty-year old Jesuit priest, Jean-Pierre Medaille penned the vision of God's 'little design' in 42 very carefully crafted paragraphs



of The Eucharistic Letter. It is now believed by the latest research (Nuns Without Cloister, Marguerite Vacher, SSI, 2010) that the original Eucharistic Letter was sent in 1660 by Father Medaille to Marguerite Burdier, one of the first six founding women, who was at that time, the superior of a community house in Tence. Just 10 years earlier, the Congregation of St. Joseph had been established canonically and legally as a new form of consecrated life, living outside the cloister. *"Within a decade, the small congregation established in the Velay had grown considerably, to 22 houses in four dioceses: 16 in the diocese of Le Puy, 3 in Vienne, 2 in Lyon and 1 in Clermont."* (Vacher, p.96)

But the birth and growth of these early communities brought its own challenges and crisis. It wasn't long before *"problems connected with the very nature of the vocation and the elasticity of its structures"* began to emerge. Manuscripts tell us that there were differences in expression of this new way of life amongst the country sisters and the town sisters. The tensions and confrontations originated from the differing points of view among the sisters themselves. It was within this climate of new beginnings that Pere Medaille, their wise spiritual guide, received this inspired vision of the 'little design' way of life and shared it with Sr. Marguerite. For whatever reason, The Eucharistic Letter was not received, at least not in this particular form and was not circulated, or rarely, among the communities. Hence, 'le petit dessein' remained largely unknown to the Sisters of St. Joseph. *"It might have been perceived primarily as a personal message and therefore more or less rejected for use by the group. Perhaps it was thought to be too close to the Company of the Blessed Sacrament. Some houses might have felt cramped by the notion of not being legally recognized. All that is known is that Marguerite Burdier, in order to work toward "the double union," was content to keep this letter as a treasure in her heart and in her records, without imposing it."* (Vacher, p. 109)

...eager for its own fulfillment, it does not deceive; if it comes slowly, wait...

Yes, we have waited for the fulfillment of this original vision of The Eucharistic Letter to be proclaimed. Over time our consciousness has

evolved and circumstances within ecclesial structures and socio-cultural realities have shifted and we have matured into an important critical threshold. After Vatican II when all religious were challenged to return to the Gospel and the 'original inspiration' of their founders, research began in earnest and translators presented us with all the written documents bequeathed to us by Jean-Pierre Medaille. According to Marguerite Vacher, *"When Father Medaille wrote the Letter in 1660, most of the existing houses were very small, with as little outward appearance as Jesus in the Eucharist. This he saw as gain: "How happy our Institute will be if it maintains this spirit of littleness, humility and self-emptying."* (p. 106) After 10 years of witnessing the first development and fruits of these early communities, Fr. Medaille seems, upon reflection, to get an insight into the future. In The Eucharistic Letter, he reiterates and expands the mystical aspects of littleness, hiddenness and self-emptying love.

Even from these early beginnings and throughout the 3+ centuries, two interwoven paths for this Medaillan spirituality have manifested and evolved. One group followed a more structured, institutionalized way of life, with more socially recognized and canonically approved religious life that had larger houses, superiors, public canonical vows and ministerial apostolates (Constitutions, the Congregation of St. Joseph). The second remained in hidden, small groups and were not legally or canonically recognized as religious. They chose to pursue holiness of life along with apostolic service as an expression of their baptismal consecration to Christ.

It is understandable that over the decades and centuries our sisters have grappled with *"the impossibility of imagining that the vocation of Srs. Of St. Joseph could be lived without the usual forms of religious life."* (Vacher p. 167) Throughout the years, the gift has been a spirit of unity and charity in all the diversity of forms; a unity that springs from our sharing in the love of Christ that has gathered us together as one.

Certainly, this absence of The Eucharistic Letter in our hands for more than 300 years challenges us to seize the moment and respond wholeheartedly.

(..to be cont'd in the next issue..)

Rosemary O'Toole, CSJ (Sister of St. Joseph in Canada, Peterborough neighbourhood)

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Nurturing the Present...

LITTLE DESSIGN COMMUNITIES REBIRTHING. MESSAGE FROM FIRST SESSION PARTICIPANTS (June 1-10, 2013)



David, Mairi, Marie, Chantal, Claire, Monique, Diane, Gracy, Katherine, Danielle, Kate, Louise, Rosemary

We are happy to share with you our experience of revisiting « The Eucharistic Letter” with 13 wonderful companions in the charming and sacred city of Le Puy en Velay. We allowed ourselves to expand and we felt ‘vivified’ as more and more of the indwelling God filled our inner beings.

