



Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard

NEWS LETTER

No. 14

Easter 1998

Dear members and friends of our Brotherhood,

Easter is the feast of Christ's victory over death and devil and thus the accomplishment of salvation. The word "salvation" derives from the Latin word "salus", which means "healing". Salvation is the status of final and complete healing, as Christ is not only concerned about our body and mind, but about our soul as well. When Christ lived a human life, he healed innumerable bodies and minds from sickness, anxiety, worries and sadness, but only when he rose from the dead he would heal our soul from death (=being parted from life) by breaking through the barrier of death and opening the way to eternal life in raising us with him. It is our Christian vocation to follow Christ, i.e. not to be complacent with our own salvation, but to bring all people to this new life. It is our special vocation as members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, too, to help all people to be totally healed in body, mind and soul, through our nursing and child care, feeding, teaching, advice, counselling, support and pastoral care. May you experience Easter in every patient, who came to new life in Christ!

Yours fraternally

Father Gérard

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta

We are the South African Relief Organisation of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and, as such, subject to its authority. When our president went to Europe on home leave last year, he was granted an audience with the Grandmaster of the Order of Malta on 30th October 1997.



His Most Eminent Highness, the Prince and Grandmaster of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Fra' Andrew Bertie and Fr. Gérard

Father was warmly welcomed and literally made to feel at home in the Grand Magistry and both the Grandmaster and the Grand Commander, Fra' Ludwig Hoffmann von Rumerstein, who came to South Africa for the Blessing of the Care Centre in September 1996, send their special regards to all our members.

International relations

U.S.A.

Since Mr. Daniel Meehan, K.M., then the chairman of the International Committee of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta's Federal Association, first visited us on 18th March 1994, we have been blessed with substantial help from both the Federal Association and Mr. Meehan personally. Our Pre-Primary School and Crèche, our Feeding Scheme for malnourished infants and especially our Care Centre have benefitted from their generosity. When the Federal Association celebrated their annual Investiture on 13th September 1997, our president was invited to Washington, DC, U.S.A., and specially welcomed by His Eminence, James Cardinal Hickey, the Archbishop of Washington. Fr. Gérard went there with the aim of expressing our sincere gratitude for all the support received and to update them on the developments of our organisation. Amongst the many dignitaries there, he met



Fra' John A. MacPherson, (a member of the Sovereign Council, who expressed the acknowledgement of the Order of Malta for our Internet publications on the history of the Order), Fra' James-Michael von Stroebel, K.J., (who excelled himself in hospitality), the president of the Federal Association, Milan C. Miskovsky, Esq., K.M. and his successor in office William J. Page, the president of the Western Association, Richard J.

Dunn, the president of the Canadian Association Francis Vincent Regan, Q.C. and W. David Holliday, who so kindly hosts our Internet site on his webserver.



Before the Investiture, Fr. Gérard enjoyed the generous hospitality of Daniel Meehan and his wife Eileen in Milwaukee, who had arranged meetings with the Archbishop of Milwaukee, His Excellency, Rembert Weakland O.S.B., and Tommy Thompson, the Governor of Wisconsin.

l-r: Dan Meehan, Tommy Thompson, Fr. Gérard, Andrew Peretti



Fr. Gérard also had a chance to meet the two volunteer nurses from the U.S.A., who worked with us at the Care Centre in 1997, Barbara Braun and Nancy Bartell and their families, who gave him a very warm welcome.

l-r: Dan Meehan, Eileen Meehan, Tom Braun, Barbara Braun, Fr. Gérard, Nancy Bartell, Larry Bartell



Fr. Gérard thanked West Allis Memorial Hospital, who have donated all the hospital furniture for our Care Centre.

On his way to Milwaukee, Fr. Gérard passed through Denton and San Antonio, Texas, where he met with members of his family and members of our brotherhood (Louis, Ray and Mary Lagleder, Ann Bateman, Eddie and Laurie Stecker)



and Schuyler, Nebraska, where he enjoyed truly Benedictine hospitality, through our member, Fr. Volker Futter O.S.B.

