



Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 18 - September 2013

Message from the NEP Extended Family Core Group

Recently, 27th/28th September, we had a meeting, much of which was focused on preparation for the annual Extended Family Gathering in Noddfa to which people from local EF groups, who are really interested in the SHM Extended Family, have been invited. The Gathering this year will take place from Friday 25th to Sunday 27th October. The weekend will be an opportunity for prayer and reflection in the beautiful setting of Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, as well as an introduction to RSHM founding sisters and an update on RSHM and EF focus on justice. There will be input and discussion on the work of RSHM as an NGO at the United Nations led by Sr. Rita Arthur who was the first RSHM NGO representative at the UN.

During our meeting we met briefly with Peter who edits this newsletter, to express our gratitude and hear from him how he sees our Extended Family through the articles which he receives from local areas. In our conversation some ideas about content were raised, including that of using quotations from the Extended Family handbook, so here's the first:

The SHM EF today, like Jean Gailhac and the first sisters, seek to respond to God's call to continue the life-giving mission of Jesus in a spirit of communion, collaboration and exchange of gifts. Their model in this is Mary, first disciple, who *"cooperated most faithfully in the work of redemption"* (RSHM Constitutions 3), through the birthing and nurturing of her son, Jesus, who came *"that all may have life"*.

SHM Extended Family in Furness – the Last Year

Over the last year the SHM Extended Family in the Furness district of Cumbria has been involved in several gatherings.

September 2012: Annual Meeting at Noddfa,

Sr. Pierre accompanied by Liz Nugent and Ann and John Newby went to the annual meeting. It was good to meet people from many different places and very helpful to reflect on the role of the Extended Family and to plan our way forward.

November 2012: Founder's Birthday

We had a gathering of friends and extended family members at the convent to celebrate our Founder's Birthday. We based our reflection on that beautiful poem composed by Sr. Mary Milligan (a former Superior General). The concluding verse provides food for thought on where we are going on our journey as the extended Family

"Another wind arises. Where will it take them?"

"The wind blows where it chooses. And you hear the sound of it but you do not know

where it comes from or where it goes.” (John 3:8)

Listen to the wind”

Sr. Pierre told us about the development of the Institute and how it grew and spread throughout the world.



This provided food for thought and discussion afterwards – over tea and cakes, of course. John Newby told the gathering about the happenings at Noddfa and the emerging plan for building the Extended Family in the Furness area, and then invited people to ‘sign up’ as members of the Extended Family or to volunteer to be members of a local ‘core group’. We now have a growing list of friends and family and an embryo core group.



February 2013: Founder’s Day

The special feature of this meeting was the presence of Sr. Anne Murphy, who came from Dublin and shared with us the involvement of the SHM sisters at the United Nations Organisation in New York. She called it “Nuns of the RUN” (RUN = Religious at the United Nations). An open invitation to all parishes drew almost 40 people together in Sacred Heart parish social area to listen to a very interesting, informative, and thought provoking talk about how the SHM’s small number of sisters

working there fight for social and economic justice for the poor of the world. More people signed up to join our local Extended Family too.

Early June 2013: Initial Meeting of the Local Core Team

The local core group eventually managed to meet together to discuss the way ahead and to look at what we would like to do to build up the Extended Family. Sr. Pierre brought us up to date with what was planned for the General Chapter meeting in Brazil. Together, we formulated a greeting and prayer for the Chapter members, which were e-mailed directly to Brazil. We then agreed to arrange a general meeting during the Chapter for an afternoon of prayer and reflection.

8th June 2013: Carlisle Gathering to Celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary

On a contingent of 4 Sisters and 4 Extended Family members from Barrow travelled up to Carlisle to join in the day organised by the Sisters from St Gabriel's. It was good to join up with them and with members of the Carlisle Extended Family, especially those who had been at Noddfa last year, and to celebrate mass with young Fr John Millar presiding. After mass, we had a marvellous shared lunch, with lots of nice food to choose from. Then, the highlight of the day was Sr. Madeline's talk about her visit to China and the work of the Church among the many poor people of that huge country. The images and the words she used will stay with us, as will the stories of the people she met. It was a good day out – and the sun even shone for the trips up and down the M6.

18th June 2013: Afternoon of Prayer and Reflection

For this gathering in the convent we were fortunate to have, from the SHM website, the words of Superior General's opening talk. Our prayer and reflection was based on this. We were aware that this was a time of challenge, decision making and change. Sr. Terezinha asked the question, "How do we see ourselves in the future?" This is a question that applies to all of us - the need to be ready to say "Yes" to the Holy Spirit. This evoked a spontaneous singing of a chorus of "Que sera, sera".



