

# NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

## CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Number 53, September 2017

### FIFTY YEARS OF CONGREGATIONAL PRESENCE IN BRAZIL

*In the previous newsletter, you could read that the Congregation is celebrating a fifty years presence in Brazil. To celebrate this memorable occasion, two Brazilian brothers crossed the Atlantic Ocean, to involve the sons and daughters of Glorieux in this celebration. The following is a report of their visit.*

#### VISIT

From August 4 to August 16, the brothers Antonio de Amorim and Danilso Estevao travelled through Belgium and Holland to celebrate 50 years of congregational presence in Brazil together with fellow-brothers, the Sisters of Mercy, and with friends and acquaintances of the brothers. For br. Marc Etienne, who lived in Brazil for many years and who knows both brothers, this was a very enjoyable reunion. Br. Pedro Goossens was needed for practical reasons: together with br. Ton Houde, he acted as a temporary translator during the excursion through both countries. Br. Herman Yosef Gultom, the youngest member of the general executive, joined the international group of visitors during the first week.



Sister Cecile D'heer, br. Carlos, sr. Hildegard Arfeuille and br. Danilso next to the statue of the Founder in Ronse.

The brothers and sisters received plenty of information about 50 years of congregational presence in Brazil. For that reasons, get-togethers were organized in Eindhoven, Oostakker and Ronse, during which people could hear and see how the brothers in this day and age are giving shape to their apostolate, and at the same time are trying to motivate young Brazilians for a life as brothers. The attentive listeners will have noticed that this apostolate has its own particular features, and that the brothers are very sensitive to the call from Pope Francis to be active in a missionary way and to make the joy of the gospel visible.

At the same time, both brothers were able to learn locally about the history of the Founder Glorieux and of the congregation by visiting the most important historical localities. Included were the Belgian birthplace of Glorieux, the parish church in Sint-Denijs, and the minor seminary in Roeselare, all in Belgium. The city of Ronse was also visited, as well as some nearby villages. Ample time was spent in the Saint Bavo cathedral in Ghent, where they could also see the portraits and the graves of the bishops of Ghent who had important dealings with the activities of Glorieux and the congregation. Smetlede was also visited; it was here that Glorieux was parish priest from 1866 until his death in 1872. A nicely renovated memorial plaque in

the wall of the church commemorates this period.

In Holland, the *brother path* in Dongen was walked. This is a historical walking route in Dongen that takes you along 22 historical localities where the brothers lived and were active from 1892 until 2009.

The deceased brothers were not forgotten either by visiting the cemeteries in Dongen, Vught-Voorburg, and of course also in Oostakker where the Founder was laid to rest. On August 15 – the feast of Our Lady’s Ascension Day – was celebrated, together with the community of brothers in Oostakker. This was also to occasion for celebrating the jubilees of four brothers.

During their stay, the brothers enjoyed the hospitality of the brothers of the General House in Oostakker, as well as with the community of the brothers in Den Bosch.

The living together of the brothers and sisters, often together with other religious and lay-persons in the domestic- and care centers, won’t have escaped the attention of the Brazilian fellow-brothers.

The brothers Antonio and Danilso didn’t return to Brazil empty-handed. They received a carefully packed bust of the Founder Glorieux that, together with the brothers, arrived home safely.

*Br. Ton Houde. See more pictures on the Facebook page: Congregacao Dos Irmaos De Nossa Senhora de Lourdes.*

## VISIT TO ETHIOPIA

*During the month of September, the general superior, br. Ton Houde, made a short but busy visit to the brothers and the congregational projects in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is the youngest member of the congregation and is entrusted to the direct care of the general executive.*

The highlight of this visit was the making of the first vows by br. Dawit Abebe Shoro. His two brothers were present, as well as fellow-brothers, friends and colleague from work. It was a simple but inspiring ceremony, followed by a joyful get-together. Br. Dawit works in the laboratory of the Saint Gabriel Catholic Health Center.

Four candidates have been added in June, and one novice and a postulant are in formation towards a life in our Congregation. This is encouraging, but at the same time challenging because we are in short supply of guides. In addition to our own brothers, especially br. Hugo, who are doing their utmost, help is sought from outside our congregation. The future is being looked after because br. Abebe Leykum is being trained in Nairobi (Kenia) as the person responsible for formation.

The candidates make a pleasant and fit impression. Most of them like soccer, volleyball and table tennis.

Several meetings were held with the executive of the Ethiopian District, an executive made up of br. Hugo Verhulst, br. Isayas and br. Wossen. It is hoped that this will produce good outcomes for the coming period.



(l.r.) Brothers Ton, Carlos, Jan Klein Overmeen and Herman at Reinier van Arkel in Den Bosch.

