

## The Foyers de Charité

### Official name

The Foyers de Charité

### Foundation

1936

### History

The Foyers de Charité were founded on 10 February 1936, when Marthe Robin and Fr Georges Finet met at Châteauneuf-de-Galaure, Drôme, France.

Marthe Robin, a young, sick and paralysed laywoman was living in intimate union with Christ. When Fr Finet, a priest of the diocese of Lyon, came to visit her, she told him about the announcement that she had received from Jesus Christ: the advent of a Renewal of the Church, to which "Foyers of light, charity and love" would contribute. She passed on God's request to Fr Finet to found the first Foyer de Charité, and to preach spiritual retreats of one week in silence. The first retreat took place in Châteauneuf-de-Galaure in September 1936. This would be the first of many Foyers de Charité that are spreading across four continents from their origins in France.

On 1st November 1986, the Pontifical Council for the Laity decreed the recognition of the work of the Foyers de Charité as an international private association of the faithful.

### The identity

The members of the Foyers are baptised men and women living and evangelising together with a priest, the father of the Foyer, who leads the life and mission of the community, assisted by the council of the Foyer.

Having made a lifetime commitment to proclaiming the Gospel, the members live together like a real family in a spirit of brotherly love. They share their material, intellectual and spiritual possessions and live in community, like the first Christians. Every day, they celebrate the Mass and meet for other times of prayer, including the Rosary and the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Their activities and their work are dedicated to welcoming the retreatants and to leading the spiritual retreats provided.

The mission of the Foyers de Charité is one of evangelisation through the preaching of spiritual retreats open to all. These retreats are predominantly conducted in silence, last for 6 days and are composed of a summary of the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. Welcomed as part of the family within the context of the life of the community, the participants in the retreat are invited to leave the world to reflect on the meaning of their lives, recharge their batteries, seek inward renewal and deepen their faith. The mission of the Foyers is, therefore, to revitalise and strengthen Christians in their faith, so that everyone can live out their vocation as baptised Christians and contribute to the

vitality of the Church in the service of the whole world. In addition to those who believe, the ambition of the Foyers de Charité is to give everyone the opportunity to encounter Jesus and to develop every aspect of their being.

## The structure

The historical and spiritual heart of the Work is the Foyer of Châteauneuf-de-Galaure (France). The Foyers de Charité are governed by a Moderator Father and an International Council composed of four priests and four lay people. It is during the General Assembly, which is convened every four years with delegates representing each of the Foyers, that the Moderator Father and the International Council are elected and/or their offices renewed. This is also when the main apostolic objectives of the Work are decided.

The members of the Foyers from the same region of the world gather annually or every two years, to share their respective experiences and jointly develop projects for the growth of the Work.

Each Foyer de Charité – as a community of priests and lay people – forms an integral part of the diocesan Church, in communion with the universal Church.

The new member joins the work of the Foyers de Charité as part of a specific community where their discernment takes place. Training sessions for young Foyer members take place regularly in Châteauneuf and locally. After three to five years, the member can make their final commitment to the work, with the agreement of the Foyer de Charité community of which they are a member, as well as the Moderator father and the International Council. They then remain in the state of life that they have on joining.

The life of the Foyers de Charité is supported by a network of friends who, along with the members of the Foyers, form what is known as the "Wider Foyer" that bears witness to the light, charity and love of Christ in the whole world.

The financial management of each Foyer is run by the father of the Foyer, the community and a non-profit civil association according to the legislation of the country where the Foyer is located.

What's more, the Foyers de Charité Foundation, a non-profit foundation recognised by the French state, is authorised to receive donations and bequests. In particular, it funds the construction of new Foyers but also helps the poorest communities, especially in certain developing or conflict-affected countries.

## Propagation

In 2018, the work of the Foyers de Charité comprises one thousand members – lay men and women consecrated to celibacy, married couples or priests – who live in one of the 78 Foyers on four continents, in about forty countries. The six-day spiritual retreats are experienced by more than 50,000 adults each year.

Although the daily life of each Foyer forms part of the local reality of the country in which it is located, all the Foyers live in communion with each other, according to the same spirit.

## WORKS

In addition to running spiritual retreats, certain Foyers carry out other missions or charitable works: dispensaries, schools, centres for receiving children or young people experiencing difficulties and holiday homes.

## PUBLICATIONS

"L'alouette" [The Lark], a two-monthly newsletter.

## WEBSITE

<https://www.lesfoyersdecharite.com>

<https://www.martherobin.com>

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