

JOOP VERNOOIJ, C.SS.R.

## THE SEVEN REDEMPTORIST BISHOPS OF SURINAME

*Introduction; A Glimpse at Suriname and its Catholic Beginnings; 1. – Johannes B. Swinkels, C.SS.R., Bishop in Suriname, 1866-1875; 2. – Johannes H. Schaap, C.SS.R., 1880-1889; 3. – Willem A. Wulfingh, C.SS.R., 1889-1906; 4. – Jacobus C. Meeuwissen, C.SS.R., 190-1911; 5. – Theodorus Antonius L.M. van Roosmalen, C.SS.R., 1911-1946; 6. – Stephanus J. Kuijpers, C.SS.R., 1941-1971; 7. – Aloysius F. Zichem, C.SS.R., 1971-2003*

### *Introduction*

Between 1866 and 2003 seven Redemptorist missionaries served as bishops in Suriname in the northeast sector of South America. Five of these were from Brabant in the south of the Netherlands. A sixth, Johannes H. Schaap, was also Dutch, but hailed from the northern city of Amsterdam. The seventh, and the last to serve, Aloysius F. Zichem, was native Surinamese.

Suriname, generally considered, was a Dutch colony from 1667 until 1975. However it must be noted that it was under British control during two relatively short periods, 1651-1667 and 1804-1816. Its status as an independent Republic has continued from 1975 until the present.

In 1865 the Vatican Congregation for *Propaganda Fide* (now for Evangelization of Peoples) requested that the Redemptorists assume responsibility for the pastoral care of the Surinamese people. (Previously Dutch diocesan missionaries from the Netherlands had this responsibility). When the Redemptorists arrived, the Catholic Church had designated the area a Vicariate Apostolic<sup>1</sup>. It retained this latter status until 1958 when a dio-

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<sup>1</sup> From 1825 Suriname was a «Prefecture Apostolic».

cese was established in the principal city of Paramaribo. This diocese came under the larger jurisdictional unit of the Antilles Episcopal Conference [AEC]<sup>2</sup>.

This article will present a personal glimpse of all seven Redemptorists who served as bishops of the people of Suriname, namely Joannes B. Swinkels, Johannes H. Schaap, Willem A. Wulfingh, Jacobus Meeuwissen, Theodorus A.L.M. van Roosmalen, Stephanus J. Kuijpers, and Aloysius F. Zichem. The first four led the Vicariate of Suriname as Vicars Apostolic, whereas the last two had the distinction of being bishops of the *Diocese* of Paramaribo. Serving in three different centuries, these men saw the rise and the demise of the vigorous presence of Redemptorists from their Congregational province of the Netherlands. They were also present for the progression of Suriname from colony to independent republic in 1975, from colonial culture to «Surinamization».

For this study the following sources have been consulted: the Vatican Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (formerly *Propaganda Fide*), the Archives of the Diocese of Paramaribo, the Redemptorist General Archives in Rome, and the Netherlands Redemptorist Archives now held at St. Agatha Cuyk. The author, who served in Suriname from 1969 until 2001, also consulted many published histories of Suriname<sup>3</sup>, the annals of missionary societies who have labored in the Paramaribo diocese, and smaller memorial volumes produced for various anniversary occasions by the Redemptorists of Suriname<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Other units of this AEC are: the (former colonial) English-speaking and Dutch-speaking islands in the Caribbean, and even the French *départements d'outre-mer* [overseas territories] of Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guyane. In 1973 the AEC was one of the founding members of the ecumenical Caribbean Conference of Churches (based in Kingston, Jamaica).

<sup>3</sup> These include: Adrianus BOSSERS, *Beknopte geschiedenis der katholieke missie in Suriname*, Gulpen 1884; Fulgentius ABBENHUIS, *De katholieke kerk in Suriname*, Tilburg 1956, 1959; Joop VERNOOJ, *De Rooms Katholieke Gemeente van Suriname*, Paramaribo 1998.

<sup>4</sup> One may wish to consult *Een halve eeuw in Suriname 1866-1916*, Amsterdam 1916; [Jaap WILLEBRANDS], *Honderd jaar woord en daad*, Paramaribo 1966. Father André Sampers, in Rome, made substantial contributions to this published work.

*A Glimpse at Suriname and its Catholic Beginnings*

Suriname is part of the Amazon Delta and the «Wild Coast» where even now indigenous people continue to live. It was occupied by English colonizers in 1651 who introduced a plantation economy with enslaved people brought from West Africa. In turn, after sixteen years of British rule, Suriname was conquered in 1667 by Dutch colonizers from the southwest of the Netherlands.

The Dutch were soon engaged in power struggles as to who among them might hold administrative control in Suriname. After ten years the Dutch Government stepped in and formed an official juridical body called the *Geoctroyeerde Societeit* [«Charter Society»]. This was a tri-partite group drawn from officials of The West Indian Company, the City of Amsterdam, and wealthy members of the van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck family from Zeeland. The *Societeit* was Calvinistic and anti-papist; however, it eventually allowed the Catholics of Suriname some leeway in 1786, permitting a Catholic parish to be established in Paramaribo. Still, due to governmental restraints, the growth of the Catholic Church was slow. There were some conversions to Catholicism among plantation slaves and former slaves. However, the principal ministry of the Dutch priests took place in the small Paramaribo parish, which included some Catholic Dutch soldiers. Nevertheless, the Dutch priests of the early 1800s were a persevering lot, and some of them took to learning the indigenous *Sranantongo* language, making translations of hymns, prayers and catechetical aids in this language.

One of these Dutch diocesan missionaries was the outstanding Father Jacobus Grooff. In 1825, although he was a only twenty-six years old and a priest for only about fourteen months, the Vatican had appointed him Prefect Apostolic of Suriname in 1826<sup>5</sup>, and under his leadership the Catholic church grew to an

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<sup>5</sup> Grooff's time in Suriname had a strange interruption. In 1842 he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Batavia, (now Jakarta, Indonesia), and for this post was ordained a bishop in 1844. But once in Batavia, he had conflicts with the government, was expelled, and in 1847 returned to Suriname as «Visitor Apostolic».

estimated membership of 8000 by the early 1850s. He is noted for encouraging Father Peter Donders (1809-1887), now Blessed Peter Donders, to come to Suriname<sup>6</sup>. Grooff was also responsible for drawing the interest and financial support of various lay groups who aided the Suriname Catholic effort<sup>7</sup>, although the vicariate remained generally very poor.

After the death of Jacobus Grooff in 1852, his successor, Bishop Jacobus Gerardus Schepers, inherited a growing congregation of Surinamese Catholics and was likewise an exemplary man. But there was a two-fold problem: Schepers' health was not good and he lacked sufficient clergy to help him. He directed the vicariate for eleven years and then died on November 27, 1863. His successor was the Redemptorist Joannes B. Swinkels.

1. – *Joannes B. Swinkels, C.SS.R., Bishop in Suriname, 1866-1875*

Joannes Baptist Swinkels was born on April 10, 1810, at Woensel, a small town in the neighborhood of Eindhoven in the Netherlands. Later the family, with their ten children, moved to nearby Helmond. Joannes was a sickly and feeble as a small child but with gradually improving health was able to enter the local primary school and then the Latin School of Helmond. Responding to a vocation to the priesthood, he attending the seminary located in the vicariate apostolic of 's-Hertogenbosch. He was ordained on September 20, 1834.

His first assignment as a priest was as an instructor at the Latin School, Oudenbosch College in the vicariate apostolic of Breda. The year 1838 found him back at the Latin School of Helmond, but now as its Rector, where he was credited with being a very competent leader.

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<sup>6</sup> Donders, as is well known, after some twenty-five years in Suriname joined the Redemptorist Congregation.

<sup>7</sup> Two of these groups were the Dutch association known as *De Godsdienstvriend* (roughly translated «Friend of Religion»), and also the French *Society for the Propagation of the Faith*. Later, in the early-to-mid 1900s the family and friends of Bishop Theodore A. van Roosmalen were also generous benefactors.

At about this time the Redemptorists began gaining a strong reputation as preachers of successful parish missions in this region in the south of Holland. Father Joannes Swinkels was impressed and soon there grew within him the desire of joining the Redemptorists. However he encountered resistance from the vicariate leaders because they were eager to build up the numbers of diocesan clergy in their area. Moreover the Redemptorist novitiate (begun by Fathers from Vienna in 1833) was in St. Trond (Sint Truiden) Belgium. In 1839 Belgium had won its political independence from the Netherlands which was another reason why the clerics in the Netherlands looked unfavorably on the loss of Swinkels from their midst.

But the young priest Swinkels persisted. He entered the St. Trond (Sint Truiden) novitiate in 1844 and his novice director was the Alsatian Father Leopold Ottmann (1805-1881). After his profession of vows in 1845 he was sent to the Redemptorist seminary community at Wittem where he was to participate as a member of the preaching team for retreats, parish missions, and spiritual renewals<sup>8</sup>.

One of Swinkels first in-house assignments at Wittem was to serve as Prefect of the Sick. In this role he was soon put to a severe test as a typhoid epidemic soon struck in 1847, eventually claiming eleven lives. By 1848 he was chosen to be the Rector of the new foundation at Bruges, Belgium, whose members also served as Chaplains for the nearby Redemptoristine convent. After a brief return to Wittem, he was named in 1851 to be the first rector of the community founded in Amsterdam. His duties there involved building a residence and a church, which, of course, meant that he had to find funds for these. In addition he had the task of building up good relations with the diocesan clergy of Amsterdam<sup>9</sup>. The reputation which followed him was that he was

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<sup>8</sup> Two brothers of Joannes Swinkels also became Professed Redemptorist Brothers. Matthew, born at Helmond in 1823, made his profession of vows in 1847. Five years later in 1852 Lambert, who was born in Helmond in 1816, made his profession. It was the latter who became the first Redemptorist Brother to go to the Suriname mission but he died shortly after his arrival. Two of the girls, Elizabeth and Catherine, from this family also entered Congregations of women religious in the Netherlands.

<sup>9</sup> Adrianus DANKELMAN, «Uit de stichtingsjahren van ons klooster te Amsterdam», [From the First Years of the Foundation of the Residence], in: *Monu-*

a strict superior, and also that he was very involved in preaching missions and retreats. Statistics from those days show that in 1853 (the same year that the Catholic hierarchy was restored in the Netherlands) the Redemptorists numbered sixty-nine men, in the two houses of Amsterdam and Wittem both of which belonged to the Belgium province.

In 1854, however, this province was divided, the new jurisdiction at first having a provisory status known as the «Anglo-Dutch province», with Joannes Swinkels himself as the leader. In 1855 he became the first provincial of the definitive Anglo-Dutch province and in that capacity was in attendance at the famous 1855 Redemptorist Chapter held in Rome.

As provincial Swinkels was a busy man. He often had to be concerned about the state of affairs in the Wittem seminary which hosted students from multiple nationalities who did not relate with one another easily<sup>10</sup>. Already in 1854 he bought property in 's-Hertogenbosch with a view to having there a novitiate residence, and this became a reality in 1859. In 1858 he attempted another foundation at Frenswegen but did not meet with success. However, in 1863, he established a community at Roermond for the purpose of having a Redemptorist junior seminary. Then followed his role in helping to make the foundations at Rijsenburg and Hoge Zwaluwe in 1864.

Other time-consuming concerns centered on new initiatives in both England and Ireland. Meanwhile in 1862 he began negotiations which would eventually lead to the Redemptorists establishing themselves in the foreign mission of the Dutch Antilles, the field where he himself would serve as a bishop.

In the so-called «Circular Letters» which he addressed to all of his confreres, he was always one to stress the observance of the Redemptorist Rule, fidelity to community life, and proper organizing of parish missions according to the guidelines of St.

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*menta Historica... van de Nederlandse Provincie der Redemptoristen*, III (March-April 1949), 33-41; Cf. Laurentius DANKELMAN, «Praenotanda bij de Geschiedenis van onze Nederlandse Provincie», in: *ibid.*, (March-April, 1949), 22-27. Hereinafter this publication will be referenced: *Monumenta Historica*.

<sup>10</sup> Theo de CALUWE, *Emmaus aan de Geul, het verhaal van een grootseminarie 1836-1968*, Wittem 2007, 33-34, 37.

Alphonsus<sup>11</sup>. It is fair to say that under Swinkels the Anglo-Dutch province flourished, especially because of the impressive parish missions preached by the Redemptorists, led by the famous Bernard Hafkenscheid. Swinkels himself took part in this preaching ministry, as he was retained in office by the Redemptorist Superior General for three terms, a total of nine years. In June of 1865 a successor to Swinkels was named<sup>12</sup> and, simultaneously, England was established as a separate Redemptorist province.

Swinkels, for a brief time served as the «substitute rector» at the Wittem seminary as the arrival of Wittem's canonically appointed rector was delayed. It was about this time that the discussions intensified (both in Rome and in the Netherlands) about the Redemptorists' assuming responsibility for Suriname. Swinkels himself was invited to Rome for the discussions, but he was doubtful about the wisdom of this move, mainly because he thought that the number of Redemptorists in the Dutch province was too small. Nevertheless, the Congregation for Propaganda Fide insisted, and eventually the Redemptorist Superior General and Swinkels consented.

Prior to this time five diocesan priests from the Netherlands had been engaged in pastoral work in Suriname. Their situation became complicated in 1863 by several significant events: the vicar apostolic for the region, Bishop Jacobus Gerardus Schepers was seriously ill; during this illness one of the priests, Stephan Meurkens, was named interim provicar; but Meurkens himself was suffering ill health and chose to return to the Netherlands in 1864 to discuss the status of the Suriname mission. It is believed that Meurkens also expected then to be named Vicar Apostolic and ordained bishop. Instead, after a three-way consultation was

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<sup>11</sup> Archives of the Dutch Redemptorists (hereinafter: *Archief Redemptoristen Nederland*, located at St. Agatha Cuyk, near Nijmegen), 489: *Visitationes Canonicae*, 1. Wittem 1837-1867, 1-44; 2, Amstelodami 1853-1867, 45-54; Buscoduci [Den Bosch] 1856-1867, 55-68; Ruraemondae 1866-1867, 69-71.