- For me, it was a time of transformation and spiritual awakening. So grateful for the gift of these days.
- The contemplative process invited me to hear the ORIGINAL vision and message of The Eucharistic Letter with new eyes and a new heart.
- I love the littleness, the hiddenness and mindfulness of the daily self-emptying and self-care.
- I felt the constant movement of going deeper and internalizing the message and going outward into the city streets, allowing the ‘lavish grace’ to flow into our encounters with the ‘dear neighbour’.
- The Holy Spirit worked in our daily life to create a loving, aware, community of contemplation. We knew it by the joy and compassion communicated in gentle gestures and generous little services.
- We were nurtured spiritually, physically and emotionally. So simple, so awe inspiring, so ordinary!

As we left the first kitchen, we sensed Father Medaille and Marguerite Burdier were telling us to ‘get moving’... share the way of being and living ‘Little Design’ with others back home ... in our own neighbourhoods... and let God accomplish whatever is in harmony with God’s plan.

Arlette one who followed the session through chat form, wrote:

« Thank YOU ALL! What I experienced above all was the « seamless garment » of your life of prayer, reflection and your daily activities: that it all flowed and WAS ONE, issuing from your contemplative hearts, your living in the presence of the Spirit of Christ: »

MESSAGE FROM SECOND SESSION PARTICIPANTS (June 14-24, 2013)



Front row: Susan, Line, Mary, Mabel, Simone, Daisy, Margaret Mary, Rosemary, Monique

Back row: Eleanor, Trine, Michele, Wendy, Mairi, Sharron

« We have been nourished at the strong roots together in Love and with Love. As we prepare to return home to India, France, Spain, United States and Canada, we share some of our reflections of our 10 day contemplative experience in Le Puy on the Rebirthing of Little Design Communities. »

- “With joy you will draw water of everlasting life.” (Is.12) Merci Seigneur.
- A rejuvenating pilgrimage with sacred meaning.
- Presence. Love. Sharing.
- Little Design is a way of life for all. All is one in Love: those who went before us and those who follow after us. Love love and let Love love through you
- Wildflowers cluster on rock face
- nourishment hidden from the senses, but known by joy, love, the beauty received.

We are a BODY broken to be shared by ALL in union, reconciliation and communion. Thank you for all the people we met that carry our lives. Gentle, giving, compassionate.

Medaille threw out seeds

on ground long holy

trusting that God would

give the growth.

Rebirthing Little Design communities in this ancient place of origins came alive with spiritual vigour and aliveness. Let us go forth graced, and loving and gentle. Thank you companions for enlivening our Treasure! Thank you, Centre International for opening your doors and hearts to us these days. “

Nurturing the Present...

PILGRIMAGE TO LEPUY

From its beginning in 2004, the Centre International has welcomed visitors from around the world. During these past years, sisters and friends have come from 24 countries and 5 continents. The Centre was born from a dream shared by leaders of 4 Federations of Sisters of St. Joseph (French, Italian, Canadian, and United States), 3 International Congregations (Lyon, Chambéry, Annecy); and 1 Independent Congregation (Argentina).

This place is called to nourish with the hearts of our sisters, our friends, and our partners in ministry and prayer the spirit and vision of our founders. To come to Le Puy is not to come as a tourist, but to come as a pilgrim. To come to Le Puy is to be open to renewal, and a deepening awareness of communal identity and call. Visitors to the Centre International can expect so much more than a cordial welcome. Those who come to Le Puy have the opportunity to walk the same streets our founding sisters walked and to visit with the descendants of the dear neighbors they loved. Today's pilgrims can visit the College church where Fr. Jean Pierre Medaille prayed, see the Cathedral associated with Henri de Maupas, walk the path of Jean Francis Regis and hear the story of the French lacemakers. The Place Martouret is a place of busy shops today. But an atmosphere abides of the violence of the Revolution and the self-sacrifice of all who died at the guillotine, including our sisters. To stand in the kitchen where six women prayed and planned together is to be one with them.

A recent visitor commented: Being in Le Puy gave me a better picture of how our sisters divided up the city to do their ministry. And an American sister who visited recently wrote: There is nothing that reaches deeper into the heart and soul of our CSSJ life than standing in the kitchen and praying at the hearth, than standing at the altar in Monistrol with Mother St. John, than walking the streets of Le Puy with our first sisters. I wish every sister could experience this at least once in her lifetime. I wish associates and aggégées could come to be steeped in that which draws us together in the Congregation of the Great Love of God.

