



# BASIC LETTER

April 2016



Maastricht, April 2016

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

A very warm greeting from your General Board!

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016, we celebrate the 179<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congregation. In union with the universal Church, who is celebrating the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we want to encourage all of you to use this moment as a moment of recalling and reflecting upon “the face of mercy”, which Pope Francis referred to as *“the bridge that connects God and humankind, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness”* (Misericordiae Vultus, art. 2). ***“Mercy is the divine attitude which embraces. It is God giving himself to us, accepting us and bowing to forgive”*** (Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, pg. 10).

Try to read the last sentence carefully and let these words speak to you personally. How do you feel? How do you experience mercy in your life? Isn't the whole journey of our life, from the beginning, that is since we were in the womb of our mother until the end of our life later, covered with a range of experiences of

mercy of others (our parents, siblings, relatives, friends, fellow sisters, colleagues, and even strangers sometimes ...) and thus, through them, of God's mercy? Why did the Church launch this Jubilee Year of Mercy? This Holy Year is meant to respond to the world's need for *a "revolution of tenderness"* from which *"justice and all the rest derives"*.

At present, we are living in a fragile world. We have become used to listening to bad news, cruel news, and to even bigger violence and killing, which offend the Name and Life of God. There is the danger of being overpowered by rationalization and relativism which make people lack in sensitivity to their wrongdoings and even having lost their sense of sin. Religious people are not exempted from this: when we sometimes tend to give too much space to individual and absolute freedom - which does not exist, not even in society; when we believe to be better and holier than others; when our judgements are based on like and dislike; when we have become numb to and unaware of or just plain passive about attending to injustice; when we are afraid of those who, unlike 'us', still put certain labels/stereotypes on others according to their racial or religious backgrounds; when we will not forgive and fix a broken relationship with others; etc.

Now, more than ever before, we are invited to not only acknowledge our own sins but also to recognize how our decisions and our comfort, as a result of our selfishness, may

even be the contributor to the pain and suffering of others. In addition to that, we need to see and promote the world from different perspectives. In fact, our world is much larger than the one being forecasted on television and other means of media communications. News which seems to be filled with political and commercial interests of those in authority. But one thing we should believe: God's love and mercy is still at work, through many people of good will who commit themselves to promoting justice, peace and mercy for those who are less fortunate, be it on a large or a smaller scale. As an individual and as a community, according to our possibilities and situations, we continue to relate ourselves with these issues through our prayers, our being and/or through our active compassion, mercy and justice, as the manifestations of our faith to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ entrusted to us in the Spirit of Mother Elisabeth, our Foundress.

***Revolution of tenderness*** will/can only take place when there is openness within us to involve ourselves in this movement and when we believe that through it the hope of being loved forever by God is experienced and recognized by everyone. Therefore, being given such a special time to reflect upon God's love and mercy, it is important to daringly ask God to bless each of us, especially with the Spirit of humility, love and mercy, starting from within – from within each of us. Why? Because each of us, without exception, experiences how sinful we are and how faithful and merciful our Creator is.

This experience goes for Mother Elisabeth, too. Reading her life's story we can feel her tenderness, love and compassion. It is quite obvious that, for Mother Elisabeth, confession or the Sacrament of Reconciliation is very important (in EG *the word confession is mentioned 27 times*), and not only that, she even said that she felt such regret and contrition of heart that the bread she ate and all that she drank were continuously mixed with tears; at night, too, she drenched her pillow with tears and this reminded her of St. Peter, especially in her meditations on the goodness of God and the ugliness of sin (cf. EG 94). In EG 131 she furthermore prayed, "*OH CLEMENT AND merciful God; how inscrutable are Your judgments, how unsearchable 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...*" Here, it should be remembered what Pope Francis says, *when one feels the mercy of God, she/he feels a great shame of oneself and for her/his sin*. Therefore, to be ashamed is a grace. It gives an opening to heal our wounds and the wounds of others, to experience forgiveness and mercy. Only then, we become a new person; a person who is moved to share love and mercy to others, with tenderness – with compassion. As Mother Elisabeth said: "*When reflecting on the love of Jesus Christ, a heart of stone would be moved*" (EG 94).

Reading the history of the Congregation makes us realize that the Congregation is rooted in and founded on love and mercy.