Germany

Fr. Gérard had the opportunity to meet many of our German members and benefactors during his home leave late last year. Special highlights were his visits to Malteser-Hilfsdienst in Landsberg (Father Gérard was formerly their district commissioner), Caritas Homenursing Services of Schwandorf district (where he had helped establish their nursing training), Descartes High School in Neuburg (which is one of our most faithful benefactors through the consistent help of Mrs Albertine Sporer), Malteser-Hilfsdienst Regensburg (where Father was the Diocesan director of nursing), Malteser-Hilfsdienst München (where Dr. Albrecht Count of Rechberg and Mr Manfred Schulz keep their supporting hands under us), Malteser-Hilfsdienst Secretariate General in Cologne (where Father met Baron Heereman, who played a vital role in the acknowledgement of our organisation by the Order of Malta, Heinz Himmels and Peter Wittmann), St. Kilian's Parish in Mainhausen (where Father Michael Eich had arranged a meeting of all local members of our Brotherhood), St. George's Parish in Amberg (where Father met our member Father Werner Sulzer),



Malteser-Hilfsdienst in Traunstein (where our members Max and Gabi Rauecker always provide unmatched hospitality)

and last but not least to Father Gérard's father, brother and sister, who are all members of our Brotherhood (but of course, he enjoyed the family side of it too).

France

It was a special act of divine providence, that just at the time, when Father was in Germany, the Order of Malta organised a pilgrimage to Lourdes



Before Father came to Africa, he used to make an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. Thus an old desire could be fulfilled again and he took his father with him as a gift to his 80th birthday, which he had celebrated in February last year.

Italy



When Father Gérard went to Rome, our faithful members Riccardo and Rosa De Stefano travelled 250 kilometres (140 miles) to the Grand Magistry of the Order of Malta, to collect Father and take him to visit the nice group of our members (which now number 20) in their home Solofra.

l-r: Riccardo, Daniela, Michael, Rosa De Stefano, Fr. Gérard

Their hospitality was unmatched. Riccardo and Rosa fulfilled another old wish of Father, to visit Amalfi and Scala. Amalfi is the place, where the merchants, who established the Benedictine Monastery St. Maria Latina in Jerusalem in AD 1048, came from. Their guesthouse was called the "Hospital of Jerusalem" and this became the historical cradle of the Order of Malta (which is actually called the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta). The guestmaster of this Benedictine Monastery was Blessed Gérard, who founded a brotherhood to help him nurse the sick.

This brotherhood very soon developed into an independent religious order, being the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. There are two conflicting traditions as far as Blessed Gérard's home is concerned. The one assumes that he comes from the island of Martiques next to Marseilles in Southern France and gives him the surname "Tonque". The other theory calls Scala next to Amalfi his home and gives him the surname "del Sasso". The contemporary inhabitants of the little village Scala know little about the most famous of their sons.

However, they have named a local church youth group after him: Circolo "Gerardo Sasso".



It took us a long time, after following three conflicting directions, to get to the house called "Villa Saxo", which is believed to have been the seat of the "del Sasso" family. There is very little left of what could have withstood the destructive powers of history for more than 900 years.



In fact, the family living in the "Villa Saxo" pointed out to us, that the columns in the basement of the building would be the only remainder of the former splendour.



A little chapel in the village has a stone sculpture probably depicting Blessed Gérard in the manner of St. Michael.





Another clue is the fact, that in a former church next to Amalfi Cathedral, which is now used as a museum, a fresco was found, which is also believed to show Blessed Gérard as a young knight. We know for sure, that in Blessed Gérard's times, the Order was purely and solely a hospital order without any military tasks. The fresco depicts Blessed Gérard wearing a sword. Maybe Blessed Gérard was posthumously granted such an attribute, as his Order had developed into a military order later.

As far as the history of the Maltese Cross is concerned, it is interesting to know, that it is part of the coat of arms of Amalfi. I have not yet found an answer to the question: "Since when did Amalfi have a Maltese Cross in its coat of arms?" This would be to determine, whether the Order of Malta got the Maltese Cross from Amalfi or vice versa, Amalfi got it from the Order of Malta.



Ireland

Our Vice-President, Clare Kalkwarf, and her husband spent Christmastime with their children (Sean and Leon, the latter being a member of ours and the architect who designed our Care Centre) in London and (Heather, our new member) in Dublin. What surpasses family business is the fact, that they visited the Headquarters of the Irish Association and the Order of Malta Ambulance Corps (OMAC) in Dublin. They were warmly welcomed there and met the director of the OMAC, Frank Hearn, who had visited us in Mandeni last year. The OMAC donated us a set of neck braces (stiff-necks) and a sphygmomanometer. Mr. Hearn also promised to assist us in the further training of our volunteers. Clare and Geoff Kalkwarf stayed with Sr. Elaine Taylor, who had been with us in 1976/77 as a volunteer nurse at the Care Centre for a whole year. Sr. Elaine's state of health has improved tremendously after she had got severely ill during the second half of her stay in Mandeni. We will never forget what tremendous asset she has been for us by training the first volunteers for our Care Centre, our instructors and setting up a group of junior members (cadets).



