



Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 17 - June 2013

18th November 2012: Seafield RSHM Extended Family Meeting

On Sunday, 18 November 2012, 27 members of the Extended Family of the RSHM joined the Sisters at Seafield for an afternoon of Reflection.

Guests of Honour were Esmerelda and Bekim, a newly-married Albanian couple who had escaped their homeland and arrived in Liverpool where they were in the process of applying to the Home Office for residency. Between them, Esmerelda and Bekim told us their harrowing story of how they had met and fallen in love. But since Esmerelda was a Muslim and Bekim was a Catholic, they had no chance of happiness in Albania. In fact, her life was under threat.

The second part of the afternoon's programme was a slide show following in the steps of Gailhac and connections were made between the work of our early Sisters and current needs in Liverpool today. Because the Group was so large, it was split into two and while one half listened to the Albanians, the other watched the slide show and vice versa.

Kath Nolan had attended the Provincial Chapter Meeting in Birmingham and reported back on how welcome she felt both there and at each of the Communities she visited.

Kath then led a Prayer and played a Reflective Hymn.

It was felt that having only one meeting a year was inadequate for sustaining the momentum of the Group. The next meeting was planned for 24th February 2013.

24th February 2013: Foundation Day Celebration at Lisburn

As our 24th Feb. Fell on Sunday this year we had to celebrate with our friends on Monday the 25th. Past pupils and staff joined with us in remembering and celebrating the Sacred Heart of Mary family.

A short history of the origins of the congregation with reference to the letter for the 24th Feb and to the Provincial and General Chapters. This was followed with the Emmaus story and its significance in relation to the S.H.M. story, the story of the church and the story of each one of us. There were some happy exchanges on the Emmaus story and connections to similar scripture passages. It was all done in a cordial and open engagement.

One person gave a very interesting and informative sharing on her visit to Brazil about 30 years ago when Sr Mary Mullins was there. She spoke very warmly about the great work being done there in such deprived conditions, and what a culture shock it was for her to have experienced it first hand.

She had travelled round the area with the sisters and to say she was impressed would be an understatement.

Then came the festive afternoon tea which was heartily enjoyed over much reminiscing and chat...



24th February 2013: Seafield RSHM Foundation Day Celebration

On Sunday, 24 February 2013, the 164th Anniversary of the Founding of the RSHM Order, 24 members of the Extended Family accepted the invitation of the Sisters at Seafield to a celebration and reflection on the theme of “Another Door Opens”.

Sister Eleanor Dalton hosted the afternoon and first invited Esmerelda to update us on the progress of her and her husband Bekim’s application to the Home Office. After 2 Court hearings, Esmerelda and Bekim received temporary residency in the UK for 3 years which gave them great joy. However, the Home Office contested it and there was another Court hearing in April, the outcome of which was not clear. Sister Eleanor then introduced Sister Pierre as our Guest Speaker. Sister Pierre led the reflection on the Founding Community by narrating the sequence of events leading up to the founding of the Order in 1849 and a number of Extended Family members present were invited to describe the lives and aspirations of some of the young women immediately prior to their joining it. These ladies were Rosalie, Cecile, Eulalie and Appolonie. Sister Anne Wells, in the role of Appolonie, then asked each lady to tell us how their experience had affected them.

A reflection on the theme of “Doors” was led by Kath Nolan who distributed sheets showing clip art pictures of doors.

Some showed a welcome sign or happy smiling faces answering, whilst others had “private, no entry” or “do not disturb” signs. Could this be the image you give when you open a door (relate) to someone?

Doors can lead us to exciting new challenges, but do we have the courage (faith) to go through and take the opportunities on offer?

Have we experienced the cliché “when one door closes another one opens”.

Some doors contained artistic panels and looked modern whilst others appeared solid, austere and quite traditional. Do you recognise yourself?

A quiet reflection time was given for everyone to look at the pictures and try to relate them to their own experiences. Following this a lively discussion ensued when many different interpretations were given.

A request was made for continued donations of clothes for MRANG and the Charity Shop and those who had so generously responded already were thanked.

The afternoon concluded with Prayers, after which we all enjoyed the hospitality and refreshments provided by the Sisters.

7 March, 2013: Extended Family Group, Ealing, London.

Our seventh Extended Family gathering was held at the Park, Ealing, on 7 March, 2013. As usual, we began with the lighting of our Extended Family Candle and singing ‘You are the Fire’.

As pre-arranged, we divided into two groups, in order to share our favourite quotations from Scripture. This prayerful start to the evening was followed by a question raised at the previous meeting: “What do the Sisters do now?” The RSHM present, Carmel, Andre, Margot, Mary Jo and Aline, spoke about their present ministries, which was followed by a pictorial display, with commentary of fourteen different ministries of our Sisters from around the Province. This inspiring display, of many and varied ministries portrayed so strongly the way we now live out: ‘That ALL may have LIFE’.

At the close of the meeting the group was very interested to hear about our forthcoming General Chapter, in Brazil. We then prayed the General Chapter Prayer, (taken from the West American Prayer for the General Chapter). The group promised to say this prayer, daily for the success of the General Chapter.

