

*Pray and love*



GRANDCHAMP NEWSLETTER  
2025

*“Pray and love! Experiencing the cross and the resurrection in our daily lives.”* This is the theme we have been exploring since the summer. It comes from our first sisters, the title of the Rule of life that Sr Marguerite sketched out in 1941 for the fledgling community. We might have expected to find “Pray and work” ... But “Pray and love!” says it all. Prayer is never separate from love. It is embodied in attentiveness, solidarity, the welcoming of life in all its forms. *“The work, the task that God entrusted to Jesus, was to love until the end (see John 13:1),”* Fr Richard told us during our retreat. *“Praying, working, loving is all one in the life of Jesus, and therefore also in ours.”*

We have witnesses of this love in our community history, such as Sr Marguerite and Mother Geneviève. They dared to embrace the shadows, even the greatest one, death, with love. In this way, they experienced a new life, a resurrection. Mother Geneviève wrote, following the tragic death of her husband, Léopold:

*“My beloved was there, ... his features clothed in the bitter chill of death. ... When it hurt too much, I left the room to give way to my distress. Being by his side was to be in the sacred silence that I did not dare disturb. Hours passed, alone with him and my Bible. And in the morning, it seemed to me that through my anxiety, weakness, distress, peace entered my heart, and I knew for certain that God was helping me. ... It was certainty and love, and I felt Léopold near, but a Léopold transfigured, radiant, alive in a higher life, understanding everything, loving completely, delivered from all fetters ... God had vanquished death, there was no more terror or anguish, there was only the great love of God.”*

Suffering that is accepted can bear fruit, like a seed sown in the ground. Accepting without judging, welcoming what is real within ourselves leads to freedom. The fullness of God’s life contains all, including suffering and death.

*“Pray and love”* is a theme for a lifetime. It’s not a story from the past: we are all witnesses, in one way or another, of this love. The path begins within you: Love yourself first, with all you have, moment by moment, accepting yourself as you are, with everything, beloved of your Creator, Source of all life. And it will spill over to others, to your relationships and to the world.

Is not every spiritual path that is interpreted in the light of Christ’s cross a path of liberation and learning about true love, a gift of Easter? God conquered death. Pray and love your human condition; although it is marked by the cross, it is also life-giving. It requires, however, that I take part. Indeed, it is when I confront my suffering, my cross, in truth and with love, that I can experience resurrection. This changes the face of the world as well as my own.

In this world disrupted by wars, climate change, power abuses of all kinds, as well as fear, this phrase “Pray and love” is a sign of resistance and hope. It invites us to live from our cornerstone: the presence of God in us, Source of love that is stronger than anything. It is only when we return over and over to this centre, to the depths of our heart, that we can participate in the birthing of a new world. Are we ready to go through this labour with all our being? Pray and work, pray and love! If we carry out this work with the awareness that we are accompanied by the Wholly Other and that we are never left alone, this path of suffering can become a passage to a life that is freer, reconciled and new, toward resurrection.

*“Pray and love”* thus becomes a way of life, to humbly take up again, day and night.

### **Pray and love.**

Two simple words,  
two impulses of the soul  
that chart a path.  
Not to somewhere faraway,  
to the heights or the temples,  
but here, in the dust of our days,  
at the heart of the everyday.

This path is not an idea:  
it is breath, silence, presence.  
It begins where you are,  
in your body, in your breath,  
in the beating of your heart.  
It invites you to gently descend  
from your cluttered head to your inner heart,  
where you can let your life come to rest,  
as it really is, no masks, no sound.

It's a transition, a Passover,  
following Christ.  
The cross is not avoided, it is experienced.  
Suffering, loss, fatigue... nothing is left out.  
Everything can become a vaster place to live.

### **To love**

is to dare to stand before your wounds,  
without running away, without struggling.  
Welcoming them like you welcome  
a crying child, entrusting them to the Source.  
Then can be born in us a path  
of peace, of reconciliation, of healing.

**To love** is also to listen. Really listen.  
What is pulsating below the words,  
what is resisting, waits to be known.  
It's learning to love yourself,  
especially your shadow side,  
and believing that new life is possible.  
It's not a lofty ideal.  
It's the Spirit already at work,  
who whispers, breathes, prays in us,  
and leads us toward this interior "yes"  
that says: I'm not afraid anymore.

Christ did not flee the cross.  
He embraced it.  
Through this mad gesture he opened a passage:  
from darkness to light, from fear to trust,  
from death to Life.

And what if, at the heart of the cross,  
there was a fire?  
A fire of love that does not consume,  
but enlightens, warms, transforms?  
With this trust, fragile but tenacious,  
that God inhabits even our longest nights,  
and that in the end,  
there is always Life.

