



*Where
is
your
treasure?*

GRANDCHAMP
NEWSLETTER
2023

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life ... strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Mt 6:25-34)

This is the theme we explored during this year’s Council. Jesus’ invitation seems rather naïve if we take it out of context. It is preceded by these words: “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (v. 21), and above all: “You cannot serve God and wealth” (v. 24). Once we have chosen the master we want to serve, these words take on their proper meaning.

The life Jesus alludes to here is to be understood in the Greek sense of *psyche*, that is, soul, mind, and not in the sense of *bios*, biological life. Serving God means serving our human brothers and sisters; it means taking care of hungry crowds, and not only with bread! That is what Jesus did and urges us to do (Mt 25:40). Our soul is nourished by what it gives. That is where our treasure is.

As for the body, we need to see it in a wider sense than that of an outer layer. Our body allows us to be in relationship with the world, with others, with God and with ourselves. We can take our place without having to look for it because it has been given to us. Nothing is given to us because we have earned it but by love freely offered. Being in tune with this Master in us, with the Divine, leads us to live more in justice, in right relationships. Isn’t this the door to the Kingdom of God?

The quality of our relationships is measured by our ability to listen. Listening leads to attentiveness, to caring that causes me to honour the thoughts and words of the other and of God in him/her. It is a kind of Visitation (Lk 1:39-45). The other is recognized in their core identity. What matters, in a relationship, is that each person can feel unique and irreplaceable, moving toward their fullness of being. These visitations nourish us, enliven us, make us creators of the Kingdom. Let us protect the difference that enriches.

It is a matter of a call to heal the heart, the essence: “May grace not fade away from the face of my sister/my brother” (a desert father). Seek this unique necessity in these troubled times in which we are living. Listening is how we try to live through prayer, praise and also work. May our way of living these allow God to be in us the treasure from which we live and share.

It is in community life (in other words, relationships, where I am confronted with the other’s presence) that we learn to pray, to work and to grow. All that happens between us teaches us: even conflicts, misunderstandings and any reactions we might have. These are opportunities to grow into our identity, our “original” self, as Maurice Zundel says. They reveal to us what remains in us of the “inherited” self. Others are mirrors who show me where I am at: on the path to the freedom of the children of God, or still in my inner prison? (Mt 25:35-36) Where am I on the path of the Beatitudes?

“Do not worry...” It’s normal to be afraid: of others, of ourselves. The self is afraid. It quickly sees what is lacking, what is problematic in the other, in the world. Yet, it is most often a question of my own faults, my own difficulties. What am I afraid of most? Of both the unknown and the “too” known, the usual things that “bind” me ... Recognizing and welcoming. Not fighting against, but working “with,” because that

teaches me, situates me in the truth of my being. It involves turning with all this toward and into the Presence of the Totally Other and of others. If I have chosen God as Master, I don't have to worry. "All these things will be given to us."

Going beyond what worries us, thoughts and fears that hold us back. Brother Richard of Taizé, during the 2020 retreat, invited us to get out of our usual ways of thinking: "The fullness of the Kingdom of God depends on this new way of thinking. These are new wineskins for new wine." The new thing that is to be born is the spiritual child. It is within me, but I must still pay attention to it. That is where the Kingdom of God is found!

Let us live in the awareness that we are created in the image and likeness of God. That means that within us is the ability to act, to live, to be like God! That's incredible! This is worth thinking about when we sense the fear. Are we aware of our infinite value and dignity? It is reflected back to us in an infinitesimally small and discreet look that fills us with a sense of hope and trust, in a smile that restores our zest for living, in a small gesture of friendship that makes space for the other. Will we be, through our way of living, the new wineskins who will help to reveal God?

In the face of the global crisis, which also touches on faith, Christianity, the Church, what call do we hear for today and for the future? Is it not simply to continue, day after day, to take care of the fundamental things, of our treasure, of the quality of our relationships? No new wine in old wineskins! It is a time of truth! The veil between the invisible and the visible world becomes more tenuous, and grace abounds even more, it seems: more and more people are seeking a spiritual life, in a form other than that of what we know, perhaps, but also seeking to serve God... Trust!

"Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Sister Anne-Emmanuelle

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"The world only keeps spinning through the breath of love. Everything that makes noise around us amid the roar of the news delineates the precise boundary of what is not important. If the earth turns, it's thanks to the thousands of acts of love made by thousands of men and women who each morning renew the covenant between earth and heaven – in spite of everything! Every morning, men and women who care for the patch of reality entrusted to them – their children, their gardens, their houses, their enclaves, their workplaces – are saving the world in spite of everything."

Christiane Singer, L'Urgence d'aimer

This quotation is an echo of what we wish to experience: allowing love to circulate in everyday actions. The patch of reality that is entrusted to us is thus transformed into rich music.

Sister Gabrielle lives in a residence for people with disabilities in Neuchâtel. She shares:

“Do not worry about your life.” At Foyer Handicap, in Neuchâtel where I live, we are faced every day with the fragility of life and its limitations. Concerns about life are at times so acute, so critical and so understandable that we can only tiptoe forward with our hearts.

It is therefore so important to learn little by little to live and to move forward with our own limitations and those of others.

But life is more than fragility, than limitations: it is also beauty, gift, welcome, sharing.

And if I need care and assistance every day, I also make sure to care for what is going well in my life, and I make sure to find resources within me. That is essential, like the day I discovered my limitations as a “life space,” and that within these limitations I can live and move, that this space is not rigid, that my limits can expand, soften, but from within, and gently. Life is a gift.

At the Foyer, for example, I can experience it through friendship, mutual aid, as well as through listening, sharing. I can also experience it in the choir that I had the joy of creating a few years ago. I also measure how much life is a gift when the “sun” reappears following difficulties that on some days can considerably darken the skies of our life.

The Kingdom of God for me is God’s presence at the heart of our lives. Seeking the Kingdom of God means heading out on the path of love, hope and trust.

Disability often invites us to care for each other. This nourishes the hope that our life has meaning, in spite of

everything. And if we lose, over time, our independence, that doesn’t mean we also lose autonomy, the ability to make choices, to choose a path of life, to believe in love, to believe that hope is not an empty word and that trust is possible even if it needs to be renewed every morning.

It is true that we can stand tall while seated in a wheelchair!

“Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This verse stays within me, like a seed that I am invited to care for, to help grow, and whose fruits invite me to share.

Sister Gabrielle

We responded to the call to go to Sainte-Mère-Église to be a prayerful presence there as an ecumenical fraternity with the sisters of Carmel Saint Joseph. **Sister Pascale** describes their experience:

Upon arriving in Normandy, we were surprised to discover the impact that the 6 June 1944 landing had left among the population. Everywhere you go, you can see large panels, memorials that refer to it. This memory is turned toward the past – a past of war. We better understood how the “Grange de la Paix” (Barn of Peace) project took shape. You could put it this way: “How can we remember the past to live better in the present and prepare a peaceful future?”

The bishop of the diocese didn’t have the means to begin such a project, but he trusted: “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness ... Do not worry.”

We feel that this project is in keeping with the seeking of the Kingdom, with what we want to live in community, and

so that peace in justice comes for the world: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

The first challenge was to get acquainted with the Grange, a totally renovated space in an old farm building, and to work with the team of volunteers (about 10 people) who support the project. Inside the Grange, a large room can accommodate lectures, and visitors can watch a short film based on the story of John Steele (a paratrooper whose parachute caught on the bell tower) that challenges visitors to ask themselves: How can I, wherever I am, be sure to be a peacemaker?

At the opposite end is a wooden structure, the dome of silence, where each person can experience silence or take a break. Upstairs, a painting allows us to see different images depending on the colour of the filter through which we look at it. This prompts a question: What filter do we use in our relationships?

