

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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ETHIOPIA

In the first half of May, the brothers Theo Bekkers and Ton Houdé visited our fellow brothers and the projects of the congregation in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. A special reason for the visit was the arrival of two Indonesian brothers in Ethiopia. May 4th Bro. Anton Berek and Bro. Maksimus Boi set foot on Ethiopian soil. They are doing well, and both started the study of the Amharic on May 16. In addition, proficiency in the English language is very important.

In total, the congregation has ten brothers in Ethiopia: four brothers with vows for life, four with temporary vows, one novice and one aspirant.



(from left to right) Brothers Abebe Leykun, Anton Berek, Ton Houdé, Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, Maksimus Boi, Wossen Kefale and Theo Bekkers visiting the metropolitan.

The visitors' program was more than full, with talks with the individual brothers, meetings with the district executive, a meeting on finances, visits and talks with the managers of the three projects, a visit to the cardinal, and so on.

Contacts with the brothers were very pleasant. The atmosphere was excellent and mutual understanding has grown strongly. The projects are also going well and give hope for the future.

In recent years, the housing of both the brothers and that of the projects has also improved. Sponsors such as Heineken (but also various others as well as the congregation) played an important role in the projects. The improvements of the brother house in Gulele have been entirely at the expense of the congregation. Project assistance is often provided through the Good Works Glorieux Foundation. Mrs. Corin van Poppel is indispensable in this regard.

Bro. Wossen Kefale being the representative of the Superior General is automatically a member of the general chapter. Bro. Abebe Leykun was elected chapter member and Bro. Maximus Boi substitute.

It was a nice visit that gives hope for the future.

Brother Ton Houdé

BRAZIL

CHAPTER



As elsewhere in the congregation, the pro-province held a chapter meeting. The brothers met and for three days made a state of affairs. The past term of office was examined as well as the topics that will be discussed at the general chapter.

Two brothers will be getting ready to participate in the general chapter this summer. They are Bro. Heládio Firmino Rodriguez (the provincial superior) and Bro. Vando Rosa de Mendonça (elected). Bro. Danilso Carlos Estevão is substitute.

BROTHER PIET GOOSSENS

Last year brother Pedro Goossens passed away in Betim (Brazil). He was part of the first group of Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes who came to Brazil in 1967, urged to do so by Pope John XXIII who had asked the religious families to come to America (Latin America) to evangelize as it was called then. Bro. Pedro (Piet) has done much more than that during his more than fifty years of presence and frater Henrique Cristiano José Matos has written a short booklet about this.

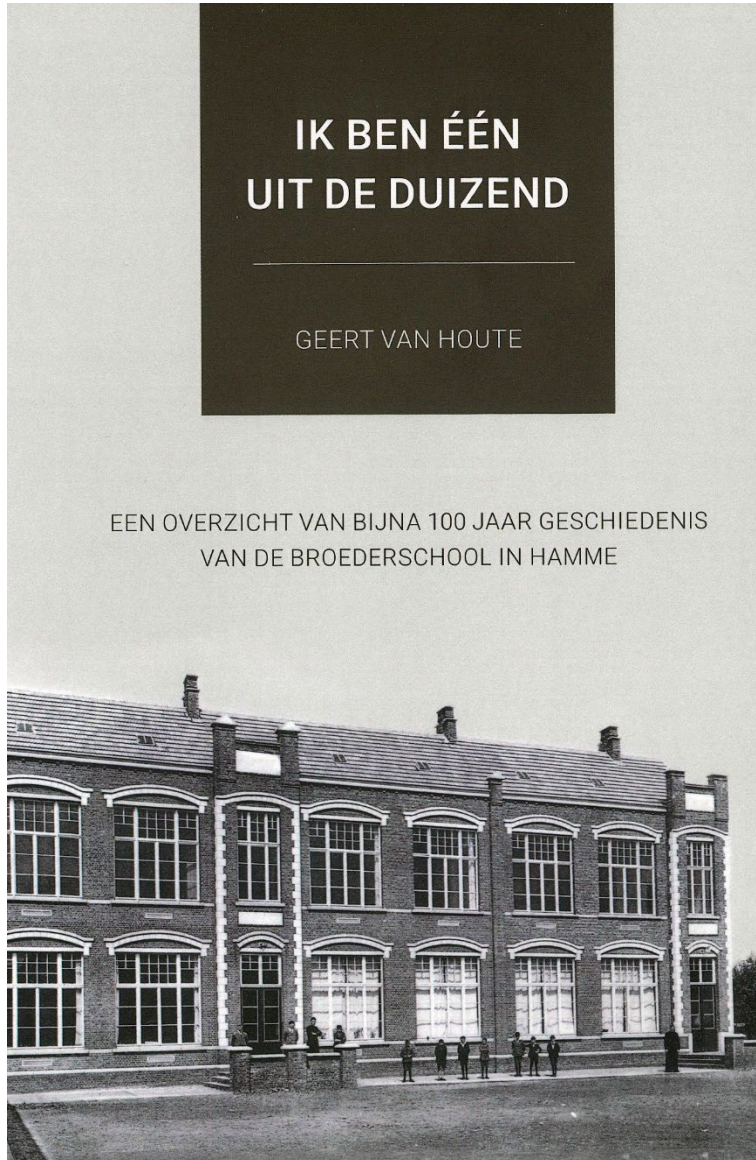
Frater Henrique has already proved himself: at the request of the Brazilian executive, he has written a comprehensive work about the presence of the congregation on Brazilian soil. This bulky book in Portuguese was presented last year, and this year has been translated into English – by Bro. Hugo Verhulst – made available for the brothers themselves and for those who are interested (in-house publication).