<sup>12</sup> The new provincial was Anton Konings (b. Helmond, Brabant 1821 – d. Annapolis, Maryland, 1884) who later became a famous theologian in North America, publishing a version of the moral theology of St. Alphonsus suited to conditions in the New World.

carried on among the papal internuncio at The Hague (Monsignor Luigi Oreglia di Santo Stefano), the Secretary of Propaganda Fide (Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò), and the Redemptorist Congregation, a decision was handed down on August 31, 1865. It was announced that the Suriname mission would be put in the hands of the Dutch Redemptorists, with Father Joannes Baptist Swinkels as the vicar apostolic. To fulfill this role, Swinkels was ordained a bishop, with the ceremony taking place in 's-Hertogenbosch on October 15, 1865<sup>13</sup>.

On this same day the new bishop issued his first pastoral letter to the Catholic community of Suriname. But before his departure for his new mission he agreed to be present at several functions in the Netherlands, especially the conferral of ordinations at the Wittem seminary<sup>14</sup>. Then he was able to set about preparing for the long sea voyage to Suriname.

This journey did not begin well, as either the absence of winds or contrary winds prevented the departure of their sailing ship. But finally Swinkels and three other Redemptorists, including his blood brother, Brother Lambert, were on their way. Except for seasickness the journey itself was smooth enough<sup>15</sup>, with an impressive welcome awaiting them in Paramaribo. It was said that «the total population» was on the shore on Monday of Holy Week, March 26, 1866, to greet them, including the handful of Suriname clergy and the Franciscan Sisters of Roosendaal. These Sisters had been in Suriname for ten years, educating youngsters and caring for orphan children<sup>16</sup>. The next day Swinkels paid his respects to the Colonial Governor Reinhart Frans van Lansberge, and several days later presided as bishop at the Holy Thursday Liturgy.

The diocesan clergy who had been serving in Suriname were very gracious about introducing the new arrivals to the existing

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<sup>13</sup> Swinkels chose as his episcopal motto «*Funda nos in pace*». This phrase can be found in the Latin Marian hymn *Ave Maris Stella*; loosely translated, it means «Establish us firmly in peace».

<sup>14</sup> Jan PELJNENBURG, *Zweijsen, bisschop*, Tilburg 1996, 231-236.

<sup>15</sup> Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 8708.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4433: Kronijken der P.P. Redemptoristen aavangende in December 1865 tot 13 Oktober 1866.



churches and chapels, some of which were located on the widespread plantations. The reality of tropical disease soon set in as the bishop was afflicted with an attack of severe fever at the end of June. He recovered, but this was not the case of his brother, the Redemptorist Brother Lambert, who suffered from a similar fever in July and died on August 6.

The bishop was conscientious about the recording of baptisms, marriages, confessions, communions; all these were categorized according to the chapel or church location in which these sacraments were administered, along with other pertinent details. But the truth was that the newly arrived Redemptorists had no previous experience of parish ministry. They now learned by effective on-the-job training, with the help of the veteran diocesan priests.

With this plunge into parish ministry, they were expected to be aware that they also had to be faithful to the Redemptorist Rule and Constitutions which prescribed a number of things to promote «common life», including designated prayer times, meals together, and regular meetings.

It soon became clear also that Bishop Joannes Swinkels was burdened with multiple responsibilities. Besides being Suriname's vicar apostolic, he was also vice-provincial/visitor of the Suriname Redemptorists, the rector of the Redemptorist community, and «Prefect of the Church» (organizing the hours of services and the personnel to preside). In addition, after several years he created guidelines for those in charge of catechetical instruction, more guidelines for a board of lay-advisors, and rules governing the local Catholic cemetery. He introduced the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family in 1868, and arranged for the publication of prayerbooks and songbooks both in Dutch and the native Creole tongue *Sranantongo*. Likewise he was conscientious to see that the vicariate's two orphanages were well staffed and organized. To one degree or another, all of these worthy causes required considerable financing, and so he was often busy searching for new sources of funding.

In the early years of Swinkels' time in Suriname a curious fiscal arrangement was in effect: both the Redemptorists and the Franciscan Sisters were supported from a common purse. The

idea behind this was that both were working for and in the vicariate, and both were members of religious congregations. But it soon became clear that this was not an effective or advisable policy and it was abandoned after a few years.

Less than a year after his arrival, in early 1867 Bishop Swinkels was required to attend the provincial synod held at Port of Spain, Trinidad<sup>17</sup>. The purpose of the synod was meant to be a remote preparation for the First Vatican Council being planned for 1869-1870. But Swinkels had little opportunity adequately to prepare for this Port of Spain meeting (which, at any rate, was attended only by a small number of the hierarchy). However, from Port of Spain the ecclesiastical region of the West Indies did manage to produce an 1867 document which followed the same general themes of an earlier synod held in 1845.

Not long after his arrival in Suriname Swinkels had the consolation of accepting two of the Dutch diocesan priests in Suriname into the Redemptorists. Both completed their year of novitiate and professed vows in 1867. One of these was Father Peter Donders, who had begun his ministry in Suriname in 1842. Since 1982, this priest has been acclaimed in the Church as Blessed Peter Donders. The other priest was Father Joannes Romme (1832-1889) who had been ministering in Suriname since 1864.

Generally speaking, during the years when Bishop Swinkels served as vicar apostolic his band of priests was zealous, but small. They worked hard to meet the diverse needs of their people. Some were parish priests, others taught school or directed orphanages; some were the itinerant priests moving by way of jungle-lined rivers (the Suriname, Coppename, Saramacca and Commewijne) to reach the slaves on plantations or the lepers in Batavia.

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<sup>17</sup> Previously, in 1854, another Synod for all of the West Indies had tried to unify pastoral practices by way of some Decrees regarding the sacraments, clerical discipline and public morals. This document can be found in a work entitled *Acta et decreta sacrorum conciliorum recentiorum*, Collectio Laecensis Tomus Tertius, Friburg 1875, 1089-1104. The general themes of these decrees were the same as had been used in a similar Synod held in 1854. It is probable that these 1854 Decrees had minimal implementation in Suriname due to Suriname's Protestant majority and its few priests.

During the period of Bishop Swinkels' service as vicar apostolic seventeen Redemptorist priests and nine Redemptorist professed brothers joined him in Suriname, although it must be mentioned that in this period three Redemptorist priests died, as did three professed brothers, and two priests returned to the Netherlands. For the Redemptorists there always remained the challenge of attending to the needs of the people, and also trying to maintain some semblance of community life.

Swinkels was the first Redemptorist to serve as the vicar apostolic in Suriname and therefore had to grow into this role. Consequently he was often in contact by letter with the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Likewise he had frequent correspondence with Father Nicholas Mauron, the Redemptorist Superior General and with the Dutch provincial in Amsterdam. These letters indicate a high level of doubt and tension about his jurisdictional authority and responsibilities. By 1871 he had begun to have health problems, serious enough to make him wonder about continuing as vicar apostolic. But he did remain at his post, although often very unwell, until he died in 1875<sup>18</sup>.

In order to give Swinkels some relief in his vicariate, the former provincial of the Dutch province, Father Johannes Henri Schaap, had been sent to Suriname in 1874 and was promptly named provicar.

The numerical growth of the Catholic community in Suriname during Bishop Swinkels' tenure, 1866-1875, can be gathered somewhat from the following statistical chart.

A = Children Baptisms    B = Adults Baptisms    C = Confirmations  
D = 1st Communions    E = Communions    F = Marriages

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<sup>18</sup> Perhaps to be noted is that the very orderly and organized Swinkels planned his own burial ceremony, and also left a detailed last will and testament.

Year	A	B	C	D	E	F
1866	433	95	258	188	10.000	20
1867	553	158	290	250	12.150	35
1868	725	228	200	265	13.600	54
1869	859	239	354	361	18.295	49
1870	755	149	135	190	16.500	57
1871	684	222	174	340	17.690	63
1872	677	228	286	234	16.636	83
1873	741	293	85	314	18.085	83
1874	604	134	223	243	17.810	29
1875	692	200	6	196	20.148	56 <sup>19</sup>

## 2. – Johannes H. Schaap, C.S.S.R., 1880-1889

Johannes Henri Schaap was born on January 27, 1823, a child of the second marriage of his father Johannes Heuveling (or Heueling) Schaap (1770-1851). (The first marriage of his father to Cornelia Schagen had produced five children before her sudden death). The maiden name of the mother of Johannes Henri Schaap was Adriana Siebenhoff (1786-1872)<sup>20</sup>.

Information on the childhood and youth of Johannes Henri Schaap is scarce. He was enrolled as a boarding student in a Latin school at Bodegraven, not far from Amsterdam. Those who attended this school were from more or less elite families. During 1839 and 1840 he and his brother Lodewijk studied with the Jesuits at St. Joseph College in Aalst, Belgium. Then from 1840 until 1843 Johannes Henri returned to the Netherlands and was at another Jesuit institution, Katwijk aan de Rijn.

The records show that he was not one of the top pupils, but ranked above average, was sometimes recalcitrant and could

<sup>19</sup> Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 118 fol. 33

<sup>20</sup> Johannes Henri Schaap was, in fact, the second son of his father's second marriage. The first had received the very same name, *Johannes Henri Schaap*; but he died shortly after birth. One more son was born to this second marriage, Aloysius Johannes, who was called Louis (*Lodewijk*, in Dutch). Cf. Stadsarchief, Amsterdam, 442, (parish De Krijtberg), 72-75.

be faulted for not always respecting his superiors<sup>21</sup>. He was, however, excellent in music and elocution<sup>22</sup>.

Afterwards Johannes studied medicine, but only briefly, at the University of Leiden, the oldest university in the Netherlands.

Then in March of 1844 Johannes Henri Schaap entered the Redemptorist Novitiate then located at St. Trond (Sint Truiden) Belgium. Following approval by his superiors, he professed his vows on May 24, 1845. After completing his philosophical and theological studies at the Redemptorist seminary at Wittem, he was ordained a priest at Liège, Belgium, August 13, 1850.

After his ordination he remained at Wittem, at first aiding Father Joannes Looyard (1814-1895) in a translation into Dutch of the ascetical and dogmatic works of St. Alphonsus Liguori. This was no small endeavor as it comprised a series of fifteen volumes<sup>23</sup>. Thereafter, from 1853 until 1855 he continued at Wittem as an instructor in the humanities, philosophy, and church history.

After that Father Johannes Schaap was chosen to preach parish missions and retreats from 1855 until 1859, while a member of the Redemptorist community in Amsterdam<sup>24</sup>. And for the next six years, 1859-1865, he was a member of the community at 's-Hertogenbosch, again primarily engaged in the preaching ministry<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Archivum Neerlandicum Societatis Iesu (Nijmegen) 44, Archives of Katwijk a.d. Rijn, fol. 53.

<sup>22</sup> KADOC (Leuven): Archief van de Noord-Belgische Provincie van de Redemptoristen, 4.4.10.3.

<sup>23</sup> *Vollledige ascetische en dogmatische werken van de H. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori*, J. van Rossum, Utrecht 1849-1855. Schaap's contributions to this series were *De priester in de eezaamheid* [The Priest in Solitude] published in 1852; *De priester aan het altaar* [The Priest at the Altar], published in 1852; and *Verklaring der Psalmen* [Explanation of the Psalms], published in 1853. These were numbers 12, 13, and 14 in the series.

<sup>24</sup> During this period he was involved in attempting a foundation at Rotterdam, but this did not succeed. Cf. L(aurentius), DANKELMAN, «Rotterdam Stichting, van klooster en kerk», in: *Monumenta Historica*, III (1951), Aflevering 1, 1-11.

<sup>25</sup> *Monumenta Historica*, VII (1955), Aflevering 4, 124; *ibid.* VIII (1956), Aflevering 1 and 2, 27.

At this time in his life, because he was going through a period of physical fatigue and mental stress<sup>26</sup>, he was sent to Austria in 1865-1866 to the Redemptorist House of Studies at Mautern. Although the time in Mautern was meant primarily as a period of rest, he was able to do some teaching of moral theology.

After his stay in Mautern, Schaap returned to Wittem, and it was there that he learned in 1868 that the Redemptorist authorities in Rome had named him provincial of the Dutch province. In that capacity he chose to move the provincial headquarters to Amsterdam from 's-Hertogenbosch, where it had been 1865-1868 during the time when Father Anton Konings was provincial.

The same Father Konings had earlier begun the process of establishing a Redemptorist residence at Roosendaal. It was Schaap who saw to the completion of this endeavor not long after his becoming provincial<sup>27</sup>. Schaap can also be credited with beginning a preparatory seminary program in the Dutch province<sup>28</sup>, but this «juvenate» (as it was called) brought on a huge wave of criticism against him in 1873-1874. The juvenate was first located at Roermond, but then it was moved to Sambeek, a small town in North Limburg, which left the Roermond building unoccupied. About this same time a group of German Redemptorists came seeking refuge in the Netherlands from the oppression of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*. Schaap decided, with an authoritarian attitude, to place the German confreres in the seminary building in the Dutch province's seminary at Wittem *and move his own*

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<sup>26</sup> A July 29, 1864 letter of the then-provincial of the Dutch province, Joannes Swinkels, to the Superior General Nicholas Mauron contains the information that Schaap was suspicious and fearful that the well-known Redemptorist Fathers Bernard Hafkenschied and Anton Konings were against Schaap, and that they were exercising too much influence on the provincial Swinkels. Swinkels said that he intended to speak with Schaap at the time of the next canonical visitation. Cf. *Archief Redemptoristen Nederland*, 8795.

<sup>27</sup> J(oseph). H. MULDER, «Uit de kronieken van Roosendaal». *Monumenta Historica*, VI (1954), Aflevering 4, 101-167.

<sup>28</sup> H[erman]. J. JANSSEN, «Geschiedenis van het 'Juvenaat' van de Nederlandse Provincie, 1<sup>e</sup> Deel: van de oprichting tot en met het directeurschap van Pater J. Kronenburg, 1870-1915». [From the Foundation until the Directorship of Father J[oaannes] Kronenburg], in: *Monumenta Historica*, III (1951), Aflevering 3, 76-86. This article is continued in Aflevering 6, 107-110, 175-184; and in Aflevering 7, 161-166.

*clerical students into the unoccupied building of Roermond.* This decision was met with a firestorm of resistance from Father Peter Oomen, the Rector of Wittem, who was joined by Wittem's professors<sup>29</sup>.

