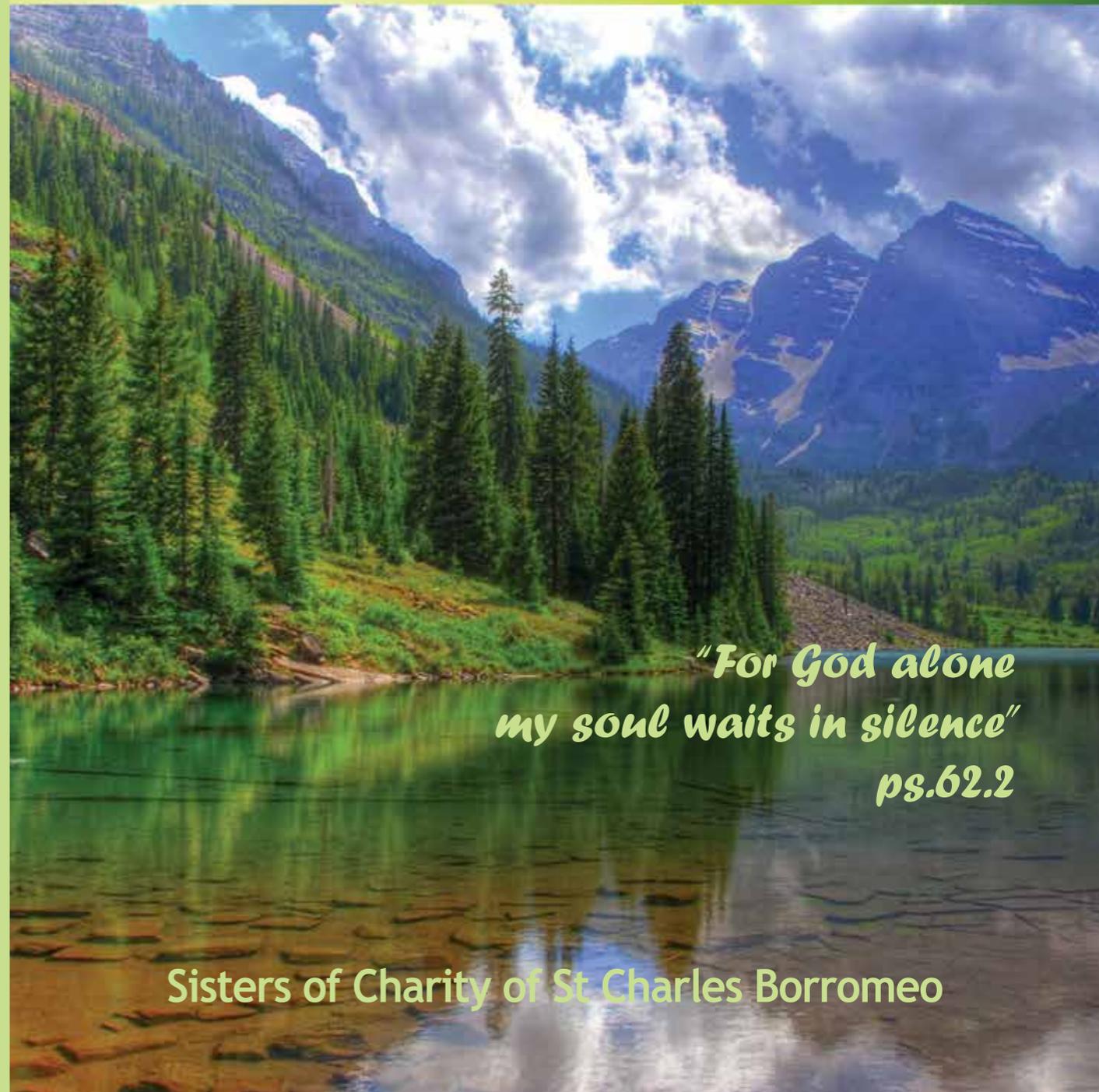




CB Inter In

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*"For God alone
my soul waits in silence"
ps.62.2*

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Sisters of Charity of St Charles Borromeo

Preface



God speaks to us in silence

“First and foremost we arranged a very healthy and quiet place of prayer...” EG 58

Prayer and silence, peace and quiet are essential to our lives as religious. For, it is in silence, peace and quiet that we can hear God’s voice. The presence of God is a mere whispering. Seldom does He speak to us in loud voice. Once, Mother Teresa was being asked: “Mother, what do you consider the most important spiritual practice for your sisters?” She answered: “Silence, interior and exterior silence.” And she continued saying: “We need silence to seek God, He cannot not be found in noise and restlessness.

Often we hear people say: “God is omnipresent.” It’s true. But God also calls us to seek Him and His countenance, so that knowing God to be present everywhere is not a matter of the head alone but also of the heart, of actually EXPERIENCING it. Not merely a ‘rational knowing’, but rather a looking into our heart and listening to our faith. When we seek God’s countenance we will find HIM (2 Chron. 15:2, Prov 8:17). When we seek and find Gods countenance it will be noticeable for the people around us, just like Mozes’ face radiated when he saw God’s Glory (Exodus 33:18+34:29).

Silence itself, however, is not a means but an end to meet God. It is the way leading towards the “EXPERIENCE of HIS PRESENCE”, His touch, His voice. And once interior-exterior silence and room for God have been conditioned in us, we will become more sensitive to hearing God’s voice in our daily pursuits.

In silence, together with God, we are being renewed and changed. That’s why silence can strenghten us and give us a new outlook on life. Therein we are full of God’s grace, which enables us to serve with joy.

We cannot experience a life of silence, solitude, humility and prayer, without the grace of God, without living after the example of Mary, ‘woman of silence’ and without meditating on the Word of God in the silence, peace and quiet of our heart.

On behalf of the editorial staff
Sr Yulita Mursamsilah

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THE COMING INTO BEING OF ONDER DE BOGEN'S 'SPIRITUALITY CENTRE'.

