

Celebrating Fr Josse van de Rest on the occasion of the official launch of “Crossing the Shelter Gap” Program

27 February 2021, Yaounde 7 Sub Division

Who was Fr Josse van de Rest?

Fr Josse van de Rest was founder of SELAVIP Foundation, a major partner in CEPROCU housing projects since 2009.

Fr Josse van de Rest was a Jesuit born in Belgium but lived in Chile since 1958 until his death on 24th July 2020 at the age of 96.

Fr. Josse challenges us with his passionate revolutionary ideas on the housing problem of the urban underprivileged. He was concerned that these families were not only socially excluded from our cities, but were also denied access to land to build their shelter.

He was not happy vulnerable families were deprived of land on which they could gradually build their own houses with their scarce resources. In this process, long-term solutions were not so important for him. He wanted SELAVIP, CEPROCU and other partners to recognize the urgent need of shelter for the needy. He decried the fact that urban poor families patching up in the homes of their relatives or friends sometimes didn't have any privacy of their own or were subjected to “conditions of extreme insecurity and unhealthiness”. This explains why for him, “it is better to have a "bad house now than a nice house in 10 more years" when it can be too late to preserve that family”.

Fr. Josse van de Rest's ideas inspired the work of SELAVIP, CEPROCU and other organizations. SELAVIP has over the years shared his ideas “with partners and groups in the countries where they work, with students and academics and in international events”. Indeed, Fr. Josse was “always open to new concepts and to learn from experience, mostly from the poor”.

It is good to know:

We at CEPROCUL met with Father Josse van der Rest for the first and only time a couple of years ago in Yaounde when he, accompanied by other SELAVIP officials, came visiting SELAVIP projects in Cameroon. It was a fatherly, caring, encouraging, soft-spoken, and ready-to-help Father Josse who received us at the campus of the Catholic University of Central Africa. We still have vivid images of his conference at this University.

His invaluable pieces of advice to CEPROCUL, his vision he shared with us, his love for the underprivileged urban poor he shared with us and his passion for service to the poor have since then been inspirational for us at CEPROCUL. That is why every of our housing projects have been founded on the following motivating citations of his:

- « Nous devons promouvoir une solidarité urbaine pour créer des villes qui incluent réellement les pauvres » (Fr. Josse van der Rest S.J.).
- « 4 planches aujourd'hui sont mieux qu'une bonne maison dans 5 ans ... » (Fr. Josse van der Rest S.J.).

This is the man we celebrate today. This is the priest whose vision we have shared in our work all these years. This is the man we lost to the ugly hands of death in July 2020. His journey on to the land of Glory is a big loss not only to the SELAVIP Foundation but to CEPROCUL and other friends of SELAVIP as well.

Father Josse van der Rest S.J. shall forever remain engraved in our work.

May God receive him and **MAKE HIM A SAINT** in the service of His suffering humanity.

May his soul rest in perfect peace

Adieu adieu, Father Josse van der Rest. ADIEU.....

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