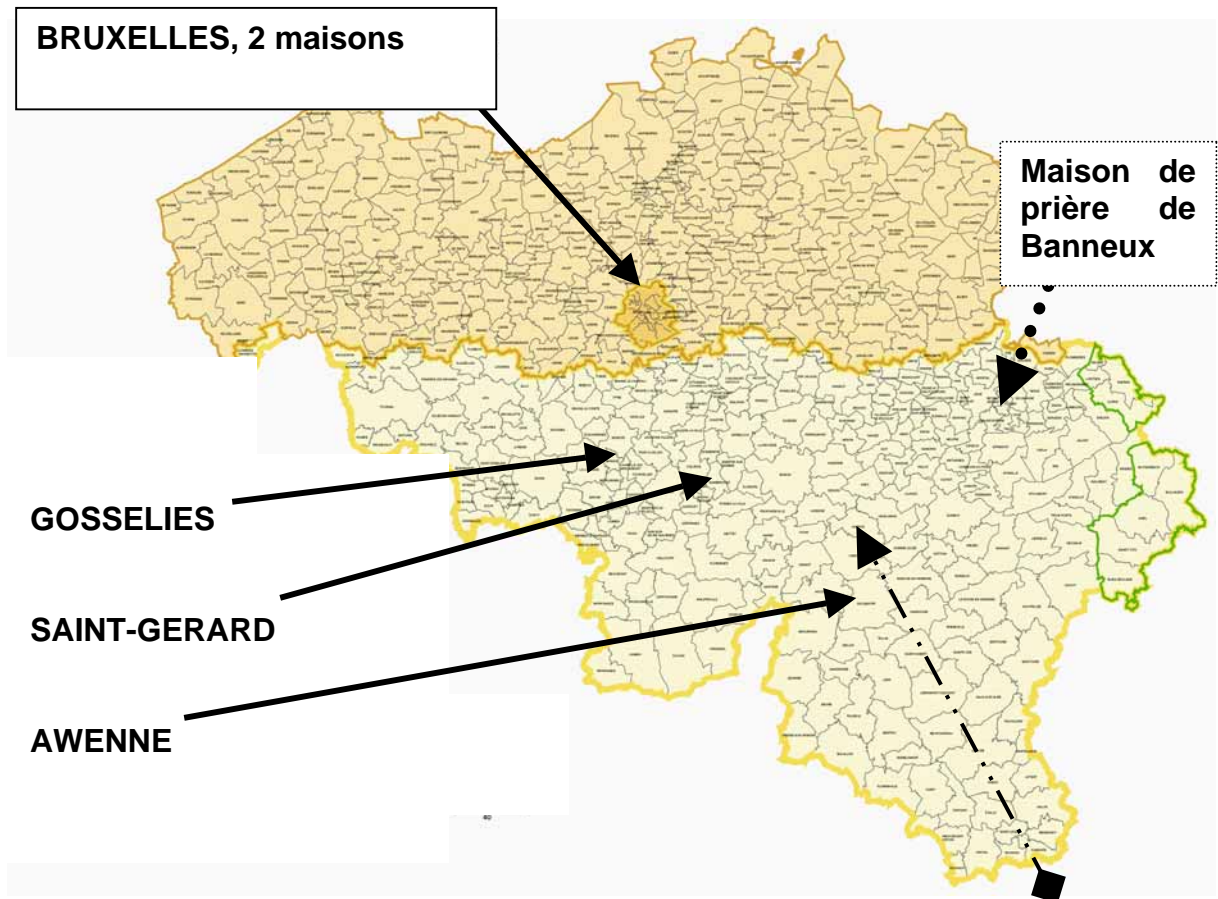


South Belgium



(Future maison de repos et de soins à CINEY)

Statistics of the Province

Religious:

	Religious Priests	Religious Perp. Prof.	Religious Temp. Prof.	Total	Novices	Postulants
on 01.01.05	40	5	1	46	0	0
on 01.01.99	59	7	3	69	0	0

