

## Editorial



Ignacio ROSSELOT,  
Fondacio's President

The life of Fondacio is beautiful and rich. It belongs to all of us, members and friends of the community living in some 25 countries where it is present. It also concerns those who are close to us by their friendship, their support and prayers. Everything that nourishes Fondacio (events, projects, ...) needs to be communicated to call everyone

to be more alive in a world that tries to find a meaning to its existence.. The purpose of the Letter of Fondacio, new formula, is to testify to a wide audience.

We wish to establish a regular relationship that deepens and strengthens the links between community's members and their friends. Countries are rich in their own identity. Their projects are colored with their personalities and their faith. They have a desire to share the graces they have received. If the community is One through intuition that gathers, it is constantly enriched by its diversity. The following news will illustrate this.

We are questioned by the major issues that shake the world. The letter wants to speak and participate

in the thought that guides action. Personalities, members or friends of Fondacio will give their qualified opinion on the selected topics.

By means of this letter, we want to gather and spread some grains of the life and love of Fondacio for this world that "God loved so much that he gave his only son" (cf. Jn 3, 16 and 17).

### A new step for Fondacio Canada

For the last few months, Fondacio Canada has become important under the leadership of a new Head of Mission. His portrait on page 3

### The University of the Tropics: an unprecedented event!

People in charge of Fondacio Benin hosted last August more than fifty people from surrounding countries to experience the first edition of the University of the Tropics. Focus on ... page 4

### "Migrants, a future to build together."

Hot topic in Europe as well as in other continents . Every day the question of "living together different." is denounced. The 85th Social Week has chosen this theme, it was a good opportunity to ask Jean Pierre Rosa to throw light on the subject. See page 8

### We give voice to the author of the Epistle to Diognetus

In order to extend your reflexion, we offer you the Epistle to Diognetus written in the early years of the Christian era. This letter has travelled down centuries without a wrinkle or lose its relevance ...

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## Summary

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## Event

The journey we had in Myanmar is quite different and challenging. We started here by giving intensive formation to these young people before we invited them to become members. But for some reason most of them refused to become member. Last year, only one person said “yes”. One by one I “journey” with them, I learned to meet them where they are, in their personal condition, but we learned to walk altogether as a flock in one direction. We laughed together, we cried together, we learned how to take care of one another and correct attitudes like brothers and sisters.

And last November, during our discernment weekend, God has fulfilled His promise. Fourteen local people have expressed to walk with us in Fondacio as members of the community. It was touching to see how God worked in their lives and change their hearts.

The official launching was a series of events in three days in January from the 9th to the 11th:



**First Day,** Fondacio presentation to the National Bishops’ Conference.

When we were invited by Bishop Francis to present Fondacio to the National Bishops’ Conference, I felt it was like claiming the birth of a new

**Birth of a community:** in Myanmar, a country which is still rebuilding after the cyclone Nargis in may 2008, the members of Fondacio lived the official launching of the community. Three days of happiness, emotion, and solemnity, rich with symbols. A story by Carol DARIA

community in the Church. It was like presenting the mission of Christ for the people of Myanmar.



**Second Day,** launching among the members of the community.

All the sixteen members were present. We started the launching by blessing each member with water and the “aung da byay pan” leaves. The leaves are used to welcome each family member after a long journey. In Myanmar culture, these leaves are usually used to welcome and bless each one during New Year and special occasions. Today, we bless and welcome the birth of a new family, the birth of a new community after a long expectation.

**Third Day,** the Sending-off Eucharist with Mgr Charles Bo, Archbishop of Yangon.

The final launching of the community was done in Archbishop Charles’ house, a significant place since we are having our principal office in Yangon.

The highlight of the launching was the Eucharist celebrated by Mgr Bo.

During the offertory, we offered the following symbols representing the spirituality of Fondacio:

the “aung da byay pan leaves” symbolizes our spirituality of

blessing;

the “rice” symbolizes the communion: in Asia, it is considered as the “food of life” served in every meal, shared by every one in the family;



the “Fondacio candle” represents our apostolic spirituality. This candle was received by the country responsible during the 2008 International Congress. It represents the passing on the light of Jesus to His workers for the mission in Myanmar.



