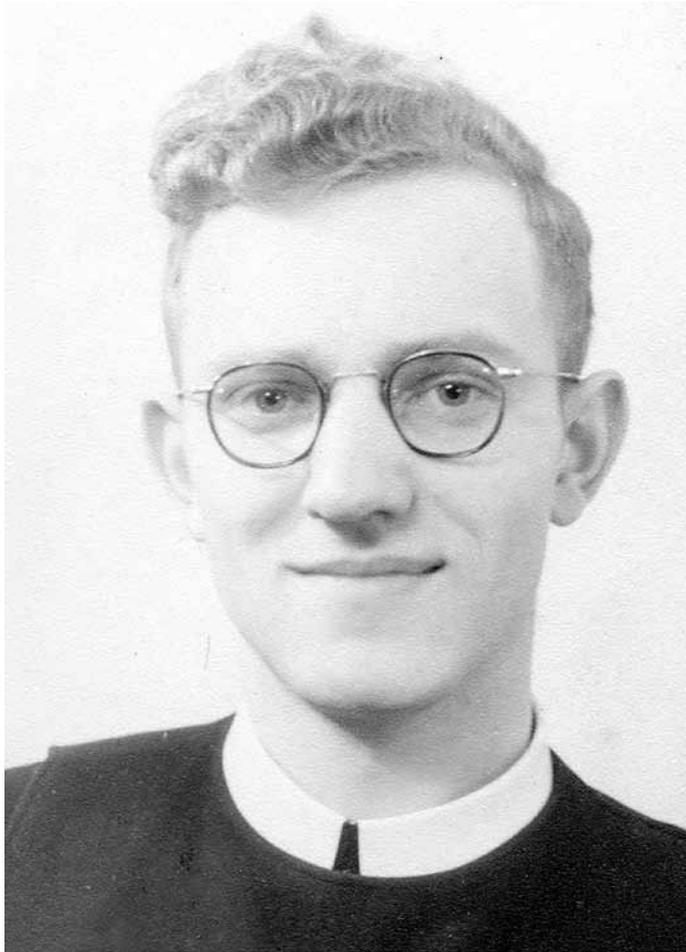


In Deo Henk (Wladimir) van Heck



Henk van Heck was born on 26 October 1929 in Veghel (Netherlands). He committed himself as brother Wladimir to the FIC Congregation on 15 August 1951. He died on Friday 11 March 2016.

Bro. Martin Dariyo tells us how it happened:

On Friday 11 March 2016, at 9 in the morning when I was teaching novices of Brothers FIC, Sisters of Our Lady and Sisters of Providence, I got a phone call from Bro. Henry Anthony Ibrahim, telling me to come to Maryview immediately. Thirty minutes later I arrived at Maryview and saw the ambulance in front of the house, then I knew what happened. People greeted me, I entered the room and some sisters were there to take care of the remains of Bro. Wladimir. He had died in his sleep. I went out and informed the FIC General Council. At 10.30, members of the Board of Governors of the Catholic University arrived, led by the Bishop of Karonga Diocese, Mgr. Rev. Martin Mtumbuka. He was in full of-

ficial robes. We brought the remains to the office room, and Bishop Mtumbuka, together with four priests, led the prayers. He chose the reading on Ephesus, and gave a beautiful speech. Before he was elected as Bishop, Fr. Martin Mtumbuka was second in command of CUNIMA (Catholic University Malawi) after the Vice Chancellor. He stayed in Maryview compound for 10 years. He knew Bro. Wladimir van Heck very well.

He quoted the verse of 2 Tim 4: 7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith". He said Bro. Wladimir was a missionary up to the end and was a good example to others, to keep the faith, to fight until the end. He also said this example is very good especially for the young generation of FIC. He said that we had to celebrate for Bro. Wladimir's achievements.

**"I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith"**

Then in the evening of Sunday 13 March, an evening wake and mass were held to allow the people from the villages to come and say goodbye to Bro. Wladimir, and a vigil was held throughout the night. In the morning the funeral mass was held, presided over by Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa, assisted by Bishop Musikwa of Diocese of Chikwawa, and accompanied by 33 priests. The main choir was from Nguludi Parish, another was the Montfort Choir of Maryview out-station. It was a very moving ceremony. Bro. Wladimir was interred at the FIC cemetery under a tree next to Bro. Thijs Holla, as he had requested in life.

