



CB *Inter In*

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Sisters of Charity of St Charles Borromeo

Preface



CHANGE

It is amongst others through the social media that we have come to know that people are liable to change. They naturally expect to change for the better. But it doesn't always happen this way. It is not as simple as we think it is. Change brings along risks, has consequences. In fact, what is good should be good for everyone, for: "...there is a time for everything" (Cf. Ecc. Chapter 3). Sometimes people tend to forget this and they become impatient and demanding. These negative influences hinder us and lead us away from the positive things in our lives, such as the Will of God.

However, today we have various means that can support us to work towards a change for the better: development of creativity, expansion of insights, sharpening of sensitivity etc.

Therefore, CB Inter In tries to make changes to its presentation. Hopefully, the new cover and lay out of our CB Inter In bulletin will be an interesting tool for us to share our ideas and ideals. We do hope this will be your experience, too.

Many greetings from the editorial staff

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LOOKING BACK- LOOKING AHEAD- EMBRACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

Sr Yulita Mursamsilah
Maastricht, Nederland

*"We toiled on with a great desire to make progress,
o yes... to make progress" (EG 53).*

Though it has almost been six months since we celebrated our Jubilee it still lingers on in our memory. It really was an unforgettable day. How come? Dozens of answers I got from the sisters to that question. Amongst others: it was terrific!; beautiful celebration; magnificent choir; interesting power point presentation; I am proud of Mother Elisabeth, how did she manage to get us do all this; everyone was so happy, so full of joy; ...and the weather gods were well-inclined towards us. In Indonesia and Belgium it rained when the sisters celebrated our 175th jubilee year. The sisters called it 'hujan berkat' which means abundant blessing. All these answers show that God's grace comes to us in various ways just like the sisters were to experience it on that very day. It is obvious: *"Divine Providence took care of everything" (EG 60)*. God is the same One: in the past, the present and in the future. Looking back on this feast-day makes my heart glow.

Have you reflected on your own life yet? Weighed up the pros and cons? I don't mean the financial side or the positive and negative things of our life story but rather the balance of our spiritual life after having existed as a Congregation for 175 years. What has become of our dreams and desires? What do I regret, what am I particularly proud of? There are various ways to look back on things. Sometimes we need to let go radically without

looking back. There's a good example in the Bible. Lot's wife couldn't let go even though the angel had told her not to look back. For, if you cannot let go of the world you will be paralyzed and turn into a pillar of salt and get stuck. (Gen. 19, 26) That's one way, let go of what lies behind you. The other way for example is: "Hold on to what is good" (Rom. 12, 9) or "Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you" (Heb. 13. 7). And what did Mother Elisabeth do? She proclaimed and applied God's Love in her work and life.

Two examples. One is asking you to let go without looking back whereas the other is asking you to hold fast to, to retain, to remember, to recall to mind. In other words: leave behind whatever paralyzes you, whatever hinders the continuation of our vision and mission, what doesn't get you going, what fossilizes and mortifies. Don't look back, don't be afraid, look ahead. Hold on to what energizes and empowers you, to what gives you hope and faith, to what enriches you, to what helps us build up our life, the community and Congregation as a whole. So, in fact, we should not pay too much attention to what went wrong. Thus we shall free ourselves from the paralyzing effect of our life history. That's why we try to look at what strengthens us. The Jubilee motto of the Dutch Province "Embracing the Future with Hope"



Sr Yulita and sr Vincenza engaged in conversation. How serious they are!

also strengthens us and stimulates us to move forward. A very powerful and meaningful motto. If we cannot continue now, why worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow the situation may be quite different. Is it not Jesus who says: "Let tomorrow take care of itself?"

During my sabbatical year in the Philippines I had a workshop about 'mindfulness'. It was a training to consciously live in the present, here and now and to take no thought for the morrow or the past. Every day has enough worries of its own. So if we can lead a care-free life today it may seem strange but it is the reality. Seems rather complicated. Should I not provide for tomorrow? Can't I make any plans? Do I not need to think things over?

There is another example: the five sensible girls and the five foolish girls in the Gospel. The sensible ones saw to it that there was enough oil, so that they were ready to go to the party. We, too, need to be sensible. Thinking about the future and making sure that everything is well provided for. "Seek the Kingdom of God and His justice first and

all these other things will be given to you" (Mat. 6, 33), says Jesus. Let our hearts be with the Lord, always, in everything we do, in all the situations in which we find ourselves. The Lord remains faithful till the end of times. He was, is and will be the same One. It is not in His character to give up. One by one old memories come back of what God has done in the history of our Congregation and of how He has also guided me in my life. People say I am loyal. According to sr Immaculée: "... *If there's talk of Faith, it was God who never let me down. The casualness of those days has disappeared. Mind you, that's not a loss but the result of growth and ageing.*"

When taking stock of my own life in this first year after our 175th jubilee celebration it might be a good idea to dwell upon the following thoughts: where did I see God at work?, what experiences do I have with Him, what memories do I have of Him? Which are the criteria, where have I seen that He is the God who remains faithful? Because this is something I can hold on to whenever I lose



focus. I can call God to account: Lord, I am so afraid, where are You? You showed me there and then that You are the Saviour of my life? Please make Yourself known again, I need you so badly right now! That's what sr Ka-dien (Vietnam) wrote: "It is important for me to keep in mind that in taking the vows later on, I will be making a life commitment. If something seems unclear I just call His name, "sweet Jesus", and He is always present in my life.

Looking ahead is looking back.

