

Evening of *L'art chretien* (Christian art) in Versailles, France



Pictured in the photo (from left to right) : Front row, Guillaume & Benedicte Martin de Clausonne, Second row: Armelle Masbernard, Julie Ballon, Anne-Lys de Haut de Sigy, Servanne Baudriller, H elene Vignon, hostess Marie-Hel ene de Touzalin, Third row (standing): artist Francois-Xavier de Boissoudy, Jean de Haut de Sigy, Dominique Masbernard, Stephane Vignon, Marc Baudriller, host Geoffroy de Touzalin, & Frederic Ballon. (Note that two of the artist's paintings are in the background).

Versailles is a French town known for its rich cultural heritage; it was the home of the famed Louis XIV. Today, Versailles is still an important place, culturally and historically, with millions of visitors from around the globe each year. Within France, Versailles is also known as a place where there is a concentration of people of great faith. The French term "grandes familles" describes many of the families who reside there, that have a deep cultural and spiritual heritage which can be traced back hundreds of years. Each Sunday one sees hundreds of faithful Catholic families walking through the town streets on their way to church. While church attendance may be down in France, there is a strong fabric of believers in Versailles who give vibrant life to its numerous great churches. As such, Versailles is a natural setting for Masterpiece Dinner Clubs and the work of the foundation.

On Saturday, November 19, 2011, **Geoffroy and Marie-Helene de Touzalin** hosted a dinner club event in their beautiful home in Versailles, inviting a group of Christian friends to participate in an evening of conversation and fellowship around the theme of Christian art. They invited painter and illustrator **Francois-Xavier de Boissoudy**, a long-time friend, to share a few paintings and drawings from his collection of contemporary Christian art. Francois-Xavier describes himself as a painter who is Catholic, rather than a Catholic painter. During the evening, he shared the "why" behind his works, particularly his manner of allowing God to inspire his themes; to "strike him" when he is sometimes touched by the wonder (* merveillement* in French) in simple daily activities and scenes. For him, it is important to see Christ in daily moments of living and remember the supernatural element of our existence. His painting is representational, unlike most modern painters, which sets him apart. Francois-Xavier lives in Paris and divides his time between his important roles of husband, father of three children, and professional painter.

To learn more, go to <http://betagalerie.fr/peinture/2010/01/francois-xavier-de-boissoudy/>

During this evening of “l’art chretien”, many different conversations took place. Everyone shared impressions of Francois-Xavier’s four paintings, which hung on the walls of the living room for the evening. Guests also compared and contrasted the work of the American artists, as seen in the catalog for ***Let There Be Light*** (2008-2009), with contemporary French spiritual art. While guests observed nearly no stylistic similarities with French art, the directness of the American painters on spiritual themes was a pleasing new discovery. Others talked of how they applied their Christianity to their daily living and work, many of them taking advantage of excellent programs in the Catholic Church designed to encourage one’s spiritual walk. **Julie Ballon**, who coordinates the Versailles dinner clubs, also presented the work of the foundation, sharing its goals and upcoming projects. There was a common feeling that using art as a means to share spiritual truths in today’s world is a relevant cause. One of the guests, **Guillaume Martin de Clausonne**, inquired about eventual exhibits in France. While there are currently no French artists who are active in the foundation, there is a hope that over time, a European community of Christian artists will emerge to join the American artists in future projects of international scope and to participate in annual conferences where artists will meet to exchange spiritual and artistic traditions.