

Vie montante internationale Vida ascendente internacional Life ascending international

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Editorial



Marta MELO ANTUNES Presidente

his new year, which has just begun, will bring us new challenges, hopes, joys, opportunities, projects....Once again God has put into our hands a *time* of grace. Today again, along with all men and women of good will, we carry a responsibility for the "Common Good", that is to say

to bring our personal contribution, according to our means, to where we are in the world for the good of everyone in it.

Vie Montante wants to help us live our Christian vocation in the world of today, bearing in mind our own status as Senior Citizens, our personal circumstances and our personal difficulties. Therefore our movements are proposing, among other things, that we practise a constant training or "apprenticeship", sharing our different experiences of life within the movements across all the countries and continents.

Concerning this "apprenticeship", Mgr Maupu, the VMI Ecclesiastic Assistant, tells us in his article on

Training for Life that it will always be useful *"even if we are too old to go to school".*

The best place for this on-going "apprenticeship" and for the individual and group support of the Members of VMI is the monthly group meeting, the core activity of our movements. In this edition of the Bulletin the leaders of movements in Canada and France describe the life of a group and show us how meetings are organised in their countries..

Several countries define a theme each year and all the participating members receive a booklet covering the theme for that year, thus helping to stimulate reflection and discussion and keeping all the movements united together. The meetings do not resemble each other however. This is natural since the problems, needs and habits of the groups are not the same everywhere, although we can always learn something from one another.

The New Year is here! It's up to each and every one of us to make their own resolutions to make this year a real time of Faith, Hope and Love, within the charism of our Movement. ■

TRAINING FOR LIFE IN VMI

MI meetings are held at least once a month. We meet one another and talk about our lives, think about activities to share. We do our best, according to the three pillars of our Movement, to live the friendship, to deepen our spiritual life, and to discover ways to share our faith in the world today.

In the explanatory booklet distributed by VMI, I read (on pages 22 & 23) : "The living faith, which Vie Montante invites us to share, will transform our entire life. Faith is the Holy Spirit's gift working in us. It will lead us to imitating Christ by loving our neighbour and serving others with the commitment and joy shared by the Disciples."

It's wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit is at work in us and in Vie Montante /Life Ascending. It's wonderful to know too that the Holy Spirit's work requires our participation.

A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2017!

It is through our efforts and our energy that our friendships grow and deepen, that they develop into the life of brotherly love which characterised the early Christians.

As with friendships, so with our faith and with the work of spreading the Faith to others, we need to be trained. Even though we are no longer young enough to go to school, such training can still be useful.

Vie Montante offers us this "initiation" or training in various ways. The first is the opportunity we have to meet others, to converse with them, to pray with them in the group and to talk about our lives. Meeting other people and listening to them, helps us to move forward, to grow and change things in our own lives. An annual theme is followed in some countries to facilitate and encourage discussion. Several countries also produce a magazine, as well as the VMI Bulletin, which help to keep us in touch with one another.

It seems to me that some kind of training in certain areas of our Movement's activities could be useful, so that Vie Montante lives and fulfils the role that it expects to play :

- training to lead the group in understanding the annual theme
- training to become familiar with the Word of God, to understand how to make it relevant in our lives
- training to understand and analyse the problems of the Elderly today, their economic, social, psychological and health issues
- training for those Members who will have to chair a meeting or who are responsible for a team or a VMI group.

During the Management Committee meeting this year in Lisieux (France) we were reminded of the wish expressed at the International Meeting in 2014, held in Namur (Belgium), that everyone should study how to become a disciple and an apostle or, in the words of Pope Francis, to become a "missionary-disciple" of Jesus, of use to the men and women of today and to the Church and to Society.

We have all had experience in this field. They vary according to the situation and the prospects of each country. These very differences between our movements constitute our wealth and value in the world.

Let us share our experiences with one another, as facilitated by VMI, either by personal contact or through the pages of the Bulletin.

Mgr François MAUPU

A MONTHLY MEETING IN CANADA

ur meetings are based on the three dimensions of our Movement.

On the Spiritual: An encounter through prayer (personal or within the group, spontaneous or prepared) including spiritual reflections arising especially from the Word of God.

On the Apostolic: An inspiration to evangelise. The life of Jesus, his words and his gestures, show us the way. Reflecting on the Word of God should encourage us to put our faith into practice. They encourage us to action and witness.

On Friendship: Meetings in a friendly atmosphere encourage

wide-ranging discussions. They inspire us to action and promote our work for the Church. It is through working with others that each one grows.

Running the meeting

1. The Welcome: Getting the room ready. We have a candle ready and we light it to symbolize the presence of the Holy Spirit. We have a Bible to hand. During the 15 minutes prior to the meeting the leaders and members greet each other. This is important for creating a welcoming atmosphere. A warm welcome is extended to new members.

