



**News**  
Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother  
of Mercy  
Belgium Region

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July–August 2026 – No. 14

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**Reflection: V A C A T I O N**

**A reflection by Manu Verhulst on what vacation can mean to you...**

“Come, let’s go.” And He took them across the lake to a secluded place to be alone there and get some rest... That’s roughly how it’s written in Mark 6:31–32. Jesus’ suggestion to take a vacation is very modest. As if He were saying: don’t expect too much from it. A vacation isn’t a magic cure that suddenly fixes and heals everything.

A vacation is just the suitcase; everything depends on it: what do you pack inside? In that brief Gospel anecdote lies a blueprint for a vacation: “Come, let’s go!” Leaving behind the worries, the hustle and bustle, and the monotony of everyday work. Seeking out a different place: familiar or unknown, but always brand-new, never seen that way before. Not a teeming crowd of people where everyone is just another face in the crowd, but a place where you can see the other person coming from far away.

To be there alone and find the space to be there for one another in a story without words. “Come, let’s go,” says Jesus; vacation is a time to be close to Me as well.

Manu Verhulst

**D** The first Tuesday after Pentecost is the Belgian Regional Day 2026 once again

took place. Together with the General Board—except for Sr. Sofiani—and Karien Janssen, it was once again a pleasant reunion with our sisters.

After a warm welcome at St. Catherine’s, Father Wim blessed the chapel, the private quarters, and all the sisters’ rooms during the Mass. In the afternoon, the entire group was expected at the provincialate, where the Belgian Region presented a PowerPoint presentation on the demolition and reconstruction of the St. Catherine’s Residential Care Center. The General Administration, in turn, presented a PowerPoint on activities in the other Regions and Provinces.

Afterward, there was coffee and cake to round off the event nicely.

*A few photos capturing the atmosphere*



**D** On Tuesday, July 14, at 3 p.m., all sisters are invited to Sister Annie Timmers' birthday party. She is turned 85 on May 19, and as tradition dictates (?), special birthdays are celebrated together. Start warming up your voices so we can sing then. Everyone is welcome!! See you then!

**E** Coming soon will host you all again a letter asking you to prepare your personal budget and investment plan for the coming year, 2027. This is an annual requirement that is necessary is for the financial meeting of the congregation, which will continue in the fall.

**D** Tuesday August August are the sisters were invited to Tilburg to spend a pleasant day together with the General Board and the Dutch sisters. Sr. Marie-Louise is unable to attend due to circumstances. The General Board is arranging for taxi transportation. If everything goes as planned, Sr. Rosa, Sr. Maria, Sr. Kristien, Sr. Marie-Jeanne, and Sr. Andrea will be going.

**D** This coming Thursday, September 24, is the feast of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, and you are invited to the provincial chapter at 4:30 p.m. p.m. for a joint celebration, followed by a light meal together. We warmly to everyone!

## **AGENDA: 2026**

### **August 2026:**

**August 18:** Meeting in Tilburg of the Belgian and Dutch sisters, hosted by the General Administration;

### **September 2026:**

**September 16:** Formation for women religious of the Diocese of Hasselt at 2:00 p.m. – Speaker: Ms. Liesbet Corvers, episcopal delegate for catechesis and youth, - Theme: “Dilexit Nos”;

**September 24:** Feast of the Congregation's patroness, Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, at the provincialate at 4:30 p.m.

**September 27:** Feast of St. Vincent de Paul;

### **October 2026:**

**Oct. 18:** 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity celebration organized by the parish starting at 8:30 a.m. – invitation and program to follow;

**October 26:** 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity in Zonhoven—invitation to follow;

### **January 2027**

**January 31:** 3:00 p.m. prayer service with our bishop at St. Martin's Church in Hasselt;

### **May 2027:**

**May 26:** Formation session for women religious of the Diocese of Hasselt at 2:00 p.m. – Speaker: Ms. Kolet Janssen, religious studies scholar and author – Topic: “The Wisdom of Old Age”;

### **Prayer**

Give me a heart that can take a break, that can momentarily break free from the constraints of work and worries.

Give me a heart, God,  
an open heart and open hands  
to reach out to people, to listen  
to their stories  
and to savor their friendship.

Give me a heart  
that can find joy in small things, that can  
admire without possessing, and can pray  
without words.

God, give me a heart that can rest as You did on that seventh day,  
when all that You had made was good again.

**Amen.**

The Poor Clares of Sint-Truiden

The Board wishes you all a peaceful and restful vacation in the coming months.

Sister Marie-Louise Aerts  
Sister Rosa Olaerts  
Sister Annie Timmers

## A FRISCO, TWO SISTERS, AND A LESSON IN HUMANITY



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The heat wave has our country firmly in its grip. For days now, the mercury has been rising above thirty degrees, and people are seeking relief wherever they can.

These are hot days for a pastor, too. That afternoon, I had the privilege of baptizing four children. Time and again, that little bit of water on a child's head. A simple gesture, but on such a hot day, it seemed almost extra refreshing.

After the fourth baptism, I drove back to the rectory. On the way, a very human thought suddenly crossed my mind: an ice cream would taste wonderful right now. The temptation was strong. So I quickly stopped by the store for a box of Friscos.

With my haul under my arm, I walked on toward home. As I neared the rectory, I saw two Sisters of Charity sitting on a bench in the shade. They were clearly enjoying the little bit of coolness the trees provided.

At that moment, I was reminded of something I myself had said just recently in a sermon: that we must not shut ourselves away in our homes; that we must rediscover the benches on our streets—places where people meet, chat, listen, share, and live together.

And so I did what the Holy Spirit whispered to me in that moment. I didn't keep the Friscos all to myself, but shared them with the sisters.

What followed was perhaps even more beautiful than the ice cream itself. We sat together in the shade, enjoyed a simple Frisco, and had a lovely conversation. We laughed, shared stories, and savored the moment.

No big meetings, no complicated plans, no social media. Just three people on a bench.

When the ice creams were gone, the sisters made a funny remark. They said that from now on, they would sit on the bench at about the same time every day, hoping that the pastor would come by again with an ice cream.

I don't know if I'll be able to live up to that expectation every day. But one thing I do know: our society needs more benches. Not so much to sit on, but to meet one another.

Because loneliness often isn't dispelled by grand words, but by small gestures. A smile. A conversation. A shared ice cream.

Maybe that's a nice challenge for this summer. Find a bench. Strike up a conversation with someone. Share a little of your time. Or who knows... a Frisco.

And be warned: if you see two sisters sitting on a bench in the shade in Zonhoven, now you know why.

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