

An experience of transformation involving a reflection on 'GROWING THE INTELLIGENCE' by all those active in education in France¹

"What is it in studies that makes character and intelligence grow? What is it that powerfully coordinates all that is learned, creates the relationships, gives a goal, a reason? In one sense, it is a philosophy; in another, broader sense, it is a passion...Passion for the faith, passion of love. passion to put into practice the law of Christ." (1844. L.1627



On April, the Assumption France forum called up about 180 people from the sixteen educational establishments of Assumption France: headmastership teams, teachers, administration

and maintenance staff, parents, voluntaries, young CNL members (National Council of France and Belgium Students) and guests. Through this forum, prepared by a very diversified team of members of the net, the question was to display a pedagogy so that the members get a better comprehension of what does 'GROWING THE INTELLIGENCE' mean for Marie Eugénie and the Assumption. This pedagogy was based upon:

- An intellectual reflexion and the content contribution allowing a critical and constructive attention in these days, so we can be able to "love our time".
- The live experience, promoting through diverse workshops, a way to adapt personally named concepts.
- L'INTER (between different generations, institutions, laity and sisters...)
- Allowing both, young and adults to be actors: animating workshops, preparing testimonial interventions, a theatre piece.
- Interior and celebration dimension, specially showing the link between intelligence and faith in Marie Eugénie.

REFLEXION COMPONENTS

Sister Claire Myriam , Father André Antoni (Assumptionnist, General Manager of Bayard), Eric M' Farredj (Diocesan Director Assistant in Seine-St Denis) , Sister Véronique Thiébaud, were the various speakers who helped us to deepen our reflexion.

Marie Eugénie's experience opened out meeting: when she was still a young girl, she was deeply in search to find a kind of answer in Notre Dame de Paris, in a Lent lecture given by Father Lacordaire. An important moment that unified her being and her quest, without putting an end to it. This discovery of faith widened in Marie Eugénie her truth quest, stimulated her, gave her a purpose. The "laborious work of her intelligence seeking to catch this treasure in a personal way in order to send

it into her life" opens Marie Eugénie's intelligence, told us **Sister Claire Myriam**.

In the Assumption founder's view, intelligence relies on a capacity to get in touch with others, to be built from opposite ideas. Necessarily, it questions our relation to the world, to reality, as a place of responsibility and engagement. Intelligence, rooted in contemplation, is the power to coordinate, to harmonize, to mobilise knowledge and all the dimensions of a person in order to allow him to spread all his resources and his whole capacity.

Three other voices gave "life" the subject illustrating it with actual examples: **Eric M'Farredj** invited us to invert our representations of School patterns. Do we have to keep a pattern where the teacher is thought as the only holder of knowledge, sending to pupils, beyond his lessons, recognition signals through rewards or sanctions? Or do we have to dare another pattern? It would then be a pattern where "the intelligence of situations" is more important than collecting knowledge, a pattern where intelligences are multiple, a pattern where space and school time are fully thought again through innovating pedagogies, a pattern where chosen orientation and education take off from recognizing all the best a young can give. A call to creativity, then! A call to audacity and humility! **André Antoni**, through Bayard Press experience, recalled us how much, to "grow the intelligence" we need to train a wider view, beyond our own frontiers, beyond already known audiences, beyond our own representations. "Growing intelligence", is to become partner, to consent to walk according to other's walk, but also to open spaces of a real share to set up readers' participation, to enable a cooperating dialogue. It is also to read news and events in another way: as from the distance, taking time to ponder the elements of a discussion bringing out the meaning of facts more than facts themselves... setting up the essential questioning for intelligence. At last, growing intelligence might be "touching heart", calling out feelings and imaginary, and turning them into vectors for taste and creativity, a way to unify them. That last point heralded "the desire pedagogy" given in the afternoon by **Sister Véronique**: a pedagogy based on a real formation to debate and to dialogue, offering spaces for interiority

¹ <http://www.assumpta.fr/Belgique-Le-theatre-comme-une.html>

and silence, inviting to creativity. Rooted in the Incarnation Mystery, that is, according to Marie Eugénie, is the base of an educative mission, such a pedagogy increases a positive glance on a person and invites him to go and seek within himself - and in God - the desire able "to mobilise his being and make it creative. In such a proceeding, educator must remain humble: acknowledging he does not know everything about the young commended to him, improving the ability of being surprised and amazed, able to create the conditions for creativity and freedom necessary to grow, helping to take distance and discernment.

