



# DEUS CARITAS EST magazine

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# Personal and common good rebalanced?

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**E**very crisis always brings benefits with its burdens. What will it be with this coronavirus crisis? We cannot see it yet, but we can speculate and think about it. Something has certainly happened to man that may be irreversible. Is it a change for the better or for the worse?

It is clear that the tension between the personal good and the common good was never before felt so strongly. We were and are confronted with our true colours, revealing fear, self-preservation, even selfishness, but at the same time we perceive in ourselves a desire to do good, to help others; there is an upward thrust to be observed in our humanity. In times of crisis, the mask slips, even when we have to put one on to protect ourselves and others. This is what it is all about: ourselves and others. What matters most when wearing these masks: our desire for self-preservation or our concern not to put others at risk?

We cannot deny that in recent decades the balance has increasingly shifted towards the personal good, or more accurately worded, the individual good, coupled with a declining concern for our neighbour. Individualism in the wake of the freedom of the individual citizen demanded more and more attention

and space, and society seemed to conform to it. It was a slow process since John Locke propagated this individual freedom in the late 17th century, which was given a pertinent place in the American Constitution. Society must do everything in its power to protect, promote, and possibly restore the freedom of the individual. In the Church's social doctrine, it sounds somewhat different. It states that one must strive to promote human dignity on the basis of the principle of the common good. Both start from what is common, but in the secular context the private is strongly narrowed down



John Locke

to individual freedom. Of course, man's dignity is often violated by imposing restrictions on this individual freedom. We experience this in countries with totalitarian regimes. But there is more at stake when it comes to man's dignity than his individual freedom. Even more so, if one starts to emphasize individual freedom too much, one is in danger of losing attention for one's neighbour. Everything is focused on one's own good, while the other disappears from sight. The other can still be there to promote our good, but that's about it. If they cannot fulfil their task, we push them aside very quickly. It becomes a pursuit for one's own good in which the other still matters to the extent that they can make a positive contribution in order to increase this personal good. What I can do for the good of the other becomes secondary and even completely ignored after a while. It becomes an every-man-for-himself mentality. There is no room for the other in individualism, so that we also see a difference between the concept of personal freedom and individual freedom. Because, in personalism, the other is a reality for which I feel responsible. As an individual, I open myself up



*Caring for human dignity is an essential element in caring for the common good.*

to the other and to the wider community. This is what the social doctrine of the Church holds to be essential, setting two other principles as conditions: solidarity and subsidiarity. It is the four-leaf clover of the Church's social doctrine: caring for human dignity is an essential element in caring for the common good, which, in turn, is accomplished on the basis of the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. This is a harmonious model in which one slides into the other and one needs the other. Society is not isolated and has only one objective: to help achieve the collective good of its citizens, which is expressed in respecting, promoting, and restoring the human dignity of each person. And in this, the amount of freedom that each person must have in order to be able to develop and experience his or her humanity in a dignified manner is of course important. But it must always remain a situated freedom, taking into account the presence of others and the task of contributing to the growth of the good, call it the human dignity of others and of all others. Pope Paul VI called it the care of all people and of the whole person. And we do this by showing solidarity and respecting the rules of subsidiarity: not taking away or undermining the other person's responsibility but, on the contrary, helping him (the word 'subsidium' meaning support) to grow in responsibility.

Back to the coronavirus crisis and the time after it. Will the experience we gained during the lockdown period help us to replace the individualism to which we were slipping with a

healthy personalism, in which we rightly care for our own good, but also for the good of others and ultimately for the common good? And that we do this in a way in which there should be no tension at all between the three, quite the contrary. Will we remember how important the attention for



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others is for our personal good? Those who were separated from their beloved family members have certainly experienced this and must now carry this experience with them and even cherish it.

Will we remember the importance of the commitment to others, which, in caring for those who fell victim to the coronavirus, took shape in a magnificent way?

Will we treat the environment with greater respect now that we have experienced how clearer the sky was when we were forced to leave our car in the garage and the planes were parked on the runways, and we yearned for a refreshing walk in a nearby forest? Or will we soon dream again of travelling to exotic locations and forget how exotic it is in our own neighbourhood?

Will we continue to care about the good of people in other continents, even when there are no more statistics coming in about how many coronavirus-related deaths there are? A global feeling arose that was different from what we used to understand by globalization. It took on a totally different meaning than the economic one we usually gave it.

And will political authorities continue to focus on the person and everything that should promote human dignity, including the economy? Or will market interests very quickly claim their priority on the political agendas, with the risk that people will once again be pushed into second place? And will the same political authorities not allow themselves to be carried away once again by the demands of an individualistic view of mankind, which only

care about absolute self-determination, absolute freedom, and absolute autonomy?

These continue to be open questions and the only ones who can respond in a positive way are we. It starts with the specific choices we make. Hopefully, those are like the circles that gradually spread across the surface of the water caused by a pebble that was thrown in. There are numerous videos appearing today that illustrate the coronavirus crisis from different points of view. I received one yesterday. It was a father telling his little children a fairy tale about what happened in 2020 and how it profoundly changed the world. And they lived happily ever after, the people who learned positive lessons from the crisis. Or will it just be a fairy tale? ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



# 25th anniversary of the Saint Vincent de Paul Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Goma

**C**entred on the theme “Restoring the dignity of people with mental illness and epilepsy in North Kivu Province: the contribution of the Brothers of Charity”, the silver jubilee of the Saint Vincent de Paul Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Goma was celebrated on 7 March 2020. What a long way the centre has come since 1995! It was then that the Neuropsychiatric Hospital, or CHNP, came into being as part of an unprecedented reform of the care of people suffering from mental illness in Goma. Since its creation, it has been an experimental structure, whose main vision is to ensure the



improvement of the living conditions of people with mental problems in their entirety and the respect of fundamental rights. In 1995 the centre was named “Centre de Santé Mentale Tulizo Letu” (“our relief”) and in 2018 the centre was recognized as a health institution by the Provincial Government with the name “Centre Hospitalier Neuropsychiatrique Saint Vincent de Paul” of the Brothers of Charity in Goma.

As a health care facility of the Brothers of Charity, CHNP today pursues its mission of restoring the human dignity of people whose human faculties are impaired with love, compassion, and professional care. With this commitment, we want to improve the quality of life of the people we serve, give them the perspective of resurrection and hope, and contribute to the development of a more humane society.

This anniversary was an opportunity to review the history of CHNP, its inception as a unit at CHP Shirika la Umoja in 1984 with Louis Martin, its relocation to its own buildings, and the recognition of the structure by the provincial authority in 2018 as a health care facility. It was also an opportunity to take turns describing the different pathologies most encountered in our institution and to raise awareness to identify these kinds of problems in their communities. Thus, since its creation, 22,770 new cases have been treated at CHNP Goma and have had their dignity as men and women restored. This is an institution to be proud of!

The events organized to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Saint Vincent de Paul

Neuropsychiatric Hospital Centre were: a colloquium, cultural events, sporting events, and a Mass of thanksgiving. They reflect the growth of CHNP and were an opportunity to share these important moments together throughout the anniversary period defined by the administration of the centre. This day of 7 March 2020 is engraved in the memory of the staff of CHNP/FC Goma, as several prominent personalities in the concession of the structure and several state and para-state partners were present.

The objectives of the organization of the colloquium on the theme “Restoring the dignity of people with mental illness and epilepsy” were to share with the participants the history of CHNP and its contribution to the restoration of human dignity through the care of people with mental illness and epilepsy on the basis of statistical data, to describe some of the frequent pathologies treated at CHNP, to review the aetiological factors of mental illnesses,



and to collect the various suggestions and recommendations from the participants for CHNP to move forward.