### **Pray – Love – Resist**

Move from your head to your heart.  
There, in the silence, a Source awaits you.  
Don't try to avoid the Cross, go through it:  
**Pray...** to open yourself up to an Other.  
**Love...** to live fully.  
**Resist...** to live in the light.

**Pray...** to stay human  
in a world that wavers,  
where fear gnaws, the earth burns.  
**Love...** bear your vulnerability tenderly.  
Love is a seed.

Trust: God causes light to shine  
in the depths of the shadows.  
**Resist...** with gentleness,  
faithful to what is right and true.  
Not by clenching your fists,  
but by keeping your heart open  
where fear settles in, cynicism freezes,  
fatigue seeks to extinguish the light.

**Pray...** not out of duty,  
but to breathe with the Breath of Life.  
**Love...** not to possess,  
but to set free.

**Resist...** not out of harshness,  
but to root yourself in Christ  
in the midst of the storms.

That is the place of our real resistance:  
the daily journey,  
the "yes" that is faithful to the Light,  
to the Invisible, to the Presence, to the Life  
that germinates in the depths of the night.

And believe,  
against all odds,  
that every step made in faith  
gives birth to a new world.

Sisters Anne-Emmanuelle and Regina

**Pray, love, resist** — this work of transformation unfolds in everyone and finds its depth when it is woven into the fragility and richness of our community life. With this in mind, we experienced our January community days under the theme *“At the Heart of the Cross, Love.”*

Through art and texts from Edith Stein, St John of the Cross, Etty Hillesum and, to our surprise, Sr Marguerite of Grandchamp, Audrey Barcelo Genevay placed before us the Cross as it is inhabited by these witnesses of hope. Together, we moved forward step by step. As one sister said: *“I approached the cross very carefully, because deep down I was a little afraid of it.”*

Crosses and suffering can be frightening. How can we handle them without losing hope? Art and beauty can sustain this endeavour. One sister put it this way: *“It’s so hard not to be able to do something when someone is suffering. Contemplating Fra Angelico’s painting of Christ on the night of Gethsemane, I imagined Martha and Mary praying for Jesus that night.”*

Another added about this painting: *“The light does not enter through the window, but comes from the dark place where Jesus is in agony, in prayer. I trust that I receive this light from this dark place in me where Jesus, in agony, prays to the Father.”*

This year, so much suffering brought us face to face with the world’s crosses. In 1954, Sr Marguerite described her experience of fraternity in a slum in Algeria: *“Living amid this misery means suffering every minute, suffering greater than we can ever fully share. But perhaps it is this tearing of our hearts that is asked of us. We must pray without ceasing so that the love of Christ may be given to us. When I start to feel overwhelmed by all this suffering, I go into our little chapel, lie face down on the floor, with my arms extended in the form of a cross (there is just enough room) and say: “In*

*the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ...” And when peace returns, I say: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit ...” And I get up strengthened and calm, and I go back to them.”*

Whatever each person carries joins with the life and the suffering of humanity. One sister put it in these words: *“This session helped me to look with love at Christ in me who fights to drink the cup of today’s suffering in the world. Collective suffering is linked to our personal suffering. I was able to look with love on the dark place in me where Christ is taking on the crosses of today.”*

Why is there so much suffering? Who has never felt this cry arise within them? Audrey quoted Sr Marguerite: *“The answer to all our ‘why’s is not a ‘because’, but greater love.”* It is an invitation to let go of the expectation of an explanation to love and let ourselves be loved.

One sister shared: *“Edith Stein invites me to see ‘all the burdens and suffering in life ... as messages from the cross.’ I feel these trials, both personal and collective, go through me: I acknowledge them without justifying them or forcing them to have a certain meaning... And what if learning to love also involves embracing suffering, which is inevitable for all of us? When it erupts in my life without my seeking it, welcoming it for what it contains and what it reveals to me of myself and of Christ... Edith’s vision of the cross as constitutive of our being soothes me: going through my crosses joins me to the Paschal mystery of Christ, a journey that leads my wounded life, in communion with his, to the Resurrection. Etty Hillesum, a contemporary of Edith’s, wrote: ‘Facing death and accepting it as an integral part of life, is to expand this life. ... Death is suddenly there, great and simple and natural, silently entering my life. It now has its place there and I know it is inseparable from life.’*

*Like Etty, I feel life and death coexisting in me, two indivisible forces. Suffering and joy, trials and peace intertwine, giving my life its intensity. Accepting death opens me to life."*

In *Prier 15 jours avec Edith Stein*, Michel Dupuis writes: "Crosses so often ignored or repressed are only waiting for the gaze of love so all this suffering, pointless, scandalous, absurd, can mysteriously be transformed into heaven for love and salvation. For the cross really needs me, it needs my love to set free what it contains."

