

AN INTRODUCTORY REMARK TO THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MGR. L.H. RUTTEN

Some years ago the autobiography of Mgr. Rutten was published as supplements to "News from the Generalate".

After that we were asked by several brothers to publish it as one booklet. Herewith we gladly comply with this request.

The text we give here is not written in the exact vocabulary used by Mgr. Rutten. As a matter of fact he had great difficulties with the Dutch language when talking as well as when writing. He managed to abuse it a great deal. He mainly used the Maastricht dialect or French in everyday speech.

Therefore we thought we had better adapt his text to present-day Dutch, as well as possible which makes reading much easier.

The text is practically the same as the one published earlier as supplements. We only rectified some inaccuracies and here and there a word or a sentence was translated differently.

Bro. Patricio Winters

Maastricht, December 1980

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

of Mgr. L.H. Rutten

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Introduction

I have made some notes in order to be able to give some information on the origin of my institutions and about myself, poor instrument.

I strongly believe I handed them to the Rev. Bro. Superior Bernardus in 1866. Now that it appears these notes have got lost, I started on 1st October 1867 to replace these, as well as possible, by new ones.

I believe I can see the divine guidance in the coming into being of these institutions and I would mind very much if I would seek my own glory in this matter through human weakness. I am convinced that man in itself is nothing and that all glory and honour is due to God and that everything good I could have done is only the work of Providence under the protection of Mary conceived immaculately, to whose aid I have always contributed everything and will remain contributing until my death.

Youth

I was born in 1809 in the evening of 8th December, the festival of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. The day after I was baptized. My godfather and godmother were Christianus Schrijnemakers from Kerkrade and Maria Hustinx, née Rutten.

From the very beginning I received a Christian education in my parental home, especially through my grandmother Maria Lousberchs, I got a good and thorough religious formation, as I had lost my mother on 16th April 1816. My first Communion took place on 21st March 1821 and on 3rd October 1821 I became a pupil of the Latin School in this place.

The first school-year was favourable for me, because I studied diligently. I got all first prizes in Latin, French and Low-German, but on account of this I became the favourite of my father and grandmother and got everything I longed for: money, pigeons, hens etc...

From that moment my study became a failure. All day long I occupied myself with my pleasures and the result of it was that I only got second prizes during the next school-year; during the third year, I think I got only honourable mentions. After that I was only a moderate student or even less and I didn't get any more prizes. I studied little and had many friends, good ones as well as bad ones. The only thing I wished was to become a farmer later on. I was often in the country and took pity on those who studied hard. It was not necessary for me to know Latin, because I liked the peasant class or the brewer class and I wanted to become at least a distiller and a brewer which my dear father was too.

The result of this was that, when I had finished those four Latin classes, which my brother Lambert had also attended, I did not want to go on studying. In spite of all admonitions by my late father and by others, urged by him to do so, I left the college on 20th August 1827.

Just as the other children of our family I got the opportunity to learn to ride on horseback and also to take dancing-lessons and to attend musical performances and thus I was taken up with the world. But I also had to go and work at an office with solicitor Simons in order to be able to look after my father's affairs later on (he did not want two sons occupying themselves with the same affairs).

I spent the first months industriously as a writer, but as I had not much to do at the office of the above mentioned gentleman, and I also hated always having to write out duns to citizens and farmers I gradually withdrew from this occupation. I was delighted in taking many walks with my father to his estate at St. Pieter etc...

Becoming a priest ?

But during work at Mr. Simons' I came to a better frame of mind.

I became much more religious and gradually came to the conclusion, if it were God's will, to resume my studies and to prepare myself, if possible, for the priesthood. I believe my object was most sacred in doing this. For I was thankful for the Lord that He had called me and I wanted to put myself into the service of fellow-people.

However, it took me great pains and I needed some months to make this resolution known to my dear father. At last in his dark bedroom I requested him to be allowed to study again. He asked me what I wanted to be. I gave him a doubtful answer, but he seemed to be satisfied and said to me: "You may study again on condition that you make progress".

Study to be a priest

As I was already 19 and did not want to go to school again, I was allowed to take a good private teacher, Mr. Novent.

So I started studying again with great zeal and though I had forgotten a lot, because I had neglected my study and had not been working at it for three years, I made so much progress, that after nine months I could already start studying rhetoric. But in September the Belgian Revolution broke out and my study suffered by it. As many young people joined the army, I asked my confessor Mr. A. Simons what to do. He advised me very much against this, because he could not agree with the purpose of it. That's why I continued my study and could offer myself at Liege in 1831 to go and study philosophy at Rolduc. I passed my exam and I got permission to start as a student of philosophy at the opening of the seminary on 17th October 1831. In those days minor seminaries were still unknown.

I thought we would be treated as university-students: comfortable rooms, heating, taking walks and going out when we liked to do so, etc., but that was a disappointment. We got one room for three students without heating; smoking was prohibited. We were under strict discipline. We had no more privileges than students of the lower departments etc. Although I had a hard time, I accepted all this with courage, because I was strongly determined to serve God and to wipe out my former faults and sins by contrition. I studied more than was customary, I did not loose a single moment, wanted to finish more in one year than was possible in two and I weakened in such a way, that I had to live on a diet during a great part of those two years. During the latter part of my two-year-philosophical course I could not really study anymore.

