



# The Holy Family of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland

Glory to God alone in Jesus Christ through Mary and Saint Joseph

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Pope Francis with RENATE Assembly participants, at the Vatican, 7 Nov. 2016

## EDITORIAL

As the work of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RENATE Assembly unfolded in Rome, from 6 – 12 November, it hit me that this was the Europe envisioned by the Founders of the European Community, a Europe where so many people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, viewpoints, so many people with different experiences of church and ministry and religious life, could work together in solidarity and single mindedness for a basic human right. Key words throughout were: Communion, Cooperation, Communication.

The first RENATE Assembly was held in Poland in 2011, mainly to get women religious from Eastern and Central Europe involved in combating human trafficking. It drew 77 participants from 17 countries of Europe. This second Assembly drew 140 participants from 27 European countries, a large number of whom had been at the Polish Assembly.

People from Albania, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, Poland... all felt at home with one another. National or ethnic barriers did not exist and language was no bar to communication, even for those with little or no English, the language of the meeting. Translation was provided in the assembly but somehow everyone communicate at any time. As someone said: "In this room we have Europe as Europe should be."

Sadly, Europe is becoming dominated by self-interest and profit. Britain has left and there are murmurs of discontent in other member countries. But the RENATE experience showed what could happen if the countries of Europe would really embrace the vision of community. Dr. Anna Rowlands said RENATE is "a model of Catholic Social Teaching in action". It is also a model of Europe as the European Union could be. At the risk of labouring the point, I would add it is a perfect model of a Network to which it is a privilege to belong .

Síle McGowan, Clane



## Message from Sr. Gemma (Unit Leader)

### LOVE IS THE ANSWER

*If we want to save the world and every sentient being that inhabits it, love is the one and only answer.” Albert Einstein*

The above quotation is attributed to Albert Einstein and is found in a letter that he supposedly wrote to his daughter, Lieserl. There is some doubt about the authenticity of the letter which acclaims love as the most powerful force in the universe. I would like to think that Einstein did write such a moving letter to his daughter (it can be found on the Internet), but whether he did or not, the truth is that love is the most powerful force in the universe.

*Teilhard de Chardin believed so. He believed that LOVE is a cosmological force, the primal energy of the universe which brought everything into being at the very first flaring forth, and the Divine Force that continuously generates new life and sustains everything in being. It is the energy of attraction, union and transcendence. “Driven by the forces of love,” he said, “the fragments of the world [continuously] seek each other so that the world may come to being”. (On love & happiness, 1984. Harper San Francisco). Without love, the cosmos would not exist; we would not exist.*

Teilhard’s burning wish is that we re-discover the power of love. “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.” (The Evolution of Chastity 1934).

These days when we are reflecting more deeply on our Chapter Document “Vowed for Mission” we

might ask ourselves: How are we living our celibate commitment to love? What is the quality of our love for one another especially in community? On the one hand we all yearn for companionship, acceptance, respect, harmony and working together; but sadly, on the other hand, we can all experience loneliness, isolation, individualism and lack of respect and acceptance by those living closest to us.



Jean Vanier comments: “Sometimes it is easier to hear the cries of poor people who are far away than it is to hear the cries of our brothers and sisters in our own community. (Community and Growth: 2007)

Today’s world needs more than ever the witness of communities of people who genuinely love one another. In a world of hatred and division, war and violence, we can proclaim to the world by our lives that the response to war and hatred is to know, love and accept others as members of our family.

“ Our challenge today is to trust the power of love at the heart of life, to let ourselves be seized by love, to create and invent ways for love to evolve into a global wholeness of unity, compassion, justice and peacemaking”.

(Ilia Delio: The Unbearable Wholeness of Being”, Orbis Books: 2013)

#### LOVE AS A COSMIC FORCE

Of all the forces  
The strong, the weak, the gravitational  
The electromagnetic  
The strangest, strongest force of all  
Is the force of Love.  
Beyond all form  
Love is the cosmic adhesive  
Binding the All  
And playing out its rites  
In every dimension.

*alexgrey.com/love-is-a-cosmic-force*



## RENA TE ASSEMBLY

6 - 12 November 2016

### Ending Human Trafficking begins with us

Participants in the 2<sup>nd</sup> RENATE Assembly, including HF Srs. Marie Power and Síle McGowan, began arriving from mid-morning on 6 November and started getting to know one another, as well as renewing old friendships from the 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly and other meetings. The formal opening ritual started at 17:40 with a procession to the assembly hall for



Mass. There we placed our national flags and bricks (polystyrene) from a demolished "wall", intending to build them into a bridge as the week went on. The chief celebrant was Cardinal Turkson, Chair of the Pontifical Commission on Justice & Peace, a very warm and friendly man.

