

In Deo

Roeland Knufman

(Hubertus Johannes Geertruda, uncle Hubert)

By Johan Muijtjens FIC



Roel/Hubert was born in Helmond, the Netherlands, on 4 February 1936. He made his first profession to the FIC on 15 August 1957. He died on 17 November 2021 at the MUMC hospital in Maastricht.

Roeland shows his nature very clearly in the two lectures he chose for his funeral. The first is on the touching words of St. Paul on the path to truest love and after that, the second, by Matthew on the concrete forms of that love, by and between human beings, and how there is no competition because God wishes to be loved in our fellow human beings.

And this appears to be the deep and lifelong wish of Bro. Roeland, Huub Knufman, the man we are now saying farewell to. Some years ago Bro. Roeland wrote his life story, full of details, with some laughter and some tears, and with a permanent undertone of optimism and gratitude. And what I noticed on reading and re-reading this story is the many people he mentions by name. Those exact, personal people he worked and lived with and for whom he worked are apparently very important to him.

Here, at De Beyart, people were always amazed at how good Roeland was at remembering names. For me it became clear that that interest had a deeper source: he really was completely people-oriented and he realized that knowing their names was important, to all of us, let's be honest. And we can forgive Roeland for showing off a little on that score.

Roeland's life story is woven from many threads. I want to look at three of them a little.

The first thread is that of his birth in Helmond in 1936, his kind parents, the family of six where he was the youngest, his teacher training, his religious formation and profession, his work as a teacher, his calligraphy work, his ICT ability, and in the end his final place here, of service still, among us in Maastricht.

The second thread is a deeper one: as I said, an entire web of people with whom he lived and worked and for whom he worked. At schools, where he was a good teacher; in various kinds of volunteer work for many years, beside his official work, and where I think he even more showed the qualities of his heart. And he writes that that is where he received much affection in return.

And that certainly included his relatives, who he loved very much. It gave him much energy. At various jubilees in his life he was always happy to tell us there would be many friends coming: people he knew from many years of work with the sick, the old, the lonely, in particular from his days in The Hague.

When he moved to Maastricht, he wrote an enthusiastic tale of that for our website. But more, within a few weeks he'd already started helping

again at our infirmary here at De Beyart, where among other things he'd help people tell and write down their life stories. For many of them that was a great experience which gave them much comfort.

The third thread in his life I want to touch on is linked to our second lecture today, the deep connectedness Roeland felt to the Eternal who carried his life. He didn't talk much about that, but his faithful attendance at joint prayer moments, his inspiring texts, his daily reading, his love of classical and religious music, indicate to me a dimension of his life that was the main source of his inner strength. And that strength was something he really needed.

In his life story, as I said, there was laughter and there were tears. Laughter, when he had good contacts and experiences with other people, tears when there were misunderstandings, perceived injustice, his own difficulties in dealing with things. And at such moments his fellow Brothers also didn't always know what to do to help him.

But looking back on the entirety of his life, what I see most clearly is that in those final years of heart failure and kidney dialysis, Roeland was so courageous in bearing that last difficult stage. For me, Roeland is an example of how a human being, keeping true to its nature, nevertheless matures, becomes more open, carefree and grateful and ends up living in gladness and surrender. The pain and the difficulties remain, but they are experienced in a different manner, they are no longer in the way of deep peace and real happiness.

May we remember Roeland in that way, a precious man, friend, fellow brother, with a rich experience in life with all its ups and downs, following a path with a positive direction, a strong motivation, a valuable goal, a path he went gladly. A path that did not break off or just ended. On the contrary, his path was completed, bringing him to life with Him who is for all of us the Way, the full Truth and the complete Life.

With gratitude, and full of faith, we wish that Roeland now lives in happiness in that Way, that Truth and that Life. May it be so!

volunteer work for many years

Roeland (behind) as a very young teacher with students of the Catholic Secondary School in The Hague



It is as it is

Louis van Stiphout/Theo van Stiphout

In September 2017, with many of the family, we celebrated the 60-year jubilee of uncle Hubert, Brother Roeland, a popular man in our family.

We remember a lovely celebration, with as a highlight a walk through very dark caves under a hill in Maastricht. On that occasion I read an excerpt from a poem by Erich Fried entitled 'What it is'. As a tribute to uncle Hubert I do that again today.

It is nonsense, says Sense
It is as it is, says Love.