I talked with all the leaders of the projects in which the congregation and the brothers are involved, and where possible, I was able to see something of what these projects would mean to many people in need. Among others, there is maternity care and in the Health Center there is care for mothers. Also, teaching disadvantaged men and women how to make a living on their own is an important project. There is also

the care of handicapped children and orphans, of making information available about the prevention of HIV, of erecting sanitary facilities for people living in poor neighborhoods, and of providing meals for the homeless elderly. This is only a partial list.

During the final day of my visit, we visited a woman who, due to heavy rain, saw half of her house disappear in the river. The remaining half turned out to be useless. She and her child were now staying in the little house of her neighbors. Ways of helping this woman are now being looked at. Luckily, she wasn't home when disaster struck.

As you can see: lots can and needs to be done in Ethiopia. Our brothers are



Brother Dawit is being celebrated the traditional way.

not the only ones involved in this. Many lay-persons also help out. One of them is Christina Maasdam who carries on her shoulders a lot of the organizational issues having to do with the projects, while, together with br. Theo van den Boer, she tries to raise the necessary funds.

We hope that the brothers and their fellow-workers will courageously continue with these works of mercy, actualizing these good works.

Br. Ton Houde

## NICE TO MEET YOU

*A general executive made up solely of Dutch and Belgian members, is now history. Since brothers outside of Europe now carry the most important responsibilities, the editors have asked the members of the executive to introduce themselves to readers via the newsletter. In a previous newsletter you were able to meet br. Ton Houde. This time it is br. Franklin Clemencia's turn.*

Like it was said in the past: I am a late vocation. In 1976, when I was 27 years of age, I joined the brothers, and in 1978 I made my first profession. While born and raised in Curacao, my first contacts with the brothers were in 1969, when I joined "Drecha Cas". This is a sort of building organization that, together with the older boys of the youth club, helped on Saturdays and during holidays to fix houses in need of repairs. Being friends with the brother in charge, allowed me to get to know the brothers better. Prior to 1969, I didn't know a single brother, since I attended a school of a different religious order of brothers. After I finished my studies for becoming a teacher, I applied for a position in a school of the brothers, and there I got to know other brothers. My friendship with the brothers, led me to a better understanding of the work and the way of life of the brothers. Little by little, I wanted to become like them: a brother. Later on, I always jokingly told the other brothers (*fraters*), that I had made a choice for the brothers because I had attended their (the *fraters*) school.



On Curacao the beach is always easy to find.  
Brother Franklin on a recreational trip with youngsters.

For six years I was a classroom teacher, and I was a school principal for 28 years. My entire career was spent at the same school. In addition, I was pleased to work in the more needy districts of Curacao.

In 2004, I was chosen as a chapter member. During this chapter, I was chosen as a provincial representative for the general chapter. For the first time, this chapter took place outside Europe, namely Indonesia. This was quite an experience for me. I got to know an entirely different part of the congregation. Since that time, I attended all chapters as a chapter member.

Last year, I was elected as a member of the general executive, namely as a second-in-command. I had not expected this, but God's ways remain unpredictable. This

means more frequent absences from home, and taking part in executive activities at the highest levels of the Congregation. Here, too, a late vocation.

## THE BROTHERS LEAVING VUGHT DEFINITELY

*The last two brothers in Vught have moved to Eindhoven on September 5, 2017. Brother Theo Rath and brother Harry van Schaijk have closed the door of the Vught residence and now live with the brothers in Depoorter in Eindhoven. (their address: Glorieuxlaan 4, 5613 LN Eindhoven).*

On Sunday, September 3, the brothers Theo Rath and Harry van Schaijk said farewell to the Edith Stein parish in Vught. Pastor Mesch had organized this farewell, and during the Holy Eucharist of 11 a.m., he recalled the many merits of the brothers in teaching at the Aloysius and Willibrordus schools, as well as in nursing in Voorburg. In addition, the pastor thanked the brothers for the many things they did in youth work, among others the drama club, the RC Youth Center (including the Youth Center Choir, the J.E.E.P, the J.J. Carnival, the soccer club Zwaluw, and the youth work in Rozenoord). After the celebration, people were given a chance to say farewell to the brothers.

The congregation was active in Vught for 131 years; not to be forgotten is Mariaoord in Vught from 1953-1969, a boarding school for boys who wanted to become brothers.

*Source: Dutch Provincial Executive*

## A FINAL WORD

In the next newsletter you will find a report on the business visit to Indonesia. After all, at the end of October three Indonesian brothers will make their vows for life, with br. Ton Houde presiding. Brother Ton will be in Indonesia for the entire month of October for a first getting thoroughly acquainted with the brothers and the work they do since his election to the position of general superior in 2016.

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