Icebreaking and logistics filled the rest of the evening after dinner. It was to be a crowded week of inputs, buzz groups, workshops, feedback in assembly, and language group meetings to prepare a strategic plan for the next 5 years.

There was time to browse at the Open Market where beautiful craft work by women survivors of trafficking, who were housed in shelters in the various countries from which the participants came, was displayed and offered for sale.



Needless to say, the conversations that took place outside the formal meeting times were extremely enriching and complemented in very concrete terms what was said by the various speakers.

Each day began with the celebration of the Eucharist. Morning prayer was wonderfully woven around the theme *ABBA*, with brief meditations on different petitions in the Our Father. It set the tone at the start of the day.

Our resident theologian, Dr Anna Rowlands, drew the threads of the day together in a theological summary in the evening.



Anna Rowlands is a Political, Moral and Practical Theologian who works particularly with questions of religion and the political, as they relate both to the great traditions of Christian political thought and also to key contemporary moral and ethical questions. She is the Director of a new network for Catholic Social Thought (CST) and Practice and works with faith-based organisations including CAFOD, CARITAS Social Action Network and Citizens UK.

## WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS

**M**onday, 7 November, was a day for welcoming and setting the scene by giving information about RENATE's activities over the past few years. Sr. Imelda Poole, an English IBVM sister spoke on the History and Mission of RENATE (see p. 9).

Sr. Patricia Mulhall, CSB, launched the RENATE Mapping Report, in which Marie Power was involved. She spoke about the extent of the network from the UK to the Ukraine and the enormous amount of work being done, much of which is not documented, and

the possibilities for the network to effect change.

We were addressed by the President of the Italian Conference of Religious Women (USMI), Sr. R. Cesarato, Sr Eugenia Bonetti, of the anti-trafficking desk of USMI, and by Sister Gabriella who leads the UISG working group against Trafficking, called 'Talitha Kum'.



Imelda Poole & Patricia Mulhall

## PAPAL AUDIENCE

**T**he high point of the morning was, of course, the audience with Pope Francis. We were honoured to be received by him and have the opportunity to greet him individually.

When Imelda had finished her address on behalf of RENATE, he rose from his throne and came over to greet her with a warm handclasp. He then returned to give his own address. (P. )

He had expressed a wish to greet each one of us personally. It was a privilege and a



pleasure to be so close to the Holy Father and have the opportunity to say a few words.

Several people offered him gifts, notably a St. Brigid's Cross woven by the RENATE Board at Solas Bríde when they met in Ireland. Another gave him two miniature bottles of Irish whiskey.

Most had a special word or request for him. I told him we were expecting him in Ireland in 2018, preempting our Taoiseach.

**Awaiting the arrival of the Holy Father**

## A SMALL TASTE OF WHAT WE HEARD DURING THE WEEK

### *Victim Centred and Direct Action*

On Tuesday, the huge problem of trafficking in Nigeria was to the fore, even though most of us are already aware of it. Benin City is mentioned again and again as the hub. The links between the Mafia in Sicily and the Mafia in Nigeria are emphasised and decried.

The EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Dr. Myria Vassiliadou, was supposed to be with but was unable to leave her work in Brussels, so from her desk she recorded a video address for us. While it showed how



much Europe's Governments are trying to be constructive in the fight against trafficking, the reaction from our Assembly delegates who are working at the coalface was strong.

The problem, they told us, is that the traffickers are changing tactics three times while our parliaments are taking years to prepare and debate each new piece of legislation to criminalise them. Punishments are trivial, e.g. 400 euro when someone is caught, and only very few are caught.

We also had a session with a former Dutch police officer who became a Christian evangelist and, with his wife, is deeply engaged in work with survivors. He was accompanied by a young woman who is recovering from being trapped as a teenager by a 'Lover Boy' - a phenomenon long known in The Netherlands, and now very much on the go in Ireland.

There was a powerful input from Iana Matei. She became an activist in the failed 1989 revolution in her native Romania. She was lucky to be rescued by UNHCR and relocated to Australia where she became

involved with work among street children in her local church. After the Berlin Wall came down, she returned to Romania, and is now doing amazing work among victims of trafficking. She deplores our legal systems, says we go after the pimps, but nobody goes after the traffickers, where the real power lies. She was scathing about politicians who put words on paper and do nothing.

