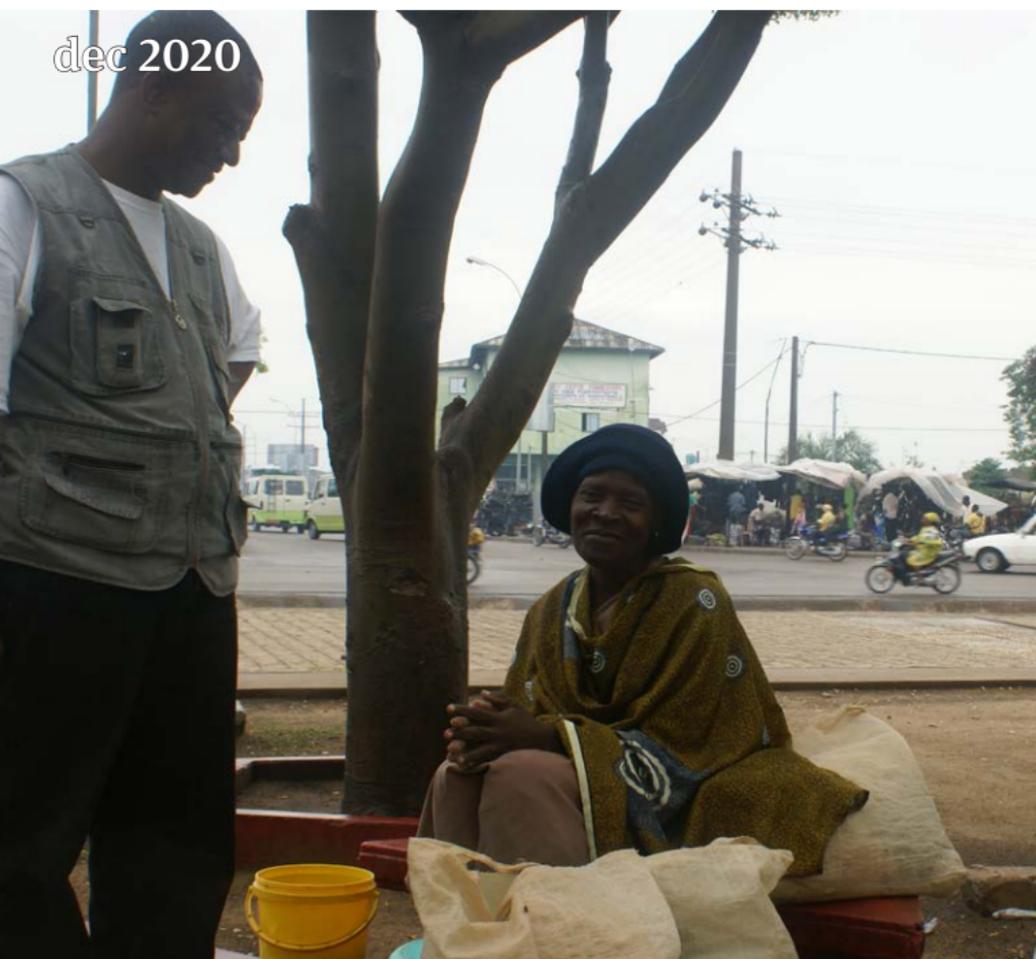




DEUS CARITAS EST magazine

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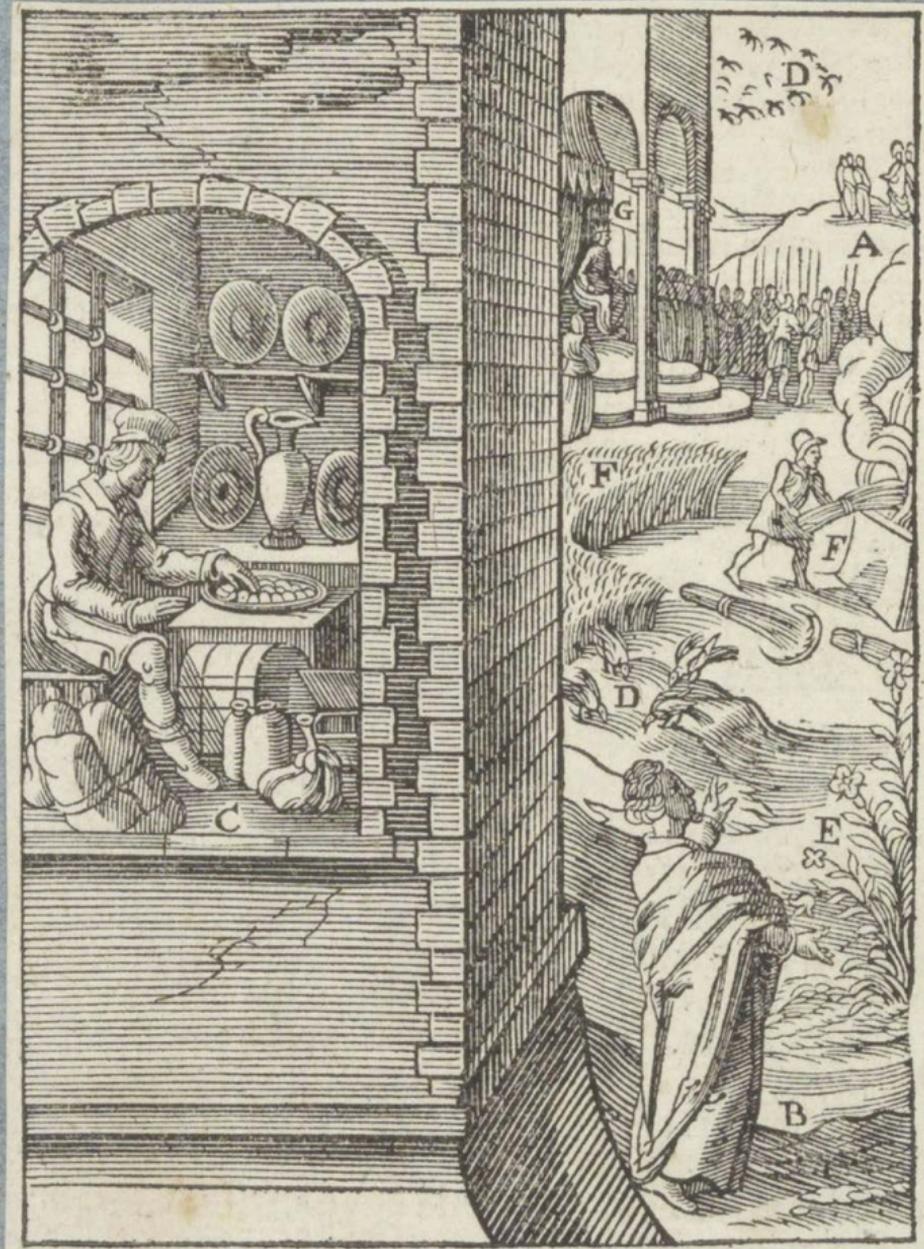
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God or mammon

“**Y**ou cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt 6:24). Very few things are so clearly put in opposition to God other than mammon, wealth. Is this not a bit of an exaggeration? Is wealth or money truly God’s greatest competitor? We can at least find it a shocking statement, for which many today will shrug their shoulders in indifference. For only money is what counts with them, and they have long buried and forgotten God. One can only be someone’s competitor if one is on somewhat equal footing, or if one has the opportunity to disadvantage the other or even make them go away. A large entrepreneur will not feel like he is competing with a small retailer, but it might be the case the other way around. For the latter may see his small business go under because of the larger entrepreneur’s urge to expand.

Surely one cannot live on fresh air, is what I can already hear some people saying. Let us be realistic and not bury our heads in the sand. Scripture says that anyone who wants to build a house must first draw up a budget. So financial options and consequences have to be taken into account when one wants to do something. Even recent Church documents have stressed the importance of sound and transparent financial management, and serious efforts have been made in recent years in the Vatican as well to



make financial management more transparent. The Church cannot afford to be concerned only with the spiritual and thereby neglect the temporal. Even its global commitment to caring for the poor and the sick and its fight for a world where there is more justice and a healthier environment requires money. Without financial resources, one can only dream of commitment to the least and only powerlessness will strike. So, let us see money as a necessary means to achieve even our noblest goals.

And yet that penetrating word of Jesus sounds: “You cannot serve God and mammon.” So, there is something amiss. It is, of course, about the word “serve”, which was not just added at random. Who or what do we want to be the servant of, in whose service do we want to be? Who or what is the ultimate goal in our lives, God or money? And where does our heart go, to God or to money? So, we are called upon to make a clear choice, because apparently the danger is that money can supplant God and even create the illusion that it can replace God. It is about where we look for security in this life. In God or in money? The entire Gospel is constantly inviting us to put our trust in God, and to do so out of a strong belief that God cares about man and does not abandon him. We all know the colourful story of the storm on the Sea of Galilee while Jesus is sleeping peacefully in the stern of the boat. The Apostles are terrified, so they wake Jesus and shout: “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” (Mt 8:25). He calms the storm but immediately offers them a lesson: “Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?” (Mt 8:26). We can give several other examples from Scripture where the Apostles are told that they have too little faith in the power of God in their lives and rely too much on their own strength and commitment alone. That being overly anxious for tomorrow and for the days to come is also very much ingrained in us. Conversely, the word of Jesus says: “Do not worry about your life and what you will eat, or about your body and what you will wear” (Lk 12:22). And further on: “Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money

bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” (Lk 12:33-34).