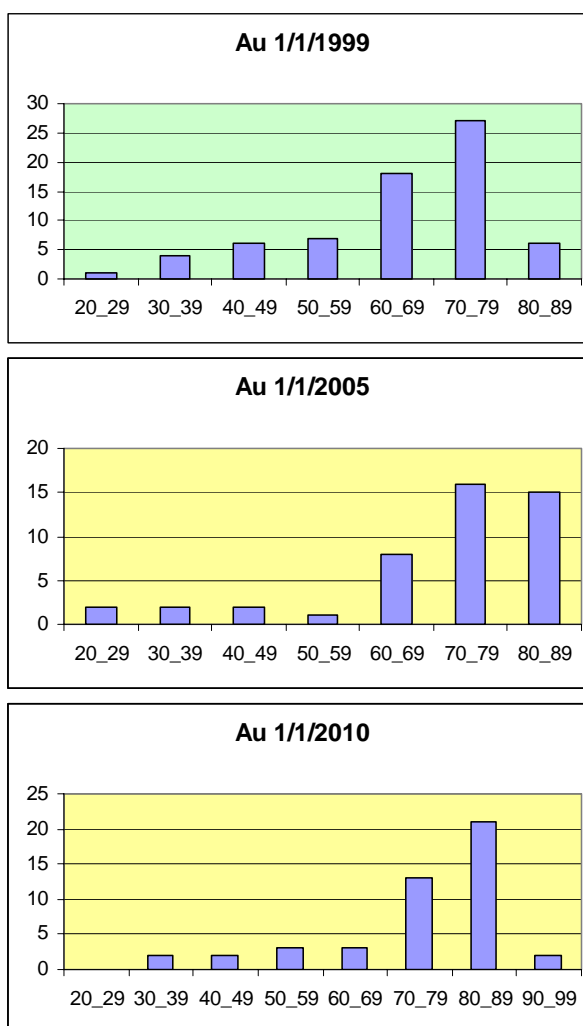
Communities:

		Local Communities		Regional Communities		Attached	Isolated (*)
		Communities	Religious	Communities	Religious		
Country	Belgique	5	32	1	5	3	1
Country	Colombie	2	5				
Total	01.01.05	7	37	1	5	3	1
	01.01.99	8	48	1	8	11	2

(*) Isolated: religious who live alone, unattached to any community or the Provincial.

Since 1999: 1 House has been closed
 0 Were opened
 0 Communities merged

A pyramid of ages (between 1999 and 2004, with a projection up to 2010)



The forecast for 01.01.2010 was based on data in January 2005.

Evolution of the Province since 1999

The Country: Five prominent events in the last six years.

1. The Catholic parties losing their place in the government (both in the federal government in the French-speaking region), after an uninterrupted presence (in coalitions) for more than 30 years. In a political system that is often (explicitly or implicitly) antichristian.
2. The passing of a law allowing active euthanasia under certain conditions.
3. The Dutroux trial (pedophile), took 7 years to come to trial, uncovering much wider network of pedophilia including members of the government.
4. The passing of a law allowing marriage between people of the same sex.
5. The rise in power of the National Party of the extreme right Vlaams Blok (became Vlaams Belang) in Flanders (the most important party in Flanders with 30% of the votes).

The Church

Three difficulties

1. Very clear crisis in Priestly and Religious vocations: diocesan seminaries are empty or almost empty (except Namur that has a small recruitment)
2. Attacks made against the institutional pillars of the Catholic Church in Belgium (Teaching, hospitals, etc.) and against the values defended by the Church (legislation on ethical issues, etc.)
3. An immobility of people responsible for pastoral care in the face of a shortage/or the apparition of clericalistic lay people.

Four signs of hope

1. The vitality of certain parish communities.
2. The presence, in several places, of fervent Christian immigrants (particularly black Africa).
3. Events that attract people, like the Session for Prayer Groups of the Renewal, in Beauraing, attended annually by 4 to 5,000 people.
4. The preparation of the Evangelization Congress for All Saints' Day 2006 that will take place in Brussels following those in Vienna (2002) and in Paris (2004).

The Assumptionist Situation

The life of Religious and communities

1. Notable events:
 - setting up the new Saint Marie-Madeleine Fraternity.
 - priestly ordination of Thibault and Yves
 - Yves' Doctorate
 - the appointment of Alain as assistant to the U.C.L. and Yves responsible for the courses in Metz.
 - the opening of the Caté-Luxemburg Center in Awenne.
2. Regular and occasional gatherings:
 - BS-BN meetings and BS-BN-NL; meetings for a funeral celebration
3. Difficult and sad situations to manage:
 - sick religious (Arthur, Victor, Jean-Marie...)
4. The work of the Councils: frequent and effective meetings; good fraternal climate.
5. The work of the Commissions: the formation commission met several times for the admissions to temporary vows (Claude) and perpetual profession (Thibault) and for the diaconate and the priesthood (Thibault and Yves). Serious reflection on the essentials.

Follow-up to the Canonical Visitation

In November 2004, we had the Canonical Visitation of our Province. It was experienced as a time of encouragement for the Province. We appreciated the fraternal examination by our Superior General, his attention to the religious and to the lay people he encountered. The Visitation Report contained criteria for the discernment and assessment of our Assumptionist life. We will be able to refer to them.