This is shown through the experience of Mother Elisabeth and Dean Antonius van Baer who, although they yearned to share their vision and dreams/desires to serve God honestly and in perfection, had to face a lot of challenges and difficulties. It is said that after Mother Elisabeth and Maria Paulussen were admitted as the first Sisters of Charity of the Order of St. Vincent à Paulo at the house at Lenculen Street on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1837, with whom Van Baer “*dared to start this important work*” (cf. EG 24), no one presented herself (cf. EG 25). How hard it was to get one or two sisters from other Congregations “*to take on the spiritual care of the first comers*” (see Van Baer, pg. 49) and not to mention, to change the statutes and have them legally recognized by the government who, at that time, was very strict and took control of everything, especially in relation to any social movements and activities including that of religious associations. It is even said that the government should know everything: their number, their activities, their uniform, etc. We can imagine the tension they had, moreover when the two sisters, Sister Theresia and Sister Francisca, were called by their superior to return to their Congregation in Den Bosch whereas this embryo of the Congregation was still very vulnerable. Mother Elisabeth said: “*I thought - as most people did – that this would be the end of our convent; that we were there like three fishes out of water, without any aid or support ... nothing was left to me but a great confidence in God’s*

*Providence* (cf. EG 54). Yes ... from time to time she prayed and her prayer was answered, indeed!

The answer of her prayer cannot be separated from the number of people who were so generous and willing to give their best support to the development of our Congregation, including that of lay people and even of a non Catholic man such as Esquire J.E.P. Gericke van Herwijnen who, in those days, served as an extraordinary commissioner of the king and was in charge of the supreme civil authority in the Province of Limburg (cf. Van Baer, pg. 60 – 62). These are some significant experiences of God’s love and mercy which the Congregation experienced through history up until now and for which we are grateful; since, through them, the Congregation could perform the works of love and mercy otherwise known as works of charity.

Having received and experienced God’s love and mercy we are empowered to show compassion and mercy to others (1 Peter 2: 10). This compassion and mercy must be *“distinguished by the fact that we not only meet the needs of the moment, but that we dedicate ourselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity.”* (Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, art. 31 a.). Therefore, in addition to our professionalism, ***‘formation of heart is important’*** so that the more we are led to an encounter with God in Christ, the more we are awakened to others.

Dear Sisters, in this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, let us learn from Saint Vincent à Paulo and give honour to him, not only because he is our second patron Saint but because he has *deeply inspired many religious Congregations -including our founders- in carrying out the works of mercy/charity. In one of his conferences he said: “We must try and allow our hearts to be quiet, making them sensitive to the suffering and misery of others, and ask God to give us the spirit of mercy. We clearly need mercy, as we are called to bear witness to it everywhere and persevere in everything for its sake”* (Vincent à Paulo, *Correspondance entretiens, documents XI*, Paris. pg. 341).

The following are some suggestions that may help us, individually and as community, to move forward:

1. Develop a prayer team to support these movements and make regular prayer concerns
2. Read and reflect the *Misericordiae Vultus*, Bull of Indication of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy and/or the book of Pope Francis titled **The Name of God is Mercy**.
3. Asses the needs of your local community/society and make a concrete plan of action in order to serve the poor, the needy and those who have no voice and have become victims of violence and injustice.

4. Consider partnering with other institutions/NGOs/Congregations to address major issues related to human trafficking, immigrants, HIV/Aids, and environmental movements.
5. As recommended by the GCB 2015, in welcoming the 180th anniversary of the Congregation, start the COIN MOVEMENT in every community. The collected coin from every community/Area will be sent to the General Board by April 2018 as the Congregation's contribution to certain projects in the area of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

May this celebration help us to respond to God's call who, through the Church, invites us to walk along the path of mercy to draw on "the sources of the Saviour's mercy" (*M.V. No. 11*), to turn our parishes and communities into "an oasis of mercy" (*M.V. No. 12*), and reach out to every human being with "the corporal and spiritual works of mercy" (*M.V.No. 15*).

**HAPPY FEAST DAY!**



## *Membership*

### **EAST INDONESIAN REGION**

#### **Postulancy**

On December 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, six aspirants started their initial formation in the postulate of Lili-Kupang.

1. Yovita Betty from the Aryos Parish, Niki-niki.
2. Imelda Leo from the St. John the Baptist Parish, Buraen.
3. Kristiana Thon, from the St. Gregory the Great Oemofa outstation, The Mother of the Poor Parish, Noelmina.
4. Maria Helmina Resi, from the St. Joseph Nuaria Parish, Detubunga, Tanawawo, Maumere.
5. Fidensia Jari from the Christ the King Parish, Waiwerang, Adonara Timur.
6. Yenita Angela Obenu, from the St. Gregory the Great Oemofa outstation, The Mother of the Poor Parish, Noelmina.

