

BASIC LETTER

APRIL 2015



Maastricht, April 2015

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

Grace to you and Peace!

In a few days' time we will once more celebrate the foundation day of the Congregation. Its 178th anniversary to be precise. What makes it different from our previous celebrations is that it is being celebrated all the way through the Year of Consecrated Life, which lasts from November 21st, 2014 up to October 28th, 2015. In the light of the call of Pope Francis to 'Wake up the World!', we signify this Congregation's feast day as a moment to 'not only remember and recount the glorious history of the Congregation in the past but also look at our great history now and in the future that still needs to be accomplished. Thus, we are invited to look to the future, where the Spirit is sending each of us in order to do even greater things' (cf. Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* no. 110).

The first aim of the Year of Consecrated Life is to look at the past with gratitude. The question is: why should we be grateful? Is it because of the length of our history that God grants us so that the Congregation may exist and flourish? Or ... is it because of the breadth of the mission we carry out in different countries and in different fields of works of charity? We surely are very grateful for all of this. But there is another reason which is far more important, namely because God has called us to Religious Life and we may carry it out in the Charism of Mother Elisabeth. We are grateful for the rich charism; the charism we inherited from her, who with the help of Paulus

Antonius van Baer, the dean of the St Servaas church in Maastricht, established this Congregation. In it we see the hand of God who called her to follow Christ more closely. She tried to translate the message of the Gospel into her particular way and read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith, as she truly believed in God's Love and Providence.

Let us look closely to this specific charism so that the deepest meaning of her vision is revealed to us as we follow Christ in her footsteps.

Mother Elisabeth spoke of God's Providence with great passion although she did not provide any philosophical and theological analysis of it in her texts. She spoke about it quite often, explicitly and implicitly. She believed in God's Providence because she was able to see, feel and experience God's love, care and compassion in her life. All of this enabled her to give meaning to the contrasting realities she encountered in her life. She gave the best example and showed us the way how to deal with our life, which is quite challenging sometimes and not always under our control.

Just like her, we, too, as human beings, experience loss and gain, chaos and design, abandonment and care, exile and homecoming, sickness and health, happiness and sadness, birth and death, etc. These experiences blend with and shape one another and create the whole reality of life. They form my life as a person and our life as a Congregation. From Mother Elisabeth we learn how to grasp, feel, and experience the sustaining benevolence of God's Providence in these realities of life with faith and how to access the providential meaning hidden in them. She wrote, *"Oh clement and merciful God; how inscrutable are your judgement, how unreachable are your*

ways. You who do not despise the desires of the poor and put us to the test year after year in order to confirm us more and more in the sweet hope of Your infinite goodness and mercy. May your Holy Name be blessed forever and ever. Amen.” (EG 131)

Indeed, God’s love and compassion are difficult to grasp and His ways are unpredictable. We all experience that God often surprises us. Pope Francis said: “...*God is the God of surprises. God is always new: He never contradicts Himself, never says that what He had said was wrong, ever, but he always surprises us*”. We do not understand God’s love because we close ourselves (with the best of intentions sometimes). Therefore, what we need is to let Him work in us according to His design as Mother Elisabeth did. She trusted God faithfully. She believed that God was at work even in her foolishness; ignorance and feeble-mindedness (cf. EG 95). She knew that she was not young anymore, did not have enough talents, and was poor (cf. EG 8, 19, 24–25) and desperate (EG 54). But ... God’s grace made her courageous and strong enough to set off this Congregation in times that everything was uncertain and everyone, including Dean Van Baer, doubted this undertaking (cf. EG 46). She invoked God’s providence to convince them, as she believed that through this way of life she could serve God through the people (cf. EG 23). The ups and downs of life transformed her to be patient, humble and simple (cf. EG 46-51). She was really aware of her self-esteem; there was nothing to be proud of. All were seen as ways by which God showed His loving care throughout her life, especially in difficult situations, like when she was trying to follow her dream to be admitted into a convent and, later on, to accomplish the works of mission in the Congregation.

She was not prepared for a big project like other people were. No professional study or formation courses as we all have nowadays. It was God's work. In the beginning she lost courage and confidence, but later she confidently moved on. She said: *"There was nothing for it but continue God's work with courageous prayer and co-operation"* (EG 24). She often prayed – oftentimes spontaneously – and began to focus her mind on God in a way that expanded her inner space. As her mind became centered on love and Divine presence, she came to new insights as far as her own sense of personhood was concerned and realized her deep connectivity to others: to serve God faithfully, honestly and in perfection (cf. EG 5). For us this means to give the whole self and to dedicate myself till the end of my life, to always remain faithful to God and persevere in His love until my death (cf. EG 20).

