

Le pain de chez nous



**Special
Little Sisters and Laity**

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❖ The International Laity Commission

The laity and the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation

'France is your cradle, but the entire universe is open to you.' Fr Pernet

As soon as we learned that the year 2015 would be a special one because of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation we laity, with the sisters, undertook to prepare and organise various activities together. These were to enable us to review their history of love for the poor and those who are impoverished in the light of the intuition of Father Pernet and Sister Antoinette Fage – an intuition of which we have been part right from the beginning.

The experience was marked by the preparatory papers drawn up by the Little Sisters: these papers enabled us to deepen our feeling of belonging to this charismatic family of the Assumption by recognising in our actions the elements of the charism, spirituality and mission that we wished to share in life and in the mission. With the freedom that is characteristic of this fine family, each town, group or person develops these elements at their own pace and in line with their interests so that our *"actions may speak Jesus Christ"*.

In the same way we, as the national laity commission, have adopted the proposal by the General Council and the International Laity Commission that each town should develop the activities it considers to be important for making the Congregation known and for celebrating this history of salvation as followers of Jesus, Servant and Saviour.



That is how, in Cali, Medellín and Bogotá, we will celebrate a Eucharist on a date close to that of the foundation of the Congregation (18 July), inviting as large a number as possible of friends, acquaintances and persons in touch with our Congregation and its history. Similarly, we have chosen the month of August (15th and 17th) for a meeting/assembly of the Assumptionist family at which

the Little Sisters, the Aolas and the Laity will reflect and pray together and will celebrate this history; we will also look at how we will continue the journey together. It will also be an opportunity for all of us to renew our commitments and it will be the first time for some lay people to express the commitment as associates of the Congregation, because we have enlarged our tent.

To carry out all that, in the case of Bogotá for example, we organised five little commissions comprising Little Sisters and laypeople that come into being following the first preparatory

meeting led by the Little Sisters: the activities we are going to develop, after a shower of propositions, are the following:

- *Communicate and spread information about the 150th anniversary and about the Congregation.*
- *Prepare the Eucharist that we will celebrate on the 1st of August 2015.*
- *Propose and develop the preparation "path" for the 150th anniversary, in which we envisage having a retreat for the persons of the group that is preparing the celebration and, finally, propose that a novena be made before the date of the foundation.*
- *Organise a "celebration of the Assumptionist people", planned for after the Eucharist, where there will be dancing, music, theatre and occasions when it will be possible to express the value of the Assumption in our life and our commitments, so that this history may continue.*



We know that all this is guided by the loving hand of God the Father, accompanied along the way by his Son Jesus Christ and animated by the Holy Spirit, with the joy and simplicity of Mary of the Assumption, and within the intuition of Fr Pernet and Sr Antoinette Fage. France was their cradle but they reminded us that the whole universe is open to us to continue journeying with the poor along the path of hope, and make visible the Reign of God here and now.

*Victor Andrés Galindo Angel
Assumption layman, Colombia*

❖ Colombia

A SHARED MISSION

LAITY AND LITTLE SISTERS OF THE ASSUMPTION

During Holy Week in 2015, some Little Sisters (Amparo Montes, Esperanza Pérez et Zoila Reyna), laypeople (Leyda Agudelo, Fabio Grajales) and an Aola (Luz Amparo Durango), had the opportunity to take part, for the first time, in the mission in a district of the municipality of Filadelfia en Caldas, a department in the west of Colombia. It is a coffee-producing area; the district of Morritos is at 1,760 metres above sea level. It is a beautiful, agreeable place, with a rather cold climate which was warmed for us by the welcome given by those who received us, beginning with the priests: Edinson, the parish priest, and Father Fredy (curate), who trusted us to carry out this important mission.

We arrived on Saturday the 28th of March and remained for all of Holy Week. From the time of our arrival and welcome we were witness to evangelising actions by the inhabitants. We settled into two rooms close to the little chapel. We quickly organised our dormitory with the materials (mattresses, blankets, pillows etc.) loaned to us by various people.

On Sunday we began the activities with the blessing and procession of the Palms, to celebrate as a community the arrival of Jesus: that triumphal entry to renew our lives.





