

NEWSLETTER GENERAL EXECUTIVE

CONGREGATION BROTHERS OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

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ETHIOPIA



The congregation has, or assists, with three large projects for the poorest people of Addis. There are also two communities where seven Ethiopian brothers are living. The definitive return of br. Hugo Verhulst had already been planned for the end of November, but was advanced by a few weeks. Brother Hugo now lives in in Care Centre Glorieux in Oostakker, and is doing well.

The arrival of two Indonesian brothers planned for the end of November, to assist in Addis Abeba, has been postponed for some months. The visit of the general superior in November, had also to be postponed.

DISTRICT THE NETHERLANDS

On December 8, 2021, The Dutch Province became District The Netherlands. This happened in a solemn ceremony in the chapel of the CareCentre Glorieux in Eindhoven. The signing of the necessary documents was a necessary part of this event. The first executive of District The Netherlands was appointed by the general superior, followed by a meaningful prayer service asking for God's blessings for the new District.

A District involves a simpler form of governance than that of a province, and is better suited for a group of brothers getting older and smaller. The executive is made up of the brothers Theo van den Boer (district superior), Jan van der Steen (member of the executive, and substitute district superior), and Theo Bekkers (member of the executive). The Dutch province has been active for 111 years, and has played an important role in the congregation, and taken on new charitable projects in The Netherlands and in other countries.

Brother Jan Klein Overmeen was the final provincial superior of the Dutch province; many thanks from everyone for all his work.



br. Ton Houdé

BRAZIL

On November 20, the book *Os Irmãos de Lourdes em terras Brasileiras* ("The Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes in Brazil"), was presented in the "Social Centre Glorieux" in Betim. Because of the Coronavirus, the presentation took place mainly online. The book deals with the already 54 years of presence of the brothers in Brazil, but also looks back at the foundation of the congregation in Belgium, and its Founder Glorieux.

The book's author, br. Henrique Christiano Jose Matos, of the Brothers of Tilburg, an authority on Brazil as far as the history of the church and of religious life in Brazil is concerned, has expressed much admiration for the person of Glorieux. The life of the congregation is described within a context of ecclesiastical and political developments of Brazil.



Br. Heladio (superior) and the author, br. Henrique, present the book.



Br. Henrique had already dedicated his book to br. Pedro Goossens. Since br. Pedro had passed away recently, this occasion was used to offer him a clear and heartfelt tribute. This took place by means of a video film about his 54 years in Brazil and the many spontaneous testimonials of people who have known br. Pedro.

The book is in an A5 format and counts 372 pages. Well over 100 pages are used for photographs (black and white) that illustrate the congregational history in Brazil, with digressions to the other countries. *Os Irmãos de Lourdes em terras Brasileiras* uses the Portuguese language for obvious reasons.

After the occasion, the brothers and a limited public were offered the first copies of the book. Afterwards, people got together with the author in the atrium of the house of the brothers for an enjoyable conversation.

br. Ton Houdé

INDONESIA

The Lawang (below Surabaya) community of novices was startled by the eruption of the Semeru volcano in East Java. Nobody was hurt. This time, the volcano spewed mostly ashes and dust. A flow of lava didn't materialize. Yet, among the people living nearby, already 14 deaths have been counted.

75 YEARS OF BOYS' YOUTH CLUB/60 YEARS OF GIRLS' YOUTH CLUB (PATHFINDERS)

In Oostakker, the boys and girls who were members of their pathfinder clubs (Chiro), were finally able to celebrate their anniversaries. The Corona-virus regulations had until then prevented them to celebrate these important jubilees that had been planned for 2020.

Br. Werner Dierickx started the youth clubs in 1945, with the intention of organizing something for youth for Sunday afternoons. Being a brother, he obtained the use of a piece of terrain next to the former normal school, where the group chose its first spot for their gatherings (Mariaheem). Later on, terrains for groups for girls were made available next to the community centre in the "Groenstraat". Br. Werner, as the founding father, was honoured in a special way: 25 years ago, an off road way between the terrain for the boys and the "Ekaardserijweg" was baptized officially as the "Brother Werner Road".



Also, the artistically gifted Br. Simeon Van Avermaet and the skilled woodworker broeder Antoon Vermeulen, have a part in this story. Br. Simeon has photographed many celebrations, meetings and excursions (among others camps) of the youth movement. Together with br. Antoon Vermeulen (between 1950-1959, when he also was the leader of this group) and br. Werner, he helped in the building of the clubs' premises. Afterwards, br. Norbert Van Hyfte also offered a helping hand. It was he

who, after the passing of br. Werner, became the new driving force for the Chiro-Lourdes-Oostakker. As the current coach of the Chiro Club for boys, he helps the leadership and the group, and together making certain that the terrain and the buildings are ready for the future, so that young people can have fun and will be able to use a trusted meeting place, rain or shine.

The festivities continued outside in front of the hall of the Boys' Chiro: a large tent with flags, party lights, speeches, and congratulations from (local) public figures and other well-known persons, while pleasantly eating and drinking, and afterwards dancing until the wee hours.

Meanwhile, all tents and folding installations have been taken down. The terrain is as before as the trusted playing field for youth from the neighbourhood, to be used on a Sunday afternoon for sports and games.



FORMER-RECTOR LUCIEN LOOTENS PASSED AWAY



On September 1, Lucien Lootens passed away in CareCentre Sint Coleta in Ghent (Belgium). For many years, he was rector of the main community in Oostakker, until his retirement in 2019.

Among others, he led the daily eucharistic celebrations, and also on the occasion for a eucharistic celebration when a brother passed away. Whatever the occasion, he always delivered a fitting sermon. He was educated as a classical scholar, and gave scholarly conferences during days of reflection for the Belgian province: Augustine, Francis of Assisi, but just as well Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Albert Schweitzer.

Now he himself on All Saints Day gratefully completed his life, and received the most beautiful reward: eternal friendship with the Lord. Lucien Lootens was buried in Zomergem on November 6.

BEST WISHES FOR 2022

*"A child is born to us ... And he will be called ...
Prince of Peace. And the peace will be everlasting."
(Isaiah 9,5)*

*A child can bring out the best in us,
we want to protect the child.
This happens with Josef and Mary, with the shepherds
and the Wise Men from the east.
But with Herod, it calls for fear and menace, and he
wants to destroy the child.
How is the child dealing with suffering?
How many children have become orphans
as a result of wars or natural disasters?
How many children suffer hunger or are abused?
Whose side are we choosing?
Josef's or Mary's, or the side of Herod?
Make us sensitive for the Prince of Peace,
Respect and love the child!*



[translation credits: brother Henk Gal, Eindhoven]

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