



# BROTHERS CMM

2/18

| INTERNATIONAL FORMATION PROGRAMME |  
| WATER IN SUAI | CIF PARIS  
| LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019: 175 YEARS CMM

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Mercy belongs to all times and places.

Mercy is at the centre of all world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The movement of mercy has left traces throughout history.

The various forms in which mercy appears, are expressions of the society in which it arose, and of the spirituality that carries it.

The Congregation of the Brothers of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, is rooted in Christian mercy.



*The Prodigal Son, Rembrandt.*



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## COLOPHON

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**Photograph front cover:** Brother Leonardo do Carmo Pinto (Timor Leste) visits the grave of Joannes Zwijsen at the Orthen burial place, in 's-Hertogenbosch (photo: Nathalie Bastiaansen).

**Photograph back cover:** Rotterdam 'Delftse Poort' building (photo: Brother Ad de Kok).



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## FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Several young brothers from Kenya, Indonesia and Timor Leste started the year 2018 in a special way. In preparation for their profession for life, they came to Tilburg to participate in an international formation programme about the history and spirituality of the Congregation. After having successfully completed these weeks of workshops, they travelled for two weeks through France, following in the footsteps of Vincent de Paul, patron saint of the Congregation. You can read about their experiences on pages 6, 7 and 8. This generation of young brothers is promising and has many qualities. And that is a good thing, because at various places where the brothers live and work their presence and commitment is still very much needed. In Timor Leste, for example, where something commonplace like water, is not always self-evident. Fortunately, they are working hard and solutions are being found, as you can read on page 9. Not only are the brothers engaged in formation prior to their profession for life, but later they keep on looking for what inspires them and how they can use this in their daily lives. Brother Rofinus Banunaek and Brother Blasius Perang attended a CIF programme at the Vincentians in Paris for this purpose (see pages 12-13). This time the series 'Images of Apostolate' presents pictures of the youth movement Ambassadors WWB, and Brother Henrique Matos gives a short course in papermaking in the series 'In the Spotlight'. In this issue attention is paid as well to two anniversaries. Finally, in the series 'See my People', Brother Hermenegildus Beris talks about brotherhood during the coffee break.



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# CONVERSATION

## WITH THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

*The reality in which we live prompts us to reflect on the future of our Congregation.  
Our mission and our work must always be a response to specific situations we encounter.*

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When we face the signs of the times, what do we do? Do we continue on the familiar path, or do we have the courage to change things, in order to become more relevant to the society in which we live and to the people we serve?

Our Constitutions refer to it several times and in different words: 'Attentively and generously we constantly try to understand the signs of the times' (Const. I, 32); 'With a watchful eye we must always be attentive to the signs of the times. We may not allow the inspiration of the Spirit to be extinguished by clinging to methods of work and activities of which the need and importance are less evident. In the spirit of evangelical freedom we must be prepared, where necessary, to reconsider or to abandon established forms of service' (Const. I, 210-212); 'Our work may take many forms. The same spirit of service should animate them all' (Const. I, 217-218).

'Faithful to our founder, we consider the Gospel to be our primary source of inspiration' (Const. I, 2). We follow our vocation and fulfil our mission in and through the concrete situation of the world in which we live.

Sometimes it seems contradictory: the signs of the times are constantly changing, but the Gospel was written about 2000 years ago and has not changed substantially since then. How can we respond to the dynamic signs of the times, while remaining faithful to the Gospel? How can we remain faithful to our inner inspiration, the Gospel, without ignoring the signs of the times?

In his apostolic letter *Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March 2018), Pope Francis points in the direction of where to find answers: 'God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond. He takes us to where humanity is most wounded.'

The signs of the times are dynamic and changeable, but so is our source of inspiration: God is eternal newness. Our mission is to constantly try to bring these two together. We have to become icons of the signs of the times that reflect inner inspiration; the inspiration of the Spirit and of the Gospel.