José Smolders - Kessels
(Co-ordinator Spirituality Centre)
Maastricht, Nederland



'Spirituality Centre'

At the General Chapter of 2005 it was decided that the 'Onder de Bogen' Convent in Maastricht was to remain the Motherhouse of our worldwide Congregation. The seat of the Generalate would remain where Mother Elisabeth had left her footprints. During that same Chapter the following wish was expressed:

"May, one day, spirituality be shared from this place from the inside to the outside and from the outside to the inside."

In view of the ever smaller number of Dutch sisters, this naturally demanded quite a bit of preparation. First of all, sisters from Indonesia and the Philippines came to live in the Netherlands in order to form an international community here. This Stella Maris-community which has existed for four years now, consists of sr Floriana, sr Hedwig, sr Josephine and sr Terry. Besides running the Spirituality Centre, these sisters are also active elsewhere.

Moreover, at the time, this building -a former convent- was in need of renovation. Gradually the sisters moved to new rooms and other communities in the convent. The building was completely renovated and plans could be made for the development of the Spirituality Centre.

A saying regularly heard in the Congregation in those days was: 'the lamp has not been put out, yet...'.
The lamp has not been put out, yet, but... how to keep it burning..., how to pass on its light..., and how are we to give form to this centre? We returned to the Source... .

As a starting point we asked ourselves two questions:

What are the requirements of today and what was Elisabeth Gruyters' vision?

What are today's requirements?

Consider the deeper meaning of human existence. To return from alienation to which this hurried existence forces us. This demands peace and reflection.

What was E.G's vision?

She wanted to go back to the essence of mankind. To help them return to their innermost selves. The focal point - in each human being - wherein God's presence has been preserved.

In our hectic Dutch society with its profusion of sounds and images that reach us via cell phone, computer, TV or radio, quite a number of people get lost and become increasingly removed from God and themselves. They often feel like they are no longer connected with people around them and life seems to have become meaningless. When this happens there's talk of a crisis. For, as the saying goes, "Necessity is the mother of invention."

One starts looking for places where one can reflect and dig deeper, in order to get in touch with oneself again and be touched. It is an opportunity to rediscover the words from the Gospel, the rituals and the liturgy. That now is what Onder de Bogen wants to offer: a quiet, contemplative place within the security of the convent community.

Experience will be the key-word.

Experiencing silence, rest, simplicity, attention and unity.

What used to be simply 'believing' has, in present day times, usually become 'experiencing'

We have all been raised in the Catholic tradition. It formed part of our life as early as childhood. Why would you not believe? But times have changed. The meaning of religion, of the church, of faith is no longer self-evident.

And yet, people start looking for God! Why? Because at the heart of every human being there is and always will be the desire to meet the inner You; to become aware of the values and meaning of life.

You will meet God, the Unnamable One, in silence, in prayer, in meditation and that expresses itself in compassion for our neighbour. For, what happens out of that Love does not focus on success in life but on its quality. Or, the way Elisabeth Gruyters puts it:

"For when God speaks to the heart, love does not keep silent".

The aim of this Spirituality Centre as officially recorded in the Statutes

Offering a 'hospitable home' where peace and quiet reign, so that in the encounter guests can:

- find themselves.
- reflect on their lives alone or together with others.
- pass on inspiration. (share and develop spirituality, also beyond the boundaries of the religious community).
- continue and pass on Mother Elisabeth's spiritual heritage to the next generations in a modern way ■



José Smolders - Kessels
(Co-ordinator 'Spirituality Centre')

May her spiritual heritage
be an inspiration to many

ELISABETH GRUYTERS STATUE FOR FUTURE TIMES

Sr Adeltruda Jongerius
Maastricht, Nederland



This statue was presented to us as a gift by our three acolytes on the last day of the jubilee year

You may all still have a fair recollection of April 29th 2012, the day on which we, after one year of intense preparations, celebrated that 175 years ago our Congregation was founded.

In all our areas it became a glorious day which started off with a solemn Eucharistic celebration. In our Dutch Province a large number of invitees were present and a great many congratulatory wishes, flowers and gifts came our way; offered to us by a.o. the mayor, staff and many other people.

Less known is the fact that some felt there was something missing. This was the general feeling of our three acolytes (Henk, Nico and Ton) who have served our Congregation for ages. On that feast-day itself they had nothing to give but, on the last day of the

jubilee year, the three of them decided to present us with a gift which suited the occasion.

They asked an artist friend, mr Ad van Wersch, to create something special. What follows below is an abbreviated version of some positive feelings with regard to what it was they had asked for:

“A real honour. Immediately ideas started popping up in my mind. But, before making any definitive designs I really wanted to sample the atmosphere of Onder de Bogen’s convent. After having made an appointment I was hospitably received by sr Paulie and sr Blanda. They led me through several rooms.... I was impressed. What impressed me even more was the love with which the sisters talk about their convent. The entire atmosphere made that, all of a



Clarionists playing at the celebration

sudden, it hit me.... a statue of Elisabeth Gruyters is what I wanted...

When, as a sinner, one opts for sculpturing a statue of a woman who stood so close to God it requires some contemplation. Our joint prayer had started. From that day onwards we talk to each other and I hope to keep doing this for a long time to come...

I made a start with moulding her head, for I wanted her to look at me during the creative process, then her hands; hands that not only give but also receive."

The artist opted for a number of symbols:

"Elisabeth is holding a crystal ball, which symbolizes the present, the past and the future. However, she doesn't look into the crystal ball, doesn't need the crystal ball to tell her what lies ahead... for, she knows already. And when the sunlight shines on the crystal ball it also symbolizes God and His message to the world; the message Elisabeth carried out in word and deed."

The artist put two relics, one from St Vincent de Paul and one from St Servaas, referring to the roots of the Congregation, there where her heart is. When the wax model was ready for casting in bronze the foundry appeared to be only two kilometres from the grave where Elisabeth Gruyters' mortal remains lie. Reason for the sculptor of the statue, to visit her grave and pursue further contact with her. Then the waiting, hoping and praying started. But... all things will come. After a couple of weeks the statue was ready.

Meanwhile the last day of the jubilee year came in sight, for which one or two things still needed to be organized. All convents received an invitation and we were asked to -just before the clock struck three- be present near our new 'Spirituality Centre' where the unveiling of the statue was going to take place.

