

13-B-70

MALONNE A CENTER FOR MEETINGS AND FOR PRAYER

Origin

The dream of having a special House of Prayer where young people would be welcome was not new when in 1981 and 1984, the District Chapter for South-Belgium expressed the wish that a Prayer Community be founded near the Mutien-Marie Center. This idea was approved and encouraged by the Superior General and his Council.

The retreat at Orval in January 1985, made it possible to set up the project. Previously, the Visitor had made inquiries to find out what Brothers would be willing to participate in new foundations. At the Visitor's request, and led by Brother Jean Thomas, four Brothers got interested in the project: Brothers Pierre Golard, André Rousseau, Joseph Verdegem and Roger Maloir. Brother Maurice Dacht who was finishing his career as a teacher, was also available.

Almost every Wednesday during the first trimester of 1985, these six Brothers met at Malonne from 4:30 to 6:30 to draw up a community program. To succeed in such an enterprise demanded considerable consultation about the style of life, the times for prayer and the mission of such a Center.

Once the community program was drawn up, it was decided that the inauguration of the new Community would take place on Holy Thursday, April 4, 1985. In the presence of Brother Visitor, a representative of the District Council and of some Brothers who had helped arrange the building, the six candidates committed themselves to live the Community program. Four of them were to be permanent members. Brother Jean Thomas, the Directory of a nearby Community, accepted the responsibility for the house and took part twice a week in Community meetings. Brother Roger joined the Community on Saturday evening.

The Aim

The name of the Community, chosen by the Visitor, indicates the aims pursued. Prayer and welcome are the key words, the *raison d'être* of our living together.

As a meeting place, it welcomes persons of all ages, particularly young people, who want to share the life of the Community by spending several hours or several days of recollection there. There are seven rooms available so the Community can receive small groups of young people for retreats, or groups of religious who are looking for a place to get together. Our prospectus proposes an adaptable schedule for these people according to the demand.

The Community is very open to the parish. Animators of the liturgy and groups of catechists have a comfortable room for their meetings. Several Lenten activities take place there.

The community is a house of prayer in the first place for its own members who assure three special times for prayer each day: morning, noon and night. Complete independence with regard to television allows time for dialogue among the Brothers of the Community. Free time for adoration is foreseen each evening. Guests are invited to share our prayer life.

A library for spiritual reading is open to the public and to persons residing in the house. Records, cassettes, audio-visual montages offer the possibility of spiritual enrichment. Documentation on different themes is available for students.

Functioning

One Brother having been named to another post, the Community actually numbers three: one permanent member, one working half-time and another who teaches full time.

The Community welcomes visiting Brothers, acquaintances looking for a place of retreat, small groups or parish groups. The center has been functioning a year and a half and is slowly becoming known. A group of secondary students stayed there for a night; a team of young Focolari organized a week-end. The groups that stayed overnight with us have not been numerous so far, but we hope, next year, to welcome retreat groups from our schools and organize several week-ends for young people who want to share Lasallian community life. One experiment was made.

Days of great affluence at the Pilgrim Center in honor of Brother Mutien Marie and parish activities (visiting the sick or teaching catechism in

the parish) are fields of apostolate which complement our specific mission.

Every month, at the Mutien-Marie Center, our House of Prayer organizes and animates a prayer-vigil for vocations. The Brothers from near-by communities and some parishioners participate. On this occasion, a periodical, "Prayer and Vocation", is written and sent to each community of the District.

Our house could also become a place to accompany young people in search of their vocation or during their postulancy.

Insertion

Insertion into the parish of Malonne was accomplished progressively and happily. The Community is very well received. It has just opened its doors to a group of parishioners who want to have a sewing room. A priest from Zaire who works in the parish on Saturday and Sunday is welcomed and lodged in our home.

We hope to establish contact with the students of Saint-Berthuin's Institute, located in front of our house. We have pointed out to the teachers and professors how we can be useful to them. During Lent, several prayer meetings and group exchange discussions were held in our oratory.

The day of prayer proposed to each community in preparation for the District Chapter furnished us the occasion to make documentary posters on the Founder, the Institute and Young Lasallians and to invite some of the professors to our chapel.

The Directors of the Institution have been very kind to us, but so far it has been hard to establish contact with the students. The layout of our house does not help matters. We hope, however, progressively, to increase contacts, especially through the library. Some parishioners undoubtedly will also come to share our prayer.

Conclusion

It is too soon to make an evaluation of our experience. If all our dreams have not come true, partly because of the layout of the house, the result is still positive. The Brothers of the Community are happy; the parish appreciates our collaboration; our guests are happy with the welcome they receive.

May prayer help us to discern and to carry out the will of God in our regard.

Brother Maurice DACHET

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