



# Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 28 - June 2017

## Solidarity

Our thoughts and prayers at this time are with all those affected by the tragic events in Manchester, London, the Punjab and elsewhere which have taken place during the past few weeks.

## Meeting of Seafeld EF Group – 5th March 2017

On Sunday, 5th March, 15 members (including 4 new ones) were welcomed to Seafeld by Sisters Eleanor, Gertrude and Paula for an afternoon of Reflection. Four apologies were received.

Eleanor opened the meeting and invited Kath Nolan to tell us about the visit to an EFM groups' meeting hosted in Lancaster last November by the Lancaster and Morecambe EFM.

Kath said that groups from Barrow, Carlisle and Liverpool attended, the theme was Laudato Si and it was a most enjoyable day. Intended to be a one-off North West Regional meeting, its success means that there may be others but not necessarily on an annual basis.

Eleanor took up the theme of our afternoon on Life with the quotes: "Choose life then ...", "God breathed life into ...", "... the tree of life ..." and "I have come that all may have life ... and have it to the full" and expanded on them.

Sheila Cogley was invited to tell us about her volunteering time in Malawi with the Charity Network for a Better World, and at a school for children with learning disabilities in Haiti which was very interesting. Describing her time in Malawi, in particular, Sheila related to the afternoon's theme by pointing out that, there, plenty of rain brought life but more frequent, serious droughts meant death.

Eleanor suggested we might think of a day visit to Noddfa this year and Kath said she would relay details about the annual weekend meeting at Noddfa which is held in October and some may be interested in joining in.

Kath played a recording of the Song "New life", then read today's Gospel: "Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.", following it with a number of thought-provoking questions on which a brief discussion was held. Kath then played another song "Lose yourself in me" and led Prayers at the conclusion of the meeting.

*Pauline Mc Manus*

## Extended Family News from Béziers, 19th May 2017

On 19th May 2017 we gathered for our latest meeting of this year in the presence of nine members of the Extended Family from Furness who were visiting the Mother House for a week. As usual we went through the latest Extended Family Newsletter, an opportunity for John Newby to comment upon the abundance of activities of the Extended Family in Barrow.



With the help of Heather Summers, we were able to reflect, share and pray in both languages while meditating upon the image of the Gospel of the Good Samaritan approaching and caring for the abused man. We highlighted that taking care of someone injured in the street is a spontaneous act but helping different types of poverty requires vigilance, discernment and recourse to competent organizations.



Our evening extended to a plentiful shared meal and songs bringing great joy to all. We hope to be able to repeat this enriching experience of fellowship with an international dimension.

*Thérèse-Marie, rcsm*

## Extended Family Carlisle Report for period February – May 2017

This has been a quiet time for our group so there is little to report.

At the end of February, Greg, Eileen and Maureen travelled to Barrow to attend their 'Foundation Day' meeting. This proved to be a very informative day with the theme 'Suffer little Children' and gave us lots to talk about on the journey back to Carlisle. Thank you, Sr Pierre and the Barrow group.

Again, in February, Sr Catherine and Maureen attended a local meeting where discussions took place regarding how we could help the Syrian Refugees who were expected to arrive/settle in Carlisle. We were provided with lots of useful information and signed up to help in a voluntary capacity should help be required.

On 21st March, we met in convent chapel for one hour of Lenten Prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Our planned event which we usually hold around the feast of the 'Immaculate Heart of Mary' is to take place on 24 June. The day will commence with mass in the parish church at 10am, followed by coffee in the parish hall and then our parish priest will speak about the pastoral support he gives to the young men in the Cenacolo Community who are recovering from a reliance on drugs. It is also hoped that two of the men who have experienced the work of Cenacolo will also come and give their testimony. More on this next time.

*Maureen Wilson*

## Extended Family in Furness Foundation Day Gathering, 25th February

We gathered together in the Our Lady of Furness Parish Centre, on Saturday, 25th February, to reflect on the theme of "Suffer Little Children". It was good to welcome Greg, Eileen and Maureen from Carlisle - early risers who had made the trip down from Carlisle for our 9am start.

Our reflections were based on the early work of the Founder, Fr Jean Gailhac, and his work among the poor and destitute of Beziers and then the continuing need to care for children, including children here in Furness in the world of today.

Our Guest Speaker was Anne Diss, who is a past pupil of the Crosslands Convent school. Anne has worked with children and young people in the Furness area in many roles— teacher, youth worker, St Omer's Group leader, and charitable foundation leader, to name but a few. Ann spoke from the heart about the way in which she had become involved in caring for and nurturing growth in young people, with moving examples of the issues they faced in, for some of them, their turbulent lives on a day-to-day and long-term basis.

Our prayer time reflected on Jesus and the way he reacted when people tried to take the children away and we dwelt on his words "let the little children come unto me" to think about how we should treat children with care and compassion, especially those in need. Afterwards, the group went across the road to celebrate mass together in St Mary's church.

