

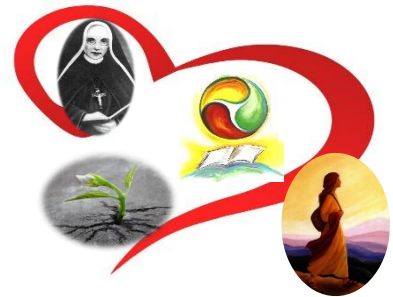
Newsletter- Formators' Gathering 2016
1-29 October - St. Rambert, France

Formation of the Heart for Mission

Dear Sisters,

Greetings of love and peace to all.

As you know, the Formators' Gathering took place at St. Rambert France from 1-29 October 2016. There were 20 Formation Directors from eleven Provinces and Regions of Aotearoa-New Zealand, Bangladesh, France, India, Kenya, Myanmar, Philippines and Vietnam who participated in this gathering. We missed Sr. Brigid Quinn from UK & I Province who could not come to the gathering as planned.



The theme of the gathering - **Formation of the Heart for Mission** speaks of our focus, goals, discussions and sharing during the month. Together we reflected on the reality of formation in the Congregation: where are we at? What are the advantages and challenges of the formation ministry at this time? Why formation of the heart? How can we best accompany our formees at each stage of formation and prepare them to be RNDM missionaries today? What would be some possible ways to share/exchange resources etc. Walking in the footsteps of Euphrase Barbier and visiting our heritage were parts of the program. In this Newsletter, we would like to share with you some of the reflections of the participants on the program.

Our sincere thanks to the sisters in France and England, especially to St. Rambert community for your willingness to host this event and the enormous work you were engaged in to help us run this gathering. I would like to acknowledge and express my deep gratitude to Srs. Patricia Boyd and Margaret Murphy for your generous support and coordination prior to the gathering to assist the sisters with visa applications. Many thanks to Sr. Mary Rose Harbinson and Margaret Doherty for your important contribution to our pilgrimage in England. Thank you PLTs and RLTs for your support to the formators. Our thanks also go to postulants, novices, TPs and sisters for your cards and words of assurance of your supporting prayer during the gathering.

"The vitality of the congregation and fidelity to its religious missionary identity depend on the quality of formation throughout the congregation."(Const.62). Please continue to pray for us as we carry out the formation ministry in the Congregation.

Bich Quyen
CLT Liaison for Initial Formation

Dear Sisters

Our sharing of reflections must begin by expressing deep gratitude to our Sisters in St Rambert Community. They have been so welcoming to each of us. Nothing has been spared to make our stay here in this lovely place as pleasant and as comfortable as possible. We appreciate their many trips to the Airport in Lyon - over an hour away, the delicious meals, our bedrooms so beautifully prepared, and the numerous other ways they have shown their generous hospitality. Most of all, however, their cheerful presence among us, has drawn us lovingly into the Community, inviting us to feel very much at home here in St Rambert. We were participating at our gathering very joyfully. It is very enriching to share life experiences and gain new insights and ideas through the input sessions.

On Sunday 2 October we celebrated our first Sunday in France with Mass at the Parish Church, being welcomed by both the Parish Priest and the Congregation of St Rambert, and us joining in with the singing (in French) as best we could.



Later, that day, our Gathering of Formators was welcomed by Jo Kane and Bich Quyen with a meaningful Liturgy. The centrepiece has remained as a focal point during these weeks. This was followed by Jo's introduction in which she both inspired and challenged us with her reflections on the theme of our Gathering: *Formation of the Heart for Mission*.

The following week was led by Maureen McBride who helped us study in depth our new Constitutions and Directives. We were blessed to have Sr. Maureen who shared with us the fruit of her research on writing the Constitutions. She facilitated a week's program and helped us to have a historical overview of Consecrated Life, Life of St. Augustine, and the relevance of the rule of St. Augustine in our Religious Missionary life today; the interesting session was to trace on what is new in the New Constitutions. It was enlightening to discover the rich contribution made by each province and region in writing the Constitutions. We explored together the creative ways in which the Constitutions could be introduced to those in formation. We had exciting group discussions and sharing on the formation ministry.

