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EDITOR'S WORD

"The life and participative management of parishes" is the theme proposed to the Missionaries of Africa in this issue of the Petit Echo.

The Missionaries of Africa pioneers, set up the first parishes and structures of evangelisation in some parts of Africa. Testimonies of missionaries and Christian faithful indicate that the fruits of the first evangelisation were appreciated by the local churches and constitute a base from which they evolve.

Society in Africa has evolved since the time of the pioneers. Local churches flourish; many African lay people have developed skills that early missionaries and even today's missionaries did not have. Being committed Christians, they are competent and well-suited collaborators who help their pastors in the organization of parishes and of grass-roots Christian communities. The Second Vatican Council gave them a strong sense of responsibility in this regard. They willingly say: "We are the Church!"

Freddy Kyombo

Cover

The Atakpamé Church before the end of the project

PHOTO THEO CAERT

Ghanaian proverb: *"He who runs behind an elephant is not wet with dew".*

Meaning: In the context of the Church: He who runs behind Christ is assured of his protection.

The Parish

For most of us, though not all, because our various apostolates can vary depending on the Province we are in, our first faltering steps on our missionary journey were taken in a parish. For us who have worked in parishes, it has been the bedrock and the mainstay of who we are from the very beginning of our Society. For myself, I can truly say that my first 6 years (1981-1987) spent in a far-out parish in what was then the diocese of Bobo Dioulasso were the most formative years of my missionary life. In a classic international community of three, we worked in an area of first evangelisation where, even today, I doubt if the Christian population has grown much above the 1% it was at that time. The majority tended to be mainly of traditional religion or Muslim. There were many different races within the parish, and we were open to all. The buzzwords today are inter-religious dialogue and JPIC and yet in our own way that was the reality of our outreach. The parish was divided into three main sectors, so each one was given a sector to be in charge of. It was amazing to be given such responsibility from the word 'go'. For all those six years I would spend three to four days a week, living within the main village of my sector: eating with the various families, drawing water from the well near my hut. During those days in my sector I would give some catechism – visit many of the families – both Muslim

or animists or Christian. I went to outlying villages where there might be a few isolated Christians – each night I would be in a different part of the village in order to share prayer and then eat with whatever family invited me. In many ways I was blessed not being caught up with a sacramental ministry – no long queues for confession, no marriage preparation but the em-

Francis Barnes
1st Assistant General





FOREWORD

phases on the catechumenate and the formation of what was a fledgling Christian community. Formation in prayer was also a key part in our presence, for each evening I would meet in different groupings our Christians in order to spend some time of prayer (sharing the word of God and prayers of intercession).

As a parish, we worked hard in all our sectors to set up primary health centres, to have literacy classes. We sent some women for basic training as midwives – we brought generic medicines to be available very cheaply to the people and we would send young people to train in basic first aid and medicine. We also had a programme for the digging of wells, and in my sector we were able to build a primary school (until that time, most of those pupils going to school in the sector where I worked would have to walk about 10 kilometres to the nearest school in the neighbouring village). I could say that in such enterprises our main concern was not to touch merely the tiny Christian population but to reach out to all the inhabitants of the area.

I certainly faced what we would call a cultural shock, but it was not just the culture, or the harsh climate. It was my constant witness to the tough life of these poor, hardworking sedentary farmers who would struggle to survive battling not just the elements and the scanty rainfall but diseases like malaria or meningitis. How I dearly would have loved to have been a doctor, a healer, an agricultural expert, yet I was none of these. Neither, thank goodness, did I have the money to be giving hand-outs – fortunately, we had a parish caritas and we were always able to refer the really needy for possible help. The only label I could give myself was that of being powerless; powerless in face of the suffering of poor farmers; powerless in front of, at times, a culture that would keep women as objects, powerless in front of a tradition that told people that there was no such thing as a natural death but all deaths were caused and therefore the witch doctors had to be consulted; powerless in front of a sense of fatality concerning life and death. Yes, that was heavy to bear and yet there within the same culture there were such beautiful things that filled me with joy and made me so humble and grateful to have been blessed to work amongst such brave people. I understood that I did not have all the answers, that my prayer and faith did not give my



all the answers. I understood something that my studies had not always taught me, that Mission was all about journeying with others; it was all about being with. It was all about me being and not doing. Being able to journey with such beautiful people; being able to walk side by side with them and journey with them in faith. This is what gave me, in the end, great fulfilment – to walk hand in hand with people –to share their journey – to share their burdens but also their great joy.

