

Maastricht, April 2013

Dear Sisters in Belgium, Brazil, East Indonesia, Indonesia, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Tanzania, Timor Leste, and the USA.

Together with Mother Elisabeth Gruyters, the Foundress of our Congregation, we give praise to the good Lord so that we can celebrate this historical day in our Congregation. On the very day of April 29th 2013, we commemorate the foundation of our Congregation. This commemoration invites us to -for a while- reflect again on the historical events in the Congregation and on the spiritual experiences of Mother Elisabeth.

We thank God for the gift of faith experienced by Mother Elisabeth in starting off the whole journey of the Congregation as she worded it in EG 46: “...*God gave the two of us courage and strength to start this work.*” Courage and strength originating from her deep faith in God. In EG 23 the depth of Mother Elisabeth’s faith is described: “... , *but then I felt my heart was burning in me so that I could not utter a word with pure joy that his funds were so very low, for my entire wealth for this work lay in God’s Providence. In this providence I put all my trust, relying on the first article of the Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty.*” The strength of faith has become the basic foundation for the whole journey of the Congregation.

The faith of the apostles started the growth and development of the Early Church. The Acts of the Apostles presented many descriptions on how the Early Church lived out and enlivened the deep faith in God as expressed in The Acts of the Apostles 14:27: “And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”

From the Acts of the Apostles we know that God has opened the door of faith to the Early Church. The door of faith (Acts 14:27) is also opened to us, so that we are guided towards complete union with God. Pope Benedict XVI has exclaimed the Year of Faith which started on October 11th 2012, and will last until November 24th 2013 (The feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe). The Year of Faith is an opportunity for each of us to reflect on and renew our faith, so that we can consider and share it with others and bring people to Jesus Christ. In other words, the Year of Faith is an opportunity for us to experience repentance in returning to Jesus and enter into an even deeper relationship with Him.

The life of faith of the Early Church is described in the Acts of the Apostles. To them, belief in God meant that even when suffering is the condition for being obedient to God, they will endure suffering. The Bible bears witnesses of how the apostles lived out their faith in their days. Though they encountered various difficulties and underwent sufferings relevant to their

faith, they kept on loving God unconditionally and put their whole life into His hands. The apostles had strong faith, the faith which became the basic foundation for the growth of the Early Church (John 1: 42, Mat. 16:18).

Also Mother Elisabeth was a woman of great faith. From her book: Elisabeth Gruyters, Foundress of a Congregation, we can dig up the dynamics of her faith growth and contemplate it. In EG 5 Mother Elisabeth expresses her desire that a convent should be established in the city of Maastricht, in which God would be served faithfully. She was even willing to bear sufferings for the sake of her great love to Jesus Christ crucified, as phrased in EG 100: *“I praised and thanked God that He allowed me to suffer for the love of Jesus Christ, for in those days I was insatiable of this.”* The courage to accept and to embrace her cross was the fruit of her deep faith in Jesus Christ. Her great love of and unwavering faith in Jesus Christ made, that Mother Elisabeth could bear the being scolded at, the being called foolish, ignorant and feeble-minded (cf., EG 95). Even in EG 117 it is said that she would gladly be gossiped about, be criticized from hatred and be ground like wheat. She endured it all for the love of God. Her deep faith had guided Mother Elisabeth towards being willing to empty herself. From the history of the Congregation, we know the dynamics of the growth of Mother Elisabeth’s faith. In the beginning, she desired that a convent be established in the city of Maastricht so that people could glorify God. This deep desire encouraged her to

continuously ask God to let this happen by sending forth unremitting supplications for fifteen to sixteen years (cf., EG 2). She was even willing to endure sufferings. It was because of her deep-seated faith that Mother Elisabeth finally gave up her desire to be admitted into a convent, thus allowing God to start working in her according to His plan. The shift and dynamics of that faith are expressed in EG 4: “... *I know that you are witnesses to my prolonged desires and prayers to be admitted into a convent. But this is past now. My years are too many. I have neither talents nor great wealth....*” Mother Elisabeth had opened her heart and let God thus complete her desire. The Year of Faith presents us the opportunity and encourages us to open our hearts and direct ourselves to God. We are invited to repent always and to renew ourselves by establishing personal relations with Jesus Christ. Being united with Jesus Christ will make our faith blossom and mature so that we can ‘empty ourselves’ and make room for God to start working in us, too. It was through the establishing of a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ that Mother Elisabeth could bequeath her spiritual riches e.g. faithfulness and perseverance to us. Her deep faith made that Mother Elisabeth dare put her entire trust into the hands of God.

