

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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INDONESIA: REPORT OF A BUSINESS TRIP

The brothers Franklin Clemencia and Ton Houde were in Indonesia during the month of July. Two more members of the general executive joined them, and together, they visited the communities on the island of Sumatra, and welcomed the participants for the international meeting about formation. They were also present when brother Maksimus Boi made his vows for life. Finally, there were meetings of the general executive

VISIT TO SUMATRA

There are four communities on the island of Sumatra. These four communities with their nine schools and three boarding homes on Sumatra were visited. When possible, there were private meetings with every brother, and often also meetings with the community as a whole.

The most recently established community, near the airport of Kualanamu (near Medan), dedicates itself mostly to pastoral tasks and the cultivation of a large parcel of land belonging to the community. For



The new community of Batang Belimbing, near Medan on Sumatra.

instance, they are growing peanuts, corn, different kinds of trees such as mahogany and fruit trees. Chickens, geese, and dogs have each found their “home” there. The brothers also take care of all their domestic duties. The community is still looking for a social project.

After Kualanamu, Pangururan on the Samosir island in Toba Lake, was visited. There, you’ll find old Batak houses; the parish church is also built in Batak style. There is a rather large junior high school. This school has a good reputation, resulting in overflowing classrooms. Since

many pupils have to come from far away, there is a boarding home nearby with room for 115 boys. Br. Syrilus is in charge of the school, and br. Nico Simanjuntak runs the boarding home. Both brothers also guide two young brothers who recently ended their novitiate. They are staying there for one year, taking on duties at the boarding home, the parish or the base communities, but the final responsibility isn’t theirs. After this year, they go to another community for their vocational schooling.

Deep inland, we come across the most remote community, namely the one of Tumba Jae. There are three schools and one boarding home. Four brothers keep these facilities going. In order to provide more room for the two high schools and the boarding home, a multi-functional hall will be built for sports and play activities, as well as for spiritual services.

In Pangururan and Tumba Jae, we witnessed the welcoming of new pupils. This was quite an occasion.

In Pemantangsiantar we visited 5 schools, a boarding home and a small cemetery where three brothers are buried.

The senior high school has a very good reputation, and attracts many pupils.

We can say that the brothers on Sumatra work with enthusiasm and much dedication, and that their efforts are fruitful.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMATION

The meetings of those responsible for congregational formation, together with the general executive, started on Friday July 19 in Villa Erema – Puncak – in the municipality of Bogor. Puncak is situated high in the mountains, and that provided for a cool environment.



Father Margo MFS was the only non-brother. He already has been assisting the congregation for quite some time during chapters and formation issues, and this time he would do that also for us.

There were several Indonesian participants (7), two brothers from Brazil, three from Ethiopia, two Indonesian brothers serving as translators, and the general executive (4). In order to acclimatize, the brothers from Brazil and Ethiopia had arrived a few days earlier in the Gunung Sahari home of the brothers in Jakarta. This was not just a case of useless luxury, because, for instance, the time difference with Brazil is ten hours.

A good number of brothers was able to understand and speak English, but during the meetings the help of the translators br. Franciscus and br. Guido, was much in need.



Centuries-old parts of Batak culture, decorating the entry-port of the modern school.

Four sessions were scheduled for the daytime, usually with a shorter meeting in the evening. The work during the plenary meetings alternated with group sessions of the Brazilian, Ethiopian and Indonesian members. The agenda committee guided the work to be done, and adjusted the proceedings when necessary.

The purpose of the meetings was twofold: firstly, promoting congregational unity by getting to know one another, and by hearing about the differences between locations, and the reasons for these differences. Secondly: getting to know the basic plan of congregational formation, and to see how this plan could be used in the different countries.

Each country was given the opportunity to present itself. It struck us that we were dealing here with three large countries as far as size of area and size of populations are concerned. The three countries concerned are also mostly tropical in climate, with great demographic differences, great differences in their major religions and in the circumstances in which the congregation finds itself. All three countries have many problems, and there is a lot of poverty.

We also enjoyed an excellent ambiance. On Sunday afternoon, we visited a safari park nearby. In the evening, there was a lot of singing going on; we also celebrated the birthday of brother Antonio Berek, etc.