I thought I would give so much to the people I served and yet it was I who received far more than I ever gave because of their great sense of welcome and the sharing of even the little they had. I understood deep down that mission was relational and the great wealth of Burkina Faso was not its mineral resources, there were none, nor its natural beauty – but the beauty of its people who often had to face the greatest of hardships in order to survive. Possibly, the greatest compliment I received when leaving the parish was a young Muslim boy whose family I knew very well – he asked me whether the ‘father’ that would replace me would also want to spend a few days a week with them in their village. I also learnt that even though I was to be in charge of the parish for my last 2 years - it was never my parish it was theirs. We had laid great emphasis on the formation of our small Christian communities and their leaders.

Reading through the articles written by our young confreres in this edition of the Petit Echo is a great joy for I sense their enthusiasm for all that is dear to us; interreligious dialogue, JPIC, ecumenism, the peripheries, empowering the laity, strengthening our small Christian communities, going beyond merely the confines of what we might deem our traditional apostolate (i.e. - street children, social media handicapped, prisoners and all this done in close collaboration with lay people). Yes, such is the ministry in the parishes that are theirs (the lay people). Such ministry reflects so well the charism we cherish. May it survive and flourish in all our undertakings.

Francis Barnes, 1st Assistant General



“The life and participatory management of our parishes.”



Missionary parishes in Africa: Respect for diocesan pastoral orientation and missionary imprint.

We, Missionaries of Africa, give thanks to God because we have several possibilities of pastoral insertion because of the diversity of our charism, among others we have the Parish. In some places it is a matter of founding a parish while in others it is in a well established parish that we are called to live out our vocation.

Since the parish is linked to the diocese, as Missionaries of Africa working in the parish, we are bound to follow the pastoral orientations of the diocese where we are. To go against the diocesan pastoral guidelines would be imprudent. Nevertheless, we have understood that this should not hinder our beautiful initiatives which aim at improving the life of the parishioners or of the community.

I am curate at St. Peter Cyahafi Parish, Kigali, in Rwanda, the only parish we have in the whole country. The parish community is made up of three confreres: Father Edison Akatururira, Parish Priest, Brother Michael Mpindo and myself.

Our parish is located in the city, surrounded by several parishes, but because of its particularity and its missionary imprint many people come to us for various services. This is largely due to the openness of the parish community and its capacity to welcome people. We welcome our Christians from Tuesday to Saturday. Then our telephone numbers are posted on the doors of our offices, to make it easier for those who would like to reach us to do so. We have made biblical formation of our Christians one of our priorities. For we have noticed that many once they have received the sacraments of Christian initiation rely only on the Sunday Mass for deepening their faith. As a result, the sects that abound in Rwanda easily manage to recruit them. To overcome this challenge, we very often organize talks on a biblical theme. In this way we want to make it possible for our Christians to deepen their biblical knowledge and their faith in Jesus Christ.



Biblical training of catechists



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Our parish is in a poor and densely populated area of Kigali, because all those who come from the rural exodus begin their lives in the territory of the parish. Evangelization is going hand in hand with development, which explains the importance of the Parish Caritas. The Parish Caritas has been ranked first several times in the diocese, not because of the money we give, but because of the impact of the different services it offers to the surrounding population. Caritas works in two main areas. The first concerns justice and peace, focusing on solving family problems. The second is Caritas Development. Our activities focus on the following points: to study the problems specific to our parish in the realms of assistance and mutual aid, be it material, social or moral, and promote solutions; to pay the school fees of children whose parents are very poor; to organize, instigate, direct or support any charitable work in the service of the poor and of those suffering from misfortune of various kinds; to help without distinction of race or religion individuals and families who face hardships. Every year 144 women are helped so their families might become self-supporting. What we cannot do in our Caritas, is to represent and safeguard the common interests of the poor before public authorities and official institutions.

Our apostolate goes beyond the parish. There is a center for the handicapped run by a local congregation of Sisters and where we celebrate Mass, “they too are children of Abraham.” I am involved with Christians and NGOs in securing funds and donations in kind for children abandoned by their parents because of their physical deformities. The parish priest, for his part, collaborates with a group of Christians for donations in kind, especially clothing for prisoners.

