



# DEUS CARITAS EST magazine

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**IN MEMORY OF**  
**Brother Waldebert Devestel**  
**1930-2022**

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*Cover picture: Pope John Paul II visits the Belgian College and the Generalate, Rome, 21 December 1986*

# Eulogy for Brother Waldebert

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**B**rother Waldebert, over the years you became the personification of the Congregation. First in Belgium, where you became a true advocate for people with disabilities, then worldwide, where, as vicar general and superior general, you succeeded in shaping the charism of the Congregation in a very contemporary way. And even after your mandate as superior general, you continued to be a spiritual guiding light for many, especially for the young brothers in formation. To so many, you were a loving confrere, a devoted father, and a wise grandfather, who will now be greatly missed.

Even as a young brother, you were driven to be a capable caregiver to those in your care. They were the hearing-impaired children and youngsters in our institute in Woluwe, where you taught them to articulate with great patience for more than 10 years. In doing so, you discovered the first building block of our charism: to open the perspective of a new way of life in people who, for one reason or another, have a disability. You would mention this so explicitly later on when writing out our new Rule of Life, where, for the first time as it were, serious attempts were made to describe our shared charism in a clear, contemporary, powerful, and challenging



*Bro. René Stockman and Bro. Waldebert Devestel*

way. Because you discovered in the eyes of these children the face of the Lord Jesus himself, and were able to grow in this warm nest that the community of Woluwe was for you, you continued to cherish these first years of your apostolic service with much gratitude and indeed with an emotional attachment. Perhaps we could say that this building block actually became a cornerstone for your further growth as a religious.

Of course, your skill and dedication did not go unnoticed in the Congregation, and so you were entrusted with the responsibility of heading the Brothers of Charity's special education in Belgium. What you experienced so uniquely and personally in your classroom, you now had the opportunity to convey to confreres and collaborators in the apostolate, and also to help

transpose it at the policy level. We can regard this as the second building block of our charism, in which you realized how important it is as a Brother of Charity to make charity heard within a wider society as a compelling invitation to consider and treat those whose human faculties are limited or impaired as valuable fellow human beings. Respecting, promoting, and restoring people in their dignity henceforth became one of your great tasks and concerns.

But all this was not only to be heard in Belgium, but had to be proclaimed and lived worldwide, and you did this for no less than 33 years as vicar general and superior general of the entire Congregation. You were elected at a pivotal moment when consecrated life was in need of a solid redefinition after the Second Vatican Council. You patiently listened to what was being said and written about this, and you managed to bridge old to new by clearly separating the wheat from the chaff. It was a time of study, of deep reflection and exchange with confreres to eventually offer the Congregation a precious treasure, a new Rule of Life that was at once challenging, innovative, prophetic, but entirely grounded in the legacy we had received from our beloved Founder Peter Joseph Triest as the charism that marked us as Brothers of Charity and would continue to guide us into the future. We will never be able to appreciate enough what you thereby bestowed on the Congregation: a breath of fresh air that did not just appear out of thin air only to quickly disappear again, but one driven by the Holy Spirit as a never-ending

source of inspiration.

For 24 years, you led the Congregation as superior general, and all the brothers got to know you as a man full of optimism, of humour, and at the same time as a talented speaker, a patient listener, and someone who could make decisions with courage. The basis of all this was your deep spiritual life in which you spent a good amount of time with the Lord every day. When others sometimes lost heart, you remained the rock that kept hope alive. How infectious was your life for the many brothers who got to know you during your visits around the world, and with every new foundation you established, it was as if the Congregation was reborn with the freshness of its beginnings, making it a new walk with Providence. Under your administration, the Congregation became more international and its missionary dimension was redefined.



*Bro. Waldebert Devestel and Pope John Paul II, 1986*

As you approached the evening of life, you could continue to share everything you had built over the years, especially with the young brothers in formation. Truly, your time, your talents, the riches of your heart, and your engaging goodness you kept spreading generously. It is as if in this particular article of our Rule of Life we found a brilliant description of what and who you were, for those who were deprived of love were able to find it in you; the less endowed were able to share in your knowledge; the sick and the infirm were sustained by your health and physical strength. Youth responded to your simplicity and readiness to serve others, which coupled with your detachment inspired them in turn to work for the needy. Your poverty for Christ offered the less gifted a new chance of life; he became even more your brother. Your face radiated the goodness of the Father (Rule of Life, No 31).



*Audience of the brothers of the Generalate by Pope John Paul II,  
2 May 1985*

Dear Brother Waldebert, as your life here on earth has come to an end and you were allowed to enter into God's eternal and infinite love on the anniversary of the day the Congregation was founded, now 215 years ago, the words in our Rule of Life that you wrote about the evening of life paint quite vividly the way you shared life with your confreres in these final years: 'In the evening of life, or when illness reduces you to inactivity, your good example among your brothers remains the most telling affirmation of your daring response to God and at the same time greatly encourages them to persevere in their vocation. Christ is your hope, God Himself your strength and reward' (Rule of Life, No 77).



*And God saw that it was good, very good indeed. Thank you, Brother Waldebert, in your great humility you were a giant of charity.*

And may we conclude with the last words from our Rule of Life and project them onto your life in total givenness: 'God is love and in this love you were constantly renewed. Your disposition was one of intimacy and love. In company with the poor you experienced the joys of a renewal. Full of joy and hope in spite of crosses and afflictions, you walked together with God's people, with all of us, towards the promised fulfilment. God who



called you is faithful and He accomplished it'  
(Rule of Life, No 83).

And God saw that it was good, very good indeed.  
Thank you, Brother Waldebert, in your great  
humility you were a giant of charity. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



# A four-leaf clover in Pakistan

**O**ur main focus in Pakistan was of course on our new community in Peshawar, where, at the request of the archbishop of Islamabad, we took over a boys' home previously served by the Marist Brothers, but which had been vacant for several years. Since the accommodation in Gujarat left much to be desired, which is where we ran a boys' home for several years, we gladly accepted the archbishop's proposal to henceforth put our efforts into reviving the boys' home in Peshawar. Brothers Ameel and Naeem, both with extensive experience in running a boys' home, form a small community there and are waiting for a third brother to join them. When they restarted, about



a dozen boys enrolled, and today about 15 have already been entrusted to the brothers' good care. The accommodation offers potential for more, and it is hoped to gradually bring the boys' home back up to cruising speed. In Peshawar, the number of Catholics is rather limited, and in the streets one almost exclusively sees men and the occasional heavily veiled woman. The Catholic Church is present with two parishes, and one of these two parishes, Saint John Mary Vianney parish, has a high school for boys next to our boys' home and also one for girls, the latter served by our Sisters of Charity. In other words, charity is well represented. The community building was built by the Marist Brothers and provides comfortable accommodation for our brothers. A new foundation that offers prospects.

Time did not stand still in Lahore either. Our Canon Triest School was able to expand further and has now become a proper high school,



where children can receive a good education from kindergarten through to finishing high school. A floor was added to the existing school building with new classrooms. It was officially inaugurated on the occasion of the visit of the Superior General. This was on 15 November 2022. Today, the school has more than 400 pupils, and with the expansion it is likely that we will reach 500 very soon, with the need for additional classrooms becoming acute. All the children here are Christians of various traditions, because Youhanabad, where the school is located, is what we in Pakistan call a Christian colony, with a preponderance of Catholics. Good education for this population is very important, because to this day Catholics in Pakistan are treated as second-class citizens. Only proper education can bring them to a better and a more respectful standard.

