

# Experiencing the essentials of Faith and Light in the midst of a pandemic



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# Summary



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# Introduction

Dear Faith and Light communities,

This booklet is a TREASURE. Take notice when you open and read it, because inside you will find gems of ideas; experiences and testimonies of great value. This is a treasure born of creativity and courage, which will brighten and enhance the lives of all us of us who are part of this Faith and Light family.

This TREASURE is given to us as a gift. Communities from many countries have sent in their experiences and, after reading them, I felt overwhelmed with gratitude and emotion. I have noted two things:

1. The commitment of the little Faith and Light communities is strong. They are full of life and want to continue. Neither the Covid pandemic nor any other plague will be able to destroy them, as long as we stay conscious of the vocation to which we are called by Jesus and of the links that unite us. And this can be seen in the experiences shared in this booklet.
2. In Faith and Light, there is plenty of creativity and a great desire to travel, to fight on and to build a community. There is a great desire to continue to be part of the family. We all hope that our friends who have a disability are happy and that we take care of them. This can be seen from reading about your experiences.

It is true that in Faith and Light, we need to meet one another, to sing and dance together...But when we cannot do this due to a situation that we cannot change, what is left for us? Only what is essential is left: Jesus unites us and brings us together. He calls us together and we have to find the ways for this to continue to grow stronger even in the midst of difficulties. And these difficulties will ultimately fade. For God, nothing is impossible!

It only remains for me to encourage each of you to continue to take care of the life of your community with creativity and enthusiasm. We

may not be able to do the things we were doing before anymore, but we can do other things and are bound to be surprised by other ways and opportunities.

I would like to thank all the communities who sent in their experiences and ideas. There are no doubt many other initiatives in other communities. I would also like to thank our friends in the international secretariat, Corinne and Céline, for all the work they had to do in collecting, gathering and translating these testimonies.

May this booklet help us all to learn from one another, to encourage new ideas and to see that caring for our communities depends on each of us, on each member of Faith and Light. May your communities, even in the midst of this situation, continue to be a place of growth, a place where we live our faith together and a motive and incentive to be happy in our everyday lives.

RAUL IZQUIERDO  
International Coordinator



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## In Argentina



### **For where there are two or three gathered in my name**

This year, 2020, has surprised us. We planned new things and projects. Our community was going to have its meetings in a new place, another space offering more availability, freedom...

We were preparing to make a pilgrimage in May to the sanctuary of Our Lady del Rosario de San Nicolás, near to us, on the theme: "Celebrating with Mary". We invited the Faith and Light communities from our country and our brothers from Paraguay. We were enthusiastically making preparations and looking forward to this time of meeting and celebration.

We met in February, the first meeting of the year, to make arrangements so that everyone could take part, to see how to raise funds, and to prepare everything that was needed to organise an event like this. We were full of courage and impatient.

But we were surprised by the pandemic that imprisoned us at home and we no longer saw each other... Isolated but we remained united. We have a WhatsApp group to keep in touch with encouraging messages, wishes, songs and hellos. We felt accompanied and supported.

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We made a few group video-calls. The problem was that most of us do not have access to the Internet and we have not been able to meet virtually with all the community.

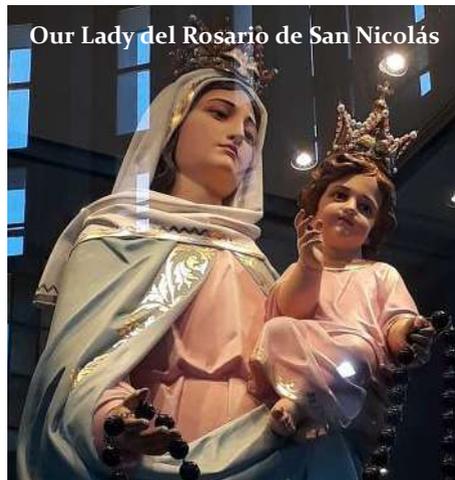
Then we made another step by organising, through WhatsApp, a meeting and prayer space. *For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them*, said Jesus. With the certainty that He is there, that His Spirit is embracing us and uniting us as a family and as a community, forming a single heart. We meet once a week, always at the same time with different modes: we sing, we give our intentions, we pray, we listen to the Word, we share... This time is experienced in an intense way. It is a strong experience of communion. We really do form a community. It is a much anticipated time. Thus, we are trying to experience the essentials of Faith and Light in the midst of this pandemic.

We are looking forward to the time when we can meet again for real, to hug one another, hold hands, celebrate birthdays together, share games, songs, the Word and life and experience what we had planned for this year.

But we will have to remain vigilant in the meantime, looking for the best way of continuing to grow as a community.

Love to you all in all the communities.

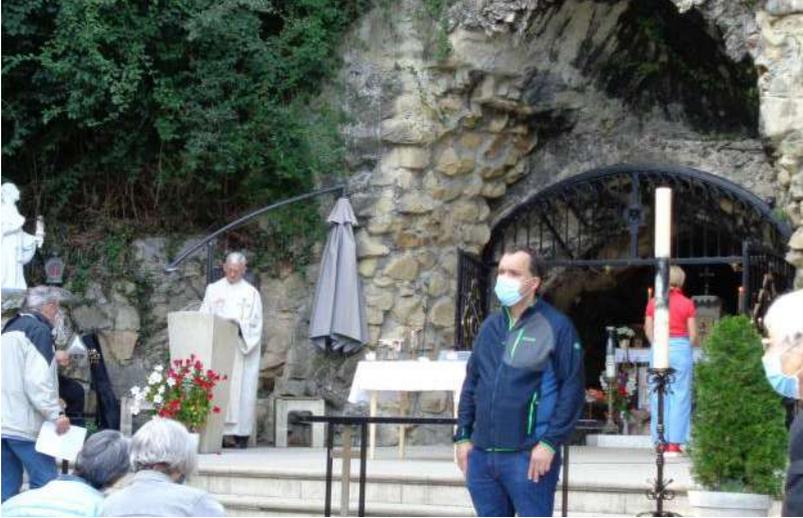
"Mary, Mother of Light" community, Santa Fe



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## In Austria

### Month after month



It was and still is a difficult period. We are thankful that there have been no Covid victims in our community so far.

Austria was locked down for three weeks from mid-March, totally banned from going out. A good many people who have a disability live in an institution and not with their family. For them, it was particularly difficult: no workshops, no work, no visits, no walks, no Faith and Light meetings. Sad!

When the lockdown measures were relaxed, gatherings were still banned and we had to cancel our summer celebration. Sad again!

The only possible contact was the telephone, mobiles with video and the ability to send photos. So, we were able to exchange ideas and encourage one another.

In September, we finally met at the Lourdes grotto in Maria Gugging near Klosterneuburg! We were able to celebrate outside then be a bit together, the restrictions are less stringent outside.

The question is what will we do when it is cold. We plan to celebrate Mass in St Martin's church in October and November but not

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have games and songs... because the rules for events in closed rooms is currently too strict. If the weather is wonderfully fine, we may be able to stay outside for a while in front of the church (observing social distancing).

For several years, in December, we have been making beeswax candles that we give to our loved ones at Christmas. We hope that the Viennese parish of our chaplain, Gerhard Mayrhofer, will be able to make a meeting room available to us. For this, we would have to go to Vienna as an exceptional case. Will it be possible?

We will decide on a monthly basis how and where we meet. But it also depends on the health measures. At the moment, the number of infected people is rising in Austria and the restrictions are becoming stricter! We do not have a firm idea but we all want the community to continue to exist. We will do everything to succeed.

Theresa Schmidt (On behalf of the team)  
"Saint Martin" community, Klosterneuburg



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# In Belgium

## Nicole's dream



Like many people, I missed seeing members of the community. From the start of the end of lockdown, I asked everyone if I could photograph them on their step, door open and wearing the mask that really marks this year of 2020.

My dream was to meet in a big house but this is only possible on paper.

This is how I realised my dream... Meeting up, in a house open to everyone, where there is lots of space and of course with the social distancing that is hard to see here...

A small nod to this unforgettable year.

NICOLE REINBOLD  
"The Veronicas" community, Florennes

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## Arriving at almost the same time as the virus

I am the new leader of "The Veronicas" community in Florennes since September 2019. I joyfully accepted this responsibility. My mandate had barely begun when the coronavirus made its entrance as well and shook up our old habits. Our last meeting took place on 2 February and nothing since. Our friends were unable to leave their institutions, others returned to their family homes for four months, others still live alone with home help.

A monthly contact has been kept between us. I sent, via email and post, a reflection, a prayer, a drawing or a craft to do, a postcard to make during the holidays and to send to another member of the community. We have also got news by telephone.

On 23 August, the regional team met, we have already thought about organising a big celebration for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary that will take place on Sunday 6 June 2021. If all goes to plan, we will meet on 18 October, we are very much looking forward to it.

LOUISE-MARIE LEURQUIN  
"The Veronicas" community, Florennes



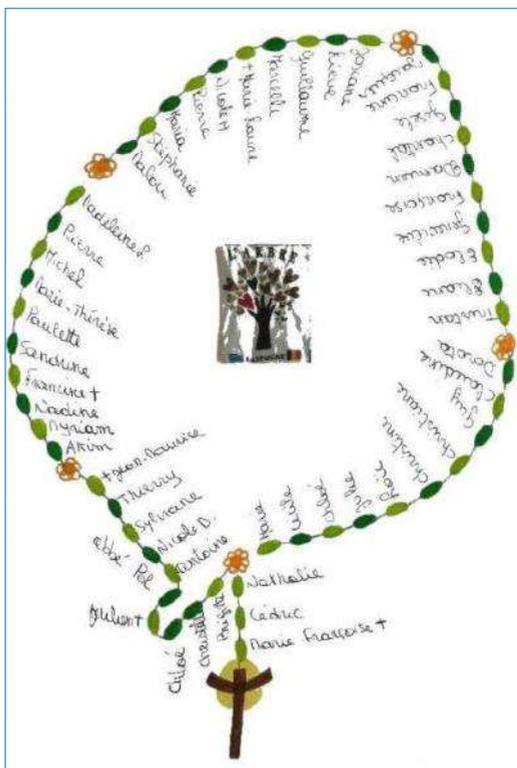
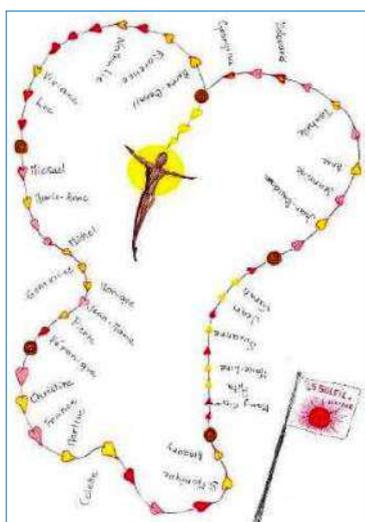
Much  
happiness  
to all

## A rosary for the month of May

We were all locked down in our homes with very little contact other than by telephone. The “Sun” community came up with the idea of establishing links between the communities in the region by proposing that they draw or make a rosary and write the names of community members all around it.

The rosary beads are also the symbol of the bonds that join all of us, brought together through Mary and Jesus.