# Portrait

In this column, every three months, we give voice to a member of the community to let him tell his itinerary in a few words, to reveal the secrets of what leads him to his commitments whatever they may be. It is a way to listen to the various cultures that enrich Fondacio and give it its diverse and plural character.

**Dany Dubois, Head of Mission of Fondacio Canada is the first to speak**

“I’m 35, I am married with 3 children. I am a speaker, a trainer, an organiser and editor of chronicles (eg for Notre-Dame-du-Cap journal, a monthly magazine of Christian spirituality linked to the Marian shrine of the same name located near Trois-Rivieres between Montreal and Quebec). I am the author of six books including the latest, “Gabriel’s e-mails” (Publisher: Novalis). Finally, I have also 22 years of rich theatrical experience.

For a few years I have walked along the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, then the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, before making another choice, as you can see ... Then I had a university degree in promotion of cultural activities, a degree in theology and further studies in interpersonal communications and finally in starting a business. For 17 years I have worked as a pastoral animator in Notre-Dame-du-Cap, at the Shrine of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré, in school and parish, in diocesan services and finally as director of the Quebec IXTHUS. Centre.

It was then that Fondacio came into my life: a meeting between Martin Yelle, a Franciscan, Richard Boislard, head of Fondacio Canada, and Patrick Francois enabled me to discover the community and to enter a period of discernment . I was motivated and inspired by the spirituality of Fondacio, and I became in charge of a missionary area.

Today, our work in Canada remains very humble. Many links are to be built. We have three households, a theater, a work camp , a project of social reflection on the way, links to partners for training and other projects.

However, what remains a priority throughout my “pastoral and missionary action” is the person itself. I do not



Dany DUBOIS, head of mission of Fondacio Canada

want a teacher-client’s relationship, or coach-client’s, etc.. but I want to pay attention to people making the link real and fraternal. This quality of relationship which leads me not to try to clone a Christian, but to bring forth the other in the Spirit, knowing that He will act through me and in me. Childbirth involves to be troubled by the coming of a new life by the other, by God. Childbirth implies that love is first above anything else.

## Focus on...

### The University of the Tropics

by Victor KOMONDI

From 10 to 30 August 74 people from Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Benin participated in the first meeting of the University of the Tropics, (UTT) at the Institute Jean-Paul II-Parakou in Benin. A training time encouraged and supported by the International Council. Objective: To strengthen the capacities of people with responsibilities in Fondacio- Africa.

The University of the Tropics : 20 training days divided into three main lines.

**First main line** : In order to grasp the identity of the community, a sharp study of the constitutional texts which are sometimes unknown (basic charter, canonical statutes..) enabled us to get a deep understanding of Fondacio spirituality. It was led by Antoine Dزامah, vice president of Fondacio.

**Second main line:** training in professional and managerial technics for project management, given by Nestor Ayissou, a consultant from Togo and Maurice Barth, head of the mission : Solidarity based Development Projects (SDP). Fondacio will progress in its mission only if it begins to be professional in its actions. It is a question of credibility. The heart of the training: management techniques of human resources, buiding team with complementary skills,

techniques of communication in managing a working team, typology of leaders, financial management (general accounting, cost accounting, budget), steps to build a project, development of strategic reinforcement of projects, quality criteria for SDP (Solidarity based Developing Projects), types of agreements to develop, elements of contractual planning, conflicts management, change management. Objective: To give tools to people in charge to avoid recurrent errors which sometimes lead to conflicts.

**Last main line** : a retreat-session for people in responsibility. The topic was : “Jesus Christ’s salvation at the source of the common mission”. On this occasion, François Prouteau, a member of Fondacio Council, talked to the people in responsibility about the funds raising, and Marie-Christine Baron, head of the mission Training and Coaching, said how important it was to use the training tools available at Fondacio.

On the UTT’s menu there were also: community celebrations, fraternal sharing, singing, dancing, coaching, workshops ... Furthermore, each country had its working sessions, so it enabled various people in responsibility to put into practice the training by providing means and priorities to set urgently in the light of what they learnt.

