



DEUS CARITAS EST magazine

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EDITORIAL

A new reality >>

ITALY

The Good Samaritan >>

THE PHILIPPINES

**500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines
and 40 Years of the Brothers of Charity >>**

TANZANIA

Responding to new needs in Kasaka >>

FEATURED: MORALITY

**Is there still room for the objectivity of
morality? >>**

Taking Stock of Life >>

BURUNDI

At a profession >>

TANZANIA

Hospitality in Bangwe >>

News from the General Administration >>

News from the Communities >>

Associate Members >>

In memoriam >>

A new reality

Who would have thought that in the 21st century, a viral pandemic would have the world in its grip, and not just for a short time, but for more than a year? We all thought that we could only read about the 'Black Death' in history books, which, until the late Middle Ages, decimated entire populations. With the medical advances that characterized the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, we thought we were immune to such disasters. When the first reports came from far-off China and we saw the first face masks in airports, many shrugged their shoulders and even spoke of a psychosis of fear that was totally irrelevant. After a few weeks, it would all be under control... We know better now.

There is no sector in society that has not suffered or continues to suffer directly or indirectly as a result of this pandemic. The consequences are barely calculable. What is certain is that it has dealt a huge blow to our accumulated self-confidence that we have everything under control. The fragility of life, which could increasingly be covered up, albeit often artificially, has once again been completely exposed. All of us have been hit in our existence whereby an undeniable truth about our lives has revealed itself in a particularly direct way and



The people of Tournai (B) bury victims of the Black Death, Pierart dou Tielt (ca. 1353)

whereby the delusion of our omnipotence has been reduced to an illusion. We are creatures who, in our earthly existence, share in the transience of all of nature, and we are called to accept this as essentially part of our humanity.

Of course, this sounds negative, but it is up to us to learn life lessons from it. Does history not show us that we have something to learn from every situation? That is why it is so important to know the history of mankind, to study it, not to make our own story out of it at will, to pass it on to future generations and, above all, to draw beneficial consequences from it for the present and for the future. A people that forgets or changes its history cuts its own roots, and that is never harmless.

The pandemic, as already mentioned, has confronted us very directly with the fragility and transience of our lives. Has this not brought

the ultimate destination of life, which had been completely overshadowed for so many people, back into focus? And with it, the presence of God within this destination? After all, it is common knowledge that in times of need, many find their way back to God and to prayer. Let us hope that it is a way that will not be abandoned just like that. For is not the loss of faith in the hereafter one of the great afflictions of modern man, which makes him deal with life's everyday reality and with death in a totally different way?

Fragility also calls for greater solidarity with those who suffer. This was very clearly expressed in the movement of care that was started and which brought to the surface what is most beautiful in man: compassion manifested in tangible help. But also those who have become ill themselves have, through the suffering they have endured and through the care they have received, gone through a learning process in a way, whereby, from their own suffering, they



Fragility also calls for greater solidarity with those who suffer.

have become more sensitive to the suffering of their neighbour. Nor shall we forget those who have suffered most from isolation and loneliness, which has caused severe mental suffering for some. This negative experience has also made

us rediscover that we are social beings for whom human interaction is of vital importance. While much was solved online and working from home was promoted, it became increasingly clear that this can never replace real, live contact between people.

From within the Congregation, we received testimonies of self-effacing commitment to those affected by the viral infection. We sympathized with those who were themselves hit by the virus. We also heard about the many concerns caused by the compulsory closure of certain apostolic works, as a result of which people we cared for could no longer be helped. We also received regular reports of new emergencies, people who had found themselves in dire financial straits because they had lost their job security. At the same time, brothers testified how during this time more energy went into prayer life and life in community, which gained in quality. We will all



The Triumph of Death, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1562)

have our own stories to tell about this period in our lives, and no one can say that it has passed them by unnoticed. So, let us continue to see it as a learning experience in rediscovering our fragility and the fragility faced by so many of our neighbours who are asking for our help. This brings us to the heart of our charism, which precisely calls us to be close to those who are affected in their human faculties in a healing and caring way. It is always a matter of approaching



Painting of Marseille during the outbreak of a pandemic, Michel Serre (1720)

this fragility with loving care, of not always seeing fragility as something negative, and of bearing witness to it in the world, and at the same time of using this fragility to help people discover and rediscover their true destiny. When people are allowed to discover a perspective in their lives that transcends this life, they will more easily be able to deal with the fragility of this life and with suffering, in their own lives and in the

lives of others.

Just as many people in the Church and in society seize the opportunity of the pandemic to look for new directions in life and in our living together, this is also a challenge for the Congregation from which we should not shy away. Let us take the necessary time for this and allow ourselves to be surprised by perspectives that were previously unknown to us. ¶

Bro. René Stockman



The Good Samaritan

In my opinion, the heart of the Encyclical Fratelli Tutti lies in chapter two where Pope Francis unpacks the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37). He points out that the ills of this world; the injustices, the greed, and so much suffering are the result of humanity's failure to recognize who is my neighbour. We can only speak about fraternity and social friendship when we can encounter each other and see our differences and diversity as a richness and not an obstacle to building the human family. In building a humane society where love and solidarity are possible, it is important to reflect on the different characters involved in the story of the Good Samaritan, as they capture well our human experience.



The Good Samaritan, Painting by Mr. Mukoko, DRC

The robbers or bandits

Yes, the bandits have a place in this story even though we tend to overlook them as though they don't exist. Without this robbery and the drama involved, we could not have this beautiful story. Each one of us has a unique role in this world, even though sometimes it is difficult to understand. A certain Victor Hugo quipped that "no man is completely useless; he can always serve as a bad example!"

It is worthy to ask ourselves, why did the bandits do this criminal act in the first place? It might be as a result of injustice that could have robbed them of the economic opportunity to be good citizens. We see a lot of wars and



The Good Samaritan, Sculpture on tabernacle, International Novitate Chapel, Nairobi, Kenya

violence in developing nations mostly fuelled by the scrambling for natural resources by the powerful nations. The same is seen with corrupt politicians who can do anything to steal from state coffers and abandon programs that could improve the lives of the poor and other vulnerable citizens. It is through this kind of reality that Pope Francis calls for a “better kind of politics”, where we all “must make room for a tender love of others” (No. 194). The Pope further reminds each one of us that “love of neighbour is concrete and squanders none of the resources needed to bring about historical change that can benefit the poor and disadvantaged” (No. 165). The covetous attitude that is portrayed by the robbers and which is rampant in our world demonstrates to the unquestioned belief that material wealth will bring us happiness. This is a distorted view as we know well from the story of the rich young man in the Scriptures who had everything but was still unhappy (Mk. 10:17-31). The desire for possessions is an indirect invitation of our restless hearts to seek what can last; that is God himself. The violence that robbers inflicted on the wounded man, can originate also in the lack of love and proper upbringing. To counter and curtail such vicious cycles of violence, we need to earnestly exercise compassion. For it is through unconditional love and forgiveness to others and ourselves, that can break the destructive cycle of cruelty. We can be part also of a criminal gang of robbers through a negative way of thinking, judging, or labelling others in a prejudiced way.

