

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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ETHIOPIA

From February 3 till February 12 (inclusive) the general superior br. Ton Houde, together with br. Theo van den Boer, paid a visit to the brothers and the projects in Ethiopia.

This visit was planned mainly in connection with the departure of Mrs. Christina Maasdam, after almost eight years of faithful service. Without her dynamic personality, perseverance and ingenuity, the projects in which the congregation is involved, would not be what they are now.

Christina Maasdam showed a lot of interest when the former general superior, br. Theo van den Boer, asked her if she would like to get started in Ethiopia. She had gained quite a bit of professional experience in organization skills and leadership roles while in Holland. She turned out to be the right woman.

She started as the first general manager of the brand-new Saint Gabriel Catholic Health Center, that saw its formal opening in February 2011. This Health Center came into existence as an initiative from the Addis Ababa archdiocese. The archdiocese looked for a religious congregation for a management role, which in turn would establish a community of brothers on the grounds of the Center. Christina successfully developed and expanded a properly operating Center, offering several services. For several years already, leadership is provided by an Ethiopian manager.

Until now, she was also the general manager of the Brothers of Good Works Counseling & Social Services Center. The brothers took over this already existing project from The Medical Missionaries of Mary in the middle of 2010. She breathed new life into this project, not only by introducing new ways of doing things, but also by making services available to different groups of people, such as sexworkers, or children with mental or physical handicaps.

In both these projects (and also in the other social projects of the brothers), she has shown her perseverance, combined with much patience, and always involving all staff members. One of the keywords in her leadership role was empowerment as applied to co-workers as well as clients of the projects.



Keyword empowerment.

No project can operate without money. Here, too, Christina Maasdam has made a strong push for a professional approach to raising funds. This has given the congregation and Good Works Glorieux the necessary elbow room to fund the projects during the past years.

These efforts were recognized, among others, during the July 2015 visit of the Belgian vice premier and the minister of cooperative developmental work, Alexander De Croo, as part of the UN top about financing enduring developmental projects. Christina Maasdam showed the minister the work being done. In November 2016, the projects enjoyed royal notice during a working visit to Addis Ababa by queen Mathilde of Belgium.



In February, during the customary visit to cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel of Addis Ababa, Christina heard many well deserved words of appreciation. The congregation agrees with this, with special thanks for all the work she has done. Christina informed us that she is going to work in a Dutch organization for the integration of refugees in Iraq. We wish her well and much success with this new challenge.

Together with Christina, all those involved have made a plan for a smooth transition. From the beginning, br. Theo van den Boer was the leading man of the congregational work in Ethiopia, and is also remaining the chairman of Good Works Glorieux, and as such being directly involved in raising funds. That is why the general superior, br. Ton Houde, invited him to play a guiding role in the work being done in Ethiopia, visiting that country twice per year if necessary.

MG

BRAZIL

KICK-OFF FOR NOVICES, POSTULANTS AND CANDIDATE

In November 2017, the executive of the Brazilian pro-province submitted to the general executive the request for housing the novitiate in the brothers' residence *Casa Nossa Senhora De Lourdes* (Sabara). There was a good reason for this, because on Saturday February 3, the brothers Paulo Sergio Lopes de Lima and Renan Sebastiao Nunes began the first year of their novitiate. And there is more happy news: on that same day, the brothers welcomed three postulants and one candidate in their midst. As prescribed by tradition, all this happened with a celebration, with a group-picture made of everyone, and afterwards enjoying a get-together with drinks and a meal.

In Betim, the brothers celebrated the feast of February 11 together with many people in the neighborhood. The priest celebrated the Holy Eucharist in the garden, in front of the grotto. Afterwards, people could socialize, enjoying drinks and snacks.



Paulo and Renan, with in the middle the novice master Br. Paulo Roberto, in the garden in front of the Lourdes grotto.

br. Ton Houdé

NICE TO MEET YOU

The time that the general executive was reserved for Dutch and Belgian brothers, has past. Since brothers outside Europe are now part of the general executive, these brothers have been asked to introduce themselves to the readers. You already met br. Ton Houde, br. Franklin Clemencia and br. Nico Simanjuntak. This time, it's the turn for br. Herman Yosef Gultom.

