

SPICILEGIUM HISTORICUM CONGREGATIONIS SSMI REDEMPTORIS

Annus LVII

2009 Fasc. 2

STUDIA

SHCSR 57 (2009) 209-272

JOOP VERNOOLJ, C.SS.R.

REDEMPTORISTS IN SURINAME

1866 – 1992

IN HONOR OF THE BICENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF
BLESSED PETER DONDEERS, C.SS.R. (1809-1887)

Introduction; 1. – Some basic statistics of the Redemptorists in Suriname; 2. – The Early Suriname Mission and its Transfer to the Redemptorists; 3. – Toward an Understanding of Surinamese Society; 4. – Aptitude and Attitude of Redemptorists who served in Suriname; 5. – Sranantongo – and other Languages; 6. – Development on Different Fronts; 7. – Unstable Leadership Structure – From the Beginning; 8. – Relationship to Protestant Believers; 9. – Marking Seventy-Five Years of Redemptorist Service in Suriname; 10. – Further Confusion and Pain over administrative Matters; 11. – Canonical Visitations through the Years; 12. – The Influence of Vice-Province Chapters; 14. – The final Days of the Vice-Province of Suriname; 15. – An Evaluation of the Redemptorist Mission in Suriname, 1866-1992; Postscript

Introduction

On November 12, 1865, word came from the captain of the sailing ship *De Jonge Eduard* that its departure was set for the next day. The four Redemptorists who had booked passage on the vessel were to hurry with all of their luggage from the Redemptorist residence in Amsterdam to the town of Den Helder, near the harbor called Nieuw-Diep. They had been appointed to be the founding group of the new Redemptorist mission in Suriname, located on the northeastern shoulder of South America.

Hurry they did, only to have a three month wait! For the winds had failed and would not return with enough force to sail out of the harbor until the following February 20, 1866¹.

They lodged on board the *De Jonge Eduard*, and waited. Sometimes they celebrated Mass in their cabin, and sometimes in the neighboring village of Schagen. It seems the foursome remained in good enough humor as frequently friends and colleagues came to pay them «one more visit». Finally, the winds were favorable, the ship weighed anchor, and they had a smooth journey of five weeks into the port of Paramaribo, Suriname, arriving on March 26, 1866².

These four pioneer Redemptorists were Bishop Jan (Joannes Baptist) Swinkels³, professed Brother Lambert Swinkels (the bishop's brother)⁴, along with Fathers Jan van der Aa⁵, and Jan

¹ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland (St. Agatha Cuyk), 8972. *Chronica*, fol. 263-395: *Het Apostolisch Vicariaat van Suriname onder de zorg van de Congregatie des Allerheiligsten Verlossers. Bestuur van Mgr. JB. Swinkels, eersten kerkvoogd van Suriname uit de Congregatie des H. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori en tweeden Apostolische Vicaris sedert het in 1853 opgericht Vicariaat* (fol. 263-333). Fol. 263 concerning the waiting time of sixty-nine days.

² *Ibid.* *Kroniek der R.P. Redemptoristen, aanvangende in December 1865 tot 13 October 1866.* 4433.

³ Jan (Joannes Baptist) SWINKELS, b. April 14, 1910; ordained priest September 20, 1834. Having entered St. Trond Redemptorist novitiate, was professed March 25, 1845. Was first provincial of Netherlands-England province, 1855-1865. Ordained bishop and made Vicar Apostolic of Suriname October 15, 1865, d. Paramaribo September 11, 1875. Very useful concerning personal data are: *Klein Memoriaal van de regio Nederland van de Provincie St. Clemens* [Small Memorial of the Netherlands Region of the Province of St. Clement], (Roosendaal 2006), and *Oversten en Officiales en het lot van instellingen en huizen van de Nederlandse Provincie CSsR* [Superiors and Officials, along with the History of Institutions and Houses of the Dutch Province CSsR], (Roosendaal, May 2006).

⁴ Lambert SWINKELS, b. November 27, 1816; professed April 15, 1852; he died August 6, 1866, just four and one-half months after arrival in Suriname, not quite fifty years old. He had a heavy attack of fever on August 2 (Feast of St. Alphonsus), received the sacrament of the sick, dying on the morning of August 6. His burial in Paramaribo was in the afternoon of the same day. The next day, his brother, Bishop Swinkels had a yellow fever attack, but recovered. *Memorial van de Nederlandse Provincie*, Wittem 1961, 64.

⁵ Jan VAN DER AA, b. August 13, 1822; professed October 10, 1845; ordained August 22, 1849; d. July 15, 1872.

van Rooij⁶. They were the first of two-hundred and twenty Redemptorists missionaries who were destined to serve the Dutch colony on the Caribbean from 1866 until 1992. This article hopes to serve as a tribute to these missionaries who were mainly responsible for moving the small Roman Catholic mission forward to its becoming today's diocese of Paramaribo.

The article also hopes to describe in some detail the difficult Redemptorist missionary life in Suriname through a century and a quarter. During this span of years, the context of this missionary experience underwent vast social, political and ecclesial changes, requiring ongoing adjustment in order to meet new challenges. To be true to their calling as servants of the gospel of Christ, these sons of St. Alphonsus had to undergo many transformations, as individuals, as members of a religious congregation, and as part of the Catholic Church at large.

Prior to the foundation in Suriname the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, or Redemptorists, had little experience of ministry outside of Europe. They had established only two successful «foreign missions», one in the United States begun in 1832, and another in the Virgin Islands, West Indies, begun in 1858. Attempts in Chile and Colombia in the 1850s and 1860s were short-lived, then abandoned. So there was little precedent, and no sense of how to prepare these first Redemptorists being sent to Suriname. Furthermore, Suriname called for the establishment and care of parishes; this ministry was actually forbidden at that time by the Redemptorist Rule⁷.

For thirty-two years, 1969-2001, the author of this present article was himself a missionary in Suriname. In that time he had the opportunity to listen and learn the spirit and tradition of the men who went before him. Subsequently he also consulted various archival sources⁸: in the diocese of Paramaribo, in the

⁶ Jan VAN ROOIJ, b. August 17, 1830; professed May 24, 1854; ordained September 7, 1859; d. November 6, 1871.

⁷ *Regels en Constitutien van de Congregatie der Allerheiligsten Verlossers*. Eerste en Tweede Deel. Uit het Italiaans en Latijn, 's-Hertogenbosch, Lutkie en Cranenburg, 1868, 87, pgh. III. Hereinafter: *Regels en Constitutien*, 1868

⁸ These archival, and other, sources will be individually and specifically named throughout the article in its footnotes.

General Archives of the Redemptorists in Rome, in the archives of the Netherlands Redemptorist province which sponsored the Suriname Mission⁹, as well in the archives of other religious groups who have worked, and are still working in Suriname.

Of no small importance were the newspaper sources¹⁰ which the author relied on, all in Suriname, and periodicals¹¹ published «back home» in the Netherlands. Other rich sources have been the various anniversary booklets published every twenty-five years when the Redemptorists observed jubilees of their Suriname service¹².

1. – *Some basic statistics of the Redemptorists in Suriname*

The following chart, provided here in four time segments up to World War II, gives an overview of the numbers of our missionaries who served the church of Suriname.

⁹ In St. Agatha Cuyk, in the neighborhood of Nijmegen, is the KAN (Klooster Archieven Nederland). It is located in an old Monastery of the Order of the Holy Cross, and is now the center of the archives of congregations and orders of the Netherlands. The archives of the Redemptorists of Suriname are also there.

¹⁰ Notably, *De Surinamer* (1891-1955), *De Katholieke Waarschuwer* (*The Catholic Monitor*) (1891-1934); *De Katholiek* (1934-1955); *Omhoog* (*Upwards*) (1955 to present); *Kontaktblad Bisdom Paramaribo* (*Diocesan Information Sheet*) (1971-1988).

¹¹ The author would also like to acknowledge the availability of a number of volumes authored by Redemptorists who served in Suriname. Some of them wrote novels, while others produced research reports and dissertations. Additionally, there are biographies of some Redemptorist colleagues: Rosemarijn HOEFTE – Clazien MEDENDORP, *Arnold Borret: Suriname Gezichten, typen en kostuumen*, KITLV Uitgeverij, Leiden 2003; The life of Felix Lemmens, Raymond LAMPE, *Ik werd militair*, Breda 1947; the life of Bishop Willem Wulfingh, L. HAGEN, *Levensschets van Z.D.H.Mgr. W.A.F. Wulfingh, titulair-bisschop van Cambysopolis en apostolisch vicaris van Suriname*, Roermond 1906; and the life of Brother Anselmus Bonten, Jan PETERS, *Broeder Anselmus (Carel Bonten)*, in *Ter Informatie*, no. 66, Augustus, 1996, 26-32.

¹² These periodicals, for the most part, were sponsored by organizations which supported the Suriname Mission: *De Volksmissionaris* (1891-1951); *Katholiek Leven* (*Catholic Life*) (1952-1964); *Petrus Donders/Hofbauer Liefedewerk* (1920-1924); *Petrus Donders Tijdschrift* [*Peter Donders Journal*] (1924-1950); *St. Clemensbode* [*St. Clement's Messenger*] (1945-1967); *Open Venster* [*The Open Window*] (1962-1966); *Ter Informatie* (1978-2002). All contained narratives touching on the lives of the missionaries and the people they served.

	Total	Fathers	Brothers
From 1866 until 1881:	39	26	13
From 1881 until 1906:	44	30	14
From 1906 until 1931:	53	34	19
From 1931 until 1940:	32	19	13

Prior to the Second World War, that is, from 1866 until 1940, the mission of Suriname saw a total of 168 Redemptorists in service to the people: 109 priests, and 59 brothers (as compared with only 52 who served after the Second World War). These figures include the several Surinamese who joined the Redemptorist Congregation.

The average age of the 157 «pre-World War II arrivals» who came from the Netherlands, was 31.8 years, and they served an average of 25.5 years in the mission. One-hundred and twenty of them came from just three provinces in the homeland, Brabant, North Holland, and Limburg. The other seven provinces provided only thirty-seven priests and brothers.

World War II did have its sharp effect on the numbers, due to restricted travel and other hardships. Yet, the total of Redemptorists serving simultaneously in Suriname reached an all-time peak briefly after the war in 1947, sixty-eight in all: forty-two fathers, and twenty-six brothers. By 1988, that total had declined to twenty-eight, eighteen fathers, and ten brothers. When the Redemptorists discontinued their official corporate presence in Suriname in 1992, the total number of Redemptorists was only ten.

These diminishing numbers in the later decades of the twentieth century were a reflection of the same kind of decrease among the Redemptorists in the Netherlands, which is attributed to secularization and declericalization of society there.

It is of significance that when the Redemptorists first came to Suriname in 1866, there were five priests, all from *diocesan* backgrounds in the Netherlands, who were already serving the colony. Two of them, Blessed Peter (in Dutch, *Peerke*) Donders (1809-1887) and Jan Romme (1832-1889), joined the Redemptorist Congregation in 1867¹³.

¹³ Throughout this article we will use the name Peter, by which he is known to English speakers. – Other than Donders and Romme, there were Ar-

Moreover, Arnold Borret, an attorney and once a member of the Colonial Legislative Council of Suriname, became a Redemptorist in Suriname in 1883, having done his theological studies in Paramaribo. Another man, Henri Rikken, born in Paramaribo in 1863, entered the Redemptorist formation program in the Netherlands. He was professed in 1886 and ordained in 1891; he returned to Suriname, but died when only forty-five years old in 1908¹⁴.

Two Surinamese, Edgar Allamake (b. 1936) and Hendrik Biswane (b. 1926) became brothers, having had their one-year novitiate and then profession of vows in the Netherlands, but they both left the Redemptorists after just several years in the Suriname mission.

In 1872 the novice Brother Mattheus Burgers (b. 1848 in Beverwijk) came to Suriname, and beginning in 1873 he was sent to Batavia to teach the leper schoolchildren. This venture was not a success. Bishop Swinkels concluded that Burgers did not have a religious vocation, and sent him back to the Netherlands. Burgers then left the Redemptorists in October 1873¹⁵.

In 1886 two other Redemptorists of Surinamese origin, Nellius Tyndall¹⁶ and Adriaan Mertens¹⁷, made their novitiate and

nold Swinkels (b. 1824), Piet Masker (b. 1824), and Theo Kempkes (b. 1808). Until 1864 another priest, Stephan A. Meurkens had served briefly as Pro-vicar Apostolic; however in 1864 he had to return to the Netherlands on sick leave. While there he gave his report as Pro-vicar and expected to be ordained bishop and be named Vicar Apostolic. Instead he was disappointed in this hope when Jan Swinkels filled these positions, and Meurkens never did return to Suriname. Jan Swinkels reportedly encouraged him not to return because a peaceful cooperation with him seemed impossible. See André SAMPERS, *The Transfer of the Catholic Mission of Surinam*, in *Studia Dondersiana. Beato Petro Donders CSSR, leprosum apostolo, in solemn beatificatione obsequii fratrum munus* (Bibliotheca Historica CSSR, 11), Romae 1982, 107, 128.

¹⁴ Before his death, Father Rikken published two important historical novels, both dealing with the times and conditions of slavery. They were *Codjo de Brandstichter* (*The Fire Raiser*), and *Ma Kankantrie*.

¹⁵ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 8972, *Chronica Missionis Surinamensis* I, fol. 282; 332-333. Cfr P. Donders mentioned him in his letter of 14-11-1873 in *Studia Dondersiana*, 204. A. Bossers did not mention him in his history, *Beknopte Geschiedenis der R. K. Missie*, Gulpen 1884.

¹⁶ Nellius TYNDALL was born in Paramaribo, 1881, professed September 29, 1886, ordained October 7, 1891, died in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1933.

profession and studied philosophy and theology at Wittem, but they were assigned to the mission in Brazil. Born in Suriname, Francis Moorrees entered the novitiate in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1885 and was professed in 1886, but died as a student in Wittem in 1888.

Still living (in 2008) are the native Surinamese Redemptorists, His Excellency Bishop Aloysius Zichem (b. 1933)¹⁷, Luchmipersad Harry Moesai (b. 1926), and Waldy Wong Loi Sing (b. 1936).

Brother Ferdinand van den Berg (b. 1884) came to Suriname in 1908. He died there in 1970, having the honor of holding the Redemptorist record for longest continuous service, sixty-two years. The record for the second-longest service was Father Henri Ruijter (b. 1876). He came in 1906 and died in 1966, completing a sixty-year stay.

We note that in the year 1895, seven fathers and four brothers (who had been trained in both Suriname and the Netherlands) were engaged as school teachers. Teaching was key strategy in this mission, although at the time there were certain restrictions in the Redemptorist Rule about serving as teachers.

Nor can we overlook the fact that by the early part of the twentieth century there were other dedicated religious, both women and men, who had come to work alongside the Redemptorists in Suriname. The 1914 statistics show that there were forty-nine Redemptorists, but also seventeen Brothers of the Congrega-

¹⁷ Adrianus MERTENS, b. Paramaribo, July 2, 1866, professed September 29, 1886, ordained October 7, 1891; was professor of S. Scripture at Wittem 1892-1906; published articles in *Nederlandsche Katholieke Stemmen*, 1902-1903, and 1930-1931, also in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, 1897-1898; authored *De Hiërarchie in de eerste eeuw des Christendoms (The Hierarchy in the First Century of Christianity)*, Amsterdam 1908; died Congonhas (Minas Gerais, Brazil), January 4, 1952.

¹⁸ Most Rev. Aloysius ZICHEM, b. Paramaribo, February 28, 1933; professed 's-Hertogenbosch, September 8, 1955; ordained priest, Paramaribo, August 14, 1960; 1965 dissertation (St. Thomas, Rom) on the Obligation of the witness in a Church juridical process, ordained bishop for the diocese of Paramaribo, February 8, 1970; succeeded to see of Paramaribo, August 30, 1971. He resigned, after a stroke, in 2003. Cfr *Analecta* 37/5-6 (1965) 288.

tion of Our Lady of Mercy from Tilburg, eighty-one Third Order Sisters of St. Francis of Roosendaal (since 1856 in Suriname), and thirty-three Sisters of Charity of Tilburg. We know that there were also devoted laity who were teachers and nurses, but we do not have exact statistics for them.