It is always a joy to be able to visit our second school in Lahore, which we like to call our 'brick school', because it originated in the place where almost all children were employed in making bricks very early on. We vividly remember our first visit, where we were able to talk to families who were pressing clay into moulds in the fields day after day and had to make sure that every evening they had prepared a sufficient number of bricks to be taken to the kiln for firing the next day. Pressured by their employer, they were obliged to enlist their children as well, and since there was no school in the immediate vicinity, these children had no opportunity to get an education. It was a vicious cycle of poverty that was almost impossible to break. We tried

to change this with the establishment of the school, and now we see a beautiful group of children, neatly dressed in uniform, going to school every day in the hope of not having to sit bent over the clay like their parents. What started in a small building has now expanded nicely into a proper primary school. Every visit echoes the importance of being able to develop further education in the future, as many children do not have the opportunity to continue studying after their primary education and some end up back in the brickworks. Simply getting there, the desolation and poverty of the people living here leave a lasting impression. We are happy to see our Founder's name on the facade here as well. Father Triest will undoubtedly be happy about this.

In the title, I spoke of a four-leaf clover. Indeed, besides this boys' home and the two schools, the brothers in Lahore have restarted the Pak Dil Centre, a small-scale rehabilitation centre



for chronic psychiatric patients. That too was opened on the occasion of the visit and, under the good care of Bro. Javaid, we were able to greet 15 residents there. It was closed some years ago due to a number of problems, mostly of a financial nature, and the premises were temporarily occupied by the school which was in need of expansion. But with the construction of the new rooms, the building became vacant again, and so the brothers decided to take up the care of psychiatric patients again. All in all, a good choice, to provide proper care and support for these people. The candidates also staying in Lahore can very directly discover our charism of charity in the care of these psychiatric patients. In a meeting with them, they all testified how they came to know the essence of our charism in caring for these people.

The community of brothers in Pakistan is small, but we were able to discover a certain new dynamic there. The buildings were given a thorough overhaul, a group of Capuchin brothers in training are moving into part of the formation house, and with one postulant and six candidates, there is new life in the community. Across the street, the Oblates have also taken a new initiative with the establishment of a college, so that students graduating with us who have the opportunity to do so can now continue their studies very easily. On 16 November, we were allowed to experience the good relationship the brothers have built with the local community and especially with the various religious communities in Lahore. At Brother





Javaid's perpetual profession, we were pleased to meet many religious who all expressed their appreciation for the openness the brothers had developed towards them in recent years, so important when the Church is in a minority position. It sounded like 'a new-born springtime and a new-born sound', even though winter was just around the corner in Pakistan. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



# Joseph Triest College in Tabaco, Bicol

**T**he story of Joseph Triest College in Tabaco, Bicol is a story of creativity and collaboration and, above all, of faith in the future.

Our psychiatric centre Holy Face really struggled with the Covid pandemic. It failed to keep its head above water, partly due to the withdrawal of Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and Fracarita Belgium, whose financial support helped guarantee the hospital's viability for many years. It was decided to focus on ambulatory care, its social integration, its proper development, and to find a solution for the vacant building. The dream was to create an income-generating activity to further support ambulatory care.





A hotel, a retreat house, and other proposals were all considered. Until with a group of enthusiastic young people, who were already working in our home in Baguio to breathe new life into that too, the decision was made to establish a senior high school specifically for local young people, many of whom do not have the opportunity to pursue advanced studies and are forced to drop out early because of financial constraints. The driving force behind the group is a young doctor of pedagogy, Dr. Joseph Carl Enriques, who has extensive experience in education and works within the overarching structure of education in the Philippines. He was willing to use his experience and especially his connections to ensure that the new initiative, which was to develop in Bicol, would have every opportunity: a senior high school specifically for the poor, who will receive scholarships through the government, and the support of other organizations to convert the buildings of the psychiatric centre into a proper school. With four other young people, all deeply religious and with a special devotion to Mary, he wants to accomplish what Francis de Sales expressed



*The story of Joseph Triest College in Tabaco, Bicol is a story of creativity and collaboration and, above all, of faith in the future.*

so strongly: to sanctify his life by working to sanctify the world. How striking that these young people also really want to do something to encourage new vocations to the Brothers of Charity. A real breath of fresh air to be able to meet and work with such enthusiastic young believers in this day and age. Because the project is carried by both together: these young people need the brothers to add structure to the project and the brothers need the young people to give it substance. A project that will start on the basis of a fruitful cooperation between religious and lay people from the very beginning.

Often, with the word income-generating activity, one hears only the connotations finances and business. Here, the objective remains to financially support the other activities of the Congregation in the Philippines, but this is set in, or better, driven by a deeper objective: to develop a third apostolate pillar of the Congregation in the Philippines, and this at a time when



problems were threatening to cause a certain paralysis. But these problems were transformed into challenges, and today they are already starting the first series of technical training courses, hopefully to effectively start the normal two-year courses in June 2023, thus giving young people real opportunities for further development.

This new project was officially launched on Wednesday 12 October 2022 on the occasion of the visit of the Superior General to the region of the Philippines. A university in Manila will help replenish the library, while others will help set up the computer class. From its inception, this initiative has enjoyed widespread solidarity, thanks to the contacts these young people have developed, both within the Church and within society. In the afternoon, they joined the brothers in a recollection on the Congregation's charism and how it should take shape within our mission. It was as if we saw the brothers of the region



revitalized, looking to the future with renewed vigour, together with their associate members, their collaborators, and now these young people, whose enthusiasm is truly infectious. Father Triest must have rejoiced to see that a new apostolate under his name and grounded in the charism he shared with us saw the light of day. Or, as Dr. Joseph Carl put it: ‘This is our baby that we will care for very much.’ This then will be a shared care together with the Congregation. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*



## Vietnam after 20 years

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**T**here are experiences one does not easily forget. This is certainly true of our first visit to Vietnam when, as a farewell gift, we had several candidates come to our door asking to become brothers. They had been preparing with the Dominican Sisters, who were very close to us from the beginning and accompanied us in our first steps in this country that was new to us. That is now 20 years ago. A year later, we decided to officially start a formation house in Ho Chi Minh City, provisionally in a rented flat and officially registered as a student house. Back then, it all had to be done in secret.

Today, as we welcomed two more brothers into the Congregation who expressed their commitment for life, which took place in a packed parish church where the local faithful shared in our joy, we would have hardly believed or hoped this would be possible 20 years ago.

The community in Vietnam currently has 15 brothers and some in training, and has a presence in Ho Chi Minh City and in Bao Loc. In the latter town, north of Ho Chi Minh City, the profession of our two brothers took place, and several parishioners came to tell us after the ceremony that they had never experienced anything so beautiful. It was in fact a liturgy



done to perfection, presided over by the bishop emeritus, who invited us to be present in his diocese. It was an honour for him to witness this perpetual profession. He promised the moment he invited us that he would place benefactors in our path, and so it happened. We were given land and with the support of benefactors, most of whom came from the area, were able to build a small rehabilitation centre for psychiatric patients. Especially the support of the local government was an unprecedented gift, because without them we cannot do anything in Vietnam.

So today we have two projects, right at the heart of our charism as a congregation. In Ho Chi Minh City, where we have the regional house and the formation house, children with autism come in

every day for special support. It is beautiful to see how our young brothers personally attend to these children in separate classes, with lots of patience and, above all, lots of love. Meanwhile, most of our brothers completed pedagogical training so that they can really carry out their apostolate in a professional manner. The very beginning of a few years ago has now developed into a group of some 30 children who come to our school throughout the week. Our next-door neighbours are the Dominican Sisters who take care of toddlers, as primary and secondary education is still forbidden for religious congregations. But again, the local authorities are well disposed towards us and allow us to expand slowly. Of course, here too, the covid period was a difficult time and they could not teach for more than a year, but again it was the local benefactors who ensured that the brothers could continue and could even spare to help others. Talk about solidarity.



