



A Slice of Our Life, the 3eme An way in the month of May...

vendredi 31 mai 2013

After two weeks of reflecting on our religious life in the Assumption, our 3eme An session took us on an adventure to the birthplace of St. Marie Eugenie. **We spent two days and one night in Lorraine.** Like all those who followed this course in the past, we visited sites and places which meant so much for our saint. We were blessed and deeply grateful for the invigorating spirit of Sr. Therese Maylis, RA, as she told the story in her graphic narrative style of "what could have been" in those times and in various moments. We took lodging at the convent of the Sisters of Providence at Peltre. Their warm hospitality and personal candour made our evening truly restful.

The visit to Lorraine provided us with elements to understand more fully the context of St. Marie Eugenie. Sr. Helene Bureau, RA, a historian specializing on 19th c. France, gave a brief but substantial exposition on the critical socio-political upheavals of that period. This put in clearer perspective the challenges of a growing congregation as explained by Sr. Therese, Maylis, RA, against the backdrop of historical facts. Detailed exposition of particular issues and difficulties encountered by St. Marie Eugenie as a foundress provided us with a composite picture of what "a woman of faith and a woman of action" she truly was. The effort with which Sr. Therese Maylis put together, like pieces of a puzzle, our history was endearing.

We saw in our history how important **life in community** is for us in the Assumption. And so once again, for a week-end rendezvous, we packed our bags and headed to **Trosly**. We spent two days and one night with the **L'Arche community**. We had the good fortune of having four sessions with Jean Vanier himself on community life. At 80 years old, he looked strong and able. He spoke deeply from the heart, seasoned with wisdom and tempered by long years of experience. This trip was a special privilege for us since this was the first time a 3eme An group stayed there for 2 days. We listened intently and learned the "HOW" of community life among persons with "different abilities". Jean Vanier is a faithful disciple and his message resounded well in our hearts.

This grace-filled encounter made us own the challenges of living communion and form resolutions to build up the body of Christ there where we are sent. This prepared us well for the session that followed - **Apostolic Life** by Sr. Marjo Matias, RA. She gave the context of our apostolic life and how the understanding of it deepens communion and mission. Then each one was given the chance to present the various insertions and apostolic commitments where we express our following of Jesus in concrete terms. Knowing not only cognitively the "works" that God has entrusted to us but more so assuming with one another the heritage that is ours as sisters in the Assumption family made our 3eme An experience a real blessing.

Various topics that form part of our apostolic life filled the succeeding days. Sr. Cecile Renouard, RA, with Sr. Clare Myriam (of the BGS) presented **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and Solidarity** (JPICS) in a very inter-active way inviting us to identify concrete responses that we can practice and live.

This was followed by Sr. Veronique Thiebault, RA, who shared the Pedagogy of Desire and Sr. Ana Senties, RA, on Transformative Education. The week ended with some members of the CPAE sharing with us where Assumption Together is today. These inputs as well as the encounters with each of these persons expanded our horizons to hear the calls that beckon us beyond the frontiers of our insertions and realities. These made us feel grateful for all that they have done and to continue contributing our own little effort in the building up of the body-congregation.

The following week, we were on the road again this time visiting the wider **Assumption Family**. We walked to the convent of **the Little Sisters of the Assumption** from the Motherhouse to see their archives. We were welcomed by their Archivist, Sr. Madeleine, psa. We also met the General Superior and her Councillors. Putting order and keeping for posterity the heritage that is theirs, made us think of our own situation. There is much to learn from them.

After lunch, we proceeded to the Generalate of the **Orantes**. This property used to be the Provincial house of RA-France. The General Superior with her two councillors welcomed us into their convent with simple but warm hospitality. We had an afternoon with them. Knowing another branch of the Assumption family was a blessing. We are deeply grateful for their openness and availability.

The next day we went out for a little apostolic exposure to 2 of the communities here in France. We were divided into two groups, one for **Lubeck** and another for **Bondy**. The receiving schools had a program prepared for us for the whole day. We simply did what they asked us to do. The school administrators organized our day well that we had time to meet with them, sit down in classes and be given a farewell program.

This limited exposure to the two formal apostolates of the French Province opened a whole, new horizon of multi-cultural, pluralistic educational context. The challenges this reality present in terms of pedagogy, approach and evangelization are enormous. The association of schools (Tutelle) has done well in planning out the strategy for relevance and effectiveness. Such great and deep possibilities of conversion and adaptation ! It's not an easy apostolate but the Sisters and their Lay Partners take on the challenge. They are fortunate to have lay administrators who are equally committed to this mission.

We had the chance to condole with the family of the grandniece of St. Marie Eugenie, Madame **Brigitte de Milleret-Rodda**, when we participated at her **funeral mass** here at the Motherhouse. She died a day after she turned 100 years old. That same afternoon, we had the session on "Formation" with Sr. Carmen Escribano, RA. She reviewed the **Project of Formation of the Congregation** with us, its contents, challenges for us at midlife and our own need for continuing formation. For some this was the first time they had seen the booklet while others had the chance to study it in their respective provinces. The next day we had Sr. Martine Tabsoba, RA, on "Leadership." Her reflection was deep but realistic. Take it from the person who herself has been given the task to live her prophecy in a time when authentic witnesses are wanting. Her own experience said a lot about how we must understand authority as a gift and a task. After this, we had a day for personal work and spiritual direction.

Last Saturday we had what may well be our last day out before our 30 Days Retreat - **a visit to the Novitiate** - Les Pavillons sous Bois. We picked-up the sharing on Formation and were welcomed by the entire community (Sisters Elisabeth - Novice Mistress, Marie France, Marcienne and Anne who is doing the 3eme Am with us and two Lithuanian Novices) who awaited us with eager expectation. It was also the birthday of Sr. Marcienne. With much joy and affection we celebrated her birthday with two kinds of ice cream cakes in a frosty day !

Like the different facets of a diamond, we were made to see our life and heritage in the Assumption. The many dimensions of growing in awareness of what has been traversed and what opens up to the future leads to a better integration of a unified life in Christ. Through the mutual exchanges, moments of reflection, dialogues, personal as well as communal prayers the light within shines forth and sparkles. This is our treasure ; this is our responsibility. The Lord has done wondrous things. Indeed we are glad !

Sr. Elnora Perez, ra

Philippines-Thailand

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