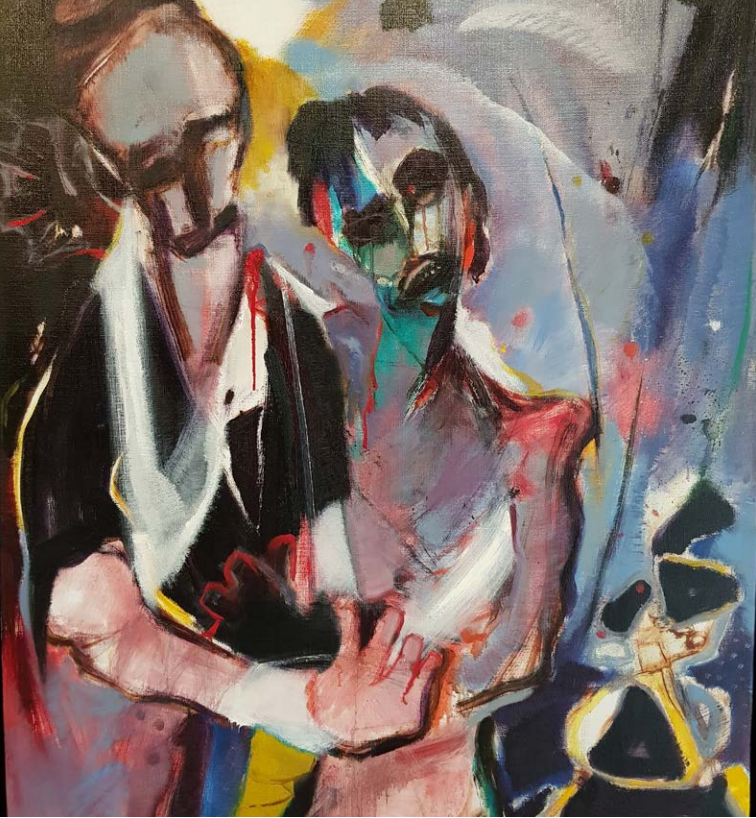


Becoming a man or woman of love, peace and justice is a result of an encounter with God's infinite love and reconciling our wounded reality.

Becoming a man or woman of love, peace and justice is a result of an encounter with God's infinite love and reconciling our wounded reality. In his book *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela puts it differently, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." This should be also stressed to the parents on how important love is to the children, for a lot of our characters are formed during this tender age.

The wounded man

The wounded man is another interesting character in the story. He has no name, but he must have been a Jew, travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was stripped of his clothes, wounded, and left half-dead. He was helpless and, for me, he can be a metaphor for ourselves. He travels like a pilgrim who is on a



The Good Samaritan, 1998, by Armand Demeulemeester

journey of faith, and the robbers can be like the devil who wants to rob our inherent goodness and gifts, and we feel devastated and hopeless at his attacks. It is not understandable why the robbers, after stripping him and taking everything, he had, still beat him almost to death. It is when he is powerless, vulnerable, and unable to defend himself that a Good Samaritan comes into the picture. It is God himself who intervenes. We, too, can be confident that when we feel humiliated by sin or other tragedies of life and God seems to have abandoned us, it is a moment to remember that his help is on the way. Even though the gospel does not tell us

what happened after being taken care of with love and compassion, we can only hope that the experience must have had a snowball effect, that he became also an ambassador of compassion. Difficult experiences and even tragedies of life can be a turning point of being more human if we are attentive to the inner spirit.

A Priest and a Levite

It is easy to pass judgment on these two religious figures how they failed to intervene and help while we can find ourselves in a similar situation. They were expected to show God's mercy because priests were the ones who offered the sacrifices in the temple and implored God's mercy. Likewise, the Levite was the expert of the law and well versed in it, which for sure he knew the precepts of the Mosaic law of the love of God and the neighbour, but they failed miserably. Perhaps the lack of mercy of these two pious Jews was a result of the fear to take risks or for just being scrupulous with religious observance and yet missing its practicality.



Difficult experiences and even tragedies of life can be a turning point of being more human if we are attentive to the inner spirit.



Drawing by Bro. Djomo Ulrich Pacôme, Ivory Coast

This is a challenge too in our time, striving to grow in piety but also be pragmatic in the exercise of love of neighbour. Community rules and guidelines sometimes can blind us to the realities of those in need. Sometimes we can be eager to help people outside the community, but we are reluctant to give a helping hand [to those within], for instance to a confrère whose parents are sick and in great need. It is indisputable that our vows, rules, budget lines, and other guidelines, help us to focus our resources on the common mission and remind us of our exclusive abandonment for God- nevertheless, they can also callous our hearts, if they are not governed with love.

The Good Samaritan

We are told in the story that when a Samaritan came upon him; “he was moved by compassion” (Lk. 10:33). He is a foreigner, one who is an

outcast, a pagan, and not so much esteemed in society, who concretely helps the wounded man, with such tenderness and compassion. His intervention transcends the cultural boundaries, and he helps his enemy so to speak. Here Jesus wants to tell us that the Kingdom of God surpasses the Jewish worldview. It is a Kingdom that broadens the concept of who is my neighbour. That we are not only to focus on my tribesmen, but we are to be open to everyone regardless of their backgrounds. Jesus wants us to embrace humankind, in brotherly affection and mercy.

At a time when the refugees and migrants are viewed with suspicion and are not welcomed in some countries, the parable challenges us to see these “strangers” with a new outlook. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis believes that “immigrants, if they are helped to integrate, are a blessing, a source of enrichment and new gift



Drawing by Bro. Djomo Ulrich Pacôme, Ivory Coast

that encourages a society to grow” (No. 135). The encounter can have mutual benefits, and we don’t have to focus only on the burden of giving them resources to begin a new life. We are aware that in some countries where Church attendance and birth rates are down, it is the immigrants who are like a breath of fresh air and bring new life.

The compassion displayed by the Samaritan, who is not even religious, challenges me to see that God’s workings cannot be limited to human reasoning. We see this Samaritan is a model of true charity, he initiates the Innkeeper to continue taking care of the wounded man, and there is mutual trust that whatever extra cost will be incurred he will repay. He leaves the wounded man in safe hands, and does not even wait to be thanked; a total gratuitous love with no expectations or strings attached.



Drawing by Bro. Djomo Ulrich Pacôme, Ivory Coast

The Innkeeper

The decision of the Samaritan to bring the victim to the Inn for proper care underscores the importance of knowing one's own capacity and limits. He didn't abandon him but left money with the pledge to return and settle any accrued costs. In a way, he passed on the work of charity to another. In the workplace, it is important to empower future generations with what one cannot do anymore. Teamwork is important and flourishes in identifying the gifts of others and nurturing them. For when we cling to our apostolate as though it is a personal project, it risks not to continue. The trust shown by the innkeeper and the risks involved shows that his business model was not only for profit but moreover place for true hospitality. This is a wake-up call for us too, that when we are engaged in some income-generating activities or apostolates, our services should have always a human face.

In a way, through faith, we are to cultivate fraternity and accept our vulnerability to encounter the other. An awareness of the characters presented in the parable of the Good Samaritan should bring us to empty ourselves and realize that God's universal love is very profound and open to all. Our cultural, ideological, or religious differences as pilgrims, reflect the diversity of God's richness and beauty and the magnificent design of his very being. ¶

Bro. Venance Kapita



500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines and 40 Years of the Brothers of Charity

The Philippine Catholic Church opened its celebration of 500 years of Christianity with a Solemn Mass lead by the Holy Father, Pope Francis from the Vatican City on Sunday, March 14, 2021. In his homily during Mass, Pope Francis said that it was 500 years since the Philippines “received the joy of the