This same year of 1914 counted Redemptorist ministry taking place in forty-nine churches and chapels-while periodic visits were made to 103 other more remote locations, of which nineteen served Indigenous, and twenty-six served Maroons¹⁹.

The statistics of 1914 also show that the Redemptorists served some 21.500 Catholics, there being 1.320 baptisms that year, while the schools for which the Redemptorists were responsible counted 4.435 pupils.

2. – *The Early Suriname Mission and its Transfer to the Redemptorists*

Suriname, which has no beaches but only mud along its coasts, is part of the humid rain forest of the Amazon basin. This disease-prone territory²⁰, with its numerous waterways, was conquered by the Dutch in 1667, after a colonial period of the English from 1650-1667. The Dutch installed a colonial government administration in 1683.

Because of the climate (with two rainy seasons every year, each lasting about three months) the Dutch could cultivate ideal plantations for lush crops of sugar, cotton, and tobacco. But the plantations needed workers, and slave labor was the answer. They gathered and imported numerous slaves from West Africa, while capturing others among the Indigenous people of Suriname's interior.

¹⁹ Maroons were, generally speaking, people of African origin who had escaped from their condition as plantation slaves, and now lived in the interior of various Caribbean regions. They spoke a variety of languages, often mixed with whatever European tongue was dominant in a given area. – The statistics given here are taken from Alphons VERHEGGEN, Feestnummer *De Volksmissionaris* bij gelegenheid van het 200 jarig bestaan der congregatie van den Allerheiligsten Verlosser 1732, 9 Nov., 1932 (Roermond 1932) 51-54.

²⁰ Some of the common diseases were/are malaria, filaria, elephantiasis, and bilharzia, as well as tropical fevers and dysentery.

The ruling Dutch were Calvinists, and severely anti-papist. Catholics were forbidden to have any public function in the colony. Nevertheless, the first Governor Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck brought with him two Franciscan priests from the southern Netherlands. They arrived in November 1683, but both died after a short time. Two other Franciscan priests and one brother then followed; but the priests soon died and the brother returned to the homeland. Virtually no institutional Catholicism existed in the colony for the next century.

From 1786 until 1793 the Dutch government permitted a church and parish for Roman Catholics but under strict conditions. Then in 1817 some priests attached to dioceses in the Netherlands began working in the colony under a Prefect Apostolic named Paulus Wennekers. This was a first step toward a lasting establishment of Catholicism in Suriname, but the priests had to endure obvious discrimination by government authorities. Furthermore, they were forbidden to accept any slave convert to Catholicism.

Still, these diocesan priests are due considerable praise. They learned the *lingua franca* of the enslaved, called *Sranan-tongo*, translated parts of Sacred Scripture and composed prayer books in that language. They started a special outreach ministry to the people in the government leper colony in Batavia, far into the interior²¹.

Meanwhile, in Europe, and specifically in the Netherlands, the number of Redemptorists was increasing, a fact which did not escape the notice of Catholic Church authorities. Beginning in 1846 and continuing until 1865, attempts were made to have Dutch Redemptorists take charge of various distant mission fields (including the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, the Dutch Antilles, and Suriname). But these attempts yielded no positive result.

²¹ Preceding any Redemptorist contact with the Batavia lepers, among them was a priest named Jacobus GROOFF. His life was admirable. He was known as «The Apostle of the Lepers» in Batavia. Later, in 1842, he was named Bishop of Canea (*in partibus infidelium*) and Vicar Apostolic of Batavia in East-India, also a Dutch colony on the other side of the world (now known as Jakarta, Indonesia). But by order of the Dutch Governor General he was expelled from there in 1846, returning to Suriname in 1847 as Visitator Apostolic, dying in Paramaribo April 29, 1852.

Only in 1865 was an agreement reached which entrusted the mission of Suriname to the Redemptorists. Before the agreement came about, much discussion of complicated factors took place-as we will now see.

Prior to the coming of the Redemptorists, the Vicar Apostolic of Suriname was Bishop Gerard Schepers²². His death took place November 27, 1863. Before a replacement could be named, it was admitted that it was hard to recruit diocesan priests to serve in the Dutch colony. This scarcity of priests in Suriname resulted in the faithful being cared for only in periodic, haphazard fashion. In view of these hard facts, after Bishop Schepers' death, alternate proposals reached the desk of the papal Internuncio in The Hague. The first was possibly to consider Suriname as part of some Dutch diocese; the other proposal was *to contract with a religious congregation to take on the responsibility of the entire Suriname mission*.

The Internuncio at The Hague, Bishop Luigi Oreglia, sent these proposals to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome, along with some possible candidates to succeed the deceased Vicar Apostolic Schepers. But Roman authorities took their time reaching any decisions, and meanwhile sought further information.

Eventually, the Internuncio Oreglia added his own opinion that it would be extremely difficult to get any Netherlands bishop to assume «such a burden»²³. By September 1864, the Internuncio Oreglia was convinced that the Dutch Redemptorists ought to be the ones entrusted with the mission of Suriname. Contact was made with Nicholas Mauron, their Superior General in Rome. Additional consultation was held with Cardinal Alesandro Barnabò of the Vatican Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Jan Swinkels was then provincial of the Redemptorists in the Neth-

²² Gerard SCHEPERS, b. August 18, 1879; ordained priest April 20, 1829; after twenty years a missionary, on September 7, 1852, named Vicar Apostolic of Suriname; September 7, 1853, ordained a bishop by Archbishop of Utrecht; was later Prefect Apostolic and Pro-Vicar of Suriname; died November 27, 1863. Cfr R. RITZLER - P. SEFRIN, *Hierarchia catholica*, VIII, Patavii 1978, 378.

²³ This abbreviated version of events is much more amply supplied in the article of SAMPERS, *The Transfer of the Catholic Mission in Surinam to the Dutch Redemptorists 1864-1865*, *Studia Dondersiana*, 104-128.

erlands, and he was enthusiastic about the possibility of the Suriname mission. Soon Swinkels was on his way to Rome, hoping to sway the mind of Superior General Mauron toward a favorable decision.

Later Cardinal Barnabò referred to the long «twenty months of informing-proposing-negotiating-awaiting» which was aimed at assuring the stable future of the Church of Suriname²⁴. Finally, however, on August 31, 1865, Propaganda Fide published the decree declaring that the Dutch Redemptorists now held responsibility for the mission. Moreover on September 12, 1865, came another decree naming Jan Swinkels, who had continued as Dutch provincial until June 2, 1865, as the first Redemptorist Vicar Apostolic for Suriname. Swinkels was ordained a bishop on October 15, 1865, in the city of 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

Propaganda assigned the mission of Suriname to the Redemptorists *ius commissionis*. This, according to the church custom of the time, meant that a mission field was given over to a single religious order or congregation, whose responsibility it was to evangelize this country or territory. The *ius commissionis* also gave the right to the religious body to recommend one of its members as Prefect- or Vicar Apostolic²⁵.

As we have already seen, Bishop Jan Swinkels (and his companions) were set to depart from the Netherlands on November 13, 1865, en route to their new mission. But as the winds failed, their sailing vessel was delayed three months, until February 1866, and their arrival in Suriname was not until March 26 of that year.

What can be said of the state of the Catholic Church in Suriname in 1866? With only some exact figures available, we must often rely on estimates provided by those who have studied this question. Also, when no figures are to be had for a given year, we can derive some idea from nearby years.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Barnabò is quoted on p. 126. The decrees are cited on p. 124.

²⁵ After Vatican Council II there was a change of thought: that a mission field could be entrusted to a *diversification* of missionary agents *who were considered unified by the central figure of the bishop* (or by the main ecclesiastical figure of the territory).

The estimated total number of Catholics in 1866 was slightly more than 12.000²⁶. This was out of a total population of about 50.000 in Suriname²⁷. The number of Roman Catholic baptisms in 1863 was a total of 175 children, and eighty-three adults²⁸.

In the city of Paramaribo in 1863 there was a total population of 19.350. Among these were the recently freed slaves (set free that very year of 1863). Of these «new free people» twenty-six percent were Roman Catholic (as compared with Moravians at forty-five percent, and non-Christians, twenty-four percent)²⁹.

As for schooling, in 1862 Paramaribo had twenty schools with about 1.800 pupils and twenty-nine qualified teachers. The Catholic Church was proud of the fact that the Franciscan Recollect Sisters had come out to Suriname in 1856 to be both teachers and caretakers of orphans. But, sadly, at the time of the Redemptorists' arrival there were no schools whatever away from the coast in the districts and the interior. On another sad note, official 1861 figures show that only four percent of the national budget was allotted for education³⁰.

When the Redemptorists came in 1866 the principal church of the Roman Catholic mission in Suriname was Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Paramaribo. Since the mid-nineteenth century there had been churches at the leprosarium at Batavia and in the district of Coronie³¹. Dating from 1859 another church had ex-

²⁶ See André SAMPERS, *Honderd Jaar Woord en daad. Gedenkboek bij het eeuwfeest der Redemptoristen in Suriname 1866-26 maart-1966* [A Hundred Years of Word and Action. Memorial for the Centenary of the Redemptorists in Suriname], Paramaribo 1966, 10. The estimated figure given by Sampers is 12.000 but in the year 1864, some two years prior to the Redemptorist arrival.

²⁷ *Bijlagen*, Den Haag 1865-1866, 1167; 1176-1177; 1863 figures.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Okke TEN HOVE – Wim HOOGBERGEN – Heinrich HELSTONE, *Surinaamse Emancipatie 1863 Paramaribo: Slaven en Eigenaren* [Enslaved and Owners], Amsterdam 2004. Bronnen voor de Studie van Suriname, Deel 25, 54-55.

³⁰ Alex van STIPRIAAN, *Between State and Society, Education in Suriname, 1850-1950*, in Nico RANDERAAD, ed., *Mediators Between State and Society*, Hilversum 1998, 77. This author also gives comparative figures for the years 1900 and 1940 which show great progress through the years.

³¹ Gerard van KEMPEN, O.M.I., *R.K. Gemeente Coronie 1842-1892*, Mary's Hope (Coronie) 1992.

isted in Paramaribo, the Church of St. Rose de Lima. There was also a temporary church erected in the district of Nickerie³².

3. – *Toward an Understanding of Surinamese Society*

We now offer some understanding of Suriname and its society as encountered and embraced by the Redemptorists missionaries.

It must be remembered that Suriname was not attractive to the European powers of the nineteenth century. The explanation of this fact was its surface features of jungle rainforest, inaccessible swampland, and muddy coastline.

Then around about 1650 it was these English who first saw the possibility of plantations, and proceeded simply to take over some of this territory with no resistance on the part of the native Carib (Kaliña) and Arowak (Lokonon) peoples. They were also the first to use slave labor on the plantations. Some twenty-six years after the English had come, in 1667, Suriname was conquered by seamen of the southwest Netherlands province of Zeeland.

But administration of the colony proved to be a perilous venture, with many uprisings. In 1683 the city of Amsterdam (with a cluster of colonial entrepreneurs), the West Indian Company (active in the region since 1621), along with the wealthy family Van Aersen van Sommelsdijck from Zeeland joined forces to form the *Geoctroyeerde Societeit*. This was a juridical body approved by the Dutch government to serve as the administrative body of the colony.

Many Sephardic Jews, after being expelled from Brazil, came to make money in the sugar plantation economy. There were 178 plantations in operation in 1667. Eventually in the eighteenth century this number grew to about 500. Then a decline set in so that by 1840 there were some 380, and by 1862, 216.

As for slavery, the colonial powers moved very slowly toward abolition of this appalling institution. (England began in 1834, and the French in 1848). In Suriname abolition did not

³² Bertus ROEST – Joop VERNOOL, R.K. *Gemeente Nickerie 100 jaar*, Nieuw Nickerie 1991.

come until July 1, 1863. However, attached to abolition in the Dutch colony was a mandatory ten years of paid apprenticeship, so that a person's freedom was not complete until 1873. Some 34.400 people were declared free in 1863, among whom were 1140 Roman Catholics in Paramaribo.

We now turn to explain how Suriname came to have such a mixed population of different cultures and religions, as indicated above. In 1873, in order to replace the slave-labor force previously used on the plantations, the government contracted with people from British India. Between 1873 and 1916 some 34.300 contracted to work for specified time periods. Of these it is said that 11.700 returned home after their contract period, meaning that over 22.000 (about fifty-three percent) remained in Suriname. With them they had brought various forms of Hinduism and Islam.

In addition, between 1853 and 1869, some 2.500 Chinese came, with their Confucianism, to work on the plantations. Then, between 1863 and 1872, various locations in the West Indies supplied some 2.400 contract laborers, adding their own diverse religious beliefs to the mix.

As for the people from Java, in the East Indies, between 1890 and 1939 almost 33.000 came as contract laborers. And, again, only about 7.700 (about twenty-three percent of the total) returned to their homeland at the end of the contract time. Those who stayed retained their Islamic and other pre-Islamic religious traditions (*adat*).

In producing government statistics it became the practice to divide the people according to ethnicity, especially the largest three groups. The following chart gives a picture of the demographic growth of these three groups in the second quarter of the twentieth century:

	Creole	Hindustani	Javanese
1925	47.501	38.087	19.517
1935	54.336	36.331	30.702
1945	66.808	51.503	31.588

After the value of the plantations declined in the nineteenth century, with most years showing a negative balance on

account in the Netherlands, the first decades of the twentieth century were more promising. A gold rush had occurred in the interior, and the exploitation of bauxite deposits began (bauxite being the main ore for aluminum).

It is to be understood that Suriname was an economic, and later socio-political, project of the Netherlands. From 1866 until 1940 there were twenty-four governors of the colony; eight of these were *interim* appointees, three had the title of Baron, and three were *Jonkheers*, or untitled Dutch nobility. In 1865 Suriname began to be an independent nation-in-progress, with the launching of a new government *Reglement* (a provisional set of official colonial policies). A Surinamese legislative body was introduced, the *Koloniale Staten*, which acted as a sort of parliament. Membership was strictly limited to the rich (whites) and the well-educated.

The general thrust of this new governmental body was to make the colony economically independent. The challenge before it was to bring about a transition from a plantation economy to a more industrialized one. It was a daunting task, as discovered in other colonies in the Caribbean region, as the society itself was in a transition from a slave colony to a multicultural society. Moreover the majority of the people brought to this task their Asian categories of thought, languages, religions, and a laboring class.

But the process of change took root, and the Redemptorist (and other) missionaries were an integral part of the process. There were deep questions regarding the educational system which had long been in vogue. The Roman Catholic Church itself was seeking a place within the social spectrum, for the government clearly favored Protestantism. Hence, in order to consolidate its position, the Catholic Church opted for an indirect route to recognition-through the quality of its schools.

In 1876 education was declared compulsory, and the official language for education was to be Dutch. Nevertheless, at times the government did allow for education in the lowest grades to be provided in Hindi or Javanese. This latter concession was meant as an incentive for parents to send their children to school. Because Suriname remained a segmented society

and some population groups were involved in their own emancipation process, religion and language were the means toward some type of internal cohesion.

Once party politics came into being, the parties grew according to lines of ethnicity and religion. This was evident in the political organizations seeking emancipation from slavery; three represented the major ethnic groups, and three more represented the major religions. These same divisional lines could be seen even seventy years later, in the crisis years of the 1930s, when labor conflicts were common³³. The position of the colonial churches, especially Catholics and Moravians, came in for criticism as being followers of the European colonial powers, and for not being aligned with others outside of their numbers. The Roman Catholic Church was content to follow the pattern of «pillarization» borrowed from the Netherlands (the three Pillars of contemporary Dutch society being Catholicism, Calvinism, and Liberalism). Consequently Catholics tended to look only inward to their own organizations in the fields of labor, sports, entertainment, and youth. This inward gazing did not equip the Catholic Church to cope with external socio-economic problems as it should have.

External issues which the Catholic Church eventually had to confront included: a close look at the Dutch model of education, strict Catholic rules for Christian living (even while employing such terms as accommodation and adaptation), and the severe antagonism toward Protestants and other religious bodies. In the years following World War II, and especially after the Catholic Church's Vatican Council II, it was clear that a time for change had come. The Roman Catholic Church of Suriname opted for «Surinamization» among *all* of its members, regardless of cultural or ethnic background. Some fundamental rethinking took place in the field of spirituality, and even in ethical matters such as concubinage, polygamy, church attendance, and rules for days of fasting and abstinence from meat.