The second week we reflected on formation in the congregation. Each one of us presented our experience in formation and we had lively, discussions on various realities in our life and mission. We also had inputs on the topic on Formation of the Heart for Mission by Sr. Crescencia. Srs. Josephine and Bich Quyen offering their valuable insights as we had open discussions. Province Reports provided us with an interesting overview of formation across our Congregation. We are certainly blessed by these young women who desire to live RNDM way of life. From these reports arose discussions on what is working well in formation along with common areas of concerns. Improving the quality of personal accompaniment and the quality of written evaluation was highly recommended.

Prior to our visit to Caen and Lyon, Marie Bénédicte kindly prepared us with an orientation session consisting, briefly, of the development of Lyon from its earliest times, and how that history has shaped subsequent developments in the Church of Lyon. There is no doubt that the early martyrs, such as Blandina and her companions, have had a huge influence on the vast missionary outreach over the centuries, especially around Euphrasie's time.

After our visit to Lyon, we moved into the study of the Mission and Formation Handbooks facilitated by Srs. Crescencia and Bich Quyen. Some valuable insights and recommendations arose out of this work. We all had the opportunity to meet Sr. Josephine Kane personally to share on our life experiences.



Visit to our elderly sisters

Another highlight was the sharing by Marie Laurent and Elizabeth on their experiences of the early days in our Senegal Mission as pioneers. Their recounting of those times caused a great deal of laughter as well as huge admiration for their courage and missionary zeal.

The last days of our programme have seen the arrival of Lissy and Lucy who have been leading us through an insightful and creative process of integration. The programme has been a very full one. It is helpful to have these days to reflect on and be attentive to further emerging wisdoms.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the CLT for organizing this gathering. We thank our PLTs/RLTs for supporting us in our ministry. We are grateful to the congregation and benefactors who have made this gathering possible for us. Our sincere thanks go to all of you for accompanying us with your love and prayers. We believe that this gathering will help us in carrying out more effectively the ministry entrusted to us.

RNDM Formation Directors

In the Footsteps of Euphrasie in Rome

Greetings of peace and love to you all from all the RNDM Formators throughout the globe. Prior to the Formators' Gathering, fifteen of us arrived in Rome on 26 September 2016 and were warmly welcomed by the Generalate Community.

We are grateful to God who gave us this opportunity and the possibility to fulfil our dreams. We are also grateful to the CLT members who took the initiative to arrange this Programme for us. Our sincere thanks go to Sisters Crescencia, Smitha and Joyce for your presence and taking us around Italy. Also, we cannot forget to thank our Province / Region Leaders for shouldering our responsibility during our absence.



Before we started our journey in the footsteps of Euphrasie, Sr. Joyce Peter, our guide on that day, explained everything so well. We reflected, imagined and pondered the ways that Euphrasie had walked. We visited all the Churches and the historical places which Euphrasie visited while she was in Rome for her work on our

Constitutions. While we were visiting the different places, we really felt the presence of Euphrasie among us. Each station that we stopped at, we read the letters of Euphrasie which gave us a deeper understanding about the life that she had lived and worked. Her spirit is very fresh in each one of us and our journey brought all of this to life for us. To our surprise, we even managed to visit the old Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition at No. 18 Piazza Margana in Rome where Euphrasie used to stay. We spent a few minutes to reflect on her letter which she wrote to Mother Mary of the Blessed Sacrament and Mother Mary of Compassion. We felt that this letter is for all of us and it continues to melt our hearts and minds. We feel proud and admire her zeal, courage, hard work, prayer and faithfulness that she lived. She was a wonderful and realistic woman. She walked by faith which is why she was able to do many things in her life for the good of the sisters and the good of each member of the Congregation. She expressed all of this so well in her life and also through her letters to the sisters. Every step we took was a special blessing, so appropriate for our visit.