At the end of the course I still received the tonsure from Mgr. van Bommel.

After Rolduc I was allowed to enter the major seminary at Liege in October 1833. There I revealed my difficulty to my confessor, that I was afraid not to be able to work for my fellow-people or only to work very little for them and that I preferred to give over the study. However, he advised me to continue and not let myself put off by much study. I was only keen on working for God and followed his advice.

I stayed at the seminary of Liege only from October 1833 until April 1834 and there I received

the four minor orders. The commander-in-chief of Maastricht that was in state of siege left the choice to us either to go abroad or to enter the seminary of Brabant (Bois-le-Duc). However, I wished to stay at Liege and to say goodbye to Maastricht, because I thought I could be more useful in the diocese of Liege (there must have been a shortage of priests at that time), but through special circumstances I went to Bois-le-Duc (Herlaer) after all to continue my study, although I preferred to go to Liege.

The change from Liege to Herlaer did not leave me unperturbed. After a two days' journey I arrived at the seminary of Bois-le-Duc. I didn't know anything at all about the customs of the region, about the habits of the students, about their sacred simplicity. In a word: everything was a disappointment to me, but I at once decided to subject myself to everything, even if it would cost me my life. Soon I felt happy.

And six months later already also other students from Maastricht turned up. On 4th June 1835 I became a subdeacon at Grave and on 27th May 1836 a deacon at Bois-le-Duc. On 25th March 1837 I was ordained by Mgr. van Wijckersloot in the chapel of the countryseat Duinzicht at Oegstgeest near Leyden.

On the side of the weak

If I had not been suffering from bad stomach-aches or other indispositions, it would have been my fervent wish to leave for the mission, even before I had been ordained. But because that was practically impossible for me, I had made up my mind, if I could not devote myself to spiritual care, to occupy myself with educating poor children. I was incited to this by our very Reverend President van de Ven, who repeatedly said to me: "If only a hundred poor children a year will get a good religious education from you, your life as a priest is worth more than when you work as a curate in a parish etc." This encouraged me to go and educate the poor youth. And assisted by a good friend, Reverend Mr. Bogaers, steps were taken at my ordination to become director of the poor children at "Den Noenhof" (an orphanage in Maastricht). If that would happen I was to yield a very considerable amount of money from my funds to provide for myself. But the good God, under Mary's mediation, had different intentions and the trustees had quite different plans from admitting a priest.

In order to foster the work for the poor children the very Reverend President van de Ven of the seminary in Bois-le-Duc proposed to Mgr. Den Dubbelden to ordain me before the appointed date, but this was declined. My companion, Mr. Germain, (who belonged to the same course as I did) might be very disappointed, finding, that he was subordinated to me.

But at my ordination the above mentioned Reverend strongly urged that I should at once leave for my native-town to start this work. But in the beginning working for my poor children, I met with opposition from the side of my good dear father as well as from the side of some clergymen. They wanted me to work in a parish as a curate etc. But supported by my spiritual leaders and because it was my firm decision, I wrote a letter a short time before my ordination (see the copy of it among my papers) which armed me for ever against the attacks of those who were dear to me and owing to that letter, all trials stopped.

Ordination

I was happy to be ordained in the chapel belonging to Mgr. van Wijckersloot at Oegstgeest near Leyden on 25th March 1837. On 28th March 1837 I celebrated my first Mass in the seminary of Haren and left for my native-town on 30th March, where on 2nd April I sang my first Holy Mass

in the parish-church of St. Matthias.

The very Reverend President van de Ven, who at my departure to Maastricht was confined to bed, because he was ill, gave me his blessing and said: "Go home and educate the poor boys there". Then also Sisters of Charity settled down here to give religious education to poor girls.

Beginning of the work

The right Reverend Dean of St. Servaas pointed out a place to me (the hall where the canopy is hanging now next to the new vestry). There I started with three children at an old desk.

This number quickly increased to 30, then to 50.

When I did not manage anymore to lord it over the larger number of children, Providence sent a good man to me, a former sergeant of the artillery (Kleitz), who wished to help me out of love for the Holy Religion. However, I did not want his help to remain unrewarded and so I gave him a small salary each month.

As the hall soon became too small, Dean van Baar gave me the place in the gallery, where at present the schools of the nuns are. I had this place put to order at my own expenses and "decorated" it with iron desks.

When I had been working there for six months, the number of children had increased to some 200 or 300. They regularly got an hour's religious instruction by turns twice a day. Besides clothes were distributed among a number of them.

In the month of October 1837 I furthermore started evening-classes for 120 young people from 20 to 25 in a house in Jew Street, where a teacher was living. Blessings were attached to this work that was led by that teacher, Mr. Lahey. But after some time I was visited by the captain of the secret police (Hennekens). He wrote down the names of the children and everything that happened. As one of the teachers was qualified, I was left in peace and I could teach those poor young men without a certificate and give them religious instruction. This qualified teacher only got 200 francs a year.

