

# Mission in a High Rise Estate

**CYRIL IS A STREET EDUCATOR. HE AND HIS WIFE, ANNE-SOPHIE, HAVE CHOSEN TO LIVE IN A DIFFICULT HOUSING ESTATE ON THE PARIS REGION. THERE THEY SHARE THE DAILY LIFE AND TOILS OF THE PEOPLE FROM 57 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES WHO LIVE SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AND NOT ALWAYS EASILY....**

**W**hen you ask Cyril what compassion means for him, his reply is simple: "Compassion means living with people... We live on the 11th floor of a high rise block, and we know all about the elevator breakdowns, the violence and the aggressiveness that are everyday things in our housing estate, along with the 'closed communities' and the noise of the freeway that passes close-by.... Having compassion also means suffering with people: Here it's something we can live every day. The people who live here do suffer, and many would prefer to live somewhere else. At our level of things, we are not in a position to demolish the high rises or stop the drug trafficking or the violence and injustice, but we are here: trying simply to carry the graces of our faith and be available to those around us". Little by little things get organised: "One day we saw a group of teenagers whipping younger children with an electric wire. We got closer and rather than telling them off we showed them that they could do other things with the electric wire: a skipping rope. A large group of children gathered round, one thing lead to another and finally we were able to organise regular street activities for them".

For Cyril, compassion in this high rise estate cannot be separated from

evangelisation: "For us, an attitude of compassion also means explicitly announcing Christ: he is completely unknown here! Shortly after coming here I met Djamel, thirty years old, addicted to crack. I helped him to repair his motorcar, and he began to open up to me, talking about his brother who was dying, about his own drug abuse etc. I talked to him about Christ and Mary. Now he prays regularly and when meet up from time to time, he tells me little testimonies about the effects of prayer!"

Cyril and Anne-Sophie have been living in this high rise estate for almost four years now, and there would be a lot to tell: teenagers going to catechism, requests for baptism.... There are difficulties, but each day they find the strength they need for their mission in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. "It's this time heart to heart with Jesus that leads to live compassion and to evangelise".

And finally...? "One day we were outside, teaching some children to plant flowers. One of the 'chiefs' of the estate, a known drug dealer, came up to us and said: "You are a light for these children, you are their way out of here, don't stop!"

*Julie Jouffrey* 🍌

*For those who wish to give of their time to take part in this mission:  
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*Cyril and Anne-Sophie, particularly active with the teenagers and children in the estate...*