The theme of the first presentation of the colloquium was: “The restoration of the human dignity of people with mental illness and epilepsy in the Province of North Kivu: the contribution of the Brothers of Charity - History of the Brothers, of the Centre, statistics, perspectives for the future”. The speaker reviewed the history of CHNP, its inception as a unit at CHP Shirika la Umoja in 1984 with Louis Martin, its relocation to its own buildings in 1995 under diocesan management, and its transfer to the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity in 2005 to the present day. The speaker also presented the number of patients that the centre welcomes and which shows the increase in the number of patients over the years through statistical data, while highlighting the recognition of the facility by the provincial authority in 2018 as a health care establishment. The speaker concluded by highlighting the challenges and future prospects of the facility. The speaker of the second presentation, entitled “The different neuropsychiatric pathologies at CHNP”, had alternately described the different pathologies most encountered in our facility, starting with epilepsy, headaches, mood disorders, psychoses (BD and schizophrenia), substance use disorders, and finally disorders due to bodily problems. This is to allow participants to identify these types of problems in their communities.

The theme of the third presentation was “Aetiological factors of neuropsychiatric disorders and their treatment at CHNP”. The speaker had briefly outlined the various aetiological factors that had been highlighted that could be the cause of neuropsychiatric disorders. These factors are biological, psychological, social, and environmental. This presentation enriched the first two and gave the participants a clearer idea of mental illness. After these various presentations, there was a Q&A session at the end of which a series of suggestions and recommendations were made by the participants.

To bless this day, a Thanksgiving Mass marked the beginning of all the activities of the day. The Mass was celebrated by His Excellency Bishop Faustin Ngabu, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Goma. His presence at the ceremonies on that day was no coincidence. It was he who had guided this facility for several years, and he was also the person who had welcomed the Brothers



of Charity when they came to Goma and began their apostolate at CHP and CHNP, which was called the “Mental Health Care Centre” at the time. Mass was beautifully enlivened by the Saint Vincent de Paul Choir of the Blessed Anuarite Parish, the quarter that bears their name and in which the Neuropsychiatric Hospital is located. During this Eucharistic celebration, one of the Brothers of Charity offered himself to God by professing his first vows. The vows were received by the Brother Regional of the Our Lady of Loreto Region. On this occasion, the Brothers renewed their vows. A very important moment for the Brothers who attended this ceremony. This act also allowed the faithful present to learn more about and to discover the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity.

After Mass, a guided tour was organized. The aim of this visit was to show the different authorities present at the events the achievements of the Brothers of Charity through the different services organized by the Neuropsychiatric Hospital. We note the presence of the Provincial Minister of



*The Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Goma is the only centre in the province with the capacity to care for people with mental illness.*

Health, of His Excellency Mgr. Faustin Ngabu, and of other distinguished guests during the visit to our facility.

The Provincial Minister of Health congratulated the Brothers of Charity for their efforts to improve the quality of services at the Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Goma, the only centre in the province with the capacity to care for people with mental illness. He did not finish his word of gratitude without inviting the Centre to do more. He expressed his wish to see our Centre equipped with other tools such as a scanner and other diagnostic devices that will allow the Centre to achieve the rank of a tertiary level hospital.

To make the events more enjoyable, we took full advantage of the talent of our children who study in the two schools of the Brothers of Charity in Goma: the school complex “La Charité”, which organizes nursery and primary education, and the school of life, which looks after children with intellectual disabilities, where the young Brother Hubert is appointed as Director.

The students of the school complex “La Charité” presented an act in which the central theme was to show the contribution of the Neuropsychiatric Hospital in the restoration of the human dignity of our sick brothers and sisters. The participants were amazed to see how eloquently the primary school children could convey such a vital message.

We cannot fail to talk about the games and dancing of our children from the school of life. These children with intellectual disabilities entertained the audience with their dancing.

Some who saw them dancing and singing for the first time appreciated the work of the Brothers of Charity who give these children a place in society.

With the aim of restoring the human dignity of our patients, the Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Goma, using its own means, is able to train stabilized sick girls and women in tailoring and dressmaking. Through these trainings, these women benefit from the material for socio-professional and economic reintegration. We had the opportunity to follow the testimony of one of the patients who benefits from support by our facility and who has already received a reintegration kit.

The anniversary of our Centre also covered other events that marked the very meaning of the events. It was the 25-year jubilee of Mrs. Justine Bwalitse who had just spent 25 years of service in our facility. In her speech, she invited the other collaborators to work with courage and self-sacrifice, because it is an apostolate to work for people with mental illness, most of whom are destitute.

This moment of joy was accompanied by a moment of sorrow characterized by the pain of parting. One of our employees, Mr. Jacques Mulago, had just reached retirement age and was due to take his rest. It is always difficult to receive such an announcement because, despite sufficient time in the preparation of the person involved, together we have found that it is not easy. However, finishing one's career with loyalty to one's work remains an important memory to keep in mind for the person retiring. His values

included punctuality, respect for his superiors, and readiness to be of service. The Centre will always remember him and he remains an example to be followed.

To keep a somewhat more special impression of our anniversary, an outfit has been designed with the logo of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity and that of the Neuropsychiatric Hospital. We give thanks to God for His protection during the preparations and ceremonies of our Centre's anniversary. We have faith that this Centre will grow and continue to serve the poor, who are our masters. We thank all those who have supported us and those who have come to celebrate with us. This is a sign of fraternity and encouragement for us. We promise you that we will do even more to improve the quality of the services we offer to our sick brothers and sisters. While counting on your prayers, together we commit this work into God's hands. ¶

*Bro. Ernest Ciza*



## Uvira's tragedy

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**T**he former town of Uvira, located on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in the South Kivu Province, eastern DR Congo, was elevated to the status of a city by presidential order of 27 December 2018, and given new city authorities with the same infrastructure. The city of Uvira has three communes and 14 quarters. It has an important port, Kalundu, which connects Uvira to the city of Kalemie in the north of Katanga Province and the city of Kigoma in Tanzania. The city is bordered to the north by the Kahwizi River; to the south by the Kivovo River; to the east by Lake Tanganyika and the Ruzizi River; and to the west by the Mitunga Range and Mount Munanira.

During the night of 16 to 17 April, a torrential



downpour hit the city. It caused the Kavimvira and Mulongwe Rivers to overflow into the commune of the same name, with waves and rising water from Lake Tanganyika. This natural disaster caused material damage with considerable and deplorable loss of human life. While rescue efforts were still under way, the rains did not stop throughout the week, adding to the toll of this humanitarian emergency over time. There are more than 100,000 displaced people in schools, churches, families, and other locations; more than 15,000 households have been affected; more than 50 dead bodies are estimated to have been pulled from the waters; more than 15,000 houses were destroyed and washed away by the waters of the Mulongwe River. Three bridges linking the town of Uvira to the city of Bukavu were destroyed and swept away, complicating the delivery of emergency assistance to the people of Uvira.

The floods caused by heavy rains on the night of



16-17 April risk leaving the affected population of Uvira in a state of delusion, wiping out a newly created city if nothing is done to save what can still be saved. What is happening in Uvira is an unfortunate surprise caused by nature's rage for man's recklessness.

The loss of human life and material damage is to be deplored, the disaster victims are in urgent need of our contribution to the chain of solidarity first of all, in terms of rapid responses to basic needs, food and non-food items, shelter, psychosocial support, health care, etc.

If it is impossible to do so at the same time, the construction and/or rehabilitation of social infrastructures (roads, schools, health care structures, churches...), the dredging of the Mulongwe and Kavimvira Rivers... are necessary at a later stage, once the disaster victims have stabilized.