Bro. Henry Anthony Ibrahim spoke at the beginning of the Funeral Mass in memory of Brother Wladimir, as follows.

Brother Wladimir was the very definition of FIC Brother Brotherhood; "We live in this world as human beings, together with all other human beings. Just like everyone else we wish to make the best we can of our lives. Just like everyone else we ask for the deepest and most perfect happiness." Art 1 of FIC Constitutions. He loved



Henk van Heck with some of the people in his Caritas project

all people especially the poor and marginalized people. He took his privileges, his sufferings, his education, and his own natural abilities and turned each of them into good for everyone else. In the eyes of Brother Wladimir we were equal before God. He had the grace to look into the hearts of people and realized that they we are all the same in our needs, in our aspirations, in our hopes, and our desire for love and human development - whatever might limit our capacities to express them. In his life he demonstrated to us that in our vocation we are called to be brothers to all people, to be good and to do good.

Bro. Henk was a model for brothers, he helped us to grasp the meaning of true brotherhood. He had natural love for the most forgotten-the handicapped, he orphaned, the Deaf and Dumb, the challenged and the poor--and brought all them into the warmth of his heart and the goals of his

life. He lived life lively and he stayed involved in its deepest aspirations until the very end, we will forever remember his positive influence.

Bro. Henk was the kind of bright candle shining among his fellow brothers. We feared to be left in darkness at his passing. Instead, we are discovering that he went through life lighting other candles along the way, helping us to see our vocation in the right perspective. He dispelled darkness; our doubts and fears wherever he went and left all of us more confident as we face a future that is unknown.

The only tribute worthy of Bro. Henk van Heck is that we go on lighting up the world in his name, in his memory, with his same passion. It was our privilege to be his Brothers for so many years, to have been in his presence. We will forever remember Br Wladimir, May his Soul rest in Peace!



The man lying here found a way



of reaching the people



Speech by the Archbishop, Mgr. Thomas Luke Msusa SMM

My deepest sympathy to the entire FIC community, the bishop of Chikhwawa diocese, the Vicar General of the archdiocese, priests, seminarians, Reverend sisters and all of you my brothers in Christ present here. A dark cloud hangs over this day and I experience the sudden loss of my arms and legs with this event. Here lies a man who became the arms and legs of the Archdiocese. He walked to the people and reached out with his hands and feet of charity to the poor that needed help. Here lies man who extended evangelization through works of charity. He practiced the gospel values and made them the reason for his calling to religious brotherhood. He never stopped at one point to ask them if they were Catholic or not, Christian or not but it was his heart that probed the root cause of poverty. He witnessed his Christian values to all people that met him.

This brother has taught us to be forthright in our approach to apostolic work. The challenge is to the FIC community. What is it that we have learned from him? Do we have to wait for a man of eighty-six years to teach us how to perform works of charity? He did his part. Will there be somebody after him? Surely we do not need to wait for FIC brothers to reach out to us. We all have gifts which we can share with other people. The pastoral letter written by we your bishops, encourages sharing among Malawians because we all have something unique.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the man lying here found a way of reaching the people. He walked to the people and found them in their humble homes. He did not spend long hours complaining at how he will reach the people. He found a way of reaching the people. He gave the poor and sick the hope that they wanted. He gave them the love that they needed.

My brothers and sisters, most at times, the sick people need our encouragement. They need our presence. They need somebody just to talk to them. They are not looking for material things. They wait for an assuring hand that offers hope.

They are looking for somebody to talk with. Our poor people are lonely and feel dejected. They need you and me to be near them. We all have a responsibility to take care of the suffering in the society. My brother lying here, shared his time with the people.

The bishops have written that there is growing poverty in Malawi because people have become selfish. There has been a growing gap between the rich and the poor to such an extent that it has reached worrying proportions. The poor have lost hope that life may one day become better for them. As bishops, we have observed that this has been caused by the lack of sharing among us. We have failed to reach out to one another. There is growing corruption among us which has resulted into accumulation of wealth at the expense of the poor. My brother lying here never wanted to keep everything for himself.