**Brother Lawrence Obiko**  
in an interview with Nathalie Bastiaansen

# CONCERNING BROTHER ANDREAS

## WE FIRSTLINGS

*When we read the vocation story of Brother Andreas, we might think that he was the only one who made his choice for religious life. But Jan van den Boer's vocation took place in a context in which many other vocations developed.*



*The birthplace of Brother Andreas in Udenhout.*

As a young man, Jan was encouraged by two authorities from his village Helvoirt, Father Steijvers and schoolmaster Marinus Boset. Both were good friends of Bishop Zwijsen. Also Mr. Borsten, the teacher of Udenhout, loved scouting religious talent and had Jan van den Boer already in his sight.

It was not only adults who were complicit in Brother Andreas' vocation. Before him, his two-year older fellow village member Piet Leijten (1839-1897) went to the brothers' teaching training college in Tilburg. The boy was admitted to the seminary and would be, as Father Borromeus, for decades a driving force of the Congregation. Brother Andreas himself became the example for Wim van Hulst (1840-1925), the later Brother Pacomius from Udenhout. Two years later Henrikus de Rooij (1846-1907) followed. He became known as Brother Mattheus. In short: there were several boys from his area who had the same desire and followed the same path. They probably discussed their desires and hesitations with each other and tested and confirmed each other's vocation. Religious life was a shared ideal.

These young men were part of what we can designate as a first generation. The mutual bond was close. Together they shared the experience that they were part of the pioneering years. They witnessed the

rapid growth of the Congregation, numerous new construction projects, and the successful expansion of the mission of the brothers. When Jan van den Boer went to the teachers' training college, it only existed a few years. When Jan did an internship at the brothers' schools in Tilburg, he walked around in new buildings and worked with brand-new teaching methods. When he was sent to Ruwenberg as a young brother, he ended up in a school in full development. All brothers of Andreas' generation received their religious formation in an atmosphere of Church growth and missionary optimism.

The fact that they formed a first generation together, also had a spiritual significance for the young religious. They were the brothers of the first hour. They were expected to set the tone and pave the way for the community. This realisation made these men stricter, more radical and more free of compromise. The first Superior General, Father De Beer, often asked his brothers the question: 'If we, the Congregation's firstlings, start weakening, what will become of our successors?' Brother Andreas behaved in accordance with it. He knew that it was important to be fervent, pure and faithful in everything.

Charles van Leeuwen





*Prayer service in the garden, Château L'Évêque.*

## INTERNATIONAL FORMATION PROGRAMME IN TILBURG & VINCENTIAN PILGRIMAGE IN FRANCE

*Fifteen young brothers from different countries gathered at the Generalate in Tilburg from 20 May till 31 May 2018 for the international formation programme in preparation of their profession for life.*

Eight brothers from Kenya, six brothers from Indonesia, and one brother from Timor Leste arrived in the Netherlands in May. For two weeks they attended workshops dealing with the topics of mercy, brotherhood, the vows, Marian spirituality, the founder Joannes Zwijsen and the history of the Congregation. The workshops were presented by Brother Wim Verschuren, Brother Niek Hanckmann, Nathalie Bastiaansen (staff), Brother Broer Huitema, and Charles van Leeuwen (study secretary).



*In the garden of the Generalate.*



*Discussion in small groups.*



*At the end of the workshop on Mary, the participants gave presentations on the Marian identity of the Congregation.*



*Visit to the Orthen cemetery in Den Bosch, the final resting place of Joannes Zwijsen.*

After the weeks of workshop in Tilburg, the group left on 3 June for two weeks in France for the Vincentian pilgrimage to study more deeply the Vincentian charism of the Congregation. The guides were the Brothers Benyamin Tunggu and Ad the Kok, Sister Elisângela Ferreira Belo (member of the General Council of the Sisters SCMM), Father Rafael Isharianto CM, and Nathalie Bastiaansen. Brother Johannes Kojongian took care of the picnic lunches on the road in France.

**Nathalie Bastiaansen**

*Delicious picnic lunches during the journey were prepared by Brother Johannes Kojongian.*



## A unique experience

The Vincentian pilgrimage left me full of joy. It was the most inspiring and enriching moment of my life. Everything I had learned during my initial formation period I experienced in real time. Personally, I could experience our charism of brotherhood and mercy.