It was a very impressive happening.

General and Provincial Board, sr Blanda, sr Paulie, the three acolytes and their wives, the artist and his partner, the clarionists and their partners, who had all been invited, went to the place where the cloth covered statue stood. On behalf of the acolytes Nico Beckers said a few words. Then the clarionists started to play. They were in dress uniform which made it very formal. Then the artist, Ad van Wersch, explained how the statue came into being under his hands. How it came about while talking to Elisabeth.

De clarionists started to play again after which sr Rosaria, General Superior, and sr Guiseppo, Provincial Superior, did the unveiling.

Sr Guiseppo delivered a short speech, after which the music of the clarionists sounded.

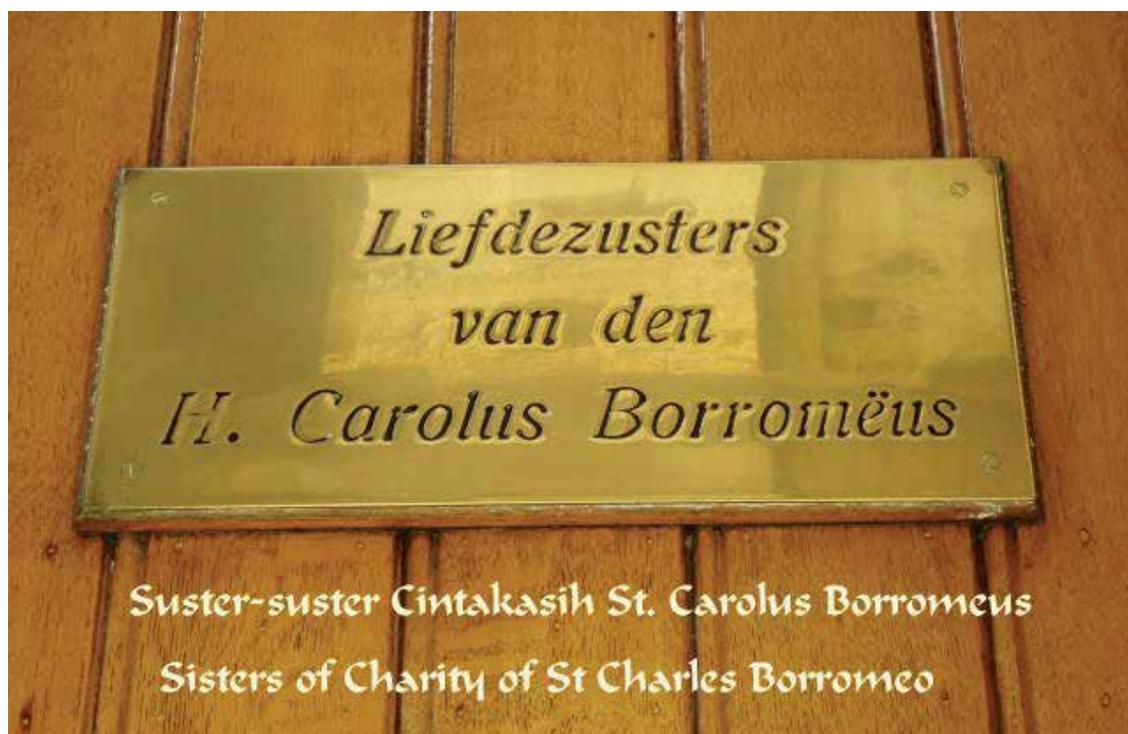
After the ceremony people socialized over a cup of coffee which was being served at several locations in the convent. All people present that afternoon experienced it as a worthy end to the jubilee year ■



Unveiling of the statue by sr Rosaria and sr Guiseppo

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT CHARLES BORROMEIO

Sr Yulita Mursamsilah
Maastricht, the Netherlands



Every year we celebrate the anniversary of our Congregation.

At the onset our Congregation did not have a name. Mother Elisabeth wasn't worried about it. It was by approval of the Rules and Statutes that Rome appointed Saint Charles Borromeo as our Patron Saint. Since then we are officially named "Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo" (see: 'Letter to Mother Elisabeth', CB Inter In nr 62).

This name is also well-known among the people who live in countries where our Congregation

is present and active. From this name arise a great number of aspects which encourage us to contemplation and self-reflection. Like in the previous edition, we are again invited to ponder on: "*Can my face reflect Mother Elisabeth's spirit of today?*" To answer this question one should recognize oneself in people to whom one looks up. In this issue I would not only like to exchange thoughts with you on the name of our Congregation but also focus on another aspect, namely: "*Am I worthy to carry the name 'Sister of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo'?*"

Most of our sisters living outside the Netherlands add CB to their name. CB indicates that the sister is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo.

What's in a name?

Names are important. Your name is who you are.

It is quite normal for parents to give their child a name immediately after birth. The parents have probably thought of a name long before their child was born. In Javanese culture the name of the child expresses the hope of the parents. A newborn boy is for instance named: Bambang Suryo Sentoso. The expectations of the parents speak through this name namely that the child will radiate a sense of security and inner peace. Later on, when the child gets sickly, its parents may think: could the name have been too heavy for the child? And, though their expectations remain the same, they will change his name into a less heavy one. The name Bambang Surya Sentosa is changed into Slamet which means 'safe from' and 'protected against danger' etc.etc.

Also in the Bible we come across name changes.

Take for example the book of Genesis.

God gave Adam a woman. And that woman was named 'mannine'. But later on Adam changed this name into Eve.

Why? Because the name first given expresses fall, pain and death. Pain penetrating the very heart of creation. For, Adam and Eve extricated themselves from God and thus death became a part of life.

How does Adam react to these horrible words? He gave his wife a new name. He calls her Eve, which means "Life", "Source of Life".

He now names her after God's promise: Eve. Life.

"The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living". (Gen.3.20)

"We take great pride in bearing the name 'Sisters of Charity'. It does sound a bit posh but I am also proud of the more simple name 'Zusters Onder de Bogen'", sr Immaculee once wrote in her 'Letter to Mother Elisabeth'. Both names will do as long as the ones who bear these names radiate that they truly are loving, humble and modest in their daily life. We may take pride in the love and grace of God! And we remain modest despite the fact that we are God's chosen ones. I am proud of my fellow sisters.

