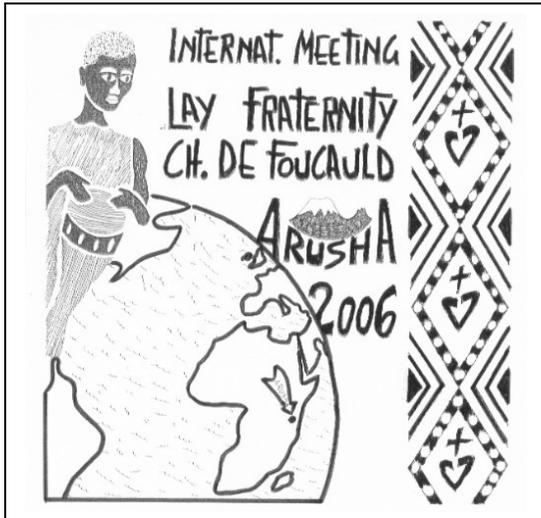


**LAY FRATERNITIES  
OF  
CHARLES DE FOUCAULD**

**INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN - 75**

**May 2006**



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## Editorial

### **Veni Creator Spiritus - Come Holy Spirit, Creator, Come among us!**

This is the great Prayer on and for Pentecost. For us it is the great and shining prayer for the International Assembly in Arusha this summer, 20-30<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

COME HOLY SPIRIT, creator, come  
from your bright heavenly throne,  
come take possession of our souls  
and make them all your own  
You who are called Paraclete  
blest gift of God above,  
the living spring, the living fire,  
sweet unction and true love.  
You who are sevenfold in your grace,  
finger of God's right hand;  
his promise, teaching little ones  
to speak and understand.  
O guide our minds with your blest light,  
with love our hearts inflame;  
and with strength, which never decays,  
confirm our mortal frame.  
Far from us drive our deadly foe;  
true peace unto us bring;  
and through all perils, lead us safe  
beneath your sacred wing.  
Through you may we the Father know;  
through you the eternal Son,  
and you the Spirit of them both,  
thrice-blessed Three in One.

All glory to the Father be,  
with his co-equal Son:  
the same to you great Paraclete,  
While endless ages run. Amen.

Jesus insisted that we must pray to the Holy Spirit. The young church came together to say this prayer (Acts 1, 4-14). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We must dare to say this prayer for all the delegates and for each one in particular.

Since he first came on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts and has been dispersed all over the world. The question is: are we ready to accept him? How much do we accept, and what part do we let go by? Can the Spirit ignite us like a fiery tongue, can he let us catch fire, can he, with his fiery tongue, make our tongues speak and witness? Are we prepared to not confound his working with other things? Can we see the difference between Jesus' Spirit and simple enthusiasm or some intoxication?

The Spirit wants to penetrate us, to determine and lead us, from the outside as well as from the inside. That is why Bro. Charles propose to us to say the "Veni Creator" three times a day, at the turning points of the day: in the morning when the day breaks, at noon at the highest point and apex of the sun, and in the evening at the end of a (hopefully good) day. Thereby all will be penetrated, transformed and determined by God's Spirit.

God's Spirit cuts in the heart: what touches us in our inner self is also God's Spirit at work. He wakes in us the question: "Brothers, what shall we do?" (cfr. Acts 2,37). Bro. Charles was convinced that he was an instrument connected to God by prayer: "to connect ourselves to God and to let us be guided by God's hand, is more effective than anything that we can achieve between humans only." The prayer for the Creator Spirit guides us, transforms us and makes us prepared. It is one of the most effective means to let ourselves be guided by God's hand and to recognise this guidance.

The fathers of the Council and the early Councils had their own prayer for this:

***We have come, O God the Holy Spirit, we have come before Thee, hampered indeed by our many and grievous sins, but for a special purpose gathered together in Thy name. Come to us and be with us and enter our hearts. Teach us what we are to do and where we ought to tend: show us what we must accomplish, in order that, with Thy help, we may be able to please Thee in all things. Be Thou alone the author and the finisher of our judgments, Thou who alone with God the Father and his Son dost possess a glorious name.***

Do not allow us to disturb the order of justice, Thou who lovest equity above all things. Let not ignorance draw us into devious paths. Let not partiality sway our minds, nor respect of neither riches, nor persons pervert our judgment. But unite us to Thee effectually by the gift of Thy grace alone, that we may be one in Thee and never forsake the truth; inasmuch as we are gathered together in Thy name, so may we in all things hold fast to justice tempered by mercy, so that in this life our judgment may in no wise be at variance with Thee and in the life to come we may attain everlasting rewards for deeds well done. Amen.

With the prayer for the Creator Spirit we can accompany and support our delegates. All of us can do that, even when we are not personally present in Arusha. We can be mentally there and we can help to support the international assembly. We can make ourselves ready to receive and accept its results and suggestions.

We can make ourselves ready to put our trust in God, to put ourselves into His hands, and to trust ourselves to His guidance, like it is stated in the prayer of abandonment.

The prayer of abandonment is made complete and concrete in the prayer to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source and the fire of love, from which we can live the prayer of abandonment. The Spirit

teaches us what pleases God. He leads us always deeper into truth. That is exactly what should happen in Arusha and in our daily life. He helps us to discover, in a new and deeper way, what we actually know and suspect already, but for which we may not be ready yet and which we do not yet put into practice. Precisely that is what the international meeting wants to achieve. To discover, in a new and deeper way, what we have discovered already from the beginning and what we want to live: how Bro. Charles is a prophet for our time, how he discovers and uses wealth and poverty as a way to make peace happen, how he accepts, recognises and answers to the challenges of his time and his life. And to do it ourselves - even better...

Wherever we pray, we can only pray in the Holy Spirit. When we pray the "Our father", we can only do it in the Spirit. When we pray the prayer of abandonment, we can only say it honestly in love, in the Spirit of God. Whenever we want to be really connected and in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, we are most effective in love, in God's Spirit.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit three times a day (like taking a medicine), so that we are connected with the Father, in God's Spirit, with our brothers and sisters, with the delegates in Arusha, and with the creative power of love, into which God wants to lead his creation to completion, through us and with us. In that variety of his gifts, fruits that we get for free, the Holy Spirit creates unity together with us.

Charles de Foucauld did not search for any other spirit than the Holy Spirit. He searched love, for himself and for all whom he wanted to be his brothers and sisters. He learned it in the Holy Spirit, in God's love for the people. That is the Spirit he prayed to three times a day!

*Josef Freitag*

<p><b>Beatification of Brother Charles 12 – 14 November 2005</b></p>
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Initially it was foreseen to issue a special edition with the texts of the Beatification of Brother Charles. But in order to avoid excess cost and to facilitate the distribution of what is needed for Arusha I have decided to include all the texts in this International Bulletin.

*Marianne*

**Vigil at the Trappist monastery of Tre Fontane (12.11.2005)**

**Welcome Address by Father Jacques Brière,  
Abbott of the Trappist Monastery.**

Welcome to you all, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Welcome to our friends from Algeria,  
Welcome to the members of Brother Charles's biological family,  
Welcome to all of you who have come from afar.

The links between the spiritual families of the little sisters and little brothers and our Trappist monasteries are so numerous and so deep, that it is a joy and an honour to welcome you in the Abbey Church of Tre Fontane.

Today, we are celebrating a solemn ceremony, and a splendid one too: tomorrow, Brother Charles of Jesus, the hermit of the desert, one of the most revered spiritual figures of the XX<sup>o</sup> century will be proclaimed "blessed". In him, we celebrate the power of God's grace. To quote Saint Paul's phrase, in the first part of his life, he was "a vessel of anger", doomed for perdition, but he was brought back from perdition to become a vessel of mercy, Christ's temple, a universal brother, to become one of these living stones from which the church is being built. Thus, carried by God's grace, persevering through struggles and trials, he learned to defeat hostile forces in order to testify that God wants all mankind to be saved.

If this celebration takes place to-day on the spot where we commemorate the martyrdom of Saint Paul, the apostle of nations, it

also takes place in Heaven, for there will always be great joy among God's angels when one sinner repents.

Let us then share in the joy of God's angels, let us share in God's own joy, and celebrate this vigil with a heart full of praise.

**Giovanni Pulici:**

*The story of my encounter with the great man who entered my life, and left a permanent imprint on it.*

It was in the Fifties, more precisely in May 1953. Towards the end of the month, I was participating in spiritual exercises given by the Jesuits. The preacher mentioned Charles de Foucauld, who was unknown to me at the time, and referred to him as “the saint, who was saintly but not canonized yet”. All at once, a question arose, deep in my heart:” Who knows, maybe I’ll see him on our altars before I die?”

A few years later, in December, before Christmas, I saw a display of gift books in a store near the Basilica of my hometown. My attention was drawn to one of them – a booklet with the portrait of a saint on its cover. I stopped, as this face seemed to call me. I read the name of the man: it was him again –Charles de Foucauld. I decided to buy the book. Coming home, I started to read the biography of Charles de Foucauld, the man fascinated me. I got to know him more thoroughly, until he became my friend.

Time went by. In the 80ies, more precisely on June 15, 1981, my wife had an operation for breast cancer. The surgery and its aftermath were all right, but at the end of 1983 my wife complained of acute pain in her chest. Our doctor examined her thoroughly, and, as he found nothing, requested X-rays. Then came the shock: the X-rays revealed multiple fractures in her ribs, which were not due to a fall or a trauma, but to mere sneezing or coughing. According to the doctors, cancer had attacked her bones. More X-rays and bone scintigraphies confirmed the seriousness of her case.

The 1984 Carnival season appeared critical. Medical science did not know what to do. Then, being a devout follower of Charles de

Foucauld, I prayed to him in this time of distress, in my local dialect, and begged him to grant that my wife be cured, for the sake of my daughter who was only 4. How could I cope without her?

From the depth of my heart came this simple prayer, and Charles listened to me:

*(Giovanni spoke the following words in the dialect of the Milan area)*

Charles, who is a Frenchman and understand my local dialect, please grant me this request:

Save Giovanna, think of my daughter. How could I cope without her?

Please, please, Charles, help me!

A few days later, the pain diminished. X-ray checks showed the fracture process had stopped, and the existing ones were healing. Life continued, and in my heart, gratefulness to Charles de Foucauld increased.

Then came the 2000 Jubilee. I went to Rome with friends and family members, to take part in the closing days of the Holy Year. On the Plaza Saint Ignatius, I came upon a group of little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, and asked them when he would be beatified. They answered that what was missing in the beatification case was a miracle. Then, I exclaimed, "I have the miracle"! We exchanged addresses and from that time onwards we met more frequently, and began to collect all the documents that testify to the veracity of the facts.

By March 2003, the inquest for the diocesan case was closed with a favourable outcome and finally, June 24 2004, the Commission for Beatification Cases recognized the miracle attributed to the intercession of Charles de Foucauld, God's servant, who will join the multitude of the Blessed tomorrow.

## **Rania Boussaid's Testimony**

I had heard about Charles de Foucauld on several occasions, and yet his name did not impress me, and I was not curious to know who he was. I had even copied a text in Arabic by someone who said he was a spy that the Tuaregs had condemned and killed. And then one

day, I was offered a job in a place called “Charles de Foucauld’s Bordj”.

To make my presence worthwhile, I had to seek a lot of information on the place, on why and how it had been built, and who had built it. I read a couple of books, without understanding much. At the same time, his story was related in front of me on several occasions. What impressed me most was the little light in the eyes of the person who spoke, as if he could see from within what others did not see, and was always happy and eager to share it, never bored or tired to tell the same story over and over.

Then, I began to want to know better who this Charles was – not only to do my job better, but also to discover the secret of this man with whom I somehow spent most of my time. It did not take long for me to get an answer: what attracted me was simplicity, his way of loving and living.

