

December 2020, Nr. 4

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Reflection by Sr Hermin

This is the last Briefing of a memorable 2020. For some it was a year to skip and to forget as soon as possible. This is what I can imagine seeing the number of corona victims and the consequences that this virus has on society. However, the pandemic has also brought us something new. We have learned to stop and see what all this is about.

How do we have to adapt ourselves to survive?

Psalm 90:12 "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." The text of this psalm impressed me deeply and invited me to reflect on the events that have taken place both globally and specifically in our Congregation.

Every day is a new day we can only experience once. "Each day crosses over to the next with the same duration but different circumstances.

The day that has passed has become the past with only a memory; today is promising, and the days after that will be hopeful.

Because time was so precious, David prayed to God that he would be given a heart of wisdom so that he could live the days with attention in order not to miss a single day".

Events worldwide and in the Congregation give us the opportunity to reflect on the future of our Congregation in every part of the world.

We did this with the help of modern communication technology. This created a mutual bond despite the distance, despite the time difference, despite the language. You could feel the will to cooperate to form a unity. It is important to remain united because only together can we face the future with confidence.

In the closing celebration of the ICB we used the text: "*Striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4; 3). To keep the unity of the Spirit is an important task.

Not only during the meeting, no, we also promote this vision of unity to the outside world. Between us we need to have a bond of peace, without any question of disputes, envy or hatred, but on the contrary a bond of love and peace.

Currently we are in *Advent*. We can think of this period as a procession to the crib where it is all about welcoming Christ into our hearts and becoming a little like Christ every day.

Isaiah, in particular, calls us to watch, to be alert, to go up the high mountain where we can be one with God, in expectation ...

Advent calls us to be joyful and attentive to God and each another. We are called to take the time to be kind, to give support and appreciation, to take time for others, to be present, and most importantly, to help those in need. Advent is about renewal, renewal of yourself. With that, the new year begins, a new time of joy and hope!

I wish you all a meaningful Christmas season.

Votive Mass for all religious in the Netherlands

On Saturday, September 12, for all religious who have died since the outbreak of the pandemic, a votive mass was held in “Sint-Jan’s” cathedral in ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

It was a beautiful Eucharist, which was celebrated by Bishop De Korte that could be attended by all religious by means of a live stream. A candle was lit for every religious who died. The general council was present during the Eucharist and Sr Hermin was one of four people who lit the candles as you can see on the front page of the *Brabants Dagblad*.



Profession in Indonesia

Despite the fact that Covid-19 held the world in its grip, the congregation has welcomed new sisters.

On September 24, nine sisters made their profession for life: Sr Delviana Ndruru, Sr Apriliana Sea, Sr Leonora Timu, Sr Magdalena Lature, Sr Estrella Amtonis, Sr Yasinta Ndari, Sr Mechtildis Lumban Tungkup, Sr Nofriani Gea, Sr Helga Bago. The photo shows the nine sisters with the members of the provincial council.



On the way to the provincial chapter

On September 20, the Dutch province embarked on an inspiring journey towards the chapter that will take place from March 1 to 5, 2021. The theme *The good will always find ways*. The image that was chosen is the dandelion. Everyone in the Netherlands knows the dandelion, especially when it has become a fluffy ball with seeds that fly about in search of fertile soil. There it can germinate again, blossom and then look for new ways.

The way to the chapter knows a few steps. These are moments when every sister of the Dutch province reflects so that it becomes a process of all.



Timor Leste

After a year of exclaustation, Sr Laura was accepted back into the community of Timor Leste at the end of November. She has had a year in which she has thought a lot under the guidance of Fr Venâncio SJ. Her return began with a retreat. After that, Sr Laura join the community in Ossu.



*From left to right:
Sr Joanita, Sr Laura, Fr Venântio SJ, Sr Eugenia and
Sr Serafina*

Pandemic

It is not easy for the European sisters now that the second corona wave is drawing its plan. Fortunately (so far) the sisters have been spared infections. There is talk of a vaccine being available soon and hopefully the situation will get better. In the UK, the sisters from Ireland and Wales cannot meet while important topics are being discussed.

The Belgian sisters are facing a renovation of St Catharina. The pandemic has postponed everything. Formation meetings and gatherings for religious will also not take place until the end of 2021. The sisters have suffered greatly from the 'lock down'.

ICB 2020

Every year in November, the provincial superiors meet to evaluate the past year and to discuss the coming year.

Usually a second person comes along and also contributes to the meeting. The corona virus made it impossible to come to the Netherlands. A solution was found in virtual meetings. That took some getting used to it. Instead of sitting in a conference room together, we met the other participants behind our computer screen. No informal talks, no in-depth conversations during the meal and no relaxing moments in the evening over a cup of coffee and a drink. But with the help of the interpreters who made sure that we could understand each other. And because the virtual meeting was limited in time, this meant that people worked efficiently and enthusiastically.