The training time being over, it’s time to go down from the mountains to the plains in order to give others the treasures we had received. During this UTT, Africa has become aware of its wealth, its identity, its hope and vision.



# Story

**Anna Teresa Peter Amandus is 29. She is from Sandakan in Sabah, east Malaysia. She is student at the Fondacio Formation Institute in Asia (IFFAsia). She is from the 2010-2011 batch. Last 30th June was an historical day for all her fellow countrymen with the 15th presidential inauguration for the newly elected president, Benigno Aquino III. Anna is marked by this event, carrying the hopes for many changes in the country. On this very same day, she wrote a letter about her first steps in the formation...**

So it has been a month being in IFFA. In just a month I have learn to discover and unfold myself little by little. It is quite challenging for me because to learn to accept the past is very difficult unless we are willing to really let it go and be open to let God enter our life. God has HIS own way helping me dig up things that I do not want to remember. I can say that the formation I undergo now is all about me. I must first know myself, I must know who is God to me and I must first accept myself as being me before going for my mission.

Along my formation I learn to accept my fellow friends from other countries, formation team and the staff of IFFA. Living as a community here in IFFA is hard at first because we came from diverse part of Asia and culture. Yet the formation is inviting me to be open, to trust and respect.

In IFFA it is all about community. Each of us is scheduled to do out duty like cooking for the community, cleaning up the formation house, disposing the garbage and leading the evening prayer. Every once a month we will be having a community prayer. Every Tuesday and Wednesday we will be having class at St Vincent, School of Theology and every Monday, Thursday and Friday will be the in-house formation.

The most significant experience

to me is the “Self – Discovery and Uniqueness”. As I shared earlier it is about discovering me as me. In this session we reflected how life is when we are pretending to be somebody, someone else to hide the real us. I remembered wearing a mask to cover the hurts and difficulties that has been burdening me. It was painful. Did I really let go? There a point where I shared to the formation team that I hated the question. But as I reflected it again it is God’s way to heal me. I only have to trust and

**My new insight in this session is I am not a MISTAKE! I was created according to HIS image.**

open to HIM... God to me is the “EYES” to my life who will always keep watch over me.

My new insight in this session is I am not a MISTAKE! I was created according to HIS image. No one can look down on me, only if I permit that person to do so and only in God that I can seek the special in me. I am a gift and I am a blessing!

Let me share you our class in St Vincent, School of Theology. We took the four Gospels and Theology for Beginners subject. To be honest to understand the scriptures is hard. Our first day in class, we learn about Mathew 1: 1-17, the genealogy. Only that verses we end up two hours and a half to truly understand the passage. Just imagine how much time we need for the whole bible...!!! For our Theology class we learn about God in our everyday living. What I like so much about this class is it is full of inspiration. I never think of God in my everyday doing like brushing me

teeth, taking my bath, walking, drink water and etc... He is everywhere, anywhere in my everyday life. I wonder if other people realize it...



## Democratic Republic of Congo

From August 16 to 21, at Liziba Kinshasa Centre, DRC Fondacio brought together 120 young people of the country and of Congo Brazzaville for the Forum the theme of which was “*Young people, shine in the light of Christ*”. There were teachings as Today young people’s values by P. Berthier Eyer, Oblate of Mary Immaculate; sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, by Delphin Ambwel, Médecins Sans Frontières. Various workshops have interested participants: first aid, speaking in public, to love and accept themselves, conflict management, connection with money ... and football, with Franquis Waya Waya head of Fondacio DRC, for a match between the alumni IFFAfrica and “the rest of the world! Teenagers presented a show about spiritual fight. The forum ended with a closing ceremony that lasted all night

## Burkina Faso



Athanase Ilboudo, head of Burkina Fondacio, has been reappointed. after a 4 year mandate. Ignacio Rosselot, Fondacio International’s President, confirming the assembly vote, recognizes the fecundity of his mission:“(…) *The Community has become more mature*

*spiritually and its commitment in its mission has grown. We have witnessed a great development of the projects serving disadvantaged populations and the growth of the community in various cities.*”