That's the principle. God's work in the past is an absolute guarantee for the future. He is and will remain the same One. 'That's why we dare say: "Embrace the Future with Love", the motto of our elderly sisters in the Motherhouse. Inspiring, indeed!

On behalf of the editorial staff

Sr Yulita Mursamsilah

A BOOK ON OCCASION OF OUR CONVENT JUBILEE

Sr Paulie Douven
Maastricht, the Netherlands



Sr Paulie admires the photos of the chapel and the Motherhouse in the recently published jubilee book.

Over the years Elisabeth Gruyters developed a personal and intimate bondage with God. To her the crucifix was an expression of God's compassionate love for us people. It is only much later that she records: *"...when the Holy Fire of Divine Love began its work in my heart; then consequently, zeal and love ought to be responded by mutual love"* (EG 95).

Her heart was touched. This had made her sensitive to what others around her needed most. It was to this end that she sought a convent community. In her notes we can read how she tries again and again to be admitted into a convent. However, God's plan for Elisabeth appeared to be

a quite different one. The heavenly 'Yes', referred to a new convent community which she had to set up.

But, how poor that first beginning actually was! Poverty was harrowing, everything was lacking. We know the story about the cold around April 1837, the 'extreme costs' that came with renting a stove. No wonder that these first sisters felt *"like three fishes out of water, without any aid or support..."* (EG54).

Throughout all the notes she made, we sense the intense care of Elisabeth for the sick of Calvarienberg, her great faith, her trust in God,

her constant prayers and the will to *"continue God's work"* (EG24).

Circumstances, especially those in the initial phase, were difficult. And, yet, Elisabeth records: *"... First and foremost we arranged a very healthy and quiet place of prayer in which our sweet Jesus would stay day and night in order to be adored and glorified there by us as Sisters of Charity"* (EG 58). Apostolic dedication, community and prayer can thus strengthen each other and bring unity.

That attention for the place where the good Lord wants to be present with us has always remained there where we, as a Congregation, are to perform our works of charity. Even till this very day.

"A quiet place of prayer" has now become the title of a book published on occasion of our 175th jubilee. It is about our Bogen chapel, as centre of our Motherhouse in Maastricht.

The content of this book tells you what you see there, who made the works of art and from what period they originate.

Guests, who enter our chapel on special occasions, are always pleasantly surprised and full of admiration for the space, the windows, the altars, the acoustics and the atmosphere.

To us it mainly is the place where we know ourselves united with each other in a global assignment, not only with our sister community but with all people journeying towards God's Kingdom.

We are grateful for the caring of so many who do their best to enhance the atmosphere in our chapel and to grace our celebrations. Because of all this it remains a beautiful central place in our house and of our togetherness. It is my ardent desire that this chapel will remain, as "a quiet place of prayer", the Wellspring of our lives from which spiritual nourishment flows all over the world. This book will no doubt contribute to this.

CB JUBILEE CELEBRATION IN BRAZIL

Sr Evelyn Aranas
Juazeiro, Brazil



Sr Evelyn and Sr Theresiata

Whenever we celebrate the foundation/feast-day of our Congregation it feels like a blessing. This year we celebrated our 175th foundation year. The Congregation has been very busy preparing things such as the launching of a jubilee song, novenas, reflections etc. All of this taking place next to the various preparations of the communities in their own localities.

While preparing, we remembered the people who have been and still are responsible for our existence in the different parts of the world, it is not only the physical presence but rather the presence of God within the sisters that brought life to our Congregation. Despite all its joys and sorrows, pains, difficulties and problems, the Congregation has survived throughout these years, because God works marvels in each one of us. Maybe it is not a matter of how big or small our contribution to the Congregation is, but of how big our hearts that we offer to the Lord are. I

believe that this great Love urges every member of the Congregation to do great things for her loved ones. Thus, the Congregation continues to contribute its share to the building up of God's reign. See, we do have a reason to rejoice over 175th years of existence.

And even though we are only two here in Juazeiro-Bahia Brazil, we did try to participate in the activities. Sr Theresiata for instance joined the song conteston with her composition which was chosen to be the song for the jubilee celebration. We also used the articles for reflection and recollection sent to us by the General Board.

We had our celebration of the 175th foundation day a bit earlier. We held it on the 10th of April 2012 with Bishop Jose Geraldo da Cruz as the main celebrant and some other priests: Fr Joseph Daniel Potter, Fr Paulo, the parish priest of Santa Teresinha parish, Fr Valmer, parish priest of St



Thanksgiving mass on occasion of our 175th jubilee celebration.

Alfonso parish and Fr Donesete. We also had some religious sisters join our celebration and people with whom we are in contact. It was the community of our Lady of Fatima Parish that helped us prepare all the food (all the communities shared), the liturgy, even the cleaning. The youth were very helpful in extending an extra hand.

It really was a wonderful celebration. The military band played the jubilee song which was chanted by a group of children who had joined in to make the celebration more meaningful and joyful. The celebration was held in the garden of the sisters' house. Though kept simple, the people enjoyed the essence of the celebration.

May God continue to touch the hearts of our people so that one day they will be able to share their children for the greater glory of God.

Although there are only two sisters in the community, the celebration of our 175th jubilee year was an unforgettable one. The celebration was a most precious event, not only for the sisters but also for the parishioners and the neighbors as well. It was very touching to see how the people, the parishioners and the youth got involved in the celebration; in its long path of preparations, the feast-day itself and the work afterwards. The sisters gratefully accepted the generosity of some parishioners who so charitably had prepared all the food to be consumed on this feast-day. Besides, a great many people got involved in many activities around the party, according to their capacity.

