



# DEUS CARITAS EST magazine

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# We will not grow weary

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“*Though young men faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall, they that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles’ wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint*” (Is 40:30-31). We cannot fail to be touched by these words of the prophet Isaiah. They are more than confronting, especially at times when things seem to be overwhelming for us and when the weariness of all that we are going through surrounds us. Every one of us will experience such moments. The reason that Isaiah gives for why we do not grow weary or faint in spite of all kinds of adversities is that we hope in the Lord. We need to shift the focus of our lives from ourselves to the Lord. That sounds simple, but it is not. For there is a powerful force within each and every one of us that would like to put this focus on ourselves and keep it there.

This shifting seems to be a sign of weakness, of flight, of shirking our responsibility. The whole of psychology is aimed at reinforcing, even entrenching, that centre of gravity in us. Maslow’s famous hierarchy of needs culminates in self-fulfilment, but ends in a top that is closed off. It is as if man is locked inside himself and that the pinnacle is a self-satisfied existence. Man unfolds in an inward movement. It is astonishing that Maslow’s theory and model still hold up,



despite all the criticism it attracts. For example, it does not indicate at all how man arrives at this self-realization. It is as if he can only use what others give him without having to give anything himself. The model may even carry the danger of using and even abusing others to get ahead in life. So it can be a very unethical model. Nothing is said about the content of this self-realization either. It almost seems to be an empty box.

Is self-realization the goal one strives for or is it rather a gift one receives as a result of something else? That 'something else' then becomes the goal of our lives, and not self-realization in itself. It was Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl who thought about the importance of this 'something else' and, during his imprisonment in a concentration camp, found that the chance of survival was much greater in those who found a meaning in life that lay outside of themselves. The presence of a loved one whom one wanted to see again, of a project to which one is committed, of another person who one knows is counting on us immensely. Once that is missing, a person willingly falls into a void, an existential void, and loses the meaning in his life. At that point, his pursuit of self-realization turns into an empty box.

In his observation, Frankl has kept himself completely on a human level in his great question about the meaning of life. But he left an opening to give this question of meaning a spiritual answer, as well. For it may be that we have no worldly project to which we can apply ourselves or that this has been taken away from us due to illness or old age. And it may be that we no longer have anyone we can count on or who holds our affection in a special way. We may find ourselves in situations where all human perspectives seem to have melted away. We literally stand in an existential vacuum.

However, when we confess that God exists, and that he is concerned with us like a caring father, and that he is the one who moves towards us with his infinite love, then our existential vacuum in which we may find ourselves can never be completely empty. On the contrary, it is in this very emptiness that we can experience the moment when we find God in a very special way, or rather, when God allows himself to be found in a very special way.

Mystics speak of the dark night they sometimes have to pass through. These are the moments when all certainties in life seem to falter. Or,



*We need to shift the focus of our lives from ourselves to the Lord.*

as the saying goes: “There are no certainties in life.” Perhaps some have to go through such a dark night to see the true light that is never extinguished, but perhaps remained invisible because too many other lights in life were lit. During the day we do not see the light of the moon because it is outshone by a much stronger light, the sun. Today, God is indeed outshone by many other lights. In his great humility and respect for our human freedom, God does not extinguish these lights so that only his light may shine. In his omnipotence, he can do so because he is the origin of all light. At the end of time, he will make himself shine more brightly than all



*Viktor Frankl*

other lights. But in the meantime, he leaves it to the people whether or not to choose his light.

Even at the Incarnation, he continued to respect human freedom. We learn it from John: *“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him”* (Jn 1:9-11). *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”* (Jn 1:5). In describing the Incarnation, John expresses the tragedy in which we blind ourselves as human beings. We are constantly looking for light, but we are blind to the true light and close our hearts to it. Yet the light shines in our darkness, but we do not accept it. We stay blind to the true light. If we do



*The Newborn Child, Georges de La Tour, Museum of Fine Arts of Rennes, France (1645-1648)*

not train ourselves to see that true Light, even though it is outshined by so many other lights, we will not find the Light when all other lights in our lives are put out, when all earthly certainties have turned to dust. That true Light is God's grace that he wants to give us every day, but we must be open to it. God's grace is unconditional, but it is we who attach conditions to it.

The Incarnation of God is the greatest paradox we can imagine. God who becomes human in an infant for whom there is no place in the world, who is born in a stable, and laid in a manger. God does not claim his place in the world, but he accepts the place that he is assigned out of his unconditional respect for human freedom that he himself bestowed on man. Often, he is relegated to the stable and reported absent from the banquets that are offered. God does not protest or intrude when he stands by and watches men organize their lives without him, or when he finds that some actively exclude him from their lives and see him as the disturber of their perceived happiness.

It is striking that when certainties in life are lost, when the glitter fades and one awakens from the haze of celebration, some try to reach back to the One they had denied and ignored before. It is striking how many candles were lit during the pandemic and how, for some, secularization was put aside for a moment in order to look for the One whom they had previously relegated to a foolish illusion. But on a positive note, we were also able to see how those who had made room

for God in their lives now knew they were safe in his protecting hands during this time of great uncertainty.

The presence of God is a reality in the life of every person, but it is man himself who must activate this presence. It always reminds me of the example Saint Therese of Lisieux gave when she spoke of divine mercy. She compared it to a lift that has the power to take us to the highest level, but it is man who needs to press the button. The lift will not move on its own. Is it not regrettable that many do not press this button, either out of ignorance or complacency? Do we, too, belong to one of these categories, or do we humbly recognize the importance of being able to trust in God, in his love, in his mercy, in his grace? It is this gift that God wants to offer us, which is a powerful medicine to dispel our inner turmoil and instead give us that inner peace that endures even in the greatest storms that can devastate our lives.

We are faced with a double task. First of all, we must be careful that we allow the Incarnation to take place in our lives again, that we allow God to be born again in our lives, and that we do not refer him to a stable somewhere, far away from our daily lives. The manger that we offer him must be our heart, and it is there that we must worship him, offer our gifts, protect him when he is threatened and, if need be, flee with him when we find ourselves in circumstances where we threaten to lose or deny him. This is the actualization of Christmas, in which we allow



*Nativity, Bradi Barth*

the Incarnation to happen anew in our lives. For the Incarnation of God continues in history and should also continue in my life. Then, it is no longer I, but God who will be the bearing force in my life, who will lead me through dark paths to green pastures.

But how can we, and this is our second task, in a time marked by a violent eclipse of God, break through the armour that many have built around themselves to avoid facing God? How can we encourage them to leave at least a few cracks in this armour so that God's light can shine through? No, we cannot do this by force, but only in an inviting and unwavering way to share the Good News with them. Perhaps our presence in the great desolation they are going through can be the moment that, through our steadfast love, they can experience something of the source of all love. This is very well expressed in what we know as a pastoral ministry of presence or a pastoral ministry of incarnation. It

is not a question of trying to be convincing with our words, but rather of bearing witness with our presence. And there is no need to develop great strategies around this, but simply to be present in the here and now of the life of our neighbour with the fullness of our humanity and our compassion. There is no need for more, or for less. For that too is incarnation: to create space in the seemingly most common and trivial in order to allow God to be born there. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



## Goma is expanding

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**G**oma has not been spared lately. After the COVID pandemic, the city was hit by an unexpected volcanic eruption and subsequent earthquakes in May 2021, and people immediately remembered the massive eruption of Nyiragongo, which largely destroyed the city in 2002. It was after this eruption in 2002 that the bishop of Goma, Bishop Ngabo, asked the Brothers of Charity to take over a centre for people with physical disabilities. The Belgian Louis Martin and his wife Geneviève had set this up in cooperation with the diocese, had returned to Belgium, and had suggested that the Brothers of Charity continue the work. On my first visit in 2003, we saw wooden houses that the people were building on the lava soil, and we could not imagine that a new town would one day be built



here. Today, this has been realized, and Goma, with its solid road network and well-developed industry, is a breath of fresh air in the Kivu region. In April 2005, the Congregation took over responsibility for both the centre for people with physical disabilities and a small psychiatric centre that had also been set up in the meantime. In October 2021, we witnessed how the Brothers of Charity are steadily working to further develop these two initiatives and even to add new foundations. This is how an ‘école de vie’, a day centre for children with mental disabilities, was founded near the psychiatric centre. The psychiatric centre itself, which started as an annex of the centre for people with physical disabilities, was expanded into a well-functioning hospital that is widely appreciated in the region. Together with our psychiatric centre Sosame in Bukavu and the different satellites they serve, including those in Uvira and Shabunda, these facilities have become household names in the whole Kivu region of Congo.



But on 20 October, our attention turned to a completely new initiative, which the brothers had taken in 2018, with the start of a private nursery and primary school. A building, which was previously used for vocational training, was adapted for that purpose, and they immediately had six beautiful classrooms at their disposal. This private school, appropriately named *'Complexe scolaire de la Charité'*, aims on the one hand to provide quality education in an environment where the official and conventional schools are constantly plagued by strikes due to poor or even non-existent government support, where the buildings are often outdated, and where teaching materials are usually lacking.



But on the other hand, it is also intended that this school, which is run financially through parents' contributions, will eventually be able to provide financial support to the other initiatives in Goma, the population of which includes many poor people who need extra support. In the quest for greater financial independence for our regions in the South, initiatives like this are of great importance in order to be able to continue

our preferential option for the poor through internal solidarity, especially by caring for people with disabilities and mental illness, who are completely marginalized and even lose their human dignity.

