

English Friends of the Foyers

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newsletter

Foyer Retreat at Wonersh this Autumn!

We will be holding another Foyer de Charité Retreat this autumn at Wonersh seminary near Guildford. The dates are Sunday 30 October (6pm), until Saturday 5 November (2pm). The theme is *God's Plan for the Fullness of Time*, and the preacher will be Mgr. Keith Barltrop, with the presence of three members of Foyers de Charité in France.

Foyer retreats are held mainly in silence, with three talks a day covering the major aspects of the Catholic faith such as Creation and Salvation, the Trinity, the Sacraments, etc., while at the same time helping participants to deepen their life of prayer and their Christian life.

There is Mass, morning and evening prayer each day, and opportunities to talk to the retreat giver and Foyer members, and to go to Confession. The climax of the retreat is the Renewal of baptismal vows and Consecration of our lives to God through Our Lady. The Foyers are communities of consecrated lay people living with a priest in order to help others grow closer to Christ and live the Catholic faith more fully. There are over 70 Foyer houses around the world, and we hope to found one in England in the next few years.

If you are ready to book a place, please send your details (name, address, phone/email, age and religious affiliation) to Fr. Keith with a deposit of £20 (cash or cheque made payable to Rev. Keith Barltrop). The suggested donation for the retreat is £200. If this is a problem, please contact Fr. Keith. Please indicate if you have any significant health problems or require a special diet.

For further information contact Fr. Keith on 07879 953953; keithbarltrop@rcdow.org.uk or at St. Mary of the Angels, Moorhouse Road, Bayswater, London W2 5DJ



Wonersh Seminary, near Guildford, where the Foyer retreat will be held

Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of Marthe's Death

This testimony comes from the Foyer Magazine, Alouette, no. 263:

Thirty years have passed since Marthe left us, yet it seems like yesterday; we have such vivid and intense memories of her. The announcement of her death spread rapidly around the world. She was dressed in a first communion robe and lay on her little divan up at La Plaine. Hundreds of people came to bid her farewell; a wonderful silence reigned in her farmhouse.

Four days later, on February 10th, her body was taken down to the big chapel at the Foyer that she never saw, and her first visit from Père Finet on another February 10th 1936 was recalled. Her coffin lay buried beneath flowers while prayer vigils were held in the chapel. Two days later it was borne by her nephews and great-nephews for her funeral mass conducted by Monsignor Marchand, supported

"The Foyers give authentic doctrinal and spiritual teaching in a climate of silence, charity and devotion to Mary, which opens souls to conversion, deepens their life with God, and leads them to the apostolate."

Pope Paul VI, November 1975

by five other bishops and some two hundred priests, and we heard him say: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.” (Jn. 12, 24) The weather was perfect that day with an unforgettable blue sky, when she was laid to rest at Saint Bonnet.

It was the same in 2011. A host of friends arrived by coach, car and train from far and wide. They were joined in spirit by many other Foyers and parishes, particularly in Paris. Numerous friends, former retreatants, old pupils from Foyer schools and their parents came to express their gratitude to Marthe. And we had so many useful helpers, along with a good TV crew who produced valuable programmes. Père Michon gave a conference in the chapel during the morning. At midday the huge crowd was fed in various dining-rooms and outside with packed lunches brought by each visitor.

In the afternoon we prayed the Rosary, followed by Mass at 3 o'clock, said by Mgr Luigi Ventura, the Apostolic Nuncio, who preached a notable homily. Concelebrating were eighty priests from all over the world. Thus we gave thanks to God for the inspiring life of Marthe, who completed her mission on earth thirty years ago. The service was relayed to the conference hall and the old chapel.

“Obscure and unknown, I shall rejoice in Heaven. Nameless and without honour on earth, I shall watch over all my dear friends. Known only to those whom I shall visit, strengthen, encourage and relieve, yet who may not even know that it is I, because often I shall remain invisible.”

Marthe Robin.

Article in 'Alouette,' on Life and Legacy of Père Finet, cont'd ...

So we learn, through Fr Finet's acceptance of God's will through the invitation of Marthe to collaborate with her in the founding of the first Foyer, that God works through the weak and humble in this world. We see here the spontaneity and daring of Fr Finet, as well as the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus he listens to and accepts the challenge of a handicapped young woman, suffering with Christ for the human race.

Another feature of Fr Finet's personality that becomes apparent on this occasion is his entrustment to the judgement of the Church. He goes at once to consult his superiors at Lyon. One might say this was inevitable, but it shows too a hallmark of the Foyer movement that it is always submissive to the judgement of the Church. “You must remain under authority” was Marthe's remark at the time. None of the great saints trust their own judgement.

Mgr Marchand recalls his first meeting with Fr Finet and Marthe in 1979, on his accession to the Diocese of Valence. He mentions that the Foyers were going through a period of turbulence of which he was ignorant at the time. He at once sensed the enthusiasm for the Foyer idea that Fr Finet revealed, and the important role that Marthe had to play. Fr Finet talked of the foundations made throughout the world, and Mgr Marchand began to realise the collaboration between the priest and the

handicapped lay woman, which he came to associate with the other famous 'duos' such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Francis de Sales and Jeanne de Chantal, etc. He also came to appreciate the central role of the Virgin Mary in the Foyer movement, and the parts played by the paternity of the Father in each Foyer supported by the maternity of Mary. Later he was taken up to La Plaine to meet Marthe for the first time, and he was entirely captivated by her. He understood immediately why Fr Finet was so passionate about the Work of the Foyers and the influence of the retreats. “After praying together I left him, convinced that the Spirit of the Lord was at work in the hearts of Marthe and Fr Finet.”

Finally he describes the meeting at Annecy between Fr Finet and the Holy Father John Paul II in October 1986, introduced by Mgr Marchand. It was spontaneous and not pre-arranged. John Paul already knew about Marthe and had read Raymond Peyret's original book. He greeted Fr Finet as Marthe's spiritual director and said to him: “Marthe Robin is a participant in the redemption of today's world.” It was a meeting that lit up Fr Finet's whole life. Marthe had been dead five years, but 1986 was the year when the Statutes of the Foyers were recognised 'ad experimentum' by the Pontifical Congregation for the Laity.

With prayers and every best wish, Martin and Donal

p.s. For more details about the Foyers please log-on to:

www.foyers.org.uk