When I was in Verviers in November 1837 I was struck by the nursery-schools they had there and I decided also to start them in Maastricht. But I needed a room and I got it by buying part of the Red Lion in Bogaarden Street. I bought it from my father and now I had to look for means to be able to pay my debt. But, oh wonder: I intended to give a piece of land in exchange, but when I scanned the distributions of the possessions of my father among his children (that had already taken place in 1833), I discovered that he still owed me a capital (with some years of interest). And that was about sufficient to pay for what I had bought from him.

So the good God had helped me to start three different kinds of work in Maastricht. The furnishing of the nursery-school progressed successfully. In May 1838 it was opened and was under the supervision of a former shoemaker, Mr. Wijlre, and his two daughters. Besides having a house rent-free, they got a small reward, with which they were satisfied.

With a small amount of 500 to 600 guilders I could support these three institutions. Outsiders though a few thousands of guilders were needed for it. If I had accepted even more brothers or sisters, one would have considered me even richer.

Cooperation and opposition

However, I must confess that I met with special help, although not very much, from the clergy

etc. and especially from my good father who as regards his fortune was a great help to me. Yet there were moments when I was short of cash, but Providence and our dear Mother Mary never left me in the lurch and I often got support from persons from whom I did not expect it. When people outside our circles heard about the foundation of the nursery-school, I met with fierce resistance. They wanted a nursery-school of an "opposite direction" and the latter was announced in the newspaper, as if there wasn't any nursery-school yet.

But two virtuous curates made our school known through letters and advertisements and they went so far that our adversaries abandoned the foundation of their school. Owing to this I experienced more sympathy and I was incited to set up a second nursery-school. With the help of the clergy and of other persons a nursery-school for the parish of Our Lady was founded in 1839. Soon more than 100 children were admitted there under the leadership of three young people, whom I gave a small salary.

These nursery-schools were not free from supervision from the secret police, who came to check everything and they investigated all places in the nursery-school of the Capucijnengang. But also these torments ended, especially when I answered the captain of the police, who asked me if he was allowed to visit the poor children several times: "Sir, you may come as often as you like, but when you come as a secret policeman, I am frightened and I tremble for you". From that day I have never seen him again.

Some highly placed persons were anxious with me and warned me to be very careful, because the secret police watched me. Following their advice, putting my trust in the divine Providence and under the high protection of Mary conceived immaculately, to whom everything had been dedicated, I went on, not without suspicion, but yet with courage.

Help needed from religious

Soon, however, I experienced, that in the long run I could not manage with laymen and I began to think of religious people.

I went to Tilburg to Father Zwijsen to obtain religious there. But I did not succeed. Yet I had helped that Reverend Father by allowing two religious to work here at my nursery-schools for some time and by going with them to Verviers to teach them how to direct a nursery-school. And all this at my own expenses.

Founding my own Congregation ?

Later on I have taken the opportunity to go to Tilburg once more. When I was talking with the Reverend Father there, we made up our minds to found a congregation of brothers, if possible, in order to be able to continue the work. I expressed the wish that Father Zwijsen should start it, and that I was to get some brothers from him. But he refused and said that this was my affair. After having spent a night without sleep I told him in the morning that, relying on the divine assistance and under Mary's protection, I was willing to start, on condition that his Reverend would find me two persons. He promised. So the plan was fixed.

Immediately after this I went into retreat in Bois-le-Duc and on that occasion I put my plan to paper to present it to my spiritual authorities. But I was advised against it. On account of circumstances the public authorities would have objections against it and it would come to nothing at all. In answer to this I said that I would never start something - as I have always done henceforth - without advice and permission of my spiritual authorities.

During my retreat in 1839 I passed on my request to have it studied. At first I thought it would be refused. However, after having promised never to compromise a person, if my views would lead to wrong results or would fail. Professor Wilmer, secretary of his Reverend, answered some days later, that I had better take a chance on it.

First efforts...

Immediately after the retreat I set to work. In one day I took a ten hours' walk and arrived at Hasselt and after that at St. Truiden where I implored the superior of the brothers to help me, either by finding me brothers or by admitting two postulants and train them for Maastricht. But that was completely refused.

I stayed the night with the Rev. Franciscan Fathers and there I met Father Dirix, my former teacher of philosophy. I told him my plan and this kind Father stimulated me not to give up my plan. He promised me to write a letter to the Rev. Canon De Dekker in Gent, who was to help me to carry out my plans.

I left for Gent carrying this letter. When I was in Brussels, I ventured once more to call on the Brothers of Charity, but again my proposal was declined.

Mr. De Dekker in Gent answered my question positively and he assured me that he would inform the superior of the brothers at St. Truiden about it and that I could put up a postulant there. And this in spite of the fact that the general superior in Gent had told me that he would never permit such a thing; that such a venture by others had already failed and that he was strongly determined never to admit any postulants of other institutions. If one wished to start such an undertaking one could do so, but without his co-operation. So nothing was to be expected from that side. But relying on the promise of Mr. De Dekker, general director of the brothers, I returned to St. Truiden, told the superior about the affair and returned to Maastricht, happy and glad. At once I wrote to the parish-priest of Tilburg that he was to send me a postulant to lodge him at St. Truiden and that was done.

