

A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS...

With the departure of Laurent Thorigné, twenty years of friendship, missionary companionship, and extraordinary adventures alongside young people give way to a new chapter in the growth of ACAY's mission in Marseille. Though I feel the sadness of seeing him leave, I welcome this new chapter with deep joy.

From the young political science student—an atheist at the time—who first came to the Philippines to discover a mission serving vulnerable young people, to the director who laid the foundations of ACAY in France, I have had the privilege of witnessing his remarkable transformation firsthand. Today, he continues to carry the gift of his life—and of his spiritual journey—even further. This time, he does so with his family by his side. Life has weathered the man; years spent accompanying young people have strengthened his hope; his professional growth has sharpened his strategic vision; and the miracles he has witnessed in the hearts of those he has served have opened his own heart to faith and to patience.

I still remember the conferences of those early years, when some professionals would remark, with only thinly veiled sarcasm, "So, when are you going to get a real job?" As though working for an NGO were somehow a second-rate calling. Over the years, Laurent has demonstrated just the opposite. He has built a strong network of institutional partnerships and enduring relationships that recognize ACAY's distinctive contribution to the field of social work in Marseille and throughout the region.

Behind every man stands a woman. Our heartfelt thanks go to Christine, whose unwavering support allowed Laurent to become what he truly is: a fatherly presence for countless young people. We now wish them both every blessing as they open the richness of their charism and their family life to many others, so that countless lives may, in turn, experience the gift they themselves have received.

Today, as we welcome our new Executive Director, Mrs. Virginie Héringier-Pashaus, we look to the future with immense joy and great anticipation for the new horizons she will help bring into being. As she recently said to me, "I can't wait to co-create with all of you and put our minds together!" May this new chapter in ACAY's journey—and especially in the life of ACAY Marseille—shine ever more brightly and deepen its impact.

In this edition of our newsletter, Laurent reflects on his long journey of personal growth within the ACAY mission, sharing the path that has shaped both the leader he has become and the person he continues to be.



Laurent Thorigné

AN ACAY YOUTH SHARES HIS STORY ON FRANCE CULTURE!

Discover the inspiring story of Kylian, a youth supported by ACAY, by listening to him on the France Culture program "Les Pieds sur terre."

Scan here to listen to the podcast!





FROM MANILA TO MARSEILLE A STORY OF UNITY

Laurent Thorigné looks back on two decades of work with young people

I can still picture myself arriving in Manila in July 2003, barely twenty years old, stepping out of the airport into the deafening chorus of taxis and Philippine jeepneys, immediately confronted by street children approaching us in the heavy, humid heat. We were five friends studying political science, and we had come to produce a documentary on the mission of ACAY Philippines as part of a university placement.

I can also vividly recall the taxi ride back to Manila airport six weeks later, my heart overflowing with emotion after an intense and deeply life-changing mission.

ACAY IS A STORY OF UNITY

At the time, I had no idea that my return to France would be only temporary, and that this experience would alter the course of my life. Less than a year later, I returned to the

Philippines, where I would spend nearly a decade serving within ACAY Philippines. Nor did I imagine that this journey, begun in the Philippines, would continue after my return to France in 2014 with the founding of ACAY France, opening the way to twelve years of adventure alongside the French youth.

How can twenty-two extraordinary years be captured in just a few lines? There is so much that could be said. Yet perhaps the word that comes most readily to mind also reflects the journey of ACAY over the past twenty-eight years: unity.

I recently had the opportunity to share with the ACAY France team, during a training session on ACAY's educational approach, the story of our mission in the Philippines and in Marseille. As I did so, I found myself deeply struck by the remarkable coherence that Sister Sophie has been

able to articulate—one that has gradually emerged over the years. It is a coherence that has shaped us profoundly and has led us to become who we are today.

The story of ACAY has unfolded through what might at first sight to be opposites: victims and offenders, the megacity and the countryside, poverty and wealth, the Philippines and France, hope in the midst of chaos...