Echoing these words, one sister shares: "Before, it was as if the cross was far from me. Now, when I hear that the cross needs me, it is no longer something mysterious and distant: the cross is within me. That is how I can be like Jesus: without guilt or moralism, but very concretely, very down to earth, in my life and in community life."

In conclusion, Audrey shared how our experience resonated with her:

*"The Cross is a mystery to be contemplated. This great account of the Passion concerns all of us; this particular story resonates in the Universal.*

*Through the Cross, the Man-God opened for us a way that reunites us with the Divine Source. In this way he saves us. But it is not his suffering that saves us, it is his love. It is the love he is able to bear witness to even amid suffering.*

*This path he carved out remains forever open; it is the cornerstone of the mystery of our existence. We must experience this passage individually and collectively.*

*The unfathomable wisdom of God gave the Cross redemptive power. And for our crosses? It's an act of faith. In the dark of night, the women myrrh-bearers go forward, carrying this deep gladness that is springing up, coming through, that mysteriously embraces from his Love the cross of the human being.*

*During the dark of night of all absences shines the bright flame of love, the Presence of the Living One on Easter morning."*

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**Pray, love, resist ... at the heart of our daily lives. Here is what marked our community life throughout the year:**

During the community retreat before Pentecost, Dom Jean-Pierre Longeat invited us to see our body as a place of encounter with God. In the face of evil that is tearing the world apart, coming back to this depth in daily life opens paths of communion: we all come from the same Source, and yet each person is unique and so different! Growing in relationship means acknowledging these differences and learning to love them! Community life offers us countless opportunities and gives us a taste of the joy of experiencing diversity through the generations, cultures, Churches, ways of living in this world and in our inner world ...

Abuses in the Church, in society, and in families are a cross borne above all by the victims. During a conversation with Margarita Fugger-Heesen and the screening of her documentary *Dignity*, we glimpsed a way of restoration through dance. Aware that no community is shielded from difficulties or dysfunction, a group of sisters attended a session on the topic of abuse, control, and trauma, facilitated by Isabelle Chartier-Siben, a victim support counsellor. This work of conversion and clarity, calling us to examine our structures, attitudes, and words, will continue with the whole community.

Since the beginning, the ecumenical vocation of our community has been an adventure in faith, a path for contemplating the love of God.

Exchanges with other communities and spiritualities are equally opportunities to experience unity, to forge links of friendship and support, and, at the same time, they offer us an invaluable light to deepen what it means, today, to be a sister of Grandchamp! Again this year, encounters led us on paths rich in discoveries:

As part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Sr Svenja joined Sr Pascale and the sisters of Carmel Saint Joseph at the ecumenical fraternity of Sainte-Mère-Église in Normandy. She shared their daily life, which is punctuated by the offices at the Grange de la Paix (Barn of Peace) and by many encounters, while Srs Mechthild, Birgit, and Martina-Anna went to Einsiedeln for ecumenical vespers. A few weeks later, Sr Anne-Emmanuelle and several other sisters were pleased to share their experience of community life with the staff of the World Council of Churches and its general secretary, Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay. Later in the year, we welcomed students from the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, who came to visit and to learn more about our life.

On the feast of St Benedict, several sisters shared in the joy of the blessing of the new abbess of Maigrange, Mother Marie-Agnès. The summer continued with a CIR gathering in Tymawr (Wales), where around 30 sisters and brothers from various traditions, including Sr Embla, had fruitful exchanges and were welcomed by the sisters of the Society of the Sacred Cross, an Anglican community that is active in ecology.

In the fall, we took part in gatherings in the French-speaking part of Switzerland: at the Day of Consecrated Life in Fribourg and at the Abbaye d'Hauterive, where, with many brothers and sisters from various monasteries, we had the

pleasure of contemplating the recently renovated church, sharing a time of praise in this place of prayer that bridges the centuries.

Like many others, we give thanks for the life and pontificate of Pope Francis, and we are encouraged by the words of Pope Leo XIV: *"I consider one of my priorities to be that of seeking the reestablishment of full and visible communion among all those who profess the same faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."*

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The new sound system in our chapel, L'Arche, also delights those praying in communion with us online, including our own sisters who can no longer live at Grandchamp, such as Sr Maria, now with Sr Hélène at the Val Fleuri care home.