The Economic life

The economic situation of the Province has altered somewhat. The income of three of our five communities is no longer able to cover their expenses. The savings made in the good years allowed us to cover these needs. But, despite all efforts the situation of houses with a tendency to show a deficit risks continuing. As the new retirement house in Ciney will be an expense for the Province, the Provincial Chapter set as a priority to keep the budget in balance. Despite these concerns we are able to maintain our commitment to the apostolic fund and we are happy to do it. We had committed to give 50% more than when we first donated to this fund.

The Provincial Chapter

Atmosphere

A day for a Province Assembly before the Chapter allowed us to have an open and fraternal dialogue. The work of the actual chapter had been well prepared by the Councils: 7 reports were sent to all religious. They were asked to reflect on them in community and send in written responses. Very few responses were received. The discussions at the Chapter were generally peaceful. Some capitulants made little

contribution. The relationship between the « new » and the « old » was generally amenable.

The most important topics

- the *projet* of the Province
- elderly and sick religious
- collaboration inside the Congregation
- the establishment of a Province of Northern Europe

Important decisions and major directions for the future

Main texts adopted by the Chapter (Acts of the Chapter)

1. Projet of the Province

The Province adopted as its fundamental *projet* to sustain the Christian fabric of our communities with particular concern for the pastoral care of young people, the awakening of vocations to the religious life and the care of our elderly and sick brothers.

2. Elderly and sick Religious

The Chapter assigned the Provincial Council to search for religious able to form a community for a Rest and Care Home (MRS) and to search for an adequate location for this project; and submit their findings for approval by the Council of the Province.

3. Collaboration on formation in the Congregation

The Chapter confirmed the proposals formulated previously by the Province, that: «...aware of the limited and fragile character of the Province, BS is ready to share its experience concerning vocations and young religious in formation with other Provinces. BS is more than ready to welcome, under certain conditions and for a determined length of time, young people from other regions in Europe or the world » (Taken from the position made by B.S. at the Council of the Congregation in 2004). More concretely, the Chapter underlined that the community of *Rue des Braves* is the place best adapted to take in young religious in formation, while the Rue Duquesnoy is more suited to welcome people for their initial discernment of Christian life.

4. The Province of Northern Europe

1. The Chapter recalls that, from the start, the Province of B.S. does not seek to modify its status.

2. However, taking into account the difficulties facing other Provinces in Northern Europe, the Chapter agreed to pursue a process of greater collaboration with them. This process must be made without skipping any of the stages, this is why a future Province of Northern Europe, made up of three Regions, should be able to function in the best possible way that respects the principle of subsidiarity. The collaboration and solidarity

between the Regions of the future Province should not lessen the functioning of their legitimate autonomy. These principles guided the writing of a draft statute (draft n° 6, October 21, 2004) submitted for examination to the Provincial Chapters of South and North Belgium and the Netherlands.

5. Collaboration with the Provinces

Taking into account realistically the weak situation of the Province, the Chapter recommends that in the domain of collaboration with other Provinces of the Congregation, an approach be made in the form of « small steps » that is respectful of the local reality.

The Chapter also encourages the development of a privileged relationship between the Province and the local situation of other Provinces in Europe, with whom an affinity may exist, by informal but reciprocal links.

The Personal appraisal of the Provincial

On the Province

The Province has two sides to its face: a young face that is hyperdynamic and a face that has been wrinkled through apostolic generosity and the weight of years. These are the two facets of our Province. As all are concerned and care for each other, love and mutual esteem grow. I am witness to this.

Ageing is a reality in the Province but also, more fundamentally, there is spiritual struggle. To see the work ahead and not be able to respond to it is a trial for more than one of our brothers. If the Lord is not at the heart of this dilemma, the suffering can be very heavy. We must therefore remain shoulder to shoulder with our brothers, even while being impotent and wordless.

The reality of our Province constrains us to do what is essential, to focus on our *raison d'être*. It is an opportunity for us. The doing is eclipsed in the face of the true incentives of our religious life, in consequence of which the spiritual and human animation of the Province is most important.

On the work of the Provincial Chapter

For me, the horizon of our Provincial Chapter was the Congregation and the world. I weighed up at every instant the implications of our local decisions on those outside our borders. The agenda items of the Chapter shared this vision of things.

On the orientations of the General Chapter

Given the importance that the Council of the Congregation gave to the forthcoming General Chapter, it wanted a large representation of elected religious. That is fortunate. To benefit the most from the intercontinental presence of the Congregation, it will be necessary to agree on what is important. All the questions raised will be confronted at the fundamental levels of our religious life. This is a great opportunity. It offers a promising future.

Fr. Guy Leroy, a.a
Provincial Superior