3-8 August: 120 participants coming from all parts of Burkina attended the third Forum of Fondacio Burkina Youth at the juniorate Saint Joseph de Saaba, in the Ouagadougou suburb. The theme: “Young Christian, carrier of Hope”. The objective: to propose some paths to build his own future, to be aware of his own richness and to learn to make faithful choices, to understand and to commit himself in the challenges of this world in crisis. “*I am free from my prison.*”, “*Now I accept myself as I am.*”

## Chile

UA particularly memorable year for Chile: the bicentenary of the country, the earthquake and the tsunami of last February, the release of the 33 miners in Copiapo...In this social context, community life is growing :

In June new journey to Nihua, a rural town in south-centre. After months of work, we managed to build basic houses and repair roofs damaged by the earthquake, but

also a meeting place to build with the victims the solidarity of a people of brothers who help each other in adversity.

From June 16 to 21, our open to culture committee



has invested heavily for DIVERCINE, the Film Festival, at the national film theatre at the Palace of La Moneda. Presentation of non-commercial films from around the world, with a humanistic content : art in the service of a better world. Great success.

On June 24th, Couples and families brought together a large number of separated and divorced people to listen to them and offer them a place of training and prayer.

On June 30th and 31st, at Punta de Tralca, annual day of Assessment and Projects for the pastoral year 2010/2011 at the invitation of Archbishop Francisco Javier Errazuriz, Archbishop of Santiago. We were in the middle of 135 people including representatives of six lay movements.

In September, Santiago Gospel through singing, made it possible to strengthen ties between people of different christian denominations. The workshop ends with a concert open to the public.

## Colombia

On August 1st, The couples and Families session brought together 80 persons for a sale by auction at San Javier de Bogota. The gathered sums will enable to finance 50% of the works of renovation of a farm at Tocaima and at the same time to make a dream come true: open a place for retreats.

On July 23 and 24, week-end “Introduction to Faith” for 18/25 years old at the Maison Teresiano of Bogota

These 20 young people started journeying with Fondacio by joining a monthly environmental and athletics club a few months ago. There was only to make these activities compatible with the spirituality of Fondacio to enable a link between their lives and faith. It’s done!

In July and August, in the district Esperanza of

Bogota, projects Oasis and Como pez en el agua have offered workshops to young people aged 7-16 coming from disadvantaged backgrounds in order to increase their awareness on key aspects of sexuality. With the objective to fight against the proliferation of diseases and disorderly conducts affecting youth who are younger and younger. Propositions were suggested for a sound and responsible management in this area.

## Belgium

From 4 to 10 July 70 young people lived the session “Dare to live” in the Belgium Ardennes, with a show at the end of the session when the parents discover their children’s talents. Taking the risk of going on a stage, the young takes confidence in himself or herself and he or she experiences what it is to give himself or herself.

From 9 July to 3 August : “Go To Togo” : 10 young people from 18 to 28 years old went to Togo to conduct with ANGE and SICHEM, developing and local solidarity projects ( all informations on [www.solidaires.fondacio.org](http://www.solidaires.fondacio.org)), camps for children who live in the streets of Lomé.

From 15 to 22 July the 3rd stage of the biblical training MESS’AJE “ *the third level of the faith* ”. After having followed the Hebrews in their Exodus , participants have discovered the novelty brought by Jesus of Nazareth.

The club 12-14 did not have (real...) holidays. Adeline confirms it : “*Our last club was the sea*”. *We discovered surfing. For everyday themes, the organizers asked us for ideas. Persons told stories about what happened to them or any story. It might help us today or later in our lives*”.



## France



60 couples belges et français, 150 children and 80 people in charge, took part in the annual Couples and Families’ meeting of Fondacio France, from 1st to 7th August, at Temple-sur-Lot, a charming medieval village in southern France.

*“Full of gratitude and a new consciousness: when I take care of*

*myself, of my couple, I take care of my family and of everybody around us. If we make peace in a part of our married life, this peace will spread....”*

*“We received several slaps... as far as communication is concerned, including our sexuality ... But the love that has been flowing and the joy of the feast somewhat lessened those slaps”*

## Romania



From August 10 to 15, the Forum of Fondacio Youth Crestini pentru lume (Orthodox) brought together 80 students aged from 18/30 in Oradea, in Transylvania, on the theme “*Youth, breath of life*”: lectures, discussion groups, creative workshops and recreational time dealing with theological, ecological, social and medical subjects.

