

ONS KENMERK --
LEUVEN, 06 October 2006

Report about the activities of the Teaching Chair for Pastoral Ministry with the Deaf, Academic Year 2005-2006

1 Introduction

My main activities during this academic year were:

- Giving lectures
- Making contacts
- Preparing a research proposal
- Visit to the programme for Master's in Deaf Pastoral Ministries at Saint Thomas University at Miami (Florida)
- Preparing publications

This year the chair got a place within the Centre for Practical Theology. This Centre, which is formed by members of the Department of Pastoral Studies, directs itself on the formation of pastoral ministers for different fields of pastoral work: in parishes, health care, youth ministry, and pastoral ministry with the deaf. The programmes in this centre are open not only for people with a formation in theology or religious studies, but also for people with a different formation who want to specialise in pastoral ministry. The programme in this Centre for Practical Theology is in Dutch.

Next to the programme in the Centre for Practical Theology the course has also its place in the foreign programme of the Department of Pastoral Theology. This foreign programme is followed by students from abroad who came to Leuven for a Master's programme in Religious Studies or Theology or for a Doctorate in Theology.

1.1 Lectures

The lectures of the first semester were in the Dutch-speaking programme, for students in the programmes of Master of Arts in Religious Studies and Master's in Theology. The number of students that attended to the programme was higher than in the other "Dutch-speaking" years, '01-'02 and '03-'04, 15, which surprisingly is above average in the first year of the Master's programme. Four of them had had personal experiences with deaf people, mainly as teacher in a school for the deaf. Two deaf persons, teachers of Sign Language and Deaf Culture in schools for the deaf, wanted to register for this course, as students from outside the University, but that resulted to be impossible because they were too late to register as students for this particular course, and being too late, the University did not provide interpreter facilities. Application for interpreter facilities during the academic year should be done before June 15th. The next time when the course is in the Dutch-speaking programme they will participate. An announcement of the course will have to be made in time, and people interested will have been warned that interpreter facilities should be applied for before June 15th.

I worked intensively through my course materials and still more than other years I focussed on self reports of Deaf people, about their own lives, about their deaf community, about their world-view. Other topics (psychology, audiology) were mentioned, but not treated extensively.



During the second semester I teach the half of a course given by me and Prof. Axel Liégeois. In '01-'02, '02-'03 and '03-'04 our courses in the programme for advanced studies in practical theology – a postgraduate programme - were followed by a low number of students. In fact the total number of students in this postgraduate programme was very low. The Faculty decided that it would better to make a combination of courses in order to raise the number of students in each course. So a combination between my and Axel Liégeois's courses was proposed. Prof. Liégeois's background is institutional care for people with special needs. Prof. Liégeois and I agreed that we had different perspectives: he has a health care perspective, whereas I stress in my course that deaf pastoral ministry is not a form of health care ministry, and that deaf people have their reasons for disagreeing with such a perspective. In fact, We decided to divide the course in two parts, and both of us were completely free in our part of the programme. In my part of the programme I spent a part of this course with the work of authors in the field of deaf studies who deconstruct the concept of disability with regard to deaf people (Ian Branson, Mairian Corker, Paddy Ladd). The Faculty's goal of raising the number of students was attained, however. It is the only course in which students of the international and the Dutch-speaking programme are combined. The course was followed by 42 students, from African countries (Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia), Asian countries (India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, People's Republic of China), America (USA, Jamaica), various European countries (Belgium, Northern Ireland, Ukraine, Rumania, Hungary). This means that all students in the Department of Pastoral Studies followed this course. There were also two students from the Department of Cultural Anthropology.

As is logical in an environment of hearing people who are not acquainted with deafness, there has some work to be done in order to make the Department of Pastoral Studies and the Faculty acquainted with the fact that deaf people have a different view on deafness than hearing people. Hearing people who are not acquainted with deafness consider deafness a disability, and disability as a common denominator for people with all kinds of functional impairments.

1.2 Contacts

This year an intensive contact was stabilised with the Department of Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Social Studies, especially with Prof. Patrick Devlieger. Patrick Devlieger is also a research professor at the University of Illinois in Chicago and he has contacts with the social studies department of Gallaudet University. Prof. Devlieger started his career as an anthropologist with studies of deaf culture in African countries. Later on, in collaboration with people from Gallaudet College he did anthropological studies of deaf communities in the USA. At the moment his area of research is culture, religion and disability. In his view "disability" is a concept derived from a medical way of thinking that neglects the fact that "disability" leads to a different world-view and a different way of forming community.

1.3 Preparing a Research Proposal

In close cooperation with Prof. Patrick Devlieger I wrote an application for a grant from the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research (FWO) about religious socialisation of young deaf people. The central hypothesis of the study is that religious socialisation of young deaf people does not depend only from the educational style in their family of origin, like in the case of hearing youth, but also from the degree in which they find examples of enculturation of religion into deaf culture and in the deaf community they associate with. We had a deaf student who wanted to collaborate with a part of the study. We asked for a grant of €280,000. The Flemish Fund for Scientific Research did not give the grant, but their reaction was not hopeless, in the sense that FWO remarked that the project might become acceptable when it is reformulated at some points. We decided to study the proposal again, in order to submit in 2007-2008.