Also, there was time left for religious celebrations in the sober chapel of the center.

The final task for the participants was to make a list of topics that needed more work in the particular countries during the next period of time, indicating also who could do this work, and when it should be ready. More work is waiting for us!

The evaluation of the meeting indicated that the participants were quite satisfied, and that the objectives had been mostly accomplished. The visits before and after the meeting to the communities and projects nearby, rounded off the trip.

VOWS FOR LIFE

The highlight of the final week of our trip was undoubtedly the making of the vows for life by brother Maksimus Boi on Sunday, July 28. The ceremony took place on the playground next to the house of the brothers in Gunung Sahari. A lot of work was done to create a suitable space, to get the chairs in place, to put up the decorations, and to go through the entire ceremony in preparation for the actual event. Most of the Saturday was used for this.

The house of the brothers was packed, but everyone did find a spot for sleeping. The brothers from nearby communities were present rather early. The choir of one of the schools of the brothers practiced the songs. Quite eye-catching were the many flower arrangements, made by two sisters and one of the brothers.

At nine-thirty, a procession left the house of the brothers. The arch-bishop of Jakarta, Mgr. Ignatius Suharyo, assisted by



Br. Januarius Sukirdi (prov. superior), br. Maximus Boi with his parents, the archbishop, and br. Ton Houde, all posing for the customary photo-op.

two priests, led the Eucharist. The bishop made an easy and pleasant impression, and after the celebration took the time to talk with the people present. The choir sung very well. After the lively sermon, the congregational ceremony started. A touching part of this ceremony is the blessing of the son by his parents. The son kneels in front of his parents, and asks for their blessing. Later on, a member of the family declares that the family surrenders the brother to the congregation and to the church. The bishop then says a prayer for the family and brother Maximus.

A different moment: the brothers present gather around br. Maximus as he lies down in front of the altar, and together, they sing a psalm.

After the ceremony, many photographers had a chance to take a lot of pictures. Many speeches were heard, and school children showed their dancing skills. A dinner for all those invited was meant as a worthy ending of the event.

We used the Monday to visit br. Martin Dol. He lives on grounds where many wild animals are kept: a tiger, two caiman, many monkeys, several birds and bird of prey: all these animals are kept there to heal from their injuries. They are meant to be released into the wilds after healing. Br. Martin also has room there for raising mealworms. These worms are sold after about three weeks, to be used as food for fish. The money earned is used in support of social projects. Moreover, this project also means a paying job for 8 men. A good project.

Around noon, we visited the three schools in Bogor, the renovated clinic, and the house of the brothers. That is where we had lunch, and also had a chance to have a chat with brother Kanisius, the oldest Indonesian brother, and with the other brothers of the community.

During the afternoon, we learned about one of the clinics where brother Konrad is in charge. These clinics are located in the interior, where there is a majority of Muslim people. The housing is simple. Help is available for many poor people. Br. Konrad and his assistants are accepted there, also because several of the latter are residents of this locale.

FAREWELL

Monday evening gave us a chance to say farewell to the brothers from Brazil and Ethiopia, as well as to brother Yosafat, who was moving to Pangkalpinang. The foreigners were more than satisfied with the Indonesian hospitality, such as by the brothers of the Gunung Sahari community. They were made to feel as true fellow-brothers of the Indonesian brothers.

On Tuesday evening, the Brazilians and Ethiopians left from the new Jakarta airport. We stayed for a few more days for meetings and for ending the visit. On Friday, August 2, br. Franklin and I left for Schiphol, Amsterdam, while br. Nico had already returned to his boys in the boarding home in Pangururan.

A warm "Thank You" to the Indonesian brothers. This was a worthwhile visit, and you have been excellent hosts and fellow-brothers.

Br. Ton Houde

A FINAL WORD

There was a chapter meeting for the Dutch province from August 20 to August 22 (inclusive). The current executive was re-elected: br. Jan Klein Overmeen as provincial superior, br. Theo van de Boer as substitute provincial superior, and br. Jan van der Steen as member of the executive.

(translation: courtesy of br. Henk Gal)



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