We were blessed by attending the Audience of the Pope in St. Peter's Square. Being the special Year of Mercy we had the special privilege to go through four Holy Doors of Mercy of the Major Basilicas opened by Pope Francis.

The experience to go through the escalator and the efficient transport means like metro and buses helped us to reach many places. During our visit in St. Peter's Basilica where the Pietà is, we remembered in prayers our sisters across the Congregation. We are so grateful to God for the opportunity given to us by the CLT to come to Rome. A big thanks to each of our sisters in the Community for their hospitality and generosity during our stay.

The life of Euphrasie continues to live in our hearts and minds. We had a special encounter with her and so we feel full of life and energy to continue our ministries with zeal in the Congregation. We praise and thank God for the gift of Euphrasie as our Foundress. We love her and are very proud of her. Long live our RNDM Charism for Mission!

RNDM Pilgrims in Rome

Pilgrims on the journey from St. Rambert to Normandy

It was a grey morning as we neared Caen. The sky, though, revealed welcoming pink streaks of colour. However, when on pilgrimage the journey is as significant as the arrival. So firstly, I will share with you some of my thoughts as we travelled from St Rambert-en-Bugey towards Normandy.

We left very early on Saturday, 8 October (in fact 5.40am) whilst everything was in darkness. The trip began with most walking down the hill to the village as the bus could not manoeuvre the steep road. Fortunately, for some of us, we were taken by car, along with all the bags, to where the bus was to meet us. It was not long before we were all settled in the coach and on our way.

With the dawn came our first glimpses of the beautiful countryside. The many fields of varying sizes, some being ploughed, and some already sown with winter crops, was a pleasant surprise. In fact, much of the land on either side of the motorways was devoted to agricultural use, including numerous smaller fields of fruit trees often shared with grazing cattle. Between the fields and the motorway were numerous drainage ponds for the collection of rain water. However, it was not until we had long passed the outskirts of Paris, that these ponds had any noticeable water. It was a sad sight, indicative of the low rainfall during this past summer and early autumn, which, I was told, had severely affected the corn, grape and other crops. About every five to ten kilometres there could be seen a very compact village with a Church and a nearby water tower. The latter often displaying, on top, several communication masts.

Both the smooth motorways and our fine coach allowed for a very comfortable ride and the frequently occurring stopping places provided for all our needs. We passed countless trucks displaying signage from the many Euro countries. What was evident to me was that all were keeping to the slower lanes and their 90 kmh speed limit. The stopping places also had ample parking allotted to the many trucks.

Chartres

As we approached the town of Chartres, looking ahead along the motorway, we were treated to a magnificent view of Our Lady of Chartres Cathedral. What a welcome sight it must have been for the numerous pilgrims who, over the centuries, have wended their way to this sacred place. We were treated to an all-round viewing of the awesome exterior as the bus came closer and closer. For me it was a breath taking experience just to view the Cathedral from the outside as we noted, firstly, the two different and distinctive spires soaring above the green copper roof, then the North and South Portals, the flying buttresses and the Grand Royal Entrance of the West Portal.

Further treats were in store for us as we entered this amazing Cathedral. The exquisite beauty of the stained glass windows with their vibrant and rich colours, the extraordinary height of the windows allowing the interior to be flooded with light, the elegance of the soaring, vaulted ceiling, and the delicate intricacy of the choir screen filled me with wonder.

Then, to stand in the heart of the tiled labyrinth, which dates back to the early thirteenth century, was a very humbling, as well as connecting experience, as I thought of the hundreds of thousands of others who have stood, centred, in this same place.

I felt also, how likely that Euphrasie herself would have visited and prayed in this Cathedral on her travels between Lyon and Caen, so our visit here seemed a very fitting vigil experience for our next day in Caen.

