

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Number 61, March 2020

ETHIOPIA

Brother Theo van den Boer and I traveled to Addis Ababa on March 8 with Ethiopian Airlines, and returned to Brussels on March 15. The journey went as planned in spite of the many changes and restrictions affecting the airlines. Blame it all on a Corona virus! On our arrival in Addis, Ethiopia was still free of the virus, although there were precautions in place, such as the filling in of several forms and checking one's temperature. When we left, they just checked our temperature.

On March 16, the Government of Ethiopia announced a number of measures, among others the closing of all schools. This has direct consequences for the brothers who are following courses, and possibly also for certain projects, such as those for the elderly. Right now, it's not certain what the effect will be, but if they

are going to try to stop the gatherings of many people, it will have consequences for certain.



Our visit had to do with the three large projects, the situation with the brothers, and the formation of some young men preparing to enter the congregation. There are three novices, while Wandimu Daka Kena was accepted as a postulant when we were there.

This time, most of our attention was focused on the Counseling and Social Service Centre that is undergoing a reorganization. With input from the Centre, our advisors and the executive of the brothers in Ethiopia, decisions were made to go in the desired direction. The Centre offers advice (Counseling) and information for about 35.000 persons in, among others, schools, and provides assistance in

some 450 situations, such as mothers with a handicapped child, and mothers who care for Aids orphans (Social Service). This has not only to do with the handicapped child, but also with the mother's attempts to keep the family going financially, and to make it self-sufficient. The information is very important to prevent sickness and to eradicate prejudices, and also leading them to trust their ability to respectfully solve their own problems. Sickness and handicaps are often regarded negatively in Ethiopian society.

Projects demand a lot of effort – also financial – to keep the services going. In case you want to help out, you can do so via “Stichting Goede Werken Glorieux” (Foundation “Good Works Glorieux”); see <https://www.goedewerkenglorieux.nl/doneren.htm>

br. Ton Houdé

39 PERCEPTIVE PORTRAITS AND STORIES ABOUT LIFE

For almost an entire year, Corin van Poppel and Odette Bosmans-Sprangers interviewed and took photographs of visitors to the daycare centre for the homeless elderly in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, the Elderly People Project of the Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes.



Elderly People Project a day earlier. This care-facility for the homeless elderly in Addis Ababa, is a congregational project. In the previous Newsletter, the project was already mentioned in connection with the royal visit from Belgium. The admission of and care for the homeless elderly involves 1. a warm meal six days per week; 2. medical care; 3. getting the laundry done; 4. taking a shower; 5. an annual supplement for clothing, shoes or blankets.

THE BOOK

The total earnings from the book go to the benefit of the project. The language is English. For further information, go to <https://goedeboekendrukker.nl/unbroken> or contact the Brothers of Good Works

DONATIONS

And for donations to this project, go to: <https://www.goedewerkenglorieux.nl/doneren>

This resulted in a book with 39 perceptive portraits and stories of the lives of people who, in spite of drought, war, and injustice, were able to survive. That is why the book has as its title, *Unbroken: every face is a story*.

Those interviewed in the book have each their story. Some of them were well-to-do at some point in their lives, but met with the results of drought or sickness. Others got separated from their families by sheer accident, due to the war with Eritrea. What all these people have in common, is that at some point in their lives they ended up homeless in the streets of Addis Ababa.

Bosman's interviews and van Poppel's photographs show a perceptive and fascinating image of a generation of elderly people, who, in spite of everything, managed to survive, and therefore deserve our deepest respect. Corin van Poppel, from Breda, and Odette Bosmans-Sprangers, from Heeze, are temporarily living in Addis Ababa, and have done this project entirely voluntarily.

The book was first launched in Addis Ababa on February 21, 2020. This happened in the

CLEANING OUT: BLOOD, SWEAT BUT NO TEARS

Since a few years, the house of the brothers in Oostakker has been rented out for use by De Foyer, a care-organization, that gave the site a new and recognizable name: ZC Glorieux (Care Campus Glorieux). The spacious rooms are used by our own brothers, and by renters from outside the Congregation. During the next few years, De Foyer wants to develop the site to a full and by the authorities recognized and subsidized care-centre (in Dutch: WZC).

Plans for the new WZC are on paper, and are in an advanced stage of readiness. But official permission is needed, and the site has to be cleaned out first. This means that old buildings will have to be taken down (with the exception of the large chapel and the rectory), and the furnishings will have to be removed and/or put to a different use/recycled. This has been quite a job, with thanks to those who have done the work.

The furnishings of the large chapel went to the Saint Hermes basilica in Ronse (see the following article). The liturgical vestments went to the diocese of Ghent, that will pass them on to (foreign) priests who can't afford such vestments. Other items/furnishings went to other interested parties. The large chapel will keep its present shape. It could be used by people as a meeting place. The beautiful organ will most likely be kept in its usual location.



In the rooms and halls of the former novitiate, and in the adjoining buildings, a lot of things have been stored over the years. Much of it has found its way to second-hand stores, and to a project in Tanzania.

Also the rooms that served as museums: Glorieux Museum and Mission Museum, had to be cleared out as well. Clearing out the Glorieux Museum was relatively easy, but not so the Mission Museum. The latter dates back to a temporary exhibition in 1947, set up by brother Chrysostomus van Yperen, general superior at the time. The most valuable items of the Mission Museum were



finally donated to a museum in Antwerp (MAS, 2016). Other items went to a museum in Ghent, to ZC Glorieux and the Residence of the general superior. When the buildings are completely empty, they will be demolished, signaling the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Brothers of Oostakker.

TRIBUTE TO THE BROTHERS IN RONSE

During the pontifical Eucharistic celebration of Saturday, February 22, in the Saint Hermes Basilica (prior: Saint Hermes church, elevation to Basilica minor in 2019), the brothers Ton Houdé, Etienne Colman, Gustaaf Verhoeven, Jan Clyncke and Gabriel Delbecke were the guests of honor (as depicted on the right).

Rector Michel T'Joel said the following words of thanks:

"We are very pleased to welcome in our midst an ample representation of the Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes, Oostakker. In memory of their Founder Stefaan Modest Glorieux, who worked here during a time of severe societal needs, they have gifted our basilica with valuable religious items from their chapel and convent. (.....) this will bolster our bond with your esteemed congregation for years to come. For this we thank you."

Bishop Luc Van Looy handed every brother present a keepsake of the Basilica and Fiertel (i.e. local pageantry, focusing mainly on the yearly presentation in the open of the shrine containing the relics of Saint Hermes, carried by bearers in procession – a distance of 32,60 km ! – on the first Sunday after Pentecost) namely a framed litho made by a local artist.

(Source: Report Basilica Days 2020)

A FINAL WORD

The worldwide measures that deal with the protection against the corona virus affect the congregation everywhere. Hygiene is becoming more important, travel is postponed (such as the meetings of the general executive), and activities are suspended. No visitors are allowed for brothers in the care facilities in Oostakker and Eindhoven. We wish you our best in dealing with this during these difficult times.