³³ Ben SCHOLTENS, *Opkomende Arbeidersbeweging in Suriname*, Doedel, Liesdek, De Sanders, De Kom en de werklozenonrust 1931-1933, (*The Growing Labor Movement*), Nijmegen 1986.

4. – *Aptitude and Attitude of Redemptorists who served in Suriname*

We cannot find in our Redemptorist chronicles, or in our archives, any explicit policy of how future missionaries were considered «suitable for the mission in Suriname». Nor is the strategy of selection self-apparent. Perhaps at the beginning it was a matter of one's having a specialized talent. The following priests were degreed and licensed teachers, most of whom had previous teaching experience: Fathers Arnold Cloosterman (1914-1989), Wim van der Heijden (1860-1907), Arend Hilgen (1899-1987) Jan de Kort (1881-1950), Frans Kusters (1865-1938), Henri Ruijter (1876-1966), Gerard Schröder (1864-1930) Gerard van Tooren (1853-1931), Cornelis Verheijen (1860-1939), Leonard Verheijen (1866-1951), Joseph Weemaes (1908-1989), Joseph Wennekes (1913-1995), and Jan Zirks (1857-1885). The same can be said of these who were not priests, but professed Redemptorist Brothers: Alphonsus (b. Anton) Koenen (1839-1912), Clemens (b. Jan) Paardekoooper (1840-1909), Edmond (b. Hubertus) Hanrath (1843-1908), and Eduard (b. Frans) Peulen (1820-1890). Over the years they helped the Surinamese Catholic Church in the establishment of schools which equaled or surpassed the quality of the government schools or those of the Moravian Church.

Some of these teachers, when they entered the seminary, already had the experience of previous careers, and were, of course, older than the typical young seminarians. They often arrived with a genuine spirit of enterprise, while not being particularly amenable to strict conformity and obedience. Consequently, these same men sometimes had struggles within religious community life.

Furthermore, the Suriname mission unquestionably brought out specific talents in many confreres, for example, to start up a rice mill (Jan de Kort), a lumber enterprise (Gerard Wortelboer and Dries Gerritsen), or a honey-bee project (Charles de Kort). Others showed a special aptitude for literature, music, theater, and journalism³⁴. Brother Frans Harmes³⁵ was a professional car-

³⁴ Later in the nineteenth century the Dutch province sent many missionaries to Brazil, a land which offered even more possibilities for specialized talents which aided the general education and development among their people.

penter, who also developed his talent for architecture. His specialty was designing with the wood which abounded in the Amazon basin region, and his huge 1885 wooden cathedral in Paramaribo became a site visited and admired by countless tourists. Besides the cathedral, Harmes was likewise responsible for many of the other Catholic churches, parish buildings and residences for religious. When overseeing construction, his motto was *ora et labora*. (He is also remembered for giving his superiors multiple anxieties on how to meet payrolls and other building costs).

Brother Anselmus Bonten³⁶ was a professional musician, organist, composer of many hymns and oratorios. Father Cor (Cornelis) de Klerk³⁷ did impressive academic work. He studied Hinduism, learned Sanskrit and Hindi, defended his dissertation *Cultus and Ritueel van het Orthodoxe Hindoeïsme in Suriname* (Leiden 1951), and published a study on *De Immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname* (1953).

Father Hans Helmer, using the pseudonym Hans van Amstel, published *De Wraak van de Javaan* (Den Bosch 1939), *De laatste der Wajarikoeles* (Bussum, 1946), and *Jong Suriname op avontuur* (Den Bosch 1960)³⁸.

Blessed Peter Donders is the icon of the Surinamese mission, not only for his service to the poor and lepers, but also for being a pioneer in pastoral planning for the Indigenous of that time. After his Vatican beatification on May 23, 1982, which was celebrated both in Rome and in Suriname, it is noteworthy that

³⁵ Brother Frans HARMES, b. Jan. 25, 1835, Venlo (Limburg), professed on May 14, 1860; he arrived in Suriname Nov. 24, 1866, d. July 6, 1894 in Paramaribo. See *Memoriaal van de Nederlandse provincie*, Wittem 1961, 54.

³⁶ Brother Anselm (b. Charles, oct. 19, 1881) BONTEN, was professed Apr. 2, 1911; served in Suriname 1913-1933, d. in Wittem, May 26, 1946.

³⁷ Cornelis DE KLERK, b. Febr. 17, 1903, Noordwijkerhout; professed Sept. 15, 1923; ordained Sept. 26, 1928; went to Suriname, Oct. 21, 1930; served in Nickerie, Suriname 1930-1939, d. May 7, 2001 Warmond, Netherlands.

³⁸ Hans HELMER, b. Nov. 13, 1898, Amsterdam; professed, Feb. 26 1920; ordained, Oct. 1, 1924, was in Suriname 1926-1933, d. in Nijmegen, Mar. 17, 1981. These titles translated, in the order given: *The Revenge of the Javanese*; *The Last of the Wajarikoeles* (an Indigenous people); and *Young Suriname, Out for an Adventure*.

his veneration has increased more in the Netherlands than in Suriname. But there are two reasons for this: first, it has been steadily difficult, after the national independence of 1975, to promote the cause of a white Dutchman; secondly, although leprosy is under control in Suriname, it is a taboo subject for open discussion. Moreover, we must remember that transportation to the Donders' tomb and pilgrimage site in Batavia is a long, tiring, and expensive trip.

However, in his birthplace of Tilburg in the Netherlands one can find the quaint and delightful shrine dedicated to him, and the people there are quite active in promoting his fame and his cause for Catholic sainthood³⁹. The *Pater Donders Vereniging* (with participation by Redemptorists) is responsible for this promotion among the faithful, especially a monthly contact bulletin called *Petrus Donders, contactblad voor de vereerders*⁴⁰.

Later (in 1944) when Father Alphons Verheggen wrote his memories of ministry in Suriname from 1908 until 1928, he complained that the Dutch province chose to send its most academically qualified priests to study in Rome or elsewhere, its priests of second-choice to Brazil, and the leftovers to Suriname⁴¹. He said this was especially true after the Suriname mission

³⁹ Donders was born on Oct. 27, 1809, the very year when Tilburg was granted official «City Status». As part of the bicentennial city celebration a pavilion is planned to honor Blessed Peter Donders; it will include exhibition halls, meeting rooms, prayer space, and a full service restaurant. A professional digitized film is currently being produced about the life of Donders. Many are also hoping for his canonization in the same year.

⁴⁰ The standard (multi-lingual) publication on Donders is *Studia Dondersiana. Beato Petro Donders CSSR, leprosororum apostolo, in solemnī beatificatione obsequii fratrum munus* (Bibliotheca Historica CSsR, 11), Romae 1982. English readers may want to consult J. Robert FENLI, *Blessed Peter Donders, His Writings and Spirituality*, Liguori (Missouri) 2007; this work is a translation of *Espiritualidad Redentorista; La vida y la Espiritualidad del Beato Pedro Donders*, No. 9, Committee on Redemptorist Spirituality, Rome 1996. In St. John's Basilica, 's-Hertogenbosch, is a 1991 statue of Blessed Donders, done by the Redemptorist Gerard MATHOT. A placard on the statue reads in Dutch, «He grew up in poverty, and in Suriname he lived for the poorest, the enslaved, and the lepers».

⁴¹ Alphons VERHEGGEN, *Herinneringen. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van onze missie in Suriname* [Memories: Contribution to the history of our Mission in Suriname], 2nd ed., Rotterdam 1955, 28-32. Hereinafter, VERHEGGEN, *Herrinneringen*.

was somewhat settled and consolidated. Indeed, it seems that the province sometimes did treat Suriname as a «small step-child», simply to be maintained, rather than as a mission in need of creative initiatives. Yet, the unexpected development of projects and programs by Redemptorists turned out to be a great gift for Suriname and perhaps a very appropriate response to the home province for its patronizing attitude.

Following the Second World War the province sent Redemptorists to Suriname with advanced degrees in areas such as Canon Law and economics. After the Second Vatican Council (1961-1965), some missionaries came with specialties in Pastoral Theology and Missiology. Overall, however, as Suriname grew in a sense of national identity, the Redemptorists did maintain a keen sensitivity to the Surinamese context in their ministry, no matter what their academic background.

On the other hand it is clear that the Dutch missionaries to Suriname slowly developed a discernible docility in their lives. They learned to appreciate the distinctively native traits of joyfulness, hospitality, and fraternity. They were also challenged by the Surinamese, when the latter simply refused to do everything the missionaries required (including, as has been said, in matters of ethical behavior). The outlook of the missionaries toward the world, and even toward «religion», sometimes underwent a major shift, as they found that *not everything* was contained within their Redemptorist Rule, nor in the textbooks they had studied in the seminary. The pathway of *religious commitment and fidelity* was far deeper and more mysterious⁴².

With time the men chosen to serve in Suriname gradually lost much of their Dutch identity. They took on a deep sense of being among, and committed to, the Surinamese. This, in turn, enhanced the quality of their love of and service to the people around them.

⁴² It seems a pity that all missionaries in Suriname, the Redemptorists included, could not have had a greater influence on the study and the practice of missiology as such. They did do some writing and publishing, but these works were in catechetics, philology, or in popular mission publications which were often geared to fundraising. Occasionally they wrote critical reflections, but these did not have wide distribution.

Through the years not a few Redemptorists made the ultimate commitment, as they lost their lives in Suriname, often when relatively young men. Four of these were victims of leprosy: Fathers Jan Bakker (1833-1890), who for a long period lived at Batavia with Peter Donders), Felix Lemmens (1850-1906), Jan Broos (1847-1888), and Brother Justinus de Bres (1863-1935). Three others drowned: Fathers Nico Spruyt (1923-1957) and Piet L. van der Pluym, and Brother Antonius Korst (1863-1896). Three were killed in road accidents: Fathers Willem Voorbraak (1898-1965), Wim Spekman (1917-1971) (in autos), and Father Marius Shippers (1919-1979) (on a motor bike). Father Dries Gerritsen was murdered by robbers inside the parish house of St. Boniface (Paramaribo). Brother Andreas van der Vlucht (1920-1989) was one of the 176 victims of the Suriname Airways Flight which crashed near the Paramaribo airport on June 7, 1989.

Of special note is one Redemptorist from the English province, Father Charles Giffkins; he remained in Suriname only a short time, from 1889-1892, having come to Suriname in order to care for the English-speaking West Indians who were immigrants into Suriname at the time of the gold rush. He served them in the Chapel of St. George behind the Paramaribo cathedral⁴³.

5. – *Sranantongo* – and other Languages

Sranantongo (roughly translated «Surinamese Tongue») is a Creole language based on English and Dutch, created by the enslaved. It is spoken in coastal Suriname and widely used as *lingua franca*⁴⁴.

⁴³ Apparently this Father Giffkins returned to the English province in 1892. Records show that he left the Redemptorists from Perth in Scotland, in August of 1893. About a decade before Giffkins, another interesting Redemptorist, Charles Warren CURRIER, served less than two years in Suriname in 1881 and 1882. A native of the island of St. Thomas in the West Indies, he was professed in 1875 in 's-Hertogenbosch, then ordained priest in Wittem in 1880. Eventually he became a diocesan priest in the U.S.A., but in 1913 was ordained bishop of Matanzas, Cuba. See BOLAND, 96.

⁴⁴ The official language, Dutch, is taught in the schools of Suriname, is used by government employees, and is the standard language of the media.

The Suriname Catholic missionaries of the nineteenth century used Sranantongo, as did the Moravian missionaries⁴⁵. In 1822 the first Roman Catholic apostolic missionary, Father Paul Anthony Wennekens published a catechism of the Catholic faith entitled *Roomsch-Catholijke catechismus of kort begrip der Christelijke leer- ing in de Neger-Engelsche taal voor de colonie Suriname met de ge- beden van de nooddooop, de morgen en avondgebeden enz* (A Roman Catholic Catechism or Brief Understanding of the Christian Teaching, in Negro-English for the Colony of Suriname, With Prayers for Emer- gency Baptism, Morning and Evening Prayers, etc.). It is a wonder that such a book was ever published, because it was forbidden by the government of that time to provide education for slaves.

Later, the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Jan Swinkels published the short catechism entitled *Pikien Katechismus foe den Katholiki pikien foe Sranam* (Little Catechism for Catholic Children of Suriname)⁴⁶.

Later, Redemptorists produced the following publications, with no specific author indicated:

Mi sieli goedoe: Wan begi boekoe for Roomsoe Katholiki soema (The Benefit of my Soul. A Prayer book for R.C. People), Gulpen 1883.

However, different cultural groups each speak their own language-so many that Suriname is said to have a small total population compared to the number languages and dialects spoken by its citizens. The Amerindian people of the interior speak several Indigenous tongues: Kaliña, Lokonon, Trio, Wayana, and Akuriyo. The Blacks referred to as *Maroons*, speak Aucaans, Paramacaans or Saramacaans. East Indians speak Sarnami, based on Hindi. The Javanese speak the language of their South Pacific island of origin. The major languages spoken by the Chinese are Hakka and Mandarin. The people often use more than one language when conversing with one another, for example, switching from Dutch to Sranantongo and then to Sarnami or English.

⁴⁵ When the Moravian missionaries came from Germany (or some of them, from far Eastern Europe), they did not have an extensive knowledge of Dutch or of the culture of the Netherlands.

⁴⁶ Gulpen 1873. There was a reprint of this work in 1890, also in Gulpen. We do not know the translator. Even before the arrival of the Redemptorists, the diocesan priests Stephan Meurkens and Peter Masker had seen the need for catechetical and prayer books in Sranantongo. Worthy of note are *Som begi na Kroisipasi, nanga S. Mis begi, nanga wan litany* [Some prayers of the Way of the Cross, with prayers of the Holy Mass, and a Litany]; also, *Gadoe Rosoe: Wan begi boekoe foe den Roomsoe katholyke soema* [Rose of God: A Prayer Book for the R. C. People], 1865, a collaborative work of both of these same priests.

Passie foe Hemel (Way to Heaven) Gulpen, 1901, with various reprints.

There were also translations of parts of the Bible, such as the following:

Den les nanga den Evangeli, disi den lese na da S. Mis, na ini da Roomsoe Katholiki Kerki soleki den de na ini da R. Mis-boekoe (The Readings of the Gospel of the Holy Mass in the R.C. Church, as found in the Missal), Amsterdam 1904.

Epistel nanga Evangeli na tappoe alle Son en Feestidei for da heli jari (Readings from the Letters, and Gospel Readings for all Sundays and Feastdays of the Whole Year), Gulpen 1889⁴⁷.

Several Redemptorists made other linguistic contributions in Suriname. Father Jacques Mols (1882-1944) developed a series of grammar lessons for the Sranantongo language, and likewise collected a number of its proverbs. Father Anton Donicie (1912-1968) published a grammar on Sranantongo (Creolentaal) and some linguistic articles. Father Adriaan de Groot (1902-1990) published word lists of Ndyuka Tongo and Saramaccan language. Recently Father Bertus Roest (1937) translated, along with the Surinamese linguist Eddy van der Hilst, the readings of the Gospel for the Sundays and feastdays in Sranantongo⁴⁸. Moreover, in 1887 Father Cornelius van Coll (1842-1922) composed a short catechism in Kaliña (Carib) entitled *Sanimee karetaale kalienja kapoewa itooriko-me (Little Catechism in the Carib Language)*. The same missionary, in 1892, did a similar work in Lokonon (Arowaks), this time giving his work a Latin title, *Primeria fidei catholicae rudimenta, arowccana lingua exarata (A Primer of the Rudiments of the Catholic Faith Written in Arowaks Language)*, and Father Karel Klinkhamer (1900-1984) two catechisms in both of the languages but in the 1950s.

Father Henri Rikken (1863-1908), appointed to the special mission for the Chinese in 1892, edited a church bulletin for his

⁴⁷ These and other similar works can be found in Jan VOORHOEVE – Antoon DONICIE, *Bibliographie du Negro-Anglais du Surinam*, Den Haag 1963. One may also want to consult, Tranquillinus SCHALKEN, *Lectuurrepertorium van de R.K. gemeente in Suriname 1811-1989*, Paramaribo 1989.

