



CONGRÉGATION DE
NOTRE-DAME

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FAITH AND LIGHT

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Sister Louise Paradis and Sister Aline Dufour, of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame (CND), have for many years worked with "Faith and Light" an international organization born of a desire to help people with an intellectual disability and their families find their place within the Church and society. It was established in France in 1971 by Jean Vanier and Marie-Hélène Mathieu. The association is organized in groups called communities. These communities, comprised of children, teenagers or adults with intellectual disabilities of varying degrees, their families and friends, meet together at least one day a month. In these gatherings they create relationships among themselves through friendship, sharing, prayer, celebration of the Eucharist and festivities. They also share their hardships and their hopes. Each community, usually made up of about thirty people, names a coordinating team responsible to plan and organize activities in accordance with the association's guidelines and theme of the year.

This team is composed of four to eight people, of whom at least one is a parent, a friend, a chaplain and, as much as possible, a person with an intellectual disability. There currently are 1,650 communities in 80 countries around the world.

For Sister Louise, her active involvement began in 1977 when she accepted the invitation from the person responsible for La Croisée community, Ms. Jeannette Cyr, to participate in a large celebration which brought together persons with an intellectual disability, their parents and their friends in the basement of St-Marc de Rosemont Church. Following the very warm welcome she received, she decided then and there to become involved. Eighteen years later, she is still involved. It is through "Faith and Light" that she discovered all the richness of persons with an intellectual disability: "They have such a sense of celebration! They teach me to live in the moment, to accept others as they are, to listen carefully to their needs..."

Sister Aline's experience with "Faith and Light" goes back to January 1995. At the request of Bishop Gérard Daucourt of Troyes, she began by dedicating a little of her time to the smooth running of La Source community. Her involvement lasted eleven years. "I have learned and received so much from these endearing persons," she says. "I have admired their simplicity of heart, their spontaneity, their courage, their affection and their humility..."

Leaving these people to whom she had grown attached and to whom she is still attached to return permanently to Montreal in 2010 was extremely difficult. However, with the help of Sister Madeleine Rochette, CND, she immediately joined L'Étoile, a community very similar to the one she left behind. The gatherings are held on the third Saturday of each month in the parish hall next to St-Marc de Rosemont Church.



" Persons with an intellectual disability are especially gifted to spread joy, happiness, reconciliation and compassion around them. "

- Ghislain du Chéné, International Coordinator