By Kate Filla(Sisters of st.Joseph of Carondelet)

A SUMMER VOLUNTEER

Kate FILLA IS A Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet, who answered an appeal to help at the Centre during the summer as the staff prepared to greet a large number of international visitors. During her three month visit she has assisted with regular house keeping jobs as well as



preparing and serving meals. Kate has enjoyed living in Le Puy becoming familiar with the French culture and way of life. She commented » I have learned so much from Gracy and Line. It is a privilege being in this town so important in our foundation story. Like so many here, I am a pilgrim »

Thanks a lot dear Kate for your selfless service to the Center. We appreciate your risk taking and always on the move nature, that kept the Center moving. Thank you for your broad SMILE that reduced the tensions and for the WISDOM that kept the team working together. Thank you and wish you ALL THE BEST for the future mission.

Coming to « A Home away from Home »

— Our Visitors

A week-end with Lyon Sisters

On April 28 we had the delight of welcoming Sister Marie Chantal and her community, Sisters Brigitte, Monique, Marie Ange and Marie Christophe. They stayed overnight for an experience of communion with our heritage. Marie Chantal writes us: "Thank you for these two days. Because of you, for me these days were re energizing and a



renewal of spirit. With you I thank God for all he has realized in the Little Design throughout the world, for more than three centuries.

These two days strengthened my courage to live

each day in simplicity, the wonderful mission entrusted to the large St. Joseph family and it is a joy for me to recall one more time, the 5 Commitments of our 2011 General Chapter to keep moving forward in hope, and to work with many others in the building of a world where all peoples, in the richness of their diversity, will make up the unique people of God. »

It was definitely a grace-filled time spent with our Lyon Sisters. Thank you dear sisters for your visit.

★ HEARTY WELCOME! ★

We welcomed with great joy Sisters Rosemary Brennan from Boston, Massachusetts and Maxine Schneider from Springfield, Massachusetts on April 29 for several days as they were heading to the gathering for major superiors in Rome. They experienced the sites that are so dear to us, the lace makers, as well as French cuisine. A very special moment was when Sister Maxine met Sister



Catherine of the Institute of St. Joseph and her connection with the Fall River, Massachusetts Sisters of St. Joseph now one with Springfield. Indeed, a cherished encounter touching two continents.

Thanks Rosemary and Maxime for gracing all of us!



Nurturing the Present...

THE ENERGETIC COLLEGE STUDENTS IN LEPUY



It was a great privilege and joy for us to be with the Students of Boston College accompanied by Sr. Betsy and Kathylyne.

The students had a short visit to the Center, the first Kitchen and the historical sites of LePuy. We appreciate your zeal and wish you all the Best for the continuation of your studies, and for your bright future.

Pilgrim Journey of the Congregation of St. Joseph . by Judith Minear and Carol Crepeau

Nineteen sisters and associates arrived in Le Puy via Chicago, Frankfort, and Lyon. The Centre staff welcomed us as we began our Pilgrimage Experience led by Carol Crepeau CSJ. From the Centre we could see the thousand and fifty year old church of St. Michel at the top of Aiguilhe and Notre Dame de France looking over the city from Mount Corneille.

Using our city map and our pilgrimage guide we walked through our history. We gathered in the ancient kitchen, the true heart of our early sisters' community and communion. We climbed the steps of the Cathedral, visited the chapel of the Black Madonna and the Cloister, stood in the square where the guillotine beheaded so many, including two of our Le Puy sisters, and prayed in the college church.

We traveled to two cities in the Haute Loire connected with Mother St. John Fontbonne. Bas-en Basset is the town of her birth and baptism, and where she returned after she was released from the prison. In 2008 the city placed a plaque on the exterior wall of the convent, honoring her significant role as the foundress of more than 40 foundations which established a variety of ministries world-wide. Jeanne Fontbonne entered the Congregation in Monistrol and later became the superior. It is there that she publicly defied the priest who had aligned himself with the civil authorities during the French

Revolution. It was in the church, scene of her defiance, that we had a significant encounter. We were delighted to learn that the woman who was tidying the church is Sister Odette, a Sister



of St Joseph of the Institute. She prayed with us, another global connection. We are one.

The prayerful and profound learning, heart sharing, dining, laughter, walking experienced on site created a fullness and openness to our Charism and mission of unity like no other: »

Valiant women from california

On May 22 the Sisters of St. Joseph from Orange arrived in LePuy for a pilgrimage to our



founding sites. What a pleasure it was to once again be touched by the enthusiasm and CSJ spirit of our sisters. Under the faithful guidance of Srs. Jane and Mary Beth the pilgrims experienced the deep heritage that is ours here in LePuy. Jane

says "Staying at the International Center is like staying at someone's home. It makes our sharing, input on heritage and Document presentations and prayer possible. "One sister expressed "Coming to Le Puy and the International Center has been for me a return to our roots. I am challenged to continue our legacy into the future." Another said "I loved being here, immersed in our CSJ history."