Love and greetings from us all in Ealing.
Aline

24th April. 2013: Letter from Sister Cécile Pommier RCSM, Somain, France

I have been struck by the content of the EF Newsletter and it has given me ideas...

We will still be living here in a small community of just two sisters at Somain for a few months yet. Somain is a commune in the Nord département, not far from the megacity of Lille.

Our community project is constantly growing in our circle in an atmosphere, indeed a life of strong fraternal relationships with families, with the people of our area, our parish and beyond. Links and exchanges are strong.

Reading the bulletin has given me ideas! Just as well, since next year there is the chance that I may remain more or less “alone” for a long time and it would be good to take a step – though for me this would be a first and a big step – towards living more intensively in communication with the Extended Family structure. In the newsletter’s articles and photos I have discovered themes common to those that we share with those close to us.

Time to start thinking...
Soeur Cécile Pommier

24th & 25th May 2013: RSHM and SHM Extended Family On a Journey

A meeting of the Extended Family Core Group took place on 24th, 25th May in St Gabriel’s Convent, Carlisle where the sisters welcomed Kath Nolan from Liverpool, Sr. Aline Leonard from Ealing, West London, Sr Kathleen O’Donovan from Upminster, East London, and Peter and Eileen Silvester from Carlisle. Sisters Moira Lever and Catherine Dolan from Carlisle community completed the Group.

Core Group 2013



Sr Moira Lever, Kath Nolan, Eileen Silvester, Peter Silvester, Sr Kathleen O’ Donovan,
Sr Catherine Dolan, Sr Aline Leonard.

Our meeting, as always, started with an extended period of prayer and reflection. (See *Scripture Reflection*)

A major part of our meeting was preparation for the fourth Extended Family Gathering in Noddfa, Penmaenmawr which this year will take place the weekend of 25-27 October. Once again it will be a weekend of reflection when participants can reflect on RSHM charism and history leading in the journey to present day mission and ministries with emphasis on action for evangelical justice. As our RSHM Mission Statement puts it:

The challenge of the gospel and the spirit of faith and zeal which marked our founders, Jean Gailhac and Mère St. Jean and our Founding Sisters, urge us to respond to the needs of our time and to work with others in action for evangelical justice.

(More information will be available about this Gathering at a later date.)

We also shared on two other extremely important meetings:



The RSHM General Chapter is to take place in Brazil from 6th to 27th June. This chapter happens every six years and sisters from all the countries in which we serve participate as elected members, in order to evaluate our life and mission as an Institute and give direction for our journey of the next six years. The General Council is elected at this meeting. For the past year all the sisters in the Institute have been involved in preparing the chapter through prayer and consultation. The theme for this chapter is *On the Road to Emmaus*.

The second part of the RSHM Northern European Provincial Chapter is taking place from 11th to 13th October in Birmingham. This is a time for the province to take up the commitments from the General Chapter and integrate them into the journey of the province for the next six years. The theme for the provincial chapter is "*Hearts burning within us as we journey*" and the EF Core Group has taken the same theme for the Extended Family Gathering.



We ask the prayers of the Extended Family for both these meetings that the Spirit may be present and active through the work the sisters will be doing together in order that all may have life.

Reflection

A prayer which Peter Silvester used to begin our day's work on Saturday is very apt for all of us: "*It is time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain salvation upon you.*" Hosea 10:12

"I would like to do it, but I am too busy." "Busyness" seems to be one of the besetting sins of our time. While a few find time hangs heavy, most of us rush from place to place in a mad way. In our hearts we know it is not good for us, yet it is hard to stop. And where in all the rush do we find God? If we dare to make time for God, choosing to set aside a few of our precious minutes for him, he will honour our trust. If the demands made on us are really so great that we cannot stop, he will understand that too, and meet us in the middle of the crisis." (*Patience Purchas*)

I reflect: How much of my "busyness" is self generated?

Scripture Reflection

For our recent Core Group meeting, we were invited to bring along a favourite scripture reading which we could read to the group and explain what it means to us. The important point is that the reading and explanation is conducted without interruption and that between input from each person there is a short quiet time for personal reflection. It is only when all the readings have been completed that the group has an open discussion to express their own views about the scriptures chosen and the reflections given.

The readings we chose were:

- Jesus walks on water. Matt.14:22-33 (2 people)
- Feeding the 5,000. Luke 9:10-17
- Jesus is found in the Temple Luke 2:41-50
- Cure of the woman with a haemorrhage. Mark 5:25-34
- Many rooms in my house. John 14:1-7
- Bartimaus Mark 10:46-52

Certain phrases from these readings stood out:

- “Who touched me?”
- “Your faith has saved you”
- “Courage”
- “But they did not understand”

You may wish to look at these readings or choose your own.
We all found the experience very inspirational and hope you do also.

Best wishes
Kath Nolan

Could you contribute an item to the newsletter? Photos and articles – no matter how short – are always welcome and will be held for the next available newsletter. Don’t delay - exercise your literary talents now!

Electronic copy by email or as an attachment is preferable as are digital photos - but handwritten copy and prints are welcome too. See below for the email and postal addresses.

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