



BASIC LETTER

August 2016

Maastricht, August 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!

The reading on this feast day was about the visitation of Mary. One scene that deeply inspires us is the meeting between Mother Mary and her cousin Elisabeth. This meeting between two relatives is very special. A woman long married but without any children and, yet, pregnant in her old age and an unmarried virgin carrying a baby in her womb. What occurred in this family shows the world the abundance of God's love and mercy as experienced by these two women. On the one hand there is Elisabeth who gained the favour from God to be blessed with child in her old age, thus being delivered from the disgrace of not being able to bring forth children whereas, on the other, there is the Virgin Mary who is carrying Jesus, the chosen One, the Son of God, who would deliver people from the forgiveness of sins. These two pregnancies were the seed of God's love and mercy, a salvific action of God as it was sung by Mother Mary: "The mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear Him" (Lk 1:49-50).

How does this relate to our beloved Mother Elisabeth, the Foundress of our Congregation? Let us go back to what happened to her on August 15, 1836. "At last on that glorious

holy day of Our Lady's Assumption, I attended a solemn High Mass...; I seemed to be out of my senses because of my great and ardent desire" (EG 2). We know this passage only too well and also where it led to. "I know too well that she never refused a favour to anybody on this solemn and Holy Day of Her victorious Assumption" (EG 4). Mother Elisabeth considered herself not worthy to ask from God what she was longing for. Therefore, she sent her petition through the intercession of Mother Mary and through the prayers of three different saints. And finally God's favour rests on her. She "... heard the blessed 'yes' from heaven and that 'yes' was no other than this: all things will come" (EG 6).

It is obvious to all that 15 August 1836 was one big experience of God's love and mercy, a salvific action of God through Mother Elisabeth. Drawing an analogy we can say that both Mother Mary, the Mother of God, and Mother Elisabeth were blessed by God. Because of their faith and obedience to the will of God, both of them have brought great things to the world. Mother Mary with her answer "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" conceived the savior of the world (Lk 1:38). Mother Elisabeth with the answer from heaven "yes, all things will come" conceived the coming of the Congregation (EG 5).

Having experienced God's love and mercy through Mother Mary and Mother Elisabeth, I deem this feast day the right moment to continue deepening the theme of mercy which is put central in the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy and was handed to us by Francis, our pope.

In this jubilee year we are invited to intensify our efforts to examine our consciousness so as to experience God's love and mercy and to share them with all creation. We are encouraged to be more aware of our own vulnerability which oftentimes makes us do things that go against the spirit of God's love and mercy. Maybe we are not conscious enough that in our daily lives we do certain things, small or big, which are not in line with the sharing of love and its fruitfulness. We might take our daily activities for granted without regarding the involvement of God. It is precisely in the ordinary life that we are invited to be conscious of the presence or absence of radiant love and mercy. Only by being conscious; be it only minimally, we can add to our daily recipe a drop of love and mercy in our words and deeds. With only this glimmer of consciousness we can ask for the love and forgiveness of God and may share it to those we meet.

We can deepen our consciousness by paying attention to our words and deeds. It is being said that the words we speak are the seeds we sow and plant. If the words are good, encouraging and inspiring, they will grow and bear rich and much fruit not only for ourselves, but also for others who hear and receive them.

Similarly our actions are like the seeds that we sow and plant. We might not even be aware of the hidden power of our doings. Only the people around us can experience the impact of our deeds in their lives. Have you ever heard people talk about a certain sister? Oftentimes we hear them tell stories about their past experiences with one of our CB sisters. The experience lies in the past, so quite a long time ago, yet the memory is still

vivid in their minds. These experiences can be positive or negative. The positive ones transform the life of many whereas the negative ones can destroy people's lives. For example, sharing one's encounter with a CB sister has transformed her life, has brought back happiness to her life. She has experienced a happy and graceful life only because of a certain action done by a CB sister. The sister involved did not have the intention to change this person's life. What she did was just listen to her story, show understanding, and by no means judge her. This was an act of love and mercy. The good deed of this sister, her action of love, has transformed one's life. What she did has made others experience God's love and mercy. In the end, this has turned into admiration for religious life without even being a member of our Congregation herself.

