

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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VISIT TO BRAZIL

After long air travel, three members of the general executive, the brothers Herman Yosef Gultom, Hugo Fahik and Ton Houdé arrived on Friday 17 of May in Belo Horizonte (Brazil). The first two departed from Jakarta and the last from Brussels. It was a great relief that all three had arrived at the right time and place.

The community of Betim served as a base. Brothers Heládio, Denis and the novice brothers Fábio and Arisson received us warmly. During this visit, the Superior General interviewed each brother and looked at the well-being and activities of each brother and that of the community as a whole.

In the community of Betim, the brothers in training have a study program in which they are assisted by Bro. Heládio and Bro. Denis. In addition, they participate in the formation activities of the collective religious congregations, in theology lessons given by the Franciscan Fathers, in individual psychological counseling, etc. Each also has specific pastoral tasks, such as pastoral care for prisoners, or pastoral care for victims of exploitation or forms of modern slavery.

There is also room for pastoral activities in the parish, as well as for care for one's own home and the work of the social center of the congregation on the site adjacent to the community.

The center has a good reputation in the wider area and is recovering from the forced closure during the corona epidemic. That epidemic was particularly severe in Brazil with at least 700,000 fatalities.

The contact between visitors and brothers from Brazil was not always easy because of the language. However, every effort was made to speak to each other, either through gestures, through snippets of English, or through telephones that converted the

spoken word into the other language. To the extent possible, Bro. Ton also stepped in for the translation from Portuguese to English and vice versa. The prayer was easy to follow: we used the Portuguese text and the Lord must surely have understood. It was Pentecost time after all.

Also in Sabará, where the brothers Danilso, Paulo Roberto, Antonio and the aspirant Jone live, attention was paid to the individual persons, the work that each one does and the attention that is paid to the parish. The aspirantate is the first stage of training for a brother. The aspirant already gets to know the Congregation to some extent and he examines whether this could be his vocation. Br. Danilso is his guide from the Congregation, but others also help him.

The guests had the chance to see a bit more of Belo Horizonte and Sabará.

The journey to Jordânia, in the valley of the Jequitinhonha River, was long and tiring. The last 200 km, the road was also in very bad condition, with sometimes deep potholes that made it necessary to slalom. After a good fifteen hours we arrived safely.

Only the brothers Vando and Guilherme live in Jordânia at the moment. They form a nice community that welcomed the guests warmly. Both are in charge of Lar Glorieux, a home mainly for elderly people in need of care. In addition, Bro. Vando still has all kinds of pastoral tasks in the parish and Bro. Guilherme studies in



Almenara to become a university trained nurse. The situation of Lar Glorieux was extensively discussed. There are issues that need to be addressed in due time.



Women's movement "March 1": a visible legacy of Bro. Pedro.

of women in the valley of the Jequitinhonha in particular. Br. Pedro assisted that group with advice and action and that has certainly not been forgotten.

Br. Herbert de Gier was visited in Rosal in the state of Rio de Janeiro. He cares for the Catholic communities in three villages. We attended the animated evening mass of Pentecost in Rosal's little church. The service ended with a Maria tribute. In many churches in Brazil this is a custom on the Sundays of the month of May. Girls in appropriate clothing eventually crown the statue of the Virgin Mary. It is a fine example of living popular devotion. Brother Herbert himself is doing well and has been seen with the people. This year, his 80th birthday was extensively celebrated.

A day out with all the brothers who could make time, off to the historic city of Ouro Preto and a discussion between the members of the general executive and those of the executive of the pro-province of Brazil concluded the visit. On Friday 2 June, the visitors left for Indonesia or Belgium.

We ask God's Blessings on this beautiful but also difficult country.

Br. Ton Houdé

THE NETHERLANDS

This spring we had to say goodbye to three fellow brothers in Eindhoven. Brothers Theo Derksen, Harrie van Schaijk and Athanasius van de Ven passed away after a beautiful and full life. They were given a final resting place at the brother cemetery in Dongen.