1.4 Writing articles and preparing publications

An article about the role of the community in religious experience of deaf people was submitted to the Irish Theological Quarterly, which is an internationally well-known theological journal. Until now they



confirmed only that they received the article. The article has been sent to the reading committee for peer review, and often that takes up to six months.

I finished another article in which the concept of disability in relationship to deafness is deconstructed. I used for this article thoughts of authors as Mairian Corker (deaf), Branson (hearing, Australian Centre of Deaf Studies) and others, and have tried to make a connection with theology. The article is written in English. At the moment I am contacting journals for submission of the manuscript. I am making a slightly different article in Dutch for the Flemish theological journal *Collationes*.

The papers presented at the conference in 2003 at Leuven will be published soon. The book will be published in the series *Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia* (Leuven Annals), a series of theological publications of Leuven University, published by Peeters Publishing House at Leuven. The publisher decided that one of the contributions to the book should be corrected by a native speaker of English. This is still to be done.

I am also compiling the lectures I gave the last years and I am looking for a publishing house that might publish them. Since the texts are in English, a publishing house in an English speaking country will have to be looked for.

1.5 Visit to Saint Thomas

From January 2nd to 9th the Faculty of Theology of the KU Leuven and the board of ICF gave me the opportunity to pay a visit to the only academic programme in the world where deaf people can follow a programme for a Master's of Art in Deaf Ministries. This programme is given at Saint Thomas University at Miami (Florida). I was permitted to follow during a week the programme such as it was offered to the students. It was a very informative week and I wrote a large report about this visit and the things that the Chair of Leuven might learn from the programme at Saint Thomas. I sent this report to ICF, Saint Thomas University and to the Faculty of Theology. My conclusion was that the realisation of such a programme at Leuven would require more effort than can be given by one person in a 30% contract. The report can be obtained from me on request.

1.6 Other activities

This year my contacts with the deaf community were mainly at a private level, often but not always related to my work at Leuven.

We are still gathering every month with a small faith group of deaf persons. In April this group was heavily struck by the sudden death of one of the participants, Ted Kempers. Ted had participated in the organisation of the weekend in 2004 at Helvoirt, and he was just planning to organise action in order to get Catholic pastoral ministry with the deaf in the Netherlands. He was very convinced of the fact that deaf persons themselves have to take their destiny into their own hands and that they can expect from hearing people only psychological support. He was a man of authority in the deaf community, with a lot of contacts in the deaf community and with (the remnants of) several Catholic deaf clubs. Under his guidance the deaf faith group had written a letter to Cardinal Simonis, in which the deaf asked for an audience in which they might explain why they want a priest for the deaf who knows sign language. The Cardinal gave an answer, in which he did not speak about an audience, but in which he gave the name of a priest that might be contacted. This priest had worked some years ago with the deaf during some period of time, but he had not been accepted well by the deaf community.

Minor actions were:

- A visit to the deaf school of Kasterlinden (Brussels), the only bilingual (sign, Dutch) deaf school in the Region of Brussels and Flanders.
- Support to a young deaf woman who started a study of theology at a professional level. This woman participated in the conference at Leuven in 2003 and the ICF Conference at Mexico in 2003. She had also participated in the organisation of the weekend at Helvoirt in 2004. In 2005 she decided to receive baptism. Her academic level was such that she could not be admitted to a university study. She was admitted to a study at professional level.
- Participation in events organised by the deaf, such as religious services for the deaf, and World Deaf Day. At World Deaf Day I met a deaf student of theology at the Catholic Theological



Faculty of Utrecht (Netherlands), who had participated in the conference at Leuven in 2003. At that time he was exclusively oriented on hearing society. Now he is orienting himself more and more on the deaf community and deaf culture. He wants to specialise in pastoral theology and hopes to specialise in pastoral ministry with the deaf. I brought him in contact with the young deaf woman I mentioned above.

- Information was given to students of theology at other universities, such as to two students at the Free University of Amsterdam (a protestant university) who are sign language interpreters who decided to study theology.

1.7 Position at the Faculty

This year the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven renewed my contract for a period of five years, until October 1st 2011, at a 30% basis. In the beginning of this year ICF had asked the Ecclesiastical Foundation Instituut voor Doven in the Netherlands (associated with Viataal) to support the Chair financially. Viataal declined this request, but promised to continue with its support to the Chair like they had done during the last five years. In 2003 Viataal gave €5000 for the conference at Leuven, and it promised €14000 for the research project which was not accepted by FWO. Now other funding are eing looked for.

At the University I applied from a promotion from the rank of associate professor to the rank of professor. The Academic Council decided not to give this promotion, although they doubted about it. They decided that with some publications during the next year a promotion might be realised.

1.8 Projects for the next year

For the next year it will have high priority to get a grant from FWO for a research study among deaf youth, in which deaf persons can participate actively.

From March on I shall announce the course of 2007-2008 (which will be given in Dutch) to deaf communities in Flanders and the Netherlands.

I shall to continue to look for contacts with deaf people in Flanders and the Netherlands who are interested in the field of pastoral ministry and theology and try to support them, also when they do not have the possibility of being admitted to a university programme.

Leuven, 06 October 2006

Marcel Broesterhuizen