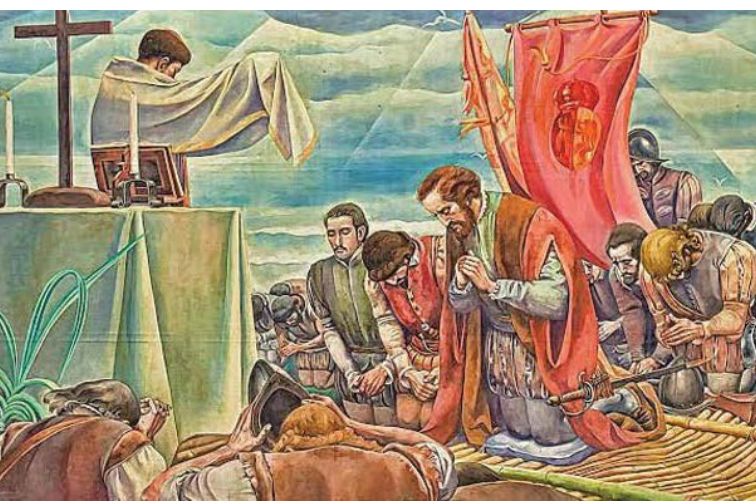


gifted to give

500 YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Gospel and this joy is evident in your people.” He continued to say, “We see it in your eyes, on your faces, in your songs, and in your prayers.” The Pope added, “I want to thank you for the joy you bring to the whole world and to our Christian communities.” Recognizing the witness of faith Filipinos offer through their “discreet and hardworking presence”, Pope Francis also urged them to “persevere in the work of evangelization.” The Pope said the Gospel message of God’s closeness must be constantly proclaimed to others so that none might perish. The Pope urged Filipino Catholics to walk courageously along the path of missionary discipleship. “Never be afraid to proclaim the Gospel, to serve and to love”, he said.

Christianity was brought to the Philippines in 1521 when the Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, heading a Spanish expedition with the Spanish missionaries in his bid to reach the



First Mass in the island of Mactan, Philippines, in 1521, by Carlos “Botong” Francisco, 1965 (Photo by Choo Yut Shing / Flickr)

East Indies, sailing west. Before Catholicism became the dominant religion in the Philippines, pre-colonial Filipinos expressed their faith in a variety of ways— from animism and folk healing to traces of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. The spice trade wasn't the only agenda of Spanish explorers who ventured to the Philippine shores in the 16th century. When colonizers landed on the Philippine shores in March 1521, they also introduced Christianity to locals. Despite initial resistance, the influence stuck. Nearly 500 years later, 93 percent of more than 100 million Filipinos are Christians of which 86 percent are Catholics. Although the Cross of the faith had come with the Sword of the conquistadores in the time of colonialism, through time the Filipinos have learned to distinguish between the Christian faith and the Spanish colonialism. We had fought against the Spanish masters and drove them out but we have remained fervent in our fidelity to the Catholic Church.

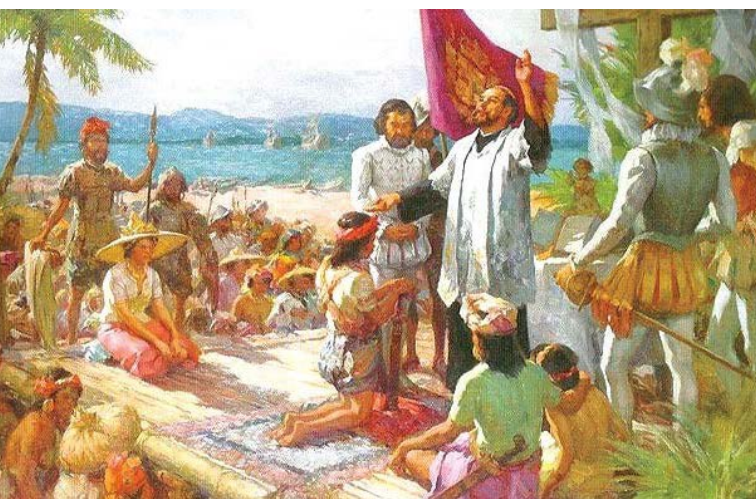


*Never be afraid
to proclaim the Gospel,
to serve and to love.*

The year 2021 is also a celebration of thanksgiving to all the missionaries and the Christian lay leaders, among them our great, great grandparents, who passed on the faith from one generation to the other. We owe who we

are and what we have to so many people down through the centuries, with their defects and with their virtues—Filipinos and foreigners, priests, religious and the Laity. The Catholic hierarchy has released the official theme and logo for the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity. “Gifted to Give,” taken from Matthew’s Gospel (10:8), is the theme. The various elements of the logo include a cross, a ship, the sun, a rosary, among others. The cross planted by Magellan on the island of Cebu signifies Christianity and serves as the mast of a ship. The ship represents the navigators of the expedition that brought the faith to the island. It also signifies the Church and its Sacraments. A dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit, which shares the Divine life in the Sacrament of Baptism. It also looks like a cloud that manifests the presence of God.

But the 500 years is not just a looking back to the past. It is also a looking forward to the future.



First baptism of the locals by the Spanish missionaries in 1521, by Fernando Amorsolo (ca. 1955-1960)

Yes, we have been chosen and truly gifted with the faith. This carries a great responsibility. We gratefully accept the gift, we develop it, and now it is our turn to pass it on to others. By “others” I mean to the coming generations of Filipinos and also to the other people in Asia and in the world. Jesus has come for the salvation of all peoples. Since we received the Good News, we have to share this Good News with others, especially with our neighbours here in Asia. Hence, the celebration is also a call to mission. The encompassing theme of the celebration, which also serves as a challenge even for us Brother of Charity as we mark 40 years of our presence in the Philippines, is Graciously Gifted to Give.

40 Years of the Brothers of Charity in the Philippines



*Spirituality and Conference Center of the Brothers of Charity,
Baguio City*

While the Spanish missionaries brought the “Joy of the Gospel” to the Philippines, the Brothers of Charity through their Belgian missionary Brothers brought the “Joy of the Resurrection” into the lives of Filipinos who are deprived of their dignity as humans due to their mental illness and disabilities. These Belgian missionaries were equipped with a care plan for mental illness and disability based on a perspective of Resurrection. Like their Founder the Servant of God Canon P.J. Triest, they help people through a very specific work of mercy with an ultimate goal of bringing the perspective of the resurrection into their lives.

In 1981, Bishop William Brasseur, a Belgian missionary bishop, and priests of the CICM Fathers, also known as “Scheut Missions” invited the Brothers of Charity to manage a Rehabilitation Center for Physically Handicapped in the Diocese of Baguio, Philippines. Brother Armand Peers was the first Belgian Brother who arrived in Baguio City. He was followed by other Belgian Brothers like Bro. Willy Ooms, Bro. Hugo Van Steenlandt, Bro. Adrian Ceelen, and Bro. Victor Gerard. Then from other countries like Bro. Walter Lips of Netherlands and Bro. Matthew Burns of USA. These Belgian missionaries did not only develop services for the handicapped they also develop vocations of local Filipino Brothers. After some years, the Rehabilitation Center for Physically Handicapped was incorporated into the school system of the CICM Fathers. Presently, the house of the Brothers of Charity in Baguio

City is now a “Spirituality and Conference Center” with the aim to generate funds to support the region.

In 1985, Cardinal Jaime Sin of the Archdiocese of Manila invited the Brothers from Belgium to open an Orthopedagogical School for children and young adults with intellectual disabilities to serve the Diocese. Brother Armand Peers came to Manila, assisted by the first two Filipino Brothers who were trained in Ireland for the “Care and Education of Children with Special Needs” with the support from the Irish Brothers in the province of St. Joseph. Brother Armand initiated the construction of the building while the two Filipino Brothers started the training of teachers and caregivers and gradually accepted students. Until now OPI school in Manila or the Ortho-pedagogical Institute continue to bring the joy of the resurrection into the lives of children with intellectual disabilities and their families



Fatima community house, Tabaco city

in Manila and nearby cities. Consequently, the Brothers of Charity did not only start the work of mercy but has become a strong partner of the Diocese of Manila in bringing the Church closer to the people particularly those in the periphery of this highly urbanized, impersonal, and individualistic society of the Metropolitan Manila. After the General Chapter of 2000, the General Council appointed a Filipino Brother to lead the Brothers of Charity in the Philippines. During this time there were already a good number of local Brothers in the region. Inspired to share the charism of Fr. Triest, the local Brothers decided to extend their services to other parts of the country.