In 1871 the provincial Schaap went to Suriname to make the required canonical visitation of this mission. Probably the best outcome of this visitation was that he established a new arrangement of the mission finances, ending the «common purse» of the Redemptorists and the Franciscan Sisters of Roosendaal. On his return to the Netherlands he brought back with him the ailing Bishop Joannes Swinkels who was able to recuperate somewhat in the homeland. During Schaap's remaining years as provincial he made similar annual visitations to Suriname, followed by the customary reports on Suriname which had to be sent to the Superior General in Rome.

After he had completed his time as Dutch provincial, in 1874 Father Johannes Schaap was appointed as superior of the Redemptorist community in Paramaribo, Suriname. But because Swinkels remained very feeble he named Father Schaap as his provicar. This situation continued until Bishop Swinkels passed away on September 11, 1875.

After Swinkels' death there was a delay of five years before Suriname again was to have a bishop at the head of its vicariate apostolic. The key person behind this delay was Father Peter Oomen, the same man who had fought the plan of Father Johannes Schaap to resettle the refugee German Redemptorists at Wittem two years before. Now, in 1875, Schaap remained at his post as provicar in Suriname.

At the instigation of Oomen, the Superior General Mauron in Rome informed the Congregation of Propaganda Fide that it was not necessary to name a successor to the deceased Bishop Swinkels. The reasons given were these: there were so few priests in Suriname, and, in fact, the role of bishop and the role of Redemptorist Superior carried the same responsibilities; moreover, it was risky to name another Redemptorist of the Nether-

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<sup>29</sup> L[aurentius] DANKELMANN, «Sambeek (1873-1874)», in: *Monumenta Historica*, I (1949), Aflevering 5-6, 149-173.

lands as bishop because he would not know the local language; nor was it wise to name an older man whose health would be in jeopardy, and, besides, no Redemptorist was available. This «information» was apparently provided to Propaganda by Mauron with no prior consultation with the Suriname Redemptorists.

It is clear that Oomen continued to have a poor opinion of Johannes Schaap, and apparently the authoritarian manner of Schaap was not completely forgotten in the Dutch province<sup>30</sup>. However, Schaap seems to have believed that he was the logical successor to the deceased Bishop Swinkels. Perhaps he also had the support or sympathy of some at the Vatican, for in 1876 he was awarded the honorary title of «Monsignor» to go with his title of provicar. Finally, not content with the complicated and embarrassing position in which he found himself, Monsignor Schaap traveled to Rome, arriving in August 1880, to plead his case and that of the young Suriname vicariate<sup>31</sup>.

Much to the dislike of the Superior General Nicholas Mauron, Schaap visited the offices of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. In the end, however, the provicar's perseverance yielded results. He was officially named vicar apostolic on September 10, 1880, and was approved for ordination to the episcopacy. Several times he changed his mind about where to be ordained<sup>32</sup>, but finally decided on the Redemptorist chapel at Wittem, believing that his standing within the Dutch province was at least debatable, if not entirely favorable. The date of his ordination was October 10, 1880, and the ordaining prelate was Bishop Johannes A. Paredis of Roermond who was assisted by the Bishop Pieter M. Snickers of Haarlem<sup>33</sup>, Schaap's chosen motto read

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Oomen to Nicholas Mauron, Feb. 24, 1876, AGHR, 30090001, 0316. Also Giuseppe ORLANDI, «Il Vicariato Apostolico del Suriname nella relazione di mgr. H. Schaap del 18 Luglio 1880», in *Studia Dondersiana* (Bibliotheca Historica, C.Ss.R., XI), Roma 1982, 47-48.

<sup>31</sup> ORLANDI, «Il Vicariato Apostolico del Suriname...», cf. nn. 28, 56.

<sup>32</sup> See Mauron to Oomen, Sept. 09, 1880, AGHR, 30090001,0427, pp. 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> Other prominent people attending Schaap's episcopal ordination were the Dutch Internuncio, Bishop Agapito Panici; Father Peter Oomen, C.Ss.R., the Dutch provincial; Jean Kockerols, C.Ss.R., the Belgian provincial; and the Redemptorist rectors of 's-Hertogenbosch, Liège, and St. Trond (Sint Truiden). Likewise, there were many local parish priests who were in attendance.



the same as that of the Redemptorist Congregation, *Copiosa apud Eum Redemptio* [With Him is Plentiful Redemption].

Before leaving Rome, the Superior General Mauron and Bishop-elect Schaap had formulated and signed the relationship that was to exist between the role of the Redemptorist superior in Suriname and its Vicar Apostolic. Mutual understanding and cooperation were to be the pillars of the future<sup>34</sup>. Another document which Schaap left behind in Rome, and which was much appreciated by the officials of Propaganda Fide, was his quasi *Ad Limina* report of July 18, 1880<sup>35</sup>.

By January 6, 1881, the newly-ordained Bishop Schaap was back in Suriname and again seeing to the day-to-day leadership of the vicariate apostolic. Whenever he could, he promoted education, providing both schools and orphanages for the young. One of his finest accomplishments was the orphanage for boys at Livorno. This involved his purchase of an entire plantation with the intention of having the youngsters become adept at agriculture<sup>36</sup>.

Schaaap's love of his Redemptorist vocation gave him a sharp eye for recognizing potential vocations. In 1883 he admitted two gentlemen into the Redemptorists as their «second career», both of whom became exceptional members of the Alphonsian family. One was the former attorney Arnold Borret<sup>37</sup>. He had served as Secretary of the Suriname Colonial Parliament and his many talents eventually led Bishop Schaap to choose him as his provicar. One of Borret's noteworthy gifts was that he was an artist; he drew many sketches of people, especially in their native costumes. Even until today these sketches are used as histor-

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<sup>34</sup> Copy to be found in Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 4093.

<sup>35</sup> ORLANDI, «Il Vicariato Apostolico del Suriname ...», cf. n. 28, pp. 58-59; see *ibid.*, pp. 61-81, and pp. 98-99. The provicar Schaap also provided Propaganda Fide with a chronological sketch of the history of the Catholic Church in Suriname; *ibid.*, pp. 81-97.

<sup>36</sup> See *De Volksmissionaris* 10 (1889) 234-236, which makes mention of Bishop Schaap's promotion of schools and education in general.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold Borret, b. in Maastricht, 1848, arrived in Suriname when he was thirty, professed vows, 1883, and, after a shortened novitiate and theology course, was ordained priest Feb. 11, 1883. A street in Paramaribo is named for him.

ical illustrations indicative of the period in which he lived<sup>38</sup>.

Felix Lemmens was the other man whom Schaap welcomed into the Redemptorists<sup>39</sup>. He had been the military commander of Fort Nieuw Amsterdam in Suriname. After his profession of vows, he was sent back to the Netherlands, to Wittem for his priesthood studies. Upon completion of these studies and his ordination, he returned to Suriname in 1888 and served as a parish priest in several remote locations. Eventually he contracted leprosy, lived for some time in isolation, and died in 1906 at the Gerardus Majella Care Center for Lepers in Paramaribo<sup>40</sup>.

In 1880 Schaap published a collection of his Sunday sermons which had been preached in the years 1877 and 1878 in Paramaribo<sup>41</sup>. For their publication, he had taken the time to edit and revise the original sermons as originally preached. When perusing this work, one can see that Schaap drew from a number of sources, especially the *Catena Aurea*<sup>42</sup> of St. Thomas Aquinas. Other sources included Cornelius a Lapide, Jan Beelen, S.J., and Saint Bede. In his sermons, Schaap stressed and repeated basic themes such as frequenting the sacraments by the faithful, the infallibility of the pope, the avoidance of evil in the world, and God's love for the human family. A second edition of this volume appeared in 1882.

Bishop Schaap was a rather frequent correspondent with the Redemptorist Superior General Nicholas Mauron in Rome,

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<sup>38</sup> A[drianus] DANKELMANN, «Ter zaliger gedachtenis van pater Arnold Borret (1848-1888) [A Blessed Memory of...]», in: *Monumenta Historica*, VIII (1954), Aflevering 1 & 2, 16-26; see also Rosemarijn HOEFTE, Arnold BORRET and Clazien MEDENBORP, *Suriname, Gezichten, typen en costumen, Naar de natuur getekend, door A. Borret*, [Suriname: Faces, Types, and Costumes: Drawn from Nature by A. Borret], Leiden 2003).

<sup>39</sup> Felix Lemmens, b. Maastricht, 1850, sent by Schaap to Wittem for studies and professed there, 1853, ordained at Wittem, 1886; arrived back in Suriname, 1888. He died Sept. 19, 1906.

<sup>40</sup> See *Nieuw Nederlands Biografisch Woordenboek*, Leiden 1912, Vol. XX, Cols. 929-930. See also Raymond LAMPE, C.Ss.R., *Ik werd militair*, n.p. 1947.

<sup>41</sup> The collection was called *Homiliën of Verklaring der Evangeliën op al de Zondagen van het kerkelijk jaar* [Homilies or the Explanation of the Sunday Gospel Pericopes (Readings) During the Church Year], Den Bosch 1880.

<sup>42</sup> The *Catena Aurea* [Golden Chain] is a commentary on the Gospels by the Early Church Fathers compiled by Aquinas.

and, surprisingly, with Father Peter Oomen, the provincial who was Redemptorist Dutch provincial until 1887. It seems that the tense relationship between Schaap and Oomen became more subdued with the passage of years. In fact, Schaap invited Oomen to come to Suriname for a visit in 1886.

In 1888 Bishop Schaap traveled back to the Netherlands and it was during this visit that he learned that his provicar, Father Arnold Borret, had died suddenly in Paramaribo. As the health of Schaap himself was beginning to wane, he was accompanied on his return trip to Suriname by Redemptorist Father Willem Wulfingh. Although Father Adrian Bossers had served as something of an interim provicar after the sudden death of Borret, it was Wulfingh who was appointed provicar of the Suriname vicariate as Bishop Joannes Schaap lay gravely ill in March 1889.

Bishop Schaap received the Anointing of the Sick, renewed his Redemptorist vows, and passed away on March 19, 1889. The funeral liturgy and burial took place on the following day. According to Father Wulfingh, these rites were observed in the presence of the Adjutant of the Colonial Governor, the President and the Vice-president of the Suriname Parliament, members of the Court, of the military, along with vice-consuls, attorneys, and notaries. Thousands of others also came to pay their respects, including members of Suriname's Catholic religious communities, and representatives of the Protestant and Jewish faiths—and even professed atheists. According to Bishop Schaap's wishes, he was buried in his distinctive Redemptorist habit.

A week later, on March 26, 1889, the provicar Wulfingh sent an official report to the Redemptorist Superior General, Nicholas Mauron, concerning the death and burial of the bishop<sup>43</sup>.

### 3. – *Willem A. Wulfingh, C.S.S.R., 1889-1906*

Willem Antonius Wulfingh was born in 's-Hertogenbosch on May 30, 1830. He came from a family which had a total of five siblings enter religious life: his older brother, Karel, entered the Redemptorists before Willem, a younger brother went to the group

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<sup>43</sup> AGHR, 00300901 I, 1887-1889.

known popularly as the Brothers of Tilburg<sup>44</sup>, while one sister became a Redemptoristine and another a Sister of Charity at Tilburg.

Willem completed primary and secondary school in 's-Hertogenbosch and then was employed in his father's wine shop. He was always a devoted member of the local Catholic church, was present at daily Mass and active in the charitable works of the parish. Occasionally he made pilgrimages to the Marian Shrine at Kevelaer, Germany.

In 1862 young Wulfingh was accepted into the Redemptorist novitiate at St. Trond (Sint Truiden), Belgium, and was approved for profession of vows which he made on October 15, 1862. Then he moved on to five years of study for the priesthood at Wittem, with his ordination day arriving on October 1, 1867, when he was twenty-eight years old. His first assignment as a priest was to the community in Amsterdam where he joined in parish ministry as well the preaching of missions and retreats. When the new province preparatory seminary (juvenile) program was begun in 1870, he was chosen to be its first director.

Wulfingh arrived at the seminary location in Roermond in April 1870 in order to begin preparations for the arrival of the first group of young men. Their dormitory and study area was to be on the ground floor, while the priest-instructors, Wulfingh among them, were to occupy the upper floor. The Dutch provincial, Father JoHannes Schaap, arrived at the end of May for the formal blessing and dedication of this juvenile. After the program was under way, Wulfingh was officially named Rector of the Redemptorist community on January 2, 1871, as he continued to function as overall seminary director. It was not a large program, as the 1873 records show a total of only seventeen students.

In the years 1872 until 1874, Wulfingh was pleased to have as one of his assistants at Roermond the very capable young Redemptorist Jacobus Meeuwissen who, at first, was not yet ordained but was well along in his theological studies. This same Redemptorist would one day be Wulfingh's successor-bishop in Suriname<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Technically, the Congregation of Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy, serving mainly in education.

<sup>45</sup> We have already seen that in 1874, for a brief while, the provincial Joannes Schaap moved this preparatory program to Sambeek, about thirty-five

The extant chronicles from Roermond commend Wulfingh for being a hard worker and effective leader of the seminary. They also state that in these years he was also involved in giving retreats for both priests and women religious<sup>46</sup>.

At the end of the scholastic year in 1874 Father Wulfingh was named as the Rector of the theology seminary at Wittem. At this new post he immediately went into action preparing for the Jubilee Year of 1875, a year in which many priests came to Wittem for retreats, among them the Internuncio himself, Giovanni Capri<sup>47</sup>. At the same time he was a fervent promoter of devotion in honor of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. It was a busy three years for Wulfingh, and then he was assigned to Amsterdam in order to be rector of that community.

While in Amsterdam he became involved in the completion and opening of the now famous Hospital of Our Beloved Lady<sup>48</sup>. By mid-1878 his term of office as rector in Amsterdam ended, but he remained in that same community as a preacher of missions and retreats. The people of Amsterdam liked him and he developed a rather extensive network of friends.

About this time the matter of the status of Monsignor Johannes Schaap was being discussed in Rome and elsewhere—specifically whether Schaap was to be named vicar apostolic of Suriname and be ordained a bishop. Moreover, it is clear that in

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miles north of Roermond, causing an outcry of opposition. However, it seems that the then-director, Father Wulfingh, simply complied without complaint.

