

**A CONDENSED HISTORY
OF THE CONGREGATION
OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES**

1830-2005

BRO. ANTOINE RUTTENBERG

INTRODUCTION

In connection with the 175th anniversary of the congregation (November 25th, 2005), Bro. Antoine Ruttenberg wrote a new and condensed overview of the history of the congregation.

The Congregation of the Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes, following in the footsteps of its founder Stefaan Modest Glorieux, has been engaged in charitable works like, among others, education, healthcare and the care of youth at risk. The brothers have established themselves in different countries around the world, hoping, among others, to create an interest in what our congregation is all about.

During the first decade of the 21st century, the future of the congregation is following two tracks, namely the one of phasing out and the one of building up. Towards the end of this short history, Bro. Gust Lauwerysen indicates the main features of what is happening, together with the "Profile of a brother of Glorieux."

Through the publication of this short history, the committee wants to offer the interested reader something about the past, present, future, the 175th anniversary of the congregation and more, all according to the opinions of the respective authors.

The committee Glorieux

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ORIGIN IN BELGIUM

It all starts on November 25th, 1830, in Ronse.

During the months prior to this date, the young assistant-pastor Etienne Glorieux has been discussing things with his bishop Monseigneur Van de Velde of Ghent: does the bishop have brothers and sisters available for the work Glorieux organized for the benefit of the poorest of the poor? The bishop doesn't have them and he advises the priest to start a congregation. The letter which appoints Glorieux as the founder and director of the Congregation of the Brothers of Good Works is dated November 25th, 1830.

And then candidate-brothers came, sometimes on their own, sometimes sent by the bishop: young but also older men. The founder discovered quickly that founding a congregation involves a lot of things. The men needed to be educated in spiritual life and a Rule needed to be written. No small task for someone whose days from very early in the morning till late at night were filled with work and cares of all kinds. He sent a concept of the Rule to the bishop, who made quite a number of changes. But it was as if he sensed that the youthful priest was taking on too much, and he ended his letter by saying, "My dear man, be careful and wary, and don't take on anything that's beyond your abilities. Doing much is not what is good, but doing good is what counts."

The (temporary) definitive Rule was approved on July 27th, 1835.

On the 19th and 20th of August of that same year the work involved in founding a congregation was completed: on the first day six brothers received their habits and during the next day they pronounced their vows for the first time.

During the following years one could speak of a stormy growth. Between 1836 and 1841 no fewer than seven houses were started: schools, orphanages and homes for the poor. The number of brothers also increased steadily, but the number of brothers available was too small compared with the number of brothers really needed. The result of this was that the brothers had to work beyond what they were capable of doing, which interfered with the care for their spiritual life. Glorieux certainly was an inspiring person, but he must have somewhat overrated the abilities of his brothers. In the meantime, he had been asking for helpers in the education and formation of his religious. This task had become too large to do by himself because of founding, after many difficulties, the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy in 1845, and also because he had been appointed as pastor of the Saint Martin's parish in Ronse in 1842. One of those helpers, a priest by the name of Colle, disagreed with many of Glorieux's ideas; some thought that Colle's ideas were better and as a result Glorieux became more and more marginalized. In 1846 Colle followed him up as general director of the brothers and sisters, and Glorieux was dismissed as pastor. Two years later he had to leave Ronse.

The period of 1846-1888 may in many ways be regarded as a history of suffering. Via a "spiritual father", a priest of the diocese, the congregation was in fact subjected to diocesan governance.

The superior of the mother-house in Ronse was called "Father superior", but his authority was minimal compared with that of the spiritual directors. Among the latter were those who genuinely served the interests of the congregation, but they did it their way. This situation has cost the congregation a number of brothers: capable people with initiatives had a difficult time.

In 1886, Brother Hilarius Van Brande was elected as general superior, an event heavily influenced by the spiritual father (it is actually questionable if the word "elected" really applies here). The spiritual director trusted the docility of his protégé, but he was somewhat mistaken in this.

