

## NEWS SHARING

BY THE SONS OF NOTRE-DAME DE VIE

# CONSECRATED IN THE WORLD !



*The Eddie-torial*



EDUARDO JOSÉ CALASANZ, SUPERIOR GENERAL  
OF THE SONS OF NOTRE-DAME DE VIE

In a letter addressed to the Sons of Our Lady of Life in September 2022 I wrote:

"The supreme authority in the male branch of the Institute belongs to the General Assembly, which meets every four years, and extraordinarily when it is convoked by the Superior General after a deliberative vote by his Council" (Const 85)." The General Assembly of the Sons of Our Lady of Life will therefore meet on July 24 until July 29, 2023."

The General Assembly is an essential moment in the life of our Branch and of all its members. It is a privileged moment of reunion and fraternal life. It is above all a time of sharing and growth for the Branch, especially in the exercise of our shared responsibility: all at the service of one another and of those to whom we are sent. The GA of 2023 is an "intermediate" assembly (i.e., in the middle of the ordinary mandate of a General Leader) (Const 87) but it has its real importance with the power "to make all decisions to procure the good of this branch of the Institute, in conformity with the Institutum or General Statute" (Const 87).

We ask our friends to pray to the Father of all mercy to enflame us with love so that we may be more docile to the motions of the Holy Spirit, more attentive to the calls of the Church, and more creative in the face of the needs of the world.

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# Retrospective in pictures of the last general assemblies

2008



2011

2015



2019



# Some news about the Sons of Our Lady of Life

## On the move

Andrès C. is studying French language and culture at the University of Montpellier, Paul Valéry.

Denis C. now lives at the Abbaye Sainte-Berthe in Blangy.

Didier G., after his year of solitude, is mostly present in Venasque for the economic affairs of the Branch. He often goes to Marseilles to take care of his 98 year old mother and to help with the apostolate to the sick in palliative care, and in officiating of funeral rites.

James V. is in Venasque for his continuing formation. He continues his work as an online counseling specialist.

## Membership in the Commission on Recognition and Reparation

Note that since August 2022, the Institute, in its 3 Branches, has joined the "Commission for Recognition and Reparation" (CRR), which offers a safe space for listening and restorative justice for abuses committed by consecrated persons.

<https://www.reconnaissancereparation.org/qui-sommes-nous>

## General Assembly, work and questionnaire

We are preparing our General Assembly with 5 working groups focused on these themes:

- Initial formation (before perpetual vows) and ongoing formation (after perpetual vows).
- The question of our witnessing and vocations
- The future of the Escombas house in Venasque
- The permanent assets of the male branch
- Authorities and obedience



In this context, we invite you to contribute to our work by answering the questionnaire below about your experience of our witnessing. We would appreciate if you could accomplish the survey before the end of March.

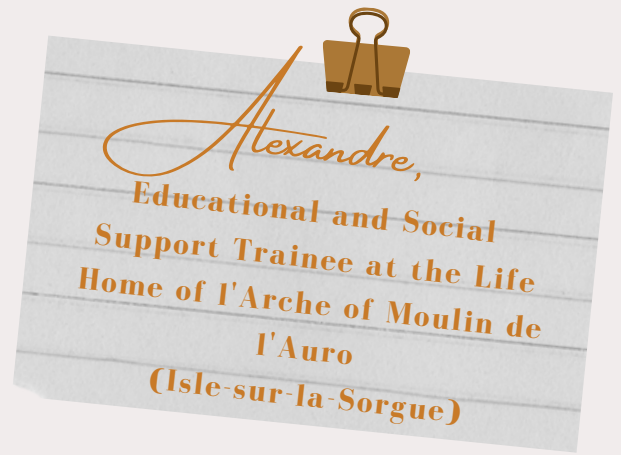
<https://framaforms.org/questionnaire-amis-fndv-1677211311>

Thank you for your help !

## Apostles in the breath of the Spirit

*"We want to pray, but if there is no one to help us, how do we do it?"  
(words of an 'accommodated person')*

At "the Source" in Venasque, I invested myself in the awakening of spirituality. As soon as I arrived at the Home (l'Arche), I felt the need of the 'accommodated people' to be accompanied in this dimension which is so dear to l'Arche. It is a chance to express one's faith in the workplace.



Every Thursday I prepare the songs for the mass with the people I accommodate. After the mass, we try to gather around an aperitif for a time of conviviality. In the evening, there is a time of sharing. This consists in spending time in the presence of God. We invoke the Holy Spirit, we prepare our hearts to listen to the Word. We light a candle and each person entrusts an intention to the Virgin Mary. We all sing together. Then, I choose a text from the Gospel that I mime so that it is understood by all. The people we accommodate have attention problems, so I put the emphasis on gestures. I ask each one to express themselves and to say if they have been touched by the Word. It's very beautiful to see them recollected.

This broadens my first professional mission, to allow me to reach all the dimensions of the people I accompany. In fact, as an educational and social support worker for people living with a disability, my responsibility is first to be concerned about the person's situation. I try to listen to them and to make them feel secure in expressing their expectations. I interact with them, according to a "personalized programme" thought out from their of their expressed wishes and needs. I set up activities to facilitate their autonomy, their ability to learn, communicate, understand and apply instructions and their social life.