The parish community has set up a nursery and a primary school, which belongs to the area, whose main aim is to help the children of the poor. The school is currently operating with the approval of the government. It should be noted that the primary school was built with funding received from Manos Unidas. The school is currently managed by Brother Michael MPINDO.

Parish life: collaboration with local clergy, laity and pastoral agents

The parish community has very good relations with the local clergy. We interchange for Masses very often. My parish priest often goes to



Overview of the primary school and kindergarten at the end of the school year

the cathedral for Mass in English and I often go there for Mass in French. They too come to us for Mass in the local language. This allows Christians to hear other homilies. Our parish community was visited by the Archbishop. Whenever we invite him to an event in the parish, he comes.

As for the laity, we make them understand that the parish is theirs. We as missionaries are nomads who never settle down for good. So they must fully assume their role for the good functioning of the overall pastoral care. That they know and do! We have indeed noticed that the laity are competent in many areas. It is enough to be close to them, to listen to them, and they are ready to organize themselves for the good running of the parish. This is what we do in the animation of our twenty-five (25) Basic Christian Communities (BCC).



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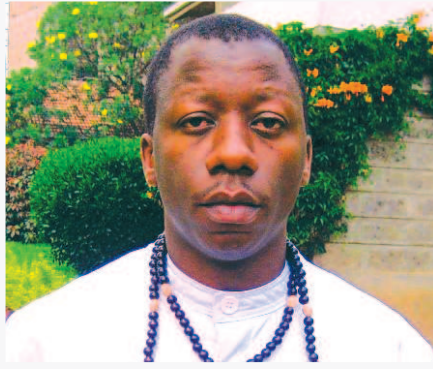
Mass in the centre for handicapped children:
"They too are children of Abraham"

We have a very great facility, to organize the ordinations of our confreres, other events in our parish, because the Christian faithful play their role fully. But to get to this point, it required, in the beginning, a great deal of in-depth awareness-raising work.

Thus, the parish's self-sufficiency cannot be achieved without the active participation of the laity. If they are not allowed to take part in decision making, there is a high chance that development projects within the parish will fail. Together with the laity, with the various pastoral agents, let us build missionary parishes in Africa, which despite the multitude of parishes around us, manage to leave a missionary mark.

Simplice Traore

Priests in Solidum



Our Lady of Africa parish in Talo is a young parish. Located in Talo, at the southern end of the town of Atakpamé, in Togo, this parish has an estimated perimeter of 12 km and a good part of it is not yet inhabited. According to the last census, about 1140 families or 4707 people live in the territory of this parish, of which 926 declare themselves Catholics (baptized or not), 2954 Protestants, 463 Muslims, 357 believers of the indigenous religion and the rest do not wish to be affiliated to any of these.

Our community has two main pastoral projects: parish ministry and vocational and missionary animation.

When I was appointed to this parish, I had to rush there to take part in the diocesan pastoral assembly followed by a meeting of the Presbyterium during which I was to take an oath together with the other newly appointed parish priests. This seemed strange to me especially since according to my appointment I was to be curate in the parish and in charge of vocational animation and not the parish priest!

It was then that the confreres explained to me that the bishop had entrusted the parish to our community and not to one person making use of Canon 517 § 1 of Canon Law, very little known to the majority. It



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would therefore be a question of us being parish priests in solidum (in solidarity), emphasizing the fact that the parish is run by all of us and not by a parish priest helped by curates. So we have three parish priests, one being moderator.

It seems to be a chaotic situation, a source of disorder, and every time I speak to the confreres about it, some do not believe me; others think that I am the parish priest but out of humility I do not want to say so, while others again make fun of such a system. And yet, during the four years that I have been here, we conceive and carry out pastoral work in a harmonious way, community life is good and the disorder predicted by some does not materialize. We have community meetings, we share tasks, and we report back to each other and discuss ways and means to move the pastoral care forward.

With this spirit of participatory management in the community, our parishioners also learn the same. For example, now the parishioners know that for certain things they will wait for us to consult each other and that the response that one of us gives is indeed the response of the whole community.

The parishes in the diocese of Atakpamé are governed by two councils: the Parish Pastoral Council (CPP) and the Parish Council for Economic Affairs (CPAE). The CPP has specialized commissions or services that work in close collaboration with the Executive Board. In our parish we have seven commissions: Catechesis, Liturgy, Priestly and Religious Vocations, Justice and Peace, Ecumenism and Interreligious Encounter, Diakonia (Charity) and Social Communications (very active during this time of confinement).