My brothers and sisters, you have heard that he did not abandon his work by finding an excuse. He went to his normal work but found time to give others a smile. It is true that he was born in Holland but he lived here. He shared the life of a Malawian. The Netherlands is just a place of birth but the real life was lived in Malawi with Malawians. To this extent, we could say that his heart and mind was Malawian. He was a religious and enjoyed to be a religious in Malawi. You have heard of the recent stories how his heart went out to those who had no food. Nobody asked him to share food with the people but his desire to alleviate suffering made him do so.

My brothers and sisters, those people who were receiving this food lined up here where the mass is taking place. This was a place of poor people benefitting from the benevolence of one man. Today the very place where poor people got their livelihood from food donation is where the rich are congregated to bid him farewell. Tomorrow, the people will not gather here. They will be surprised that the man who cared for them is no longer. Obviously, many of them will not understand. They will move round the compound in disbelief and ask why this could happen at this time. We must pray for one another that we should be moved by the suffering of other people and do something about it.



Those people who were receiving his food



lined up here for the Mass



Brother Wladimir to the donors *a letter to the people of Veghel*

Dear all

Some time in 1979, Bro. Hubrecht paid a visit to St. Michielsgestel where I was working at the School for the Deaf. "Why don't you come to Malawi?" he asked me. "Malawi? And what should I do there?" "We have a school for deaf children in Malawi too", he replied. "Oh... I had never considered that before."

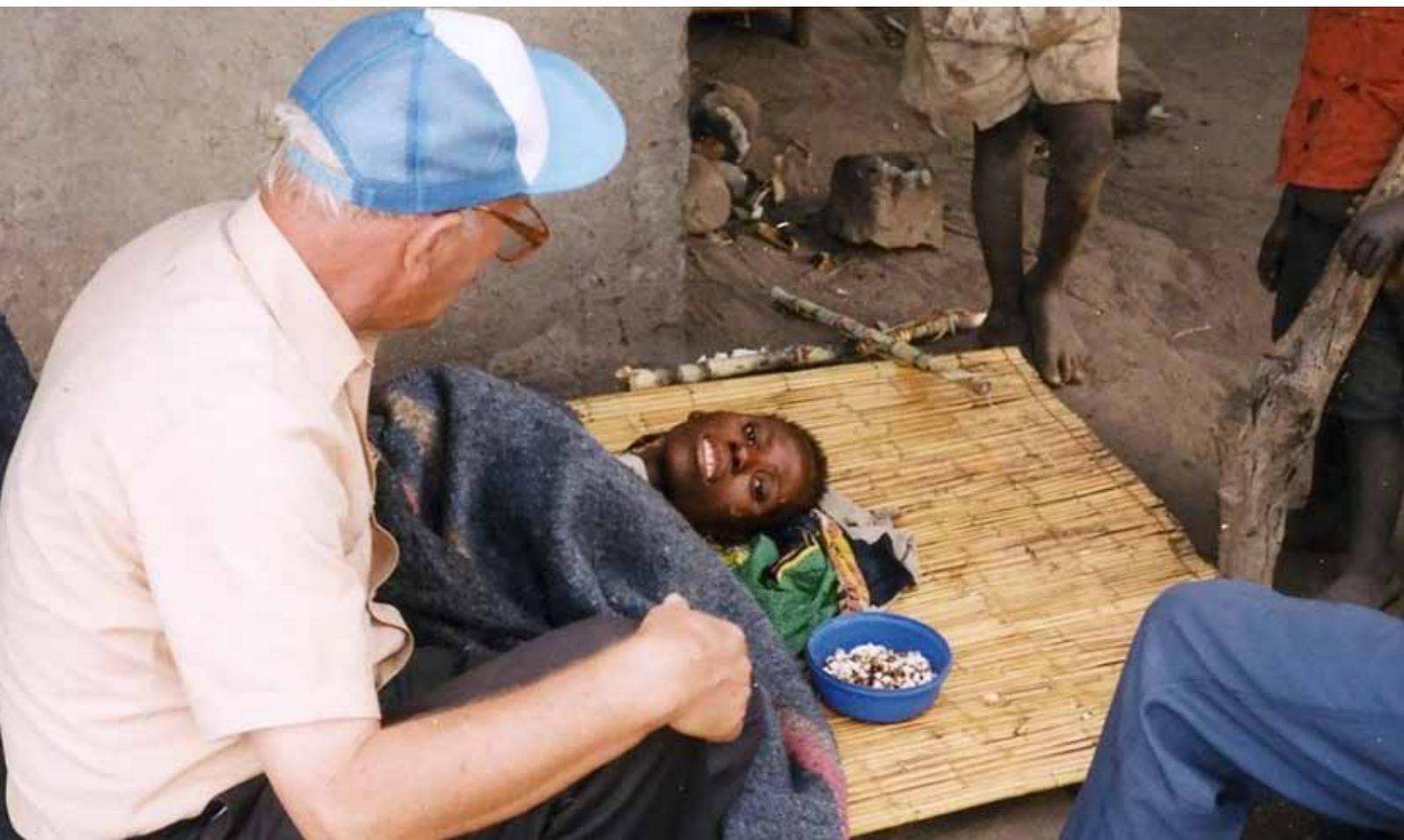
After that, the idea of going to Malawi did not let go of me. I had turned fifty just a few months earlier and I thought "If I don't do it now I never will." So I contacted the late Bro. Bruno van der Made, our General Superior at the time, and on 15 November 1980, Bro. Hubrecht and a bus full of deaf children met me at Chileka airport in Malawi.

