



Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 19 - January 2014

From the SHM Extended Family Guidelines

The members of the SHM EF are women and men who desire

- to deepen their relationship with the RSHM for mutual enrichment,
- to deepen their understanding of the charism of Jean Gailhac and the history and mission of the RSHM Institute,
- to deepen their understanding of the challenges of the Church today and the RSHM Institute's focus on justice, peace and integrity of creation, promoting *"the life and dignity of all our sisters and brothers"*

25th-27th October 2013: Extended Family Gathering - Hearts Burning Within Us as We Journey

On Friday the 25th October Sister Pierre, Liz Nugent and I set off from the convent in Barrow. It was a glorious sunny day and we picked up Katherine Pearson and travelled to Noddfa in Penmaenmawr. Noddfa is a Welsh word meaning haven or refuge - a place of peace and welcome, a place where you can regain energy. It is the name of the centre run by the sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary in Penmaenmawr, on the North Wales coast.



After our arrival and dinner Sister Pierre explained the history of the sisters and how the congregation began in Béziers. This was acted out by six people and culminated with Liz, Kath, and Eileen from Carlisle, acting out the final part with real passion. Even I had a small part to play as Fr. Jean Gailhac!

Breakfast next day was followed by a prayer service in the chapel given and prepared by Eileen Silvester and Greg Smith from Carlisle. This was followed by a presentation by Sr. Aline on the modern day ministries of the sisters in the province.



After a break there was a talk by Sister Rita from New York about her work in the United Nations and how the RSHM had come to be there as an NGO. She told us of the similarities of the work they were doing, and how the different departments worked. This was a very informative talk and went into great detail. It was followed by an excellent question and answer time.

In the afternoon to continue on the next stage of our journey we split into groups of six where we read a passage from scripture, chosen according to the theme of journey or which had a special meaning for us. We each read our passage in turn and, if we wished, explained the reason for our choice. At the end of the readings we reflected personally on the readings or stayed with others in the group to share our reflections and observations.



Sister Moira and Eileen then spoke about the possibility, the next day, of making a commitment as a member of the Extended Family. At six o'clock Mass was said by Fr. Damien Jackson, SJ from St.

Bueno's. The music for the liturgy was prepared by Greg from Carlisle and the Psalm sung by Sue Black and Liz Nugent.

After breakfast the next morning we gathered for a talk by Sister Ursula on the General Chapter held recently in Birmingham and the direction set there for the Congregation's way forward. This was followed by reflections on the Provincial Chapter from Eileen and Peter who had represented the Extended Family there. Eileen spoke on their behalf, talking primarily about the way forward and quoting Jean Gailhac: "We cannot rest until Jesus Christ is fully formed in each of us....It is up to us to work with Jesus Christ to transform the world. This is our vocation." Eileen then gave the four points raised for moving forward as Extended Family: To pray with the sisters; To share scripture; To value and share simple things in life and greet God in each of us; Extended family to be inclusive, reaching out and showing compassion.



In our local groups we discussed our own way forward and then it was time to move to the chapel for the ritual of commitment. (See next item.) A dozen or so people made promises and received a lighted candle from Sister Catherine, asking that the light of Christ may remain in us.

After lunch there were many goodbyes and we set off for home. This for all of us was a wonderful relaxing and spiritual weekend and I'm sure we have made many friends. I for one hope I'm invited back next year.

(Adapted from Barry Kendal's account of the weekend)

Ritual of Commitment: Our Promise of Service

At Noddfa (see above) the commitment made by those wishing to be members of the Extended Family took place in the context of a prayer service and was in the form of a Promise.

After a reading from Scripture, an opening prayer and the hymn: Christ Has No Body Now But Yours, those making the commitment said together: "***We promise our service***" after each of the following:

To Jesus Christ present in the poor, hungry, marginalized and the voiceless of the world. Mindful of the charism of Jean Gailhac and Mère St Jean, and the continuing work of the Sisters of the

Sacred Heart of Mary, both locally and throughout the world, we promise our service as members of the Extended Family...

- In our prayer for the ministry of the Sisters
- In making their work known to others
- In giving witness to the values of the Gospel
- In supporting the Sisters in their ministry
- In desiring to deepen our relationship with the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary
- In our desire to nurture each other on our journey of faith



After each one had received a lighted candle a blessing was given and the prayer service finished with the hymn: *Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You...*



It was encouraging to see how many of the participants took part in the ritual and committed themselves as members of the Extended Family.