I frequently heard the impressions and comments of the visitors; I was a witness to their discussions, and received their questions. They came from different countries, different cultures, social backgrounds, age groups, and were from every origin, every colour. I was surprised by what was being said around me. They were all trying to understand how the man managed to live and fit into this isolated corner of the Sahara. I heard people voice opposite opinions, but all of them respected and admired Charles.

Some visitors asked me what I was doing in this place. Was I studying, was it for the sake of Charles, was it just a job for me? I answered their questions, but certainly with some reluctance. They forced me to clarify my ideas and understand what had happened deep within me. How mysterious all these events and encounters were! I am still wondering whether I was not above all trying to understand myself rather than the questions of the visitors.

I have realized that I owe a great deal to this man, because I got a job thanks to him –which is not just a job, but an opportunity for me to know people from such a variety of cultures and religions. I was really happy to discover the unique riches that each person harbours. But it was not easy for me, for I was very much afraid of losing my own identity and my roots. I thought I was at a crossroads. But I

think now that I was wrong, for the crossroads was more of a meeting point, and a gathering place.

I remembered a little of what I had read about Charles, and doing this, I felt as if he was talking to me, telling me that he himself had often found himself at a crossroads at different moments in his life, and I saw what he had done to get out of such situations.

It is almost two years now since I have discovered through the study of Charles de Foucauld what is rich and unique in me, without losing my identity or my roots, or anything else. On the contrary, I have managed to understand many things that help me today to follow my own path, confidently and fearlessly.

He was wont to repeat that change and renewal must begin within us. We must transform ourselves from the inside before we can presume to change anything in the reality of the world. Our dreams must come true, instead of remaining mere fantasies in our minds. They who have acted righteously do not disappear. They live forever.

Rania Boussaid, born in Tamanrasset in 1978, has been hosting tourists in Charles de Foucauld's Bordj for the past three years.

### **Dinner at Villa Bonaparte**

**Speech given by M.Pascal Clément Justice Minister and Keeper of the Seals.**

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Monsignors  
Mr Counsellor to the President of the Algerian Republic  
Reverend Fathers, Reverend Mothers  
Little Brothers and Little Sisters  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly happy and honoured to welcome you tonight in the French Embassy to the Holy See, and to represent the French authorities tomorrow, with Madame de Villepin, on the occasion of Charles de Foucauld's beatification.

First of all, I want to congratulate His Eminence Cardinal Roger Etchegaray for his recent promotion to the dignity of Vice-Dean of the Sacred College –which is a tribute to his great charisma.

To evoke an exceptional figure whose life took shape gradually through an irrevocable choice of the desert, of a hidden life, and service to the poorest, it is fitting to speak soberly and to measure one's words.

And yet, how could one fail to evoke the main stages of this extraordinary life, which fascinated his disbelieving contemporaries and upset his military and then his religious superiors?

It is an extraordinary life, for sure. And above all, there is to it something we do not understand fully, even today, even though we are better able now to perceive that Charles de Foucauld was building up a different order, which appeals to believers of course, but also to all men of good will.

Your presence here tonight is an epitome of the various stages of his life. Let me salute the members of a large and numerous family, the delegates of the Saint-Cyr Military Academy, which produced this untypical, courageous, and finally exemplary officer, who became an explorer with a fascination for Morocco.

Thank you, Mgr Vincent Landel, the Archbishop of Rabat, and president of the Episcopal Conference of the Maghreb, for being with us tonight. Charles de Foucauld experienced conversion in Saint-Augustine's church in Paris, and I am happy to welcome Mgr André Vingt-Trois, the Archbishop of Paris, as well as the priest of that parish.

I welcome the Abbots of the Trappist monasteries in Notre-Dame des Neiges and Tre Fontane, who remind us of the Trappist monasteries in the Ardèche, in Akbes (Syria) and Staoueli in Algeria. The presence of Mgr François Blondel, the Bishop of Viviers reminds us of the ordination ceremony June 9, 1901, which concluded the 4 years in Nazareth and inaugurated the 15 years in Algeria.

I am happy to welcome Mgr Claude Rault, the Bishop of Laghouat, the diocese in which Tamanrasset, as well as Charles de Foucauld's first hermitage in Beni Abbes are situated, and also Mgr Alphonse Georger, the Bishop of Oran.

I also salute M. Abdel Kader Djeghoul, Adviser to President Bouteflika, who came from Algiers to head his country's official delegation.

But Charles de Foucauld's prestige also resides in his spiritual following, which, in accordance to his intuitions, is forever in a stage of foundation rather than mere renewal.

In truth, there is no better testimony to the richness and fecundity of his work than the presence here tonight of the heads of the 19 branches of his communities - a spiritual family of some 15000 members, present on every continent, in over 90 countries. Everywhere, but especially in developing and sometimes warring countries, these "buried" communities (as Charles de Foucauld himself was) bear witness, engage in dialogue, and bring help.

Allow me to select one word in the great lesson in life that Charles de Foucauld gives us even today – that of *fraternity*, "written on our walls", as he used to recall, when he was fighting against the remaining traces of slavery in Northern Africa.

We know of his beautiful desire to be a "universal brother" – not as an absolute model, of course, but as a brother to any man - without any conditions, categories, or exceptions – that is, a brother to the weakest, the most abandoned, the most forsaken.

Three stages along this great path to brotherhood attract our attention: the thorough study, then the passionate discovery, and finally the actual encounter of the other. When he wrote "A journey to Morocco" this very modern nomad inaugurated a prospect that he would never abandon: proceeding from the territory to the souls, so to speak, keeping in mind the need to get a thorough insight into one's subject.

Thirty years later, he was still engrossed in his "tamachek job", that is the study of the Tuareg language. For years, he devoted ten hours of work everyday, in precarious conditions, to what other scholars looked upon as "a berbere dialect spoken by a few hundred people". Ultimately, he was to lose his life for this, in complete anonymity.

Along this path, which was to lead him far beyond mere exploration, philology and ethnology, the discovery of Islam was to play a fundamental role.

The same year he was ordained as a priest, he declared bluntly: “Islam created a profound upheaval in me...The sight of such faith, of these souls living in the continuous presence of God made me discover something greater and more authentic than mundane occupations: *ad majora nati sumus*”.

To encounter the other is not a danger but a gift, an opportunity, a call to better inhabit one’s own tradition. We need not emphasize how relevant this initial experience of his is for our time.

We see here how the ceaseless study of the other which prevails in Charles de Foucauld’s “buried life” stems from an initial gesture of respect, which makes it possible to avoid the pitfalls of intolerance on which hatred grows. Yes, a simple gesture of sincere, wholehearted basic respect helps us overcome the barriers of distrust, contempt and rejection of the other if only we decide to make it sincerely and tirelessly. Far from giving way to complacency, resignation or caricature, it consists in remaining true to one’s self while truly listening to the other.

I am well aware of the spiritual dimension attached to this attitude for believers who follow Charles de Foucauld. But I also, want to say that there is no better way to be a citizen of one’s country in to-day’s troubled world.

For years, the President of our Republic, Jacques Chirac, has been inviting all countries to contribute to the preservation of the cultures of the world, and we rejoice with the Holy See that the UNESCO adopted the convention on Cultural Diversity two weeks ago. It is also in this spirit that my colleague Philippe Douste Blazy, the Foreign Minister met the imam of the Al Azhar mosque, Cheikh Mohamed Tantaoui two weeks ago.

The Holy See had shown the way long ago, with the second Vatican Council. Pope Paul VI, then Pope John Paul II whose memory is still very vivid in France as well as here in Rome both recognized in Charles de Foucauld a peerless promoter of a dialogue between peoples and traditions that is becoming more and more vital.

I also want to pay tribute to the patient and discreet work that the Church in France carries out on a daily basis. Day after day, we understand how urgent it is to forestall the danger of a clash between religions and civilisations that would in fact result from mutual ignorance.

At the close of his life, centurion Charles de Foucauld became a hermit. Far from going astray in the desert, he achieved self-fulfilment there.

In a twist of fate that can often be found in the lives of great men, he who had been such a seeker - became the one many people sought: believers and non-believers, Christians, Muslims, Tuaregs, haratins, soldiers, scholars. Let's listen to Lyautey, who visited him in 1906 and thus became the first link between de Foucauld and Louis Massignon: "A mere hut and a hermitage...and yet I never heard mass celebrated the way Father de Foucauld celebrated it. I thought I was in the Thebaïde. It was one of the strongest experiences in my life". And how could we fail to mention Jacques Maritain, the French Ambassador to the Holy See, appointed by General de Gaulle in 1944, who helped France settle in this Villa Bonaparte, and lived his last years in Toulouse, after the death of his wife Raïssa, as a Little Brother of Charles de Foucauld?

Your Eminences,  
Your Excellencies,

A century later, our outlook is different, and yet how radically new and astonishing Charles de Foucauld's work remains! It has a human richness to it which keeps finding new illustrations.

The initial intuition, the inner fire found their full development in the most ordinary aspects of life: let us not confine ourselves to the highest services, he used to say; let us have this delicate tenderness that shows in small things and invents the little gestures that will soothe the heart so well. This slow dispossession of oneself can still be understood in different ways today, and we can thus appreciate how apt Jean Guitton's instant depiction of Charles de Foucauld as "a man who never stopped being born" was.

As we raise our glasses in a few minutes in homage, and express our joy and communion in anticipation of to-morrow's ceremony, which will culminate in Pope Benedict XVI's gesture of veneration, let each of us simply listen, for himself, to the voice of the Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

**Speech given by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray President  
Emeritus of the "Justice and Peace"  
and "Cor Unum" Pontifical Councils  
Vice –Dean of the College of Cardinals.**

In the gamut of beatifications the Church has played profusely, especially since Pope John Paul II, the note you have just struck so justly and so fairly, to honour Charles de Foucauld, is certainly a typically though not exclusively French one.

And I can imagine how proud you –Mr Ambassador Pierre Morel and Ms Olga Morel– must be to play for us tonight a most beautiful swan song, judging from the quality and exceptional number of the guests you have gathered in this Villa Bonaparte, which strives to make our lay Republic extend hospitality to the saints of France.

Actually, and Mgr Bouvier will agree, the length of the beatification trial (almost 80 years) for a cause which speaks for itself in its evangelical purity, shows how difficult it has been to dissociate the Army from the Church in colonial times, when civilisation and evangelisation proceeded apace. Today, the new "blessed" proves one can be at once a good Frenchman and a true "universal brother". I know of an essay by a journalist and scholar, Marcel Clement that asked whether nations –including ours– have a place in the universal symphony. His book, which he gave me ten years ago, is dedicated to his daughter "France, named after the mother country", and to his son "Pascal, named after the Resurrection".

Like many people in my generation, it was René Bazin's book – published in 1921 and aptly republished with a preface by his fellow

Angevin Cardinal Poupard- that made me discover as a young man the character he introduces in a somewhat reductive way as “an explorer in Morocco, a hermit in the Sahara”. This biography generated the first disciples, all of them lay people. In the course of time, secular, sacerdotal, and religious fraternities were born, from the spirit rather than from the will of Brother Charles, whose sole following at his death was a pious union with 48 members, only one of whom had paid his dues.

There has been much talk of the many foundations of this “non-founder” of a posterity which, as you put it, Mr Minister, is perpetually in the foundation stage. It has also been claimed that it was fortunate Charles de Foucauld never founded anything, leaving it to successive generations to discover the many facets of a life that was essentially nomadic, spiritually as well as physically, that drew a puzzling, hesitant, meandering curve in search of God’s will, through an enormous mass of spiritual writings (17 volumes) and thousands of letters addressed to all kinds of correspondents: to Father Huvelin- the Parisian priest who looked like the vicar of Ars -who received his confession when he converted, to his cousin, Madame de Bondy, to his sister, Madame de Blic – three of whose grandchildren were fellow-students of mine at Santa Chiara ( Paul is among us to-night). It can nevertheless be asserted that in his spiritual progeny – variegated as it is- there is a common core that allows us to recognize in de Foucauld a “founding father” with three essential characteristics: the imitation of Jesus in his life at Nazareth, the centrality of the Eucharist and Eucharistic worship, and the primacy given to missionary work –whatever its style- throughout the world.

