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# Lettre de la Communion de La Viale

A word from Michel Val  
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Supplement: Christmas celebrations

Christmas Christmas, with its share of festivals, large meals and small gifts, trees, garlands and stars. Ah! the stars ... The most beautiful are those which shine in the eyes of a sick child, of a homeless; those that light up a sad face with a smile. Perhaps that is why Christmas exists ... Because Christmas is not just gifts and trees. No. Perhaps this is the opportunity to give a look, a smile, to offer a little of your time to those who need it. This may be the time to share and even give. So that we can finally see that little glow in every look we meet. And always those stars in the eyes of those you make happy. Virginie, student at lycée St Pierre et St Paul de Langogne (Lozère). Michel Val

## **Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8**

Today we celebrate Mary.

From your secret origin within your Mother Anne, you could only live in Love.

When you were born, your eyes were transparent and shining with this original Light.

You carried in the hollow of you, this great void awaiting the only Love of God.

Mother of God, you taught your Son-man the gestures and words of tenderness.

He taught you everything about the gift of God.

In thirty years He lived with you everything He shared with men in his public life, until the Offering of his life to each.

Through his Passion of Love, to which you communicated from your origin, you existed only through Love, without being able to assert yourself by yourself, only by receiving yourself from God at every moment, vulnerable to God.

Magnificat! Through you and with you we sing the great Mystery.

Guy Martinot SJ

Christmas proverbs

So we shout Christmas that it is coming (Bro. Villon).

God also has a mother.

A child is born to us, a Son is given to us.

There is a star in the heart of every man to show him the way to his God.

## **Christmas, the quest for innocence**

Sometimes, holding a newborn baby in my arms, it is given to me to gaze into his and discover there a fragile light that comes from elsewhere. When he is touched by evil - violence in his entourage, a sudden separation, a cry - it is first of all

astonishment that appears because, to integrate it, he has no corresponding experience in him. to this evil. Then fear. And this fear, will perhaps lead him later to a counter-violence, and to hatred to justify the violence.

The Christian tradition gives us to believe, by a dogma, that Mary remains with the original astonishment in front of the evil which is foreign to her. The innocence of the little one helps us understand the vulnerability of this innocence.

At Christmas, Mary, smiling, confides Jesus to us by putting him in our arms. And we discover in the eyes a unique light and a shattering vulnerability, for it can respond to attacks only with Love.

This light of the gaze, Jesus will keep it all his life. The Gospel only allows us to guess the exchanges of gaze with each one of those he meets, but they are at the heart of the Good News.

His joy will be for him to find it in the children. "Let the children come to me for, with their angels, they see my Father who is in heaven". The religion of Jesus is the religion of looks, windows of the Soul.

Jesus will also try to explain why the eyes he sometimes meets around him are dark and empty. Man is not totally or solely responsible.

A heredity of sadness, coming through what Chesterton called "the good news of original sin," partly exonerates us.

Jesus will also dare to name and confront the Evil One, revealing to us that we are not the authors of evil but only accomplices of another, the Prince of Darkness. Trained by another, to be delivered by another.

In his Passion, Jesus, before uttering this great cry of Love which words were unable to express, will fulfill this quest for Love by praying "Forgive their Father, they do not know what they are doing". The inner experience of wanted evil did not give man the knowledge of Love which only exists when received. By his final prayer, Jesus shares with us his innocence. In Him, who knows no evil, our quest ends.

Guy Martinot SJ

## *Des nouvelles des pôles...*

**La Viale  
Lozère**

“Be always in the joy of the Lord; I say it again: be in joy ”(Phil 4, 4). This is what we are indeed in since the beginning of Advent. For Arnaud and Guillaume, this time was experienced as a confinement in God (and courageously in a hermitage). In order not to be outdone, we exchanged our joys: those we experience together, but also that of God when he looks at us. This is how sharing in communion, simple and beautiful things, but also sad things, gives us joy. First, to be, quite simply, then in front of the beauty of the world, to work together in creation, to slip into warm socks in the morning and to butter bread, to see others enter into the mystery, to receive and transmit God, to marvel at the healing in the Central African Republic of a malaria child considered lost, to think of each other, and even, simply to listen to us tell our joys. And then, what about the joy of God to see us joyful, since he is its Source! And perhaps especially when a prodigal son returns to his Father ... So we thus enter into the joy of one another, and it multiplies! To Saint Paul who says to remain in joy, we answer: “Ah! How good it is, how sweet it is for brothers to live together and to be united ”(beginning of Psalm 132).  
Benoît Bouchard

**La Viale  
Opstal**

Christmas celebrations, with restrictions?

Yes, it is a first, for our families and for our Church, that the deprivation of masses or the limitation of the number of participants enter our life. In recent decades, the decline in religious practice has occurred on its own, as a consequence of our disinterest, prosperity, the quality of the transmission of the Christian message, the diversity of human choices, or even the overflow. activities of all kinds ...

We see that the pandemic situation is still worrying and dramatic for many. The nations around us are reacting vigorously. Our Church leaders, from Rome to our home, show a new face to solidarity, in collaboration and respect for common measures.

This "restraint" in our habits is just as difficult to observe in matters of worship as in the face of the world of consumption or the exploitation of our common House. Could a Christmas under such conditions diminish our fervor in front of the manger?

At the end of October, a quarantine of the community had a "prophetic" effect on the circle of our relatives and friends, preparing them for general confinement throughout the country a few days later. Without a priest and without masses, we lived on the Eucharistic reserve and our daily sharing. On weekends, we were in remarkable contact with all those we saw in ordinary times. The first Mass in December gave us such a taste for the return of Jesus made flesh among us! What joy!

