

# REFLECT

September 2020



## In solidarity with the entire world



The Covid 19 pandemic has gripped the entire world in suffering, fear, anxiety and uncertainty. The present situation poses enormous physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, economic, environmental and social challenges.

Each one is grappling with the global effects in his/her life. Possibly even our spiritual life may be shaken. We may feel the vital energy and life of Christ seem to be taken away from us. At the present time we feel powerless, but on the other hand there is an opportunity to experience God's blessing amidst chaos. Lockdown slowed down our rhythm of life, and gave us time for ourselves. It was a moment to reclaim our spiritual space. Has it instilled in us a longing for God and social solidarity with the human family?

The uncertainty leads us to entrust ourselves with more confidence in God, to accept that insecurity leads us to an intense search for God, to anchor our

hearts in him. This renews us being rooted in our vocation and mission.

God invites us to take care of listening amidst confusion and uncertainty, and to create space for contemplative silence to listen to him for conversion of heart.

This will help us to live a new life rooted in Christ as we are preparing for our coming General Chapter.

This year the feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows presents us with a unique inspiration of trust, hope and compassion to endure the suffering of the pandemic with patience in solidarity with the entire world.

Our Lady's sorrow was contemplative sorrow, feeling the loss of her son at the same time contemplating it to know the redemptive plan of God. She mourns with us as we deal with the struggles of sin, and the events that come with mortal life that are beyond our control, like illness, accidents, and death. She endured sorrow with patience and hope. The Mother of God is the compassionate intercessor who intercedes to God for us.

Great as the sea was her sorrow. But great as the sea is her compassion and her hope for the resurrection. Inspired by the spirit of deep faith and encouragement of Fr. John Lambertz, we the daughters of Angela turn to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows to implore her to end the coronavirus.

With great confidence we have the assurance of being guided by Divine Providence, as we recall the favor granted to Fr. John Lambertz to reopen the school. He received the good news on the feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. Do you have enough trust in Divine Providence that God will see us through this time?

Sr. Nirmala Kujur, OSU

### **The Generalate flower garden**

When we, members of the CLT, looked at the garden, representing the natural world, we recognized the contrast between what was happening all around in the midst of a terrible pandemic and the serene setting of the Generalate garden.

The coronavirus lockdown provided the time and opportunity to look more intently and appreciate the beauty of the garden while learning to find new life in a relationship with the rhythm of our garden as we aimed at being deeply rooted in Christ.



Our garden provides a place for experiencing nature in a new way and which has been beneficial to our community living, and even emotional well-being. As we work and walk in the Generalate flower garden - we see, touch, feel, and listen to God's creation. It produces a sense of pride and pleasure, to us and to the neighbours who look out their windows.

This Spring, warm sunny days encouraged flowers to bloom in profusion - lilacs,

lavender, poppies, roses, daisies, bluebells, gladiolas, tulips, azaleas, hydrangeas, geraniums, lilies, forget-me-nots, snapdragons and dahlias. This year the abundance of roses filled the garden with a sweet fragrance.



We noticed new plants, healthier roses, brighter lilacs, and even new

species never before in the garden. Our heightened sense of awareness was in full swing.

Working together was a community project and we all chipped in to remove dried moss so the grass could come up and we weeded out invasive plants. Weeds were thrown out, new seeds were sown.

Our garden has proven to be an amazing place, filled with birds' songs, and an array of flowers of all colors and shapes.

We watched apple seeds sprout and bean plants climb up poles. Insects tried to destroy our young bean plants, feasting on the tender new leaves. We outsmarted them by raising the plants high. Drama is going on all around in our garden, between snails, ants, and slugs there is never a dull moment. These little insects don't always do what pleases us, but they are there and we have to control them.

Our compost bin provides us with a natural nutrient that improves the growth of our plants and flowers. The waste can be transformed - symbol of our life.

One evening for prayer, we were invited to observe our garden with new eyes, listening

to the birds, noting the bright colors, textures of the leaves and the aroma of the roses. We walked in silence meditating and noticing new things we had not seen before. We felt a renewed sense of awareness and gratitude for the gift of nature and of our beautiful garden.

How do you feel being connected with creation? Do you share the joy of gardening?

*"Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker" (Wisdom 13:5)*

### **Formators Programme in Rome**

**Sr. Lucia Nag (Ranchi Province) reports:**

It was my great privilege to be one of the participants of the UISG (Union of General Superiors) Programme for the Preparation of Formators 2020. The programme was inaugurated with the Eucharistic celebration on February 3<sup>rd</sup> and concluded on June 26<sup>th</sup> with a Thanksgiving Mass followed by the distribution of certificates and an agape meal. We were 44 participants from 26 countries, belonging to 34 Congregations.

It was an experience of internationality, of being together with Sisters of many congregations with various charisms, diversity of cultures and contexts. We experienced intercultural living and global sisterhood, collaborating with each other in the mission of the Lord, in this challenging and demanding world. The entire experience gave me a wider view of the world in which religious and lay men and women are working in partnership to

respond to the needs of the suffering at the periphery.

All the participants were companions, learning, sharing and working together for the common welfare. Each of us was accompanied by a mentor, a psychologist, and by a retreat director. We were provided with 26 courses. All of them are very valuable and enriching. -I would like to mention a few of them: ***Religious Life in Today's Context, Consecrated Life a Living Exegesis of God's Word, Theology of Religious Life, Discernment and Leadership, Digital Culture and Formation, Young People Today and Vocational Discernment.*** These topics have inspired me to appreciate the richness and uniqueness of each person.