The 20-minute theological summary in the evening by Anna Rowlands was brilliant. She walked us through the stories of each of the women who approached Jesus in the NT with different requests. Then she focused on the Canaanite woman. Today, the women approaching Jesus are trafficked women, or they are us who advocate on their behalf or help them in some way.

### *Migration & New Forms of Human Trafficking*

Our main input on Wednesday was about the extraordinary role played by Italy in the tragic events related to the mass migration of peoples from Asia, the Middle East and Africa to Europe - due to war, poverty, people smuggling and human trafficking.

Sister Valeria, an Italian Comboni Sister, working in



Sicily gave harrowing details of what is happening. It was not surprising to hear her say the Mediterranean is a graveyard. It was, perhaps, a little surprising but heartening to hear that Sicily, given it is almost synonymous with the Mafia, has a big heart and the local people welcome all the migrants.

Listening to Valeria, you could not help thinking that those who die in attempting to cross the Mediterra-



Theo Hendrickz in blue shirt

mean are more fortunate than those who survive, given what faces them, despite the extraordinary efforts of the people of Italy and their government and churches to help them.

Valeria went into some detail about the lot of those whose identity papers are taken away. That is bad enough, but when the documents are sold, and these people's fingerprints are associated with the person to whom they have been sold, it is next to impossible for them to recover their identity. Some of the people she tries to help have had so many names and have been through so many ordeals that they cannot re-

member their original name. It is impossible for many children to ever establish their country of origin.

Most of the women have been raped. Many young women arrive pregnant because the smugglers know they will then get better treatment on arrival. The traffickers know these vulnerable women will have to 'earn' their living and be more easily available for the prostitution rings they run.

Valeria's paper paints a truly horrifying scenario. Her driver is an Italian Franciscan brother and he spoke very movingly from the audience of his experiences with her in meeting the boats at Palermo.

Monsignor Giancarlo Perego, who is Director General of the Office for Migrants with Caritas in Italy, told us about what is happening at the other Italian ports, including the tiny island of Lampedusa, the nearest to the shoreline of North Africa. You will remember Pope Francis visited Lampedusa shortly after he became Pope. In the hope that they will some day be able to reconnect unaccompanied minors with their families, they are trying to build up a DNA data base, a mammoth task.

The social and political problems in the countries of origin of these people were often mentioned. It was difficult to avoid a sense of helplessness.

The lights were turned down in the auditorium for Anna Rowlands' theological reflection on Wednesday evening. During last summer, she had visited the Calais 'Jungle', recently demolished by the French authorities. On the screen, she projected religious paintings by Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees which had been on the walls of the - now demolished - church in the Calais 'Jungle'.

She had permission from the artists to photograph and use this amazing Biblical artwork, including the scene from the Book of Revelation where Michael engages the power of evil, and another of Jesus standing at the door and knocking.

Her theological reflection centred on the NT story of the boat tossed by the storm while Jesus slept. She reflected on the dangerous power of fear which serves evil so well. She drew on the writing of Bonhoeffer when Hitler was elected in 1932 and 1933



Interior of makeshift chape; at former Calais Jungle

and led us in prayer that fear of the evil that surrounds us will not leave us paralysed. Once again, our working day closed as we quietly recited the Our Father in our own native language.

## Workshops

A number of workshops were given throughout the week, in the afternoons. It was possible to attend two from about six on a given day. This posed something of a dilemma as all were so informative relating to concrete problems and describing activities to address them.

To name a few:

- Safe Return- Information on the new Dutch Religious Network on Trafficking, Exploitation, Migration and Justice, led by Mrs Ivonne van de Kar
- Voluntary Return, led by Sister Monica Chikwe, som
- MECPATHS- Mercy efforts to end Child Prostitution and Trafficking in the Hotel Sector, led by Sister Mary Ryan, rsm
- The Nano Nagle Centre, Spišské Podhradie, Slovakia, led by Sister Anne McNamara, PBVM.



Sr. Monica Chikwe

### *Relaxing with some music*

At times when we needed some cheering up or simply a break from the serious work we were engaged in, our two musicmakers, Sr. Marie H  l  ne Halligon, RGS and Gazmir Memaj, started a chorus.



Throughout the week, the bridge was gradually being constructed.