Dear sisters, as you know, our Congregation held a General Consultative Body Meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from February 17th - March 16th, 2013. The meeting was attended by Provincial and Regional Superiors and their Boards. During this meeting the superiors shared the developments/progress,

challenges, concerns, needs and chances they encounter in their respective Areas and which show how unique each area actually is. Through these sharings we felt enriched and united. Each Area shared information about the efforts they have been taking and the concerns they have been facing which are all relevant to living out our spirituality, community and vowed life, apostolate and formation; formation in line with the follow up programs of the International Formation Team (IFT) and in line with the assets/financial matters of the Congregation.

The participants of the GCB looked at and tried to face the variety of the situations from their 'faith point of view'. With open heart they let the Holy Spirit guide and accompany them throughout the process of the Meeting, so that the recommendations and decisions which came up were the fruit of their deep faith in God.

May the repentance exclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI in the Year of Faith motivate us to realize and share the riches of faith in a concrete way in our daily life. Pope Francis, chosen in conclave on March 13th 2013 and succeeding Pope Benedict XVI, reminded the Catholic Church that if there is no spiritual renewal, there will be no difference between the Church and a social institution. This message invites all of us to be brave enough to renew ourselves after the example of Pope Francis, who dares to step out of his comfort zone and live humbly. Humility is the fruit of faith emanating from a deep personal

relationship with Jesus Christ. May the commemoration of the foundation of the Congregation invite us to renew ourselves and to show repentance the way Mother Elisabeth did; Mother Elisabeth who was perseverant and faithful in establishing deep relations with Jesus Christ. We hope that the Year of Faith will, for all of us, become an opportunity full of grace to engage in spiritual renewal, so that we, as CB religious, will be capable of presenting new life; life that brings salvation. In spite of all the challenges and difficulties we meet on our dynamic path through life we can always, together with Mother Elisabeth, put everything into the hands of God and have Him make all things perfect according to His Will.

Happy feast day to all of you!

News from the General Office

1. The General Consultative Body Meeting (GCB) 2013 was held in Yogyakarta from February 17th till March 6th. The Theme of the meeting was Mysticism and Prophecy in the Heart of Our Congregation. This theme was chosen as to deepen the General Chapter's 2011 theme: "Love's Burning Flame in us release, that to the world I servant be." In this meeting the leaders of the Congregation (The General Board members and the Provincial/Regional Board members) sat together to discern the signs of the times in

order to arrive at a common vision. The vision that can guide the direction of the Congregation (cf., Constitutions 188).

This meeting also served as ongoing formation for the leaders especially in deepening the leadership style of Mother Elisabeth. Fr Hendra Sutedja, SJ, from Jakarta was invited to be the resource person in this meeting.

The leaders who attended this GCB meeting were:

- a. The General Board members
 - b. Sr Guiseppo Jonkman and Sr Vincenza Pranawanti from the Dutch Province.
 - c. Sr Carolina Nuryati, Sr Yustiana Wiwik Iswanti, Sr Yesina Sumarni and Sr Yosefine Kusuma Hastuti from the Indonesian Province
 - d. Sr Bernadetha Kessy and Sr Marie José Voeten from The Tanzanian Region
 - e. Sr Maria Heddy Salvador and Sr Nerisa Jayme from the Philippine Region
 - f. Sr Goretti Wahyuningsih and Sr Patromana Wea from the East Indonesian Region.
2. Sr Elisia Terry Novaria Mulyadi has been appointed General Treasurer as of January 1st 2013. She has taken over this duty from Sr Domenico Kustinah who has been General Treasurer for many years. We gratefully thank Sr Domenico for her faithful dedication and fruitful service to

our Congregation. Her commitment and love in managing the finance and property of the Congregation in the generalate will be long remembered.