A youth of sixteen had agreed to take the role of Jesus riding on a "borrowed" donkey, as the text says. His presence reinforced the attitude of the community that is respectful and has such deep faith. It was possible to sense the action of the Spirit who is revealed in those who are simple of heart.

During the three days before the Paschal Triduum we had times of reflection with the children and also with the adults, at different times, so as to be more aware of these holy days. It was really wonderful that this community recognised how, on many occasions during their lives, they do the same thing that Jesus did – and which He continues to do with each one of us – through total giving, the faith they have, respect for others and the value and importance of life as a community and in their family.



On Monday, the subject of the reflection was the meaning of Holy Thursday: the value of devotedness, of solidarity, and of Love. On Tuesday we meditated on the meaning of the cross and how to live it as Jesus did.



On Wednesday, with the people of the district (children and adults), we celebrated the Jewish Passover, in a catechetical way, so as to understand the culture of Jesus with its traditions but, above all, to show that the Eucharist is at the centre of the Christian life. It was a magnificent celebration, carried out as a family in an attitude of prayer, reflection and community sharing.

At the end of the celebration many people said it was the first time they had experienced something like that. They thanked us for such an opportunity and were motivated to continue with the other celebrations.

During the Paschal Triduum, there was good participation by children, teenagers and adults. We could feel the support, the solidarity, the participation and the commitment of the community.

For us it was very significant that, even though there was no priest, it highlighted the intensity, the dedication, the faith and the love with which each celebration was carried out: the way of the cross, with some special times of prayer and recollection,



the liturgy of the Word in silence, participation and reflection, the seven Words of Christ on the cross – all of this was in an atmosphere of listening, reflection and attentiveness to each message.

On the Saturday, at 6 a.m., we recited the pilgrim rosary with meditation and biblical reflection on the sorrowful mysteries of the Virgin. That evening, we had the great celebration of the Paschal Vigil as the conclusion of this beautiful week. That day it was Father Fredy who accompanied us with surprising simplicity.

Throughout the whole of the shared mission we were able to recognise Jesus, Servant and Saviour: Servant because we saw the charism reflected in families that share, with concern for one another, in the kindness and hospitality shown to us, being attentive to our needs. And Saviour because they truly live the love of the Lord and of their brothers and sisters.



As Scripture says:
"Let us be concerned for one another, to stir up a response in love and good works. Do not stay away from the meetings of the community as some do, but encourage one another to go; the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Hebrews 10:24-25



In such a beautiful setting, our eyes were able to admire the impressiveness of creation: the landscape, the flowers, the scents, the rain, the people. We received a great gift that is not experienced

much in the city – tranquillity; there are no discussions, it is life in community. All this recalled the life of the first Christian communities. In the midst of the many conflicts and difficult situations that our country is going through, we can say that this place is "a territory of peace", in spite of some difficulties being experienced by those who live there..

Whether we are laity or Little Sisters, we still have some thinking to do and many concerns to deal with.

- Defend and take even more care of the planet, of water and of peace.
- How do we live out our Christian/Assumptionist commitment?
- How do we ensure continuity for the mission, taking account of the wonderful welcome we received from the priests and the community in general.
- Cultivate non-violent relations, live in solidarity etc.
- Learn to work as a team
- Examine more intensively the importance of the shared mission.
- We need to be trained for the mission
- Importance of the youth and vocations ministry
- Make known the different forms of belonging to the Assumption

"Thank you to the Little Sisters who offered us this opportunity, this mission, that leaves us Resurrection, life, peace, reflection..."

And, to conclude, we ask: who, in fact, were those who were really evangelised?

Can we say that we are missionary disciples?

We ask the Lord that He would give us Wisdom, simplicity, humility, and that we may be attentive to His calls and projects so that we may respond to them. May we "give freely what we have received freely", as the Gospel says.

It only remains for us to say with the psalmist: *"How good, how delightful it is for all to live together like brothers."* Psalm 133



*For the missionary team:
Luz Amparo Durango – Aola from Medellín
Amparo Montes – Little Sister from the Aguablanca community*

❖ Ireland - Dublin 10

Convent Lawns: Our history, our mission

1998 was such an eventful time for Sisters Agnes, Phil and myself, Eilis. We were asked each in turn if we would like to go to Ballyfermot, to Convent Lawns, a new Housing Estate built by Dublin City Council. All three said yes with joy, we had each experienced life in Ballyfermot as second-year novices, our first taste of mission on the district. Never having lived in community with each other of course we said yes, such a grace to be offered such a fertile ground.