### **VIETNAM**

#### **Postulancy**

On January 25<sup>th</sup> 2016, five candidates were accepted into postulancy in Vietnam. On February 19<sup>th</sup> 2016, these five postulants went to the Philippines to continue their initial formation there.

1. Anna           Tran Thi Lien
2. Maria         Nguyen Thi Trinh
3. Elisabeth    Maphi
4. Maria         Do Kim Trang
5. Maria         Nguyen Thi Xuan

## TANZANIAN REGION

### Postulancy:

On April 29<sup>th</sup> 2016, four aspirants start their postulancy:

1. Sophia Philipo Maganga from the Ndala Parish, Archdiocese of Tabora – Tanzania
2. Pamela Jerono Ngetich from the Eldoret Parish, Diocese of Eldoret - Kenya.
3. Winfred Nzisa Mutua from the Masinga Parish, Archdiocese of Machakos - Kenya.
4. Odete Mbusi Isamba from the Nyakasanza Parish, Archdiocese of Bunia - Democratic Republic of Congo.

### *In Memoriam*

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end.* – Lamentations 3:22

#### 1. Sr Meingarda – Helena Lenssen



Sr Meingarda was born in Groesbeek on January 25<sup>th</sup> 1917, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1938 and passed away in Heerlen, nursing home ‘Bergweide’, on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2015.

#### 2. Sr Mariëttina – Johanna Bakker



Sr Mariëttina was born at Zwaag on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1930, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1954 and passed away in Maastricht on October 28<sup>th</sup> 2015.

### **3. Sr Henriëtte – Jacoba Hendrika Maria Arts**



Sr Henriëtte was born at Vierlingsbeek on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1924, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on November 16<sup>th</sup> 1953 and passed away in Heerlen, nursing home ‘Bergweide’, on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2015.

### **4. Sr Ciel – Cecilia Dora Maria Brouwer**



Sr Ciel was born in Sneek on September 14<sup>th</sup> 1929, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1959 and passed away in Maastricht on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2015.

### **5. Sr Marioba – Adriana Clasina Johanna van Lint**



Sr Marioba was born at Willeskop on June 9<sup>th</sup> 1924, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1951 and passed away in Maastricht on December 21<sup>st</sup> 2015.

### **6. Sr Trinita – Everdina Engelina Francisca Beus**



Sr Trinita was born in Amersfoort on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1927, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on October 9<sup>th</sup> 1955 and passed away in Maastricht on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016.

**7. Sr Godefrida - Elisabeth Johanna Maria van der Heijden**



Sr Godefrida was born in Delft on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1921, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1943 and passed away in Maastricht on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2016.

**8. Sr Canisius - Gerrardina Josephina Bruggeman,**



Sr Canisius was born at Zwollerkerspel on March 19<sup>th</sup> 1921, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on November 18<sup>th</sup> 1944 and passed away in Maastricht on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2016.

**9. Sr Nothburga - Maria Philomena Meurders**



Sr Nothburga was born at Klimmen on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1923, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1946 and passed away in Maastricht on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2016.

**10. Sr Nicola - Elisabeth Jozepha Buurman**



Sr Nicola was born at Grootebroek on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1918, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1951 and passed away in Maastricht on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016.

### **11. Sr Othmara - Maria Petronella HES**



She was born in Castricum on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1915, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on September 29<sup>th</sup> 1940 and passed away in Maastricht on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016.

### **12. Sr Elisabeth - Joanna Hesther Berg**



She was born in Sassenheim on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1920, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1948 and passed away in Maastricht on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016.

### **13. Sr Franceline Harjanti**



She was born in Boro, Kulonprogo on December 24<sup>th</sup> 1932, made her profession in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1964 and passed away in Biara Santa Anna, Yogyakarta, on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016.

### *News from our Missionaries*

1. Sr Irene Kristiani from the Indonesian Province arrived in the Mother House in Maastricht, the Netherlands, on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016. She belongs to the Dutch Province with special assignments; mainly as a secretary to the General Board and to support, through her presence, the activities in our 'Bezinningscentrum' as best she can.