In a conversation with Brother Lawrence and other brothers, Brother Lawrence told us that the older brothers in both the Zwijsen community and the Generalate community were delighted to see us and that our presence gave them hope and confidence that our charism will continue. It made me think how we could realise this.

The pilgrimage also made me realise that the number of brothers in Europe has declined drastically. We, as young brothers, must face this reality and look for opportunities to continue our charism. The cooperation and the spirit among the young brothers and sisters were encouraging. Despite language barriers, we could understand each other. We shared with each other about our cultures and discussed ways of putting our spirituality in our various countries into practice. Thus, we also learned from each other.

**Brother Videlis Ong'ombe Minyega**

*Candlelight procession in Lourdes.*



## Mercy in the community

The first part of our formation programme started with two days of reflection on our spirituality of brotherhood and mercy, under the guidance of Brother Wim Verschuren. What is this mercy that we are talking about? Mercy to me refers to the forgiving attitude and action towards another person.



*Brother Wim Verschuren speaks about mercy.*

In his talk on mercy, Brother Wim presented us with two well-known parables: the parable of the Good Samaritan and the parable of the Prodigal Son. His explanation made clear what the act of mercy entailed, shown both by the Good Samaritan and by the father of the Prodigal Son. What I came to realise is that to be merciful we must first bend down on our knees and then lift the other person up. We must share God's love with all, put the person in need at the centre of our attention. 'Seeing - being moved - taking action'; and all of it without prejudice.



*The parable of the Prodigal Son.*

We all need mercy, but where does mercy start? It starts with me and from there it spreads to others. A community is a perfect place to practice mercy. Mercy is essential for good community life. 'Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy' (Matthew 5:7).

Mercy connects us with the needy in society, helps us to have an extra eye and being sensitive to what is happening around us. Mercy enables us to act swiftly in meeting the call of the needy. Mercy knows no boundaries. It does not make a distinction based on tribe, race, or nationality. We must be generous and ready to assist God's people.

**Brother Videlis Ong'ombe Minyega and  
Brother Geoffrey Sinange**

*Cathedral Saint-Front in Périgueux. Photo: Brother Arnoldus Janssen Sanit.*





# WATER FOR BROTHERS AND STUDENTS IN SUAI-TALIOAN

*In Suai-Talioan, Timor Leste, the brothers have been running a boarding school for boys since 2012. At that time they took it over from the Jesuits. Recently a new facility to provide water has been built.*



*Water reservoir (on the roof).*

The boarding school offers the boys the opportunity to have good quality education at a good school, which is not always available in their own neighbourhood. In edition 4/16 of *Brothers CMM*, this boarding school was portrayed in the section 'Images of Apostolate'. When school hours are over the students get home work supervision and assistance, and they can take part in music lessons and sports activities. There was, however, one difficulty....

## No water

Each year during the dry season, from July to October, the water supply was inadequate. And so, during the dry season, the brothers of the Suai-Talioan community had to go to the community in Suai-Audian every day, 4 kilometres away, to get water in jerrycans. Drinking water, water for cooking and water for washing.

## A new well

Now, at last, a solution has been found. A new, much deeper well has been made, and the pumping system has been modified. The water from deep down is being pumped into a higher situated reservoir. The new well

provides enough water to see the brothers and pupils through the dry season. The new water supply was made possible with support of several sponsors from the Netherlands. The brothers and students in Suai-Talioan are very grateful for this.

## Sharing with others

The new water well is not only intended for the brothers' community and the boarding school. The brothers decided to make the water available also to the people living nearby who dealt with the same problem. From the reservoir water is taken to the front of the building complex. This way the water is also accessible to people in the neighbourhood. As the Roman philosopher, Seneca, said: "Possession brings happiness when it is shared."

**Nathalie Bastiaansen**



*Flowing water.*

# HANDCRAFTED PAPER FROM BROTHER HENRIQUE IN BRAZIL

Since the opening of the Joannes Zwijsen residential care facility in Tilburg in 2008, there is a small alternating exhibition on the fourth floor displaying some hobby work of brothers, such as collections, paintings, drawings or calligraphy. It gives a different, sometimes unknown insight in the makers. Some brothers in other countries also have unexpected creative talents. This feature will put a selection from this work in the spotlight.