We cannot be thankful enough for all the blessings God showered upon us. Although the community is small it celebrated the jubilee as one big family with parishioners, friends and coworkers yes, even with people from the countryside.

LEUT CELEBRATES UNDER A CURTAIN OF RAIN

Sr Felix Westerwoudt
Maastricht, the Netherlands



Also sr Felix (wheelchair) joined the procession in spite of the horrible weather!

The church at Leut awaited us with its doors wide open. Full of expectation we had come from Maastricht by bus, a big one. For, also Leut commemorated the Congregation's jubilee. After all it was out of their midst that our Foundress, Elisabeth Gruyters, originated. The church was filled to capacity which made that we got fully absorbed in this festive celebration. The parish priest of the federation and the vicar of the Bishop conducted the service. Unfortunately the Bishop himself could not be present as he had to attend another jubilee celebration. It became an

unforgettable high day celebration. The choir rejoiced and graced the celebration. Festive sounds echoed along the faithful and the church arches. A couple of times our Indonesian fellow sisters came forward to sing a festive song composed to suit the occasion. To our surprise a big screen was lowered in front of the altar after the Gospel reading and next we got to see an interesting power point presentation picturing the life of Elisabeth Gruyters and her Foundation. I couldn't help thinking: "blessed be the Lord" that the spiritual richness of Elisabeth Gruyters gets

better known also around here. It was dead calm in the chock-full church for almost a quarter of an hour. It really was a success.

At the end of this solemn mass our General Superior gave a heart-warming speech. The thunderous applause she received spoke for itself. A celebration never to be forgotten. Our hearts raced with anticipation when, after the celebration, the church doors opened.

Rain, rain... more rain.....!!!

Next on the programme: the unveiling of a new street sign "Elisabeth Gruytersdreef". So we all went to the Dreef (= lane) facing the rain. The ceremony was kept short. The brass band played to the rhythm brother rain beat on the open umbrellas. The tape was cut and we hurried through the mud to the ceremonious unveiling of the commemorative tablet which was given pride of place in front of the castle. From under our umbrellas the unspoken wish could be heard to: keep it short. The unveiling ceremony only lasted a couple of minutes.

Quicker than quick we arrived at the parish hall. The cosy atmosphere inside contrasted sharply with the dull and dreary curtain of rain outside. So many happy encounters. People had even come all the way from Brussels! It became a lively and

pleasant reception with a few drinks and a delicious meal, but above all with a great many heartfelt and friendly hello's. After a delicious cold buffet we were invited to go to the presbytery, for a cup of coffee. All they had organized was supposed to take place in a tent outside but the rain kept being a spoilsport! There are many sardines to a tin so we all found a place to sit and the coffee we got made up for even the smallest seat.

The sisters and the people from Leut went out of their way to organize things well. There were all kinds of attractions inside and outside the house such as a super tombola with marvellous prizes. In spite of the rain people even dared to step outside where, in one of the tents, Indonesian angklung music was played and songs were sung. In the church there was a power point presentation going on about our overseas ministries. Before we knew it the bus was ready to leave for Maastricht again.

We want to end this story by expressing a well-meant word of thanks to all those who have prepared this feast-day for us. High up there they must somehow have lost the keys, for the heavens opened. The downpour we got for free. And yet, believe me, everyone was radiant grateful and happy...

SPIRIT OF THE JUBILEE

Sr Ammie R. Adoremos
Davao-City, the Philippines

Though the Jubilee celebration may be over the spirit still lives on in our hearts. It dwells in the ordinariness of responding to the challenges of our commitment as CB religious. For me it is still going on, not because I feel that we cannot capture the grandeur of the celebration in just a year and not because it is not easy to let go of these grand celebrations but because this is still a time to relish, to contemplate and to relive the experiences and encounters. For me every day is a jubilee day if I always use the bold courage, compassion and deep faith of Mother Elisabeth. The spirit of the Jubilee still echoes in the midst of all the joys and pains, in our wholeness and woundedness, in our consolation and desolation in our self-emptying and self-absorption. The spiritual event that has taken place during this Jubilee Year is still unfolding itself in our daily struggle to constantly respond to renewal, depths and rootedness.

When I experienced the 150th anniversary year of the Congregation, it did not have such a great impact on me since I did not know and did not

love the Congregation that much then. But, after having experienced our glorious Congregation for almost twenty-five years, I could go on and on celebrating, remembering, thanking and pondering God's faithfulness and love. The mysteries of God's unconditional and compassionate love continue to manifest themselves in the heart and in the life of our Congregation and that of our sisters.

The blessings of the jubilee still flow in us, bringing progress and transformation in the realities of religious life today, in depressing situations, devastating experiences, paralyzing fears, in unacceptable ailments, in excruciating pains, in the challenges of community life, in unbearable sufferings and in the process of ageing in this and in our journey of faith and life.

O, God of Jubilees, thank you for this time of joy, for this time of healing, for this time of forgiving, for this time of renewal, for this time of growth, for this time to be whole and for this time to be authentic as CB religious. Thank you, dear God, for the gift of our Vocation and for the gift of our Congregation. Indeed Your grace is constantly and abundantly overflowing in us in our journey together in building God's reign here and now. Amen.



Sr Ammie with the Mother Elisabeth Gruyters' Apostolate (MEGA) Group of Women during the 175th Jubilee Year Celebration.

GOD TAKES CARE OF EVERYTHING

Sr Yulita Mursamsilah
Maastricht, the Netherlands

“... where does this money come from Where it comes from ...”