⁴⁸ Bertus ROEST – Eddy VAN DER HILST, *Leysipisi fu den sonde nanga des fesadey*, Lomsukerki-Paramaribo-Sranan 1988.

flock in their Chinese dialect. Father Willem Gerard Ahlbrinck was another distinguished linguist who, after arriving in Suriname in 1910, also worked among the Chinese and learned their language. Later, in 1925, Ahlbrinck was appointed to the Javanese ministry. But then he took a special interest in the Indigenous of the interior, especially the Kaliña, leading two expeditions (1928 and 1936) to study Indigenous languages and culture⁴⁹.

Finally, in 1924, the Redemptorists published a catechism for the Hindi speakers: *Katholik-Dharm ka prasnontar Surinam Vicariat ke Hindostanon ke liye pasand kiya gaya (Catholic Teaching of the Vicariate of van Suriname for the Hindostanis)*. No single author is credited with this Hindi catechism.

So it is clear that with such a multi-cultural mission set before them, the Redemptorists Dutch missionaries among the poor in Suriname had the zeal to learn whatever language their evangelizing effort required. When individual men were assigned to various language/culture groups, they did what was necessary to care for to them.

6. – *Development on Different Fronts*

As said above, one of the first areas of development on which the Redemptorists concentrated was education. In some ways this created the image of the Catholic Church as being a children's church. But there was a far-sighted vision operative here: toward building a strong Catholic community for the future. Sharing in this vision, and in the early effort toward having quality schools, credit must be given to other dedicated religious. These religious were the Franciscan Recollect Sisters of Roosendaal, whose members had been in Suriname since 1856.

⁴⁹ Father Willem AHLBRINCK, b. Geldrop, Feb. 14, 1885; professed 's-Hertogenbosch, Sept. 29, 1904; ordained Wittem, Oct. 8, 1909; in Suriname 1910-1955; d. Paramaribo, Aug. 27, 1966. He was awarded a Dutch cultural award called *De Zilveren Anjer [The Silver Carnation]*. For a listing of Ahlbrinck's outstanding anthropological works, see DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie* II, 11-12; III, 246. Later in this article we will treat the foundation established in Ahlbrinck's honor, the PAS, or *Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting*.

Eventually there were also the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg who arrived in 1894, the Brothers of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy of Tilburg who came in 1902, and the Third Order Franciscan Sisters of Oudenbosch who began in Suriname in 1925.

Soon after their arrival the Redemptorists, especially in the person of Blessed Peter Donders, concerned themselves among people with leprosy. They were first at the government facilities on the Coppename River at Batavia, west of Paramaribo. But later, in 1896, with the help of the Sisters of Charity of Tilburg, they also established a Catholic leprosarium, *St. Gerardus Majella*, in Paramaribo itself. Still later, in 1916, they also began *St. Vincentius Hospital* located in Paramaribo.

In a report filed in 1880, Bishop J. Henri Schaap⁵⁰ (who had succeeded Bishop Jan Swinkels as Vicar Apostolic of Suriname), reported that he was working with twelve Redemptorist priests, eleven Redemptorist brothers, and thirty Sisters of Roosendaal. They labored among a total Surinamese population of about 50,000, among whom were about 12,500 Roman Catholics. Paramaribo had two parishes, with outstations in Coronie, Batavia, Livorno, and Buitenrust. Bishop Schaap said that the priests were regularly visiting some seventy plantations.

The Sisters, along with three of the Redemptorist brothers, were teachers for about 1000 children, of whom 150 were either Protestant or Jewish. The vicariate operated two orphanages, one for thirty-four girls, and another for forty boys. Each year the church was blessing about fifty marriages, celebrating 700 to 800 baptisms among whom were 200 to 300 adult baptisms. An estimated 23,000 communions were distributed. Six catechism lessons were being taught each day (two of these for adults), and five sermons were preached each Sunday in Paramaribo.

The Bishop also reported that there were several active spiritual associations: the Confraternity of the Holy Family, the

⁵⁰ (Jan) Henri SCHAAP, b. September 27, 1823, Amsterdam; professed May 24, 1845, St. Trond; ordained priest, August 13, 1850, Liège. As a young priest he taught at Wittem; appointed provincial of Dutch province, 1868. Went to Suriname in 1874, becoming Pro-Vicar Apostolic in 1875; ordained bishop, October 10, 1880, becoming Vicar Apostolic of Suriname. Died March 19, 1889, Paramaribo. See BOLAND, 535.

Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart, and, in the Church of St. Rose there was the sodality of Our Lady of Perpetual Help⁵¹.

At the beginning of their missionary work in Suriname the Redemptorists were concentrated in the capital city of Paramaribo, and the cathedral church of Sts. Peter and Paul. Much of their advance into the districts and the interior can justly be attached to the name of the man who became Vicar Apostolic in 1889, Bishop Willem Wulfingh⁵². It was he who erected parishes in Albina in the east, and Nickerie in the west. He was responsible for small churches at Estherlust (1895), Mariënborg (1897), Domburg and Paradijs (1898), Voorburg and Bethanië (1899), Rorac (1901), Levant and Wanica (1903), Libanon, Pinard and Welgedacht (1905).

The Redemptorist missionaries also made gradual progress in the interior among the Indigenous and the Maroons, utilizing a system of what came to be called the *waka kerki* (*walking church*). Within a few decades following the Redemptorists' arrival the Roman Catholic Church in Suriname was widespread, like its counterpart, the Moravian Church.

The memorial volume *Een Halve Eeuw in Suriname, 1866-1916*⁵³ provides an excellent summary of the progressive development that accompanied the ministry of the Redemptorists and

⁵¹ The report of Bishop Schaap is discussed extensively in Giuseppe ORLANDI, *Il Vicariato Apostolico del Suriname e la relazione di Mgr. H. Schaap del 18 Luglio 1880*, in *Studia Dondersiana*. For specific references to these spiritual associations see pp. 39, 76 and 97. In this report Bishop Schaap makes no mention of two priests, formerly diocesan priests, who left the Redemptorists and returned to their diocesan status, Jan van Mens, b. 1832, in Suriname 1869-1874, and Toon van Koolwijk, b. 1836, in Suriname 1869-1871.

⁵² Willem WULFINGH (alternately *Wulfing*) b. May 30, 1839; professed October 15, 1862, St. Trond; ordained priest October 1, 1867; having held several important posts in the Netherlands, he was later sent to Suriname; ordained bishop and made Vicar Apostolic of Suriname December 15, 1889. Died at sea April 5, 1906, but burial in Paramaribo.

⁵³ *Een Halve Eeuw in Suriname, 1866-1916, Ter dankbare herinnering aan het gouden jubilé van de aankomst der eerste redemptoristen in de missie van Suriname door eenige missionarissen derzelfde missie* [*Half a Century in Suriname, as a Grateful Memory of the Golden Jubilee of the Arrival of the first Redemptorists in the Mission of Suriname by Two Missionaries of the Same Mission*], Den Bosch 1916.

of those others who labored with them in the mission's first fifty years.

The majority of the Catholic Church members were Creoles, but, as pointed out, there was an outreach to all the language groups: Chinese, Hindostani, Javanese, English, and to the Amerindian people of the deep forest who spoke their Indigenous tongues.

In 1923 the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Theodore van Roosmalen, C.Ss.R.⁵⁴, first began thinking about founding a minor seminary. However, it did not become a reality until 1929, beginning with five young Surinamese students. Sadly, after a short while it failed⁵⁵. There is evidence that some Redemptorists were not of a mind to support native Surinamese vocations, as they had difficulty suppressing their racial attitudes. The same men expressed their belief that a native Surinamese priest would suffer by association, should his family fall into disrepute in a tight-knit society⁵⁶.

In 1932 the same Bishop van Roosmalen had the privilege of founding a local women's religious congregation. They were known as the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. In 1940 they numbered eighteen, and in 1965 twenty-two.

The year 1949 saw the arrival in Suriname of another group of Dutch missionaries, the priests and brothers of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. To this group, which had been founded by St. Eugène de Mazenod in 1816, part of the Vicariate Apostolic was assigned by a Vatican decree of January of 1951⁵⁷. Just as with

⁵⁴ Theodore Anthony Leonard Mary VAN ROOSMALEN, b. 's-Hertogenbosch, July 27, 1875; professed at 's-Hertogenbosch, September 29, 1896; ordained priest at Wittem, October 8, 1901. Worked in Vice-province of Rio de Janeiro, 1904-1911. Ordained bishop and named Vicar Apostolic of Suriname, November 15, 1911, at 's-Hertogenbosch. Resigned as Vicar Apostolic, 1946, and d., Paramaribo, June 9, 1957. See BOLAND, 403, s.v. van Roosmalen, Theodore. - As the bishop was sometimes known methodically to delay decisions, he was, perhaps unkindly, referred to as «TALM», which epithet took the first letters of his four names and played them into a word which connotes «delay» in Dutch.

⁵⁵ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 9056.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8720.

⁵⁷ They were assigned for the District of Nickerie (the west, near to Guyana), and also a quasi-parish in the city of Paramaribo. Cfr *Catalogus CSSR*, 1955, Lovanii 1955, 310.

the Redemptorists before them, this decree was officially by *ius commissionis*, meaning that they were in charge of caring for the people of their given territory.

In the 1950s and 1960s the cries for civil autonomy and the end of colonialism became more strident. There was a clear option for a «new Suriname», and one of the essential points being broadcast was that there had to be unity among the diverse population groups.

The Roman Catholic Church (as well as the Moravian Church) had provided special training to the clergy to serve the Hindostanis, Javanese, and Chinese residing in Suriname, and for this purpose had even brought in personnel from India, Java, and China. Those who were calling for national unity saw this approach as an *obstacle to unity*. The Catholic Church then opted to change its pastoral methodology. Clearly a process for *Surinamization* was underway.

Between 1957-1963, the vicariate apostolic of Suriname was linked with other regional Catholic Church units of the Caribbean into what was called the Antilles Bishops Conference. This Conference embraced areas whose main idioms were English, Dutch, or French, but they shared concerns common to all the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, the events surrounding Vatican Council II (1962-1965) had an impact on the Catholic Church of Suriname in matters of acculturation, especially the encouraging of local cultural elements and languages in the liturgy.

In 1958, what had been the vicariate apostolic was granted the status of diocese, with its see city at Paramaribo and the Dutch Redemptorist Stef Kuijpers⁵⁸ as the first diocesan bishop. The new diocese was named a suffragan see of the archdiocese of Port of Spain, Trinidad. Bishop Kuijpers soon organized a pastoral survey carried out by the Redemptorist sociologist Henk

⁵⁸ Stephan KUIJPERS, b. Borkel en Schaft, July 22, 1899; professed 's-Hertogenbosch Sept. 30, 1920; ordained priest, Wittem, Oct. 8, 1925. Sent to Suriname 1926; consecrated bishop and named Vicar Apostolic of Suriname, June 10, 1946 in 's-Hertogenbosch. Became first ordinary of new diocese of Paramaribo June 14, 1958; resigned See Aug. 30, 1971; died in the Redemptorist residence at Nebo Nijmegen, July 5, 1986.

Dekkers in 1966, the year in which the Redemptorists celebrated their centennial anniversary of arrival in Suriname.

Not long after, the bishop also arranged series of meetings throughout the diocese to discuss its future directions. From these meetings came directives for continued Surinamization, more leadership by laity, more acculturation in liturgy, and an ongoing discernment of the identity of the diocese, which was clearly on the road to renewal *from within*. There was dialogue on how liberation theology and black theology might have relevant application. In addition, connections were made with ecumenical institutions such as the Caribbean Conference of Churches.

Then in 1970 the Redemptorist Aloysius Zichem was ordained Bishop of Paramaribo, the first Surinamese native ever to be a bishop. He succeeded Bishop Kuijpers in the see of Paramaribo in 1971.

Meanwhile Suriname was preparing for its political autonomy, realized in November 1975. Soon after that, Bishop Zichem published a document in which he stated that the primary task of Redemptorists (and other church personnel) was to guide the Surinamese in building up a truly Surinamese church. To accomplish this he urged proper training, with emphasis on the quality of faith, the adaptation and inculturation of the liturgy, and the use of local languages in celebrating the liturgy. Moreover the bishop believed that everyone involved in evangelization was to be guided by total trust in the Holy Spirit⁵⁹.

Bishop Zichem's document did not surprise church personnel, nor was it difficult for them to sense its momentum and contribute to the renewal process. Some adjustment of thinking by the Redemptorists was called for, in that they could have no special claim on the bishop. It was evident that he intended to be the bishop for all.

The results were exciting. A catechetical and pastoral center was opened, featuring a permanent course to train catechists for the villages in the interior. Men and women, Indigenous and Maroons, were chosen to be pastoral animators. The use of mass

⁵⁹ JOOP VERNOOL, *Loomsu 1975-1985. De afgelopen tien jaren [The Last Ten Years]*, (Paramaribo 1985), 78-83. Cfr *Ter Informatie*, nr. 10, Juli 1976, 6-11.

media was increased. The church was on the move, with many Redemptorists leading the renewal.

The diocese became known as being in the forefront of the Antilles Bishops Conference regarding renewal efforts, decolonization, and response to the signs of the times. As hoped for, within the structures of ecumenical outreach, there grew a respect for and a hearty promotion of culture, especially Creole culture; indeed, the Catholic Church, and other *Christian* churches in Suriname were composed mostly of Creoles. The former image of the Catholic Church, as an institution of buildings, of European personnel, with funding from abroad, now gave way to a new image. This renewed church placed a focus on distinctively human qualities, as well as on Surinamese traditions, traits and character.

All too soon, however, there erupted the military coup of 1980, followed by seven years of military dictatorship. Widespread poverty and shortages of food (previously imported) highlighted the results of colonialism. Now, politically, economically and religiously the Surinamese were responsible for themselves.

A second military coup in 1990-1991 brought on further political instability, causing many citizens-and religious-to seek security in the Netherlands. No less than five Surinamese parishes grew up in Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Tilburg⁶⁰.

It had also begun to be clear during the 1980s that, with the decreased number of Redemptorists in Suriname, the Suriname Vice-province (a juridical unit of the Netherlands province), would not last much longer. But we will take up this story in a subsequent section.

7. – *Unstable Leadership Structure – From the Beginning*

At the beginning of the Suriname mission, a number of responsibilities resided in the one person of the Redemptorist superior. He was simultaneously Vicar Apostolic, superior of the religious community, and pastor of the church of Saints Peter

⁶⁰ To some extent Redemptorists of the Netherlands were involved in helping these emigrant churches.

and Paul in Paramaribo. Before very long his subjects were spread around Suriname, and decisions still had to emanate from his office. This situation gave rise to various conflicts of interest.

Several times we have spoken of the first Vicar Apostolic in the person of Bishop Jan Swinkels. When appointed to Suriname he was already of fifty-five years of age, and had a generally feeble constitution. After five years in the mission he begged unsuccessfully that he be allowed to serve *only* as Vicar Apostolic, without the added burden of being the Redemptorist vice-provincial⁶¹. But he was destined to live yet another five years, filling both roles, and then being succeeded by Bishop J. Henri Schaap in 1875⁶².

It was after Swinkels died that the Vatican Congregation of Propaganda Fide began to express doubts about whether it was necessary even to have a Vicar Apostolic in Suriname.

The Redemptorist superior general, Nicholas Mauron, wrote his opinion on this matter both before and after hearing from Schaap about Swinkels' death. He thought a *Pro-Vicar* would suffice, for the small number of priests in Suriname did not warrant such a hierarchical structure. Moreover, he said that all the priests were Redemptorists, and it was not good to «elevate» one of them above others. He added that if one person held several offices, this could invite great difficulty, as happened in the Swinkels' era.

Mauron also wrote to Propaganda that it would be best not to name another Vicar Apostolic. One of his main reasons was that, except for the sacrament of Confirmation, the missionaries could fulfill all the functions of a Vicar Apostolic. He argued that a new Vicar Apostolic had to come from the Netherlands, but the number of Redemptorists in the Netherlands was not great. Naming an older father was not advisable because the climate of Suriname was detrimental to one's health. Mauron further commented that a new Vicar Apostolic would have to learn Sranantongo, which would take time.

