



Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard

Newsletter No. 4

December, 1994
CHRISTMAS ISSUE



Fr. Gérard T. Lagleder was invested as a Magistral Chaplain in the **Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John** of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, shortly referred to as the Order of Malta.

CONGRATULATIONS

Fr. Gérard Lagleder, President of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, Mandini, kwaZulu/Natal was invested as a Chaplain of the Order of Malta on the 24th October, 1994 while on home leave in Germany. When Fr. Gérard became a Benedictine monk the newspaper article said "A Maltese becomes a Benedictine" and now we can say "A Benedictine becomes a Maltese". By serving God both as a Benedictine monk and a Chaplain of the Order of Malta, Fr. Gérard is uniting the two most important ideals of his life, that of protecting the faith and serving the poor. The Benedictine motto being "ora et labora" (= pray and work) and the Brotherhood motto being "tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" (= protection of faith and service to the poor) - both meaning just that. By being invited to join the Order of Malta an almost lifelong dream has been fulfilled, having been involved with the German Maltese organisation, [Malteser-Hilfsdienst](#), for more than twenty five years. We, the members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, are extremely proud to have a Magistral Chaplain of the Sovereign Order of Malta as our president. We extend our sincere congratulations to Fr. Gérard and wish him God's richest blessings in his work in South Africa.

LEADERSHIP

The first term of office of our Executive Council ended on 5 November 1994. The Council of the Dedicated Members has given a vote of confidence to the President and re-elected the other office bearers.

MEMBERS' NEWS

OBITUARY: We offer our sincere condolences to the families of the following - May they rest in peace.

- Mr. William Francis
- Deacon Franz Grandl

MARRIAGE: Congratulations to Mr. Johann Hauer and his wife Ute on their marriage.

BIRTHS: Congratulations to Mrs. Mechthilde Hirmer and her husband, Heinrich on the birth of their daughter, Elisabeth.

ANNIVERSARIES: Congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. Hoff on the occasion of their Silver wedding anniversary.

BIRTHDAYS: Congratulations to Mrs. M. Hiza on her 80th Birthday and to Emanuel Graf von Walderdorff on his 60th Birthday.

GOOD LUCK: To Mrs. Wendy Richardson and her family who have moved to Pietermaritzburg. Her active and cheery help will be sorely missed. May God go with you.

[COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE / SEWING SCHOOL IN SUNDUMBILI](#)

1994 has been a very successful year for this project. Forty nine students have passed the "A" (elementary) course and twenty five have graduated from the "B" course (advanced). We have also utilised Radio Zulu to advertise the courses, which they have done free of charge. We are very grateful for this facility. Our teacher, Miss Lindiwe Mazibuko is very dedicated to her job and turns out high quality work. We wish her a very restful holiday - it is well deserved.

AIDS PREVENTION EDUCATION

Eighteen members of the Brotherhood attended a course given by the Diocesan team from Eshowe. Whilst we enjoyed these courses, we also found the subject of AIDS very shocking. Three teams were set up, one to work in the Mandikini area under the leadership of Johannes Hlongwa, one in the Whebede area under the leadership of Conrad Khumalo and one in the Sundumbili area under the leadership of Dr. Paul Thabethe. Dr. Thabethe has had the opportunity to speak on many occasions and had one of his talks broadcast on Radio Zulu. The Brotherhood finds this kind of coverage to be advantageous as we can reach a greater number of people. The shocking fact is that there are still some people who have not heard of the disease called AIDS. 1st December, 1994 is World AIDS Day - let us remember all the victims of this terrible disease in our prayers.

CRÉCHE / PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL

January, 1995 will see the opening of this facility in a provisional building in Whebede, kwaZulu/Natal. Our teacher Miss Veronika Makhosazana Mthethwa has been trained at Nqutu in Northern Natal by the Twasa Sisters. She will further her studies in January, 1995 before the project opens. The construction of the new building to house the children will be completed some time in February. We will be able to accommodate approximately thirty children to begin with. The close proximity of the crèche / pre-primary school to the government run junior and senior schools will make bringing the pre-schoolers to our facility a lot easier.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

We have come to the end of a busy and fulfilling year. Although four of our members passed away and "Ma" Muriel Wiggill moved to a retirement home, our numbers have grown. Each meeting we have had a new face or two. It was decided to have two meetings a month as we found there was not enough time for all our activities. We had a number of speakers, i.e. Miss Ramballi from the Deaf & Blind Society in Durban, Dr. Lynton Wilkinson spoke on the symptoms of ageing and Allison Coetzee from the Durban Welfare Society. Some of the members themselves gave demonstrations on smocking, knitting, candlewicking and appliqué work. The "Old Biddies" or "Recycled teenagers" had some very lively chat mornings, especially after Margaret Hawthorn had read some readings about "Grandparents and grandchildren". Bingo was always very popular with Joyce Buss doing the calling. Old Christmas cards were recycled and sold in aid of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard Funds. We were very sorry when Wendy Richardson moved to Pietermaritzburg. Her hard work and dedication to the Friendship club has been missed. The club has grown, to the extent that we had as many as eighteen members at the last three or four meetings. We ended the year on a high note with a Christmas party, at which small gifts were given to each person. A very big THANKYOU to all who helped make this day and the whole year such a success. We have already had offers of demonstrations and talks for the coming year. Our first meeting for 1995 will be on Wednesday, 25th January.