SOME ASPECTS OF CHOSEN PEDAGOGY:

* **WORKSHOPS:** making easier appropriation by experience, the three different workshops were in great coherence with those points; they offered a possibility to deepen three aspects:

- intelligence and interiority: the members could choose between a workshop of contemplative dialogue from the God Word; a corporal expression workshop to be aware of what is surrounding us (air, light...) and of oneself; and a creativity workshop (representing interiority with photos, drawings and words linked to them...)

- Intelligence and links/ relations: each team had to build a part of a town in future, a town where respect for creation would be alive. Treasures of creativity were brought and little by little offered boxes and hampers rose to a town where every one would like to live.

- Intelligence and sense: from a video extract, members examined the sense of our actions, every one found it is more difficult to question oneself the "why" rather than the "how".

* **RISING UP ACTORS:**

At one time, everyone became an "actor" of the forum, but some of them had a stronger experience of it: Leaving the call to the CNL (Conseil National des Lycéens) helped us to be sensible to their worries: the surroundings damages, the fact acting in coherence with one's beliefs, the challenge of passing from " speech" to an effective action, the importance of the multicultural experience. They invited adults to trust them, stating their wish to be responsible and to be able to carry on projects.

On Friday evening, a show formed by Marcel Bouillon (Theatre Teacher in Bordeaux) was given in Valpré

Chapel, by 12 actors, young and adult, coming from different institutions. A nice human experience as they didn't know each other three days before! The play helped us to travel between past and present. It started with a meeting between Louis, a young modern boy, disillusioned and in despair, and Anne Eugénie, a young girl of the 19th century, who invited him to love his world, finally not so different from hers. Then two "historical" scenes: a dialogue between Marie Eugénie and Father d'Alzon about the Assumption purpose, the inscription of a pupil allowing the founder to present her education project in a clear way. At the end, an actual scene with five educators talking about this project's pertinence in nowadays world. A fine synthesis of that day!

* **CELEBRATING AND MAKING MANIFEST FAMILY SPIRIT:**

On Saturday, a liturgy spread all over the morning, allowed everyone to celebrate this Assumption vocation to give sense to our actions, to bind our knowledge and experiences...a vocation calling to grow through meetings and exchanges, to commit oneself for justice and surroundings. JOY was evident and celebration was as an outcome of reflexion and pledge. Each delegation took a symbolic decision to be carried as soon as they come back. The family spirit - joy, simplicity and fraternity - allowed us to weave or to strengthen friendship bonds and collaboration among all.

WHAT TRANSFORMATION?

A new education pattern rose little by little: every member of the educative community has a place and a saying in the matter. Listening to each other helps us to walk along together in order to revisit our pedagogy and organisations, to innovate with boldness and humility.

A space for dialogue between Marie Eugénie and today youth, between two centuries, two realities with common points and adjustments to be made. And being able to discover that Marie Eugénie is still modern today. A new impulse helping us to start again full of belief and strength.

This new model is perhaps an example of the "gospel & wisdom" leadership that the General Chapter invites us to live, a leadership "inciting us in our way of carrying our animation" "to call forth to community", "a way to understand the others and to be linked to them.", "to call up the capabilities and possibilities of everyone", that generates " life, joy and freedom" while welcoming difference...

*Sister Véronique Thiébaud
Tutelle Assomption - France
05/2013*