On the occasion of the visit to this school, which exudes real quality, and which is under the capable leadership of Sister Françoise of the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, three new classrooms and a washroom were opened. These classrooms were created with the support of the Friends of the Brothers of Charity Committee in Belgium, through Fracarita International. With this realization, all pupils of both the nursery and primary departments now have separate classrooms. The parents urgently requested that this school also be expanded to include a secondary level, as they were concerned that the proper training and education their children were receiving would continue at secondary level. This is a question we will take with us into the future.



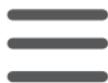
*The various classic apostolates of the Brothers of Charity took shape in a very unexpected way in Goma, and all of them radiate inspiration and expertise.*

So, the various classic apostolates of the Brothers of Charity took shape in a very unexpected way

in Goma, and all of them radiate inspiration and expertise. Of course, we are very grateful to the various organizations and persons who continue to support us and make a substantial contribution to the brothers to really build up their capacity. Let us now hope that the volcano will remain calm, so that what has been carefully built will not be buried under lava by the unexpected forces of nature. ¶



*Bro. René Stockman*



# Saint Mawaggali Trades Institute in Choma

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**I**t was in 2016 that the new bishop of Monze, Bishop Moses Hamungole, wrote to the Brothers of Charity to explore the possibility of coming to his diocese as a congregation. He had earned his doctorate at the Catholic University of Leuven and was a regular guest at our formation house in Moerzeke. The General Administration asked the brothers in Zambia to initiate contact, which resulted in a first visit of a group of brothers to the diocese in April 2018. During this visit, two projects were presented, for which the diocese is in need of religious: a school for special education in Mazabuka, Flamboyant Special School, founded in 2014 by Irish sisters, but who wanted to withdraw from the project due to old age, and Saint Mawaggali Trades Institute, a technical institute founded in the early 1970s by the Christian Brothers, but who left this school in 2016 and left its management to the diocese.

Following the tragic death of the previous regional superior, Brother Constantino Kaunda, at the beginning of 2018, and the successive short terms of the regional superiors who temporarily held the position, there was initially little follow-up to the two requests, until in 2019 the decision was made to take over Flamboyant Special School in Mazabuka and to establish a small community of brothers there. This was the first

tangible apostolate of the Brothers of Charity in Zambia. Today, the brothers have settled down well in Mazabuka and are happy to continue the beautiful work the sisters started. 'Flamboyant' is the name of a tree that grows very tall and wide, gives a lot of shade, and has beautiful red flowers. About a hundred children with intellectual, physical, and hearing disabilities attend the school daily to receive appropriate education.

In the meantime, however, the bishop of Monze, Bishop Moses Hamungole, died from Covid and the administration of the diocese was temporarily taken over by Fr. Francesco Airoidi, a priest from Milan, as Apostolic Administrator. He contacted the brothers again with the request of taking charge of the technical school in Choma. The new regional superior, Brother Hippolyte, was asked to look into this request and he and his council made a positive recommendation to the General Administration to get involved in this school.



On the occasion of the superior general's visit, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the diocese and the Congregation, thus giving the go-ahead for a few brothers to gradually be involved in this technical school in Choma.

The school is named after one of Uganda's martyrs, Saint Mawaggali, and was founded by the Christian Brothers, who developed it into a high-quality institute for post-secondary technical education.

Currently, the school has about 500 students divided into four departments: electrical engineering, machining, automotive mechanics, and carpentry. There is also a boarding school that accommodates about 400 boarders. The courses vary from one to three years and bring well-trained technicians onto the labour market. During a visit to this school, which is subsidized by the government, it was noticeable that it is really up to date. Especially in the automotive mechanics department, we could see the latest machines used to check and repair cars. According to the school's principal, it is important for students to keep up with the latest technical developments in order to be able to enter the labour market right away.

During the ceremony in which the agreement was signed, both the apostolic administrator and the superior general presented their views on education in Zambia, the importance of a Catholic school, and what is specifically to be expected from a Catholic school. In the school as well as in the boarding house, there is a real need to emphasize this Christian inspiration and

that will be the first task of the brothers, who are expected to move into the convent located on the school grounds in January 2022.



With the start of our presence at Saint Mawaggali Trades Training Institute in Choma, the Brothers of Charity will be active in three locations: in Lusaka, with their formation house, where they are also looking to start a small-scale apostolate in counselling; in Mazabuka, at Flamboyant Special School; and now in Choma. The earlier plans to start a psychiatric centre in Kasama are on hold, waiting for better times to come.

The Brothers of Charity have been present in Zambia for 10 years and the Congregation is fortunate to welcome several Zambian brothers. With them, we will now continue to grow this young region, which today is linked to South Africa. We hope that the charism of the Brothers of Charity, which encouraged young Zambians

to join the Congregation, will now also become visible and tangible in the concrete care of their neighbour: students, people with disabilities, and people with mental health problems. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



## Sosame is expanding, too

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**O**n 14 October 2021, a few days after celebrating World Mental Health Day, the flagpoles were erected again at Sosame Psychiatric Centre in Bukavu, on the occasion of the inauguration of the new administrative wing, the new kitchen, and a new unit for emergency psychiatric admissions. Whereas a few years ago Sosame was still in the red, they have now managed to complete these renovations thanks to good management and, of course, support from a number of projects. At the same time, work is continuing to gradually renew the existing wards and bring them up to modern standards.

Attention to ongoing training, the provision of suitable accommodation, and organizational optimization remain the three ingredients that already formed the pillars of Father Triest's expert care. The director, Bro. Gregoire, guarantees that these pillars will not only be preserved, but also reinforced.

The latter was strongly emphasized during the visit of the Superior General, Brother René Stockman, and the meeting he had with the entire staff and with the department heads.

After the inauguration of the renovated buildings, he had a long talk with the representatives of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which is responsible for the further decentralization of



mental health care in South Kivu, in cooperation with Sosame. They also spoke of a good collaboration, which means that the long-dreamed-of decentralization is no longer a dead letter.

In the afternoon, the Superior General gave a conference on the mission of the Brothers of Charity in mental health care as a specific embodiment of the charism of charity and the place of pastoral care in the total care package that should be offered to the sick. He particularly emphasized the importance of ‘presence’, the quality of being with the sick, both as an important part of the therapeutic approach and the ideal gateway to approaching the sick person’s existential-spiritual dimension. Starting in 1994, when the Brothers of Charity started with the care of the mentally ill in the refugee camps in and around Bukavu from Rwanda, and the moment they actually started with the establishment of their own psychiatric centre in Bukavu for the local population, Sosame has come a long way and has further

developed into a pilot centre for mental health care in South Kivu. From Sosame, mental health care in Shabunda was developed, as well as care in Uvira. However, due to the floods that hit part of Uvira and the rising level of Lake Tanganyika, the existing community and the psychiatric consultation attached to it were largely destroyed, so that the brothers had to temporarily move to a parish. They hope to be able to move into a new house very soon and, also in a new consultation room with a limited capacity for hospitalization, to take care of the patients until the newly built psychiatric centre can be put into use there.

When one drives down from the muddy makeshift road to the psychiatric centre and enters the gate, one finds oneself in an oasis of green with a beautiful view of Lake Kivu. This is the place where psychiatric patients can find the peace and support they need to regain their mental equilibrium. The area is plagued by



regular gang raids, in which women are raped and left severely traumatized. Here too, Sosame plays a major role in helping these people with post-traumatic symptoms. It is admirable to see how the brothers and their staff succeed in providing good care in an environment characterized by rampant corruption, which prevents the country, which has so much potential, from escaping the spiral of poverty and underdevelopment. During our visit, we heard again how only the institutions run by the Church function more or less normally, despite the many constraints they constantly face from a government that utterly fails in its mission to govern the country properly. Of course, reference was made to the schools, which have been closed for a month because of a national strike, due to the deep dissatisfaction of the teachers, who have not been paid a salary by the government for a long time.

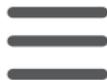


*As a congregation, we can be proud that institutions like Sosame, at the heart of our charism, help to restore human dignity.*

As a congregation, we can be proud that institutions like Sosame, at the heart of our charism, help to restore human dignity, especially for those who have totally lost their human dignity because of mental illness. It

remains resurrection work, carried on by human hands. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



# Challenges in Uvira

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**U**vira was first mentioned in the Congregation when Bro. Stan Goetschalckx arrived there with a group of refugees from Rwanda. With a number of brothers and candidates, he started taking care of young people, which he later continued in Kigoma, Tanzania.

A few years later, the then bishop of Uvira asked if the brothers would like to return to Uvira. Meanwhile, they were already well established in Bukavu, with education in the former technical school of the Marist Brothers and with the care of psychiatric patients in Sosame. There are psychiatric patients in Uvira, as well, waiting for the care of the Brothers of Charity, it was said during a visit to the bishop.

The bishop's request did not go unanswered, and since the Congregation had a number of



properties in Uvira, it was sought how these could be used to serve as a community and care for people with mental illness.

In the end, it was decided to use the former youth centre on the shores of Lake Tanganyika for this purpose. We were happy to finally be able to start a community and a small-scale care facility for people with mental illness. Through a benefactor from Belgium, Mr. Piet Cleemput, now deceased, we were soon able to build a proper psychiatric centre just outside the city of Uvira. Once this building was finished, the brothers would continue the relief, care, and support of the sick.