The Brothers of Charity have not been spared. No room in the house of the Brothers' community in Uvira escaped the flood, the walls of the kitchen collapsed, and the Sosame Psychiatric Centre was badly damaged, as well. Thank God, no loss of human life has been recorded in our house. All the property of the community was damaged



***The Brothers of Charity have not been spared.***

by water or taken by looters who came to the Brothers' rescue in this emergency situation. The Brothers were forced to move to the parish of Kavinvira without saving anything from the house, which remains inaccessible due to the stagnant water and rubble around and inside. Appeals to the chain of solidarity for the affected population of Uvira have been pouring in from everywhere since these unfortunate events: the



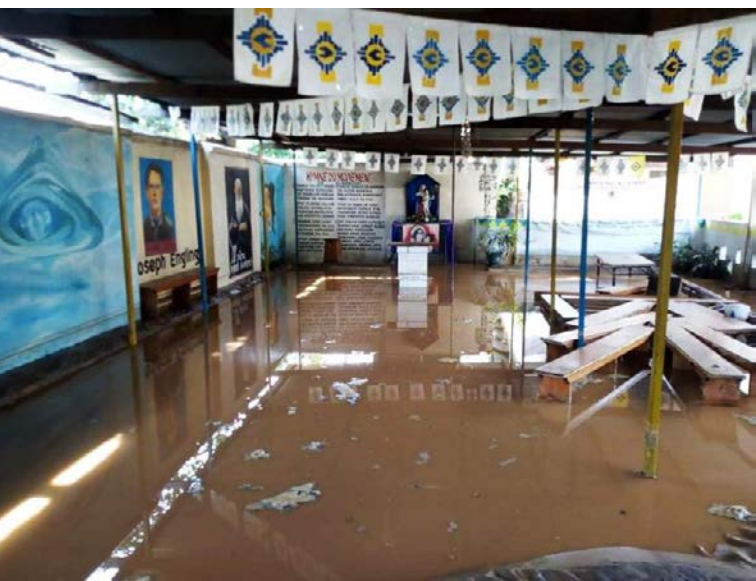
needs for food and non-food, drinking water, shelter, medical assistance for the injured, burial of the dead, care for orphans, psychosocial support for those affected... were already felt from the beginning until today.

To join the voices crying out from everywhere to help the population of Uvira, in the name of Fracarita DRC, while being ourselves counted among the disaster victims, we issued a statement in the aftermath of the floods, under the emotion of the shock, launching an appeal to the chain of solidarity to men and women of good will, to national and international NGOs, as well as to decision-makers to come to the aid of the disaster-stricken population of Uvira.

The cholera epidemic is adding to the misery in Uvira today. The Brothers of Charity, however, have warned of this threat, following the overcrowding of the disaster victims in the families and reception areas, the lack of drinking water, the absence of a waste disposal system, and the lack of respect for basic rules of hygiene. Hunger and the lack of assistance in terms of basic necessities (soaps, clothes, shoes, blankets, tents for shelter...) were already showing on the faces of the disaster victims in the aftermath of the disaster.

This humanitarian tragedy in Uvira was added to the global urgency of fighting the spread of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Following the confirmation of the first positive cases of COVID-19 in the DRC, on 10 March, in the city-province of Kinshasa, the President of the Republic made public on 19 March a number

of response measures to block the spread of the pandemic. The city of Bukavu had three confirmed positive cases and was isolated from the rest of the territory of the South Kivu Province, including the city of Uvira at the time of the disaster. This has consequences on all fronts, everything is at a standstill. Even if schoolchildren return to school after the lockdown, those in Uvira still have to wait a long time, even though the school calendar has already been greatly delayed as a result of the lockdown. Traditional objects, schools, ... are washed away or damaged by the floods. As for the community house of the Brothers in Uvira, everything has to be repaired; the house has to be re-equipped and the construction has to be adapted to face possible floods in the future. The bulk of the work to be done falls to the State, which is responsible for enforcing urban



planning standards to compensate for human recklessness in the future. When construction is carried out in such a way that water cannot pass through, it will eventually reclaim, willingly or unwillingly, its proper path constricted by uncontrolled construction and sometimes on sites unsuitable for construction. Nature is unforgiving when its rights have been violated. Together, let us act for a healthy environment where life is good. This kind of humanitarian tragedy does not benefit anyone. Prevention is better than cure.

Solidarity and love of neighbour are the only remedies that can put a smile back on the faces of the stricken inhabitants of the city of Uvira and restore people's taste for life. 🙏

*Bro. Janvier Batumike Murhula*



# A story that leaves you speechless

**A**bout a year ago, the brothers in Shinyanga, Tanzania opened a small day centre for children with intellectual disabilities. Every day, they take care of about 15 children in their house. It all started with a parent who approached the brothers and asked them if they could do anything for their child. They had been told that the brothers could cure children with intellectual disabilities. No, cure them, they could not, but maybe they could help educate this child. So far, they had not noticed any children with intellectual disabilities, because they are carefully hidden from the eyes of the community. They are usually locked



in a small shed, sometimes even chained, because most parents believe it is a curse to have a disabled child. They certainly cannot rely on proper care, and most of them die in their early years.

More children came after this one child, and the brothers got addresses where more children were locked up. They asked the Congregation for a little support to furnish a classroom, a room with a few beds, and an adapted sanitary building. A new project was born and besides guiding these children, they were also faced with the task of convincing the parents that their child was not the result of dark forces that wanted to hit the family. The latter is a persistent conviction that is very hard to challenge. Changing a mentality always takes a lot of time and patience and can certainly not be forced here. But the enthusiasm with which our young brothers take care of these children every day would undoubtedly have a positive influence on some parents and would teach them to look at their child differently.

One of the first children was Festo, eight years old, who had spent his life in a dark shed until now. He was extremely shy, constantly afraid of being beaten. But gradually the brothers saw the child blossom, however the parents remained aloof. He was brought to the day care centre by his older sister, who did seem concerned about the child. The brothers were so glad that they had been able to get the child out of isolation. And the presence of the other children did Festo good. He became more sociable and learned to perform a number of tasks on his own. There was hope! But suddenly, they did not see Festo anymore. Days passed until

the brothers went to ask where he was. There was no answer. There was no answer from the parents, until finally the older sister went to the brothers, sobbing that her father had drowned Festo in a well in order to ward off the evil hand that was hanging over the family. Festo was seen as a devil's child, causing all kinds of misfortune in the family and he had to be removed. The brothers were stunned and shocked. The girl asked not to tell anyone about this for fear of reprisals within her family. Apparently, it was a done deal in the family that Festo would have to die in order to calm the evil spirits. The superstition that still persists in so many places had prevailed over the willingness to leave the child alive and let him come to the day care centre.

Bro. Valentine, the brother in charge of the day care



centre, wrote to me and told me this story with a palpable feeling of great emotion. He told me that there may still be many children locked up, out of the conviction that they are possessed by the devil and that it is necessary to try to isolate this devil. The life situation of these children is terrible, they barely have enough to survive, and illness and death of such a child is considered a victory over the devil. Festo went a step further by sacrificing himself, so to speak, to calm the evil spirits. I have a picture of Festo here with me, because Bro. Valentine sent it with his letter from Shinyanga. A distressed and timid child looking away from the camera.

The brothers are facing a huge task to break the taboo on children with intellectual disabilities. Once again, they are breaking chains like our first brothers did with the mentally ill who were imprisoned in the crypts of Gerard the Devil's Castle in Ghent, Belgium. History repeats itself, but the biggest chains that need to be broken are those of taboo and discrimination. It will be by their loving care that they will tacitly show that these children are valuable, that they are children of God and not of the devil and are therefore worthy of being cared for, of being educated, of being loved. I am reminded of a phrase from our Rule of Life that reads: "When working with persons who are sick or elderly, or who have a disability or mental illness, you are brought face to face with the more urgent need of relieving them because their human condition is impaired in so many ways. You never shun them, for you regard them as fellow travellers, who, like yourself, are

bound for the same destination: God.” “You never shun them.” This is definitely the basic attitude of Bro. Valentine and his confreres who are creating a new sound in that distant Shinyanga, perhaps sounding like they are still in a vast desert, but hopefully their daily example of concern and care may touch a few hearts, so that from now on these children, too, will be regarded “as fellow travellers”, and for which solidarity may grow in order to be “bound for the same destination: God”.



*Bro. René Stockman*



## Fatima Community

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**I**n 2001, when the Brothers of Charity first explored the possibility of establishing an International House of Formation in Washington, DC, in the United States, they were focused on the quality of education at The Catholic University of America in the field of nursing and special education. The St. John Neumann House of Formation came into being in 2002 and educated many Brothers until it closed in 2015. What was developing slowly underneath was a network of relationships, not only with the University, but among many good people around the city of Washington. Those relationships endured beyond the 2015 closing and were kept alive by our associate members, who continued to promote the charism of the Congregation. The Brothers of the USA region realized that it was time to make a new effort to implant the charism in the Archdiocese of Washington, DC.