Catechesis, Justice and Peace, Ecumenism and Interreligious Encounter are clearly among the priorities of the Missionaries of Africa. Let us admit that these commissions are new and have not yet taken their desired flight, but efforts are being made to make them work well.

For example, we have a Justice and Peace group called Salt and Light. The members debate social current events, analyzing news from the Local and Universal Church. Encyclicals, synod conclusions, post synod exhortations, messages from the Pope and bishops are discussed in this group and sometimes long before us! Their participation in the life of



The rectory of Atakpamé

the Church is even recognized at the level of the Diocese because its members have initiated a course on the Social Doctrine of the Church which has been incorporated into the curriculum of the Diocesan School of Theology.

The Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Encounters has undertaken a census in our parish not only to have statistical figures, but also to be in contact with everyone, to feel the waiting stones and possible resistance to these interreligious encounters. By the same token, Christians were encouraged to get to know their immediate neighbours.

The institution of these councils and commissions calls irremediably for the participative management of the parish. The laity, in collaboration with us, is at the head of these commissions and their commitment and dynamism are remarkable.

In conclusion, I am very happy with such participatory management of our parish. We remain human and improvements are to be sought continuously, but I think that the participative management should be given the chance to be tested and why not replace the current method which is strongly monolithic and hierarchical!

Ghislain Mbilizi



Serving and living with God's people.



Proud to be a member of our Society by my missionary Oath, I was ordained in and for the Church. I am a Missionary of Africa priest in the Church who is mother and educator. Since my ordination, the Society has granted me the grace and privilege to live in a parish in Mozambique. In this semi-urban and semi-rural parish, my desire is to live a very active apostolate in which the collaboration between the pastoral team and the Christian faithful is felt and lived. This desire, which is a reality in our small and young parish, is the subject of a sharing on “the life and the participative management of our parish”.

Encounter with the right key

Hand in hand, we will build up the Church as God's family. As a Missionary, I am aware of my contribution but the strength of the building will depend on the people who receive the Gospel, and allow it to penetrate their lives and be its life-giving source. In Mozambique, every confrere who arrives for the first time in this “Glorious Land” becomes a small library which is once again enriched with two languages: Portuguese and the local language. Taking to heart the invitation of our

founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, learning the language brings us into the reality of the people and brings us closer to them. As Missionaries of Africa, speaking the local language remains a priority for the sharing and incarnation of the Good News, for breaking down barriers of communication and for coming into contact with and understand the local culture. Speaking the language already gives this joy of walking together. In his missionary sending, Jesus said: “Go therefore, make disciples of all nations, (...) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20a). To make disciples of them and to transmit what the Lord Himself has commanded me, knowledge of the language is the key that allows me to be a happy and fulfilled missionary.

The Apostolate of collaboration, baptized and sent

Invited by the Bishop because of our charism, we have responded by taking a parish as a starting point for our apostolate of Justice and Peace and of Integrity of Creation(JPIC). In the same perspective and taking



The young Christians of Tete around the bishop



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advantage of our presence, the Bishop also asked us to join his pastoral team to initiate ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue with the growing number of Muslims in the region. The cosmopolitan reality of Tete calls for an integration of our specialisation with the pastoral needs of the Diocese. In this mining town and crossroads of travellers from neighbouring countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, we observe the intermingling of races and human mobility as ordinary realities. As Missionaries of Africa, managing a parish that responds to our vocation as ordained for the Church, the particularity of our charism propels us to respond to pastoral needs starting from the parish that serves as a springboard.

With very few diocesan priests, the Diocese counts on different congregations each with its own approach to mission, based on its Charism. The absence of permanent catechists in the Diocese of Tete was a surprise to me. This reality provides for a very close collaboration with lay people and pastoral agents. For catechesis in our parish, we work with volunteer catechists. We have the presence of the Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist and the Ministers of Hope. The Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist assists the priest in the distribution of the Eucharist and brings communion to the sick. He also accompanies the priest at the appropriate time for visits to the sick. The Ministers of Hope collaborate through being close to the sick. In case of decease, the Minister of Hope leads the prayers for Christian burial when the priest cannot be present. Within the framework of these two extraordinary ministries, each group is being prepared and trained before being sent out for witnessing to their faith through their ministry.

