

SR. DANIELLE, PRIOR OF THE COMMUNITY OF POMEYROL (FRANCE)

For the Sake of God and Men

We are twelve sisters and ever since we reached that number, the Lord has always kept us from growing any bigger. The youngest is 50; the oldest is 87. A small community but made up of five nations, speaking French or German.

Everything began with the Scout movement. In 1921 Antoinette Butte, a lawyer from Lorraine, was the first Girl Scout Commissioner in France. Active life of service. But God decided otherwise! Two years of illness made her discover the life of prayer. Long moments with God guide her life. She discovers a life directed, a life by faith for the sake of God and men, guided by the spirituality of the Third Order of the Watchers.

In 1929, she leaves everything to live listening to God and is guided by the spirit of the Beatitudes: joy, simplicity, mercy – she adds beauty. In a small retreat house at Saint Germain en Laye, near Paris, together with a few teammates, she experiences hospitality in silence, the discipline of personal and community prayer, regular. Meditation on the Gospel makes her perceive the mystery of life in Christ, of the incarnation: Jesus' life, the son of Mary and son of God, the Lord's Supper, Christ in us, and the Church Body of Christ. She is ready to give her life in total dedication with her teammates, the Companions, around her.

In 1938, the first three sisters leave for Southern France. Pomeyrol: a castle and its park is available. But war robs them of everything except the imperative call of God in a commitment of their whole being. A world is collapsing!

After the war, a vision of a new world, taken hold of again by God and rebuilt with Him and in Him in expectation of the Kingdom: joy!

We must sow in the disorder of the world small seeds of life. Far from there, in Taizé, a young man, Roger Schutz, saw the same call from the Lord – for him too the war was a time of maturation. In 1950 Pomeyrol, with three teammates committed to life, Grandchamp around Mme. Micheli, all related to the Watchers, share with Taizé the imperative of community life, for the Church and in our Protestant churches. Many more will follow of whom you see here the heirs.

In November 1953, the three French-speaking communities Grandchamp, Pomeyrol, Taizé, express in writing their "common vocation at the service of Christ and the unity of their witness in the Churches of the Reformation and the world": the same Rule, shaped by Brother Roger, similar offices with accents adapted to their different histories, the teaching of the brothers and many reciprocal visits.

A solid common basis, but over time the communities grow on the earth where they were sown, the ecclesial identity of Pomeyrol becomes more organically precise, in that reformed church reluctant to a warm welcome – but that is where we had been called. Each charism was affirmed but without a break. Time apart, but certainly always in communion. One and the same call to a life dedicated to community life, prayer embodied in hospitality (whose form varied over time) one-time commitments in the Church to listen to the world's needs and always the concern in our lives and

around us for the unity of the body of Christ. "Be passionately concerned for Christ's body," the Rule advises us.

And now? A world has finally collapsed, but a world is being born, taken hold of by God who always works at the grass roots.

In this world you are the seeds for tomorrow that God has selected, planted and which are germinating. "See," said Jesus, "the wheat whitening." I see that the Lord sows the world with small prayer cells; they are the first fruits, these fruits taken from the first harvest and offered to God. The Lord needs this offering of new lives, consecrated to him, well embodied in the real, in the body of the Church from which they come, in the midst of others. Sister Antoinette and Brother Roger were prophets. Taizé, Grandchamp and Pomeyrol are not accidents of history but the expression of a worldwide religious vocation. Initially, a call from God, an inner imperative, an impulse of the Holy Spirit and always an unqualified consecration in poverty lived day by day, in obedience, "for the sake of God and men."