As for me, though I never sat on a branch of Foucauld’s great tree, and never even visited the famous places called Beni-Abbes, Tamanrasset, and higher up, the Assekrem, I have always felt like a younger brother of the great Brother Charles, and I tried to get close to some of his greatest disciples: Father Albert Peyriguère, whom I met in Pau (he was born near Lourdes) and who instilled in me a desire to visit the hermitage at El Kbab (in the Moroccan Middle

Atlas) where Michel Lafon (who is with us to-night) had taken over from him after his death, Father René Voillaume, whose home port (but that is a bit excessive) was Marseille, where I began as a Bishop, deeply influenced by his book “*Au coeur des masses*”; little sister Magdeleine, whom I met frequently as a seminary student in Rome; Louis Massignon, whom Brother Charles had selected as his first heir, and whose famous lecture “A whole life with a brother gone to the desert” I heard in the Sorbonne in 1959; and the many encounters with Mgr Guy Riobé (in Orleans) and Mgr Charles de Provençères (at Le Tubet, in Aix)- two very different bishops who shared the same passion for De Foucauld. And how could I forget Ali Merad, the Muslim scholar who gave such a candid yet warm account of de Foucauld’s mystical adventure from the perspective of Islam. The word “dialogue” was not much used at the time, but with him, in the desert, Abraham’s tent of hospitality – that no dictionary could define in its human and divine dimensions- was always raised.

Time is short, so I shall say no more. Let me just pause to quote Cardinal Ratzinger (a fashionable thing). In a booklet dedicated to his companions for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, in an evocation of Brother Marie-Albéric, he mentions Jesus in Nazareth: “ This is the only possible place for the church to start from, if it is to make a new beginning and recover. It will never be able to provide a true answer to the revolt of our times against the power of wealth if it fails to live the true life of Nazareth in its own bosom”. But over and above everything else, including poverty, in accordance with Paul’s hymn to the Corinthians, Charles de Foucauld designates to us the ultimate reality: charity, the “agape” represented by a blood-colored heart surmounted with the cross he had so often drawn, engraved, and sewn onto his gandura.

Please excuse me for drifting –though it was not off course- into a kind of meditation. How could it be otherwise with Brother Charles de Jesus- even for a mere toast?

To-night, he will be happy to see this glass of champagne (he probably did not raise one very often after his conversion) bubbling up to Heaven where he is, to the health of France and those in charge of her destiny and calling, whom you represent with your delegation:

the President, Jacques Chirac, and the head of the Government, and I shall ask you, Madame Marie-Laure de Villepin, to relay to your husband, especially in these days, the lesson and the example that Charles de Foucauld gave us: yes, every French man is called upon to be a “universal brother”.

## **Celebration at Saint Peter’s Basilica (13.11.2005)**

### **Cardinal José Saraiva Martins’ Homily.**

*Sunday morning, Nov. 13.2005, in Saint Peter’s Basilica, Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, Prefect of the Congregation for Beatification Cases, representing the Holy Father, presided over the beatification rites for Charles de Foucauld, Maria Pia Mastena and Maria Crocifissa Curcio. At the end of the celebration, Pope Benedict XVI proceeded to the Basilica, where he censed and venerated the relics of the new Blessed on the Altar of Confession, before granting the Apostolic Benediction. The homily given by Cardinal Saraiva Martins can be found below.*

Today is the 33d Sunday of the ordinary time, and the penultimate one in the liturgical year, which is coming to a close. The end of a year always invites us to ponder on the mystery of the passing of time, of its inexorable flight, of the end of our lives.

In this respect, the Word of God for today raises a concrete question: how should we live this expectation of Christ’s second coming? Jesus himself offers an answer, through the Parable of the talents that we just heard. It has an immediate consequence: we should engage all we are and all we have in the service of Christ and of our neighbours, and in a word transmute them into charity.

In that sense, there is an extraordinary truth to the assertion that we shall only bring to the Lord what we have given, and not what we have accumulated, because what we give is invested in the bank of love. This is why Jesus praises the two men who have been able to

multiply the talents they have received; that is exactly what the saints have done, following the divine logic of love, and total oblation. This is precisely what truly unites and distinguishes at the same time the splendid figures of the three new Blessed ones: Charles de Foucauld, Maria Pia Mastena and Maria Crocifissa Curcio.

As he meditated in front of the Child Christ in the Christmas season of 1897-1898, over the passage from Matthew's gospel that was proclaimed this Sunday, Charles de Foucauld focussed on the duty of the man who has received talents to multiply them:” *We shall have to give accounts for all we have received. And since I received so much, I shall have to account for much. If I have received more than most men, conversion, a religious calling, the Trappe, life as an hermit, Nazareth, daily communion, and so many other blessings, much shall be demanded from me.*”

Charles de Foucauld's beatification confirms it: under the guidance of God's spirit, he was able to use and multiply the numerous talents he had received, and in perfect docility to divine inspiration, he followed a truly evangelical path along which he attracted thousands of disciples.

Pope Benedict XVI reminded us recently that “we can encapsulate our faith in the words: Jesus Caritas, Jesus Love”- the very words Charles de Foucauld had chosen as a motto to express his spirituality.

Charles de Foucauld's adventurous and fascinating life testifies to the truth of the Holy Pontiff's words: it is indeed easy to discover a kind of connecting thread that runs through Brother Charles's life, in all its changes and evolutions, as Father Huvelin wrote to the Father Abbott of Solesmes in 1889: “ he turned religion into love”.

Charles himself revealed what he called “the secret of (his) life” to a high school friend who had remained agnostic in these words: “*imitation and love are inseparable...I lost my heart to this Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified 1900 years ago, and I spend my life trying to imitate him as far as my weakness permits.*”

In his correspondence to Louis Massignon, we can analyze the liberty Charles had acquired in his apprenticeship of love” *Love of God, love of our neighbours...This is what religion is all about...*

*How do we achieve this? Certainly not overnight, since this is the height of perfection: it is the goal we should always strive to attain, which we must try to get closer and closer to, and that we shall only reach once we get to Heaven... ”*

In 1880 already, we find the famous phrase in Matt. 25, which he quotes so frequently, and which accompanies him to the last meditation in 1916, when he draws a parallel between the Eucharistic presence and God's presence in the poor: *“I cannot think of a phrase from the Gospel that impressed me more and transformed my life more thoroughly than this one:” In so far as you did this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me”*. *If we think that these are the words of uncreated Truth, of the lips that said: “This is my body, this is my blood”, how strongly do we feel impelled to seek and love Jesus in “the little ones, the sinners, the poor”*.

Charles de Foucauld had a notable influence on the spirituality of the XXth Century, and at the beginning of our third millennium, he remains a fruitful reference, an invitation to a truly evangelical lifestyle, that reaches well beyond the members of the different groups that make up his numerous and diverse spiritual family.

To welcome the Gospel in its simplicity, to evangelize without imposing, to bear witness to Jesus while respecting other religious experiences, to assert the primacy of charity among brothers, here are only some of the most important aspects of a precious heritage that makes us work towards a life that consists in *“shouting the Gospel over the rooftops...in shouting that we belong to Jesus”*, as the Blessed Charles did....

Dear brothers and sisters, if we finally get to the core of the Parable of the Talents, which still speaks to us, we must say that God entrusts his Word to our ministry and our responsibility, and wants us to invest in his treasure, that is, to let the Word of God be an inspiration for our life, without fearing to commit ourselves, for we must not behave like the servant animated by misplaced human caution, who buried his talent. The warning Jesus gives us remains very forceful; we should indeed ask ourselves: how can we partake of the blessings of God without sharing them with the world?

A church – that means us- that would refuse to venture her inheritance by committing herself courageously in the City of Man, would not only betray her mission but she would already have lost her inheritance.

Let us learn from the new Blessed to live our faith in a contagious, communicative way, for a “harmless” faith, which has nothing to say to anyone, which does not act on its beliefs, remains an unused gift.

Like these witnesses of Resurrected Christ, we too should never stop multiplying the talents we have received until we hear again these splendid words which we can consider like an evangelical formula for beatification: “*Well done, good and trustworthy servant; come and join in your Master’s happiness*” (Matt.25,21)

### **Pope Benedict XVI’s homily**

*They consecrated their lives to Christ and offer to every Christian the sublime ideal of sainthood.*

*At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Pope Benedict XVI proceeded to Saint Peter’s Basilica. After censuring and venerating the relics of the new Blessed, the Holy Father pronounced the following words in Italian and French, before giving the Apostolic blessing.*

Dear brothers and sisters,

On this XXXIII Sunday in the ordinary time, we have the joy of venerating three new Blessed: a priest, Charles de Foucauld, Maria Pia Mastena, the Founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Face, and Maria Crocifissa Curcio, the Founder of the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Theresa of the Infant Jesus – three persons who, in different ways, have consecrated their life to Christ and hold up to every Christian the sublime ideal of sainthood. Dear friends, I greet you all, who have come from every part of the world to participate in this solemn demonstration of faith. I extend special greetings to Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, the Prefect of the Congregation for beatification cases, and I thank him for presiding over the Eucharistic celebration during which he read the apostolic

letter by which I inscribed these servants of God in the roster of the Blessed.

*The Holy Father went on in French:*

Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Let us give thanks for the testimony given by Charles de Foucauld. In his contemplative and buried life in Nazareth, he fathomed the truth of Jesus' humanity, inviting us to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation. There, he learned a lot about the Lord he wanted to follow in his humanity and poverty. He discovered that Jesus, who came down into our human condition invites us to a universal brotherhood which he was to live later in the Sahara, and to the love that Christ exemplified. As a priest, he gave central place in his life to the Eucharist and the Gospel – the two tables of the Word and the Bread, the sources of our Christian life and mission.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us praise the Lord for the gift of these new blessed, and try to imitate their examples of holiness. May we, by their intercession, live in fidelity to Christ and his Church. With these wishes, let me assure everyone of you of my cordial remembrance in prayer, as I confer on all of you who are present here, and on those who are dear to you, the apostolic benediction.

### **The Pope's words for the Prayer of the Angelus**

Dear brothers and sisters!

This morning, in Saint Peter's Basilica, three servants of God, Charles de Foucauld, a priest, Maria Pia Mastena, the founder of the Sisters of the Holy Face, and Maria Crocifissa Curcio, the Founder of the Congregation of the Carmelite missionary Sisters of Saint Theresa of the Infant Jesus were proclaimed Blessed. Their names are added to the long list of the Blessed who, under the Pontificate of John Paul II were offered to the veneration of the church communities in which they lived, as a sign of something the Vatican Oecumenical Council had emphasized, namely that all baptized

people are called to the perfection of Christian life, whether they are priests, religious or lay people, each according to their own charisma and specific vocation.

Indeed, the Council paid great attention to the role of lay people, by devoting a full chapter of the *Lumen Gentium* Constitution on the Church to the definition of their role and mission, rooted in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and inciting them to “seek the Kingdom of God precisely through the management of things temporal, which they ordain according to God” (n. 31). November 18, 1965, the Fathers approved a specific decree on the apostolate of lay people: *Apostolicam actuositatem*. It underlines first of all that the fecundity of the apostolate of lay people depends on their being vitally united to Christ (ibid. N 4) –that implies a strong spirituality, fed by active participation in the liturgy and expressed in the style of the evangelical Beatitudes. Moreover, for lay people, professional competence, devotion to one’s family, a civic sense and social virtues are very important. While it is true that each of them is called to give a personal testimony, which is particularly important where the freedom of the Church is curtailed, the Council insists on the importance of an organized apostolate, which is necessary to influence the public mentality, social conditions, and institutions (ibid. N 181). In this respect, the Fathers encouraged the many associations of lay people, insisting on the need for them to train for their apostolate. And the beloved Pope John Paul II chose as a theme for the 1987 Synodal Assembly that of the calling and mission of lay people, which resulted in the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*.