As pastors, we visit the communities for Masses and in the absence of the priest we count on their leaders for the celebration of the Word every Sunday. According to St. Paul “How could they call upon him, if they had not believed in him? And how could they believe in him without hearing him? And how can they hear him if no one proclaims him? And how can they proclaim him unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:14-17). This responsibility is shared and the most important thing is to empower these lay leaders through prior preparation. The training and meetings allow us to journey with the members of the different groups and move-



Water sprinkling during a Eucharistic celebration in Tete

ments towards a precise horizon. We keep an eye on the organization and the life of the basic Christian communities. We visit these communities from time to time so as to accompany them and to remain in touch with the faithful. We also encourage them to practice solidarity in their daily living.

The reality of the mission in the field educates and teaches us. After a long time of formation, I discovered the necessity and importance of pastoral collaboration. In addition to the collaboration with the Pastor of the Diocese and his pastoral agents, I have learned to appreciate collaboration with the laity so as to live the apostolate of closeness in view of rooting the Gospel in the life and culture of people. The preparation I have received is being contextualised and teaches me to delegate, to share my experience and know-how with close collaborators for the building up of the mystical body of Christ: the Church.

Hervé Tougma

Mission, a call to a spirit of collaboration and participation



Our Founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, bequeathed to us a priceless treasure, the “All for All”. This is an attitude of openness, welcome, simplicity and closeness in our relations with other people (Cfr. C&L, art.20). From this point of view, Mission would mean an appeal to the spirit of collaboration and participation. So, how do we live this “all to all” in our Diocese of Toulouse? With whom do we collaborate in our various tasks while integrating the mission of the Society?

First of all, our community is only a few years old. It was established in the district of Les Minimes in September 2016. We are organized as follows: a parish priest, a community superior, a bursar and a stagiaire. Looked at from the side of the Society our mission is outreach to the African world, the Muslim world, the outskirts and migrants”. Because of our insertion in the Diocese, the Diocese has entrusted us with communities which we are to animate in the light of its project, “Les Fraternités Missionnaires”. How do we do this?

Daniel, in a meeting with Muslims in Toulouse...



As soon as I arrived on September 23, 2016, the Diocese offered me a session in view of getting acquainted with French culture and ways of doing. Such initiation allowed me to acquire essential tools to start my pastoral work.

According to the rhythm of our community, we had defined our priorities taking into account the diocesan project. In 2018, we were asked to participate in the organization of a gathering known as “Fête des Peuples”. The latter helped us to discover several Communities, Associations, Groups and Movements of the Diocese.

At the level of whole parish, we animate the different communities by emphasizing unity and welcoming everyone. Thus, during the major celebrations such as Christmas and Easter, we gather our seven communities in one church and celebrate the Eucharist together. At the beginning of each school year, we have a special Eucharist called “Retrouvailles” which brings together all our communities and during which we welcome newcomers and present our parish project. These celebrations end with a shared meal or with an apéritif.

Regarding our commitment with Muslims, one of us is a member of the “Groupe d’Amitié Islamo-Chrétienne” (GAIC). In December 2018, the community welcomed this group for the organization of two meetings on the beatification of the monks of Tibhirine. On the initiative of Muslims, a first meeting was held on 8th December 2018 and took place on our premises. The second meeting took place in the church of the Holy Spirit on 9th December 2019. These meetings with prayers, wit-

nessing and various interventions have highlighted the friendship that existed between the people of Algeria and the monks. These two meetings have deepened our fraternity and our friendship both with the Muslims and with the Diocese. To concretize the project of the Diocese, we are deepening our fraternity around a shared meal and/or a soft drink. We regularly participate in the organization of several ecumenical events such as the inter-convivial peace march in October 2018.



Procession with the Bishop on People's Day

Concerning the Peripheries, we do what is necessary by visiting isolated or sick people, either personally or in a parish capacity, with the help of a team of lay people, called Service Évangélique des Malades (SEM). In the absence of the priest, these lay people make these visits alone. In addition to these visits, we also had the pastoral care of gypsies. We visit these Christians in their camp; their families in collaboration with Brother Camille, a brother of the Christian Schools and Sister Solange who is a Sister of the Daughters of Saint Vincent de Paul. At the level of young people, we have lay people who participate in the mission by taking care of our young high school and college students.



