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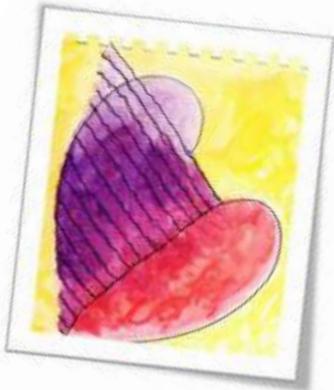
### **Reflection by Sr Hermin**

In the Netherlands the month of January was “*the month of the Bible*”. In various ways, the media paid attention to this book, which supports and consoles people worldwide. Our diocese sent me a booklet entitled: *Guidance, searching for the source of hope*. It reflects an exchange of letters between bishop Gerard de Korte and the highest office holder of the Protestant Church René de Reuver. It was very interesting. They write about several topics and within the context of those topics they give meaning to the Bible. Each author from his own perspective.

The fourth exchange of letters is very special as it discusses Lent. Fasting occurs often and throughout the Bible, as a part of religious life. It relates to denying yourself something in order to help someone else. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ disciples are called to righteousness, and to leading a righteous life. A life consisting of mercy, praying and fasting.

That made me think about ‘fasting’. During these times of corona, you hear constantly that people will do anything to stay healthy. Many people want to lose weight to keep out of the risk group. Eating less is considered fasting. However, is that fasting as it is meant in the Bible? At any rate, it may be a matter of denying yourself something, but it is not done in order to serve someone else.

I rather think that fasting is related to justice, to righteousness, to a fair distribution amongst people. Justice, and therefore righteousness is one of the fundamental rights of our society. We would really love for everyone to be as well off as we are. Without righteousness it is difficult to live peacefully together. However, righteousness without mercy is cold and harsh, and without compassion. As Christians we want to be merciful towards each other, even when we have been wronged. After all, we have been commanded to forgive each other. We can only succeed in that when we are involved and remain together. We have been moved and look after one another.



Joël 2:13 reads: "Rend your hearts and not your garments. So, what God wants from us during Lent is to see a 'heart that wants to be torn,' so that we truly regret all our faults and sins and that we then experience God's mercy and forgiveness in our daily lives.

Finally, our fasting during this time of Lent signifies our willingness to truly make peace with God and thus also with ourselves and others.

### **Working visit to Brazil**

Sr Elisângela left for Brazil around the middle of December 2020 in order to spend Christmas with the sisters there, once she had completed her time in quarantine. Then she visited her family and in the New Year it was time for her working visit. She paid visits to all the communities and talked to the provincial council.

The sisters are doing well. Sr Maria Lynen is preparing her return to Belgium. No date has been set yet, as everything depends on the development of the pandemic. She has recently been vaccinated and is awaiting the second vaccination in Brazil as well.

The pandemic plays an important role in the work carried out by the sisters. The schools have been closed and teaching takes place online. The Dom Helder Camera Foundation, the centre for the elderly, is closed as well. Last year the Brazilian authorities still helped pay for the costs of the staff members of the centre for the elderly and the teachers at the school. Unfortunately, that financial subsidy has now been suspended.

Sr Dalva and Sr Graça have gone back to work again in Ibimirim on a part-time basis since October 2020, whilst respecting all the various safety rules required. The exchange with the sisters from Timor Leste also depends on the developments relating to the pandemic, in particular the vaccination program.

The Brazilian sisters hope that it will be safe enough in July or August for the two sisters from Timor Leste to come to Brazil for a period of two years.

The year 2021 will be a very special year for Sr Lusinete, as she will be taking her final vows at the end of that year.



*Sr Elisângela visited the Brazilian communities in Bayeux (above), Ibimirim (top right) and Santa Rita (bottom right).*

### **Provincial chapter in the Netherlands**

From 1-5 March this year the provincial chapter of the Netherlands will take place in Tilburg with the following theme *The good will always find a way*. It has turned out that the chapter will be different from the way it was in the past, now that measures have to be taken because of the coronavirus. The participants in the chapter will go into quarantine prior to the meeting. The Dutch province numbers about 115 sisters, almost all of them over 80 years of age. For that reason, is it logical that the plans for the next four years will focus on completion and the way in which the sisters constitute a community together.

## Timor Leste



The corona virus is manageable in Timor Leste. The sisters therefore went on a retreat from January 11 until 19 in Ossu.



There are five new aspirants. We hope they have a good time in the congregation to make an informed decision at the end of the aspirant term.

## Indonesia

There are many difficulties in Indonesia. The pandemic is one. The corona virus has major consequences for the work the sisters do and for the apostolate. Dormitories are closed because students are not attending school. They take the classes online. The economic situation caused by the pandemic is the reason that many parents can no longer afford school and / or board money. As a result, much less money comes into the foundations, while the salaries of the teachers have to be paid.

In addition, nature also plays a major role in the problems that the Indonesian sisters have to face. You may have heard, read or seen it on television somewhere that the island of Kalimantan in Indonesia has been hit by a flood. Our sisters' schools in Banjarmasin and Banjarbaru are severely affected by this flood. A lot of school furniture and teaching materials have been damaged.

The rivers in the vicinity of Banjarmasin overflow, requiring a strong and high bridge to allow the children to go to school.  
The Indonesian province asks for everyone's prayer.



*Impression of the floods*



**Corona**

Sr Josephine left at the same time as Sr Elisângela. Where the latter went to Brazil, the former went to the Philippines. The plan was for Sr Josephine to also combine her holiday with a working visit. Unfortunately, the situation in the Philippines is less favourable in reference to the coronavirus. A prolonged quarantine and hardly any possibilities for travel have meant that no conversations with the sisters have taken place so far.

Vaccination has already started in many countries. This is also the case with our sisters in the Netherlands, Belgium, UK / Ireland and USA, where it has started with the elderly and with vulnerable people.

## Jubilees

We congratulate:

April 28 - 65 years in the Congregation

Sr Marie-Louise van den Eerenbeemt, Tilburg, Sr Bernadette Nijkamp, Tilburg and Sr Marianne van de Ven, Tilburg.

April 30 - 60 years in the Congregation

Sr Ursula van de Ven, Tilburg and Sr Corrie Langermans, Tilburg.

## Sisters who have passed away

We remember our sisters who have died:

09-12-2020, Sr Balthazarina Buis, Tilburg – the Netherlands

25-12-2020, Sr Kararina Fau, Jakarta - Indonesia

30-12-2020, Sr Gerardi van der Burgt, Tilburg – the Netherlands

20-01-2021, Sr Paulus de Bruijn, Tilburg – the Netherlands

25-01-2021, Sr Catherine Shakespeare, Pantasaph - United Kingdom

01-02-2021, Sr Gerdina Tromp, Tilburg – the Netherlands

20-02-2021, Sr Thérèse Oortwijn, Zonhoven – Belgium



**We wish you all a good Lent with the  
prospect of a happy Easter!**