Merle Hiscock

Journey to Caen

The weekend awaited us with a journey to Normandy, CAEN the birth place of Euphrasie. Sr. Maureen was our tour guide. It takes 13 hours by bus to reach Normandy, a province of West France. You can imagine how excited we were to reach CAEN. It was our maiden visit and we recalled the life of Euphrasie, her childhood, education, upbringing, her vocation and departure from her dear ones to follow God's call. We visited the church of SAINT-GILES where Euphrasie was Baptized. This church was destroyed during the war and we can only see the ruins of the Church.



The Church of the Holy Trinity and Saint-Pierre are magnificent with art and stainless glass windows. It was here Euphrasie had her first Holy Communion and Catechism of perseverance. It was indeed so moving to visit Euphrasie's home, the apartment where her family lived and where she spent 19 years of life. We know that Louis Barbier, Euphrasie's father had the trade of master shoemaker, to our surprise the Cobbler's shop is still there not very far from her home. We can imagine how Euphrasie might have run to the shop to call her father for meals, and to help him in the work.

On 9th October we went to the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration at St. Pierre Church. Our prayers and our thoughts were for all members of the Congregation. We were welcomed by the parish community of Saint-Pierre. We took turns to sit on the chair where Euphrasie might have sat to attend the Eucharist, and where she listened to the missionary Bishop's homily inviting the young people to go on mission. The sacristy where Euphrasie ran to meet the Bishop to express her desire to become a missionary is enveloped with Euphrasie's presence. Everything was so real for us, and we felt the real presence of Euphrasie in that holy ground. There is the Picture of Holy Trinity that attracted me, I felt that Euphrasie might have spent hours in deep contemplation conversing with God, Trinity the source of all mission. She had the irresistible energy to go to the ends of the Earth with the message of Jesus. As I felt the closeness of Euphrasie, her spirit so alive in that holy ground I uttered a prayer for all our sisters with tears in my eyes for the joy of her presence with us, and for the gift of our missionary vocation..

The journey through the tapestry in the Museum at Bayeux was one of the educative tours where we could see and listen to the history of King William conquering the battle at CAEN.

Vinitha and Rita

My vocation is Love

I am blessed and most graceful for being given the opportunity to visit Lisieux, the hometown of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus. I have loved Theresa since I was a little girl so I read her story of life, "the soul" many times. It's a miracle for me to see with my very own eyes her place of birth, her writing, items that she used, especially her body. I felt her spirit become alive and present. I was speechless and inspired by her spirit. My spirit was lifted up as Mary's did and I was singing Magnificat in my heart to praise and thank God for wonderful things He has done in Theresa's life. As I stood there in front of Theresa's tomb and recalled her words: "My vocation is love". These words inspire me and confirm my value of life is to love. The matter is not about how great my work is but how much love I put in my work that matters. This becomes a guideline for me to live my religious life. The life of Theresa inspires me to live lovingly by doing little things with great love. This is an invitation as well as a challenge for me. Many times I have failed to love God and other people.

I am astonished to witness so many people who have received abundant graces through Theresa's intercessions. It is absolutely amazing to see how her short life has changed and affected the life of countless people, ever after her death. She already died but her love for her God has never perished. This inspires me to love God more and more each day. It's so wonderful to witness that her missionary spirit has spread throughout the world until now even though she was cloistered. I reflected on myself, an Rndm, religious missionary, do I have that kind of missionary spirit? Thanks be to God, this visitation is significant for me because it affirms, fires and strengthens my zeal for mission of God.



Visiting the tomb of St. Theresa's parents, I come to know that the holy spouses Louis Martin and Marie-Azelie Guerin are the first ever-married couple with children who were canonized in the same ceremony. I adore saint Louis Martin and Marie-Azelie for their example of life. They created an environment of love and faith for their children. I thank God for their lives and I pray for all those who are married to imitate their examples so that their children may have a good environment to live in and to grow up as good Christians.