⁶¹ Letters Swinkels to Mauron, June 3, 1871; Schaap to Mauron, April 4, 1871, in which Schaap proposes that Swinkels return to the Netherlands for an extended time; Swinkels to Mauron, April 27, 1871, AGR, Provincia Hollandica.

⁶² See note 50.

From his post in Rome Mauron sent these same opinions to the Dutch provincial, Piet (Peter) Oomen, who responded on December 1, 1875. Oomen agreed with the vision of Mauron, and promised to name a new rector/superior, someone *other than* the Vicar or Pro-Vicar, as well as a new consultor to this superior/rector. Noting that this new plan would work better than what was in effect in the time of Bishop Jan Swinkels, Oomen agreed that it was not good to have one Redemptorist priest as the hierarchical superior over other Redemptorist priests and brothers. He also remarked to Mauron that the Redemptorist Rule forbade a Redemptorist consenting to be a bishop⁶³, and urged Father Mauron to avoid any dangerous tensions.

Nicholas Mauron, as Superior General, pleaded all these same reasons with Propaganda Fide that no Vicar Apostolic was needed in Suriname. Nevertheless, in 1880, Propaganda decided to the contrary. The Redemptorist J. Henri Schaap was named Vicar Apostolic, was ordained a bishop, and was also appointed superior/rector⁶⁴!

Thus it is clear that in first ten years of the Suriname mission even Redemptorist superiors thought the leadership structure had an unstable quality built into it, with lines of authority blurred, and the structure would not be changed for over thirty years, in 1898⁶⁵.

Moreover, Jan Swinkels, the first Vicar Apostolic, and the three men who followed him in this role (J. Henri Schaap, Willem Wulfingh⁶⁶, and Jacques C. Meeuwissen⁶⁷) had to learn about

⁶³ *Regels en Constitutien*, 130, pgh. VI. This prohibition against consenting to be a bishop was somewhat more nuanced in the Redemptorist Rule, if, for example, a man is obliged to accept being a bishop by the Pope or Superior General.

⁶⁴ AGHR, Provincia Hollandica: Mauron to Schaap, September 24, 1875; Mauron to Propaganda Fide, November 1875, in copy form; Oomen to Mauron, December 1, 1875.

⁶⁵ As Dutch provincial, J. Henri Schaap made a canonical visitation of Suriname in 1871. His report, *Rapport fait au Rmus Père Supérieur Général, sur la visite canonique faite à Suriname du 26 Janvier au 1^{er} Mars 1871* is very informative and analytical. See *Archief Redemptoristen Nederland*, 4141.

⁶⁶ See note 52. Wulfingh had been rector in several Netherlands communities, and seminary prefect in Roermond.

⁶⁷ Jacques C. MEEUWISSEN, b. at Oud Gastel August 15, 1847; professed

missionary life day by day. All four had proved able leaders *in the Netherlands*, but, obviously in circumstances very different from Suriname. It can be argued that they were as bewildered as all other Redemptorists by the tropical heat, disease, diet, language, and the very novelty of the Suriname pastoral ministry.

On top of those factors, as indicated earlier, we can add the issue of age. All four of the above came to Suriname at a relatively advanced age, when energy and stamina are on the wane. In fact, superiors both in both in the Netherlands and in Rome began to acknowledge that age was an appropriate consideration before assigning any missionary to Suriname (not just Vicars Apostolic).

A case in point was Willem Wulfingh. When still in the Netherlands, he was known to be strong in character, an organizer, hard working, and a leader-type. At age fifty he was ordained as Vicar Apostolic in Suriname, where he wanted to extend the mission geographically into the interior, with more missionaries in more posts. But soon, with chronic health problems setting in, he began to antagonize the Redemptorists both in Suriname and the Netherlands-and even in Rome.

As leader of the Redemptorist Suriname mission, Wulfingh was *ex officio* a voting member of the Congregation's 1894 General Chapter being held in Rome. While there he visited the officials of Propaganda Fide, urging them to contact the Superior General Matthias Raus⁶⁸ who was to put pressure the Dutch provincial to send more missionaries to Suriname.

In the end, this move turned into a misadventure for the Suriname mission; the Dutch provincial did indeed send more men-but they were generally a group unfit for their assignment.

April 26, 1868 at St. Trond: ordained priest at Wittem October 6, 1873; ordained bishop at Amsterdam and named Vicar Apostolic of Suriname March 3, 1907; resigned, returned to Netherlands 1910, d. at Amsterdam June 29, 1916. Before Suriname, had been rector in several communities, seminary prefect in Roermond, and Dutch provincial 1890-1894, and 1901-1907.

⁶⁸ Matthias RAUS, b. Aspelt, Luxembourg Aug. 9, 1829; professed St. Nicholas-du-Port, Lorraine, France, Nov. 1, 1853; ordained priest, Téterchen, France, Aug. 8, 1858; held several leadership positions in Franco-Swiss province; consultor to Nicholas Mauron, 1819-1893; superior general, 1894-1909; last years of life in Bisichenberg, d. at Bertigny, Switzerland, May 9, 1917.

Soon there was much discussion of Bishop Wulfingh in his role as vice-provincial. A number of complaints were raised: he was involved in too many matters; he held too many authoritative positions and was meddling in too many cases. Understandably, his recent maneuvering at Propaganda Fide in Rome was looked upon as appalling.

The 1898 appointment of Father Cor (Cornelius) van Coll as vice-provincial (while Wulfingh continued as Vicar Apostolic) briefly marked the end of the old system in which one man played the dual role of Vicar Apostolic and Redemptorist vice-provincial. But, yet another confusing factor entered the scene. Sometimes the head of the Redemptorists in Suriname was officially designated as «vice-provincial»; sometimes he was termed «Visitor»; and at still, at other times, «Superior». The compounded confusion had a demoralizing effect.

Bishop Wulfingh died at sea on April 5, 1906. Succeeding him as Vicar Apostolic in 1907 was Jacques C. Meeuwissen. Strangely, with him the old system was restored and he was also named vice-provincial! On top of that, Meeuwissen was not chosen from among the Redemptorists in Suriname. The rationale which was provided for this appointment was: clearly none of the priests in Suriname was capable of serving in this leadership role.

Meeuwissen was already sixty years-old, lacked any experience of Suriname, and lacked good health. Within three years, in 1910 he applied to Pope Pius X to accept his resignation, and had to leave the mission in Suriname. Meanwhile in 1909 Walter Perriens, missionary in Brazil, was named as visitor or vice-provincial⁶⁹. The Redemptorists in Suriname looked also upon this appointment with disapproval.

The next Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Theodore van Roosmalen⁷⁰, was brought over also from Brazil in 1911, but he *did not have the dual role*.

⁶⁹ Walter Perriens, b. Roosteren February 8, 1867; professed 's-Hertogenbosch September 29, 1890; ordained priest in Wittem, August 27, 1893. Appointed to new Dutch mission in Brazil 1896. He served as Visitor in Suriname 1909-1912, then returned to Vice-province of Rio de Janeiro, remaining there 1912-1935; d. Belo Horizonte November 25, 1935.

⁷⁰ See note 54.

That these two «outsiders» were brought in to lead the Suriname church, and that this was done with no prior consultation with the men in Suriname, was considered grievous insult. It was especially hard since the Suriname Redemptorists were then involved in their own internal strife. Conflicts had arisen over mission methodology, and over who could best serve the various categories of ethnic groupings. Later, however the men admitted that the new «administrative team» of Roosmalen-Perriens brought about a welcome degree of serenity and healing.

When Perriens returned to Brazil in 1912, Father Leonard Verheijen was named as his successor, now with the denomination «Visitator». Verheijen received a re-appointment in 1915 and continued in office until 1919⁷¹. He was then followed by Henri De Groot who had a long tenure, 1919 until 1930. De Groot had the privilege of once again seeing the clear title of «vice-provincial» come his way in 1924. De Groot's successor was Jan Franssen (1930-1936)⁷².

8. – *Relationship to Protestant Believers*

From the beginning of the Suriname colonization project in 1667, Catholics felt some measure of Protestant opposition. The government of the Netherlands was exclusively Calvinistic in orientation, and outspokenly so⁷³. The ministers of the Calvinistic Church involved themselves only with white people, namely, the slave owners, the government officials, and the military.

In 1735 the Moravian Church, received permission from the Board of Owners in Amsterdam (the *Geoctroyeerde Societeit van Suriname*) to begin mission work in the interior. Originating in

⁷¹ Leonard VERHEIJEN was to return for yet another nine years as vice-provincial, 1936-45. Later in the twentieth century another man had long years as vice-provincial, Father Sebastian Mulder, 1972-87. See following footnote.

⁷² *Oversten en Officiales en het lot van instellingen en huizen van de Nederlandse Provincie C&S*, 1853-2005, Roosendaal 2006. On pages 4-7 the list of Vice-provincials (Superiors/Visitators) and their consultors, 1866-1990, and the rectors who followed into the 1990s.

⁷³ It is interesting that such opposition was not present in the neighboring Dutch colony, the Dutch Antilles, where the population was predominantly Roman Catholic.

Germany, these Moravian missionaries developed a commendable ministry, but suffered a heavy loss of personnel due to climate and prevalent diseases.

When in 1817, almost fifty years before the Redemptorists arrived, a Roman Catholic parish was begun, the Moravian Brethren (called the *Evangelische Broeder Gemeente*, or *Herrnhutters*, or in Sranantongo, *Anitri*) resisted the Catholic presence. The Catholic priests at first had to work in low profile, avoiding contact with the slaves. Later, the Catholic Church was granted governmental permission to move about more freely.

One of the articles of the Manumission Decree in favor of former slaves (July 1, 1863) was that the newly-freed persons had to become members of one of the Christian churches. The Moravian Church, present in many places, was more attractive to these people than was the smaller Roman Catholic Church. It is estimated that in 1863 the Moravians membership was about 27.000, and that of Catholics about 12.000.

In the first decades after the abolition of slavery, even with some immigration into Suriname, the percentage of membership in Christian churches remained about the same. What subsequently changed the religious picture was the arrival of more Catholic priests, religious sisters, and religious brothers. These additions indicated a pointed emphasis on Catholic schools as a more indirect method of evangelization. The resultant situation became a threat for white Protestant groups and the elite of society, especially for the Dutch Reformed and the Evangelical-Lutheran churches. They had envisioned Suriname's continuance as a Protestant colony, urging cooperation among the main Protestant denominations in a type of soundly «pillarized» atmosphere along ethnic and religious lines.⁷⁴

At the end of the nineteenth century other Protestant groups (Adventists, Baptists, African Methodist Episcopalians, and the

⁷⁴ As indicated earlier, «pillarization» was to become a reality in Dutch society around 1900; it meant that each substantial subsection of the population was accorded a role within institutions and organizations (universities, the media, labor unions, etc.). Thus society in general rested on several vertical «pillars», each having public voice, with representative pluralism of opinion then somewhat assured.

Salvation Army) began evangelization efforts in Suriname, with predominantly black Surinamese leaders. These groups, however, were rather marginal in numbers and influence.

The first Moravian missionaries were excellent workers and continued to keep good records of their activities (doing so in German until about 1940). Their initiatives were first directed to training people in skilled trades, providing boarding houses, and setting up schools of general education⁷⁵. Gradually they began to work among the descendants of the enslaved in Paramaribo and the coastal area (that is, among those referred to as the Creole church). Then they extended their efforts in the interior among the Maroons⁷⁶.

In Paramaribo itself the Moravian *Grote Stadskerk* was built in 1778, the Combè church in 1858, in 1882 the Rust en Vrede church, and in 1886 the Wanica church. Other Moravian churches were built in districts: Bersaba (1858), Berg en Dal (1870), Charlottenburg (1835), Nieuw-Amsterdam (1879) Catharina Sophia (1855), Coronie (1840), and Saron (1843). Total Moravian Church members in 1911 was recorded at 27.949, which was about the same number as in 1863⁷⁷.

Here we cite some examples of preferential treatment in favor of Protestants by the colonial government. In 1892 the government subsidized four ministers of the Dutch Reformed and the Evangelical churches with a total of 23.000 guilders (in that time a Surinamese guilder was equal to two Dutch guilders). Whereas six Roman Catholic priests, as second class clerics,

⁷⁵ In Maria LENDERS, *Strijders voor het Lam. Leven en werk van Herrnhutter Broeders en-Zusters in Suriname, 1735-1900*, Leiden 1996, KITLV, 409-410, we can find some interesting statistics. Ms. Lenders sees a *shift* toward the end of the nineteenth century in how the Moravians missionaries became more theologians, business leaders and teachers, rather than craftsmen and (women) domestics.

⁷⁶ See H. BENJAMINS – J. SNELLEMAN, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië*, Den Haag 1914-1917, 182. This work provides data of 1911 as follows: thirty-two Moravian mission stations, with twenty-five «more distant outstations», and twenty-six places where «missionaries came for preaching». Twenty-eight men were ordained missionaries and fourteen more non-ordained, forty female missionaries, and «seven unmarried sisters». Tending the Creoles (*Incolae*) were eight ordained men, and eight non-ordained, forty female missionaries, fifty-five evangelists, along with 362 men and women assistants.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

received only 13.800 guilders; the Jewish community, with two synagogues, only 7.500 guilders, and the Moravians a pitiful sum of merely 3.000 guilders. The annual subsidy for Moravian schools was 28.400 guilders and for the Roman Catholic schools only 6.000. This amounted to sixteen guilders from every Moravian pupil, and only four and one-half guilders for every Roman Catholic pupil. These figures can be compared to the calculated cost for those in a government school—twenty-four guilders per pupil! It may be noted that the Moravians used their church buildings for schooling, a system which lowered their overall costs. There was once a proposal for confessional school bodies to receive between ten and twelve guilders per pupil, but this was rejected by the government⁷⁸. As it happened, in the schools of Suriname society there was official discrimination in effect; this fomented contention in the small society.

In 1935, which marked two centuries of the Moravians in Suriname, they had only seventy-two missionaries caring for about 30.000 church members. More than two hundred of their missionaries had died there, often at an early age and not long after their arrival⁷⁹. However, by the mid-1930s there was also much discussion about how these German missionaries fit into Surinamese society. For the colony was thoroughly Dutch in nature: the educational system was Dutch, Dutch was the prevalent language, and funding depended heavily on the Netherlands. Moreover, negative sentiments surfaced in the general population as some Surinamese Moravians became influential, wanting more recognition and responsibility.

Later, by the 1950s and 1960s, Catholics were outnumbering the Moravians. This was due partly to the successful Catholic schools and partly to fewer Moravian missionaries arriving after World War II. However, ecumenism was beginning to evolve, and the former (often shameful) rivalry between Moravians and Catholics was diminishing, especially along the coast. The same era saw an influx of Evangelical and Pentecostal sects. These newcomers presented themselves as hostile to both of the «older»

⁷⁸ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 4614.

⁷⁹ *Zeister Zendings Genootschap, Gedenkboek 2 Eeuwen Zending in Suriname*, Zeist 1935, 71.

denominations, thus causing a closer bonding between Moravians and Catholics.

9. – *Marking Seventy-Five Years of Redemptorist Service in Suriname*

In 1941, as World War II was gaining momentum in Europe, the Redemptorists observed their seventy-fifth anniversary of their arrival in Suriname. The interim governor of Suriname served as sponsor and patron of the observance. He was the Honorable Jan (Johannes) Cornelis Brons, one of two Catholics who served as governor since 1683.

This anniversary was an opportunity to celebrate the growth and presence of Catholicism in Suriname. Present for the ceremony were the St. Jozefbond, an organization of laborers; the St. Clemens Catholic Builders Union; the Catholic Youth Centrale; the group of Catholic intellectuals called «Catholic Life»; the Catholic Teachers Union; the Catholic Surinamese Basketball Centrale; the Union of Libanists; the Dutch Guyana Football Union; the New Roman Catholic Sick Fund; the Peter Donders Foundation; and the Roman Bharat Roshnie (a Hindostani Group).

This again was a public illustration of ethnic and religious pillarization, similar to the functional social pluralism operative in the Netherlands. It was also an acknowledgement of the cooperative ministry of the Redemptorists, the religious sisters, religious brothers, and the hard-working laity. It was a church which had grown and spread to all parts of Suriname.