In Bao Loc, they have received official



recognition as a rehabilitation centre, which is obviously really helpful, as it allows them to raise their social profile without any problems. Today, there are about 30 patients with whom the brothers share their everyday life. Both in Bao Loc and Ho Chi Minh City, everything is done by the brothers themselves, which brings about a special, personal involvement. It reminds me of the early days of the Congregation, when the brothers were caring for the elderly, for the sick, and for children as a community. History is once again being made here. Brother Dominic, our first Vietnamese brother testifies that it was here that he truly got to realize Saint Vincent's words: 'The poor are our masters whom we must serve with respect and love.' That was his ideal when he first came to us 20 years ago, an ideal he now gets to fulfil daily with these patients. Every morning, he prays with the sick and tries to read them a passage from the Gospel and comment on it. He is amazed at how receptive they are to it. It may have everything to do with the simplicity he exudes and the authentic way he shares his faith with them. It had been three years since I had visited Vietnam, and I could barely recognize the home in Bao Loc. From a very simple and actually too small building, they have now been able to expand both the community building and the centre for the sick, all with the help of benefactors. It is an oasis of peace, in a green environment and a colourful array of flowers. The hand of Bro. Thomas is visibly present. He was also the one who had decorated the parish church for the profession in a way that no one else can. Talk about talent.





Catholics in a communist country, that is what makes Vietnam so unique, especially in the south, where there is a veritable concentration of Catholics who certainly do not hide their faith, but are happy to express it generously. The number of churches we come across on the road from Ho Chi Minh City to Bao Loc is innumerable, and everywhere we see statues of Our Lady of La Vang or Divine Mercy on the balconies of houses. While in other parts of the world, where the Catholic faith once flourished, churches are being abandoned, demolished or repurposed, here churches are still being built, and all with the support of the local Catholic community. We are happy that as a congregation with our specific charism, we get to be a little flower in that big bouquet of flowers, as the bishop called the presence of the Congregation during his homily. May we continue to grow and above all blossom, and do so with God's blessing! 🌿

*Bro. René Stockman*



# In memoriam Brother Waldebert Devestel (1930–2022)

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**O**n the day we commemorated our foundation as a congregation, Brother Waldebert Devestel passed away in Zelzate on 28 December 2022. He was the Congregation's superior general for four terms from 1976 to 2000. During this long period, he saw the face of the Congregation change and made a fundamental contribution to guiding the Congregation and the brothers in it like a good shepherd.

Indeed, it was a time of constant change, ushered in by the Second Vatican Council, where there was a call to bring consecrated life up to date and, at the same time, to go back to the source, so that the charism could be lived in all clarity. Bro. Waldebert clearly understood this double call, which resulted in the drafting of a new Rule of Life, largely written down under his guidance and supervision. As young brothers, we were offered this Rule of Life in order to give shape to our vocation as Brothers of Charity. What we had witnessed in so many brothers before, we now found expressed in a challenging and even prophetic way. After more than 50 years, this expression of our charism retains its power because it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit,



*Official portrait of Bro. Waldebert Devestel*

which, through Bro. Waldebert, was wonderfully reflected in our Rule of Life. Yes, through the Rule of Life, it became very clear for the first time what inspired our Founder Father Triest to found our congregation. It opened the way to continue the search for the source with great curiosity, to finally get to know the full richness of the charism, which Father Triest carried within him and which he had uniquely received from the Holy Spirit, and even to offer it to the Church to be officially recognized as unique, extraordinary, guiding for all times. But the articulation of this charism as it resounded in the new Rule of Life was contemporary, dynamically forward-looking in time, and therefore truly prophetic. Truly, what we will continue to praise when we commemorate the generalate of Bro.

Waldebert is this unique gift with which, faithful to our tradition, he outlined new perspectives and showed renewed ways to live the charism of charity with great enthusiasm, today and tomorrow, as a Brother of Charity, and to spread it out into the world.

What he wrote in the Rule of Life in an inspired way, he also tried to live up to in an enthusiastic way during his long term of office. He categorically refused to resign himself to any form of defeatism and discouragement, which sometimes tended to surface in many of those around him. The lack of vocations in the northern provinces, the lack of faithfulness among confreres, the difficulties that presented themselves at the start of new foundations: no,



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they were not able to sway Bro. Waldebert when it came to his leadership. He was sensitive, sometimes even overly sensitive, but in faith and with a strong trust in divine Providence, he continued on his way: as a shepherd who mapped out the way for his brothers, as a shepherd who walked the road together with his brothers, and as a shepherd who often went in search of the sheep that was lost to bring it back to the fold with joy. At the end of his term as superior general, he was given a statue of the Good Shepherd and a mosaic depicting Jesus calming the storm; one could not find a better gift to sum up the 24 years of service in leadership. Yes, he was a good shepherd to his sheep and he mastered the art of calming many a storm that raged around him so as to continue the journey together in the right direction.



*Golden Jubilee of Bro. Waldebert Devestel, 1998*

Looking back on his richly filled life, we recall his first years in the apostolate, where he emerged

as a specialist in teaching children and young people with hearing impairments. For 11 years, from 1952 to 1963, he was the competent teacher of articulation in the French-speaking section at our institute in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe.

He lived in a community of brothers where the apostolate was practised in a passionate way with a great concern for further education and training. During this period, he completed his educational training with degrees in speech therapy, thorough French, pedagogy, music education, and spirituality. For a short period, he was superior and director of our institute in Gentbrugge, before becoming inspector of special education with the Brothers of Charity in Belgium. For three years, he would visit the schools and encourage his confreres to improve their skills. He also learned to recognize the importance of making his voice heard at policy level. During the General Chapter of 1967, barely 37 years old, he was unexpectedly elected vicar general, which made him go to Rome, together with the also newly elected superior general Bro. Agnel, to be the first to move into the newly built General House.

During the nine years as vicar general, he got to know the whole congregation, and at the same time he took the time to earn a master's degree in pedagogy and to specialize in teaching catechesis to children with mental disabilities. In doing so, he became a specialist who started teaching these new approaches to catechesis in other congregations, as well. With a doctorate in educational sciences, with a highly regarded dissertation on specialized catechesis, he was



able to complete his university studies in 1980. Meanwhile, he had been elected superior general by the General Chapter in 1976, a position he would hold until 2000.

After this long tenure, at the age of 70, he was ready to continue serving, this time as provincial superior of the newly constituted European province and also to take on the responsibility of mentoring the young brothers who were in Belgium to study. Every week, he went to our international novitiate in Sint-Maria-Aalter to introduce the novices to the Rule of Life. Who better to receive these lessons from than Bro. Waldebert? His place of residence was our international formation house in Kruibeke,



where he playfully liked to be called ‘the baron of Kruibeke Castle’. Many young brothers keep fond memories of their stay in Kruibeke with Bro. Waldebert as their beloved superior.

With the closing of the community in Kruibeke in 2016, Bro. Waldebert left for our rest home in Beernem, where he enjoyed a few more happy years, before finally coming to our rest home in Zelzate, where, surrounded with the best of care, he quietly bade farewell to life with a grateful heart.

The end of the year 2022 was marked by the passing of two important figures for the Church and the Congregation: Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Brother Waldebert. Both are closing a chapter in the Church as well as in the Congregation, and for both we can only be grateful for their total gift and commitment to the good of the Church and the Congregation respectively. Both of them may now share in the infinite love of God forever. ¶

*Bro. René Stockman*





# A tribute to Brother Waldebert Devestel

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**T**he rich life of Bro. Waldebert Devestel can be summed up with the words of St. Irenaeus that ‘the glory of God is man fully alive’. As a Brother of Charity, he was inspired by God’s love and was full of life and joy. He was open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and God became not an abstract concept for him but a reality that he experienced with deep conviction. To encounter Bro. Waldebert even when one was stressed was to experience freshness and unmistakable peace that had its source in his union with God. He was a charismatic and born leader who was loved and admired by many. He instilled hope when others saw fear because he was grounded in his faith. His firm belief in God filled his heart with love that manifested in real joy. It was always springtime in his soul, to use the words of St. Jean-Marie Vianney, because of his cheerfulness and approach to life.

The first time I met Bro. Waldebert was when he came to give us lessons on the Constitutions at the international novitiate in Maria-Aalter. At first, I didn’t know who he was, but I instantly liked him. There was something mysterious and delightful about him. He was real, transparent, and like a magnet, he attracted us to love our vocation, as he radiated beauty, goodness, and joy that was not only profound but also contagious. What impressed me was not only

his knowledge of the Constitutions and its developments but his spontaneity and inner freedom that we all long for. He embodied the words of Jesus, 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly' (Jn 10:10).