2. The Prayer: Preceded by a moment of silence, the Prayer becomes

a way of welcoming the Lord into the Group. Suggestion – singing or reading aloud a psalm, listening to a spiritual reading, meditating during the recital of a well well-known prayer, e.g. the Our Father or the "Prayer for Senior Citizens"

3. The Life of the Group: We take turns to talk briefly about our lives - family events (birthdays, weddings etc), expressing sorrows, sharing trials, recommending sick people needing prayers etc; sharing a moment of uplifting or revealing personal faith, giving information about Church matters, in the diocese, in the parish, and about world affairs; commenting on articles in the magazine "La Vie Montante" (Life Ascending).

Note: This section lasts no longer than fifteen minutes so as to leave time for our Spiritual exchanges.

4. Reflecting on the Spiritual theme: Each month our magazine " La Vie Montante", provides us

with a text taken from the Word of God, then a meditation related to that text and then some questions leading us to share and develop our thoughts on that spiritual subject.

(This year, (the Year of Mercy), the theme for the year was "Be Mer-

ciful like the Father". Our Spiritual Director, Mgr Raymond St-Gelais, took Gospel texts and developed ideas to guide us in our discussions.)

Marielle LORD

GROUP MEETINGS IN FRANCE

n our country, the groups meet each month to discuss a theme Loutlined in the "Annual Campaign Booklet". This is divided into chapters and each chapter is expected to last for two sessions, over two months. The first part encourages discussion about our lives in general and the second part invites members to analyse their attitudes and behaviour within the context of a Bible text (from the Old or the New Testament). Group meetings might also revolve around discussion of a subject in the news or an important event in the life of one of the members.

For the year 2016-2017 the theme is *"The New Man"*. (In 2015-2016 it was *"A New World, the Church in the World"*. The three chapters were entitled: "Man in Relationships, Man and the Environment, and Man and God's will.")

Members' experiences in Central France

Based on the chapter "Man in Relationships", we discussed in our **first meeting** our experiences in the most recent new relationships we had made

 the Internet: One member of our group corresponds with a group belonging to an Association in India. They hold regular conversations by means of Skype, using sound and pictures. A new brotherhood place has been created.

- Another area for relationships to grow: doing some voluntary work instead of continuing one's established patterns of activity; some relationships are lost, others are created.
- For many of us, new beginnings come in a relationship with the companion and "second family" of our own grown-up children: they constitute new opportunities and a break with tradition still hard to reconcile for some of us.

During the second meeting, a month later, (the second half of the chapter), we read the story of Joseph (Genesis 37). Only one of us, together with our Chaplain, knew this Bible account, so it was an important discovery. Everyone had something to say about the story: Jacob had a large family (and, the Chaplain reminded us, two wives, Leah and Rachel) but we were only concerned with Jacob, the father, and his sons; the father's preference for his youngest son, Joseph, who being rather precocious, caused his brothers to be jealous; Reuben the eldest, who saved Joseph's life in a violent family argument which could have led them to killing and lying.

What did the text teach us about ourselves? We all come from large families, except one of

us who is an only child. We considered the position of the eldest brother, who took on the responsibility for the others - which can sometimes lead to a certain coldness between siblings, but can also lead, as in the case of one of our members, to great affection between the eldest and the youngest. Another situation cited was when the family home was being sold up and a sister-in-law began to cause trouble, and the situation was only eased when the rest of the brothers and sisters agreed to waive some of their rights.

Relationships between brothers and sisters are important for us even when they aggravate us. Family relationships grow and get stronger over time; it's certainly true, and especially for parents, who learn more about their role in the family with each new arrival.

Several members decided to read the whole story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50).

When we pray the « Our Father » we are therefore praying within a brotherhood.

We finished by reading a religious text *"What have you done with your Brother?"*, and with a prayer.

Father Gabriel ROUILLET

BENIN

The Annual General Meeting of Vie Montante in BENIN, which took place on 28 July 2016 in the St Peter and Paul parish of Porto-Novo, was the highlight of the year for the Association.

It gave the departing National Committee the opportunity to tell the members what had been accomplished during their four years in office, from June 2012 to 28 July 2016.

A/ Activities

The groups had met regularly during their period in office, and their activities were undertaken in the spirit of the three pillars of the Movement, namely Spirituality, Friendship and Apostolate.

During the monthly meetings therefore, a period of time was always spent meditating on the Word of God, on examining the life of the Movement, and on reflecting on the Apostolic work accomplished through being active in the life of the Church.

Catechism, reading in Church, choir-singing, Church warden activities, participation of certain members either in the Parish Council, or in giving support to young people in Catholic schools.

B/ Diocesian Co-ordination

Diocesian Co-ordination means supervising the Vie Montante groups so as to help them to put into practice the decisions taken by the National Committee.