<sup>46</sup> Archief Klooster Roermond, Codex Chronicorum C.Ss.R. Ruremundae, Primus, fol. 89. – When reading far ahead in these same chronicles, one finds Wulfingh returning to Roermond as a bishop (perhaps with nostalgia) and with less than two months to live. Thus the chronicler on February 28, 1906, remarks on his swollen legs and writes sadly, «Really, one could only have pity on him». See fol. 261.

<sup>47</sup> Monsignor Giovanni Capri had become the Internuncio of the Netherlands on August 11, 1874. He remained in that office until replaced by Monsignor Agapito Panici. Panici (b. Jan. 15, 1839 at Amaseno, Ferentino; died at Rome, Feb. 7, 1902) had been named a cardinal by Pius X but died before the Consistory which would have created him cardinal.

<sup>48</sup> Jurjen Vis, *Onder uw bescherming: de katholieken en hun ziekenzorg in Amsterdam* [Under Your Protection: the Catholics and their care for the Sick in Amsterdam], Amsterdam 1998, 107. This volume features photographs of Father Willem Wulfingh and other Redemptorists.

1880 Schaap wanted Father Wulfingh to come to Suriname and eventually be his replacement. Wulfingh, however, at least at this time, was not keen on the idea of his being in the South American mission.

After 1878 and through most of the 1880s Father Wulfingh remained in Amsterdam serving the Redemptorist community as the minister<sup>49</sup> of the house and as a member of the house council. He served the local Amsterdam people where, one of his biographers says, he was known in rich homes as a «beggar for the poor», and in poor homes as an «angel of consolation». However, he also went out of the capital city to preach missions in towns and villages, and retreats in seminaries and convents<sup>50</sup>.

Near the middle of 1887 a rumor began to spread in Amsterdam that in the following year Father Wulfingh would be leaving Amsterdam, and that his next assignment as a Redemptorist would be in the foreign mission of Suriname. There was an outpouring of both grief and affection at this news, which turned out to be true<sup>51</sup>.

Apparently all his previous objections, whatever they were, had dissipated. Bishop Joannes Schaap came back to the Netherlands in 1888 with hopes of restoring, or at least improving, his failing health. On June 12 both he and Father Willem Wulfingh were on the Steamboat *Frederick Hendrick* en route to Suriname. The understanding was that Wulfingh would be his provicar and successor. They arrived on June 29 at the port of Paramaribo<sup>52</sup>.

Soon after their return, the health of Bishop Schaap took a severe turn for the worse. During the seven months that he lingered, Father Wulfingh had to learn quickly what was required of him in his new surroundings. Less than two months after the death of the bishop on March 19, 1889, Wulfingh was named as

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<sup>49</sup> AGHR, Redemptorist General Catalogs, 1884 and 1887. Generally, the minister of a Redemptorist house handled the finances and saw to the upkeep of supplies, and also took care of building maintenance.

<sup>50</sup> Lambert HAGEN, *Levensschets van Z.D.H. Mgr. W. A. F. Wulfingh, C.S.S.R.*, n.p. 1907, 14.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

the new vicar apostolic and bishop-elect on the following June 6.

He traveled back to Holland for his episcopal ordination in the basilica of 's-Hertogenbosch which took place on December 15, 1889. When he returned to Suriname, it would be to serve as bishop and vicar apostolic for the next sixteen and one-half years. Automatically, as was the case with his predecessors, he was the leader of the group of Redemptorists, i.e., their Vice-provincial, but often referred to as the «Visitor» of the Redemptorists.

Before his return to Suriname, however, he made the wise move of establishing, with papal approval, the St. Clement Hofbauer Charitable Fund. This fund had two organizational centers, one in Rome and the other in the Netherlands. The purpose of the fund was to support the mission of Suriname, and especially the care of those affected by leprosy. Once Bishop Wulfingh had the fund well established, he was faithful in writing a letter every year to those who contributed to the fund and to those who promoted it.

Reliable statistics are sometimes difficult to ascertain for this period, but it is believed that in all of Suriname there were about 13,000 Catholics, of whom some 8,000 were in Paramaribo with perhaps 3,000 living either on the many plantations or in camps along the main rivers, and the rest in the villages of outlying districts. The Moravians in Suriname, on the other hand, numbered about 26,000<sup>53</sup>.

As for the Redemptorists who were ministering with Wulfingh in Suriname in 1889, there were thirty-six in all: twenty priests and sixteen professed Brothers, along with three students studying for the priesthood. By 1894 two additional priests and one additional brother had been added to this total, and there were two students for the priesthood<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> *Kolonial Verslag 1889 van Suriname*, Den Haag 1890. This is a government report of the Netherlands.

<sup>54</sup> Peter RIETBERGEN, *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, Leiden 1990, 75-98. In 1894, Bishop Wulfingh went to Rome to the Redemptorist General Chapter (in his capacity as Redemptorist vice-provincial); there he visited the offices of Propaganda Fide, seeking more missionaries for Suriname. He was

The new bishop had many organizational and practical talents to employ in the mission. In 1891, with a keen sense regarding the value of print media, he founded two weekly newspapers, one called *De Katholieke Waarschuwer* [The Catholic Monitor] and another called *De Surinamer*. In order to publish these he had to purchase and import the necessary press machinery.

For the sake of serving the people better, in 1890 he established independent parishes in the outlying areas east, west, and south of Paramaribo (Vierkinderen, Nieuw Nickerie and Albina), each with its own priest. Moreover, in 1894 he brought the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg to Suriname with the explicit purpose of caring for those afflicted with leprosy. Their arrival led to the foundation of the leprosarium known as Gerardus Majella in 1895<sup>55</sup>.

One of the struggles of Bishop Wulfingh as the leader of the Suriname Catholic Church was that his role of vicar apostolic came into conflict with his role as Redemptorist vice-provincial. It seems that he viewed his first responsibility as that of vicar apostolic for the ecclesiastical mission. Some of the Redemptorists objected that this did not preserve their identity nor their responsibilities as members of a religious congregation. Some Redemptorists angrily reported their objections to their Dutch provincial in Amsterdam, and even to the Superior General in Rome. In 1898, the General in Rome, Father Matthias Raus, named a new vice-provincial in the person of Cornelius van Coll. This decision was not gladly received by Wulfingh who viewed the decision as a punishment.

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upset that the Dutch province had in 1894 begun a mission in northeast Brazil when Suriname was, in his opinion, in need of men.

<sup>55</sup> At first Wulfingh worked out an agreement, whereby, with a Surinamese government subsidy, the Roman Catholic Church would care for all lepers in the country. But the bishop canceled this agreement when objections arose among certain sectarian groups. In the end the Catholics had Gerardus Majella Center, while the government operated the Groot-Chatillon Center, and the Protestants built Bethesda Center (all three centers were dedicated to the care of lepers). This was an example of what was known as «pillarisation», whereby in Dutch and Dutch Colonial societies, people were «vertically» divided into several segments or «pillars» (in Dutch, *zuilen* – the singular is *zuil*) according to different religions or ideologies. Each of these «pillars» often had their own outreach to the ill or needy.



Once slavery had been abolished in 1863, the population of Suriname changed with an influx of Chinese, Hindustani from British East India, Javanese from Dutch East India, and a variety of people from the Caribbean islands. (The attraction was often the availability of work on plantations). Among these immigrants, also from the Caribbean islands, were enough English-speaking people that Bishop Wulfingh organized special services for them, even providing the St. George Chapel for them near the Paramaribo cathedral. From 1889 until 1892 Father Charles Giffkens from the Redemptorist London province ministered to this group. Likewise, there were some Catholics among the immigrant Chinese, and the bishop saw to it that Father Henry Rikken (the son of a Creole mother) served them in a small church of St. Anthony which was constructed in a Chinese style. Even Portuguese speaking people, from the island of Madeira immigrated into Suriname, and they too asked for special attention. The overall result was that by 1904 Bishop Wulfingh officially sanctioned pastoral work among these various language and cultural groups. Thus evolved an «ethnic pastoral approach» within the vicariate.

Bishop Wulfingh never knew Father Peter Donders personally, but he was hugely impressed with the life story of this man who was first a diocesan priest, later a Redemptorist, and who dedicated himself to those suffering from leprosy in Suriname. In the year 1900 Wulfingh began some of the remote preparation for the procedures which would eventually lead to the declaration of Peter Donders as a «Blessed» by Pope John Paul II on May 23, 1982. The Paramaribo bishop also saw to the transfer of the remains of Donders to the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in July of 1900.

Until the end of his life, however, Bishop Wulfingh never lost his passion for improving the life of his flock. In 1902 he was successful in bringing the Brothers of Tilburg to Suriname. He put these excellent educators in charge of an orphanage for boys and also a vocational school. In this latter venture the young men could learn farming, building construction, commercial printing, rope making from hemp, and even the production of cigars. The energetic and creative Wulfingh also encouraged many devotional organizations and confraternities among the Catholics.

By 1905 he was sixty-six years old and his health had deteriorated. At the end of that year he traveled to the Netherlands hoping for a rest and for recovery. With no significant improvement after a few months, he wanted to return to his beloved Suriname. On April 4, 1906, he was aboard the *Steamship Prins Willem IV* leaving the harbor at Amsterdam. But the very next day he died at sea<sup>56</sup>. Two Redemptorist companions who were with him saw to it that his body was placed in a lead coffin for burial in Paramaribo.

The ship carrying the remains of Bishop Wulfingh arrived at its destination on April 21. As may be expected, his burial was attended by crowds of the Catholic faith and of other denominations, as well as by dignitaries from the entire colony, including the Governor, Finance Minister, and Attorney General. Memorial articles were carried by all the newspapers in both Suriname and the Netherlands. Later a street and a secondary school, both in Paramaribo, were named for him. At the school there is also a statue which was erected in his honor<sup>57</sup>.

#### 4. – *Jacobus C. Meeuwissen, C.S.S.R., 1907-1911*

Jacobus Cornelius Meeuwissen was born on August 15, 1847, at Oud-Gastel, a town which lies on the border of Flemish Belgium. His father Cornelis managed a small lumber factory, as well as a local pub *De Bonte Os* [The Speckled Ox]. The mother of Jacobus was Anna Maria Blankers. Of the four sons in this family, Peter joined the Brothers of Mercy in Malines<sup>58</sup>; there were also three daughters<sup>59</sup>.

Having attended primary school in his hometown, Jacob then pursued courses which could have led to his being a teacher,

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<sup>56</sup> DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II, 476.

<sup>57</sup> During World War II a Foundation was begun in the Dutch Antilles known as the Monsignor Wulfingh Foundation whose purpose is to collect funds for the mission of Suriname. See Valdemar MARCHA, *Gods wijngaard in de West*, Amsterdam 2009, 368.

<sup>58</sup> Among these Brothers, Peter was known as Andreas; he died in 1922.

<sup>59</sup> A nephew of Jacobus Meeuwissen, Cornelius Jacobs, son of Anthonia Meeuwissen Jacobs, became a Redemptorist and a missionary in the Rio de Janeiro province, dying in Curvelo, Brazil in 1941.

but about this time he began seriously to consider being a priest<sup>60</sup>. Some of his humanities studies were taken at a school in Herenthals, Belgium, and then in 1867 he was admitted into the Redemptorist novitiate at St. Trond (Sint Truiden).

For awhile his novitiate year had to be interrupted because of illness. However, with his health improved, he was readmitted into the novitiate and professed his vows on April 26, 1868, and then moved to the House of Studies at Wittem in the Netherlands. While still a theology student and before his ordination to the priesthood, in 1872 he became a staff member at his province's preparatory seminary at Roermond. His ordination day came in the following year and then he returned to Roermond until 1875.

Over the next fifteen years young Father Meeuwissen received three other assignments. He first went to Roosendaal in the diocese of Breda, where, according to the diocesan regulations, he could begin his ministry only after he passed the so-called «jurisdictional examination»<sup>61</sup>. After his four years in Roosendaal (1875-1879), he moved on to Amsterdam for two years 1879-1881, and then came six years in Rotterdam (1881-1887).

By now he was considered as someone possessed of leadership qualities, and in 1887 Meeuwissen was named the rector of the Redemptorist Roosendaal community. Moreover his was one of three names which appeared on the official *terna* (recommendation) which the Redemptorist Superior General Mauron submitted to Propaganda Fide as possible successors to Bishop Johannes Schaap in Suriname after Schaap's death in 1889.

When Propaganda's choice for bishop fell to Willem Wulfingh<sup>62</sup>, it came as no surprise that Meeuwissen was chosen by Mauron and his consultors as next the Dutch provincial in 1890. He led the Netherlands Province from 1890 until 1894, and in that

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<sup>60</sup> Helping Jacobus with the expenses of his priesthood studies were two sisters of the Redemptorist Father Joannes Mastboom (1831-1907).

<sup>61</sup> Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, Kronijken Roosendaal, fol. 149, 10761. The records show that he passed easily.

<sup>62</sup> The name *Meeuwissen* ended up being mistakenly written as *Leeuwissen* on the *terna*. The third name on the *terna* (other than Meeuwissen and Wulfingh) was Gerard Schrauwen (1839-1904). It is interesting that the *terna* of the Papal Internuncio of the Netherlands, Monsignor Aristide Rinaldini, contained the same three names.

capacity attended the 1894 (February to April) General Chapter held in Rome. In the following years, from October 1894 until December 1898, Meeuwissen was appointed to serve as rector of the community in Roosendaal. Suddenly, however, with the resignation of Father Joannes Baptist Kronenburg, at the end of 1898 Meeuwissen was asked again to take up the role of Dutch provincial<sup>63</sup>, a position which he was to hold until 1907.

His second period as provincial was filled with multiple routine matters, but also some memorable moments. Besides his responsibilities at home, he now had oversight not only of Suriname, but also of the Dutch province's Brazilian mission which had been founded in 1894 in Juiz de Fora in the state of Minas Gerais. Late in the year 1899 he made a visitation of this South American mission<sup>64</sup>. Not long afterwards he was also involved in the opening of a second Brazilian location at Belo Horizonte, and the establishment of the Brazilian vice-province in March 1903<sup>65</sup>.