This was a new project and, working with Dublin City Council, we engaged in programmes aimed at building an open and honest community among people who, before, had experienced difficulties with neighbours.

As part of our new Estate we had a purpose-built community centre and in our eyes it was such a joy to have. We worked together and Sr Phil did so much to teach the children to cook wholesome and nourishing meals and of course brown bread! Children are always eager to learn and long to use their talents.

Part of our mission in those early days in Convent Lawns was our involvement in the home help service. Sr Eilis along with her group of dedicated workers provided much needed home support to the elderly, infirm and handicapped. As the years passed this function was taken over by other groups funded by the local authority. Sr Eilis was, in fact, the last Little Sister to run a home help service in Ireland. Later on, she took up the role of archivist for

the Anglo Celtic Province and has recently initiated a digitisation programme which will make historical items relating to the Province more accessible

As we grow older we live in the reality of doing mission differently and can smile inwardly at the passage in Jn 21:18. Now we live as community as 'neighbour' in a larger community as 'presence' while our work is less 'out front' our charism is still centrally relevant as we try to be neighbour. We have been given the grace to live in close proximity to the 'ordinariness' of everyday life but in a special way. A way in which we have developed relationships with families is by supporting them in all kinds of small but significant ways and allowing ourselves being supported at the same time.



One way in which we tried to fulfil the aspiration in Acts 2:42 was the development and nurturing of our 'companions' programme, gathering a small group of neighbours and friends in monthly meetings that focus on prayer, spiritual reading and sharing of simple food which is usually brought by different members of the group on each occasion. Likewise the reading and prayers are chosen and led by group members, this deepens the diversity and richness of the way the Holy Spirit can work in our midst.

Some of our companions have said: "The Little Sisters looked after us and our families in the past and now it's our turn" and, while there is some element of role reversal, a greater degree of mutuality has entered into all our relationships.

In the last few years we have celebrated Passover by organising a "Seder" meal during the early part of Holy Week. We have done this both here in Convent Lawns and with the Mount Argus community in their house, where we brought together our companions, neighbours and Sisters from surrounding houses.

Sadly over the past two years we lost two of our friends and companions. Both loved our charism and lived it themselves in different ways: Carole, a caring mother, grandmother and neighbour, and Simon, a gifted artist and a Companion of long standing. May they rest in peace.

Sr Eilis Murnane

❖ France

Regional Meeting of the Fraternities of Our Lady of the Assumption of the *Ile de France*

On Saturday, the 11th of April, some fifty brothers and sisters met at Montrouge.

From 9.30 a.m. we gradually arrived in the hall of the public education chaplaincy. Present were the Fraternities of Antony, Montrouge, Pierrefitte/Saint Denis, Conflans Sainte Honorine and Grigny. The Fraternité at Le Havre had been contacted by the sisters at Conflans but was not present. The fraternity of Suresnes was represented by Thérèse Crampon (LSA) because now, given the age of its members, this Fraternity can no longer travel.

At 10 a.m., after a warm welcome by the Montrouge Fraternity, Epiphane opened the day and invited each one to introduce herself/himself. In the course of the morning we mingled in inter-Fraternity groups so as to do this. Father Jo launched the work of the day by inviting us to write on "paper spectacles" what we had observed on our arrival at the regional meeting. This initial participation gave those who were there a fresh outlook. Each person was transformed both by what he or she had said personally and by what the others said: a new outlook, ears that not only hear but listen according to the Holy Spirit.

Here are a few words: *to admire, to see beautiful things, to offer one's place, to sing, to meet the neighbour, to hear, to be with children, to show the way, to observe, to exchange, to guess, etc.*

We took a step further, the second stage of the process. Father Jo explained it: choose one or two photos from among those that were distributed on each table. Express the meaning that emerges from that photo, it is what we call contemplation. To see oneself beyond the mirror: the only image it gives us is that of oneself. Go more deeply, to the meaning. The mirror of the heart changes our outlook, we renew ourselves with what is beautiful, we are called to have an interior life. Each group wrote on different-coloured stickers.