Upstairs is also found a prayer space where we gather every evening for evening prayer with people who wish to pray with us. A reading and gathering space allows us to host mainly educational groups.

We are surprised to see how receptive visitors are; they say they are touched by this place and encourage us to continue.

Another challenge was to reach, as an ecumenical fraternity from different communities, an agreement for common worship. We have started refining things over the liturgical seasons and feasts, and this refining continues. We are very thankful for the kind welcome we have received both in the Catholic parish and in the Protestant parishes of Saint-Lô and Cherbourg, in gatherings of the consecrated of the diocese and in gatherings of Protestant churches. Our

presence has already led to ecumenical encounters.

Bishop Grégoire Cador was recently appointed to replace Bishop Le Boulc'h, who asked us to take on this mission. We are pleased with the new bishops' interest and openness.

The third challenge was - and remains - adjusting to community life. Our communities are different, as are our ways of life, but we agree on the essentials. We had to get organized for day-to-day operations, for our presence in the Grange, and make sure there was enough space for silence, sharing, retreat and prayer.

"Therefore do not worry"! Yes, let us remember this verse, as events (lectures, concerts, exhibitions) and funding can worry us at times. We are 4 sisters. We could say it's a bit crazy to embark on such a venture, and yet we feel that it's the right thing.

It's a bit like we were given some seeds, and it is up to us to care for them so they germinate and grow, while we rely on an Other.

*Sister Pascale and the
sisters of Carmel Saint Joseph:
Catherine, Marie-Thérèse and
Anne Marie who joined us this autumn.*

Our vocation of reconciliation and unity takes shape in our daily community life. It makes us aware of what we carry within ourselves, the result of our upbringing and our culture, our "cultural archives." It was important to us to increase our awareness. **Kanyana Mutombo** (director of the African Popular University in Geneva) and **Thierry Genevey** (a Jungian psychiatrist) allowed us to confront the theme

of exclusion and racism in us and among us.

Mr Mutombo started by reassuring us that it's normal to have prejudices, a kind of apprehension toward someone who is unknown and different. But it becomes problematic if we encounter the other without altering our views. This risks becoming *discrimination*, causing us to push aside the person who is different.

Racism - a word that in itself is inappropriate, as there is only one race, the human race - is an ideology with assertions that show a person's so-called inferiority or superiority. It's *hierarchized*: based on skin colour, religious affiliation, sex, nationality ...

He reminded us that humanity was born in Africa around 300 000 years ago. It was only 20 000 years ago that skin began getting lighter. Do we realize enough that the ancestors of all humanity were Black?

Without wanting to or being aware of it, we can have racist behaviours. We must dare to look closely at ourselves to leave behind paradigms of superiority and inferiority that live unconsciously within us.

Our desire to grow together in community while preserving the uniqueness of each person was echoed in the discovery of the principle of Ubuntu, ancestral African wisdom:

"I am because you are."

I can't exist without you. Rejecting the other means rejecting myself.

One aspect of the Bantu languages, spoken in a large part of Africa, speaks to us in our commitment to simplicity of life. In these languages, the verb *to have* doesn't exist. Instead, people say *be with*. For example: I don't *have* a house, but I *am with* a house. Placing relationships

ahead of possession changes the way we situate ourselves in the world!

Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu were infused with this wisdom that supported them in their fight against apartheid.

Thierry Genevey emphasized how the encounter with the other carries a "risk": the risk of transforming us. Fear is a kind of protection to maintain our integrity. It is legitimate to defend oneself, to set clear boundaries, to exclude if it is a question of protecting oneself. But in each one of us, there is also a deeper part that knows it is loved: "the Self." When it guides our lives, the encounter with the other becomes something we desire and a source of richness.

Hospitality has fully resumed, with new people who are discovering Grand-champ, as well as many volunteers, from a wide range of places. We were able to replace some of our roofs. Thank you to our guests for understanding when less than pleasant noises echoed throughout the area!