2. Sr Evelyne Aranas from Brazil is on home leave in the Philippines from March 2<sup>nd</sup> up to May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
3. Sr Marie Jose Voeten from the Tanzanian Region will be staying in the Netherlands from May 1<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 for her medical checkup.
4. Sr Stefani Indrawasih Gowijaya from Norway will be staying in the Motherhouse in Maastricht, the Netherlands, from May 21<sup>st</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 for spiritual refreshing and for making a short pilgrimage to Leut, Wolder and Rijckholt.

### *News from the General Board:*

1. Sr Jacintha from the East Indonesian Region has transferred to the Indonesian Province since December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. She has been assigned to Pandansari, a branch of the Magelang Community.
2. Sr Lisbeth Cicih Ratwasih was in Indonesia from November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 up to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 for the funeral of her mother who passed away in Borromeus Hospital, Bandung, on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015. She expresses her gratitude to all of you for what you have done for her mother and family.
3. Sr Yosita from the Indonesian Province stayed in Manila, the Philippines, from November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in order to attend an English course which she needs before she enrolls for further study.
4. Sr Annunsianes and sr Lely (from the East Indonesian Region), Srs Baptista, Marga, Patris Di and Eufrasia (from the Indonesian Province) went to the Philippines on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 for an English Course as preparation

for their Multicross-Cultural Leadership Formation Program which is held from January 30<sup>th</sup> – April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

5. Srs Maria Vidensia and Fabiana from the East Indonesian Region have transferred to the Indonesian Province since January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
6. Sr Hetty went to the Philippines on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016 in order to accompany the sisters who join the Multicross-Cultural Leadership Formation Program. She returned to Maastricht on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016.
7. Sr Petri from the Bintang Timur community, Sorong, East Indonesian Region has transferred to the Indonesian Province since January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
8. Sr Benedikta from the Melati Community, Witihama, East Indonesian Region, has transferred to the Indonesian Province since January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
9. Srs Lisbeth and Jane Ann paid a visit to the sisters in Leut, Belgium, from January 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The purpose of this visit was to disseminate the resolutions of the GCB 2015 and to restructure the community.
10. Sr Dwina Arintowati from the Indonesian Province and Sr Odilia Sadinah from the Tanzanian Region were in the Philippines to facilitate and accompany the sisters of the Multi Cross-cultural Leadership Formation Program. Sr Dwina stayed in the Philippines from February 20<sup>th</sup> up to 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 whereas sister Odilia stayed in the Philippines from February 19<sup>th</sup> - March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
11. Sr Rosaria went to the Philippines on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in order to be one of the resource speakers at the Multi Cross-cultural Leadership Formation Program. She returned to Maastricht on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

12. Sr Lisbeth went to the Philippines on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in order to accompany the sisters who join the Multi Cross-cultural Leadership Formation Program. She will leave for Maastricht again on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
13. Sr Epiphana Feringa, one of the Dutch sisters who has been working at the GB office in the financial department retired on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016. We are thankful and appreciate her for her dedication over 24 years. She will always be remembered as a hardworking, committed, accurate and diligent person. We wish her the best of luck.
14. In order to prepare future leaders and facilitate the on-going formation of those who are already in positions of leadership both in the community and/or in the ministry, a Leadership Formation Program is held in the Tagaytay retreat house in the Philippines from January 30<sup>th</sup> until April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016. There are ten participants to attend this program:

**Indonesian Province:**

1. Sr Baptista Kristi Handayani CB
2. Sr Eufrasia Dua Pare CB
3. Sr Marga Susmiyati CB
4. Sr Patris Di CB

**Tanzanian Region:**

1. Sr Regina Chibibi CB
2. Sr Hildegarda Mushi CB

**The Philippine Region:**

1. Sr Marichu Cultura CB
2. Sr Creselda Chia CB

**East Indonesian Region:**

1. Sr Annunsianes Muda CB
2. Sr Lely Leda Liman CB

15. Srs Rosaria and Elisia Terry went to the Tanzanian Region from April 2<sup>nd</sup> up to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 with the purpose of accompanying the sisters in their regional meeting on finances and the meeting with the boards' members of the Elisabeth Center and the Carolie School.

*Latest Development:*

**Indonesian Province**

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Stella Maris Unit was blessed. This unit is an extension of the St Anna Community in Yogyakarta, the community for our elderly sisters in the Province. The purpose of this is to provide proper facilities and care for the elderly sisters. We hope that in this spacious and warm environment our elderly sisters who have devoted their lives to God in the Congregation can graciously enjoy their latter days.

Kind regards,  
on behalf of the General Board



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