**I help them to walk with Christ, with all that they are.**



## *Like leaven in the dough*

I like to compare our vocation to that of leaven in the dough. The resemblance is based on three characteristics of leaven. First, it is present in the dough, everywhere in fact. There is no place where it would not be. Second, it is invisible.

In spite of its all-presence in the dough, it is not distinguishable. One could not say: it is here or there. Thirdly, it has the quality of lifting the dough of which it is a part of.

Looking at our vocation, we are called to be in the world and not of the world. We are sent everywhere. There is no place where our calling could not be fulfilled. This is our advantage and our great responsibility. We are in the dough and we are the dough. We are part of the society, we participate in its life, we carry with it the weight of each day. We concern ourselves with its problems and we participate in the construction of a better future. The concerns of the society and the nation are ours. We do not live apart, we are in the middle with the others.

While being in the dough our belonging to a family in the Church must remain hidden (with some exceptions) to make our witness more powerful and true. It is not primarily through our words that we must bear witness, but through our lives, which can be both an enigma and a sign of a deep interior life for those we come into contact with.

Our role, however, is not only to be there and hide, but to try to make the dough rise. This is our fundamental mission, the deepest meaning of our presence among the men and women of today.



*On the left, coordination of work on the construction site of a 102-meter tower in Krakow (10 years of work).*



*On the right, retreats for youth and adults in the House of Potrojna (South of Poland)*



It is in this sense that we try to carry out our activities in Poland. First of all is the presence: wherever we go, wherever our human and professional qualities lead us. This presence is at the same time our testimony, often silent, but not afraid to speak up when the situation requires it. We live hidden like leaven in the dough and people do not know precisely what sets us in motion and gives us the strength to live as we do. For our goal is not to be seen and admired but to help the young (and not so young) to build their relationship with God in order to live fully, to blossom, to develop their talents, to realize the infinite desires that the Good Lord has put in their hearts because He wants to fulfill them. We are only modest brushes in the hands of the Master.

## *Being a witness to Christ*

My vocation, my mission as a consecrated layman, as a Son of ND de Vie, I have been living it at the heart of society for 30 years now. A first, rather short insertion in a company in the city of Montpellier. And then a second one now in a school in the city of Carpentras. It is in this context that I try to respond day after day to be a faithful witness of Christ.



To be a witness is.. round the clock. At work, at the heart of parish life, at home with the person I live with, in the neighborhood, at the ND de Vie community, when I go shopping, when I visit my family, etc. My life as a consecrated lay person, my life united to Christ is intimately linked to my daily life. This is what makes this vocation so beautiful.

In order to remain a "living" witness to Christ, it is very important that I remain united to Him "from the ground up". Mass (daily if possible), times of silent prayer, reading the Bible and its commentaries, constitute the foundations of my vocation and are ESSENTIAL.

In addition, my encounters with my neighbor enrich me in a special way. But above all they identify me (somehow) with Christ, who always turned to the other.

I have tried to gather in these few short lines what makes me live and move forward every day. One day in 1985, Jesus came to meet me and held out his hand to me when I was a bit "lost". Almost 40 years later, I am still in giving thanks for this encounter that directed me towards Life.





Three questions to ...

Sebastien

Friend of the Sons of Notre Dame de Vie, and Founder of the consulting firm, AD LIMINA

**Can you tell us a little about your personal journey and the role that Notre Dame de Vie has played in it?**

Converted at the age of 30, I discovered ND de Vie during the WYD in Madrid in 2011. Involved in *La Frat* and in the prayer group of Grenoble for several years, I found my spiritual family in Carmel, and ND de Vie for me is A privileged place to deepen my and anchor my faith in.

In 2013, I founded a consulting firm, AD LIMINA, which supports various institutions in the non-profit sector (solidarity, cultural, educational, faith, health, communities) in strategic management, communication, and fundraising. The firm has several offices in France and abroad. Its vision is inspired by the social doctrine of the Church: the service of the common good. For the past ten years, I have professionally accompanied several works of the Institute: in Sainte-Garde, Marie Pila, Studium, and Petit Castelet. During these missions, I have been able to work more closely with the members and to better understand the grace of ND de Vie and of the vocation of a consecrated lay person in the world. In particular, I appreciated the capacity of the members to have professional relationships, at times hierarchical, and at the same time, maintain fraternal relationships.

**What can you say about the dynamics between your consulting activities, given the tools and techniques you use, and the work of the Holy Spirit?**

Analysis, strategy, competitive studies--this jargon of consulting firms could, at first glance, lead one to think that the Holy Spirit is far from all that. I believe that this is not the case. Certainly, the vocabulary is not that of the Bible, but the Lord Himself tells us: *"For who among you, if he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down to calculate the cost and see if he has enough to go all the way?"* The role of a consultant is precisely to apply this reflection and to accompany its operational deployment. I am therefore convinced that a proven methodology provides a framework that brings out the intuitions of project leaders, encourages creativity, and structures the implementation of actions. Thus, the tools deployed are above all at the service of the project, and the art of the consultant's profession--I like to call us craftsmen--consists in finding the subtle alchemy that will precisely allow the Holy Spirit to work. There, the consultant gives way to the "Advisor".