A parish choir

Finally, the community remains in close collaboration with the Mayor of the District, Maxime Boyer in many activities. Recently, he allowed us to organize a conference on “Ecology” at the Town Hall. We also participate in activities organized by the Town Hall, namely intercultural meetings. Finally, not to be forgotten, was the participation of our Anglican brothers last January in the organization of the “Rally Game”, a time of prayer, praise and of testimony at the closing of the week of prayer for Christian Unity.

In conclusion, our community lives the “All to All” in different ways. Thus, our mission is lived and deepened in the light of the “Fraternités missionnaires”. From this angle, we encourage, mobilise and privilege the laity to participate in the life of the Church. They respond through different services such as catechism, welcoming of families in need, marriage teams, youth chaplaincies, scouting, and others. We confess that their participation is of capital importance in the realization of the mission. With them, we bring the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15).

Daniel KABUYA



Systematize the Management of our Parishes and of our Works.



“The parish is not the property of the parish priest”. It’s a bit disturbing to read such a statement and what it hints to. Perhaps we need to refer to the 1983 Code of Canon Law in Canon 301 to understand that each diocese (a particular church usually headed by a bishop) is asked to organize itself into “distinct parts or parishes”. This clearly means that a parish does not exist outside a diocese, whether or not it is territorially located. It also points to the relationship that must exist between those appointed to a parish and the head of the diocese, who is the bishop (the local ordinary). It is in his name that the parish priest manages the parish.

There are unfortunate experiences of parishes and works that are apparently badly managed, where denunciations and suspicions prevail because some issues remain unresolved or situations unclear. The hoped for progress and benefits are not forthcoming. And if moreover in this situation, some individuals show a dazzling increase in personal success and sometimes in material assets to the detriment of the parish, such certainly does not promote trust.



Singing the Passion of Christ with the Lavigerie Choir, on Good Friday in 2015, at the Chapel of the Bandari Centre in Bukavu

The idea here is that of opting for an all-out systematization of the management of the parish entities and the works for which we are responsible. The first thing to understand is that “everything we do for people, without their participation” will not survive after our departure. We, Missionaries, are called to “come and go” and we are welcomed by people who on the contrary have settled in their environment. If there is to be any lasting improvement, it must involve the permanent inhabitants of the area, the local people.

This is how, for example, a simple and fraternal appeal can be made to the skills of the local people in the various areas that make up the life of a parish... It is their parish after all!

During our years of training in seminaries and during other stages of formation, many of us did not have the chance to become familiar with personnel management, social works, charitable works, youth ministry, the Christian promotion of women, construction, financial management, strategic pastoral planning, economic planning, management of patrimony, etc. But once you have been appointed parish priest or are respon-



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sible for a work, you are expected to be competent in all these areas. It must be said right away: “this is utopian!”. However, it is possible for you to become the “animator” of all the skills that you will find among the “local lay people”, the women and men you will call to collaborate with you in the realization of the Kingdom of God in their own milieu.

You are their Pastor. If you reassure them and if they feel that you are leading them towards a greater good, towards a brighter future and a more Christian fraternity, they will surely follow you, with confidence and generosity more than you ever hoped for.

One way of systematizing things nowadays, even in a parish context, is first of all to have the discipline of computerizing the parish file. To do this, you need the help of your parishioners who are in the field and who will surely be good counsellors and who may even offer to do it for free if they can. This step already shows the seriousness of your approach. The second thing to do is to ask the different structures of your parish to have their operating plan up to date and their file well established - for example, the list of all the members of the Caritas committees of the Basic Christian Communities, if they exist in your parish; the list and programme of activities planned for each quarter, etc. The other essential thing to do is to computerize the finances of the whole parish and of course of all the parish entities for more traceability and transparency. Here too, to call upon the services and skills of the parishioners who are committed to the life of their Church. Trust will reign and this trust will be followed by prosperity and charity, the result of the empowered Christian community involvement.

Commenting on the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* on the Apostolate of the Laity (AA), Father Hugues Guinot, Chancellor of the Diocesan Curia of Paris, writes: the Lay faithful are called to participate actively in the mission of the parish priest, and therefore in that of the bishop. But they are called in the name of the “common priesthood” of all the baptized, and not because of an ordination. “Participating in the office of Christ the Priest, Prophet and King, the laity has their active part in the life and action of the Church. In ecclesial communities, their action is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the pastors cannot, most of the time, achieve its full effect”. (AA, no.10).