“The Sun” community, Bouge



## An initiative



Members of the communities in the Namur-Luxembourg region organised this meal and shared their photos to feel close to one another...

Sunday 19 April was supposed to have been a beautiful and great day for our Faith and Light communities in the Namur/Luxembourg region. A day of joy, celebration and meeting!

And if we were creative throughout the lockdown, we experienced this day at the height of "this bond of friendship that unites us".

We figured that this Sunday lunchtime, we would put 7 extra places at the table, one for each community in our region. And then we would decorate the table with souvenirs: photos, small flags, bookmarks from previous years... and why not as a meal have a picnic! A prayer before the meal: *"Our 5 loaves and 2 fishes"*. And then, use your imagination...

A beautiful day in communion.

ALBERT, "Friend-Sharing" community, Libramont  
FRANÇOISE, "The Tree" community, Bastogne

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## Who's who?

Our "Emmaus" community sends a newsletter every month. We still have not resumed the pace of our monthly meetings due, obviously, to the coronavirus. Normally, our community is made up of 31 members (plus a chaplain). Of these members, 13 are in institutions. For the time being, they are not allowed to go out in a group without a teacher. It is impossible for us to accommodate them all at the present time.

During this time that is hard for everyone, we are trying to keep in touch, even if this is difficult. Our little newsletter remains a good way to do this and the last issue contained a small game that tested the visual memory of our members.

Who is hiding under the obligatory mask?

JIMMI BRUYNINX  
"Emmaus" community, Nivelles



In addition to the mask game, the latest newsletter from the community presents the word of the month from the guidelines, a colouring page of Saint Francis and the birthdays calendar ...

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## In Benin



### Everyone is getting restless

It is always a great joy for me to read the messages from our Faith and Light leaders.

Indeed, since the announcement of the coronavirus pandemic, we have stopped our meetings with the people with disabilities. Nevertheless, we have kept the contact between parents and friends.

We telephone each other to exchange news. Once, we met as a large delegation to respond to an invitation from a Religious Brother who was taking his final vows in his parish. It was a beautiful time of reunion and celebration. We were also able to make the annual pilgrimage to the Marian shrine in Allada, which is about thirty kilometres from Cotonou, before the situation erupted. Currently, everyone is getting restless. When will this Covid end?

We await in prayer the time of the Lord. How will the recovery come about? God will provide. Let us live in hope of a better tomorrow. Let us remain united in prayer and trust.

SISTER MARIE-ANTOINETTE DOSSOU

"Our Lady of the people with disabilities" community, Cotonou

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## In Brazil

### Visits to families



The community has been in existence for 22 years. Today, we are living in a very difficult time. However, by using media, the bonds between the community members are being maintained and even strengthened.

During lockdown, the only form of personal meeting was visiting the families.

We have had several occasions: Easter, 12 October when the feast of children is celebrated in Brazil, and Our Lady of Aparecida, the patron saint of the country. We took presents to our friends with disabilities. This was a joyful time with songs and smiles... Then finally, we experienced a real community meeting with intensity.

We hope that this experience will be able to positively influence all the Faith and Light communities in the world.

SABRINA  
"Saint Lucia" community, Governador Valadares

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## I have telephoned everyone

My community, here in southern Brazil, is the only one in the region. It is very old: 33 years, our members are already at an advanced age.

During the pandemic, the way of remaining close to everyone was our WhatsApp group. But not everyone takes part. Some still have Internet issues.

I organised meetings via Zoom and WhatsApp but only ten people could take part. So, I telephoned everyone. I asked for ideas to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Faith and Light and everyone suggested a meeting at the shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida.

ELAINE MORÁS  
"Our Lady of Glory" community, Porto Alegre



## A YouTube channel

We have created a YouTube channel on which all the communities in Brazil can post videos and messages.



In my community, Marcia is very good at crafts. She made a small present for the friends with disabilities. They were all delivered in person. It was an opportunity to have a brief chat and check how everyone was doing.

JUSSARA AIDAR

"Vila Guilherme" community, Sao Paulo



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## In Burkina Faso



### Distribution of food

We are pleased to be able to share some of the experiences we had during the lockdown from March to June and after.

During the lockdown in Ouagadougou, we did not have the monthly meeting, in response to the measures decreed by the Ministry of Health. We got news via the telephone. All the community members have a means of communication.

The community was able to meet on 12 July with a Eucharist celebration with our chaplain followed by sharing of food. We had a campaign to request aid to support us during the period of inactivity that we have all had to face. We received in-kind and cash donations. This allowed us to distribute food to all the community members. These donations were made up of milk, rice, pasta, oil and sugar.



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We do not hold meetings during the rainy season, which is from June to October. We decided to organise meetings every two months until the health situation really improves because our children are very fragile.

Our WhatsApp group helps us to exchange news and for those who do not have the Internet, by telephone and little messages.

We remain united in prayer.

CAROLINE ELLA VIHO

"Our Lady of all Graces" community, Ouagadougou



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## In Canada



### A bit of a chaotic start

We started to meet via Zoom soon after the lockdown, due to the pandemic, being declared. The Coordinating Team met on 17 March 2020. Our first gathering as a community was in April. We have been meeting twice a month ever since. One session for everyone and the other one only for parents.

Our first Zoom meeting was chaotic. We were so happy to see each other, we all talked at the same time! It was happy and refreshing with much laughter. The meetings that followed have been structured and fun. We organise different activities: songs, action songs, games and guessing games, origami, drawing, painting... The favourite is painting. We have had two “painting in the garden” sessions. This was done whilst respecting all the measures put in place by the government. These were both in person and via Zoom.

“Holy Family” community, Dorval

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## "Friendship-Loyalty" visits

I proposed "Friendship-Loyalty" visits allowing us to meet up in small groups outside, while we can, to talk, have fun, warm our hearts... Marcelle and I began our visits.

We wanted to organise a meeting in small groups in a park for a picnic. However, the second wave of Covid put an end to that. We chose to wait for group meetings but we will continue our personal meetings as much as possible to keep in touch, in person or by telephone, and we encourage you to do the same. You are all very important to us. And we are all very important to each other.

Despite the pandemic, subscriptions are still required, as a gift to our international family and to have the Guidelines printed. We have already given some and have received subscriptions on our visits.

Let us be guided by the Spirit and ask for clear signs to guide us in our decisions. We rely on your prayers.

"The Star" community, Montreal



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## They miss us so much



We were so missing our friends... We had not met since February so this summer we became more creative. We were feeling bad, not only for the people with disabilities who mainly live in homes but also for their caregivers, wearing masks all day and trying occupy those who would normally attend workshops.

We wanted to let them know that they were all loved, so we decided to organise an online meeting. We played music with action songs, celebrated birthdays and ended with a special blessing. We were able to visit six homes where our friends live. Even without the usual big hugs, we all felt closer.

As we head into cooler weather with no hope of Covid restrictions lifting soon... We have begun to meet again via Zoom.

In September, we managed to bring together 17 of our members online. We plan to get together every month as previously, using this year's Guidelines.

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In addition:

- We have developed and distributed a memories calendar that features the celebrations and major themes that we have previously celebrated together. On it are the member birthdays and the meeting dates for each month.
- We asked our members to decorate thank you cards for the front line workers that we have given to the local hospital.
- Each person from the coordinating team has adopted one or two members as “phone buddies” to share news with between meetings.

Our prayers go out to all those who are struggling to find connections and feel the ever present love of God and community during these strange times.

DEANNE RIOPEL  
"Grandin" community, Saint Albert



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## In Chile



### **Hello to all Faith and Light**

I am the coordinator of the "Capacity for love" community, we are in Santiago in Chile and I want to share our experience in these times of pandemic.

We meet online once a month and share a theme from the Guidelines, we sing and play games and we love the time of sharing.

Everyone awaits these meetings. Between times, we send photos... The new technologies have helped the Holy Spirit to bring us together as well as God, Jesus and Mary.

We embrace you fraternally from this corner of the world.

PABLA VERA GUERRA  
"Capacity for love" community, Santiago de Chile

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## In Columbia



### Every day, Rigoberto sends a prayer

This period has been very difficult, not only for our community, but for the whole world because the virus happened unexpectedly and made us totally change our lifestyles. We contacted every member of the community by phone. On our WhatsApp group, every day, Rigoberto sends a prayer and we also post positive messages to everyone. Every Sunday, Father Hermann sends us a reflection on the Gospel of the day.

We have met virtually three times: in July, August and September. We were lucky enough to be spiritually accompanied by Father Isaac from Peru and Father Hermann Rodríguez.

It was an immense joy to see our friends again and share our experiences of living through this period of lockdown. We gave thanks to God for the health of each person.

For the third meeting in September, Father Hermann Rodríguez began with a beautiful prayer for all the Faith and Light communities in the world and for our families. We began our year with the first theme of the new Guidelines.

We hope, God willing, to see each other again very soon and celebrate the 50th anniversary of Faith and Light!

RAQUEL TRUJILLO AND ROSA-ELVIA ROSAS  
"Road to Bethany" community, Bogota

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## In Croatia

### Praying together every Sunday

We are happy that we could have our monthly meetings in June, July and September 2020. It was nice and warm so we could be outside. We celebrated Mass together and, as there were 30 of us, we had a lot of space in the church.

During the lockdown period from March to June, we tried to see each other and pray via Zoom meetings every Sunday. Therefore, we saw each other and stayed in touch.

In June, we tried to share how we had experienced this strange and difficult period. It was a great joy. We took special care especially for lunch, each person bringing their own meal. We tried not to hug and kept a distance between each of us. It was really unusual for us, but we did our best and we were happy to be able to see each other in real life.

For those who cannot come to the meetings, we try to keep in touch by phoning them or having a short visit (just one of our members as a representative). We sent a parcel with some small gifts to one of our members who was celebrating their birthday and was not allowed to join us.

We wonder what this winter will bring, but we hope that with the God's help, we will continue to be close to our friends with disabilities and to each another.

"Saint Jerome" community, Zagreb



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## In Czech Republic

### Regular meetings

During the lockdown, we set up a Skype group for:

- Regular monthly meetings,
- Stations of the cross during Lent,
- Stations of the light during Easter.

We also used this channel to send messages and photos between people from the community.

Since May, we have all felt the need to pray together. We therefore have vespers every Wednesday evening.

Unfortunately, about a third of the community members cannot join us so I call or send emails or real letters to everyone.

May God bless you all.

ALZBETA VESELA  
"Little Boat of St Joseph"  
community, Brno



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## In Denmark

### In pairs

The "Vesterbro" community has not met since March. However, we meet in pairs for a walk, we phone each other and we pray for one another. As we have not been able to organise the Day of Sharing and Announcing, the members paid the money for solidarity themselves, the same amount as in previous years.

We still do not know when we are all going to be able to meet again but we hope to go to Lourdes in 2021 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Faith and Light. We will go to Lourdes during the last week of July with the Scandinavian pilgrimage, which normally takes place every year.

May God bless and protect you all.

INGE SWITON

"Vestebro" community, Frederiksberg



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## In France



### September letter

We know how much a lot of you are looking forward to the resumption of our community meetings and so are we.