The "first one"

The first postulant was Franciscus Donkers from Bois-le-Duc, a boy of good will, who arrived in October 1839 and who was sent by me to St. Truiden. When he arrived there, he was told, that he could not be accepted, because they had not got a letter from the director of Gent. Fortunately I had given him a letter for Father Dirix and the latter accepted him in the monastery of the Franciscans and he at once informed me about one thing and another. In consequence of that letter I left for St. Truiden in October 1839 at nine o'clock in the evening. I arrived at the Franciscan monastery at about midnight. On the advice of the above mentioned Father I left for Gent the next day together with the postulant. But unfortunately the director had left the town. After having waited for a day I learned at his return that he had forgotten to pass on a thing or two. He handed me a letter for the house of St. Truiden and now I was so lucky to get my postulant put up at St. Truiden. Now I thought: "Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, thanks be to my good Mother Mary, things have started. Full of confidence I returned to Maastricht.

Some days later I received news from the postulant that he had great temptations. In a moving letter I roused him to perseverance. Some time later I was informed that the postulant had taken to his bed and had had a spitting of blood. I went to see him as soon as possible. He had recovered

a bit, but some days later I was informed that he had died. Frans Donkers died on 9th December 1839. I went to St. Truiden to pay for all the funeral-expenses and .spent the night in the religious house where I slept in the cupboard-bed on which there still were big bloodstains of the deceased. That struck me greatly.

Bernardus Hoecken to St. Truiden

When I had settled everything in the morning and paid for everything, I was assured - at my request - that I was allowed to send another postulant.

I immediately wrote to Tilburg and after some time I was informed that Father Zwijsen from Tilburg assured me that I was to get two new postulants. So there was an interval from 9th December to the last day of February, when two new postulants arrived, namely Mr. Hoecken from Tilburg and Mr. van Weert.

I was glad and as I expected new difficulties and as I had almost run out of money I went on foot to St. Truiden in the morning with the two postulants.

In the evening we arrived at the religious house of the Reverend Brothers. But the Superior Franciscus refused to accept them. What induced him to do so, I don't know, but he said that, as he had not heard anything for 3 months, he thought it was a matter done with. I protested, reminded him of his promises and begged him not to be the instrument of evil by preventing a good work and I told him that I refused to leave. Then he went to the Very Reverend Dean of St. Truiden to ask for his advice and finally the two postulants were allowed to stay.

The beginning in Maastricht

There they did their noviciate and (not without much opposition and refusal) were given the habit. In 1840 I could happily ask the two novices to come to Maastricht where they began to occupy themselves with the nursery-school for boys and girls in part of the room where now the religious house is situated in 'Capucijnengang'.

But before long I had to accept with sadness that one of the two novices from St. Truiden gave up his vocation to become a brother after having been in Maastricht for a very short time. Thus we slowly plodded on with one of the brothers from St. Truiden who had been appointed Superior in Maastricht, Bro. Superior Bernardus, and two more postulants. Beforehand they had been working at the nursery-school behind the "Oude Minderbroeders" and in November 1840 they were called to be accepted as postulants in the present-day religious house.

Founding the Congregation

On 23rd November 1840 I was so happy as to say the first Mass for them in a small room. (The annals of the Congregation say that this event took place on 8th December 1840.

On 21st November 1840 the oratory had been consecrated by the Rev. Dean van Baer of St. Servatius Church. This last date is considered to be the foundation-day of the Congregation).

On 8th December they put on their habits and appeared, dressed in this way, in the streets in Maastricht. Some days later they were at once ordered to appear before the captain of police. He asked them what habits they were wearing and who had given them permission to wear them. They simply answered they had no other habits and that they looked after poor children. He made a report and that was all.

The beginning of the brothers was most miserable.

When the number of postulants increased by 3, 2 others left so that, if we had not hoped for God's generous help, we should not have thought the foundation of the Congregation possible. For they had a small and wretched house, there were but few means, sometimes they lacked human consolation and they had got but little education. Very often one did not know where one stood, but through courage and perseverance the work of the Lord went on. There was some progress because at that time there was no religious house for brothers in Holland and a fairly large number of postulants presented themselves to become religious, so that in 1841 and 1842 the number increased.

A petition to the King

In the year 1841 freedom of education was longed for in our country and after the example of Belgium it was thought that this could be achieved here as well!

In June 1841 the King came to Maastricht. I asked Mgr. Paredis for advice and he gave me complete freedom to endeavour to be allowed to give primary education .

Father Bernardus, the great man of the Redemptorists, who was in Maastricht at the time, and some other gentlemen advised me to offer His Majesty a petition to obtain permission to teach at the nursery-schools for the poor in this town.

Therefore I went with my request to the audience of His Majesty in Maastricht; full of fear and shyness. I could hardly utter a word and I requested His Majesty to accept my petition. I was firmly convinced that I would soon get an answer; however, I did not receive any. On the advice of some important persons however, who were of opinion that they could be certain that freedom of education would soon be realized, I together with Bro. Superior ventured to start it gradually and there seemed to be nobody to prevent it. But some time later I was visited by attorney-general Strengs and by the inspector (Schreuder) who asked admission to the nursery-schools and who asked me after that, whether we occupied any other rooms. To prevent them from seeing the rooms in which children were learning the tables by Princen, which they could certainly hear, I led them through another corridor, showed them some empty rooms and took them through another door into the street. Everything remained a secret, thanks be to God.