His passing on 28 December 2022, the day of our foundation as a congregation, was not only symbolic that he too started a new life in heaven, but also made me reflect a lot on what a gift he was to us as Brothers of Charity. This led me to dig into my old diary and see places where I recorded my experiences and admiration of him. He was a luminary and a true light that shone with brilliance to inspire us all. Each time someone asked me to think of a leader or a living Saint, his name would pop up effortlessly in my mind. He was extraordinary in the ordinary, and a mystic who could see God in all things. Yes, for



him God could be ‘honored and praised even in a glass of a Trappist beer!’

He was very humble and obedient so you would not know he was the immediate former Superior General. Even the idea that he had a doctoral degree, is something that most of us came to learn much later and not from himself. His spirit of humility touched us immensely when he shared a moving experience as a young brother in class. He was asked by the Belgian government to go to represent the country in the USA at an important conference on special education. Everything was arranged by the government from the plane ticket, and accommodation at a 5-star hotel, to a big traveling allowance, but to his surprise the superior refused him to go at the last minute. The government officials could not understand why he was refused and they came to persuade the superior, but the superior stood by his decision. Bro. Waldebert said, ‘On a human level, I could not understand, but I had to obey out of faith.’ Maybe the superior felt guilty for his refusal since a few months later, he sent Bro. Waldebert to study for a degree in Paris in special



*To encounter Brother Waldebert even when one was stressed was to experience freshness and unmistakable peace that had its source in his union with God.*

education. His point in sharing his experience was to invite us to understand the role of a superior on a supernatural level, that when we only see things on a human level, obedience can be difficult and futile. Certainly, it requires deep faith to give up our wills and heed God's voice, through a superior.

Bro. Waldebert was not only humble but was simple and poor in spirit. He was so detached whether on positions or material things. This is exemplified by how he treated us when we lived together in Kruibeke. He was not just a brother but a caring father who would make us feel at ease. He was so generous with giving us pocket money, and some of us somehow abused his generosity by exaggerating our needs. But even when he knew our attachments to material goods, he purposely turned a blind eye. He



*Bro. Waldebert Devestel is made a Knight of the Order of Leopold, 2000*

didn't judge us or oblige us to live as he did. He knew that it is cruel to force someone to live a

life of poverty and simplicity when one is not yet touched by Christ the poor. Like a merciful father, who let his prodigal son go and wander to a far country in a life of dissipation and debauchery (Lk 15:11-32), he let us learn the hard way that true happiness is not in accumulating things or living a reckless life. Such patience to give young brothers some space and freedom, I believe was his pedagogy, like St. Therese of Lisieux, who would say we have to let each flower bloom in its own way. He was so gentle yet firm when he felt that it was necessary. He would encourage us to learn computers not to remain 'illiterate' but he would also give us a stern warning to use the media wisely and prudently as he saw it could endanger our vocation. In the same way, he was free to share whatever he had. During a reception in Maria-Aalter, I asked him out of curiosity where he had gotten that special wooden congregational crucifix he was wearing. Instead of answering my question, he spontaneously took it off and put it on me and insisted, 'it will be a link between my vocation and yours.' I was startled and amazed. His readiness to give up something very personal was very humbling for me and I could not believe it. With his passing, I now treasure this crucifix as a relic from him, and I think of him each morning when I put it on. Such spontaneity, simplicity, and generosity in sharing freely are born from a heart that knows God. That is why he would often remind us to look with wonder at all the gifts we received from God such as our intellect, good health, vocation, friends, and family – that all of this should lead us to exclaim

personally, 'I am perhaps one of the most blessed people in the world!'

Yes, God was a very important factor in his life and he took the time to pray devoutly. While teaching us the Constitutions, he would remind us that 'the secret of prayer is to make time for it.' He was faithful to his words and while most of us in Kruike were glued to the 'holy' television after supper, he would sneak into the little chapel that was inside the castle and would sit quietly before the Blessed Sacrament. It was his 'movie theatre' if you will, and through it, I believe his heart was more illumined with God's light, and he could see and contemplate the things of God. The secret of his heroic life of virtue was a result of his daily contact with God in silence and the Eucharist. He was not only devoted to the Eucharist but also to St. Joseph.



*Bro. Waldebert Devestel with Mgr. Werner Quintens*

He would share countless experiences on how St. Joseph helped the Congregation through his

intercession. He insisted that we should not only seek St. Joseph for our material needs, but also for his life of holiness and virtue, especially his purity of heart, humility, patience, and hiddenness of not seeking any fame. He exhorted us that our mission is to proclaim the Kingdom of God and not to be lost in building our little kingdoms.

Bro. Waldebert believed holiness is realized in the contemplation of divine truth, which must be the goal of every desire and action. If one loves God, one desires to know him better. This divine love led him to acquire a spirit of playfulness like a child. That is why it was not a surprise for us to see some dolls in his provincialate office in Ghent. As he gave us a tour, he freely narrated that they give him comfort when he feels stressed. His upbeat spirit and optimism would also manifest when he showed us the newly built building of St. Julian's. The old building was replaced with a new one after a fire incident so that Bro. Waldebert saw the providence of God as 'a lucky fire since it brought a new building.' His positive interpretation of events and taking it easy resonates with an adage that says 'Angels do fly because they don't take themselves too seriously.' Even when he was reminded by the late Bro. Guido to observe his diet at the table, he would grin and grab another piece of meat and respond with humor, 'the doctor said I can start tomorrow!'

Bro. Waldebert will remain in our memory not just as a former superior general, but also as someone who allowed God to mold and shape his whole existence. He fully lived a life of

beatitude and accepted Jesus in his life as a child of God (Jn 1:12). He was a missionary by nature in many dimensions and could master difficult situations with ingenuity, humor, and divine wisdom. Perhaps what we can learn from his extraordinary life is to be open to the transforming power of God's grace. We can also become witnesses of God's love even in our secular and hostile world. As we say fare thee well to Bro. Waldebert, I can't think but imagine his confreres have welcomed him up in heaven with a huge party as they sing his favorite song in jubilation, 'We are one big happy family of Brothers of Charity... we are!' 🙏

*Bro. Venance Kapita*





# News from the General Administration

On the occasion of the meeting of the provincial and regional superiors with the General Council in Rome in September 2022, Bro. Joel Ponsaran was chosen as the new general assistant, replacing Bro. Godfried Bekaert who died in March 2022. In addition to his overall task as general councillor, he will receive the delegation from the General Council to oversee both the region of the Philippines and the foundation in Papua New Guinea.

During the meeting, it was decided to make the following vade mecums and actualizations:

- About the administration of ecclesiastical goods
- About the use of information and communication technology
- Actualization of the formation plan
- Actualization of the formation plan for associate members.

Period of preparation for final profession. During the meeting, it was decided to prolong the period of preparation for final profession and to look for collaboration with other congregations of brothers in order to develop a specific formation plan.

The following brothers were accepted for final profession in 2023:

- Bro. Gilbert Dusezerane (Rwanda)
- Bro. Callixte Ndikumana (Rwanda)
- Bro. Matthieu Kudzwe (Zambia)
- Bro. Clement Yambani (Zambia)
- Bro. Alain Mbusa Bahwere (DRC)
- Bro. Pierre Kalombo (DRC)
- Bro. Inigo Gidh (India)
- Bro. Rohit Barwa (India)

The following brothers with final profession received dispensation from their vows in 2022:

- Bro. Anuranjit Kullu (India)
- Bro. Saul Okaya (Ethiopia)
- Bro. Godefroid Mukena (DRC)
- Bro. Jean Paul Nshimiyimana (Rwanda)



## DR CONGO

# Profession and jubilee together in one ceremony

On 18 August 2022, four brothers pronounced in the newly established parish of Saint Bernard in Lubumbashi their perpetual profession and two brothers commemorated the 25th anniversary of their first profession.