However, a heavy flood in Uvira ruined all these plans. Our community was destroyed by the force of the water and even the new psychiatric centre sustained water damage, which fortunately could be repaired. But half of our community was washed away and swallowed up by the rising waters of the lake. The brothers found shelter in a parish, where they continued their consultations very modestly, and they received



the necessary support from Sosame in Bukavu. In a creative and dynamic way, Regional Superior Bro. Janvier went in search of a more sustainable solution. Finally, the choice was made to build a small house for the brothers on one of the remaining properties and to buy another house where consultations with limited hospitalization could be held for the time being. In the meantime, the region where our new psychiatric centre is built has been declared a 'red zone', where there is a risk of robbery, and we were strongly advised not to start the care of psychiatric patients there at this time. So, it will be a while before the new centre will be in use. However, we hope it will not take too long, because the new centre looks really nice and will be a real asset to our care for psychiatric patients. All this ran through our heads like a film when we welcomed a brother into the Congregation for his perpetual profession, Bro. Alain Asila Musole, in the cathedral of Uvira for the first time on 17 October 2021 – for this occasion in the open air because of the large number



of faithful attending the ceremony. It was an excellent opportunity to ‘manifest’ ourselves as a Congregation and to announce our presence to the population in an official way. We repeatedly heard the message that sounded like an urgent request to further develop the care for psychiatric patients. At the same time, words of gratitude resounded because, despite the many obstacles we had encountered along the way, we were still there. For Bro. Alain and his confrere Bro. Innocent, it was a confirmation to be able to experience this profession after the difficult months they had been through, and to hear the perspectives offered by the Congregation.



*This is the story of many new foundations, which go through difficult periods before they can fully realize their potential.*

This is the story of many new foundations, which go through difficult periods before they can fully realize their potential. Our foundation in Uvira is certainly a textbook example of this. It is always a matter of walking with Providence, because our own human resources often fall short to achieve the things we dream of. And especially the courage to go on in spite of everything. We are very grateful to the local brothers for that! ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



## Brother Gabriel in Mbuji-Mayi

**F**or the past eight years, the brothers in Congo have had a house in Mbuji-Mayi. At first, the intention was to have a place for the brothers to stay when they were passing through the Kasai region. Those who know the roads in Kasai and the distances between the Congregation's convents and institutes understand the importance of having this stopping place between Kananga on the one hand and Lusambo and Kabinda on the other. But, from the very beginning, the aim was also to start up a small-scale project for the treatment and care of psychiatric patients. For the whole of central Congo, there is only one psychiatric centre in Kananga with limited possibilities for reception, and due to the big transport issues, only patients from Kananga and the area



immediately surrounding Kananga can receive proper care.

That is why, for some time now, we have been looking for a way to provide care for people with mental illness in Mbuji-Mayi, as well. The brothers' house is too small to take in patients. Ultimately, we found a site with a few older buildings that could be considered for the establishment of a modest centre. Thanks to the support of the Friends of the Brothers of Charity in Belgium and other benefactors, the funds were raised to purchase this land and to start the planning for the development of a small-scale psychiatric hospital. The purchase was finalized during the Superior General's visit to Mbuji-Mayi in January.



But at the insistence of the bishop and the local government, it was decided not to wait with the treatment of psychiatric patients until the centre would be built, but to make a few rooms available in the existing convent to already treat

and take care of patients on an outpatient basis. A brother nurse will therefore be sent to Mbuji-Mayi to start the project and to assist in the further planning.



The question of what name to give the new project came up immediately. The local brothers suggested 'Brother Gabriel', referring to our first brother missionary and pioneer in Congo. This was approved by the regional council, which, in doing so, launched the eighth mental health care initiative in Congo. At the same time, there was an in-depth discussion on how to increase the quality of care by working more closely with the various initiatives, both in Congo and in neighbouring countries. For the time being, the new project will be linked to our Dr. Joseph Guislain Psychiatric Centre in Lubumbashi, which will initially provide the necessary medical and paramedical support as well as the necessary medicines.

Brother Gabriel continues to be a true example to

many of how charity and professionalism can go hand in hand and reinforce each other. It was out of his deep religious conviction that he went to Congo and did real pioneering work in the field of education, where he became a true specialist in knowing local languages and culture, and left behind a wealth of writings on language, culture, and pedagogy. He was not spared opposition and even had to leave Africa temporarily because of internal intrigues, but was later rehabilitated and again became a pioneer, this time of foundations in South Africa and Rwanda, where he died very prematurely in 1934 and where his grave is still kept in Butare.



*Brother Gabriel continues to be a true example to many of how charity and professionalism can go hand in hand and reinforce each other.*

We hope that our brothers can take on the new project in Mbuji-Mayi with the same inspiring and innovative spirit, with the aim of helping the many who have lost their human dignity due to mental illness. The restoration of human dignity remains one of our great missions! Caritas Christi urget nos! ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



# The Power, or Powerlessness, of Bureaucracy

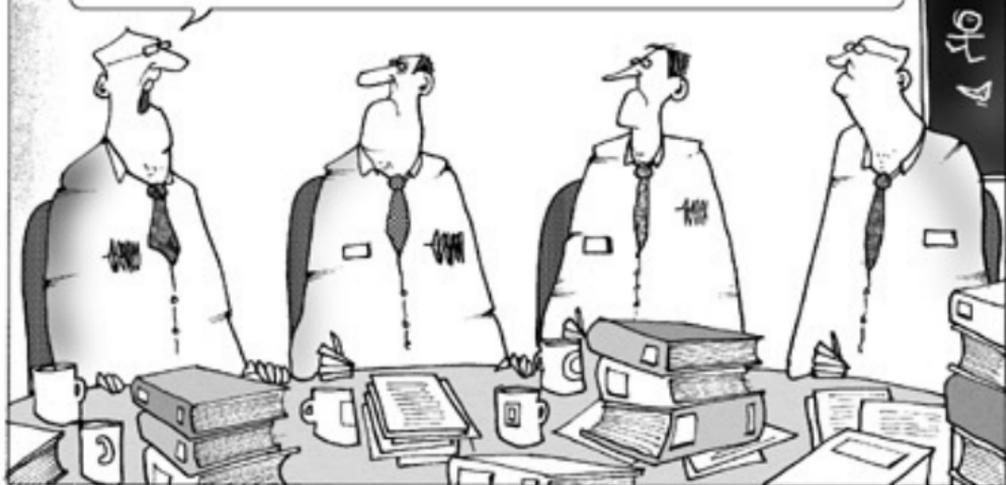
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**N***o one will deny that we live in a time of excessive bureaucracy. A simple transaction requires the completion of a range of documents. In order to be officially registered somewhere, one has to go through a set of procedures with the chance of things going wrong somewhere along the way and having to start all over again.*

Anyone who might think that it is only the official authorities that like to shroud themselves in a mist of bureaucracy so as to be as obscure as possible in their dealings is wrong. Organizations and even private persons have also found the way to bureaucracy to demonstrate how important they are. Because, after all, this is what it always comes down to proving by means of complex procedures that one is important and that others must take this into account if they are to obtain anything from them.

At one time, when I was the director of the nursing school, I had to go to the Ministry of Education to collect some diplomas. The receptionist sent me to a certain floor, where they would take me to the director in charge of these diplomas. When I arrived on that particular floor, I did not see anyone in the secretary's office, so I looked for the director's office myself. When I

WE HAVE TO RESPOND TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE UNIVERSITY IS OVERLY BUREAUCRATIC. I SUGGEST WE SET UP A SUB-COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF THINKING ABOUT WHO MIGHT JOIN A POLICY GROUP TO DRAW UP A PAPER WITH SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW WE MIGHT START THINKING ABOUT THE PROBLEM...



knocked on his door, he looked perplexed and asked me who had permitted me to come to his office like that. I told him that I had not found anyone by the lift, so I had started the search myself. He angrily sent me back to the secretary's office where the secretary had returned to his desk. There, I had to fill in a document stating who I was, who I wished to see, and for what reason. Then, I was shown to the waiting room and fifteen minutes later the secretary came to fetch me and took me to the director's office. I was handed the diplomas in a very pompous manner and, again, I had to fill in several documents. Although it was impressive, it was also a very pathetic affair. He could have given me the diplomas during the first visit, but that was not according to the procedure. It also showed how powerful this director was, who could just send me back to the secretary's office like a little errand boy to sit and wait because by making me wait, the director demonstrated even

more how much power he had over me.

This incident taught me a great deal about how people can make themselves out to be important. At the same time, it urged me to make sure that I would never fall into this trap of bureaucracy. There are plenty of pitfalls in this respect. Sometime later, in a board meeting, we were discussing what we could do to have better control over the central warehouse of the hospital of which I was also the director. Goods were regularly going missing, and the warehouse keeper claimed that he lacked the resources to



*"It's a big misconception. Everyone thinks hell is all fire. Actually, it's all paperwork."*

do a proper check of the stock. Our accountant would solve it, and at the next board meeting he came up with a plan to develop a comprehensive control system. He had order forms made in no less than eight copies, which all had to be filled in and signed by different people to get a single product from the warehouse. No, we could not accept that, even though the devised procedure was probably foolproof.

