

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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VISIT TO ETHIOPIA

Bro. Albert Komang (member of the general executive) and I (Bro. Ton Houdé) recently visited Ethiopia. It is the youngest and smallest part of the congregation. There are no problems. Fortunately, there is also a lot of positive news to report and we would like to share that with you. For Bro. Albert it was a special reunion, because he was part of the Ethiopian district for about four years and worked at the St. Gabriel Catholic Health Center. It was sometimes an emotional reunion. Although the rainy season is actually over, we have witnessed the after-effects: many heavy showers, sometimes with lightning and thunder.

THE ELDERLY PROJECT



Brother Wossen is seeing a client in order to establish a diagnosis.

In the elderly project, about ninety poorly housed or sometimes homeless elderly people can eat a meal, wash their clothes and take a shower six days a week. Brother Wossen comes on Saturdays to respond to medical complaints, provide medication or refer clients to doctors and specialists. He also maintains medical records.

Bro. Abebe is director of the project and he also provides spiritual sessions for those who want them. The files of the elderly are kept up to date by the social worker and in the event of a longer absence, an investigation is carried out to determine what is going on.

The novice brothers come twice a week to cut hair or nails, clean and help serve the meal. Some clients help out or grow vegetables in the vegetable garden.

If possible, eleven “houses” will be renovated, and four toilet blocks built in neighborhoods where the “houses” do not have toilets. A beautiful and practical project.



Hairdresser and pedicure: it can be that easy to feel good about yourself again!

THE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Started under a different name, this project has been around for many years. Initially it was aimed at people with HIV issues. The family and any orphans were also taken into account if the father and mother had died. There is still attention for information about HIV and its treatment, but the focus is now more on making women resilient in difficult situations. This may apply to women who, for example, have a child with a disability, who are alone and do not have sufficient finances to support their family. Information about health risks, training to set up a mini-business, informative neighborhood meetings about health and prejudices about women who, for example, have a child with a mental or physical disability or suffer from a certain disease, are part of the program. The situation has improved greatly for many women and their families.

SAINT GABRIEL CATHOLIC HEALTH CENTER

This is a health center, a kind of clinic, where people with health issues from the neighborhood(s) can receive a diagnosis and treatment of their medical complaints. In case of very serious complaints, patients are referred to a hospital. There is good guidance for pregnant women and if necessary, they can give birth in the health center. There is also a pharmacy, a laboratory, a dental practice, and an eye clinic. There is great confidence in the center because many patients come from other neighborhoods. Children and adults can also receive vaccinations. Sometimes the government funds the vaccination. Depending on the type of treatment, a fee may be requested. People who cannot pay are helped free of charge.

The Archdiocese of Addis Ababa owns the center. The congregation has had a close relationship with the center from the beginning and provides a lot of support. At the request of the archdiocese, there is a community of brothers on the grounds of the center.

FINANCIAL HELP

The projects mentioned require a lot of finance. The congregation contributes to this, but cannot do it alone. There are large and small sponsors. Among the major sponsors we see Cross Catholic (USA), Misereor (Germany), Liliana Fund (Netherlands), Dioraphte foundation (Netherlands) and various congregations.

Private donations are usually made through the Good Works Glorieux Foundation. This foundation was established at the initiative of the congregation and supports the projects. If you would like to contribute financially, you can consult the website: www.goedewerkenglorieux.nl . Your support is very welcome.

The congregation also employs an employee who takes care of fundraising and maintains contacts with the projects and donors.

THE CONGREGATION IN ETHIOPIA

The congregation has now been present in Ethiopia for over 20 years. A lot has happened. Candidates have come and many have left. Those who did not stay received a good education and formation, allowing them to make a good contribution to the church and/or society.

Brothers from Indonesia, Canada, the Netherlands and Belgium have contributed to the building of the Ethiopia district. Unfortunately, there are no helpers from other areas of the congregation at this time. A small group of Ethiopian brothers stands alone: two brothers of perpetual vows, three of temporary vows and two novices. They can count on support from the general executive, from the Good Works Glorieux foundation and on the moral support of fellow brothers from other countries.



Brothers Wossen, Ton, Abebe, Duressa, Dawit, Wandimu, Mamo, Zerihun.

The atmosphere is good. It gives much satisfaction to see that the young brothers are committed and convinced that the congregation is present for a reason, that is to actively help the people in need. They work closely with the elderly and at a center of the Sisters of Mother Teresa, and they gladly are to roll up their sleeves. They are really passionate. The brothers are becoming more and more involved in the projects and that has a very positive effect on the brothers themselves and on the projects. There is clearly a better cooperation between the three projects. Only the project for the elderly is led directly by a brother.



Bro. Albert Komang Alit with the two novices and the newly professed Brother Wandimu.



Brother Ton Houdé, flanked by Bro. Duressa (l.) and Bro. Dawit (r.).

During the visit there were individual conversations with all the brothers, with the district board and with those responsible for the projects. The older brothers bear a great responsibility for the formation of novices and young brothers. There is good cooperation with other congregations.

During the visit, two postulants started the novitiate, Bro. Wandimu (photo left with family) took the first vows and two brothers renewed their temporary vows. There was also time for relaxation.

We would like to ask for your interest, prayers and support for this young branch of the congregation.

Bro. Ton Houdé