October 2013: RSHM at the United Nations:

We are very grateful to Sr. Rita Arthur for her presence with us in Carlisle and at the EF Gathering in Noddfa. In her presentation on the work of the United Nations she explained how and why RSHM became a Non-Governmental Organisation at the UN and spoke of similarities between the RSHM mission and the commitments of the UN. As an NGO the RSHM, in collaboration with others, are able to bring influence to bear on some of the issues which are dealt with at the UN.

It's impossible to give a full account of Rita's presentation but the following are some of the slides Rita showed and spoke about in her presentation:

RSHM NGO at the UN... transcending boundaries



Shared Missions & Commitment

United Nations

Prevent wars
Faith in rights
Social progress
Tolerance
Live together in peace
Combine our efforts
Dignity & worth of human person

RSHM/RSCM

Gospel challenge
Responsive to needs
Evangelical justice
Life and dignity for all
Serve those most in need
Empowerment of all
Spirit of faith and zeal

Religious at the United Nations (RUN)

- 50+ Congregations & Federations
- Mostly women religious
- On the ground in 176 different countries
- Representing 100,000+++ religious

***Goals for our RSHM NGO
in the spirit of Pere Gailhac***

Education

Participation

Advocacy

The 2013 UN Call

A Million Voices Working Together

To

“Create The World We Want”

“So That All May Have Life”

Rita reminded us of the Millennium Development Goals. These are eight international development goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. All United Nations member states committed to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empowering women
4. To reduce child mortality rates
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development

As of 2013 progress towards the goals was uneven. Some countries achieved many goals, while others were not on track to realize any. A UN conference in September 2010 reviewed progress and concluded with the adoption of a global plan to achieve the eight goals by their target date. New commitments targeted women's and children's health and new initiatives in the worldwide battle against poverty, hunger and disease.

17th November 2013: Extended Family joined the Sisters at Seafield

On Sunday, 17th November 2013, 18 members of the Extended Family joined the Sisters at Seafield to hear from Guest Speaker, Sister Madeleine Fitzpatrick about her Mission to China with the Vincentians.

Sister Eleanor Dalton opened the meeting by asking everyone present to introduce him/herself, and then inviting Sister Madeleine to speak.

In opening, Sister Madeleine said how appropriate the timing of this meeting was since the Sisters had just this week celebrated their Founder's Birthday and it was exactly a year ago that she visited China. Sister was particularly pleased to have heard good news for China this week; namely that their Chairman planned to allow families to have a second child; to abolish the labour camps; and to allow citizens to move about more freely.

Sister Madeleine prefaced her talk by first explaining to us the historical journey of Christianity to, and in, China. She then described in detail the composition of the Group, their travel and accommodation arrangements, the instructions they received from the Bishop in Hong Kong before they entered China and how he urged them to take great care and be alert at all times there. Sister Madeleine told us of all the people and projects they had met and visited during their time there and how impressed they were with everyone and everything.

At a number of the meetings which had been arranged for them, the Group found that there were chances for progress and the possibility of groups such as the AUC going into China to help in various ways. There was one potentially dangerous situation during their visit from which the Group had to extricate themselves in a hurry. However, on the whole, Sister Madeleine said the visit had been a huge success and her heart had been touched over and over again particularly by the people they met. In closing, Sister Madeleine suggested that we spent 10 minutes in groups of 3, each disclosing one particular kind of journey in our own life and the group to then discuss them.

On the subject of "the Spirit moving in the world", Sister Eleanor mentioned her own visit to a Sister in Loyola Hall who is now in China training people in retreat giving. Also the Jesuits are going back to China. A brief Question and Answer Session followed.

Sister Eleanor thanked Sister Madeleine very much. She then invited Bekim to update us on the situation of himself and his wife Esmerelda. [Esmerelda, a Muslim, fell in love with Catholic Bekim and they fled their native Albania 2 years ago]. In the early days of their application for asylum, they were granted a 3-year stay but the Home Office appealed that and won; so they were back to square one. Bekim explained that their journey had been fraught with unexpected ups and downs because of red tape, but especially when they were arrested by the Immigration Forces and detained for 1 month which was traumatic and terrifying. Both were used to difficult and dangerous situations but that was a particularly bad experience; however, Bekim said nothing lasts for ever and, thanks to many prayers and lots of friends, things were better now, despite the fact that the outcome of their application is still unclear. They are living at the Carmelite Convent, thanks to Sister Maria's intervention. Esmerelda is expecting their baby on 12th January 2014.