“For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” Where does our heart lie? With God or with money? That is the penetrating question that is raised here. It is the question we must dare to answer in all honesty. It is a hierarchy of values on which we build our lives with the question of who or what is most important. And then we come back to Jesus’ stern remark: “You cannot serve God and mammon.” It is one or the other. Why? Because the desire to possess is one of the three great passions we are constantly confronted with as human beings. Precisely because it is a passion, it has an overwhelming quality and a tendency to want to take hold of us completely. When even Jesus was confronted with these passions and was tested by Satan in the desert, the first passion was that of possession that sounded in the invitation to turn stones into bread to satisfy his physical hunger. But we know Jesus’ reply: “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). Again,



For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

possession is quite radically contrasted with every word that comes forth from the mouth of God, with God Himself. Satan uses this passion with Jesus as a gateway in an attempt to divert him from his calling and in the vain hope of gaining control over him. He will then attempt to take hold of Jesus through the passions of pleasure and power. These are the big three with which we can and want to build our lives in a positive and passionate way on the one hand, but with which we are constantly confronted by the overwhelming way in which they are trying to get a hold of us and take us in completely. There is a constant danger of becoming slaves to what we possess, what we enjoy, and what we want to control because of our desire for power. That is precisely the path along which evil, and I deliberately call it Satan, tries to take hold of us. His great aim is to settle in our hearts and drive out God. There is no place in our hearts for both God and Satan. If we choose Satan through our addiction to our passions, we close our hearts to God. "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." When our treasure becomes our possession, mammon, then our whole heart will go there, and God will be pushed out of our lives. For, through money as a means of seduction, Satan comes to take possession of our hearts. This brings us a little closer to the starting point formulated by Jesus in his exhortation. Money, mammon, seems to be God's great competitor, because through money Satan himself takes possession of us. Money is indeed God's, and therefore man's, worst enemy, because it replaces God or gives the impression of being able to

replace God. It is an anti-God because it builds an alternative world in which God disappears completely and in which the divine virtues of faith, hope, and love are hit hard. One believes only in the power of money, one hopes to have more and more money, and one loves money above all else. When Scripture says “All things are possible for God” (Mk 10:27), the world says “All things are possible with money”. Karl Marx said that money made him who he was. So man makes himself with money. My power is directly proportional to the money I have. Shakespeare called gold the visible god.



Money also makes man proud and makes him think he is superior to others because of what he owns more. He becomes the untouchable, and money becomes his great defender, even when corruption gradually creeps into his life and, after a certain period of time, begins to determine his actions. In the wake of pride, envy follows, of course, the constant suspicion of the other

person as to whether they have more. And from this we see the rise of the arrogance with which people deal with each other when it comes to money. All the rules of mutual human respect and honesty have to give way, people even kill for it.

It is a sad story, both on a purely human and spiritual level. Man, because of his exaggerated desire for money, loses his humanity, especially his humanity, and what is worse, he breaks off his relationship with God. Money folds man back into a sterile individualism, only paying attention to his own little world and his own future. One forgets that what one owns more is actually at the expense of those who have to make do with much less. The only remedy is to use the money one has in an honest and generous way and not to reserve it exclusively for one's own pleasure and security. So, we are not saying to renounce money, but we are saying to make sure that money does not become number one in life. Make sure you have enough to live well and use it to build your life and the world around you and make it better. That is the path of austerity. Perhaps we can all learn something from Paul's exhortation to Timothy if Jesus' statement to sell everything and hand it out to the poor sounds too radical and impelling to us. Paul gives the following wise advice: "Tell the rich in the present age not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth but rather on God, who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, thus

accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life” (1 Tm 6:17-19).

In addition to the human aspect that is profoundly disturbed by this insatiable desire for mammon, there is, of course, the even more important spiritual aspect. Money displaces God in our lives, and is it not this that we find regrettable in a world marked by ever-increasing secularism? No, we should not go back to a time when we see God as a kind of *deus machina est*, who will solve everything that we cannot do ourselves. However, we are invited to give God the place he deserves in our lives: as the One who created us, as the One who gave us life, as the One who wants to give us his love and ultimately accept us into his love, forever. We urgently need to learn to walk with God at our side again, to walk with Providence, which does not in any way eliminate our human effort, but which does relieve it of the anxiety of thinking that we should make it all happen on our own. What inner peace is granted to us when we believe that God carries us and that he will never abandon us. This inner peace will never be given to us by Satan with his illusion that we can secure our lives with money. But in the meantime, many have lost God in their lives, and have given free space to Satan through mammon. Truly sad. Let us be wiser and not take this path of death. ¶

Bro. René Stockman



Kigoma Training College: the answer for many poor young people

It was the year 2000 when the Brothers of Charity in Kigoma, Tanzania came up with the brilliant idea of tackling the education problem for many refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Many young refugees missed education as the result of running away from their own country. The Brothers of Charity in Tanzania started teaching social work in collaboration with the Belgian government. Thanks to Brothers of Charity, many young refugees received a good education that is useful to them, to society and to entire world.

Inclusive education for refugees and Tanzanians

In the beginning of 2002, the Brothers of Charity in Tanzania saw the great need for the Tanzanian young people for further education (vocational education), hence the need for education for all began. The Brothers of Charity had to meet with government officials in order to follow the proper procedure and get approval, in order to provide the same education that will be suitable for both refugees and Tanzanians. Things went well until the year 2005, when the College, formerly the Newman Institute of Social Work, got its Accreditation from the Government.

Evolution of the College

The College started with a social work program from the beginning of its establishment due to the needs of that time. Then came the time when there was a high demand for other programs. We received many requests from the friends of Brothers of Charity in Tanzania. In 2016, we added a new program for teachers. The program was to prepare teachers who will be working in government and private sectors as teachers in primary and secondary education in Tanzania. The program went well as we managed to recruit thirty students.

In the beginning of 2017, we thought to add more programs as the needs came to us. We added Community Development, Law, Nursing and Midwifery. We thank Superior General Bro. Stockman with Fracarita International for the strong assistance to enable all these programs to start. These three programs seemed to be in demand for many people in Kigoma Region.



As it is known, Kigoma Region is amongst the regions in which society is confronted with great poverty and so there is a huge demand, which deserves special attention, for education and health programs. Young people should not need to travel to other regions like Tabora 450 km away, with traveling cost. So, by having these programs, it helps many poor young persons to get good education within the Kigoma area.

Special Study Fund

The management of Kigoma Training College, with good collaboration with the Brothers, has a study fund for students who come from very poor families who cannot manage to pay tuition fees. The Brothers of Charity have been helping many young Tanzanians to get an education at the Kigoma Training College. The program to find out who is in great need is done via the request form and a letter to the coordinator of Maendeleo Youth Center. When the coordinator and his team find a suitable student, then the payment is done to the College bank account. Thanks to the Brothers of Charity, especially Fracarita International for their special attention for many poor young people in Tanzania.



The Brothers are really helping a lot as the tuition fee at Kigoma Training college is affordable for poor people like us.

Since the beginning of 2019, there has been a great demand for Pharmaceutical and Clinical Medicine. We received many applications from the management in the region, from young people who want to study Clinical Medicine and Pharmacy. We thought that, as Brothers of Charity, we need to see how to meet the new needs according to our capacity. So, the management thought it better to establish two more programs of Clinical Medicine and Pharmacy. This will help both the Congregation and all of society.

Generally, we at Kigoma Training College, under the Brothers of Charity, are trying to meet the new needs of our time and our environment. We hope that, when the construction of the compounding laboratory will be ready, we can start the new program by October 2020. 🙏

Bro. Louis Timoth Kusaya

Testimonies from students at Kigoma Training College

“My name is Median Tilas Japhet. I was born on 26 June 1998 in Kigoma Region in Tanzania. I am the first born among six children. I finished my studies in 2015 and passed well. Now I am studying at Kigoma Training College under



the Brothers of Charity. I thank God and the Brothers of Charity because, according to my family, I could not get any money to pay for tuition fees. I am now studying Nursing and Midwifery, which will make me new, and many people will get good health service from me. I hope to help my parents and my young sisters and brothers. Special thanks to Brothers of Charity, may God bless you.”

Median Tilas

Nursing and Midwifery

“My name is John Peter. I am a student at Kigoma Training College. I am studying for a diploma



in Social Work. I come from a poor family and I thank the Brothers of Charity for helping me to study. I do believe that this education is a gift that I am getting for free from people of good will, the Brothers. I also

promise to help others in the future. As a social worker, I will make sure that my community is well with good service. Thank you, Brothers of Charity. Thank you, Kigoma Training College for this special assistance.”

John Peter

Social Work

“My name is Yona Sadock. I am a former student of Kigoma Training College. I took my studies

from 2015 until 2019,
from a certificate to a
diploma in Social Work.
I thank God that I got
this education from
Kigoma Training College,
the college owned by
Brothers of Charity.



The Brothers are really
helping a lot as the tuition fee at Kigoma Training
College is affordable for poor people like us. Now
I am working with an NGO in Urambo, Tabora in
Tanzania.”