Until a few years ago, Brother Theo worked on Curaçao in education and social work. Brother Harrie will be remembered, among other things, for his twenty years of work in Spain with people with a physical and/or mental disability. Brother Athanasius was responsible for the farm, the maintenance of the park and the garden in Dongen. He was also known as a skilled beekeeper who took great care of his bee colony, without losing attention to his fellow brothers and people in need.

There was a very nice meeting with students from the secondary school who are currently using the social center as a school, because their own school is being renovated. It was a spontaneous meeting, fun for the students, fun for the visitors. The center has been made available by the congregation to the municipality, which now temporarily uses it as a shelter for the school. Naturally, a visit was made to the cemetery where the brothers Pedro and Cornélio rest.

In Almenara there was contact with some ladies of the Lourdes group, who have been working for many years to improve the lot



INDONESIA



The young brothers of three communities on Java, those of Gunung Sahari in Jakarta, from Desa Putera in another part of Jakarta and from Bogor, form a singing group (choir) to sing in church or to enliven the Eucharist in other places. The three communities are quite close to each other. They have already sung several times in Bogor Cathedral, in various churches in Jakarta and at the time of writing this article in one of the churches in the city of Lampung on the island of Sumatra. Lampung is the largest town in Tanjung Diocese Karang and is located on the southernmost point of the island of

Sumatra. To get there you have to use a ferry service. The transfer takes about 2.5 hours. The total travel time from Jakarta to Lampung is a good five hours. The brothers were invited to two parishes in Lampung and they were received in the parishes.

The choir is a kind of business card of the Congregation: it is a way of drawing attention to the brotherly life in our Congregation. Brothers Albertus Insantuan and Polikarpus Arafit are the leaders of the choir.

Br. Herman Yosef Gultom / br. Ton Houdé

ETHIOPIA

In recent weeks and months, we have worked together with the general executive on the details of the projects for the coming years. The projects are largely dependent on sponsorship, with the result that adjustments must be made in function of the possibilities.

Meanwhile, Bro. Maksimus Boi received a new assignment in Indonesia. He had previously gone to Ethiopia together with Brother Antonius Berek to gain experience in international aid and cooperation between the different areas in our Congregation. Their efforts are looked back upon with gratitude in Ethiopia.



The project for the elderly in social need is a success.

BELGIUM

UTILITY WORKS IN SINT-JOZEFSTRAAT



In the Sint-Jozefstraat, work is still being done on the renewal of the utility pipes. The Generalate, the ZC Glorieux and the brothers remain accessible by car and bicycle, but via a detour.

These works will take some time and they are partly dependent on the weather conditions. After all, the heavy rain in recent months has ensured that the groundwater level is very high. That is of course good news for people and nature ... unless earthworks are carried out, as is currently the case.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEE VILLAGE

Several countries have temporarily taken in refugees from Ukraine. In the Eikstraat in Oostakker, close to the social project De Kromme Boom (of which brother Jozef De Block is a part), the government has built an emergency village that will soon provide space for about 150 people. They will be housed and supervised there.

One refugee already found shelter in the Oostakker brothers' house last year. Because there are still empty rooms, there is consultation to make some of them available as well.

MERCY IN GHENT

It does not always have to be a lecture, the people responsible for religious life in the Oostakker community will have thought. That is why the brothers and all those who wish to join will go to Ghent this summer to search on foot for traces of the past related to (the works of) mercy. This initiative fits in the series of activities entitled 'a reflection on mercy' that will take place this year in the Brothers' House.

The walk starts at, how could it be otherwise, the House of Mercy in the heart of Ghent. There are twelve places to stop along the way, and the guide has the opportunity to explain the history as well as the meaning of the ornamentation, and the references it contains.

We understand that the walk ends with an obvious work of mercy, namely giving drink to the thirsty (photo)!



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