As the new century dawned, and into 1903, Meeuwissen was involved in the introduction of the cause of sainthood of Father Peter Donders. This cause was introduced both in Suriname and in Donders' native diocese of 's-Hertogenbosch<sup>66</sup>.

Among the more routine things that occupied Meeuwissen were his regular requests to the Superior General Matthias Raus in Rome for various dietary dispensations for the Wittem seminary community, and also for a change in the textbook used for Church History at Wittem<sup>67</sup>. In the days of highly centralized Roman authority within the Redemptorist Congregation, Meeuwissen frequently wrote to his superior general, sometimes several

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<sup>63</sup> Superior General Matthias Raus to Jacobus Meeuwissen, Dec. 07, 1898, AGHR, 3009001,1073.

<sup>64</sup> Jacobus Schrauwen to Matthias Raus, AGHR, 30090001,1105, and 30090001,1106.

<sup>65</sup> Meeuwissen to Matthias Raus, Jan. 22, 1900, AGHR, 30090001, 1116; 30090001,1201.

<sup>66</sup> Meeuwissen to Ernst Dubois, Consultor General in Rome, Feb. 8, 1900, AGHR, 30090001,1128; also Meeuwissen to Raus, July 18, 1901, 30090001, 1160, and May 22, 1903, AGHR, 3009000,1204.

<sup>67</sup> See for example Meeuwissen to Raus, Nov. 13, 1900, and Feb. 9, 1901, AGHR, 3009001,1135, and 30090001,1142.

letters in the same week, requesting permissions or advice. By far the most frequent topic that one notices in this correspondence deals with the topic of smoking cigars, something which could be regularly allowed only with special permission of the provincial<sup>68</sup>.

Although there is evidence that he was considered rigid as a provincial<sup>69</sup>, or perhaps because he was so considered, Meeuwissen was reappointed as Dutch provincial by the superiors in Rome in 1901<sup>70</sup>.

There were occasions when as provincial he accepted requests for special preaching events. Just prior to Christmas 1901 he took part in a large parish mission conducted at Arnhem near Nijmegen. In March 1903 he accepted an invitation to conduct a retreat for ninety superiors of the Sisters of Tilburg, and later that year he preached a pre-Christmas Triduum in the cathedral of 's-Hertogenbosch<sup>71</sup>.

The year 1904 turned out to be especially eventful as Father Meeuwissen was reappointed yet again to continue as provincial. In May of that year he has the compassionate foresight to ask the General Raus in Rome for permission to purchase land for a «country house» not far from the Wittem seminary. The idea, he pleaded, was to ward off «nervous disorders» among the students<sup>72</sup>. He had the joy of blessing this rather large «Emmaus House» house a year later. Midway through 1904 he accompanied Raus on an Extraordinary Canonical Visitation of the Redemptorist communities in Ireland and England. Then he was in Rome for the canonization ceremonies on December 11 of Brother Gerard Majella, the second Redemptorist ever to be proclaimed

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<sup>68</sup> *Redemptorist Rules and Constitutions*, English ed., St. Marys, Clapham [London] 1898, C. 517. For particular occasions, the local superior could grant permission. It seems interpretations of this prohibition were many.

<sup>69</sup> Joannes Lohmeijer to Matthias Raus, Dec. 19, 1898, AGHR, 30090001, 1078. Also, see Joannes Lohmeijer to Raus, Dec. 16, 1898, 30090001,1076.

<sup>70</sup> Meeuwissen to Matthias Raus, May 4, 1901, AGHR, 30090001,1152. – Meeuwissen was to remain in the role of Dutch provincial until January 1907 at which time he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Suriname.

<sup>71</sup> Meeuwissen to Raus, Dec. 21, 1901; March 29, 1903; and Dec. 25, 1903, AGHR, 30090001,1167, 1200, 1211.

<sup>72</sup> Meeuwissen to Raus, May 23, 1904, AGHR, 30090001,1237. Also Theo de CALUWE, *Emmaus aan de Geul, Wittem 1836-1968*, see FN 10 above, 94f.

a saint, the first having been the founder himself, St. Alphonsus Liguori<sup>73</sup>.

About this same time the Redemptoristine Nuns of Wittem were looking to found a new monastery in Canada. The provincial Meeuwissen took a special interest in planning and aiding this project. In fact, in July 1905, he personally accompanied the three Redemptoristines who began the new foundation at Ste-Anne de Beaupré, in the archdiocese of Quebec. He remained with them for several weeks willing to help in any way he could, especially with legal and business matters<sup>74</sup>.

On January 7, 1907, there was issued in Rome a Papal Brief which named Father Jacobus Meeuwissen the new Vicar Apostolic of Suriname<sup>75</sup>. A few weeks later as he wrote to the Redemptorist General Matthias Raus in Rome, he confessed that he preferred to be a religious more than a bishop<sup>76</sup>. His ordination to the episcopacy took place on March 3, 1907, in Amsterdam, the principal consecrator being Archbishop Hendrick van de Wetering. The motto on his coat of arms was «Let us go forth with confidence»<sup>77</sup>.

On the day of his ordination Meeuwissen was almost sixty years of age. He had held a number of important posts in the Dutch province, including being provincial twice. Leaving for Suriname on June 14, 1907, on the steamship *Prins der Nederlanden*, he arrived in Paramaribo on July 1, 1907, and took up the burden of being not only the Bishop/Vicar Apostolic for Suriname,

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<sup>73</sup> Meeuwissen to Raus, Oct. 12, 1904, AGHR, 30090001,1243, and Oct. 27, 1904, 30090001,1245.

<sup>74</sup> Meeuwissen to Raus, July 4, 1905, AGHR, 30090001,1259, and Sept. 5, 1905, 30090001,1263. See also *Viva Memoria O.S.S.R., 1731-1998*, Monasteries of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer, n.p. 1999, 146ff. Also, Clemens HENZE, *Die Redemptoristinen*, Bonn 1931, 176-177.

<sup>75</sup> Zenone PIËTA, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii et Recentioris Aevii*, IX, Patavii 2002, 313.

<sup>76</sup> Meeuwissen to Raus, Feb. 03, 1907, AGHR, 30090001,1295. Interestingly, the news of his choice as Vicar Apostolic in Suriname was leaked to the press in Lyon, France, in Dec. 1906, two weeks before the date of the official Papal Brief. See Meeuwissen to Raus, Jan. 29, 1907, 30090001,1294.

<sup>77</sup> In Latin «*Adeamus cum fiducia*», probably a near-citation of Hebrews 4:16 in the Latin Vulgate, «*Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae*». «Let us approach with confidence the throne of grace».

but also the vice-provincial of the Redemptorists. For once again his superiors had decided that the double-post could be handled by one man, as had been the case prior to 1898. (However, just two years later this arrangement was again to be reversed and a missionary from Brazil was brought into Suriname to serve as Redemptorist vice-provincial)<sup>78</sup>.

Almost from the beginning of the Meeuwissen era in the Suriname mission, it was clear that his body could not adjust to the tropical climate. By November 1908, after only fifteen months in the mission, his condition required that he had to return to Holland for a rest<sup>79</sup>. Late in 1909 he made an attempt to resume his duties in Suriname, but he was never really well again. In the following year on October 14 he reported that for months he had been unable to rise from his bed, and could drink only milk and eat only bananas<sup>80</sup>. On December 18, 1910, he submitted his resignation to the Holy See, and, after some delay, it was accepted<sup>81</sup>.

Even though he was often ill during his relatively brief tenure in Suriname, after his departure an edition of *De Surinamer* newspaper (February 5, 1911) summarized the signs of growth in the mission during his time as bishop. These included the establishment of a new St. Rose Church in Paramaribo, as well as a special chapel for the East Indians living in and near the capital. In addition seven other small church buildings arose in the outlying district settlements of Meliapur, Onverwacht, Matta, Potribo, Berenslust, Willemburg, and Surnau Creek. There were new schools at Livorno and Maratakka River, while renovations were made to schools in Paramaribo and Nickerie. The Sisters of

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<sup>78</sup> It seems that by 1909 factions had developed among the Suriname Redemptorists, especially regarding their pastoral methods, and rather than favor one faction over another, an «outsider» from Brazil was brought in as the Redemptorist superior (vice-provincial).

<sup>79</sup> Joannes Lohmeijer to Raus, Sept. 19, 1908, AGHR, 30090001,1351, reported that Meeuwissen was very sick, could only weep as he suffered from the heat, a depressing situation for all. See also Lohmeijer to Raus, Oct. 10, 1908, 30090001,1352.

<sup>80</sup> Meeuwissen to Joannes Lohmeijer, Oct. 14, 1910, AGHR, 3009001, 1393.

<sup>81</sup> PIËTA, *Hierarchia Catholica...*, IX, 313.

Roosendaal received a new convent, while the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg were provided with a small but new hospital. Meeuwissen was also credited with launching a Savings Bank, named in honor of St. Gerard Majella.

The Bishop Meeuwissen era also saw the development of a special kind of pastoral work for young people. First developed in the Netherlands and known as *Patronaten*, these youth groups were available, separately, to both boys and girls. They offered well-planned educational courses as well as entertainment and sports activities. A priest-director was known as the *Patroon* for the boys, and a woman religious served in the same leadership capacity for the girls' groups. The Redemptorists introduced this type of youth ministry into Suriname with the eager encouragement of the bishop.

St. Vincent Hospital in Paramaribo also owes its existence to Bishop Meeuwissen. This came about because of a difficulty which the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg had within the military hospital of Paramaribo; although fully qualified, the Sisters were not allowed to be department supervisors. In response the bishop decided to have a new hospital totally under Catholic auspices, with the Tilburg Sisters in charge. He organized fundraising committees among laypeople and sought donations from other sources. St. Vincent's opened its doors in 1916 and in 2011 it is still operational.

After returning to the Netherlands in 1911, Bishop Meeuwissen was occasionally able to celebrate ordinations and preside at a few other liturgical functions. But he was always in poor health. In 1915 and 1916 he underwent major surgeries for the removal of kidney stones, but to no avail. He died on June 29, 1916. His funeral Mass and burial in Amsterdam were attended by large numbers of mourners.

It is believed that there was a lesson to be learned in the relatively short time during which Bishop Jacobus Meeuwissen held the position of Vicar Apostolic of Suriname. This lesson was that his successor should be a younger man who possessed good health. So it came about that the successor to Meeuwissen came to Suriname when only thirty-six years old.



5. – *Theodorus Antonius L.M. van Roosmalen, C.S.S.R., 1911-1946*

Theodore Antonius van Roosmalen was bishop and vicar apostolic in Suriname longer than any of the other prelates who held that post, thirty-five years in all. Moreover these years encompassed both World War I and World War II, and the Great Depression.

He was born on July 27, 1875, in 's-Hertogenbosch, the second-to-last child of Wilhelmus Joannes and his wife, Louisa Johanna, née Bogaerts. At his birth they already had three boys and five girls, and after Theodorus they were to welcome yet another girl<sup>82</sup>. This youngest son of theirs was baptized on the day of his birth.

His early schooling was in 's-Hertogenbosch, but for his humanities studies he went to the Redemptorist preparatory seminary at Roermond. Continuing on with the Redemptorists meant that he returned to his native city of 's-Hertogenbosch where the novitiate of the Dutch province was then located. His profession of vows was on September 29, 1896<sup>83</sup>.

After the novitiate Theodorus van Roosmalen moved to the seminary at Wittem to begin his philosophy and, eventually, theology studies. He did well in these studies as the records show, and received especially good grades in music and choral studies. It was also noted that he was a young man blessed with a healthy and strong constitution.

Ordination to the priesthood came on October 8, 1901, in the seminary chapel of Wittem, the ordaining prelate being Bishop Anthony Hubert Fischer (1840-1912), who was then an auxilia-

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<sup>82</sup> Theodorus van Roosmalen had two uncles who were priests, one being from his mother's side who was a Redemptorist, Jacobus Bogaerts (1848-1923), and the other from his father's side, Hendrick van Roosmalen a diocesan priest of the 's-Hertogenbosch diocese. There is evidence that these priest-uncles inspired Theodorus in his own vocation.

<sup>83</sup> Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 5521: *Kronijken van het Noviciaat van 's-Hertogenbosch*, fols 162, 169. For more on the history of the Dutch novitiate, see Alfonse STRIJBOS et al., «De Geschiedenis van ons Noviciaat», in: *Monumenta Historica*, vol. 6, 1-32; for the period of Van Roosmalen's novitiate year, p. 5. – Interestingly, Van Roosmalen had as fellow novices, Aloysius Koopmans (1874-1936), Alphonsus Verheggen (1876-1946), and Henricus De Groot (1874-1945); all four were later to serve together in Suriname.

ry bishop of Cologne but later became the Cardinal Archbishop of that city. After completing studies at Wittem, young Father Theodorus van Roosmalen was assigned to Rotterdam, where he arrived on September 16, 1902. His uncle, Father Jacobus Bogaerts, C.S.S.R., was then a member of the Rotterdam community, a man known for his expertise in church music and musical composition. We know that at the Rotterdam community the neophyte priest was involved in giving missions and retreats, and aiding the local clergy in pastoral ministry when called upon.

Less than two years later in April 1904 he received his next assignment: to serve in the Redemptorist mission in Brazil. He had less than three weeks to say his farewells and board a ship for Suriname. There is an extant letter which he wrote to his mother saying that he much preferred Brazil rather than to be sent to Suriname<sup>84</sup>. Exactly why he said this is not certain, but when he was later sent to serve in Suriname he came to love the Surinamese people and any former reservations dissipated.

Once at his new mission in Brazil, he was first assigned briefly to the novitiate house as assistant to the novice director. This was not a difficult task as there was only one novice<sup>85</sup>. In the following year Father van Roosmalen was given an opportunity for his «second novitiate», that is, several months devoted to prayer and to the writing of sermons for parish missions, retreats, and other spiritual exercises.

Soon enough he was a bona-fide missionary, traveling on horseback and preaching in Portuguese to people in isolated areas. Once again he could appreciate the blessing of his robust physical health and that he was able to keep to a full schedule of parish missions<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, Scripta J.M. van Emstede: Mgr. Th. Van Roosmalen, C.S.S.R., 1875-1957.

