



GREETINGS FROM PARIS!

The time of the pandemic has shown people of faith that God does great things, starting from small things and gestures. In his address for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Pope Francis praised the “logic of smallness and giving”.

It is so different from the human perspective. We tend to accumulate things, but Jesus asks us to give, in fact, to diminish them. This pattern of living takes many forms but the result is the same in God’s eyes, he multiplies!

In EuroInfo this month we hear of “going the extra mile” to reach out to others who are isolated in various ways and circumstances. It brings a blessing to the giver.

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OBITUARY

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JOAQUÍN FERNÁNDEZ (ESP) ON THE MISSION TRAIL IN MEXICO, JUNE 2021



Joaquín Fernández (Esp) has just finished a placement in the Mexican province as a member of the formation team. Recently, he accepted to be part of a mission team there and set out to a remote part of the country, in the state of Puebla. He writes:

“The whole month of June, I was on the move. David Sánchez (Mex), three Marist students and myself travelled to a mission at least 9 hours by car from Toluca, to a very remote area in the mountains. There are no paved roads, only a mountain track of stones and rocks. The population comprises mainly of local indigenous people, speaking their language, Nahuatl. Their houses are simple and built with timber, and scattered throughout the mountains and valleys. They are connected by narrow and steep paths, not easy to navigate particularly during the rainy season. Most of the 15 days we were there, it rained!

The main group of 30 houses clusters around a central chapel where the Liturgy of the Word is celebrated on Sundays. Sometimes during the year, the parish priest arrives for major celebrations and people from other communities join in. We divided in two groups, “two by two”. We visited all the houses of 6 communities, spending time with the families, blessing the houses, anointing the sick and celebrating Mass on the last day of our visit in each community. It was quite an experience!!! We always had one or two people with us as guides and who also served as interpreters when required. Most of the communities have never been visited by the parish priest because they are hard to reach and there are so many villages in each parish... Many people identify themselves as Catholic but without sacraments, not even baptism.” There is a lesson in this for all of us.





A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON THE MARIST MISSION IN NOTRE DAME DE FRANCE (NDF), LONDON

Sr Anne Lata SMSM is a Marist Missionary Sister from Fiji who arrived in London (4 October) during the second Covid wave. It was a particularly difficult start for her mission at NDF. She has a special role in the homeless service there in the centre of the city. Sr Anne writes: "It was a paradigm shift for me from the classroom setting to touching the souls of those at Leicester Square. A vast difference from the blackboard chalk and correcting students work to preparing sandwiches and beverages for homeless people! But the personal interaction, the same spirit is needed to welcome all who are hungry and thirsty.

I was stunned by the large number of people who came to the Saturday homeless service. I noticed some waited for others to arrive so they could queue together. There was a beautiful atmosphere of happy friends coming together. I struggled to understand why in this developed country, we would find people in such need? Why would some even choose to live on the streets? I thanked God when I realised that everywhere in the world no matter who we are, there is a certain kind of poverty. Solidarity creates a beautiful atmosphere where friends come together."



PRAYER INTENTION

Eternal God, from generation to generation you give your gifts of grace for every time, place and season as we strive to walk in your ways and remain close to one another and to you. Show us the value of family life and help us to respect all life. We give thanks for the Christian memory which inspires and enlightens us.

We give thanks for the example of faith we have received for earlier generations, for their witness, constancy of love, for their prayerful support.

(Prayer based on text by Msgr. Joseph Quinn pp, Knock, Co. Mayo, Ireland, 22 September 2007)

THE CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ASSOCIATION (CGA) AND THE MARISTS IN WALSINGHAM, ENGLAND

The Feast Day of Sts Joaquin and Anne (26 July), was the occasion for Pope Francis to inaugurate the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. In doing so, he publicly recognised the vocation of the older generation "to pass on the faith to the young and care for the little ones". In 2017, the CGA formally asked Pope Francis to set aside a day in the Church's calendar to recognise the contribution that grandparents make to families, society and the faith and he welcomed the initiative in January this year. The founder of the CGA, Catherine Wiley, herself a grandmother, was instrumental in realising the ambition to see grandparents honoured by the Church. It was the initiative of Pope Francis to add "elderly" to the title (bit.ly/GrandparentsAssocation).



Catherine and her husband Stewart live in Walsingham, England, and reared their four children there. Walsingham is a mile from the National Shrine of Our Lady which was administered by the Society of Mary until 2014 alongside the Marist Sisters. In an article published in the Tablet (24 July 2021), Catherine identified one of her formative influences as the faith fostered and nurtured by the Marists, notably Fr Philip Graystone (Eng): "He knew me for 40 years and he mentored and guided me from the very beginning. The last 20 years of his life in Walsingham were totally dedicated to developing and strengthening me, which in turn strengthened and gave a solid foundation to the CGA". This is an inspiring example of the powerful message of Pope Francis, "... there is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren".