There are, however, enough stories that are totally different from the above scene. Sometimes, we hear terrible experiences from our friends. There are people who have encountered particular experiences with certain CB sisters which they can never forget—because of the negative impact it had on their life. A certain action of a sister has ruined one's image about religious life, because the sister did not show a good seed in her action. For example, one shared about how difficult it was to work together with a sister. Others shared about the sisters who would never understand the needs of the coworkers, who always make demands on others and cannot listen attentively to the cry of other people in their ministry or in the society. These bad experiences have made that some people started crowning particular sisters with certain titles such as; the CB sisters are harsh, controlling, demanding, unmerciful, law-oriented, only success oriented, cannot listen, etc. From this we can tell that

people can easily identify whether we sow good seeds or bad ones. Let us continue exercising our consciousness to choose sowing and planting good seeds in our words and deeds.

Dear sisters, without our awareness, human beings have a tendency to belittle others, to reduce them to objects. One might consider oneself better than others, find one's ethnic background nobler than others' and believes one's country to be better than others'; therefore they claim superiority over others. If we are not careful, this situation can also enter into the life of the Congregation. We consider having special privileges because of what we have accomplished. We demand to get a certain treatment because of our important and special role and all the wonderful things we have done to the Congregation. This tendency is in fact a form of arrogance which, if we are not aware of it, can be a cause for disunity in living together as a community and as a Congregation.

Look around you and see... . How often do we project certain things on others or on something outside ourselves? We tend to judge politicians in our own country who not optimally dedicate themselves to the welfare of the people. Oftentimes we point fingers at the leaders in the world whom we believe do not try hard enough to stop the war and alleviate the poverty in some countries. We are oftentimes angry to see all kinds of horrible things taking place in today's world such as the many victims of wars, thousands of refugees who run for their survival looking for a better life. We might even be disappointed in the leaders of the Congregation who cannot solve all problems properly. In any case, we are disappointed to see all kinds of things happening around us which do not meet

our expectations. The anger and indignation we feel about all this makes us easily condemn and point fingers at others or at certain organizations which we consider responsible for all the evil happening in today's world.

To a certain level you can see the same tendency take place in community life. The members of a community can easily blame others by their own measurement standards. When things do not go well we easily pass the buck to other sisters. Even we can consider other sisters inferior because of their background, level of education or their ministries. We can criticize younger and even older sisters by our own standard of values. Living together in a community can be depolarizing or lose its unity because of the members who easily point fingers at others to criticize or even judge them.

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy we are invited by our Pope to let go of these kinds of practices. Instead of blaming and pointing fingers at others, we are reminded to ask for a conversion of heart. The pope calls us to ask for the grace of repentance, of feeling ashamed of our sins so that we are in need of God's love and mercy. By being aware of our own weaknesses and vulnerability we will not easily condemn and judge others. Instead of only criticizing, we might get involved in the works of love or acts of charity depending on our own capacities; praying and performing little ascetic acts is the least we can do. As children of God we are called to be merciful and filled with love and kindness so that we can see others with His countenance of love and forgiveness. We are not called to blame, let alone judge others by our own standards of measurement nor are we called to humiliate and belittle others.

We are called to live in the light of love and in the armor of mercy.

In the book *The Name of God is Mercy*, Pope Francis shares that he has taken a cross from his confessor. Every time he has a bad thought about someone he will touch this cross in order to remind him of God's mercy, which he experienced through this priest. We can compare this experience with the experience of Mother Elisabeth who teaches us to fix our eyes on the cross so that everything will come right, everything is self evident (cf. EG 156). Why? At the cross we see Jesus in His total obedience and faithfulness to the Father. At the cross we experience God's unconditional and compassionate love. At the cross together with the thief who was crucified with Him, we experience forgiveness. By fixing our eyes on the cross we are invited to continuously meditate and experience God's love and mercy. If God embraces and accepts unconditionally us, who commit mistakes and wrongdoings, and unites us with the Crucified Jesus, how about us? How dare we still look down on others mercilessly? How will we not pardon and forgive others who may commit mistakes?

The Pope gives us the example on how to prevent ourselves from doing things contrary to His love and mercy. He holds the cross (mentioned above) that he always carries with him. This is an inspiration that we can follow. Once there is spark of thinking evil about someone, we should turn to God, the source of Love. How can we do that? There are many ways. We can hold a cross or, just like Mother Elisabeth, fix our eyes on the crucifix, or we may even bow down like Jesus did when he was asked what He would do for the woman who committed

adultery etc. (cf. Jn 8:6-8). At any case, we can find a way to remind us about God's love and forgiveness. You may look for one way or may already have found a similar one to do so; a way that becomes your own tradition. With this practice may we all recognize the presence of God's love and compassion, always.