Part 2 of this new rubric depicts handcrafted paper by Brother Henrique Matos (Brazil). The idea of making your own paper is in line with the ecological dimension of the retreat and reflection centre Retiro Vicente de Paulo, in Igarapé, Brazil.



*Brother Henrique Matos making paper.*



*Greeting card 'Be like a child', with a watermark of the retreat centre Vicente de Paulo.*

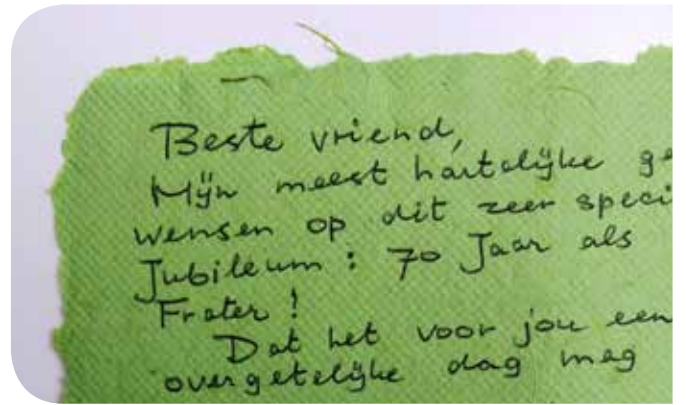
The production of this handmade paper is done as follows: first, all kinds of waste-paper, such as newspapers, cement bags and paper bags, are collected and shredded. This material is soaked in a bucket of water for approximately 24 hours. After draining, a kind of porridge is formed. The porridge is spread in a fine layer on a net, with the possible addition of organic fibres of e.g. onions and plants. The net is then placed under considerable pressure for a 24-hour period. The paper that is the result of it is hung from a clothesline to dry, preferably in the sun.

Then there is the finishing touch. The paper might receive a collage of pictures, a watermark, or a commission written with a brush. The brothers in Brazil use this beautiful paper, for example, as stationery or for occasional cards, for birthdays, anniversaries, and condolences. The products are made with loving care, and it is precisely this personal attention that is often highly appreciated by the recipients.

**Brother Henrique Matos**



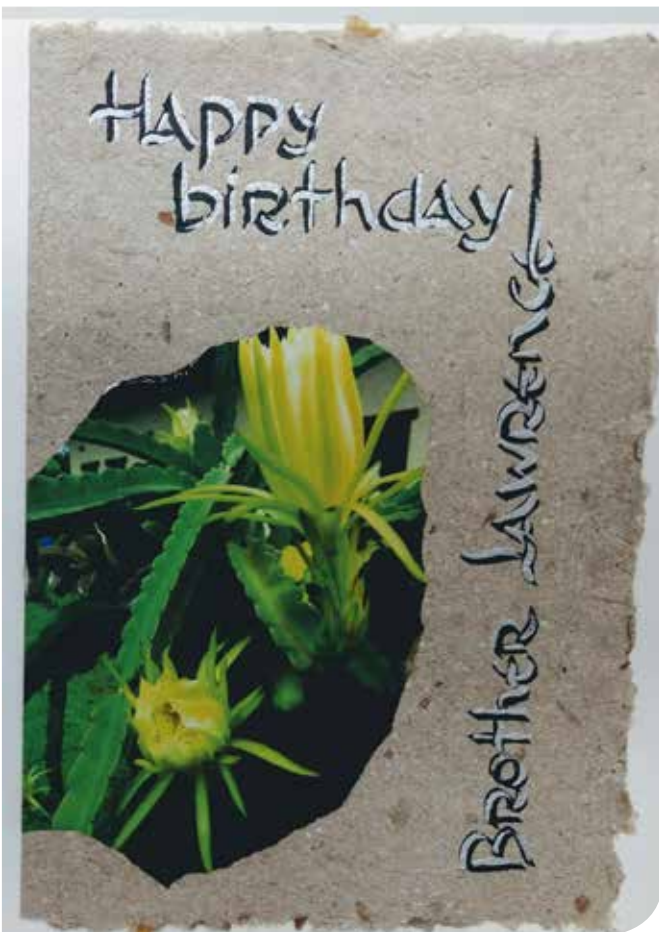
'Good wishes for your health.'



