



# Church

*By Gerard van Veen*



**F R O M  
DUTCH O.P. TO POLISH  
S.V.D.**

Once upon a time, but not so very long ago – namely in the first half of the 20th century – the Dutch Dominican priests (O.P.) were in charge not only of the Saint Martin of Tours Catholic parish in Philipsburg, but also of the St. Martin de Tours church in Marigot. For 40 years, from 1912 till 1951, the Dutch Dominicans served our whole island, be it one of two different dioceses, the one of Willemstad in Curacao and the one of Basse Terre in Guadeloupe. One of those priests, Humbertus Smit, was even dubbed “the super-pastor” because for the period of almost a year, he was parish priest in Great Bay (as Philipsburg was then called) and in Marigot at the same time. Some other pastors at that time included Willibrord van Teefelen, who stayed in Marigot for 15 years; Michael Holterman, who became bishop of Willemstad in later years; and the much-loved Bruno Boradori, who worked eight years in Marigot, six years in Philipsburg and



*Father Marcin Karwot S.V.D.  
(l), and Father Adam Oleszczuk  
S.V.D. (r)*

afterwards a few years in St. Barths, and finally in Saba where he suddenly died at the age of 59 during a Lenten service.

All this is history; but the French say, “L’histoire se repete.” This year, only a few years more than a century after the Dutch Dominicans came to the French side, the Polish Missionaries of the Divine Word (S.V.D.) came to Marigot, while they were serving already in Philipsburg since 2005. The parish priest of Philipsburg, Father Adam Oleszczuk, and since October, new Parish priest of Marigot, Father Marcin Karwot, are both born in Poland, are both members of the S.V.D. missionaries of

the Chicago Province and are both full of energy and enjoying excellent health.

Hopefully, this “accidental” arrangement may bring more cooperation and unity between the two parishes that both are dedicated to the same St. Martin of Tours, both are on the same island, be it in two different dioceses and two different countries. In the past, church choirs of both churches used to come together to celebrate at the end of November the patron saint of music, Saint Cecilia; but perhaps there are some other areas and occasions that can bring the two parishes together to cooperate in the field of evangelization, catechesis and the exchanging of ideas and projects.

Father Marcin got acquainted with the French language during his studies for the priesthood in Paris and two years in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He used to work in Kenya as director of a S.V.D. seminary, among other things, for 13 years. We welcome Father Marcin on our island and pray that his stay here may be a blessing to the Catholic community on the French side and to the Dutch side as well.