The thing I noticed most in Malawi at the time was the poverty so many people live in. I can remember the first hut I ever entered had a door of woven grass and a leaking roof also covered with grass. It was quite dark in there and it reminded me of a poem by Huub Oosterhuis, "Should I, as He did, share the fate of the poor?" And

slowly it came to me that someone who says "No, I won't, what could I do that way?" turns his back on God who says "I am a God for the poor." And I think that a God who is poor and destitute, a God who is not heard and whose rights are denied, is truly a God for the poor.

When I came to Malawi in 1980, there was only one school for the Deaf there. Now, just a few years ago we opened the fourth school, and we are giving some more deaf children a bit of a chance of a bit more future. Unfortunately it is also becoming more difficult to keep these schools going, for the government has not much to spare for their exploitation. In effect, these specialised schools are too expensive for this poor country. 150 children to a class is quite normal in an ordinary primary school, and we are asking for ten teachers for 150 deaf children, plus money for water, electricity, transport, food, in short all the exploitation costs such a school has, for the children are also boarding at the school and they need expensive hearing aids as well. That is sheer luxury compared to other schools.

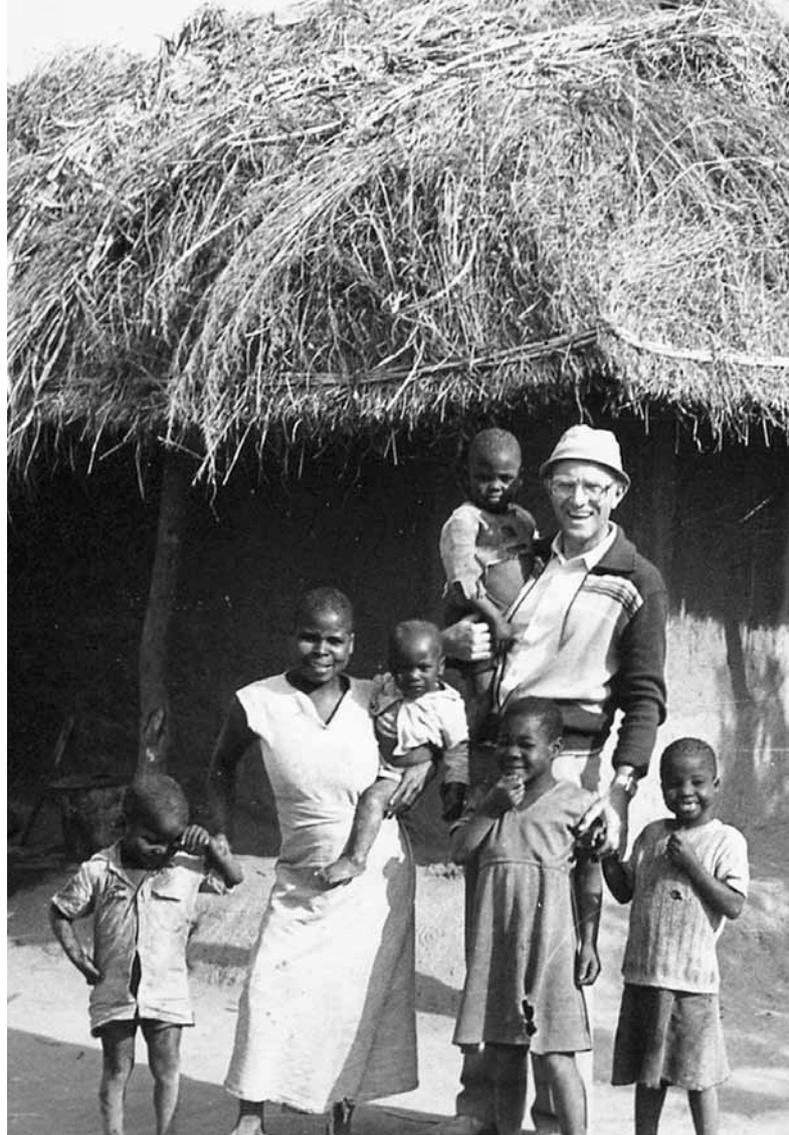
Beside my work for the deaf, there are so many other things for me to do here. I am a man who wants to go and sit beside people at their homes, talk with them, share in their worries, their joys, their fears and sorrows. I have learned



