

In Deo

Gerard Hermans

Johannes Andreas Gerardus

By Wim Swüste



Gerard was born on 17 June 1931 in Maastricht. He made his Vows to the FIC on 15 August 1951. On 12 December 2021 he died at the MUMC+ hospital in Maastricht.

The words from the Gospel today tell us that a concerned mother fell on her knees to ask the Man from Nazareth for a first-rate place for two of her ten sons. Jesus does not get angry, he doesn't mock her. But he firmly explains such a request is not in order. "Dear lady, that is not for me to decide, that is in the hands of my Father in heaven."

He also says "Don't try to be a boss, try to be of service. That way you'll be precious in My eyes."

From the lecture out of Proverbs we get the same idea:

"Keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years, and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man."

It seems as if King Solomon, writing these words, had Gerard's life in mind: a life in goodness, faith, loyalty and service. In these days of unrest, ignorance, and guessing at solutions, such people are very rare. That makes us especially sad on this day, because we have to let go of this man, a man with such gifts, our relative, friend, fellow Brother.

We can find some comfort in Gerard's own words, words he spoke recently at his jubilee, when we commemorated his 70 years as a Brother: "I've had a good life. And I am grateful for all those I have met in my life."

Among his papers, we found a hand-written biography. "In our family we were five children: my four sisters and myself. I was born in Maastricht, my father had a shoe repair shop. The Aloysius school was where I went to school." In 1943, Gerard told his parents he wanted to become a Brother. He writes: "My parents weren't exactly pleased; my father had hoped I would succeed him in the shop. They felt regret to let me go to the monastery, but once I was there they were soon quite proud of me."

Gerard had been born with many talents. And he used them all to help others. He was a valued teacher at the Jeanne d'Arc secondary school in Maastricht, was superior in various communities, and for twelve years he was part of the General Council. During his stay in Malawi he was twice appointed Provincial Superior.

After his return to the Netherlands, he joined the Capucijnengang community in Maastricht. He became a welcome volunteer in the Rooden Leeuw project, having a delicate sense of how to deal with people who needed attention and deserved respect. Gerard radiated peace and wisdom. So it was completely logical for him to

become an official confidant at the Care Home De Beyart. He was very modest about that kind of appointment. Modesty and wisdom were his strongest assets.

Recently I asked him what had been the most difficult moment in his life. "That was the attack on my life in 1998 in Malawi. I came home that night to find the door open, and in the next moment they were shooting at me. I was hit in my stomach, in my arm, in my bottom."

An armed robbery it was, five men who had thought there would be lots of money in my house. My heart almost stopped, you don't know if you'll survive such an attack. I could have died. Helpful people put me on a lorry and sent me to the hospital. Fortunately I've recovered completely." And if I hadn't asked, he'd never have told me, he wasn't one to tell tall tales.

He kept his simplicity, also where his talent for singing was concerned. "At the Aloysius school, I was popular for singing at parents' evenings. I'd be a soloist, with Bro. Diëgo conducting. And in school plays I'd be given the prime role because of my voice."

For years, Gerard himself conducted the Beyart choir, which provides music for the prayer services. Even last week, he did this, with Corrie Dam playing the organ. As a conductor he was talented, and he was always patient and mild towards the choir members.

In our community at Capucijnengang, he was a quiet leader. He was always ready to help with the shopping, and enjoyed eating what was put before him. In community meetings he'd make balanced contributions, evidence of his wide experience in life and his deep faith. He was always willing to listen, and interested in what people said. And we'd gladly ignore the loudness of the sound in football and tennis matches on TV when he was watching.

He was a faithful participant in all prayer services, and every morning we'd find him in our prayer room in the attics of our 'In de Rooden Leeuw' house. That was one of the supports of his life, this faithfully communing with the Eternal.

After twelve years on the General Council, he took a course of religious formation in 1988-89 at St. Anselm's College in Cliftonville, England. He wanted to 'recharge the battery' of his religious life. And he did the same with his daily meditations and prayers. "in praying, I find it is important to do that in a very quiet, almost meditative way. I'm glad there is growth in my prayer life. I often feel a need to commune with the Eternal, quietly, often without words."

Now, Gerard may rejoice in a wordless eternal peace near the One he searched for all his life. He may now experience that his faith and goodness will never leave him again, because he was a good man in the eyes of God and of his fellow human beings.

May we keep Gerard in our hearts, after his blessed life, in affection and gratitude. I feel that he deserves that very much.

Dear relative, great fellow Brother, precious friend, Fare well!