In the process, through links with Fondacio Romania, a similar pilot experience was conducted in Moldova where there were 12 participants.

Fondacio Greek Catholic Romania also held its Forum. 30 young people took part in it. There was a new and strong ecumenical sign: the active presence of young Orthodox, due to links that were forged during the last visit of people in charge at the Headquarters, last February.

## United Kingdom

2nd trip to the Philippines from August 16 to 26 for members of Fondacio UK, called to lead “Enneagram” sessions and meet members and friends of Fondacio Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka and Penang. A working time in synergy between the communities of Asia and Europe. 3 days, 3 themes: “*We are a gift of God*,” “*We need healing*” “*The call of God for my life*,”. The work enabled us to observe and analyze the methodologies of the supervisory team, then to propose a workshop on the types of relationship in the follow-up on people. Then visit to Penang for two projects: a school for orphans and a day center for the homeless.

## Immigration in the light of the social doctrine of the Church

by Jean-Pierre ROSA, General Delegate of the Social Weeks of France

### The biblical roots of the social doctrine of the Church

There are few themes of the social thought of the Church which has such a strong Biblical rooting. It appears right in Genesis. Abraham, a nomad, leaves his country, offers hospitality to a mysterious visitor who is God Himself and receives it from a foreigner (cf. Gen 12, 1, 18, 1-5, 20, 14-15).

Subsequently, hospitality is seen as an imperative that transcends ethnic or clan frontiers. The phrase *“being an alien in the land of Egypt”* is based on a dual experience: to be welcomed (this is the story of Joseph) or enslaved (it is the Exodus and Pharaoh). It explains this requirement that appears throughout the Bible. *“The alien who resides with you will be as a fellow-countryman for you and you will love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt”* (Leviticus 19: 34)

Not only the man is a nomad, but God himself is. God “a nomad” refuses to live in the temple that David wants to build for Him (cf. 2S 7, 5). The tent will remain the place where God resides (the tabernacle that is to say the tent, will recall this characteristic of God).

Thus throughout the Old Testament a fundamental rule of hospitality is formed. It is rooted not only in Israel’s history but also in the very being of God.

Jesus, in the New Testament, appears like the very figure of the “migrant”. It is a highly symbolic illustration that unfolds on two levels, one is narrative, the other one reaches the very being of Christ

At the level of the Gospels’ narrative, Jesus takes on the figure of the alien, who is welcomed or cast out. During the flight to Egypt He is a political refugee. In Nazareth he is a stranger among his people: No one is a prophet in his country. Jesus comes from a “multicultural” country (Galilee of the Nations, of “goyim”) in order to go to “his” country, Jerusalem, the city of the Temple, where God dwells. But He is put to death as an alien, outside the walls of the city, crucified and not stoned.

At a more theological level, Jesus is the one that is alien to himself. You can find this theme in the epistle to the Philippians or in the Prologue of John’s Gospel *“He always had the nature of God but he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He*

*became like man and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience, all the way to death, his death on the cross (...)”* Ph 2, 6 -8

Jesus’s teaching emphasizes the importance of welcoming the foreigner: in welcoming the foreigner, we welcome Christ Himself, Christ who has “come to his own country”. The parable of “the Good Samaritan” emphasizes that the neighbour is the settled foreigner whom we do not like.

But Jesus also teaches through his acts. The Samaritan, the syrophoenician or Canaanite in Mt, the Roman centurion etc.: All these people that Jesus welcomes and praised for their faith are hated immigrants. The Samaritans because they have introduced another religion and would not take part in the rebuilding of the Temple, Romans because they are the occupying forces.

At the birth of the Church, the apostles and Paul will be forced to turn to foreigners of the time, the Greeks.

Theologically, the idea of universality is expanding (*“There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women, you are all one in union with Jesus Christ”* Gal 3: 28, Col 3:11) to the detriment of any special “particularity”.

