

**Reflection by Sr Hermin**

There are three things in life that we cannot reverse: time, memories and opportunities. There are another three things that we should not live without: hope, honesty and passion.

At the beginning of this year I visited Timor Leste together with Sr Josephine. This was Sr Josephine's first experience of that part of the congregation. The trip was very tiring, but what really impressed us was the bad condition of the roads: a rough and rocky surface. Moreover, it was foggy and raining, so that the road was muddy and slippery. Sr Serafina was driving the car that Sr Josephine and I travelled in and we asked her to drive slowly so that we would feel safe. Sr Serafina drove through the steep streets with a robust driving style until we finally reached the community of Ossu where we were warmly welcomed.

In February Ossu suffered excessive rainfall accompanied by stormy winds and nights when all lights were turned off and only candles in the corners of the room helped us to identify where we were. Such circumstances evoked feelings of fear, anxiety and worries.

Remembering this experience I would like to link this with the Gospels according to Matthew 14:27: ‘

***Take courage! It is I, don't be afraid.***

With these words Jesus inspired the apostles with hope and confidence in order to survive the storm in which they had ended up with their boat.

Fear appears when you cannot see things clearly, when something is not clear. Fear can even obscure faith. However, our faith offers us hope. By deepening our faith, we have the hope that we shall reach our ultimate goal. Therefore let us concentrate on the opportunities offered to us in life and on the challenges of our apostolate while keeping the words of Jesus in mind: ‘Take courage! It is I, don't be afraid!’



The beginning of Lent is Ash Wednesday and is marked in with a Holy Mass and the distribution of the ashes. To endure the Lent sincere acts of compassion for the less fortunate must be part of our penance, our contemplation. And of our renewal of life, for these acts of mercy are a sign of our solidarity and longing to justice that is so important for the coming of God's Kingdom here on earth. I wish you a good Lent.

## Working visit to Timor Leste



Sr Hermin and Sr Josephine have just returned from their visit to our sisters in Timor Leste. As usual they were warmly welcomed by all the sisters. It was a pity that Sr Eugenia, the coordinator of Timor Leste, was not able to attend. Sr Eugenia is staying in Jakarta at present for medical reasons. Sr Serafina and Sr Laura fulfilled the tasks on her behalf.

The working visit started in the community in Ossu. Sr Laura is the coordinator here. She reported to the two general council members about the general state of affairs in the community. Nine sisters live there, two of whom have taken final vows. Therefore the professed sisters take on a great deal of responsibility. In addition to the discussions with the sisters in charge, there were also

conversations with the individual sisters. In Ossu the sisters run two dormitories with spaces for around 100 children. The number taken up has gone down drastically because many parents are no longer able to afford the fees. They only house 29 children at present.

After their visit to Ossu, the two general council members were taken to Dili. The formation house where Sr Eugenia resides together with two junior sisters is located here. During the temporary absence of Sr Eugenia, Sr Serafina is taking over her tasks.

Sr Serafina lives in the St Yohannes community in Dili, together with 7 junior sisters. They work in the clinic. In Dili the general council members also held individual talks with each of the sisters as well as group discussions. Timor Leste is still a part under construction. All the sisters do what they can to help the people in their environment.



In September they will celebrate the final profession of two sisters: Sr Natalia Deus Maia and Sr Esmenia Silva.

## Chapter in Brazil

At the moment the sisters in Brazil are preparing their provincial chapter. This will take place in Cabedelo from 30 June up to and including 4 July under the guidance of Father Jean OFM. The theme is: *'To go further than what we are in faith and charity by means of compassion'*, with the subsidiary proposition *'Deny yourselves and follow me'* (Matthew 16:24).

Both sisters, as well as associated members and members of the Movement of Mercy (both the young and adult members) are involved in the preparatory process. Four associated members will attend the provincial chapter. During the chapter the sisters will focus on the question in which way the mission of the congregation can be continued in times of crisis in matters of vocation and social, political and religious life.

They will reflect about the meaning of the charism of mercy for the marginalised. The charism is larger than we are!



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How can guidance be given to our laity, the associated members and members of the Movement of Mercy during the coming period? The possible merger of the four smallest parts of the congregation into one part will also be discussed.

