

Aging Faith and Light communities

As early as 1995, some leaders were concerned about the future of certain communities that were becoming elderly. In any family - and Faith and Light is a large family - one worries about its older members, and this is normal. But it is not a failure to grow old: it is a new stage of life that opens up. So there were many debates: should we support the life of communities that hardly meet any more? Should we send young people to an elderly community? Is it the same thing as growing old or no longer being renewed...?

The most diverse situations have arisen, for example:

- A community with very old members only meets once a quarter for an outing, the people are very keen on it, they do themselves good. Should we stop this because it is not the rule of life in Faith and Light¹?
- A somewhat aged community received two young friends twice in a row as reinforcements who dropped out after two meetings. The group was unable to integrate new members. Should this community be left to its fate?

As such situations arose, the deep sense of belonging to the community resumed its role as a major criterion of discernment, resulting in some common advice:

- Growing old is not a defect! However, ageing does require more attention.
- Some communities that are no longer able to renew themselves must "die". It is not necessary to be relentless, but rather to make sure that no member of the community that stops is left alone. The other communities of the province must work together to welcome them or revive the community by integrating new members. Sometimes, a well-supported stop of a community is better than a forced accompaniment.
- When the functioning of a community becomes very weak, the criterion remains: "Are the members doing good by meeting in their own way? Do people with disabilities find friendship?" If so, then that community should be supported, for there is no reason to blow the fuse that is weakening.

¹ The history of this community continued in a somewhat exceptional way: friends took it over and a complete renewal of the community took place so that the older members were able to continue to belong to the network of friendship that was so dear to them.