

RNDM Renewal- A pilgrimage to our Roots 25 April to 20 June 2018

2nd Newsletter

Dear Sisters

Greetings from St Rambert where we have continued to enjoy the peacefulness of the place and the hospitality of our sisters. A few weeks ago, we shared with you our beginnings of our renewal program and we hope that you enjoyed reading that newsletter. We have concluded our time in St Rambert and as we move on to the next part of our pilgrimage in London, Deal, Sturry and Rome, we would like to share more on the past weeks since Pentecost. We thank you for accompanying us in many ways and especially through your prayers.

Celebration of the Feast of Pentecost

On Pentecost Sunday, the renewal group along with 16 sisters of the Province, who were already here for the Province gathering, welcomed four of our RNDMs Marie Lea, Marie Emanuel, Marie Chantal and Jeannine (under the care of Mercy Home) for the day of celebration.

It was a great joy to have almost fifty of us to gather together for the Solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Xavier, Capuchin, an Indian serving in Lyon, France. Hymns in different languages, a beautiful Kenyan offertory dance, followed by a procession with the symbols of our Congregation and relevant prayers, added more solemnity to the celebration. We were delighted to greet one another a very Happy Feast of Pentecost, continued with the distribution of handmade flowers by Sr. Marie Emanuel. Thank you very much sister for your thoughtfulness and great interest. We do really appreciate your hard work.



It was our privilege and immense joy to anticipate the 100th Birthday celebration of Sr. Marie Lea on this auspicious day. She was overjoyed to receive bouquets, gifts and to cut the cake followed by a sumptuous meal prepared by the community in honor of the feast day and birthday celebration which everyone enjoyed to the full. After the meal, we bid good-bye to our sisters from Mercy Home.

Cultural Evening

The day of celebration continued until evening and ended with a social gathering. Variety cultural items were presented by the renewal group and communities of French Province such as dances, songs, stories and poems. Everyone had a hearty time and the programme with the distribution

of sweets packets from Antonette, one of our former Eurasian girls, now settled in Switzerland. Thank you Antonette for your generosity.

On the morning of the 21st May, in the absence of Sr. Rose Mary Harbinson, (who was unable to be with us due to illness,) Sr. Lucy led us through a personal reflection based on the past two weeks – “What is that one learning that will influence the way I will live in future my life, community and ministry?” In four groups we shared with one another some practical ways of doing this learning and then met the challenge of finding a creative way of presenting it to the large group. Each group presented their practical views in an innovative way in the form of skit, mime, song and the use of captions. This presentation widened our vision of living our future life in communities.

Lucy then introduced us to the meaning of mindfulness, how to live in the now. She also introduced us to the symbolic meaning of the labyrinth where we learnt that, “Our life is a sacred journey. It is about change, discovery, growth, movement, transformation; continuously expanding our vision of what is possible, learning to seek clearly and deeply, listening to our intuition, taking challenges along the way. We are on the path, exactly where we are meant to be right now....” Thank you Sr. Lucy for making us aware of the importance of mindfulness in our day to day life.



Next day, Sr. Marie Benedict Ollivier shared with us her wisdom and expertise on Euphrasie Barbier’s bi-cultural heritage through the family tree, Euphrasie’s personality and her spiritual heritage. Maps and photos made us to be all the more excited to visit Caen, the birth place of Euphrasie Barbier. Thank you for your valuable contribution towards our new understanding of Euphrasie, Marie Benedicte! We are deeply touched by your profound knowledge and appreciation of our Foundress.

Adding to this Sr. Kathleen took us through part of the life journey of Euphrasie, her vocation story, her religious life with the Sisters of Calvary/Compassion right through the struggles of giving birth to the new foundation of Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. She helped us to internalize the story of Euphrasie with our own personal stories. Thank you for imparting your knowledge with us.

Sr. Patricia Boyd, Province Leader, prepared us for the pilgrimage to Caen, Normandy, the birth place of Euphrasie Barbier with relevant photos of significant historical places and maps which gave us an idea of our three days’ itinerary.

Pilgrimage to Caen

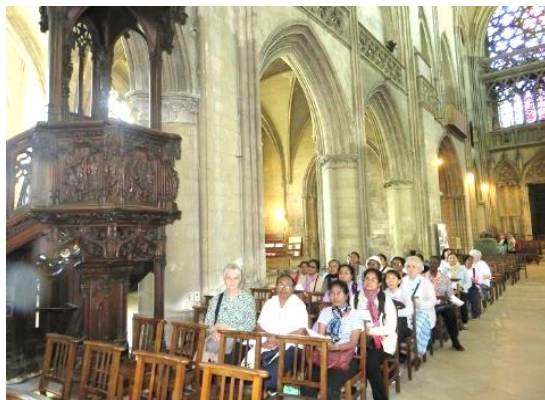
On the morning of the 26th, we started our most exciting pilgrimage to Caen with Sr. Patricia as our guide. After the long journey for 10/11 hours, we reached the Benedictine Sisters at Bayeux where we were to be accommodated. The tiredness did not keep us away from exploring the 18th century monastery and its chapel.