This is the question Mother Elisabeth asked herself in 1840 after having purchased the house for 11.000 Dutch guilders and another 3.000 Dutch guilders for the outbuildings. In 1844 Mother Elisabeth purchased another property. All in all, that is to say with the construction of the chapel etc. etc., this house cost ample 50.000 francs. On August 4th 1853, everything was paid for, so to speak. On seeing all this Mother Elisabeth was greatly surprised and thus from her lips came the abovementioned rhetorical question. The question to which no answer is needed as the answer was already clear to her: *“Divine Providence took care of everything”* (EG 60).

Till this very day this question is being asked: where does the money come from with which we could build such a solid and safe house, provide good care for and guarantee the well-being of our sisters and celebrate the 175th jubilee year of our Congregation with abandon? Where does it come from? The answer is exactly the same as it was 175 years ago: *“Divine Providence took care of everything.”*

The Lord performs His great work and the miracle in peace and quiet.

Naturally we know that it wasn't all that miraculous and spectacular; that things did not descend from heaven but that we really worked hard for what we have now. The Lord performs His great work and the miracle in peace and quiet. I still remember how the Lord multiplied the bread in order to feed 5000 people (John 6. 1-15). Have we ever given it a moment's thought that this tiny

little kid who simply brought five loaves of barley bread and two dried fish was involved by God Himself in performing His great work. Besides, the child had no name and no further mention is made of what happened to him. I don't know why he had the loaves with him and the others did not. Maybe his parents had given them to him because they could not afford to give him pocket money for buying food. Most likely the bread and fish will have been quite small. And yet, it was this boy Andrew took to Jesus. And there he stood, in front of Jesus, with in his hands the loaves of bread and two dried tiny fish. How much I would have liked to take a picture of this and put it on Facebook. Did Jesus take the loaves of bread away from him? Most certainly not! It was the child himself who handed them to Jesus. So little for so many people? And yet, the boy handed the loaves of bread to Jesus, trusting that He could do something with it.

“You cannot be expected to give more than you have.”

Jesus took the loaves without furthermore, said a prayer and had them distributed to the people in silence. For the satisfaction of all Jesus needs the gift of the individual. What does this story tell us? The message for us is: *“You cannot be expected to give more than you have.”* Though it may not seem much in the eyes of the people, in the hands of the Lord it is sufficient to satisfy all. In order to let this miracle happen the boy had to give away the loaves of bread. Without the help of this child the miracle would not have taken place. It is



obvious that the people should help build God's plan. God has no other pairs of hands but ours. Divine Providence can happen but only if we cooperate with Him. The multiplying of the bread did not happen just like that. It happened because a child modestly shared what was in his backpack.

Now, what do we hold in our hands?

Now, what do we hold in our hands? What talents do we have? Maybe not much more than five small loaves of bread. Just remember the little boy and the Lord. What we still hold in our hands may not really be worth-while but if we place it in the hands of the Lord, it will be enough to make many happy and joyful.

The above mentioned question is still being raised today: "Where does the money come from? So much that we can renovate our house. Where does the money come from so that we are all well provided for, where does the money come from to support those who need our help, nearby and far off? We do realize that the help we render to the world is merely a drop in the ocean. Not nearly enough as we all know.

Yet, if we are willing to put what we have -little as it may seem- into the hands of our dear Lord, the miraculous bread multiplication can begin. Just remember... without the help of that little boy the miracle would not have taken place.

Exactly the same thing is going on in our Congregation. *Without having someone who looks after our financial interests with heart and soul, the miraculous bread multiplication would never have taken place in our Congregation.*

The Lord does not ask from us what we do not have

Courage lost, all lost. That would be the worst of all. I happened to know a sister who wore specs, had dentures, a hearing aid, elastic stockings, arch support, two prosthetic hips and a set of 'repaired' knees and moved about with a walker after having been operated upon two or three times. Whenever I asked her: "How are you doing?" she gently smiled and said: "I am doing fine, thank you". She bore up and said: "I am completely revised, got two new hips, artificial knees etc... but the main thing is: did I also get a new heart and a fresh spirit within me? Great thinking..!, Just look in the Bible: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you..." (Ez. 36. 26). It's what God promised me and His promise has been fulfilled. This sister gave me whatever she had: a good example, inspiration, a smile and no self-pity.

That little boy also made me think of some of our sisters; modest, and simple in their human existence but GREAT like Mother Elisabeth. You can see for yourself who these sisters are or were.

But, isn't it true that we, as CB-sisters, should recognize ourselves in that little boy? Should we not be just like him? When it comes to performing miracles, we don't really have all that much in our hands to change the community, the Church or the world. Sometimes we feel powerless and just give up. But, shouldn't we much rather trust that what we can give, little as it may seem, is extremely valuable and meaningful? Just look at this particular sister. She got absolutely nothing except artificial aids to continue her life with. Yet, I know for sure that she placed everything she had into God's hands. This now is precisely why she sets me such a good example and inspires me.

How many baskets of bread do we still have left? We have just celebrated our jubilee. It was fantastic, exuberant and impressive. We are proud of having been able to celebrate this feast-day the way we did. One day I asked the sister who cares for our bread: "Sister how many baskets of bread do we still have left? Twelve or more?" "Enough and to spare!" she said. "Don't worry about the future! There is more than enough bread for granting our Congregation a long life." Wow, how great her faith was! Yes, we have meanwhile celebrated our 175th jubilee year and never ever did God abandon us! So don't worry about the future. God will give us whatever we need. Just trust Him! Nice isn't it ... and what is more, we still have something left for the future! No need to worry!

Just read what Mother Elisabeth wrote about this in her days: "*... my trust was in God and nobody could make me waver*" (EG 55).