## Discernment and Strategic Planning

Our last day was devoted to working out a mandate for the next 5 years with some practical help from a few speakers.



Sally Axworthy addressing the assembly

Sally Axworthy, UK Ambassador to the Vatican since last August, told us about the 'Modern Slavery Innovation Fund', recently announced by her Government. She listed countries that are priorities for UK aid, among them Nigeria and S. Sudan, but anyone can apply. £6 million has already been provided by UK to this fund, and a probable £5 million more to follow.

The UK Government is looking for new ways of tackling trafficking. Working with religious sisters would be something new, Sally told us. They are keen to deepen partnership with faith-based organisations.

After that we had input on strategic planning from Markus Janzen, the German Grant Manager of the philanthropic organisation, Porticus, that is funding much of RENATE's anti-trafficking work. Markus is based in Vienna, but Porticus (which is linked to the

Dutch family who own the C&A chain store) also has a London office. Porticus greatly admires the work of RENATE and has been supporting us since we were founded.



Markus Janzen, Porticus representative

Guy Insull of Caritas Anchor House in London gave a fascinating presentation. He has been working on the development of the new Global Noticeboard technology. Guy was accompanied by an Indian colleague, who heads a 21-person team in India where this new development was pioneered. The Global Noticeboard is what it says, a noticeboard behind your website on which anyone, anywhere, can put a notice, and on which anyone, anywhere, can find a notice on any topic under the sun. It seems the Diocese of Brentwood has piloted the technology, and many church agencies in the UK are following up. Is it for us?

The rest of the day was devoted to brainstorming and prioritising the Mandate to the Board and Leadership of RENATE for the coming five years. It has since been published on the [RENATE](#) website.

The work of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RENATE Assembly was done. In five years' time, God willing, members will meet again to evaluate how the mandate was implemented.

Our closing Mass took place at 6 pm and, like the opening Mass, was live streamed around the world via the RENATE website.

A final celebratory get-together began at 9 pm.



The European Network of Women Religious Against Trafficking and Exploitation – known as RENATE, achieves its goals in the light of Gospel values. The members work in the field of direct action, training, advocacy and campaigning, research and cross cultural cooperation. The work of RENATE has an ethic of inclusivity with members equally from East and West Europe. RENATE was founded in 2009, it is under the umbrella of Talitha Kum, the International Body of Religious Networks under the aegis of UISG in Rome.

RENA TE has developed a methodology of work which includes a high level of networking processes amongst the members using modern technology and clear communication. This enables resources to be shared and an implementation of the plan of action to be successfully accomplished at every stage. The work itself includes awareness raising right across Europe through the collaboration of the many members of RENATE. This action is directed to eliminating, to the best of their ability, the crime of human trafficking taking place in our world today. This particular work undertaken by the members, involves many creative initiatives right across Europe in the field of prevention, using film, UNGift box, drama, twitter and other social media platforms, in the most vulnerable and isolated regions, sustaining many innovative projects.

The members are also engaged in direct action with the victims of trafficking. They work in shelters, refugee services, undercover work, reintegration centres and on the streets where the victims are being used by pimps and need to be rescued.

Finally our methodology includes advocacy and research. We have conducted the Mapping Exercise of Human Trafficking right across Europe where RENATE members are working in the field. We are also aware, through the use of our website that we can be key actors in the field of advocacy worldwide. Through the individual members, advocacy is taking place each day at the grass roots.

We, in RENATE, are aware of the intensity of our work and so a key element is also ‘care of the workers’. We have included this as an integral part of our plan of action and therefore our methodology. Trainings related to Human Trafficking and workshops take place each year for the members.

We are also aware of the need for assessment and for ensuring our future until this crime has disappeared, therefore fund raising is constant and we raise awareness of our needs to all congregations in Europe and funding bodies who are sensitive to this work. We are constituted as a non profit NGO under the Dutch law and have a Board, and a core group consisting of hard working voluntary members. We also employ four part time staff: A secretary, a website development officer, a communications officer and a finance officer.

The focus of the work is the rescue, protection and rehabilitation of the victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Imelda Poole RENATE President

## Two International Teams of Participation meet in Rome 15 - 24 November

**T**wo International Teams of Participation that have become known, for brevity of utterance, as the *Roots* Team and the *God Alone* Team met together in Rome this month to share the results of their research so far. Each has a mandate given by the 2014 General Chapter.

The mandate of the *Roots* team is to delve deeply into the main aspects of our spirituality and see how they connect with the emerging worldview.

