

# NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

## CONGREGATION OF THE BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Number 62, July 2020

### MEETINGS 2.0

Normally, the general executive in its entirety meets three times per year, one week at the time. These meetings mostly take place in The Netherlands/Belgium, and sometimes in Indonesia, Brazil or Ethiopia. This year it has been impossible to meet as usual, and it was decided to conduct the regular meetings



online. If everything goes well, we see and hear one another. We already have had various discussions and it's been a good experience. The executive in its entirety can become more involved in what's actually happening in the various areas.

The meetings are shorter (about 1 1/2 hour per meeting), but are more frequent. There isn't much choice as far as the timing is concerned, because of the time difference between Curacao and Indonesia, while we also have to respect the time the secretary is available during office hours. Undoubtedly, we will continue to use this means of communication after the corona crisis.

### CORONA VIRUS AND THE CONGREGATION

#### EUROPE

In Europe, including Belgium, The Netherlands and Spain, the virus infections are decreasing. Many rules are, or have been relaxed or repealed. The three countries mentioned above, have been impacted heavily. Everybody is hoping that the economy slowly but surely is able to return to normal, and that the customary social contacts between people will be restored. In homes for the elderly and in nursing facilities, this isn't so easy yet.

We know for certain that two brothers in Eindhoven were infected, but they are now free of the virus; they suffered only minor symptoms.

In spite of much hesitation, churches, schools, public transportation and the hotel and catering industry, are starting to function once again, albeit with many



The mask is omnipresent.

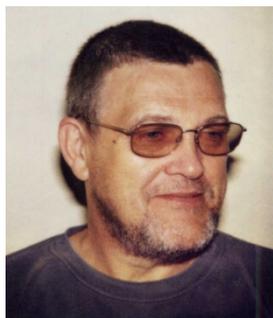
restrictions. Traveling within Europe is allowed again almost everywhere, but not yet for quite some time outside of Europe.

Not everybody abides by the restrictions, which sometimes leads to small revolts and violence.

### BRAZIL, INDONESIA, CONGO AND ETHIOPIA

For Brazil, Indonesia, Congo and Ethiopia things are different. In Brazil, the impact is enormous in terms of fatalities as well as infected persons. The virus is now also penetrating the countryside, and this is also noticed by the brothers in the Valley of the Jequitinhonha River, and in Jordania. Luckily, the Care Home for the Elderly “Lar Glorieux” has so far been spared from the virus.

In the four countries mentioned, churches and schools are closed, and attempts are being made to restrict social contacts. In Indonesia, one is allowed to travel only if you can show that it is necessary, while having an official letter of affirmation from some authority. As far as the brothers are concerned, this authority could be the provincial superior or, for instance, the chairperson of the school board. There is much fear and a lack of knowledge concerning this virus. As a result, a lot of information regarding the virus is given in the Counseling Center in Addis Ababa. Many people don't understand the situation, and blame it on the Europeans, trying preferably to stay away from them. This also happens in Congo. Finding the source of the virus there, is often very difficult, because there is almost no testing material, and there are no laboratories nearby to evaluate the results of the tests. Br. Eric Claeys writes that a test for corona has to be sent from Bukavu to Kinshasa (1.525 km) by plane, while there is hardly any air traffic. Br. Eric is still working in Bukavu – Congo, and is living in a community of the Brothers of Charity.



### CURACAO

Curacao has a particular problem. The number of infections is well-controlled, and the travel restrictions will be relaxed on July 1. There has been talk about social unrest, together with some riots. The question is: will this go any further?

We are well aware of the fact that the situation here described for the countries where the congregation is present, is only a snapshot.

### SPAIN

In Astorga, Spain, there lives our brother Blas Navarrete Bezares. Astorga has been founded by Caesar Augustus, and is one of the oldest dioceses of Spain. The diocesan See probably dates already from the third century.

On July 18, Mgr. Jesus Fernandez Gonzales will be installed as the new bishop of Astorga. We hope that Don Jesus will prove to be a good shepherd. He was born and bred in the nearby diocese of Leon, and was assistant-bishop of Santiago de Compostela.



The newly appointed bishop of Astorga (center) with Pope Francis.

Br. Bas works at Las Cinco Llagas, a center for the severely physically disabled. The brothers started this center in 1993, at the request of the diocese of Astorga (Caritas). This also happened in Cosamai in 1968, a center for children and grown-ups with intellectual handicaps, which was started similarly at the request of the same Astorga diocese.

Luckily, during the recent dangerous period, nobody in Las Cinco Llagas has been infected.

## INDONESIA

### BROTHERS

The brothers Agustinus Apriando Lingga, Andrean Petrus Sitindaon, and Gabriel Marchel Irviantyas made their first vows in Lawang – Java. They moved to Pangururan on Sumatra. A few brothers got new assignments and moved to another house on July 1.

There is now one first-year novice, and five second-year novices.

Two brothers have left the congregation, namely Carolus Naisoko and Herkulanus Harjono.

### PANGKALPINANG

In Pangkalpinang on Banka, the house of the brothers stands partly empty. In the past, this was destined for postulants. The latter now live in Klepu, Java. The empty part, together with the former house for old men, is now being prepared to serve as a house for retreats and formation.

The students of our schools, the teachers, catechists, youth, and families, can make use of it for one-day or longer gatherings. There are already gatherings in the part that has been renovated. The remainder – if the corona crisis allows it to happen – will be fixed during the coming months. For this purpose, money from the Congregational Projects in Indonesia, will be used.



*Bro. Ton Houde*

## DISCRIMINATION

The Vincentian Family, congregations of lay-movements founded by St. Vincent or that were inspired by him, has taken a position in the protest against every form of discrimination. Part of the declaration reads as follows:

“As members of the Vincentian Family, we want to vouch for those who are most forgotten in our society and, among them, especially those who are discriminated against because they are different. Saint Vincent a Paulo reminds us that we must love our neighbor, simply because our neighbor is “God’s image and the object of his love”. We reconfirm our endeavor to serve those who are marginalized, needy, homeless, and everyone who for whatever reason are discriminated against.

Human life is important, regardless of skin color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, belief or culture.”

We happily support this declaration.



## THE FINAL WORD

We especially wish that during these times of worldwide pandemic, you and those who are dear to you, will stay healthy. Hopefully, we will be able to meet again soon and under normal circumstances. Take good care of yourself and for each other.

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