Yet from these realities, which might seem to stand in contrast to one another, a profound unity has emerged in ACAY's mission alongside young people, within the judicial and social sectors, and in society more broadly. This work of fostering unity within ACAY also radiates into the lives of the young people and all those who serve the mission, enabling each person to discover what makes them uniquely themselves.

As I look back over these twenty-two years with ACAY, I believe this is what fills me with the greatest sense of wonder: witnessing, year after year, this quiet work of unity within my own life, and seeing how each stage—embraced through deep attentiveness to myself and to others—prepared the way for the next, revealing ever more clearly the unique role I am called to play in this world.

Bearing witness to so many lives restored in the Philippines led me, amid the turmoil of broken lives, to carry that same deeply rooted hope to young people and professionals in Marseille.

Living alongside that remarkable "gang of sisters" in the Philippines, and witnessing the friendship, joy, depth, and complementarity that flowed from their community life, set me on a path of profound spiritual and personal growth.





Choosing to commit myself over the long term and to put down roots in different cultures and social contexts, in order to better accompany young people, enabled me to grow in resilience, to discover the joy of commitment, and to experience the richness born of encounters between worlds that seem, at first glance, irreconcilable. The greatest of these encounters was undoubtedly with my wife, Christine, who has supported me throughout these years and without whom I could never have become fully the person I am today.

Walking alongside young people through their true transformation led me to develop both human and professional qualities. Patience, adaptability, deep listening, and perseverance are perhaps the virtues that have shaped me most profoundly.

Becoming a fatherly presence for young people has, in turn, enabled me to become a fatherly presence within my own family and for our three children.

It is this lifelong work of integration within my own life—patiently shaped throughout my years with ACAY—that now leads me to embrace this new chapter and to set out toward new horizons as a husband and a father. Our children are filled with excitement as they look forward to this new adventure.

In Zaragoza, Spain, Christine and I will join a team serving with the Chemin Neuf Community, where we will lead an international programme of accompaniment and formation for families, married couples, and single adults. This new mission is a natural continuation of the one we have lived through ACAY: continuing to accompany and equip others, still within an international context, but now in the service of a different community.

33 BECOMING A PLACE OF FATHERHOOD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LED ME TO BECOME A PLACE OF FATHERHOOD FOR MY OWN FAMILY

Without question, I will miss ACAY family and the friendships woven with each and every one of you over the years—in Manila, in Marseille, and during conferences held across France and throughout Europe. Yet, alongside the sadness of parting, there is a deep joy in being able to pass on all that has shaped me, and everything I have received through the ACAY mission, to others in a new country.

Welcome to Virginie Héringier-Pashaus

33 It is with great joy and enthusiasm that I join ACAY France as its Executive Director. For more than twenty years, I have supported organisations and teams through periods of transformation. My professional journey has been shaped by work in human resources, leadership, talent development, and change management, both in France and internationally.

Throughout my career, I have been guided by a deep conviction: that every person possesses unique gifts and strengths waiting to be revealed. It is this conviction that naturally led me to ACAY. I was deeply moved by the association's mission of accompanying young people toward a new future by believing in their potential and in their capacity to rebuild their lives.

I will be joining ACAY on 6 July, eager to gain a deep understanding of the realities on the ground, to listen to each person's experience, and to help shape ACAY's future together. I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

-Virginie Héringier-Pashaus, future director of ACAY France

How could I not end by saying THANK YOU?

My heartfelt thanks go to Sister Sophie, Sister Edith, Sister Laetitia, and Sister Rachel, for making it possible for me to become the person I am today.

My deepest thanks go to the young people of the Philippines and France for allowing me to be a witness to your lives; to Georges Renoux, President of ACAY France, to the Board of Directors, and to the teams at ACAY Philippines and ACAY Marseille for the trust you have placed in me; to our financial partners for your enduring friendship and faithful support; to our operational partners for the strength of our relationships and for the risks you have sometimes been willing to take alongside us; and to each and every one of you for the countless moments and conversations that have shaped the person I have become.