*"I am grateful for all those
I have met in my life"*

He sang with his soul

Corrie Dam

In January 1987 I came to work at De Beyart in Maastricht as organist, succeeding Bro. Tiburtio Kalwij. I soon met Bro. Gerard, a pleasant first encounter. At that time, Gerard was working at the Jeanne d'Arc secondary school at Gronsveld/Heer as an English teacher. He was also at the time a member of the General Council of FIC.

Almost immediately he told me he didn't like being addressed as 'Brother' and I should call him by his first name. He then explained about current musical affairs and he conducted the choir. Gregorian music was usual at festive occasions at De Beyart, and it was a shared passion. At the music school, I had been taught the style, but I'd rarely played it, a new challenge that Gerard patiently helped me find my way in. Gerard was very talented and I'm told he used to sing solo at the Servatius Church in Maastricht, although he never said a word about it himself. A lovely voice, but then he always sang with his

soul, and thus touched mine. In that fashion we three, me as organist, Gerard as conductor of the choir, and Bro. Anselmus Janssen as precentor, worked together on music that first year, and have good memories of that time.

Then in 1988, Gerard had different plans and wanted to go to the mission, before he'd be too old. And it would be Malawi. So in preparation he went to Cliftonville, near Canterbury. From there he sent us a letter with best wishes, when Ynze and I became parents. In the spring of 1989, he had time briefly to admire our daughter Lidwine, before moving to Malawi where they made him Provincial Superior. Bro. Remund Penning took over as conductor, and we worked together very well for a number of years. And when Gerard came on leave, I'd ask him to be precentor, to enjoy his voice... He gladly sang but he'd always respect Bro. Anselm's position, which was very much Gerard's style. In Malawi, Gerard was shot by a burglar, had an operation there, then a second operation in Maastricht if I remember correctly. Around 2001 he returned to Maastricht for good, took his time to get used to the place again, and when Bro. Remund died he came back as conductor for the choir.

Gerard's other great passions beside music were literature and sports, in particular football



(soccer) and tennis. In 1987, Father Carel van Tulder had been his regular tennis partner. We often talked about football before choir practice. As Gerard said, "In my community at Capucijnengang they're not all that interested in sports. "But do you watch matches on your own then? Isn't that a bit cheerless?" He looked at me, raised his eyebrows, and said it didn't trouble him in the least.

Gerard was a contemplative sort of man, sometimes unreachable, keeping his own counsel: a good characteristic, really, he'd shrug if there were complaints, but mostly he was fair, patient, a dear sweet man who for years acted as confidant of De Beyart inhabitants. I've rarely seen him angry; only last year when the library had to be moved he was definitely 'not amused', he went to a higher level to discuss it but when that didn't help he accepted that the library was moved to the room behind the chapel, and renamed 'Gerardus Library'.

At first it seemed that Gerard had come through the recent time of sickness and deaths at De Beyart (COVID-19) all right, I'd see him walk in the gardens, or conducting the choir for the funeral masses of his fellow Brothers and Sister Stephanie Maas, but perhaps it touched him

more than I knew. On Saturday 27 November, we celebrated First of Advent. Before the mass, I saw Gerard at the library and suddenly I noticed how frail he looked, a man of 90 years old, now bent, and leaning on a balustrade while conducting... In the week after that, he felt unwell and on 5 December he was sent to the hospital, after which we had a lovely and loving moment of goodbyes last Friday.

In his Christmas card for 2020, he'd written in his careful script "thanks for your efforts for our Liturgy, don't lose courage!" Last weekend I was on my bicycle, on my way to De Beyart, and I saw the Ferris wheel in the square. We used to go there every year between Christmas and the New Year, a group of Brothers, myself, Sister Rafaël Crooymans, and Paul van Pul. Gerard would look out over his beloved Maastricht, and after we'd have coffee and 'vlaai' cake at the Capucijnengang house.

Last Sunday, you, Gerard, rose high above the Ferris wheel, into the Light and Love of that Higher one where maybe you're now listening to Heavenly Music.

Thank you Gerard!



Uncle Gerard, a connecting force

Niece Véronique

Dear all,

Here I am with a balloon in my hands. And yes, in the basket there is my Uncle Gerard.

And the first thing you'll think is that it is a metaphor for Uncle Gerard's last journey. But no, it is more literal than that. For we had promised him a real balloon trip, for his 90th Birthday. And with his typical look of curiosity and wonder, he'd have looked down on his home town and surroundings. He'd have loved it. But the trip had to be cancelled twice, due to circumstances.