As always, no gathering is complete without tea and cakes afterwards, and a good natter.

These activities have brought our local group together and made us more aware of our role as the SHM's Extended Family in Furness.

We now look forward to gathering in Noddfa in October.

May 22nd 2013: Thanksgiving Mass and Celebration in Upminster

The parish church of St Joseph's in Upminster was packed to capacity on this evening. The local community of sisters, parishioners and extended family were joined by our sisters from London, Liverpool and Penmaenmawr as we gathered to give thanks and celebrate the life and mission of the RSHM in Upminster and the surrounding areas throughout the past 86 years. Many of those who joined us were past pupils, past staff and sisters who had ministered here over the years.

The sisters expressed their gratitude to the priests and people for the life giving experience of sharing life together, and for their constant support and friendship.

The sisters came to Upminster in 1927 and opened a small school in the house. As the numbers increased they built the present Sacred Heart of Mary Girl's school, which has expanded over the years and has become the very successful school it is today. The sisters also started St Joseph's Primary school in the parish and taught in the parishes of Hornchurch, Elm Park, East Ham and Custom House.

Our mass was a celebration of life shared in all these places, and gratitude to God for all the lives touched throughout the 86 years of RSHM presence in Upminster.

Following the mass we had a party at the convent which was enjoyed by all as we shared memories and stories from past and present times.

23rd June 2013: Extended Family Meeting at Seafeld

On this Sunday nine members of the Extended Family joined Sisters Patsy Butler, Eleanor Dalton, Gertrude McCarthy and Anne Wells for an afternoon of Reflection at Seafeld Convent, Blundellsands, Liverpool. Apologies were received from other members who had previous commitments. The theme for the meeting was *"Challenges for the Year of Evangelisation"*.

Sister Patsy welcomed everyone to Seafeld then Sister Eleanor introduced the afternoon's proceedings but first told us that Esmerelda and Bekim were expecting their first child. However, their joy is tinged with concern because their residency status is not yet established.

Sister Eleanor talked briefly about the Year of Faith and reminded us that we must continue to keep in mind those marginalised people whom we hear about in the media. She then went on to say that the Year of Evangelisation should be about how we are evangelising today and referred us to Psalm 18 *"... Day unto day takes up the story and night unto night makes known the message..."* Word of mouth is, and always has been, the most effective way of evangelising since the time of Christ and it must be a loving message we give to all. The RCIA programme has proved to be one of the best things to have happened in the last 50 years since Vatican II. Sister Eleanor felt that we needed more of this in the Church today.

Sister Patsy then lit the candle which the Sisters had been lighting daily since the start of their General Chapter Meeting taking place now in Brazil. A new Superior General, Sister Ros (American) had just been elected and voting was now underway to elect her Councillors.

Much of the afternoon was then about the evil of Trafficking led by Sister Patsy who first asked us all *"Do you think there are trafficked people in Liverpool?"* Sadly, most seemed to agree that there

surely were and Sister then distributed a leaflet *"Let's bust some lazy misconceptions"* which she asked us to read. She also handed out a number of other informative leaflets on the subject for us to read at home. Sister Patsy, who had been involved for the last 8 years (initially through the Medaille Trust and now with The TRAC Group) related some of her own experiences and some of her Sister friends and colleagues which were all very moving. Sister Patsy showed us the video *"Fields of Mudan"* which was harrowing to all present. A serious discussion then followed and Sister Patsy suggested that having now heard so much about trafficking we should, as a Group, find ways to do something about it. Obviously, the first thing we can do is pray but we should also watch out for any signs in our own localities of trafficking. The leaflets *"On TRAC to ratify..."* *"But what can I do?"*, *"Right under your nose"*, and *"Human Trafficking in the UK: Sexual Exploitation"* all provide very good guidelines for us.

Sister Eleanor thanked all those who had brought bags of clothing and goods for the Charities, Nugent Care and MRANG.

For our next meeting in November, Sister Eleanor said she was hoping to invite Sister Madeleine Fitzpatrick RSHM, based now in Dublin, to come and tell us all about her recent and most interesting trip to China.

Sister Patsy played a track *"Sharika"* from one of the leaflets she had handed out and we all sang along to it and then prayed the special Intercessions. Sister then led a minute's silence to express our compassion for all those many women and children who have died inside because of these terrible atrocities. She also asked us to pray daily for all those who are trafficked and especially on the coming Tuesday which would be the Sisters' Congregation Day.