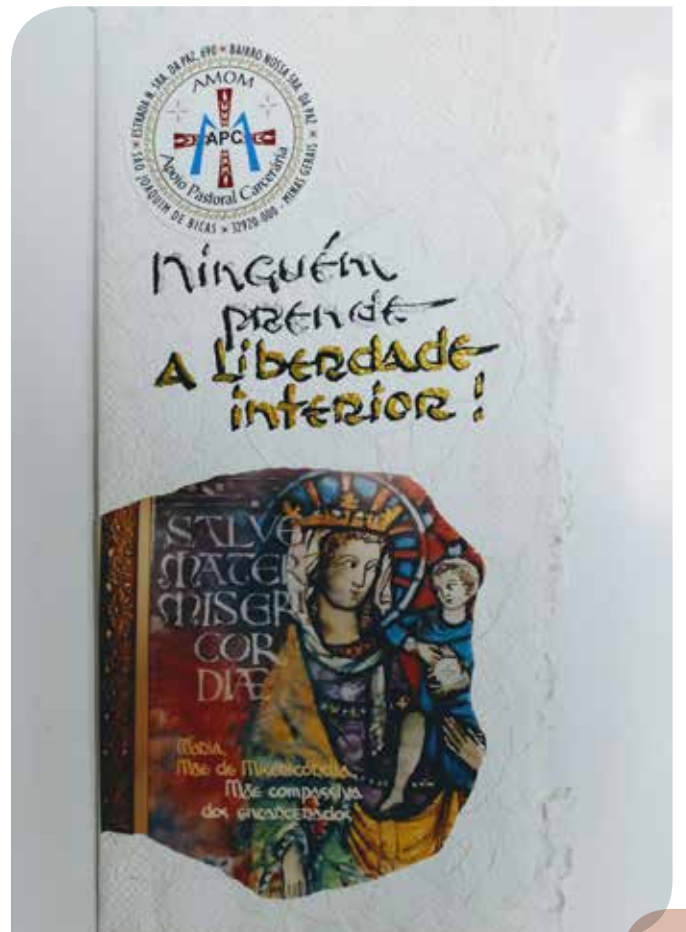
Congratulation card for a jubilee, back.



Greetings card 'Mercy.'



Birthday card for Brother Lawrence, front.



Card for prison chaplaincy:  
'No one can chain inner freedom.'



# FORMATION IN PARIS

*From 10 April to 11 May 2018, two brothers from the Congregation of the Brothers CMM took part in the programme of the International Centre of Formation Saint Vincent de Paul (CIF) in Paris: Brother Rofinus Banunaek and Brother Blasius Perang.*



*Students of the International Centre of Formation (CIF) in Paris.*

The group was made up of people from different congregations and associations, as well as from different countries and languages. The largest group was from the Congregation of the Mission. Also several women's congregations participated: the Sisters of Mary of the Miraculous Medal, the Daughters of Charity, the Sisters of the Holy Faith, the Servants of the Redeeming Love of Christ, and the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul of Gijzegem. The organisers were happy with the increase of laypeople from various countries in the meeting. The countries with the greatest presence of religious were Indonesia, Brazil and Benin. Likewise, the greater presence of laity came from Latin America.

## **Different and yet óne**

This group of men and women of different ages and ministries, some more silent and others more talkative, showed the interculturality and internationality of the Vincentian Family. Each participant assisted in

some task: computer work, cleaning, photocopying, preparing liturgy, organising events, helping to make purchases, taking pictures, or taking care of the refreshing coffee breaks that refreshed students, teachers and translators. They all had the desire to learn, a longing to pray, the willingness to collaborate, and a great talent for joy. In spite of the difficulty of the different languages, they also spoke a universal language, as Pope Francis called it: 'the language of mercy'.