Brother Donatien Kabuluapa, Brother Guillaume Mbo, Brother Pascal Nsenga and Brother Valentin Ndimuka, all from DR Congo, made their perpetual vows in the hands of the Superior General, Brother René Stockman, while Brother Freddy Ndjibu and Brother Theodore Nkondo gratefully recalled 25 years of religious life as a



*The perpetual professed brothers*



*Jubilee of Bro. Freddy and Bro. Théodore*

Brother of Charity. A third jubilarian, Brother Albert Nkoy, could not be present as he is working as a missionary in Papua New Guinea.

This event was appropriately framed with a very special celebration of the Eucharist presided over by the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Lubumbashi, followed by an elaborate reception in the garden of the scholasticate. A high day for the region 'Notre Dame d'Afrique' in DR Congo and a joyful moment for the entire Congregation.

## KENYA

# Perpetual profession

In Kakamega near Kisumu in Kenya, there was great joy on Saturday, 20 August 2022, on the occasion of the perpetual profession of Brother Gasper Ofisi as a Brother of Charity.

Originally from Kakamega, the choice was made to make the profession in the parish where the brothers' community is located. In this parish, the brothers serve the Saint Lazarus Medical Centre. A massive turnout of family members and friends from various nearby parishes made the profession into a real testimony to the presence of the Brothers of Charity in the diocese of Kakamega, with a strong hope of expanding our presence in Kenya in the future.



**FRACARITA INTERNATIONAL**

## **Annual Report 2021**

Fracarita International is pleased to share with you their Annual Report 2021.

The report provides an overview of the activities, testimonies and stories at their services worldwide.

The report can be consulted on the [website of Fracarita International](#).



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

**FRACARITA INTERNATIONAL  
NGO BROTHERS OF CHARITY  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

**MENTAL HEALTH CARE  
EDUCATION  
CARE FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY**

**DR CONGO**

# **Perpetual professions in**

# Bukavu

On 23 December 2022, Brothers Eli, Bonaventura and Alain were allowed to pronounce their perpetual profession in Bukavu.

In the Eucharist presided over by Archbishop François-Xavier Maroyen, and in the presence of the Superior General, Bro. René Stockman, the three brothers committed themselves for life in the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity.



Brothers Eli and Alain from Congo, and Brother Bonaventura from the Central African Republic, after their respective spiritual and professional training, are serving in the apostolate: Brothers Eli and Bonaventura in Bangui and Brother Alain in Goma.



# New novices in Nairobi

In a modest yet meaningful ceremony, 31 young men started their novitiate at the International Novitiate in Nairobi, Kenya, on 25 February 2023.

The novices hail from Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, South Africa, Zambia, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.



## IN MEMORIAM

**Mrs. Rosalia Banting  
(Philippines)**

As an associate member of the Brothers of Charity in the Philippines, Ms. Rosalia Banting, or 'Leah' as she was affectionately known, was a gift in many ways. We were saddened by her passing on August 6, 2022, at the age of 50. Even though she had a speech impediment, she was very active in leading prayer ministry of the associate members since 2020. She was a servant leader who was concerned for the well-being of others. Despite being attentive to her family's needs, she was also passionately involved in helping others, especially persons with myasthenia gravis disorders, by ensuring they had access to identification cards. She would be there for them early in the morning so the patients could be attended to or even sleep in a chair to watch a person who has had a thymectomy. She helped provide medicine to indigent patients with other disabilities, as well.

When she made her promise as an associate member in 2019, she expressed her commitment to pray always and became an inspiration to others in this regard. Her devotion to Divine Mercy and praying for the vocations and beatification of Fr. Triest was something she was deeply committed to. She also joined service missions of a local foundation and, among



others, helped wash clothes for distribution to people in need who lived under the bridge close to the parish of the Brothers of Charity. She joined the Associates and Friends in visits to the leprosarium. This was a concrete way she lived her vocation as an associate member. The charism of charity was embedded in her everyday life and made God, who is love, more visible through her humble service to those in need. Like a faithful daughter of Fr. Triest, she was truly exemplary in living her baptismal promises and being a light to others. Like the way she found inspiration in our Constitutions, that 'you cannot separate your prayer from your apostolate', we are sure that she continues to pray for us in heaven as she now contemplates her Creator face to face. This is our Christian hope, that all shall be well, even after we depart from this world.

IN MEMORIAM

## **Mrs. Rosette Roels (Belgium)**

Associate Member Mrs. Rosette Roels of the Saint Vincent Region passed away on 25 August 2022 in Aalst (Belgium), at the age of 82 years.



IN MEMORIAM

## **Mrs. Maribeth Verdida Portes**

# (Philippines)

Associate Member Mrs. Maribeth Verdida Portes of the Sacred Heart Region passed away on 4 October 2022 in Manila (Philippines), at the age of 52 years.



# Brother Victor Grard

## 1930-2022

Brother Victor Grard, who passed away on 17 July in our convent rest home Saint John's in Zelzate, was a colourful character, known in almost the whole Congregation. He was a man who maintained many contacts, he was a loyal friend and was interested in everything that happened in the Congregation. He spent many years in education and taught in virtually every Flemish school of the Brothers of Charity, in both mainstream and special education. He enjoyed thinking back to the time when he taught children with disabilities in Gentbrugge and Woluwe. There, he truly felt himself to be a Brother of Charity. In 1971, he was asked to share his extensive experience in the apostolate with young people as a vocation animator. He stayed in our community of Leopoldsburg, from where he travelled the Flemish roads to speak animatedly about the life of the Brothers of Charity in schools. He had an imagination that was unrivalled.

In 1990, another dream came true for Bro. Victor. He was asked to help in the new foundation in the Philippines, where his contemporary Bro. Armand Peers was the superior. He lost his heart to the people of Baguio where he was in charge of the House Without Steps, a home for people with physical disabilities. Even after he had returned to Belgium a long time ago, he continued to



correspond with many of his former pupils and to support them as much as he could. In 1997, he came to Rome to help with the administration, and here too he left his mark with his striking phrases and his distinctive translations, which were later recounted with much delight.

After a few years of service in the primary school in Aalter, he asked to go to the Netherlands in 2002, where he found a new home in Eindhoven. Having Bro. Victor at the table meant that there was always a lively atmosphere, and again his unique views and remarks will remain in the memory of the local brothers for many years to come.



He was not doing very well during the last few years, and slipped into a process of dementia, so that he finally returned to Belgium to receive proper care in our convent rest home Saint John's in Zelzate, where he died.

Brother Victor lived out his vocation as a religious brother to the full and in a very unique way. He was a man of prayer, of community, and of service, which firmly established him on the three pillars of consecrated life. On the one hand, he loved being on his own, quietly reading and taking time for prayer. But on the other hand, he could not do without others and constantly longed to have quiet chats with his confreres and with everyone he came across. Every time he went for a bicycle ride, he was sure to meet someone new with whom he would have a conversation, and then report back to the community. He also kept up an extensive correspondence and the letters he wrote were pieces of long prose in which it was not at all hard to lose track.

Brother Victor, thank you for the gift of yourself as a Brother of Charity and the very special colour you added to your vocation. Your life was a joy to many people and you will now be able to enjoy the full joy with God who will let you share in his love.

## **Brother Anselme Harimenshi 1956-2022**

On 4 August 2022, our confrere Anselme died

completely unexpectedly in Bujumbura. As a 25-year-old, he began his novitiate training in Butare, Rwanda in 1981, after which he made his first vows on 15 August 1984. He was promptly sent to Rome to study spirituality and then to complete these studies at the faculty of Notre-Dame de la Paix of the University of Namur.

Once returned to his country of origin, he was able to start his apostolate at our psychiatric centre in Kamenge. In the meantime, he learned more about accounting so that he was ready to offer administrative support to our apostolic works. That was to be his field from now on.

In charge of administrative services, he grew in tandem with the psychiatric centre, so to speak.

To recharge and breathe new air, he was sent to Rwanda in 1989, where he got to work at our centre for people with disabilities in Gatagara.