The long awaited day dawned and we began our pilgrim journey by walking to what was still remaining of the parish church of St. Gilles (destroyed in the bombing of Caen in 1944 during World War II) where Euphrasie was baptized. From there we returned to the Abbey Church of the Blessed Trinity. It was a coincidence that we were there on the feast of The Holy Trinity to participate in the Eucharistic celebration. We remembered Euphrasie

who, on that day, had received her First Communion in her parish church of St Pierre.

Before the Mass we had visited L'Abbaye aux Dames next to the church, founded by Queen Mathilda, the wife of William the Conqueror. For centuries it had been home to Benedictine Sisters until the French Revolution. Later it became a general hospital and it was there that Euphrasie's mother had died. Since the 1980s the Abbey is now the headquarters of the Regional Council of Caen. After Mass, we admired the beauty of this ancient church and found that Queen Mathilda is buried in the choir.



We continued our pilgrimage to the church of St. Pierre, the parish church of Euphrasie and her family. We imagined Euphrasie listening to the visiting missionary bishop's sermon which "reawakened in her a deep and irresistible attraction to consecrate herself totally to God in the service of the Church in missionary countries..." (Missionary Beyond Boundaries: M. Benedicte Ollivier) We spent some time in prayer remembering all the RNDMs and sang the hymn "Woman of Faith" (Composed and written

by Sr. Moira Ross) We had a magnificent view of the glorious church which was bombed in 1944 and completely reconstructed, the bell tower still being reconstructed.



Every step we took in the areas of Rue du Vauguex, Caen, one of the places where Euphrasie's family settled and is today mainly a street full of restaurants, reminded us of Euphrasie and her journey as a vibrant youngster. Then we proceeded to L'Abbaye aux Hommes, a former Benedictine Monastery dedicated to St. Stephen. It was founded in 1063 by William the Conqueror and his body is buried in the church. The Benedictine Abbey was suppressed during French revolution and the abbey church became a parish

church. We could see the magnificent work of the glorious past in each and every corner of the Abbey. The day's pilgrimage ended with a short concluding rite of sharing our experiences. All of us expressed that it was the realization of our long cherished dreams and a blessing that we hold exceedingly dear as we journey onward.

We also thank Sr. Patricia Boyd for the valuable commentaries, during the journey and visits to the places of significance, which helped us to know and understand the context well. Thank you for the quality time spent with us. We do appreciate and thank the Benedictine sisters too for their hospitality and accommodation.

Retreat

It was the golden opportunity placed before us to experience God in a deeper level. Sr. Clare Murphy invited us to be in solitude in a creative way and to rest a while to listen, to open our heart, mind and our whole self to the loving touch of God. The awakening in the spirit slowly led us to experience the Incarnation of Christ in our life and the deeper meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. Also we were given one day to be with Euphrasie to reflect on her life and our RNDM heritage of spirituality which brought us endless joy, peace and hope for the future. The integration of three dimensions of our charism - Contemplation, Communion and Mission into the 6 days retreat was worthy of praise. The life-enhancing retreat gave us the taste and boost for an onward religious journey though life. We thank Sr. Clare Murphy and Sr. Lucy for your qualitative guidance and support during our retreat.



Closing Liturgy



The six interesting weeks of our Pilgrimage at St L'Abbaye ended with a closing ritual, led by Lucy that included Sr Patricia and the community. The ritual was made more meaningful by receiving again our own journals as a symbol of the blessing we received during this Pilgrimage to our Roots. Thank you, Sr. Lucy, for your innovative par-liturgy and for the accompaniment throughout our stay here. There is more to come and we hope that you have a good rest once the course is over!

During the closing remarks given by Sr Patricia, she reminded us that 6th June, this very day of closing, was the anniversary of D Day for France; the day when the liberation of France began on the beaches of Normandy. This day of memory of the anguish suffered during World War II is still marked. Patricia playfully indicated that she would “kick us out of France” to be received joyously by England and called Brigid Mary Kennedy to receive us on behalf of the UK and Ireland Province! She presented each of us with a miniature baguette symbolizing bread for the continuing journey of life.

Gratitude



As an RNDM Renewal group, 2018 we would like to express our sincere gratitude to sisters Marie Laurent, Marie Benedicte, Elizabeth, Helen, Rebecca, Kim and Fr. Joseph, our chaplain, for your kindness and generosity during our stay here. We thank God for your loving service, concern and sisterly love; we really appreciate your hard work. Of course, the delicious French food and the table wine we can't forget, and the comfortable bed and

peaceful surroundings nourished and rejuvenated us both physically and spiritually. It is our privilege to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Patricia Boyd, the Province Leader of France for her warm welcome, accompaniment and availability during our stay here.

Today, Thursday, 7 June, we are on pilgrimage again, journeying to whatever lies ahead for us in England. Our hearts will take with us beautiful memories and blessings from France, the land of our Foundress.

We wish you many blessings and we hope that you enjoy reading our second newsletter.

Your loving sisters on RNDM Renewal in L'Abbaye, St Rambert