so much from them. I have learned to listen, to understand something of their situation, to see what life is like for them, step into their shoes for a moment – although most of them have no shoes. But I know that any time I can step out of it any time I want, and they can't. I can go back home to a house that doesn't leak, to a bed with a mattress and blankets, clothes to wear and a table with food on it.

It is something like twenty years ago when I started seeing very sick people in the villages, people who had been sent home by the hospitals because they couldn't be treated. Go and die at home. They were the first patients with AIDS. 'Matenda opanda mankhwala', 'the sickness we have no medicine for'. The circumstances under which these people were shoved away were inhumane in my opinion, and I found some women who were willing to help make the last days and weeks of these people a little more bearable. This grew into a project called Caritas Home Based Care. It is a kind of home care for people in the 28 surrounding villages. In this country, too many people die each year because they are too poor to stay alive. They die in hospitals, for lack of medicines, they die in the villages for lack of mosquito nets, food and clean water. They die namelessly and soundlessly. They are the poor, who have the same ambitions you and I have, and our families. Just to live.

Someone asked about my motivation. What can I say? It is just something to do with my time. Something I cannot leave undone. Availability? Service to others? I know women in the villages who beside their own single-parent family also care for anyone who needs it, day and night. Just do what needs to be done. Without asking or being asked. And how much, is it useful, feasible, possible, is it structural? Don't bother with such questions, just do what needs to be done. Take risks if you have to. Fall, and get up again. Start over again. Keep fighting for a few more rights for a few more people. Be deceived and forgive, again and again. Seventy times seven times. "And you Brothers do not tire of doing good." I'd rather be deceived than send away someone who really needs my help. I'd rather have negative experiences than no experiences at all. I feel guilty when a child dies of malnutrition here in Masikini. I want to prevent that. Every time. No matter what. That is what keeps me



going, this fight for food and shelter, for attention and human dignity, for medicines and work, for the right to speak up. And in spite of failures, bad luck, incompetence and powerlessness, I don't want to be bitter or cynical. I just want to go on helping to make sure our students become integrated citizens in this Malawian society.

People sometimes ask when I'll be coming home, hasn't it been enough? But here, I am home, this is my place, and as long as I am not in the way and people like having me around, I'll stay. I can't let go. There aren't so many things I must do, but there is a lot I can do. And maybe I'll be allowed to stay and die here. Who knows? Until then I'll just go on doing my best, within the means and possibilities I have, and I'm happy with every little bit of progress we make. Every smile, every happy face is a reward for me. And I'm happy to serve, the last in a long chain from donor to receiver, from the people in The Netherlands with a warm heart to the people in Malawi, the one to bear the gift.

Greetings, and thank you. God Bless.