With the arrival of Brother Stan Goetschalckx in 2016, and the late Brother Claude Simbizi in 2017, a new vision was embarked upon serving the homeless in the city in a residential setting. A small house was found as a temporary place to begin, and thus Fatima Community was born on October 13, 2017, with two Brothers and 10 guests and others could come in to share daily life. We believed anyone knocking at the door is a blessing not a burden. Brother Claude left in 2018. He was replaced by Bro. Saud Aslam, who now directs the program after the departure of Brother Stan in 2019. Fatima Community made a transition into another larger, newly-renovated house on March 7, 2020. This move created a better quality living space and a new transition for the community.

Fatima Community is an inclusive community sponsored by the Brothers of Charity of the USA Region. It is focused on building a spirit of belonging and healing, while preparing for a new start in life for persons experiencing homelessness. The mission is to enable each individual to transition from Fatima Community



*A new vision was embarked upon serving the homeless in the city in a residential setting.*

to again live a meaningful life in society; to answer the urgent needs of homelessness through housing services; to promote the creation of a small community of Brothers and guests together; to have a community of belonging and healing; to allow homeless persons to discover new perspectives in life, rebuild self-confidence, take personal initiative for their life, and develop a spirit of self-reliance and solidarity.

Members of the Fatima Community come from diverse backgrounds in all facets of their lives. We welcome men of all ages who are in difficult situations with society and their families, and some who suffer from various ailments. Many have shared common struggles such as recurring and complex legal challenges, difficulty in sustaining family and other relationships, inability to live independently in the community, inability to control aggressive behavior or regulate their emotions, and having no place to live due to job loss, personal history or larger systemic issues.



The Brothers of Charity constitute the core of this community of radical hospitality. Our homeless “guests” gather with the religious community of the Brothers and draw strength from it. They also contribute to the community in many ways. Fatima Community collaborates with other social service programs in the neighborhood for quality, professionalism, efficiency and synergy. It also participates actively in the local Catholic parish. Homelessness is a significant issue in Washington, DC, with over 800 homeless families and hundreds of homeless individuals. Fatima Community hopes to help many of the homeless individuals with its ongoing work. To sustain its activities, the Fatima Community depends on the goodwill and support of benefactors, the local Catholic and other churches, and support from private foundations. Government programs have great difficulty understanding the concept of “communities of radical hospitality.” The funding schemes are aimed at outcome-based services. Thus, government support is elusive for the moment. Little did the Brothers realize in 2001 that putting their foot on the ground in Washington, DC, would lead to such a ministry in the local church and in the life of the USA Region of Our Lady of Charity! The words of Father Triest guide this difficult and challenging apostolate: “Love gives strength that nature cannot provide.” ¶

*Bro. Saud Aslam*



# From Saint-Sulpice to Nicolet

**A**t the beginning of 2014, we all met in Saint-Sulpice. Several Brothers passed away and all of them were very advanced in age. As the infirmary of Saint-Sulpice became too large and too costly to operate for the small number of Brothers, the Regional Council studied for three long years to find an alternative situation. After having visited several infirmaries of Brothers, Fathers, and Sisters, it had to be concluded that none could accommodate us as a group. We would have had to split up in different institutions. The main criterion of the Regional Council was that we had to find a place where all the Brothers would be welcomed.



So, we looked at private developers for the possibility of staying together as a community. It was then that in the small rural town of Nicolet, Mr. Yvon Perreault was able to welcome us all in his Résidence Saint-Joseph. It is a small residence of about sixty units that welcomes seniors who are still living independently until the end of their lives. Each unit has its own complete bathroom. One can easily go from the independent section to the actual infirmary, visit us and stay together until one's last breath. When we moved at the end of October 2019, four very disabled confreres were admitted to the infirmary and the fourteen others settled in their rooms where the independent part is located. We also have a community room and an office for administration. Meals are enjoyed together with the Sisters. There are organized activities in the afternoons for those who wish to take part under the supervision of a professional entertainer. Already on 27 February, Brother Rolland René left us for the eternal Fatherland. He was able to



receive the most attentive care both for his body and his soul. We were able to be with him when he received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick from Bishop Simon Héroux, chaplain of the institution. It should be noted that this brave priest comes to celebrate Mass every morning (except during the pandemic) and is available for all our spiritual needs. The funeral services of the Sisters and Brothers are held in the chapel and we can receive family and friends in the refectory for the post-funeral meal.

We have the advantage that this infirmary was first built and organized by the Sisters of Charity of Montreal (founded by Saint Marguerite d'Youville). More than thirty elderly Sisters still live in this residence. They take care of the liturgy and maintain an atmosphere of piety and fervour in the house. We pray with them.

Saint John the Baptist Cathedral is the cathedral of the Diocese of Nicolet located in the city of the same name just a few minutes from our residence. 🙏

*Bro. Joseph Turcotte*



## From the street to family warmth

Since 2009, in the tropical country of Nicaragua, the Brothers of Charity of the Province of the Americas – Our Lady of Guadalupe, have had to face a reality that affects the entire province, and many other religious communities, which is the limited number of consecrated brothers to continue to love with the same intensity and dedication. However, this has not brought them into a pessimistic attitude, but rather encouraged them, so that, together with a team of collaborators, they can continue to walk among the most weak and vulnerable people in the city of Granada, fifty kilometers



from the capital city of Nicaragua. It is the second poorest country in Central America, which in 2018 experienced another crisis in its history. It was a crisis that brought violence, more hunger, increased the lack of opportunities and left hundreds of children exposed to the risks of the streets, such as exploitation, trafficking and prostitution. In addition to the crisis, they were already living with a high rate of domestic violence.

We look back at the past and the present-day of our apostolic work, which our first brothers developed when they arrived from the east and the north to sow the first seeds of charity. With much dedication, they welcomed young people from the streets who were sniffing glue and fed them and gave them opportunities for sports and manual activities at “Centro Jesús Amigo” (Friend Jesus). In addition to that, they welcomed a group of poor boys in social orphanage situations at “Casa Hogar Amanecer” (Sunrise Residential House), providing them with opportunities for



*This warmth translates into educational opportunities, emotional support, primary health protection, and temporary residential care in case of high risk.*

shelter and education.

Now, the reality has matured over the last five years, and nowadays in 2020, with the two centers under their same initial names, “Casa Amanecer” for integral development and family reintegration in the city of Granada and “Jesús Amigo” for promotion, prevention and psychosocial rehabilitation in the rural community of “El Hormigón”, we support the development of seven different programs for the benefit of boys and girls, adolescents and their families, incorporating a model of community development, based on the Gospel values of solidarity, forgiveness, peace and justice. This reduces the short-term and long-term consequences in their education, relationships,



primary and mental health and their human and community development of over 300 children, adolescents and their families who take part in these programs.

Our main pillars that we promote through our Office of Integral Development Fracarita Latin America are: animation of collaborators, strengthening of the family, the shared mission with other partners and integral development. Without substituting our own identity, by valuing our vocation and enriching each other, brothers and collaborators, we go out of ourselves to meet Christ, walking along the same streets, listening to the same cries, so that, together, within a support structure we leave the violence and loneliness of the street, to return to the warmth of home. This warmth translates into educational opportunities, emotional support, primary health protection, and temporary residential care in case of high risk.