However, the health situation with regards to the virus has forced us to cancel our September and October meetings. Until we have a respite from this situation, we will not be able to meet. We have strict instructions from our international and church leaders. It is vital not to put the most fragile amongst us at risk. Nevertheless, we are proposing a large number of activities to make up for this:

- First of all, we are going to start our bi-monthly letters again, in which everyone will be invited to share photos, prayers and information.
- With each delivery, we will print a prayer created by one of us, which will be used as the prayer for the whole community. Get your pens out!
- We are going to set up meetings in pairs, the 4<sup>th</sup> time of Faith and Light. The coordination team will choose and give us the name of our partner who we will be able to contact, meet, exchange with... with protective measures! Everyone is free to organise this time of sharing. The team simply asks that each pair to do a report on what happened so that it can be reported to everyone. Each time the pairs will change.
- We will organise Days of Announcing and Sharing in the parishes in small teams without the fragile ones so as to be able to introduce Faith and Light, our beautiful community, sell some cakes and gather a bit of money for us all to go to Lourdes on a pilgrimage at the end of 2021.

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- We are keeping the Wednesday evening individual prayer, starting with the prayer communicated, in union with the whole community.
  - We are maintaining, and returning to you, the list of community members for whom we are praying every day throughout the month.
  - We will create, as in lockdown, a catechistic sharing on a passage from the Gospel with colouring in and games.

There will be other surprises that we will share with you throughout this time when we are unable to meet.

We are thinking very much of you all, we are praying for you and we embrace you.

MARIE-CHRISTINE AND RÉGIS GOUSSET  
"The Seed that Blossoms" community, Orleans

**The community coordination team has also sent a named letter to six of its members to ask them for a testimony that will be shared with the whole community. The question is different each time:**

- **Your most beautiful story about life in Faith and Light?**
- **What does Faith and Light mean to you?**
- **Why are you part of Faith and Light?**
- **Faith and Light, what does it mean to your family, to you, your partner and your children? How does it help you?**
- **How does Faith and Light help you to live your everyday life?**
- **My life with Faith and Light? Faith and Light my second family!**



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## Every Sunday

Since the beginning of lockdown, we have met every Sunday at 17:00 by telephone: we exchange news, we meditate on the theme of the day given by our Guidelines, which at that time was “Jesus is the way” and we end with a time of prayer and intercession.



### Testimonies:

- *Going out, the time of meeting, the lockdown and feeling planned like a normal meeting.* (Nicole)
- *I found it very open and very big.* (Pierre)
- *We continued to follow our little book: reading the gospel in many voices.* (Nicole)
- *We let the silent ones share by allowing them a time to say their prayer intention.* (Nicole)
- *I prayed to Our Lady of Lourdes for all of Faith and Light and also for the world.* (Hilaire)

NICOLE, JEAN-PIERRE, HILAIRE AND NICOLAS  
"Hope and Friendship" community, Le Plessis Bouchard

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## Thank you WhatsApp !

From the very beginning of lockdown, a WhatsApp group was set up and almost all the community was connected! The birthdays during these months of lockdown were celebrated on the same day and we had then several queens or kings of the day! Lucie sang happy birthdays. Little videos of Pauline and Emmanuelle were sent to us from their establishment. Julie “sent” us cakes for us to devour with our eyes!

We had a WhatsApp on Easter day. Blandine sent us a tutorial explaining how to celebrate Easter when you are all alone and she received a lot of very kind feedback especially from Viviane and Madeleine who were also alone. Cécile shared with us her talents as a seamstress and housewife. Etienne took us to the Ardèche region in the middle of his sheep. Catherine and Blandine introduced us to their latest granddaughters, Ava and Elisabeth...

On Good Friday, some experienced the washing of the feet at home as we know how to do it! Several of us were in a communion of prayer via YouTube, where André, our chaplain deacon, took part in the services.

No-one was seriously ill in the community. We were quite in touch with each other during this time, but the “real life” presence was missed and I hope that we are not going to have to wait too long to see each other again!!!

"Mustard Seed" community, Ville d'Avray



## "The Gazette"



Arc-en-ciel / Foi et Lumière  
le 3 mai

Un bonjour bien amical de Régis :  
"Ben triste de ne plus pouvoir vous  
rencontrer tous et très heureux de  
vous les téléphoner et courriers  
échangés. Un grand merci à chacun !  
Comme le printemps a été beau  
ça m'a permis de travailler dehors"



Biancine Mazzoni  
le 14 mai

"On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible  
pour les yeux." On veut mettre de la JOIE, JOIE, JOIE  
dans vos COEURS" ... avec toute notre amitié !



Arc-en-ciel / Foi  
et Lumière  
le 24 mai

De la part de Josette : " Courage à chacun de nous pour  
la suite ! "

**"The Gazette", (16 pages) helps  
you to publish news and photos  
directly. Page setting is automat-  
ic and the result is very beautiful.  
The site exists in several lan-  
guages.**

[https://www.famileo.com/  
famileo/en-EU/](https://www.famileo.com/famileo/en-EU/)

This is what we have done to keep the community alive in these times of lockdown and difficulty in returning to normal.

- For four months, thanks to the "Famileo" site, we have produced a monthly "Gazette" to give and receive photos and text that we can post directly on to the site. Each person can then keep a link with the community. It is not ideal but we do our best.
- We have taken out 17 subscriptions for each of the people with disability at a cost of 5,90€ per paper issue. The rest of the community receive the gazette as a PDF.
- For the return to meetings, we will organise small group meetings on a Saturday afternoon: a walk, a visit to an establishment, a time of prayer... perhaps a snack.

MARYSE TRUCHOT AND EMMANUEL MOUCHARD  
"Rainbow" community, Grenoble

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## Praying with St Francis

Despite the pandemic, we were able to meet at the beginning of September outside and at the beginning of October in a hall, keeping our distance and wearing masks. Of course, some have not dared to come for fear of coronavirus. For them, we have come up with some ideas to keep them connected.

We took the Gospel of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25) in conjunction with the feast of St Francis of Assisi. We did the mime proposed by the booklet then told the story of St Francis with, among other things, the episodes of the wolf of Gubbio with the crow and the sparrow. Then we read the simple prayer of St Francis.

For the activity, we sent everyone a bookmark depicting a painting of St Francis of Assisi and with his prayer on the back. Everyone decorated the prayer with a garland of flowers. We will try to keep in touch with everyone by sending, whenever possible, a card or a drawing to those who are absent.

Of course, SMS works between us as well as the telephone for getting news. Then, each person passes on news of who they have been able to contact. We have experienced a real union of the whole community: we pray for such and such a person, ill or absent, and it is a very rich time.

During the lockdown, we suggested to everyone to watch the televised mass in a union of prayer and do a drawing each week linked with the liturgical year: flowers, cross, sun, tree, road... And at the September meeting, we made a display of all these drawings.

These are our small ways of keeping our community alive...



CLAIRE TERRASSE  
"The Star Boat" community, Gap

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## Grow fruit and veg



Thank you to the international coordinators for all the attention and affection that you sent us through your letter to all the communities. Regarding your request to share about the various opportunities whilst complying with the health precautions, here is my answer: grow fruit and veg! Where we meet beside our meeting place (parish hall), on lawns, in nooks and crannies and everywhere!

This has the advantage of being outside and we contribute in a small way to food solidarity and also to the better health of each person!

Some of us, not wanting or not being able to kneel down, will prepare seedlings in pots at a table.

We have still not tried it out as such only mentioned it. It is an avenue that we will share with everyone because we believe that it is good and beautiful.

STÉPHANE  
"Hope and Friendship" community, Le Plessis Bouchard

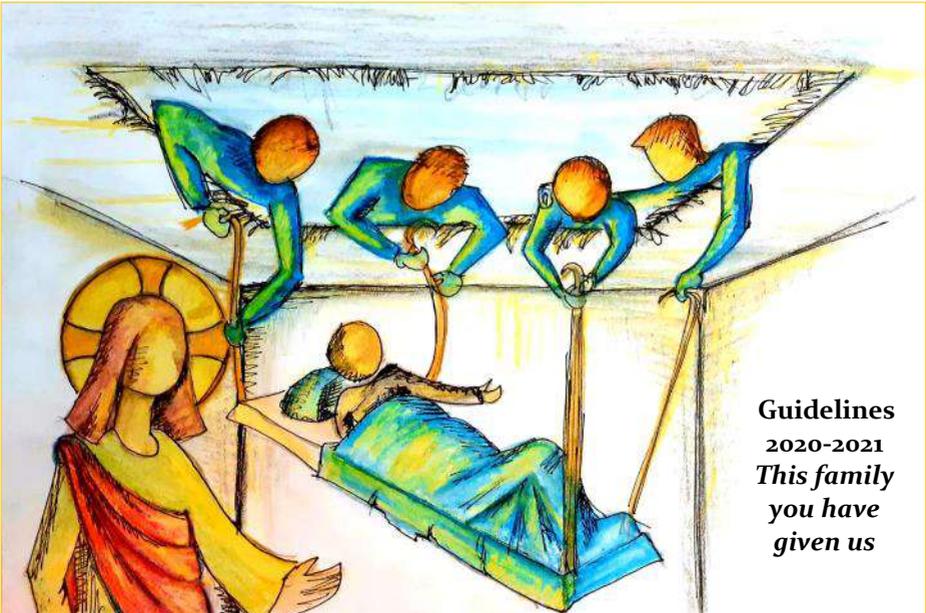
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## Thank you for giving us a boost

Our community has 45 regular members! During lockdown, we stayed in touch with each other through the internet, telephone and individual visits. Following the message from Raúl and Maria-Sylvia, we decided to start up our meetings again, one Sunday afternoon a month, in a different way so as to comply with the health guidelines.

The new format for our meetings: six small groups meeting from 15:00 to 16:30 from November with a team leader and team member. Our parish has made six rooms available to us in which we are able to respect social distancing and the orders of the homes.

Our meetings will take place as before with the exchange of news, a theme from the Guidelines common to the six teams, a meditation and a time of sharing and songs. Each team leader will bring a snack (biscuits and single serve drinks). Our first theme: *This family that we have been given* and the Gospel of St Mark 2, 1-12, which speaks of the care that we take of one another and our desire to meet Jesus. We also want to deepen the Lord's Prayer by meditating on one sentence at each meeting.





After the meeting, the team leaders will be able to stay in a room for an exchange (or connect through Zoom). Every month, we will produce a small newspaper with news and testimonies from the six small groups, photos and/or drawings... In advance of each meeting, the coordination team will meet as previously with our deacon chaplain, Luc Martel.

The meeting is the heart of Faith and Light. *When a friend takes me in their arms, Natalina tells us, I feel that my disability has disappeared and for a short while, I feel like the others, this makes me feel good.* We cannot hug but the words of friendship and the exchanging of looks will be there to say that we love each other.

CLAUDINE PLAS ARBON  
AND MICHEL AND ANNE HUGON  
"The Dove" community, Neuilly

## No more meals or snacks!

During lockdown, the community continued its activities through a telephone tree that worked very well then sent out postcards via the "Feezer" website with a photo of all the community members. Then, two four page newspapers summarising all the activities of each person during the lockdown with a word from our chaplain.