Sr. Elaine Taylor in front of St. John's House in Dublin

England

Mr. Charles Wright sent us a wonderful gift from the Grand Priory of England of the Order of Malta: A copy of the Missal of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (in English). This missal is bibliophilic treasure wonderfully illustrated with colour pictures of the Saints of our Order, including one of Blessed Gérard. We are most grateful and honoured to receive this most valuable gift.

News from our projects ..

Blessed Gérard's Care Centre & Hospice

has had a boost in activity through the management committee being invited to join the iSithebe AIDS Forum. This is a committee of factory managers, industrial nurses, shop stewards and volunteers from the factories in the local industrial area. The concern of this committee is the high incidence of people being found to be HIV positive (informed sources claim that 80% [!!!] of the work force in iSithebe factories could be HIV-positive), their ensuing deterioration into full-blown AIDS, finally resulting in the bording and/or death of factory personnel.

This forum was seeking help in the nursing and counselling of their own staff members. We, the team at Blessed Gerard's Care Centre, were approached to give advice and to look into the best manner in which we could help. The Care Centre hosted the last meeting of the iSithebe AIDS Forum, when it was decided that our facility would be ideal for the purpose of education, advice, home nursing and hospice care for all people and families affected by the HI Virus. Selected volunteers will be trained as AIDS counsellors along with other members of the iSithebe AIDS Forum.

The iSithebe AIDS Forum is also looking into the funding of the work done by our organisation in relation to the utilisation of our facility. They will canvass donations from their own companies as well as organising fund raising events in the local community.

We look forward with much anticipation to a good number of volunteers from the U.S.A. and Germany to join our local volunteers soon. The ones who will be coming definitively are Björn Peters from Germany from July 15th for a whole year and Katie Truesdale from the U.S.A. from July 17th for

a month. Most probably there will be two more nurses from the U.S.A., but we are not 100% sure at this stage. We look forward to your coming!

Blessed Gérard's AIDS Prevention Programme

will also be utilised more fully by the Isithebe AIDS Forum. Dr. PZT Thabethe, our medical superintendent, has been asked to organise our educational teams, to give seminars on AIDS in local factories.

Support has been received from the local paper factory, SAPPI Kraft, in the form of a donation of R5000 towards our AIDS education programme. On behalf of our entire executive, our members and all the people we assist, we would like to say thank you.

Blessed Gérard's Community Development Centre (Sewing School)

is full once again. Miss Thulile Nzuzza has excelled herself in her role as the teacher, maintaining a very high standard of sewing. During 1997 twelve ladies passed through our course. They began as unemployed people, with no means to earn an income. By the end of the year they had progressed from not knowing anything about being a seamstress, to being able to make lined skirts and jackets for ladies and trousers and collar shirts for men, as well as school uniforms, toddlers clothes and many other items which would be easy to market. We wish all the "graduates" the very best for the future.

Blessed Gérard's Bursary Fund

has once again been able to assist some worthy students to achieve a higher standard in education. In 1998 three young people will benefit from this fund. A young man who is a student at the M L Sultan Technikon in Durban, a young lady who is a student at the University of Zululand and a youth who is a pupil at a local high school. We wish them all the best in their quest for a better future and one day they will be in a position to help others, as they have been helped.

Blessed Gérard's Pre-primary School & Crèche

has been through some difficult times as a result of violence, unstable living conditions and unemployment in the surrounding areas. However, Miss Veronica Mthethwa, our teacher at the crèche, perseveres relentlessly. We congratulate her on her stability and conscientiousness. The school is presently running at approximately 55% capacity, and we continue to advertise via word of mouth. We hope that this facility will be running at

full capacity by mid 1998. We were able to buy a new set of three swings for the children at the crèche as well as many other small items.