Also Mother Elisabeth was proud: *"Come and see for yourself, for now we have our third convent, with the help of God."* (EG.56) *She was proud of God's grace.*

The psalmist was proud of the Lord: "... my soul makes its boast in the Lord, O magnify the Lord with me" (Ps. 34, 3).

We are chosen to pass on His Love. We have seen and experienced how God's hand works in what He started in and through Mother Elisabeth. In short, God works in us, individually and collectively.

Love, a big word!

Love is not a matter of obligation, but a favour, a matter of the heart and soul. Love supposes effort and dedication. This means that we ought to do as much as we can for each other. It is all about 'wanting' to please others.

In 1 Cor.13. 4, Paul talks about love; the love that is patient and kind, not jealous or boastful. That's quite clear to us.

According to me love should be tangible and obvious, we should be able to hear and touch it.

Just like the love Mother Elisabeth shows to God and to others, especially to the poor and suffering. That is true love.

In fact the word love is imperishable and indispensable. She is the stimulant of creativity and expresses itself in the smallest tokens of appreciation offered to others e.g. writing a card, sending an e-mail message, buying flowers, decorating, making a nice gesture, go shopping for other sisters, listening, complementing someone and paying a thousand-and-one attentions..., all of this in fact is a way of 'doing' things just like putting away booklets in the chapel, doing the washing up etc.

Unselfish love

We love our fellow sisters, our parents, our friends, because they are good to us. With Jesus it is just the other way round. He loves you first and because of this you become a good person. He loves Zacchaeus who, because of this, gives away half of his possessions to the poor. He loves Peter even though he betrays Him three times and Peter

becomes a rock of faith. He loves a cast out leper which makes this man one of them again. That's the way we should act.

By practicing the word Love, all is said and done! Then we may rightly call ourselves SISTERS OF CHARITY.

But, what if we have not lived up to our name in daily practice? Should we change it? Imagine that, in this case, we would follow the abovementioned customs of Javanese culture. Ought the name to be changed then, because its bearer does not reflect its meaning? And then what? Should we keep changing the name of our Congregation? Obviously neither a desirable nor a very realistic thought.

In conclusion we can say: not the name of our Congregation needs to be changed, but we ought to let the name 'Sisters of Charity' speak through the way we live, through our deeds, through the meaning we give to our life, and through the expression of our faith. Thus, we will be worthy bearing that name and people can approvingly say: "Yes, they do live according to their name: 'Sisters of Charity'." ■

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT (Mk. 6,37)

Sr Karita Suharti
Leut, Belgium



Sr Karita and sr Lisbeth

Sitting in the living room, I just have to look at the picture of sr Felix hanging on the wall. The photo was taken by our parish priest Marcel Cloet from Brussels, when he visited Maastricht with the entire group of the parish of St-Gillis. On that occasion sr Felix was interviewed, that's why the picture looks so natural. It is as if she's talking. Whenever I look at this picture, I can still hear her say over and over again: "as religious we want to live EVANGELICAL lives, we must make do with what we have!!!" To me this saying is like a SPIRITUAL HERITAGE.

I believe this heritage to run parallel with what we have always occupied ourselves: the spirituality of our Foundress, Mother Elizabeth, whose life was also based on the Gospel.

Working and living together intensely with sr Felix for thirty years (twenty-five of which in Brussels), has deeply influenced my life.

Looking back on the things we used to do, the film on the way of life we lived back then vividly comes to mind, as if it were yesterday.

"You give them something to eat", Jesus said to His disciples. And the more they shared, the more fish and bread were multiplied till all were satisfied.

The same we did and experienced for twenty-five years in Saint-Gillis, Brussels, together with sr Felix.

We distributed bread and other foodstuff, handed out clothes and sheltered the homeless. From the very first till the very last day we were never alone in the house. There was always someone asking for

shelter. We were never short of anything. "It is the Lord!" sr Felix used to say.

We also counted on St Joseph, the Lord's foster father! In Brussels we took turns in cooking meals for each other and often also for guests. Sr Felix took over de 'Clergy meal' from the Daughters of Love (Filles de Marie in French). It was a midday meal for the monthly gathering or reunion of the parish priests, the deacons and pastoral workers of the federation or pastoral unit of Saint-Gillis and Vorst. And every time they complimented her. She herself thoroughly enjoyed the great food and was thankful for it. In it she not only tasted the gift of God's love, but also the love with which these food dishes had been prepared. Thus she experienced what Saint Paul advises: "...So, whether you eat or drink, do all to the Glory of God" (1 Cor.10.31).

In Indonesia it is customary to share your food with neighbours, guests etc. In Leut-Maasmechelen we do the same. On every occasion, that is. Not only during all the get-togethers, meetings or when there is a reunion, but also in working groups and with all kinds of co-workers. And also of course with the volunteers. Like many other parishes we organize a Lenten 'soep-op-de-stoep'* fundraiser with a voluntary donation for Welfare as well as a Lenten coffee-stop fundraiser for Share and Share Alike. We also organize a plain solidarity meal to (learn) to share what we have with our undernourished and exploited fellowmen in developing countries. The way Jesus told and taught us to do. For, He came and still comes to share everything with us. That way He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of the Bible. He started His public life with the turning of water into wine and sharing it at the marriage at Cana (John 2, 1-11), with the multiplying and sharing of the bread and fish (Mk.6, 43), with the breaking of the bread thus sharing His Body and Blood even with us at

Passover (Mk.14,22) and with the people on their way to Emmaus who recognized Him in the breaking of the bread (Lc.24,35). It may be a bit far stretched to call the Bible a cookery book, but the term 'gourmet guide' most certainly will do.

Is it not the Book of Genesis that starts with: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden" (2,16)? And does not the Bible -in the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse- conclude with: "To them I will grant to eat from the tree of life" (2,7)? According to John, Jesus testifies by saying: "I am the bread of life" (6,35) so that "many will sit at table in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt.8,11)?