Yona Sadock
Social Work



A little piece of history from Rome

The Generalate of the Brothers of Charity. It feels as if it has always been there. But nothing could be further from the truth. Until 1967, our Generalate was based in the Stropstraat in Ghent, which then became the Provincialate of the Belgian Province.

During the first session of the 1964 General Chapter, which took place from 15 April to 23 May, i.e. during the Second Vatican Council, a great deal of time was devoted to starting the revision of our Constitutions in line with the renewal to which all religious communities were called. At the same time, the question to the pontifical congregations to establish their generalates in Rome was addressed. As arguments we read in the conclusions of this first session that it is indeed important to have a 'supranational' generalate, no longer linked to a province, and with the opportunity to be close to the departments of the Vatican and to establish an international scholasticate there, as well. Bro. Evan Dion, General Assistant at the time, was commissioned to take on the project. He did not waste any time, and in September he went to Rome where he was a guest of Fr. Jean Beyer S.J., canonist at the Gregoriana and advisor to the Brothers of Charity for the drafting of their Constitutions. Meanwhile, contacts had already



been made with a number of congregations to see if there were any possibilities to purchase an existing building or to acquire a plot of land.

The list of sites to visit included the Daughters of Calvary, a French secular institute that had its generalate on Via Momentana and was leaving it. But Bro. Evan considered the location on this busy street to be anything but ideal, and the asking price also seemed quite high. The Scheut Missionaries had just started the expansion of their generalate and there was still land available, but it seemed insufficient. A visit was also made to the Trappists of Tre Fontane, but there they heard that a large part would be expropriated. Eventually, they ended up at the Brothers of the Christian Schools on Via Aurelia. They had just sold part of their large garden to the Sisters of Saint John the Baptist who also wanted to establish their generalate there with a private hospital, Villa Benedetta. But they still found their garden big enough to sell another part of it. Negotiations led to an agreement for

the purchase of 1.2 ha at the price of 24 million Belgian francs. The purchase was finalized on 11 October 1964.

Bro. Evan had taken a first important step in the realization of the project. As a follow-up, he was asked to settle in Rome for the time being, with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who were happy to offer him their hospitality. He would become the first legal representative with the Generalate of the Brothers of Charity as his address. Bro. Evan had experience in building, and immediately went to work to draw up the first plan. At first, he thought of two communities: the General Administration with the necessary functionaries and the scholasticate. At first, he even thought of two chapels, but this was rejected by the General Administration, and in the end one larger, separately built chapel was chosen which would be used by both communities. New liturgical guidelines providing for the possibility of concelebration were immediately taken into account, and so a large altar with space around it for concelebrating with several priests was chosen. This was totally new at the time. In addition, accommodation had to be provided for the resident chaplain, and it was to be located within the building itself, but near the entrance. As an architect, the Brothers of the Christian Schools recommended Fausto Passarelli, and the first designs were approved on 20 May 1965. In his diary, Bro. Evan mentions that on 9 February there was heavy snowfall in Rome, which he described as exceptional. As a Canadian,

however, he was used to heavy snow in winter.

On 6 August, the plans were approved by the city of Rome and the details could be fleshed out. Bro. Evan was lucky enough to attend the last session of the Vatican Council on 7 December 1965 when the excommunications with the Orthodox were lifted. In the meantime, he was already well integrated in Rome.

On 3 March 1966, the choice of contractor was made. It was Giorgio Cardì who could offer the best terms. On 22 March, the laying of the foundations was started with the cutting of the first sod. The decision was made to put the building on the street side in order to have a nice enclosed garden at the back. This was a felicitous decision. With the detached and protruding chapel, the building would very clearly have a religious character. The existing cypresses at the edge of the property were preserved, as well as part of the path with the old mulberry trees, which, before the sisters started their building, extended into the street.



With the detached and protruding chapel, the building would clearly have a religious character.

Meanwhile, Bro. Evan was busy getting the proposed Constitutions, which were drafted

during the second session of the Chapter, which lasted from 28 September to 30 October, approved by the Congregation for Consecrated Life. He would spend many hours with Fr. Beyer and the staff of the Congregation, because immediate approval was apparently not possible, as some thought that the new proposal was a bit too new, while others did not think it was new enough. But in the end, it would be accepted as an experiment on 14 June 1966 on condition that a more definitive version would be drawn up by the next General Chapter. It became the well-known red booklet.

Apparently, there was a lot of debate about the design of the chapel, because the architect had no experience with the new liturgical regulations. To be sure, the proposal to put the tabernacle on the altar and to fit it with two small doors to allow for adoration was submitted to the Vicariate of Rome, which approved it on 21 June 1967. On 31 August 1967, the building was completed and the finishing touches to the site and the purchase of furniture could begin. The bursar stated that the whole project, including the land, had cost 43 million Belgian francs.

Meanwhile, things were moving in the Congregation, because on 1 May 1967, Bro. Koenraad, who was completely overworked, had offered his resignation as Superior General and so a special General Chapter had to be convened, which elected Bro. Agnel as the new Superior General with a whole new team as General Council. It felt like an earthquake within

the Congregation! This would be the group that would be the first to come to Rome.

When the altar was put in, they dropped the large slab of marble and had to look for a new one. In order not to waste any time, they opted for a slab that was available but smaller than originally planned. For those who think that our altar is too big now, it may comfort them to know that the first version was even bigger! With the altar in place on 7 September, Bro. Evan could not wait to move into the house, and on 20 September he was able to sign in as the first occupant. He was the one who had commissioned the building and now he became superior, bursar, and he combined it with his position as procurator of the Congregation. On 23 October, the first brothers arrived: Brother Martial as brother cook and Brother Ludardus to help around the house. But the latter had



trouble getting used to the situation and would leave for the Netherlands a few months later. On 7 and 9 November, the members of the General Administration arrived: Bros. Aubert, Amedée, More, and Orest on the 7th and Bros. Agnel, Waldebert, and Jules on 9 November. The next day, they celebrated the Eucharist for the first time in the brand new chapel. On 16 November, Bro. Evan was officially installed as superior. The blessing of the new house was planned on 18 January 1968 and was to be done by the Dutch-Belgian Mgr. Van Lierde, Augustinian and Vicar General of His Holiness for Vatican City and also Sacristan of the Apostolic Palace. On 21 March, the neighbouring hospital of the Sisters, Villa Benedetta, was also to be blessed.

The first months were not easy for the brothers who were there, because there was still a lot that needed to be organized and arranged, and the vision of the businesslike Bro. Evan was not always in line with the vision of the more art-loving Superior General Bro. Agnel. On 25 September 1965, Mgr. Anné came to live with the brothers as chaplain and on 12 February 1969 the previous Superior General Bro. Koenraad joined the group, as well. As the first major event, we should mention the second session of the General Chapter, which was opened in the new house on 3 April 1969, again with the revision of the Constitutions as the central theme. Following this Chapter, a committee would do the great work of editing the Constitutions as we know them now under the leadership of the then Vicar General Bro. Waldebert and together with Fr.

Werner Quintens, Mrs. Mieke Roosen, and Bro. Arcadius.

In September 1969, a request was made by the Brothers of the Holy Family whether they could stay at our Generalate temporarily until they were able find a suitable place for their generalate in Rome. This was granted and at the beginning of 1970 they became co-residents of our house until mid-1972. In the meantime, the projects around the house were finished: the landscaping was done and the internal paths were asphalted. Also in 1970, rooms were rented out to a Mr. Stringer of the Loyola University of Chicago who was trying to establish a school for children of diplomats. The school would never come to fruition. There were enough classrooms, because in the early years not much came of the planned scholasticate. As a result, the General Chapter of the Brothers of the Holy Family could be held in our house. The large hall at the end of the corridor, now occupied by the Belgian College, served as a chapter room and was entered as such in the plans.

Talking about the Belgian College, let us jump to February 1972, when the Bishop of Bruges, Mgr. De Smedt, together with the then Rector of the Belgian College, Mgr. Prignon, asked the brothers whether they saw the possibility of offering accommodation to the priests-students who were studying in Rome. In the meantime, the outdated Belgian College on the Quirinal had been sold and new accommodation was sought. An agreement was made to rent out part of the

building to the Belgian Bishops' Conference and in July they started the relocation of the college, while the first priests-students arrived at the end of September as well as the sisters who would help in the kitchen. Meanwhile, the already well-known Werner Quintens was the new rector of the college and from August onwards, canonist Mgr. Onclin also became a quasi-permanent resident of the house as he had been appointed to the Vatican commission tasked with drafting the Code of Canon Law. This is how the scholasticate got started, not with our own brothers, but with priests from Belgian dioceses. Rooms were rearranged and proper agreements were reached, which are still in force today.

In January 1973, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, that is to say, the Italian province, sold another plot of land next to ours to a group from Luxembourg without any clear agreements. A few years later, a sports hotel was to be built there, far too high in accordance with the regulations of the city of Rome. The Italian mafia was involved yet again. It would cause a lot of noise pollution for several years until it was finally closed down and taken over by the city, which established its own offices there.