As a conclusion, I would like to recall that last Sunday, in the Cathedral of Vicenza, a mother was beatified: Eurosia Fabris, known as Mamma Rosa, a model for Christian life in the state of laity .We entrust the people of God to those who already dwell in our heavenly home, to all our saints, and first of all to the Holy Virgin Mary and her husband Joseph, so that each baptized person may grow in the awareness that he is called to work zealously and efficiently in the Lord’s Vineyard.

*At the end of the Prayer of the Angelus, the Holy Father added:*

Today, in Italy, we celebrate a day of Thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth and of man's labour. I join in the prayer and praise of the faithful, in particular farmers and rural communities, and invite everyone to give thanks to God for his blessings. I hope the recent pastoral note of the Italian Bishops in the rural world will help this important portion of society to safeguard its rich religious and cultural inheritance, for the good of the whole country.

*Then, addressing French-speaking pilgrims, the Holy Father said:*

I greet you, dear pilgrims from France. Charles de Foucauld, who has just been beatified, invites us to follow the path of Nazareth, and to observe the silence he knew in the desert. Indeed, this is where we can discover with Mary the mystery of Christ who made himself humble and poor to save us, to make us the sons of the One Father, and brothers in humanity. Like Brother Charles, let us find in contemplation and in the Eucharistic mystery the strength to live and bear witness, so as to contribute to evangelisation.

Then, after greeting German, English, Spanish, Polish and Italian pilgrims in their respective languages, the Holy Father concluded: "I wish you all a pleasant Sunday".

(L'Osservatore Romano; November 15, 2005)

<p><b>Mass of Thanksgiving after the Beatification of Charles de Foucauld Rome, Tre Fontane (14.11.2005)</b></p>
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<p><b>Homily given by Claude Rauld, Bishop of Laghouat and Ghardaia</b></p>
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Dear brothers and sisters in humanity  
Dear brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let me first of all thank my brother bishop Vincent Landel for agreeing to celebrate our mass of thanksgiving. He presides over the conference of the Bishops of the Maghreb, and represents here our

Church in Northern Africa. He also reminds us that Morocco as a country was not alien to the human and spiritual path of our blessed brother!

Charles de Foucauld's beatification is not an event per se, as if we had put him to a long test, a long process of questioning before granting him a degree in sainthood.

The real event is the uncommon and somewhat chaotic life of the man, and the fruits he bore.

It took a long time for these fruits to ripen, but we have them now. And this is what matters in our eyes. This is what we have been celebrating these past few days

We have just read two passages from the scriptures, which highlight the full meaning of the gift God gave us in his person. And I think these texts suit him particularly well. The Book of Wisdom reminds us of God's love for every person, regardless of his failings, and Charles's failings are well known to us indeed.

John's Gospel puts before our eyes the boundless love which Jesus had for us, and which he invites us to practice. This burning love devoured Charles's heart.

What can I say about the blessed Charles? So many things have already been stressed in speech or writing, and revealed...I am at a loss for something to say.

Let me first pause on his conversion; the way God broke into his life – a God he had gradually forgotten since the days of his adolescence, letting him slip away from his life, almost unnoticed.

And yet, in the course of his life as a lazy student, and a somewhat lackadaisical officer keen on refined parties, there gradually welled up in him a thirst for another life, one that would have meaning and aspire to greater heights. A great sense of vacuity got hold of him, little by little, and came to haunt him." I committed evil, without either approving or enjoying it. You made me experience a painful void, a sadness I had never felt before or after, that would recur every night as I found myself alone in my apartment" he writes in one of his meditations But God never abandons those he loves. "*You take pity on all men, because you are all-powerful. You close your eyes on the sins of men, so they may repent*", we heard in the Book of

Wisdom. God is patient, and his patience spreads through ages and ages.

And it was the living testimony of Moslems that was to rekindle his faith. I quote: "*Islam produced a profound upheaval in me. The sight of this faith, and these men who lived in the continual presence of God gave me a glimpse of something greater and more real than mundane occupations.*" This experience of living his life side by side with men of the Islamic faith was to provoke him, and lead him back to the faith of his childhood. He was 28 then.

His reunion with his God was to occur in the secrecy of a confessional, silently, in a whisper; it was a recognition at long last, a commitment for life, a desire to dedicate himself to God – a God he still had to discover. But he has been seduced.

This seduction was to assume the form of a wound of love. A love that required constant purification, in an endless and burning quest that set him off on an interior journey, a long journey that drove him to the extremities of his own self. What a vast desert the human heart is!

Once he had heard the first call, a long wandering began, a lifelong search for God, at first in monastic life. But that was not enough.

The God he sought then came to assume a human face in Jesus of Nazareth whose country he visited in Galilee. He discovered in him not only the great God of immensities, but a humble, powerless, helpless God, who always occupied the place no one would ravish from him: the last place. God in the highest was to be found in the lower depths.

This spiritual nomadism would finally bring him to the confines of the Sahara. He was then 43. He went there, not out of romantic love for the desert, but out of love for what was most remote.

And that love was to get even more inclusive. The Jesus he had met, contemplated, and sought in his long meditations in Nazareth, he was to find in a more concrete and less romantic way in Beni Abbes and the Hoggar, in humble people, in the excluded, the outcast. He was also to meet Him in those who shared neither his religious universe nor his culture.

And he was to devote his time and energy to them, not in a condescending manner but in the most embodied way, all the while feeling the acute pain of being unable to meet them in the last place, forever occupied by his beloved Lord Jesus.

Because he lived amidst people whose faith he did not share, he was eager to communicate to them his own faith. Yet he, who was aflame with the fire of the Gospel would stifle it and with an infinite respect for the other, discover that he was called upon to proclaim the Gospel through his life. This is certainly the most beautiful inheritance he left to us, for it is within reach of each and everyone of us. He was to content himself with talking to the Beloved in the Eucharist he celebrated and contemplated, and through the Gospel that he meditated again and again.

He, who dreamed of giving up his life for others, was to receive his own life from them, at a time when he was going to die from scurvy. The poor brought him back to life.

Nazareth again. He was to go further in incarnation by educating himself to the language and culture of the other: he was the stranger, and therefore he was to take the first step, starting with the first mumblings of the child. By dint of long hours of work, he started to learn the language, collected more than 6000 lines of poetry, and composed a Tuareg dictionary in 4 volumes.

He was to live in this way, dividing his time between hospitality, adoration, and study until the fateful day, December 1, 1916, when he was killed on the threshold of his bordj, in Tamanrasset.

Are we going to stand passively from now on, rapt with admiration for the life of this man, as if he had obtained some degree in perfection?

We also know that he did not meet all the challenges he had set for himself along his life. It would be sad if we were mistaken on this point: Perfection does not exist, except in God. God alone is Holy. God alone is perfect.

His existence was to be constantly marked by the pain of being so remote from a God he felt to be so near to him. He, who had envisioned fraternal life among companions proved to be incapable of living in a community. He who had given so much thought to

universal brotherhood spoke about our adversaries in World War I in a way that we cannot sanction.

Close as he was to the peoples of Southern Sahara, he was unable to envision their development outside the colonial framework, albeit a humane one.

We also know that his soldier's blood was occasionally aroused by the conflicts generated by rebellious peoples. He dreamed of martyrdom, and allowed himself to remain confined in his bordj with weapons, which he had forbidden prospective brothers to keep. And this may have caused his death!

And we could easily play the role of the devil's advocate concerning many other shady areas of his life. But it has been done already.

Maybe you think that I am tarnishing the figure of a man whose portrait I had previously outlined in rather positive terms.

No! We should never forget that Charles de Foucauld as a man was moulded from the same clay as we were, was agitated by the same inner turmoils, a prey to the same contradictions, the same errings as we are.

What if this had something to tell us about sainthood? What if it was telling us more about the kind of love God proposes? "*As the Father loved you, so did I love you too*"..."*Here is my commandment: you must love one another as I have loved you*".

If only there hadn't been this "*as I have loved you*", which makes it forever impossible for us to love, the way Jesus did!

This, I think, was Charles's great wound, which is also that of every one of us: our desire to love can never reach fulfilment. But the wound of our mutilated love is a fortunate one, for it can stimulate us to move ahead.

Charles de Foucauld leaves us with an inheritance to be increased, with challenges to be met. He leaves us an unfinished work.

Are we going to lock him up in a pious museum, or are we going to roll up our sleeves, to keep ploughing in the same furrow he ploughed?

Great evangelical challenges are laid out in front of us:

The challenge of meekness and evangelical non-violence

The challenge of fraternal love to be practised within a community. The challenge of fraternity on a world scale, exempt from any manifestation of ethnic or vengeful hatred, from any sense of national or cultural superiority

Whether we had desired Charles de Foucauld's beatification or not, we are become prisoners of his message and unfinished work.

What we have to do is not so much to place his statue on our altars, wear his medal around our neck, and honor his relics, as to become his disciples, that is the disciples of Jesus, his beloved Master.

If we want to follow in Charles's footsteps, there is no other path than the one which leads to Jesus of Nazareth, to Him who took the last place.

*Claude Rault, Bishop of Laghouat and Ghardaia.*

### **Antoine Chatelard, Back from Rome**

Should we rejoice at the Roman festivities to honour Charles de Foucauld? This is a question many people rightly asked. And the answer is: yes, let us rejoice, for these days of festivities and encounters went well beyond what could be expected. I am speaking for myself and for the small group that came from Tamanrasset and Algeria, but it also applies to all the little sisters who were rewarded for the huge amount of work they had put into the preparation and organisation. It was also the impression of those who attended not just the Sunday celebrations in Saint Peter's but also the Saturday or Monday celebrations at the Trappist abbey in Tre Fontane, and in the village of fraternity.

On leaving Tamanrasset, I had wondered what I was going to do in Rome, and even more what would be done with those who travelled with me. Returning home, I knew the answer, for I had been kept busy with interviews for the press, the radio, and television, but this was nothing when compared with the media impact of these men,

who were conscious of being the representatives of the city of Tamanrasset, though they had no official mandate to be.

Whatever their initial motivations and desire to participate in this celebration may have been, the event outdid their expectations, and they are not going to forget what they experienced in Rome with the Pope, and even less in Tre Fontane, in an atmosphere of universal brotherhood, that Charles de Foucauld obviously would never have imagined.

In Saint Peter's, after the interminable and wearying waits both outside and inside - which fortunately also allowed unexpected encounters, the official ceremonial had its usual pomp, in the grandiose setting of the basilica, which could not contain the crowds (it was said there were as many people outside as inside). For us, the important moment was the coming of the Pope at the end of the mass. The presence of the men from Tamanrasset in their traditional costumes gave an unexpected tone to the celebration. They had been seated behind the altar, and could not fail to be noticed by the photographers and by the Pope himself, who stopped to shake hands with every one of them. Hadn't this unplanned encounter occurred, something would have been lacking in a very catholic ceremony during which not one mention had been made of the Muslims. This spontaneous gesture by Benedict XVI, relayed by all TV channels, was seen everywhere, including Tamanrasset where the news spread instantly and it will certainly take more importance than many papal speeches, for those who can read the signs of the time - more importance even than the presence of an official representative from Algeria, which went unnoticed. A diplomat from the Algerian embassy explained the meaning of this presence by quoting to the journalist from La Croix a sentence from a speech by the president of the Republic, which said that religion brings light, and that it is man's ignorance which turns it into obscurity. As if to confirm this, the new Algerian ambassador to the Vatican presented his credentials on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, as we celebrated for the first time, the new "blessed" whom the Pope in his speech presented as a great figure of peace and reconciliation between communities.

