

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL ST. JOSEPH

Le Puy-en-Velay



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This first Newsletter of the new team is fondly dedicated to Mary Diesbourg, Josette Gocella, and Sheila Holly who were the great pioneers at Centre International! Their dedication, zeal, and obvious love for the world-wide Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph are apparent in everything they tried to do during their three-year mandate. The neighbours loved them, the shopkeepers still ask for them, the parishioners miss them! We are very grateful for the thorough orientation they provided for us, helping to make the transition from old team to new as smooth as possible. We wish them God's blessings as they settle into their new ministries in Canada and the U.S.

We share with you some of the highlights of our first six months at Centre International:

Great and Graceful Moments of the Year

We three, Lorraine, Donna and Martha, had the privilege of participating in the long-awaited Lyon Forum. On July 6, we were also able to attend the special Eucharist celebrated in the Cathedral of St. Etienne. This Mass, celebrated by the bishop, marked the life and work of our beloved Mother St. John. A delicious lunch was served following the Mass. After the celebration we headed for Lyon to participate in the inaugural functions of the FORUM. The campus of the old Lyon Novitiate was crowded with forum members. We could only stay for two days as we had to return to the Centre in Le Puy to welcome 130 Sisters from the forum. The Sisters of Chambéry also came to visit that week. They were having a three-week session, *International Heritage Group*, and a visit to Centre International was on the schedule.



A group of Sisters from the Lyon Forum



Chambéry Sisters enjoy a picnic on our balcony

On July 9, sixty-five of them came from various countries. They came in language groups and had brief self-introductions and sharing. One group (pictured above) ate their picnic lunch on the balcony. Of course, we joined them! The climax of the bicentenary for us was on July 10, when the Lyon forum members came in two full bus loads. We had prepared refreshments in "eco-nature", under the cherry trees whose branches were loaded with huge, ripe fruit! There was amusement and informal sharing and the Sisters seemed to enjoy the relaxed pace of the day. Donna and Martha returned to Lyon the following Saturday for the concluding solemn

liturgy and grand lunch. The Lyon Forum will be something to remember for many years to come!

Some "Special Events" include:

- The departure of Mary and Sheila – April 6
- Hosting the Lyon Provincial Council for dinner – May 12
- The Lyon Finance Commission Dinner - 22 people – May 21
- Interview of team by Father Bernard Planche
- Lyon Forum – July 7 - 12
- The early documents – Sister Thérèse Vacher August 20 - 23



Lyon Finance Committee

Novices and Junior Professed – Great Hope for the World-wide CSSJ Family

Since our arrival, March 6, 2008, there have been a variety of groups, pilgrimages, programmes, and individual guests. Each one brought new life and energy to the Centre. The last group to pass through the Centre was *The Assembly for Young Sisters from the Institute of St. Joseph*. These young Sisters are novices and junior professed from France and Senegal. There were 15 young Sisters and four directors. They spent a solid week of hard work looking at the meaning of religious life in today's world. There was a good balance of prayer, free time, small group work and plenary assemblies. The meals were always times of good sharing and lots of laughter. No one seemed to want them to end! The African Sisters had brought their drums. On a couple of evenings, they showed us some of their dances. It was quite incredible to see how some of them could move! They insisted that we show them one of our dances, so one night we learned the Hokey-Pokey! To me, this seemed unbelievably mild compared to their dances, but they loved learning it, and enjoyed practicing their English when they sang the words! This is certainly the liveliest group we've had at the Centre so far! Their vitality and enthusiasm were tangible and it inspired hope for the future of the world-wide family of CSSJ's. It was a gift to host them!



*Young Sisters of the Institute of St. Joseph
with Sister Marie Paule Rascle, General Superior*

We've had several large Pilgrimage groups since March – from Boston, Los Angeles, Carondelet. It is always a joy to see how much these Sisters and Associates appreciate coming to Le Puy where it all started! One pilgrimage was particularly touching. When we did the ritual in the XVII century Kitchen, many Sisters were in tears as we formed a circle and held one common piece of lace. For many, I suspect being in Le Puy, was the fulfillment of a life-long dream.



Carondelet



Boston



Los Angeles

Many individual guests have passed through the Centre doors since our arrival. They always bring energy and life, new hopes and dreams and share them so willingly with us. We are the richer for their visits!

