

## Do you know me?

Beloved person,

On May 30, my wife and I went to a concert by Typhoon, a Dutch rapper and singer of Surinamese descent. Between songs, he told this story:

*"In our living room in the Netherlands, hangs a painting of a Surinamese washerwoman. In red. With a gaze that cannot be captured. It may be sad, it may be proud. She might be distracted, but most likely it is the look of someone who knows something but chooses to keep it to herself. With a touch of humour. I do not see suffering in her eyes, but I know it is there. The strong, black woman. As cliché as it sounds, it is true. My mother. My aunts. My little sister. My grandmother. They know more than they say. They carry more than is good for them. Sometimes unseen, but still gracious. Often loving for two. She also forgives. She is love. But do not think she forgets."*

His story touched me. Such a big show, such a big stage, but he kept this very close, small and personal. It went completely silent.

Do you know a strong, black woman? I do, my whole life long! She is one of the sisters from the community of Dordrecht, where I grew up. I decided to have a chat with Sister Orsine Huiskes because, if the theme is global solidarity and we celebrated Ketu Ketu on July 1, then what ends up on paper cannot just come from my head and heart. In our conversation, we saw each other more from the inside than from the outside. The superficial differences fade, and the inner desire to connect comes to the surface when you dare to ask questions like: 'What was it like for you back then?' During our conversation, I felt a universal desire to be known. Maybe in a real conversation you also come across things that, surprisingly, you do or see differently. Is it then a matter of 'who is right'? Or is it more interesting to hear something from outside your own bubble?

*"Do you know me? Who then, do you know?"* When reading this poem written by Huub Oosterhuis – inspired by the text of Psalm 139 – I also found that longing to be known, just as I felt in the conversation with Sister Huiskes. In the poem and in the psalm, it goes a bit deeper; it talks about the wonder of creation. *"I praise you for the awe-inspiring wonder of my existence, marvelous is what you have made. I know it, to the depths of my soul."* How powerful is that? That I feel known, feel loved by the primal force, the primal source from which everything arose, that I am part of it. That I sing, dance, laugh, cry, argue, and make amends under the same stars and moon as so many people before me...?

*"How can the miracle be understood?"* In our foundational statement, there is a sentence that touches on this: *Because we believe that all life stems from the same source, we want to see each person as equal and continually search for that which connects us.* That means we are talking about every person: nearby or far away, in distance or feeling. Does this foundation statement transform into an attitude from which love and dignity can be experienced? How so? What does this ask of me in my everyday life? Do I really know the people I encounter?

The answer lies in taking action. By putting solidarity and equality into practice, our ability to connect grows and we lift each other up. Human dignity expressed through compassion and solidarity. That is what we believe in.

With a warm greeting,

Brother Paul Joor, in co-operation with brother Daniel Broertjes



**We lovingly remember those who preceded us**