It is with immense joy that I now pass the torch to our new Executive Director, Virginie Héringier-Pashaus, and to this remarkable team—Inès, Hugo, Ombeline, Emma, Saran—and to our ambassadors, to all of whom I owe a profound debt of gratitude. Together with each one of you, I know they will continue to anchor this extraordinary ACAY adventure firmly in its founding values, while carrying it forward toward new horizons. And they will continue to write this story of unity—a story that will remain a source of inspiration, renewal, and hope for so many others.

Laurent Thorigné,
ACAY France director





LAURENT'S FOOTPRINT: TESTIMONIALS FROM THOSE HE GUIDED

Over the years, Laurent has left a lasting mark on the lives of many people. Some met him at pivotal moments in their lives, others worked alongside him. Their memories and words each, in their own way, tell the story of what he has meant to them.

22 years alongside young people — their testimonies...

"He supported me in my weaknesses, helped me grow, and opened my eyes to many things. Laurent was far more than a simple mentor: he was a true friend. He helped me, inspired me, and left a deep mark on me through his kindness, humility, and simplicity."

-Idrisse

"He has no idea of the strength he has to help young people rise again and become what they never thought they could be. He has made us exemplary ambassadors, ready in turn to accompany and uplift the youth."

-Ange

"The day I met Laurent, my life changed significantly. It was then that I realised how fortunate I had been to cross his path. I trust him so deeply that I have shared things with him that I have never told my own family."

-Yanis

"I met him in prison six years ago now, and he has played so many roles in my life: educator, coach, employer, confidant, manager, friend... He has become a true point of reference. Today, he holds a very significant place in my life."

-Rayane

"He has always seen us as a family, and for that we are deeply grateful to him. He has been a true source of inspiration for us."

-Rainier (ACAY Philippines)

"LAURENT WAS MUCH MORE THAN JUST A GUIDE: HE WAS A TRUE FRIEND."



10 years leading ACAY France — the team shares their memories...

What is his greatest quality?

"Listening. Laurent has an impressive capacity for listening. When he listens, he is fully present and always takes the necessary time. In this way, he creates an atmosphere of trust that makes it easy for others to speak openly."

-Emma, Communications Manager

What's one memorable moment with him?

"Our first trip to the Philippines. Seeing him speak Tagalog, reconnect with former young people, and return to his own story was deeply moving. That moment brought together everything Laurent has built over the years: his journey, his commitment, and the lives he has touched."

-Ines, Program Manager

"I remember the first time I went to the EPM. As we entered the courtyard, several young people greeted Laurent, while others called out to me: 'Miss, miss! ...' One of those calls ended with a remark that made me burst out laughing: 'You've got lovely sandals!'"

-Amycie, former employee

"I had the joy of working with Laurent for many years in the Philippines. Having arrived at a very young age, he committed himself with remarkable energy, generosity, and passion. I am proud of everything he has accomplished and deeply grateful for his dedication, his talent, and his contribution to the development of the mission."

-Sœur Edith (ACAY Philippines)

Is there any advice you've taken to heart?

"This attention to holding together two interdependent dimensions: on the one hand, the lived reality of our young people, their families, and the team—a very concrete reality, sometimes joyful, sometimes difficult; on the other hand, the capacity to step back and gain perspective on these situations, nourished by an extraordinary hope."

-Ombeline, Partnerships Manager

What will you miss the most?

"His ability to take a step back in his work with young people. His experience enables him to be precise in defining an appropriate and effective action plan. Even his notes on a flip chart, which looked like a treasure map, always seemed perfectly clear to me."

-Hugo, Support Coordinator

Reintegration, social
reinsertion, preparation
for autonomy... how many
times have you come
across this ACAY
vocabulary in our writings,
so closely it resonates with
the very heart of our work:
accompanying young
people.

As you know, our concern
is that their pasts do not
become an overly heavy
burden during this
transition between the end
of adolescence and the
beginning of early
adulthood.

With this in mind, I sought
to explore how these key
terms in our shared
language resonate with
around fifteen young
women from School of Life
who have reintegrated
into society over the past
three years.