In 2003 Bishop Jose Sorra of the Diocese of Legazpi and Auxillary Bishop Lucilo Qiambao formally welcome the Brothers of Charity in the Diocese of Legazpi, about 500 kilometers south of Manila. After a year, Holy Face Rehabilitation Center for Mental Health and Fatima community house was inaugurated on May 13, 2004, in the presence of Superior General, Brother René Stockman who is the main promoter of this new project. For 17 years, Holy Face Rehabilitation Center for Mental Health has become a model of holistic care with a new Christian vision of man in the mental health care system of the Philippines. Through the years of pioneering service to the people in the Bicol region, Holy Face Rehabilitation Center for Mental Health has proven that barriers of stigma and ignorance can be broken; that restoring the human dignity of people with mental illness is

possible. It is encouraging to witness smiles on the faces of former patients and their amazing transformation to a meaningful life in society.

Due to lack of funding, residential services at Holy Face Center was discontinued. At the moment only the outpatient and community services continue to operate funded partly by Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and from the contributions of the patients. There were plans to develop sustainable programs to generate extra income using the facilities and professional expertise of Holy Face Center but due to Covid-19, all these plans were put on hold. Many of our donors and partners were financially affected by Covid 19, thus local fundraising is not possible until the country can recover economically. A feasibility study was conducted on how the Fatima building can be utilized to generate funds. Plans were ready for implementation but due to Covid-19, it was put on hold. Recently a



The Ortho-pedagogical Institute and convent of the Brothers of Charity in Manila

“super typhoon” severely damaged Holy Face Center and Fatima building. Walls around the property collapsed and many other facilities were damaged by strong wind and flood. Thanks to the support of our Superior General Bro. René Stockman, Fracarita International, and many kind-hearted people from Belgium who contributed to restoring the damaged property.

In 2003, the Brothers of Charity took over Saint Dymphna Psychiatric Center in Gingoog City, province of Misamis Oriental 1,300 kilometers from Manila. After renovation, the center reopened in 2004. The centre provides a new way of psychiatric care in the province with the cooperation of the local government and stakeholders of Gingoog City. Due to lack of fundings and with few Brothers in the region, the Congregation decided to return St. Dymphna psychiatric center to the former owner.

We look back with immense gratitude to the Almighty God for his guidance and protection for the Church in the Philippines and our presence as Brothers of Charity. The last 40 years have brought the Joy of Resurrection to the poor whose dignity continues to be violated. We praise and thank God for the generosity of the Brothers from Belgium, the Netherlands, and America, who built up the foundation of the Brothers of Charity in the Philippines and enabled us to continue to this day. Despite the challenges on vocations and financial sustainability of our services, we remain hopeful and ready to continue sharing our Charism of Charity. Like our Blessed Mother

Mary whose patronage and protection to this region has been so strong, we can say, we are the servants of the Lord who are ever ready to give graciously! ॥

Bro. Joel Ponsaran



Responding to new needs in Kasaka

Creativity is king in Kasaka. On 12 December 2012 (12-12-12), a new psychiatric centre was opened and blessed in Kasaka near Kigoma in Tanzania. With a capacity of 30 beds, it would now be possible to serve the population of Kigoma and the surrounding area and their psychiatric needs. We found the site somewhat remote from the city and not easily accessible, but it is a peaceful environment.



The brothers literally moved into the centre and used one wing as a convent. No, it was certainly not luxurious. But living under the same roof as the sick gave both a special feeling of solidarity. It reminded us of the many brothers who used to have their rooms adjacent to the patients' or disabled children's dormitory. The brother was always available.

The Kasaka centre has not been spared from misfortune. A fire destroyed one of the wings, causing the loss of valuable materials. More recently there was a break-in during which basic materials were taken. However, the brothers have always tried to overcome these setbacks and have come out stronger. At the same time, they remained open to the questions that came their way. The care for psychiatric patients coming from the refugee camps became one of the specific requests to which they responded favourably. Recently, a new request was made to offer help to people with physical issues. This is how the idea came about to convert the wing where the brothers were staying into a somatic dispensary and to turn a warehouse just outside the walls of the hospital into a convent.



On 12 February 2021, the somatic dispensary and the new laundry were inaugurated during the visit of the Superior General. Targeted projects helped to raise the funds needed to convert and equip the dispensary. They are now only waiting

for the medical equipment to be able to start providing actual care. The construction of the convent is the next step, and the brothers will be happy to be close to their patients again, as they have been commuting to and from Kigoma every day since the renovation.

The project also has a broader purpose, as they hope to generate additional income to support the centre's operations. It was the theme of the words spoken at the opening. "The Congregation has invested in the establishment of this centre and also in the formation of the brothers. It is now up to us to continue to build on what we have received and to find creative ways to limit our own capacity." Powerful words from both the regional superior Bro. Chrisantus and the local director Bro. Emmanuel that resonated and that became matter for further reflection.



That is continuing today what was started earlier thanks to the Congregation's missionary work. It is also going back in time to when the first

brothers, with the work of their hands, gradually set up care and education and ensured that it became sustainable.



We can only wish that everything that is being done in Kasaka really helps the sick and that these psychiatric patients can have their human dignity restored. An anecdote added some special colour to the event. One of the patients came to ask me what religion I practised. He used to be a Catholic, too, but had converted to Islam. He asked me if I would consider converting, as well. I promised I would think about it, and when I left, he was standing at the gate, waving me goodbye. Apparently, he hoped that his conversion work would bear some fruit. Talk about inter-religious dialogue... 🙏

Bro. René Stockman



Is there still room for the objectivity of morality?

Today, we are experiencing a new paradox. On the one hand, we are overwhelmed by a plethora of new laws that are more and more concerned with people's personal lives and convictions, driven mainly by all sorts of ideologies. On the other hand, we experience a growing allergy to generally applicable morality that refers to what is morally right and wrong and tries to give direction to human actions. These ideologies claim that they want to support man in the accomplishment of the so-coveted individualistic self-realization and want to liberate him from the so-called yoke that morality would weigh on man and prevent him from self-realization. A morality based on natural law, which for centuries has formed the basis of the order of Western society, was considered by many contemporaries to be an infringement of human freedom and self-determination. This universally accepted principle, which formed the foundation of morality and society, has been completely rejected by the new – supposedly progressive – ideologies, which have plunged society into a profound moral crisis, sadly claiming countless victims. This crisis is rooted in the broken union between freedom and truth. Many people believe that human freedom is so unlimited that it is no longer bound by anything, not even the truth. Nothing is pre-determined or

given, everything can still be created; nothing is pre-determined as good or evil, everything good can still be created.

Today, everything seems to be judged based on the situation and the inner motivation, and no fixed standard is accepted by which an action can be evaluated. Now, it seems as if the situation in which an action is performed and the inner motivation by which it is performed have acquired the exclusivity to judge the moral content of this action. Traditionally, the situation and the inner motivation were the criteria for judging whether an action – considered deviating from what was good – could count on extenuating circumstances. Good was called good and evil was called evil, and between these two, certain criteria and circumstances determined the severity of the evil.



These ideologies have also made their way into contemporary theological trends that preach personalism and the proportionalism and consequentialism associated with it. As a result,

good and evil are put into perspective to such an extent that there can no longer be any objective good or evil, nor any sin.

This is why it has become fashionable to condone everything and to draw a veil over it, out of a so-called pastoral concern. The argument is that, after all, Jesus Christ was forgiving to the woman taken in adultery and forgave the murderer on the cross. However, one fails to ask the question as to whether the forgiveness Jesus offered also meant that the act was approved.