Sr Felix

The saying goes: The way through a man's heart is through his stomach. In order to win people's hearts, God gives Himself as food; to share His Love with us so that we can also do this with each other "through Him, with Him and in Him". Also in a daily Christian gastronomic culture. We wish each other and sister Felix who is now a guest at the eternal banquet, "Selamat makan" or Enjoy your meal! For, selamat cognates to the Semitic word 'Salem' or 'Sjalom' which means PEACE.

Naturally, I recognize all of this in other fellow sisters who want to make themselves familiar with and live our spirituality.

I am really grateful to sr Felix for all the things I have learnt from her. THE BIBLE is my COMPASS. In it is everything one needs, to live one's life on every moment in time under all circumstances, here and now, with ups and downs, and to be a human being after God's heart ■

*Soep-op-de-stoep = dishing out soup to stand up against poverty

THE COMPASSIONATE LOVE

Sr Heddy Salvador
Quezon City, the Philippines



Sr Heddy

Our Charism “The compassionate love of Christ Crucified” which was a product of long reflections and prayers was officially formulated during the 1998 general Chapter held in Davao, Philippines. That was about 15 years ago. We are thankful because before it was difficult for us in the Philippines, being new if we are asked about our Charism and we can’t give a statement which was expected. However more than the statement of our Charism, I think what is more important is the living out of our Charism and our Spirituality. As our sisters in the Netherlands before would say, there is no need for a statement because they have lived it out in their lives and the people acknowledged

them and have seen it in the witnessing of the life of the sisters.

Lately I happened to read an article entitled “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate” by Jose Antonio Pagola in the recent UISG bulletin. I was interested in it because it is related to our Charism as CB Sisters. However after reading this many things came to my mind as I prayed and reflect about it. The article emphasizes so much on the compassion of the Lord for us and all of creation. The compassion of the Lord for us is best described and explained in the two parables: The Prodigal Son and The Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the parable of the prodigal son, the

father was not obsessed about the morality of his son, instead he has waited for him, and when his son came back, still far off, he sees his son who had abandoned him and he was deeply moved. He ran to meet him, he embraced and kissed him and interrupted his confession to save him from humiliation and restored him as his son without hesitation and condition. This is a great metaphor of God's compassion, welcoming back sinners who commit sins not only once or twice or more but nonetheless welcomes him/her back.

The parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan helped the wounded man, brought him for treatment, paid for him and still promised to be back. The Samaritan responded with compassion to the victim, unlike the other two who happened to pass by that same route, although they may have important reasons. The Compassion of the Good Samaritan exhibits a real compassion and this is the compassion of God who wants to alleviate us from pains, suffering, oppression and anything that would hinder our humanity, from becoming happy. There are a lot of instances in the life of Jesus where He showed compassion like the cure of the sick: lepers, the blind, the possessed, the paralyzed etc. He did not cure them to prove His divinity but what moved Him was compassion.

As CB sister, I am often times challenged and reminded to be compassionate not only because this is our Charism but also because Mother Elisabeth, our Foundress, was compassionate. To mention two incidents in her biography "after visiting the sick at Calvarieberg Hospital I saw those people before my eyes and they occupied my mind" EG 113, also EG 43 and following which is Mother Elisabeth's experience with the Nijpels' family. She saw/witnessed their sufferings/difficulties and she was touched and was impelled to do something for them.

As I look back in my own journey in my early years before I joined religious life, I easily felt compassion if I see people suffering or people in dire need. It was also easy to do something or to respond/answer to a need at a given situation in my capacity. When I came to Manila the first time where there were street children/people, I struggled a lot that I was not able to do something. It was a struggle for me to see them dirty, sleeping and living in the streets. One time as a novice, I got the chance to talk this out to a sister. I was told "we cannot just help everyone". This was true and this somehow comforted me of how I felt that time. However this still kept hunting me because it was also different when I was not doing something, at least to help someone.

At present the number of the needy people in the street/society greatly increased. I have also grown in age but the challenge is still there on how to develop compassion as our Charism. I am worried that one day will come when I will just get used to this feelings/challenges and it will not affect me anymore. How can I in my own ways will be able to respond to this in my own little way and in my capacity? I would like to do something to be true to our mission, to be compassionate and be true to our CB charism. To do it myself from the very basic of relating to people I live with and also those I meet outside who are entrusted to my care. I hope I can still do something. How wonderful it is if we will be known as CB sisters by our compassion, our charism just like poverty for the Franciscans ■

VOCATION, A GIFT OF GOD

Sr Alfiana and Sr Esther
Novitiate, Kupang-Indonesia



“THE FOUNDATION THAT HAS BEEN LAID WILL BE BLESSED CONTINUOUSLY BY OUR DEAR LORD” (EG 75).

As candidates to religious life in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Charles Borromeo, it is but right to be grateful for the grace of vocation that we received as a gift.

Two years ago we experienced a day of grace - the 175th foundation anniversary of our Congregation. Since then, the life of the Congregation has increased by one more year and is now 177. In all these 177 years, i.o.w. since its foundation, the Congregation has encountered and gone through different challenges. In its conception, Mother Elisabeth did not have anything: no material and no household appliances (EG 25). Nevertheless, she worked hard with the grace of God and was not hopeless. She did not complain and did not give

up although there were many who ridiculed her and belittled her efforts (EG 55). Full of courage, Mother Elisabeth continued to move forward and achieved her heart's 'desire' - "If it pleases the Lord, I pray that in this place, the city of Maastricht, a Congregation will be founded where God will be served with sincerity . . ." (cf EG 5).

The gift of vocation in this Congregation is the most beautiful gift God has given to us because we thus got to know Mother Elisabeth and the pioneering Sisters, who exerted so much effort to continue doing God's work. We are also challenged to prepare ourselves really well in taking care of and living out the spirituality of our Foundress and nurture the life of the Congregation in the future.

When our formator asked us to reflect on the life of the novices in the past and at present, we came to see realities that are quite different. The life situation of the novices during the war was so simple and, yet, the novices had the spirit of perseverance and really lived according to the spirit of Mother Elisabeth. We, on the other hand, live in a safe world where everything we need is available. In this present situation, we are sometimes negligent and inclined to do what pleases us. We hold on tight to our securities. Through reflection, we came to realize that we have weaker perseverance and are inclined to want to live 'well' with no difficulties. We desire to have it all 'fast' and 'instantly', without much effort.