I was born on May 30, 1981, in Pematangsiantar, a mid-sized city on the island of Sumatra (Indonesia). My parents were happy and thankful as they welcomed me as their fourth child. I was also welcomed by two sisters and one brother, and I grew up in a home where everyone took care of one another.

As a child, I had some vague idea about what I wanted to be in the future. I am sure that, one way or another, Jesus also was involved in pointing the way, and eventually made me one of his followers. It goes without saying that the brothers, who were always welcome in our home, and whose work I could see, influenced me in a particular way.



For me, it is important to see life as walking along a path, respecting what is possible, rather than chasing after something that somehow cannot be achieved because it goes beyond one's abilities. I am sure that my vocation is a process, and that I am able to become who I am because He has chosen me, giving me the means to serve Him. That is why I chose the following Bible saying as my motto when I made my vows for life: *"Therefore brothers, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble."* (2 Peter: 10).

What is now the path I am on? In 1998 I got acquainted with the life of brothers in Pematangsiantar, followed by my move to the home for postulants in Bangka (Pangkalpinang), and from there to the novitiate in Lawang (Java). I made my first vows as a member of the community in Tumbajae-Manduamas, where I lived from 2002 to 2005. This was followed by four years in Desa Putera (Jakarta), where I studied at the University nearby.

After this, residence (and provincial house) at the Gunung Sahari (Jakarta) became my permanent home. This is a course of life that is not foreign for a cheerful brother!

Once again, the process, the natural way in which life progresses, is important to me. Simple, uncomplicated things, and my gratitude for all this: this is how I see my tasks in my daily life. One sometimes says, not without reason, that great things have small beginnings, and that life in the service of others rewards itself. That is so beautiful!

br. Herman Yosef Gultom

50 YEARS OF COSAMAI

Four brothers, namely brs. Theo Bekkers, Frans Pikkemaat, Theo van den Boer and Ton Houde travelled to Astorga (Spain), at the invitation of the "Diputación de Leon". They were there from January 18 until January 26, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Cosamai, officially called the *Colegio Santa Maria Madre de la Iglesia*. At the same time, this was a meeting with old friends and acquaintances. Of course, the only brother still left in Spain, brother Blas Navarrete, was pleased with this visit.

At the invitation of the then bishop of Astorga, the first four brothers left for Spain in 1966. Cosamai was a center for children with an intellectual handicap, who in a novel way were prepared to take their place in society in normal employment, or in a protective workplace.

There was an excellent level of interaction with the people of Astorga, among others through the annual circus in which the children and young people played the major roles, the Cosamai celebration including various games – prizes were donated by the shopkeepers –, and participation in all sorts of Spanish sporting activities. The biking club of br. Theo Bekkers was well known; many a hill and mountain was conquered by the members.



Brothers Frans Pikkemaat, Theo Bekkers, Ton Houdé and Theo van den Boer.

The experience gained in this Center, became the occasion for the congregation to accept, at the invitation of the Province of Leon, the operation in La Bañeza of a Center for those with severe intellectual handicaps. In addition, and at the invitation of the diocese, a Centre for those with severe physical handicaps was started in Astorga. These Centers, too, continue to flourish.

br. Ton Houdé

A FINAL WORD

The best kind of drug for your brains is to move. Every step you make, improves the circulation of the blood throughout your brain, raises the oxygen transfer to the brain by at least 30%, and helps your ability to concentrate. In addition, moving about guarantees the addition of new gray matter, and promotes more and better connections between brain cells. Also, the number of blood vessels increases, resulting in more nutrients entering the brain.

And with this good advice, we wish you an enjoyable Easter time!

GENERALAAT
SINT-JOZEFSTRAAT 1
9041 OOSTAKKER (BELGIUM)

GENERALAAT.FNDL@TELENET.BE
[HTTP://BROEDERS-OLV-LOURDES.WEEBLY.COM/](http://broeders-olv-lourdes.weebly.com/)
(+32) 09 251 01 85