Also primary education

Perhaps to save scandal and to legalize our unlawful affair I received a Royal Warrant in January 1842 by which it was allowed to give primary education at nursery-schools founded or still to be founded, if only the children were below 6 and the teachers over 18. His Majesty would gladly comply with my requests but he was not allowed to break the law by appointing teachers who had not passed an examination. It seemed to me that my nursery-schools were done for by this and that the permission I had been given was a disadvantage rather than a benefit. That's why I wanted to protest against it but I was advised to do nothing. I really consulted my spiritual superiors about the decision.

Inspection

From January until April 1842 everything remained quiet. Then inspector Smalhouzen wanted to see me. He asked me whether everything was exactly in accordance with the permission given. He had to come and visit the schools, being an inspector. I answered him that there were children of over as well as of under the age of 6 and that I did not consider the permission a favour, on the contrary. During his inspection he wanted me to send away the bigger children who were over 6, but I refused. I asked him, if there were no other solution, that he himself had to send away

those whom he preferred and that I would warn the parents that their children had to stay away from school, because they had been dismissed by the inspector. But he was against it. First he did not want to tell me at what day he was to come and inspect the school, but nevertheless we fixed a day.

During his first visit the inspector didn't say anything about the children who were older than 6 and when I asked at his departure if everything was all right he declared not to have any criticism. I said to myself "Deo gratias", and we continued accepting and teaching several poor children, no matter how old they were.

In the month of August 1842 a beautiful prize-giving was held and certain gentlemen who after all are very eager to publish, gave a splendid account of that prize-giving, although it was against my wish and against my will.

The inspector was of course afraid that he would be reproached for not doing his duty.

Perhaps incited by other reasons as well, he called on me and presented the case as if I had acted, completely ignoring the agreement. His anxiety was, what people in The Hague were going to say about it when reading what was in the paper.

I said that people in The Hague had more important matters to be concerned about and that by making such remarks it became difficult for me to do good to the poor youth by educating them. I also said that I at once wanted to prepare and to present myself to go in for the examination myself and that although my knowledge was moderate I was of opinion that a priest or someone who had studied theology soon knew enough to go in for an examination in order to teach poor children reading and writing.

The inspector was not satisfied when he went home, but he remained polite. After that I went to see inspector Schreuder and entered my name for the examination. But, as he said, he could not accept me, because there was no board of examiners here.

From that time I, together with the brothers, have quietly been giving primary education for a long time, without ever having been hindered by the police, by the inspector etc.

The first examination

In July 1843 I was visited by the parish-priest v.d. Heuvel from Bois-le-Duc. He had come to see the brothers, eagerly hoping to get brothers for Bois-le-Duc as well. Some brothers were promised him for Bois-le-Duc on condition that he would help us to get some brothers to go in for the examination before the Board of Examiners in Bois-le-Duc. After he had promised this and with the support of Mr. H. De Wijs, member of the Provincial States of North Brabant three brothers (Bro. Bernardus, Bro. Aloysius and Bro. Stanislaus) went to Bois-le-Duc on 27th July 1843. And although they could not prove that they had worked as teacher-trainees or as common teachers somewhere in North-Brabant and though they did not excel in capability, but relying on the help of Mary conceived immaculately and of the Holy Mother Ann, they returned with the certificate "teacher third grade". This particular incident enabled us to legalize our schools here.

Official primary education in Maastricht

After having seriously consulted some experts and after I had been assured once more that I and my schools were under the supervision of the secret police, I dared to hand in a petition with the town-council to be able to appoint these three brothers legally as teachers. I came to this step only with great aversion and fear. For after having handed in my petition I had to have an interview with all the members of the town-council and also with inspector Smalhouzen, with whom I had quarrelled so often, and who had to be consulted first.

But in love of God and for the poor children I went to him. At first he seemed to be prejudiced against me, but when I said that he had always treated me so humanly, he assured me, that his advice about my plan would not be negative. When I left him I expressed my esteem for him because, as I said, I could tell the town-council now that even the inspector was not against my plans. And indeed, I was treated obligingly by all the members of the council when I told them that the inspector had given me his fiat.

And the best of all was that the members of the council gave me their permission, as I believe, even without having consulted the inspector. So the three brothers mentioned above were allowed now to give primary education in all schools we had or that still had to be set up.

I just have to point out the divine guidance in this affair. Besides all my cares I had asked Mr. De Wijs in The Hague to tell me briefly and to the point how I had to hand in my petition and what I had to do if the town-council might refuse.

As I had to leave town, I was in a great hurry and by mistake I included Mr. De Wijs' reply with the three teacher-certificates and some other papers.

When the board set eyes on it they did not make any objections anymore. On my return I noticed my error. I considered my clumsiness as a dispensation of Providence. From that time the brothers could legally teach and the troubles and the suspicion had disappeared.

The first foundations outside Maastricht

One of the qualified brothers became headmaster of the charity-school at the parish of St. Peter in Bois-le-Duc where he worked for some years to the greater honour and glory of God. Then the school stopped to exist.