Blessed Gérard's Feeding Scheme for Malnourished Infants

continues to run smoothly. Unfortunately we have more and more babies referred to us by the local doctors, clinics and social workers. I say "unfortunately", because it is a sad reflection on how needy our society really is. But, on the other hand, I say, "fortunately", because Sr. Nokuthula Thabethe and her team of volunteers are there on behalf of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, to assist with the education of the mothers and the monitoring of the progress of the babies involved. At the moment we have more than 30 babies on our cards, which are brought, on a fortnightly basis, to be physically checked, weighed and supplied with enough infant formula milk powder and protein enriched porridge for two weeks consumption. This service is given completely free of charge. Should the children need more specialised or long term help, they would be referred to the relevant authorities, e.g. the social welfare department or a medical specialist or hospital.



Blessed Gérard's Friendship Club

has begun a new era.

The members bade a sad but fond farewell to Mrs. Margaret Hawthorn, who had helped to plan and run the meetings during the last four years. Our active members, Mrs. Hawthorn together with Mrs. Yvonne Renaud and Mrs. Wendy Richardson were the initiators of this particular club, which meets fortnightly. It began as a senior citizens club, but has evolved into a true friendship club, with ladies of all ages coming together to assist and enjoy a morning of fun with the elderly. Mrs. Joyce Buss will continue to organise the

meetings and outings.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our very sincere and heartfelt gratitude to you, Margaret, for all the time and effort you put into making these meetings so enjoyable. May God bless you and your husband, Tom, in your retirement!

Blessed Gerard's Care Centre's new Nursing Sister.

It is with great pleasure that we introduce Sr. Sanet van Zyl to you. We would also like to wish her a very warm welcome to our team in Blessed Gérard's Care Centre. Sr. van Zyl has recently moved down to kwaZulu/Natal from Gauteng, with her family. She is highly qualified and we are sure that she will prove to be a wonderful asset to all the people we serve.



Sr. Sanet van Zyl writes.....

Blessed Gerard's Care Centre has taken a big step by employing me. I am a South African registered nurse, having begun my general nursing training in 1980, completing it in 1983, in Pretoria. Other qualifications that I have attained are midwifery, pharmacology, junior management, AIDS counselling, community health nursing, occupational health & safety and advanced nursing dynamics.

I am married with two wonderful children, a son of 14 and a daughter of 4 years. My husband and I decided to relocate from Gauteng to have a more peaceful life away from the "rat race". I was very happy and fortunate that the position in Blessed Gérard's Care Centre, became available just at the time when we decided to move to kwaZulu/Natal.

My aim in life is to help people in need and to teach them to be positive, love one another and to enjoy life, which is the greatest gift from God. I hope and pray that I will be the asset that the Care Centre is looking for.

Sincerely,

Sr. Sanet van Zyl

Δ caregiver joins the staff

Mrs. Estelle Denner, a local housewife and mother of two, joined the volunteers of Blessed Gerard's Care Centre at the official opening of the centre in September 1996.

Mrs. Denner says, "When I heard about the Care Centre, I was really excited, because I always wanted to be a nurse, so this was a perfect opportunity for me to fulfill this wish. Helping the sick gives me great pleasure and the best thanks I could get, is the smile on their faces.

I really enjoy working in the Care Centre and would recommend, that all men and women who sit at home and complain about having nothing to do in Mandeni, join the happy family and come and help us."



The Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard employed Mrs. Estelle Denner in September 1997, on a temporary basis, for three months. But she proved to be such a valuable caregiver that we asked her to stay on for a further three months. Subsequently, at our request, she joined our staff permanently in March of this year. We would also like to welcome her to our team and to compliment her on her sensitivity to the needs of people, and to thank her for her loyalty and hard work.



The staff of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre [l-r: Fr. Gérard (project co-ordinator), Clare Kalkwarf (manager), Estelle Denner (caregiver), Samantha Geswindt (housekeeper), Caroline Beaumont (secretary), Sr. Sanet van Zyl (nurse)]

MEMBERS' NEWS

BIRTHDAYS

We wish a blessed and very happy birthday to:



Frau Anna Folger on her 80th
Mrs Lillian Joseph, Mrs Joyce Buss, Frau Ilse Lang
and Sr. Cilli Schedel on their 75th
Herrn Hanni Haberberger on his 70th
Mrs Ruby Martin on her 65th
Mrs Fikelephi Ncube, Sr. M. Winarda Maier, Mrs
Avis Barth, H. Herrn Konrad Bösl, Sr. Agnes
Grasböck, Herrn Helmut Görg and Mrs Renée
Pieters on their 60th