These last days we can say that we are at the bottom of the year. He invites us to take a closer look. This is where the crib appears. There is Someone in our hollow. There it is. It nests there. It is suffused with light. Around Him, people in Adoration. He saves us. About what ?

Like everyone else, the situation seems strange and at the very least unprecedented. But not without resources, on the contrary! All "planed" a bit from above, we rediscover what is most common in us, our fellow human beings, ourselves, and perhaps even finally the One who saves us from our mistakes. At the Opstal - as the French like to say, we are not afraid to say how privileged we are, by the priests and the good souls who assist us, by the way of life imported from Lozère by Pierre van Stappen, and by the immense horizon opened by common prayer. We all feel you are part of it. And we believe it's mutual! Merry Christmas and a holy year to come! Olivier de Kerchove

**La Viale  
Quartier-Gallet**

We felt the confinement quite harshly, as our small group of residents live primarily on welcoming, that is, this life that comes and goes all the time.

However, we were able to nourish ourselves with a little more sustained prayer, and we were also struck by the visits of the people of the surroundings who come to see us, because there are many walkers in the countryside. We do our best to

accommodate them because our table is always open. Many are all struck by the peace and silence of the place. They tell us: "What silence! There is no car. "

We sometimes welcome isolated groups, who then do everything independently of the farmhouse in the house called Inigo. So a group of five sisters.

We are always happy to have Father Pierre Depelchin who came to live with us for his last sabbatical months. It tackles all kinds of minor maintenance jobs.

As everywhere, we are waiting for the days when we can start welcoming the final classes again. Jean-Marie Glorieux SJ

## **La Viale Europe**

It is obviously an icy place when we forget to close the doors, or humid when the weather is not freezing ... But since confinement prevents us from collecting impressions from outside the community, we have to recognize a place where life always arises unexpectedly. A refugee family from Burundi to be welcomed within 3 days: and we discover that the solution to no longer be cold is to smile with all your teeth at 7 years old when you discover the ping pong table ... An outside look is not will not perceive the delicacies of each other ready to spend 3 hours in the kitchen to develop Hungarian-Indian recipes, unless they are Norman-Romanian. I confess that I am very moved when I see the friendship between such diverse peoples being realized quite simply, which is rooted in youth, in shared service, in the fervor of daily prayer.

Today, La Viale Europe is of course looking for itself: how to become a new place to live, that is to say a space where the Spirit breathes which gives life? Perhaps while listening to Marie-Louise sing a few songs in the evening between the meal and the "private" Eucharist celebrated in the evening, she who, without being told about it, established her winter quarters with the young people, able to encourage each and everyone and, for that, up to copying twice the names of each one so that his memory of 82 years does not forget them.

A weekend in Quartier Gallet was a time of amazing renewal thanks to the teaching on prayer from Father Jean-Marie. Half of Viale Europe was there. No doubt this is bearing fruit so that all can discern the presence of the newborn child in a manger in the midst of the life they lead. I am in awe of these young people from Europe and the world who, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., are in Brussels to qualify professionally, to build a career (which will be brilliant for some), but who choose the simplicity of life, friendship in common life and fidelity in prayer to base their life on reality. It is true that the fight is constant to let ourselves be lulled into the European cocoon, a sort of meta “social bubble” which constitutes the environment in which we live in Brussels. But when the Kurdish Suzanne, who has been in church for more than twenty years, comes to have her Sunday meal with the community on Sundays, then the bubble of appearances bursts so that the truth of the people appears! And the person in charge of the community is no longer surprised that the discussion at the meal turns on the maraud of hot chocolate for the homeless carried out by so and so on the forecourt of Luxembourg, or on the meals served on rue Haute at the little sisters of the poor. .

Yes, in this time of uncertainty, of the impossibility of meeting and moving as one would like to continue to do, it becomes possible to discern where the crèche is located which protects a newborn child. Open hearts have already learned to welcome it!

Alban Massie SJ

<b>Béguinage Viaduc</b>
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From confinement to Christmas.

This is an opportunity to learn ourselves a new way of living and praying together, while respecting safety standards.

In the morning, in the chapel, we begin with the Lauds prayer, with social distancing.

Young children go to school, and with the colder climate, they are less tempted to play on the patio together. There is no case of covid at this time.

Recent initiatives: a rosary in the open air or in the covered parking lot and the installation of a beautiful artisanal nursery.

The houses receive a name in calligraphy on a slate: Abraham, Saint Charbel, Thomas Merton, Sacré Cœur, Hildegard von Bingen etc. Saint Nicholas passed in front of all the houses where there were good children.

Guy lives in a studio at the Béguinage. Before he expressed any opinion, he was given the house name "Abraham". He receives many visits there, and often finds in front of his door the newspapers of the day before and the ready meals to support a bachelor. It's delicious to taste both the good stews, but also the delicacy of the attentions. Being on site, he plays a dual role: chaplain and trustee for emergencies.

There is always work going on, not only on Saturdays for community work, but also small repairs: unblocking, lighting, leaks, etc.

Basically, the Beguinage looks like a crib. This is what we think of when we look at Mary, Joseph and the Child Jesus who came to live among us.

Guy Martinot SJ

Marthe Mahieu and Guy Martinot's book "La Viale, a path to reborn, a place to live": € 10 (book) + € 4.9 (Belgium post) or € 8.70 (France post) to the IBAN BE43 account 0013 0875 3201 (BIC GEBABEBB) of the Communion of La Viale Europe. Send an email to [olivierdekerchove@hotmail.com](mailto:olivierdekerchove@hotmail.com) with NAME and ADDRESS of the recipient.