Kath Nolan then told us about her recent visit to Noddfa when 32 Members of the Extended Family and Sisters from all over the country met and the theme on that occasion was "Journey";

specifically, the journey of the RSHM to join the Order, their journey today, and the journey of the Sisters who serve abroad; (she mentioned, in particular, Sister Rita, who is a Representative of the United Nations). Whilst at Noddfa, Kath personally dedicated herself to following the ethos of the Sisters. As to our own journey, for the meeting at Noddfa, Kath had sent out a list of New Testament Readings to do with journeys and then in groups of 4 or 5 their chosen Readings were read and discussed. The Reading about Bartimaeus was the most popular of the many about journeys and it was agreed that it was not necessarily where one was going on a journey but what happens on the way. A recording of Enya was played; a haunting melody but beautiful words about the journey to find out who we are. Kath then offered Prayers for the Sisters, for Esmerelda and Bekim and for ourselves.

Sister Eleanor thanked Kath and announced that our next meeting would be on or about 24th February 2014.

The Meeting closed at 5.10 p.m. and was followed by refreshments kindly provided and served by the Sisters.

18th November 2013: Friends of Castlemilk Came Together

The evening began with prayer and we took as our theme "Life is a Journey". We began by singing 'Life is a journey. We travel together' and this was followed by a quote from Fr. Gailhac "We cannot rest until Jesus Christ" We prayed the poem 'Lord you are in this place...' then read and reflected on Matthew 14: 22-33. Opportunity was given to all to offer personal prayer and we remembered especially those who had died during the past year. Together we prayed 'The Song of Mary' and our prayer ended with 'Will you come and follow me?'

A delicious meal was enjoyed by 27 friends. Memories of past sisters and stories about Noddfa were in abundance and shared by parishioners from both St. Bartholomew's and St. Margaret Mary's.

There was great joy and excitement when we introduced our new song book complete with 59 songs. A wonderful night was had by all.

27th November 2013: Meeting of the RHSM Extended Family at Béziers.

Three meetings brought together the Extended Family during the course of 2012-13, a period marked by the Year of Faith and the fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II. Thus under the leadership of Sister Marie-Paule we searched for what we could learn of our faith from Father Gailhac and our scriptures. With a presentation prepared by Sister Marguerite-Marie we remembered "*The sap that gives us life*" and in the third meeting we re-read the first chapter of "*Dei Verbum*", a text from Vatican II on Divine Revelation.

To continue to share in the spirit which enlivens the Institute, three further meetings have been arranged for 2013-14 and the first of these took place at Maison-Mère on the 27th November. Eighteen people responded to the invitation and joined six sisters from the Béziers communities. Together we focussed our approach on the dynamics of the target given by our bishop for the current pastoral year: "*Tomorrow our communities: let us build fraternity*".

Our Extended Family fits within this perspective to always live better an evangelical fraternity. To help us we undertook a prayerful reading of the Saint Luke's Gospel of the Disciples of Emmaus when viewed from the presentation in the second part of the provincial chapter last October then welcomed together the vision which opened the final document of last June's General Chapter in Brazil and which engages our lives as believers.



After thus feeding our spirits and hearts we took care of our bodies by sharing the food which each of us had brought.



On 19th February and 26th May 2014 we will continue to address the document and listen to the Word addressed to each of us on behalf of the Lord through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in connection with what makes the life of all. Would you like to join us at Maison-Mère SCM? We count on your presence and hope to see many of you. *To assist with the organisation of the evenings please contact us at least a week in advance on (+33) 04 67 28 11 34.*

It would be a joy to welcome you!

8th December 2013: Extended Family in Belo Horizonte

On Saturday 8th of December, Catherine and I were invited to participate in the Extended Family gathering of a couple of areas of Belo Horizonte.

Our sisters have no longer been present in Valé de Jatoba for many years but I was moved to encounter a group of people who continue to journey in the RSHM spirit. A couple who had come to Béziers in 2007 were thrilled to tell me about their dream to save enough money to take their two children (17 and 15) to visit “our” origins. It is a must for them.

The day was exceptional: all generations mingled. The adolescents played in the pool while the adults prepared the meal and the mass. Others were lost in conversation.

The Mass was animated by a group of families who assembled everybody before we shared the delicious barbecue. Then the conversations picked up again or one or another found a quiet place to pray.

What joy to see this web of relationships ...all in the RSHM spirit.

(Sister Bernadette McNamara)

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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