Kath Nolan then spoke about a Core Group meeting at Carlisle and described the evening prayer session. Everyone had been asked to bring their favourite scripture reading, to read it to the group and then share some thoughts of what the reading meant to them. Discussions only took place after each person had finished. She remarked how interesting it was that each person interpreted a passage slightly differently. Kath suggested that maybe we should try this experience at a future meeting and received a positive response.

To help with prayerful reflections Kath explained that Sr. Anne Wells could forward the Prego newsletter if anyone was interested.

Kath has been invited to the next Chapter Meeting in Birmingham and she advised us that the next Province-wide meeting for the Extended Family would be held in Penmaenmawr on the weekend of 25-27th October. Up to 3 members of each Extended Family unit would be welcome to attend at a cost of £40 each.

Kath thanked Sister Patsy for her excellent presentation and hospitality and thanked Sister Eleanor for the meeting which closed at 5.05 p.m. We then enjoyed refreshments kindly provided and served by the Seafeld Community.

September 2013: Castlemilk and Skipton visit Noddfa

Friends of RSHM from Castlemilk and Skipton enjoyed their annual visit to Noddfa during the first week in September 2013.

Penmaenmawr was as beautiful as ever with glorious weather which helped us to pray, reflect, relax and socialise in the gardens and beach. We departed refreshed knowing we will be back in 2014.

Look forward to 2014!

September 2013: News from our Neighbours in Béziers

The Poor Clares, les Clarisses, were sent to Béziers to reside in the parish of St. Aphrodise by St. Clare herself in 1238; they were the second Clarisses cloister in France, the first being in Reims. In 1254, King Louis IX visited them on his return from the Crusades. He asked them to pray for his mother, Blanche of Castille, who has been in their prayers ever since. In return he lifted from them any rent in perpetuity.



Now the Clarisses are moving to Millau because their cloister here in Béziers is too big for their needs. When I asked when they were moving, the sister who must pay the bills said "before we have to turn on the heat we need to think if it is absolutely necessary."



For us it was an extraordinary occasion to meet for the first time people whose connection to us goes back more than 150 years when Père Gailhac was their confessor. After dinner they walked back to the Motherhouse with us to see it for the first time. We prayed together in the crypt.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE RSHM WORLD

21st April 2013: Day of Reflection at RSHM Provincial Center, Montebello

This item begins with an apology from the Editor – it was omitted in error from the English version of the June Newsletter. Sorry.

On April 21, 2013, the SHMEF offered a day of reflection at the RSHM Provincial Center in Montebello, California. The theme, *LIVING A RESURRECTED LIFE*, was led by Dr. Michael Horan from the theology department of Loyola Marymount University.

Following Dr. Horan's presentation, three presenters offered their personal reflections through themes they had been asked to address. Sr. Joan Treacy, RSHM, shared her reflections through the lens of living this resurrected life through the Internet. Progress made in communication can offer new life in terms of education and spirituality as well as instant communication. Michelle Youssef-Forgione shared living a resurrected life through motherhood, and she spoke of her own new experience with motherhood and her joy in participating in this "new life". Jane Eggleston talked about the lens of cosmology and how new life evolves and is transformed. Presentations were followed with a period of reflection and a Liturgy celebrated by Father Tim Klosterman.

Following the Liturgy there was a generous lunch as well as stimulating conversation. The opportunity to come together in this way offered time away from the usual, sometimes unnoticed, day to day life, as well as a chance to reflect on the continued Easter season and the new life of nature springing forth.

June 2013: 23rd General Chapter in Belo Horizonte

Belo Horizonte, Brazil, was the ideal setting for our 23rd general chapter. We woke each morning to warm sunshine followed by days that never grew too hot. It was winter in Brazil in June.

Our venue was *Casa de Retiros São José*, a spacious and comfortable house, situated on one of Belo Horizonte's many hills, and commanding great views of the city. Our sisters came from all the provinces and regions, and great was the joy experienced when we met, some after many years, others for the first-time.

The theme of journey - the Emmaus journey and our RSHM journey - threaded together all our reflections. The chapter was a time for evaluating the journey of our Institute from different perspectives, especially regarding its fidelity to the spirit of our Founders, Jean Gailhac and Mere St. Jean, and our apostolic responses today. It was a time for reflecting and making decisions for new times and new situations, and for electing our Institute leaders for the next six years.