I have mentioned the men, mostly, but I should say there was also a woman whose testimony as a Muslim woman about Charles de Foucauld made a strong impression on the 1000 people present on the first evening in Tre Fontane.

This young woman, who has been receiving visitors for the past three years in the bordj where the new blessed ended his life had agreed to give her testimony in French, although she had written it in Arabic originally. Stage fright and emotion did not prevent her from sharing a very deep personal experience. She did not appear on TV, but in the following days people went up to her to congratulate and thank her, and wanted to read her text, either in French or in Arabic.

I mentioned the international context. With little sisters coming from every corner of the world, it was to be taken for granted, but for the Algerians, it was a novel experience to meet so many people from everywhere: Arabs, Asians, Africans, and also all these friends of Charles de Foucauld, and the members of his biological family –close as well as remote (there were 150 of them). One could meet men and women in religious or civilian garb, bearing the cross and the heart as an emblem that revealed the existence of unknown groups or congregations in Siberia and elsewhere, far beyond the 18 members of the official association. This moment of convivial encounters impressed all those who were able to enjoy them, but this was even more perceptible in our small group of Algerians who stayed with the trappists or the little sisters. The day before we left, after a Saharian couscous and a Tuareg tea, a memorable evening gathered the sisters of Tre Fontane and the remaining guests. Sister Josephine, a Palestinian nun who represented the Clarisses of Nazareth surprised and delighted us all by her humour and her very fraternal testimony.

It took a great deal of favorable circumstances and last minute events for everything to unfold smoothly, from the original plans to the unforeseen events of the last days. Some would read this as a sign of the discreet intervention of the man who was the focus of these celebrations. Our thanks go to our sisters who worked for months to make possible this gathering, which went beyond our predictions and our hopes. A message of universal fraternity emanated from it all, as powerfully as from official proclamations.

## **Spirituality**

### **A day of reflection of the Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld in Cologne, Germany**

On 13 November 2005, Brother Charles was declared Blessed.

Those who attended the ceremony in Rome also gave the impression of being 'blessed' themselves.

That which was officially attributed to Brother Charles seemed to have rubbed off on them.

Foucauld was not only one blessed but also one who made others 'blessed'.

Since the day of reflection of the Charles de Foucauld Fraternity in Cologne, I have invited those who took part to reflect and to formulate certain keywords expressing how the Foucauld spirituality could become 'Good News' for each individual.

In this way a certain number of 'beatitudes' took shape and these were read during the service, then placed on the altar for them to be transformed by God.

- Happy are those who occupy the lowest place, for they shall discover the richness of the poor.
- Happy are those who create silence, for they shall find God at the centre of their heart.
- Happy are those who never cease to be converted, for they proceed directly into the arms of God.
- Happy are those who know how to endure the desert, for they will find themselves as well as God.
- Happy are those who are contemplatives in the world, for God will reveal himself to them in unexpected ways.
- Happy are those who practise hospitality, for they will not fail to entertain angels.
- Happy are those who see their lives in the light of the Gospel, for they will discover what God expects of them.

- Happy are those who are guided by the Holy Scriptures, for their compass is set on the road to God and on journeying with him.
- Happy are those who never cease to seek the will of God, for God will never cease surprising them.
- Happy are those who lead the life of Nazareth, for they live the hidden life of God.
- Happy are those who love to gaze on Jesus in the bread of life, for they will be transformed.
- Happy are those who are passionate about God and man, for they will be freed from their selfishness.
- Happy are those who seek to know the will of God, for they will move on step by step towards themselves.
- Happy are those who lead the life of Nazareth, for their daily actions will become spontaneous prayer.
- Happy are those who practise hospitality, for their many contacts will help them discover God.
- Happy are those who are converted, for they will find a home with God.
- Happy are those who seek after silence, for they will influence others.
- Happy are those who know how to let go, for great will be their reward.
- Happy are those who are nourished on the Holy Scriptures, for they will be strengthened for their journey through life.
- Happy are those who try to become universal brothers and sisters, for through them heaven will be reunited with earth.
- Happy are those who set foot on alien soil, for the grace of God will go before them.
- Happy are those who do not fear the desert as they pass through life, for God will go before them and wait for them there.

*Marianne Bonzelet*

**Twelve stars for Europe, or how the spirituality of Cdf can mean something for Europe and for the European integration process that also impacts our spiritual family.**

The final lecture during the meeting of the spiritual family in Germany (27-30.12.2005) stimulates us to think about the meaning of  
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our spirituality for Europe and its importance for the European integration process. Dr. Joachim Drumm chose the 12 stars of the European flag, and the 12 stars mentioned in Revelation 12,1, to speak about twelve aspects of our spirituality that challenge our spiritual family. Marianne completed Dr. Drumm's ideas with some questions, to stimulate sharing in our groups.

### ***1. Building concrete and worldwide networks, binding nations together***

Europe only functions thanks to its many meetings. A 'meeting' is something very concrete. The spiritual Cdf-family has everything to do with meeting one another. It is an international network, around the world. You, the members of the different communities, you exchange experiences, you show hospitality, you share. You are a community in faith, united in prayer and in celebrating the Eucharist. This is not at all obvious. It is an enormous potential, for Europe and beyond. Your family is a gate in Europe's frontiers. So if you keep the gate open, Europe will become more open.

*Where and when do I feel hospitality in Brother Charles' spiritual family?*

*What value do I attach to international contacts and to reports from all over the world, e.g. in this international bulletin?*

### ***2. Living one's calling in everyday life – Nazareth***

Nazareth is the place of Jesus' hidden life, and that was the motive of brother Charles' calling. It is a metaphor for doing what is needed, in a discrete way. What is it then that has to be done for peace and reconciliation in Europe? Universal answers do not exist. Everyone can contribute, no matter where he/she lives or works. The administrative HQ of the EU is to be found in Brussels, but Europe's soul is in Nazareth, in living together every day, for better or worse.

*What does my Nazareth look like, what is my calling in everyday life?*

### ***3. Standing in the middle of the world, in a contemplative way***

To characterize our present situation, one could use words like plurality, complexity, contradiction, de-synchronization, non-

transparency. A general recognised central perspective does no longer exist. Things can be looked at in a variety of contradictory ways. It is no longer possible to cope with the flood of information and with all these possible angles of view. It has become a full time job to build an opinion and to choose a position. To cope, one can reduce the world to areas and consider them as independent: work, economy, leisure, sports, politics, culture, etc. The individual loses his/her identity. What is presently, often diagnosed as a 'crisis of meaning,' is connected with this fragmentation of reality. 'Meaning' can only be experienced if one understands the importance of something in relation to something bigger, something on the horizon. The values of an individual are established in a more comprehensive context. Experiencing a meaning is referring beyond oneself, to a 'spiritual central point', a historical or material context, a claimed truth, to some objective, to the 'total picture', it doesn't matter how one experiences or describes this 'comprehensive' space that links everything together.

If something doesn't 'fit in', it seems meaningless. If one cannot find a sense for something, one quickly feels unsure, helpless, lacking orientation. When one experiences lack of meaning more and more in everyday life, one becomes spiritually homeless. Things appear all the same, exchangeable in their insignificant stupidity. Indifference is quickly growing.

We long for simple answers, clear connections that we can understand. The lack of meaning and orientation can also be compensated by the construction of clear-cut models. If something doesn't fit in, it is eliminated or left aside. This simplification approach means taking a step back, to privacy, or by retreat into a protective community of like-minded, that only deal with themselves. Fundamentalism grows when indifference grows.

Indifference and fundamentalism: both are gnawing at the foundations of our European culture. The world of today is also a world of mass movements for the seekers. There is a great thirst for rituals. There is much complaining about this phenomenon in the Church, because people do not come to the churches to still that thirst. We are quick to label such search movements as 'esoteric', not

Christian, therefore we avoid or ignore them. But it is often baptized Christians who find answers to their questions in esoterics. I meet many reasonable catholic or evangelical baptized men and women, faithful and caring fathers and mothers, reliable fellow employees, who live an honest civil life while listening to spirituality designated as esoteric. That makes me think.

Maybe we should not dismiss these developments as having nothing to do with the Church, but look at them as phenomena that have a place among Christians and therefore also in the Church. Neither exclusion nor blind criticism helps us any further. Well thought arguments are needed, a spiritual debate and a creative mediation between traditional faith and spirituality lived every day.

I believe that many Christians are threatened to die with spiritual thirst, because they can no longer integrate the faith of their forefathers into everyday life. The theological answers do not help them much with their concrete questions.

Even Christians engaged in the Church seldom see the connection between their commitment in the Church and their daily and professional life. It is as if they walk in two worlds, as if church questions are of a totally different universe. One engages oneself *for* the Church, one accepts a task *in* the Church, in addition to and unconnected to those of everyday life. In that perspective, Church life appears to be totally separated from everyday life. "Everything that has to do with the fundamental questions of our existence and our society seems to become more and more confused and not leading anywhere. Church affiliation becomes a kind of a hobby, some specific leisure activity, for which one has to take a commitment from time to time, but without any consequences." (J.B. Metz)

The future of Christianity in Europe will substantially depend on to what extent we succeed in bringing everyday life and faith back into a living relationship with one another. This does not require any new actions or programs. Only a different perception is needed. I am convinced that "being contemplative in the middle of the world" is of enormous importance for society and for the Church in Europe.

*How do I manage to connect my everyday life with spirituality? What helps me to achieve it?*

#### **4. Desert**

Charles de Foucauld withdrew in the desert. Often people ask: why in the desert, if he wanted to achieve something? What can one do in the desert?

The desert creates a distance and it brings clarity about what is important and what is less important for you, about what you need and what you do not need, about what you really want to achieve. Finding the answer to such questions requires a long learning path.

In a time when one is flooded by so many things, a step back is not only necessary, but also desired by many. That can be seen in the success of "wellness", of sobriety courses, of short retreats in monasteries. It is however important to not see this step back as a luxury, it has to be integrated in normal life. The spiritual family of CdF has experience with this, more specifically in desert days and review of life. For men and women of our western society these kinds of experiences become increasingly important.

*What do I experience, if I take a desert day?*

#### **5. Review of life**

Brother Charles' life was indeed a moved one. He has traveled quite a distance. The road to Tamanrasset was a long one, with many detours and some dead ends. Afterwards one always tends to smoothen things out. Yet for those who are themselves looking for their own orientation, it is encouraging and helpful when the breaking points in the life of their spiritual leaders remain visible.

For many, who day after day faithfully provide their service in the place where they are living, their own life might look boring and banal when compared to CdF's biography. But it is not important to live a moved life but to discover one's own calling. And there are many different callings. It is important for me that I do what I recognize as being necessary.

What is true in small things also applies to the bigger scene. Everybody who tries to find and live his calling, sets a star for a good future for Europe.

*Are we practicing the review of life in our group? What helps us? What hinders us? What do I wish for myself?*

## **6. Eucharist, Gospel and Adoration**

While he lived in Algeria, CdF did not undertake any action to get followers. He did not do anything more than bringing Christ closer to the people, by bringing the tabernacle into the desert. He suffered for a long time under the fact that he could not celebrate the Eucharist on his own nor store the Holy Sacrament. The many letters that he exchanged with his bishop are witness of this suffering. The Eucharist was as important to Br. Charles as his daily bread.

In his book “God does not have fear. The power of the Gospel in a changing world.”, Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant’ Egidio community, writes about the relationship between Eucharist and love: “A church without cult, without the gift of the Eucharist, is no longer a loving church; it becomes a community in which love disappears. As long as Eucharist is celebrated in our parishes and communities, as long as there is somebody to read the Gospel and to preach love, ... there will always be a reserve of humanity, compassion and love in the world ... The Eucharist protects the world.” I would like to add: the Eucharist gives Europe a future.