LEUT CELEBRATES!

Daniela, sr Mariani, , Marie-Jeanne, Andrea, Jan
Leut, Belgium



Unveiling of the street sign "Elisabeth Gruyters dreef"

175 Years Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo. "Celebrating one's jubilee is making merry for all that has been done, in love and faith, for so many years..."

What happened previously at Leut

In April 2011 sr Mariani visits her home country, Indonesia. Daniëlla and Marie-Jeanne, two members of the parish council of Leut, accompany her. The festive commemoration of the Congregation's 174th anniversary on April 29th has greatly surprised them as has the gratitude towards Mother Elisabeth, the Foundress. Back in Leut again it is obvious: we need to organize something. For, Mother Elisabeth is born and bred at Leut and therefore we want the jubilee year 2012 to become a special one!
There is an idea and a dream...

In no time an organizing committee is set up consisting of four women and one man: sr Mariani, Daniëlla, Marie-Jeanne, Andrea and Jan. We gather for the first time on September 29th 2011 and plan this jubilee day in broad outlines: the unveiling of a commemorative tablet, a reception, open house at the sisters', guided tours around the church and if possible a street named after the Foundress of the Congregation. The latter appears the biggest challenge. We know that part of the lane leading up to the birthplace of Elisabeth Gruyters still has no name. We soon agree upon a name, but the mills of town council grind slowly. The official request for the 'Elisabeth Gruytersdreef'* is filed as early as October 18th 2011. There is nothing else for us but wait. We send a reminder and wait. Then, finally... good news. The cultural council advices in favour! Now, it's up to the bench of



This monument is erected on occasion of the Congregation's 175th jubilee year. Leut, May 6th 2012

Aldermen and city council. They still need to grant permission. More waiting. We start to think that we are never going to make it on time. Lobbying should do the trick. Two weeks before the red letter day, under a radiant sun, no less than three street signs are put up! The country lane with no name will from now on be called 'Elisabeth Gruytersdreef'. Besides a dream and the enthusiasm of the organizing committee, we meet with the generosity of sponsors and the dedication of a great many volunteers to make May 6th a memorable jubilee day.

Festive jubilee on May 6th:

As early as seven o'clock in the morning we start making sandwiches for the reception. 'We' are the women of the organizing committee together with a number of sisters from Maastricht who arrived on Saturday and have come to help us. Many hands make light work. We are sooner done than we thought.

The thanksgiving mass with the theme 'Embracing the Future with Love' at 10.00 o'clock is really beautiful. Father Vandeweyer and Reverend Vicar

Jan Boonen conduct the service. The church is festively decorated, the great many parishioners and invitees present pay tribute and thanks together, the choir sings a well-practiced new mass, a power point presentation depicts the life of Elisabeth Gruyters, the foundation and work of the Congregation and the sisters sing the jubilee song they have composed for the occasion. Now, what would be nicer than the voices of angels singing a jubilee song? You can hear a pin drop during the chanting. The spontaneous big hand afterwards expresses appreciation.

After the mass we walk in procession to the birthplace of Elisabeth Gruyters to witness the inauguration of the new street sign and the unveiling of the commemorative tablet. There's only one problem. All day long, we cannot get rid of an uninvited guest: the rain. The brass band marches without umbrellas and gets soaking wet, the balloons blown up with great care by Young Leut and meant to give an extra festive touch to the lane, are stuck to the ground with dampness. Courageously we continue, along the 'Elisabeth Gruytersdreef', to the castle square for the unveiling of a commemorative tablet.

Elisabeth Gruyters, born in the steward's house of Castle Vilain XIII, spent her early childhood and a great many years of her life at Leut. Growing up in unsettled times (Goat riders, priest hunt, Napoleon) Elisabeth saw how the then chatelaine Mewen-Felz offered refuge in the subterranean vaults of this castle to whoever had to flee from violence. In 1821 Elisabeth entered the service of Baron de Roos in Maastricht where she, after the death of the baroness, founded the "Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo" in 1837, in Maastricht and surroundings otherwise known as 'Sisters Onder de Bogen'. Many women who, just like her, had a calling "to serve God faithfully" and to lovingly care for the innumerable amount of poor, sick and suffering were inspired



by her conduct in life. Even until today the sisters of the Congregation of Mother Elisabeth work in different countries such as the United States, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, Tanzania, Timor Leste and Vietnam. For many years a group of eight sisters used to reside in the birthplace of Elisabeth. They worked in the parish, the hospital (Vilain XIII) and youth welfare care. Today the sisters live in the presbytery of Leut and are of service to both parish and society.

Wet and chilled to the bone we arrive at the parish hall. Dry at last! The reception is ever so pleasant. Laughing and chatting people everywhere, a meal and a couple of drinks and a small token of appreciation from the sisters for everyone to take home as a keepsake.

The afternoon programme with open house and open garden, the 'everyone's a winner' tombola, and the church opening its doors, chiefly takes place inside as the rain keeps being a spoilsport. Young Leut faces the weather and goes on a search with all kinds of petty facts about Elisabeth

Gruyters. They send up balloons with the message: 'For when God speaks to the heart love does not keep silent'!

Thanksgiving party on June 24th for all those who have helped: We can see it all before us: attending mass together and then spend the Sunday afternoon in the lovely garden of the sisters', sun, nice company, a delicious barbeque... .

It is a cold day with an overcast sky and look... also the rain is back! The warmth we feel on this day comes from inside of us. It feels so good to say thanks together and look back on a successful jubilee celebration.

When people have a common goal, respect each other, and use their talents as best they can, working together will become enjoyable and will help make dreams come true. It is this experience which makes that we 'embrace the future with hope ...'.