Since September, we have met on a Sunday afternoon in a church, to respect the protective measures, with a time of welcome, a time of sharing around the Guidelines and the preparation of the mass that we celebrate together. Sadly, no more meals or snacks, which had been very, very important to us!

CLAIRE GAUTHIER

"The Volcanoes" community, Clermont Ferrand



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## A special lockdown prayer

During lockdown, we telephoned one another and each person received the "special lockdown" prayer, found on the OCH website, by a letter or email.

In May, we met in small groups in a garden. In September, we settled in the basement of the coordinator with all the doors open to respect distancing, disposable plates and gel on our hands before eating.

In October, we met in the parish hall with face masks, gel, social distancing and we took up the Guidelines. We had absentees but for reasons other than the fear of Covid.

DANIÈLE LAVAUD  
"The Pirogue" community, Poitiers

### Prayer of support

Lord, in communion with the whole Church and Pope Francis, we turn to you:

Help us to use this period of trouble and lockdown to allow us to rediscover the beauty of the small things, small attentions to our loved ones, our parents, our friends and our neighbours.

With the help of your Spirit, help us to understand that in these small things are our treasure.

Help us to renew the gestures of kindness, affection and compassion to reach out to those who need it most.

We especially entrust to you those who are ill and have a disability and all those for whom this period is a source of anxiety and great loneliness.

We also entrust to you all those who have lost a loved one as well as all the people who are caring for the sick, sometimes at the risk of their own life.

Finally, we entrust to you all those who are now working so that we can continue to live our daily lives. Thank you for all these talents and the outpourings of generosity throughout the world.

With the help of the Virgin Mary, help us to not lose sight of you and to travel together towards the light of Easter.

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## The sun is still shining



Here is how we spent this long time without the possibility of meeting between 2 February and 11 July, unheard of since the creation of the community in 1997.

We were keen to send a special email to community members (and a letter to those without the Internet) on the days planned for the meetings that could not take place. I also used video to give a personal message to the community, with my daughters, we shared an action song. We launched a 'guess the action song' competition (ten songs without words, each person has to guess the song title). We sent everyone a telephone number list and a photo of everyone so that we could call one another as well as a calendar of birthdays. It has been very important in continuing and strengthening bonds.

Finally, two months of strict lockdown ended, I personally visited each person at home. This was an immense joy. I was able to take a photo of everyone and I then shared by email some news but especially the beautiful faces of everyone. Our community has thus continued to live and the sun of our community is still shining!

MARC BIENVENU  
"Sun" community, Dijon

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## In Germany



### **A coordinator's letter to his community**

We too were surprised by the Corona virus and were not spared.

The meetings that were planned have been banned by the government and today, we still cannot say when we will be able to meet again.

All community members have received our CD of songs and many of them like to listen to it.

Four people meet every day at 19:00 in our old church. We do a "corona prayer". For twenty minutes, we pray and sing together and this gives us courage and hope. In these uncertain times, our social circle needs Faith and Light more than ever, so as to not give up.

I wish you all trust and joy in the hope of seeing one another again as soon as possible.

May God protect you, we do not forget about you.

"Martinsquelle" community, Tecklenburg

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## In Hungary

### How do you keep the flame alive?

On 6 September in Budapest, we organised a reduced celebration taking into account the health precautions and placing the emphasis on the personal meeting. During the mass, there were some first communions.

To make the celebration more beautiful, we learnt to sing our Faith and Light prayer that had just been put to music. During the lockdown in March, we asked a well-known musician to put the Hungarian words of this prayer to music. As he had some time, he gladly did so. At the meeting, we learnt the tune. Dance is closely linked to celebration. To keep the necessary distances from one another, we held scarves, forming a larger circle. This was a good time together.

During the lockdown, our communities were able to meet online. However, this summer, most summer camps were able to take place. Although some of them were shortened, sometimes to a weekend, we were eager to see one another.



The communities of Hungary



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## The power of prayer

Here is what we did:

- We stayed in touch by telephone and we visited each other. Visiting a member of the community and their family helped us to get to know each other better.
- We should help each other and share our fears. If I can call someone from Faith and Light, I will quickly be relieved and feel better. We shared our fears and concerns.
- We carried each other in prayer. We should not be afraid to ask the others to pray for us.
- We took care to protect the health of each person. This is why we contacted each other via Messenger, Skype, Zoom or WhatsApp, which also allowed us to see each other. It is reassuring to see each other.
- We sent the list of telephone numbers to each member so that they can call each other at any time to ask for help or share their feelings.
- Those who are not in quarantine do the shopping for those who are.
- My husband passed away during the lockdown. This is when I experienced what belonging to the Faith and Light family really means. I asked for and received a lot of help. My brothers and sisters helped me to feel the generosity of God's love and kindness. I was able to call them at any time, even late at night. We prayed together over the phone. They prayed for me. I felt the power of the prayer. This is what sustained us.

Once, I passed a friend from the community on the stairs. I think she had been sent by the Lord. After meeting her, I was totally renewed. My son, who has Down's Syndrome, also helped me a lot. I feel truly privileged to have him.



"Pine" community, Dewdrop

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## In Italy

### Near, at distance



Lockdown began: no friends, no cinema. Meetings cancelled. And the biggest suffering: not being able to see Faith and Light friends. The last meeting with my community in Rho was so rich and so intense. A beautiful day together, with our announcements and sharing, a lunch and a show that involved everyone. The calendar was ready, many meetings were planned. But no. Everything stopped. From Glenda's birthday celebration to the province formation session, from the International Council meeting, planned for mid-March in Egypt, to the Italian National Assembly planned for June. Forced shutdown.

The desire to get news, to shake hands, to hug was too strong. But what could we do without leaving the house? The only solution, apart from telephone calls and WhatsApp, was social networks. And so was born "near, at distance", the launch slogan of videos that helped us to feel closer to the communities, to each family and to each person.

Then came the desire to listen to Don Marco: his commentaries on the Word of God were precious, his accompaniment was missed. These videos touched me a lot, I felt less alone. I hope that they also helped other people to get through these strange days.

Creativity is at home in Faith and Light. I have seen cooking competitions, other videos teaching songs, messages from Don Mauro, colourful rainbows with the words: *It will be ok!*, Matteo preparing pasta for his mum, Luisa... I have also read some sad messages. I have cried... I have prayed for my dear friends locked up in the hospital and then at home.



The lockdown has taught us to take some time for ourselves. Even if not being able to go out creates stress, carry on having imagination. Give yourself time to pray. The social networks have showed us how they can also be useful for this: following a way of the cross, the mass, listening to meditations...

The desire to see each other again is immense. As soon as we are able to open the doors of our houses, we will run to one another to celebrate. This will be a great joy.

The lockdown will have taught something to everyone. The first thing for me is being near even at a distance helps hope to grow. And the certainty that Faith and Light is a large family is, every day, my great hope. We are contagious, yes, but it is a contagion of love. And even from a distance, we know how to say to each other: *you are precious to me, I love you so much!*

ANGELA GRASSI  
International vice coordinator

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## Then came the lockdown

At the very beginning of the pandemic, we were optimistic about the possibility of meeting, we just thought that we would have to implement some additional protection procedures, but that eventually things would stay as usual. But the restrictions came. One of our "ragazzi" (persons with disability) said: *If we cannot hug one another, it isn't Faith and Light!*

In one sense, he was right. Faith and Light is a relationship, based on bonds of friendship and human contact is a natural consequence of it, it is our way of showing that we care about one another.

When lockdown came, all these doubts were swept away by a reality that was very much harder: physical contact was forbidden and we had to stay at home. How could we experience a friendship without the basic "tools" that we needed? Technology and creativity came to our rescue. Social networks, digital tools and video-calls became our eyes and our voices.

Our community started with a cooking contest: each family had to prepare an Italian dish to honour and celebrate our country, so severely affected by the pandemic, and film the activity. Our "ragazzi" loved shaping meatballs or decorating cakes with the colours of our flag. Even more enjoyable was watching the videos and eating these culinary masterpieces! As the virus spread throughout the whole of Europe, we did another cooking contest by giving each family a European country, whose typical dish they had to prepare.

We created a video that described each member of the community by showing an object that had a special meaning for them. The gesture had to be simple, so that anyone could do it:





the person had to catch the object from the outside of the frame, do something meaningful with it for a few seconds, then throw it out of the frame. The final video showed us a trait specific to our personality that had a special value in our lives.

Two "ragazzi" started a kind of daily video event: they sang a different song every day at 18:00 sharp.

They were moving and funny at the same time. We all enjoyed their performances. So we organised a singing competition, with judges and marks. We have watched these videos hundreds of times and we were dying of laughter every time that we watched again. Our community was really alive and passionate in those singing faces, scattered on the screen like a coloured mosaic.

Today, the virus has returned with its restrictions. We can feel how much we miss each other. We cannot share a prayer or a meal in the same room, but we know that we are together, even separated. So, getting back to the original question: *"Is this still Faith and Light?"* We answer honestly: *"Yes, perhaps not to its full extent but Faith and Light is made up of relationships and they are still there, intact".*

STEFANO MARCHETTI  
"San Gregorio" community, Rome

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## We miss the spiritual moments

During lockdown, we created a chat on WhatsApp which all the community members joined apart from two or three who did not have Internet access. We used this chat to exchange a simple hello, get news... and to make ourselves feel less isolated. The others were contacted by telephone.

In the near future, we do not wish to meet physically. Our parish does not have any large spaces and some of our friends do not understand that we cannot hug each other.

As long as it isn't too cold, we can divide the community into two or three groups to go for a walk and eat ice creams. Sadly, we miss the spiritual moments of the meeting but with this Covid coming and going, the fear here in Turin is still very great.

United in prayer with each and every one of you.

"Open Door" community, Turin



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## Small gestures

After the last meeting in February and the cancellation of the one in March, we met, after an initial moment of bewilderment, to organise meetings via Zoom with a few difficulties but at least we could see each other and discuss what we were going to do.

For Easter, we sent a card to each of the people with disabilities and, from time to time, we organised video-calls in small groups via WhatsApp with the families or the homes for those living in an institution.

During the summer, with some of the young people, we organised small groups to have an ice cream or pizza together but many families remained at home as a precaution and those living in a home were not able to have visitors.

Today, we have decided to begin celebrating birthdays again, by preparing a present linked to a happy time experienced in the community: like a placemat with a photo of our community on it or a t shirt with a photo of the person being celebrated on it...

A small gesture to feel close through photos taken together and we await the opportunity to see each other again even for a simple walk.

"The Way" community, Perugia



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## Covid does not stop Faith and Light!



During lockdown, technology allowed us to be close. We could not meet but with the new communication tools, we could see each other, keep company, talk...

Those who do not have WhatsApp were contacted by telephone or email. We supported one another so that no-one felt alone.

We also managed to play fun games, joke... We put simple puzzle games online to stimulate the imagination, stay busy and pass the time. So as to involve everyone, we tried to set a time that suited everyone, for example in the late afternoon like 18:00 or after dinner at about 21:00. For many, this play time has become an unmissable event because we have fun, we go with the flow and we have a carefree hour. I had a lot of fun organising these games, finding the content. It was a trial but the objective was reached, it was very successful. Through word of mouth, finally, everyone joined in with this time of relaxation. We were each at home but we were close to everyone with simplicity, laughing and having fun together.