Working with the National Committee, the Diocesian Co-ordination Group works hard to start groups of Vie Montante in the parishes. As a result, during the period 2012 to 2016 the Movement has been set up in eight new parishes in the Archdiocese of Cotonou. As part of our Action Programme, the Movement decided to undertake the wide distribution of the document "Year of Mercy". Within this framework, they carried out the spiritual exercises and activities and members of the Movement made pilgrimages to the churches where a Holy Door had been opened.

At the end of the meeting, a new National Committee was elected.

Albert GRIMAUD

MAURITIUS

ur Bishop asked us to place our Movement under the protection of St Anne, Jesus' grandmother, and we decided to hold the event at Chamarel, in a chapel dedicated to St Anne, which turned out to be the highest in Mauritius.

Each month for the whole year, to prepare the members for the ceremony, we dedicated one page of the monthly bulletin to getting to know St Anne. We organized a time of spiritual preparation for the journey in the bus, and everything went off with quiet devotion and prayer; thus encouraging the participants and their friends to enter wholeheartedly into the Mass presided over by Mgr Piat, whom Pope Francis had recently made a Cardinal. Everyone present took part with great joy and we were soundly supported by the inhabitants of Chamarel.

The day finished with lunch all together and then we had sketches and songs prepared by all seven regions of the Island.

Marie-Noëlle LUCHMUN

LATIN AMERICA MEETING OF THE "SOUTHERN CONE" COUNTRIES

Regional Meetings are held every two years in Latin America, and last October it was the turn of the countries of the "Southern Cone".

With the title *"Mercy, Dialogue and Progress"*, a conference, hosted by Uruguay, with representatives from Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, was held in Montevideo from 17 to 19 October last.

Some participants knew each other already and others were delighted to meet for the first time, so the event took place in an atmosphere of brotherhood, unity and enthusiasm as we all joined forces in our efforts to help the senior members of our society.

The subjects chosen were varied : The Apostolic Exhortation *"Amoris Laetitia"* on family love; a brilliant presentation from Argentina, *"Laudato Si"*; a well-prepared exposé from Uruguay; plus the different talks on Grandparents and Communication, and the concern which exists to increase the number of members with practical experience of life and the world of work, as requested by the Pope, in order to improve the practice of the new evangelization.

We were told the story of the movement in Argentina and different countries shared their feelings and information about the particular work of Vida Ascendente.

These meetings are a real blessing because we all take part in them and they allow us to exchange our personal opinions, share our friendship and souvenirs through which we relive past experiences.

Cardinal Daniel Sturba, archbishop of Montevideo said Mass on the opening day. On the other days the Latin America Chaplain, Mgr Osvaldo Montferrand, concelebrated Mass with Father Esteban Diano, the Vida Ascendente Chaplain from Uruguay, and with Father Jorge Techera, part of the Social Work team which collaborates with Vida Ascendente.

We thank God that this meeting took place and we hope that the conclusions agreed upon will be able to help our Members serve God and our beloved Senior Citizens with greater love.

We shall shortly be publishing the magazine reporting on the meeting, including its projects and conclusions.

Goyita BOYD

VIE MONTANTE IN SPAIN

In June last year we held our Annual General Meeting in the presence of the VMI President, Maria Melo Antunes, and during which we said goodbye to Guillermo Aparicio, who had held office for eight years, and welcomed, with the approval of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, Alvaro Medina del Campo, the current President of the Diocesian Commission of Alcalá de Henares (near Madrid), who brings with him his dynamism and enthusiasm, and the energy of his years – for he is only sixty-six years of age.

During the past two years the Movement has been working on renovation and modernization, electing several new diocesian Presidents and encouraging active participation from groups and members of the dioceses.

We list below the broad outlines of the new President's programme :

- Respect for what has been done recently : renewing without ruining.
- Strengthening the Movement by instilling into it the spirit which has been born in the Diocesian Commissions, by asking questions and by getting involved. *What can I do personally for the Church and for Vie Montante?*
- Maintain, improve and enlarge our links with the Church hierarchy.
- Spread the Movement into all possible areas, (and for this reason a special group has been formed which will collaborate in the work with the dioceses).
- Work on the creation of a Pastoral Programme for the Elderly, to be organized and run by a new Advisor.

In this new stage full of hope and promise, we are confident of the Holy Spirit's participation as He blesses and guides our steps.

José María CASTAÑO

NEWLY-ELECTED PRESIDENTS

At the end of 2016 or on 1st January this year several movements have elected new Members into office.

Among them we are pleased to note :

- Belgium : Ms. Sylviane Sbille
- Spain : M. Alvero Medina del Campo
- Great Britain : M. Ross Roberts
- Switzerland : Ms. Josy Lambiel
- Australia : Ms. Margaret Smith

We extend our thanks to them for having accepted this mission of service to us all and we hope they will be able to bring all their projects to fruition and so encourage many new members to join us.

At the same time we sincerely thank the past Presidents for their tireless devotion and all the work they did during their term of office, in spite of frequently difficult circumstances.

LIFE ASCENDING INTERNATIONAL IN THE WORLD



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