Father Hilarius moved the mother-house from Ronse to Oostakker where the brothers had agreed to start a school. On that occasion he also suggested a new name for the congregation: Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes, also to start with a clean slate since for various reasons the congregation in Ronse had gotten a somewhat less

than favourable reputation. Finally in 1892 he achieved that the congregation received papal recognition, in this way becoming a congregation with “pontifical right”. This terminated the direct connection with the diocese and removed the spiritual director from the scene. From now on, the brothers had become independent; further history shows that this has been good for the institute.

Here’s in a nutshell the Belgian story of the first half of the 20th century. The congregation mainly focused on education. Shortly after moving to Oostakker several voices pleaded eagerly in favour of a new-to-start school managed by the congregation. The school’s mission was to deliver certified brother-teachers, something that became reality in 1914. Years later, in 1937, students were welcomed in a new and architectural remarkable as well as eye-catching construction. Some students were allowed to continue their education and earn a degree from other specialized schools or follow classes at the university. A brother house in Leuven harboured those enrolled.

Brothers took up educational assignments in for instance Puurs, Hamme, Merchtem, Loppem, Burcht, Bornem, Lebbeke, Asse, Anderlecht, Heusden and Ledeborg. What sometimes started with only one or two classrooms ended as a full scale primary school, sometimes complemented with a high school.

Key to this success were amongst other reasons the progress made in improving the professional skills of the brother-teacher, the confidence the congregation had earned over the past years and a favourable coincidence with contemporary social trends and choices.

THE BROTHERS IN HOLLAND

Rather shortly after the founding of the congregation, candidate-brothers from Holland showed up. On the one hand, this is somewhat surprising given the distance from the city of Ronse where the mother-house was located and where formation and training took place; moreover, Ronse was located in a country that recently had fought more or less for its independence from Holland. On the other hand, there were still rather few opportunities in Holland for young men to answer the call of their vocation in an active congregation. Anyway, around 1840 candidates entered from Uden, Nijmegen, Eindhoven and still other places.

One gets the impression that the Founder Glorieux didn’t quite know where he could employ these brothers; he speaks of “difficulties with language”. A couple of difficult boys from Delft solved that problem. The governors of the catholic orphanage in Delft didn’t know what to do with two of the boys, and the so-called “house-father” knew even less. The chairman had heard - we don’t know how – about the institution in Ronse and he asked its director Glorieux to take these two difficult boys in. Glorieux agreed to that request, and in the same letter he proposed to send Dutch brothers to run the orphanage. The governors agreed right away that this was a good idea, but it took several months before finally two brothers arrived on June 29, 1844, followed by two more brothers a few weeks later.

The governors of the orphanages in The Hague, Rotterdam and Leiden probably heard good reports from their colleagues in Delft about the brothers from Ronse. During the years that followed, we see the brothers taking care of the education of the boys in these institutions and soon after that also the care of elderly men. Later on they also did the same in Den Bosch.

In 1853, a totally different request was received by the brothers in charge of the congregation: would they take on the care of the psychiatric patients in the centuries’ old institution “Reinier van Arkel” in Den Bosch? This type of charitable work was still totally unknown to the congregation. Nevertheless, the care of psychiatric patients would become the work that more than anything else made the brothers known, if only for the number of brothers involved in it. In 1870 the brothers also worked in “Coudewater” in the town of Rosmalen and in 1885 also in “Voorburg” in the town of Vught. But in all those institutions the brothers were “employees”, and although the relationship with the various administrations wasn’t bad, the congregation

wanted to show what they could accomplish in total independence. This led to the start of ‘Huize Overdonk’ in the town of Dongen, a temporary or long-term home for handicapped men with whatever ailed them.

When in 1910 the congregation was divided into provinces for reasons of improved governance, the administration of the Dutch institutions moved to “Overdonk” and since that time the brothers became known as the Brothers of Dongen.

But “Overdonk” was not a true psychiatric institution, and a number of brothers who were psychiatric nurses wanted an independent institution with its own directors and management.