In 1941 there were 19.104 Catholics in Paramaribo, and 12.008 in the outlying districts, including 3.201 Catholic Indigenous, and 1.307 Maroons. There were thirteen Catholic schools in Paramaribo, and twenty-six Catholic schools in the rural districts and the interior. These thirty-nine schools had a combined enrollment of 7.764 students. In the interior, were another nineteen schools serving 651 students.

From 1866 until 1941 there were 109 Redemptorists who had come to Suriname. Twenty-eight returned to the Netherlands (mostly because of health reasons). However, forty-two were buried in Suriname. At the time of the 1941 anniversary there were thirty-five Redemptorists priests and twenty-four Re-

demptorist Brothers active in the ministry. The Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Theodore van Roosmalen, and three Redemptorist priests were not present, as they were being forced to remain in the Netherlands during World War II.

At the time, other than Redemptorists, the Church of Suriname could count eighty-five Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of Roosendaal, seventy Sisters of Charity of Tilburg, twenty-four Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of Oudenbosch, eighteen Indigenous Sisters, Daughters of Mary Immaculate (and their three postulants), and twenty-nine Brothers of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy of Tilburg. In the interior there were thirty-one lay men and women serving as official teacher-catechists.

One can appreciate, therefore, that the Roman Catholic Church was now firmly established, and henceforward its task was to consolidate its position in the small Suriname colony amid the influential Protestant churches. Accustomed to view and assert itself in those days as the «only true church», the Catholic Church injected a sharp contrast into Suriname society. For Catholicism in Suriname pursued a steadfast European model, employed an educational program from the Netherlands, and imaged forth a church of mostly young children.

10. – *Further Confusion and Pain over administrative Matters*

When they first arrived in Suriname in 1866, the four pioneer Redemptorists had taken up quarters opposite the main church in Paramaribo, near the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of Roosendaal and the orphanage these sisters conducted. The daily meals of the Redemptorists were prepared in the same kitchen as the orphanage, necessitating some sharing of expenses.

When this arrangement extended into early 1870, the Dutch provincial, J. Henri Schaap, wrote a proposal to clarify this matter of sharing of expenses⁸⁰. Schaap was realistic, as he said he

⁸⁰ This proposal has a lengthy title, *Ontwerp van scheiding in de tijdelijke aangelegenheden van het vikariaat, van de E. Paters en van de zusters te Suriname*. [Plan for Separating out the Daily Financial Matters of the Vicariate, as Pertains to the Rev. Fathers and the Sisters in Suriname]. Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 4501. Schaap wrote this at the behest of the Roman Superior General Nicholas Mauron, whose style it was to be concerned with details at a local level.

wanted to avoid any real or supposed injustice.

The Redemptorists also soon drew up strict prescriptions concerning their yearly financial reports, especially as these concerned their vow of poverty.

Soon there came a discussion about whether the Vicar Apostolic himself was to be reckoned a member of the local Redemptorist community of Paramaribo, with the pointed question: Was he the financial responsibility of the Redemptorists, or of the vicariate?

At its start the Redemptorist mission in Suriname was supported by two distinct funds. One had been established by the deceased Vicar Apostolic Bishop Gerard Schepers⁸¹, and the other by the official Dutch Procurator of West Indian Missions, Bishop Cornelis L. Baron van Wykerslooth⁸². But these funds were intended in theory to pay for the expenses of the Vicariate *per se*, and not to support the Redemptorists or any other religious group members. In practice, however, when bills had to be paid, boundaries were not tightly observed; there was a friendly agreement for everyone «to look out for one another».

One year after the 1870 separation of expenditures by the Dutch provincial Schaap, and with stricter auditing procedures, it was clear that the Sisters had suffered a deficit, and the Vicariate made up the difference-but for the last time. Thereafter the new accounting methods did prove successful⁸³. It was especially hard for any vice-provincial that he could spend so little money, the limit being 2.000 guilders at his own discretion, and

⁸¹ See note 22, above.

⁸² Cornelis Lodewijk Baron VAN WJCKERSLOOTH, b. May 25-1786 Haarlem, 1911 ordained priest, Paderborn, ordained bishop 1833, Münster, and designated bishop for ordinations in the Netherlands, September 15, 1833; 1834 designated Mission Procurator in the Netherlands for the East and West Indian Missions; was principal consecrator (1842) of John Zwijsen, who became the first Archbishop of Utrecht (1853) after restoration of Hierarchy in Netherlands; died at Duinzigt, April 10, 1851.

⁸³ In 1875, the budget, given here in Dutch guilders, was as follows: Coronie, parish house and church: 6.000; Burnside, church: 3.000; Livorno Orphanage: 1.950; Salaries for Catechists: 9.753; Small Churches of Indigenous: 20.000; Nickerie: 6.000; Buildings, Commewijne District: 4.000; Buildings, Suriname District: 4.000. Total for fiscal year 1875: 54.703.

only 4.000 with the consent of his consultors. Even more restricted was the spending allowance of the rector of the Paramaribo house: only 50 guilders on his own, and 500 with his consultors' consent. Beyond those amounts, special permission had to be sought from the next highest superior, provincial or vice-provincial⁸⁴. In 1890 Bishop Wulfingh (who was then both Vicar Apostolic and the Suriname Redemptorist superior) worked out a set of policies with the Netherlands provincial as to clothing, food, and necessary business matters⁸⁵.

Beyond finances, however, from the start the Redemptorists felt the conflict of pastoral duties, and the requirements of their Redemptorist Rule. Expected to be both missionaries and religious, daily parish (and outstation) ministry conflicted with their required presence at community prayer and prescribed gatherings⁸⁶.

Other pressures arose when the Redemptorists were subjected to decisions made by the provincial far-off in the Netherlands, or even by the Redemptorist general government in Rome—when these decisions deserved to be made on location in Suriname. For instance, in the early 1900s the Superior General Matthias Raus decreed that the two communities in the city of Paramaribo (St. Boniface and St. Alphonsus) were to be subject to the jurisdiction of only one superior, namely, the vice-provincial/Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Wulfingh. So both of the young communities lost the relative autonomy which they had inaugurated and to which they had become accustomed. Another strange regulation coming «from above» was that the vice-provincial was to be the «Prefect of the Church» for the entire vice-province. It means that he had to maintain the accounting of Mass intentions and stipends with all attendant details; this was seen as very impractical, something much better handled at each separate location⁸⁷.

Furthermore, both the Papal Internuncio at The Hague and Propaganda Fide in Rome were claiming their jurisdictional rights,

⁸⁴ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 8822, 8815.

⁸⁵ This policy, for some reason or other was composed in French; *ibid.*, 4407.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4147.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 8748.

requiring detailed reports and not hesitating to hand down new directives. Today such procedures might be termed *micro-management*, but by any name it caused tension and resentment.

At times the Suriname Redemptorists of their own accord decided on commonsense ways of addressing their life and ministry-only to have these solutions opposed and overturned by superiors in Rome.

At the General Chapter of 1909 held in Rome, a Dutch Redemptorist, Willem van Rossum⁸⁸ had been elected a Consultor to the new Superior General, Patrick Murray⁸⁹. Then in 1911 a very indicative exchange of letters occurred between van Rossum and Bishop Meeuwissen-who was back in the Netherlands, having resigned in 1910 as Suriname Vicar Apostolic/vice-provincial. The bishop claimed that van Rossum and the Redemptorist administration in Rome had unlawfully interfered in the Suriname vicariate business. Meeuwissen charged that this created discord in the mission.

Van Rossum agreed on a need to maintain proper boundaries between vicariate and Redemptorist interests. He knew that the Redemptorist congregation at large did not supply men or money to Suriname, and communication between the Redemptorist Generalate and Suriname needed improvement.

⁸⁸ Willem VAN ROSSUM, b. Zwolle, Oct. 3, 1854; professed, 's-Hertogenbosch, June 16, 1874; ordained priest, Wittem, Oct. 17, 1879. Taught at juvenile, Roermond, and theologate, Wittem; then summoned to CSSR Generalate, Rome, 1895. Began Vatican work, 1896, first for Holy Office, then held other positions. Elected CSSR General Consultor, 1909. Created Cardinal of Church by Pius X, 1911, as honor to CSSR; held many Vatican positions, including Prefect of Propaganda (1918 till death). Died, Maastricht, while on visit to Netherlands, Aug. 30, 1932. Buried at Wittem. For more on van Rossum see Joop VERNOOIJ, *Cardinal Willem van Rossum, C.S.S.R. The Great Cardinal of the Small Netherlands (1854-1932)*, in *SHCSR* 55 (2007) 347-400.

⁸⁹ Patrick MURRAY, b. Termon, Donegal, Ireland, Nov. 24, 1865. Came to CSSR novitiate already in minor orders; professed Bishop Eton, England, Oct. 23, 1889; ordained priest, Teignmouth, Devon, England, Sept. 10, 1890. Preached parish missions, mainly in Scotland. Served as Prefect of Students. Was second provincial of Dublin province, 1907-1909. Elected C.S.S.R. superior general 1909, which office he resigned April 26, 1947. Retired to Limerick, d. there June 4, 1959, aged 93.

Nevertheless, he said letters had come to the Generalate from fathers in the mission with various complaints. These letters, said van Rossum, showed that the mission was too concentrated in Paramaribo, and decentralization was necessary for growth of the mission. The letter writers thought that the people in the outlying districts had been until now neglected, maybe out of necessity; but the time had come for reaching out to them.

When one reads the details within this exchange of correspondence between van Rossum and Meeuwissen, it becomes clear that there was much confusion as to authority, jurisdictional issues, as well as finances⁹⁰. This confusion was an «old story», and was to continue in Suriname for decades.

The heart of the matter was the dialectic dimension of canonical *potestas*⁹¹, a favorite point of discussion in Canon Law. At odds were the *potestas* of the Vicar Apostolic and the *potestas* of various religious superiors. This conflict arose from the decision of the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide to entrust the care of mission fields to religious institutions such as the Redemptorists. Only in 1929, when the same Willem van Rossum had been made a cardinal of the Church and Prefect of Propaganda Fide, did the Vatican take a definitive regulatory step toward clarifying some of the issues of *potestas*⁹².

Both the Redemptorist Generalate in Rome and the Dutch province eventually opted in favor of more autonomy in the Suriname mission. But one crucial factor frustrated true autonomy, namely, the ongoing poverty of the mission. For those churchmen who solicited and contributed money to Suriname wanted to retain a voice in how the money was spent; hence, a return to the *potestas* issue.

The years 1917 and 1920 saw some financial readjustments. First, in 1917, the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Theodore van Roos-

⁹⁰ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 8822.

⁹¹ An adequate translation being «governing power» and involves the question of where, or in whom, such power resides. In other words, who has the final decision, and in what circumstances.

⁹² *Instructio ad Vicarios Praefectosque Apostolicos et ad Superiores Instituturum, quibus a S. Sede Missiones concredita sunt*. Cfr *Sylloge*, Vatican 1929, 251-357. Cardinal van Rossum issued (and perhaps himself authored) this *Instructio*.

malen and the Dutch provincial, August Beukers⁹³ signed an agreement that henceforth all real estate property, as well as all church liturgical furnishings, would be owned by the vicariate; and all personal goods of the fathers and brothers would belong to the vice-province. At the same time, the Vicar Apostolic signed an agreement with the vice-provincial that every father and brother would receive from the Vicariate 1.040 guilders per year⁹⁴.

Then in 1920 came a second financial arrangement between the Vicar Apostolic and the Dutch provincial, Jan Kronenburg, circumventing any authority of the Suriname Vice-provincial. Henceforth every Redemptorist was to be paid an equal salary, and receive no income from Mass stipends. Any necessary building maintenance or restoration was for the vicariate to pay. In this new arrangement, the Vicar Apostolic was the loser, although any small maintenance cost (not above fifty guilders) was to be paid by the vice-provincial. As for travel expenses to and from Suriname, the Vicar Apostolic was to pay under two conditions: first, such travel needed the permission of the Dutch provincial; and secondly, any travel for strictly Redemptorist business (e.g., to a general chapter) was to be at Redemptorist expense⁹⁵. Within Suriname the local Redemptorist community was to pay for short journeys. The vice-province had the right of using and residing in the buildings as well as the use of the yards, gardens, and estates provided by the Vicar Apostolic. Telephone costs were divided in half. In the Catholic hospital a sick father or brother was to have first-class accommodation at 2.50 guilders per day, but extra costs, surgeries and food were to be charged to the vice-provincial. Furniture in the house chapel was owned by the vice-province, but, as stated before, not the liturgical items, nor the glass and ceramics of the large parlor.

⁹³ August BEUKERS, b. May 2, 1861; professed September 29, 1885; ordained priest August 15, 1884; missionary in Suriname 1888-1890; rector of Juiz de Fora (Brazil) 1901, vice-provincial/visitorator in Brazil 1903-1912; provincial of Netherlands, 1912-1918; d. September 23, 1921.

⁹⁴ The exact use of money is not always clear: sometimes it concerns the Dutch guilder and sometimes the Surinamese guilder (= 2 Dutch guilders).

⁹⁵ About 1920 the missionaries were given permission for a six-month home leave after ten years of labor in the mission.

The 1917 Code of Canon Law directed the respective leaders of vicariates, dioceses, orders and congregations to devise new rules and statutes. Consequently, in 1922 in Suriname the Vicar Apostolic published the new statutes defining the relationship between religious superiors and himself as ecclesiastical ordinary. But the thorny problem of the shortage of money was a problem for all parties concerned: the vicariate, the vice-province, and all religious congregations.

Nevertheless, after friction and outbursts, some matters did get sorted out by keeping to a basic principle: the Vicar Apostolic was responsible for the cost of pastoral and liturgical activity, and for some portion of the needs of the mission personnel.

Consequently, in 1921 in Suriname the Vicar Apostolic moved out of the Paramaribo Redemptorist residence into separate lodging not far away. It is also to the credit of all the Suriname missionaries that no irreparable breach in relationships happened. In retrospect, one can judge that the painful internal difficulties were of a normal variety which occur in mission lands where sincere people struggle along in poor living conditions, and, with trust in God, do not give up.

But *external*, international economic pressures were another matter. They reached with a fury into the heart of the Dutch colony. What has been termed the «Great Depression» greatly enhanced the already poor conditions. In 1932 the Suriname vice-provincial, Jan Franssen, wrote to his provincial in the Netherlands that the earlier division of vicariate and Redemptorist finances was no longer succeeding. The mutual dependence of one sector on the other had not diminished. They still «looked out for one another» because it was a matter of survival. He urged that the Dutch province set aside a designated yearly amount in order build up a sizeable fund, the interest of which would be used for daily Suriname expenses. But before any relief came, the Great Depression deepened even more, and it was soon followed by World War II, when all of Suriname was isolated from the Netherlands.

As the effects of the war were being felt, a ray of hope did appear when a group of devoted laity created the Peter Donders Foundation. Its goal was stated in Article 2 of its statutes: «[Our

purpose is] to support the R[oman] C[atholic] mission of Suriname, above all by financial contributions, and by promoting initiatives to bazaars, fancy fairs, and lotteries and every other means for the benefit of the goal»⁹⁶. This development was a pleasant surprise for the mission personnel, and a move in the right direction, as it proposed to change the sources of church funding for Suriname⁹⁷.

The Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Stef Kuijpers⁹⁸, then took the initiative to formulate yet another set of mission statutes⁹⁹. Also, an accountant company from the Netherlands, stationed in Paramaribo, upon the request of the Bishop and his staff, analyzed the financial situation of the vicariate. The group concluded that the situation was critical¹⁰⁰.

In 1949 the Dutch provincial, Charles Donker¹⁰¹, proposed yet one more working agreement between the vicariate and the vice-province. He had been shocked by the living conditions of his confrères in Suriname. Donker suggested various solutions, but once more the financial crisis continued unabated. Bishop Kuijpers went to the United States trying to find enough money to establish a capital fund, yet this proved to be only a stop-gap measure, and the crisis persisted into the 1950s.

⁹⁶ *Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement van de Petrus Donders Stichting (PDS)*, (Paramaribo 1940), 2.

⁹⁷ It can be remembered that at various times the church had launched some small-scale efforts in order to be more self-supporting; these included ventures such as hat weaving, agricultural efforts and dairy farming, and even small lumber and construction industries. But none provided long-term profit for the mission.

