

# REFLECT

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## Happy Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows!

September 15 is very significant for the Ursulines of Tildonk. We celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. This special feast is particularly significant this year as we celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Ursuline Congregation of Tildonk.



Father John Lambertz, the Curé of Tildonk, had to face a big challenge after only a few years of the foundation of the little association. While the convent building was under construction, he got a royal decree to stop the construction and send the sisters and the boarders away. Even with this great blow, Father John Lambertz was convinced that in founding his humble association he had only been the instrument of a counsel of Providence, and this Divine

Providence would be able to maintain the association in spite of human opposition. And he enrolled his daughters in the Society of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. With great confidence in the Divine Providence, he encouraged his daughters *"Let nothing disturb you, my children, your Institute is the work of God, the devil will not destroy it. But pray and persevere in prayer so that God will soon bring the test to an end. ..."* On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1823, the Thursday of Passion Week the Curé of Tildonk received government approval to resume building. Thus he could complete the construction that had been started, and reopen the classes, provided that the teachers were equipped with certificates of competency.

With gratitude to God and to Mother Mary invoked under the title of her Seven Sorrows he announced: *"May thanks and devotion to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows be forever preserved and perpetuated in our society!"*

For many years the Sisters in the Convent of Tildonk celebrated this day every year by praying and contemplating the seven sorrows of

Our Lady while carrying the statue (picture above) in procession until the Convent in Tildonk was closed in 2007. This is the extract of the prayer they recited:

"O Mother of Sorrows, continue protecting this community. Remember the tender love our venerable founder had for you, remember the affection with which he honored you, remember the zeal with which he urged us to serve you ... let his spirit continue to live in our midst: his spirit of prayer, of love, of humility and fervor. Pray for us, O Holy Virgin Mary that this house of which you are the queen and the companion may always be a place of wellbeing for you and for Jesus your Divine Son. Amen."

This feast invites us to contemplate Mother Mary's significant spiritual journey of martyrdom with her Son Jesus in fulfilling the Divine plan of God in bringing salvation in the world. Mary brought her whole hearted presence to Jesus' suffering and became the Co-Redemptrix.

May Our Lady of Sorrows, Queen and Mother of the Institute of Tildonk, pray for us.

Sister Bimla Minj

### **A Tribute to Sr Henriette VERHEYEN**

The Congo Vice Province feels a deep sadness at the death of our dear Sister Henriette who spent half of her life in the DR Congo, especially in Kalima.

But at the same time we have a sense of appreciation for all that she did for the Congolese girls and for us the Congolese sisters. She spent most of her life as a teacher at the Institute Chemchem in Kalima

Animated by a spirit of wanting to do more and always being sure a job was well done, she strove to help teachers and students discover for themselves their best qualities.

As she was very practical, she held the girls in high esteem and wanted them to learn sewing skills, so she taught them what she knew.

For her a woman should be able to do a little bit of everything in her home. She has prepared a lot of girls to be women who embody the best values. By her full integration into our Ursuline mission, to know and love God, she gave the best of herself to pass on intellectual knowledge, and Christian and moral values to young people. Prayer was for her a great part of an apostolic missionary life. The women should have this to create a balanced home.

Her charity, generosity and compassion showed itself through the support she gave to provide school fees for poor students. A positive woman, she played a large role as reconciler between teachers, students, and the sisters. She always saw things in a positive way. Because of that, she was always cheerful and passed her joy on to others.

She had a special attachment to all the Congolese sisters. She took it to heart to convey a spirit of hard work. She stressed the importance of persevering in a work until it was finished and to seeing that it was well done. She introduced the sisters to housework and took care of their wellbeing.

Very quietly, she shared what she had received from her family with the Congolese sisters. We have with us the memory of the cups with the brand name of VERHEYEN; a name she was very proud of when she was drinking her coffee.

Quiet and attentive, she loved to dance and the Congolese sisters always felt free to dance with her using the steps of Belgium dances. This gave her joy.

They say that when a wise person dies, it's losing an entire library in a fire. But for our Sister "Y et" her library continues, she planted it in us and all the people who knew her.

By her death we understand that life is a passage and we are called to carry out the mission for which we are on Earth.

We are very grateful for you, Sister Henriette, and for everything we have received from you. We will never forget you. Thank you, thank you for everything and may your soul rest in peace.

Sisters Ursulines of Tildonk / Vice Province of the DRC

## Service of Leadership



When I heard that the *Leadership Conference of Women Religious* (LCWR) Assembly this year would be in Orlando, Florida I thought of sand and surf, but Orlando is inland. The closest we came to water was at the pool in the hotel and at Universal Studios.

Sr. Nirmala and I attended the assembly along with about 700 other sisters. The theme was *Being the Presence of Love: The power of transformation*. The LCWR is the association of the leaders of congregations of Catholic Sisters in the United States. It assists its members in carrying out their service of leadership to further the mission of the Gospel in the world.

The topics at the LCWR Assembly 2017 lent themselves to look closely at the losses in our life. I'm writing this on Sept 2, the anniversary of my Sister Nancy's death so the loss I still feel is tangible. I hope by giving a few key ideas, our Sisters will continue discussion or pray with the ideas I have chosen from the superb talks,

This year's meeting was a spiritual experience, guided by contemplative dialogue. The bond of connectedness to one another was felt throughout our days together in Orlando. During the Assembly we met in small groups called

"deepening groups." These gave time to listen to each one around the question *What is required of us now?*

During the week of the Assembly, tensions in the world escalated between the USA and North Korea. LCWR's public statement "implores President Trump to engage in dialogue and negotiation." LCWR also made a public statement condemning racism in all its harmful forms.