One overlooks the fact that the adulterous woman was instructed not to sin again and that the forgiveness granted to the murderer on the cross came after he had confessed his guilt.

None other than Saint Augustine expressed this distinction in a powerful way with his well-known phrase that we should love the sinner but hate the sin. A distinction that is often not easy to make, because an act is always committed by a particular person, so that there is an essential link between the act and the person who commits it. However, the distinction helps us to maintain our objectivity in judging the act and to assert subjectivity in judging the person who commits the act and in the understanding we have, to a greater or lesser degree, for the act. It is this distinction that has disappeared altogether today in an atmosphere of condonation.

As Christian believers, we must ask ourselves whether, in this way, we are doing each other a service, or whether we are obstructing each other in living out our vocation as human beings in general and as Christians in particular.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to become holy as the Father in heaven is holy. This is the benchmark for our life as Christians to which we are invited and to which we must aspire, yes, from and with our human limitations. Pope Francis also explicitly calls us to this on several occasions.

The pursuit of holiness is not a relic from a distant Catholic past, but a contemporary appeal for all who call themselves Christians.



Consciously or unconsciously, everyone is looking for the full life, the absolute good, the fullness of good. And since only God is good, any human being can turn to God to know what is good and what is evil. God has made himself known in many ways, but first and foremost by the law written in the heart of man, which is natural law. This natural law is nothing other than the light of reason instilled in us by God, by which we learn what we should and should not do. The content of this natural law is made explicit in the Ten Commandments (the

Decalogue). Natural law and the Decalogue thus go hand in hand and protect the singular individuality and dignity of the human person. Nor is the new law that Jesus presented in the Sermon on the Mount opposed to natural law or the Decalogue; on the contrary, the Sermon on the Mount is the fulfilment of the Decalogue. In it, Jesus internalizes the commandments and calls his followers to a most generous response. Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is the Magna Carta of evangelical morality. It is the task of the Church's Magisterium to present natural law, the Decalogue, and the Sermon on the Mount to all generations in the light of Christ.

Although the Church does not wish to impose any system of philosophical or theological thought, the Church's Magisterium has the duty to say that some views and schools of thought are contrary to the revealed truth.



God has made himself known in many ways, but first and foremost by the law written in the heart of man, which is natural law.

This does not place an unbearable burden on people's shoulders, and does not restrict their freedom, but helps them not to lose sight of the ideal in life. We are all, in one way or another, far from that ideal, but the path to it will not be

made more passable by obscuring the ideal or simply seeing it as outmoded.

When the Church's teaching on moral issues is rejected a priori because it supposedly takes insufficient account or no account at all of the realities of life or shows a lack of love for the lives of real people, then I think there is a serious confusion on the part of those who claim this. As human beings, we need both truth and compassion, upliftment and support. It is presented as if every word spoken by the Magisterium – which is not in line with a contemporary ideology – would be a condemnation of specific people and a reason for people to turn their backs on the Church en masse.



As long as there is love, everything seems to be allowed according to this attitude. Reference is again made to Saint Augustine and his other well-known saying: “Love, and do what you

will.” It seems to be forgotten, however, that Jesus phrased the commandment of love as a completion of the Law, not as a replacement for it.

“We do not want to condemn or lose anyone,” we often hear today as an additional argument for rejecting statements of the Church Magisterium. Indeed, condemning people and leaving them to their own devices can never be the intention.

But if, as is rightly said, one wishes to give conscience its rightful place in judging and deciding whether or not to commit an act, then this conscience must be formed and take into account a clear frame of reference, and it cannot simply depend on one’s own interpretation of what is good and what is evil. If a conscience is confined to a purely personal conviction about what is morally good or evil, it is only a very limited individualistic reflection, which escapes the test of what is defined as universally good.



The formation of conscience involves precisely this growing capacity to weigh personal action against the universal good.

The formation of conscience involves precisely this growing capacity to weigh personal action against the universal good. Psychology devotes

a great deal of attention to this inner growth process and to how guidance and examples are needed in order to grow towards a mature conscience. It seems that, today, people no longer want to give this natural growth process in man a chance, and, on the contrary, want to replace it with a conscience that allows itself to be guided only by emotions.

Perhaps this is one of the great mistakes of our time that prevents people from real happiness. It is regrettable and painful that people who are called and have the responsibility to guide and lead others in faith are led by populism and certain ideologies rather than by the Christian faith in their oversimplified criticism of the Church's Magisterium.

If we, as a church community, want to take the guardianship of our brothers and sisters to heart, as is so aptly indicated in the first pages of the Bible, we must help each other to allow good to grow in our lives and to renounce evil. This presupposes that we dare to be honest about what is good and evil, first of all for ourselves but also towards others.

A sincere act of love and a spiritual work of mercy to boot! ¶

Bro. René Stockman



Taking Stock of Life

The last words attributed to Steve Jobs, billionaire and Apple co-founder, who died at the age of 56 from pancreatic cancer :

“I reached the pinnacle of success in the business world. In others’ eyes my life is an epitome of success.

However, aside from work, I have little joy. In the end, wealth is only a fact of life that I am accustomed to.

At this moment, lying on the sick bed and recalling my whole life, I realize that all the recognition and wealth that I took so much pride in, have paled and become meaningless in the face of impending death.

You can employ someone to drive the car for you, make money for you but you cannot have someone to bear the sickness for you.

Material things lost can be found. But there is one thing that can never be found when it is lost – “Life”.

Whichever stage in life we are at right now, with time, we will face the day when the curtain comes down.

Treasure love for your family, love for your spouse, love for your friends... Treat yourself well. Cherish others.

As we grow older, and hence wiser, we slowly realize that wearing a \$300 or \$30 watch – they both tell the same time...

Whether we carry a \$300 or \$30 wallet/handbag – the amount of money inside is the same.

Whether we drive a \$150,000 car or a \$30,000 car, the road and distance is the same, and we get to the same destination.

Whether we drink a bottle of \$300 or \$10 wine – the hangover is the same.

Whether the house we live in is 300 or 3000 square feet – loneliness is the same.

You will realize, your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world.

Whether you fly first or economy class, if the plane goes down – you go down with it.

Therefore... I hope you realize, when you have mates, buddies and old friends, brothers and sisters, who you chat with, laugh with, talk with, have sing songs with, talk about north-south-east-west or heaven and earth, That is true happiness!!

Five Undeniable Facts

1. Don't educate your children to be rich. Educate them to be happy. So when they grow

up, they will know the value of things, not the price.

2. Eat your food as your medicine. Otherwise you have to eat medicine as your food.
3. Whoever loves you will never leave you for another, because even if there are 100 reasons to give up, he or she will find one reason to hold on.
4. There is a big difference between a human being and being human. Only a few really understand it.
5. You are loved when you are born. You will be loved when you die. In between, you have to manage!

Note: If you just want to walk fast, walk alone!
But if you want to walk far, walk together! 🍃



At a profession

Three young brothers kneel before the altar to profess their vows before God, the Church, and the Congregation. It always reminds me of the time when I myself knelt down to make my profession in a somewhat trembling and emotional voice, almost fifty years ago. At that time, I, like these three brothers now, had a perhaps exaggerated idea of the religious life I was about to enter. It all seemed rather rosy. However, it would not be long before there was a crack in this initial enthusiasm and I was confronted with the first doubts, difficulties, resistances both within myself and around me. Gradually, I would discover that these would be the contours in which my life as a religious would have to develop. And then came the question of what the ultimate keynote of my life would be.



We go through numerous storms in our lives, moments of profound disappointment and circumstances that deeply disturb our inner life. Just as we are currently suffering under the scourge of the Covid pandemic and facing natural disasters in various places where the Congregation is active, each of us will have our own personal story of events that tried to put out the fire from the very beginning. The question arises: did we let these events overwhelm us, paralyse us, or did we use them to deepen our lives and to rekindle the fire of the very beginning?