*Dreef = lane

LEUT CAN BE PROUD...

Sr Rosaria Nur Hardiningsih
Maastricht, the Netherlands



Sr Rosaria standing next to the new street sign.

First of all I would like to praise the good Lord for the wonderful works He has done to our Congregation. Today we celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Congregation here at Leut, the birthplace of Mother Elisabeth. Besides, we want to offer our thanks to God here, in this very Church, as it was the place of prayer that Mother Elisabeth loved so dearly.

Dear brothers and sisters, reflecting on Leut, I couldn't help thinking about Nazareth, the village where Jesus grew up. Maybe you still remember how disparagingly people talked about Jesus and His village. They wondered: "can Nazareth bring forth anything good?" The same question could be asked about Leut: "Can Leut bring forth anything good?" The village of Leut, small as it may be, can actually be very proud of the fact that it has been chosen by God as the place for

Him to sow His good seed in the heart of young Elisabeth. And see, the seed has fallen into fertile soil, has multiplied a hundredfold and still continues to grow and bear fruit in the Congregation till this very day. So, Leut can be proud, because it not only is the source of something good, but because it was from this place that God has done a wonderful thing. A woman from this village founded a Congregation in Maastricht.

With a few words I would also like to express the gratitude and thankfulness that we feel inside us. The Congregation has reached the milestone of its 175th jubilee year with the blessing from God. However, it would never have reached this age without the involvement of all of you and of those who continuously support us. Your commitment means a lot to us.

We also want to thank Reverend Vicar Jan Boonen and Father Gerard Vandeweyer for conducting the Eucharistic celebration in this church.

Another 'thank you' is for the committee. The people on it worked hard in order for us to be able to festively celebrate our jubilee today. Thanks for all your efforts to honour the name of Mother Elisabeth, our Foundress, by calling one of the streets in this village after her. Our gratitude naturally also goes to the municipality of Maasmechelen who granted permission. How honourable it sounds: "Elisabeth Gruytersdreef".

Our gratitude also goes to the owner of the castle who so generously and warmly offered to have a Mother Elisabeth commemorative tablet put in the castle gardens. Sacred grounds to the Congregation. For, it was in this castle that Elisabeth Gruyters learnt about and experienced God's love. And thus we may say that this is the place where she was formed.

Thanks to the choir and the organist who have sung and played so marvellously. Your beautiful voices have no doubt made this Eucharistic celebration a serene festivity. I know for sure that the angels

in heaven have listened to your chanting or rather that they have been singing along with you. As the choir will have existed forty years this year we want to CONGRATULATE them. Please give them a big hand.

We also want to extend a word of thanks to Young Leut and to all those who have worked either in the spotlight or in the background to make this day a special one.

It is impossible to mention the names of all the people who have been involved in the preparations or the realization of this celebration. And even though I may not have mentioned you by name... thank you for participating.

But all things must end, also this festive jubilee celebration. We will cherish the memories in our hearts as we continue to proclaim the good news and continue to do God's Will in our daily life. FOR WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO THE HEART LOVE DOES NOT KEEP SILENT. That's why, in Leut as well as in our Motherhouse in Maastricht, we 'EMBRACE THE FUTURE WITH HOPE' out of Mother Elisabeth's own thought that: "All things will come".

Thank you ever so much and God bless.



The organizing committee is proud of everything that has been achieved.

SIXTY YEARS LATER

Sr Immaculée Hylkema
Maastricht, the Netherlands



Sr Immaculée taking part in the festivities on occasion of our 175th jubilee celebration.

Within a couple of days' time it will have been sixty years that I made my profession. According to tradition this will be celebrated festively. But now that it is about me, questions arise such as: what exactly will I be celebrating? And: do I have a reason to do so? Naturally I will join in on this convent custom and face a festive day together with my peers. And yet... When fellow sisters congratulate me, what do they actually mean to say to me? On such occasions usually the word 'faithful' appears. Being faithful to your vocation, being faithful to your once given word, being faithful to God even. But I know all too well that - if there's talk of faith - it was God who never let me down. God? ...

The God of my youth is gone. In other words: the image of the God I used to know in my childhood years no longer exists. Yet, it was because of this God that I decided to enter the convent and chose to be of service to others. That the superior

assigned to you the place where this was to happen was only natural.

The years in the noviciate passed by in a glow of devoutness, of devotion, of obedience. And also of togetherness. Profession was as it were the confirmation of what we called our 'vocation'. I experienced it that way. I was dedicated to God, heart and soul. Sometimes I think back longingly to my enthusiasm and the feelings of religiosity in my early convent years. Meanwhile I know that this had nothing to do with real life. It's what I have learned over the past sixty years. I went through stages of development in believing and experiencing. But the casualness of those days has disappeared. Mind you, that's not a loss but the result of growth and ageing. It is difficult for me to picture the God of my 'old age'. There's no need. For, every attempt to name Him or Her would be inadequate. It's true, I need less and less words to focus on what I fail to understand. To pray... .