Spiritually, Paul and the Apostles take on, as Christ did, the picture of the itinerant, of the pilgrim who “runs to the objective” (as Paul), but is led “where he would not go” (as Peter)

The biblical roots are extremely strong. One might almost say, with a slight exaggeration, that the theme of the foreigner is in itself a key to reading and understanding the whole Bible.

### Immigration, history of a Christian commitment

One can therefore summarize in three forms the theological beliefs that form the foundation on which ethical reflection is developed by Christians about relations with any foreigner, near or distant: welcoming the foreigner is one side of the welcoming of Christ: “I was a foreigner” is the main sentence, in the Church, there is no foreigners: *“There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles ...”* God’s people itself is migrating so they are foreigners everywhere.

o Read the Epistle to Diognetus (go to page 10), text from the second century.

o And in May 2005, the text *Erga migrantes* says: “*Welcoming the foreigner which is a characteristic of the early Church, remains the permanent mark of the Church of God. It remains, so to speak, doomed to exile, Diaspora, dispersion among cultures and races, without completely identifying itself with any of them, otherwise it would cease to be the beginnings and sign, ferment and prophecy of the universal Kingdom and welcoming community to all human beings, without preference of individuals and peoples. The welcoming of the foreigner is thus inherent to the nature of the Church and testifies to its faithfulness to the Gospel.*”

On this basic frame, a whole practice will be worked out and implemented. One example: In the fifth century, from the late Roman Empire, when the collapse of the Roman administration and the barbarian invasions make security grow, the hospital (or inn) appears as a welcoming place - where the foreigner, the pilgrim, the patient can stay for a more or less long time. Any city, any cathedral has its hospital. This is how the Church supports the safety of persons. The “rule of law” does not lean on the army or the police but on the duty of hospitality (the Code of Justinian in 529 will establish hospital function). In the Middle Ages, the hospital extends its function but this time the Church appears directly as an hostel. The church stands between the combatants. It sets hospitality against hostility.

### Today's social views on migrants

The social views of the Church on migrants is the consequence and extension of powerful roots in the Bible as well as a reflection and an old practice.

The social discourse of the Church is constant, built, solidly settled. It is also ecumenical. Finally, we must point out that it is shared by many non-believers who think about these issues or advocate for welcoming the foreigner. This social discourse, since it has not seen innovation as it was the case with *Rerum Novarum* or *Populorum Progressio* is diluted over countless texts. No encyclical letter is especially dedicated to it. No one here can cite a particular text which speaks explicitly and in a privileged way of migrants and yet this topic is permanent.

All these documents reaffirm the basic principles that can be listed as follows:

respect of any person (regardless of its origin or legal status,) duty of welcoming the foreigner, opposition to rules which limit family reunification, (moral and legal) obligation to grant a refuge not only to those who are persecuted in their country, but also to those who do not find ways to live with dignity, invitation not to define

migration policies based on the sole interest of welcoming countries, concern for the universal common good.

### A doctrine that does not go down well

Why is this doctrine so poorly received, even in the Christian community whereas it is so constant, vigorous and ecumenical? We can identify four reasons.

The first is based on simple considerations of religious sociology. We must admit that in many European countries, the majority of Catholics is rather conservative. The word of the hierarchy and the militancy of the Christians working alongside the immigrants do not weigh enough to face social heaviness.

The second, paradoxically, is that the Church's teaching on the subject has always been consistent. The immigration issue was not debated in the discourse of the Church. Immigration itself did not appear as a new phenomenon. Hence the absence of a strong magisterial text. It is quite recently, when it was noted that the issue was becoming increasingly crucial. The Christians themselves did not really know what to do, so the Episcopal Conferences and the Holy See have restored a more prominent position to this teaching.

The third reason is “experimental.” This is the one put forward by Paul Ricoeur at the Social Weeks of France in 1997: “*You must have the experience of exile to understand. We have been settled down for too long and we are no longer “foreigners in the land of Egypt.”*”

The fourth reason, that Ricoeur is also developing in this text is anthropological. The universal and almost unconditional welcoming attitude of the foreigner goes against a fairly normal reaction of belonging which consists in building some fence around his group, nation, religion. There is a very strong originality on this point in biblical and Christian teaching compared to other types of membership, including religious ones. Moreover, when a threat or the feeling of a threat emerges vis-à-vis the membership group, the “normal” reaction is not the opening but rather the closure or the designation of a common enemy (real) or perceived (what is known as a scapegoat). A strong Christian identity must have been built in order to escape this logic. Inherited, “sociological” or “traditional” Christianity “has great difficulty with this evangelical movement.