Friendship brings us closer, it shortens distances, we are united by bonds that strengthen and we support each other.

FLORA ATLANTE  
'Messengers of joy' community, Milan

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## Recipes from the Rho community

Within a few days, we found ourselves separated with no possibility of meeting up. From the start, we all wanted to stay in touch with each other. Our telephone and our WhatsApp group became key. Those who could not join the group were contacted individually. From the first day of lockdown, we organised time together:

- Palm Sunday: instead of the traditional celebration and lunch together, everyone sent a photo or video with their arms outstretched as a sign of an embrace with a song.
- Easter: we asked each person to make a greeting card and take a photo of it. All the photos of these small words were brought together in a single video that we shared.
- We asked each person to send videos or photos of their activities during lockdown. Many were of various physical activities to stay in shape but many were also of cooking and cleaning.
- Everyone shared their favourite recipe, sometimes accompanied by photos. The recipes were then put together in a booklet and sent to all the communities in Lombardy.

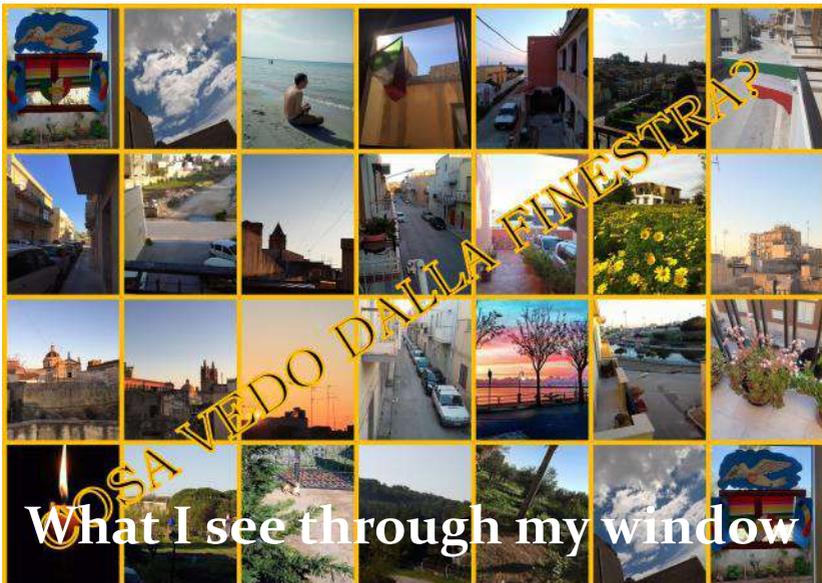
We can say that in this difficult and demanding period, we have discovered something beautiful: our friendship and our desire to be together are true and deep. The search for and discovery of personal relationships is more alive than before.

MONICA  
Rho community



## Exchanging photos

A few photos of the moments experienced by the "New Bud" and "Seed of Hope" communities in Mazara del Vallo.





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## In Lebanon

### Where there is love

Where there is love, suffering can coexist with joy. And this joy is what distinguishes the Faith and Light community.

How can we make up for, with simple things, the time we had before, such as the presence, celebration, prayer, friendship, evangelisation, mass, meals, dancing, craft, games, songs?... We can no longer do all that.

Since we have been locked down, I have made a great effort to find the best solutions to communicate with one another, even remotely... Thanks to the social networks and WhatsApp, we have been able to comfort each other, have fun conversations and exchange photos that show how we are living in our homes.

Every week, on Wednesday, at seven o'clock, we have a time of prayer. We share all our requests and thanksgiving prayers asking the Lord to put an end to this pandemic and to return our lives to normal. The most important thing is to see each other again.



RITA NAHED

"St John the Baptist" community, Bauchrieh



## Visits in convoy

During this lockdown, we have thought a lot about the members of our “Faith and Light Byblos” community, who are part of our family. We have reflected a lot about how to help them, to be beside them despite the lockdown that has separated us. We organised three activities:

- **How do we contact our friend?**

Our aim was to check their health and strengthen friendships.

Each young person had to telephone their friend to ask these questions:

- What is your favourite dish?
- What have you learnt new during the lockdown?
- Do you want to sing with me?
- What are you doing at home?
- Are you ready for a riddle?
- Do you remember what we did during the summer camp?



Finally, we shared this news and information on the young people’s WhatsApp.



- **How do you pray remotely?**

Our aim was to meet in an atmosphere of prayer so as to give back hope.

Each family prepared a prayer corner close to their home. Then we visited them by car, in a convoy, accompanied by religious songs.



- **How do you play remotely?**

Our aim was to have fun and encourage talent.

First of all, we sent a list of numbers to the WhatsApp group, each person chose a number that corresponded to a challenge.

For example:

- Film a dance
- Play a musical instrument
- Sing a song
- Draw the faith and light logo
- ...

We hope that our activities will be able to help other communities conquer this lockdown.

"Faith and Light Byblos" community

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## Mary, protect our country and our communities

How do we strengthen the bonds of our community during the pandemic despite the physical distancing? It is a challenge we have tried to rise to, seeing that we can no longer meet as we used to every week.

In our community, we have done this in the following ways:

- Zoom meetings have been scheduled to share and talk about how each person is spending their time during this period.
- To carry on having the time of prayer, we meet every Wednesday on the community WhatsApp group.
- Every week, a new "challenge" is sent to all the community members to try do some of the activities that we usually organised together during our meetings: crafts, sport, games not forgetting dancing, even recipes! All the community members take part in these activities at home, they film or photograph them and share them on the group.

It is true that nothing can replace the real meetings but it is important to carry on trying to experience the essentials of Faith and Light in the midst of this pandemic.

In these difficult days, let us ask for the intercession of Mary to bring an end to the epidemic and to protect our countries and our communities.

"Our Lady of Deliverance" community  
Bickfaya



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## With their help

Because the whole community wants us to stay united in spite of the circumstances, with the help of the Lord and Mary, we were able to share several activities like:

- the way of the cross online with other communities in the region,
- a mass for the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the community with intentions and thanksgiving prayers done by the people with disabilities at home.
- A video to wish happy birthday to the community.

To this, add weekly contact between the friends, people with disabilities and parents.

BARBAR ABI ISSA  
"Amashit" community, Amchit



## An online camp

This pandemic is not easy. However, we have done everything we can to make it an entertaining time.

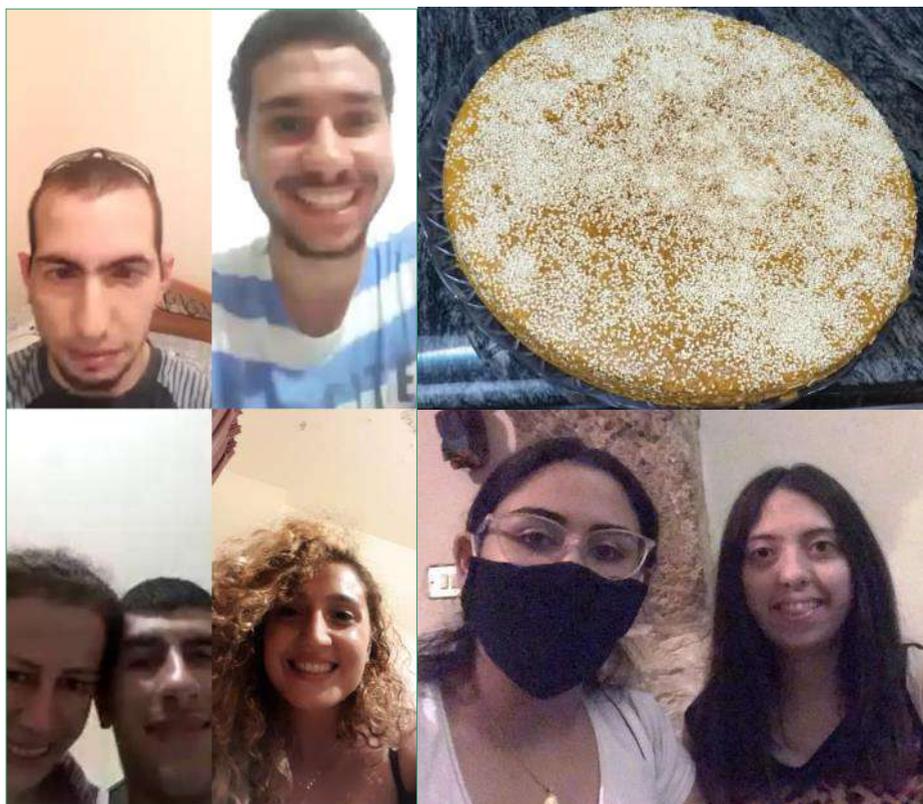
To better communicate, we created two WhatsApp groups, one for the young people and the other for the mums of our friends. It all began with simple messages on the two groups, then we began to send funny games on the young people's group. Every day, and spontaneously, the young people send games, we share them and have fun.

Every year in May, we usually have a pilgrimage to a shrine of the Virgin but this year, we did it remotely and by car. The young people, with our parish priest, visited the homes of all our friends from the Mastita community.



At the end of August, we had an online summer camp, the preparations were not easy! The idea was to send photos of the activity to the WhatsApp group of the young people and the mums and to share them on our Facebook page.





There were activities like mimes and games, cookery competitions, two days of prayer and a final day that summed up the whole camp with a time of music and games. These activities were shared via video conference and also by home visits, taking all the necessary precautions.

When lockdown was lifted, we started meetings again but in mini groups. In the next few days, we are going to organise a cinema evening to say goodbye to summer and, as a surprise, we are going to send each person a bag of homemade popcorn and the link to the film.

VANESSA ASSAF  
"Matista" community, Matista Jbeil

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## In the Netherlands

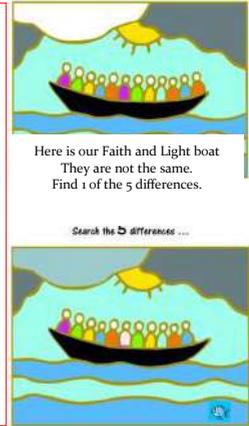
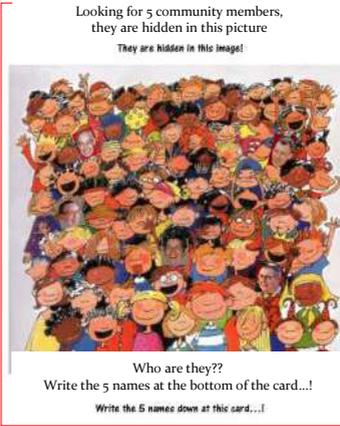
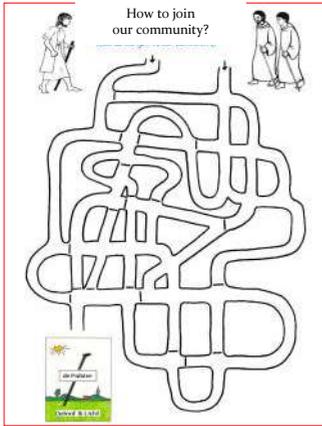
### Some simple and joyful ideas

We only had simple but joyful ideas to soften the serious consequences of this pandemic, especially the impossibility of meeting each other.

