

Reflection by Sr Hermin

Time really flies! Not so long ago we visited Brazil. This year it was a special visit both for me and for the Brazilian province. During our visit Sr Joérica Kátia Melo took her final vows and four sisters renewed their vows. These five young sisters were happy and enthusiastic to have been called to serve the congregation.

Last year the Brazilian province officially received eleven associated members. These eleven people also renewed their commitment. Before this took place we had discussions with them about the meaning of their membership for their personal lives. They feel responsible for their commitment and propagate the charism of the congregation in their families and in society. In this way the charism of *'love through mercy'* has found a fertile ground for continuation.

These events demonstrate the creation of a powerful bond within which sisters and associated members support each other in their work and pray for each other. I experience that as a change in our congregation and in particular in Brazil. I realised that any change requires courage and sacrifices to start something new. That reminded me immediately of the text from Isaiah 43: 19a: *"See, I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"*

A longing for change requires involvement, making sacrifices, courage and sincerity. Changes are part of a cycle, which may be compared to the cycle of the seasons, as we know them in Europe. When I take my daily walk here and notice how the leaves are now falling to serve as compost for the new leaves that will appear again in the spring, I recognise it as a reflection of life. The leaves that are falling now remind us of our mortality. That means that all I can say is that all will end at the end of time.



The ICB and the financial meeting

From the 12th up to and including the 15th November we had the first ICB and financial meeting during our term of office. In addition to the two new members of the general council Sr Elisângela and Sr Josephine, we also welcomed other new people: Sr Blandina Zagötö and Sr Florentina Siregar, both from Indonesia, Sr Nora Hayes and Sr Mary O'Rourke from Ireland. We also had a new facilitator. This time it was Mrs Mirjam Dirx who chaired the meeting. The meeting took place in an open and warm atmosphere. We were heartened by the various expressions of interest and involvement of communities, sisters and associated members from all parts of our congregation.



The general council had mailed the relevant documents to the participants a few weeks before the meeting took place, which allowed everyone to prepare for the substance of the meeting. That proved to be an improvement as it allowed discussions during the meeting to take place on the basis of the texts and focused advice to be formulated to the general council.

A number of topics were discussed. Of course we looked back on the period following the general chapter in 2017 on the basis of the annual report. This took place on Monday, an informative day when the general council reported about their experiences up to now in the various parts of the congregation and informed us about the current state of affairs. Tuesday was set aside for discussions. We had a short prayer service before we began the discussion. We spoke of the mission of the congregation in reference to the changes in society. This is not a topic that can be quickly dealt with and there will certainly a follow-up discussion.

A second topic was the formation of the post-province. During the general chapter we had an extensive discussion about the way in which a province will achieve completion. The American sisters were given the scope to discover what worked for them and since last August they are the only post-province. A second post-province is being prepared, as the English/Irish sisters will follow after the province days in 2019. Both Sr Mel Ryley and Sr Nora Hayes spoke about their experiences so far and that was very instructive, in particular for those parts that are also approaching completion.



The third point on the agenda on Tuesday was a new topic for the congregation. Before the break we were talking about completion, but after the break the discussion was focused on the future: the formation of a new part consisting of the USA, Brazil, the Philippines and Timor Leste. This concept was suggested during the general chapter, which then gave the general council the mandate to investigate this possibility as an experiment. The four participating parts expressed the wish to get started together and to enhance their cooperation without however losing sight of the

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interests of the entire congregation. Many talks will be required to bridge distances and language differences. In order to deal with this in an effective manner a committee will be constituted that will set the process in motion and that will also organise it. Of course this will be a recurrent topic in future ICB meetings. The last discussion of this day dealt with the ICC meetings to be held in the coming years. The delegates from the (pre- and post-)provinces indicated their preferences as to priority. We will definitely hold an ICC about the formation of an international province and one about the intangible cultural heritage, which will also involve the mission of the congregation.



As is tradition the last day was dedicated to several short topics of an organisational nature like the sending of mail, the website and Facebook. Of course we returned to any topics with loose ends. We concluded the meeting as we had started it with a prayer celebration. True to tradition the Thursday was reserved for a discussion of the finances. The general council had invited all participants to the ICB to also attend the financial meeting. The Dutch province called the attention of the general council to article XI-2 in the statues which lays down who shall attend the financial meeting. The financial meeting still took place as agreed previously as an experiment, therefore including all delegates who were also present during the ICB meeting. Mr Van den Bergh and Mr Paffen had joined us and explained the situation effortlessly. After a plenary discussion, followed a separate discussion with several individual (pre- and post-)provinces. It is now up to the general council to get to work with the advices they have received.