In 1843 a certain well-meaning Mr. van Cranenburgh would like to have brothers for the boys' orphanage in Amsterdam. The right Reverend parish-priest Marinkele came to Maastricht to ask for brothers and after I had been to Amsterdam twice to draw up a contract, ten brothers gradually started to work there. And up to now, 1 October 1867, they have done a lot of good work there.

The Congregation going to Belgium

In 1846 or in the beginning of 1847 some brothers went to Hasselt to look after the orphans. There were few schools in Hasselt then, at least for poor children who, owing to this, remained deprived of education. Gradually the brothers started a nursery-school there in the "Begijnhof". And at the same time they started some other schools. With the help of some citizens and especially with funds from Maastricht something beautiful has come into being there which not only town-children but also boys of the boarding-school benefit from.

This work caused great difficulties, many costs and a lot of trouble and if it were not the Lord's work, nothing would have come of it.

Building-activities in Maastricht

In 1846 we began to enlarge the religious house of the brothers here in Maastricht by erecting the buildings placed in a square and the adjacent chapel. As our means were limited the brothers and myself often toiled for days on end as simple hodmen.

But by persevering courageously the brothers have got the opportunity to carry out their religious duties more regularly.

The death of Mgr. Rutten 's father

Pro memoria: 2nd December 1842 I lost my dear father with great sorrow.

After his death I left the parental home where I was born as well, because it was too big now and

not fitted for works of charity and because I needed much money for the brothers, for the evening-classes and for other works of charity.

In 1842 already I had bought a house from the Nelissen family with the intention to start an institution for deserted women, but my plans were always bigger than my means.

Nursery-school for poor girls - Ursuline nuns

For the time being I could not carry my fervent wish into effect on account of the death of my dear father and I decided to go and inhabit the house myself together with my sister to start a nursery-school for poor girls there.

My dear sister Maria Antoinetta was a brave woman, full of good will and with a great willingness to help whenever something was undertaken to the glory of God.

That's why I admire her. As regards this she is by far my superior.

With God's liberal assistance and with the help of the Reverend van Doren and Professor Bogaers who therefore deserves our appreciation this nursery-school was opened on 23rd July 1843 and started that same day.

Through the just-mentioned Mr. van Doren a well-to-do lady came to us to apply for the job of headmistress of that nursery-school. Up to 1850 everything was quite well, but as this lady fell ill for a very long time and as there was hardly any hope that she could help us any longer, either the school had to be closed for some time or other means had to be found to assure its survival. To achieve the latter I went to look for nuns. I first applied to the superior of the nuns at Tilburg, but in spite of all my requests I did not succeed. Finally I turned to the Rev. Parish-priest van Tildonk who was superior of the Ursuline Nuns. He informed me that two or three nuns were available on condition that I could provide for them and take care that they would get everything they needed. I consented to it. I think it was 8th April 1850 when two Ursuline Nuns came to Maastricht and at once started the nursery-school there. They stayed in my house for six months and were provided by me.

In September 1850 I went to live in the house along the canal. At the same time the nuns moved into my previous house in Jew Street in which nearly all my furniture was. During the time they had no paying children at school, they were for the greater part supported by me. Also the buildings with the chapel etc. were paid by me. The Ursuline Nuns have worked with much success.

Not only poor children with the sister's

After having given the matter serious consideration and after I had been persuaded to allow the nuns to educate children of well-to-do parents as well, the nuns achieved much. Though I have never asked for something of the profits of whatever institute and though I've only had great sacrifices, it would have been more consoling for me if I should have occupied myself only with poor children, as I had planned.

In this way the spirit of the religious would also have remained more simple. But it may have pleased the good God not to exclude more well-to-do children from education by religious and then everything is all right.

I have suffered a lot because the Ursuline Nuns removed to a bigger house in "de Grote Gracht".

As my physical condition had been undermined already for a considerable time, owing to all kinds of opposition, as I suppose, I finally made up my mind in 1867 to hand over the rooms that were empty now and the chapel to the members of the "St. Vincentius Society". May the divine will be blessed. Amen.

Mgr. van Wijckersloot - military orphans

In 1842 I had the honour to receive Mgr. van Wijckersloot in our nursery-schools. He had paid a visit to Rolduc. His intention was to get brothers and to place them at the estate "Duinzicht". He also asked me, when I was to go and see the brothers in Amsterdam, to call on him as well. That was a great honour for me and I did so several times. In 1846 he proposed to me to put the estate at the disposal of the brothers who could start some charitable work there. He also proposed to me to accompany him on a journey to Rome which took place on the 27th of December 1847. After our journey he returned to the matter. But after having reflected upon it for a considerable time and after having consulted many persons I was of opinion that I could not accept his offer. As I was in this prelate's good books, I have been able to give him much advice about possibilities to use his estate as a religious institute. But this has not happened according to my suggestions. However, in 1852, when he was fatally ill, he did not forget me and entrusted to me the foundation of an orphanage for military orphans. After his death I was informed that he put a fund at my disposal, as director of the brothers, enabling me to accept twelve poor orphans. However, we experienced great difficulties to come into possession of this fund and when these troubles had been solved, we at once started that institute.