Dr. Rainer Tichy, Mrs Anna-Joseph Hlongwa and Herrn Wilhelm Nees on their 50th

Miss Sherine Jamieson, S. H. Rudolf von Freyberg, Mrs Elizabeth Mntungwa, Signora Anita Didonato, P. Kilian Saum and Signora Rosa Aufiero on their 40th

Frau Caroline Cochran, Mrs Ntombizonke Radebe, Herrn Christoph Deutsch, Fr. Susanne Thamm, Mrs Melanie Nicholas and Frau Ulrike Endres on their 30th

Congratulations & may God bless you both

Sr. M. Bernadette Lohrum O.Cist. and Sr. M. Michaela Krautmann O.Cist. made their solemn profession as Cistercian nuns of Heart of Mary Priory in Sostrup, Denmark. As you have given your entire life totally into the



hands of Christ, may he bless you with his companionship in your monastic life. Father Gérard had studied Theology at Regensburg University together with Sr. Teresa Brenninkmeijer O.Cist., the prioress of Sostrup. They have been good friends ever since and they encouraged each other in their spiritual footsteps.

l-r: Mother prioress Teresa, Sr. Michaela, Sr. Bernadette, Fr. Gérard

The entire convent has joined our brotherhood as spiritual supporters. We hope that other religious communities would follow their example as well.

Congratulations to

Mrs. Beryl Bouchier & Bernard on the birth of their first grandchild in England. We wish Mrs. Bouchier a very happy holiday in England with her daughter & family.

Farewell to

Mrs. Margaret Hawthorn and her husband, Tom, who have retired to Johannesburg. We wish you all the best and we know that you will enjoy being near to your daughter & son-in-law and your grandchildren.

Sincere condolences to

Mrs. Nancy Bartell who lost her husband last month. Mrs. Bartell is a nursing sister from Milwaukee in USA who spent a month as a volunteer in Blessed Gérard's Care Centre mid 1997. Our prayers are with you Nancy.

WELCOME to all our new members:

Mr Orion Michael Domaracki, Mr Fernando Blanco Dopazo, Dr Hilmar Krenn, Frau Helga Krenn, Frau Elizabeth Bauer, Herrn Reinhold Bauer, Frau Ursula Bauer, Mr Robert Louis John Galliah, Mr John Serafino Craparo, Mr Wayne Saillard, Herrn Hans Spagl, Frau Marga Spagl, Miss Thoko Fikile Mdletshe, Rev Sr Sigis Tholiwe Khuzwayo, Mr Tholinhlanhla Bheki Gumede, Miss Heather Ann Kalkwarf, Signora Gallo Norma, Signora Pasqualina Buacci, Signora Anna Santoro, Signora Filomena Rinaldi, Signora Lucia Landi, Miss Dee-Ann Gayle Morris, Mr Robert James Devine, Associazione Figlie di Maria, Signora Teresa De Vita, Signora Lucia Citro, Signora Elvira Sala, Mr Ben Lytz, Ehrw. Sr. M. Johanne Hahn, Ehrw. Sr. Anna Hömme, Ehrw. Sr. Filippa Nörsgaard Macher, Ehrw. Sr. M. Magdalena Kann Möller, Ehrw. Sr. Margareta Birkhof, Mr Rasheed Kallen, Mrs Mary Lagleder, Mrs Sanet van Zyl, Mr Noel Zbingniew Gondek, Mr Juan Raul Gil Frias, Mrs Nonnie Booyesen, Mrs Princess Nompumelelo Gumede, Mr Barend Johannes van Zyl, Mrs Ayesha Badat, Mrs Jeanette Ann Gregory, Mrs Alana Carmen Coetzer, Mr Andre Barde.

Membership statistics on 14.4.98	Active Members	Donors	Spiritual Supporters	Total
South Africa	172	74	19	265
Tanzania			1	1
Austria		1	3	4
Belgium			1	1
Germany	11	154	72	237
Denmark			16	16
Finland			1	1
United Kingdom	4	1	1	6
Hungary			1	1
Italy	2	18		20
Ireland	2	6	1	9
Malta			1	1
Canada		2	1	3
El Salvador			2	2
Chile			1	1
USA	6	19	10	35
UAE			1	1
Japan			1	1
Australia		2	2	4
Total	197	277	135	609

Thank you - once again - to Clare Kalkwarf for writing this newsletter!

The "Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard Newsletter" is the official mouthpiece of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and is edited by the Management Committee of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

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