This concludes our story about the early days of our Generalate in Rome. Bro. Evan meticulously kept a diary that contains no less than 229 typed pages and gave us the opportunity to reconstruct this early period. He was also a man who liked to take pictures and so we found a few of this early beginning. With the stories we heard

from Bro. Waldebert and Bro. Jules as the first residents, we were able to paint a fairly accurate picture of the origins of the Generalate of the Brothers of Charity that chose Saint Vincent de Paul as its patron saint and whose statue was placed near the entrance in 2004. But that was much later than this early period. In 2017, the fiftieth anniversary was marked by placing a commemorative plaque at the entrance. ¶



Bro. René Stockman



Carlo Acutis: a new Blessed

Although beatifications are not uncommon, the beatification of Carlo Acutis on 10 October 2020 is special for a number of reasons.

He is a 15-year-old boy from Milan who died on 12 October 2006 following a short illness. So, this is an extremely quick beatification! The process was started in 2013 and the diocesan phase was concluded after three years already. Carlo was proclaimed 'Venerable' on 5 July 2018, and with a miracle that took place in Brazil on 12 October 2013, just seven years after Carlo's death, the way to beatification was open. Even more special is the fact that Pope Francis mentioned him very beforehand in his post-synodal exhortation *Christus Vivit* from 2019 among eleven other young saints. Why? Because he wanted today's young people to look to him as an example. So, what was so special about this boy?

Carlo was born in London on 3 May 1991 while his parents were there for work purposes. They returned to Milan in September of the same year and it was there that young Carlo grew up. His great devoutness stood out from an early age, as well as his cheerful nature. At his express request, he received the First Communion according to the Ambrosian Rite at the age of 7, at an earlier age than his peers. From that



moment on, he would not miss a day to attend the Eucharist, to take time for adoration before the tabernacle, and to pray the rosary. Weekly confession was also on his agenda from then on. He was not particularly encouraged in all this at home, but instead it was he who showed his parents the way to church in a renewed fashion. His mother attests to the fact that his constant questions about faith encouraged her to pay more attention to her faith herself, which even resulted in taking a theology course! He grew up as a committed pupil at school, a friend to all, and extremely interested in the digital world. He would use this extraordinary talent to develop his own website where he would put together a virtual exhibition on the Eucharistic miracles of the world. It was after a visit to the church with the Eucharistic miracle in Lanciano in Abruzzo that he started his own research on the Eucharistic miracles in which he saw a special sign of Jesus' love for man. He called the

Eucharist his highway to heaven and liked to compare himself to the Apostle John who rested on Jesus' chest during the Last Supper. He invited other young people to come to the Eucharist with him, which is not at all obvious with young people, not even in Italy! But he did it in such a spontaneous way and without pretence that several people followed his example. At school, too, he was the first to participate in the pastoral work, all in an infectiously joyful way. Every picture we see of Carlo is always with that big smile. A happy young fellow!

He did not like to deny playing games on his computer as well, but he laid down very strict rules for himself in order not to waste too much time on it. He knew the dangers of the digital world, but at the same time he was looking for a way to use it in line with his religious life. When asked to participate in the catechesis in preparation for Confirmation, he creatively used his computer skills to put together very original PowerPoint presentations to get the Gospel message across in an engaging way.

Carlo also enjoyed sports and travel. He was very happy to go to Fatima from where he brought back an even stronger devotion to Mary. Another place that particularly appealed to him was Assisi, because the figure of Saint Francis spoke to him in a special way. He wanted to live like Saint Francis: dressed simply and wanting to share with the poor. He did not want two pairs of shoes and certainly no brand-name clothes, and with his pocket money he helped the poor in his

neighbourhood.

One of the last and best known photos of Carlo was taken during his stay in Assisi in the summer of 2006. There was nothing to suggest that this would be his last visit. At the beginning of October, he became ill, and what at first was mistakenly considered to be a passing flu turned into an aggressive form of leukaemia that led him to his death within a few days. But even those days he consciously experienced, he showed once again how unique he considered his relationship with Jesus to be and his life as a journey to heaven. To his anxious mother he said on his deathbed: “Mother, do not be afraid, because with the Incarnation of Jesus, death becomes life, and there’s no need to escape: in eternal life, something extraordinary awaits us. Our goal must be infinite, not the finite. The infinite is our homeland. Heaven has been waiting for us forever. I offer all the suffering I will have to suffer for the Lord, for the Pope, and the Church. I don’t want to do Purgatory; I want to go straight to Heaven.” Words that take your breath away. The night before he died in the early morning, a nurse saw that his condition was getting very critical and asked him if he would like to have his mother with him. He refused: “She is very tired as well and she will only worry even more.” On the morning of 12 October 2006, Carlo began his journey to heaven, on the highway, as he liked to say.

Another one of his telling statements was: “Everyone is born as an original, but many

people end up dying as photocopies.”

No, Carlo was certainly not a photocopy like many young people today who lose themselves in the masses, but rather was like a fresh flower that attracted many. And that attraction continues, even after his death, because his website featuring the virtual exhibition is consulted by many and goes around the world.



*Everyone is born as an original,
but many people end up dying as
photocopies.*

At his express request, he was buried in Assisi and now he has a place in the Basilica of Saint Francis. On the occasion of his beatification, his tomb was opened and, for the first time in history, one could see a Blessed in a tracksuit and sneakers. It is touching for the parents who experience all this and especially for the mother who, after the death of her beloved son, became the happy mother of twins who live their faith in a refreshing way exactly like Carlo. It is as if they are accompanied by Carlo from heaven, according to the mother.

We end with the words of Pope Francis from his exhortation *Christus Vivit*, where he explicitly mentions Carlo: “Don’t forget that there are young people even there who show creativity and even genius. That was the case with the

Venerable Carlo Acutis. Carlo was well aware that the whole apparatus of communications, advertising and social networking can be used to lull us, to make us addicted to consumerism and buying the latest thing on the market, obsessed with our free time, caught up in negativity. Yet he knew how to use the new communications technology to transmit the Gospel, to communicate values and beauty” (No. 104-105).



From now on we can pray: Blessed friend Carlo Acutis, be with our young people today on their often arduous road to the Lord. And also show them the highway to heaven! 🙏

Bro. René Stockman



RWANDA

A unique Religious Profession in Rwanda during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Unlike the previous years, this year's profession was held uniquely; not only because of the absence of the General Superior who usually gives retreats and receives the vows for such occasions, but also in the strict observance of the preventive measures against the Covid-19. Brothers had to keep on their masks during the whole celebration, and the number of guests was strictly reduced to adhere to the new restrictions both during the Eucharistic celebration and at the reception.

The Eucharistic celebration presided by his Excellency Mgr Antoine Kambanda, archbishop of Kigali, took place at Regina Pacis Parish of Remera on the 5th of September 2020. During this profession Bro. Félix Uwimana Baho said his final "yes" by consecrating himself for life to God through the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity. Similarly, 16 novices from different Regions: our Lady of Africa (DRC: 4), our Lady of Loreto (DRC: 2, Central Africa Republic: 1), Saint Francis Xavier (Rwanda: 3), Saint Dominic (Tanzania: 2) and Saint Charles Lwanga (Burundi: 4) did their first profession in the

hands of Brother Charles Nkubili, the regional superior of Saint Francis Xavier, who represented the General Superior who could not come due to the traveling restrictions posed by the COVID-19. The mass did not exceed one hour and was on the live transmission on Radio Maria and the Pacis TV station. Despite the circumstances in which everything took place, the newly professed Brothers, Brother Félix, and all the Brothers present were grateful to God for making it possible. We were glad to see them profess after a challenging reality and circumstance in which their formation took place. It is good to underline that the measures taken in Rwanda against this pandemic were one of the strictest of all the countries. This situation was lived in permanent alertness, fear, and anxiety among the community members, especially during the first days. The community had to organize a workshop to share how each one was experiencing this moment. Different coping mechanisms were presented to help combat and



manage the pandemic well. Among them regular sports activities, singing and sharing talents (the Brothers wrote and interpreted songs), personal and community accompaniments, and strengthening the community bonds among members. The novices were also urged to reduce their exposure to information from the news and have a critical attitude towards the information received, but also avoid spreading information that would not bring comfort to others. Above all, we used this moment as an opportunity to be keen on hygiene and express our solidarity with those who were less privileged. Concretely, we recited the Pope's prayer against Coronavirus, prayed the daily rosary with special intentions for the suffering and the needy all over the world, and observed the hygienic measures as proposed by the health authorities. Also, the community developed a special devotion to our Lady of Kibeho and made a pilgrimage to Kibeho on the 15th of August, just 2 weeks before the profession.

This period helped us discover the strength of community life and develop a common resilience which transformed our suffering of fear and anxiety into an opportunity to exercise compassion for the suffering and the less privileged. With this spirit, we lived the Lenten season and were able to receive the special graces of the risen Lord and share this joy with our family members, other communities around us and remain united with the whole Congregation.

This experience was not only a testimony of an enduring Church which, like the disciples never

loses hope and trust in Christ in this stormy moments, but which believes in the words of the Gospel, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him” (John 4:23). Indeed, this was our strong belief and strength. It brings to mind the words of Viktor Frankl who says, “Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the situation. You cannot control what happens to you in life, but you can always control what you will feel and do about what happens to you”. In other words, no matter how hard the trials are, all that counts for a human being is how he responds to them with serenity. When this is applied to Christians and consecrated people like us, suffering has no last word. It rather becomes an opportunity for us to find a “vital center”, that is, finding meaning in everything we do or experience and of course, this is discovering Jesus Christ himself.