It was a privilege to stay in the house of the Benedictine sisters. I was moved by the way the sisters welcomed us. Even though they are few and have a lot of work to do, yet, we all were touched by their simple but loving and warm welcome. Their vitality, joy and friendliness inspires me. My ideas about the nuns, those who live behind cloisters completely changed as I saw the life and joy in their faces. They really live out the statement of our Pope Francis: *"Where there is a religious, joy is there"*. Indeed, they served us generously and joyfully. As we said goodbye to them. I still remember their joyful and loving faces and I believe that all of our sisters have the same beautiful experience being with them. This is my unforgettable pilgrimage that I have ever had. It is absolutely significant and meaningful to my life. I am most thankful to God, CLT, PLT and all Rndms for giving this wonderful opportunity.

Martha Hoang Thi Bich Huyen

Lyon- The Birth Place of the Congregation

The second weekend we set out to visit Lyon the cradle of the Congregation. We travelled 45 minutes by bus to reach Lyon. It is a very ancient city with a very rich historical heritage and Roman, Christian rootedness. As Euphrasie and Wilfred set out to climb the hill of the ancient sanctuary of Fourviere on the day of their arrival at Lyon in 1861, we too set out to visit the Basilica of Fourviere on the hill. As we enter the city we can see

Walking the stairs of 550 steps with Euphrasie



Euphrasie's missionary journey

the golden statue of Our Lady of Fourviere watching over the great city of Lyon. For centuries the people from across the world, flock to Fourviere to seek her blessing. As we know many Religious Congregations are born in Lyon under the protection of Mary. We visited the chapel and saw the name stone of our Congregation on the wall. It was a grace filled time and I remembered all our sisters, each one of you in my prayer.

At the foot of the hill was our first Mother House, Rue Cleberg, which was transferred to Chemin de Montauban in 1865, where we have a community now and our heritage home. We climbed down 550 steps from the Church to our community. Remember, Euphrasie had climbed those steps many times and for us it was truly an experience of walking on the footsteps of Euphrasie. The sisters in Lyon community, with their mission partners welcomed us so gladly and offered us a sumptuous meal. Sr. Patricia, the provincial, was with us and she took us for a journey through our heritage home, where we were able to encounter Euphrasie face to face.



As part of our visit to Lyon we had some time with our elderly sisters at the care home. It was a moving experience to see them and to have some time with them as a group. As I left them I felt mixed feelings of joy and sadness. One week after our visit, we received the news that one of the elderly sisters, Sr. Bernadette, whom we visited in the care home died in the early morning. She had a lovely appearance of peace and inner joy when we met her. May her soul rest in peace.

Vinitha rndm

PILGRIMAGE TO TAIZE

Our pilgrimage to Taize began with an orientation from Sr Marie Benedict who had a personal experience/encounter with Br Roger the founder of the Taize Community. Taize is a place of solitude, silence, peace and reconciliation. It is a place where we experienced the deep sense of brotherhood/sisterhood.

On this day, we had the opportunity to participate in the Eucharistic celebration in a very deep, meaningful and inclusive way which is different from our traditional way of celebration. i.e knowing that some of the pilgrims and brothers are not Catholics but were fully present in search of something deeper. It was a realization for us as formators that the young men and women including those who are interested in our RNDM way of life are in search of something deeper which our church has not been able to give. As formators this pilgrimage to Taize helped us to ponder in what ways we can fulfil their longings for a deep spirituality.

On our way back home, we had another deep experience of visiting Ars the village and home of St John Mary Vianney. This holy man of God lived a simple lifestyle and touched the lives of many people. This was evident when we visited the house where he lived and died. He is known for his countless hours hearing confessions and indeed a great role model for Priests and religious today.

We feel so blessed to have had this memorable experience and we pray that our pilgrimage to Taize will transform our lives and the lives of those we serve in formation and at large.

Sylvia Ines and Felista

Following the Footsteps of Euphrase Barbier in Deal & Sturry

On 25th October, we bid goodbye to the community at St.Rambert, France. Our hearts were filled with gratitude for the unforgettable time that we had in France. We took the flight to our next destination England. The songs of gratitude welled up our hearts as we arrived at Beech Court Community.