Realizing that goal took a long and difficult time, but 1929 saw the beginning of the St. Willibrord Institute in Heiloo, a psychiatric institution that in its heyday counted 700-800 patients and that employed over a hundred brothers. “Heiloo” was able to attract well-known psychiatrists and in this way doctors and nurses did a lot of pioneering work.

Unexpected developments followed. The government requested that “Heiloo” would also care for psychopaths, among whom there were sometimes young boys.

Some brothers took the initiative to treat these boys differently, and this led to a home for these young psychopaths in the town of Heemstede and later in the town of Doorn where the brothers started a home for the observation of these boys; this latter home was called “Beukenrode”. In these homes the brothers tried to find out what caused this criminal behavior in children at such a young age and what could be done to turn that around.

Then there was teaching, from the beginning well-known among the Belgian brothers, but in Holland it had a relatively late start. The reason for this was that in Holland the legislation regulating teaching was a lot stricter than in Belgium. Moreover, the executive of the congregation feared that the legal demands would be made even stricter, and in addition, non-public education had to make do without much financial assistance from the government. On the other hand, it was realized that via schools of its own, the congregation would become better known. If the activities in Holland were to continue, then it was necessary to attract Dutch candidate-brothers. In 1896 a number of brothers and Dutch candidate-brothers came to live on the grounds surrounding “Overdonk”, and a start was made with the training for the teaching profession, which later would develop into a Normal School for teachers. As soon as some brothers had become teachers, schools were started or taken over in the towns of Dongen, Rotterdam, Vught, Valkenswaard, Moergestel, and Geldrop.

After the Second World War there was a growing interest in special education: in the town of Emmen (technical training), in the town of Groesbeek (technical training and a school for slow learners) and a school in a disadvantaged socio-economic area (in the city of Nijmegen).

This overview is not complete. But certain other activities deserve to be mentioned that, at the time that they were started, were rather uncommon: like running camps for the unemployed in the 1930’s and, somewhat later, housing the homeless in the city of Utrecht. And there still is “Huize Kafarnaum” in the town of Vessem, where it is possible to have meetings, or times for reflection; nearby is the “Jacobushoeve”, a renovated old farm building housing a shop in recycled goods. Both “Huize Kafarnaum” and the “Jacobushoeve” are kept going with the help of many volunteers.

A number of institutions have been mentioned above that were either started by the brothers or taken over by them. Today, we just about nowhere see a brother at work in these institutions. But luckily they continue to operate: professionals and volunteers are dedicating themselves to doing the good works. And what do the brothers do?

They do the best they can by serving their neighbor. Due to circumstances, this is done in the form of small-scale activities as compared to the large-scale activities of times past. But luckily, the good work continues to be done.

TO FAR-AWAY COUNTRIES: THE CONGREGATION EXPANDS OUTSIDE BELGIUM AND HOLLAND

In 1864, a number of brothers of Good Works made the long trip from Ronse to the New World. Destination: Troyes, about 200 km to the west of Boston. They must have experienced this as a great adventure; Europe, did not yet regard the U.S.A. as the land where everything is possible, but rather as a land of migrants and fortune-seekers, a land that was spreading more and more westward and where in the year 1864 a civil war was going on between the northern and southern states about the abolition of slavery.

In other words: a great adventure, but the purpose for going to Troyes was very down-to-earth: to cook and clean in a seminary. All this was completely arranged without the knowledge of the brothers.

The directors of the seminary had asked the bishop of Ghent for brothers, and because at that time decisions in the congregation were made by the bishop's representative, the "spiritual father", there was nothing else to do but to go in obedience, even though everyone knew that the Founder Glorieux had other plans for his brothers.

Here follows a short summary of the expansion of the congregation outside Belgium and Holland. We also want to pay attention to the motives behind starting or taking over certain works.

Just about all so-called active congregations have expanded outside their country of origin. Bringing the good news of faith by living the Gospel, such as relieving material and spiritual needs, has undoubtedly been the main motive. Other motives, so to speak worldly ones, also came into play. Work in the missions gave enterprising people a chance to do pioneering work, which for some was a necessity for functioning optimally. In addition, when considering starting new foundations there was almost always the thought about whether or not there would be chances for vocations to the brotherhood. Finally, there was also the correct conviction that being engaged in missionary activities would attract youthful candidates.