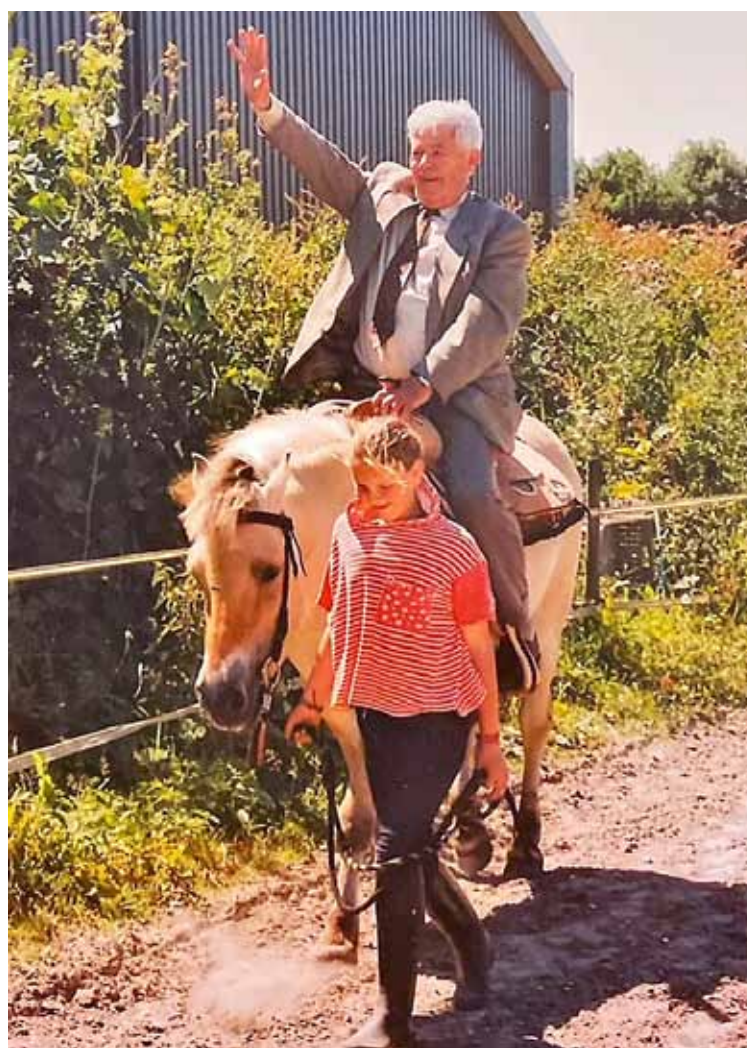
It is an accident, says Calculation.
It is only grief, says Fear.
It is hopeless, says Insight.
It is as it is, says Love.

It is ridiculous, says Pride.
It is careless, says Caution.
It is impossible, says Experience.
It is as it is, says Love.

Auteur: Erich Fried (1921-1988)



Roeland - uncle Hubert - with relatives



When we remember uncle Hubert...

Inez Vereijken

Dear Aunt. Congratulations on your 74th Birthday. Here, early this morning our Hubert was born. He has black hair. This is my big news. With many good wishes from the family. (Birth announcement by his sister Mia to her aunty Go on 4 February 1936).

My uncle Hubert was the youngest of five in the Knufman home in Helmond. Cherished by his favourite sister Mia, sister Betsie, brothers Wim and Anton. Next and last came sister Rose. Mother works hard at home, father at Van Vlissingen's. Mother is courageous. During the war, she hides the forbidden radio. Dares to lend cooking pots to young German soldiers at the end of the war. Dangerous, could be considered treason, but she pitied them. Aside from that she has a good sense of humour, we are told.

Hubert meets the men Mia and Betsie marry, and they play football! As a young boy he secretly goes with them to matches out of town. Sjeff and Adrie hide him in the bus, until he is old enough to wave at his very strict father. And again without telling his parents, Hubert rides with Anton on the motorbike.

At school Hubert decides to do some more travelling and at twelve, goes to join the FIC Brothers in Maastricht. From that moment, he becomes Bro. Roeland, and after his training he works as a maths teacher. He loves teaching. Does a lot of volunteer work. And long after his retirement, moves back to Maastricht from his home in Rotterdam. Many former students and their parents keep visiting. And he helps people with mild dementia to write their life stories, to honour them.

That is the past we share. For us, in the Knufman family, Hubert was the connector, a real family man. Closely involved with every one of us.

On 16 September 2017, we celebrated his 60-year jubilee with all the family at De Schark, the retreat of the Brothers in Maastricht. 60 years of serving the community. We see Hubert working for people and love. A great number of us were there, to enjoy and celebrate. There are many good memories of that, showing how we feel about Hubert.

Hubert enjoyed good cheer, positive moments. He valued his brothers and sisters and is there were problems he was always ready to come and discuss things or give support. A cheerful, clever man with a passion for maths. Always interested in how people were doing, always remembering names and happenings. Truly interested, listening. Digitally active. Sending birthday cards with calligraphy texts. Enjoying a joke, offering maths puzzles. A joy to be with.