There were many memorable moments. One such happened about mid way through the three weeks, when around 100 guests, including members of the Brazilian SHM Extended Family, sisters from our Brazilian communities, members of other congregations, and friends of the sisters, joined us for an afternoon. It was a very joyous occasion as we interacted and responded to the guest speaker, Sr. Márian Ambrósio, of the Sisters of Divine Providence, outgoing president of the National Conference of Religious in Brazil, who addressed us on the theme, "The Church Fifty Years after the Council".

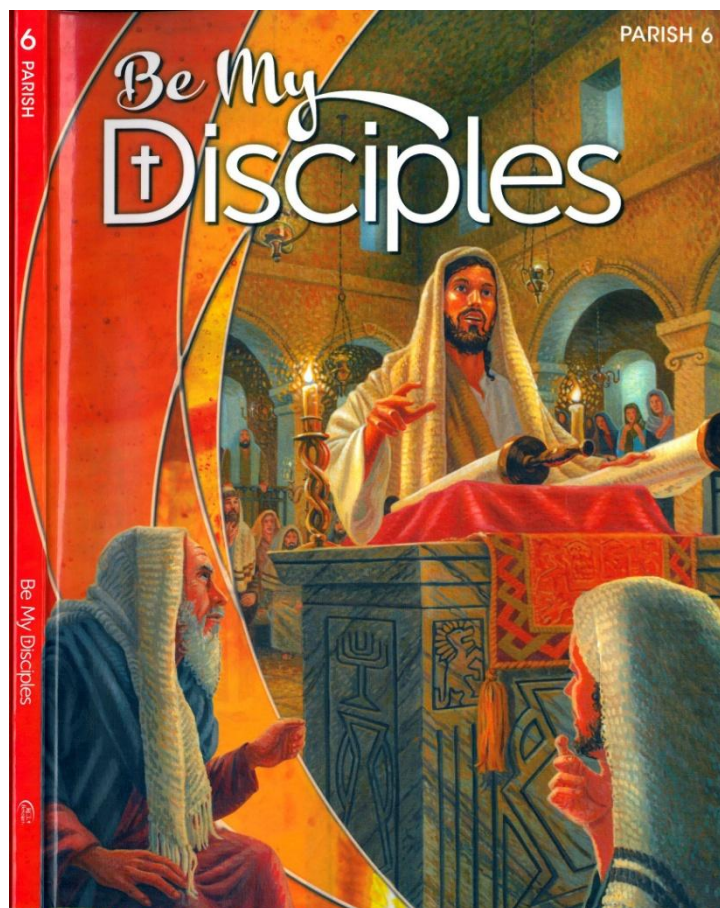
A 'free' day spent at Enotim Park outside the city of Belo Horizonte was another memorable experience. The pictures will convey better than words the beauty, peace and tranquillity we felt as we explored the extensive gardens and admired the various pieces of sculpture and art exhibited throughout the Park.



The chapter ended, and we returned to our countries and communities, filled with joy and hope, like the Emmaus disciples who returned to Jerusalem, hearts burning within them. May all of us, RSHM, members of the Extended Family, and all with whom we collaborate, continue to be "on fire with the love of the Risen Christ... who sends us out as disciples in mission". (2013 Chapter Document)



News From California of a New Publication for Schools



Sr Gretchen Hailer, a member of RSHM Western American Province, living in California, was among a group of Extended Family members from various provinces who spent time together in Beziers in 2006. She has sent us the following information about a publication to be used for children in 6th grade (Year 7 in English Secondary Schools) in which Fr. Gailhac is included.

Sr. Gretchen wrote:

I am pleased to provide these extracts from a 6th grade religion text produced by RCL/Benziger Publishing that my dear friend and colleague Jo Rotunno (the publisher) made happen for the RSHM. She and her editors chose Jean Gailhac (and Mère St. Jean) as the Faithfilled People for the children to get to know. The sidebar below is in the Chapter on Holy Orders and you can also see Jean Gailhac mentioned in the Table of Contents. This Religious Education series is published for both Catholic School and Parish editions and is also available in English/Spanish as well.

CHAPTER 15 Holy Orders 135

FAITH CONCEPTS: Sacraments at the Service of Communion, the Rite of Ordination, bishop, *patience*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 9:35-38; Mark 10:42-45

FAITH-FILLED PEOPLE: Venerable Jean Gailhac

PRAYER: Prayer for Vocations



I'm particularly thrilled since I worked for the company as the National Catechetical Consultant a number of years ago

Could you contribute an item to the newsletter? Photos and articles – no matter how short – are always welcome and will be held for the next available newsletter. Don't delay - exercise your literary talents now!

Electronic copy by email or as an attachment is preferable as are digital photos - but handwritten copy and prints are welcome too. See below for the email and postal addresses.

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