Bro. Ton Houdé

FEATURED: BOOK ABOUT FORMER BROTHER SCHOOL IN HAMME

1927 the Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes settled in Hamme, at the mouth of the river Durme in the Lower Scheldt territories. To the satisfaction of many the congregation successfully runned a primary school (1927-1988), a vocational school (1927-1935) and a secondary school (1927-1986). The presence in the rural village – *la Flandre profonde* – would last until 2004: in July of that year the last two brothers left Hamme, namely brother Adolf Vasseur and brother Marcel Versluys.



This fact, as well as the positive response from the administrators of the archives of the Congregation at that time, stimulated Geert Van Houte (retired primary school teacher in Hamme and alumnus of the Teacher School of Oostakker) not only to work on the school archive, but also to create a richly illustrated book (432 pages) in which the reader gets an overview of almost 100 years of history of the brother school in Hamme. The book entitled *I am one out of a thousand* has no academical pretentions, but rather wants to give attention to *how things used to be*, by showing great interest in people and school life, and by going into the originality of the moment and by highlighting remarkable stories.

The book was completed with the cooperation of the archives of the Congregation and with the financial support of the Brothers of Oostakker. The relevant monastery archive itself was handed over to KADOC for safekeeping some years ago.

It was a two-year wait for the book to be presented due to the restrictive measures imposed by the government during the corona crisis. On April 24, Heritage Day in

Flanders, the event could finally take place. A delegation of the brothers was present, including br. Ton Houdé (superior general) who gave a short occasional speech, and the brothers Etienne Colman and Jan Clyncke on behalf of the Belgian brothers. Brother Marc Etienne, now 96 years old, who has worked for two decades in the brother community in Hamme, was unable to attend but shared in the festive mood from a distance. The book hasn't left his hand so to speak and receives his utmost attention!

INDONESIA

The first part of the chapter in the province of Indonesia is over. The chapter members gathered from April 20 to 22 and discussed the past term of office, gained inspiration, and selected the six brothers to be sent to the general chapter. They are Bro. Silvester Simamora, Bro. Gregorius Suwardi, Bro. Albertus Komang, Bro. Gerardus Manik, Bro. Francis Sirait and Bro. Hugo Fahik. They, together with Bro. Janarius Sukirdi (provincial superior) and Bro. Herman Yosef Gultom (member of the general executive) make up the group of participants from Indonesia. Brothers Benedict Suyatmo and Ivan Singalingg are substitutes.

When I am writing this down it is Vocations Sunday. Some of our brothers have gone out on the road and are conducting promotional campaigns: there are face-to-face meetings with young people and there are – how could it be otherwise nowadays – online information campaigns about being a brother.



The good news from Indonesia is that the pandemic is ending. Offices and schools have reopened as normal, although wearing a mask and being careful is still strongly recommended. It is important to mention that the condition of the brothers in Indonesia is healthy. As far as schools are concerned, it is now straight ahead towards the holidays.

Bro. Herman Yosef Gultom

NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM

Two brothers have moved to Eindhoven, the Antonia Depoorter house. Brother Jan Klein Overmeen has said goodbye to his home in 's-Hertogenbosch after many years of living there. From Veldhoven, Bro. Wim van den Boom came over. Both brothers have already settled-in smoothly amidst their fellow brothers.

The Netherlands will hold a district meeting with all the brothers of the district on Wednesday 25th of May. They will then choose two brothers who will go to the general chapter in Denekamp and a substitute.

The Belgian brothers held a chapter on April 5 and elected the brothers Staf Verhoeven and Paul Daemen as members for the general chapter this summer. They are now preparing together with br. Etienne Colman (district superior) who is automatically member of the general chapter. Bro. Jan Clyncke is substitute.

THE LAST WORD

The entire congregation is preparing for the general chapter this summer To you, dear reader, be it that you have travel plans or simply choose to stay at home, we wish you a nice vacation season!

Bro. Ton Houdé

GENERALAAT
SINT-JOZEFSTRAAT 1
9041 OOSTAKKER (BELGIUM)

GENERALAAT.FNDL@TELENET.BE
WWW.BROEDERS-OLV-LOURDES.ORG
(+32) 09 251 01 85