It is the home that we promote for many children and their parents following the model of the family of Nazareth, because, in the family, society and the church are built, and because this is how the seeds were planted by our first Brothers. There is no society that is not characterized by its culture. Our mission in Nicaragua is alive and an example that provides the value and warmth for this culture to be the culture of charity, where men and women open up to the understanding that the gift of life comes from God. In a concrete family, even though at times it is damaged by suffering and limitations, we hope that the father or the

mother discover that God still loves them and entrusts them with the task of caring. If we can still be those fellow companions on the journey for them, we can say as it says in Psalm 1:3 “...is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season...”. 🌿

*Bro. Jimi Huayta*

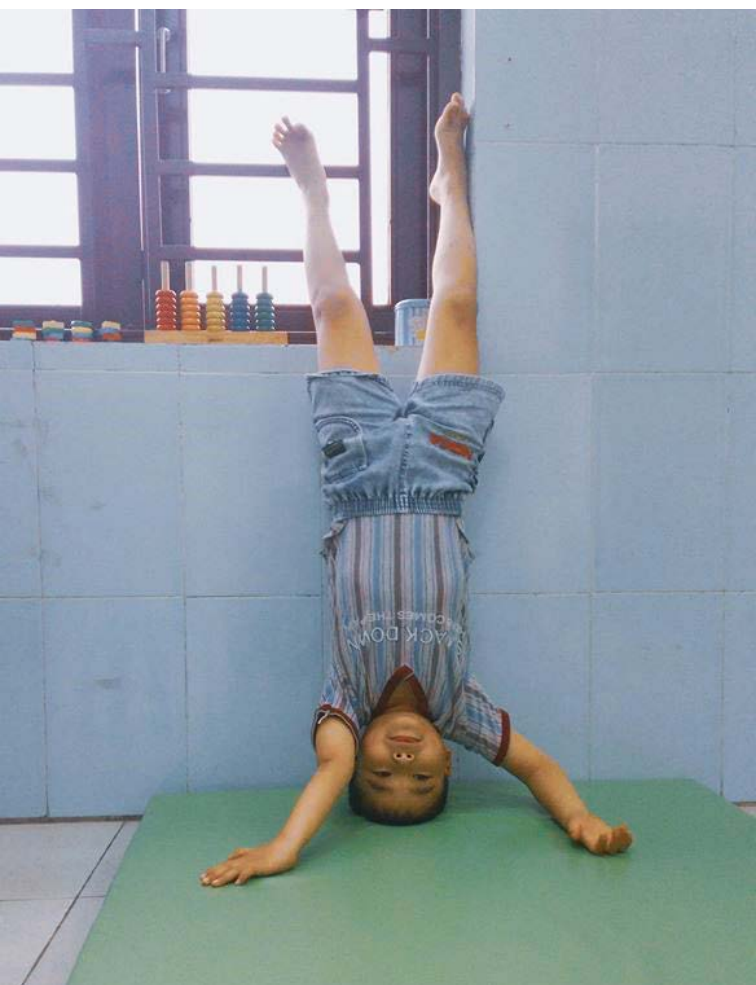


# Personal intervention for children with autism, low development, and learning difficulties

**T**he idea of establishing a support class for children with development and learning difficulties (children with autism) has been formed and mentioned by the superiors long ago because of the necessity and the situation of society's slow recognition of these children. It was not until May 2015, when the superiors saw that the community had met the most basic essentials such as facilities, human resources, training skills of the teachers, etc. that the new class would officially be put into operation and would be called An Phuoc. In order to be well prepared for the children's



care and education, our Congregation sent two brothers to train as special needs educators. They would be trained professionally and receive practical training at local centers and abroad to gain experience and learn necessary skills because, in fact, the care and the education of children with special needs comes with a lot of difficulties: there are many children who have difficulties pronouncing words, listening and understanding what teacher is saying;



sometimes children have disruptive behaviors; they vomit or go to the toilet in the classroom; teaching them to answer and say “yes” or remembering a color or a letter can sometimes take weeks, even more. However, the love and enthusiasm for children has helped the teachers overcome these difficulties and increasingly perfect their skills so they can help them improve faster. When children first come to the classroom, they are offered a general exercise program. Children are given a general knowledge of their surroundings including geometry, colors, letters, numbers, arithmetic, animals, fruits, vehicles, careers, families... Depending on the ability and age of each child, these subjects are arranged accordingly.

The teachers help the children develop skills in reading, writing, singing, coloring, as well as communication skills and social interaction. In addition, individual living skills are also taught at appropriate times.

At the end of the school day, children play sports in groups, or individually with the teacher in charge.



*... the mission the teachers have learned from the Founder: bringing the love of God to those who are less fortunate.*

Each child is given one hour of individual intervention time, but in practice, teachers will use the gap between lessons to increase the time for children.

After nearly 4 years of operational experience, An Phuoc's class has helped many children to have the opportunity to continue learning at preschool. Currently, there are 14 children attending the school under the guidance of 3 teachers, a few community members, and volunteers. Despite many difficulties in the facilities as well as with teaching equipment, the Congregation still pays a great deal of attention to the students. The teachers are still being sent to universities and colleges for further professional training to cultivate and improve their knowledge in the hope of helping children increasingly progress, just like the mission the teachers have learned from the Founder: bringing the love of God to those who are less fortunate.



At the moment, there are no classes due to the coronavirus. Classes will start again in June 2020. Our brothers and volunteers have prepared all the equipment for the next step of accepting children with autism to come to class.

In the progress of this apostolic work, we aim to approach the Department of Education to ask for official permission for the operation of a “special needs children’s group”. This would allow us to work out this mission in a more concrete way so that we would be able to teach the children and let them stay with us for day care in the Our Lady of Lavang Community in Ho Chi Minh City. 🙏

*Bro. Augustine Hoai Nguyen Van*



ROME

## Experience of a student in Rome during the coronavirus lockdown

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**T**he total lockdown that began in March came as a surprise to me. Initially, we could follow the news about how bad things were in the northern region of Lombardy and all movements were curtailed. It was something distant, only to find ourselves living the same reality a few weeks later. This changed our life fundamentally: we could not go back to Angelicum University to follow classes; new arrangements were made in the community since we could not receive Holy Communion, and even sitting in the dining room was adapted to adhere to new social distancing. For the first time in my life, I thought death was a real and imminent possibility. I felt very vulnerable, and it also made me reflect a lot about what is the most important thing in life.

The situation of living in lockdown made universities adapt their programs and start teaching online. It was a difficult transition not only for us students but also for professors to embrace this situation. It was also stressful for me as a class representative, since some classmates, whenever they had even a little challenge with technology, would call me to assist, as if I am the one who invented computer

and the like! This experience sometimes tested my patience, because I could not understand how in the world someone had to ask the same thing again and again? Luckily, I had some good, supportive friends who would encourage me and appreciate how I tried to accommodate everybody, but little did they know that at time in my room, I literally got mad, gnashed my teeth and felt like kicking the table! Consequently, I learned to be patient and appreciate that the little skills and resources that we have and take for granted can be as complicated as rocket science for others. It was inspiring for me to see how some of these students showed humility and a sense of decency even when I uttered an unkind word.

The difference we noted is that online classes can be more stressful and demanding than taking classes on campus. It has to do with the notion that each professor presumes you need more assignments to keep you busy. The lack of personal contact and interaction with others in the class could be deeply felt. It was quite a new experience that for some courses we had to do group discussions via video calling. Even though we have some online interaction, it is no longer the same. Our experience at the Angelicum before the lockdown provided us the atmosphere of feeling like one family. The Dominican Friars, the professors, and even the cleaners, demonstrated and lived the Dominican spirituality and motto of being there to praise, to bless and to teach. This sentiment of sense of love and communion at Angelicum was also

confirmed by students from other pontifical universities who came to do research there. The truth (veritas) of the Gospel is still communicated via online platforms, but it is evident that there is a void and an absence of the personal encounter and free cookies, and coffee, I got spoiled by my best buddies!

Perhaps a notable difference after quarantine started is how we had to adapt living our spiritual life. Before being “caged”, we could go freely to pray at St. Peter’s Basilica and to so many other shrines and churches in Rome. These places gave us new experiences on the beauty and the spiritual heritage of our Catholic Church. Moreover, at Angelicum we always had silent adoration, and each time we were free to go and pray before the Blessed Sacrament, but with corona, all these possibilities have been halted. Similarly, as stated above, even though we were fortunate to have daily Mass in our community, we could not receive the Holy Communion daily. This was very painful, particularly for me, but we had to let go and learn to commune with the Lord spiritually and be in solidarity with so many Christians who had no possibility even to attend Mass. Being inside created new space for meditative walks in our beautiful garden. It was very common and a sight to behold to see confreres and priests residing with us, strolling in the garden with a rosary in their hands. Yes, we became true contemplatives with these reflective walks, and it made us pray for the victims of this pandemic and for all the healthcare professionals who were on the

forefront to fight the disease. We could also pay more attention to nature (my Filipino confrere Bro. Edcel says flowers now seem to have brighter colors than before!) and to the sound of birds, of which at times I felt envious to see them fly while I could not leave the house. We truly tried to realize one of the spiritual works of mercy by praying for both the living and the dead more intensely and to be attentive to ecology. The spacious and well-manicured green garden that soothed our troubled spirits did not make us turn a blind eye to the realities we saw across the street. We empathized with our neighbors whom we saw confined to their tiny balconies with little room to maneuver. It was an invitation for me to always be grateful for so many precious things this religious life offers. Yes, despite the fact that this life has its daily crosses, if you flip the coin, there is an incredible beauty to the other side, namely, less worries to life and a glorious liberty that St. Paul talks about (Rm 8:21). At times it can evoke genuine feelings of guilt, that we live like little “kings” while there is so much suffering



*The coronavirus experience has taught us valuable lessons about our vulnerability and how limited we are to control life's events.*

and misery around us.