*Which consequences do Eucharist, adoration and gospel reading have in my everyday life?*

## **7. Brother of all men: Christian universalism**

CdF wanted to be a brother of all men. He loved them, even though he could be hard and severe in his judgment. Nevertheless, or maybe just for that reason, he knew that he needed to show solidarity with each individual. This attitude is the real mission of the Church, a mission that is universal and very concrete. Jesus Christ himself is the ‘concrete universalism’. He was born and grew up, worked and suffered, lived and died somewhere in a province of the Roman Empire, yet he is an important testimony for the whole universe, designated as the savior of the world.

This universal dynamism of Christianity can be a blessing for Europe because Europe is in danger of shutting itself off in its prosperity. On

the other side of Europe's border, a whole continent is in poverty and dying with AIDS. The pictures from Ceuta and Melilla that went around the world expose in a shameful way this aspect of Europe's integration. Young Africans run across the Sahara until their feet are bleeding. They climb over the border's fence and tear their members apart. Some succumb to their injuries. Why did they come? Because in Europe they see a future, whereas in Africa there seems to be none. And what happened? The survivors were pushed back by us Europeans, they were left behind in the desert, like wild animals. This is another side of the European Union. It is good to know that there are people who do not forget that they are brothers and sisters of everybody.

*Where have I become a brother or sister for some other human being?*

### **8. Solidarity with the people in need: the last place**

CdF had a good life, no lack of money. He could afford whatever his heart longed for. And he could do a lot of good with his money. He could have started a welfare organization, but he selected another way. He stood on the side of those who have nothing or very little. He looked for the lowest place, solidarity in poverty. Did this help the people on whose side he stood? Materially no. But they could experience that someone was standing on their side, somebody who wanted this proximity, voluntarily and not because he had no other choice.

Solidarity. It is a big word in many mouths, a term that easily creeps into many EU declarations. There is a lot of solidarity in Europe, not only in texts. It also exists in real life, thanks God! Solidarity that looks for the lowest place is probably the most fastidious form, a way of life.

It demands me completely. I cannot delegate it. It can easily make excessive demands on me, but others cannot impose it on me. It doesn't heal all wounds of this world. But one, who shows that this radical form of solidarity exists, sets an effective sign in this world, in Europe. It opens a remarkable and accessible corridor in the bushes of straightforward rationalism and economic calculations.

*Where do I offer my proximity to somebody else - simply and for free?*

## **9. Intercultural learning**

Bro. Charles contributed in a special way to the building of bridges between cultures: by his life with the Tuareg, by his journeys, by his work as a geographer, by his language studies. In Tamanrasset, he undertakes the work to compile a Tuareg-French dictionary. He puts himself under real time pressure. Charles' letters testify his impatience. On 3 June 1905, the military interpreter Gustave de Calassanti Calassanti-Motyliniski comes to visit him in Tamanrasset. Motyliniski has considerable knowledge about the Berber language. Bro. Charles learns from him that it is important not to translate literally from one language to another. Before starting with a translation - according to Motyliniski - is it important to listen: to understand how the Tuareg express themselves, to analyze how they think and to observe how they live. This advice pushes Charles to collect stories and the poetic heritage of the Tuareg. Only then he discovers the genuine characteristics and the wealth of the language and culture of the Tuareg.

This discovery by Charles and consequently his way of working are of great value today in our questions about Europe's future. A well noticeable characteristic of modern Europe is its pluralism. Not only the pluralism of countries and cultures, but also and mainly the pluralism of views, truths, life projects and life-styles. The intercultural meeting is not only between humans from different countries and cultures. Modern societies have become multi-cultural themselves. Think about the variety of music styles, fashions, environments, and areas of life. Every one of us, each individual moves in a variety of worlds, subject to a variety of partly contradictory requirements. This variety shapes our present culture. The more variation there is in our present culture, all the more important it is to understand the other in his 'otherness'. This understanding is more than bare translation; it is not possible to establish a simple one-to-one correspondence. If I try to do it that way, I am imposing my own thought patterns on the other. Real

understanding, however, requires that I let the other in, so that his words will change me. Bro. Charles has learned and lived what that means. This basic attitude can also be found in his spiritual family. And it is of great importance for Europe, with its characteristic pluralism.

*In our groups, very different types of characters meet. Which "treasure" can I discover in the others from the group?*

## **10. Building bridges between the separated churches - Ecumenism**

Bro. Charles was not a great ecumenist. It was not his first priority. He was a child of his time. His life ended at the beginning of a new century, the century that was to become the century of the Ecumenical movement. He in whose life the meeting of religions and cultures was so intense, would have regarded the search for ecumenical unity as a blessing. The spirit of ecumenism is well present in his spiritual family. If you build bridges between churches, you build bridges in Europe. United Europe needs united churches. A few sentences from the Charta Oecumenica of the council of European Churches and the conference of the European bishops on the theme "Participating in Europe's construction": "The Churches are in favor of a union of the European continent. But without common values a durable unity cannot be attained. We are convinced that the spiritual heritage of christianity represents an inspiring strength that enriches Europe. Based on our christian faith we commit ourselves for a human and a social Europe, by promoting human rights, the basic value of peace, justice, liberty, tolerance, participation and solidarity. We stress the importance of respect for life, the value of marriage and family, priority commitment for the poor, readiness for forgiving and mercy in all circumstances.

*What do ecumenical contacts mean to me?*

## **11. Inter-religious dialogue - meeting with Islam**

Bro. Charles practiced the interreligious dialogue. He travelled with a Jewish rabbi through Muslim Morocco. His meeting with Islam was an important step to find back his own faith. He lived together with

Muslims and was saved by them from a serious illness. He shared with them what he had. He wanted to be a missionary, but came to the conviction that he could not bring the Gospel to them as if it were a new coat. A sincere dialogue was needed, mutual understanding, give and take in two directions, with each party sharing with the other.

Charles was not the only christian among the Muslims. Algeria was administered by the French army. But Muslims and Christians were living side by side. On 22 November 1907 Charles writes: "We have here more than three million Muslims, since more than 70 years. Nothing has been done for their moral progress. One million Europeans live totally isolated from them; they regard them as foreigners, usually even as enemies."

What about today, not even 100 years later? We can make the opposite observation: 3,3 million Muslims live in Germany, they are our neighbours and teammates, they visit catholic kindergartens and they experience our life shaped by Christianity. Does it today come to a dialogue? Hardly.

Yet a dialogue between Christians and Muslims is of enormous importance for the future of Europe. Islam is alive and well present in Europe. But not in the least as a result of 11 September 2001 coexistence now comes with considerable fear and distrust. Where the Muslim presence becomes visible and unavoidable, the fear of the natives grows more than elsewhere, certainly in times of fundamentalist terror. What worries us Christians in Germany a lot, is that we cannot clearly see with whom we are dealing if we get involved in a discussion with Muslims. One does not see whether some Islamic is radical or not. It is therefore difficult to engage in a discussion. Naiveness is as wrong as suspicion. There is however no alternative to the dialogue. Without a peaceful coexistence of the religions Europe will not grow harmoniously. Before we start the religious-theological dialogue we must engage in a dialogue around everyday life; before solving the general argument with Islam, mutual personal acquaintance is required.

Christians and Muslims do not only face the challenge of meeting each other, they also face the challenge of a common religious plea

for tolerance and against violence in a world between secularisation and fundamentalism.

The fact that Muslims live and work among us, offers a great opportunity for personal contacts and mutual acquaintance. Where Christians get involved in the discussion, they experience that they are challenged in their christianity itself. The meeting with Islam is also a chance for Christianity to reflect on its own identity.

*Do I have contacts with Muslims? What do I wish for myself in such meetings?*

## **12. Strength in weakness**

Most of the things that Charles de Foucauld tried to do, seemed to be futile. The word about the grain of wheat, which must fall into the ground and die, in order to bear much fruit, also applies to brother Charles. His strength came from his weakness. "Strength in weakness" is an important leitmotiv in his spirituality. It can protect us from attaching too much importance to the direct effect of what we say and do. It can protect us from our constant looking for success. Thereby it protects us from disappointment and resignation, but also from grim compulsiveness and hectic activity. He who trusts in strength in weakness, becomes more free and more peaceful in his actions, calmer in his attitude and in his dealing with others. He who trusts in strength in weakness, can let things grow. Sharing this experience is also an important dimension for the future of Europe. Europe needs time, in order to grow together. One cannot just simply 'make' Europe. One cannot change things by force. Europe is not only and not firstly a Common Market, not only a administrative-political thing. Europe is the Europe of humans and it must become so more and more in the future. Humans however are more than what they carry out and bring in. Humans are what they are. Their calling is not to become something, but to become who they really are, loved by God. A life with a future, in Europe as well as elsewhere, is a life that emerges from God's strength.

*Can I live with weakness, do I have the courage to be the second best? What do I feel about the invitation to accept weakness in myself so that God can work through it?*

**Mark Hayet: Address to Synod (12 October 2005)**

*Mark Hayet, prior of the Little Brothers of Jesus, attended the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist (2 – 23 October 2005). He had one opportunity to speak. This is his address:*

I speak from my limited experience of our little contemplative fraternities situated among the poor. The Eucharist is the normal way of prayer, both personal and communal, for us. But I would like to say, paraphrasing Charles de Foucauld's words that the Lord has led us to unite very closely to the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and an open life.<sup>1</sup> A life open to the poor who are not afraid to come to us because they know that we live a life of work within the community similar to their own, and that we share the same anxieties and the same struggle for a more just and dignified existence. A life, in short, open to this other presence of God, his presence alongside the poor. The life of the people does not leave us; it stays with us whenever we read together the Word of God, whenever we celebrate the Eucharist and whenever we pray in silence. Our prayer is often in tension between the sorrow of the psalm: *'Why do you remain silent when your people are being slaughtered?'* (cf Psalm 94.3-5, 14.4) and the praise of Jesus: *'I bless you, Father: that which you have hidden from the wise and the learned you have revealed to little children'* (Matt. 11.25), or his cry: *'You did not want holocaust or victim, so I said: "Here I am, I am coming"'* (Heb. 10.5f). What I want to show is that this sharing in the life of others, whatever their belief or unbelief, with their dignity and their troubles, totally engrossed as they are in their struggle for life – all this always makes us discover yet more the face of the God of tenderness and mercy who walks humbly with us, as is signified by the Eucharist.

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the text of Antoine Chatelard: *From Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament to an open life. The Eucharistic Journey of Charles de Foucauld* (Fraternity document) quoted in *A New Look at Charles de Foucauld* p.62 (see also Antoine's book: *Charles de Foucauld – the Way to Tamanrasset* p.138)

So from this experience I would like, with your permission, to make a request. When we speak for the Church, let us pay attention to the manner in which we speak. To speak of our world principally in terms of a ‘culture of death’, to speak of secularisation as the source of all evils (violence, lack of respect for life etc.), is this not lacking respect for those people who try to live their faith in God (whatever the name they give Him) or their faith in man (whatever their philosophy) by giving themselves in the service of life – whether it be the daily battle of father or mother to ensure that their children have food and a future, or the men and women devoted to the service of society? This mixed world, where the weeds and the good grain grow together, is also the place of every act of generosity, solidarity and commitment, sometimes at the cost of life; and it is also this world, and no other, which the father loves, for which he gives his Son once more today (as the Eucharist reminds us), the world in which the Spirit is working.

Secularisation has deprived us of the influence we once had over individuals and society. We have great difficulty in accepting it as Cardinal Danneels remarked in this very room, the expectations of today’s men and women are ‘evangelisable’ But they cannot hear the Gospel message unless we present it to them as a proposition which addresses itself to their freedom, in a true dialogue in which we respect their seeking and are ready to receive, to learn from their competence and their life-experience, including that of the poorest, who are so full of humanity. But is this not fundamentally the way taken by the ‘humble carpenter of Nazareth’ who was amazed at the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, the centurion, and the man crucified with him? Perhaps the humble sign of bread and wine invites us it is to this as well – to be accessible to all and intelligible to all.