## What are your take away's from the work you recently did with Notre-Dame de Vie on the future of the proposals made to young people?

The reflection that was carried out took place over the course of several months which mobilized young people, consecrated persons, and young consecrated persons. We first formed pairs who worked on different subjects: *bibliography of today's youth, benchmark on the proposals that work in the Church, assessment of the NDV proposals over the last few years, resources within the Institute*. We then formulated 11 strategic orientations, themselves explained in the form of several operational variations. At the beginning of January, we then brought together about fifteen people in charge of NDV Youth activities and we drew with them the outline of a steering body and the missions that could be entrusted to it. A summary of this work must now be presented to the general managers. From this reflection, I retain more particularly the following tracks: *to involve the young people in the elaboration of the proposals, to keep the requirement of the proposal, to mark the belonging to the family of Our Lady of Life, to deploy the Marian dimension of the charism (ex.: handing over of the scapular), to develop the partnerships.*

## Walking together

*Towards a weekend dedicated to "beauty" together with our friends*

*Prayer to live "a new Pentecost" with the Sons of Notre Dame de Vie*

Week-end des amis des Fils de  
Notre-Dame de Vie  
3 et 4 JUN 2023 à Venasque

La beauté  
dans tous ses éclats

Beauté de Dieu et de la Création,  
Beauté de la vie et des relations  
humaines...

Enseignement, partage,  
prière, balade, détente



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Beloved Father, you have given us the gift of your Word of fire, your Son. See to it that He becomes fully incarnate in our Branch! We ask you that the Pentecost He promised be renewed for the Sons of Notre Dame de Vie and that it sets us on fire with love!

Grant that we may be all together, with one heart, diligent in prayer with Mary our Mother, in the humble call of your Spirit of love. Without Him we can do nothing!

Show us the conversions we have to experience in order to speak in other languages. Make our lives a word of love that adapts to the needs of the brothers and sisters we meet--a word that always proclaims your wonders!

In the strength of the Spirit, move us to the ends of the earth, beyond our customs, to the peripheries of our lives.

Enlighten the decisions to be taken for the good of the Men's Branch, listening to the calls of the Church and for the glory of God.

All were filled with the Holy Spirit: may it be so for us according to your desire, in the ways, time, means and measure that you will! We renew our offering, personal and communal, in order to give you the joy of spreading your infinite mercy!



## Remembering to move forward

### *Pentecost 1963 ... and the call to live a new Pentecost for the Sons of Our Lady of Life*



On the feast of Pentecost 1963, Father Marie-Eugène gave a homily in Blangy that would become a milestone in the history of the Institute. Many members of the three branches came to Blangy, including George Lejeune and Bernard Saudout for the Sons of Our Lady of Life. In the chronicles of Saint Berthe Abbey is found: "At the day's Mass,... standing at the entrance to the oratory... he spoke with such an accent of truth that one had the impression that he was lifted up by the Holy Spirit." Here is an extract from his homily :

*" Come Father of the poor!" How dear this title is to us! Yes, the Father of the poor! It is the poor that he conquers, and as long as we are not poor, as long as we are not stripped of everything, as long as we have not realized this stripping, this annihilation of all our faculties, the Holy Spirit cannot conquer us. Let us offer ourselves today, on this feast of the Pentecost, of this taking hold, of this conquering of the Spirit, to the full extent that he desires, that he has decreed from all eternity... It is to this thought of God, to this power, to this ardor of substantial Love, which must descend upon us and upon the whole Institute until the end of time, that we are communing today. It is for this intention... that I am going to offer the Holy Mass, so that he may deign to carry out his thought, in spite of our timidity, in spite of our cowardice, in spite of our impurity, in spite especially of those stiffness of pride which we all carry within ourselves. May this Spirit deign to do his work completely and perfectly, not only by sending his tongues of fire on our souls and on all the souls of the Institute, but first by purifying us, by making us receptive. May this Spirit... deign to call to the Institute, and thus to himself, all the souls whom he has already chosen in his eternal decree. May he bring them by the paths he wills. We will not identify them, we will not determine these designs. We do not want to have any thought other than his, we do not want any other measure of love than that which he himself has laid out...*

*Yes! Give to each of our souls, O God, give to the Institute of ND de Vie, in the present and in the future, O Spirit of Love, O Father, this beauty, this greatness, this scale which you have dreamed of for it from all eternity, which you have already enjoyed, in which you have taken pleasure."*

Looking back at this moment, back in Venasque, Father Marie-Eugene says: *"On the day of Pentecost, I got them at Blangy, I shook them. They told me that I had stung them... if it could be the stinging of the transverberation... There is the symbol and the object. The object is the spiritual fecundity".*

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60 years later, on the eve of our next general assembly, we are organizing a year to invoke a new Pentecost on our Branch. We propose to all our relatives and friends to join us in this intention. For this we share with you the prayer above and ask that you be associated with the spiritual fruitfulness of this year.