Back to the American adventure. This can be told in a few words. There have been a total of nine establishments, most of them for various reasons of short duration. The one that lasted the longest was a house and school in Seattle, on the west-coast of America. In 1935, a last try was made in Albuquerque where a trade- and boarding school was begun. Competition from a (cheap) state school was one of the reasons that after a few years this project also had to be ended.

Around 1920 there were serious requests for working in far-away countries, but there was some hesitation in acceding to this, and it would be a miracle if the American experience would not have played a role in this hesitation.

An audience of the general superior, Father Amedee, with Pope Pius XI, the mission Pope, prepared the minds of people and official decisions followed. On June 1st, 1926, seven brothers travelled from Dongen to what then was still called the Dutch East Indies, to take over an orphanage with schools in Buitenzorg (Bogor). This was the beginning of what we may call to the present day a flourishing enterprise. Institutions offering a variety of options in education, schooling, and nursing followed on the islands of Java, Bangka and Sumatra. Meanwhile, the Japanese occupation took its toll: seven brothers lost their lives due to their suffering in captivity; an eighth brother died during his return home. After the Dutch East Indies had become Indonesia, the development continued stronger as ever.

In 1929, four Belgian brothers left for Kisantu, in the (Belgian) Congo. This, too, was known for many years as a flourishing and varied enterprise. A special person to be recognized in the Congo was Bro. René Van der

Meersch, a builder of churches, monasteries and schools. The Second World War by-passed the Congo, but not the process of de-colonization. For many years there was unrest in the Congo, and because of this unrest and the impossibility of doing fruitful work, the joint efforts of the brothers came to naught.

Even before the Second World War there was talk about starting an establishment in Curacao. The brothers were asked for a psychiatric institute and an institute for the re-education of "at risk" boys. The war was the cause of much delay, and after that the negotiations, particularly with the government of the island, went with great difficulty. Finally, in 1949 the brothers started working in the Government's Institute for Education, which soon after that was followed by the take-over of a number of schools founded by the Brothers ("Fraters") of Tilburg, and a home for the care of elderly men.

The circumstances surrounding the start in Canada during the early 50's were rather different. The general superior at that time, Father Denijs, was afraid that the congregation in Europe would perish due to a possible domination by the communists. The Cold War was in full swing, and he was certainly not the only one who considered that possibility.

Therefore a new beginning, far away in a place where there was no reason to fear danger. But why Canada, and specifically why Western Canada? Male religious were rather unknown in that part of Canada and that could mean a possible source of vocations. On the other hand, Catholics, in contrast with parts of Eastern Canada, formed a minority. Here too, getting started wasn't simple, but after some time the brothers found their proper tasks, primarily in the education of emotionally disturbed boys, and in teaching.

Above, I wrote about the new concepts in psychiatric care as had found their way into, among others, the Saint Willibrordus Institute in the town of Heiloo.

A professor and psychiatrist in Vienna who had been thinking about a home for schizophrenic patients had heard about this, and contacted the cardinal-archbishop of Vienna. The latter contacted Dongen asking for brothers, and these were made available. For exactly 27 years to the day, the brothers dedicated themselves to this difficult work, first in Lanzendorf near Vienna and later in the city itself. Austrian situations and ways of doing things were possibly reasons for additional complications. The presence of the Sisters of Mercy, also founded by Glorieux, made things somewhat easier when, after a few years, they started to take care of the female patients.

About midway through the 60's, it became evident that the time had come for a new impetus, also within the congregation. Rather abruptly, the influx of candidate-brothers ground to a halt in Belgium and Holland. This gave rise to the desire to make young brothers available in places where they were most needed. The Second Vatican Council pointed to South America as the area where the care for the countless poor was an urgent necessity.