Pope Francis tells us that guilt can build up and can blur our sense of God's love and mercy in our hearts, in our being. Just like the example of a glass window. If we do not clean or wash it regularly it makes the view unclear. The piling up of dirt will obscure the feature in front of us. Seeing something through this unclean glass window will make us not see clearly the real image but will lead us to an incorrect description of things.

Similar to this is our view of God's love and mercy. God's love is actually always there for us. He always waits for us to come back to His embrace, no matter how far we have gone astray. He always patiently awaits our homecoming after we have gone lost. This because of our shame in committing sins and faults. God is always looking for a gesture from our part, how tiny it may be, to discover and rediscover His merciful heart. It is us who reluctantly come home to our Father thinking of our unworthiness just like it is depicted in the parable of the prodigal son. And, sometimes, we do not even need to come home since we are like the eldest son who always feels worthy in front of the Father since he is always right (cf. Lk 15: 11-32). We know only too well that these two different attitudes need the merciful act of the Father. Therefore, in whatever situation we find ourselves right now, we must not be ashamed

or afraid to come home to Him and to drink afresh his fatherly and motherly love and mercy.

Dear sisters, let us pray so that we can always stay and live in the presence of God's love and mercy. We pray to become sisters of charity who are merciful and can show God's love and forgiveness to others. Let us continue contemplating the face of mercy, Jesus the Son of God, so that our lives bear witness to the presence of the Lord in the world. We pray this through the intercession of Mother Mary and our beloved Mother Elisabeth who have entered deeply into the mystery of the unconditional and compassionate love of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We wish you all a Happy Feast Day!



MEMBERSHIP

INDONESIAN PROVINCE

Postulancy

On August 1st, 2016, five aspirants started their formation as postulants:

1. **Vinsensia Elisabeth Ose Tukan** from the St Antonius Padua Parish, Flores
2. **Gertrusa Yalinia Hia** from the Salib Suci Parish, Nias Barat
3. **Erlinda Gulo** from the Salib Suci Parish, Nias Barat
4. **Asriana Remba** from the Santo Mikael Palopo Parish, Sulawesi
5. **Lusia Dewi Rianti** from the Marga Agung Parish, Lampung.

Final Vows

On August 14th, 2016, three Junior sisters made their perpetual profession of vows in the Maria Bintang Samodera Chapel, Yogyakarta:

1. **Sr Fransilia Nurlia Siregar** CB from the Penyelenggaraan Ilahi Parish, Palembang Archdiocese.
2. **Sr Nelli Ariani Saragih** CB from the St Fransiskus Assisi Parish, Medan Archdiocese.
3. **Sr Liani Sri Mulyani** CB from the Allah Maha Murah Parish, Palembang Archdiocese.

TANZANIAN REGION

Habit Taking

On August 14th, 2016, three postulants started their novitiate in the Formation House of Tengeru – Arusha:

1. **Rozina F. Sabini** from the Usseri Parish, Moshi Diocese - Tanzania
2. **Agripina D. James** from the Lowerere Parish, Moshi Diocese - Tanzania
3. **Rebeka M. Abdala** from the Gitting' Parish, Mbulu Diocese - Tanzania

First Profession

On August 15th, 2016, two novices make their temporary profession of vows in the Formation House of Tengeru, Arusha:

1. **Sr Esta Mkenda Pantaleo** from the Mashati Parish – Moshi Diocese, Tanzania
2. **Sr Dionosia Florence Shirima** from the Mrao Parish – Moshi Diocese, Tanzania

Final Vows

On August 15th, 2016, six Junior sisters make their perpetual profession of vows in the Formation House of Tengeru Arusha:

1. **Sr Justina Mageni** from the Christ the King Parish, Sengerema-Geita Diocese, Tanzania

2. **Sr Monicah Wairimu** from the Kangari Parish – Murang’a Diocese, Kenya.
3. **Sr Felister B. Joachim** from the Kasamwa Parish – Geita Diocese, Tanzania
4. **Sr Willimina A. Ochal** from the Kocholia Parish – Bungoma Diocese, Kenya
5. **Sr Yosepha B. Kimario** from the Mashati Parish – Moshi Diocese, Tanzania
6. **Sr Agnes E. Masabo** from the Katubuka Parish - Kigoma Diocese, Tanzania.