For them, preparation for
reintegration has been
neither a smooth journey
nor empty words, for most
of them have no family to
support them. They know
they must stand on their
own two feet. When they
speak about their arrival
at School of Life, they
describe themselves as
fearful, voiceless and
directionless, lost,
insecure, and struggling to
trust anyone again.

REINTEGRATION AS SEEN AND EXPERIENCED BY YOUNG PEOPLE!



“ NOW EVERYTHING IS MY RESPONSIBILITY

In this sense, the School of Life has been—and remains—vital for each of them. Through their commitment to the programme, they have made it into a genuine path of growth and maturation. A “zigzag path,” as Jhaycel puts it, or, for Joanna, “a roller coaster,” with its highs and lows, its turns to navigate, and above all... the call to persevere.

The fundamental learning process: no longer giving in to discouragement in the face of failure. They are no longer alone in this learning journey. And then comes the moment of reintegration—the moment when life opens up more widely. “This journey toward autonomy was a challenge for me because now everything is my responsibility: from managing my daily budget to making career choices, not to mention the loneliness of evenings after work,” says Mickaela.

“ MY JOURNEY? A RIVER: I’VE ENCOUNTERED COUNTLESS ROCKS, BUT LIKE WATER, I’VE LEARNED TO ADAPT.

Yet it is precisely within these everyday challenges that autonomy takes on its full meaning, and that pride emerges as the crowning reward of sustained effort.

Elea comes to realize that she now carries within herself all the capacities needed to adapt to a new environment and will be able to build relationships with unfamiliar people, taking small steps day by day.

Vanessa will come to recognize her unwavering determination; Rain will successfully overcome her stress during a job interview and in her application to nursing school; Pauleen will say, “It hasn’t been easy, but now I know how to manage my budget, my time, and my priorities.”

“I was worried because there was no one left to guide me in my decisions. But now, I’m taking the reins. I was able to say no to a roommate who wanted to take advantage of my youth. Now I’m grateful to ACAY for all the training I received.”

—Jhaycel.



“ Before coming to SOL. I barely see myself as someone who’s worthy or capable of doing things. I never acknowledge all the achievements that I achieved. Perhaps, I just didn’t love myself enough to see great things that was inside me.

Those things changed — though not instantly but, slowly changing when I arrived in SOL. When I was slowly adapting and accepting all the formations and trainings that was provided by the program of School of Life, most especially when I experienced the Metamorphosis.

There I realized how important to have a positive perception towards yourself. I believed, that perception brought me where I am right now.

I graduated college with a degree in Business Information Management and I got a job from ACAY as a Finance Assistant where I’m continuously growing as a professional.



They all speak of their joy at being able to meet their own needs, and of their hope that one day they will be able to sponsor another young girl from the School of Life.

88 I HAVE CHOSEN TO RISE ABOVE THE PAIN AND SHINE AGAIN.

Their success is tangible: Edna, Vanessa, Lovely, Erika, and Joanna proudly wear their high school graduation caps, while Lovely, once a beneficiary herself, has become a trainer for other young people.

Angelane, responsible for the new generation of young girls at the School of Life in their daily lives, and Mickaela, who supports her during her days off.

The metaphors they use to describe their journeys are striking in their depth: “My journey? A river, because I encountered countless rocks, but like water, I learned to adapt.” “As for me, I love the metamorphosis of the butterfly; I have experienced this inner transformation.” “For me, it was a tunnel where my first struggle was not to remain in the past, but to move forward and to hope.”

“Today, I have come out of it and I am in the light.” “I may not be the best woman in the world,” Edna concludes, “but I have chosen to rise above the pain and shine again.”

A heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you for standing alongside us and supporting them through this experience of transformation.

**Sister Sophie, Founder
of ACAY Philippines**

YOUR FEEDBACK IS INVALUABLE AS WE WORK TOGETHER TO SHAPE ACAY’S FUTURE!

To improve the quality of our communication and our relationship with you, we invite you to complete this short questionnaire.

Scan the QR code to take the survey: It only takes 3 minutes, and your responses will be very helpful to us. Thank you very much!



LET’S CONTINUE METAMORPHOSING YOUTH’S LIVES... TOGETHER!