Let us unite in prayer and support Sr Elisia Terry with carrying out her new assignment as General Treasurer. We pray that through her administration and management of our temporal goods, her love of the Congregation grows even more and thus the life and mission of the Congregation shall bear abundant fruits of blessing in the future.

3. After the GCB meeting, Sr Berna Kessy, Regional Superior of Tanzania was given the opportunity to have an orientation in some communities and apostolic ministries in Indonesia. She returned to Tanzania on April 4th, 2013. We hope that the experiences gained during this period of orientation will enrich her in being of service to the sisters in the Region.
4. After the GCB meeting, sr Vincenza paid a visit to Timor Leste for a couple of days. We hope that this visit will inspire our sisters in this country and that it can serve as a sign of support, encouragement and unity amongst ourselves.
5. Sr Terry left for Indonesia on January 28th, 2013. She attended the GCB meeting as General Treasurer and at the same time coordinated the work of the secretary committee for the meeting.

6. Sr Domenico left for Indonesia on February 1st, 2013. She attended the GCB meeting where she, together with sr Terry, presented their report on finance. She continued her stay in Indonesia for holidays and returned to the Netherlands on April 24th, 2013 together with Sr Rosaria and Sr Jane Ann.
7. Srs Guiseppo and Terry returned to the Netherlands on March 13th, 2013.
8. Srs Lisbeth and Hetty returned to the Netherlands on April 21st, 2013.
9. Sr Melanie Giniyati and sr Tavana have meanwhile finished their Sabatical Program in EAPI, the Philippines. Sr Melanie started the course on January 3rd and went back to Indonesia on April 3rd, 2013. We hope that this renewal program nourishes their spiritual needs and helps them to manage their future ministries.
10. Sr Cresencia Lagunsad has meanwhile ended her sabatical year in the Philippines after her term of office as General Board member. We pray that this one year period has enriched and inspired her.
11. **DVD ‘Arches and Bridges’ (Documentary film on our Congregation)**

One of the positive impacts of globalization is that it challenges us to go deeper, to respond to the question posed

to us, “how/where are we now as a Congregation?” The General Consultative Body Meeting of 2010 committed itself to maintain the internationality of our Congregation. The decisions and recommendations encourage all Areas to be creative in finding ways to live out and spread our CB Spirituality. In support to this call, the General Board has produced a film entitled: “Arches and Bridges”. This film is about our Congregation and leads us through its past, its present and its future. This film shares the history, spirituality, inspiration and ideals of our Foundress, Mother Elisabeth Gruyters, and the many sisters who have followed her. We will see their efforts to find Christ in every person, to build bridges between heaven and earth. This DVD hopefully opens up new horizons, enlivens our creativity, and releases our talents and skills. At the same time we are challenged to live our life as true CB sisters.

Therefore, we hope that each Area will show this DVD to our mission partners, co-workers, friends and benefactors so as to have them share in our spirituality.

For more information please contact sr Elisia Terry (zr.terry@zustersonderdebogen.nl or eterrycb@yahoo.com).

12. GB members to be contacted for the Areas

In order to develop better communication and support for the Areas, the GB has to allocate its tasks and will, to that end, appoint a contact for each Area. This sister’s main task

is to keep in touch with the Areas entrusted to her and thus provide the other General Board members with regular information on developments and concerns in her Areas. To achieve this, we inform you of the following:

- 1) Sr Rosaria is the contact person for the Dutch Province, the Indonesian Province and the USA.
- 2) Sr Lisbeth is the contact person for the Philippine Region and Norway.
- 3) Sr Jane Ann is the contact person for the Tanzanian Region and Brazil.
- 4) Sr Hetty is the contact person for the East Indonesian Region and Belgium.