One last incident I would like to mention is my first visit to Congo when it was still necessary to obtain a special permit to enter the Kasai. Together with a confrere, we embarked on our journey early in the morning in Kinshasa and stopped at no fewer than thirteen offices where documents had to be filled in each time in the hope of obtaining the coveted permit, as the flight to Kasai was scheduled for the following



*It is easier to sit behind a computer screen all day analysing all sorts of numbers than to spend a day with people and actually listen to them.*

day. In several places, they asked me for a passport photo, so that in the evening, I was down eight photos in all. When I mentioned in one of the offices, already tired by the whole procedure, that there was a lot of bureaucracy in Kinshasa, my prompt reply was: “We learned

that from you Belgians.” I quickly swallowed my words. At midnight, I had my permit for the journey, obtained through the intervention of the daughter of a minister who happened to be doing a work placement in our centre and whom we had handed some money.

Since then, I have been fighting a constant battle against bureaucracy, but at the same time, I have to be careful not to develop procedures myself which would only show how powerful I am. How often do we put off dealing with problems, referring them to a committee that will be set up, knowing in advance that we are buying time so that we might not have to deal with these problems at all? How often do they make people wait when they ask for an interview, both to show how powerful they are and out of fear of being confronted with a problem? I even heard from brothers that they had to follow a certain procedure to request a meeting with their superior. Is there a superior here who wants to call himself a father to his brothers and who, like the merciful father, is on the lookout when his prodigal son would return to him?

Good management indeed requires planning, not leaving everything to chance, setting up control systems, and developing and following procedures. But the question must always be whether this management brings people closer together or distances them, especially those with whom they work and whom they serve. A manager can indeed be expected to make good use of his time and plan his work, but this

planning should always include space to be available for unexpected occurrences, for people who urgently want to see him, and even for spontaneous meetings that can be very useful to have a finger on the pulse of the organization one represents. After all, one does not learn everything from nicely made reports that only reflect one aspect of reality, and often only what one wants to hear and read like someone in charge. That is why contact with the grassroots level is essential to obtain a clear picture of reality. With every procedure that is developed, one should ask oneself whether it will help people more, whether it will improve how the organization is run, or whether it will contribute to the fulfilment of the mission. Complicated procedures often indicate a lack of substantial knowledge, which is camouflaged in this way. Some people are only concerned with structures, with the numbers they are presented with, and can thus hide their incompetence as far as substance is concerned. It is easier to sit behind



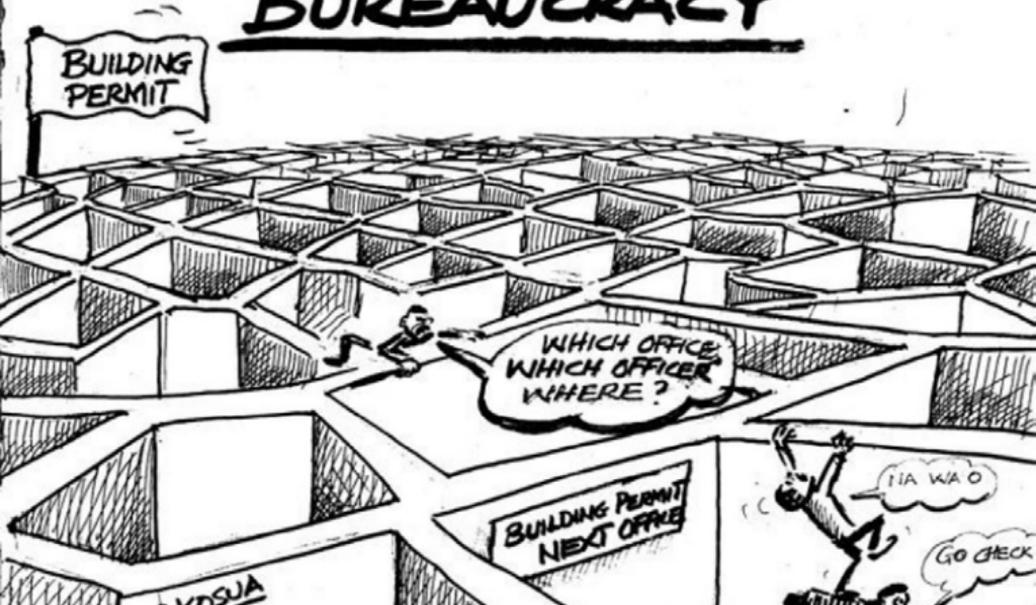
*Let our first concern always be to be accessible people, and let us keep the necessary procedures simple and to a minimum.*

a computer screen all day analysing all sorts of numbers than to spend a day with people and actually listen to them. In one of our hospitals,

I met a director who, like the director at the ministry just mentioned, could only be reached by going through reception and his secretary's office, and whose door was locked, otherwise, he would be disturbed too much. As a young director who had just graduated, I thought I could plan my day well, but I soon realized that my job was precisely to be constantly disturbed until I found my balance by clearly allocating space in my schedule for those who needed me. Yes, there needs to be a clear hierarchy, and generally, that hierarchy should be followed, but at the same time, there should be enough flexibility to accept that sometimes a level is skipped if one is not heard at the previous level. Of course, this must not become a system, but rigidity in this regard can block a lot of things and leave problems unsolved.

When developing procedures, one must ask whether they are drawn up based on trust towards those who are to follow them or based on mistrust. Are the procedures that are developed facilitating or rather inhibiting? Are the procedures feasible or do they make demands that simply cannot be met? In development aid, for example, all kinds of conditions can be set that may sound logical in the West, but are not at all logical in the South and cannot even be implemented without using certain techniques. With automation comes the added difficulty of how some documents are drawn up, which means that a small mistake can block the whole system. For example, I was recently asked to have my retirement file monitored via the Internet, but

# BUREAUCRACY

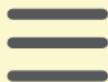


so far, I have not been able to correctly submit the data requested. Of course, this is first and foremost my fault, but at the same time, I wonder what those who are not used to submitting data in this way are supposed to do.

Bureaucracy, procedures, business-like management: these are the ills of our time that we often fall victim to, but at the same time, we must be careful not to fall into these traps ourselves. For it will almost always be about satisfying our passion for power, our need to show others how important we are, and how serious we are about the responsibility we have received. Let our first concern always be to be accessible people, and let us keep the necessary procedures simple and to a minimum. It will be our contribution to initiate a countermovement, a movement against bureaucracy, in the places where we have the responsibility, and at the same time to give full space to humanity in our workplaces, in our communities, and in the organizations where we have some responsibility.

For if our organization, our community, our workplace is not there to serve, it serves no purpose! ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



# News from the General Administration

Due to travel restrictions, the general council meetings have so far been held in digital format. We hereby present a number of important decisions that were made in the previous months.

## APPOINTMENTS

- Bro. Hippolyte Manirakiza, Provincial Superior of Europe until now, was appointed Regional Superior of the Saint Paul Region (South Africa and Zambia).
- Bro. Jos Mathijssen was appointed Provincial Superior of Europe.
- Bro. Linus tendered his resignation as Regional Superior of India due to the inability to stay in India. He was replaced by Bro. Reijus Toppo.
- Bro. Martin de Porres, Regional Superior of Indonesia, is temporarily being replaced by Bro. Ferdinandus Harun due to long-term illness.
- Bro. Jimi Huayta-Rivera, General Assistant, is also appointed Provincial Delegate for Latin America.
- Bro. Joseph Kasonde is appointed master of novices in Nairobi (canonical year) and Bro.

Bienvenue Kiyombo is appointed master of novices in Ndera (second year of novitiate).

## **NEW FOUNDATIONS**

- In India, a new community was founded in Goa, its patron saint being Blessed Carlo Acutis, and its apostolate being the care of old and sick priests of The Pillars Congregation.
- In Ethiopia, a new community was founded in Nekemte, its apostolate being the care of the sick in a medical centre and the running of a primary school.
- In Zambia, a new community was founded in Choma, its apostolate being the spiritual guidance of the students at Saint Mawaggali Technical Institute.
- The green light was given for the ongoing development of the Congregation in Kalemie and Kalima, both in Congo, and for the start of the reception of psychiatric patients in Mbuji-Mayi, also in Congo.

## **COMMUNITIES CLOSED**

- In the Philippines, the community in Gingoog was closed.
- In Ethiopia, the community in Awassa was closed.
- In the Netherlands, the communities in Roermond and Etten-Leur were closed.

## **ADMISSION TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION**

The following brothers have been admitted to make their perpetual profession:

### **Saint Dominic Region – Tanzania**

- Bro. Gaspard Mofati
- Bro. Michel Kankole
- Bro. Kelvin Lazarus Soko
- Bro. Aloïse Kafwimbi

### **Nairobi – Kenya**

- Bro. Gasper Ofisi

### **Notre Dame d’Afrique Region – DR Congo**

- Bro. Pascal Nsenga-Kitengie
- Bro. Guillaume Mbo Zamwime
- Bro. Valentin Ndimuka Mutombo

### **Notre Dame de Loreto Region – DR Congo**

- Bro. Eric Macumu

### **St. Charles Lwanga Region – Burundi**

- Bro. Marcus Ciza
- Bro. Grégoire Mukito

### **Blessed Isidore Bakanja Region – Ethiopia**

- Bro. Elias Abunte
- Bro. Paulos Semebo
- Bro. Yohannes Mamo Sinebo



## RWANDA

# Perpetual profession in Kigali

On 9 October 2021 in Kigali, during a beautiful ceremony, Brother Jean Damascène Barindira professed his perpetual vows as a Brother of Charity. Brother Jean Damascène pursued his studies in pedagogy and is now a teacher of religion in our secondary school in Huye. The choir of our second-year novices, under the skilful direction of their novice master Bro. Bienvenue, enlivened the celebration of the Eucharist. Despite the restrictions that still apply here due to the COVID pandemic, some family members were able to attend the ceremony. The family photo with the brothers of the region and the novices is a lasting memory of this beautiful day.



**PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

## **First profession of six novices**

On 18 July 2021, during Sunday Mass, six novices made their first profession. They are Bro. Albert Wii, Bro. Jeremiah Kombuk Goru, Bro. Raphael Messia Bepi, Bro. Toby Kagi Baundo, Bro. Christopher Joe Kamane, and Bro. James Morris Lipit. Postulant Marcus Kumuno was also accepted. The ceremony went very well and many Christians witnessed it. The family members of the new Brothers were present in the church, which was filled to the rafters with almost 300 people, excluding the Christians of Yampu Outstation.



**ROME**

# Perpetual profession

On 15 August 2021, at the Casa Generalizia in Rome, Bro. Swarup Tirkey from India made his perpetual vows in the hands of Bro. René Stockman.



KENYA

## Oblation and perpetual VOWS

In the International Novitiate in Nairobi, 23 young men received the religious habit of the Brothers of Charity on Saturday, 28 August 2021, thus beginning their novitiate training. The oblation ceremony was presided over by Brother René Stockman, Superior General, who, after a week of retreat, officially welcomed them into the congregation as novices. The new novices hail from DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Sri Lanka. The next day, two brothers professed their perpetual vows: Philippe Didier Anon Amin from Côte d'Ivoire and Jose Alberto Tabua from Mozambique. The solemn celebration of the Eucharist took place in the chapel of the Marist Brothers and was presided over by the Papal Nuncio to Kenya, Mgr. Bert Van Megen.





## RWANDA

# World Mental Health Day

Kigali, 11 October 2021 – On the occasion of World Mental Health Day, the President of Fracarita International, Bro. Dr. René Stockman, had the opportunity during his visit to Rwanda to witness this commemoration at the Caraes Psychiatric Centre in Ndera. He had great admiration for the way the different departments presented their service in a visual and creative way.

The first stand referred to the past, when psychiatric patients were still locked up in prisons and some were brought to the facility handcuffed.

In his speech to the staff, he discussed the importance of ‘presence’ in the care of psychiatric patients and used the apt image that with one mouth and two ears we should be

specialists in active listening as a basic attitude to the ‘presence theory’.

He also congratulated the management that had just taken the decision to establish a rehabilitation centre for the long-term in-patients and a department for forensic psychiatry in order to be able to receive and treat patients coming from prisons even better.



ROME

## **Archbishop Rugambwa thanks the Brothers of Charity for their missionary commitment in the world**

Archbishop Rugambwa, the Holy See' Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, has thanked the Brothers of Charity for their apostolate in various parts of the world,

especially in Africa. He made the remarks when he presided at the celebration of perpetual vows for three Brothers of Charity who belong to the Congregation's region of Tanzania, on 28 December 2021. The Brothers who made perpetual vows before the Superior General, Brother René Stockman, are Michel Kankole Kyondo, Gaspard Mwape Mofati (Democratic Republic of Congo), and Kelvin Lazarus Soko (Zambia).

The celebration took place at the Generalate of the Brothers of Charity, in Rome.

“It is a great joy for me to preside over this celebration in which you will make your religious profession of perpetual vows. To the Superior General, Brother René, I express my gratitude for inviting me. My cordial greetings to you all! I also thank you for your missionary commitment in various parts of the world, especially in Africa where you are present in 10 countries, including Tanzania, my country, and especially in the Diocese of Kigoma where we met and worked



together,” said Archbishop Rugambwa who was Bishop of Kigoma Diocese between 2008 and 2012.

Turning to the three Brothers, Archbishop Rugambwa reminded them of the uniqueness of the identity and mission of the call to Brotherhood. It symbolises unity and diversity, he said.

“Mother Church welcomes you and invokes upon you the Holy Spirit so that your “Yes forever” may make your life and your mission as consecrated persons, in the religious Institute of the Brothers of Charity, beautiful and joyful,” said Archbishop Rugambwa.

The Archbishop reaffirmed that essentially the perpetual vows that the Brothers would make were an “embrace” of love for Christ and the people they would serve.

“Sanctify yourselves concretely through the constant exercise of charity, which is the charism and the heart of your Congregation. Your active charity will manifest itself in the various social works at the service of education, health care, childcare and integral human development. It will open you up to listening to and caring for the poor and those most in need,” said Archbishop Rugambwa.

*(Source: Paul Samasumo, Vatican News)*

**RWANDA**

**First and perpetual professions**

During the celebration of the Eucharist presided over by His Eminence Cardinal Kambanda, Archbishop of Kigali, on 19 February 2022 in Ndera, Rwanda, 21 novices professed their first



vows as Brothers of Charity in the hands of the Superior General, Brother René Stockman. Three brothers also made their perpetual profession: Bro. Eric Macumu Imani, Bro. Pancras Niyomugabo, and Bro. Thacien Nubuhoro. In his homily, the cardinal stressed the importance of religious vocations both in the Church and in today's world as a sign of God's unconditional love for every human being without exception.

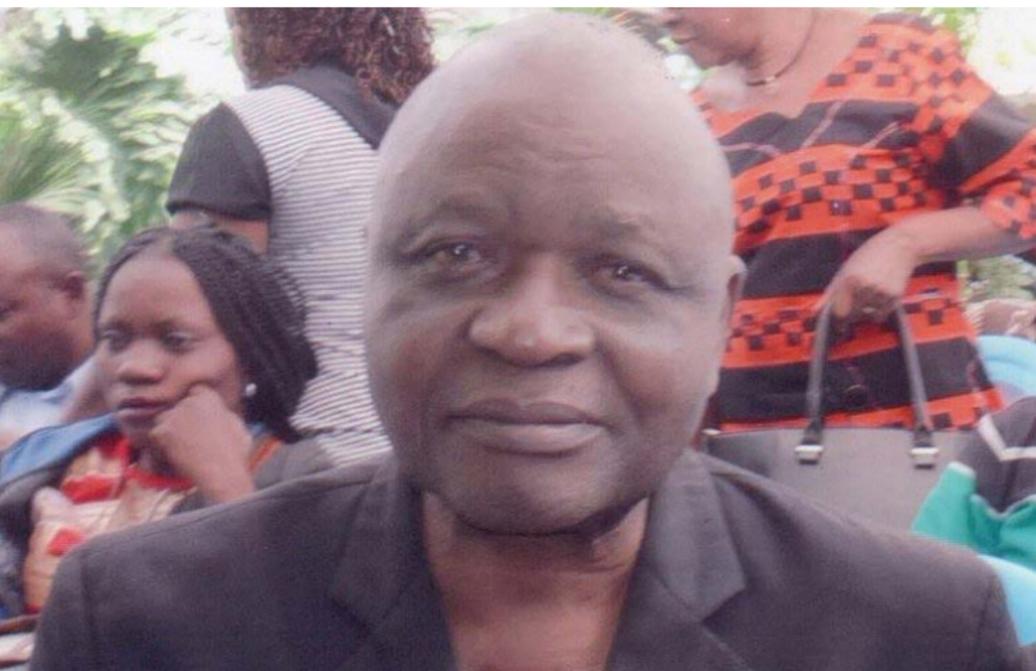


## IN MEMORIAM

**Mr. Maximilien Yangiesu  
Kalonji****DR CONGO**

Maximilien Yangiesu, fondly known as Papa Max, was born in Kabinda on December 15, 1943. He did his primary and secondary studies in Kabinda and Lusambo with the Brothers of Charity. He studied biology and chemistry at the University of Kisangani (UNIKIS). On December 26, 1986, he married Marie-Françoise Bankanga Ntambwe in Isiro. Together, they had six children, including four boys and two girls, all alive. He made his promises as an associate member on October 22, 2006.

Papa Max was a very good man, calm, kind, welcoming, peaceful, and smiling to his wife, children, and friends. He was involved in the Saint Mathias parish in the Makala commune



in Kinshasa as leader of the Latin-French choir, president of the Mabota commission, and responsible for the C.E.V.B. He was assiduous in praying the Rosary and attending Mass. Forgiveness for him was the golden rule for those who offended him. Everywhere he went, he always had a good testimony and when he left a place, his entourage melted into tears because of the consideration he had for everyone. Papa Max did not want to see anyone suffer and he always found solutions to their problems. He was a unifier of people. He made sure children studied and he financially supported a SIAMFUMU orphanage in Central Congo for the education of orphans. He did not fail to contribute to the Caritas Commission of his parish where his wife is president. All these testimonies gathered among many others, push us to say that Papa Max lived his heaven here on earth by doing good as Saint Therese of the Child Jesus said. At this time, many are mourning his absence because he was a great trainer of inspectors throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo. He died as the National President of the Correction Center of State Examinations in DR Congo.

As an associate member of the Brothers of Charity, Papa Max attracted the attention of many by his peaceful and charitable behavior. He also attracted a few fellow inspectors who became associate members and who testify to his example of love, respect for others, honesty, prayer, peace, and forgiveness in the workplace. In short, he was an exemplary Christian. We were grieved to learn about his passing away in

Kinshasa on June 18, 2021, but we hope that he is now enjoying the Glory of God in the company of other Saints.