A tour through South America by some members of the general executive resulted in the choice of Brazil, where a few projects were selected, to be served by Belgian and Dutch brothers. The beginning was difficult, especially because of a lack of mutual understanding of each other's mentality. Brazil begged for religious and when they arrived, church authorities didn't really know how to put them to work. The result of this was that the brothers in fact had to find their own way, which required time, a lot of time. Luckily, starting on a modest scale produced results in the care of the sick, care for youth, catechetics and pastoral care. The fact that it took several years before the first Brazilian candidates showed up, was experienced as a handicap

At the same time that the brothers started in Brazil, four brothers went to Spain. There was a dual purpose for this which was clearly expressed: there was work to be done and there were vocations. An increase in the number of brothers in Spain could possibly alleviate the need in Brazil. A home for mentally handicapped children was established in Astorga. Later on, similar institutes were added in other places. The institute in San Andres del Rabanedo was something quite different. Here, the brothers worked on a project for refugees and

drug addicts. Not all the work has survived; it has in part been taken over by others, while the rest has been terminated because of a shortage of workers. The last remaining brothers, five in number including a Spaniard, still worked in a social centre for the physically handicapped in Astorga, the city of the earliest beginnings. January 15, 2005 marked the end for the Dutch brothers in Spain. Age and health concerns were the reasons for their departure. The only Spanish brother remained with the institute.

The beginning of the work in Ethiopia saw a surprising start. In 1999, the general executive received five letters from that country. Young people expressed the wish that they wanted to participate in the life of the congregation and that they felt attracted by the charisma of the Founder. This created astonishment because it was assumed that the congregation was totally unknown in Ethiopia.

The very recent general chapter had expressed the wish for an active approach towards alleviating needs if and wherever possible. Three brothers met with the letter-writers. During their trip they were struck by the great poverty and misery. It was decided to wait for a year before further steps would be taken that could lead to the congregation establishing itself in Ethiopia. "Siddartha", a Belgian project being led by Bro. Gust Lauwerysen, was ready to start right away. Candidate-brothers were made to get involved in this project which, among others, involved the building of toilets, caring for single mothers and other types of help for the poorest of the poor.

If you have followed the story of this expansion into many parts of the world, you will realize that it is a big problem for the leaders of a small congregation to manage and keep together establishments located around the world and often staffed by only a few people. As a result, the most recent general chapter (2004) has looked closely at the problems associated with this. But considering the past, we have to be grateful for all the large and small things that, also outside Belgium and Holland, have been realized. The commitment by many, the support from the home-base and the blessings from Above together have made it possible that the inspiration of Glorieux could be realized in many localities in the world.

THE RECENT PAST AND A LOOK AT THE CURRENT SITUATION

Besides running a few orphanages, the emphasis in Belgium has always been on teaching. For a number of years, the brothers operated a psychiatric institute in the city of Luik. The teaching institutes in the town of Oostakker together formed an impressive complex: a high school, teacher training, technical training on different levels and for a large number of trades, elementary education, boarding school. At one time one could see there about 2000 young people every day.

Like in Holland, the time of working together on a large project has passed. However, the brothers do remain involved in the administration of teaching institutes. In the spirit of Glorieux, special attention is also paid to taking in and guiding people with problems by "Siddartha" in the town of Tremelo, and "De Kromme Boom" ("The Twisted Tree") in the town of Oostakker.

A number of communities of teaching brothers have been discontinued. The transfer of the impressive complex of schools in Oostakker was certainly experienced as very drastic.

In the Congo, the brothers formerly operated different kinds of schools, like for teacher training and agricultural education. Due to the disturbances that have beset the country during the past several decades, much of what was so laboriously built up, has now disappeared. Yet, during the last quarter century the brothers have re-organized the educational system in the diocese of Kalemie. They have also collaborated in large developmental projects, such as having to do with making drinking-water available for 5000 persons in Moba.

Bro. Eric Claeys, working in the technical school of the Brothers of Charity in Bukavu, is the only brother left in the Congo.