In order to comply with the desire of the bishop of Roermond to place brothers in this town who were to look after poor children we have taken up the orphans together with them in 1853. This was a very expensive business. Then permission was given to lodge the orphans in Weert, and to exchange the house in Roermond for a suitable institution in Weert. There these children have been looked after very well by the brothers up to now, 1867, and they have been put up these permanently.

Difficulties with the paying-schools of the sisters

Now I come back to the Institute of the Ursuline Nuns. To get permission to be allowed to educate paying children great difficulties had to be overcome in those days.

When a nun had passed her examination, the government still had to authorize the admission of paying children and that's why the educational inspector's advice had to be taken. So I first had to go to Mr. Smalhouzen, who was an inspector then. When I had explained the matter there this gentleman appeared to be against me and also against teaching nuns. He frankly told me that he hated education, given by religious. When he noticed that we were quite set on this he made the following remark: I had, he said, always had a very good reputation because we gave free education to poor children. I would lose this reputation by the step I was now going to take. Everybody would say: Here you are, now this reverend gentleman is going to make a profit on it etc. etc.

I refuted this and said that in spite of all his remarks we still wanted to start schools for middle-class children and that this was also the wish of the town and its citizens.

After having made an application with the Government the Ursuline Nuns got the permission longed for - without, consulting the inspector. I think it was October 1851 when the first paying children were accepted. There were 20 of them in the beginning, then 30 and the number gradually increased to 100 and afterwards to about 200. They have been taken into the house in Jew Street. Thus the work of the sisters was blessed under God's gentle assistance and under the protection of Mary conceived immaculately.

Also the brothers start a school for middle-class children

When the Ursuline Nuns were so successful, I was persuaded (as a matter of fact things could not be stopped anymore) to have also the brothers teach middle-class children. They too started with

a small number in 1852. Finally they bought another house in Capucijnenstraat and there they had much success until 1866...

By founding "industrial" schools and by using other means to reach as many children as possible, and perhaps because the brothers relied too much on their own strength as well, their school for middle-class children got remarkably fewer pupils in 1865, 1866 and 1867. If divine providence does not continue to help them in a special way, it will be expected that it appears to be impossible to compete with the government-schools which have enough money and enough staff to lord it over us. And as religious flags in the hearts of the parents, the number of middle-class children will decrease. Only the good God will be able to do something about this. Here I confess that, although Providence has always blessed and protected me, my love for it and my confidence in it have not been great enough. That is a great shortcoming of mine, poor man, and I confess again my great guilt. The divine Trinity and Jesus, Mary and Joseph may forgive me, poor sinner, my sin.

Sisters of Charity

And now something about another institute, namely the one of the Sisters of Charity. They had been called to Maastricht to assist unmarried mothers. As was said before, in 1842 already the house in Jew Street was intended for this purpose.

After I had left that house, many efforts have been taken to get Sisters of the Good Shepherd for this, but they did not succeed because one disagreed on the question whether also novices could be put up here etc. When I was in Liege with Mgr. Vrancken in 1855, I applied to the superior of the Sisters of the Miséricorde there. We soon came to an agreement and these sisters were to come and look after the unhappy girls. After approval by the bishop of Roermond they came to Maastricht on 14th August 1856, the eve of Assumption Day.

In the beginning this house caused a great scandal from the side of some priests and some pious people. They thought such a house would foster immorality, that Maastricht was too small for such a house and that in another neighbouring town the foundation of such a house had led to nothing. These objections did not hold water, which was proved when we applied to Mgr. De Hessel, bishop of Namur for information and himself the founder of such an institute, and to the superior of the house "The Good Shepherd".

In spite of some opposition many girls have been taken in up till now and have been trained to be good women.

Providence assisted in a special way in the institution which appears from the fact that exactly the two most important persons, who objected against the foundation of it were the first who, once the house was there, insisted to take also postulants into the house and persons who were in danger.

Originally the house was furnished for 10 persons. Twice it was enlarged considerably, so that in 1860 one could also start a nursery-school for poor girls and the number of destitutes could be raised to 30. Also the number of sisters increased. In October 1867 there were 13.

The house was bought from the Weustenraad family, in Mr. Clareboets' name who lent us f.5.000,— at 3% when we bought it. This interest has regularly been paid him, in the hope that these f.5.000,— would be given later on as an alms to the home, such as - so I believe - the family has repeatedly told. In any case the costs of the purchase have been paid by myself as well as the interest. And this will be paid by me as long as I live. Later on this interest and these capitals will have to be paid by a legacy to the sisters - under will. After the purchase I have had the house altered for f.3.000,—. In 1858 I spent another f.6.000,— to add the gate and schools

and another f.2.000,— for the workshop behind etc.

I hope all this has been done to the greater honour of God. I pray to the almighty God to guard, to protect and to bless this house. The coming into being of it has happened with honourable intentions, Laudetur Jesus Christ. Amen. It was also attended by big financial sacrifices and there was no fixed income; and that was the case with all works of charity. I hope that through this I can always say with calmness and surrender: On You, my Lord, I have hoped. Man proposes, but God disposes.