Hubert was our mother's brother and he was always there for every occasion, communion, birthdays, weddings, always there. Holidays in France with his friend Emil. Coming to parties the first to arrive and often the last to leave. No celebration was complete without him. He was there also for our Froukje, daughter of Louis and Léonie, lighting a candle for her.

He was a man who could unify the family and thought of everyone, and his chief lesson in life was: have love, have faith. Looking at pictures he said: "You can look, but you can't tell what the future will bring."

Hubert was ready to go to his Lord, he had completed his life.

Ciao dear Hubert!

Roeland in his turn gave support to many others. He was a good and kind man. We can be grateful for who he was, for what he did, and for the role he played in our lives.

I want to offer my condolences to all relatives, friends and fellow Brothers. It is a great pity that because of the pandemic we cannot all be there at the funeral, we would certainly have made a big crowd for him.

Four weeks ago, I visited Roeland at De Beyart. I picked him up in his room where he was sitting ready in his wheelchair, and we went to the restaurant for lunch. Halfway through they came back for him to get his dialysis in his room, as at that time they were doing six times a day. The visit before that, he was still walking and I can remember when he would drive around in Maastricht. At De Beyart he'd visit fellow Brothers who were sick, just like he'd always visited the sick in The Hague. Every Sunday he'd come to the hospital in The Hague from Rotterdam where he lived. He'd bring sick people to the chapel and on many a Friday he'd walk around visiting patients and inviting them for the Sunday service.

I first met Roeland in 1988 when I was appointed pastor at the hospital, and we saw each other regularly until he left to live in Maastricht. But we kept in contact and I visited him from time to time. Roeland in turn always knew every birthday and sent a message.

His wide circle of relatives and friends kept faith with him and I heard about the huge celebration there was in 2017 for his jubilee. Roeland bore his illness patiently, kept optimistic, never complained and was very grateful to all those who in his final months and weeks helped him, took care of him, gave him time. All those relatives, friends, fellow Brothers were there for him, and some of the latter ones had spent years of their own lives outside the Netherlands working for others before coming to live at De Beyart.



Left: Roeland receives a book about the Bible at his farewell reception at the hospital in The Hague

Right: with Anton Smit-huis, first lay manager of the Carolus school in The Hague



Below: with Councillor Baldewsingh of The Hague who handed Roeland the City Award



A place of inspiration and service

Wolfgang Borghans

For twenty years, Roeland lived in the FIC community at Jozef Israelsplein in The Hague, from its foundation in 1968 to its closure in 1988. Wolfgang Borghans wrote a short piece about that community in 1990, on the occasion of the 150-year jubilee of the congregation. This is a good moment to publish it. Roeland may well have spent some of the best years of his life as a Brother in that community.

A short history of the JIP

In the nineteen sixties, the St. Joseph community at Westeinde in The Hague was seriously overpopulated. Twelve Brothers lived in very small cells in the attics of the Carolus and Mary schools. For the authorities of the time as well as the inhabitants, it was clear that needed changing.

So seven Brothers moved from the Westeinde house and one from another community moved to a beautiful house at the Jozef Israelsplein – soon abbreviated to JIP by all and sundry.

The new community consisted of Bros. Nico-medes van de Hurk, Emilius Gordijn, Wolfgang Borghans, Franciscus Xaverius Neggers, Theolino Verharen, Leo Daenen, Roeland Knufman and Seraficus/Wim Diemel.

And they had hardly started their work at the various schools – primary, secondary and teacher training college – when they were told they would be an ‘experimental’ community. In those days, ‘small communities’ came up everywhere in many congregations. And there were many meetings to decide on what manner of experiments would be suitable. But all attempts to find new ways were hard to realize and eventually those attempts were dropped in favour of just plain and simply doing the work necessary in church and society.

Nevertheless the community was disappointed when the provincial council of March 1985 decided it would be more practical to close a number of the smaller communities in the country and the JIP proved to be on that list.

Bros. Diëgo van Slobbe, Modesto Schouten, Emilius Gordijn, Theolino Verharen and Roeland Knufman moved to Maastricht, Rotterdam and the old Westeinde community, looking at a new future and hoping that those communities would also be places of inspiration and service.

Note: Aside from the ten Brothers mentioned in the text, two more had lived in the JIP community for a while: Bernardo van Gool and Dick van der Geest. All in all they were twelve.



Above: Rotterdam, 1980s. Jacq Lipman, Theolino Verharen, Ramón Wuisman, Thijs Holla, Roeland Knufman, Albuinus Berkens

Below: Maastricht, 2017. Wim Brands, Gerard Langelaan, Roeland Knufman, Noud Fonken, Léon Huybregts, Hein Fest