The said discoveries made us reflect deeper so that we can choose what needs to be given more attention to and developed so that the seed of vocation that was already planted in us will grow and prosper. We, who are under formation process, struggle to build the foundation of our vocation to a holy life by building a personal relationship with the Lord through faithfully training ourselves to discern and reflect on our psychological needs which sometimes make us fall in love with ourselves and become too critical of others. We immerse in the process of being educated and trained to be disciplined in our life of prayer, reflection and meditation. We train more in developing our personal character and do our work with honesty and without complaining. We sweep and mop the floors, clean the toilets, do the weeding, clean out the pigsty, the goat barn and chicken dens, go shopping at the market and do the cooking. We also bring Communion to sick parishioners and others. These activities support us in forming a balanced religious life.

We are aware that we are not capable of realizing the good values in ourselves without the help of



God. Openness to be guided helps us a great deal when undergoing the formation process although, because of this openness, we also experience many difficulties and challenges. The difficulties and challenges that we have experienced so far, we have created ourselves and, yet, God is always faithful in guiding us in our diversity of character both through our joyful and sad experiences. "Brothers and Sisters, try your best so that your call as the chosen one will be strengthened. Because of it, you will not fall. That is why you will receive full rights to enter the Kingdom of God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Ptr. 1:10-11). This word of God strengthens us when our spirit is weakened in undergoing formation. Finally, we thank the Congregation for having granted us the opportunity to study so that, through this formation process, we will experience God's love and care in our lives. The Congregation becomes the entrance door through which we can get to the Source of Water that gives Life, who is Jesus Christ ■

A NEW HORIZON

Sr Tavana
East Indonesia



Sr Tavana and participants

From November 2012 to May 2013, I got the opportunity to spend my sabbatical leave in the Philippines. It was an opportunity that brought blessings and much graces to my life. For six months, I joined the sabbatical program of the East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI) and attended a course on “Spiritual Direction for Formators” offered by EMMAUS (a center for psycho-spiritual formation for religious and lay people). Other than this, I was also given time to visit the different communities of the CB Philippine Region. All these experiences opened a new horizon to my life as a member of the Congregation.

One experience that impressed me was the course on “Spiritual Direction for Formators”. It only was a three-week course. There were 15 participants among whom 8 priests, 2 deacons, 1 brother, 3 sisters and a lay woman. The participants came from different countries e.g. the Philippines, Pakistan, Belgium, Poland, China and Indonesia. The venue was the Sacred Heart Retreat House at Novaliches.

In the beginning, although the theme was not new to me, I felt frustrated because of my limited knowledge of English. The course was intensive. There were lectures with reflections and prayers with personal guidance. Every day, there was deepening and group sharing. The

situation trained me to let go of my frustration and feeling of inferiority in speaking and made me courageous to share in spite of my limited English.

The course materials (hand outs), deepening and every time sharing was done, made that I got to know the beauty and challenges of my call as a spiritual director. Beautiful, because my apostolate guides me to see God's work in every person. Challenging, because it is about human life and not about inanimate things. A spiritual director has an important role in the initial and on-going formation in religious life. A spiritual director helps people whom she guides to a deeper relationship with the Lord and live it daily.

The three weeks experience with the priests and sisters from different congregations and nations who all have a sense of concern and deep commitment to formation of religious

life made me shy. I was ashamed, because I became conscious that, all along, I have not been grateful enough to be called 'Formator'. Many times I complained, was bored and was indifferent in accompanying aspirants/candidates. At the same time, however, I was also grateful because the experience invited me to see the goodness of God in really giving me the talents and graces as a Formator. I was also invited to become aware that the "Real Formator" is God himself who works in His own way and time on the formation of aspirants.

The course "Spiritual Direction for Formators" was quite concise. It brought something new to my life as a member of the Congregation and to my call as a formator. There is this feeling of deep gratitude because God has chosen and called me to be a formator; a call I could never have dreamed of before. I was invited to grow in humility and entrust my call to His care - "The Real Formator" ■

REMEMBERING OUR ROOTS

Sr Evelyn Aranas
Juazeiro, Bahia-Brazil



Sr Evelyn together with the children in Juazeiro- Brazil

When we had our community recollection in preparation for the feast-day of the Congregation last April 29, Sr Restie who was responsible as the facilitator of the day, chose the theme: “Remembering our Roots with Gratitude; Embracing the Future with Faith.” We started with a simple activity, the Stations of Gratitude which was divided into four stations: 1) The Desire to Enter a Convent. 2) To Serve God I am Capable. 3) The Prayer “Beloved” and 4) All Things will come.

As we went through each station, I remembered the beginnings of the foundation of the Congregation. How Mother Elisabeth went through hardships, doubts, rejections and yet she never gave up her desires until she heard the “yes” from heaven that all things will come.

The history of the Congregation was her own vocation history. And once again I was reminded of my own vocation history, how God called me and how I responded to His invitations to

follow him. God always initiates manifesting his great love for us and never forces us to answer immediately. He can be very patient waiting for our “yes” that sometimes it lasts for 16 years like Mo. Elisabeth but in other times it takes only a short while. Every sister has her story to tell of how one journeyed. Sometimes along the way there are obstacles that hinder the traveler to continue/pursue her desire to reach her destination.

As a Congregation we have gone through a lot of trials yet the captain, Jesus Christ, of the journey is always there never leaving his companions. As an individual sister, sometimes we lose sight of our destiny but God never abandons us. Thus for me looking back at the

time I felt my calling, I could not but say, thank you Lord for not abandoning me. You have journeyed with me along the years through sorrows and joys.

Each one is part of the history of the congregation, those who have gone before us and those who are still thinking to travel with us. And like our Foundress, Mother Elisabeth, with love and hope, we can say “all things will come” because God is love and faithful and he can never be unfaithful.

