

# Vie montante internationale Vida ascendente internacional Life ascending international

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# **Editorial**

This Bulletin will be mostly concerned with the last meeting of the Management Committee, held in Poland, and whose main object was the preparation of the next International Meeting in Santo Domingo in 2018.

The success of this Meeting will depend on all of us! We would like you to think about the theme - evangelisation - which our Spiritual Director, Mgr. Maupu spoke to us about in our last Bulletin. We are therefore sending you this time the thoughts expressed by Father Mashtaki in Katowice (Poland) concerning the role of the elderly in the task of evangelising society.

On the eve of celebrating Christmas once again, we must consider the fundamental newness of the Love this feast mean for us. What if we tried to insert it into our everyday lives? What will Christ bring into our lives again this year?

He tells us that His life is a gift received in

order to be given away.

He invites us to respond to the challenge of a transforming love which encourages us to forget self, to go out towards others and discover the joy of sharing what I have and what I am.

He encourages each of us to be faithful to the truths we have learnt, even if it is difficult, or goes against the current trends of greedy selfishness and exploitation.

He encourages us to be unafraid of daring to say the words or of doing the things which are the active signs of the living Christ-child, the Word of Jesus of Nazareth made known to us.

Shall we know how to share this good news with others - that is to say, shall we know how to evangelise them?

Wishing you a good and holy Christmas!

Marta Melo Antunes

### THE ELDERLY AS AGENTS OF EVANGELISATION

he elderly in all generations form a store or library of knowledge and experience for reference by society. It is a pity that the rapid development of technology and scientific discoveries which have given rise to globalization, struggle to material pleasures, acquisition of wealth and power has made society-corrupt, arrogant, sensual pleasure seeking, engaging in debauchery and disregarding ethics, etiquette and cultural values. The intermingling of many cultures and denominations in society sometimes produces havoc and disorders.

As such it is the elderly, that is, the older generation that has the time to think, meditate and seek ways of transmitting the true word of God from the holy books, tradition, culture, and lives of the patriarchs. The scrip-

ture commands us: (Lev.19:32).... "Show respect to the elderly and revere your God". (Ex.3:6) "I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob..." All the quotations above show that the elderly have knowledge, wisdom, and ability to educate, evangelize, impart, and transfer the Christian faith to the younger generations who should respect and learn from the elderly. The elderly should be provided for, preserved and protected as treasures and richness of society...

Man also needs to know God who speaks to us through the Bible, the word of God to experience his goodness. Man always needs to live in happiness. He craves for what will make him happy in wordily possession, travelling and in pleasures. There is no perfect

satisfaction in all these without God. St. Augustine taught that "My heart will never be at rest until it rests in you O, God". Here we find the need to bring the good news to these different groups in our modern society...

#### WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION

It is an entire range of activities by which the Church proclaims and communicates to the World. It is the saving message of Christ, which is fully contained in the layout of His words and deeds. Christ commanded the Church to do so. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them" (Mt.28:19). This missionary work, guided by the Holy Spirit, continues the mission of Christ himself in the counsel of history. God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim.2:4). This illustrates the need to evangelize, that is, to proclaim to everyone the Good news proclaimed by Christ and following his path and even being ready for death for evangelization. Evangelization is to be done by all in the members of the Church: Bishops, priests, those in consecrated life and the laity in total. The catechism teaches that the laity carry out their call to holiness and to the apostolate, a call given to all the baptized. Thus the need for the elderly to get involved in evangelization.

Evangelization is to proclaim the Gospel with sufficient information, clarity and persuasion that people may be converted in their minds and convicted in their hearts. The former is the work of proclamation and the latter is the sovereign work of God: both together achieve the intended objective, which is the repentance and conversion of sinners. Evangelization in itself is a clear verbal proclamation of the Gospel, which is intended to result in divine conversion and salvation. We need to keep hearing it, saying it and believing it ...

Evangelization is for all people in all nations: people hungry of the Word of God not food; thirsty for knowledge, peace, truth, justice and love not for water; naked not for clothes only but for human dignity too; giving shelter not only made of bricks but by an understanding heart that cares and loves; nursing the sick in mind and spirit...

The elders, who are endowed with courage, audacity and long experience must expel fear and doubt in them. Without courage, audacity and love illustrated by their hard working for the people of God, the elderly will remain spectators, viewers and not agents of evangelization.