*Sr Pierre Dullaghan and John Newby*

## Extended Family in Furness Monthly Prayer Meetings

We continue to meet on the first Monday of each month. Attendance is still good. The theme for the sessions is always chosen to tie in with the Liturgical Themes of the time. Our latest meeting on 5th June was based on the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The theme related to the way in which the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed on each of us as individuals, just as on the first Pentecost, the flame separated and tongues of fire rested on each one of the apostles. We contemplated on Jesus' final prayer at the last supper (John 17) and the

call to be one, and on the link to Fr Gailhac's final prayer for unity at all times among members of the Institute.

*Sr Pierre Dullaghan and John Newby*

## Extended Family in Furness Pilgrimage to the Mother House, May 2017

At last! On the 16th May - after much prayer, planning and juggling of arrangements – we were off! Eight of us flew off from Manchester to join Sr Pierre, who was already in Beziers stopping with the Bon Pasteur community. At last, we were going to the Mother House, to where it all began in 1849. We were fortunate in that all of us could stop in the Mother House. That, in itself, was a great part of our experience: living together in the spaces where some of the sisters we know had lived and worked. The place where Mère St Jean and the Founders had lived, worked and prayed; the place where Novices were trained.

Sr Therese-Marie together with Sr Bernadette and Heather, a member of the local Extended Family, led us and supported us through our week-long visit. Our programme was based on three themes: Water, Spirit, and Fire. It took us through familiar themes and stories of the foundation and the growth of the RSHM – but this time we were in or moving around the places where all these things had happened. That brought them much more alive in our hearts and minds. Most days involved prayer, reflection, presentations and visits to sites linked to Fr Gailhac and Appollonie and Eugene Cure. We also had planned some free time to soak up the atmosphere of the place and to enjoy being in the south of France. The warm, sunny weather was much appreciated. It allowed us to enjoy some 'al fresco' time for 'refreshments' and lunches.

Sister Pierre was so excited to have some of her extended family in the place where she lived and worked for 10 years and that she grew to love. Many of those years were shared with her late sister, Sr André. Together, they used to be the ones who gave visitors the 'Beziers Experience'. Every time we went out into Beziers or to mass in the town somebody recognised her and greetings were exchanged with typical French flair. This time though, instead of walking the legs off people, Sr Pierre had to let her family take her out in a wheelchair. This she accepted with grace and was still able to provide a running commentary as we passed through the streets.



We soon learned the short-cuts through the narrow streets of the old city so that we could get to Mass in one of the historic city-centre churches. On the Sunday, we went to Mass in the very impressive Cathedral of Saint-Nazaire, and enjoyed the celebration of the Baptism and First Communion of many local school-children. That was an unexpected bonus.

One of the highlights for most people was our Friday visit to the villages of Murviel, where Appollonie grew up, and Autignac, where Eugene came from. In the church at Murviel, Heather told us the moving story of Appollonie's life, revealing to us the wealth of detailed knowledge and her attachment to Appollonie that she has built up through her researches.



Also among the highlights were our two gatherings: first, our party night with the Sisters of the Bon Pasteur Community and then with the Béziers Extended Family, followed by a shared table meal. While some in our party had good French, for some of us, rusty schoolgirl/boy French was dusted off. Hospitality was second to none. The evening ended with sharing of songs by both groups. Our party pieces were Wild Mountain Thyme and 'Til We Meet Again.

Our free day on Saturday turned into a group excursion to the abbey at Fontfroide. As a Cistercian abbey, it held particular significance for us Furnessians. The ruins of Furness Abbey, on the outskirts of Barrow were a thriving Cistercian abbey 400 years ago. It was interesting to see the similarities between our ruins and the restored abbey at Fontfroide. Sr Bernadette made the experience all the more enjoyable with her detailed knowledge of the place and its history. After our tour, we enjoyed some very nice French Cuisine in the 'Table de Fontfroide' restaurant there.



We are very grateful to Sr Thérèse-Marie, Sr Bernadette, and Heather for all that they gave us during the week. The interesting programme they prepared for us was most prayerful and informative – it really was a journey in Faith and Time.

A special thank you goes to Sr Thérèse-Marie for being such a good host and welcoming us into the Mother House, making us feel at home, providing lovely evening meals for us, and for letting us use the old Community Room to cater for ourselves at breakfast and lunchtimes. It wasn't

until the end of the week that Sr Thérèse-Marie shared with us that we were the first group to stay for a full week.

Finally, the feeling that most of us have experienced during our Béziers Experience was the love and joy shown by the Sisters we met and by their Extended Family and the peace in the chapels in each of the houses. Like our friends from Carlisle, we think that would like to come back again, God willing.

If you have been thinking about going to Béziers to visit the Mother House, please do it soon. It is a wonderful place to be and it needs all the support it can get. Be a Pilgrim.

