



# Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 21 - November 2014

## Happy Tenth Birthday, SHM EF: 2004 – 2014!

Ten years ago, on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary 2004 the RSHM General Council wrote to all Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary to announce the birth of the SHM Extended Family, describing it as “this new life, which we believe is Spirit-inspired and brimful of energy. It has developed from the spontaneous movement and desire of many people, in many of the countries we are in, to share our journey in some way”. The General Council also wrote of the mutuality between the SHM EF and RSHM with the hope and expectation that “entrusting our charism to the Extended Family can also be a call to us as RSHM to a deeper living of our charism and spirituality”.

Those of us who have journeyed with the NEP SHM EF as it has grown and developed have experienced this mutuality in various ways. Below are some reflections on the experience of being part of the EF movement, either as members or as RSHM accompanying the members:

### ***Greg Smith (Carlisle):***

I first became involved in EF in 2011 when my wife Carmen and I attended some meetings at St Gabriel’s in Carlisle. This however was not our first encounter with RSHM. Carmen had been taught by the Sisters and subsequently went on to teach with them at St Gabriel’s and St Margaret Mary, both in Carlisle. In the early seventies I came to teach also at St Margaret Mary and the rest, so they say, is history.

From those very early years we counted the many sisters we worked with both as colleagues and friends. In a sense, the family roots were very deep. Interestingly - and this was a point I alluded to at Noddfa this year – in all those years of friendship and collegiality, I don’t remember any discussions about charism or Jean Gailhac or the history of the order. I think it is fair to say that in “joining” EF, the relationship I felt I already had, was enriched. I suppose a parallel would be someone sitting down with a grandparent and discovering by their life history a person they did not know as well as they thought.

The meetings we have had both in Carlisle and Noddfa have helped to deepen this sense of family discovery. It has been inspiring to discover the work of RSHM on the world stage, to get a global picture of the family in action. Probably the highlight for me has been the opportunity to pray together and share the scriptures. I have met many new friends and, of course, had some fun and laughter!

We often ask at meetings, “What are we going to do?” I think what we do will always be determined by who we are. This sense of discovering who we are is the key to action. Part of the challenge of EF is discovering how our relationship with RSHM will contribute to the person we are and how this will translate into action.

**Sue Black (York):**

So there we were, Patrick and I, living our lives, watching our family fly the nest, involved in parish activities, when along came a larger-than-life character in the shape of Sr. Moira Lever. ‘How do you feel about joining me in a new venture for our Order – Extended Family?’



Well, the term ‘fishing in the dark’ was an understatement, we were all floundering. There was no brief, no previous model and no source of eternal wisdom to help us. Moira, Sr. Kathleen O’Donovan, Ruth Long, Colette Kearney and ourselves, met, talked, socialized, got to know each other, and began to experience the Spirit at work in the venture.

As we encountered the Sisters and what drives them, we became victims of the ‘Gailhac’ effect. This was enhanced by visits to Noddfa (Penmaenmawr), Carlisle, Upminster and Liverpool, where we shared spiritually and socially. However the process was thoroughly consolidated by a visit to Beziers in 2006 where we met Extended Family members from France and the USA, and together we trod in Fr. Gailhac’s footsteps - truly a life-changing experience.

When I lost Patrick two years ago, the nature of the unique friendship that had grown over the years became so valuable, and as Core Group membership has changed, this has widened. I have no idea whether my contributions have been large or small, but the benefit for me has been immeasurable.

**Sr. Kathleen O’Donovan, RSHM (London):**

Journeying with our SHM Extended Family has been a challenging and enriching experience for which I am truly grateful.

As a member of the core group, there was the challenge of openness to where the Spirit was leading us in making Fr. Gailhac’s vision more widely known and lived in our times, and in our areas. Through prayer and reflective sharing we discerned the way forward, and we were mutually enriched through our encounters with each other.

At our local and annual gatherings, the sharing on our Charism, history, spirituality and focus on Justice, enabled each of us to deepen our commitment, and collaborate together in our mission to promote the “life and dignity of all our sisters and brothers”. (mission statement)  
The deep faith and commitment of our Extended Family members has challenged me in living my own faith and my religious commitment, “so that all may have life.”

**Kath Nolan (Liverpool)**

I was introduced to the Extended Family nine years ago by Sr Eleanor Dalton who I was working with at the time at Nugent Care in Liverpool. I admired the work that Eleanor did as a Catechist

with people who have a disability and joined her in helping to develop a spirituality for the disabled.

I became aware of the wider picture of the RSHM when I volunteered to help Sr. Kathleen O'Keeffe with admin work in her role co-ordinating the various projects the sisters were involved in throughout the world. As I read the details of this work I could see the valuable role all the sisters were playing in supporting those in need.

I became very involved in our Extended Family meetings in Liverpool and usually lead the reflection. After a weekend meeting at Noddfa, I was approached by Sr Moira to see if I would become a member of the Core Group. I accepted this offer and have seen a great development. We have been introduced to the charism of Gailhac which gives true meaning to the mission that the sisters are living and have had the opportunity to share our thoughts on scripture readings which has proved very thought-provoking. All the sisters who have given presentations to us from the history of the order, to the involvement with the UN, have been extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

I had the privilege of attending the Provincial Chapter Meeting in Birmingham as a member of the Core Group and was very impressed to hear a very realistic report about the RSHM in the modern day, struggling with the demands of a difficult financial climate, an "aged" membership and few vocations being introduced. As a lay person, I firmly believe, that I too have a vocation and would hope that I can support the work of the sisters in any way I can. I have become far more aware of many justice issues, of human trafficking, plight of asylum seekers, prostitutes etc.