The morning of the profession of these three young brothers, I received an email from a brother who had left the Congregation and thought it necessary to vent his spleen on everything that had happened to him in the Congregation and of which he had become the victim. What a sad story; a story of tribalism, of exclusion, of false accusation, and much

more. I really felt sorry for this man who now apparently went through life as someone who had been hurt. Little remained of the enthusiasm he had shown on the day of his first profession. When I looked in my saved documents for the photo of the group of novices to which this brother belonged and saw him surrounded by his colleagues, I saw several other faces of brothers who had probably undergone and experienced the same thing as our friend, but who now lived a happy life as Brothers of Charity. What could be the difference between that disappointed man and those others? It was and will always be about the keynote that they have given to their lives and that we have given to ours.

There are probably three ways in which we can allow that initial enthusiasm to grow or fade away altogether.

We can let it be overwhelmed by the many negative events that we face and let this become the keynote in our further lives. There will not be



much left of this enthusiasm in the short term, and we see this in those who, after a while, cease to pay attention to the further development of their spiritual life, which is, after all, a life with God and with God alone. The initial joy that they tried to find in a spiritual life is then quickly replaced by the surrogate of cheap pleasure, and when there is not enough room for this in the religious life, they quickly find arguments to leave this life behind as a place where there is only frustration. Did I not recognize this from somewhere in the email I received that morning from the brother who had left?



A second group will settle into a civil existence, earning diplomas, building a career, dealing with material things and even money, and will try to find meaning for their lives in this. Here, too, there will not be much enthusiasm left and their lives will differ very little from those who seek to shape their lives outside of a religious context. In this process of becoming more civil, with all that this entails, there will be little room left

for the fervour with which they set out on their religious lives. It is sad that in our communities we meet brothers who live more like civilians than religious. They remain brothers, but their spiritual keynote seems to have been completely undermined and there is very little of their radiance left. They are certainly not very appealing to young people who are thinking of taking the path of consecrated life.

Thankfully, there is a third group. These are the ones who, after their profession, have found the way to walk with Jesus and to find in all the events of their lives a reflection of the life that Jesus led on this earth, up to and including his death on the cross, and thus have allowed the perhaps still superficial enthusiasm at the very beginning to grow into a purified and deepened enthusiasm, marked by the cross, but shining with the joy of the resurrection. They experience the same as all the others, but they do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by it; on the contrary, they let their lives be driven by this spiritual keynote that always makes them look forward to their final destination, of which their religious consecration is already a foretaste. And this final destination fills them with profound joy and above all with a peace that the world cannot offer them. It is a matter of giving God a place in everything that happens to us and of believing that this is our unique path that God wants to take with us.

The final question is: what about us? To which category do we belong? It is the reflection that



It is a matter of giving God a place in everything that happens to us and of believing that this is our unique path that God wants to take with us.

I took with me during the whole ceremony and that I also shared in the little speech I was invited to make. Above all, I prayed that these three young brothers would choose the path of deepening their spiritual life, a path with the joy of God's glory in view, and with Jesus as their faithful companion. ¶

Bro. René Stockman



Hospitality in Bangwe

Visiting Bangwe is always a remarkable experience. Some thirty young people with mental disabilities are looked after there, some as residents, others only during the day. A project, or rather a community, which has been around for almost twenty years now and which grew out of Maendeleo, the youth centre in Kigoma, Tanzania. Maendeleo is also remarkable in itself as a home where anyone in need is hospitably welcomed. Young people, but also a few elderly people, a few psychiatric patients, and children with mental disabilities. It was with this last group that the decision was made to open a separate home, which became Bangwe.

When we stop at the house in the car, a large group of children come running towards us. They are celebrating because they have visitors. It is difficult for us to get out of the car, because we are overwhelmed by the many hands that want to greet us. Some of them I recognize from our last visit two years ago, others are new and still very young. Several have Down syndrome and stand out because of their sweetness. I practically need to be freed from this crowding group to reach the brothers' home. Brother Ernest, the person in charge of the house, talks enthusiastically about the way the house works, where everything is aimed at the promotion of these young people's



daily lives. Self-sufficiency is the theme here, set in a veritable community where the children can be happy. During the following visit, the latter is certainly clear. They are happy. One of the youngsters takes me with him to the storeroom and he explains in words that I cannot understand, where everything has its own place. Bro. Ernest tells me that this boy is always happy to work in the storeroom, a converted container adjacent to the home's recreation room. A young girl, with her headscarf clearly a Muslim, has now got hold of me and pulls me with all her might to the garden, to show me what they grow there. Again, pride and joy. The whole group follows us, shouting at the top of their voices to get attention. Back at the home, I am shown the dormitory. It is tidy. That was not always the case and I congratulate Bro. Ernest for the care he shows. No, it is not an easy task to go beyond one's daily routine and to repeat and live with enthusiasm the basic concepts of an orderly life. That is education, orthopedagogy in full practice.

Back at the house of the brothers, we talk some more, and one of the youngsters has managed to follow us unnoticed and is now holding a cola drink, which he clutches triumphantly in his hands. We give him two biscuits with the instruction to give one to his friends. He does, and he deserves real encouragement for doing so. Yes, education is visibly doing its work here in Bangwe.

Bro. Ernest is delighted with the minibus they have just received by submitting a project through Fracarita International and the additional support they receive from the Congregation. He keeps dreaming that one day they can have a new building, also a project that is pending. But with the current Covid-19 pandemic, that is one of many projects that has now ended up on a waiting list. We remain hopeful for the future.



The moment we say goodbye is once again very powerful. Everyone wants to shake hands, and

one of the children tries to climb into the car in front of me. We manage to get him out with great difficulty. He cries because he cannot come with us in the car. “Next time” is apparently not much consolation to him. Everyone is enthusiastic for the group photo and once more I am surrounded by that group of happy young people. Children with mental disabilities, written off by many in today’s society as inferior, but here in Bangwe, I only experience added value. Added value with which they let me feel that warm hospitality, spontaneously and uncomplicated. No, they let their emotions run free and it is definitely not an act. It all comes from the heart. During our drive to the next apostolate that we will visit today, we spoke with Bro. Chrisantus, the regional superior. “The children are indeed our masters, as it sounded during the last retreat. We have so much to learn from them.” Indeed, Bro. Chrisantus made the right connection between the earlier theoretical words of the retreat and the visit we



The fragile neighbour has so much to teach us: simple compassion, true friendship, spontaneous warmth, everything that is so often hidden behind structures and management these days.

were now able to make. The fragile neighbour has so much to teach us: simple compassion, true friendship, spontaneous warmth, everything that is so often hidden behind structures and management these days. I would like to invite everyone to visit Bangwe and be overwhelmed by this spontaneous and genuine hospitality. In a word: uplifting in a sometimes harsh society! 🙏



Bro. René Stockman



News from the General Administration

- Due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, the General Council meetings were continued online. By increasing the pace of the meetings, the items on the agenda can be dealt with more quickly. However, from September onwards, we hope to once again be able to hold an extended council meeting with the provincial superiors present.
- The following brothers were granted permission to profess their perpetual vows:
 - Bro. Casimir Reynante Largo Orosio (Philippines)
 - Bro. Swarup Tirkey (India)
 - Bro. Rohit Barwa Joachim (India)
 - Bro. Jean Damascène Barindira (Rwanda)
 - Bro. Alain Musole Asila (Our Lady of Loreto, DR Congo)
 - Bro. Philippe Amin Oboue (Our Lady of Loreto, DR Congo)
 - Bro. André Ngalula Nkombua (Our Lady of Africa, DR Congo)
 - Bro. Donatien Kabuluapa (Tanzania)
 - Bro. Richard Tchansa (Tanzania)
 - Bro. Joseph Trung Nguyen Van (Vietnam)
- Dispensation of vows: Bro. Rudy Despi

(Philippines) was granted a dispensation from his vows.