**“You must have the experience of exile to understand. We have been settled down for too long and we are no longer “foreigners in the land of Egypt.”**  
Paul Ricoeur

# Epistle to Diognetus

In his article “Immigration and the Church’s social doctrine” (cf. page 8), Jean Pierre Rosa quotes the Epistle to Diognetus. We are giving you a longer version of it.

This letter which dates from around 160-200 aims to lighten his addressee, Diognetus, a pagan, who questions himself on the origin, specificity and effectiveness of Christianity. It was classified in the literary style of apology, peculiar to apostolic Fathers (Clement of Rome or Ignacio of Antioch) confronted to polytheistic paganisms. The new Church also had to give its say in the intellectual environment which was then marked by the success of the Greek philosophy. But the Epistle is not a catalogue of truths defying pervading thoughts. It is more apologetic than proselyte (even if it leads Diognetus to conversion) far from idealizing the Christian or putting him on an elitist pedestal, it tends not to set him apart, to give him his entire place and nothing else : the leaven in the pastry, “the soul in the body”. This text from the primitive Church is still very topical. In the world, the Christian is called to be an infusion of fraternity...

“Since I see you, most excellent Diognetus, exceedingly desirous to learn the mode of worshipping God prevalent among the Christians, and inquiring very carefully and earnestly concerning them, what God they trust in, and what form of religion they observe, so as all to look down upon the world itself, and despise death.(...) What is this great love they have for each other ? (...)

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly

striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their na-



tive country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They

are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life.(...)

God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake. For, as I said, this was no mere earthly invention which was delivered to them, nor is it a mere human system of opinion, which they judge it right to preserve so carefully, nor has a dispensation of mere human mysteries been committed to them, but truly God Himself, who is almighty, the Creator of all things, and invisible, has sent from heav-

en, and placed among men, [Him who is] the truth, and the holy and incomprehensible Word, and has firmly established Him in their hearts. (...) This [messenger] He sent to them. Was it then, as one might conceive, for the purpose of exercising tyranny, or of inspiring fear and terror? By no means, but under the influence of clemency and meekness. As a king sends his son, who is also a king, so sent He Him; as God He sent Him; as to men He sent Him; as a Saviour He sent Him, and as seeking to persuade, not to compel us; for violence has no place in the character of God. As calling us He sent Him, not as vengefully pursuing us; as loving us He sent Him, not as judging us.(...) O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits

surpassing all expectation! (...) He has now revealed the Saviour who is able to save even those things which it was [formerly] impossible to save, by both these facts He desired to lead us to trust in His kindness, to esteem Him our Nourisher, Father, Teacher, Counsellor, Healer, our Wisdom, Light, Honour, Glory, Power, and Life, so that we should not be anxious concerning clothing and food. (...)

For God has loved mankind, on whose account He made the world,

And when you have attained this knowledge, with what joy do you think you will be filled? Or, how will you love Him who has first so loved you? And if you love Him, you will be an imitator of His kindness. And do not wonder that a man may