This was the philosophy behind our attitude towards this difficult period. Nevertheless, the experience of welcoming 16 new members and one Brother who did his perpetual vows was so great and gratifying. It made us forget the threat which the pandemic brought and made us give thanks to God for his protection and to the congregation's particular attention to the formation of young people. For they hold a promise and a future in spreading our Charism of Charity all over the world. ¶

Bro. Bienvenue Kiyombo Wa Nyembo

DR CONGO

Perpetual Professions in Kikwit

Before our three brothers Bro. Henri Ngoyi, Bro. Yves Mandefo and Bro. Yves Masasa took their perpetual profession on September 19, 2020, as a region we had a preparatory session for 2 weeks, with the facilitation of some experienced brothers and external animators. This ensured that the program was well implemented and we got the inspiration for this session from our Spiritual Animation booklet of 2020, "As Brothers of Charity, we are committed to the full life." The theme resounded in a powerful way that to be fully alive: it all starts with cultivating a profound spiritual life and being open to

God's infinite love. Eventually, this can lead us to live authentically the core elements of our consecrated life. For instance, how to live community life as a consecrated person and to actualize the vows with interior freedom requires openness. It is through daily commitment and communion with the Lord that we penetrate and rediscover the Mission and Charism of the Brothers of Charity that is centered and flows from an experience of God's abundant love- who compels us to reach out to the poor and the neighbor as the encounter is too good to keep it to ourselves. Such spiritual exercises are meant to help us discover the beauty, goodness, and the truth that may remain hidden in the deep recesses of our hearts. The Session was also about a personal review of one's religious life of 6 years of temporary vows. In this way, one could assess areas of growth, failures, difficulties, and what could change after perpetual vows. It is all about responsible discernment and resolutions in ones' inward vocational journey of faith. The personal question can be how can the congregation, the region, and the Church count on you as a Brother with perpetual vows; can we see the difference?

Besides the animation theme that we took, the brothers also had some introductions on Christology, Creed, and Ecclesiology that aimed to replenish their spiritual life. The objective of the session is to awaken the conscience of the Brother in perpetual vows to live his consecrated life in its fullness and to assume responsibility for his religious commitment both before God and humanity. To prepare well for the final vows

the three Brothers also followed a 5-day retreat at the Kipalu Center in Kikwit, animated by a Jesuit father. It was a good way to be ready for that commitment of giving ones' life totally to God. It is an act of generous self-giving that remains a puzzle and a mystery to many.



The Mass of Perpetual Profession was celebrated at Our Lady of Kikwit Parish by his Lordship Bishop Timothée BODIKA, Bishop of the Diocese of Kikwit in a colorful ceremony, despite the COVID-19 restrictions. The vows were received by Bro. Floribert Kabindu who was delighted to represent the Superior General, as the regional superior could not make it due to the pandemic. This celebration was an opportunity for the Diocese of Kikwit and the population to get to know well the Brothers of Charity, our mission, and Charism towards the poor and the sick. The Bishop had congratulated the Brothers for their presence in his Diocese and their mental healthcare apostolate, which is of paramount importance in the Kwilu Province and its vicinity

and the Diocese as a whole. It was also an opportunity to encourage new vocations to the brotherhood.



As noted above these perpetual vows were realized in an exceptional and difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic and others. But we believe “God’s love gives us the strength that nature cannot provide” as put so well by our beloved founder the Servant of God, Canon Peter Joseph Triest. It is with God’s unfailing love and grace; this event took place against all the odds and challenges. We say thank you to God, to the Bishop of the Diocese of Kikwit, to the Superior General who delegated us, to the parish priest, to the confreres who gave their fraternal support, and to the parents. We are grateful that your support and prayers helped our brothers to make that bold step of self-donation and consecration to God. ¶

Bro. Paulin Kindambu

BELGIUM

Grégoire Ahongbonon wins the 2020 Dr. Guislain Award

On 15 October 2020, the Dr. Guislain Museum and Janssen Research & Development, LLC named Grégoire Ahongbonon the 2020 winner of the Dr. Guislain “Breaking the Chains of Stigma” Award. The award honors Grégoire for his extraordinary efforts to reduce stigma about mental illness and organize contemporary psychiatric services for people in need across West Africa. After battling and recovering from depression, he was inspired to help others in West Africa – a region where mental health has historically been misunderstood by those suffering, their families and friends, and even by doctors. Grégoire Ahongbonon was honored for its outstanding humanitarian work during an online ceremony. In African culture, mental illness is often seen as a supernatural affliction with those suffering assumed to be possessed by contagious evil spirits. They are often isolated from society and brought to church or healers before visiting a medical professional. In fact, due to the high cost of some treatment facilities and medications, extreme measures – such as physically chaining people – are still used when dealing with mental illness.

Applying many of the same humane principles



Dr. Joseph Guislain sought to integrate in Belgium nearly two centuries ago, Grégoire created the Saint-Camille Association to offer individuals in West Africa basic and psychiatric care.

“Grégoire Ahongbonon embodies the spirit of the Dr. Guislain ‘Breaking the Chains of Stigma’ Award, having both literally and figuratively freed those in West Africa from the shame and burden often associated with mental illness,” said Brother Dr. René Stockman, Superior General of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity and Chairman of the Museum Dr. Guislain. “Through the Saint-Camille Association, he has made a meaningful and direct difference in the lives of so many, while also fostering acceptance within the communities.”

The Saint-Camille Association began in 1991 as a simple operation at the University Hospital Center in Bouaké, Ivory Coast. There, Grégoire

and a group of volunteers were able to tend to the mentally ill and provide basic care such as hygiene, food, clothing and emotional support. Today, the Association operates nearly 50 inpatient psychiatric centers, rehabilitation centers and outpatient clinics in communities across the Ivory Coast, Benin and Togo. Currently, it is estimated that around 100,000 people have benefited from their services and been able to return to their families and communities, often times taking a job with the center that helped them rehabilitate.



The Dr. Guislain Award program is a joint project of the Dr. Guislain Museum and Janssen Research & Development, LLC. The winner receives a \$50,000 prize that must be used toward further work to reduce societal stigma

about mental health. The Award is given to an individual(s), organization or project that has made an exceptional contribution to mental healthcare in the broadest sense on a cultural and/or social level; has provided a genuine contribution to decreasing stigma around mental health conditions; has promoted attention for mental health care; and has done all this with passion, creativity and innovation. ¶

PHILIPPINES

A super typhoon in the Philippines

Every year in the Philippines we are hit by several typhoons. It is a weather phenomenon that is precisely equivalent to a hurricane which results in a very strong wind with heavy rains. In November this year, we experienced the strongest typhoon ever recorded that has been dubbed “super typhoon.” It has caused a lot of damage to the buildings of our communities and entities where we serve. In Tabaco City in Bicol region, where our Fatima community is located and which used to be our International Novitiate a lot of damage happened, on doors and windows being broken and water flooded in. Similarly, the Holy Face Rehabilitation Center for Mental Health, San Lorenzo Chapel used by patients and people in the village, and the Gymnasium got affected by this natural disaster. The Gymnasium

is frequently used by youth groups in the Diocese as venue for sports and other religious activities. Even though the compound is still secured with a wall fence for a bigger part, the full extent



of the damage inside the compound is not yet known as I am in Manila. I have been updated with the reports and pictures on the damage by Bro. Rudy, who is closely monitoring the situation and assessing the extent of the damage. So far, electricity and communication have been disrupted with coconut trees falling on the electric posts. The good news is that our three brothers, Bro. Vic, Bro. Rudy and Bro. Andy are safe but terrified. They are doing their best to cope with the situation. I have been encouraging them to have enough sleep and rest before starting the clean-up.

For two nights, the brothers didn't sleep well. They only listened to the horrible sound of the

strong wind lashing out in the compound. I advised them to ask help from the City Mayor, from the Parish, and from their village leader, because Bro. Andy is already 65 years old, Bro. Vic in his late 50s, only Bro. Rudy is younger. The very sad part of all this is that it was only last month that we completed the repairs of broken glass windows, broken doors, beds, tables, chairs, and many more because it was also damaged in the past but never got repaired. Additionally, many wooden furniture and wooden doors were damaged by termites but it was never given attention. The building and the furniture were all repaired and repainted recently. The ceilings, electrical wirings, and water connections got restored also. We repaired



it well with “a new look” and only this super typhoon destroying what we had just renovated. It is disheartening, but we remain resilient and hopeful.