That of the *God Alone* team is to re-write the process of discernment for those members of the *Holy Family* who feel called to commit themselves in the Vocation of God Alone.



Zulema, Aine, Colleen, Ana Maria, Claire, Micheline, Margaret, Dammika, Síle Perpétue, Pascale (Translator)

There are obvious advantages in both Teams meeting occasionally to reflect together and share insights and pool research.

It was a time of prayerful listening to the Spirit, and deep listening and reflecting back to one another, as each one shared the fruit of her work since the last meeting. The way forward gradually began to open and, God willing, will be broadened at further meetings.

We were privileged to be in Rome for two important events.

### *Closing of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica*

Sunday, 20 November, was free, so those who wished were present at Mass in St. Peter's Square to witness Pope Francis closing the Holy Door into St. Peter's to mark the end of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy.

### *Birthday of Ana Maria, our General Leader*



Ana Maria celebrated her birthday on 24 November, our last working day. We were happy to have the opportunity to join the two communities of the Generalate in prayer and thanksgiving for her, trusting in God's continuing love and blessings on her in the future.



## WMOF2018

*By now everyone is probably familiar with the official website of the World Meeting of Families 2018 (<http://www.worldmeeting2018.ie>). Below is a copy of a page about volunteering which might appeal to some of us or to our friends. Volunteering for the Eucharistic Congress in 2012 was for me a wonderful experience which I might hope to replicate in 2018.*

“Would you like to help us organise this amazing event? We would be delighted to have you!

The World Meeting of the Families 2018 will attract thousands of Irish and International pilgrims. Organising it and seeing it through will only be possible with the help of generous volunteers who will put their love and talents to service.

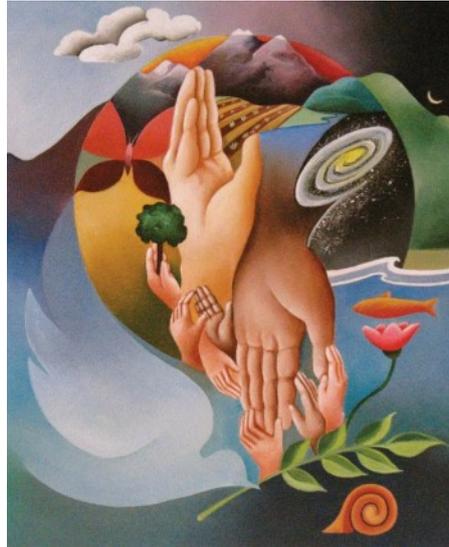
In 2012, for the 50th International Eucharistic Congress, approximately 2,000 volunteers gave their time, abilities and service to organise this event in various roles, such as stewards, welcoming and information teams, photographers, bloggers, media support, logistics, programming support, among many roles. The volunteers were amazing and loved the experience of being part of the event from the inside.



If you volunteered for IEC2012 please volunteer with us again and help us encourage others to do so too. If you haven't volunteered before, we would like to have you too. We are seeking approximately 2,000 volunteers; we hope WMOF2018 will appeal to many to help!

Applications to become volunteers will open in early 2017, both to start helping us with the preparations and also for the five days of the event. This will include a formal online application and Garda vetting process in line with our safeguarding policies.”

<http://www.worldmeeting2018.ie/volunteer/>



Hope is a communal virtue.  
Now is the time to be community for each other  
• to help carry burdens, to share, to offer hope,  
to trust, to love one another.



#### **A Prayer of Gratitude**

**We are grateful for the gift of life and for all the gifts  
of friendship, love, devotion, and forgiveness  
that we have shared.**

**We give thanks for the presence of our loving God -  
visible to us in one another, in countless daily gifts,  
and in the miracles and wonders of creation.**

**May we remember to express our gratitude  
each day through lives of service,  
generosity, kindness, care and compassion.**

Submitted by Joan Farrell, Rock Ferry

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>December 2016</b>						
<b>Sun</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>
				1 World AIDS Day	2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	3
4	5 International Volunteers Day	6 Foundation of Sisters of the Immaculate Conception 1829	7	8 Immaculate Conception of the BVM	9	10 Our Lady of Loreto  Human Rights Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 Our Lady of Hope Approval of Constitutions of Holy Family Srs. 1903 & 1088 International Migrants Day	19	20 International Human Solidarity Day	21	22	23	24
25 Christmas Day	26	27	28	29	30 The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph	31