Belgium North Delegation – Four Brothers, “Brothers of the Christian Schools

Brother Alberto Gómez

In mid-July (2020) Brother Leo Caeyers of our Delegation died at the age of 86 as a result of a stroke. He had lived for 39 years in the community of the village of Ternat, where our Delegation’s headquarters is currently located. There he worked as a primary school teacher and headmaster for all those years.

A citizen of Ternat affirmed: “More than half of the Ternat’s inhabitants learned to read and write thanks to Brother Johan” (his religious name).

The current headmaster of the primary school, Pascal Blijkers, wrote Leo was one of the architects of the union of our school with the Ursuline Sisters, located across the street. Brother Leo laid the foundations of our school so that it would become the beautiful reality it is today. He was always ready to help wherever and whenever necessary and showed particular attention to students who had fallen ill and those living in poverty”.

In addition to being a good educator, Brother Leo was a catechist in the parish, president of the Mutual Health Insurance Company for the Elderly (MRB) and organizer of conviviality and holidays for sick religious for many years.

For 12 years, as director of the senior citizens’ home in Groot-Bijgaarden, he accompanied the last moments of more than 100 brothers and sisters. His devotion to the sick Brothers was a beautiful example of brotherhood for all.

But there is something else in the life of Brother Leo Caeyers worth noting. It has happened once or twice in the history of the Institute and this is one of them.

His parents, Peter and Dymphna, had five sons and one daughter. The eldest of the sons, Peter Jozef, got married. The other five were all religious. Jan, Jozef Lodewijk, Alfons and Leo were, all four of them, Brothers of the Christian Schools

and Maria Joanna was a religious of the congregation of the Sisters of Wijzegem, dedicated to education.

Bro. Jan Caeyers carried out his mission in Winterslag, Antwerp and Shaarbeek and Sint-Truiden. In Vorst he was the director of the community and the school for 27 years.

Brother Jozef Lodewijk Caeyers started his educational mission in Vorst. As a missionary in Congo he was the director of the technical school at Gombe-Matadi. Back in Belgium, he was the director of the technical school in Záventem.

Alfons Caeyers was first a primary school teacher and then the headmaster of the primary schools in Vorst. He lived here for 42 years and then moved to Winterslag as community director. He was a religious with great qualities as an educator.

The remains of the four Brothers rest in the cemeteries of our Institute in Bokrijk and Groot-Bijgaarden.

What is striking, among other things, is the generosity of these people's parents, who were able to give five of their six children to religious life. The fact that four brothers from the same family chose the vocation of a Brother of the Christian Schools and that they were faithful to their vocation to the end of their lives is worthy of being known by the Lasallian family throughout the world.

The first lasallian schools were established in Saint-Hubert **in 1791**. Others in 1815 and in 1830 (after Belgium became indipendent). The belgian district was officially Founded in 1834 and in 1840 there were 124 Brothers in the schools.

In the second half of the 20th century, a crisis of religious vocations affected the District. In fact is now a Delegation. At the moment there are **29 Brothers** and **2,168 teachers** (**1,584 women** and 5**84 men**). **The istitutions are 31** and the total amount of **students** is **17,921**