We realize the importance of developing the daily habit of reflection in order to bring about profound changes in our life. However, the capacity to access the hidden-meaning of events is not merely dependent on our human efforts. It is the result of co-operation between God's power and human's insight that we are able to experience Divine providence in all realities, both the negative and positive ones. It also happens in the work of mercy and charity of the Congregation. Both are mainly the works of God. To realise it we are called to maintain our relationship with God. Without this, we will certainly fall into a merely human project and end in our own glorification. Therefore, although God's way is unreachable and not easy to understand we, just like Elisabeth Gruyters, believe that *"God knew it and secretly set to work. He began to stretch His invisible hand out to us and he began to help us. He began to stretch His invisible hand out to us."* (EG 15)

Inspired by the charism of Mother Elisabeth we are called to cultivate and develop THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE in every phase of life. *"For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,"* says St Paul (I Timothy 4:4). Cultivating the Spirit of gratitude honours God and strengthens our faith. It also strengthens our relationships with other people. We can't be in a right relationship with God or with anyone else without the spirit of gratitude. No matter what problems we are struggling with, we need to be thankful in all circumstances (cf. 1 Tes. 5: 18).

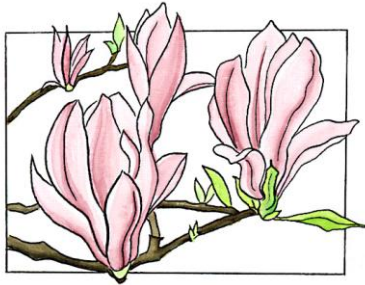
At this point, again we have learned from Mother Elisabeth; Mother Elisabeth who gratefully acknowledged the great intervention of God's hand in taking care of her own life and the Congregation. She recognized the goodness of God (EG 26), who cares for everything (EG 32); who provides everything that human beings need; who showered so many graces upon her and the Congregation and called her to the religious life; who blessed them daily more and more with all that they needed (EG 49); who takes care of the poor (EG 52); and, who blesses various works of charity daily by His invisible hand (EG 63). This is because God allowed her to suffer for the love of Jesus Christ (EG 100) and granted her the longing to be with Him from time to time (EG 140). Mother Elisabeth was thankful not only for God's kindness but also for the sufferings and pain. Indeed, all are gifts which can lead us to union with God if only we faithfully realize that God is working and guiding each of us day by day. In joy or in pain, in success or in failure, He is present to save all human beings.

We could surely reflect more upon the richness of the charism of Mother Elisabeth which she shared with and bequeathed to us. Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant

with what the Spirit asked of her? How do we creatively carry out her charism in our present situation? Do we have the same passion for God and the people around us?

Dear Sisters, the challenge remains for us to determine the uniqueness of our contribution to the Church and society, to give greater efforts and directions to our ministerial choices and to assess more critically the long-term effects of our choices. Some Areas are ageing rapidly. Some communities will decline and cease to exist, but others may revive and flourish. This is the reality that we are facing today. Yet, these times are not without hope. Today, as we are celebrating the foundation day of our Congregation, let us continue to look to the future with hope and confidence. As Jesus calls us to personify our hope by placing our lives in the hands of God with the same security with which we faithfully embrace the future, we are invited to put our hope fully in Him.

May the name of the Lord be blessed forever and ever. Amen.



HAPPY FEAST DAY!

In Memoriam

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:1-3)

1. **Sr Flosella Poos** was born on April 5th, 1917 in The Hague, the Netherlands, and passed away on November 14th, 2014 in Kloosterhof, Maastricht
2. **Sr Elisabetha Sri Widarwi** was born on March 22nd, 1934 in Solo – Central Java and passed away on December 31st, 2014 in St Anna – Yogyakarta.
3. **Sr Marie Martha Sumarjinah** was born on December 20th, 1917 in Ganjuran, Bantul, Yogyakarta and passed away on January 8th, 2015 in St Anna – Yogyakarta.
4. **Sr Bertine Tri Hartati** was born on June 26th, 1943 in Yogyakarta and passed away on January 13th, 2015 in Saint Carolus Hospital, Jakarta.
5. **Sr Gijsberto Boerlage** was born on October 24th 1909 in Nieuwer-Amstel, the Netherlands, and passed away on January 17th, 2015 in Lydiaconvent, Maastricht
6. **Sr Ruth van de Zande** was born on April 16th 1921 in Hillegom, the Netherlands, and passed away on February 6th 2015 in Kloosterhof, Maastricht
7. **Sr Servatio Ament** was born on December 27th 1915 at Stramproy, the Netherlands, and passed away on February 10th 2015 in Elisabethconvent, Maastricht.