By Yvonne Renaud

THANKYOU

to all our donors, to those who pray for our work and to all the active members - because without ALL these people, there would be no Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

A very special Thankyou to Mr. [Johannes Lagleder](#), Mr. & Mrs. Johann & Albertine Sporer and Rev. Fr. Vitus Wengert for their unceasing support to organise and administer our fund-raising in Germany.

Another special Thankyou to Emanuel Graf von Walderdorff whose wish for his 60th birthday was, that people might give [donations](#) to the Brotherhood.

Prof. Dr. Bernd Ultsch had the very same idea on his 50th birthday. May God reward you for your selflessness. Your birthday gifts are greatly appreciated.

The German [Malteser-Hilfsdienst](#) has somehow adopted our Brotherhood as its godchild. We are very grateful to the Executive President of Malteser-Hilfsdienst, our member, Johannes Freiherr Heereman, for having organised that. The Executive of Malteser-Hilfsdienst has now appointed Dr. Albrecht Graf von Rechberg to initiate and co-ordinate the support programme of the German Malteser-Hilfsdienst for our Brotherhood.

When Fr. Gérard went on leave this year, he also visited the Irish Association of the [Order of Malta](#) in Dublin. They were very interested to hear about our projects and promised to assist us in the training of trainers. Further details are still to be finalised.

A highlight of Fr. Gérard's overseas tour was an audience with His Most Eminent Highness the Prince and [Grandmaster](#) of the Order of Malta in Rome. He was very appreciative of what we have initiated and achieved. We consider it a great honour that Fr. Gérard was presented the Missal of the Order of Malta by the Grand Commander Fré Ludwig

Hoffmann and that he was most cordially received by the Master of Ceremonies Fré Carl Paar.

Fr. Gérard was also invited by the Grand Prior of the Order of Malta in Bohemia on the occasion of the investiture of their new Prior in Prague (Czech Republic). He accompanied our member Friedrich Graf von Strachwitz, who is the Treasurer of the Order of Malta in Bohemia.

WELCOME

to all our new members: Frau Helene Gierl, Mrs Severina Mthembu, Mrs Lucia Ncanana, Fréulein Marianne Dittrich, Fréulein Anna Spielmann, Rev Sr Edwina Ruth Mncube O.S.B., Mrs Alzinah Dubazana, Mrs Helma Antoinette Lintvelt, Mrs Sandra De Vries, Mrs Cecilia N Msomi, Rev Sr M Rutila Wadenstorfer O.S.B., Dr Ernst Richard Eiselen, Mrs Estelle Eiselen, Mrs Margaret Hiza, Mrs Colleen Barnes, Mr Vernon Barnes, Mrs Julia Thandiwe Mhlongo, Mrs Kim East, Mrs Jean Geswindt, Mrs Joan Rose Dunn, Mr Jetro Zwelihle Qwabe, Mrs Enize Feeke, Mr Gerard Thomas Coughlin, Mrs Nomafa Anna Thusi, Mrs Thembi Natalia Zikhali (Kunene), Rev Sr M Bernice Donharl, Rev Sr Irene Zitha O.S.B., Mrs Eslina Ndokweni, Mrs Tine Catharina Van Der Steege, Mrs Lindeni Ignatia Dlamini, Rev Fr Gerhard Brunner, Herrn PeterWurstner, Herrn Hermann Kirschner, Mrs Sandra Janene Messenger, Mrs Roélien Ann Ogle, Herrn Werner Méller, Mrs Constance Nzama, Mrs Ivy Manqele, Mrs Margaret Ann Potter, Mr Carelius Mbhekeni Sithole, Mrs Martha Nhleko , Herrn Georg Rinnagl, Herrn Josef Pauli, Frau Walburga Guggenbichler, Frau Franziska Gisela Binzer, Herrn Franz Herner, Frau Sigrid Lauinger, H. H. Pfarrer Alfons Schmidt, Herrn Friedrich Féchsl, Herrn Génter Hupperich, Frau Johanna Hupperich, S. E. Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager, Ehrw. Sr. Theresa Brenninkmeijer, Ehrw. Sr. Simone Larsen, Ehrw. Sr. Caterina Wissner, Ehrw. Sr. Raphaela Méller, Ehrw. Sr. Bernadette Lohrum, Ehrw. Sr. Michaela Krautmann, Ehrw. Sr. Maria Hellgren, Ehrw. Sr. Sigrun Krenn, Ehrw. Sr. Stephanie Sérensen, Ehrw. Sr. Christina Rasmussen, Ehrw. Sr. Franka Engel, Frau Barbara