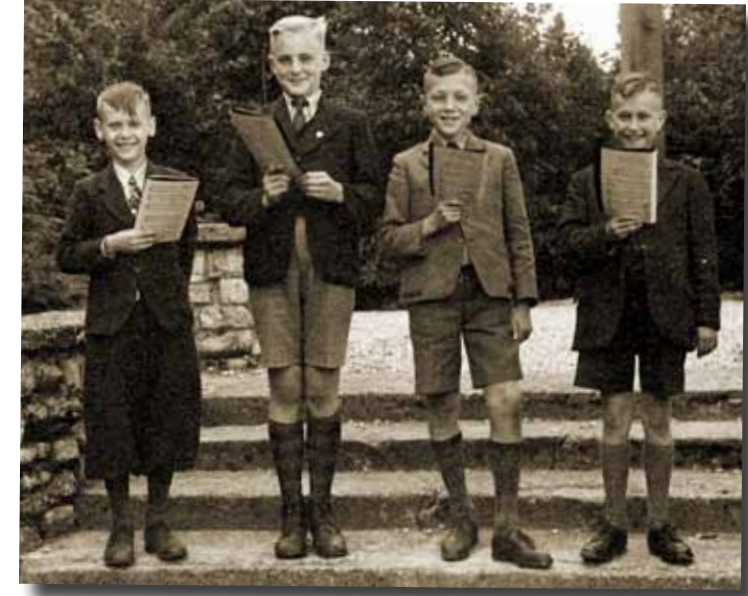
You can see there's a thread from that balloon. And now I'll go back to metaphors: that thread is a symbol for the connecting force my Uncle Gerard was for all of us. During his life, he kept us connected to him and among ourselves with that thread.

It would be great if we can keep that connectedness after his death. That is why I want to give all of you a piece of that thread, and you can tie it to each other's wrists. As a connection to each other and to Uncle Gerard. And to remember this lovely person by.

I'm very glad we had him in our midst for so long, that I have been a part of his life.

Uncle Gerard, I wish you Safe Journeys!





Left: Maastricht 1938, 2nd form Aloysius school, with Bro. Conrad Dikschei. Gerard Hermans 1st row, far right. 3rd row. 3rd right, Paul (Bro. Diomedes) Marx
Above: Simpelveld 1944. Gerard 2nd right, Svetko Velisček far left



Above: Maastricht 1946, sports day. Bros. Egidius Veenhof, Magnus vZutphen, Gerard Hermans, Patricio Winters, Jozefo Dassen

Right: Maastricht Tongerseweg 1949, football team. Hind row Piet Raijmakers, Gommarus Vervoort, Gerard Hermans, Meinulfus vd. Weiden, Reginald Haverkort. Front row Aurelius Gilsing, Henk vMierlo, Wladimir vHeck, John Hetem, Juventius van Amersfoort



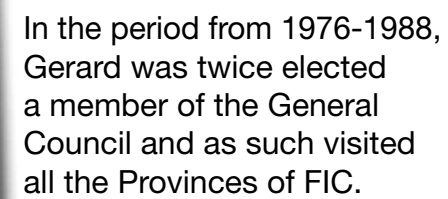
Above: Zevenaar 1960, celebrations. Evermarus Jacobs, Gerard Hermans, Auxilius Cappendijk, Richard vd. Berg, Gerold Raaijmakers

Above right: Gerard with Noud Fonken, digital work

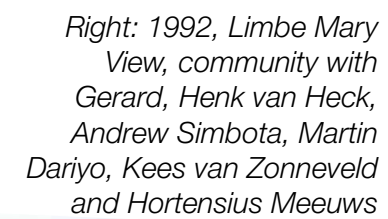
Below that: Maastricht, 1970s

Bottommost: De Beyart, 2021, opening Gerardus Library

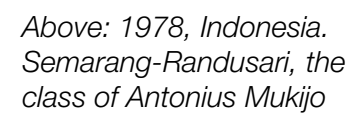




After that, in 1989, at his own request he was sent to Malawi, where he worked until 2002.



Bottom middle: 1989, Limbe Mary View, Gerard as a teacher at Montfort Training College



*Below: 1979, Ghana,
Nandom Secondary
School. With Bruno
vd.Made (4th left, pink hat)*



Bottom right: 1996, Limbe Mary View, Provincial Council Malawi. John Hetem, Gerard (Provincial), Henry Anthony Ibrahim, and Martin Dariyo. The fifth member, Pascal Mtuwana, was in England for studies