8. **Sr Ernesta Sumartini** was born on June 22nd, 1933 in Mlati, Sleman, Yogyakarta, and passed away on March 2nd, 2015 in Panti Rapih Hospital, Yogyakarta.
9. **Sr Loes Jorna** was born on September 26th, 1921 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and passed away on March 27th, 2015 in Bergweide, Heerlen.
10. **Sr Conceptio Zonderland** was born on July 29th, 1920, at Wymbritseradeel, the Netherlands, and passed away on April 1st, 2015 in Carolusconvent, Maastricht.

Termination of Membership

Sr Xaveria Lusia Wati who since August 15th, 2002 became a member of the Congregation and was assigned to the East Indonesian Region has terminated her membership in the Congregation as of November 5th, 2014. We pray that she may lead her new life in joy and happiness.

Conference on Religious Formation around the World

As already announced, one of the activities the Congregation for Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life is organizing to mark the Year of Consecrated Life, is a Seminar for Formators of Institutes of Consecrated Life. This seminar is only for Formators that belong to Institutes with Pontifical recognition. The Seminar is held in Rome, from the 8th till the 11th of April 2015. Seeing the importance of this seminar for the whole Congregation, we assigned **sr Dwina Arintowati and sr Odilia Sadinah** to take part in it. After the Seminar they are invited to share their experience with the GB in the Mother

House, Maastricht, from April 16th – 19th. Both departed to their respective country again on April 20th, 2015.

Further Study

Sr Sofia Gusnia from the Indonesian Province is going to take the PhD study program (in) at St Paul's University, Manila - the Philippines starting in April 2015. She will stay in the CB Study house in Project 4, Manila.

News from our Missionaries

1. On February 28th, 2015 **Sr Domenico Kustinah** left for Indonesia for good after having served the Congregation as a General Board member and as General Treasurer. Afterwards, she took care of the archives of the General Board, a task she carried out wholeheartedly. With great appreciation we let sr Domenico go to her homeland. May she find happiness and joy in her new community and ministry.
2. On January 9th, 2015 **Sr Theresiata Suwarsih** from Brazil arrived in Jakarta – Indonesia for her mother's funeral and to be of support to her relatives. Afterwards, she spent her time for vacation and renewal.
3. **Sr Grace Samuel** from the Dutch Province spent her vacation in Indonesia from January 15th, 2015 up to March 16th. We pray that this holiday has energized her as she continues to share her apostolic presence in the Netherlands.

4. **Sr Floriana Sudaryanti** from the Dutch Province spends her holidays in Indonesia. She is in Indonesia from March 16th up to May 16th, 2015. Besides her vacation she makes use of this occasion to celebrate her 50th of religious profession together with her peers. We hope that she has a fruitful and inspiring celebration.
5. **Sr Ancilia Sus Indarti** from the Memphis community in the USA has her holiday in her motherland, Indonesia, from May 31st up to July 30th, 2015. We hope she can use this opportunity to strengthen the bonding with her family and the sisters in Indonesia.

Opening and Closing of Communities

1. **St Charles Borromeo Formation House**
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Together with Mother Elisabeth, we have desired that “*if it pleases God, let a convent be established in this city ... in which God will be served faithfully ... as long as there would come souls to it who would serve God honestly and in perfection...*” (EG5)

Our hearts are filled with praise and thanksgiving to God for answering our deepest desire by giving us this wonderful dwelling place through the endless support of the GB and countless generous people.

We moved to this house on January 22nd, 2015 which was blessed by Fr Dominic Nguyen Van Hiep, our parish priest of the Vinh Hiep Parish, on January 24th, 2015 at 10:30 in the morning in the presence of Fr Francis Nguyen Van Nhut,

OP (our friend who introduced this house to us), Mr and Mrs Le Thanh Ben and family (the former house owners), our lawyer and the architect. Then at 3:30 in the afternoon, we had our first Mass, which was graced by Fr Moises Albarina, Comboni Missionary. Although our house has not yet been completed we had it blessed before our aspirants left the next day for a one-month holiday with their family.