We had planned, like the Fatima building, to be used for income generating activities, for retreats and recollections, and at the same time offering a serene sanctuary for such spiritual exercises. We had also foreseen seminars, camping, and other occasions for people to rent and pay. Programs and contacts were already made but unfortunately the Coronavirus stopped our plans. It was very depressing and our dreams to have some income revenues collapsed. And on top of that, here comes the “super typhoon”. At moments like this we can cry in despair to the Lord, for we feel vulnerable and powerless. We appeal to Good Samaritans to give us moral and financial support so that we can rebuild our lives and continue giving care to our clients, who are severely affected. Despite all these setbacks we plan to start a new Rehabilitation Center for those suffering from the “Internet Addiction”, catering for children whom we believe can contribute to the services. We hope that as we render this service to give them also the “Joy of the Resurrection” it can auto-finance itself and perhaps in future help us to support other apostolates too. Despite the disappointments born from the pandemic and the super typhoon, we are making some efforts and networking as we envisage for a better tomorrow. 🙏

Bro. Joel Ponsaran



A new Triest Museum in Rome

On August 6, 2020, a new museum dedicated to the Servant of God, Peter Joseph Triest, was opened in the Generalate of the Brothers of Charity in Rome. During the lockdown period, which was very strict in Italy, the young brothers worked hard to prepare the space for this museum. The “old” library in the basement was moved to two warehouses also in the basement and the vacant space was nicely painted and prepared. In the meantime, all the necessary material was searched for that would be exhibited in the new museum and the necessary plans were drawn up. At the beginning of August, together with the staff of the Dr. Guislain Museum, the exhibition was set up and the local



community had the pleasure of being the first to visit the permanent exhibition on 6 August.

In the exhibition one can get acquainted with the life of our Founder, by means of enlarged prints from the visual story of Father Triest. Via a number of panels one can read the short sketch of life. In the showcases one can find the books that Father Triest used during his education.



Special attention is paid to the Founder's charism, based on the precepts he wrote for his four congregations and the elements which formed the basis of his charism: his thorough knowledge of Scripture, which gave his charism a true evangelical color, his Eucharistic and Marian spirituality and his devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the figures of Saint Vincent de Paul and Bernard, with whom he united contemplation and action. Of course, special light is shed on the charitable and apostolic activities which Father

Triest developed together with his brothers and sisters, in which the breaking of the handcuffs in which the mentally ill were confined takes a central place. Finally an overview is given of the process of beatification and a number of important artifacts related to Father Triest are exhibited.

Of course the book stand, consisting of the works written about Father Triest in the course of history, and the recent works that are also on sale, should not be missed.

In the future, we hope to contribute a number of changing elements to this permanent collection, and of course we also hope to be able to follow the beatification process closely through our new museum and to present it visually.

From now on, every visitor of the Generalate of the Brothers of Charity in Rome will be invited to visit the small but attentively elaborated museum, in order to get to know even better the life and charisma of Father Triest. Several brothers are available to give a guided tour.

Welcome! ¶

Bro. René Stockman

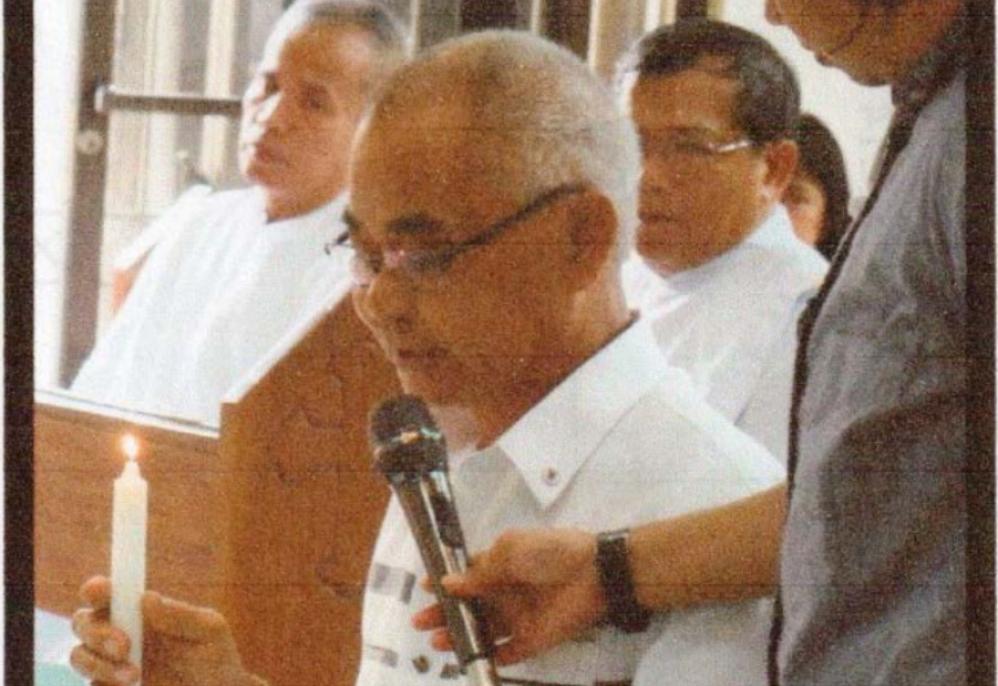


IN MEMORIAM

Francisco Alcantara (Philippines)

The mourning offering for Francisco Custodio Alcantara came from people of ages and different beliefs, from different walks of life. Friends of many years from grade school to secondary and on to his college years came to mourn the loss of a friend, a fellow alumnus, a classmate, a colleague of the Parent Teachers Associate or the Alumni Association, a fellow pilgrim in his Life in the Spirit of the Workers of Christ or Marriage Encounter of the Alay Sa Dios Community or as Lead Volunteer of the Associates in the missions of The Brothers of Charity. “Kuya Kiko” to many was also “Tatay Kiko” to fellow associates.

In his life, God “wrote straight with crooked lines”. His son Macmac was the reason why he went to the Ortho Pedagogical Institute. He was a special child. As a parent of the school, the leadership of Francisco Alcantara was noted. A degree holder in Management with a 2-year associate degree in Civil Engineering he offered his services to help in the construction of the BOC Miraculous Medal Community Facility in Baguio and the Holy Face Mental Health Rehabilitation Facility and the Fatima Building at the Nazareth Compound of the BOC Tabaco City. Kuya Kiko was a man of mild temper, most of the time. He was determined to speak his



mind when needed but also knew when to face situations in life that needed to be accepted. Twice his business venture did not succeed. He made wrong decisions in the choice of a supplier and a partner and was left with debts to pay. He remained undaunted.

Soft-hearted and generous, he decided to commit to paying unhesitatingly for the cost of chemotherapy of a relative for 2 years. Never was an event of the associates or Brothers held without a “Bilao” a bamboo tray with glutinous rice from Kuya Kiko.

Kuya Kiko married Amabel, a 2019 associate of the Brothers of Charity (it took her 13 years to join him and ask to be an associate), had 3 sons and a daughter. Except for Macmac, all are degree holders. The second son, Arthur, is pursuing a degree in Medicine, while working as a Laboratory technician Supervisor in his school, the Ateneo School of Medicine. It was he who stayed by his bedside in the long nights everyone hoping he would feel better It is with a sense

of loneliness for Arthur and his wife Lalaine, a nurse, that their son Kenzo, the 4th grandchild was born after Kuya Kiko's demise. His daughter, Len and son in law Mar, devotedly took turns caring for Kiko and Mabel in the trying times of his hospitalization. The eldest son Tristan, who belongs to an international non trinitarian church, the INC, spent time with a father he loved and was proud of primarily because he respected his faith practices, thoughts and religion. Truly, a father who understands mercy until his last breath.

As Tatay Kiko he led the associates to visit the different facilities of the BOC. He shared the history of the BOC with them. He was with them in the different works of mercy, joining a medical mission and feeding the children of the Tabaco BOC Community, giving clothes to those in need in Pandacan and Baguio Community, visiting the persons deprived of liberty in Legazpi City, preparing beds of lepers, and persons with disabilities in the leprosarium and the Harong Sagrada Familia.

He actively participated in the marriage encounter class following his attendance of ME class at the Alay Sa Dios Community of Mary the Queen Parish. He was in Albay for the Workers of Christ sponsored Change of Life Program. And he was a companion of 10 parents whose children were undergoing surgery for cleft lip or cleft palate.

He left in the early morning of August 24th. Gentle until the end, he asked his wife to go home for the night and rest. On his sickbed, he would ask his wife if she has had her meals.

The other person was always important to him. He shared, in a limitless effort to “give because he knew it will be given to him” as Father Triest said.

This the associates will remember of Tatay Kicks who shared his wisdom until he departed at the age of 70.

“When we share jokes and laughter, it’s twice the fun; when we share problems it’s half the pain; when we share our blessings then we multiply our joy; what draws us closer and makes us care for one another is not what we have, but what we give.” (Francis Kong) A “tatay” (father) dear loved, a “kuya” (brother) one is proud to have.