Thank you for listening.

*To my sister in Christ,  
Who, in the City of St Peter,*

*Invited me to compare no longer ...  
In the manner of Patriarch Athenagoras  
(quoted in The Way of Peace)*

*At Lourdes, 25 March 2006, Feast of the Annunciation, Feast of Mary's 'Yes', the  
First on the way, who shows us her Son, in the last place  
'Do everything he says to you.'*

## **Prayer**

Why this need to always compare?

The one and the other, they are different.

Of course, I may have a personal preference.

God loves every man and wants to lose none,

But some are the beloved of his heart, the smallest ones!

If I want to be among them, I just need a humble heart, a child mind,

To acknowledge my smallness in front of this God who himself chose  
the last place.

If I want to compare,

I may only achieve opposition,

Look for a sterile equality

Where I could have enjoyed a rich complement

Why compare men and women, girls and boys, whites and blacks,  
rich and poor?

Why not accept them in their diversity?

Has the rainbow only one colour?

Has the week only one day?

God has needed six to finish his creation,

Then, he rested.

Aren't the seven equal and different?

*'Brother, if you're different from me, far from wronging me, you  
enrich me'*

(Wisdom that Antoine de St Exupery borrowed from the Andes  
Indians)

How could I forget the first day of the week, resurrection day?

For my elder brothers, the Seventh will be the most important,

For my Islam brothers, it will be the Sixth,  
But are the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth less loved?  
God makes every morning divine, reveals Himself every day, gives  
thanks every evening  
For '*There was an evening, there was a morning, God saw that this  
was good*'.

Two thanks to the Holy Spirit  
Three says God  
Four like the pillars of Christian life:  
Teaching from the apostles, brotherly communion, sharing of bread,  
prayers.  
(even though a child told me once: *after holy Thursday? Well its  
Friday the sixth!*)

Jean, don't you have seven brothers and sisters?  
Each one has arrived, fruit of a precise moment in the love of your  
parents.  
Consider your luck, compared to your young colleague, Oliver,  
Only child from an only child father and an only child mother.  
Indeed, it would be easier to have peace if you were the only one,  
The olive branch kept like the scepter of this lonely king on his  
planet.  
Jean, count your blessings for being born with siblings.

Charles died alone, fallen to the ground like wheat.  
Yet...  
At different periods of his life he had children  
Nineteen to this day, how many tomorrow, nobody knows  
Rejoice that more keep being born  
Don't try to ascertain  
If you are first or sixth  
May all be one  
As the Father and the Son are one in the Spirit  
So as the world believe.

Remember!  
Christ is the First-born  
You can ever be second only  
Christ took the last place  
You can ever look for the one before last  
Charles himself was second only after a lost brother  
But who could be lost in the eyes of God?

*Jean de Soos, number Five among Eight Diocesan priest  
of the Union called Sacerdotal Fraternity*

## Arusha 2006

### Logo for the International Assembly, Arusha 2006



*Marianne*

### Prayer to prepare the Arusha World Meeting

All countries in which the Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld exist can send a number of delegates to the 2006 International Meeting in Arusha. Yet the World Meeting concerns the whole of the Fraternity

all over the world. All members of the Fraternity in every corner of the world are invited to join in the preparation of the Meeting through prayer.

*God, You are our Father and our Mother,  
We place into your hands  
The 2006 International Meeting in Arusha,  
Its preparation and its consequences.  
We pray to You for  
The teams in Tanzania and Kenya  
In charge of the organization,  
Our delegates and those in charge all over the world  
The International team of the Fraternity,  
So that we may all together  
Follow the prophetic thoughts  
Of Brother Charles  
On the fight between violence and peace,  
The rich and the poor,  
Do our best,  
Accept the challenges  
You place on our way.  
Help us grow more and more  
Responsible the ones towards the others  
So as to become a brother/sister to all men.  
For You are our Father and Mother,  
Father and Mother of all men.  
Amen*

*Josef Freitag/Marianne*

<b>Information for the Arusha Delegates</b>
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*End of April, the delegates enrolled for the Arusha Meeting have received the following letter with important information. I feel it is appropriate to inform as many members as possible so you can help with your prayers.*

Hello,

After a very impressive trip to Tamanrasset where we (two friends from the German Lay Fraternity and I) prayed for all of you and for our International Meeting and where we also celebrated Easter with the Little Sisters of Jesus, the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Little Brothers of Jesus, I have resumed the preparations for Arusha.

The week before Easter, Jean Chris traveled again to Tanzania and Kenya where the East African members have already done a considerable amount of work. I'll pass on the information and advice given by Jean Chris. I'll send them also to those in charge in the different countries in case they are not delegates, so that communication is open.

**Enrolments:**

To this day, I have received 99 enrolments ( technical team included) from 35 countries. In some enrolments, the delegates haven't indicated their addresses; two countries have even failed to mention the names of the delegates!

So, please, contact the delegates from your country and ask them to **send the following information as soon as possible**. We would like to establish the list of participants and I don't intend to do it on the spot as there will be many other errands.

**Surname:**

**Given names:**

**Sex:**

**Age:**

**Address:**

**e-mail:**

**languages spoken/understood:**

Those who haven't sent their address haven't received the official invitation necessary to obtain the visa!

### Arrival/Departure

The organizing team asks you to **indicate times, dates and places of arrival and departure** (Airport of Arrival and Departure) to allow Peter Mbuchi and his team to extend a proper welcome to the delegates at Nairobi Airport and organize their transfer by bus to Arusha where they shall be met by the technical team before arriving at the housing centre.

### Finances:

The accommodation expenses were indicated in a letter dated autumn 2004. There were much additional information in that letter. For this reason we send it again attached.

Please bring your money in **US Dollars to Arusha** where you can pay direct after arrival.

For money exchange transactions, no problem. A Canosian sister will offer this service if needed.

All those who have asked for **support from the International fund** must indicate clearly their need (help for accommodation only/ travel and accommodation). If you don't send this information promptly, you may find the fund empty when you arrive in Arusha!

There will be several possibilities to settle payments:

- You pay for your travel and get reimbursed in Arusha;
- You send me your bank information (in this case, money is lost due to 'exorbitant' bank fees)

In any case, in order to check expenses, during or after the meeting, we shall need **receipts for all your expenses** (passport, visas, vaccinationa, transport, etc...) Please bring them to Arusha.

### In-house organization:

- In the Canosian Sisters Centre , **a clinic and medicine** are available, **even a doctor**. However you'll be personally responsible for provision of **medicine against malaria**.
- **Soft drinks and mineral water** are available, but no beer , available nearby.

- Transport from the Canosian Centre to town can be organized with a twelve seater bus against payment of cost of petrol.

### **Programme:**

The provisional program of the meeting is attached.

- If you still have **proposals or requests**, please send in quickly!
- During the meeting of the European delegates in 2005, the problem arose that in our Western societies, people no longer understand the meaning of '**lay fraternity**'. In Belgium, an attempt has already been made to change the name. This problem concerns the whole of the fraternity, particularly in French speaking countries. (Others have already chosen a word understood in their country). A request in the International Bulletin has received no answer. So, I urge delegates from French speaking countries to discuss the problem within their fraternities and inform me of the outcome so that I can pass on to other fraternities before the meeting.
- As previously explained, we'll have **continental exchanges only**. This means that you must communicate your ideas on the Arusha theme to the continental heads so they produce a summary to be sent to the delegates before the meeting (short reading for the long journey; at the same time an opportunity to reduce making copies on the spot). We try to avoid long reports by having small group exchanges often (almost every day).
- Each delegation must bring **two posters**: one representing the Fraternity of their country, the other showing the work on the four proposed themes. All comments must be short and translated into several languages: French, English, Spanish and Swahili.
- **Little groups** will be well mixed ; though language will be taken into account and groups will remain stable during the

meeting. We hope that our schedule will permit more fraternal and friendly meetings among us.

- As you can see on the program, continents are requested to prepare **morning prayers**, meaning a time of adoration, as well as **evening entertainment**.

**Morning prayer:** we suggest the following (but you are free to change): song –

Gospel of the day (see program) – long silence – Brother Charles quote – silence –

Abandonment Prayer.

**Evening entertainment :** all ideas are welcome! If material is needed (ex. For a slide show, the Projector will have to be rented outside... As in Rio, it would be good that the evening conclude with a silence, a song and a prayer.

**Songs:** there will be a **book of songs**; unfortunately it's not yet completed due to delays from countries who still want to send songs.

**We won't have much opportunity to make copies! If you need them, please make them at home and bring them.**

- Don't forget your **bible** and a **jumper** for the evenings.

Ouf! That's a lot, isn't it?

I hope I haven't forgotten the important points. If I did, don't hesitate to react. I try to do my best, but it's really a lot... - besides my work...

Next week-end, I shall definitely finish the 'Little Guide of the Fraternity' which will be officially published in Arusha. I shall also launch there a booklet introducing all the spiritual family of Brother Charles, as well as material on the beatification, the spirituality of Brother Charles, etc. I feel I'll need a freighter for the meeting. I shall distribute all this material to the European delegates – that will be somewhat sharing 'the weight of the meeting'!

Further information will follow!

I trust in your prayers for the International Meeting (see IB74) and also ask you to pray for the chapter of the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart which will happen in June.

I wish you had a rich preparation in this Easter time with a heart full of joy about the resurrection of the Lord.

I look forward to meet you again or simply to meet you in Arusha.

*Marianne*

### **Orientation text of the French Fraternity**

We are challenged by the confusion of our changing world, the crumbling of our values and the inequalities in our societies. Expectations are pressing: decent conditions of life, wish for success, search for meaning and responsible participation in civil society and in the church, more companionship, more justice, more solidarity for a greater part of humanity.

We wish to live the Gospel with the help of our fraternities inspired by the intuitions of Brother Charles. So we are invited

- To change our attitudes to let others exist in a real reciprocity.
- To let ourselves be challenged by those we meet and who do not share our way of life, thinking and belief.
- To overcome our instinctive fears, which cause wounds and violence.
- To put ourselves at the service of mankind, especially of those most vulnerable, with the care of social solidarity based on rights and justice, political dimension of charity.
- To be optimistic and have trust in mankind, in spite of the incertitude caused by political, economic and social context.
- To remain vigilant and to 'resist' in defending man's dignity from the beginning to the end of his life.
- To 'live with others' in humility, kindness and simplicity.

This effort for conversion commits us to pray and to live the Eucharist so that the spirit inspires us in word and deed. May Charles

de Foucauld, declared Blessed, help us to open ways of experience and joy. We dare to say that this is what gives us life.

*National Council , September 2005*

## **News from the Continents**

### **Africa**

#### **Burkina Faso**

On 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February, Burkina celebrated on a national level the commemoration of the Beatification of Charles de Foucauld. The aim of this celebration was to make known Brother Charles to the Church in Burkina and to all. It was marked by the presence of our brothers from Niger led by Antoine Chenu and some others from Mali. We also had with us Jean Yves You who came courageously to visit our brothers of the Burkina fraternity and to know the country.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> there was animation by two choirs from the town of Ouagadougou, followed by two talks delivered by Fr. Dominique Nothomb, an African missionary and Mgr. Philip Ouedraogo, Bishop of Ouahigouya and our priest of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity in Burkina.

The Holy night celebration was animated by the Little Sisters and on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> there was a High Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Camille's parish. This celebration originally was to be presided by the Archbishop of Ouaga, but was presided instead by Mgr. Joachim Ouedraogo, the young Bishop of the Diocese of Dori.

