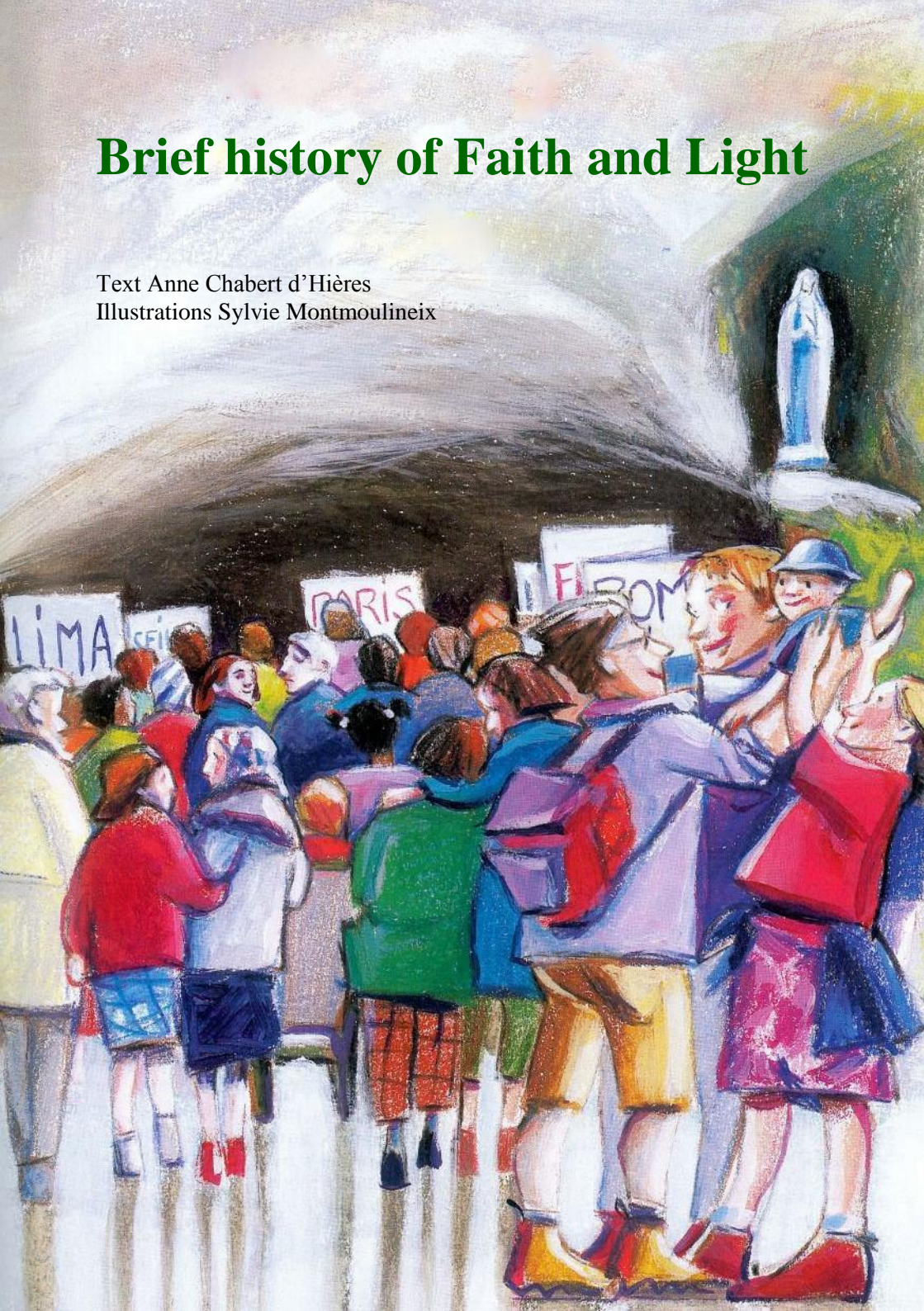


Brief history of Faith and Light

Text Anne Chabert d'Hières

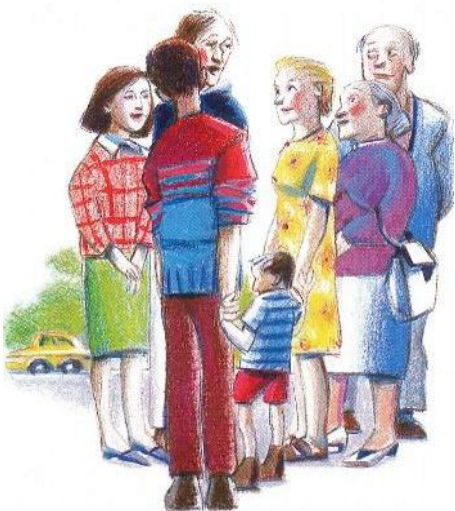
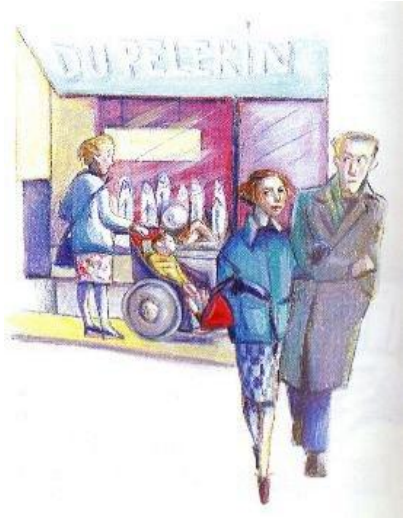
Illustrations Sylvie Montmoulineix





1- Camille, Gérard and their two sons form a united family. However, their life isn't easy because Thaddee and Loïc were born with disabilities that prevent them from walking, talking or reading. Within the family they try to move forward day by day as best they can, putting their faith in God.

2- In 1968, they went away on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. But they were very alone. The hotel that accepted them made them eat in their room. When people aren't used to children like Thaddee and Loïc, they may turn away from them. People don't realise how much their hearts long to be loved and how capable they are of loving others.

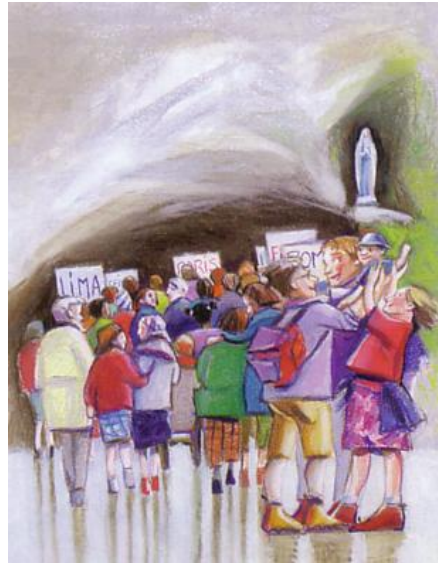


3- On their return, Camille and Gerard confided their sorrow to Marie-Helene Mathieu who was supporting parents at the Christian office for disabled persons. On his side, Jean Vanier had already some experience of pilgrimages with intellectually disabled people. An idea came to light: *"How about organising a pilgrimage where persons with a disability are at the heart of it?"*



4- By word of mouth, from one friend to another, the good news circulated... “We’re invited to Lourdes!”. So, in France, Belgium, England, Canada etc. the long preparation began. Disabled people, parents and friends met up. In community, they learnt to get to know each other and to love each other.

5- Easter 1971, here we are in Lourdes! 12 000 people from 18 countries discover they are the beloved children of God, under the protection of Mary. In the midst of so much pain, the word “Alleluia” springs up again and again. “We are no longer alone!” On their return, people here and there continued to meet up in their community.



6- “Patrick is in hospital. Jesus hel him...” “I’d like to pray for my birthday...” “And for peace!” Over the years, through meetings of sharing, prayer and celebration, bonds of friendships are forged in the community and with the people in the parish.



7- Faith and Light is now growing in many countries across the world. With people of different colours, languages and religious denominations, everyone feels part of the same family. Agnes's community is particularly close to a community in Rwanda. She is delighted to show her photos.



8- Easter 2001. "Thank you! Thank you God for Faith and Light. It's beautiful here. No one is arguing. We sing songs together and dance. I'm going to tell everyone about it! When I get back home, I'll invite my neighbours to my community. Some of them are all alone. No one can stay sad when they know God and when they have friends".