Once again I would like to thank the General Board and the Philippines Regional Board and all those people who have been part of my journey, for all the support and prayers throughout these years! Muito abrigado a todas! Happy Feastday!

CHASING DEADLINES

Sr Agnes Ofelia Simbillo, CB
Quezon-City, the Philippines



Sr Agnes standing in front of the new convent in Bohol

Many things are in my mind, unfortunately, nothing can be formed as an article. With my varied activities, my thoughts are scattered and it's difficult to write an article. To fulfill my commitment, allow me to share with you one interest that keeps me busy these days.

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEIO MISSION PARTNERS' SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

As I write this article, CBMP has accepted 37 scholars who will enter elementary, high school and (one) college. Ambitious? One can say that

we are! Why? Because we are relying completely on the grace of God and the good will of people!

How did it come about? Brother Bernard, SsSS, a monk based in the United States paid us, the Sisters including Sr. Evelyn who was joyfully on vacation, a visit. He was accompanied by the Vocation Promotion team of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Parish.

In the course of our conversation, Brother Bernard happily shared that partly, he owes his vocation

to serve God and the Church from Sr. Evelyn. While looking at her, He said that he was one of the youth catechists of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal parish who was taught and trained by Sr. Evelyn. He fondly remembered that they, the parish youth catechists would come to the CB compound and helped teach children from Escopa and its environs. He remembered the dedication of the Sisters especially that of Sr. Evelyn. He was grateful for the opportunity of working with her and his corresponding experiences.

After his sharing, we told him about the Sunday school class. We shared many news and developments that includes the tendency of poor families to change religion so that their children can study. The children are cutting classes or absent themselves in their classes and sometimes dropped out of school because of lack of financial support. Discussions followed on how to help and on how the problems can be avoided. Collectively, it was decided to help poor children so that they can continue their studies and be given hope for their future.

How to finance the project was another matter we discussed. We came into agreement that pledges and donations will be accepted from good hearted parishioners and friends. Brother Bernard good naturedly offer a light in the tunnel. He promised to talk the matter with his community and make efforts in raising fund. Their community decided to support the project.

What is the name of the group? It was during our second meeting that we came up with the name CB Mission Partners' Scholarship Program. Fitting because we are CB Sisters and they are our Mission Partners and the project is scholarship for poor children and seminarians from OLMM parish.

It was decided to adapt the name and its office will be at the MP's office in the compound.

The group was introduced to our Congregation's spirituality. The film 'Arches and Bridges' was shown to them and discussed by Sr. Agnes Ofelia. Election and appointments of officers was done. Below are the 'elected' officers: President - Vicky Ballester; Vice-President- Letty Roberto; Treasurer - Sr. Sally and Lorie C; Secretary - Nonette; Auditor - Gerry; P.R.O - Brother Gabriel; Consultants - Sr. Agnes Ofelia and Sr. Restie.

The plan was for the scholars to undergo Sunday catechesis and join other church groups like the Legion of Mary and the Altar Servers. The goal is for the children to have 'wholistic' education and training and learn to love God and serve their fellows.

At present, we have distributed notebooks and other school materials to the students and a seminarian. We are grateful to those who are supporting our efforts. Special thanks to the Briggitine Monks headed by Brother Bernard, who have pledged to send regular help. There are many more individuals who generously give donations and shares their time and talents. May God continue to bless them!

On our side, we are very grateful that a seed of an idea is taking roots. We are graced with the opportunity to share our spirituality to friends and carry out our Congregation's vision and mission. Co- workers and friends are offering not only their time, efforts, finances but also their talents.

May God be glorified and His people be served ■

GRANITE JUBILEE IN JUNE

Sr Stefani Indrawasih Gowidjaja
Moss, Norway



Sr Stefani (l), sr Paulie (r) among the youngsters in Norway

On June 30th 2013 it was ninety years ago that our sisters started ministering in Norway.

On occasion of this milestone sr Stefani wrote the following article for the parish magazine of Moss and asked to have it translated for CB Inter In.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO CELEBRATES ITS 90TH JUBILEE YEAR TO THANK GOD, NORWAY AND THE PARISH.

On June 12th 1918, ten of our sisters travelled from the Netherlands to the then Dutch East Indies on board the 'Frisia', a large ship, On the way over there, they had a ten-day delay in Bergen (Norway). The sisters were favourably impressed on seeing that beautiful city of Bergen and said: "Who knows, maybe our Congregation will also start ministering here in future times". After five

years this dream came true. Fantastic, don't you think!

On June 30th 1923 our four pioneers: sr Fulgentia, sr Constantina, sr Fortunata and sr Hermelindis left Rotterdam for the 'city of roses', Molde, in Norway. Mgr Johannes Olaf Smit had asked our Congregation to come and be of assistance in Norway. These four sisters worked hard. In honour of God they dedicated themselves to establishing a parish in Molde. Our first house. Later on, the sisters had a small hospital build there (1933) and a Kindergarten (1962). Since 1951, our sisters have engaged in all kinds of Kindergarten activities on a simple location. And with God's grace, the Congregation extended its pastoral works to Hamar one year after they had settled down in Molde. On May 29th 1924 they started ministering there. In 1934 they had a clinic build and in

1962 a Kindergarten. (The sisters started their Kindergarten activities in a carpenter's workshop in 1940)

Later on they settled in Kristiansund (1934), in Ålesund (1959), in Oslo-Bærum (1968) and in Moss (1980), our last house.

The sisters were competent and, strengthened by prayer, they fulfilled their ministries. Below follows the prayer Elisabeth Gruyters, our Foundress, has taught us (EG 41). In it, her deep faith in the Mystery of the Cross is expressed:

*O gentle Lover of my heart,
in Your suffering give me part.
Love's burning flame in me release
that to the world I servant be;
in evergrowing strength and care,
until eternal life we share.
Come... enter me, Sun divine
and wound with love this heart of mine.
Teach me to suffer in silence together with You
and be even at your side.*

As the Congregation only has few candidates the number of sisters in Norway has decreased sharply. Over the past ninety years 72 sisters have been of service in Norway. Now, there are just the two of us.

"Don't be sad. The joy that the Lord gives you will make you strong!" (Neh.8,10b).