⁹⁸ See note 58, above.

⁹⁹ *Statutum Pro Missione Surinamensi provinciae hollandicae concredita*, Romae 1959.

¹⁰⁰ The Firm of Vereenigde Accountants Kantoren, «Verslag van de vergadering d.d. 15 mei 1968 van de financiële positie van het bisdom Paramaribo» [«Report of the meeting May 15, 1968 about the financial position of the diocese»], Paramaribo 1968.

¹⁰¹ Charles DONKER, b. Gennep June 2, 1899, professed, Sept. 29, 1918; ordained Oct. 3, 1923. Missionary in Brazil 1924-1935; procurator of the Dutch province, 1942-1946; provincial, 1946-1950; superior in the mission in N.E. Brazil 1951-1953; vice-provincial of Recife, 1953-1956; director of South American College/College for Latin America (Colam, Zenderen) 1958-1966; died Aug. 1, Nijmegen.

Substantial relief finally came with the improvement of financial conditions in the Netherlands in general, and the Dutch province in particular. Funds from Dutch Government sources and Catholic mission organizations became available; projects in the Suriname diocesan schools (both general schools and boarding schools) were subsidized. Other such subsidies even reached into the outstations of the interior districts. The church of Suriname witnessed the restoration of buildings and increased evangelization efforts. The *Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting* (Father Ahlbrinck Foundation) and other non-governmental organizations emerged to promote development for the Amerindian and Maroon communities in central Suriname¹⁰².

This new energy in the diocese, related to the more solid financial footing, was to continue through much of the 1970s, only to meet a serious setback at the time of the «Internal War» (1986-1992).

Less gratifying at times was the relationship between the Redemptorist bishop and members of the Redemptorist vice-province. Some frank discussions with the bishop were necessary in order to discuss pastoral priorities, divergent theologies of church, financial management, and some aspects of the inculturation of the Surinamese context into church life. A vice-province chapter in 1981 formed a commission for open dialogue with the bishop on specific concerns. The viewpoint of the vice-province members was successful on some points, and unsuccessful on others.

A key point was that the position of the Redemptorist priests and brothers was ambiguous. They often sensed being «caught somewhere in the middle of a power struggle» between the bishop/Vicar Apostolic and the superior/vice-provincial, or even between the bishop/Vicar Apostolic and their provincial back in the Netherlands. In fact, sometimes their own Redemp-

¹⁰² The *Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting* (known by its acronym *PAS*) was launched in 1968 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in honor of the Redemptorist Father Willem Ahlbrinck (see note 49 above). The *PAS* goal was to care for community development of the villages in the interior, concentrating on education, health care, agriculture and self organization: *Initiatieven tot missiologische vernieuwing in het bisdom Paramaribo* (Initiatives for Missiological Renewal in the Diocese of Paramaribo), Huis ter Heide 1968.

torist superiors seemed to have more power than the bishop/Vicar Apostolic. After the 1958 creation of the diocese, new regulations were formulated, and subsequently confirmed by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, providing a somewhat more agreeable situation¹⁰³. In the last decades of the twentieth century the number of priests, both Redemptorists and Oblates decreased. This resulted in the bishop having a more central position in the processes of pastoral planning and practice.

In 1975 the Dutch Oblates of Mary Immaculate instituted the policy of an individual contract between each man and the diocese, and they did so in a manner that satisfied all concerned. As will be seen, however, it was some years before the Redemptorists (then with very diminished numbers) followed the Oblate example of individual contracts¹⁰⁴.

11. – Canonical Visitations through the Years

According to the Redemptorist Rule, a periodic visitation by a superior (termed in Latin a *Sancta Visitatio*) was meant to focus on both the ideals and the practical details of members' lives. Its purpose was to aid the spiritual, pastoral, and material welfare of individuals and of the local and regional community.

In the case of Suriname, the vice-provincial was to visit all locations every year. Sometimes it was the provincial of the Netherlands who conducted the visitation, and, on occasion, a delegate of the Superior General came for an «extraordinary visitation». From the records of these visitations (especially if the vice-provincial came) we can gain a good picture of what ideals got special emphasis, and the realities which existed. When a visitor departed, he often left his «*recessus*», (in English «*recesses*»), which were orders or counsels to be taken seriously.

¹⁰³ *Statutum pro Missione Surinamensi Provinciae Hollandicae concredita*, Romae 1959; 59 articles, printed in Romae (in fidem A. Van Biervliet, Procurator Generalis). Propaganda Fide approved the document on February 18, 1959.

¹⁰⁴ Sebastianus (Bas) MULDER, *De Vice-Provincie van Paramaribo, Ter Informatie*, 9 (November 1975), 13-17. He distinguishes three periods: first, the time of the pioneers (1866-1911); second, the time of institutionalization (1911-1937); third, from the all-time low point (the author's Dutch *dieptepunt*) to a new relationship.

The following is a list of the Dutch provincials who came to Suriname, and in what years: J. Henri Schaap, 1871; Piet Oomen, 1882; Jan Kronenburg, 1896; Jan Lohmeijer, 1907; and August Beukers, 1914. In 1923 there was an extraordinary Roman visitation, made by a delegate of the General Council, Jerome Rabaey, then vice-provincial of the Belgian vice-province of Roseau in the Caribbean.

Rather remarkable was the extraordinary visitation of 1929; in this case the Roman delegate, Adolph Nederveen, was a member of the Suriname mission itself (he was in Suriname 1893-1930). The next visitation, in 1936, was done by the Dutch provincial, Aloys Saut¹⁰⁵. In 1945 the Roman delegate for the extraordinary visit was a Dutch father laboring in Brazil, Everard Padeloup (known as Alberto in Brazil).

A series of visitations by Dutch provincials after world War II began again as follows: in 1949, Charles Donker; in 1954, Henri van der Meulen; in 1957-1958, Jan Kluijskens; and in 1964, Christian Oomen. After that year, the more recent Dutch provincials came to Suriname to visit, but it is reported that they came on a more informal basis «according to the modern times».

In 1974 two members of the Roman Council, John Ruef and Ignaz Dekkers (the latter from the Dutch province) came for the visitation. In 1981 Ignaz Dekkers returned, this time with the Superior General, Joseph Pfab.

In the early days of the Suriname mission, the recesses were extremely detailed. For instance in 1871 J. Henri Schaap, besides repeating many items from the Rule, gave instructions on how to pause within the *Hail Mary*, said that the brothers are always to show reverence to the fathers, and left directives about the kind of underwear to be used. (Later, when Schaap himself was stationed in Suriname, he was more realistic¹⁰⁶.)

¹⁰⁵ One might note here that a Dutch provincial did not visit Suriname between 1914 and 1936. World War I had intervened, but it was also a period when disputes were warm-to-hot over who was to carry the financial burdens of the mission. The three-way relationship (among vicariate, vice-province, and the Netherlands province) was far from optimal.

¹⁰⁶ Archief Redemptoristen, Nederland, 4141.

In 1896 the provincial Jan Kronenburg was mostly positive and complimentary of the men in his recesses. However, when the redacted version came from the Superior General Matthias Raus, he had added his own comments, stressing that the missionaries had to be more religious than pastoral men, and that evangelical zeal could not replace keeping the Redemptorist Rule.

In 1908 the provincial Jan Lohmeijer, among other things, noted that the door of the religious enclosure was too often left open, urged more «modesty of the eyes» in the dining room, and alleged that cleanliness was lacking in parts of the houses¹⁰⁷.

In 1912 the vice-provincial announced to his men that their Dutch provincial had asked the Superior General Murray about the use of bicycles. Roman approval had come, but *for use only outside the city of Paramaribo!* We are left to reflect on how a high level of governance was employed to decide matters that seem picayune today¹⁰⁸.

When one reads these recesses, it is clear that they intended conformity with a type of religious life that came from a previous time-frame, and from a European mindset. They were apparently generated out of an underlying fear that Redemptorist life would disintegrate if mission life were accorded too many adaptations. «The Rule» was predicated on communities of ten, twenty or more confreres. The Suriname situation was being lived in twos and threes. «Community life and prayer» in Europe meant gathering three and four times a day. Account was not taken of the fact that in the interior of Suriname a missionary might be travelling for weeks at a time to reach his flock in the marshes and jungles, during which time he had no contact with a fellow Redemptorist.

Things did not change until long after World War II, when a newer, more mature model of Redemptorist missionary life began to evolve. The old, top-down approach gave way to a greater situational understanding, and to a more dialogic unravelling of difficult concerns. More attention was being paid to the branch

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4134.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8756, November 11, 1912.

of theology called missiology, which reflected on comparative methods of reaching out to God's people, utilizing such disciplines as anthropology, communication theory and cross-cultural understanding. Alongside missiology there was the influence of black theology and of liberation theology.

In the midst of these changes came the impact of Vatican Council II, and national independence for Suriname with its momentum toward Surinamization, as described earlier. It is quite remarkable that during these momentous changes, very few Redemptorists left religious life, priesthood, or their posting in Suriname.

It has been said that this tropical mission had been stamped with the spirit and presence of Blessed Peter Donders. He and other Redemptorists were looked upon reverently as trendsetters.

The final recesses to come to Suriname were those of Superior General Joseph Pfab. They were positive in tone, and came in the year 1982 when Donders was declared Blessed by Pope John Paul II. Pfab's set of recesses were based on the 1981 visitation report of his Vicar General, Father Ignaz Dekkers¹⁰⁹. Father Pfab thanked the Redemptorist priests and brothers, praising them for so many years of dedication. He asked them to reflect on certain points: being in tune with the needs of the local church; having clear pastoral priorities; on how they fit into the life of the Surinamese church and society; a willingness to suffer trials in coming to mutual understanding through dialogue; how they might deepen their faith and self-sacrifice; their willingness to pursue ongoing education and study; and the value of mutual support in community. Pfab's thoughts impressed the men as being in line with the trends of thought already current among the Redemptorists of Suriname. They noticed that he did not refer to the precarious stability of their vice-province, or of its possibly coming to an end¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 8810; for the report of Ignaz Dekkers, see 8811.

¹¹⁰ For any researcher wishing to do a longitudinal, analytic study of these visitation recesses, she or he may want to consult JOOP VERNOOIJ, *Redemptoristen in Suriname*, OSO (Journal for Surinamistiek) 17/2 (November 1998),

12. – *The Influence of Vice-Province Chapters*

It was not until after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that a greater degree of self-governance at the vice-province level existed in the Redemptorist Congregation. Prior to that, a vice-province may have met in sessions called chapters, but their main purpose was to choose a delegate to attend the sessions of a General Chapter in Rome.

In this section, then, our focus will be only in the post-Vatican II era, when the vice-province of Suriname, in its various chapters, entered into the processes of renewal as called for in the Vatican II decree *Perfectae Caritatis*¹¹¹. Before Suriname could take its first step, however, the Dutch «mother province» had already in 1967 held its initial post-Vatican II chapter. In this chapter the Dutch province authored a document entitled *Our Responsibility for the Church of Suriname and [Northeast] Brazil*.

The Redemptorists in Suriname looked kindly on some parts of this document, but, predictably, resented other parts. The Surinamese point of view was that, without full experience of life in Suriname, a distant body (i.e., the Dutch province chapter) could not speak with credibility. So in Suriname «the word of the moment» was *patience*.

When the first Suriname vice-province chapter after Vatican II got underway in November 1969, the first order of business was the election of a vice-provincial and his Council. Then followed discussions on the mechanics of conducting future chapters, and some considerations specifically on religious life. But attention soon turned to truly *pastoral concerns*, especially regarding how Redemptorist ministry would be coordinated with the vision of the new Bishop of Paramaribo, Aloysius Zichem, C.S.S.R. This 1969 session was a good beginning at renewal as requested by Vatican Council II¹¹².

194-203. This work provides notes, statistics and some remarks concerning the daily mode of life. See also *Archief Redemptoristen Nederland*, 8756 (the whole packet of the ordinary yearly visitations by the local vice-provincial).

¹¹¹ There were, of course, subsequent Vatican documents guiding the Religious of the church toward renewal, but they flowed from *Perfectae Caritatis*.

¹¹² Formal publication of the first vice-provincial Statutes which grew

The second session of the chapter was scheduled for the next year, 1970. The membership of this session was composed of *all* the Redemptorists in Suriname and, for the most part, the focus was again very pastoral. Attention was given to such subjects as service to the local church, contact with others in the Caribbean region and with the Dutch Council of Missionary Societies, coordination of outreach projects with whatever finances were available, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, acculturation of ministry to the Surinamese society, and an updated mission spirituality. However, of necessity, some practical topics were also treated, for example, the relationship with the Dutch province, and strict budgeting procedures.

It is impossible, and beyond our scope, to give a detailed report of all the chapter sessions from 1969 to 1991. Suffice it to say that in these years the Redemptorists of Suriname were faithful to their calling. They fundamentally stood steadfast and loyal to the people of Suriname, the diocese of Paramaribo, the mother province in the Netherlands, and the Redemptorist General Council. By 1987 their number had decreased to a total of twenty-two, and by 1990, to a mere seventeen, with the youngest being fifty years old. They tried to address the reality and the dignity of their aging brothers and fathers. They established good relationships with the other religious ministering around them, and with the growing number of Surinamese laity heartily involved in ministry. While admitting with regret the absence of numerous native vocations, they rejoiced to see the elements of Surinamization in the church around them. One of the signs of an inculturated church was the diocesan catechetical and pastoral center which continued training so many lay ministers¹¹³.

It is worth noting that the Redemptorist loyalty of which we speak during the post-Vatican II renewal era was maintained

from this 1969 chapter session did not come until 1976; see *Statuten Vice-provincie CSSR Paramaribo*, (Paramaribo 1976).

¹¹³ *20 Jaar Bisdóm Paramaribo. Gisteren-Vandaag-Morgen. Verslag van het Kerkcongres in de Steigers 1978-1979 [20 Years in the Diocese of Paramaribo. Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow. Report of the Church Congress: a Church in Scaffolding]*, Paramaribo 1979. In fact, the Sts. Peter & Paul Cathedral in Paramaribo was under reconstruction and filled with scaffolding.

even during the ravages of the «Internal War» that began in 1986 (and will be treated in the next section).

When a chapter session took place on April 5-6, 1989, it was becoming more evident that it was time to begin candid discussions about taking steps to end the Redemptorist vice-province of Suriname. The General Council in Rome made suggestions on how to move in this direction, and its suggestions were not unwelcome. To give up the existence of an independent Redemptorist unit was not a problem for the men who still remained in Suriname. There were to be other chapters over the next two years, with the last being held in May of 1991 at the St. Rose residence in Paramaribo. These final chapters, as we will see, were to determine the specific details of Redemptorist presence in the near future.

13. – *The Challenge of Wartime*

Before describing the final days of the vice-province of Suriname, we would be amiss if we failed to recall how the confreres passed through the days of two World Wars (1914-1918, and 1940-1945), and even a third war, a Surinamese conflict referred to as «The Internal War».

In this Dutch colony the main problem during wartime was isolation. Being cut off from the Netherlands (and other countries) did not bode well when Suriname had grown to depend on *imports* and managed to exist with limited industry. It was far from being self-supporting in many things necessary or useful for daily living. True, there was local cultivation of such things as rice, sugar, coffee, fruit, and tobacco. But Suriname was a country that had to import country staple items like salt and butter, as well as liquor, wines, and paper products.¹¹⁴

During the First World War the vice-provincial Leonard Verheijen had to initiate an in-house rationing of certain items which ranged from tobacco products to personal clothing and bed-linens¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁴ Archief Redemptoristen Nederland, 4145-4153.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4149.

World War II brought other adjustments in living conditions. American army units soon arrived with troops assigned to protect the bauxite mining. (Bauxite, of course, was vital to the production of the aluminum necessary for warplanes and other weapons). The presence of the soldiers' spending money was a welcome item, but not so the rapid increase in prostitution.

Another factor at this time was the government-ordered internment of German citizens in Suriname, including Moravian missionaries. Their camp was placed just south of Paramaribo at Copieweg in the Catholic Javanese mission center with its farm, school buildings, and other facilities. After the war the mission was able to retrieve the use of its buildings and properties, and in very good condition.