Mediatrix Villanueva

IN MEMORIAM

Maria Fe Mabini (Philippines)

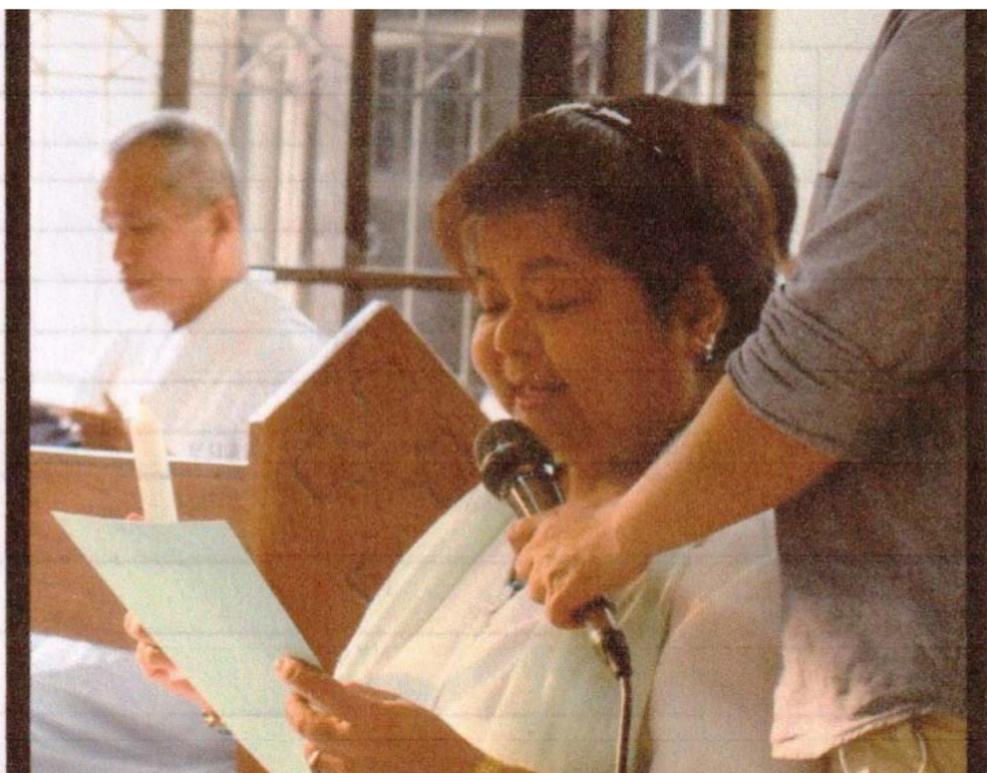
“Mommie Fhe” is how she is known to many. She is a person with Myasthenia Gravis- a rare neuromuscular disease. But, that did not stop the 55-year-old Mommie Fhe. with a daughter and 4 sons, one with hearing impairedness from joining the Associates. Mommie is how her 3 grandchildren called. Mommie is how we ended up calling her because she was and will always be remembered as one who cared for us - in many ways.

Mommie was a woman of courage. She was challenged in far many ways.

The last years of her life were dedicated to her small business which she inherited from her grandmother. She prepared sweets-custards, she cooked egg rolls. She maintained a sari store, a micro-business selling an assortment of grocery goods and snacks.

She found ways to raise her 5 children to pursue their education. Her son who is hearing impaired is a teacher. Her husband for 35 years was totally dependent on her for health care. When she attended the various activities. the associates would worry for her because her husband, a former mechanic Overseas Filipino Worker was bedridden.

Edwin was difficult in many ways. He was moody and frustrated with his life of dependence. The liver disease that made him come home from Riyadh was not the cause of his paralysis. It was



a motor accident that led to his paralysis and made him a dependent person with a disability. Mommy Fhe was a cheerful person. Nothing made her unhappy about her circumstance. Her patience was a gift from a God to whom she prayed often.

Mommie, when in the company of Associates showed the way to handle the challenges of life. Her ocular myasthenia affected her eyelids which would be drooping at different times and for long periods. On the day she made her commitment, wearing her favorite white blouse, Mommie Fhe and the rest of the associates prayed that she would be able to open her eyes to read her commitment prayer.

Under usual circumstances, she needed both hands to keep her eyes open.

As she walked down the aisle and knelt, with full confidence, Mommie Fhe held on to her candle with one hand and another hand held the commitment prayer sheet. She finished her prayer. Some associates were in tears. She was smiling.

Mommie Fhe was a generous woman who shared whatever she could with anyone in need. Her generosity was beyond measure as she contributed her custard cakes every time the associates gathered for learning sessions or service activities. And more than that, Mommie Fhe generosity overflowed by sharing her faith. She was available as a constant activity companion to a friend who she invited and

nurtured to be an associate. The woman needed to travel with her to be able to leave home, Ate Viol, a highly diabetic associate spent a year being nurtured by Mommie Fhe.

Mommie Fhe would have renewed her commitment this year. She prepared for it by drafting a letter requesting renewal. She died without having submitted her letter which she entrusted to a friend when she got sick. At three o'clock in the afternoon, as the associates gathered for the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Mommie Fhe informed the prayer warriors to include her among those in need of healing mercies. She simply said she was not feeling well. That was her goodbye statement.

Looking back to the year of friendship and camaraderie, we will remember Maria Fe Gonzales Mabini, 2019 associate of the Brothers of Charity, Philippine Jurisdiction with the prayer: "Life-Giving God, You are my sustainer. Thank you for giving me what I need to navigate my struggles and hardships."

Mediatrix Villanueva

BURUNDI

Five associate members renewed their promises on Saturday 26 September. They were Madam Agnes Niragira, Madam Beatrice Rushigajiki, Mr. Boniface Nyampeta, Mr. Celestin Mbonihankuye and Madam Marguerite Niyonzima. These were joyful moments.



DR CONGO

On 26 September in the chapel of the physically handicapped centre Shirika la Umoja, 9 associate members renewed their promises in our congregation.



Brother Fernand Schepkens

1935-2020

Fernand, Joseph and Antoine, all three sons of the Schepkens family from Leopoldsburg, joined the Brothers of Charity at a young age. Antoine passed away several years ago and Jozef left the Congregation but remained very connected to it. Fernand took his first vows as Brother Richarius on 2 February 1955. After his studies at the normal school in Zwijnaarde, he would make his own way as an educator in various schools and institutes. Finally, in 1966, he became an established name at our institute in Woluwe,



where he was appointed section leader among the deaf pupils. For more than 22 years, he would stay there and do his utmost to educate the youngsters. In the meantime, he turned out to be a passionate historian and his great hobby was checking registers and family trees. This resulted in short articles about a person from a distant past, an event in a village, or an anecdote involving the congregation. He had a regular column in our magazine Jong Karitas and was able to captivate many people with it.

In 1988, Brother Fernand moved to the Guislain Institute in Ghent where he was put in charge of the boarding house at the nursing school. Two years later, he was able to return to his home in Leopoldsburg to supervise the new sheltered housing projects from our centre in Lummen.

He always managed to win people over with his witty remarks, and his imposing figure exuded a natural authority.

Brother Fernand enjoyed contributing to the publication of our Founder's writings, and with great patience he would carefully type out many of the manuscripts.

In 2009, it was time to take things a bit easier, and Brother Fernand moved to the convent of Lummen for the last time. He spent a short time in Saint John's, our convent rest home in Zelzate, where he passed away on the feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven.

Brother Fernand was a sociable confrere and with his very own sense of humour he was able to liven things up in the community. He was a faithful confrere, who did not shy away from expressing his views, but with respect for all. His

sound religious upbringing from home was the solid ground on which he built and shaped his religious life as a Brother of Charity. His being received into God's love is the apotheosis of a life of love for the least. He was able to fully embrace the words of our beloved Founder as he made the transition to eternal love: "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

Brother Augustin

Bwampamyé

1937-2020

"A saintly brother has left us." That is the first reaction I got when I was informed of the passing of Brother Augustin in Bujumbura. Everyone who knew Brother Augustin will fully agree.

Born in Muhanga near Ngozi in Burundi on 30 April 1937, a young Concordien started his religious formation as a postulant with the Brothers of Charity in Bujumbura, which resulted in a first temporary profession on 2 February 1958. At that time, Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi still formed one province in the Congregation, and so Bro. Augustin went to our Groupe scolaire in Butare in Rwanda to study at the Education Department. Even then he already excelled in earnestness, intelligence, and piety, which is why he was asked to continue his studies in Belgium, where he graduated with a teaching degree in Arlon in 1964. Back home, he became a teacher at our normal school in Gitega until



1971. For two years he went to Kinshasa where he obtained a candidate's degree in religious studies. Meanwhile, the community of Gitega was closed and Bro. Augustin was sent to Zaza as superior, novice master, and teacher at the normal school. This made him the first African brother to become superior of a community that at that time was still largely made up of white missionaries. With great wisdom and gentleness, and at the same time perseverance, he managed to shape his leadership. When it was decided to transfer an 'international' novitiate for the three countries to Kananga in Congo, he became the novice master from 1978 to 1982. There was no one better than Bro. Augustin to prepare young people for religious life. One simply had to look at him and listen to him to discover in him a genuine Brother of Charity.

In 1982, he was called to be the provincial

superior of the newly founded Saint Francis Xavier Province consisting of Rwanda and Burundi. He would serve this mission for 12 years. The words of Saint Augustine, his patron saint, certainly applied to him: for you I am a superior, with you I am a brother. Service, humour, joy, and all this from a deep serenity that he exuded. This serenity, however, had divine ground, for anyone who lived with him could testify to how much time he spent in prayer. Yet he could also be stubborn when asked to carry out a task successfully.

The genocide in Rwanda hit him hard and his inability to help his brothers and the many other religious with whom he had an intense relationship was difficult for him. For six years, he became a general assistant, and from Rome his care and attention continued to go to the many who turned to him for help. He could never say no, and he shared what little he had with those in need. Talk about a Good Samaritan. Bro. Augustin was someone who was always willing to go where the Congregation asked him to go. After Rome, it was Abidjan, where he brought peace and quiet to the scholasticate, and then Nairobi, where he continued to guide the young confreres towards the essentials with a gentle yet steady hand.

