

Final editing: Karien Janssen-Schwiebbe

## Reflection by Sr Rosa

During a meeting on the occasion of the Day of the Consecrated Life (which takes place every year during the feast of the Presentation of the Lord - Candlemas) Pope Francis pronounced his concerns about the growing loss of members of monastic orders and religious congregations. Over the past decade the number of conventual sisters has decreased all over the world by 10% to 680,000. Amongst the reasons that the Pope quoted for this occurrence I was struck in particular by what he refers to as: "routine, fatigue and internal divisions within monastic communities." The latter fact may mean that we also have too little regard for the community at large. When we view our mission as 'my apostolate, my task, my merit', we may miss the larger perspective. Art. 19 of the Constitutions states: 'As members of one community we each share in the mission of the congregation'. Perhaps we need to focus more on this aspect. This is comparable to the labourers who built a cathedral: some of them said that they were masons, others stacked the stones and yet others prepared the mortar. That too caused a division among them because they had lost sight of the greater whole. However, in our case even if we get older or if we are ill, we still continue to share in the mission of our congregation. Just have a careful read of what Art. 21 of the Constitutions tells us about this.

## Working visit to the Philippines

Sr Hermin and Sr Dorine have just returned from their working visit to the Philippines. The trip started out with a setback. The plane's engine was not running properly and therefore they had to make a long intermediate stop in China, so that it took the two sisters 48 hours to travel from Amsterdam to Manila. Fortunately the Filipino sisters were very happy with their visit and they were very warmly welcomed. The



sisters then travelled from Manila to Lupao, where the home for people with a handicap is located. At the moment eight people are making use of this facility. The sisters in the Philippines are pleased with the appointment of Sr Catherine at the home. She has creative ideas and a professional approach to the work.



The sisters also have concerns. The pre-province would like to grow and they are aiming for an organisation, which is also financially self-sufficient. Not all of the sisters are in paid employment. Moreover, no postulants have applied for some years. Yet they continue to search for young women who would be interested in religious life. Sr Jessica and Sr Catherine, the two youngest sisters are going to prepare for the renewal of their vows in May.





## General Chapter of 2017

The general chapter will take place in Vught (the Netherlands) from 5-17 June and its theme is 'Trusting in the power of the Spirit'. Thirty-six sisters will represent the congregation and provide their input to our objectives for the next term of office. As your present general council we have written a report of the past years. This report will tell you about the things that went well and the things that could have been done better. We request all sisters to share in our thinking about the future on the basis of that report.

With the report you will also receive a letter with a few questions. We would like you to answer those questions. There is no need to send your replies directly to us. The chapter members will have a dialogue with you around those questions. Via the chapter members the opinions and ideas of all sisters will be brought to the chapter.

In this way each sister is involved in the coming general chapter.

## Reflection for the chapter

In the run-up to the general chapter we will provide you with texts/and or images for reflection.

### Your strength

Lord, I would like to ask You:  
If you see me passing  
today or tomorrow,  
please reach out and touch me  
for a moment  
There is no need to say anything  
for that silent gesture alone  
will ensure  
that I feel Your strength again.

*Frits Deubel*

### Two or three suffice

Ecclesiastes: 4:9-12: 'Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.'

Matthew: 18-20: 'For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.'



*Trusting in the power of the Spirit  
Vertrouwend op de kracht van Gods Geest  
Confiando no poder do Espírito Santo  
Dengan mengandalkan kuasa Roh Kudus*

Trusting in the power of the Spirit he courageously broke new ground; and he was prepared to take the risks which this inevitably brought with it.

*(Constitutions, Art. 4)*

## Working visit to The Netherlands

The General Council will visit the sisters in the Dutch province on 7-8-15 and 22 March. The first three gatherings take place in the communities at Tilburg and in the Meeting place where the General Council will meet the sisters who don't live in one of the large community houses. On March 22, the General Council will visit the sisters in Arnhem in the morning and the sisters in Raalte in the afternoon. In the next Briefing, you can read more about it.



## Website

We are hard at work to construct a new website and hope that we will soon be able to show it to you. However, some work still needs to be accomplished first. We did notice that the old website no longer functions properly. As we are working on a new website anyway, we will not make any changes to the old website. We hope that we can count on your understanding.