Thanks to all for the support given and for the Communion in the church. Special thanks go to the brothers of Niger and Mali for coming over. Fraternally yours in Brother Charles.

*Evariste*

#### **Kenya**

Dear Marianne,

Good morning. .... On 25<sup>th</sup> October 2005, nearly all the members of the fraternity of Brother Charles of Jesus in Kenya were represented in a meeting that took place here in our house. Only Jesus Caritas was not represented. We had met to plan how to implement our strategy for making Brother Charles known. Starting from 13<sup>th</sup> October till the day of the beatification, each fraternity made a 15-minute radio broadcast every Sunday at 9.30 in the morning on their experience and perspective of this humble and faithful servant of God. All the talks were recorded by Radio Waumini and are available for listening. On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2005, we celebrated the beatification at Kangemi Parish here in Nairobi. This is the parish where the Brothers of the Gospel live and work. Several bishops attended: including the Pro Nuncio, who is French. Auxiliary Bishop David of Nairobi Archdiocese attended. David used to be an active member of Jesus Caritas. On the same day, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2005, a group of youths who live in one of the most congested and polluted slums about three kilometers from where we live presented a play on Brother Charles.

On 14 January 2006, three other fraternities and the youths had a thanksgiving meal in the slum. The play is now available on video, thanks to the assistance of the Little Sisters of Jesus and their friends. We hope to send you a copy. In the meantime, the priest who strongly opposed our efforts to involve the youth in the formation of a strong Lay Fraternity seems to have reviewed his attitudes about us.

About the Nazareth week: I booked the venue last year as agreed. At this time, a deposit is required to confirm the booking. You will remember from my notes that I booked Dimesse Sisters Retreat centre, a short walking distance from the house where Karen Blixen lived...it is actually about ten minutes walk. Chris was to visit us this month to discuss the theme and the logistics. Sister Tabitha and Chris were to take of that. On my part, I have already arranged to take my annual vacation from 15<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> August. The Nazareth week is scheduled to start on 9<sup>th</sup> July and end on 16<sup>th</sup>. That would leave a window of several days to allow the necessary time for us here in Nairobi to welcome and transport guests on transit to Arusha.

*Peter Mbuchi*

## **America**

### **United States**

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas celebration! Our Retreat this year will be May 26th, 27th and 28th so mark your calendars. More details about cost and reservations will be sent out later this week.

During the retreat this year we will be electing a new North American Representative. Some have asked if I would be willing to serve another 3 year term. I will not serve another term at this time but may in the future. I think it is important for us as a community not only to share the responsibility of leadership but to participate in a process that helps insure the future existence of this community by passing on that leadership.

A new leader will bring their own strengths, charismas and focus to our community and challenges us in new ways. My focus these past few years has been to involve this community with the International Community. I am pleased to announce that Joyce Polistena, Janet Curly, Jim Pelican and possibly Fr. Lennie Tighe will be making the trip to Arusha for the International Assembly July 20<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> this year.

I ask each community to send their nominations to me by March 1st so they may be forwarded to all. I hope that each of you will prayerfully consider the National Responsible.

*Joe Conrad*

## **Arabic World**

### **Impressions of Rome**

In taking part in the Beatification of Charles de Foucauld in Rome, we have lived three days of real universal fraternity, three days of meetings, sharing and joy. The welcome of the Little Sisters at Tre Fontane will remain an everlasting remembrance for all the participants. Everything was simple, from the prayer, refreshments, lodging were festive moments lived together. Souvenirs of Brother Charles like his altar in Beni Abbes, the pictures of the Visitation and the Holy Family from Beni Abbes and his tools were displayed in the chapel. This is a place of meditation for every pilgrim, as is the crypt, looking like a catacomb, where Madeleine Hutin foundress of the Little Sisters of Jesus is buried.

Tre Fontane is the place of the martyrdom of St. Paul and Roman soldiers. It's also the place of the Trappist Abbey where Brother Charles lived for some months.

On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November in the evening, in the Abbey's church we learnt about Brother Charles from his childhood to Tamanrasset. Through pictures which followed each other, showing us the situations which he lived: orphan, Lyceum student, in the military, explorer before his search for God, at Nazareth, then Trappist and at last as a priest at Beni Abbes and Tamanrasset near those who were farthest away. Everything was well explained from 'his experience of the tenderness of God', 'the discovery of Jesus of Nazareth', 'the fraternal presence in the heart of the desert', 'the patient friendship' up to 'resembling Jesus in his death'.

On Sunday morning 13<sup>th</sup> November the crowd was immense. The Basilica and St. Peter's Square were full to overflowing. We had the joy to hear the Bishop of Sahara presenting the life of Charles de Foucauld. Universal fraternity is really lived worldwide and in all cultures!

The thanksgiving Mass concelebrated by the Bishop of Morocco, the Bishop of Laghouat and the Prior of the Tre Fontane was a real feast, a unanimous prayer, a Magnificat!

The homily of Fr. Claude Rault invited us all to follow the way of the Gospel: "There is no other way but that of Jesus of Nazareth, He who took the last place".

*Jean & Thérèse Gernigon*

## Asia

### **Pakistan**

#### **Signs of New Beginning.**

The beatification of Little Brother Charles de Foucauld - just like any other beatification in the Church - is an opportunity to rediscover the true life and message of the person of God who had lived in a particular era but well ahead of his time as well. Many are now discovering and rediscovering the person of Brother Charles, the mystic and the Universal Brother.

We are fortunate to have the presence of the followers of Little Brother Charles in Pakistan. We have Little Brothers of Jesus in Karachi and a Fraternity of the Little Sisters of Jesus in Multan. It is encouraging to note that there are however, many individuals and groups who know about the life of the Little Brothers and Sisters and they try to follow some aspects of the spirituality of Brother Charles. It must be noted that in Lahore there is an active Fraternity of Priests whereas in Karachi after a long slumber there are signs of reawakening!

‘The Lay Fraternity of Karachi has over 12 very committed members both men and women, young people, single and married of various social groups, works and jobs, experiences and situations. They all want to live life of the Fraternity following life of prayer, the Gospel sharing, life-sharing and Eucharistic worship. Every one of them tries to base his or her life on Jesus Christ. They meditate the texts of Brother Charles, to live a simple life and they support each other in time of need, be it spiritual or material," said Fr. Arthur Charles.

At the end, Fr. Emmanuel Asi encouraged the participants to continue to grow in the life of the Fraternity. He also gave a few practical ideas to make the fraternity function according to its true spirit.

*Fr. Arthur Charles*

## **Europe**

### **Celebrating the Beatification of Brother Charles de Foucauld in Malta.**

The long awaited 13<sup>th</sup> November 2005, date of the Beatification of Brother Charles de Foucauld, finally arrived. We, in Malta like many others in different parts of the world following in Brother Charles' footsteps, prepared a programme to celebrate this special and unique event.

On the actual day and in the days preceding and following the beatification, articles about Brother Charles and his spirituality written by members of the priest and lay fraternities were published in different local newspapers and periodicals. A special edition of the local Jesus Caritas Bulletin was also

published. A new leaflet including a photo of Brother Charles, his prayer of abandonment and extracts from his meditations, as well as a brief biography, was widely diffused. Programmes were broadcast on local radio and T.V. stations. A special vigil of prayer with extracts from the Gospel and meditations of Brother Charles was held in various parishes.

A group of priests, lay members and friends of the fraternity took part in the Beatification celebrations in St. Peter's Basilica and at the Trappist Abbey at Tre Fontane in Rome. This was a memorable occasion which we shall always cherish in our hearts.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005, the first feast day of Blessed Charles, a Thanksgiving Mass was concelebrated by twelve priests and attended by numerous members and friends of the Fraternity. This was a joyful celebration, beautiful in its simplicity, with an attendance of about 150 members and friends. During the offertory two Poor Clares presented relics of Blessed Charles, which they conserve in their convent. (The Poor Clares first came to Malta from Nazareth after being expelled from the Holy Land in the beginning of last century. They knew Brother Charles well as he had lived in a shack in their monastery garden and one of them Mother Saint Michel continued to correspond regularly with him from Malta). It was a memorable occasion for us, more so because at the end of the mass, the Archbishop of Malta Mons. Joseph Mercieca, presented the newly recognised statute of the Lay Fraternity to our National Responsibles, Anna and Francesco. The Church gave its official recognition of the Fraternity just in time to coincide with the Beatification. This enables us to participate in the Maltese Forum of Lay Church organizations and movements. After mass there was a time of friendship and sharing of refreshments for all those present.

The following Sunday, a Mass celebrated by Fr. Joe Fsadni, the Priest Responsible of the fraternity was relayed on local television to commemorate the Beatification and feast day of Blessed Charles.

We hope and pray that the Beatification of Blessed Charles will be an opportunity for many more Maltese to follow in his footsteps in order to grow in the love of Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ and that of our fellow men, especially those who are emarginated.

*Doris Borg*

### **Malta Fraternity Life - Solidarity and Commitment.**

The Beatification of Blessed Charles has urged us to be more faithful to our call to follow in his footsteps. The presence in our island of a big number of

refugees fleeing to Europe and finding themselves unwillingly on our shores, has been a challenge to us as fraternity. But because of our limits, especially as regards our number, it was difficult for us to decide what we could do about it. So when one of our members met a group of refugees, we decided to hold an activity for them at Christmas time.

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2006 we invited some refugees and a group of Indian men working temporarily in the construction of the new hospital (befriended by a fraternity couple), for a Get-Together. We met at the house of the Jesuits, who are themselves involved in the Jesuit Refugee Service. We had refreshments and games in a simple fraternity atmosphere, and we got to know each other. The refugees and the hospital workers appreciate this friendship. In fact, two of the Indian men regularly take part in one of our groups' fraternity meetings. We hope to keep up these acquaintances and to further our action.

We also decided to hold a celebration of the Word on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2006, the feast of the Shipwreck of St. Paul in Malta (cf Acts 27, 28). This feast is very special and dear to us Maltese as it reminds us of our Christian roots and is considered as a sort of Baptism of Malta. We had readings from the Bible, meditations of Blessed Charles, extracts from the Social Teaching of the Church, prayers and songs, in Maltese and English. This celebration was held at the Church of the Bonfire, very near the place where St. Paul was shipwrecked. Our guests included Indians and refugees. At one point all those present lit a candle from a big candle on the altar symbolising the warmth of love and hospitality. At the end we all shared a loaf of bread to symbolize our readiness to welcome others. St. Paul was a helpless stranger whom the Maltese welcomed, and we have been renowned for our hospitality ever since. Today we are called to extend our welcome to those brothers and sisters who are finding refuge in our island. We hope to be able to hold this activity every year.

## **Spain**

One of the branches of the family in Spain, a diocesan religious community, the Emmaus fraternity (Jose, Cinta and Ana) organised a Nazareth week for youths aged 25 to 30 years, with the collaboration of some members of other groups of the Foucauldian family in July 2005.

The Emmaus community was set up for welcoming children and adolescents who have difficulties with their family. The house and the village were ideal as a place for meeting, prayer, sharing and walks in a mountainous and calm setting. The majority of the young people know the

community, some helped in welcoming the children, in education and activities.

The young people asked for a time to deepen their spirituality. Other young people known by the other members of the fraternities joined the group. 25 people spent the week together. The programme of activities included living together, sharing daily tasks, time of formation, working in groups and adoration. An equipe made up of members of several branches of the family prepared the meeting and took part in it.

## **Prayer**

- In June the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart have their General Chapter in Brussels. This was the first branch of the big family of Brother Charles founded in 1933. They are no longer numerous about 37.
- The Little Sisters are going to close down the fraternity in Tamanrasset. All the fraternities in the places connected with Charles de Foucauld in Algeria need renewal. Help by lay people is welcomed.

## **To deposit money directly to the International Fraternity Fund :**

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Sparkasse Südwestpfalz  
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