

## TO SERVE WITH JOY



Calling a Lebanese couple to liaise the Central Europe Zone seemed surprising because we are from the other side of the Mediterranean; but for us, it was an avant-gardist sign of the interest that the Church has for Christians in the Middle East.

Our Zone stretches from West to East and from Northern Europe, passing by the Middle East to finally include Mauritius; on top of the two Super-Regions France-Luxemburg-Switzerland and Belgium, there are 5 regions: Poland, Germany, Lebanon, Syria, Mauritius and isolated teams in Belarus, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Rumania, Norway, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Qatar, which require particular attention to the different specific features and cultures.

We learnt that *what is extraordinary is not the fact of meeting someone else but the fact of creating a relationship with them.* Masses and prayers always precede our trips. The couples' warm hospitality has allowed us to experience this relationship and to augment our capacity to listen.

In Munich in 2013, we experienced a very precious moment: all that was necessary was to listen, open our heart and "*don the spirit of humility to overcome obstacles,*" while in Poland it was an apostolic commitment that was driven by a strong sense of service. In Hungary, the number of teams grew from 12 to 18 and the Responsible Couple, who is dedicated to transmitting the riches of the Movement, committed to translating the documents and study topics. We found the warmth of their welcome and the sense of hospitality of these Team members very touching.

In March 2014 in Namur, our Belgian friends told us about that they were worried about the aging of the Movement and asked us to pray for them. Today *they hope against all hope:* ten teams are being piloted and couples have come forward offering their services to the Movement.

Within the zone, *“everyone is concerned about each other.”* The Super-Region France-Luxemburg-Switzerland responded generously to the requests and appeals of the regions attached to the International Leading Team and the isolated teams for the expansion of the Movement, the distribution of numerous documents and the hosting of couples at training sessions.

Today in Mauritius and thanks to the training sessions organised by the International Leading team, the Teams are now able to set up and run their own new sessions.

Our isolated Teams make great efforts to translate into their mother tongue; they appreciate the richness of the international nature of the Movement and are keen to deepen their spiritual life and know a little better the thinking of Father Caffarel. Since they have few occasions to open up and blossom in their own countries that are non-Christian in the Middle East or non-religious in Europe, couples find the monthly meetings to be a haven of trust and mutual help. In Jordan, the beauty of the ecumenical spirit amazed us when we realised that the members of the 9 Teams belonged to different churches. But what moved us the most was to see the Team members in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. These are Syrian and Lebanese couples who have emigrated because of the war and who wish to persevere in their spiritual life despite two major obstacles: the lack of priests and the lack of freedom to worship outside the parish buildings.

In Syria, the scattered Team members meet as and when they can. They mutually help each other despite the dangers inherent in moving around and circulating.

In the Middle East, the Teams have to deal with the dangers of fundamentalist Islam, which encourages them to emigrate; Lebanon remains a refuge for Christian Arabs and its Church represents a dynamic presence and a link with the universal Church for them.

At the end of our second year of service, we have a deep conviction: when *“unworthy servants”* experience joy in their relationship with their brothers and sisters, they allow the Spirit to transform them so that they can navigate upon the ocean.

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