



International Meeting of the Associates

Belgique – 2010

By

Pauline Kerrigan



Sr Chris and I enjoyed a trouble free journey to Brussels on Eurostar. Cecile was kindly waiting for us at the station when we arrived. She then drove us to 'L'Olivier' a residential Nursing home, to meet with fourteen sisters. what a wonderful welcome; I sat beside a Sister who is 100 years old; enjoying a great chat and a cool afternoon drink, feeling very comfortable in a beautiful environment now happily called 'Home' by the Sisters who gave us a superb start to our stay in Brussels. Acres of land, shining golden in the afternoon sun, crops bursting ripe for harvesting; this was the views, as we drove to Cecile's home, for a great overnight stay in Brussels.



Cécile & Pauline



'L'Olivier', a residential Nursing home.

Monday morning we went back to Brussels for lunchtime and the start of our gathering at Bon Pasteur, a vibrant 'air' surrounding us from the very beginning. The afternoon was spent getting to know Sisters, Associates and friends, also our 'home' for the next six days!

A welcome Mass was celebrated by the local priest, Fr Philip, in a very quiet, simple sharing way. After supper, Stephane gave a slide show and an informative commentary about Pierre Fourier.

Tuesday was a presentation prepared by Cecile, "Education can change the World". Gathering as a whole, then moving into small groups, to further discuss and enhance our perception of Blessed Alix and Pierre. The evening was spent enjoying music and singing with Philippe Goeseels and his group.

Wednesday Sr Marie Laure led us into a greater understanding of Alix Le Clerc, using her 'relation' and sharing with us in depth, the intensity of the texts. Once again the session left me feeling enriched, wanting to know more. In the afternoon, Beatrice showed us how to express ourselves using art work, at first I thought, "This is never going to work" but slowly it all came together!



Some of our art work.



Patrick & Veronique cooking on a BBQ

Thursday: Belgique Day (Belgium's national holiday), Marie Alexia spent the day with us; her theme was, "The Congregation in the world today". Many sisters teach boys and girls in countries across the world, other Sisters work in special areas, sharing and assisting for their wellbeing of family life, bringing Justice, Peace, Health and

understanding into many homes throughout the world. Marie Alexia used the 'Relation' of Alix Le Clerc many times to enhance and bring to life the charisma of the Congregation. Thursday evening supper was a beautiful barbecue cooked to perfection by Patrick. Then if we wished; a trip into the city centre to experience the festive gaiety.

Friday was a whole outing day, we all went together and visited many interesting places, which was a wonderful full day all guided perfectly by Charline.

Saturday morning was very much as 'associates'; sharing with those gathered around us, (everyone), Associates; with the Sisters, and our hopes and dreams as we try to embrace it more and more of our Founders way of life, the highs and lows as we live, work and study; and enjoy moments of joy and happiness with our family and friends.

We all 'associate' in very different ways according to our circumstances and needs. Very deep in our love of Jesus, we are all enhanced by our Fellowship with the Sisters, the care and support we share helps us to 'reach out' and grow'.

Four suggestions arose from these sessions which are important to us all.

1: Better communication between groups world-wide. Appoint a 'link person' in each group/country to communicate with Stephane Gilson, Stephane.gilson@gmail.com in the form of a news letter and we thought a photograph of each group could go into the newsletter.

2: The newsletter from all groups of Associates every two months in turn; therefore, UK Associates should have their newsletter for July / August 2011.

3: Chain of prayers to be used, to support the country that is doing the newsletter for the two months mentioned.

4: Next International Associate Meeting to be held after the Sisters Chapter in 2014.

Saturday afternoon was a 'cheerio' Mass, everyone was very much involved with the prayers and reading preparations.



Edith



A Congolese nurse, Pauline, Isabella,

Sr Helen Marie & Sr Edith.

Sunday, after a good night's rest and special prayers with Sr Marguerite, we spent time in her lovely garden until Edith collected us for Sunday lunch at her home. Special food and a wonderful time before Edith drove us to the station, to catch our train home to the UK.

Pauline's Reflections.

"The accommodation at Bon-Pasteur lent itself beautifully to our needs, plenty of quiet space, indoors and out. A large room to gather in, as a whole and most important, a well tuned piano and rooms to move into smaller groups, all close to the main area ; one always felt very much 'part of it'.

Great food, three times a day, eaten at two long tables; tea & coffee more or less on tap!

The eating, clearing up, chatter and movement at meal times with so many cultures and traditions, gave a great sense of wellbeing and joy. Sleeping and ablutions, was a couple of minutes from the main house. I felt the set up lent to a great sense of freedom and ease. A Hugh feeling of freedom and safety, sleeping in a school like dormitories, what fun to!

A simple Chapel housed within this building, always open, day or night. Within the grounds, a wonderful small oratory, quiet, plain and darkish, attached to the main house. It may have been a food store or pantry in its other use. The grounds were much of the same as one would expect to find around a manor house; trees, Scrubs Lake and old tennis court. No feelings of sadness here, the place was full of life, light and peace.

This feeling of wellbeing is staying with me, having spent my time in Belgium, listening, learning and sharing with like minded associates and Sisters; helping me to recognize my own special gifts and knowing this, if I am able to, must be the right time to reach out and spread. I want to be able to share the love and joy of our own spirituality to embrace the spontaneity, the individuality and to show sensitivity towards all the diverse cultures, traditions and social status that I may encounter. Enlightenment and understanding became a rich experience for me at Bon-Pasteur. I do so want to share this in my everyday life, here in Ireland and wherever my travels take me"