Working visit to the Philippines

Around the middle of October Sr Josephine and Sr Elisângela were warmly welcomed in the Philippines. They visited all communities and talked with the sisters about their life as sisters, their work and their mission. At the moment there are two sisters who need a little extra assistance because of health problems. Sr Amy and Sr Annie are trying to find a good solution. Sr Elena Bencila has almost completed her studies. She hopes to graduate next year around April/ May. Sr Catherine Ba-a is already working in the centre for the handicapped and is very happy there. Srs Catherine and Jessica Magno will begin to prepare for their final profession next year. Sr Josephine took a holiday after this working visit and therefore stayed on a bit longer in the Philippines.



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Working visit to Brazil

It was a few months ago that Sr Hermin and Sr Elisângela travelled to Brazil. Because no report about this working visit had been included in a Briefing so far, we are doing that now.

Sr Hermin and Sr Elisângela enjoyed their time in Brazil. They were present when four young sisters



renewed their vows in Cabedelo. They also attended when the eleven associated members renewed their commitment also in Cabedelo. And finally they were present when Sr Joérica took her final vows in Bayeux. This took place in the parish church where Dom Gabriel celebrated the Eucharist. Sr Hermin accepted their final vows. All sisters from the province were present and they had a party.

However, a working visit does not only consist of attending festive events. The two members of the general council visited all communities and had individual conversations with each sister and with the council of the Brazilian province. One of their visits was to the community in Ibo. This community will be closed. The bishop has offered the sisters a new

location in a larger town than Ibo. At the moment the sisters are preparing for their departure to start again elsewhere. However, the new beginning will not take place before the provincial chapter, which starts at the end of June 2019.

As is the case in the Philippines, the young sisters in Brazil are advancing well in their studies. Sr Lusinette da Silva Pereira intends to graduate next year. Afterwards she will start her preparations for her final vows.

Jubilees

Quite a few jubilees were celebrated in recent times or are about to be celebrated in the near future:

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| 25 October | 70 th convent jubilee of Sr Hubertino Bijnens (Belgium) and Sr Hélène Vogels (The Netherlands) |
| 3 November | 75 th convent jubilee of Sr Agnes van Doorn (Belgium) Sr Francinie Koers, Sr Hermani Frederiks and Sr Marianne Hoefnagels (all from the Netherlands)
65 th convent jubilee of Sr Josée Clijsters (Belgium) Sr Bep Holthuijsen, Sr Bernadette Oostveen, Sr Genoveva Smits, Sr Hélène Hilkens, Sr Lien Tammer and Sr Marij van Berlo (all from the Netherlands)
50 th convent jubilee of Sr Delian de Brouwer (the Netherlands) |
| 4 November | 80 th convent jubilee Sr Balthazarina Buis (the Netherlands) |
| 8 November | 60 th convent jubilee Sr Agathe van Ham and Sr Gerda Kramer (the Netherlands) |
| 12 November | 65 th convent jubilee Sr Barbara Ann Valentine (USA) |
| 30 November | 12.5 th convent jubilee Sr Elena Bencila (the Philippines) |
| 7 December | 50 th convent jubilee Sr Emerensia Situngkir (Indonesia) |
| 29 December | 12.5 th convent jubilee Sr Jeannetta Ginting, Sr Yulita Wea, Sr Elsa Sihotang, Sr Celina Aa, Sr Gonzalia Sinaga (all from Indonesia). |



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Indonesia

On 23rd November six sisters in Indonesia took their final vows:

Sr Lestiana Dhue, Sr Ester Halawa, Sr Germana Ndraha, Sr Michaela Bahan, Sr Masiana Haghe and Sr Maureen Delu Kaka.

The festivities were extended to include the celebration of the various jubilees.



Obituary

Since 16 September the following sisters have passed away:

- 01-10-2018 Sr Franciska Swanen in Tilburg (The Netherlands)
- 08-10-2018 Sr Matea Wijaya in Sumba (Indonesia)
- 09-10-2018 Sr Wilhelmin Limbong in Medan (Indonesia)
- 06-11-2018 Sr Lidwien Puijn in Tilburg (the Netherlands)
- 12-11-2018 Sr Dimphe Geers in Tilburg (the Netherlands)
- 08-12-2018 Sr Lidwina Kartini (Indonesia)
- 11-12-2018 Sr Hendrika ten Rouwelaar (the Netherlands)

Agenda

There are no working visits on the programme of the general council for the following weeks. The generalate will be closed from 21 December 2018 up to and including 1 January 2019.

Sr Elisângela will be on holiday from 28 December 2018 up to 29 January 2019.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas
and pray for an inspiring 2019.