The most important thing is that I feel like I belong to a family. I have made many friends and love meeting up with them all and know that wherever the venue is, the sisters will always give a very warm welcome.

## 26th May, 2014: Extended Family at Béziers

The Extended Family at Béziers met for the third and final meeting of the year, beginning with a Holy Hour made up of reflection upon an image linked with the feast of the Ascension, a sharing of the Word of God and a period of adoration of the Eucharist. This time of discovery and enrichment of our faith in a setting of contemplation and prayer was much appreciated and hope was expressed that such an experience should be repeated in our future meetings.



'Ascension of the Evangelist', attributed to Rabula (VI century)

We were then able to read together on the big screen the latest Extended Family Newsletter – another great moment of discovery of the living reality of the Extended Family across the Province and the Institute. This gave us ideas for our three meetings next year: to know better the different

regions of the Province so that Carlisle, Seafield or Lisburn, for example, might become concrete realities for us here at Béziers. We would also like to know and understand better the mission of the SHM across the Institute, for example in Brazil. We also expressed the desire to be able to know better what the young sisters of the Novitiate are doing and to continue to deepen our understanding of the spirituality of Father Gailhac in today.

After sharing this food for the soul and spirit, our evening continued as usual among a shared joy with an abundance of food to nourish our physical bodies.



## 9th July 2014: RSHM at the United Nations

A good number of people gathered in St Gabriel's at Carlisle to hear a talk from Sister Veronica about the work of the order at the UN and were joined by video link to a group assembled in Barrow whose members were able to listen to the talk and join in the questions.



The order's work is inextricably linked with the marginalised while the UN Charter promotes justice and the organisation has many facets and many organisations carrying out many projects. Since the order's General Chapter promoted partnership working with other organisations the order linking to the UN provides a good match.

The RSHM was set up in September 2006 as a Non-Governmental Organisation at the UN to promote Education, Participation and Advocacy and since September 2013 has Special

Consultative Status within the UN Economic and Social Council. The RSHM as an NGO is part of various groups at the UN: Religious at the UN, the Committee of Religious NGO at the UN, the NGO committee for Social Development, the Working Group on Girls, the NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons, the NGO Committee on Migration and the NGO Committee on Financing for Development.

Sister Veronica reminded us of the words of Pope Francis: "Each individual Christian and every Community is called upon to be an instrument of God".

## September 2014: Barrovians in Béziers!

Greetings to everyone from the Extended Family of Bon Pasteur!

We wanted to share with you the joy we felt in September when Barry and his wife Barbara from Barrow came during their holidays to visit Sisters Pierre and M André in the Bon Pasteur Community, a moment of true friendship.



Naturally we discussed the Extended Family. Barry told us of his hope to be able to come to Béziers to visit the Mother House with a group from the Extended Family. May it please God that that might come to pass!



Sr Thérèse-Marie est currently away but she will be able to tell you of the new team which has been set up at Béziers!

With our affection  
*Françoise and the RSHM of Bon Pasteur*

## 3rd-5th October, 2014: Extended Family Gathering in Penmaenmawr

As we know November 13th, the anniversary of Fr. Gailhac's birth, is the day when we acknowledge with joy this gift of the Spirit, affirm our journey together and celebrate our common desire to know and love God and to make God known and loved. However, Extended Family members from Glasgow, Carlisle, Barrow, York, Liverpool and London had gathered together at Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, from 3rd to 5th September to celebrate the journey which has brought us to this tenth birthday.

John Newby travelled from Barrow and here are his thoughts:

Home again, with a head full of thoughts implanted by the activities of our get-together. It's always a pleasure to return to Noddfa and be nourished by being among the group that gather there and to be looked after by the house team.

"That all may have life" is certainly high among those thoughts, along with "what is right for our times" and "where should we be going, locally and nationally, to 'be the living Christ' for people": "To Be", not just "To Do" is particularly challenging for me.

Our journey together as Extended Family will be different because of the things we have shared and what we have learned from each other, but we know that we have love and prayers to support us and guide us on our way.

## 19th November, 2014: Extended Family Meeting in Béziers

Our first meeting of the Extended Family for the year took place on November 19th.

When we last met in May, our assembly expressed the wish to become better acquainted with the different parts of the Province so that when reading the Extended Family Newsletter we might become closer.

A small steering group had met to prepare this meeting. We began by discovering the context and implementation of the first foundation outside France, that of Lisburn in Northern Ireland. That enabled us to understand the concerns of Mother Ste Croix, then Superior General, amid the turmoil of the 1870s, the laborious work to establish the mission by Mother St Thomas and the first sisters sent to a Protestant land and the evolution of the mission up to present.

We recalled the words of Father Gaillhac supporting and urging on his daughters at Lisburn to "Give yourselves completely to God...which implies renouncing everything of yourself and your possessions and carrying your cross..." with the faith that "God is not only a father, he is also a mother; his tenderness is incomparable..." (GS/21VII/71/B).

Through the testimony of Sister Marie Jean Barthès and Sister Marie-Paul Petit who were warmly welcomed at Lisburn this year, we were able to learn how the mission lives on in the communities still present over there.

A time of prayer finished our meeting recalling the daring and the faith of the apostle Paul in the foundation of the church at Corinth told in the Acts of the Apostles which we are reading in the



diocese for the 2014-2015 year.



The sharing of a meal again extended the joy of reunion!

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The newsletter is published in English and French versions. If you (or someone) else would prefer to receive the French version then please get in touch.

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! Contributions in English or French (both, even!) are equally welcome.

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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