Of course I like to read about the insights and perceptions of others. They help me put my own perception to the test and deepen it. But, to me, the most beautiful meditation book of all is outside, in the open countryside. Magnificent banks of clouds, the sun or the moon, budding greenery and growth in abundance help me more than anything to transcend myself. I have discovered that I am a particle of the universe. The way I experience things does not always mesh with that of fellow sisters. We may have chosen the same direction, the way there, the inner spiritual path, often appears a different one. Which brings me back to the word 'faith'. Is being

faithful to myself, to who I am meant to be, not my very first task? That, through a jumble of customs and rules, of changed insights and practices, of disappointments, too, I have tried to be faithful to myself, for sixty years, could be said to be worth celebrating. Together with my peers who travelled that road in their own manner. With the statue sr Carolina van Vliet made almost ten years ago, she wanted to show that the number of sisters in the Netherlands is gradually decreasing. I wrote a poem to accompany. Originally it had a fourth stanza in which I tried to express that loneliness is the price you pay if you decide to remain faithful to yourself:

We did find support with one another.
The same goal kept us together.
Yet, in the course of years I learned that:
in the very depths of the soul you travel alone.

I was glad when they said to me:
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
(psalm 122)



The statue moulded by sr Carolina symbolizes the situation of the Dutch Province and its decreasing number of members.

The direction we received on being created,
it was in a long row that we went.
With all those before us it felt really safe,
it gave us a sense of security: we did the right
thing...

But now that we are rapidly decreasing in
number
and the youth no longer chooses the old track,
I'd rather not stand still and look back.
Does what I opted for cease to exist?

My place is with the last,
for nobody, nobody, joins us.
How much I would like creative daredevils
to push me forward a little.

March 15th 2003, sr Immaculée

THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S LOVE

sr M.Ph.

Being with my God in silence, my day of recollection helped me become more aware of my experiences. I had faced a lot of situations during my exposure in the parish and now in the IHA. All these were blessings God gave to me. I have connected my experiences with the material for reflection (for the Jubilee Year) and I felt so wonderful in this time spent with God in prayer. The sentences that touched me most from the reflection material are: in trying to bear our limitations, we can show others our love of God. No need to speak beautiful words. I really like these sentences, not because I do not speak so well, but rather because it is the reality. In my experiences with the poor, the rich, even with the Muslim people, I noticed that not all of them can speak English or Bisaya. Every time I am with them, I am a little worried about how I can communicate with them and feel at home with them. I try to think about beautiful words to say to them but then I feel uncomfortable.

One time, sr Agnes, Ka-dien and I went to the Muslim area to visit them. It was a nice place. I learned that sr Agnes had her ministry there before. She shared with us about their lives and the way they were before. At first I was afraid because just hearing the word Muslim makes me think of danger. But my fear was gone when Norsida brought us to her house. We passed by a lot of bamboo houses. I could not imagine that there are people living in that way. They are so poor and lacking in many things but soon I discovered that their hearts are not poor at all. The people already know sr Agnes but as for Ka-dien and I, it was our first time to meet them.

Even then they welcomed and greeted us with a smile. It happened that in a certain house they were celebrating the graduation of one their children. We were invited for refreshments and some of their neighbours came to see us too. Most of them cannot speak English. They spoke Tagalog and therefore Ka-dien and I could not talk to them. Sr Agnes had to do the translating for us. With my simple English, a smile and some gestures I was able to communicate with them and I felt ever so happy. I looked at their faces with gladness. With this experience I can see how true the sentences that struck me are. We can show others our love of God. No need to speak beautiful words. Indeed, I need not choose beautiful words to speak to them. Still I felt God's love in the way they respected us. I was happy to be with them. Ironically, sometimes, using beautiful words make people afraid to communicate. Just like one woman I met in the area, I tried to talk to her in my simple English but she did not answer me. Then I learned from sr Agnes that she was afraid to speak to me in English. I was hurt because whenever I have the chance to go out, I do not want people to be afraid of me, do not want them **not** to get near to me. So even if I did not understand them, I just tried my best to approach them and make them feel that I really wanted to be with them and share with them the love of God that I experience. My heart is still with them.

No need to speak beautiful words but we can show others the love of God. Yes! There are many ways to show God's love to others. But the important question is how? For me, I just do whatever I can for them. The reality is that not all the people

can feel god's love through simple words or actions. I have met some people who were not really interested to talk to me because of the language. I felt sad. I know that my English is not so good and that it became all the more difficult for me to open up to simple people. Yes, I tried my best to look for beautiful words but that just made me and them unhappy. Hopefully situations like this would bring me to a new horizon of meanings, a new understanding of myself and new way of being a CB.

Today I had time to dialogue with my God about that feeling. I hope the beauty of God's love will remain with me on my journey so that I can feel more His love through people around me. Whatever happens, I should not lose my self-respect. God loves me and abides with me in all situations of life. Thanks God for everything that I have received through my sisters. Thanks for guiding me always.



DAYDREAMING

Sr Karita Suharti
Leut, Belgium



Sr Karita, sr Rosaria dan sr Felix

What a glorious day. I was sitting outside under a sheer blue sky in the cool shade of the trees daydreaming about our jubilee feast on May 6th last. How sharp the contrast! That morning the sky was overcast. It rained softly which was good of course for the grass seed that had just been sown round the church. But for the party?

The volunteers and the sisters had worked nonstop. As early as seven o'clock in the morning they started making sandwiches to be presented to the

guests. All the rest had already been taken care off. Everything under control! The organizing committee and the other volunteers were always astir. According to capacity of course. The cooperation in the community was always relaxed. We all did something.

The underlying pillar of strength being the prayer: "May this feast-day become a day of UNITY, ONENESS AND SOLIDARITY". The dining room had



been beautifully adorned for the 'everyone's a winner' tombola, whereas the other rooms had been fit out to welcome guests. Here they could have a soft drink, a cup of coffee or tea and in the mean time leaf through the photo albums telling them about our life and work in Belgium. Outside several tents had been set up. Lots of tables and chairs, too! For the garden party. And also the church had been magnificently adorned. How many pairs of hands did do all this? Must have been countless! It created an atmosphere of spontaneity, oneness and solidarity. Even the youngsters (Young Leut) had their own programme to add lustre to this feast-day. They f.i. decorated the streets, made a quiz, and let loose balloons with a message. There also was a stand from the Netherlands selling delicious oriental nibbles of titbits.