See, in orange: we look at the photo that has been chosen.

Contemplate, in green: I try to understand what I see.

Change, in rose: the photo questions me about my way of looking at things.

Afterwards, we had a free discussion and received many testimonies:

The testimonies were intense: "I am called to see the interior beauty of young people; if we judge them we kill them"; another said: "I suffer when I see the suffering of others makes me suffer"; another "The Cross we bear is our faith; this faith that we have can change the outlook of others. My grandfather used to say ', Carry your cross always and walk with justice and uprightness'. And finally: "When you have a trial, you are never alone, a time will come when somebody will take your hand, the All-Powerful is there, we must go from distrust to confidence."

We shared the food each one had brought. The Montrouge Fraternity offered the coffee, which was accompanied by delicious little homemade cakes prepared early in the morning.

At 2 p.m., Monique, a lay member of the Antony Fraternity, began the afternoon by talking to us of the "Common Treasure, Laity/Little Sisters". Father Pernet, from the beginning had thought of the laity. The Little Sister and the laypeople walk together, they support one another. At the 2011 General Chapter the laity asked the Congregation for some formation on the LSA charism. As a result of that we have the papers that we use to animate the Fraternity meetings. Monique recounted the history of the commitment in the Fraternities; it has been brought into harmony with the present day since 2008 when there were initial commitments at Lourdes. Then, Monique invited the five persons who had made the commitment to renew it publicly and together before all the brothers and sisters.

At 2.30 p.m. we prayed together: "Lord, I pray you, teach me to be attentive... "

Father Jo led us into the third stage of our meeting by recounting the gospel story of the Samaritan woman in present-day language. He told us that it would be good to tell this story to one

another in our own words – this would help us to listen to it in a new way. Then, we listened to a reading from the gospel of John: 4:1-19, and shared freely. *"Jesus saw that the woman was not loved"; "The meeting of Jesus with a Samaritan woman was a shock, because the Samaritans did not mix with the Jews." "She came at midday so that she would not be seen, because she was ashamed before the others." "She went to tell others because Jesus had told her not to keep the secret for herself." "There was a dialogue, it is in talking that we open our heart."*

We had an inter-Fraternity time during which we recalled other encounters that Christ had.

What is the gaze of Jesus like?

When Jesus encounters people, how does he look at them?

What is happening in His heart?

What do people discover in how He looks at them?

How and why are they led to change their behaviour?

At 3.45 p.m. there was the Eucharist, with Jo, a priest, and François, a deacon. Others persons joined us and we gathered in a semi-circle around the altar to have a time of sharing the Word of God. There was an intercessory prayer that was an echo of the depth of our discussions, attentive to those present as well as to those who were absent, to the sick, recalling also the questions of the world, our neighbourhoods, our churches and our families.

At the end of that Eucharist we were filled with the Holy Spirit. Some were surprised, taken aback, quite overwhelmed by the experience of such marvels in the course of the day. Each returned home filled with joy; some found it difficult to leave being still quite astonished to have had that experience of the Risen One.

*"I did not know that you had a treasure hidden in your crystal ball."
"It was different, this participation was deep, everybody recognised that!" "Everybody is enthusiastic."*

*Account written by Casilda Mendos (Pierrefitte/Saint Denis),
Monique Fouilloux (Antony) Myriam Collon (Montrouge)*

News Item

With the arrival of the sisters who will be participating in the Assembly of the Congregation, Grenelle is once again resonating with a more intense international tone. The International Council of the Aolas (consecrated laywomen) joined the 21 Little Sisters for the first stage of the assembly.

From the 4th to the 9th of June it was the stage of "Thanksgiving for what has been placed in our hands", with the review of what we have experienced since the Extraordinary General Chapter in 2013 and the setting up of the Territories.

From the 11th to the 15th of June there will be the evaluation of the situation today. It is the stage of "living our present time in faith."

From the 16th to the 20th of June we will be turning our gaze to the future. "Have humble and confident daring in face of the future, because we are in the hands of the Father."

This assembly will end on the 21st of June of this year 2015, in thanksgiving and rejoicing, with the Celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation.

You can see the photos on the Congregation Webpage:
www.assumption-psa.org