As our first house in Vietnam belongs to our Congregation, we call it after our patron saint – St Charles Borromeo Formation House. It is intended for the formation of our aspirants and perhaps for our postulants in the future. Right now, we have 6 aspirants and 4 discerners.

“May the name of the Lord be blessed for all eternity.” (EG 140)



On behalf of the Vietnam Community

Sr Virgilia Mascarinas, CB (Coordinator)

2) Elisabeth Convent – Maastricht

After consultation with the members of the communities of the Carolus Convent and Elisabeth Convent, the Dutch Province decided to close down the Elisabeth Convent in Maastricht, the Netherlands, as of March 30th, 2015. The sisters of this community joined the Carolus Convent.

Pilgrimage Program

“Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.” (Psalm 84: 5)

As one of our efforts to realize the ongoing formation program for sisters, we are organizing another Pilgrimage Program in the Netherlands and Belgium which will start on April 30th and end on May 31st, 2015. The vision of this program is: ***Sabbatical CB Sisters, deeply connected with the roots of the Congregation and passing on its rich heritage.*** The said program will be held in the Indonesian Language because the participants are coming from two Areas i.e. the East Indonesian Region and the Indonesian Province.

The participants joining the Program will be:

- 1 Sr Jacintha Sukamtini
- 2 Sr Petri Suparti
- 3 Sr Alphonsa Achadinah
- 4 Sr Hendrika Suwartilah
- 5 Sr Priyati Surtiyati
- 6 Sr Faustina Surtini
- 7 Sr Resdiana Ngadinah
- 8 Sr Jeanne Kustidjah
- 9 Sr Sesiliana Putik Sulistyani
- 10 Sr Avriana Dwi Atmi Wisyastuti
- 11 Sr Resita Sulasmi
- 12 Sr Theofani Admini Paji Moong
- 13 Sr Margareti Endang Pujiastuti
- 14 Sr Luisa Sri Hartuti
- 15 Sr Lusiani Ni Luh Astiti

Main agenda of the Pilgrimage Program 2015

27/28 April 2015	: Arrival of the participants
29 April 2015	: The Foundation day of the Congregation
30 April 2015	: The Opening of the Pilgrimage Program together with the sisters in the Mother House
3 – 7 May 2015	: Pilgrimage to the birthplace of Mother Elisabeth in Leut, Belgium
8 May 2015	: Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Banneux, Belgium
9 – 27 May 2015	: Pilgrimage in Maastricht and surroundings, the Netherlands
27 – 30 May 2015	: Triduum and the closing of the program.
31 May 2015	: Thanksgiving Mass with the Sisters in the Mother House.
2/3 June 2015	: Departure of the participants

News from the General Board

- 1) Srs Krispiani and Yesina from the Indonesian Province had their orientation in the Region of Tanzania from February 16th up to March 5th 2015.
- 2) Sr Jane Ann Aballe spent her vacation in the Philippines from January 24th to April 24th, 2015. We hope that this opportunity has been a time of spiritual and physical nourishment for her.
- 3) Sr Ancilla Setyarini, one of the Board Members of the East Indonesian Region, will be in the Philippines from April 2nd –June 19th, 2015 for) a three- months English

Course. We hope that this course will enrich her as she continues to serve in the leadership ministry of the Region.

- 4) Sr Rosaria was in Norway for a community visitation from April 21st – 27th, 2015.
- 5) On June 5th 2015 Srs Rosaria and Hetty are leaving for Indonesia where they will stay until August to enjoy their home leave. During their stay in Indonesia, they will also pay a visit to Timor Leste (June 22nd – 27th, 2015) and Kupang (June 30th – July 4th, 2015).
- 6) Srs Jane Ann and Lisbeth are going to Tanzania on July 1st and will be back on August 4th, 2015. Both of them will hold opinion polls and accompany the Region before and during the Regional Assembly. The term of office of the Regional Board will end on July 31st, 2015. Therefore, a new Board will be assigned. We accompany the sisters in Tanzania with our prayers as they discern to give their opinion on the future of the Regional Board.

Kind regards,
On behalf of the General Board



Sr Rosaria Nur Hardiningsih
General Superior