As far as Indonesia is concerned, prior to this country becoming a sovereign nation (1949), only a few Indonesian young men were added to the ranks of the brothers. But after that event one could speak of a steady growth in numbers, and since about 1995 one could say that things have stabilized. At the moment, the number of brothers is about 70; among them there still is one Dutch brother, Bro. Martin Dol.

Since about the year 1960, the administration has gradually gone over into the hands of the Indonesian brothers. Much attention is being paid to "enculturation", the living out of religious values but adapted to the specific character of country and people. In addition, much attention is being paid to the religious training of the brothers and to the various disciplines that go with religious life. During the past few years, new communities have been started in North-Sumatra, Central-Java and West-Timor, among others to promote the development of agriculture.

In the year 2001, the 75th anniversary of the presence of the congregation in Indonesia has been celebrated with much festivity.

Five brothers are still working in Curacao. They no longer work in the institutions mentioned above, but they are involved in catechetics, helping drug addicts, the building of houses and making warm meals available to school children.

At the moment, there are still 8 brothers living in Canada. They are involved in pastoral ministry and catechetics. Two of them have for a number of years devoted all their energy to the guidance and training of the youngest members of the congregation in Ethiopia.

The problems encountered when the brothers tried to establish themselves in Brazil have been mentioned already. Nevertheless, after starting with as simple hospital in Jordânia, a health centrum and a parish centrum

followed; Betim saw the start of a community centrum. The young-professed brothers live in the latter city; they are involved in social projects.

One of the brothers who has been a priest for many years, is pastor of a parish. A special problem in Brazil is the fact that every so often there are big changes in the number of candidate-brothers. This is regrettable because in Brazil there is more than enough work for those who want to commit themselves to improving the standard of living of the population.

The candidates in Ethiopia who presented themselves as candidate-brothers, wanted to be religious according to the tradition of the church. This implied that the rules governing training and formation needed to be applied. After some Indonesian brothers spent time and energy to work on that, this work was continued by Canadian brothers. At the moment, the leadership in Ethiopia is in the hands of another Indonesian brother, who is also a member of the general executive.

In the meantime, thanks to "Siddartha" (Belgium) and the commitment of young brothers and co-workers, much has been accomplished in a few years in the fight against the poverty and misery of the people of this very poor country.

Meanwhile, three Ethiopian brothers of temporary vows and a number of candidate-brothers, among others, occupy two houses in Ethiopia.

IN CLOSING

It is possible that some readers would notice privately that this history deals mainly with “externals”. This is true. But we didn’t want the information to be too detailed. Moreover, for a consideration of the “internals”, as well as the many changes in the congregation’s 175 years of history would require more research, time and space.

Still, to mention certain things: during the time around the Second Vatican Council, significant changes occurred in the way the religious ideal was lived. For instance, at the time of the founding of congregations such as ours, sanctification of the self was the primary aim. One of the means to realize this aim - a very important one at that - was service to our neighbours, but equally important was an elaborate program of prayers not much different from that of contemplative religious. A new vision emphasized the evangelical call to commit oneself entirely to those who need help, trusting correctly that by doing so one obeyed God’s most important commandment. The same can be said about living the vows: in the past you emphasized what you “gave up”, rather than seeing the freedom you gained for a total availability of service to others by means of the vows.

Finally, one may ask the question why this form of religious life here in Western Europe only attracts a few if any young people.

There are possibly several answers to this question. We live in a very secularized society in which church and faith often play a marginal role. It is also possible that, after all, congregations have not done enough to keep up with the times, for example by letting go of work that is well established and that pays well. This has indeed been suggested but who would accept the consequences, and who could accept the consequences for doing so and thus be free to address current needs? This has nevertheless happened in the past, and it still happens.

As a final point it may be said that much of the work done by active religious has been taken over by others. And it has been precisely that work, as research shows, that primarily attracted people to join a congregation. As far as our congregation is concerned, it is a fact that the deep concern of the young priest Glorieux for the victims of the misery of his time, inspired a group of young men to follow in his footsteps for part or for all of their lives.