Various visits give their own unique character. We can only mention a few: Bishop emeritus Claude Rault of the Sahara, Sister Angelika from the Imshausen Community, Brother Sabino, Sister Silvia and Brother Daniel of Bose, Dom Mark-Ephrem of Holy Cross Abbey, Sister Agnès of the Sisters of Saint Andrew. So many opportunities to deepen the bonds of friendship with these communities.

Dan Jaffé, an Israeli and a historian of religions, gave a very rich session, open to the public, on the beginnings of Christianity.

Students from the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey visited us for a day: it was a wonderful opportunity to talk with theologians of a wide range of Churches and countries.

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Alongside the reception of guests, life goes on, in various ways:

We are delighted to enter into this time of Advent and Christmas with a revised edition of our office, the result of lengthy work on our liturgy.

Several people made a commitment to the Third Order of Unity and to the Servants of Unity.

The Circle of Friends is growing. Thanks to each member for their support expressed through prayer, financial contributions and volunteering.

Two sisters from the Mamré community in Madagascar spent 6 months with us, bringing their dynamism and taking part in the formation for novices: a welcome mutual enrichment that will continue this winter with the arrival of another sister.

A few notes from Grandchamp also resonated in other places:

Sister Anneke and Sister Gesine spent a month in Taizé listening to youth.

Sister Anne-Emmanuelle and Sister Carolina took part in the "Together" weekend, a gathering of the People of God in Rome through Taizé's initiative: celebrating an ecumenical prayer vigil as a concrete sign of synodality of all the Churches. There was openness on all sides! It was a historic moment: the Holy Spirit blew and offered hope on the path of Church unity!

Sister Siong gave a session to the Little Sisters of Jesus in formation at Tre Fontane. She also worked as a part of the ANANIE facilitation team on a formation session for nuns and monks of the Benedictine and Cistercian family from several continents. Sister Gesine and Sister Eva participated in an inter-novitiate formation in Tamié.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, sisters prayed ecumenical vespers at Einsiedeln monastery.

Sister Anne-Emmanuelle, along with some other sisters, shared the joy of the Sisters of Carmel Saint Joseph during their 150th Jubilee. Sister Pierrette was already there, having given the opening retreat for their General Chapter.

Sister Sonja represented us at the "Church and Peace" gathering in the Netherlands, while Sister Hannah and Sister Embla flew to Sweden, participating in the Conference of Interconfessional Religious (CIR).

Sister Dorothea had the joy of discovering a small part of Poland during the gathering of the Christophorus Network communities in Laski.

Sisters connected in gratitude for the Chemin Neuf community for their 50 years at Hautecombe Abbey, as well as the Fraternity of Veilleurs in Paris for the celebration of their centenary.

A group of novices was pleased to discover the Bose fraternity in Assisi and that of the Little Sisters in Rome.

In Sonnenhof, the experience of the "Weggemeinschaft" – the group of sisters and people who commit for a time to share daily life – is off to a good start and is deepening. Martha Jost had restricted her time beforehand to one

year, while Reinhild Schneider extended her commitment for two years and Susanne Grau joined the group this fall. For what we have experienced up to now, and for the ongoing adventure, we are very thankful.

Some major construction work was done to maintain quality hospitality.

In the Netherlands, Sister Janny, Sister Christianne and Maria de Groot continue to offer their friendship.

Last fall, Sister Anne-Geneviève entered into the light. Several members of our spiritual family and many other people who were dear to us also left this world,

who were dear to us also left this world, including Brother Pierre-Yves of Taizé, Father Pierre d'Eygalières, the pastors Jan Slomp, Nicodème Alagbada and Bonar Lumbantobing...

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Where is our treasure? As the end-of-year liturgical feasts approach, our prayer for you is that you will discover your treasure: through the light of a star, through a look that fills you with hope and trust. May the blessing of the Christmas Child accompany you with his joy.

The Sisters of Grandchamp



Grandchamp 4, CH - 2015 Areuse

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