We are grateful to God for the sisters who have sown the seed knowing that God will make it grow.

"I sowed the seed, Apollos watered the plant, but it was God who made the plant grow.

The one who sows and the one who waters really do not matter. It is God who matters, because he makes the plant grow. There is no difference between the man who sows and the man who waters; God will reward each one according to the work he has done.

For we are partners working together for God, and you are God's fields. You are also God's building" (1 Kor.3,6-9).

Now, on occasion of this granite jubilee, we ask for forgiveness and are grateful to God Almighty and to the Norwegian people. We are also grateful for the support we received from the parishes.

In silence we contemplate whether our hearts are still burning in love of God, of our neighbour and of ourselves?

Have we, in our life of prayer, in our being called to serve in Norway, through all graceful challenges and temptations, found God's Love in silence?

We dare sing to a well-known melody:

*CB sisters, servants of Jesus Christ
Bearers of love, on our restless earth.*

For ninety years we have been on this pilgrimage; a pilgrimage which we want to continue also after today. And while journeying we pray:

Oh, dear great God, we are thirsty, give us of that life-giving water:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (App.22,13).

DEAR LORD, WE PLACE EVERYTHING IN YOUR HANDS ■

NORWAY: PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF 2013

Sr Hilde Geers
Maastricht, Nederland



Sr Hilde (l) and sr Gjertrud (r)

For the Catholics in Norway the year 1923 was a special one because, encouraged by Bishop Jan Olav Smit, our first four CB sisters went there to be of assistance to the priest and the few Catholics who lived there at the time. On July 12th, 1923, they arrived in Molde.

For these pioneering sisters it was not that easy to get in touch with the local population which consisted for 95% of Lutherans. In the course of time the number of Catholic people increased sharply. Catholic refugees from Vietnam and a number of people from Poland, the Philippines and other countries came to live in Norway. Besides, there were also a number of Norwegian people who converted to Catholicism. One could say that the

Catholic Church in Norway is flourishing right now. Something I experienced a couple of months ago.

Several Catholic churches in Norway are being extended and in places where there is no church, they build one.

2013 is the year in which our sisters started ministering in Norway, now ninety years ago.

In 1960 I went to live and work in Molde (Norway), where I was of service in the Kindergarten started off by our sisters in 1951 in a small, alternative classroom. After one year a real Kindergarten was built. I stayed there till 1990. However, for lack of sisters, the Congregation had to close this community. And although both the hospital (where

our sisters also worked) and the Kindergarten had been sold a couple of years earlier, our sisters stayed on to be of service. Also the smaller house, in which we went to live after the sale, was sold in 1990. Several sisters returned to the Netherlands, some others were transferred to other communities.

After having been of service in Molde for thirty years, I moved to Hamar where I stayed for ten more years. In 2000 I moved back to the Netherlands because also the Hamar community was closed for lack of sisters.

I was so lucky to be able to revisit this country a couple of times. The first time in October 2001. It was by invitation on occasion of the 50th anniversary of Molde's Kindergarten. And in 2008, I travelled to Molde together with sr Gjertrud. We had been invited to be present at the reopening of the hospital after it had seen major interior renovations. Our travelling expenses and accommodation were paid for by Molde. Quite an adventure! Having been invited surprised us, after all our sisters had left Molde such a long time ago.

For me 2013 became a special year because that year I celebrated my 80th birthday. It was a pleasant day spent in 'Onder de Bogen' together with my sister, five brothers and in-laws. While having dinner they offered me a holiday trip to Norway as a present. Honestly speaking, I must admit that I was not all that happy with it. My relatives noticed this and asked me what was wrong. I told them that I dreaded the commotion at Schiphol Airport. My youngest brother then said he would accompany me. I liked his proposal and started planning my trip. Because of the vast distance between Hamar and Molde, the places I really wanted to visit, I scheduled a fortnight's holiday. My brother, who had probably counted on being away for only one week, took along his wife. So there were three of us on this trip. After having arrived in Norway, they went their way and I went mine. Since they are both sports enthusiasts they made a pilgrimage on foot whilst I visited friends and acquaintances. After one week we reunited again, telling each other about our experiences.

I had to alter my itinerary a little because of the flooding. Days of summerly weather alternated with days on which the rain kept pouring down. This heavy rainfall caused the snow up in the mountains to melt faster. The immediate consequence being that it became impossible to travel by public transportation. The couple at whose house I stayed over, offered me a plane ticket to Molde. A present for my 80th birthday. Now, how about that! Ever so convenient as Molde has an airport.

While in Norway, I naturally also paid our fellow sisters, sr Pauline and sr Stefani who live in Moss, a visit and attended the Eucharistic celebration on Whit Monday. Like I did the day before in Hamar. Both in Hamar and in Moss I was favourably impressed with the large number of youngsters who joined the celebrations. The same I experienced in Molde, where also a great many youngsters and children were present in the church. How big a difference with the Netherlands, where the churchgoers are mainly elderly people.

As the parishioners in Norway often have to travel long distances they are always offered the opportunity to socialize over a cup of coffee in the parish hall after Mass. In Hamar, they had organized a barbeque, this time in the back yard of the presbytery. The parishioners had brought all kinds of foodstuff. It was one big family happening.

During these fourteen days I not only stayed over at our sisters' in Moss but also at the homes of three parishioners. I also was to meet with a great number of dear old friends and strangers.

It was an unforgettable holiday which I enjoyed body and soul. I am grateful to both the Congregation and my relatives for granting me the opportunity to make this trip. It was good to see that the parishioners care for their church and help clean and maintain it.

I believe I can say that the seed that has been scattered there by our seventy-two sisters since 1923, is now blossoming ■





Christmas

Every time a hand reaches out
To help another...that is Christmas
Every time someone puts anger aside
And strives for understanding
That is Christmas
Every time people forget their differences
And realize their love for each other
That is Christmas
May this Christmas bring us
Closer to the spirit of human understanding
Closer to the blessing of peace!

~Anon



Bless us Lord,
this Christmas
with quietness of mind
Teach us to be patient and
always to be kind

“Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year”

COLOPHON

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