**IN MEMORIAM**

## **Ms. Françoise Muabi Mwibi**

**DR CONGO**

Associate Member Mrs. Françoise Muabi Mwibi, from the Notre Dame d'Afrique Region in DR Congo, passed away on 21 September 2021 in Kinshasa, at the age of 55 years.



**IN MEMORIAM**

## **Ms. Godelieve Soti Ngalu**

**DR CONGO**

Associate Member Mrs. Godelieve Soti Ngalu, from the Notre Dame d'Afrique Region in DR Congo, passed away on 10 January 2022 in Kinshasa, at the age of 74 years.



**IN MEMORIAM**

**Ms. Alda Cyr**

**CANADA**

Our good friend, Ms. Alda Cyr, an associate member since September 8, 1983, though the statute was officially recognized in 2001, passed away on Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at the age of 79. She was born on 21st November 1941 in Lac Baker, New Brunswick, Canada to a loving family. Though she was always close with the Congregation since she came to know the

Brothers of Charity, she formally pronounced her promises as an associate member on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011.

Alda was a woman of faith, loving, warm, very involved in the cooperative where she lived. She was very attached to her family, both close and extended. Her daughter Sylvie told me that she had the best mother she could have. Alda had two daughters, Sonia and Sylvie, and she had a grandson, Ian, who is about 12 years old. Alda was once very involved in her parish community, as well as with the associate members of the Brothers of Charity, especially with the Bethany Café. In recent years, she renewed her promises whenever it was possible for her to be present. We will miss her friendship and her jovial personality. We are sure that she is already rewarded by our Lord with endless Mercy. Let us pray for the repose of her soul.



# Brother Michel Paquet

## 1939-2021

It was no easy task for the young French-speaking Michel to join the predominantly Dutch-speaking postulants and novices in Sint-Maria-Aalter to receive his religious formation there. But it soon became clear that this bright young man could handle himself well and was very quickly perfectly bilingual. After his profession as Brother Bruno, he went to our normal school in Zwijnaarde and without any difficulty earned his teaching diploma, after which he was sent to the University of Leuven where he would study Science and Mathematics, and there, too, he graduated with flying colours. His dream was to become a missionary, and immediately after his studies, in 1965, he was allowed to go to Burundi in lieu of his military service, where he taught for three years at the technical school in Bujumbura. It was a great learning experience for him and he was hooked for good on missionary work. But first, he had to return to Belgium to teach in Leopoldsburg for two years and to briefly replace the bursar in Manage. His dream finally came true in 1971 when he was allowed to return to Burundi, this time to Gitega, but the very next year he and his confreres had to leave Gitega to settle in Butare, Rwanda. These were the best years of his missionary life: teaching, leading, and, above all, serving. Apart from his scientific knowledge,



Bro. Michel was highly skilled in the field of technology and very soon he was asked to set up a movie room for the students and repair electrical appliances, which was of great value in the mission countries of those days. Truly, technology held no secrets for him. He was a man who made a lot of friends among the local population and was particularly concerned about their fate. This would be evident later on when he would help to welcome the many refugees from Rwanda in Belgium. In the early 80's, Bro. Michel was asked to become director of the Caraes Psychiatric Centre in Ndera, an unknown

apostolate for him, but one that opened new perspectives. In 1991, after a brief stint in Gatagara, where he also served as director, he decided it was time for a spiritual reawakening. It was 'Gaudium et Spes' in Sint-Andries, Bruges, after which he decided, in consultation with his superiors, to change the course of his life. Pastoral care for the mentally ill, was this not a new need in our psychiatric centres in Belgium? And so, he went to Manage, where he took on the pastoral care from 1992 onwards. But Bro. Michel was not easily satisfied with himself and felt that he had plenty of scientific knowledge but too little theological training. So, he decided to go back to school and in 1998 he earned a Candidate of Theology degree.

Meanwhile, he took to heart the fate of the many Rwandan refugees who had ended up in Belgium after the genocide in 1994, many of whom he knew from his time spent in Rwanda. That, too, became a new apostolate for him. He guided them through their difficult integration and even organized holiday weeks for them in Maria-Aalter.

Bro. Michel was an authentic religious who sometimes could be critical or even cynical and who could describe a situation very astutely, yet he always tried to heal wounds with a soothing touch. He gladly stood up for those who felt marginalized and, following the example of Saint Vincent, he saw in them his 'masters'. Many can testify to that. As he grew older, he became milder and freely gave evidence of his long life experience in so many places and situations. In all this, he stayed grounded in a spiritual life that

he faithfully nourished with prayer, reflection, reading, in the quiet seclusion of his room. The last few years, he suffered from dementia and gradually he had to let it all go. After a period in our rest home Saint Arnold's in Beernem, he finally came to our convent rest home Saint John's in Zelzate where he quietly prepared himself for the ultimate encounter with God. All obstacles that he had faced during the last period of his life have now been lifted, and how happy he will be to be able to look upon the One he has longed for all his life: God himself. Brother Michel, thank you for your witness as a Brother of Charity, to so many people in so many places around the world.

## **Brother Victor R. Bosco Pachake 1939-2021**

Brother Victor Bosco Pachake, fondly known as Bro. Bosco, has gone home now, guided by his faith and leaving those of us who grieve his passing with the precious memories he gave. He was born on December 22, 1939, to an Indian Malayali family who found their new home in Sri Lanka. At a very early age and after getting some education in the school of the then Brothers of Saint Joseph, he was so impressed by their dedicated service and simplicity, that he later joined them. He was eager to give his life completely to God as a religious brother



without hesitation. Consequently, he started his formation as a postulant in Kalmunai and then his novitiate in Batticaloa, which culminated in his first profession on December 8, 1959, at the age of 20.

After his profession and being interested in technical skills, he was sent to Pakistan for further training to study electronics. This was his passion and he liked making and repairing radios and other small electronic gadgets. After he returned from Pakistan, he was in charge of the Boys' Home in Hatton. It is here that Bro. Bosco demonstrated the very essence of his compassion, of duty, and gave himself to the poor children and orphans in the field of education. Afterward, he was transferred to Trincomalee, to Saint Joseph's Technical Institute, where he was an instructor for a long time and later was made the director of the Institute. During his mandate, he encouraged many poor children to get technical skills, which made them employable. He did all this out of his profound faith and he remained a very kind,

simple, and humble man. And this made him endearing to many youths and people who came in contact with him. He was surely loved and respected because we believe he radiated Christ in his unique way.

Bro. Bosco was a man of prayer and very much interested in the growth of the Congregation and was very positive about the amalgamation with the Brothers of Charity in 2004. He respected the superiors and, as a profound sense of respect and reverence, whenever he met a major superior, he would kiss his hands. Perhaps, he sensed that superiors are God's representatives on earth, and out of that consciousness and childlike faith, he would make that gesture with profound humility. In the community, his concern was on the common good and making everyone happy with his sense of humour. His last 10 years were spent in the community of Batticaloa but before his passing away, he had wished to go back to Kalmunai where he had many friends and classmates. We fulfilled his wish and he was very delighted to be there for just three days before he passed away on June 14, 2021. It is evident that he was prepared for this transition to new life and was ever ready with peace. We are consoled that he is in heaven now, not listening to his favourite radio anymore, but to his Creator who has welcomed him with his infinite mercy.

**Brother Joris De Roeck**

## 1948-2021

Brother Joris followed in the footsteps of his brother René when he left Temse to become a postulant in 1965. He, too, would become a Brother of Charity. After his first profession in 1967, he completed his higher secondary education with a teaching diploma, but the sensible young brother was immediately allowed to go to university to study Economics and Hospital Science. He passed these courses with flying colours. After military service, the apostolate was waiting for him, and it was our psychiatric centre in Manage, where he became secretary of the board and, from 1980, general director as well as superior. The French language became like a second native language for him, and so he was regularly called upon to interpret at congregational meetings.

In 1989, he went to Bonneville for a year, after which he became a staff member in the Provincialate in Ghent as well as the head of the boarding house at the Guislain School of Nursing, where he made his home. A big change after years of working in mental health care, but as always, Bro. Joris had no problem adapting. After six years, he would return to Manage, first to be administrative director and then general director again.

In 2002, he was called upon by the General Administration in Rome, and for four years he held the position of General Bursar, a position which he then continued in Ghent as part of the Belgian region.



The last few years, however, his health deteriorated, and after a temporary rest period in Beernem, it became his permanent home. The last few months, he came to Zelzate, to our convent rest home, where he was surrounded with the best of care until the moment he made the great transition to be received in God's love for all eternity.

Bro. Joris was unique in many ways. With his keen mind, he knew how to analyse every problem thoroughly, though without always finding a solution. But one could be sure that the analysis was accurate. In his good days,

he was a ray of sunshine in his community, bringing joy with his wordplay and anecdotes. There were also days of complete silence, and everyone respected that. In his commitment to his apostolic tasks, he was punctual, and behind every page he could see the face of the sick and the poor, and ultimately the face of the Lord Jesus himself. For he was a religious before anything else, consistent in the practice of his religious vows and faithful in his daily prayer life. He had his principles and he stuck to them, very much so, indeed. Every task that was entrusted to him, he accepted without any argument. That, too, was part of his principles. He had a strong connection with his family without adding too many externals to it.