HOW DOES THE CONGREGATION VIEW THE FUTURE?

The ageing of religious is a reality in all of Europe. Belgium nor Holland are exceptions. A lot of attention is being paid to the process of letting go of work and transferring it to others. Our congregation has withdrawn from most of its work, but in most cases a (personal) bond with that work remains. The age of many brothers demands adaptations in policies that take possibilities and limitations into account.

Outside of Europe, the Indonesian province experiences a steady growth. The developments in Brazil and Ethiopia are reasons for hope.

Because of the fact that the congregation is following a two-track path (phasing out and building up), it is unavoidable that in time there will be a shift in prominence towards areas outside of Europe. The most recent chapter meeting (August of 2004) that not accidentally was held in Indonesia, took that very much into account. Among others, it was decided not to split up the congregation and to give the general executive a more international face. In short: the brothers decided in favor of congregational solidarity.

Today, the Brothers of Our Lady form a strongly decentralized congregation in which each province follows its own policies.

The general executive has as a special mandate the task of strengthening the communal bond between all areas where the congregation finds itself. Among others, this is realized by paying attention to its own characteristic spirituality, and especially by adapting the inspiring example of Glorieux to this day and age.

PROFILE OF A BROTHER OF GLORIEUX

SPIRITUALITY

A brother of Glorieux wants to live and act out of a spiritual base.

This base is grounded in Christ's and in gospel values.

These values promoted by Glorieux and adopted by the congregation in the past and present, show a concrete direction.

As required by the gospel and the Way of Life, we want to be yeast, salt and light, without forgetting our human limitations.

VOWS

Living the vows faithfully and creatively is the manner in which we express our dedication to God and neighbour.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Prayer and reflection are necessary for being spiritual persons.

Glorieux's profound need for prayer and the example of many brothers who went before us, inspire us to be people of prayer.

Brothers who are no longer able to be directly involved in the apostolate, are able to support the good works of the congregation by prayer and reflection.

COMMUNITY

We, as brothers of Glorieux, want to live out of a personal spirituality.

We live this spirituality in a community.

In the community we give shape to our spiritual values and we find there a sounding board which helps us as a community to be followers of Christ and Glorieux. The community is also the first place where we prove that the love for one's neighbour is not an empty phrase.

Service is the motto.

All brothers belong at least to a congregational, provincial, pro-provincial, regional or district community; most of the brothers belong to a local community.

We will honestly try to make every brother feel at home in each of these communities.

We want to live and work as brothers. Congregational projects and projects in which several brothers work, are, among others, proof of this.

OPTION FOR THE POOR

Living the gospel, following Christ, standing in the tradition of Glorieux and his followers is impossible without an option for the poor, the outcast, the weak nearby and far away.

We keep them always in mind in our way of thinking, living arrangement and work. That is why we aim for a simple life style and why we are satisfied with little. We like to share with others who are in need.

CRITICAL ATTITUDE

We have a critical attitude towards our own ways of doing things and towards those of the community. We always say “no” to the desire for more possessions.

We are members of church and society. There, too, the evangelical values must be the touch stone. That is why a low-key but courageous and critical attitude is necessary. Connecting with nature and God’s creation won’t fail to touch us.

FLEXIBILITY

Christ and Glorieux make us unshakable when it has to do with standing up for the weak, but flexible in the way we express this and in dealing with others.

We want to be people on the move, able to detach ourselves from things when required in considering new tasks.

To change and to let go is asked of every brother. The older brothers are confronted with this in a special way. Experiencing the spirituality and the support of the community will help them to find new and fitting ways to give meaning to life. The form changes, not the basic values.

HAPPINESS AND OPTIMISM

People who live the gospel and whose work is rooted in the gospel, and who feel at home in their community, radiate happiness and optimism.

People from outside feel at home with warm people and open and hospitable communities.

SIMPLICITY AND SINCERITY

A brother of Glorieux is not so much a man of words, but a man of action. This is also a consequence of the choice of being a brother. He gives shape to evangelical values in real deeds rather than fancy words.

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