## **Themes**

As teaching was a fundamental element of this meeting, the participants learned about various topics: 'Evangelizing through the Media; Vincentian Presence in the Media and Saints of the Vincentian Family', by Joe Agostino and Javier Chento. 'Saint Vincent: Sources and Bibliographic Searches; Vincentian Studies; Vincentian Spirituality and Ethics', given by Andrés Motto. 'The Miraculous Medal: Historical

Context and Study of the Marian Apparition', under the direction of Jean Daniel Planchot. 'Theology of the Poor; Vincentian Option for the Poor and Service to the Poor within the Vincentian Family', explained by José Antonio Ubillús.

### On the journey

Besides the classes in Paris, the participants made three pilgrimages. Also in these pilgrimages the richness of the Vincentian charism became clear. One pilgrimage reminded us that life is a journey. Where did they go? Pilgrimage I went to Richelieu, Perigueux, Sarlat-La-Canéda, Le Berceau, Buglose, Pouy, Dax, Lourdes, and Angers. Pilgrimage II went via Gannes and Folleville to Amiens. In pilgrimage III, the participants visited Taizé, Châtillon, and Annecy. The group also visited some projects in Paris where concrete assistance is given to the poor.

### The language of love

What a great joy it is to be a part of the Vincentian Family. One month passed as if it was one week. That only happens when you are with those who are close to you. It does not matter that we came from four different continents, different congregations, with different cultures, traditions and languages. Saint Vincent is gathering all of us in the name of Jesus Christ to serve the poor. On the first day I heard the question: 'How are we going to communicate?' But soon the answer came: 'with the language of love.' Yes, it is really possible and it happened in this CIF group. To exchange with each other thoughts, feelings, successes and failures in our contact with the poor, is priceless.

Returning to the source of our Vincentian heritage igniting a fire in our hearts, a flame that we so often need in our ordinary life. Without knowing our roots we easily can be lost in this world. After a series of excellent classes and pilgrimages, the time came to return to our reality, to ignite a fire in our communities, to give hope, to heal hearts with God's love, to go on mission to the peripheries. To be a real mystics of Mercy.

Sister Ivana Fulir, Congregation of the Sisters of Mary of the Miraculous Medal

### Mystics of mercy

The CIF meeting was a wonderful experience, which impels me to continue the mission Christ himself has entrusted to me. The brotherhood and sisterhood we achieved is a bond that can never be extinguished. We shared our experiences, our spirituality, love, respect, empathy, solidarity and service.

To be members of the Vincentian Family is to embrace the charism of Saint Vincent and his preferential option for the poor. Our life is committed to evangelisation and mercy. As members of the Vincentian Family we have to work towards a dignified future for our neighbours, in which everyone can develop his or her potential and in which we are moved by the brightness of thought and heart. This we were privileged to experience in this formation programme, where the language gap was bridged by the language of love and by the dedication of each of the attendees. 'Members of the Vincentian Family are mystics of mercy.'

Mónica Cobos, Coordinator of the Vincentian Family in Ecuador

*From: "The Third CIF Meeting for the Vincentian Family in Paris Concludes", by Andrés Motto, CM, director CIF, at [www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org), 21 May 2018.*



*In the evening there was also time for a pleasant get-together while enjoying a drink and a snack.*





*A celebration with many young people from all parts of the world during the World Youth Days in Krakow.*

# AMBASSADORS OF A WORLDWIDE BROTHERHOOD

*Worldwide the Congregation is being confronted with all sorts of material and spiritual needs. The brothers, together with others, are trying to alleviate these. The tenth episode of this feature showcases the Ambassadors WWB: an international youth movement initiated by the Brothers CMM.*

*The concern of our Congregation is especially directed towards youth. Through education and other forms of guidance we want to help them to find their way in the world of tomorrow (Constitutions I, 30-31).*

The goal of the international youth movement 'Ambassadors of a Worldwide Brotherhood' (Ambassadors WWB) is to bring young people from different countries together and to work together towards a global movement of mercy and brotherhood. Within the WWB, these young people learn about the spirituality and charism of the Congregation. It also gives them the opportunity to explore their own vocation.