It is not easy when you are in confinement for weeks. There can be a lot of internal pressure. Therefore, we had to immerse ourselves in reading and occasional jogging with my young brothers to ease the pressure, and find a new sense of balance and harmony. Reading gave me new perspectives on different dimensions in spirituality and mysticism, counseling, psychology, acupuncture (and other natural therapies) and, oh yes, we also perused a few political biographies! Reading a good book gets you connected with the author like you converse with a dear friend. It makes one wonder how God can inspire a mere mortal to write such delightful insights that resonate and electrify one's heart. These moments of reading, silent reflection, prayer and solitude deepened my understanding on the value of freedom, the genius and the awesomeness of God, and how fragile life can be. Community life has been a force that nurtures and sustains life during this period. When so many people are isolated, for us, we could experience the solidarity and the beauty of having someone to talk to. The conversations at the table were helpful and aided to quell our fears as we recounted statistics of those who died. It was liberating to have a listening ear and I have come to value our brotherhood and friendship in a special way. The communal dimension created imagination where we could think outside the box and even organize an "outing" on Easter Monday, as it is usually the community custom. Not that we broke the

quarantine protocol to go out, but we tried to be ingenious and creative to organize a cookout and music in our garden with the priests from the Belgian College. It refreshed our clouded minds to change the milieu and forget about the coronavirus, albeit for few hours. Eating outside, even for soup that was getting colder, was tastier! Of course, a lady across our compound was not happy to see us gathered that way in a celebratory mood, and she started shouting at us that we were risking our lives by not observing the social distancing. Though she lacked decorum, her concern was understandable. Conversely, we were not perturbed by her rumblings and complaints and continued enjoying our food and l'olio. Indeed, l'olio is an Italian word for "the oil" but in this context it has a different meaning, that of beer or wine as we have come to know from our esteemed cook, Mr. Nicola and his gentle wife Ms. Gabriella. They have been staying with us since the lockdown was put in place, and to the great extent they are a blessing for us and have found their new home here. It has been wonderful to see them tirelessly cook very sumptuous meals for us with such devotion and dedication, and we owe them a word of gratitude. If we are still safe today from COVID-19 that can partly be traced to the fact that we always had nutritious meals, which helped to boost our immunity in one way or another for sure. We also appreciate their leader Mr. Bernado who brought kitchen supplies on daily basis, and he exemplified servant leadership with his humility and readiness to serve and do menial

tasks even like washing pots. Their exuberance and joyful presence were something to reckon with and gave us reason to remain hopeful in the midst of this suffering. The image that will remain imprinted in my mind is when these 3 co-workers joined us to pray “Our Father”, when Pope Francis asked the whole country to do so silently for the victims. For me it was moving to see them interrupting their cooking and kneeling with such profound reverence in chapel for prayer in solidarity. Even when the lockdown will be lifted, I think we will use this new word *l’olio* as something that gladdens a man’s heart (Ps 104:15) and can be like a lubricant that reduces friction in life when shared together in fraternity. Indeed, no man is an island and does not live by bread alone! (Mt 4:4). We are social beings in need of each other and transcendence. At this time, we could also communicate more with our loved ones through WhatsApp calls, which gave us hope that we are not alone. Something that we appreciate was how Brother General tried to put some structure in the life of us, students, allowing us to help with the cleaning and organization of the house. We moved books to the new library and created a space for a new little museum of our Founder, Canon Peter Joseph Triest. As we moved some ancient books and other archives, I had so many thoughts on how each book represented a soul that walked on this earth. They kept their faith and have passed on the light of truth to us and to future generations through their writings. It comforted me to realize that even if half of humanity would

be wiped out due to this pandemic, the future generations will have some traces to know how we lived our Christian and religious life. I had a fleeting warm sensation when I saw all those volumes of spiritual works, that, to some extent, we will continue to exist even if we all died, and I felt connected with all those who have passed away from this world in a new and profound way. It is something I treasure now immensely, on keeping proper documentation of our congregation and other publications related to our faith – not only for us to know and be grateful of the past, but to live the moment fully and look to the future with confidence, just to paraphrase Pope Francis. The past is important as a gift for the future.

The fact that we had something to do in the house, made the experience of living in quarantine less painful as we could channel our frustrations and stress to the house improvements. The same could be said in terms of the cooking that we do every Friday to relieve the cook so that he may have some rest. We also learned some interesting recipes online, which, when we experimented, turned out to be sumptuous delicacies. Of course, the consequence of having delicious meals and not moving a lot in this lockdown has resulted in unintended added weight. Nevertheless, we try to use some humor when we are teased with our protruding “basilicas” – we try to brush off the comments with some lousy explanation that we are not big as such, but it is “the image of God” that is increasing, as we are all made in

His image and likeness! In short, burning my fingers while turning chapatis has helped me to be conscious and more appreciative of the cooks and to discover that cooking can be another way to unlock our hidden gifts and release stress and anger nonviolently and creatively.

As we conclude, we realize that even though the lockdown has eased, we will continue to follow our classes and exams online. The coronavirus experience has taught us valuable lessons about our vulnerability and how limited we are to control life's events. It has been an awakening for us, allowing us to slow down and ponder on the meaning of life. Life is more than our plans, finances and work. It is a realization that whatever we do should flow from being connected with the Divine. Indeed, corona has taught us that being is more important than doing. We continue to be vigilant with the situation since we are not out of the woods yet. The resilience of the Italian people has been rooted in a popular phrase *Andrà tutto bene*, that, despite of this terrible coronavirus experience, the sun will shine again and everything is going to be all right!

*Bro. Venance Kapita*



# Anniversary of the death of Founder Peter Joseph Triest celebrated in Kikwit

*“How can I repay the Lord for all the good done for me? I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.”*

*(Ps 116 :12-13)*

On 24 June, the Peter Joseph Triest Neuropsychiatric Centre in Kikwit celebrated the 184th anniversary of the death of its patron, with the theme: “Peter Joseph Triest: an icon of charity” (cf. the book “Peter Joseph Triest, an icon of charity” by Bro. René Stockman, Editrice Velar).

Every icon invites you to turn more towards the one that is represented in the image. This icon should lead us to the beings themselves, to the saints, and to God Himself. Through Jesus Christ, the true icon of the invisible Father, it appears before the eyes of those who contemplate it as an incessant reminder of God’s presence and as an invitation to imitate the persons who are represented. We have learned much about the life of our Founder during this day, but we can return to the fact that our Founder Peter Joseph Triest had a concern for formation, a concern for professionalism. He dared to link professionalism with charity and saw it as a logical continuation of charity. At the heart of

charity, Triest put service first as the centrepiece of his mission. He emphasized the importance of the quality of service: personal qualities, patience, a pure heart, kindness, and the willingness to go very far in terms of serving others, and so on.

With this in mind, we organized an on-the-job training session from 15 April to 24 June on common pathologies encountered in the field of mental health. This training course offered a certificate of participation with educational support.

At the end of this course, we found that the nurses of the Peter Joseph Triest Neuropsychiatric Centre in Kikwit have learned many things that will enable them to broaden their knowledge in order to properly care for neuropsychiatric patients.

There is still a lack of awareness of mental health care in our communities, and even in our country, the Democratic Republic of



Congo; hence the need to train medical teams to raise awareness of mental health among the population. This course was a response to Father Peter Joseph Triest's demand for service.