At the beginning of the Second World War, the Redemptorist vice-provincial, Leonard Verheijen, wrote to his men that their wartime slogan was: «Be Sparing in All Things». Other directives followed: one portion only of potatoes, rice, meat, fish, vegetable, or eggs was to be served; only on big feasts was there to be a second portion; only inexpensive fruits were to be bought; only small portions of beer and wine, if available; no canned foods; one cigar only on major feastdays at evening recreation; strong alcohol was for the sick and feeble and only by advice of a physician.

It is presumed that these limitations by Verheijen were for the larger communities, the ones located in Paramaribo. The conditions in the outstations were different and very unpredictable; there one did the best one could from day to day. Life after the World War II continued to be hard, but in the years of development leading up to Suriname's autonomy life for the missionaries and their people saw some economic improvement.

Then at the end of the twentieth century Suriname suffered yet another war (the third war experience for the Redemptorists). This was what has come to be termed the «Internal War», which lasted from 1986 until 1992. The democratic society, in existence since the gaining of independence in 1975, was dissolved by a military coup in February 1980. During the years that followed, the governing of Suriname was by a military dictatorship that spelled nothing less than brutality and intimidation.

Then in 1986 a group of Maroons, Jungle Commandos, sponsored by some Surinamese and, at times, by collaborators in the Netherlands, started a guerilla war, acting (according to the military) as terrorists. The location of some of the worst fighting was in East Suriname, in territory lying between the Commewijne and Marowijne Rivers. This region had Catholic Church outstations (Moengo and Albina) which were cared for by two Redemptorists. Both of these men witnessed killings, other violence, and ruthless damage. The government sent a ship for evacuation of the inhabitants of Albina on the French Guyana border. The last person to be placed in the boat was Father Herman Holtzer. Later it was determined that Albina's church and parish house had been burned, as was the convent of the Franciscan Sisters, Missionaries of Mary, who had been in Albina since 1974¹¹⁶.

Thousands of people from East Suriname fled to neighboring French Guyana. The priests and catechists from the Surinamese side visited the refugee camps, trying to restore the school system and helping the people with medical needs.

Some priests were involved in resistance movements against the brutal military personnel. Choosing to remain at Moengo and Abadoekondre (both west of Albina), Father Harrie Heijkers was an eyewitness to the damage done to schools and small churches. It was not until 1992 that a peace accord was reached, following negotiations in which Paramaribo's Bishop Zichem, and various other Redemptorists, along with Moravian ministers, were all involved. Afterwards they faced the demanding task of resettling their people, reconstructing villages, and attempting to seek redress at the court of the Organization of American States for violations of human rights¹¹⁷.

For the Surinamese this period of conflict meant bloodshed, destruction, and chaos. It was a challenge for the church

¹¹⁶ The congregation of Franciscan Sisters, Missionaries of Mary, was founded by Hélène de Chapottin de Neuville in 1877 in France; they were also working in French Guyana (Guyane). The small group in East Suriname was made up of members from various nations, being involved in pastoral work, catechesis and social welfare training.

¹¹⁷ Harrie HEJKERS, *Zeven maanden werk onder de vluchtelingen in Frans-Guyana [Seven Months Working for the Refugees in French Guyana]*, in *Ter Informatie*, 1973, 25-40.

to maintain any balance, with immense energy drain on everyone-physically, emotionally, and mentally. Recovery and reconciliation has been a long-term process, as the nation collectively has tried to re-establish the level of economic and political hopefulness that came with independence in 1975.

14. – *The final Days of the Vice-Province of Suriname*

To extraordinary vice-province chapter in January of 1990 came all the Suriname Redemptorists who were able to attend. It was then that the decision was definitively made to terminate their Suriname ministry as it had existed for approximately a century and a quarter.

This chapter decision was followed by a decree of the Redemptorist General Government on January 7, 1990, which stated that the vice-province of Suriname would no longer exist as of February 2, 1992.

In 1991 the provincial of the Netherlands, Piet Nelen¹¹⁸, paid a paternal visit to the confrères in Suriname. Subsequently he sent a report back to the men in Suriname indicating his observations which confirmed that it was time for the suppression of the vice-province. Basically, he said, the men, through no fault of their own, simply no longer had the strength or the «internal cohesion» to meet the challenges of the mission, nor to maintain a vibrant unit of the congregation.

On January 1, 1992, the former vice-province canonically became a house of the Netherlands province, with any Redemptorists who remained in Suriname assuming thereafter voting rights in the Netherlands province, being subject to a single local superior, and having the right to send a representative from Suriname to the provincial chapters¹¹⁹. Thus ended that formal re-

¹¹⁸ Eric CORSIUS, (ed.), *Een missionair tijdperk. Balans en perspectief. Teksten voor Piet Nelen C.Ss.R.* [A Missionary Era, Balance and Perspective: Texts for Piet Nelen, C.Ss.R.], Wittern 2007.

¹¹⁹ In 1992 the representative of Suriname at a provincial chapter in the Netherlands reported the difficult circumstances suffered by the regional community of remaining Redemptorists in Suriname; the confrères were facing economic and political instability, and, in his opinion, a certain stagnation in church administration. Yet, this small group was glad to be able to help the

lationship which had existed between the diocese of Paramaribo and the Surinam unit of the Redemptorist congregation. Later, in 1997, if a Redemptorist chose to remain in Suriname, he was obliged to make a personal contract with the diocese of Paramaribo (as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate had previously done since 1975).

15. – *An Evaluation of the Redemptorist Mission in Suriname, 1866-1992*

It has now (in 2008) been sixteen years since the vice-province of Suriname has ceased to exist, and it may be fair to say that more time is needed before a proper analytical evaluation of the mission can be offered. Nevertheless, some attempt will be made here to give what might be termed an «interim evaluation».

Father Alphons Verheggen, who had spent twenty years of service in Suriname (1908-1928), recorded his memoirs 1944, in which he also included a number of evaluative insights¹²⁰. We summarize them here as a starting point toward a larger evaluation.

Verheggen commented extensively on the ongoing issue of the relationship between the Vicar Apostolic and the Redemptorist superiors. At the centerpiece of that issue was the 1907 appointment of Bishop Jacques Meeuwissen, rather old and unhealthy. Verheggen also records the negative reactions when, immediately after Meeuwissen, Theodore van Roosmalen was brought over from the Brazilian mission in 1911 to be Vicar Apostolic, although there were competent candidates present in Suriname.

On the other hand, Verheggen calls attention to the huge amount of good accomplished by van Roosmalen in his long years as head of the vicariate. To be specific, one can point to his

Paramaribo diocese in its critical situation, as the Redemptorists were focusing on two situations: first, training of laity for ministry, and, secondly, the efforts at rehabilitation in East Surinam after the Internal War of 1980-1992.

¹²⁰ *Herinneringen. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van onze missie in Suriname* (2nd ed., Rotterdam 1955).

fund raising in the Netherlands, his establishment of the Secretariate for the Suriname Mission, his editorship of the Catholic newspaper *De Surinamer*, the launching of the ministry among the Hindustani, and the foundation of a hat weaving school for young women¹²¹.

Not content with mentioning those accomplishments of van Roosmalen, Verheggen enthusiastically quotes these growth statistics during the bishop's *active* tenure (1911-1940):

	1911	1940
Total Catholics	21.000	32.000
Total churches/chapels	37	70
Total religious houses	6	18
Total parishes and stations	7	12
Total villages/plantations regularly visited	55	98
Total schools	57	87
Total boarding schools	0	11
Total orphanages	0	2 ¹²²

No doubt Verheggen's principal, and oft-stated, concern was the lack of preparation for men who were named to serve in Suriname¹²³. He knew that the University of Nijmegen in the

¹²¹ This school was a result of the fiftieth anniversary observance of the 1863 abolition of slavery. The vicariate cooperated with this special citizens' initiative. A similar successful industry at Curaçao in the Dutch Antilles was the model for this «cottage industry». With the Sisters of Roosendaal (and specifically Sister Gonzales Klijn), Father Alphonse Verheggen started the school in 1913. It was a great success. The school participated at the Yearmarket Utrecht (1922), at the World Expo Rome (1925), and the Indian Expo Arnhem (1928). The school could not cope with proliferation of imported hats from abroad and had to close in the 1930s. See Alphonse VERHEGGEN, *Hoedenvlecht-industrie [A Hat Weaving Industry]*, in *Een halve eeuw in Suriname 1866-1916* (A Booklet Celebrating Fifty years of the Sisters of Roosendaal in Suriname) Amsterdam 1916, 85-88. Pictures of the school can be found in Janneke VAN DLK, et al., *Fotografie in Suriname 1904-1937*, Libri Musei Surinamensis 3, KIT Amsterdam 2007, 49-54.

¹²² VERHEGGEN, *Herinneringen*, 25. It must be remembered that because of World War II, Bishop Theodore van Roosmalen could not return to Suriname from his 1939 *ad limina* visit to the Vatican. He resigned his See in 1946.

¹²³ Verheggen offered no less than nine pages (*ibid.*, 28-37) of fresh and useful suggestions for this advanced training. It seems that these suggestions were never heeded by the provincial authorities.

Netherlands had a chair of missiology, but he noted its lack of Suriname-specific instruction, an area which could have been provided by missionaries returning from Suriname.

So now we turn to our own interim evaluation of the 126 years of official presence in the church of Suriname by a unit of the Redemptorist Congregation. There was never a mass movement toward Catholicism among the people. However, from the beginning there was the presence of the Moravians who had begun to enroll members in its church years before the Redemptorists arrived, and continued doing so thereafter. (As noted, the strength of the Moravians waned as anti-German sentiment increased in World War II).

One element that accounted for the Catholic growth which did slowly happen was the respect shown by our missionaries to the cultural and religious heritage of the free and slave blacks. Their language was learned and used fluently by the Redemptorists, and, in general, a kindly consideration was shown toward them. The same can be said for the attention given to other ethnic groups (Chinese, Indonesian, and Hindustani). Another element conducive to growth was the importance accorded to general schools, boarding schools, orphanages, hospitals and the leprosaria¹²⁴.

As for the development of native vocations, this had mostly disappointing results. Relatively few young Surinamese looked in the direction of becoming Redemptorists, and of those who did, few persevered. Much the same can be said of the congregation of native women religious founded by Bishop van Roosmalen in 1932 which never reached a total number higher than 22. The sisters started a foundation in Brazil (Campina Grande and Belem do Para). By 2000 their number had decreased to 11¹²⁵. What do these vocational figures mean? Was a church ministry vocation not attractive? Did religious life appear too «foreign» to the candidates who did come? Was the influence of family and the importance of progeny too overwhelming? What was the

¹²⁴ We have previously noted that the Catholic schools strictly followed the Dutch educational system; this, in retrospect, may *not* have been in the best interests of the Surinamese.

¹²⁵ Mildred CAPRINO, *Dochters van Maria Onbevelekt Ontvangen: Zusters van Paramaribo, 11 februari 1932–11 februari 2002; 70 jaar, Paramaribo 2002*.

pertinent comparative experience in nearby mission fields? These are questions open to further historical research; any attempt at answers now would be conjectural?

The establishment of the *PDS* (The Father Donders Foundation in 1940) was initially more effective than it is now. However, as it continues to be overseen by devoted laity and provides limited benefit to the financing of Roman Catholic needs, it may well be judged one of the more propitious Redemptorist legacies.

The process of «Surinamization» after Vatican Council II, acknowledging and incorporating native traditions and tastes into church life, surely gave a certain vitality to lay initiative and involvement. However, its long-term benefit may yet be in doubt.

If one uses the criterion of «veneration» by the people of some Redemptorists who served the Suriname church, then one may say it is alive, although not altogether strong. Blessed Peter Donders, of course, remains as one to whom Suriname grants unquestioned veneration. His self-sacrificing care of people with leprosy and his holiness of life are dearly remembered.

Several Redemptorists have been honored by streets and even schools being named for them. Others have had statues of different sorts erected to mark the places where they served. These marks of appreciation have honored the following in names of roads in Paramaribo: Bishops Willem Wulfingh and Theodore van Roosmalen, Fathers Joseph Weidmann (d. September 15, 1962), Arnold Borret (d. June 2, 1888), Adriaan Verschure (d. July 7, 1980), Henry Ruijter (d. November 9, 1966). Schools have been named for other Redemptorists: for Piet van der Pluym (d. November 24, 1961) at Brownsweg (District of Sipaliwini), and for Jaap Willebrands (d. October 10, 2000) at Pikin Slee (District of Sipaliwini). The diocese honored Father Herman (Jozef) van Nimwegen, inspector of the R.C. schools, giving his name to the Herman Jozef school (Latour) in 1960.

Today the Catholic Church in Suriname is held in high esteem if one can judge from its invited presence marking anniversaries, holidays, and other civic occasions. If mistakes were made in the past (such as some lack of respect for the ancient cultural and religious dispositions of the Indigenous peoples), it can be

said that those mistakes are now in the process of being corrected. The Catholic Church is discovering the Gospel *in the people* and articulating that phenomenon with wholehearted appreciation. There is an implicit admission that the Creator loved these people and the Spirit of God was at work among them long before any missionary ever arrived. Self-criticism and analysis in this regard can only bode well for the future.

Meanwhile any Redemptorist who came to minister in Suriname can rejoice to have been an instrument in the resplendent fulfillment of *Copiosa Redemptio*, the plentiful Redemption whose proclamation remains at the heart of Redemptorist missionary life.

POSTSCRIPT

As we write, there are seven Redemptorists maintaining our presence in Suriname. Three of them are the native Surinamese mentioned by name earlier in this article. Of the other four, one is Dutch (Father Sebastian Mulder), one is of Irish origin (Father Brendan Callanan), and two are Brazilian (Fathers Dionisio de Foltran Zamuner and José Vergilio da Silva). The union of Redemptorists of Brazil (URB), an association of major superiors of the nine provinces and vice-provinces of the Congregation in that country, hopes to send more personnel to Suriname to bolster our numbers there. Meanwhile, the General Council of the Redemptorists is in the process of redefining the structures that govern the missionaries in Suriname.

SUMMARY

From 1866 until 1992 two-hundred and twenty Netherlands Redemptorists served the people in the vice-province of Suriname (once, Dutch Guiana). At first they had little to guide them, as «foreign missions» were still new to Redemptorist apostolic life. Still this mission continued, amid tropical heat and disease, to care for a diverse flock of city dwellers, plantation workers, lepers, and indigenous tribes in the deep interior. The author, a veteran of thirty-two years in Suriname, tells of confreres learning – among other languages – Sranan Tongo, Hindi, Chinese, Arowaks, and Carib. Besides deaths from natural causes, thirteen others gave their lives while serving the people: by drownings, in road accidents, one in an air crash, another murdered by robbers – and four from leprosy. Although he did not die from leprosy, our own Blessed Peter Donders is an international figure for his work in Batavia among those with this disease.

The vice-province officially came to an end in 1992, but seven Redemptorists continue the traditions established by the valiant confreres before them. These seven are sponsored by the Union of Redemptorists of Brazil (URB).

RÉSUMÉ

De 1866 à 1992, deux cent vingt religieux Rédemptoristes hollandais, Pères et Frères, ont œuvré au Suriname (autrefois: Guyane hollandaise). Au début ils avaient peu de repères pour les guider, car les «missions étrangères» étaient un nouveau domaine dans la vie apostolique des Rédemptoristes. Cependant malgré la chaleur des tropiques, malgré les maladies, les missionnaires continuèrent leur travail parmi les colons, les planteurs, les indigènes, les lépreux, les tribus de l'intérieur. L'auteur, qui a travaillé trente-deux ans au Suriname, nous raconte la vie des confrères qui ont dû apprendre des langues telles que le Sranan Tongo, le Hindi, le Chinois, l'Arawakien, le Karib. Outre les décès pour cause naturelle, treize Religieux donnèrent leur vie en servant le peuple: par noyade, accidents de la route, un dans un accident aérien, un autre assassiné par des voleurs, quatre sont décédés de la lèpre. Bien que notre Bx Peter Donders ne soit pas mort de la lèpre, il est devenu une figure internationalement reconnue pour son travail parmi les lépreux de Batavia.

La Vice-Province cessa officiellement d'exister en 1992, mais sept Rédemptoristes, soutenus par l'U.R.B. (Union des Rédemptoristes du Brésil), continuent l'œuvre de leurs vaillants prédécesseurs.