### ICC 2019

During the ICB-meeting in November of last year one important point of the discussion was the examination of the possible joining of four parts of the congregation into one. The general council has decided to organise an ICC on this issue for those four parts, i.e. Brazil, the Philippines, Timor Leste and the USA. A preparatory group is at work to organise this meeting. This group consists of Sr Mel Ryley (USA), Sr Elisangela Ferreira Belo (Brazil and the general council) and Sr Josephine Corpuz (the Philippines and the general council). Because Timor Leste is a community under the responsibility of the general council, all parts are therefore represented.



The meeting will take place from 29 July up to and including 6 August in Chicago (USA). Maximum five sisters will be invited from each part. Together with the general council that means that there will be 24 participants.

The purpose of this ICC is for the four countries to meet and to consider whether the experiment could be successful. Therefore they will have a look at the cultural similarities and differences to discover a foundation on which a sustainable cooperation might grow. It is also of great importance to discuss the apostolic meaning of this venture, so that adequate guidance can be provided to the individual parts in a larger cooperative association. This meeting is seen as a sign of hope.

Hope for a dynamic future for the entire congregation.

Such a process is not a matter of weeks or even months, but a process that will take years. At the end of the meeting the general council hopes to have taken a few steps in the right direction so that they can proceed.

### The experiences of Sr Mariana Soares in Panama

Sr Mariana Soares from Timor Leste participated in the World Youth Days (WYD) in Panama. The CMM brothers gave guidance to a preparatory group, which Sr Mariana joined. Sr Mariana explained that the preparation helped her to grow spiritually and for the group to become a unit.

After her arrival in Malambo (Panama) she participated in a number of activities.

In particular, the meditation/reflection about Mother Mary during the first days was of great importance for her. The catechesis in the church of Balboa was a special experience. The bishop focused entirely on the theme of the WYD '*And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*' (Luke 1:38). Apart from deepening this theme, there were also moments of relaxation.

Sr Mariana enjoyed not only performing the traditional Timorese dances, which they had practised during the preparation, but also the cultural expressions by other countries.



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## Register 2019

The postal service in Brazil is operated in a very different way than in the Netherlands. In some streets and neighbourhoods the postman does not come to the door, but people have a P.O. box in a post office where they have to fetch their mail themselves. This is also the case in Santa Rita. Our register includes the home address of Sr Maria Lijnen and Sr Joérica Kátia Melo, but not their P.O. box. Next year we will include both addresses in the register. Meanwhile if you wish to send mail to Santa Rita, you can use the following address:  
Irmãs de Caridade SCMM, C.P. 54, CEP. 58.300-970 SANTA RITA-PB, Brazil.

## Website

The website was renovated in 2017. Since that time not much has been changed. Information may be found there about each part of the congregation. During the ICB all provincial superiors have been asked to check the factual information on the website and to notify the contact person about any amendments, so that the website will once more be up to date. In all parts of the congregation funny, interesting, sad and important actions or events may take place, which are of interest to all the sisters. In order to keep the news page lively, we invite everyone to share information. You can easily do so by sending a short message with a few photographs to [generalate@sistersofcharity.nl](mailto:generalate@sistersofcharity.nl). The staff members of the secretariat will then post the information on the website so that it is accessible for all sisters and other interested people.

## Joys and sorrows

The first jubilees will be celebrated in April. The next Briefing will report on them. Since the middle of December the following sisters have passed away:  
29-12-2018 Sr Teresia de Groot in Tilburg (the Netherlands)  
16-01-2019 Sr Marianni van de Voort in Tilburg (the Netherlands)  
18-02-2019 Sr Francinie Koers in Arnhem (the Netherlands)  
25-02-2019 Sr Anne Wendel in Tilburg (the Netherlands)  
26-02-2019 Sr Beatrix Cox in Tilburg (the Netherlands)

## Agenda of the general council

March will be a busy month for the general council. On 11 March a meeting will take place of the general councils of the CMM brothers and the SCMM sisters in Tilburg. Two days later on 13 March, the Dutch provincial council will come to 's-Hertogenbosch. Another two days after that, on 15 March, Sr Hermin and Sr Josephine will leave for Indonesia for a working visit. They will return from this visit on 11 April. On 23 April the general council will go to Belgium to have a meeting with the provincial council and the sisters from this province.



The date for the next ICB meeting has meanwhile been decided. The ICB will take place from 11 to 13 November, followed by the financial meeting on 14 November.

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