Their first activity was an international meeting in Tomohon, Indonesia, followed by participation in

the World Youth Days in Sydney, in 2008. This was followed by international meetings and World Youth Days in Tilburg and Madrid (2011), Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro (2013), and Tilburg and Krakow (2016).

In the meantime, the movement grew into a group of young people who, in their own country and in their daily lives, are actively working on their dream: a world of mercy and brotherhood. Young people are actively involved in seven countries: the Netherlands, Kenya, Namibia, Brazil, Indonesia, Tanzania and Timor Leste. A new generation of ambassadors is currently preparing for the next World Youth Days, which will take place in Panama in January 2019

**Nathalie Bastiaansen**



*Country presentations in Tomohon. Presentation by the Indonesian group.*



*Ambassadors WWB planting trees in Tomohon.*



*Ambassadors WWB choir at a youth festival, WYD Sydney.*



*Vigil on the beach of Copacabana, WYD Rio de Janeiro.*



*A beautiful tradition: an ambassador from Kenya gets a souvenir from an ambassador of Timor Leste.*





*WWB candle, made at the WYD in Krakow.*



*Reflection in the church of Peter and Paul, Tilburg.*



*WYD Krakow, waiting for Pope Francis to arrive.*



*Lectio Divina at the international WWB meeting in Tilburg (Sparrenhof, 2016).*



*Celebration of Ambassadors in the church of Peter and Paul, Tilburg. With Brother Broer Huitema and Brother Niek Hanckmann.*



*Travelling by metro in Krakow.*



*During World Youth Days it is a tradition to exchange bracelets, addresses, and souvenirs with pilgrims from all over the world.*



# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019: 175 YEARS BROTHERS CMM (1844-2019)



## Prayer for the Year of Jubilee

175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of CMM  
25 August 1844 – 25 August 2019

Merciful God,  
As we celebrate this special jubilee  
of our foundation by Bishop Joannes Zwijsen,

we express our gratitude to You  
for the charism you gave us:  
Mercy and Brotherhood.  
We thank you for all the blessings  
our Congregation received.

We pray today:  
Instil your Loving Mercy  
into the members of our Congregation.  
Guide us to follow Jesus, your Son  
and help us to serve and enlighten,  
to speak a redeeming word,  
to be a helping hand  
in today's world.

Inspire more people  
to join our charism and mission  
as brothers, associates or otherwise.

Send your Holy Spirit  
to strengthen and unite us,  
Hopeful and Faithful  
on the Way  
of Mercy and Brotherhood.

We ask you this through the intercession  
of Mary, Our Lady, Mother of Mercy,  
Saint Vincent de Paul, Father of the Poor,  
and through Jesus Christ, our Merciful Brother,  
Amen.



*Logo for the Jubilee Year, in 4 languages. The first logo of the Congregation has been used for this anniversary logo. This can still be found as woodcarving in the bureau of the superior general. The text around the picture comes from the brothers' Rule of Life: 'His Spirit brings us together with others to be the people of God. He sends us to do what Jesus did: **to serve and enlighten, to speak a redeeming word, to be a helping hand.** In this way we know that we are called to become men after Jesus' image and in his spirit' (Constitutions I, 9-11).*

Next year, 25 August 2019, will mark the 175th anniversary of the beginning of the Congregation. To celebrate this, the whole year prior to that festive day will be devoted to this anniversary. The jubilee year begins on 25 August 2018 with a prayer service and continues until 25 August 2019. During this year different activities will be organised in all countries where the Congregation is present. The upcoming editions of Brothers CMM will of course pay special attention to this.



# 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROVINCE OF KENYA

On 25 March 1993, the CMM region of Kenya became a province. This was then celebrated in the Pastoral Centre of Sotik, where one of the brother communities was located. At that time, mainly Dutch brothers lived in the 6 communities Mosocho, Sikri, Oyugis, Sotik, Rhapta Road and Umoja. Over the past 25 years, more and more African brothers have joined the Congregation: a new generation that is working hard for people and society in Kenya and now also in Tanzania. Since then, four new communities have been established (Sigona in 1999, Nakuru in 2005, Urambo in 2005 and Molo in 2011). And we are still pleased to welcome new brothers in Kenya.