Father Gregory Mashtaki (Tanzania) (from his contribution during the Katowice meeting)

## **MANAGEMENT** COMMITTEE

## from 4 to 8 September 2017

This year the VMI Executive Committee met in Katowice in the archdiocese of Silesia in Poland.

Taking part in the meeting were : Mme Marta Melo Antunes (President); Mgr François Maupu (Spiritual Director); Goyita Boyd, Monique Bodhuin, Jean-Michel Siméon and the VMI representatives of the following continents:

- Father Gregory Mashtaki (Tanzania) for Africa
- Father Rosario (Santo Domingo) for Latin America
- Marielle Lord for Canada
- Monika Ptak for France, Christian Liebenguth for Belgium, Jaime Tamarit for Spain,
- Father Antonio Rego for Portugal; the European Spiritual Director

(The co-ordinators for Oceania and French-speaking Africa were unable to attend.)

Mgr Skworc, the Archbishop of the diocese, honoured us with a visit, as did our friend Father Roman Chromy.

he main aim was to prepare the International Meeting due to take place in November 2018 in Santo Domingo, with the theme:

"The elderly, active participants in evangelising a multigenerational and multicultural society".

We outline below the principal areas covered:

#### The role of grand-parents

Mgr Maupu, our Spiritual Director, reminded us of the Pope's words to grand-parents: "We must give to our young children that sense of life that we have acquired during our lives: we are not wrapped up in memories of the past, but called upon to dream, to pass that dream on to our young". He went on to enumerate the various ways which Jesus used to evangelise, and he stressed "evangelising is not just a responsability, but a right". Redemptoris missi n. 71 and 72). He also recommended reading from the apostolic exhortation of pope Paul VI "Evangelii nuntiandi"- (Evangelisation in the modern world" to prepare for the Meeting).

#### The elderly as participants in evangelisation

Then Father Gregory Mashtaki from Tanzania talked about the role of the elderly and the challenges arising for evangelization in multicultural societies. (You will find extracts from his contribution later in the Bulletin.)

#### Work in groups

After this, two discussion groups met to decide which

were the most important ideas worthy of discussion during the International Meeting in 2018 and to propose some starting points for these discussions, by means of a Questionnaire. The responses will serve as a basis for further exchanges.

This document will be sent to all those concerned from January 2018.

#### Preparing for the International Meeting in November 2018

We examined with Father Rosario the practical problems involved in organising the Meeting - in particular the use of translators and their equipment as this is an important financial element.

We also examined the question of the Annual General Meeting of the Movement which will take place during the Meeting. This will be the occasion for ratifying the election of new Continental Co-ordinators, proposed by member countries, and of the new Executive Committee: President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. The Executive Committee will be asking for nominations for these posts in the early months of 2018.

#### A social encounter with a group of retired Polish people

We had the opportunity to meet a group of fifteen elderly people, accompanied by the Director of the Caritas Home in Katowice. We explained the working of the VMI Movement to them.

#### **Reports from the Continents**

The Continental Co-ordinators compiled reports of their activities since the previous Management Committee meeting, and spoke of their forthcoming projects.

Of general interest we note: a Continental Meeting in



Latin America in October ( see page 4 ); a visit by Mgr Maupu to Taiwan in October(see page 3); forthcoming visits by Father Mashtaki to East Africa (notably Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique...); an increase in contacts between movements in Europe, and the plans for a future European Internet website.

#### Conclusion

Apart from the pleasure of meeting one another again, and of working together, this Committee meeting was an occasion of spiritual growth: we met the Archbishop, we shared daily Mass with our participating priests, we spent time in the Marial shrine of Czestochowa (l'Appel Jasnogorki<sup>1</sup>), we visited historic Cracow and the church where Pope John-Paul II was a curate.

We wish to sincerely thank Monique Ptak, Co-ordinator for Europe, and her husband Janusz, as well as Father Roman, for their tireless and thoughtful ideas and suggestions during our stay and its preparation.

1. Closure ceremony of the virgin icon.

#### The continent of Asia

### **A VISIT TO TAIWAN**

rom the 10th to the 15th October 2017 I was fortunate enough to visit Life Ascending (LAI) in Taïpei. After preaching a retreat in Japan, I visited Taiwan on my way back to Paris thanks to the kindness of the Foreign Missions (MEP) priests there.