- The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life appointed an Apostolic Commissioner to lead the Belgian region for the time being, in the person of the Abbot of the Norbertine Abbey of Postel, Fr. Frédéric Testaert, who is also the President of the Union of Religious in Belgium.
- Bro. Victor Hugo, having finished his assignment as master of novices, has returned to the American province and will be appointed in the United States. We thank him for his commitment to the formation during the past period. He remains the contact person for the reporting point for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons.
- From 17 to 29 May, the Superior General was in Rwanda and Burundi for a canonical visitation. On this occasion, he received the first profession of four novices who had completed their novitiate formation in the Philippines, as well as the perpetual profession of Bro. Jean-Louis Mukonkole (Our Lady of Loreto, DR Congo). At the same time, arrangements were made for the organization of the second year of the novitiate in Ndera and the start of the project for the reception of priests and religious in need, in the buildings of the Twizere Formation House for the time being.

- Several requests for new foundations in Ethiopia, Zambia, and DR Congo were discussed and will be followed up later for further evaluation.



TANZANIA

Perpetual professions in Kigoma

On Saturday, 13 February 2021, seven brothers made their perpetual profession of vows as members of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity in Kigoma, Tanzania.

Their profession had already been planned for last year, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but now finally, during the visit of the Superior General to the region, these brothers were able to commit themselves to the Congregation forever.

The open-air ceremony, due to the renovation works in the Cathedral, was celebrated by Mgr. Joseph Mlola, the Bishop of Kigoma. During his homily, he emphasized the importance of religious life for the Church, and he thanked



the Brothers of Charity for their presence in the diocese in the field of education, and in their service for people with a disability and people with a mental illness.

The Superior General, Bro. René Stockman, encouraged the newly professed brothers to look to the future with hope and to keep the charism of the Congregation present in a prophetic way. The professed brothers are from Tanzania, DR Congo and Kenya.

BELGIUM

Perpetual profession in Moerzeke

On Saturday 1 May, the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, Bro. Marius Mande professed his perpetual vows in the community of Moerzeke in Belgium.



RWANDA

First professions in Ndera

On Saturday 22 May, Brother Superior General received the first vows of two new brothers, Bro. Fidèle Mugabo and Bro. Théophile Habingabire, who committed their lives to God.



BURUNDI

First vows and perpetual profession

27 May was a joyful day in Bujumbura with the perpetual profession of Bro. Jean Louis Mukonkole and the first vows of Bro. Jean Népomuscène Nkurunziza and Bro. Michel Nahayo. The ceremony took place in the parish of Saint John the Baptist of Gihosha, near the seat

of the Archdiocese of Bujumbura.



IN MEMORIAM

**Mr. Daniel Miku Mwanza
(DR Congo)**

Mr Daniel Miku Mwanza was born in Lusambo on 20th August 1947; he made his promises as an associate member in 2019.

He has had many responsibilities in primary education since 1974 with the Brothers of Charity in Lusambo, where he contributed a lot to stabilise education in the schools.

He was very assiduous in serving the poor in the schools where he worked and in his living environment based on the charism of the



congregation. He was faithful in prayer and other activities organised in the group of the associate members and the community.

He died on the 9th of February 2021 in Lusambo.

IN MEMORIAM

Ms. Delphine Axford (USA)

Associate Member Delphine Axford, “Dell” as she was known to most people, was born near Philadelphia PA in the USA on August 18, 1937. Her family was small with only one brother, Robert. Her parents adopted another brother, Joseph, with whom she became very close. Both of her brothers died in recent years, a loss that she felt very deeply. In her early years, she attended St. Luke School with the Sisters of St. Joseph and later graduated from Gwynedd Mercy High School with the Sisters of Mercy. She later attended Gwynedd Mercy University for a short time. Often she would joke that they wanted her to join the convent, but that was not for her. She married Charles Silvestri and together they raised 5 children. He also died in recent years. In 2004, Dell observed the Brothers and the intellectually disabled residents they care for during Mass at St. Luke parish church. She remarked to herself that she wanted to be part of such a loving community. Dell immediately volunteered to help at Triest Hall. She quickly found a “home away from home” with the community there.

When the Brothers initiated a first come and



see for potential associate candidates, Dell was quickly in line. She completed her formation and pronounced her first promises as an Associate Member on August 15, 2009. She maintained her volunteer activities at Triest Hall and added many new activities -- too many to list here -- such as Mary's House for unwed mothers where she met and counseled the young women living there. She was always active in her own spiritual life and attended many prayer and enrichment activities in the parish. Dell regularly attended monthly Mass in the chapel at Triest Hall. She invited other people to come with her and introduced them to the community. She would often say that she wanted to be sure that someone would replace here when she is gone. She struggled with significant physical

challenges, overcoming breast cancer in 2005. She was left with COPD as a result of that chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Carrying her oxygen tank, she never complained, but pushed onward, even with frequent hospitalizations. At last, it was time for her to complete her work here on earth and return to her home in heaven. Dell died on February 15, 2021 at age 83 years.

BURUNDI

On 30 March, Associate Member Marguerite Niyonzima and her husband Hilaire Baransharitse celebrated their silver wedding anniversary (25 years). The event was marked by an evening Mass at the chapel of the Kamenge Neuropsychiatric Centre (CNPCK), the same venue where they exchanged wedding vows twenty-five years ago.



Brother Christ Doorakkers

1926-2021

On 6 September 1926, Christ was born into the Doorakkers family in Tilburg, the Netherlands. Because of his religious upbringing, he developed a longing for a religious life. So, at the age of 13, he chose to go to the juniorate of the Brothers of Charity at Eikenburg. After the juniorate and novitiate period, which were marked by the Second World War, Christ was professed a Brother of Charity at Saint Paschal's in Oostrum on 15 August 1945.

As a young brother of almost 20, he came to live at Eikenburg, after a few months in Venray. There, Bro. Christ helped the brother bursar with administrative work. When they needed someone at Saint Servatius' who was familiar with this, he went back to Venray.

Venray became his home. He experienced the best years of his life there. His work progressed from general administrative work, over payroll administration, to the personnel department, where he became a specialist dealing with pensions, taxes, and social insurance. Contact with people was what made the work special for him. And people really thought he was special! When Bro. Christ retired in 1988, he remained active, doing volunteer work. Filling in tax returns and handling correspondence for people of foreign origin is what filled most of his days and his heart. It resulted in beautiful friendships,



in addition to the many he already had.

On 21 May 2012, Bro. Christ fell ill from one day to the next. A critical period followed, but he slowly recovered. After months in hospital with the support of his confreres and friends, he was allowed to go to his new home: back to Eikenburg where it all began. He went back to work there, not for his neighbours this time but focused on his own recovery. He was determined to increase his mobility and thus his independence.

This determination was characteristic of every setback he subsequently suffered. A hernia, an eye operation, several cases of pneumonia... again and again, he worked on his recovery, step

by step. Literally, too: by extending his daily walk as far as he could, with a walker and later with oxygen.

Yet his life was characterized not by these setbacks but by positive things: as a 94-year-old brother, he was still using the computer, he used a smartphone, he made Christmas cards and personalized birthday cards, he wrote letters, he enjoyed people visiting him with a pastry or a glass of wine, he took walks on the Eikenburg estate, and he travelled a few more times.