The 25th anniversary was celebrated on 18 March 2018, in two parts of the province. In Sigona the brothers of Rhapta Road, Umoja and Nakuru met. In the west of the country the celebration was held in the renovated brother house of Mosocho. The theme of this festive day was 'peaceful coexistence'. The lectures on this day encouraged the brothers in the CMM province of Kenya to become 'new wine' and to prepare 'new wine pouches' for the future.

May Mary, our Mother of Mercy be our shining example, and may Jesus, our Merciful Brother, accompany us to become more and more prophets of brotherhood and mercy for the benefit of all mankind.

Brother Leo van de Weijer, Kenya

mercy brotherhood

simplicity trust in God

Are you being called?  
We welcome new brothers  
and others who want to join us.

 join-us@  
cmmbrothers.nl

## COMMUNICATION TRAINING IN INDONESIA

From October 1 to 12, 2018, the General Board and the Communication Office will organize a training in communication for a small group of brothers from different countries. The course will take place in Indonesia. The aim of the course is to teach the brothers how to present their life and work to a wide audience in an inspiring way, and thus improve the external reporting. Topics that will be addressed include: intercultural communication; writing for specific target groups; and the use of visual material (photo and video).

# BROTHERHOOD DURING COFFEE BREAKS

*Mercy and brotherhood are two key concepts in the charism of the Brothers CMM. Beautiful words. But what happens in the reality of the everyday life of the brothers? That's what is highlighted in this feature 'See my People' (cf. Matthew 9:35-38).*

Brother Hermenegildus Beris worked 51 years as a missionary in Namibia. In 2016 he returned to the Netherlands. In Namibia, at the Major Seminary in Windhoek, he lectured a.o. in African Church History, General Church History, Namibian Church History and Patrology. When they could not immediately find a successor to take on those colleges, Brother Hermenegildus – then a young 87 year old – was found available to continue his work. Nowadays this can all be done 'at a distance'. From his present home in the brothers' community Eleousa in Vught, he uses Skype on his computer to make contact with the seminary at Windhoek via the screen. This way he "lectures" several times a week.

After working like this for one-and-a-half year it was found in Namibia that it was about time that Brother Hermenegildus should appear once again in front of his students, eye to eye. Brother Hermenegildus agreed wholeheartedly and left on the 16th January this year to Windhoek in Namibia for a work-visit.

"Young people, like my students", Hermenegildus tells us, "don't ask straight out for mercy. Apart from a possible death or serious illness. That's why my attention goes out to them. Especially the seminarians in the lower years, they often struggle with English, and you need to be really patient with them and offer them extra help. Being patient is also a form of mercy and compassion."

At the Seminary where students come together from different ethnic groups, brotherhood is important, but not always self-evident. Brother Hermenegildus: "Among the seminarians this is sometimes quite awkward, as they come from widely diverse countries. All different cultures, languages and customs. As the Staff is expected to set a good example, I have always tried to maintain friendly ties with all of them:



*Brother Hermenegildus Beris.*

Indians, South-Africans, Poles, Austrians, as I walked among them as a Dutchman.

I always found the coffee break important, as that was the right place for brotherhood. All this is much more difficult through Skype. Teaching from a distance is – as the word already says – more distant, even in the figurative sense. One teaches, with patience and kindness, but much further one doesn't come. The extra bit of patience, a kind word during the coffee break, for that you need to be on campus."

Meanwhile Brother Hermenegildus is back. On the 1st May this model of vitality, our confrère, arrived again in the Netherlands, quite content. Content, because he was able to do his work once again the way it suited him best, close to students and colleagues, coffee breaks and all.

Nathalie Bastiaansen



**ATTENTIVELY AND GENEROUSLY  
WE CONSTANTLY TRY TO UNDERSTAND  
THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.**

*(from the Rule of Life of the Brothers CMM)*

*Magazine of the Congregation of the Brothers of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy*