Brother Joris, we are grateful to you for being a confrere in the Congregation and for your service in the apostolate, where, together with many others, you gave new meaning to consecrated life as an apostolic religious after the Second Vatican Council, open to renewal but faithful to traditional values. All too soon we have to say goodbye, and we can only imagine how heavy the last years weighed on you as your strength slowly but surely declined. But, as always, you retained an outer calm that mirrored your inner life. Accepting from the hands of God what life brings us was certainly the motto of your life. Now, you were able to entrust that life to the God to whom you had already dedicated yourself through your religious profession. Thus, your life as a Brother of Charity turned out to be a long preparation for this ultimate encounter. Till we meet again in the hereafter.

# Brother John McAteer

**1935-2021**

Bro. John McAteer was born in Fanad, Donegal in Ireland in 1935. Following his early education, he spent a number of years working in the locality and also in Scotland. Bro. John always loved the outdoor life and the jobs he undertook were mainly of a farming nature.

At the age of twenty-six, Bro. John began his postulancy and novitiate in Rochestown, Cork in 1961 and he made his first profession in 1963. His first assignment was for six months in the English Juniorate at Thistleton Lodge where he helped with general duties. Back then, the six-month period after profession was known as a 'second novitiate' and tended to be served in particular communities where there was a specific focus on the development of the young brothers. Brother John's next assignment was to Clarinbridge, Co. Galway where he spent a number of years working on the farm there. In 1969, he moved to Waterford where once more he provided assistance on the Belmont Park farm. This was followed by a move to the Provincial House in Dublin in 1972 where Bro. John assisted with the maintenance of the grounds. Bro. John remained in Dublin until the closure of the Provincial House in 1989 when he returned to Galway where he spent the remainder of his life. Bro. John had two enduring passions in life, one for sport, particularly Gaelic games and more



particularly still the Gaelic games of his native Donegal. He was particularly knowledgeable about the rules of Gaelic football and was a respected referee of football games during his time in Dublin. His other passion was for farming and he regularly entertained us with stories of his farming days whether prior to joining the Congregation or in the various farms he later worked in. Even in retirement, Bro. John regularly visited the local mart and kept in touch with agricultural matters through discussion with the local farmers.

Bro. John had an absolute fondness for his native Donegal and made regular visits home. In addition to keeping in touch with his immediate family, he visited his many neighbours, particularly the elderly, and had a genuine interest in their lives.

Throughout his life, Brother John was very faithful to his prayer life and his religious duties. He suffered from ill health for a number of years and we are grateful to the dedicated staff of the nearby Kilcolgan Nursing Home where he

received excellent care for the past eight years. Brother John died on 1 September 2021 at the age of eighty-six. The chief celebrant of his funeral Mass was his brother, Canon Francis McAteer. May he rest in peace.

## **Brother Eduardus Sabar Utomo**

### **1956-2021**

Brother Eduardus Sabar Utomo, who was known as Brother Edo, was born on 13th September 1956 in Wonosobo, Central Java. He is the youngest of 11 brothers and sisters. After completing his high school education, he continued his education at the Stella Maris Seminary, Bogor, West Java from 1979 to 1981. Brother Edo enjoyed his youth by being involved in church activities, namely as a companion for Catholic youth and also in the liturgical field. He has also been an employee at our special school for deaf children, Don Bosco, in Wonosobo. As time went by, God had other plans to prepare him to be his instrument for blessing many people, especially those who were neglected.

Through his experience in church and living with deaf children, it led him to decide on joining the Brothers of Charity. He joined as a postulant of Brothers of Charity in 1986, in the community of Saint Paul in Nandan, Yogyakarta. After the formation period, he professed his first vows on 3rd July 1988 at the age of 32 and sealed them



with perpetual vows in 1994. In his lifetime as a Brother of Charity, he assisted in administration at Purwokerto High School in 1990 and moved to Purworejo with the same service at the Pius Foundation. In 2018, Bro. Edo received a new assignment as a local superior in the Don Bosco Community in Wonosobo. The last few months, he was sickly and had been hospitalized in Palang Biru Hospital, also in our community, and on 3rd September, Bro. Eduardus passed away. In the end, we have to admit, that it is the Lord who gives, and the Lord who takes away. May the name of the Lord be praised. Bro. Edo, 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.

# Brother Jan Scherpenbergh

## 1938-2021

Brother Jan was an amiable confrere, known for his soothing Limburg accent and his infectious laugh. After his training as a teacher in Zwijnaarde and his military service, he was fit to work in our primary school in Essen in September 1961, where he was entrusted with the third year. After a period in Sint-Job-in-'t-Goor in special education, he returned to Essen, until he was called to be a teacher in the training school in Zwijnaarde in 1970, from the conviction that, as a brother teacher, he possessed the necessary didactics to introduce his young confreres to teaching and to lead them. He stayed there until 1977, from where he moved to Saint Paul in Ghent and taught in the primary school on Marathonstraat. A brief transfer over Leuven brought him to Eeklo in 1982, where, in addition to teaching, he also became the local convent superior. It was very pleasant to stay with a superior like Bro. Jan. In 1990, he briefly went to Gentbrugge to be the superior there, too, but this was only for one year and at his request he went back to teaching in Merksem and Brakel. When the Congregation started up a new project in Knesselare for the reception of people with existential problems, Bro. Jan was asked and immediately agreed to be involved in this new apostolate. The garden in Knesselare and the care for the sheep received his special attention. Meanwhile, he was always ready to listen to the guests. Many found solace in Bro.



Jan, who was always willing to have a chat, with encouragement and a smile. But foreign countries also caught his interest. When the Congregation opened a mission in Romania, he was happy to be one of the chosen ones. In 1999, he was the first to go to Iasi, where he would stay for five years. With endless patience, he tried to learn the language and he became the friend of our associate members Sebastian and Carmen, and of Felicia and Rodrica, who saw in him an exemplary brother. They loved Bro. Jan and he loved them. Even when he had to live alone for a while in this foreign Romania, he remained, as always, the punctual brother who took time for prayer and who, in his unique way, was able to put the problems he was confronted with into perspective. When the community in Romania was closed Bro. Jan returned to Knesselare and then asked to live in Lummen, returning to his native region, which he held dear.

A full life of service and great diversity, but with an even greater willingness to go wherever the Congregation felt it needed him. There was no arguing with Bro. Jan; as a religious, he knew

that obedience should not remain just a theory. Bro. Jan loved nature, enjoyed working in the garden, and was proud to show off his homegrown produce. The beds were not always very symmetrical, but that was not a problem for Bro. Jan. This was put into perspective with his familiar smile: it was about the vegetables, not the straight path next to the patch.

Bro. Jan loved his congregation and was intensely involved with what was going on around the world. He always had a youthful air about him, and when we heard of his sudden passing in our convent in Lummen, we were surprised to learn that he was already 83 years old. A brother who found his greatest joy in the consecrated life as a Brother of Charity and who remained faithful in an extraordinary way to the commitment he had made as a young brother on 2 February 1958. We can only be grateful for having been privileged to know such confreres. He has now come home to the love of his Father in heaven, whom he served and loved so faithfully here on earth.

## **Brother Louis Verschueren**

### **1941 -2021**

Always en route to serve, Bro. Louis has unexpectedly been called to leave this life. Those of us who stay behind have been and are faced with a great ordeal, a shock that confronts us all with the finiteness of life here on earth.

Born in Merksplas in 1941, he joined the Brothers



of Charity as a postulant in 1960, professing his first vows on 19 September 1962. After his studies at the normal school in Zwijnaarde, he served in the army, which left quite a mark on him because of the severe hepatitis he contracted, but it did not prevent him from continuing his studies at the teacher training school in Sint-Niklaas. In 1967, he was ready to make the transition to the apostolate and stayed in Temse for a few years as a teacher of Dutch and history, and as head teacher of the sixth form of the modern humanities. In 1973, he went to Essen and in 1975 to Gentbrugge, where he became superior of the community and headmaster of the vocational school. He probably thought he would stay in Gentbrugge for a longer period, but when Bro. Sextus, the head of the buildings and grounds of the Saint Vincent province, suddenly died a year

later, Bro. Louis was asked to take his place, and he turned out to be a dedicated superintendent of the numerous buildings in the province. He was on the road almost every day and his car became his second home. For almost thirty years, he would fulfil this difficult task and, in doing so, leave his mark on the building stock of the province, now a region. Even when a serious accident almost cost him his life and left him permanently disabled to an extent, he continued his mission with unwavering dedication.

As of 2004, he was in Gentbrugge, where he became superior in 2010 and assisted in the administration of the apostolic work.

Bro. Louis was an amiable confrere, always ready to help whoever asked for it. At meetings, he was someone who would always listen, who liked to share his views at the end, and, with that, sometimes managed to leave his mark on the decision-making process. His faithfulness as a religious in the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity was the hallmark of his life, and he enjoyed studying the documents in which the life of the Congregation was elaborated in directories.

From 1976 onwards, he took part in all the General Chapters, until he was allowed to preside over the vote as 'eldest' at the last chapter. He came as the youngest and went as the oldest member, thus contributing to the history of the Congregation.

An aneurysm on the way to Antwerp cut the thread of his life, and medical assistance was of no avail. Even at the age of 80, he unfailingly continued his life of service, and perhaps

he thought he would still be active in the Congregation for many years to come. But God works in mysterious ways, and if his life was an inspiration for all of us to work actively for the good of others, his death is a reminder to always be ready to make the transition to eternal life. The rest he never allowed himself during this life, he has now received in eternity.