13. Agenda of the General Board

SISTERS	DATES	ACTIVITIES
Sr Hetty	Jan-27	Yogyakarta, GCB meeting
Sr Rosaria	Feb 3 – Feb 6	Kupang, with Sr Terry
Sr Lisbeth and Sr Jane Ann	Feb 1 – 4, Feb 10 - 11	The Philippine Region, meeting with the RB and visited Stella Duce Learning Centre in Tagaytay.
General Board	March 7 – 8	Yogyakarta, meeting with the Regional Boards of Tanzania, the Philippines,

		and East Indonesia
General Board	March 10 - 11	Yogyakarta, meeting with the Provincial Board of Indonesia and Regional Board of East Indonesia.
General Board	March 18 – April 13	Yogyakarta, visit to the communities.
General Board	April 17 - 18	Yogyakarta, meeting with the Provincial Board of Indonesia.
Sr Rosaria	May 1 - May 9	Rome, UISG meeting

In Memoriam

I have asked the LORD for one thing – this is what I desire!
I want to live in the LORD’s house all the days of my life,
so I can gaze at the splendor of the LORD
and contemplate in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

The Dutch Province

1. Sr Quirina Hafakker was born in Hilversum on July 23rd 1920, made her profession in our Congregation on November 18th 1944 and passed away in Maastricht on Saturday, November 24th, 2012.

2. Sr Christilla Post was born in Diemen on October 3rd 1914, made her profession in our Congregation on November 22nd 1935 and passed away in Heerlen on Thursday, December 13th, 2012.
3. Sr Felicia Austie was born at Losser on June 28th 1921, made her profession in our Congregation on May 14th 1946 and passed away in Maastricht on Wednesday, December 19th, 2012.
4. Sr Protatia Quadvlieg was born in Kerkrade on August 23rd 1913, made her profession in our Congregation on November 22nd 1935 and passed away in Heerlen on Sunday, December 23rd, 2012.
5. Sr Cordula Bosch was born in Raalte on January 8th 1923, made her profession in our Congregation on May 6th 1953 and passed away in Maastricht on Wednesday, January 7th, 2013.
6. Sr Felix Westerwoudt was born in Delft on September 21st 1916, made her profession in our Congregation on September 29th 1940 and passed away in Maastricht on Friday, February 15th, 2013.
7. Sr Rosaria van Wees was born in Amsterdam on October 13th 1916, made her profession in our Congregation on November

22nd 1935 and passed away in Maastricht on Monday, February 25th, 2013.

8. Sr Emila Schön was born in Tjandoer, Indonesia, on May 12th 1910, made her profession in our Congregation on February 2nd 1940 in Indonesia and passed away in Maastricht on Friday, March 8th, 2013.

News from our missionaries

1. Sr Josefina Estoque from the Stella Maris community in the Netherlands stayed in the Philippines for some activities from October 27th 2012 – January 15th 2013.
2. Sr Regina Sumiyatni has served the Tanzanian Region for many years as Formator and as Regional Superior. She handed over these responsibilities and returned to Indonesia for good in February 2013. We thank her for her service in Tanzania and pray that her re-entry process in Indonesia will proceed smoothly and that she will soon get accustomed to her new assignment.
3. Sr Evelyn Aranas from Brazil arrived in the Philippines on January 27th 2013 for vacation. During this home leave, she attended her sister's funeral. We pray for the repose of the soul of her sister and for strength for the family. She will stay in the Philippines until May 11th 2013 and devote her time to spiritual renewal and updating.

4. Sr Domenico Kustinah from the Carolus convent in Maastricht stayed in Indonesia for her holidays, after having attended the GCB meeting. She returned to the Netherlands on April 24th 2013.
5. Sr Vincenza Pranawanti, board member of the Dutch Province and member of the Proosdij convent in Maastricht, took her holiday in Indonesia from March 15th – May 13th 2013 after having attended the GCB meeting.
6. Sr Reni Susi Ngadi from the Tanzanian Region came to Indonesia on April 7th 2013, to have a retreat and celebrate the 25th jubilee of her religious profession. She will continue her stay to enjoy some home leave as well.

Kind regards,
On behalf of the General board

Sr Rosaria Nur Hardiningsih
General Superior