Again the Centre International was blessed.

Surprise visit from Cuneo, Italy

It was a great joy when Sr. Lucia and six of their sisters, arrived at the Center for a surprise visit. Four of the sisters were from Congo



and were visiting LePuy for the first time. We were so happy to visit with them around the table and to share the Global story of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Thank you Sr. Lucia. We hope you return to Lepuy soon.

Creating the Future...

**COME ! EXPERIENCE OUR SPIRITUALITY AND CHARISM
IN A PLACE STEEPED IN OUR CSJ HERITAGE.**



Mission Effectiveness: The Charism Alive in C/SSJ Ministries

This program offers a pilgrimage for associates and lay partners in ministry, providing an immersion experience in the original spirit and global dimension of our C/SSJ charism. If you are a lay leader who has assumed responsibility for works founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph, this program will deepen your learning, nourish your imagination and strengthen your conviction in moving the mission into the future. The week-long experience offers a rhythm of prayer, interactive participation, and visits to historic sites in Le Puy, including a day trip to Lyon.

Presenter: Dolores Clerico, Sister of St. Joseph, PA (USA) regularly provides opportunities for deepening an awareness of the C/SSJ charism and spirituality among Sisters of St. Joseph, associates and lay partners in the United States. This is Dolores' 8th year offering this program at the Centre International, and always with rave reviews .

October 1, 2013, 6:00PM to morning of October 8, 2013

Register by September 1, 2013. Suggested contribution: 650 Euros+4 Euros (cotisation)- includes room, meals, and materials.

Go to www.centreinternationalssj.org to register

Painting/QiGong Retreat in the Heart of Le Puy.

A Contemplative Art retreat incorporating the practice of art and Qigong as vehicles to connect with the spirit and energy of the first Sisters of St Joseph. Their dream impels us to tap into our own creativity, to be in the moment and awaken images and dreams for contemporary times. Previous art experience is not required, rather an openness to our senses and paint "the essence" and spirituality of these dedicated women. Being in France offers an enriching opportunity to permeate us with a deeper appreciation of their story and the people and culture of the time.



There will be opportunities to visit some of the beautiful and significant historical sites in LePuy and Lyon. There will be ample opportunities for quiet time, listening and meditation. Painting and Qigong will deepen prayer and evoke renewed passion and hope.

Presenter: Patricia St.Louis, CSJ is an artist, Qigong facilitator, and nurse. As a multi media artist she facilitates groups in painting, collage, journaling, as life giving spiritual practices for the soul along with mediation and Qigong. She has studied art at the Ontario College of Art, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI and Fine Arts at the University of Windsor, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

October 14, 2013, 6:00PM to morning of October 21, 2013.

Register by September 1, 2013.

Go to www.centreinternationalssj.org to register for any of the above programs.

WELCOME...

We also welcome you for Pilgrimages, Visits, Retreats, Sabbaticals. These can be individually arranged throughout the year.

- Guided pilgrimages and visits for individuals or groups offered in various languages.
Private retreats and spiritual direction is available
Personalized reflective days and sabbaticals near the cradle of the congregation.

Write us at centre.international@wanadoo.fr

PLEASE STAY TUNED

2014 Programs are presently being planned. As soon as we finalize them we will inform you. We hope to continue to offer excellence with quality and experienced presenters on topics rooted in our charism and spirituality, our history and mission, the Ignatian Exercises and our Charism, among others. Visits to our heritage sites will be included with all programs. To get you to start discerning, the Ignatian Exercises/Charism program is titled "Seized By Love for the Life of the World". The Mission Effectiveness program for lay partners in mission will once again be offered. Two programs will be offered on our Charism and Spirituality. All programs look to the future of the global Sister of St. Joseph family.

October 15, 2014 is the 10th Anniversary of the opening of Centre International St. Joseph! What a great time during this anniversary year to come celebrate with us by participating in one of the opportunities to be offered. Come and immerse yourself in our CSJ heritage, and leave here energized to share with your sisters, Associates and lay partners the richness you have received ..

Our door is open! Come and be with us!!!

CONDOLENCE

LORRAINE MALO, a Sister of St. Joseph from the Toronto Congregation, entered eternal life Tuesday, June 18, 2013.

Lorraine was a former staff member at the Centre International.

We are grateful for all the gifts she shared with us and offer our heartfelt CONDOLENCES to her Community, family, and friends, as we pray for the repose of her Soul.



REMEMBER, send us your suggestions for a new title to replace "NEWSLETTER" for this publication. **Thank you!**