Today he is sending us on a medical missionary journey and will sum up his mission in three words: "example, teaching, and service". For him, service deserves our attention, he said: "I owe you my vigils, my care..." Thus, by analogy, good nurses are those who sacrifice themselves for their patients without rest, sacrificing themselves with their lives. Peter Joseph Triest faithfully carried out this mission in renewed ways, and his teaching was always marked by authenticity, steeped in service to the poor. This is an invitation as we contemplate his icon today for our time.

May his example, his teaching, and his service be the driving force of our commitment as "religious" and "collaborators" towards a healthy Centre.

*Bro. Bernard Ntambwe*

**BELGIUM**

## **IICT Graduation**

On June 17th the twelve students of the Social Doctrine of the Church program at the International Institute Canon Triest (IICT) were proclaimed master or expert by the Pontifical

Lateran University (PUL). Five of them belong to our congregation. The proclamation followed the defense of the theses. These were judged by Bro. Dr. René Stockman, Superior General, and Prof. dr. Dr. Mgr. Gaetano de Simone, representative of the PUL. Some theses were of excellent quality. One student, Sr. Marie Médiatrice, achieved the maximum number of points.

The thesis is a crucial ingredient of the course, in which a lot of material that is provided in all subjects, supplemented by personal research under the supervision of a promoter, comes together. In consultation with the staff, each student establishes a theme that is a current problem in the region from which he or she originates. This can range from evangelisation, religious education, marital problems to drugs, war, child labour, human trafficking. Then the student investigates the way this is being remedied by government, NGOs and



the Church. This is then compared to what the Social Doctrine of the Church prescribes in that area. Finally, based on the comparison, the student formulates a conclusion in the form of recommendations. With this instrument, the student can practically start working on return. A large part of the practical, pastoral relevance of the study program can therefore be measured by the thesis.

A graduation ceremony, in the presence of Pr. Jeroom Heyndrickx of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, completed a two-year course. During this time, the students took thirty courses, wrote papers and took exams. In the meantime they shared community life in the monastery in Moerzeke.

This summer, the students will return to their home countries in Africa or Asia.

In September we expect the first students of the new class. It will undoubtedly be fascinating for everyone involved.

## INDONESIA

# Religious vows and promise in Indonesia

On July 3th in Purworejo, Bro. Antonius Nelson Sembiring professed his perpetual vows, while Bro. Ferdinandus Sifriardus Harun celebrated his silver jubilee as a Brother of Charity. Bro. Yohanes Maria Vianney professed his first vows,

Bro. Joshua Vendelinus Sua renewed his vows, and Miss Benedicta Sri Setiati renewed her promise as an Associate Member.

To prepare our brothers for their pivotal moment of making their religious vows, the region organized a week's retreat. From June 26th till July 1st, the retreat was organized in the St. Yohanes Bosco Community of Wonosobo, and led by our Superior Provincial of Asia-Oceania, Brother Adrianus Bambang Hartotanojo.

Because of the measures to prevent COVID-19, the solemn celebration at the Chapel of the St. Boniface Community of Purworejo could have a maximum of 50 people present and with the presence of health inspectors for temperature screening. Bro. Martin De Porres received the professions.



# General Administration

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the planned General Council could not proceed normally during the week of 23 March 2020, but thanks to technology, we managed to meet daily on Skype and Zoom, and we even extended the planned meeting time with regular Skype meetings for urgent items on the agenda. Of course, our attention and concern went to the situation in the Congregation: brothers, staff and co-workers, patients, residents, students... all who were confronted with the coronavirus. At the end of April, there were the floods in the Kivu region of Congo which especially hit our house and our project in Uvira and for which we looked for solutions together with the regional superior.

The following is an overview of a number of agenda items.

- Thorough consideration was given to the meeting with the Belgian region, which took place in January 2020 and of which a final report with concerns was sent by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. The general assistants covered a number of points for follow-up.
- Specific follow-up was given to the decision of our November meeting last year with the preparation of the strategic committee. To this end, Mr. Willem Duron was brought in to act as an external consultant and the first meetings

were planned with him.

- The commission that will take charge of the adaptation of the Constitutions and the General Directorium was formed under the direction of Bro. Jean-Marie Mukonkole, Vicar General. Preparatory work was carried out by him and Patrick De Pooter, PhD, with the consultation of a Dominican canonist.
- After local consultation, Bro. Waseem Khan was appointed District Superior of Pakistan. He will hold this position under the direct supervision of the provincial superior.
- Authorization was granted to close the community of Saint Victor in Turnhout, Belgium.
- A special meeting was held to discuss the letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which stated that, from now on, our psychiatric centres in Belgium will lose the designation 'Catholic' because of their refusal to conform to the teachings of the Catholic Church concerning absolute respect for life. This means that we can no longer consider these institutions as belonging to the Congregation. Further consultations will be held with the Belgian region and the Brothers of Charity organization concerning the concrete follow-up and implementation of the decree.
- At his request, Bro. Constantino Chisi (Saint Paul Region, Lusaka) was granted a dispensation of his vows, which was accepted by the Holy See.

- The following brothers were granted permission to profess their perpetual vows:
  - Saint Dominic Region, Tanzania:
    - » Bro. Charles Kawila Salima
    - » Bro. John Samuel Magambani
    - » Bro. Marius Mande
    - » Bro. Don Thaddée Kibeka
    - » Bro. David Evariste Kazadi
    - » Bro. Jean de Dieu Niyomugabo
  - Our Lady of Africa Region, Congo:
    - » Bro. Henri Ngoyi
    - » Bro. Yves Masasa
    - » Bro. Jean Yves Mandefo
  - Our Lady of Loreto Region, Congo:
    - » Bro. Privat Olivier Sepamio
    - » Bro. Jean Louis Mukonkole
  - Saint Francis Xavier Region, Rwanda:
    - » Bro. Felix Uwimana Baho
- The seat of the Provincialate of Asia was transferred to Wonosobo in Indonesia and the seat of the Provincialate of Europe to the Formation House in Moerzeke, Belgium.



## **Mrs. Perpétue Mangaza († 2020)**

Mrs. Perpétue Mangaza was married to Mr. Georges Mudimbi, both associate members of Kinshasa. She became an associate member in 2011. She worked at the National Biomedical Research Institute (INRB) in Kinshasa as Managing Director. But above all, she was a responsible mother who educated 15 academics, and religiously married 12 couples. She had a humble and quietly active nature. Some of the Christian values she embodied were: generosity, spiritual devotion, love, service, sharing, and faith. She had an active



faith to the point that everyone who asked her for help received it. She was very attentive and sensitive to the needs of others and ready to offer solutions.

Many people have testified to her generosity in providing medical assistance while on duty. Her service colleagues recognized her as a humble and wise woman who provided answers or acted as an intermediary with the Director to find solutions. She was also an enterprising woman.

As an associate member, she did her best to assist the group of associate members in Kinshasa not to miss out on meetings or other group activities.

Her husband, Mr. Georges, testified to her nature as a woman who would calm him down in many difficult situations, because she knew how to simplify life and find answers in silence and gentleness.

# Promise Renewal

On May 26th, Sr. Teresa Wang Qingfen renewed her promise as an associate member of the Brothers of Charity in China for a three-year term. Bro. James Wang represented the community in China and was a witness.



# Brother Gaston Briers

## 1939-2020

For many years, Bro. Gaston was involved in the formation of young people who showed an interest in the Congregation and dreamed of becoming brothers themselves. After his military service and further studies at the normal school in Sint-Niklaas, Bro. Gaston was ready to teach at the juniorate in Sint-Michiels, Bruges in



1963. There, he became a class teacher of the sixth years and a teacher of Dutch and history. He combined teaching with the supervision of the boarding school and the support of young people. There was a special atmosphere in the juniorate in Sint-Michiels, because everything was in the hands of the brothers. It was a close community with enthusiastic confreres who really lived up to what they taught.

When the school could no longer exist independently and was connected to the grammar school of Zwijnaarde, Bro. Gaston left for Essen to teach there for two years. But when this convent was also closed, Bro. Gaston moved again, and for 12 years he would become a vocation animator for the Limburg region.