In Taïpei a meeting had been arranged by Father Jess Brena, a Jesuit, the chaplain and promoter of VMI/LAI in Asia. It was held in a parish room of the Assumption Parish. Until 2014 Father Brena, author of a book in which he talks enthusiastically about the Vie Montante Movement (VMI = Life Ascending International), was the VMI Spiritual Director for Asia. He then became the Emeritus Spiritual Director and has continued to give his support to the Movement.

The meeting began with the presentation of their activities by the seven groups of LA in Taiwan: I was impressed by the great enthusiasm for the Movement which exists in the country. Afterwards Mr Ralph Shung gave us a tour of Asia, where he has been the Continental Co-ordinator since 2014. Our discussions then moved on to the objectives of VMI-LAI and I was able to get better acquainted with the two people for whom my visit had been arranged:

Mr Abraham Lee, the prospective Continental Co-ordinator for Asia;

and Monsignor James Liu, the prospective Spiritual Director for Asia.

With Mr Ralph Shung and Father Jess Brena, it was

agreed that they would both take up their duties immediately, even though according to the statutes of VMI their nominations should first be confirmed by vote during the next International Meeting in November 2018. The Executive Committee had already given their consent during a meeting in Paris on the 8-9 November 2017.

In order to further relations between the LAI movements in Asia and to facilitate the preparations for the International Meeting in 201, Mr Abraham Lee et Mgr Liu have been entrusted with the Continental Co-ordination of Asia..

Our thanks go to all those who preceded us: Father Jess Brena, Mr Seusuke Fukushima from Japan and Mr Ralph Shung from Taiwan. Also to the MEP Fathers who organized the meeting and took care of the translating. We wish good fortune to LAI in Asia in its mission to promote long life and happiness to the elderly. May they enjoy a contented retirement, open to progress and novelty so that they do not turn in on themselves but are really able to "ascend" in the realms of human relations and Christian faith.

Mgr. François Maupu

#### **Latin American**

### **CONTINENTAL MEETING**

his year's VMI Latin American Continental Meeting took place in Colombia from 30 October to 3rd November, in the town of Chinauta. The theme and was "Let us move forward united in Faith, Hope and Charity towards a stronger vibrant Vie Montante". Our aim was to examine together the strengths and weaknesses of the Movement, faced with today's challenges, and to see how to increase our elderly members' knowledge and faith with understanding and love.

The following countries were represented: Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay.

The Meeting began with Mass, celebrated by Father Salomon representing the Bishop. The Opening Ceremony was initiated by Mme Clemencia Rodriguez, President of the Movement in Colombia and Mme Goyita Boyd, Co-ordinator for Latin America, and the reading of letters of support and encouragement from Mme Marta Melo Antunes, President of the VMI Management Committee, Mgr. Osvaldo Montferrand, Spiritual Director for Latin America and the Carribean, Mgr. Adriano Tomasi from Peru, and from Mr José María Castaño from Spain, ex member of the VMI Executive Committee.

We were united in our concern for all the countries of Latin America, their present preoccupations and their future plans and we discussed ways of reaching out to the elderly and what changes needed to be made so as to improve, with the help of the Holy Spirit, their evangelization.

The different discussions showed us that new responsibilities and obligations can serve to increase a person's capabilities. We are all called upon to start new

initiatives in the face of the general disinterest which Is felt for the elderly in general, and the lack of love for them in society. "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone" (Ps 71, 9) We must also increase public knowledge of our usefulness and the benefits we can bring to our aging population.

Training our members and especially our leaders is essential. Times have changed and we have got to accept the demands of modern life and not be afraid of modern technology. Each country's leading members must take responsibility for communication now that we can so easily talk to each other via Skype, both easily and instantaneously.

The talk by Father Velasquez on the family gave us a broad view of the elderly, knowing that we have an important role within the family thanks to our age. Pope Francis has spoken several times on the subject, emphasizing how important grand-parents are in the family's life. "Grand-parents constitute the wisdom of the family and one which doesn't listen to them is one which will die."

The next Latin-American Meeting will take place in four year's time in Argentina.

We would like to thank the VMI Movement in Colombia for having welcomed us so kindly. They made us very comfortable and we pray for them that our VMI Movement in Colombia will continue to function with great success.

**Summarised from Goyita Boyd**