

# NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

## CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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### INDONESIA

*Brother Ton Houde, the general superior, visited Indonesia; he was there also for the occasion of the two brothers who made their vows for life. He was in Indonesia from October 9 to November 7, visiting the communities on Java and Bangka. Some impressions.*

A visit by the general superior always requires a lot of planning: the travel involved, the purpose of the visit, dealing with a different climate, etc., all kinds of practical issues. There are also the social issues having to do with encountering a different culture, requiring respect and social adaptation.

Every congregation tries to maintain its existence by recruiting new and young members. We see an increase in vocations during the past few years. Due to the efforts of the general chapter, and especially due to the efforts of the provincial executive, it seems, these efforts are bearing fruit. During a period of study and formation, lasting about 9 years, the suitable candidate goes through a period of postulancy, two years of novitiate, and a period of temporary commitment. During the current period of formation in Klepu (postulancy) and the novitiate of Lawang, six postulants and 16 novices are studying and preparing themselves for membership, which is something to cheer about.

There is reason for more joy when people commit themselves to a chosen congregation for life. One of the reasons for making this trip was the fact that the brothers Efrem Vulma (left on the picture) and Valentinus Bois made their profession for life. They did this on October 16 during a ceremony in Lawang, in which the congregational input is part of a colorful Javanese celebration. The charming traditional dances, and the moment when the father and mother symbolically hand over their son to the church, remain two of the memorable highlights of this kind of ceremony.



Sometimes, a person's escapes from a disaster. On the day that br. Yosef Gultom and br. Ton Houde were supposed to fly from Bangka to Jakarta, a plane that flies between these two destinations crashed with fatal consequences. The brothers were booked for the next flight! The realization of having escaped this disaster, calls to mind the fact that several Indonesian fellow-brothers have met with fatal accidents on land and at sea. Having these happenings in mind, the travelers visited the graves of the deceased brothers on All Souls Day: the Dutch brothers who died in Japanese camps during the Second World War, the young Indonesian brothers who tragically drowned in 1966 when their ship went down at sea, and the many other brothers who passed away. Their graves are well-kept, their memory is kept with reverence.

There is one more Dutch brother in Indonesia: Martien Dol. He was the stimulating force In Desa Putra behind the well-known printing office and graphics school. This printing office and graphics school are now in the hands of the next generation of brothers. But br. Martien isn't sitting still: he is, knowing the issues, supporting all kinds of projects for the benefit of those needing help. One of the more recent projects for raising money is the production of food for fish. This small scale operation for growing mealworms, also provides a job for some people, providing an additional social dimension to this project. All revenue goes to Indonesian projects.



At the beginning of 2018, this mealworm project, as well as the clinics that the brothers started in Bogor and Desa Putera, have been made part of the social Foundation Yayasan Bruder Glorieux Indonesia, comparable with the Foundation Good Works Glorieux in Belgium and The Netherlands that raises money for projects of the brothers.

With a feeling of satisfaction, the general superior has returned to Oostakker, not forgetting to thank everybody for their hospitality and their help to make this trip a success.

*Terimah kasih !*



First-year novices.



## ETHIOPIA

*During the second half of November, the entire general executive paid a visit to Ethiopia, specifically to Addis Ababa where the two communities of brothers and the congregational projects are located.*

Addis is located in the tropics, but due to its elevation of about 2000 meters, one wouldn't notice being in the tropics during evenings and nights. The rainy season makes it even worse, making you feel even colder. The group of brothers is small: seven brothers, one novice, two postulants and one aspirant. The brothers occupy two houses: one in the Health Center – and belonging to that center – and the other one in the

district of Gulele, which belongs to the congregation. Together, the brothers form a District, and meetings were held with the executive of this District, the executive made up of the brothers Hugo, Isayas and Wossen; there were also meetings with the communities of the two houses. The house in Gulele is also the location where formation takes place, and this also received special attention.



The general executive and the Kality community.

prime minister. This prime minister especially promotes more openness within the country, and a friendly attitude towards Eritrea, aiming to end years of hostility. Within Ethiopia, there still are several “minefields” between the different sections of the population, causing very dangerous situations at times. The brothers also have experienced these situations.

Much attention was paid to the projects. All projects are very meaningful and serve people in need.

In the St. Gabriel Health Center one can find maternity care, care for small children, for sick people, etc. In the Counseling and Social Service Center, information is provided in schools, and also for young people; people suffering from HIV are cared for as well. People in need are assisted, and help in finding a way to support oneself is provided. In addition, children with a mental or physical handicap are cared for and their families are offered support. In the Elderly People Project, the lonely elderly can get a warm meal, and there is an opportunity to get a bath. Also, toilet facilities are being built in the slums, and the most dilapidated buildings are

Ethiopia has a new president, a woman, and also a recently elected



fixed up, often at the request of the local authorities. Wonderful provides for school supplies and school uniforms for children, so that they are able to attend school.

The executive was given the chance to see all the projects. Poverty has different faces. Besides pure misery, one could also see hopeful signs, like people who are working at improving their situation, and people who are working towards a modest future in which they would be less dependent on others.

All projects are fragile because of their financial reliance on their mostly foreign donors. Some backers

drop out, and it is not so simple to find new donors. Yet, Good Work Glorieux, our congregation, and many fellow-workers in Ethiopia and Europe spend a lot of energy in getting the much needed financial support. Also, all projects have been emphatically asked to look for possible adaptations to manage costs. That's not easy, because these projects have to do with helping people and not just numbers. Yet, possible cost-cutting is essential for the continuation of these projects.

Two members of the general executive visited Ethiopia for the first time. They were impressed with this visit. I myself have noticed improvements, but there unfortunately remains too much human misery. In the face of this human misery, our contribution is small, but it does fit within gospel

teaching in which Christ himself indicates that giving food and drink to needy people has a very special value. The homeless, the people living in a leaky shack of sorts, and suffering cold every night of the year, and where there is not always a bed for every member of the family, and where sometimes only one meal per day is available: situations like this remind us of the first Christmas when a mother had to give birth in a barn. You can see here quite a few little shelters that are probably more primitive than the one in Bethlehem, and which are supposed to be a "home" for people.

*Br. Ton Houde*

## A LAST WORD

*In the Christmas story, shepherds, angels, and wise men from the east came in support of a poor family. That we may follow that example. Do something personal for people in need far away or close by. I am wishing you a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year. Br. Ton Houde*

***Best wishes for a good 2019 !***

*(translation: brother Henk Gal, Eindhoven)*

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