It became a fascinating experience for him.

Back in Bujumbura, he was able to resume his former apostolate. When they started the secondary school in Butare, he was asked to lend a hand there too. But his home would remain Bujumbura, and until the day of his passing he was involved with the psychiatric centre.

Brother Anselme had a somewhat unique way of life, but always found his true home in the community with his confreres. There, he was able to create a good atmosphere with his witty remarks and pleasant stories.

As the secretary of the association of the higher superiors of Burundi, he got to know many other religious, and was invited by them to help in the realization of their projects. He looked back on this period with great fondness.



He did experience some health problems in recent years, but no one had thought that he would die so unexpectedly. The night before, he had animatedly participated in a community meeting, but a severe heart attack during the night proved fatal to him.

We are grateful for Bro. Anselme's life and for his givenness as a religious in the Congregation. He was the last of a generation of Burundian confreres, for without realizing it himself, he had become the oldest in the region, after we had had to say goodbye to Bro. Augustin. Together, they will now intercede with the Lord for us all and above all pray that the Saint Charles Lwanga region of Burundi may flourish more fully, all in the service of charity. *Caritas Christi urget nos!*

# **Brother Jozef Hontelé**

## **(Timon)**

### **1930-2022**

With Brother Timon's passing, we have lost an inspired missionary who enthusiastically left for Japan in 1973 to replace the late Brother Adriaan Daems. No, the foundation of the young mission in Tottori was not easy, quite the contrary. But eventually the trio, Bro. Bavo, Bro. Ludo, and Bro. Timon, would become and remain the pillars of Matsu no Seibo, the newly founded institute for children with severe intellectual disabilities. It marked the birth of something new in Japan coming from the Brothers of Charity. Brother Timon had already completed a long list of assignments when he left for Japan. As a young professed brother, he obtained his teaching certificate. After his military service, he was sent to the Saint Joseph Institute in Zwijnaarde, Belgium to teach the youngest children. Meanwhile, he would also obtain the certificate of proficiency for educating children with disabilities. He dedicated himself with heart and soul to this beautiful task, and in educating these children he could fully live the charism of the Congregation. In 1962, he headed for Woluwe, where he taught at the vocational school for the blind and after a few years he became headmaster of the primary school there. It was to be his first administrative position, and with this experience he was ready to take on bigger tasks. It was to be the Saint John



Berchmans Institute in Ghent, where he became both headmaster and junior master. It was an entirely new experience. The following year, he was given the same position in Sint-Michiels, Bruges. When in 1968 Brother Vianney left for Rwanda to set up the new Caraes psychiatric centre, Brother Timon became director of the Guislain nursing school in Ghent, as well as superior and master of scholastics. For three years, he would fulfil these difficult duties with such enthusiasm and optimism until a ministerial decree demanded that the director of a nursing school had to have a background in nursing. Meanwhile, Bro. Vianney had returned

from Rwanda and resumed his former duties, while Bro. Timon moved to Saint Julian's, where he became headmaster and superior. With a small stop in Bonneville, he finally got to prepare to travel to Japan in 1973. He even had to attend a school for counsellor training to do so, and so we met him during a summer camp in Sint-Martens-Latem. We were all impressed by the commitment and dedication of this ever cheerful brother, whose laughter was more than infectious. It was to be a totally new page in his life. With great courage and dedication, he started studying the Japanese language, which was no mean feat at his age, but after a year and a half he seemed ready to be the person in charge of one of the institute's pavilions and also superior of the community. He was happy to welcome a number of Japanese candidates and guide them in their vocation. By 1989, Japanese law required him to retire, and now the time of 'ora et labora' had arrived. He became the caring superior of the house, ensuring that homeliness reigned there. Furthermore, he volunteered to serve the institute and did three hours of worship every day in the small house chapel. The latter in particular was special and added increasing depth to his life. When the Congregation was restructured in 2000, he became regional superior for one term, and at every meeting we got to enjoy his colourful comments and stories. With Brother Timon, seriousness and joy would simply blend into one another, which made him so unique and authentic at the same time. He would stay in Japan and decided not to return to Belgium for the last few years. His closest

relatives had passed away, and he felt it was so important to continue to offer his support to the small community in Tottori and especially to Bro. Makita.

Anyone who ever got to meet Bro. Timon will carry with them a lasting happy memory. But for us, who have shared the same vocation as him, he will remain a true example for us to follow. And we are sure that now he will be able to see God face to face and continue his daily worship for eternity and see it to perfection.

## **Brother Lucien Massenhove**

### **1943-2022**

Whenever Brother Lucien was around, we would invariably hear his well-known laugh and mannerisms. He was a man who was always sociable and liked to have his say whenever he had the opportunity. We will miss this infectious laugh.

Originally from Westkerke, Belgium, he joined the Brothers of Charity as a young man and professed his first vows on 19 July 1963. He was not a scholarly person, but a practical worker. And so, after his military service, he was able to work as a cook. This led him to Brakel from 1966 to 1973, where he gained additional skills and became an esteemed cook. He was dexterous and, as a self-made man, he soon mastered many techniques that would later serve him immensely, especially in the apostolic works where he would find himself. From 1973 to 1976,





he became the brother cook of the Provincialate in Ghent, until a dream he had long had came true: he was sent as a missionary to South Africa and for three years he became a teacher in the woodwork department of the school in Pietersburg. Soon, he was put in charge of the technical department, and every corner of the school became familiar territory for him. Everyone there was amazed at how he always found a solution to technical defects with few resources. He communicated in a combination of Dutch, English, and Afrikaans, which sometimes led to amusing anecdotes. In 1979, he moved to Rwanda, and became head of the kitchen at

the Groupe scolaire in Butare and assistant to Brother Junius in the technical department. Then came a time when he returned to Belgium to serve in Casteau and in Ghent, where he joined the missions office and where his technical skills really came into their own. How many shipping containers he very carefully loaded, Rudy Vaernewyck will surely be able to tell us. He also ran the kitchen at weekends, and the brothers of the Provincialate will certainly remember the chicken that he knew how to prepare in a special way. In 1990, he was again in a position to leave for South Africa, where he was in charge of technical services at Saint Conrad's College in Klerksdorp for more than 15 years. Again, he was admired by confreres, teachers, and students for the way he found a solution to every technical problem, in his very own way. Only electrical installations were not his cup of tea. He was allowed to continue this task for a few years at his familiar Pax College in Pietersburg, now called Polokwane.

Health reasons forced him to return to Belgium, and from Gentbrugge he remained the serving confrere, always ready to drive someone at any hour of the day or night.

Brother Lucien was a straightforward confrere, faithful to his commitment, who took advantage of the natural talents he was given and in doing so really served his community. He loved his community and was always there, eager to be actively involved in everything that happened. His stories with his familiar exaggerations were sometimes legendary, especially when he would reminisce about his travels as a truck driver

back in the day. They certainly had to be taken with a large pinch of salt. But all this made him so special, unique and, above all, likeable with many people.

Brother Lucien, for the gift of yourself in the service of the Lord and in the service of your neighbour, we can only be thankful as well as for your friendship, which was unconditional. You may now enter fully into that divine friendship, of which you were already allowed to have a taste here on earth, so that you may share it abundantly with others too.

## **Brother Engelbert Engelen**

### **1929-2022**

‘Bertje’, that is how our Brother Engelbert was called by his fellow brothers.

He was indeed a brother who was appreciated and loved by everyone who knew him, who met him. Yes, a true Brother of Charity.

Originally from Tessenderlo, Belgium, having completed the traditional religious formation, he pronounced his first vows on 2 February 1947, after which he further qualified as a nurse. After some ten years at the Guislain Institute as a dedicated brother-nurse to people with profound intellectual disabilities, he moved to Hollogne-aux-Pierres in 1962, to help prepare the move to the new institute being built in Bonneville. He would stay there until 1992, not counting a slight interruption in 1971, during which he stayed back at the Guislain Institute for a year. In Bonneville,



Brother Engelbert was the caring angel for the children with severe intellectual disabilities and also head of the medical service. This meant being available day and night, and, with an appropriate routine, he did everything for these children and meant everything to them. This was his life for 30 years, and never was there a day when he gave himself to his mission with less dedication. As of 1978, he became superior of the community, and his confreres could also enjoy his loving care and concern.