<sup>85</sup> This single novice was Julio Maria Moraes de Carneiro, fifty-five years old and a former attorney. Having suffered the loss of two wives, he had been ordained a diocesan priest in 1891. In 1906 he professed his vows as a Redemptorist and served in the Brazilian mission until his death in 1916.

<sup>86</sup> Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, Scripta J.M. van Emstede: Mgr. Th. Van Roosmalen, C.S.S.R., 1875-1957.

In 1909 he was named rector of the community at Juiz de Fora. Yet he continued his preaching ministry, which at times was very challenging. The challenge arose especially when he encountered outright indifference among some of his flock, or where in remote areas he discovered that the outreach of the Church had been rare, and the good-hearted people needed very basic care and attention in matters of faith. From his letters, however, it is evident that he loved his missionary life in Brazil.

Then, suddenly, this phase of his life came to an end. Without any prior notice or discussion with Van Roosmalen himself, his ecclesiastical superiors selected him to be the Vicar Apostolic of Suriname. This choice was officially made on September 5, 1911. He was obliged under obedience to accept. The appointment required that he be ordained a bishop, and for this purpose he traveled back to the Netherlands. The ceremony was set for November 15, 1911, in the cathedral of his hometown of 's-Hertogenbosch. As was true of his predecessor in the vicariate of Suriname (Bishop Jacobus Meeuwissen), the principal consecrator was Archbishop Hendrick van de Wetering of Utrecht.

Bishop Theodorus van Roosmalen chose as his motto: «God is my Strength». On his way to assume his post in Suriname, he traveled by way of Rome. This was for the explicit purpose of visiting the Redemptorist headquarters on Via Merulana so that he might confer with his Dutch confrere, Father Willem van Rossum, who was then serving as General Consultor to the Rector Major, Father Patrick Murray<sup>87</sup>.

When Bishop van Roosmalen arrived in Suriname in January 1912, his reception in Paramaribo was splendid, with much credit for this hearty reception due to the provicar, Father Gerard Eijsink, C.Ss.R. The Adjutant to the Governor met him at the quay when his ship arrived. Then a number of civic dignitaries were waiting to greet him at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul where Van Roosmalen graciously thanked everyone and imparted

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<sup>87</sup> In the same month, on Nov. 27, 1911, Willem van Rossum was named a cardinal of the Church, and eventually became the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, serving in this role from 1918 until his death in 1932.

his blessing. When he came out of the cathedral there were huge crowds who broke into long and enthusiastic applause<sup>88</sup>. That same evening there was another festive welcome sponsored by the Catholic Social Organization of the vicariate.

It must be realized that Van Roosmalen became a bishop after only ten years in the priesthood. Moreover, in Suriname he was facing his «second foreign mission culture» within seven years, and although some of Suriname's church traditions were in accord with what he knew from the Netherlands, other traditions were growing ever stronger—which were strictly native to Suriname. When he arrived, there were an estimated 17, 300 Surinamese Catholics; they represented about nineteen percent of the total population<sup>89</sup>. Including the new bishop, there were twenty-nine Catholic priests, all Redemptorists. There were also seventeen Redemptorist Brothers who were involved in various ministries, and thirteen Brothers of Tilburg (technically, the Congregation of Mary, Mother of Mercy), all of whom were teachers. Among the women religious in the vicariate were seventy-six Franciscan Sisters of Roosendaal, some of whom were teachers and others cared for approximately sixty children in the vicariate's two orphanages. Finally, caring for those afflicted with leprosy at the St. Gerard Center in Paramaribo were thirty-two Sisters of Charity of Tilburg.

Almost coinciding with the arrival of Van Roosmalen in 1911, a report was published in the Netherlands on the economic and financial situation of the colony<sup>90</sup>. Significantly, this report contained evidence of the importance of the Catholic Church community within Suriname. It showed the extensive efforts of the Church reaching out to serve the needs of the Indigenous

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<sup>88</sup> *De Katholieke Waarschuwer*, Jan. 1912, 6.

<sup>89</sup> This total population was estimated to be 92,700. Moravians made up the largest religious group at 26,200 (about twenty-three percent of the total population). The number of Hindus were about equivalent to the Catholics, and there were about 10,500 Muslims. Other denominations were much smaller than any of these three. See *Koloniaal Verslag 1912*, Government publication, Den Haag 1913.

<sup>90</sup> *De economische en financieele toestand der Kolonie Suriname*, [with subtitle] *Rapport der Commissie benoemd by besluit van Zijne Excellentie den Minister van Koloniën, van 11 maart 1911, Afd. B, no. 56*, 's-Gravenhage 1911.

Peoples in the remote districts. Likewise, the Church was credited with its care of the new immigrants who arrived from the Dutch East Indies, noting that Catholic missionaries had learned the native languages spoken by the newcomers and were cognizant of their Oriental customs<sup>91</sup>. Among the Surinamese at large there was surfacing an ideology of «Unity amid Diversity».

In 1916, during the First World War, the Redemptorists observed the Golden Anniversary of their presence in Suriname. Because of wartime conditions this observance was necessarily of a sober nature. Everyone was suffering because the importation of goods, upon which Suriname depended, was heavily curtailed. Moreover, the actual anniversary date fell during Lenten time. Nevertheless, the Redemptorists did manage to publish a booklet, *Een halve eeuw in Suriname, 1866-1916* [Half a Century in Suriname], with an excellent overview of the different activities of the mission<sup>92</sup>. Also, in that same year Bishop van Roosmalen was able to preside at the formal dedication and blessing ceremony to mark the opening of the new St. Vincentius Catholic Hospital in Paramaribo.

In 1917 the new Code of Canon Law for the Roman Catholic Church was promulgated. This code required that every diocese or vicariate formulate its own local statutes. The Redemptorist Cardinal Willem van Rossum, who was instrumental in drawing up the 1917 Code, assisted in developing statutes specific to the Suriname mission<sup>93</sup>. This document was composed when Bishop van Roosmalen visited Rome in 1919. The results were published as *Statuta Vicariatus* in 1921, and in fact were published in Latin, Dutch, *Sranantongo* and English—an indication of the multilingual and multicultural nature of the vicariate.

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<sup>91</sup> The investigative arm of this commission had conducted personal interviews with Bishop Meeuwissen (by then home in the Netherlands) as well as with key Redemptorists in Suriname, among them Leonard Verheyen, Alfonsus Verheggen, and Willem Austermöller.

<sup>92</sup> *Een Halve eeuw in Suriname, 1866-1916*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1916. This rare booklet of ninety-six pages contains some photographs of the earliest Redemptorists in the Suriname mission.

<sup>93</sup> The full Latin title reads *Statuta Vicariatus Apostolici Surinamensis, edita ab Illmo. et Rmo. A. L. M. van Roosmalen episc. Tit. Antigomensi et Vic. Apost. Surinamensi*, Paramaribo 1921.

In that same year Van Roosmalen and his staff moved from Gravenstraat 21 (now Henck Arronstraat 21), opposite the cathedral, to the stone building at Gravenstraat 12 which had previously housed a school for straw-weaving. This was an attempt at separating the strong ties between the Redemptorist community and the activities of the vicariate. Some of the Redemptorists at first were not in agreement with this move, but Bishop van Roosmalen was adamant about a clean break between the two institutions.

As indicated earlier, the Great Depression occurred during the years when Van Roosmalen led the vicariate. This worldwide economic crisis deeply affected Suriname's gross income from the key industries of cacao, coffee, and sugar<sup>94</sup>. Many people who had worked with these crops had to seek employment in the oil industry of the Dutch Antilles. It was a blessing that more people did not suffer the same fate for, providentially, after the year 1916 Suriname's bauxite business had grown. True, the Brothers of Tilburg continued the small «social trades» which they had initiated in Suriname, such as rope and cigar manufacture, but these were not capable of providing large-scale employment.

As for keeping up the numbers of religious personnel serving the Suriname mission, Van Roosmalen was generally successful. In addition to the Sisters already present, in 1925 he was able to bring to Suriname yet another group, the Franciscan Sisters from Oudenbosh, Holland. They were placed in charge of additional schools and orphanages. Then in 1932 he himself became the founder of a group of Sisters from within Suriname, giving them the name Daughters of the Immaculate Conception. They became a veritable «Icon of Unity amid Diversity» as they welcomed women of Chinese, Creole, Hindustani and Indigenous heritage. The one disappointing area where Van Roosmalen was not very successful was in the recruitment of young men of Suriname for the priesthood, although he was always on the alert for viable candidates.

Another creative endeavor of Bishop van Roosmalen was the encouragement and support of the «MIVA», an acronym for *Verkeers Middelen Aktie*. [In English: The Mission Workers Re-

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<sup>94</sup> See A[drian] van TRAA, *Suriname 1900-1940*, Deventer 1946, 206-207.

sources Action]. This was a foundation in the Netherlands which sought and provided financial support for the purchase and maintenance of transport: bicycles, motorcycles, autos, trucks, and even ambulances and boats<sup>95</sup>. Even with this endeavor the bishop's creativity did not end, as he invited experts to look into the possibility of a small airplane for maintaining contact with the villages of the interior. Unfortunately, the cost was prohibitive and the idea never developed.

In 1940 a group of lay Catholic men and women took the initiative to launch the *Petrus Donders Stichting*. This was a foundation which took upon itself the raising of funds by various fairs and exhibitions to benefit the mission outreach, especially in Suriname's less developed interior. This foundation proved very effective and continues to this day. That it was founded and directed by the laity may well have been something of which Bishop van Roosmalen could be especially proud. However, the truth is that he was not physically present in Suriname when it came into existence. He had gone to Rome for his *ad limina* visit to Pope Pius XII. Before the end of his leave in Europe there occurred the outbreak of World War II, and it was not until after the war that he was able to return from the Netherlands to his vicariate in Suriname<sup>96</sup>.

He finally came back on January 1, 1946<sup>97</sup>. Soon after this he submitted his resignation to Vatican officials. His replacement, the newly-named Bishop Stephanus Kuijpers traveled for his ordination to Holland and returned to Suriname on January 7, 1947<sup>98</sup>. Van Roosmalen lived out the rest of his days in the Redemptorist residence on Gravenstraat (now Henck Arronstraat) in Paramaribo, where he died on June 9, 1957.

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<sup>95</sup> In Germany this organization was already an active organization. It still exists today to help missionaries in Developing Countries.

<sup>96</sup> BOLAND, 403. When Van Roosmalen left in 1939 for his *ad limina* visit to Rome, he named Stephanus Kuijpers provicar in Suriname.

<sup>97</sup> Marinus Mol (Dutch Provincial) to Superior General Patrick Murray, Nov. 27, 1945, AGHR, 9003000,2249.

<sup>98</sup> Fr. Tranquilinus SCHALKEN, *Historische Gids. 300 jaar R.K. Gemeente in Suriname* [Historical Guide of the Roman Catholic Church in Suriname], Paramaribo 1985, 123.

In summarizing Bishop Theodorus van Roosmalen's life his confreres wrote about him that he worked with «determined and indefatigable zeal»<sup>99</sup>. In 1923 the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina declared him a Knight of the Order of the Lion<sup>100</sup>. In 1952 he was inducted as a Commander of the Order of Orange-Nassau<sup>101</sup>. These are two of the Netherlands highest awards, meant to show appreciation and recognition for how recipients have carried out their activities for the benefit of society. On October 24, 1952 he also received the honor of being named an Assistant Bishop at the Papal Throne<sup>102</sup>. There are at least two streets named for him, one in Paramaribo in the Rainville section, and another in 's-Hertogenbosch, the city of his birth.

6. – *Stephanus J. Kuijpers, C.S.S.R., 1941-1971*

Stephanus Joseph Kuijpers was born on July 22, 1899, in the village of Borkel en Schaft, near Eindhoven. His father was Cornelis Kuijpers and his mother was Maria Elizabeth van Hout. In all they had nine children, but two died soon after birth. Of the surviving seven, several remained to work the family farm, one son became a local town administrator, a daughter entered a convent in Tilburg, and the youngest son, Adriaan (1909-1970) followed his older brother Stephanus into the Redemptorists<sup>103</sup>.

Stephanus completed his primary years in the local village school and then in 1911 moved to the preparatory seminary of the Redemptorists at Roermond. It was not an easy life for Stephanus

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<sup>99</sup> *Memoriaal van de Nederlandse Provincie*, privately printed, Wittem 1961, s.d. June 9. This small volume is a remembrance of deceased members of the Dutch province and of historical dates significant to Dutch Redemptorists.

<sup>100</sup> *Analecta*, XIX, 249. The Order of the Lion was established by King William I of the Netherlands in 1815.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* The Order of Orange-Nassau (sometimes compared to the Order of the British Empire in the United Kingdom) was established in 1892 by the then Queen Regent Emma.

<sup>102</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XLIV, 892. This honorific title has not been used since Vatican Council II.

<sup>103</sup> Adriaan Kuijpers, brother to Bishop Stephanus Kuijpers, b. Sept. 8, 1909; prof. Sept. 8, 1932; ord. Sept. 22, 1937. Assigned to Suriname, arriving Oct. 1938; died in the Netherlands, Mar. 9, 1970.



as he joined about fifty other students at the preparatory seminary<sup>104</sup>. This was because he struggled in his studies. In fact, his academic records show that he had to repeat both his first and fourth years<sup>105</sup>. However, he persevered, and during these years he was privileged to witness one very special occasion. This occurred when the Redemptorist cardinal, Willem van Rossum, came to visit the Roermond seminary in July 1913.

After finally completing his humanities studies in 1919 Stephanus was allowed to enter the novitiate of the Netherlands Redemptorists at 's-Hertogenbosch. His profession of temporary vows was on September 30, 1920. Then he went to join the thirty-three other Redemptorist students at the philosophy-theology seminary at Wittem. Perpetual profession followed in 1922, and ordination to the priesthood came on October 8, 1925.

For a very short time he was stationed in the community of 's-Hertogenbosch but by August 24, 1926, he received his appointment to the mission of Suriname. He had about five weeks to make his preparations and be aboard the steamship *De Prins* on September 30 bound for the tropics. Along with Father Joannes (Hans) Helmer (1898-1981)<sup>106</sup> he arrived in Paramaribo on November 14.