With his sociable nature, his fresh face, his sense of humour, and his cheerful character, Bro. Gaston was very well suited to introduce the Congregation in the schools of Limburg. At the same time, he was a supervisor at the school of Leopoldsburg. After a short transfer to the formation boarding school in Zwijnaarde, Bro. Gaston became vice-director of the Sint-Jozefinstituut also in Zwijnaarde in 1986, truly new ground for our brother. But these were instructive years and a good preparation to go to Brussels in 1991 to become superior of the community and bursar of the institute.

The longest period was in Lummen, where he arrived in 1996 as logistics director and where he would stay and volunteer after his retirement. Meanwhile, Bro. Gaston had health problems, but each time he managed to overcome them and

kept his cheerful character. His room became his chapel, about which he regularly wrote a lively reflection in the in-house periodical “Helpende Handen” (Helping Hands).

Because of his increased need for help, Bro. Gaston spent the last few months in our convent rest home Saint John’s in Zelzate, where he died on 29 April.

From Bro. Gaston, we preserve the memory of a happy brother, open to his confreres, compassionate to many, and concerned for the welfare of others. In his final years, he courageously showed how he dealt with his suffering. No, he did not want to be a burden to others. On the contrary, these were years of inner deepening, of contemplative growth, and he did not shy away from telling us about it in all simplicity.

His longing for God, on which his whole life was focused, has now reached its completion and fulfilment. He is now fully a brother in the love of God.

## **Brother Maurice**

## **Mortelmans**

**1932-2020**

To meet Brother Maurice Mortelmans was to experience culture, to listen to music, and to taste the pride of ‘his’ Antwerp. As a young brother, he would teach one year in Sint-

Michiels, Bruges and then perform a two-year service to his country, which he fortunately was able to combine with his studies at the teacher training school, which he finished in 1956 as a teacher of Germanic languages. Distinction and punctuality were his great qualities, which he wanted to pass on to young people as important virtues and, above all, live up to them. He did so in Brakel, in Aalter, in Turnhout, and in Leopoldsburg. It was thirty years of further study, becoming proficient in music and literature, and



this for the benefit of the Flemish youngsters. None of them would soon forget their brother and the way he articulated and taught them music. In 1986, he came to Ghent for a few years as a supervisor at the grammar school and as a helper at the juniorate. But he still had a hidden dream: to become a missionary. In 1989, he was allowed to realize his dream and went to South Africa to teach at our Pax College in Pietersburg. What a change for our brother who had to leave a lot behind in terms of his own culture, but at the same time he was fascinated by the many new discoveries he made. And again we see a choir being formed and an actual xylophone music band. The performances had to be perfect, no note would be missed or sound off. Eleven years with great dedication, and always with the same punctuality he taught the youngsters at Pax, and he led his brothers in the community as superior. Full days, and knowing Bro. Maurice, it was never a job half done. He also took care of the paperwork of the boarding school, and again all the numbers had to be correct down to the decimal point.

In 2000, he was really tired and asked to return to Belgium. Would it be resting or looking forward to a new ministry in service? In the end, it was Kruike where he accompanied the young brothers in the scholasticate. He was their English tutor and he corrected so many theses or even partially wrote some himself. For every spelling mistake, he grumbled. In the beginning, to the young brothers' fear, but afterwards, it became more of a game in which he brought

colour to the community. Again, he took care of the singing in the parish, and when it was off-key, he could barely hide his vexation. Bro. Waldebert knows all about that.

After Kruibeke, he was allowed to go to Sint-Job-in-'t-Goor, where he was close to 'his' Antwerp, to where he commuted every now and then, for a short visit to his family or a cultural excursion.

In the last two years, his health noticeably declined and he suffered from severe dementia. He was transferred to our convent rest home Saint John's in Zelzate where, in the care of the nurses, he died peacefully on 29 April.

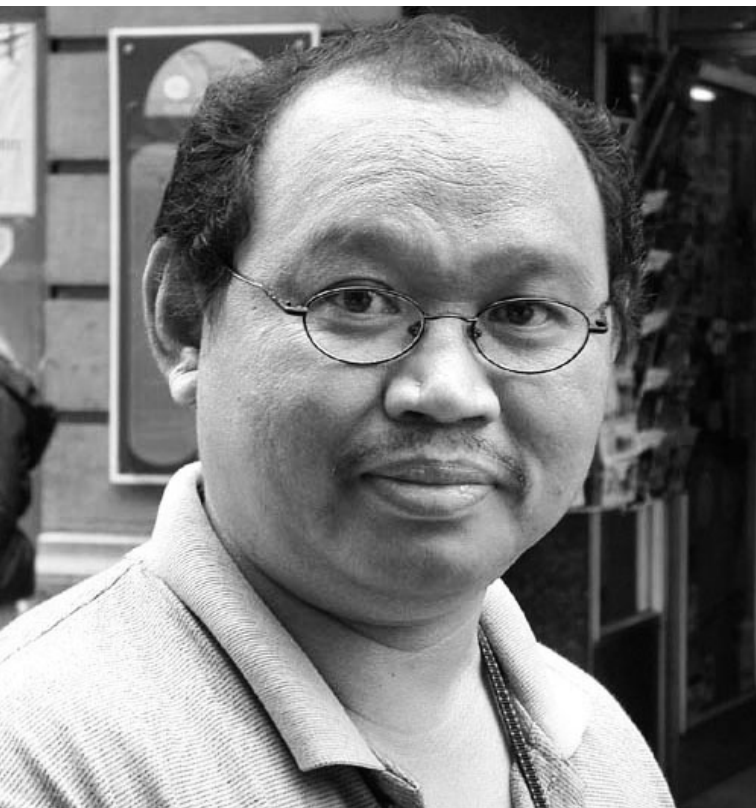
Brother Maurice was an authentic brother, who knew how to say a lot with few words. His punctuality was proverbial, and while he came across as somewhat distant at first, once he found a common theme of conversation, he opened his heart without reserve and showed who he really was: a loving confrere who had devoted his life to his Congregation. He may now sing and praise the Lord for all eternity and never again will a note be out of tune.

## **Brother Marcellinus Putrosumarto 1960-2020**

Brother Marcellinus Mulargono Petrus Damianus Putrosumarto, whom we are familiarly called Brother Marcell, was born in Cilacap Regency

of Central Java on February 12, 1960; the 9th child of 10 siblings. After completing his Teacher Education School in 1981, he entered Semarang Diocese Minor Seminary and then continued for sometimes to Yogyakarta Major Seminary until 1984 as an OMI Seminarian. A unique way of life with beautiful twists and turns, led him to respond God's Call for Consecrated Life by becoming a Brother, and the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity is his final choice.

Brother Marcell began his Postulancy in 1986 under their Master, Brother Joachim Yosef Widyajuwana, who are still kicking and alive till to the present day at the age of 82. Brother

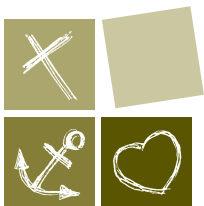


Marcell and his group made the First Profession in 1988, Perpetual Vows in 1994, and then Silver Jubilee in 2013.

The Congregation placed him living and serving in several communities. As his education background, He began serving in Purwokerto Bruderan Schools; and then enhancing further studies and lived in St. Paul Community of Yogyakarta. After graduating from Special Education Teacher, Brother Marcell carried out missionary work as among the first group of Indonesia Brothers in Tabora, Tanzania.

Upon returning from Tanzania, he completed his study for the advance level of Special Education in February 2000. He served for some years in Purworejo before was appointed to become the Director of Don Bosco Residential School for Students with Deafness and also Chairman of Karya Bakti Foundation. He served the congregation as Superior Regional from 2012 till 2018. On June 24th 2019, he received the appointment letter and moved to St. Laurentius Community of Borowetan. He served as the Director of Karya Bakti Residential School for Students with Learning Disabilities and Autism. Brother Marcell is a type of pretty taciturn persona. Among so many of his life-qualities, making sure both national and aboard guests feel comfortable and welcomed is his profound value. Dawn before the universe illuminating the mother earth with light on July 13th 2020, Brother Marcellinus passed away. God completing the Good Work He began in him.





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