Everything had been arranged for in apple-pie order. But the overcast sky... that now was something we had no control of. The sun deserted us. The solemn Eucharistic celebration was beautiful, festive and modest and the choir sang so heavenly that it was as if angels had their voices heard. Seeing the crowded church -there were also a lot of youngsters- was a special joy. The people who had come from far, from Brussels even, were present in large numbers. Oh, what a glorious feeling. After the mass, while the brass band played, we left in procession for the place where a new street sign would be unveiled. Umbrellas up! Nothing could stop us, not even the rain, for

we all wanted to witness the unveiling of the new street sign and of the commemorative tablet in memory of our Foundress. Afterwards we went to the parish hall for the reception, to get warm again and to socialize. Forgotten were the wetness, the gloom and the overcast sky. The faces of those present radiated joy. It was ever so pleasant.

In the afternoon there was a garden party and open house in the presbytery and church.

The tombola was sold out. Outside it was still wet and cold. So... full house.

Mr Willy Willen guided people around the church in which also a repeating power point presentation was shown about the holiday of Marie-Jean B., Daniella and sr Mariani in Indonesia. In the garden sr Mariani tried to teach people how to play the angklung. Everyone was invited to have a go at it. All you had to do was... shake. Let there be music... and there was music... whole songs even! How courageous also all these volunteers who poured out the coffee and tea and provided people with soft drinks and home-baked cake. And then of course there were those working behind the scenes, doing the washing up! It all comes with partying.

All in all, the feast was fantastic in spite of the rain. We are ever so grateful to have experienced this. Grateful for the great many volunteers who, because of their dedication, made all of this happen. May their input be blessed!

EVERY DAY I LIVE, I SEE, I FIND

sr M.Kd

*"Every day I live, I see
How great the world God made for me...
The ever-changing seas and skies
The birds and all the butterflies
The rainbows high above the trees
And just to think, God gives all these to me!
The world is full of everything,
And every day I live, I find
Beauty of a different kind
For God, it is very plain to see
Outdid God's self for you and me!"*

God grants me countless blessings and the grace to keep me safe and sound. In a very special place within His heart He hides me and wraps me in His Love. With that experience it is enough for me to say that God loves me ever so much! With the support of my family I would like to express my gratitude to the Congregation and to the local community where I am having my exposure. It is a blessing for me to be able to contribute my share to the Congregation. The celebration of our 175th Jubilee Year gives me a lot of inspiration and growth. I trust that my stay here would provide me the strength and courage I need, to face the challenges of the world.

In the spirit of Mother Elisabeth I have to witness to the beauty, love and richness of our religious life. It is important for me to keep in mind that in taking the vows later on, I will be making a life commitment. If something seems unclear I just call His name, "sweet Jesus", and He is always present in my life. Religious life thus is a way of

experiencing more intimately my total dedication to God. God is the one who gave me life; it is also Him, who nourishes that life so that I can live in perfect happiness. Vocation is a gift from God. God freely calls me to a relationship with Him, to share in the work and mission of the Church today. This is the right and responsibility of those who are called. It is a gift to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ. The road may seem painful and difficult but whoever travels it is assured of the presence of Christ who invites and accompanies her/him.

The celebration of our Jubilee Year is not an invitation to a lavish celebration but a call on us to discern the needs of our time, a challenge to journey to the depths of our being. To look back on the past 175 years is a long process. To do this I would like to invite you to reflect with me on the experiences of our Foundress, hoping to discover the profundity of her relationship with God and her generosity in reaching out to others. As we all



know, her path through life was not strewn with roses. Rather, she shed tears for many years before she could realize her dream. She was always in touch with God such that she understood how much Jesus suffered in order to save the people. Mother Elisabeth was a beautiful example of a person who has truly dedicated her life to the service of the Kingdom and God's people.

What I found most significant is the deep prayer life of Mother Elisabeth. Contemplating on the cross she saw on the cross not merely the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth but the compassion of God. With God as the centre of her life, Mother Elisabeth was transformed into a courageous woman who was faithful until the end. As her daughters may her spirit continue to live in and inspire us so that we too may stand firm in our faith.

Reflecting on my own experiences, many things have happened in the past but I have also learned

to accept them. In this simple way I experience peace and happiness. I believe that God Who has chosen me, saved me and made me His own, is also offering Himself to me to be my companion in life. So in this time of jubilee, what is important for me is to continue God's work in and through me... firstly, to respond to His love by offering myself and, secondly, to desire to possess Him more, entrust myself to Him and let Him dispose of my life as He wills. The Jubilee Year is also a time for me to build solidarity with others including those under my care.

So I pray I would always stand firm in faith and fix my eyes on the Lord - *humble, beautiful and attractive* - and heed His invitation to follow Him in carrying my cross, in loving and sacrificing myself for others, especially the needy. May I persevere in prayer and put God's will above everything else.

The Work of Christmas Begins

“When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with the flocks,
then the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal those broken in spirit,
to feed the hungry,
to release the oppressed,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among all peoples,
to make a little music with the heart...
And to radiate the Light of Christ,
every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say.
Then the work of Christmas begins.

(Howard Thurman)

Faith makes all things possible,
Hope makes all things work,
Love makes all things beautiful.
May you have all the three for this Christmas!
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year !



COLOPHON

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