*Sr Pierre Dullaghan and John Newby*

## Extended Family in Furness: What's Next for Us?

To celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, this year we have been invited to join our friends in the Carlisle Extended Family for their gathering on Saturday, 24th June, starting with Mass at 10am. So, this time, we will have to be the early risers,

On Saturday, the 8th July, we are hoping to arrange our next gathering in Barrow so we can share the fruits of making our pilgrimage to the Mother House.

*Sr Pierre Dullaghan and John Newby*

## NEP Extended Family Core Group

On 26th June, there will be a meeting of the NEP Extended Family Core Group - Kath Nolan (Liverpool), John Newby (Barrow), Eileen and Peter Silvester (Carlisle), Sr. Catherine Dolan (Carlisle). We will meet in St. Gabriel's Convent from 10am until 4pm.

The main focus of our meeting will be preparation of the EF Noddfa Gathering in Penmaenmawr which takes place this year 8th-10th October.

So far suggestions include:

- that it be a reflective weekend to value spiritual development beginning with Fr.Gailhac's principles of respect for everyone and his reaching out "that all may have life";
- finding ways of relating this to present day situations;
- making a link with Laudato Si and Pope Francis's emphasis on mercy;
- scripture sharing and reflection as in former Noddfa gatherings;
- time for getting together socially.

Members of the Core Group would welcome any other suggestions.

We will send more information sometime after the meeting on 26th, hoping that many of you will be able to join us in Noddfa in October.

*Maureen Wilson*

## RSHM at the UN: Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

The Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary NGO have been in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2013 and with the Department of Public Information since 2006 and there was involvement in the 16th Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which took place from 24th April – 5th May. This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Forum addressed measures taken to implement it.

One aspect of the strife that faces indigenous communities worldwide is the particular vulnerability of indigenous women and girls. The Indigenous People's Forum shed light on the magnitude of abuse and violence, delving deep into historical contexts and present policy deficiencies. Indigenous women and girls are more likely to experience violence and human trafficking than non-indigenous women and girls. For example, 50% of all sex trafficking victims in Canada are aboriginal although aboriginals make up only 4% of the population. Due to the complex nature of Tribal/customary laws versus National Laws, perpetrators are not often held accountable for their crimes. All across the globe indigenous women are speaking out against the injustice and demanding a seat at the decision-making table in order to inform policies regarding their communities. "Nothing about us without us" has become a creed for marginalized groups and was echoed throughout the Indigenous People's Forum. Canada is leading in efforts to "decolonize and depaternalize" laws and systems, with Mexico and the United States not far behind in implementing policies to eliminate violence against indigenous women and girls.

*Sister Catherine Dolan*

## Further Appreciation of Béziers Visit – October 2016

(This item was received too late for the last edition of the newsletter)

We have known the story of Father Gailhac and the early Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary sisters in Beziers and found it to be powerful and heartening.

However, visiting Beziers with a group of Extended Family and staying at the Mother House in 2017, proved to be deeply inspiring and gave us insight into the depth of faith; trust in God and dedicated commitment of Gailhac, Appollonie and the sisters. How wise and sensitive he was to read the signs of the times; recognise the deep social need around him and put faith into practise. The depth of Gailhac's openness and his determination were incredible acts of faith; he placed life and work into God's hands.

How incredible was that! The extent of his undertaking was huge but the faith, dedication and love of the religious sisters who committed to the Order was remarkable. History has demonstrated that Gailhac's openness to respond to the needs of the times is still apparent today in the life and work of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary across the world.

How wonderful it was to spend time with the sisters in Beziers at the present time; receive their hospitality, their retreat inputs and witness their active faith. To visit the historical landmarks of the Order helped us to grasp the reality of the lives of the founders and when we see pictures of those places now they speak to us in a genuinely meaningful way.

We will always value the opportunity we had to share our time in Beziers with wonderful, warm-hearted people from New York; we all loved meeting them and hearing about their

lives. Meeting with the local people of Beziers who joined us for a gathering in the Mother House was most enjoyable. Thank you so much for the delicious food you shared with us!!



And the Mother House itself? And the chapel? We were so aware, in awe and impressed with its ambience and the way it has been preserved and cared for. The displays were so impressive and artistic and told the story of the Order in a sensitive caring way. When we stood in the entrance hallway and reflected on those first sisters gathering on the night before the Order was established – we so admired their faith commitment. We thank God for the RSHM.

A sincere thank you to all we met.

*Peter and Eileen Silvester*

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As always, thanks to the contributors and to Sister Thérèse-Marie for her work on the translations to and from French.

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.

**E-mail: [efnewsletter@outlook.com](mailto:efnewsletter@outlook.com)**  
**Post: 12 Huntsman Lane, Carlisle, CA1 3TQ, UK**