In 2006, he was able to return to Burundi and became superior of the community in Bujumbura. No one will ever be able to describe how much good he did there: as a superior for his brothers, as a loyal visitor to the sick of the psychiatric hospital, as a listener to the many people who came to see him. And always that

service: the kitchen, the garden, the chapel looking after the liturgy. In his familiar absent-mindedness, the arrangements that were made were not always respected, but no one would get upset about that. Bro. Augustin was always the first person to apologize for it.

His empathy for the whole Congregation was infectious. He was always asking for news, and he tried to put everything into perspective with eyes of profound faith. He felt that the present time within the Congregation was a time of purification and he kept repeating how he carried this with him in prayer.

The last few months were tough on our confrere, as a severe cancer got a hold of him. But he accepted his suffering admirably. The last few weeks, he was surrounded by his confreres who took good care of him, and even though he could no longer put it into words, with a gentle smile and a twinkle in his eye, he continued to show his gratitude. Together with Jesus on the cross, he was able to say: "It is finished."

Bro. Augustin, with great gratitude on behalf of many of us, we have been privileged to have known you, to have lived with you, to have been able to listen to you, and to have shared life's joys and sorrows. There will be great joy in heaven where they will welcome you, and henceforth we know the intercessor we have with the Lord and his heavenly Mother, because Bro. Augustin will continue to care for his Congregation to which he was so deeply attached.

Brother Alfons Goorden

1925-2020

Meeting Brother Alfons was meeting culture. Music, art, literature... That was what he was all about. His classroom and later his office looked more like a museum, where Brother Alfons artistically surrounded himself with original parchments, a letter bearing a historical figure's signature, and art books that were regularly replaced according to the time of year, a commemoration, or a new interest. He even managed to discover unpublished Schubert songs and record them. He loved travelling and was one of the first to organize foreign community trips for his confreres, with outstanding cultural and historical visits, of course. No, these were not trips to the beach or to fashionable tourist locations. Quite legendary were his Christmas concerts with which he managed to put his confreres in the right Christmas mood. And each time there was a very original selection, where modern or kitschy hit songs were definitely out of the question. Brother Alfons really enjoyed the beauty that the Creator had given him and was happy to share it with his pupils, his co-workers, and his confreres.

Born in Essen on 14 August 1925, he went to Leuven at the age of 12 to get acquainted with the Congregation as a junior. Following his first profession in 1943, he completed his studies as a teacher and was ready for the apostolate as a brother-teacher. He was able to take his first steps



in the then seventh year of primary school in Hasselt, followed by the eighth year in the Ghent Juniorate. In 1951, he went to Saint Thomas' in Brussels to graduate with a teaching degree in Literature in 1953. From then on, he was able to give his all in the juniorates of Sint-Truiden and Sint-Michiels, where he was headmaster and class teacher from 1966 to 1976. Former pupils continue to bear witness to the fascinating way in which Bro. Modest – at that time he was still being addressed with his brother name – was able to teach and to instil in them a sense of beauty. He fully understood how to move from the good, beauty, and truth to God. This became

his appropriate educational and pastoral approach that caught on.

When the juniorate in Sint-Michiels closed down, a new era dawned for Bro. Alfons: superior in Gentbrugge and then in Sint-Jozef in Zwijnaarde, each time as headmaster of the vocational school. The young people with intellectual disabilities became his favourites; he would do anything for them. They too had to be lifted up to the good, beauty, and truth. He turned out to be a true father to his brothers and a spiritual mentor to his teachers. The mission of the Congregation did not have to be written out for him: he lived it to the fullest and radiated it to the people around him, always with a big smile on his face. He even put the name 'Brothers of Charity' on the water tower in Zwijnaarde so that everyone could see it from the motorway: that is how proud he was of his congregation.

In 1992, he officially retired and that meant a move to Sint-Laurens in Zelzate, where he was superior for many years until he was admitted for care in our convent rest home Saint John's. There too he was still a sociable confrere, still living in the world of music and art, yet at the same time rooted in a deep prayer life.

Brother Alfons was the salt of the earth, and led a successful and authentic life. He will be delighted to listen to the heavenly choirs of the angels and, above all, to know that he is totally immersed in the love of God, to whom he gave his whole life, out of a profound conviction and with great enthusiasm.

Brother Oscar Duym

1940-2020

Deeply impressed by his brother-teachers at the Sint-Laurensinstituut in Zelzate, where he completed secondary school, a young Oscar went from his beloved Eksaarde to Maria-Aalter to start his religious formation as a postulant. The date is 1 August 1958. He made his first profession as a Brother of Charity on 19 July 1960. The newly professed Brother Egbertus was allowed to leave for Temse to study secondary school teacher training in Sint-Niklaas, where he graduated in 1962 with a teaching degree in Mathematics and Physics, ready to start the apostolate. After a year in our juniorate in Sint-Michiels, however, he still had to serve in the army, a time that he put to good use by obtaining a religious teaching diploma. His apostolic career started as a teacher in the secondary schools in Turnhout, Merksem, and Aalter. In Merksem, he turned out to be a passionate captain of the OLSE handball team, where a large part of his spare time went. He also enjoyed doing all kinds of stencil work. Bro. Oscar was a busy bee, and with his puffing and blowing he could not hide the fact that he had a packed schedule. But that was his nature. He always had a story to tell in the community, often with much excitement and in great detail. He was a pleasant confrere for whom his community became his real home.

In 1981, he was appointed headmaster of the school in Temse, a task he took to heart once again with the fullness of his abilities. But

perhaps he demanded too much of himself, so that in 1985 he needed some time to rest. For a short while, he went to Sint-Job-in-'t-Goor and then to Roeselare where he became headmaster of the vocational school, a position he later continued in Sint-Job. But it took too much out of him and once again it broke the overenthusiastic Bro. Oscar. The Congregation offered him some time for renewal in Rome, where he took a few spiritual courses. He really felt at home in Rome and he became a welcome guide for visitors to the Casa. With the General Chapter of 1994 approaching, he was a welcome helping hand in the house and Bro. Oscar became the key figure for the practical preparations.



The meticulousness with which he did all the paperwork inspired the then superior general to appoint him as his general secretary after the chapter. It was a task that suited him well. He brought order to things, developed a clear administrative guide, and even visited several provinces to mentor the local secretaries. With a door that was always open, no one could pass through the corridor without hearing a cordial word from Bro. Oscar. It was an open house for brothers and students, and with some of them he developed a close friendship. In the meantime, he had developed a severe form of diabetes, which became a heavy cross to bear for Bro. Oscar, because dieting was hardly his thing. It meant even more puffing and mostly sweating when the weather was hot in Rome.

In 2000, he returned to Belgium and went to live in Temse where he became secretary to the head of special education. For 17 years, he commuted daily from Temse to Ghent, until in 2017, when he wanted to take things a little easier, and from Gentbrugge he stayed active in the archives of the regionalate.

The last few months the impact of his diabetes worsened, which ultimately proved fatal.

He passed away in hospital in Ghent on 26 September.

Bro. Oscar was a brother who added colour to our community and translated the charism in his time and with his many talents in a very personal way. He may now rest and dwell in God's love, because to behold God's love was the purpose and the deep motivation of his life here on earth. It is now complete.

Brother Camille Rooms

1924-2020

A modest confrere has left us. Brother Camille was a man of quiet presence and humble service. He was always very well-groomed, which gave him an air of distinction, and he had an inner peace that suggested a deep spiritual life.

Bro. Camille was born in Ostend in 1924 and went to the juniorate at the age of twelve to mature his vocation to the religious life. On Candlemas in 1943, in the midst of the Second World War, he professed his first vows, and three years later his perpetual vows. It was to be a long religious life that can now be continued forever!

After completing his studies at the normal school, Brother Camille was sent to Temse to fill in for a brother, and from the next school year onwards, he was entrusted with the first year of primary school in Eeklo. Many houses would follow, and we always see Brother Camille as a dedicated brother-teacher among his pupils. Everything was done with gentleness and his example will have called on many to learn to appreciate the value of simplicity.

In 1984, Bro. Camille went to Zwijnaarde, where he helped in the boarding school and also became the community's bursar and a member of the council of the house. For twenty years he was a household name in the convent: always there, always greeting everyone in a friendly way,

quietly sympathizing with the ups and downs of his confreres. He knew how to contribute to a conversation and share his views in a clear way, but always with a lot of respect for others. When the community was closed, our now eighty-year-old confrere left for the rest home Saint Arnold's in Beernem. There he could enjoy nature and he continued to be what he had always been: the modest confrere with a very well-kept appearance. It seemed as if everything in him had struck a balance. Gradually his mental strength diminished and for the last few months he stayed in our convent rest home Saint John's in Zelzate where he passed away on 22 October 2020.



We should be grateful for Brother Camille's exemplary life. Without many words, he radiated the charism of the Congregation especially to all those who were close to him: his pupils and his confreres. We will miss Brother Camille's gentle smile, but now we will keep it in our hearts and we believe that he may now abide in God's love forever. No, his life has not been in vain and we can only be thankful that through Bro. Camille we have been able to experience a glimpse of God's goodness.





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