## **Brother Maurice Buyens**

### **1940-2022**

“Brother Maurice Buyens: Brother of Charity and champion of the deaf.” This is how the press announced the death of our confrere. His whole life was indeed dedicated to the care, the promotion of people with hearing disabilities, and this based on his own experience as a child of deaf parents. With an uncle who was a Brother of Charity the combination was made: in 1959, he started as a postulant in Maria-Aalter where he professed his first vows in 1961. In the meantime, Brother Leothardus, the monastic name he received when he took the habit, trained as a teacher, which was later complemented by a teaching certificate for religious instruction in lower secondary education and a specialist qualification as a teacher for the hearing impaired. But already in 1964, he was fully active in the deaf community and taught the little ones in the Saint Gregory Institute in Gentbrugge, and after a year’s experience in Woluwe he came



back to Gentbrugge to stay for good. From 1968 onwards, he accompanied Bro. Swithinus to the meetings of the East-Flemish deaf associations and after Bro. Swithinus' passing he succeeded him as supervisor of the deaf clubs and also in the National Association of the Catholic Deaf-Mutes. From 1977 on, he even became the general secretary of the Federation of Flemish Deaf Societies.

Brother Maurice was a brother who could never say no and who was always on the go. His task in Saint Gregory's, as a teacher and later even as general director, he combined with

interpreting the many meetings of deaf people all over Flanders. Interpreting at the celebration of the Eucharist, for which he was asked all over Belgium, was very dear to him. As a result, he had very few spare evenings and weekends. It was a real puzzle where this brother got his energy from!

In 1981, he started a programme for interpreting for the deaf, as a result of which sign language, of which Bro. Maurice was a true advocate from his own experience, gradually gained more recognition, finally to be officially recognized by the Flemish government in 2006. Since then, deaf people have been entitled to interpreters in education, in their private lives, at work, and when defending their interests. Thanks to the school for interpreting, solid interpreters were prepared to take on these roles. He recorded his experiences as a supervisor of the deaf clubs and the development of sign language in various publications, which became real key works, of which the sign language dictionary is the most outstanding. At last, the Dutch-speaking deaf had their own dictionary.

In 1998, Bro. Maurice founded Emmaus, a centre in Ledeborg, as a meeting place and assisted living facilities for the deaf. He also took special care of the elderly deaf by founding a home for them in Temse, which was later integrated into the care home in Tielrode.

Besides his work with the deaf, he also started his own school for training carers for people with disabilities, from which 'Bloemenstad' would later grow.

We asked where this brother got his strength.

This became very clear during the last years of his life, in the way he dedicated himself to reflection groups, went on pilgrimages with the deaf to Medjugorje and San Giovanni Rotondo to Padre Pio, and wrote weekly encouraging texts for his countless friends in the deaf community and beyond. He proved to be a charismatic shepherd.

It is safe to say that the deaf community would have looked very different had Bro. Maurice not been there with them.

At the end of his life, Bro. Maurice knew that he had to let go of a lot of things, but he stayed connected to everything through prayer, intense prayer. He spent many hours praying in the chapel of St. John's Rest Home in Zelzate, until gradually he had to let go of everything, including his own life. But he knew to whom he could entrust it and with Therese of Lisieux he was able to say: "Everything is grace. I am entering into life."

Thank you, Brother Maurice, for the many good things you have done for so many others. It was charity of the purest kind. You will be missed by us, your confreres, but even more by your many friends from the deaf community all over the world. You brought them true joy of resurrection in your very own way, in a charismatic way, unparalleled, tireless, with Saint Vincent's 'davantage', and a charitable compassion as a faithful follower of Father Triest. How happy they must have been for their charism to be so alive and renewing in you.

# **Brother Justin Bashombe**

## **Nabagayire**

### **1975-2022**

The passing of a younger confrere, and totally unexpected at that, hits us extremely hard as a congregation. When we heard the news that Bro. Justin had died early in the morning in Nioki, Congo, it became very quiet in our hearts and we needed some time to let the news sink in. Word then came that he had died as a result of the Covid-19 infection that had been rampant in our brothers' community in Nioki for several days. Our thoughts go back to 1999, when we had the privilege of meeting him for the first time as a young postulant in Bukavu. It was a beautiful group of young people who were preparing very enthusiastically to come to Belgium for their training in the international novitiate. Bro. Justin was one of them. Four years later, he would profess his first vows in Bukavu and then move to Lubumbashi to start his studies in nursing, which he interrupted for a while, but finished in 2010. In the meantime, he had gained experience in the apostolate in Bukavu and Goma, where he was involved in the start-up of the newly established community. After his perpetual profession in 2009, he returned to Goma where he became local superior and head of the psychiatric centre. He proved to be a dedicated nurse and a helpful director, very concerned about the further development of the small centre. He wanted to do everything thoroughly,



sometimes with a certain stubbornness and not afraid to express criticism when this was necessary.

In recent years, he was active in Nioki and we were looking forward to meeting him during our upcoming visit to Kinshasa. However, God has decided otherwise, and the pandemic has quite unexpectedly taken a deadly toll on one of our younger brothers.

Brother Justin was a gifted confrere, serious in his way of life and faithful to his life commitment. In personal conversations, he could be very serious, but in community he was easy-going and pleasant. Sometimes he had difficulty in reconciling his own views with those of the community, and then silence was the solution. And in this silence, he always came to his senses

and to a solution for himself, after which he readily joined the community. His attachment to the Congregation expressed itself in his use of words: “My General, my Congregation, my Community.” The Congregation had indeed become his home where he lived as a valued brother for almost twenty years, in great service to both the community and the sick people for whom he cared.

All this has now come to a halt and we can only prayerfully think back to all the times we were able to meet Justin, indeed in good and bad moments, but always ending with a firm handshake and a heartfelt embrace. May the Lord, to whom he gave his whole life, now give him the full life, where he will be able to taste God’s love for ever. Rest in peace, dearly beloved Brother Justin.

## **Brother Gaston Jeurissen**

### **1925-2022**

When Brother Gaston signed up to become a brother in Zwijnaarde, it was already his dream to become a missionary. It was wartime, of course, and it would be some time before missionaries could leave for Africa again. After his studies as a teacher, he would first gain a few years of experience as a brother in the first form in Bruges. But then the long-awaited moment came and in 1951 Brother Gaston could leave for Congo, where he became headmaster of the primary school in Kabinda straightaway. After a



short stint in Lusambo, where he taught at the vocational school, he left Congo for Rwanda, where the skilled brother teacher taught at the normal school in Zaza and was once again headmaster of the primary school. These were busy years, including the known difficulties surrounding the independence and the various rebellions. But Brother Gaston's love for the people was paramount and so he was able to withstand all dangers. In 1972, it was time to return to Belgium and for three years Brother Gaston became headmaster of the Saint Paul Institute Primary School in Ghent. He stood out by regularly appearing in shorts, which earned him the nickname 'Kort Broekske' or 'Shorts',

which also referred to his small stature. His joy was great when he could return to Rwanda and become active in Zaza again. He was in charge of the Youth Centre, became a bursar, and was responsible for the weekly provisions, for which he regularly had to travel between Zaza and Kigali by truck. All of Kigali knew him as the brother in the habit, because, as an alternative to his shorts, which he still wore indoors, he resolutely chose to wear the habit, albeit with a slight modification, which he made mainly as the choir leader of his 'Pueri Cantores'. For that was his great hobby, to which he dedicated himself with fervour and managed to make many young people enthusiastic about choral singing. He became a member of the international movement and was even able to visit Rome with his group and sing for Pope John Paul II, which was an unforgettable moment for him. When the Congregation decided to set up a new psychiatric centre in Bujumbura and needed someone to monitor the construction work, they called on Bro. Gaston, and obedient as ever, he went to Bujumbura to help with the development of the centre and the convent for four years. But, of course, he was happy to return to Zaza where he took up his former duties again. These were probably the happiest years of his life: always in service, always out and about with young people. A new highlight was when, on the occasion of his religious jubilee, he was able to come to Belgium with his choir to perform in various places. The year was 1993. At that time, nobody thought that it would soon be over in Rwanda and that he would be back in Belgium the next

year, this time with his confreres who had all had to flee the country. A few months later, he accepted the call from South Africa to have brothers in Saint Conrad's in Klerksdorp, and Bro. Gaston started to learn English well in order to leave for Klerksdorp at the end of September and become the boarding master there. South Africa would be his second home and after a period of being superior of the regional house, he went to Polokwane where he was superior and in charge of the boarding school for about ten years. He was appreciated for his punctuality, his readiness, and his friendliness by both the teachers and the many boarders. In 2012, our brother felt that he was not doing well anymore: he forgot names, he could not keep up with the bills like before. He had to say goodbye to Polokwane with a heavy heart, but also to his long missionary life. He came to our convent retirement home in Beernem, where he enjoyed 10 more years of excellent care from the brothers and staff, until he completely disappeared in the twilight of the past. The last months of his life, he spent in our retirement home in Zelzate, where he quietly went to heavenly Father on 21 January 2022.

A beautifully filled life of commitment, of religious depth, of profound happiness to be able to dedicate oneself as a Brother of Charity to young people. Brother Gaston, always ready, has used his talents to the full, spreading them widely, and allowing many to enjoy them. He may now lead the hymn in heaven for all eternity. Pueri Cantores...





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