Nature changes, too: under the weight of the snow, a large pine branch in the yard fell, while at the mouth of the Areuse River, a revitalization created a small island for the birds ... fragility and beauty of life.

At Grandchamp, day to day, volunteers support us through their faithful commitment. Their presence and regular donations allow us to continue to be a place of welcome for all those seeking an interior space where the mystery of Life can be renewed. We are very grateful.

It was a joy to welcome from Algeria, for a few months, a long-time friend, Miassa, as well as from Israel, Prof. Dan Jaffé for a seminar on Jesus in the Jewish understanding.

*"What is hope? It is happiness to come."* This is just one example of the short and meaningful phrases that linked the songs at the show presented at Grandchamp in L'Arche by Sr Gabrielle and her co-

residents at the Foyer Handicap de Neuchâtel. A bright moment filled with happiness!

After years of major construction projects at the Sonnenhof, the **Weggemeinschaft** is enjoying a more stable phase that allows community life to grow stronger. Having six people – three sisters and three “companions” – brings balance, energy, and joy to the prayer, work, and welcoming of guests. Two of them, with Sr Gesine, went to the Kirchentag in Hanover for a time of encounters and inspiring conversations.

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In November, like the migratory birds, Sr Lauranne left for Benin to lead a retreat for the Third Order of Unity. Sr Anne-Emmanuelle headed north to the Netherlands to visit Sr Janny, as well as Sr Christianne and Maria de Groot. We were happy that they could spend an extended summer at Grandchamp. Through their eyes as female poets and writers, they invite us to contemplate Jesus' life experiences and the joy that is revealed there:

### *Joy perfumes time*

*This meditation leads us from joy to joy. First, the journey of the three Magi to Bethlehem, bringing their gifts. Later will come the Child's death on a cross. So, even though this death will be turned into joy, the essence of the story is sombre and filled with danger: enemies and adversaries, threats and pain.*

*Let's take the gifts of the Magi into our hands. Gold evokes the royalty of the Eternal. A transformed world emerges, inhabited by a humanity glowing with love and peace. It's unimaginable for us who live here and now, and yet real in the ingenuity of the Mother-Spirit. Frankincense affirms the blue triumph*

*of a new heaven and a new earth; a divine fragrance permeates our humble and vulnerable being. Myrrh recalls the death of the Child, but also prophecies healing, his and ours.*

*Gold, frankincense, myrrh: king, priest, prophet. The Magi see the Child in all his mysterious identity. The star that guides them is a star of joy.*

*Jesus is born into a people who know and embrace joy. Sim'hat Torah, joy of the Torah, inspiration of the Jewish people. Jesus breathes the Torah, practises the Torah, speaks the Torah, rests in the Torah that sings the psalms. Long live the vast spectrum of joy!*

*Going through the world  
with a vision in your mind's eye,  
you often meet with disappointment  
and a sense of betrayal.*

*Whatever good you do,  
evil still seems to triumph.  
Carrying on calls for courage  
for those who walk this earth.*

*Do not lose courage. Listen to what Jesus says in John 14:28: "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."*

*In his intimacy with God, Jesus says, "Father." It is one of the Names that express the being of God, always in motion, that we can cherish, as if it was written "Mother," "Friend," "Dear One," or "Creator" ... O ineffable Name!*

*Jesus describes the joy of reunion after a separation using a feminine image (John 16:20-23). "I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." – Joy, like at the birth of a child.*

*Because of a birth, three Kings of the nations set out, guided by a heavenly light. They bring joy with them in the form of gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

*And see: the Child, now an adult, offers these gifts to the world. The gold of divine royalty: raise your eyes with trust and recognize it. The frankincense of a fragrant vocation: use your sense of smell, have faith. The myrrh of temporary death: a transition that turns separation into joy.*

*May we receive these gifts from him, admire and acknowledge them, and do as he does, to become royal beings.*

*Remember what Rabbi Nahman said: "Joy is a commandment."*

Maria de Groot and Sr Christianne  
*(translated from Dutch)*

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This Christmas, may the Love of Christ lead us in the footsteps of the Magi: offering the gold of our humanity, the frankincense of our prayer, and the myrrh of our life journeys marked by the cross.

Let us love, pray, and resist!  
May we acknowledge together the crosses that obstruct peace in many places, and may this realization, far from extinguishing hope, strengthen it and raise up new life in us and around us.  
Peace and communion for 2026.

The sisters of Grandchamp



Grandchamp 4, CH - 2015 Areuse

**[www.grandchamp.org](http://www.grandchamp.org)**: program for 2026 and list of readings  
**[www.facebook.com/communautedegrandchamp](https://www.facebook.com/communautedegrandchamp)**

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