Biedermann, Frau Hildegard Biedermann, Frau Dorothee Wroblewski, Frau Irmgard Schraml, Herrn Erich Wallner, Frau Anni Wallner, Herrn Franz Béumler, Frau Resi Béumler, Frau Marianne Béllmann, Frau Marianne Regen, Frau Rosa Sulzer, Herrn Ernst Dostler, Herrn Constantin von Brandenstein-Zeppelin, Herrn Joachim Schnurbus, Frau Jutta Betzler, Ehrw. Sr. M. Eugenie Léffler, Frau Irene Maria Wittkowsky, Sr. Cilli Schedel, Frau Inge Glatzel, I. H. Nadine Frfr. v. Redwitz, Herrn Otto Neumeir, Frau Anna Folger, H. H. P. Kilian Saum OSB, Herrn Leo Kneip, Frau Gerti Dietrich, Frau Andrea Guggenbichler, Herrn Erhard Schiffers, Mrs Gail February, Mr Vusi Victor Nzuzza, Mr Ambrose Ngema, Mr Mathambo Odysseus Nhleko, Herrn Génter Neuner. We are especially proud that the Hospitaller of the Order of Malta Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager and the President of the Salvadorian Association of the Order of Malta D. Gerard T. Coughlin and the President of [Malteser-Hilfsdienst](#) (Germany) Constantin von Brandenstein-Zeppelin joined the ranks of our members. We will try to keep you informed as to how our projects are progressing. Please keep canvassing for new members. If you need additional [application forms](#), please contact the office at 032-4562743.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

to one and all. May God Bless you and keep you safe over the festive season. Let us remember those less fortunate than ourselves. Merry Christmas and a happy 1995!

A Christmas Message, so I was told, should be my contribution to this newsletter. An honourable request probably made because I am considered the specialist for such pious exercises. Sorry, I can't. Who am I to deliver such an incredible message? Why me? God used an angel to announce the Good News of God's incarnation in Christ Jesus and people still did not believe. What are my words to reassure you of the Saviour's coming into this our world? Nothing! Even St. John the Baptist was killed in spite of being a successful preacher of repentance preparing Christ's way to serve and save mankind. Do you really think that a few lines of my Christmas Message will achieve what the greatest of the prophets hasn't achieved? Jesus Christ himself failed to make known and to be accepted by everybody as what he was and why he came into this world on Christmas day. They killed him as a rebel like a criminal. Excuse me please, are you really sure that one of those many thousands of Christmas messages, which are being delivered just this year, will make any change? Do you really think, that people may have a minute to spare between Xmas-parties, holiday stress and gift-mania to listen to me relaying the soft cry of a new-born baby, born poor and homeless in a stable out of Bethlehem? Wouldn't you rather be left in peace than listening to my emotional waffling? I apologise for wasting your time with my non-delivered Christmas Message. If it weren't for some days off work, the dinner and the season's-greetings-cards it would be much more convenient to cancel Christmas anyway, but what must be, must be. It's true and I beg your pardon for all inconvenience caused by my inability to do as I am told. I better give up and withdraw from all this Xmas-business. Father Xmas is more proficient anyway to supply such a high demand of gifts, than the little baby, which I am promoting with it's silent cry for peace and reconciliation suffocated in the noise of the merchants who have taken over the show in the temple. I better leave the spotlights of the festive season. I walk out of it and have a rest from my useless efforts. I go to a place, where nobody wants

to be in these days. There I meet poor mothers and their malnourished children. I meet unemployed women and single mothers, I meet HIV-positive and many neglected sick people. I meet lonely senior citizens and many people uneducated for lack of funds to pay school fees. They cannot join in the festive performance. They silently sit back and look at me. The deeper I look into their eyes, the more I notice that these are shining. When I did all my desperate preaching about the good news of salvation proclaimed to the poor, the freedom promised to prisoners and the joy coming to those in sorrow, they had paid attention. They had understood, what I meant, when I told them, that Christ had humbled himself and become a servant to show mercy to those who honour him, to lift up the lowly and to fill the hungry with good things. Their eyes look at me sparkling from the true light of Christmas. I wonder why they could believe. It could not have been me and my preaching, because others had heard the very same message and disregarded it. I doubt, if there were not angels involved, angels who brought them the same message, much better than I did through my sermons, in their helping deeds, when they fed the malnourished children, taught the unemployed in skills to make them independent of charity, prepared a crèche for the children of single mothers, cared for the endangered to prevent HIV-infection, planned a [care centre](#) to look after the neglected sick, replaced loneliness through friendship and made education possible for the poor. Thank you, my dear angels! You have preached the better sermon, which people could understand. You have made Christmas happen in those, who have listened and in me, too, in a very special way. Your Christmas Message is my greatest gift. Thank you and have an angelic Christmas!

Yours most gratefully

[Fr. Gérard](#)

PS: A special Thank you to [Clare Kalkwarf](#) for compiling this newsletter!