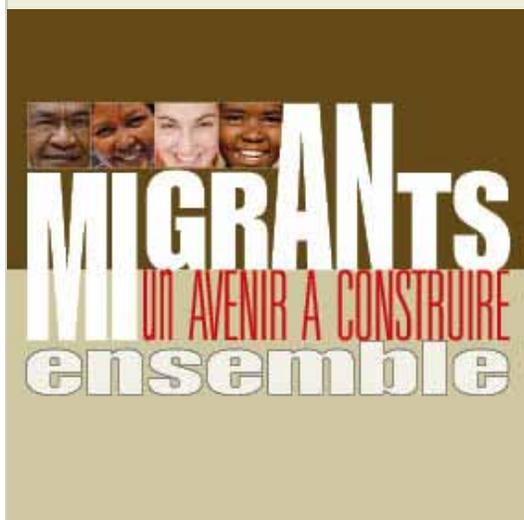
become an imitator of God. He can, if he is willing. For it is not by ruling over his neighbours, or by seeking to hold the supremacy over those that are weaker, or by being rich, and showing violence towards those that are inferior, that happiness is found; nor can any one by these things become an imitator of God. But these things do not at all constitute His majesty. On the contrary he who takes upon himself the burden of his neighbour; he who, in whatsoever respect he may be superior, is ready to benefit another who is deficient; he who, whatsoever things he has received from God, by distributing these to the needy, becomes a god to those who receive [his benefits]: he is an imitator of God.

Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers

## Fondacio with migrants

With the support of the Spiritans of Bobigny (near Paris) and in partnership with the Association of the Africans of Bobigny, Fondacio sets up a social project for migrants of the department of Seine Saint-Denis cities. Urbain Malonda is responsible for this Fondacio project which focuses on four points:

- Literacy and Education
- Support and advice in administrative and legal aid
- Computer formation for youth
- Support for youth to develop cultural projects



Fondacio is partner of the 85th Semaine Sociale (social week) in France November 26, 27, 28

Parc Floral de Paris

On November 27th, Fondacio Paris will help the meetings with migrants in collaboration with the Spiritans of Bobigny.

[www.ssf-fr](http://www.ssf-fr)

 CHILE

02/10 at Los Almendros Centre in Santiago – A day of retreat, listening to inside and outside silences where God speaks and reveals Himself. It will be preached by Father Abad Rodriguez, Benedictine.

14-21-28/10 + 04/1 at los Almendros Centre – Training session “Vision of Man in Christian faith”, open to any public.

Information, subscription [www.fondacio.cl](http://www.fondacio.cl)

 FRANCE

12/10 at the Ermitage, Versailles – Launching of the cycle ( 5 afternoons) « Praying, yes, but how »

16-17/10 or 02-03/12 at the Ermitage - For people who are 20 and more : Training period : “ Self esteem, one must work on it “ conducted by members of S-Team, association of marriage guidance and family counselor.

20-23/12 at Igny (Essonne) – Christmas camp « Hope Attitudes » for all 14-18 youngsters of France.

24-29/01 at La Roche d’Or, Besançon – Session « time to retire » for the people who are going to retire or have retired.

Information, subscription [www.fondacio.fr](http://www.fondacio.fr)

27/11 at Lyon the show « What about you... ? » given by « envie2plus » and the young of Fondacio Switzerland, goes on with its tour

Information [www.fondacio.ch](http://www.fondacio.ch)

09/12 at 20h00 -Maurice BARTH will speak of the meaning and specificities of Fondacio’s involvement on solidarity and development issues from practical cases in countries where Fondacio works. Maison internationale de Fondacio, salle Ephésia, 5 rue Monsieur 75007 PARIS.

IFFEurope

08/10 - Angers - Conference « Train the actors of change »

 BELGIUM

4/10 - 08/11 - 06/12 – Fondacio House « Les Mimosas » at Brussels : prayer- gathering

06/10 - 27/10 – House « Les Mimosas » : interactive training « Mess’Aje » to appropriate the biblical text  
Thèmes : « Torah and wisdom » and « Martyrdom »

4 & 8/10 - 19/11 – House : les Mimosas : Singing and praising evenings opened to any person who likes singing and wants to extend its repertoire !

Information [www.fondacio.be](http://www.fondacio.be)

 SWITZERLAND

After the success in 2008, the show “What about you ...? ” given by « envie2plus » and the young of Fondacio Switzerland, goes on with its tour :

09/10 at Nyon

06/11 at Lausanne

07/11at Sion

Information [www.fondacio.ch](http://www.fondacio.ch)

 CANADA

From September to December 2010, meetings of community-groups at Victoriaville, Drummondville et Winnipeg.

Information [www.fondacio.ca](http://www.fondacio.ca)

If you wish to support us (donation, voluntary work),  
[solidaires.fondacio.org](http://solidaires.fondacio.org)



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