Bro. Christ was always looking forward to milestones: his 75th convent jubilee was one of them. He reached it and that was something to be proud of. Turning one hundred was the next milestone. He often talked about that. He still enjoyed life. Yet he also thought about death and had prepared everything for his final farewell. He wrote:

“From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank the Lord in Heaven that I was allowed to live on this earth as a human being and most of all as a Brother of Charity. That I was allowed to receive so much grace and joy from Him. It was good, it was beautiful.”

We in turn thank Bro. Christ for all that he has meant to us as a person and as a brother. Rest in peace!

Brother Floribert Carrette
1948-2021



Brother Flor, as we used to call him, added colour to the Congregation and left his mark of joy wherever he went.

Originating from Ruiselede in Belgium, he grew up in a family where two brothers and one sister chose the religious life. Young Flor also decided to enter the convent and became a novice in 1968, with his first profession as a Brother of Charity on 15 August 1969. He received his further professional training at the Guislain Institute in Ghent, and, as a young brother nurse, he was assigned to the not so easy Saint Dymphna Ward immediately following his graduation in 1972. It was a real learning experience for him. At the same time, he turned out to be a confrere who brought liveliness to the community. Someone once said that nobody was safe when Bro. Flor was around. There was a risk of finding teaspoons in one's coat pocket, batteries were taken out of hearing aids, X-rays were taken supposedly to reveal a missing

little cross in a patient's stomach, or a brother was sent on his way with a few bricks in his suitcase. Together with Bro. Henri Fransen, he was certainly imaginative in playing pranks on others. It added warmth and conviviality to the life of a community of then predominantly young brothers.

In 1974, Brother Flor transferred for the first time and went to Dave where he became head of the then O Department. A year later, he went to Zelzate where he became head of the Vita Clinic. Here, too, his daily dedication to the sick was interspersed with anecdotes that are still being told today. Perhaps the most daring was the impersonation of the then provincial superior when he announced the superior's transfer by telephone. Afterwards, everyone had a good laugh about it.

In 1982, Bro. Flor was asked to move to Beernem, where he became head of the clinic and, a year later, nursing director. There, he learned not only how to take care of the sick, he also learned the tricks of the trade as a leader, and the staff always found their young director willing to listen to them. He was therefore the right person to become the director of the Psycho-Social Centre in Leuven, which he led with great dedication for ten years.

When the Congregation started a house in Ronse for the care of AIDS patients and they initially tried to run the house with a family, it soon became clear how necessary a community would be. In 2000, Bro. Flor was called upon to take on the responsibility of this new initiative. For more than twenty years, he was the driving

force behind it. His care for the patients and the respect he demanded for these people who were very quickly discriminated against and marginalized because of their illness made him like a crusader in testifying in many places that these people, too, needed our care, our respect, and especially our love.

The house itself became a truly welcoming community that he led together with other brothers and with associate member Jeanine. The last few years, he struggled with his health, but he remained faithful to the end, bearing his suffering rather in silence. Consequently, his death came as a surprise to many.

We are grateful to Brother Flor for his dedication as a Brother of Charity, for his love for the sick to whom he was close throughout his life and whom he truly considered his brothers and sisters. His brief accounts in the former periodical Jong Karitas were appreciated by many and that was his way of sharing our charism. His life in community was sacred to him, and in his truly unique way he brought flavour to everyday life among the brothers with a dash of humour. All this was underpinned by faithful prayer and an unshakeable trust that the Lord would complete what he tried to do by his own efforts. Brother Flor may now enter into that great mystery of God's love. What was the driving force in his religious life he may now fully experience as a gift that God will bestow on him. God is love, and many have been able to experience it here on earth through Brother Flor.

Brother Lambert Stouten

1929 -2021

An amiable brother has passed away from us. Together with his brother Marcel they came from Rekem in Limburg to the Brothers of Charity, and while Marcel as Br. Lucied became a very dedicated brother-nurse and later director of a psychiatric hospital and died rather young, Lambert as Br. Wenceslas became an equally dedicated brother-teacher, and later also director and superior and even novice-master.

After his profession in 1948 he completed his studies as a teacher and then, as was still the custom at the time, had to serve the country, to receive his first appointment as a teacher in the Juniorate in Leuven in early 1952. The first years he worked in Leuven, Hasselt and back again in Zwijnaarde, to start in 1954 in Sint-Niklaas the study of regent which he finished with flying colours in 1957 as regent for scientific subjects. Br. Lambert would continue to be associated with the junior schools in Sint-Michiels-Brugge, Sint-Truiden and Leopoldsburg, each time as teacher, as master of the juniorate and as director. After 25 years of dedication and experience in the formation of youngsters, in 1982 the delicate task of novice master was entrusted to him, and as always Br. Lambert accepted this new task in his well-known enthusiastic way. Every year he saw fewer young people entering the Congregation, which certainly worried him. But those whom he was allowed to accompany both as juvenile, as postulant and later as novice,



will always speak with great pleasure, reverence and gratitude about their ever friendly and helpful master. From 1986 to 2002 Br. Lambert commuted between Ghent and Turnhout to be superior of various communities there until in 2002 he was asked to become the superior of the Convent-Rest-home Saint-John in Zelzate. With the same care and devotion he now became the caring companion of his aging fellow brothers. After a short interval in Beernem he came back to Zelzate to rest himself. However, he remained the helpful fellow brother, always ready to help the others in the many small needs that growing older entails.

Brother Lambert was an authentic Brother of Charity, who knew how to give shape to his vocation in a very unique and personal way, with as its greatest characteristic his incalculable servitude. His fidelity to his daily prayer life was proverbial and it was there that he was allowed to discover more and more the depth of his vocation as a religious. This became the source of his devotion and the strength from which he could accept everything and discern in it the will of God. He loved his community and his community loved him. He lived intensely with what was happening in the Congregation worldwide and rejoiced in the many new initiatives that young brothers promoted. If at certain times he found it a bit difficult to accept his coming of age, he always managed to overcome this and found inspiration in his religious vocation and mission to accept every life situation and really make the best of it. It is in this spirit that he took the great step to the glory of the Father. It is a step that he has prepared a whole life by knowing himself safe in God's hands every day. He has now arrived at the final destination of his life and we are sure that he will be welcomed with joy there as well. We can only be grateful for this beautiful life that Br. Lambert has given to the Congregation and in which he has been able to find his deep happiness and with which he has made so many others happy.

Brother Antonius Nelson

Sembiring,

1967 -2021

Brother Antonius Titus Nelson Sembiring or famously known as Bro. Anton originally came from Simalungun North Sumatera, where he was born on 2nd September 1967. He joined as a postulant of the Brothers of Charity in 2009 in the community of St Paul in Yogyakarta. After the formation, he pronounced his first vows on 26th February 2014 at the age of 42-years old and sealed them with perpetual vows in 2020. One would rightly say that he was a late vocation but not too late than our first brother Bernard De Noter, who joined at the age of 60!

Bro. Anton had finished his Philosophy studies before entering the congregation and worked as a trainer for the Catholic youths managed by the Archdiocese of Jakarta. In his lifetime as a brother, he became a teacher of our primary school in Yogyakarta and then moved to Purwokerto with the same service in junior high school. In 2018, Bro. Anton Sembiring received a new assignment at Panti Sahabat Kita in Purworejo and also teaching religion in junior high school. He carried out his duties with full responsibility and sincerity.

When he had free time, he used it well by writing several articles that were in several Catholic magazines and he gave retreats for the schools of the brothers and other congregations. In 2019 he joined the formation team and often he visited several parishes and schools for vocation promotion activities. He was a brother full of joy



and close to the young people and many of his former students enjoyed his presence and the charisma which was always marked by Charity. That is why when he passed away on 21st April 2021 we were immensely saddened. Dear Bro. Anton, we will always remember your kindness and sincerity, and may God put you in the best place in heaven as you pray for us too.





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