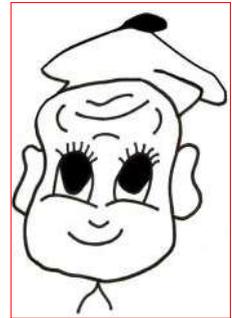
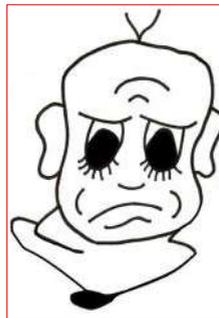


- We went to sing outside, at the front door or under the balcony, of a friend who was celebrating their birthday or we wrote an extra beautiful birthday card.
- We met outside on the beautiful square in our city (a maximum of 3 people) and we treated ourselves to ice creams or waffles, with cherries and whipped cream; luckily, the weather was good!
- Thanks to the good weather, it was possible, after the relaxation of the lockdown, to visit people at home, but only if we could sit outside; we had wonderful meetings, more personal and different to our usual community meetings...





Look, what a whiner!  
Such a grouch!  
How grumpy he looks!  
That is not how God intended you!  
Turn the picture quickly!  
Then you see how God intended you!



- We regularly send a letter of friendship with a puzzle card to stay in touch with our Faith and Light friends.
- We send a letter to everyone with 2 pages to colour in or paint. We enclose two stamped envelopes. Once the task is completed, it is sent to two other community members.
- We repeatedly called everyone s by phone or video-call.
- We hope to have meetings again, with a lot of precautions, but we want to try...

CORINNE AND HETTY  
"De Palster" community, Roermond

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## Three virtual meetings

During lockdown, we made a video every month with the coordination team and sent it to all the members via mobile or computer. It was a community meeting.

The coordination team, with the help of two persons with disabilities, sang the welcome song. They also did a mime with stuffed animals. Then there were other songs. The two chaplains explained the mime and gave a meditation. All the elements, brought together in one video, gave the impression of a normal meeting. The coordination team really enjoyed it and we also received very positive reactions from everyone.

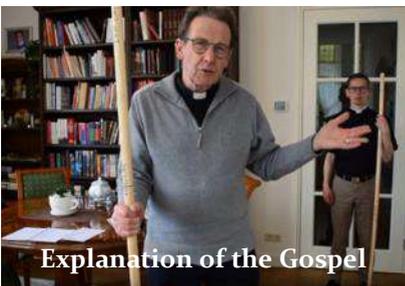
For the Easter celebration, we visited all the members even if we were only able to see them from a distance.

We gave them our quarterly letter "Het Lichtpuntje" and some chocolate eggs. A welcome distraction for many.

"God's Pearls" community, Volendam



The family responsible for welcoming time



Explanation of the Gospel



The apostles on the lake have caught a lot of fish

# In Peru

## National Council



**From top to bottom: Guillermo Rovero , Erika Gonzales, Father Isaac Martinez, Maritza Regalado, Hector Luis Meza, Raquel Franco and Elvira de Gomeró**

On 7 September, members of the team from Peru, in council, took part in the Eucharist celebrated by our province chaplain, Father Isaac Martinez. Our International vice coordinator, Elvira de Gomeró, also accompanied us.

These new times lead us to use new tools that allow us to remain united in our service to the communities.

In our intentions, we carry all the communities in the province, we pray for each one of their members and their families, especially those who are having a difficult time due to the coronavirus pandemic.

May God bless you all.

ERIKA GONZALES  
Vice provincial coordinator, Peru

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## The most anticipated time

For many of us, the Faith and Light meeting is the most anticipated time of the month and this makes our commitment increasingly deep. Events have changed us all, we are filled with fear and uncertainty.



Even if they have physically exhausted us, they have strengthened the bonds of the heart, increased everyone's participation and strengthened our unity. We have always been a small community, but we are blessed because we have a beautiful parish hall and the regular attendance of Father Carlos Rosell, the parish priest and our community chaplain. We have had some great times and I remember the Days of Announcing and Sharing where we introduced our community at Sunday Masses, which increased the number of community members.

Last year, few of us attended meetings because there was always a good reason or excuse not to. Today, there are no more excuses, we simply want to see each other and we do our best to have a connection, our computer or our mobile phone available, our Zoom, Google Meet and Skype applications and members of our family help us to have safe and fast communication.



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In addition, we have a discussion group where we share prayers, reflections, birthday wishes, news... We remain united. Today, we are a large family that has more than thirty members.

I would like to acknowledge the great support and accompaniment from Elvira Gomero (Vice International Coordinator) and Father Isaac Martínez (the former International Chaplain) who join us every month and bring renewal and hope.

During the pandemic, we have been supported and nourished by prayer and guided each month by the Guidelines. Thank you to the members of the international team for such beautiful and enriching Guidelines. Faith and Light will soon celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are feeling renewed in faith and hope and we are preparing to experience this jubilee joyfully.

EDDA JANNEATH GALLEGO MUÑOZ  
"Lord of Divine Mercy" community, Lima



## Almost like before

Our community, like all the others across the world, is living in the middle of a pandemic that has claimed many victims, regardless of race, background or religion... Impossible to meet. We decided to continue our meetings but virtually, we meet on the Internet on the third Sunday of every month at 13:00, as we did before.

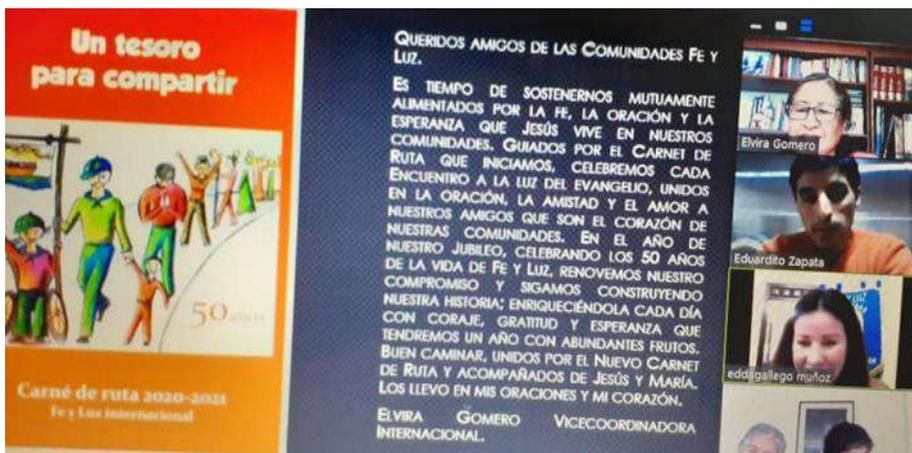
In their homes, community members are invited to prepare a prayer corner with an image, the Bible, flowers and candles. For the craft workshops, we make what is suggested in the Guidelines and place it in our prayer corner. We take a photo and send it to everyone.



We begin with a welcome, a song, a prayer to thank God for being together and in good health, we also pray for the sick and those who have gone to meet Him. We share on the theme of the month, sing and celebrate the birthdays to be celebrated in the month. For those who can't connect, we send emails and recorded messages.

May God help you!

"Seed of Love" community, Huaura



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## The important place of brothers and sisters



Hello all!

Our community has been walking together for more than fifteen years and during this journey, we have shared joy, hope, sorrow and always much faith.

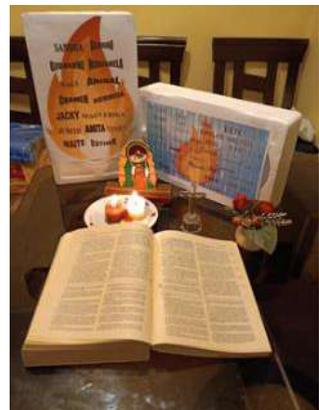
At the start of the pandemic in Peru, the situation was uncertain. There was a lot of confusion and suffering. But the communities did not want to come to a standstill. Quickly, we began virtual meetings using the Zoom platform.

The people with disabilities felt happy to see each other again even if it was on a screen, to hear the voices of others and to celebrate our meetings despite the limitations.

Siblings have taken an important place because it is they who helped the parents and those with disabilities (who were not used to the technology) to connect. We have now been joined by some members of other communities who have not been able to hold their own meetings.

Our coordinator, Sandra Oviedo, always takes care of every detail of the meetings so that we feel welcome and we all take part.

Today, physical distances still separate us but we feel together, spiritually united.



ERIKA GONZALES  
"Heart of Jesus" community, Lima

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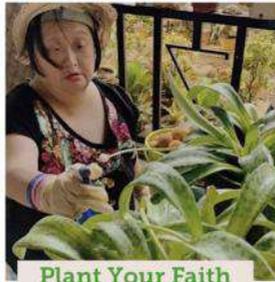
## In the Philippines

### "Plant a seed of faith" programme

#### The spirituality of gardening



Plant Your Faith



Plant Your Faith



Plant Your Faith

The Faith and Light "Morning Glory" community (all the communities in the Philippines have the name of a flower) has just proved through experience that there is happiness in the darkness because true happiness comes from faith that is nurtured and cultivated by the Light that burns in the heart of each person.

Like a flash of lightening followed by a deluge of heavy rain, a storm that has been brewing suddenly came upon the planet casting darkness upon the whole of humanity. Multitudes are dead or dying. People are losing loved ones and possessions while many are starving. The certainty of tomorrow has become as blurry as the muddy waters of a raging flood, drowning lives and dreams.

In all this desperation and hunger for deliverance, a light still burns: there is hope after all if we only have the faith to seek the Light of redemption.

Cloaked in the gloom of the global Covid crisis, the "Morning Glory" community launched the "Plant a seed of faith" programme on 20 August 2020 simultaneously with the first monthly online meeting with the theme: *"Sing out our faith in the light of the Lord"*.

This undertaking seeks to focus the attention of our friends with disabilities and their families on something constructive and productive; whilst allowing them to appreciate the meaning and the joy of gardening. In this very basic exercise, they can benefit from the spiritual

and physical aspects of learning how to plant and nurture a seed to fruition and later on sharing the fruits of their labour with those around them.

The programme features competitions that revolve around the planting activity, helping to discover that there can also be a real happiness in nurturing the seed of faith planted in their heart. While planting the seeds and taking care of their plants, the participants are encouraged to sing the "Morning Glory" community hymn: "*blade of faith*". This song says that nurturing a seed through storm and wind – from the time it is planted until the first green leaf – and growing it to fruition demonstrates the faithful stewardship that recognises with faith and respect the gift of creation from the Father.

The first competition was to reward the best image of the person and flowers in the vegetable garden. Sharing the honours, five prize winners were rewarded by the panel of Faith and Light friends, headed by Father Julius Clavero, pastor of the parish of Saint François Xavier de Pueblo. Justine, Mika, Trisha, Ramsey and Quinbertman embraced their prizes with joy and gratitude from our local and foreign benefactors.

CONNIE HOMESCHOOLMUM  
"Morning Glory" community, Cagayan de Oro



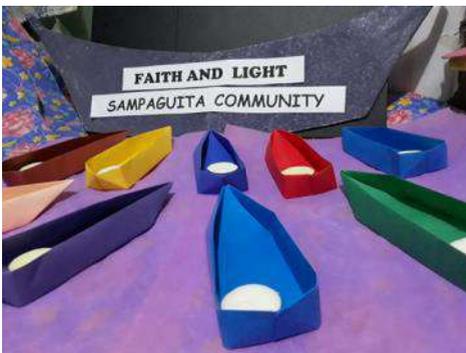
# 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary



The Sampaguita community celebrated its 36th anniversary despite the pandemic. The anniversary celebration was to have taken place on 28 September but due to an Internet outage for five consecutive days, it took place on 11 October.