The ***Dialogue Training for Formators, Intercultural Living and Group Building / Dynamic*** courses have taught me to foster team spirit and celebrate differences. ***Contemporary Global Needs*** has instilled in me a fire for Mission. The classes on ***Self- Deepening Awareness, Human development and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*** offered me an occasion to write my autobiography which filled me with gratitude as I became conscious of God's presence and His persistent companionship through the people I have encountered. It is also assisting me to assess myself and discover meaning from past experiences to grow in maturity. ***The Doctors of the Church*** are motivating me to be a good learner in order to become a good disciple of Christ. Over all UISG has trained me to be a graceful companion in the mission of the Lord.



It was a long spiritual journey from one's mind to heart. The resource persons consistently emphasized widening the tent of one's heart and listening to the long stories of people. They encouraged us to imbibe the spirit of flexibility and rootedness, to be compassionate and hospitable, offering a healing glance and a word of hope, and giving due respect to everything.

Now, having completed the Programme, my heart is filled with a song of gratitude to Sr. Bimla Minj and Sr. Suchita Shalini Xalxo for providing me the opportunity to participate in the UISG.

I am grateful to the CLT for inviting me to Belgium, the heart of our Congregation and to visit the roots of our foundation. The rich experience of visiting Tildonk and other places has increased my joy and helped me deepen our Ursuline charism.

Sr. Lucia Nag, OSU

## Pilgrimage to Curé's foundations

### Introduction

Father Henri Saintrain wrote an early account of the foundations established by Fr. John Lambertz. After reading his book, Jean-Corneille Martin Lambertz, originally written in French in 1892, the CLT was particularly interested in seeing the success of his work by visiting a few sites. We chose places situated in close proximity to each other in the Province of Antwerp in Flanders. Saintrain's book served as a guide to trace a route to Lier, Gierle, Beerse, Hoogstraten, and Meerle.

On July 15, with the GPS programed, and Saintrain's book as reference, we started the day's outing prepared for an uplifting spiritual experience while enjoying the joy of discovery. After saying goodbye to the Sisters in **Melsbroek** we got settled in the mini bus. The CLT, Sr. Lucia Nag, visiting from Rome, and Sr. Lea, our driver and guide set out for an Ursuline pilgrimage to find places connected to Fr. John Lambertz.

## LIER



Our first stop was in Lier (1863) where we stood in awe at the courses of study offered in the St. Ursula School. As we looked at the former convent in the distance, we imagined the many years that the Sisters dedicated their entire selves to educating children. In *The Curé of Thildonck* by Holemans we read: "The Lierre Community had its beginnings in Louvain, where some pious ladies had joined together to teach children... The House was later transferred to Lierre... In 1863 it became united to Tildonk." It was closed on July 31, 2019.

## GIERLE



Fr. Lambertz had the joy of sending his daughters to different parts of the country, among the places was Gierle, founded in 1860. The convent is now a family home called the KLOOSTERHOF. We were delighted to visit with two women who live there now. Two of the Peeters family were Ursulines.

In 1966 the building was bought by Jos Peeters-Govers. The Peeters family lives there now and has renovated the convent chapel and school.

There was a display all around the outside of the Church showing a pictorial history of the Parish Church. To our delight we discovered a picture of the school, and the last group of Ursulines who were teaching in the once flourishing French-speaking boarding school. The boarding school, founded in 1873, had many foreign students in those early decades, especially Danish and Greek girls.

In Saintrains' book we read: "The Sisters were welcomed with extraordinary joy to Gierle in 1860 by the good and religious population. Like almost everywhere, they did not wait long before inviting young girls

to meet on Sundays at their home, to engage together in various exercises of piety."

## BEERSE

We were particularly interested in visiting Beerse (1896) to find out if the Van Ael family was recognized as connected to the Curé since we read: "Johannes was less than 10 years old when his mother Marie-Thérèse Van Ael from Beerse died." With this information, we visited St. Lambertus Church and to our delight, we met two women who showed us around the Church, and pointed out a plaque on the outside of the Church mentioning the grave of the grandfather of Father Lambertz.



From the annals of the Church, we read, "In 1723 Cornelius Van Ael acted as secretary. He was also bailiff (sheriff) of Merksplas and married twice. His daughter Maria married Lambrecht Lambertz, secretary of Rijkevorsel. One of their sons is the holy priest Joannes Lambertz, founder of the Belgian Ursulines in Tildonk. After a long illness he died in 1758.



The tombstone of Cornelius Van Ael is embedded in the north wall of the church tower." We felt connected to Fr Lambertz as we learned about his saintly mother.

## HOOGSTRATEN



The birth place of the Holy Pastor of Thildonck J. Lambertz 1785-1869

Fr. Lambertz was born in **Hoogstraten** on February 8, 1785 and was baptized the same day and made his First Communion there in 1797. We stood in Saint Catherine Church where this took place and where later in his life, he was a priest in the same parish. The Church is renowned for its magnificent stained-glass windows and paintings.

The first new convent founded after Tildonk was in Hoogstraten in 1832. Fr. Lambertz gave the convent the title of *Convent of the Holy Cross*.



"Our Lord has entrusted to you the beginnings of a great work, and you must not be surprised.. by the crosses you meet."

Despite the difficulties in the beginning of the foundation in Hoogstraten, the reputation of the school is well known for its excellence. Today the school offers education from infants to secondary, and post graduate studies in hotel management.

We were particularly interested in the house where Fr. Lambertz was born and lived; standing in front of the actual house on the main street had an impact on all of us. It made the trip worthwhile. He seemed alive to us. His father, Adrien -François, was village secretary and filled responsible positions on the municipal council of the town.

## MEERLE



The convent in **Meerle** was founded in 1866 at the request of the parish priest. According to Saintrain, there were six sisters at the time of his writing. The school was attended by one hundred and fifty pupils. Meerle is a village in the Belgian municipality of Hoogstraten and has always been affiliated with Hoogstraten. Little remains of the original convent/school today.