When Brother Engelbert was asked to come to Dave in 1992 to become superior and head of nursing, there were justified protests in Bonneville, especially from the parents of these children who found in him a father and mother

for their children whom they had entrusted to the institute. But for Brother Engelbert, obedience was not an empty word, and once in Dave he revealed himself once again as a gentle superior, a servant director, and someone everyone could always turn to. He was always ready to listen, to smile encouragingly, and to say the right thing to put someone back on track. So many African fellow brothers, who came to Dave to do a nursing internship there, testified to his great hospitality and concern so that they would not want for anything.

In recent years, he got to return to his hometown and was happy to be close to his family. He accepted the suffering he had to endure and was allowed to say goodbye to life in the way he had always lived it: with immense gratitude.

As confreres, we owe Brother Engelbert this gratitude in a very special way. His family name was 'Engelen' ('Angels') and his religious name 'Engelbert', and so we truly saw an angel in him: an angel in the community, an angel for the many people he lovingly cared for, an angel for those he guided, an angel for everyone who was able to walk a part of life's journey with him.

By his daily faithful fulfilment of his tasks and his consistent way of life, Brother Engelbert created a brilliant mosaic of what the life of a Brother of Charity can encompass. There was the colour of his intimate relationship with the Lord, there was the colour of his fraternal connection with his confreres, there was the colour of his boundless love for the little ones, the least. He was a true angel who tangibly brought charity to the world. We now have an angel in heaven to

whom we may turn to further help us on our way to becoming true angels of charity, like him, and increasingly so. Blessed are those who have had the privilege of knowing Brother Engelbert and savouring his love.

## **Brother Bartolomeus Gulan Murtono 1977-2022**

For the brothers in Indonesia, 19 October 2022 will remain engraved in their hearts as the day that our beloved Bro. Bartolomeus Gulan Murtono passed away at the young age of 45. Before being promoted to glory and joining his heavenly Father, Bro. Bartholomeus' earthly life began in Wonogiri in Central Java, Indonesia, where he was born on 24 August 1977. He must have had very Christian parents because about four months later he was baptized on 18 December 1977 at Timang. He was a third child born to a big family of six siblings. It is at this family level that he must have learned the spirit of living together and sharing, so that when he joined religious life years later, he could easily adapt and bring the values of love and brotherhood to the community.

After completing his high school education at Kanisius Wonogiri High School in 1996, he later worked as a sacristan in the parish of Saint Albertus Magnus in Jetis, Yogyakarta from 1996 to 1998. In 1999, he thought of a



religious vocation and began his discernment in Wonosobo as an aspirant with the Brothers of Charity. He began his postulancy on 4 July 1999 at the Saint Paul community in Nandan, Yogyakarta. He was very open to his call and he proceeded to go to Maria-Aalter, Belgium for his novitiate from 25 August 2001 to 26 August 2002. After the canonical year, he continued with the second-year novitiate in Kruibeke, Belgium. Bro. Bartolomeus immediately made his first profession on 15 August 2003 and professed his perpetual vows in 2009 in Purworejo, Indonesia. Since professing his religious vows, Bro. Bartolomeus remained faithful to God and to his vocation until his last breath. After his first profession, he was sent to Belgium to study nursing at the International Institute



Canon Triest between 2003 and 2006, where he also had a chance to go to Romania and do his practicum. After that, he served as a staff member at our psychiatric centre Sahabat Kita in Purworejo, Indonesia. He also served to assist people with mental disorders at the Renceng Mose Rehabilitation Centre in Ruteng, Manggarai, Flores. In 2018, he was sent to Sri Lanka with the same task of dealing with people with mental disorders. In early 2020, he returned to Indonesia and got a new assignment as regional bursar and school director for children with special needs in Boro, Purworejo. In the last few months before he passed away, he was sickly so he was hospitalized at Panti Rapih Hospital in Yogyakarta where he passed away on 19 October. Bro. Edcel Lacierda, with whom he lived in Belgium and later joined him for a mission trip to Romania, remembers him as someone who was humble and devoted to prayer. He had a special devotion to Saint Therese of Lisieux, which explains his simplicity and doing little things with great love. He did not want to attract attention to himself and was kind, peaceful, and treated everyone with a sense of respect. Though he was seen as an introvert in the canonical year, he became more open and friendlier.

Perhaps what we will miss most about him is his total trust in God as shown in his letter of request for final vows dated 12 April 2009, in which he generously surrendered that ‘...[God] can do what he wants with me’. In the same letter, he paraphrases the Psalmist, as his deepest inspiration – which can become ours, as well – that ‘My heart is not proud, nor haughty my eyes.

I have not gone after things too great but to be simple and humble' (Psalm 131:1).

In the end, we must be grateful to God for having given us Bro. Bartolomeus. He has carved a very deep imprint in our life as a good disciple of Christ and as one of the finest sons of Fr. Triest's charism. Dear Bro. Bartolomeus, we will always remember you for your love, kindness, and humility, and may God put you in the best place in heaven as you pray for us too.

## **Brother Emmanuel Kadiodehoua Yeo Adama 1968-2022**

When death comes unexpectedly, at an age when one has not yet contemplated the possibility of dying, it leaves one very quiet. This was the case when we were informed that Bro. Emmanuel had died in Abidjan. His health had not been altogether excellent in recent years, but the latest news we received was rather hopeful. He had found a good place in our formation house in Abidjan and had even taken the time to attend some courses at CELAF. But the future is in God's hand and it is he who decides on life and death. Bro. Emmanuel was our first brother from Côte d'Ivoire. In 2003, he arrived in Yamoussoukro at the age of 35, where he had been impressed by the apostolate among the mentally ill that the brothers had established there. Coming from a family with a Muslim background, he had



considered becoming a priest before, but ended up feeling more drawn to religious life. When he professed his first vows in Yamoussoukro on 1 July 2006, the whole family came together and it was like an interfaith gathering. He was happy as a new member of the community to be able to devote his best efforts to the care of the sick, and soon he felt the need to become more skilled in health care. To this end, he came to Kruibeke to train as a nursing assistant, which allowed him to start working in Yamoussoukro again in 2008. In 2010, when the Congregation took over the work with street children in Granada, Nicaragua, he applied to go there as a missionary. He revealed himself to be a committed educator, much loved by the children and appreciated by his co-workers. After a short stay in Peru, where he assisted at the shelter for people with drug problems, he returned to Africa in 2017 to serve at the Kakamega medical centre in Kenya.

Illness forced him to return to Abidjan, and once recovered, he was able to help out at the formation house in Abidjan and also attend a few courses there. It is there that he completely unexpectedly departed this life.

Brother Emmanuel will be remembered as a happy and cheerful confrere, who loved to make others laugh with his stories and witty remarks. Even though he was a lot older than his confreres in training, he knew how to adapt both in terms of age and culture. He found living with brothers from different cultures to be very enriching, which is why he was eager to travel to other countries as a missionary. He had a special sensitivity towards the poor and therefore he found his true home in the charism of the Congregation. He sometimes had some trouble keeping sufficient control over his food and drink, and when his health failed and he had to follow a strict diet. It proved a real cross for him. But he retained his joie de vivre, which helped him transcend his suffering that he silently carried. We may never have known how serious his condition was, so that until the evening before his passing, he still shared community life with his confreres as usual, saying only that he felt a little tired.

Brother Emmanuel paved the way for other vocations to religious life in our congregation and was delighted with the arrival of new life in his region. We are sure he will now continue to watch with special care from heaven the growth of our congregation in Africa and especially in Côte d'Ivoire. May he be our intercessor with the Father with whom he may now spend eternity in

his love.