Our community coordinator, Lyam Castillo, and her brother have asked everyone to place, in their prayer corner, souvenirs that are dear to them from these 36 years of life.

"Sampaguita" community, Mandaluyong City



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## In Poland

### Together, online and in real life

The lockdown has not prevented our community from spending time together. New technologies have allowed us to see each other and exchange information. These unusual meetings were accompanied by a lot of joy and smiles.

With the relaxation of the health restrictions in our country, we resumed monthly meetings. Everything complied with the rules for our health and the health of our loved ones.

At the end of August, during the Feast of Our Lady of Częstochowa, we celebrated the third anniversary of the recognition of our community. On this occasion, we went on a pilgrimage to the oldest Marian shrine in Poland, located in Górka Klasztorna.

Despite difficult times, we have continued to be together both online and in real life.

Rykotki community, Wiecbork



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## And when it rains or is cold?

The "Iskierki" (Small Sparkles) community meets every third Sunday of the month for a mass at the Our Lady Queen of Poland Church in Warsaw. After the mass, we always had a meeting with tea and sweets, attended by our chaplain, Father Tadeusz.

After a three month break caused by the pandemic, we started to meet again at Mass but the meetings are held outside the church and without the tea. We are worried about what to do when it rains or is cold if the virus persists.

We cordially greet you and join you in prayer.

KALINA AND ZYGMUNT  
"Iskierki" community, Warsaw



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## "Summer in the city"



The lockdown in Poland began in March and when it was announced, we cancelled our community meeting that should have taken place a few days later. We did not see each other in spring and we decided to cancel our summer camp, planned for July. It was a very hard and painful decision, especially since there were already less restrictions in Poland and it seemed it would be possible to organise it, but we felt that it wouldn't be responsible. However, we knew that some of our community members were isolated and felt lonely and we were all missing each other.

We therefore decided to organise summer meetings in our town, instead of going on camp, that we called 'Summer in the city'. We made the most of the beautiful weather and organised mainly outdoor activities, trying to keep to the health rules and distancing.

It was amazing to see our friends again after so long. It was also an interesting experience to discover the beautiful places to visit in our neighbourhood. We found out that we did not have to travel far to have a community "camp". During one week, on consecutive days, we did: a pilgrimage to a sanctuary, a big walk in the forest, a visit to the cemetery (each person showed the grave of a loved one and we prayed together). We had a barbecue at the home of one of our friends who has a large garden. These are only a few of the main activities. We man-

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aged to pray together, to talk, share and celebrate the time we spent together.

Unfortunately, summer is over in Poland and the pandemic situation is getting worse, so there are a lot of challenges ahead. It will be great to read the ideas of other communities for these difficult times and to get inspired!

KAROLINA JĘDRZEJOWSKA  
"Ziarenko" community, Otwock



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## In Portugal

### Just before the lockdown



On 8 March, just before the lockdown, the S. Pedro Fins community was recognised in the presence of many friends. The bishop of Porto was there as well as several priests and deacons from the whole diocese. Several officials were there, representatives from the Maia town hall as well as the parish councils of Folgosa and S. Pedro Fins. Many parishioners took part in the celebration. There were moments of great joy, friendship and affection.

This was possible thanks to a beautiful team who carried out various tasks: cooking, decoration, layout of the hall, various preparations, the choir, music, speeches and many other things that led to a magnificent day, only troubled by the threat of Covid. Thank God, there were no positive cases which was a serious concern in the days that followed.

The new Faith and Light community in Folgosa and S. Pedro Fins warmly thanks all these people for their presence. We know that many others wanted to be there but were absent due to fears about the virus but they showed us much affection.

A special thank you to the province team that accompanied us and encouraged us on our journey. Thank you also to the S. Romão de Ver-

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moim community that sponsored us and was always at our side. Finally, thank you to our chaplain, Father Domingos Areais, who, in all the doubts and uncertainties, supported everyone.

We ended by thanking those who have joined the community. In each one, we find a friend and a willingness to help others. We find the love of the neighbour who Jesus always spoke to us about. We all have the desire to build a stronger and more united community, ready to welcome.

Then Covid issued us with a new challenge We had to be creative. At Easter, each family had to put a cross on the door of their house. Every friend with disabilities received a card! We celebrated Mother's Day: every mum received a surprise at home. We also made some single decade rosaries.

On 31 May, we were together again and we celebrated the Eucharist. In June, we all prepared something about S. Pedro! In July, we celebrated Grandparents Day but were sad at not being able to finish the holiday camp, we are all "homesick" but soon we will be together again and we will be fine!

SÉRGIO SILVA PINTO  
"Divine Saviour" community, Folgosa



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## We will go to Mass together



These are very difficult times. We were (very) used to embracing but this virus has taken all that away from us. In the first month of lockdown, everything was so confused, our lives had changed so much, that we were not able to meet, but we still remained in touch via our WhatsApp group.

It was great to be able to pray together despite the distance. These were very good moments of sharing and friendship.

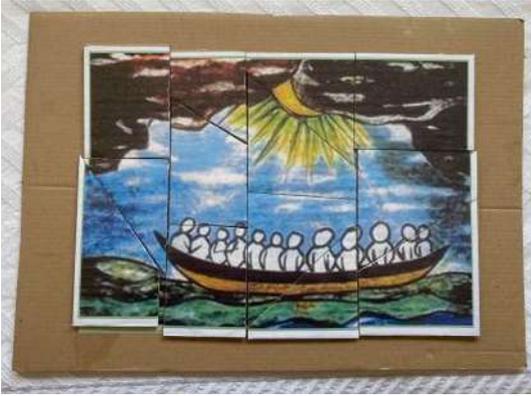
At our last meeting, we decided that we will start by going to Mass together in our parish, following all the recommended safety measures. It will be strange that we will not be able to run to one another as usual in meetings... But with small steps like this, a light will appear that will confirm that, with the strength of God, all will be well.

We embrace you all wholeheartedly.

CLÁUDIA ROCHA DA CUNHA  
"St John the Baptist" community, Vila do Conde

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## A puzzle for everyone



We decided, after carefully assessing the situation in our country and our region, to maintain the bond between families and friends by creating a “Caravan” for the community. Here is how it works: the coordination team and some friends are going to visit families and friends who have a disability in their homes or institutions. We stay for a few minutes with everyone, taking all safety measures, to hear their news, talk to them and remind them that we are still here, that we are always in touch.

We created puzzles with the Faith and Light logo for everyone and placed the pieces in a small bag with a prayer. This is what we will give them today.

Stay safe and take care of one another!

NUNO ANDRADE  
"St John the Baptist" community, Vila do Conde

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## Sing the joy of being alive

During the period of lockdown, we tried to reinvent ways of being. We knew that we could not be together but the desire to see one another and to share was stronger. Zoom came and put an end to our yearning. At the beginning, we all talked at the same time, we sang at the same time and no-one understood each other. Gradually, we began to understand what our friends with disabilities teach us: the main thing is to share life and silence, which is a form of dialogue.

The meetings were held every month and maintained a certain normality in this uncertainty. When possible, we met outside to sing the joy of being alive and we were treated to a magnificent sunset and gave thanks in the manner of St Francis: *Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, specially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light.*

Nature has welcomed us and shown us that even with masks, it is possible to love because nothing will separate us from the love of God.

Stay safe. It has never been more important to take care of one another.

TERESA MARINHO  
"Friends of Joy" community, Estoril



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## In Russia

### The light online

Previously, in our community, we celebrated birthdays once a month at the community meetings. Congratulations, small presents while drinking some tea.

The health rules during the pandemic have distanced us and we have had to stay at home. We were lost and confused. The friends who prepared the meetings were worried about the birthdays. After some discussions, we decided to celebrate them online.



Our friends Alla, Yegor's mum, and Maria began to prepare digital cards for each birthday.

Early in the morning, a touching postcard with a unique design, kind words and photos appeared on the Internet. This was just the beginning. After that, community members added their congratulations, sent emoticons and pictograms. However, we realised that not everyone was connected to the group. We added them and wrote them a private message. Such interaction united us and comforted us. We realised that we still worried about one another, that we missed each other and that we couldn't wait for our meetings to start again.

Interestingly, the birthday cards have become more relevant because they appeared on the day (and not once a month). We know each other better now because we have seen several photos...

Maria told us: At one meeting, we made commitments about the way we would support the community and each of its members and wrote it on a heart. I remember that I wrote that I would participate in creative projects.

Our community is made up of creative people and we are like children. So, we regularly come up with something unexpected and new. Everyone cooperates and, out of nothing, everyone has a great time.

During lockdown, Alla and I organised the birthdays online. We took a birthday calendar, asked for God's help and began to create. Alla wrote the wishes and I was responsible for the visual design. Alla always has just the right words for everyone. She always has very pertinent words of encouragement and support! There is a power of healing, love and beauty in her words.

Our life has become more interesting and beautiful, communicating with each other online and sending love via satellite and fibre optics! Sometimes, it seems that everything is bad and black clouds are coming. At this very moment, the Lord responds through friends from the community with a message in our group: *Vanya got up early this morning and received his birthday card. He is very happy!* Can you imagine how easy it is to give happiness to another person?

"Under the Blue Sky" community, St Petersburg



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## Evening prayer



Every evening, throughout the whole lockdown, we gathered online, in small groups of three-four people, to read the Holy Scriptures, pray, have fun, listen to each other and support one another.

First of all, we created a community group on WhatsApp, a place for our meetings, announcements, birthdays... This proved to be very convenient: if someone wrote that they did not feel well and will not take part in the evening prayer, the group would pray for them...

Every day, someone was responsible for dividing the people into random groups so each time the groups were different and they appointed a leader for each group.

At 21:50, there was a group call on WhatsApp; the rest of the participants only discover with whom they would pray by seeing the photos on screen. It brings a joyous expectation, a sort of surprise.

Meeting schedule:

- General call, sharing: each person talks about how they have spent the day.
- Reading from the Scriptures: a random text selection by one of the group members. After that, we discussed it, shared our reflections.
- We give our prayer intentions and our thanksgiving “with the candle”. Then, we recite the Lord’s Prayer and Ave Maria.

*“Layla Tov !” See you tomorrow!*

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This form of communication arose by chance when everyone had to isolate themselves in their homes. We were bored; we wanted to carry on communicating. The idea of an evening prayer arose. The format has remained the same throughout the whole lockdown. The groups of 3 to 4 people are practical: each person has time to talk about their day, to share what was particularly important to them.

A “prayer with the candle” does not mean that we light candles, we only say: *I pass the candle to* (name) to give them the chance to speak. We thank the Lord, entrust our needs to him, pray for loved ones, acquaintances and strangers, for members of our community, for all the Faith and Light and L'Arche communities. Over time, people began to ask us to pray for someone or something in particular. We prayed with the Moscow communities for those who fell ill.