At the beginning of his time in Suriname Father Stephanus Kuijpers worked mostly in the capital city, both in parishes and in the *Groot-Chatillon*, the government center for the care of people with leprosy. Gradually he felt confident enough to move out into the districts of Coppemane, Saramacca, and Boven-Commewijne<sup>107</sup>. The Redemptorists' missionary method at this time, as in the past, was to adapt to the specific people for whom they worked.

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<sup>104</sup> It is interesting to note that during the time Kuijpers spent at Roermond the total enrollment at Roermond was bolstered by the admission of students from Belgium because of the disturbances of World War I.

<sup>105</sup> *Archief Redemptoristen Nederland*, 5391: No. 474-479, *Kroniek van het juvenaat* 5081, 51.

<sup>106</sup> Father Helmer was to serve well in Suriname until 1933. More on him can be found in: *De Volksmissionaris* 48 (1926-1927) 92-95.

<sup>107</sup> Kuijpers provided first-person accounts of his ministry in the remote districts, complete with photographs. These remain interesting and inspiring for one who can read Dutch. See *De Volksmissionaris* 50 (1928-1929) 250-253, 281-285, 317-319.

Succinctly stated, this method was: *to approach each group of people, individually, according to their character and with careful preservation of their good customs and habits*<sup>108</sup>. Pastoral care in Suriname had been thus structured since about the beginning of the twentieth century. It had become the Redemptorist missiological norm for serving the Creoles, Hindustanis, Javanese, Maroons, Indigenous, and Chinese. Stephanus Kuijpers fit into and became part of this tradition.

In 1933 he was named rector and parish priest for the community of St. Rose in Paramaribo. Two bouts of illness required hospital stays during the years 1933 and 1935. He recovered, however, and in 1937 he was assigned as rector and parish priest at the central Redemptorist community at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Paramaribo. In 1938 his brother, Father Adriaan Kuijpers, arrived as a missionary; theirs was a close relationship and they were delighted to be in Suriname together.

During the time of World War II, when it became clear that, due to war conditions, Bishop Roosmalen was restricted to Europe and could not return to Suriname, Stephanus Kuijpers had been appointed, and was serving, as Suriname's provicar. In this capacity he found it necessary in 1942 to terminate his role as rector of the Saints Peter and Paul community and move into Bishop Roosmalen's residence.

Also in 1942, a very interesting and forward-thinking development took place. The four major colonial Christian Churches (namely, the Dutch Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Moravian and Roman Catholic bodies) launched the «Committee of Christian Churches». This was a new ecumenical phenomenon whose main interest was the promotion of Christian ethics and social life.

Bishop Theodorus van Roosmalen finally arrived back in Suriname on January 1, 1946, thus ending the provicar role of Stephanus Kuijpers. However by February 15 Kuijpers received the news that he had been named the vice-provincial of the Redemptorists in Suriname, that is, some forty-two priests and twenty-six professed Brothers. After the resignation of Bishop van Roosmalen, it was expected that Stephanus would be his successor.

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<sup>108</sup> See *De Volksmissionaris* 48 (1926-1927) 336-340, 377-381.

There were other candidates on the lists submitted to Propaganda Fide. However the reasons favoring Kuijpers were his vast pastoral experience in Suriname, his expertise in the mission's languages, and the fact that he was an exemplary religious.

And so it came to be. The official news arrived on March 2, 1946, a telegram sent via the Catholic nunciature in Caracas, Venezuela. Father Kuijpers decided to go to Holland for his ordination as bishop. One of the reasons for this was that he could also visit Rome for an *ad limina* visit, something that had not been done by the vicariate since 1933<sup>109</sup>.

The episcopal ordination of Stephanus Kuijpers took place in the basilica of 's-Hertogenbosch on June 10, 1946<sup>110</sup>. Following his ordination he traveled to the Vatican as planned, and then returned to Suriname on January 7, 1947. At his formal installation in the cathedral of Paramaribo it was an emotional moment when Bishop van Roosmalen passed his bishop's staff over to his successor.

Soon it was necessary to attend to important business matters within the vicariate. He chose as his secretary a degreed canon lawyer and former professor at the Wittem seminary, Father Englebert Eijkemans (1904-1964). He also brought into his office a man skilled in matters of finance, Father Adrianus Verstege (1902-1986). That something of a «new era» had arrived was further indicated when both Eijkemans and Verstege were sent to the United States in early 1948 to engage in fundraising for the Suriname vicariate. Meanwhile, however, the new bishop continued to attend to the established pastoral care, medical facilities, and educational institutions already in place.

One factor which contributed to noticeable growth within the Roman Catholic community was that the Moravian Brethren in Suriname lost their native German missionaries during the Second World War, and very few of these were replaced. After

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<sup>109</sup> Another reason was that he wanted to give van Roosmalen an opportunity to be again acquainted with his beloved flock in Suriname after van Roosmalen's forced absence due to the restrictions brought on by World War II.

<sup>110</sup> Various details of the ordination can be found in: *Katholieke Illustratie*, Dec. 12, 1946; see also *ibid.*, Sept. 20, 1958. This magazine was published in the Netherlands until 1967.

the war Bishop Kuijpers began negotiations to bring the Dutch Oblates of Mary Immaculate to Suriname. His efforts proved successful and the first Oblates arrived in 1949. At the same time the Dutch «Secular Institute» called *The Grail* [in Dutch *De Graal*] agreed to come to work in the vicariate<sup>111</sup>. Their role was to train women in medical work, catechetics, and domestic science. In the 1950s and 1960s a handful of diocesan priests from different parts of the world came to serve in Suriname, sometimes contracting for specified amount of time.

History was made when Paramaribo was raised to the status of a diocese in 1958. This was a major development for the Catholics of Suriname. Moreover, at the same time, in the background there were rumblings of Surinamese civil autonomy, a growing sense of «Suriname as Suriname», rather than «Suriname as a colony of the mother country». No longer were «matters Dutch» looked upon as the measuring stick of excellence. One key sign of this development was eagerness to participate in Surinamese party politics. In fact, with the permission of Bishop Kuijpers, a Redemptorist named Josephus Weidmann<sup>112</sup>, launched a political party in 1946 called *The Progressive Surinamese People's Party*, or «PSV», which at first did enjoy some success. The same Redemptorist, Father Weidmann was also responsible for starting a trade union called *The Progressive Workers Organization*, which, among other things, developed a very solid savings bank<sup>113</sup>.

Bishop Kuijpers went to Rome to attend and participate in Vatican Council II and in the spirit of the Council's emphasis on the role of the laity, there was soon formed in the diocese an Episcopal Consultation Committee. This Committee, in collaboration with the bishop and selected priest representatives, was intended to discuss the best approaches to pastoral development

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<sup>111</sup> Begun in the Netherlands in 1921 by the Jesuit priest, Jacques van Ginneken, they were early-on referred to as «Women of Nazareth». They are dedicated laity and now serve in many countries of the world.

<sup>112</sup> Josephus Weidmann, b. 1899; prof. Sept. 9, 1922; ord. Oct. 8, 1925; to Suriname 1928; d. Sept. 15, 1962. In some records his surname is given alternately as *Weitmann*.

<sup>113</sup> [Otmár BOTTSE], *60 jaar Progressieve Surinaamse Volkspartij*, Progressieve Surinaamse Volkspartij, Paramaribo 2006, passim.

both in Paramaribo and the interior of the country. Almost immediately a major item for discussion was whether the special pastoral attention given to ethnic groupings in the diocese (Hindustani, Javanese, Chinese, etc.) was an obstacle to «nation building». The Committee eventually fell apart over this very issue, but the leaning toward a newer kind of thinking was clear. This «new thinking» was not entirely favored by the Redemptorists who had worked hard to speak the native tongues and to accommodate their efforts to the culture of the special groups.

In 1965 a Diocesan Pastoral Center was established in Paramaribo, the idea of which was to provide a place where many «working groups» could meet in order to discuss, and effectively provide, development within the diocese. But it soon became evident that there was little-to-no expertise in group dynamics. The result was much overlap of ideas, ongoing frustration, and various abortive efforts.

In the meantime the year 1966 ushered in events of a more positive nature, as the Redemptorists observed one hundred years of their presence in Suriname. The occasion was grand, with numerous congratulatory speeches witnessing to the people's affection for and admiration of the missionaries who had served in Suriname. The Redemptorist vice-provincial, Father Jaap Willebrands, and others produced a special commemorative booklet for this anniversary<sup>114</sup>.

Bishop Stephanus Kuijpers offered his resignation from the diocese of Paramaribo to the Vatican in 1969, but he was to stay on as head of the diocese until October 24, 1971<sup>115</sup>. He went for awhile to the Netherlands because of health reasons, but returned in August 1973 to reside in Suriname. He went definitively to the Netherlands in 1977 and lived in Nijmegen. For the rest of

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<sup>114</sup> [Jaap WILLEBRANDS], *Honderd jaar, woord en daad: Gedenkboek bij het eeuwfeest der Redemptoristen in Suriname, 1866 – 26 maart – 1966*, privately published, Paramaribo, 1966. In the rear of this work is a helpful list of the Redemptorists who served during those first 100 years in Suriname, giving the dates/years of their service. As noted elsewhere, Father André Sampers, in Rome, contributed substantially to this published work.

<sup>115</sup> It was also in 1971 that the Vatican honored Bishop Kuijpers as an Assistant Bishop at the Papal Throne. See *Archief Redemptoristen Nederland*, 9088; here can be found also the sermons of Bishop Kuijpers.

his days he was well respected and retained many interests. After a brief illness he died on July 5, 1986, only a few weeks before his eighty-seventh birthday. In his birthplace, Borkel en Schaft, Bishop Stephanus Kuijpers was honored by having a plaza named for him, the «Mgr. St. Kuijpers Plein [Square]».

#### 7. – Aloysius F. Zichem, C.S.S.R., 1971-2003

Aloysius Ferdinand Zichem was born on February 28, 1933, in the capital city of Paramaribo. His father was Henri Lambertus Zichem, a teacher, of Creole heritage. His mother was Rahmina Jane Kromosemito, a Javanese and a convert from the Muslim faith. From this marriage were born two daughters and four sons.

Aloysius received his primary education in Paramaribo, and then for his secondary schooling attended the Paulus School of the Brothers of Tilburg, also in Paramaribo. Later he moved to the Dutch Antilles to the *Hogere Burger School* (HBS)<sup>116</sup>. Then, after being employed briefly by the Surinamese government, he applied for and was accepted in 1953 at the preparatory seminary of the Dutch Redemptorists at Nijmegen in the Netherlands. After one year and a half of further study, he was ready to sit for what were called the *Beta Track* examinations. These included a rigorous testing of one's knowledge of both ancient and modern languages – and mathematics and science. His success in these examinations was an exceptional accomplishment for one enrolled at the Nijmegen preparatory seminary.

On September 7, 1954, Aloysius Zichem entered the Redemptorist novitiate at 's-Hertogenbosch. After the usual one year of novitiate training, he professed temporary vows on September 9, 1955, and then moved to the Wittem seminary for philosophy and theology studies<sup>117</sup>. When it was time for his priesthood ordination, he was allowed to travel home to Paramaribo for the ceremony on August 14, 1960.

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<sup>116</sup> This *Hogere Burger School* was a level below the *gymnasium*. It had an emphasis on the classical languages of Greek and Latin.

<sup>117</sup> The enrollment at Wittem in 1955 was forty-six; by 1960 the enrollment was to decline to thirty-three, an indication of the huge decrease in vocations of the 1960s throughout most of the Roman Catholic Church.

More study lay ahead. For this he returned to Wittem for one year, and then in 1961 he began to study in Rome for a doctoral degree in Canon Law which he completed in 1965. His doctoral dissertation dealt with the duties of a witness in canonical juridic processes<sup>118</sup>. At the beginning of 1966 he was back in Paramaribo. Bishop Kuijpers assigned him to Sacred Heart parish (Combé-Paramaribo) where he remained about two years. In April 1968 he was transferred to Paramaribo's St. Boniface parish. He was also involved in developing catechetical projects and engaged in discussions on how to apply some of the thinking of Vatican Council II to pastoral ministry.

Suddenly on November 4, 1969, came the news that he had been named the bishop to follow Bishop Kuijpers in Paramaribo. His ordination as the first native Surinamese bishop took place at the Cathedral of Paramaribo on February 8, 1970, with Cardinal Alfrink of Utrecht as the principal Consecrator<sup>119</sup>. His chosen motto was *Amore traxit omnia* [«He has drawn all things to Himself by love»]<sup>120</sup>. Within his heraldic design as bishop he included the national flower of Suriname, the *faya lobi* [translated «ardent love»].

When Bishop Kuijpers resigned, he presided at the installation of Aloysius Zichem as the resident bishop of Paramaribo. This change gave impetus to the *Surinamization* of the Roman Catholic Church in Suriname. Bishop Zichem was very aware that he was stepping into a challenging role. It had to do with a growing climate of identity and autonomy, in both civil and church societies. It had to do with a decline in the number of Redemptorist personnel, and in the number of other religious belonging to both men's and women's congregations. It had to do with laity in unfamiliar leadership positions.

Political independence from the Netherlands, the birth of the Republic of Suriname, came on November 25, 1975. It was accomplished with a «Golden Handshake», without violence.

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<sup>118</sup> The dissertation had a Latin title: *De Obligatione Testis in Processu Iuris*.

<sup>119</sup> There was a host of co-consecrator-bishops, most being from the Guianas and from elsewhere around the Antilles.

<sup>120</sup> This seems to be a paraphrasing of John 12:32.

The Committee of Christian Churches<sup>121</sup> (abbreviated to «CCK»), with whom Bishop Zichem was closely affiliated, was generally supportive of independence<sup>122</sup>.

The CCK used the media to issue statements of protest, or simply of commentary, but it did not offer practical guidelines to local church communities. Sometimes the members of the local religious denominations had different political views; they complained that the CCK was one-sided in its statements, and, besides, was out of contact with the rank and file citizens.

After 1975 there was a period of unrest resulting from wealth and resources being controlled by the rich, with poverty on the increase among the majority of people. Periodically the CCK vigorously expressed concern over these inequalities<sup>123</sup>. Then in 1980 came a coup d'état organized by members of the military, dissolving the democratic government. This marked the beginning of a very difficult decade, 1980-1990. The difficulties were political, economic and cultural.

