

The charism of EFISIA

In 2020, after five years into its existence, the EFISIA community has received the official approval of its Constitutions (as a private Association of faithful with diocesan right). During the ceremony, Mgr Santier, the bishop of Créteil, emphasized the fact that in EFISIA he was recognizing a new charism in the Church, and that its mission shows the action of the Holy Spirit.

EFISIA traces its source to the heart of the Pascal mystery. From the cross Jesus said to John: “Son, this is your mother”, thus inviting us all to “take Mary into our home”. Besides the Marian spirituality, the short history since its foundation speaks of a community of lay persons who live friendship, while promoting human fraternity and citizenship through the encounter with the other who is different, and this brings about a true “culture of the encounter”.

EFISIA was born at a time when our modern society is marked by individualism, and social groups are becoming autonomous; under the effect of multiple fragmentations (social, educative, territorial, ethnic, and cultural), they have developed an auto-interpretation of unity. Society is becoming multi-cultural and cohabitation is not easy. Dialogue is one of the main means to realize an authentic pluralism. EFISIA contributes toward the creation of bonds and the practice of dialogue while respecting the cultural, religious, and ethnic differences. Our faith pushes us to go ahead and to develop a pedagogy that favours a culture of the encounter, which is a central element of our identity.

Our mission is three-fold:

1. The encounter with Muslims under the title “Together with Mary”.

The Virgin Mary is present in the Christian as well as in the Muslim tradition. She is the one who promotes the encounter of believers (cfr. the Gospel narrative of the Visitation: Maria goes to encounter her cousin Elisabeth), and she renews the dialogue between our two religions. Our activities and meetings allow us to discover, listen to, accept and appreciate each other. The mission consists in creating the conditions to enhance friendship, fraternity and the respect and love for the others, in a perspective of a world that is one, albeit diversified. Through mutual acquaintance, we do away with fear and shatter all prejudices. The meetings, ranging from 100 to 1000 participants, are possible thanks to the contribution of qualified keynote speakers, and they also include prayers, witnessing, singing and music, symbols, etc. Such initiatives have been organized in prisons and also in schools with the aim of involving the younger generations.

2. The encounter with the most disadvantaged

Together with the poorest, EFISIA carries out projects with a great social impact in various areas: education, health, culture and also in economics (agriculture) in order to guarantee a better future to abandoned children, the handicapped, prisoners, the illiterate, the unemployed, etc. These projects are mainly carried out in sub-Saharan Africa.

3. The formation of Christians

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It was the Holy See that encouraged us to develop this aspect because of the Catholics' quest for their identity and the risk of being closed upon themselves. This entails the formation of Christians, especially young people, with the aim of promoting the "culture of the encounter" that favours dialogue without renouncing to one's belonging and identity. Often, when one's identity is clearly defined, it is easier to be open to others. Otherness is a challenge of our time. Various formation modules are proposed.

EFISIA is present in 8 Countries and is active in 13 others.

The community is present in about 20 cities.

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