Accommodation Ursuline Nuns - Poor Clares - Ladies of the Holy Sacrament

In 1863 the Ursuline Nuns condemned the house in Jew Street and bought a house in "de Grote Gracht". They promised to keep on the two houses, but finally they thought after all they had to abandon the old house which I had enlarged with very great sacrifices and with the approval and constant pressure of the first superior. When the sisters had left the house, I thought, I had to keep on the schools for poor children. Although it seemed that the sisters wanted to do this at their own expenses, yet an amount of 1000 francs has been put at the disposal of the charity-school.

Many attempts have been made by me to find new religious so that I would also be happy again when being older to be able to say Mass there which would be good for me and also for my sisters. But continually I experienced opposition.

In October 1864 the Poor Clares came here and bought the house, yearning to go and live in it. Neither they nor I succeeded in getting that far and with most sadness we were obliged to abandon it. Nothing can be done against violence!

On 13th May 1865 I had the pleasure of transferring the house to the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament who have their mother-house in Brussels.

With great sacrifices on my part they inhabited the house free of charge for about a year. However, difficulties arose between the sisters and another religious institution and as they thought they were going to work here without success, they left the house in February 1866, although I have tried to prevent this with all possible means.

From that time I thought it was impossible for me, owing to the circumstances in which I found myself, to change the situation in any way. I was offered f.25.000,— for the house, but I could not bring myself to sell it. Finally I offered it to the members of the St. Vincentius Society who eventually became the owners of it. May the good God grant there will be a time they will be able to make good use of it. May the divine will be done. Amen.

The teaching of religion for girls and young labourers

Through some girls, the teaching of religion started in 1867 to some poor children. Or properly speaking: religious instruction, which the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament had started, was continued again.

When the former house of the Ursuline Nuns was transferred to the Vincentius Society, I asked the Sisters of the Miséricorde to put the rooms of the nursery-school at the disposal of the above-mentioned girls on Sundays.

I hope they can do much good work there, if it were only that some children could get religious instruction. But in the long run it will be difficult to continue this without support of the clergy. As I begin to grow older and as I am often unwell I myself cannot give the necessary impulse to such a work.

I hope divine Providence will do so, for according to me it is necessary in these days of slackening that the Christian youth gets a thorough education as much as possible. Some time ago the Rev. Superior of the Brothers also started giving religious education to factory-boys in a room

belonging to Mr. Regout. But after having done this for a short time without success, he stopped it altogether.

The purchase of the later Jesuit-house

In 1852 the rebuilding of the house of the Ursuline Nuns in Jew Street was started. As Mrs. Devalensaert died, the big house in which the Jesuit Fathers are living now was offered for sale in April of that year. As at an auction the price which was asked was not reached, the house remained unsold. In the month of October it was said, that Count Verlain XIV wanted to sell the house at a considerably lower price.

As I asked to have a good house - in spite of building a lot I had no house that could be compared with this one - I intended to buy it without giving it yet a fixed destination. It could be used later on if it were necessary. After having prayed to the Good God and to his Holy Mother, I decided to go to the count in Liege to negociate with him. He answered I could come on 5th November. On that day I went to the castle by boat and after dinner the negotiations took place, however without result. I stayed there during the night and after having said Mass and after he had been presented with many written motives to take the selling, he told me that he was to answer me within a few days. Soon afterwards he wanted to make over the house to me for f.12.000,— and some other religious commitments...

When I had become the owner, I had to spent a lot of money on it.

Besides, the beautiful cellars have been deepened some feet, so that they can be let at a good price. But the house could not remain empty. The Ursuline Nuns together with their director, the parish-priest v.d. Tildonk, came to see it, but they thought the house too big. And the then superior of the sisters did not want on any condition to leave the house in Jew Street. Then in 1853 it was offered to accommodate the orphans of the late Mgr. van Wijckersloot; at the same time more military orphans and also other orphans could be accepted.

But the brothers dare not start this, so that the house remained empty. In June 1853 I had the pleasure to transfer it to the Rev. Jesuit Fathers. That happened at a low price, but it was for a good purpose and to the glory of the Lord. I only wished to reserve the right to myself to make use of the lower garden which I could enter through a door in the rampart. I have only made use of it for one year, for the Rev. Fathers have often informed me of their desire to start to build etc. etc.

As not to prevent this good work, as I wished to subordinate my interests to those of a community, I have renounced my right, although because of it I had considerably lowered the purchase-price of the house.

Then I have made the condition that the Society of Jesus was to say Mass for me eternally on the 5 great festival days of the Holy Mother of God.

I hope they have written it down carefully and that it will be kept accurately.

In 1860 and the following years the Fathers have enlarged the house considerably by adding a large building. In 1865 they bought another big house and finally they will also build a practical church or chapel.

May our Lord under the invocation of the Star of the Sea profusely bless their enterprises.

Maastricht, October 1867

In 1869 the young people who had founded a Sunday-school for poor workmen, applied to the St. Vincentius Society and transferred this school under their supervision to the institute of this Society. The foundation of Sunday-schools and evening-classes has been a precarious matter. With fresh courage many boys start to qualify in reading, writing and arithmetic, but there are only few who persevere. Certainly not those who have to start from the very beginning. The long experience has convinced the writer that such undertakings are without much result. But in any case, the efforts are worthy of praise, if only because it is possible to give the youth some knowledge of their duties.

THE END