This is what our meeting looked like on the computer screen:



Three topics were discussed: the future of the Congregation, the project to merge four parts and a possible adjustment to the constitutions if three general board members were to be elected.

The future is near. Over the past year, we have seen how vulnerable we are as humans when unforeseeable things happen. We have all known for years that the congregation is getting smaller and smaller. We have all known for years that there will come a time when there will be no more sisters living in the older parts. That time seems closer than we have realized beforehand. We want to think together about the consequences, especially with regard to the future of the museum and the Congregation Chapel.

In order to make the shrinking of the various parts more effective, the idea arose during the General Chapter in 2017 to have four parts, USA, Brazil, the Philippines and Timor Leste, investigate whether cooperation between these parts could lead to a merger. Those four parts are hard at work. For now the main focus is the language so that the sisters can understand each other and communicate in English. Sister Janice Buszta (USA) helps the Brazilian sisters with this. In addition, it is important for the sisters in Timor Leste that they master Portuguese. To this end, an exchange program with Brazil is being prepared that will be carried out in the second half of 2021, if circumstances allow.

Four sisters are elected to run the congregation. According to the constitutions, this is the minimum number of general board members. As a congregation, will we be able to find four sisters in the future to do this work? Is it possible to change the constitutions to allow less general board members to be in charge? Interesting questions for which we seek answers.

The *ICB* is an advisory meeting. For the general council it is important to know how each part of the congregation thinks about these subjects so that they can continue on that basis.

Founding day of our congregation

Despite the presence of the corona virus, the 188th anniversary of our congregation was still celebrated in various parts of the congregation. In Indonesia, the sisters gathered in Medan on November 23 to celebrate the jubilees:

Sr Alberta Telaumbanua:

65 years in the Congregation.

Sr Florentina Siregar:

50 years in the Congregation.

Sr Hilda Mila Ate, Sr Elisyeba Karo-karo
and Sr Francis Dakhi:

25 years in the Congregation.



Three lay people confirmed their strong commitment to the mission of the Congregation.



One woman is a candidate for associated membership.



Also in the Philippines and in the Netherlands attention was paid to the founding day of the congregation.

Here the sisters were united in prayer. Due to the corona regulations, the sisters could not meet. The Dutch sisters followed the Eucharist in their own room.

In the Philippines, the gospel offered thought-provoking topics.

New contact person for Timor Leste

Sr Sofiani is already well established in the Netherlands. She has also found her place in the general council. It has therefore been decided that she will become Timor Leste's new contact person. She takes over this task from Sr Hermin, who remains the contact person for the Netherlands and Belgium.

Jubilees

Belgium

70 years in the Congregation:

November 17 Sr Henrite Neyens

Indonesia

65 years in the congregation:

October 3 Sr Alberta Telaumbanua

50 years in the Congregation:

December 8 Sr Florentina Siregar

12½ years in the congregation:

December 24 Sr Leony Bela Malo, Sr Antonia Inya Bebe,
Sr Yosefa Telaumbanua and Sr Krispina Manaö

The Netherlands

75 years in the Congregation:

October 28 Sr Gradine Verbakel

70 years in the Congregation:

November 17 Sr Serva Bergsma, Sr Hyacinthe Rijk and Sr Hennie Ruimers, Sr Corneline Buijsman, Sr Laetitia Goris, Sr Adelaïde van den Berkmortel, Sr Antonetta van Uden and Sr Geertrui Koks.

65 years in the congregation:

October 28 Sr Dominique van der Poll and Sr Bernarda Krijger

60 years in the Congregation:

November 13 Sr Birgitte Meeus, Sr Mariëtte Kinker and Sr Francis van Rooijen.

Died

Six sisters have died in recent months:

06-09-20 Sr Martini Wouters
08-09-20 Sr Hélène Vogels
20-10-20 Sr Mary Schaefer
27-10-20 Sr Aloys van der Burg
31-10-20 Sr Camilla Heinemann
09-11-20 Sr Adriani Verhulst
03-12-20 Sr Vincent Mol

Vacation

Sr Elisângela and Sr Josephine both spend the end of the year and the beginning of 2021 in their home countries. Holidays are linked to a working visit. Sr Elisângela will return on January 24 and Sr Josephine on April 1, 2021.

Closed

The generalate will be closed from 24 December up to and including 4 January.

Christmas card 2020

The image on the Christmas card is different this year. Christmas is the feast of light, of hope and of new life. With this image we express the wish for a hopeful future for everyone. We've had a pandemic in the past year. Let us trust in God's protection and hope for a new year in which we can face distress. Hope for balance in our life that we share with others.

A merry Christmas for everyone!