Dr. Christopher Pramuk gave a keynote address: *Will the Circle Be Unbroken? Leaning into the Mystery of Resurrection Faith*. He is a professor, author, student of spirituality, Thomas Merton and music. Chris inspired us through his songs of pain and hope and, in between his songs, he read the words of Frederick Douglass on the strength of black music. Chris led us to the tomb of the risen Christ, standing with Mary Magdalene, being asked, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

We listened and sang with Chris as he told his personal spiritual journey. His sharing of himself reminded me that each of us has our own story of our development and one of our tasks as members of a community is to draw that story out of one another, listening to our sisters, to family and friends, and even to the stranger on the airplane.

Sr. Mary Pellegrino, the out-going president is a visionary and strategic thinker. In her address, *The Future Enters Us Long Before It Happens:*

*Opening Space for an Emerging Narrative of Communion*, she made an emphatic call to all of us to begin shifting the focus from diminishment to communion. Some memorable quotes from her talk: "What is waiting to be born in our mission?" "While our grief is remaking us, we will remake the world."

**"Our own grief is a gateway to grace, not only for ourselves, but also for our world."**

Mary received a standing ovation which showed how address touched us all.

Another major speaker was author and Methodist minister Jan Richardson. Jan discussed her emotional journey following the unexpected death of her husband, in her address, *We Stood in the Place of Death and Heard the Living Call Our Name*. She invited us to listen to our heartbeat and consider what it means to "be the presence of love" even when it seems that the "love that's been present seems to have left us." She said death is a process that can come in many forms: a physical death, the death of a dream, loss of a familiar lifestyle, or the ending or changing of a community that has held our hearts. "When absence erupts in our lives, how do we call upon the presence of love that goes deeper than our loss?"

Sister Constance Fitzgerald, a Carmelite Sister and leading speaker on the re-interpretation of the

Carmelite lifestyle for our times, received the *Outstanding Leadership* award during the closing banquet. People recognize that she lives in solitude, yet thrives on collaboration and friendship. A few gems from her speech: "I deeply believe this is the era of contemplation, and the stakes are very high." "Contemplation is a love experience."

When discussing qualities needed for board members for LCWR, I noted qualities that may help all leaders: good interpersonal skills, live with ambiguity, use feedback constructively, appreciate diversity of views and maintain a collaborative spirit.

In conclusion, the three days in Orlando engaged us all in profound conversations regarding grief and vulnerability, the presence of love, and communion. For complete coverage of the Assembly visit [www.LCWR.org](http://www.LCWR.org)

Sr. Jane Quinlan

### **GUYANA MISSION**

December 14, 2010 was a very special day for the people of Karasabai when for the very first time two Ursuline Sisters came there. People were very happy to see us. There was no convent and we were kept in the teachers' quarter. Within 4 months the convent was built and we moved in. Our first mission started with a Jesuit priest Fr. Paul Martin and a Regent Br. Britto who helped us to know the people and their needs.

We visited the families regularly, went to different villages, taught catechism, prepared for different Sacraments, visited the elderly and sick and gave them Holy Communion. Very soon we won the hearts of the people. They were even very free to share their personal problems. They even shared their food like farine, beef, fish, vegetables, etc. On Sundays we led the Service and people came in good numbers. We also went for Gospel sharing daily to different families and said the Rosary. We tried to know them by their name and their families. We also kept the records of different sacraments and issued the Certificates. We used to go to the villages 4 or 5 times in a year. Sometimes the priests went with us to offer Holy Mass and to give the Sacraments.

Most of the times we journeyed by bicycle. Sometimes we went by tractors, trucks and ATV to the far villages on the mountains. These were the means of transportation.



L-R : Sisters Divya and Seraphina

To continue the Mission, two Sisters, Nishi Kujur and Crecencia Toppo joined us on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016. Soon they were at home and our work became a little easier. They were full of enthusiasm and youthfulness. Together we tried to keep up their catholic faith.

In Karasabai people needed a church since the old church building was almost falling down. We helped the people to build a new Church with the help of our Visitor friends who came from abroad for holidays the Jesuits and Ursulines also helped us financially.



Generous contributions from the locals came in the form of cash and materials such as bricks, wood and food items. People shared their labor and skill. The beautiful church was ready in one year and was blessed by the Bishop of Guyana.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 2017 Srs. Sosan Kujur and Helena Soreng joined our community. They doubled our joy. Their coming to Guyana confirmed our coming back to India. They are happy and full of missionary zeal.

We are very grateful to our authorities for their prayerful support,

encouragement, and appreciation. We also thank all the Jesuit priests for their cooperation in our mission.



L-R : Sisters Crecencia, Helena, Sosan Anima, Divya, Seraphina, Nishi

Our stay at Karasabai was a time of grace, filled with the experience of God. We enjoyed being with the people very much. May the Good Lord bless them all. At the end we thank each and every one. THANK YOU.

Srs. Divya and Seraphina