THE PHILIPPINES REGION

Final Vows.

On August 15th, 2016, **sr Salvacion Alagon** makes her perpetual profession of vows in the Mary Star of the Sea Chapel, Davao.

EAST INDONESIAN REGION

Habit Taking

On August 15th, 2016, two postulants start their noviciate in the Formation House of Lili, Kupang:

1. **Karolys Tuli** from the St Yohanes Paulus II Parish, Larantuka Diocese.
2. **Antonia Christina Taek** from the St Maria Mater Dolorosa Parish, Atambua Diocese.

First Profession

On August 15th, 2016, two novices make their temporary profession of vows in the Formation House of Lili, Kupang:

1. **Sr Rensilinda Julita** from the Hati Kudus Yesus Parish, Ruteng Diocese.
2. **Sr Damiana Maria Lusia Helyanan** from the St Yohanes Rasul Parish, Sorong Diocese.

Let us pray for all these sisters and candidates who enter the next level of their formation for their faithfulness and happiness in following Jesus in the life of the Congregation.

Termination of Membership

Sr Melina da Costa Santos from the Indonesian Province, officially left the Congregation since May 2016. Her request to leave was granted by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life with the written letter Prot.n.32876/2016 signed by the Archbishops' Secretary. We wish her luck for the future.

Transfer of Membership

Since June 1st, 2016, **sr Anunsita** from the Indonesian Province has been assigned to the East Indonesian Region. Her ministry is to strengthen the formation staff in the Initial Formation House of Lili, Kupang. We pray that she will soon be able to adjust to her new ministry.

In Memoriam

Sr Marije – Elisabeth Cornelia Peters



Sr Marije was born at Sawah Loento, Sumatra on May 2nd, 1924, and entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo in Maastricht in 1951. For her profession on July 16th, 1954, sr Marije returned to Indonesia where she stayed most of her ministry life. In 2004 she returned to Onder de Bogen in Maastricht where she stayed up to her death on June 19th 2016.

NEWS FROM OUR MISSIONARIES

Sr Lidwiana from the community in Brazil left for Indonesia on August 8th, 2016. Because of certain circumstances she needs to reprocess her residence permit. She will go back to Brazil when all the necessary documents are complete. Let us pray that this process will run smoothly.

NEWS FROM THE GENERAL BOARD

1. Holidays

Some of our Vietnamese Junior sisters spent their holidays in their home country:

- **Sr Dung** from May 17th to June 5th.
- **Sr Huong** and **Sr Truong** from May 17th to June 10th.

- **Sr My** from June 18th to July 17th. Her holidays were extended with one week due to circumstances.
- **Sr Man** from July 2nd to August 3rd.

2. The closing of a community

The **community in Dare, Timor Leste**, which belongs to Indonesian Province, was closed on June 20th, 2016. The Congregation started this community and its ministry as early as October 15th, 1992. The main apostolic ministry of this community was managing a retreat house which comes under the Diocese of Dili. Besides, the sisters involved themselves in parish activities. There even has been a sister who was involved in the field of healthcare. As the Diocese intends to manage this retreat house from now on, the Bishop terminated the contract with the Congregation. The Congregation, however, remains present in the Diocese and engages in other ministries. We hope that this retreat house will develop and can serve the needs of the people in the Diocese better.

The Agenda of the GB

1. **Sr Lisbeth** and **sr Jane Ann** paid a visit to the community in Norway from July 25th - 31st, 2016. This visit will be regarded a time for sharing of the recommendations of the last GCB meeting and at the same time serve as preparation for the General Chapter 2017.
2. **Sr Rosaria** and **sr Hetty** are visiting the community in Vietnam from 8 – 16 August 2016. There are some legal issues they need to address during this visit. Please,

continue praying for the development of our Unit in Vietnam.

3. **Sr Lisbeth** and **sr Jane Ann** will leave for Indonesia on August 16th, 2016. They are to join sr Rosaria and sr Hetty who arrived there earlier from Vietnam.

4. **All the General Board members** will be in the East Indonesian Region from August 21st – October 11th 2016 for visitation and at the same time for conducting opinion polls before assigning new Regional Board members. The term of office of the present Regional Board will end on October 7th, 2016. We ask your prayers for the smooth process of this so important matter in the life of the sisters in the Region.

Kind regards
on behalf of the General Board,



Sr Rosaria Nur Hardiningsih
General Superior

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