Despite the isolation, we spent lockdown together, so when six months later, we met in person, we had the feeling that we had not been separated for so long.

“Fontanka” community, Saint-Petersburg





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## An essential tool

Since we were forced to cancel the meetings, WhatsApp has been our essential communication tool. We have stayed in touch with each other almost daily. Ana remembers the birthdays of each community member, of the family members and the anniversaries of the deaths of loved ones. It is a good way of sharing good news and our memories of those who have left us. There are seven people who do not have WhatsApp. We make direct contact with them by telephone or through their loved ones.

- During the lockdown, every week we sent prayers so that everyone could pray at home and be close to Jesus and community members. We held virtual meetings in April, May and June. Here is the format: The community coordination team meets via Zoom and assigns a task to each person.
- The chaplain records the time of prayer.
- Everything that each person has prepared must be put online before the meeting.
- We send an email to those who do not have WhatsApp the day after the virtual meeting with the videos and the prayer.

The "Talitha Qumi" coordinating team, Madrid



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## A "real" meeting

To start the year, the coordination team looked into organising a virtual meeting, which would resemble those we had had before. It was held on 27 September! At the end, we were all very pleased with the way in which it had happened, with what each person had brought and with what we had received to help us go forward every day.

Preparation and proceedings:

- We sent the new Guidelines to each person by email. We chose the theme 1: *The vocation of Faith and Light, You called us to follow you.*
- Reading of the Faith and Light prayer at the start of each meeting.
- Song: "Fisher of men", magnificent, we all sang accompanied by the guitar.
- Each person had prepared a drawing of a fish with their name on one side and, on the back, a sentence saying what Faith and Light means to them.
- Reading of the meditation of the month.
- Reading of the Gospel of the miraculous catch (Lk 5: 2-11).
- Broadcast of the video suggested for this theme.
- Reflection and answers to the three questions asked.
- Interactive surprise game: "Kahoot!", an online quiz prepared with questions and photos sent in by everyone. It was great fun!
- Reading the prayer all together.
- Snack in each house.

ESTHER GÓMEZ  
"Maná" community, Madrid



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## Easter at home



During Holy Week, the hardest period of lockdown in Spain, the communities from the “Terra et Mare” province met to celebrate *Easter at a distance* or rather *Easter together through the heart*. Every day of the week, Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, the provincial team sent the community coordinators, and they to their members, a simple prayer proposition to do at home. They were invited to pray, at the same time, as a family or with a few others by video, especially those who were most isolated at home or in an institution.

Some simple prayer propositions, with accessible readings, accompanied by gestures and music in the Faith and Light style. The prayers would always end with a gesture to share via WhatsApp. They also sent photos to the province team. Throughout lockdown, we also had Sunday prayers in the same way. We have shared some photos of these days that helped us to live Faith and Light at home.

JORGE AND CUCA  
“Terra et Mare” provincial coordinators

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## So many changes!

We no longer see each other, we no longer hug... At the beginning, we thought it wouldn't last; our relationships by telephone and WhatsApp continue today, we are adapting to the new reality.

For almost two months of lockdown at home, the "Without Barriers" community remained united by telephone and WhatsApp, we supported each other and shared our daily life to find out how we were doing and to get news of Nuria, Fátima and Rocío who live in institutions and who contracted Covid. Some very hard months for the community because when a member is suffering, we all suffer with them; this is how it is in Faith and Light.

Rosario and Maria José were very affected by not being able to visit their daughters. Although they were in daily contact with the institution by telephone and video conference, it wasn't enough. They were very distressed and sad.

Fortunately, Nuria, Fátima and Rocío conquered the virus like champions confined to their rooms. Some of us sent them videos of encouragement and support.

At midday, during lockdown, the Angelus rang out every day. Don Jesús Recuero, the parish priest and our chaplain, would climb the bell





tower every day to vigorously ring the bells and send his blessing to the whole neighbourhood. At 20:00, we were all at our windows or on our terraces to clap for the care givers. Don Jesús went up the bell tower to vigorously ring the bells again after celebrating mass alone with Him.

We followed the celebrations and the Eucharists on television and on the Internet. We experienced these celebrations with fervour in our homes. Finally, this period of lockdown helped us to deepen our personal meditation and to keep the Gospel more alive.

The community remained in constant contact with the communities from the “Terre et Mare” province. Together, we experienced the Lent celebrations, Holy Week and Easter. Celebrations adapted to those who are at the heart of our communities, to those with different abilities, especially their overflowing capacity to love.

We have prayed a lot during this period, especially for the sick and for those from Faith and Light who have died. We know that Jesus is amongst us, we are not afraid and we will continue to share life.

"Without Barriers" community  
Guadalajara

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## Smiling eyes

During lockdown, from March until June, our community held virtual meetings with the coordination team to reflect on what we could do to motivate the community and also talk about the contact that we had with the people with disabilities via the Internet.

In the WhatsApp group, every week we publish one of the photo albums of old meetings. The families do not join in with this group much but when we called them, they told us they could not wait to see the photos.



One day, we made up a game that we really enjoyed, we called it *smiling eyes*. Since we can no longer see smiles because of the masks, it is important to learn to see the smiling eyes. I asked families to send me a photo. We cut out the eyes and made a montage to play guess who. We suggested this game to all the community leaders in Catalonia.

In July, when everything was more relaxed, we had a mini get-together with the families. Many were afraid and did not come. It was short, in one of the parishes in the city, socially distanced with all the security measures in place. We could see one another! Everyone talked about how they felt during the lockdown and what they had done. Then, we ate ice creams and went for a walk on the beach. This lasted an hour and half. Those who wanted to, could stay for the evening mass.

Since October, we have decided to make things simpler. Each month we will send one of the drawings from the Guidelines with a beautiful sentence and the proposed meditation. We will send the people with disabilities, an envelope with a letter, a small present and a

drawing to colour in. This afternoon, I will distribute them so everyone gets the letter.

I do not know if this will interest anyone. It is what works for us and we want more than anything to maintain our bonds in order to keep our community alive.

I embrace all the Faith and Light communities across the world. As Fano said: "keep on rowing".

CUQUI CARVAJAL  
"The Smiles" community, Blanes



Jesús,  
et dono gràcies  
per haver-me cridat  
i t'estimo.



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## In Switzerland



### In front of my house

Our community and all those in Valais had the pleasure of meeting, in the parish, on 2 February for the Feast of Light and a meal and an afternoon of sharing and games.

We began the lockdown in March with beautiful memories of this last meeting, the one in March and the following months were cancelled. During this whole period, we talked, to get news, through WhatsApp and by email for those who had that. For the others, through telephone and letter (monthly letter) instead. I found drawings done by a person with disabilities in front of my house and I received mandalas through the post.

One mum from the community was ill, we formed a group that gave news and prayed for her. She is now well. She celebrated her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday in May. We also had contact with the Carmelite Sisters with whom we are twinned. Our links remained despite the distance! Of course, birthdays were not forgotten. And we were really pleased with our first meeting on 20 September.

MARIE-JEANNE  
"Particle of Sun" community  
Martigny

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## What a shock this corona is!!!

Our Faith and Light friends who have disabilities are very affected but admirably supported by their teachers and families.

A WhatsApp group was quickly set up to give us news about each other and from the more remote communities.

The Holy Spirit still breathed to comfort us and help us. Every week, Gabrielle wrote "*Le petit P'tit bulletin de la Colombe*" (*The small Little report from the Dove*), which publishes photos, games, prayers and stories, some humorous. Like the twelve apostles, twelve reports up to June and since then, one per month. Many have nurtured this "messenger" that brings joy to us all. Christiane is the postwoman. This sharing creates a beneficial relationship in this difficult period.

In August, we celebrated our chaplain who retired without forgetting us. When will we start our meetings again to welcome our new chaplain, Bernard?

Above all, let us not forget to continue the journey with Jesus. Let us keep our hearts open to welcome and share the treasures of the Holy Spirit.

MARIE-THÉRÈSE ET CHANTAL  
"The Dove" community, Bulle



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## In Ukraine

### The strongest feeling

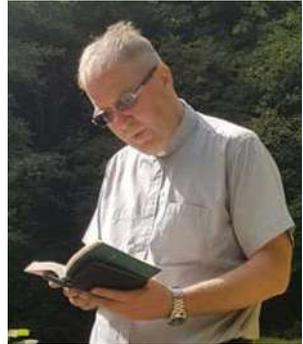
A pure heart is love, it does not have boundaries. Nothing can resist it, it conquers everything, even death.

Christ is Love. And this is your one and only, eternal homeland. Being able to love God and humanity is the highest art. Friendship is, just like love, the strongest feeling that unites hearts.

Our actions:

- A coordination team meeting took place via video-conference, a lighted candle, a time of prayer, a time of sharing about our life and the life of our friends.
- Father Andrew, the community chaplain, communicated with friends and their parents by phone and Skype.
- The “Mysteries of Faith and Light” were meditated together at home, on the same day and at the same time making a unity of prayer. We recited the rosary, a time of thanksgiving and prayer intentions.
- We also proposed meditating these mysteries via Skype, at church or at home.
- We invited everyone to take part in the Divine Liturgy broadcast on the Internet.
- A meeting of brothers and sisters of the community took place outside while still respecting the health guidelines.

"Annunciation" community, Lviv



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## A challenge for everyone

The pandemic period was a challenge for everyone. This challenge also affected Faith and Light. The members of our community wanted to meet and communicate. The friends (this is what we call the people with disabilities in Ukraine and the friends are called buddies) often questioned their parents about future meetings and looked at photos of past meetings.

For this reason, we began to try different ways of meeting. We communicated via Zoom at first but it was difficult to keep the community spirit with such a format. This variant did not suit many of us but there were also members who were pleased with even this type of “meeting” because it was better than nothing. At the meetings, we told each other about our feelings, our life in lockdown... Our chaplain gave a word of the month every month, we had a time of sharing followed by a joint prayer.

A few months later, we were finally able to meet offline. Of course, this meeting was also unusual because we could not embrace and we had to sit at a distance. But we were all happy. At this meeting, we placed the chairs and benches according to the social distancing rules. Each family had its own place. We felt safe.

“Heavenly Lanterns” community  
Lviv



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## In Wales

### Making life more gentle

The very first thought was to keep in touch so we started by phoning everyone. All the friends called the people disability at least once a day.

Then, we gave each person a small basket with a soft drink, crisps, chocolate, sweets, popcorn, a candle and a beauty mask to make themselves beautiful!

We organised weekly Zoom meetings and although not everyone has the Internet, there were about twelve of us every week. We run these meetings along the lines of a community meeting, sharing news, singing and praying. These meeting were loved by everyone.

We have also prepared a bag with felt tips, coloured pencils, a wordsearch, a leaflet for bird watching in the garden and mini cakes.

To make the life of our members a little nicer in lockdown and as we had a small amount of money set aside, we organised the delivery of afternoon teas from a hotel once a month. They were delicious and everyone really enjoyed them.

I look forward to seeing everyone else's ideas to make life a little better in these trying times.

JEAN GRAINGER  
"The Lantern" community, Swansea





**Encourage one another  
and build each other up  
just as in fact you are doing**

1 Thessalonians, 5-11