Until 1986 a military dictatorship continued to rule the country. It was a time of brutality and intimidation as the military claimed that their tactics were necessary in order to eliminate poverty and to temper the power of the rich.

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<sup>121</sup> In Dutch, the *Comité Christelijke Kerken*, was initially founded by members from these denominations: Dutch Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Moravian, and Catholic. Later The Salvation Army, and the Anglican and (Dutch) Calvinist Churches also became members. Its statements used key phrases such as: «supporters of independence», «necessary for development», «straightforward in gratitude», «united in service», «trusting in the power of faith», «making history», «trusting the constitution», and «independent but dependent on each other». It also underlined freedom of religion and education as necessary for the republic.

<sup>122</sup> See its statement: *Boodschap van het Comité Christelijke Kerken ter gelegenheid van de onafhankelijkheid van Suriname op 25 november 1975*, Comité Christelijke Kerken [CCK], Paramaribo 1975.

<sup>123</sup> Joop VERNOOIJ, *Lomsu 1975-1985 (de afgelopen tien jaren)*, Paramaribo 1995, passim. See also «Memorandum van het Comité Christelijke inzake het ontwikkelingsproces aan de regering en het parlement van de Republiek Suriname», May 17, 1976, in: *Archief van de Kerken*, Vol. 38 (1983), No. 6, pp. 5-6. See also «Memorandum van het Comité Christelijke Kerken over de ontwikkeling van Suriname», Dec. 12, 1979, in: *ibid.*, Vol. 38 (1983), No. 6, pp. 6-8.



In 1981 the CCK organized large ecumenical meetings which had the theme «To be Christian in a Time of Revolution». Those who participated in these meetings called for a renewal in the religious institutions by implementation of new pastoral approaches<sup>124</sup>. The meetings held some promise of a solid new beginning. But the situation worsened with more violence and «acts of destabilization» against the military.

A bit of respite came to the Roman Catholic community in 1982 with the Beatification of the Redemptorist Father Peter Donders, the apostle of the lepers. The ceremony was held in Rome on May 25, 1982. Bishop Zichem (now over twelve years into his episcopacy) was in attendance, accompanied by a sizeable group of Surinamese.

But in Suriname, later in 1982 the country saw another round of repressive killings by the military, and again the CCK called for a halt to violence and respect for human rights. Finally in 1986 there came a quasi-parliamentary democracy, to be followed by free elections in 1987. Sadly, however, in 1986 Suriname suffered yet another conflict which was termed «The Internal War».

This war was conducted by guerillas–jungle commandos–against the military forces of Suriname. The violence was particularly tragic in Eastern Suriname, between the Commewijne and Marowijne rivers. Church-owned buildings and private homes in Catholic settlements were set afire. The hostilities were so bad that the government sent a ship for the evacuation of inhabitants. Some people sought refuge in neighboring French Guyana. Priests and catechists from the Surinamese side visited the refugee camps, attended to medical needs and tried to restore schooling for the children. During this time Bishop Zichem and the CCK assisted with peace negotiations, once more emphasizing respect for human rights and avoidance of violence.

The launching in 1989 of the Interreligious Council in Suriname (with the acronym «IRIS») was also an initiative of Bish-

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<sup>124</sup> See this statement, in: *ibid.*, pp. 14-17. See also Joop VERNOOLJ, «Kerk en revolutie in Suriname», in: *Wereld en Zending*, Vol. 12 (1993), No. 3, 216-222, as found in Sonny E. HOF, «De Achterkant van kerk en revolutie in Suriname», in: *ibid.*, 223-225.

op Zichem to promote religious dialogue in Suriname. Furthermore, it was intended to encourage general cooperation for the sake of Suriname as it fostered ethical norms and values in party politics. The weak point of this organization was that it was not embraced by all the main religious bodies.

Providentially, during this period time of dreadful disturbances, the Catholic Church's pastoral, catechetical and liturgical activities increased. More than one hundred people (men and women, Maroon and Indigenous) were trained as catechists. Likewise there was special training for others who took leadership roles in their parishes, both in cities and in the interior. The diocese established a «Bureau of New Initiatives» (in Dutch a *Projektenbureau*) in order to coordinate the development of such initiatives in the areas of education, agriculture, and community building. People came together locally and nationally for exchange of ideas, for support and for consolation.

The diocese also stepped up its efforts at *Surinamization* especially by encouraging the use of the *Sranantongo* language. As part of this effort, it published an official version of the Gospel readings in *Sranantongo*<sup>125</sup>. Also, it increased its interaction with other church groups in the Caribbean Region<sup>126</sup>.

Only in 1992 was a peace accord reached. Bishop Zichem played a key role in the negotiations which led to the accord, and other Redemptorists and ministers of other faiths were involved.

During the years of his active episcopacy, Aloysius Zichem, this last of the seven Redemptorist bishops in Suriname, ordained for his diocese seven native Surinamese priests, as well as two Dutch and two Belgian priests. However, he also had to deal with the dramatic decrease in the number of *Dutch missionaries* in Suriname. A clear notion of this decrease can be gained from the figures comparing the years 1966 and 2010 (2010 being the year the last Dutch Redemptorist left Suriname).

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<sup>125</sup> *Leysipisi fu den Sonde nanga den Fesadey*, Paramaribo 1988.

<sup>126</sup> See «Een kerk in dialoog; een bezoek aan de kerkelijke synode in Trinidad», *Omhoog*, Vol. 56 (2009), No. 6, pp. 1-2. Also, «De Antilliaanse bisschoppenconferentie in Grenada; een oproep voor gerechtigheid, liefde, genezing en verzoening», in: *ibid.*, Vol. 57 (2010), No. 17, pp. 1-3.

	1966	2010
Sisters of Tilburg	65	2
Sisters of Roosendaal	67	1 (a Surinamese)
Brothers of Tilburg	36	3
Redemptorist Fathers	40	
Redemptorist Brothers	10	
Oblates of Mary	13	5 <sup>127</sup>

Meanwhile theologians were involved in the development of an ecumenical Surinamese theology aimed at a full dialogue by the various religious expressions. Regular meetings were held with Hindus and Muslims. The Afro-Surinamese religion called *Winti*, the religious heritage of the Hindustanis (*Interjaal*) and of the Javanese (*Kejawen*) became the topic of organized ecumenical research and discussion, avoiding prejudicial terminology such as «heathendom» and «superstition».

On December 31, 2002, Bishop Aloysius Zichem suffered a severe stroke which affected his speaking, writing and walking. He traveled for recovery to the Netherlands, but to no avail. He submitted his resignation in August 2003, but served until November 2004.

In 2005 the secretary to Bishop Zichem, Paul Tjon Kiem Sang, gathered into a single volume selected letters of the Committee of Christian Churches, and selected letters which the bishop wrote as Lenten messages. These were published under the title of *De beminde kinderen van een Vader zijn wij*<sup>128</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> The current (2011) statistics for priests and religious in the diocese of Paramaribo are not more hopeful. Six Redemptorists remain in the diocese: Bishop Zichem (who is very ill), Father Lachnipersad Hendrik Moesai, and Father Waldi Wong Loi Sing, along with three of their priest-confreres who have come over from Brazil. (There is hope of more Brazilians in the future). – As for the Sisters of Paramaribo (Daughters of the Immaculate Conception), their total number has decreased to six. Beginning in 2012 the last of the Brothers of Tilburg will leave Suriname. However an Argentinian group of Sisters, the Congregation of Anima Christi, have begun in Paramaribo with a community of three.

<sup>128</sup> In English the meaning is «We are the Beloved Children of One Father». There were many other letters by Zichem which are not included in this volume. Noted Surinamese scholar Hein Eersel, in analyzing these letters divided them into four periods: Preparation for Independence, First Years of the

To this day, but in failing health, Bishop Zichem lives in Paramaribo in quarters provided by the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception, the Congregation of native Surinamese women religious founded by Bishop van Roosmalen<sup>129</sup>.

### *Conclusion*

Finally we offer some general reflections about these seven Redemptorist bishops who served as leaders of the Catholic Church in Suriname—and about the Suriname Mission which they served.

Three of these bishops (Swinkels, Meeuwissen and van Roosmalen), did not have any previous experience of the Suriname mission prior to their being named as leaders of this mission. Two of them (Schaap and Wulfingh) had been in Suriname only a year before before being so named<sup>130</sup>. Not being properly prepared for such a role was an enormous disadvantage.

But all seven were dedicated men, and they received generous support from the seasoned Redemptorist Dutch missionaries, as well as from the other native Dutch men and women who served the Catholic Church in Suriname. These seven also proved to be faithful to Rome and to their own Redemptorist heritage.

One may truly believe that those who came from outside of Suriname left their imprint on the Church in Suriname. One may also regret that, almost exclusively, only Dutch missionaries ministered in the Dutch colony.

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Republic, Years of Military Dictatorship; and Restoration of Democracy. Peter Sjakshie added an essay on the spirituality of Bishop Zichem; he concluded Zichem: was a man of grounded spirituality, an encouraging spirit, a long-suffering spirit, a trustful personality, one who possessed major virtues, with a deep prayer life, and a true disciple of Christ.

<sup>129</sup> Bishop Aloysius Zichem's successor, Bishop Wilhelmus Adrianus de Bekker was appointed to the See of Paramaribo on Nov. 12, 2004, and was ordained Bishop of that See on January 30, 2005.

<sup>130</sup> Schaap became leader of the Suriname mission as provicar just one year after his arrival; this was due to Swinkels' illness and subsequent death. As we have seen, it was some five years, in 1880, before Schaap came into «full-power» leadership as vicar apostolic and bishop.

The isolation of the country from the neighboring areas of Portuguese-speaking Brazil, English-speaking Guyana, and French-speaking *Guyane* meant that these bishops had to discover their own methods of administering and leading the pastoral work. They were successful in institutionalizing Suriname's Catholic schools, boarding schools, hospitals, orphanages, clinics and leprosaria—both in Paramaribo and the interior districts. They provided employment projects and programs for youth. So the social relevance of the Catholic Church was eminently clear and was well appreciated by both the government and the communities which benefitted from these facilities. The Catholic Church had a leading role in recognizing the value of «Unity amid Diversity», as the country grew in a sense of *Surinamization*, independence as a nation, and the workings of internal democracy.

The concept as the Catholic Church as the only true Christian church was not an ideal starting point. The Catholic Church in Suriname learned to value other religions and cultures, and it was directly involved in promoting ecumenism and dialogue.

The theological constructs of church and mission underwent a change as literature from outside became available, as the impact of the Second Vatican Council was implemented, and theologies from other continents were carefully studied.

Bishop Zichem is remembered as having said that Surinamese Catholics were «spoiled» by the generosity of Dutch missionaries. To a degree this led to the start of a campaign promoting financial stewardship in the Paramaribo diocese.

The vicariate, and later, the diocese, have been subsidized in part by the Surinamese government; yet it remains poor and is dependent upon donations and gifts from outside, especially from the Netherlands. Many members of the Catholic community, even the majority, remain poor. It is generally difficult to raise funds or establish foundations. (Perhaps the reorganization of what possessions are held by the diocese, such as land holdings in various parts of Suriname, may bring some relief in the future).

The concept of Christian stewardship which has been introduced in the diocese can be viewed as one facet of *Surinamization*. Other facets may well include development of native priest-vocations, the training and ordination of native deacons,

and further training and utilization of catechists in the interior villages.

The challenge of Suriname as a multicultural, multireligious, and multiethnic society is unique. Other dioceses can learn from the methods of pastoral work in Suriname. All religions are minority groups, busy with the dynamics of identity. Significantly inspirational are the words of the Surinamese coat-of-arms: *Justitia, Pietas, Fides*, [«Justice, Loyalty, Faith»], as well as the following words in the Surinamese national anthem: *Recht en waarheit maken vrij al wat goed is te betrachten* [«Justice and truth will set free all that is worth our labor»].

Reviewing the era of the seven Redemptorist bishops of Suriname, and the days when large numbers of Redemptorists served in this mission, we can believe there are two intriguing questions which arise: What did the Redemptorists learn from the Suriname mission? What did the Dutch province of the Redemptorists learn from the Surinamese mission? These two questions represent something of a «Reversal of Mission» – as from Suriname one looks back upon the current needs of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands and in Europe.

#### SUMMARY

Between 1866 and 2003 seven Redemptorists served—one after another—as bishops in tropical Suriname in the northeast region of South America. Six were from the Netherlands; the seventh was a native Surinamese. The author of this article, Father Joop Vernooij, a Dutch Redemptorist and a missionary in Suriname for thirty-two years, provides insights into the early lives of these seven bishops. Then he moves to the challenges facing each of these men in the Suriname period of their lives. As bishops, together with their faithful people, they faced the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual issues of Indigenous Creoles, Javanese, Chinese, Hindustani—and Dutch nationals. They dealt with widespread poverty, the Great Depression, waves of immigration, isolation factors brought on by two World Wars, and a civil war. They witnessed a growing sense of *Surinamization*, as the colony moved toward being the Republic of Suriname. One is left with the impression that these seven Redemptorists “lived and developed” missiology both before and after missiology was developed.

RÉSUMÉ

Entre 1866 et 2003, sept Rédemptoristes se sont succédé comme évêque au Suriname dans la région Nord-Est de l'Amérique du Sud. Six venaient des Pays-Bas, le septième était un surinamais de souche. L'auteur de cet article, Joop Vernooij, rédemptoriste hollandais missionnaire au Surinam pendant trente-deux ans, nous décrit leur vie en ces temps lointains. Il développe également les défis auxquels ils ont été confrontés durant leur séjour là-bas. Ensemble avec leurs fidèles, ils ont dû affronter les problèmes multi-ethniques, religieux, linguistiques des Créoles, Javanais, Chinois, Hindustanis, sans oublier des colons hollandais eux-mêmes. Ils ont connu la pauvreté généralisée, la Grande Dépression, les vagues d'immigration, les problèmes d'isolement amenés par les deux Guerres Mondiales, et même une guerre civile. Ils furent témoins du phénomène croissant de la *Surinamisation*, lorsque la Colonie s'acheminait vers la création d'une République. On a l'impression que ces sept évêques rédemptoristes «ont vécu et développé» la missiologie avant et après que la missiologie ne se soit développée.