## **Brother Luc Baes**

**1942-2022**

Africa and scouting are the two words that immediately come to mind when we think of Bro. Luc Baes. Both his being a missionary and his commitment to scouting marked his life as a Brother of Charity. As an 18-year-old, he started his formation in 1960 in the novitiate of the Congregation in Sint-Maria-Aalter, which was sealed with his first profession on 19 September 1962. His religious training was followed by professional training leading to a teaching degree in 1964. With this, Bro. Luc was ready for the apostolate, which was to be the first year in Leopoldsburg. But it was only short-lived, because in him lived the dream of becoming a missionary, and already in 1966, we see him as a young brother in Zaza in Rwanda, where he immediately became a science teacher, which he continued the following year in Butare, also in Rwanda, where he would stay for almost 20 years. Butare marked him and he marked Butare, and it was mainly the scouting movement that enjoyed his talents. Bro. Luc found in scouting an ideal environment to impart a values-based education to young people. In 1986, he returned to Belgium for a period of renewal, where he attended a spiritual formation at the Lumen Vitae Institute. Brimming with courage, he left for Rwanda again, this time for Zaza, where he



would stay until the genocide in 1994, and here too, school duties would be supplemented with scouting guidance. As for most missionaries, the events of 1994 in Rwanda were very frustrating and painful, but Bro. Luc was among the first to volunteer to go back to Africa and continue his missionary work in Bukavu. Very courageously, he went to the refugee camps to support the children there. I still remember him vividly on a visit to the camp near Bukavu, where Bro. Luc, together with Bro. Hubert Pattyn, provided a healing religious presence for the residents of the camp: Bro. Luc as educator and facilitator and Bro. Hubert as nurse for the mentally ill. They were the Brothers of Charity at their best! Gradually afterwards, Bro. Luc integrated into normal education at the technical school in Bukavu, and here too he became the scouts' passionate mentor. After a period back in Butare,

where the brothers had meanwhile set up a new school, he returned to Bukavu in 2007, where he served as community superior and school teacher for a while. It was in 2010 that Bro. Luc permanently returned to Belgium, where he initially worked actively at the Les Sauverdias centre in Dave, before finally taking it easy in Bierbeek, where the last year was marked by illness and disability, making him very dependent on the help of others.

Brother Luc was a passionate man, who liked to stand up for his opinions that were sometimes different from his peers and thus got into a lot of animated discussions. But it was also his way of showing his interest in the work of others and appreciating it in his own way. In his life, he found the right balance between being prayerfully present in the community, caring for the community, and commitment in his apostolate, which he never limited to what was strictly required of him. He eagerly devoted his time and talents to the many who surrounded him. He was always available, and when asked to go to Uvira to establish a new community in what were not easy circumstances, he was instantly willing. The people who met him there still speak of him, and at his death it was striking how many responses came from the places where Bro. Luc had lived and worked. As a missionary, he had left his mark there.

He was very close to his family, and through him and through his brother Guy, who was also with us for many years as a brother missionary, and his brother Tony, who worked as a nurse at the Guislain Institute in Ghent, the family was



closely attached to the Congregation.

Bro. Luc will be missed by them, as well as by his confreres and the many former pupils in Congo and Rwanda where he did so much good. We can only be grateful for a life given like Bro. Luc's and we are sure that he may now fulfil his full destiny in God's infinite love.

## **Brother Leopold Vlemmix 1938-2022**

For many years, Brother Leopold was a dedicated teacher of children with disabilities in Lummen, Belgium. He was there from 1977 to 1988, the moment when he had to learn to live with a physical disability. Originating from Overpelt, he joined the Brothers of Charity in 1956 and professed his first vows on 2 February 1958. After his profession, he further qualified as a teacher and after his military service he could start working in Sint-Job-in-'t-Goor, where he gained his first experience in educating children with disabilities. After a short stay in Merksem, he briefly changed direction and qualified in secretarial work to become a secretary at our psychiatric centre Sint-Jan-Baptist in Zelzate from 1968 to 1970. But this task suited him less, and he was happy to return to teaching and for six years he was teaching at our primary school in Essen. When the brothers left, Bro. Leopold went to Lummen and was a popular teacher at the vocational school. But then illness struck and a stroke left him partially paralysed. He still



tried to remain of service, but finally in 1992 he went to Sint-Arnold in Beernem and from there he moved to our convent rest home Sint-Jan in Zelzate in 1996, where he received the proper care and support. It was there that he died after a brief illness.

Brother Leopold had a great admiration for Don Bosco and for Phil Bosmans, whom he was able to meet several times. Don Bosco was his life model for going through life as a brother teacher and he found the Salesians' pedagogy very inspiring. Through Phil Bosmans and his quotes and writings, he found the courage to accept his suffering and live life with joy.

Brother Leopold loved the Congregation and was faithful to his given word. He lived his religious vocation in his own way, which showed in his

service and inner joy. He could be quirky at times, and a number of anecdotes will certainly be preserved about him. It was his spontaneity and emotional response that led him to act in this way, but afterwards we would all be able to laugh at what had occurred and he himself never took it badly either. At every visit, Bro. Leopold had many questions, showing how he continued to sympathize with everything that happened in the Congregation. He also kept good relations with his family. They supported him in the suffering he had to bear.

Having to let go of the apostolate early was very hard on him, but gradually he came to accept it and he filled his days with quiet reading and prayer and active presence in the community where he lived. For that we can truly admire him, because realizing that one would never recover is not an easy task for anyone. It brought out in Brother Leopold the spiritual depth from which he lived.

Thank you, Brother Leopold, for your many years of being with us in this world and shaping our charism of charity in your way as a Brother of Charity. May you share in God's infinite love forever now.

## **Brother Joseph De Ridder**

### **1933-2022**

There are brothers who excel in pure service. It is as if they lack any other ambition and are there only to serve others. Such a person was



Brother Joseph De Ridder, to whom we had to say goodbye on the penultimate day of 2022. He spent most of his life in service to his confreres in our rest home in Zelzate, to where he was appointed in March 1962. It was then still called the 'Sana', where brothers with tuberculosis were treated. When we look at his file, we see our psychiatric centres Guislain, Dave, Mortsel, and Zelzate as places where he always helped the sick as the second brother for a short period of time. A brother who always remained in the shadows, exuding a friendly calm towards everyone he met and expressing all that needed to be said without saying too much.

We can still see him walking, or should we say limping, down the long corridor of the Sana because of his minor physical disability.

His superior, Bro. Aïmard, also had the same physical disability, so that some thought this was the requirement to be appointed to the Sana... That is why with Bro. Jef things went a bit slow, but he would always be there when someone needed his help and support. He lived by his routine in the daily care of his confreres, and he took the time to prayerfully watch over the dying. When my own father was admitted to our rest home in the last days of his life, it was Bro. Jef who was quietly praying the Rosary in the corner of the room. No, he would never leave the dying on their own. How many did he not guide like this to the new life, praying and watching?

While he had a quiet nature, and was rather an observer, in the community he could aptly speak his mind, and could melt away any tension like snow before the sun with his sense of humour. I do not think anyone ever saw Bro. Jef angry or annoyed by anything that bothered him. He happily accepted every day from the hands of the Lord, to whom he had given his whole life. And in this he remained faithful, without much outward show, but by faithfully abiding with him every day in contemplation and worship. Always with his rosary in hand.

He was not spared suffering himself. There was his physical disability that made walking difficult for him, as well as the severe form of diabetes that plagued him. But even this he continued to bear nobly without complaining. He had built his own life philosophy around it. Instead, it made him even more sensitive to the suffering of others, and perhaps this can be said to sum up his life: to accept the suffering that befalls us and

from there develop deep compassion for others. Bro. Jef, thank you for your many years among us as a confrere and carer of your sick confreres. You fully lived what Father Triest tried to teach us so clearly: to see Jesus himself in each person we serve and to be Jesus to them at the same time. Charity was the sustaining force in your entire existence and you knew where to find the source of charity: with God himself who is love. It is in this love that you may now fully share.





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