The sisters welcomed us graciously, with warm and hearty smiles. Oh! What a joy we experienced as we were greeted by each one of the sisters. A sumptuous dinner was set for us; we were cordially invited to enjoy the meal as the sisters lovingly served us with joyous smiles, laughter and fun. We had a lovely evening with the communities as we shared our stories and listened to the missionary stories of the sisters at Beech Court and Sturry. It was indeed a heartening experience for each one of us and we felt the Oneness with the sisters.



On 26th October we continued to have an enriching time with the sisters as we engaged in lively conversations. As the sunrays spread the warmth there was excitement, beauty, love and laughter all around. The Eucharistic celebration was in thanksgiving to our God who brought us all together as one family. It was a profound experience of interconnectedness with the Whole to which we are all parts.

The sisters drove us to visit the cemetery. We prayed at the graves of the early sisters who are buried there, including the grave of Miss Boys. Many of Euphrasie's early companions are buried in this cemetery, among them is Sr. M. Wilfred the first companion of Euphrase from the Sisters of Compassion.

Walking in the footsteps of Euphrasie we visited the orphanage in Middle Street, Deal which was run by Miss Boys. In 1870 Euphrasie and her two companions Sr. M. Wilfred and Sr. M. Gabriel arrived here to take over the orphanage run by Miss Boys. Also the Queen Street Deal, St.Ethelburga Convent which was opened in 1878. During the outbreak of World War II, 1939 the bomb, destroyed the building and now this building has turned into a supermarket. The window eaves of the chapel are still reserved along the side of the supermarket and can be seen today. The car park is called St. Ethelburga Car Park and the Portery from the former convent is now a set of flats and still remains today in Queen Street. The plaque bearing the presence of the RNDMs on the wall can be seen. The Stained glass windows that were the gift of Lady Southwell are now in Sturry.

As we walked on the ground that Euphrasie walked, lived and prayed Sr. Roseanne shared the history of those first years of the life of our foremothers. The spirit of Euphrasie is kept alive and we felt her tangible presence among us.

We came to the closure of the day as we had the community gathering with songs, dances and games. Sincere thanks to the Sisters at Beech Court community for their gracious hospitality and friendship.

A tribute of praise in memory of our dear foundress!

Our pilgrimage to Sturry was a long awaited one. All of us longed to visit the Tomb of Euphrasie and to spend some time in her place of rest. As we stepped into that holy ground of St. Anne- Sturry where Euphrasie entered eternity as she breathed her last and was laid to rest in January 1893, memories and stories of her life flashed in our minds and our hearts were filled with emotions.

As we stood at her tomb we felt her presence, her life and energy moving in and around us. A very moving prayer service prepared by Sr. Mary Rose Harbinson and beautifully lead by Margaret Doherty. We spent time at her tomb listening attentively to her voice. Many profound experiences of personal encounter with Euphrasie took place in our hearts.



Sr. Yvonne guided us to the heritage home. Treasuring the richness of our past we reflectively gazed at the various objects displayed there, the belongings of Euphrasie and felt blessed by her saintly presence with us. Nicola, the Archivist, took us for a visit to the Archive and explained to us some of the documents and photos related to the foundations in different countries. She also gathered ideas from us as to how we could make use of the Archives in our formation ministry.



Our elderly sisters in St. Anne's nursing home welcomed us with great joy and we spent some time with each one of them. There was great excitement and joy in them as we shared mission stories. The Sisters in Sturry gave us a loving and touching goodbye as we were heading to Wealdstone.

The sisters at Wealdstone welcomed us with warm hearts. Our sincere thanks to you sisters for the lovely welcome, accommodation and for organizing the London tour. We greatly appreciate each one of your contributions to make our stay a memorable one. Thank you Sr. Margo, the Team and to all the sisters for making our stay a happy one and for accompanying us to the Airport. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the Sisters in Deal, Sturry and Wealdstone for making our visit an experiential one. We remain ever grateful to you and ask for God's blessings upon you. Let us remain united in prayer in the Heart of the Trinity who continually calls us to participate in the Divine Missions.



Commitment to formation ministry

Thank
you 