

Rome, November 2003.

#### A Meeting between Sr. Agnès Charles DMJ and Fr. Robert Hamilton CJ

As I remember I was in Rome for meeting of the Union of Superior Generals. It seemed an excellent opportunity to me to meet with Sr. Agnès Charles the Superior General of the DMJs for the first time. It was intended to be a courtesy call. Little did I realise as I climbed out of the taxi just what an eventful meeting was about to take place.

At that time the Superior General of the DMJs lived in Rome, Via dei Lucchesi. I remember the meeting as if it were yesterday. Sr. Sheila Moloney was also present. The conversation soon turned to our Founder. I expressed my Concern that amongst the Josephites the Founder was not sufficiently known. Within a few minutes Agnès suggested the idea of a Symposium on the Founder for the members of the four Congregations that van Crombrugghe had founded. I remember being slightly reticent about the idea but within a few minutes Agnès had convinced me that a Symposium was perfectly feasible in England using the Emmaus Retreat Centre in West Wickham.

The next hour was spent drawing up a list of topics and speakers.



What followed is history. Agnès and I worked together and were able to get Sr. Marie Rose, the Superior general of the sisters of St. Joseph to join us. Although the Sisters of Mary and Joseph were not able to join us in England they provided us with information on their history and spirituality.

The Symposium took place in Emmaus February 28th to March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005. A detailed version of the proceedings of the symposium has been published in French and English (See [www.vancrombrugghe.net](http://www.vancrombrugghe.net))

The collaboration did not end there. In July 2009 a very special pilgrimage took place in Belgium entitled "In the Footsteps of the Founder". Members of all 4 Congregations met together in Belgium. College Melle provided accommodation for those coming from the USA and England. For a whole week we were able to visit places associated with the Founder. We visited Belleghem where the Founder collaborated with Julie Herbau who was to become the Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Bruges. Another place of interest was the former Jesuit chapel in Alost where the Founder, as Director of the College often celebrated Mass. Sr. Agnès was able to organise a visit the parliament. We were able to visit the very chamber where our Founder spoke up for freedom in education.

Who would have believed that all this came as a result of a courtesy call in November 2003?

Robert Hamilton CJ