



To our Friends of the Mission,

Easter 2009

*"I am come that they might have life,
and that they might have it more abundantly"
(St. John 10,10)*

The chains of Faith

Dear friends,

I write from Moscow – to which I came back this week - this editorial of this year's Blue Newsletter. After having visited our teams, we had a meeting in Toulouse in late February with the brothers of Europe; in March I visited Mgr. Genoud in Freiburg, the bishop who binds us to the Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul.



This year, as per the demand of Pope Benedict, successor of Peter, the whole Church honours Paul, who is, with Peter, a column of the Church of Christ. This gives us great joy. So, thanks to the Synod on the Word of God, we see that all the values that we have received and which are our treasure shall be supported by the Great Church. All is in common. We cannot do more, except realize our call and respond: what grace!

When the bishops are the successors of the apostles in the first communities formed by them, others are, in turn, their successors among the people who do not know the Lord Jesus. They give witness to the life and love of God revealed by Jesus. We are the last of them. Our apostolic task today is a lot simpler, but more demanding, because the world expects people "to live with passion for what the Church proclaims," as St Paul did.



Recently, I was touched by the words of Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens, who when in Rome on 14 December 2006 receiving the gift of a relic of the chains of S. Paul, recalled:

"Held in chains seven times, exiled and stoned, he became a champion in East and West. He received the ardent fame of martyrdom for his. After teaching justice in the world and reaching the limits of the West, he gave testimony in front of the rulers. Thus he left the world and went to holiness – he is a model of coherence.

"This citation is of St. Clement, Bishop of Rome who, according to St. Irenaeus, "had seen himself the apostles and had been in contact with them." Written thirty years after the execution of Saint Paul in this place, it shows that the author has closely followed the events and brilliantly sums up the life of the Apostle



He added: *"We venerate today the chains, that Onésiphore should have no shame. Not only do we worship them, but we receive by your hands a fragment, with the blessing from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. The Church of Greece receives this fragment of the chains of the apostle Paul, as a very valuable relic ... We come as humble pilgrims to this holy place associated with the memory of the apostle Paul, founder of the Church of Greece.*

We leave, taking fervently in the hands this sacred treasure to our Church. Hopefully, this chain of the apostle Paul may be the unbreakable bond uniting East and West through the bond of love, and the whole world "by the bond of peace."



Signs of life in the Spirit

Dear friends,

We were called to the apostolic witness, and we also venerate these chains, the source of unity and peace. Experience shows that we are also holders of chains like Paul, and none of us knows in advance where this will lead.



Jacques Loew said that the paths of faith are nothing like a motorway. Ten years ago he left us, and two books just being published reveal his chains. One, of his correspondence with Madeleine Delbr el about his times of trials, the other is an anthology of his writings, including the tribulations of his last days. (1)



We bear witness to the truth, when we say that we are every day, like Jacques, as S. Paul dare I say, subject to temptation, before we could even open our mouths. We suffer like other men by well known-desires that we have in common, but we are where the Lord wants us to be, with the most precious gift -our faith, which we have to transmit.

Every day we feel the fragility of our being and the separation due to our sin, which blocks the love we bear. Yet, once the race is over, we can still speak, testify, we can relate what we experienced.

A former Latin motto sums up the apostolic task in the world: "*contemplata aliis tradere.*" What we experienced within ourselves, will be the subject of our announcing. We have then the "purified vision" to see and to tell - not only our petty stories, very real indeed, as if they were the most important piece of the game - but, like the donkey of Balaam, we can

“see and announce "the wonders that God does around us, though they are invisible to the distracted and selfish eyes of men who resist God.



We can "provoke" the blessings of God through our faith, so that they descend in abundance on our brothers, on the poor people with whom we are in solidarity of destiny and want to leave the desert.

I propose this year to look for a few stories to take with us, regarding how God deals with his children and that

He shares where He sends us in mission. I hope that you too, captivated by these witnesses, after passing through your experience - that which reaches you where you received your gift - you can see “the heavens open,” as the first deacon Stephen witnessed before S. Paul and many others after him.

The Spirit of God is present everywhere, He is at work, he goes before us, He takes care of us, even when we do not think about Him. The Spirit is "Lord and gives life", he continues the work of Jesus after his resurrection and makes us his witnesses. He gives signs of life and resurrection among men, so that they may believe and have life. That he still awakes men and women worthy to see this and to be the successors of the apostles!



You will receive this letter, I hope, around Easter. We reiterate then: Christ has defeated death, to those in the tomb he has given life! Yes He is risen! He is truly risen! We are witnesses.

Your brother and deacon, Antonio
Moscow, March 15, 2009

(original french, translation by Susan and John Curmi, Wimbledon)

(1) "Madeleine Delbr el, gen ese d'une spiritualit e" Nouvelle Cit e, 2008; "Jacques Loew, la qu ete de Dieu", DDB, 2008, "Comme s'il voyait l'invisible" Cerf, 2008³.