The Radical Gift of Grace Through the Eyes of Twelve Josephites in Le Puy

Twelve sisters and associates gathered at the Center from June 7 to 14, 2008 to participate in the retreat *Radical Grace* given by Sisters Joan Atkinson and Susan Wilson of the London, Ontario Congregation. The participants came from Australia, New Zealand, Germany and Canada. The following excerpts from a poem written by Sr. Margaret Gillespie, rsj and the collage of reflections by some of the participants show what a radical difference the gift of the graces of their retreat has made in their lives.

**Twelve eager Josephites journey to Le Puy
seeking out their roots in the dear St. Joseph tree. . .
Disciples on the journey, we listen and we share. . .**

We discussed and named some of our fears around the teachings of the Beatitudes. I have spent many hours reflecting on these discussions and teaching since returning home. (Pat Coderre)

**. . . we begin to see
the flow of grace within, without, embraced by the Trinity,**

Personally transforming in that it enlightens one to what blocks the light of the soul and gives a way to pause, step back, disentangle the knots and go forward with God. (Patricia Howe)

**The pain of my dear neighbor and her joy is also mine . . .
We have new eyes to see the way injustice shows its face.**

The program involved input, personal reflection and contemplative dialogue as we considered our context and heritage and how this provided themes of transformation for our contemporary reality. From the first day we felt at home and the depth of sharing reflected this sense of common vision and values. (Pat Malone, rsj)

We delighted in our shared gift of being Josephites and marveled at how much we held and treasured in common. (Sue McGuinness, ssj)

**Twelve grateful Josephites sadly leave Le Puy,
carrying within their hearts a golden memory,
of bread and wine at table shared, the bread of who we are.**

I didn't know what to expect, but after a few days I began to find myself going on a very special spiritual journey. I took away with me energy, the power of community and the power of continuance. (Kay Brown)

**Our roots are twined forever, and although we live afar,
there's a spirit that unites us and enables us to see
we're dear neighbours for each other in our dear St. Joseph tree.
Poem by Margaret Gillespie, rsj**



Radical Grace 2008

An Encounter With Our Own Poverty That Makes Us One



The second gathering of the CSSJ International Peace and Justice group took place in Lyon from April 13 to 19, 2008. Anne Rutter of Annecy recalls it was a time of joy to strengthen the bonds with those who had been at the first meeting in Le Puy in 2007 and a pleasure to get to know the sisters new to the group. The session began with each group represented sharing reports of what they had done with the plan developed at the gathering in 2007.

In the days that followed the group prayed, dialoged, struggled and laid open their hearts to each other. As the process of sharing deepened, Rita Bosch of Argentina aptly describes what happened next, "Tocamos fondo en el sentir profundo descubriendo hasta con lágrimas que en muchas vivencias, heridas y logros, éramos dos pueblos encontrados: Norte y Sur global, Colonizadas o Colonizadoras." (We touched bottom in the profound sense of discovering, even with tears, that in many experiences, wounds and accomplishments, we were two peoples: North and South, the colonized and the colonizers.) Another participant, Mary Ellen Gondeck of the United States, noted that, "it was the most significant moment to hear our sisters from the South say that now our poverty met theirs and we are equals and that they love us". Anne Rutter tells that at that very moment, "the Spirit blew in and the barriers came down as we began to realize how, as one body, we share the whole world's poverty." The group also spent an afternoon with the general superiors from the international congregations of Annecy, Chambéry and Lyon. The three general superiors shared their personal stories of the poverty, suffering and violence that they have witnessed during their visitations around the globe. At the conclusion of the seven-day gathering the group developed a communication plan that would allow them to share their own stories and build transforming relationships with each other. In addition, a small committee of members was formed to support and promote the communication among the group and organize the next gathering for 2009 or 2010. As the 2008 encounter ended, the participants returned to their home countries as Rita Bosch noted, "con la pobreza enorme de sentirnos tan frágiles para ir creando en nuestros propios grupos, comunidades, este inmenso proyecto a crearlo y recrearlo cotidianamente." (With the enormous poverty of feeling ourselves so fragile in order to go on in our own groups, communities, to daily create and recreate this immense project.)