In March 2015, after Mass, talking with the supervisors of the children "in rupture with their families" in the Sisters of Santa Gemma Centre in Bukavu.

Thus, even when one is not an expert in all relevant domains, it is possible to succeed in “giving a soul” (animate) to a parish or to a missionary work. Having said that, there is no magic recipe in this area... But try first, before you begin to list the “impossibilities” learned from past “experiences” and declare failure prior to action. If we do it for God, Gaby did say, “Nothing is impossible for God.” (referring to Lc 1, 37)

Freddy Kyombo Senga.



The Parish, a Community of the People of God



A Parish is simply a “community of the people of God, constituted as such by the Bishop and placed under the pastoral care of a priest within a particular geographical territory”. It is indeed a place for evangelization and for pastoral ministry. Through a parish we are born and grow into deep relationship with Christ and have a spirit of service.

The church vision targets clearly the notion of community as a pillar and foundation of an active and vibrant parish. We can figure out three types of communities in our parishes. First is the community composed only of members within the Missionaries of Africa upholding the famous rule of three. Secondly, is a community with an incardination or incorporation of a diocesan priest or a deacon living together with missionaries. Thirdly, in a larger sphere, a community attached to the local Bishop with some diocesan priests making a family. What unites these three types of the communities is that they have one pastoral objective or goal for the diocese: teaching, sanctifying and governing.



The fathers and sisters of Kisenso posing around the bishop who visited them.

Cardinal Lavigerie insisted that all missionaries make an effort to learn the local language, tradition and customs. Consequently, when I was doing my apostolic experience and learning the local language, I went to a parish, situated in a remote area, to stay with diocesan priests to learn and practice “Kinyarwanda”. Diocesan priests helped me learn this language as an essential tool for my apostolic work in Rwanda. Within a short time, I was fluently speaking and mingling with people comfortably. The good collaboration that existed between Diocesan priests and Missionaries of Africa helped me a lot.

After my ordination in 2012, I had my 1st appointment as a young and newly ordained priest to Kinshasa, DRC. I had to learn another local language, “Lingala”. This was again in collaboration with diocesan priests working within the parishes of our deanery. By then, my parish priest was Father Italo Iotti I keep good memory of. Hardworking with a simple lifestyle, he initiated me to a stronger and more vivid apostolic work. I dedicated most of my apostolic time with the youth, elderly and sick people. Not forgetting visiting and administering sacraments and giving catechetical instructions to our catholic schools’ students. These activities were done in collaboration with diocesan priests of the deanery team. During recollections and retreats we used to have exchange of our



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programs. I would go and preach a retreat in another parish while we also invited a diocesan priest who would come and animate a retreat, recollection or give the sacrament of penance in our parish. During funerals, we participate in preparations and burial. As they say, United we stand, divided we fall.

Pope Francis, in his address to the Brazilian Bishops said this: “The results of pastoral work do not depend on a wealthy of resources, but on the creativity of love, perseverance, hard work, planning and organization”. One of the things I love as a missionary is creativity. Don’t leave a place in the same way you found it. Saint Benedict’s motto was : “ora et labora” “pray and work”. I may add, speak less and work more. As Parish Priest of St Etienne, Kisenso, with determination love and perseverance, I managed to change the image of that parish in all its aspects. Part of my success is due to the fact that I worked in collaboration with others and to a larger extend with the local clergy who helped and encouraged me a lot. In our deanery meetings we were sharing different responsibilities. At the beginning as a parish priest, I had a lot of criticisms from all corners “He is still young with no experience how will he manage this big parish?” others were saying “being the 1st black parish priest of this parish he will ruin this parish financially” These hearsays did not hinder or discourage me from attaining my goals. On the contrary, this was energizing me to work extra hard thus proving them wrong. Water project in this parish is another sensitive phenomenon which is part of charity work for the population of Kisenso. I was well initiated by my predecessor to run the project efficiently. Through this project, I had golden opportunities to meet and create constructive dialogue with the laity. We had development meetings with my Parishioners, Protestants, Muslims and even Animists. Interreligious dialogue and even Justice and peace were items on the agenda of numerous meetings. This strong bond of friendship helped me to create deeper relationships even with American, UN, Kenyan and Ugandan embassies, with their ambassadors. Humility, dialogue and collaboration helped me to get financial assistance in these embassies to boost and expand the water project and our health center. The expansion of this water project allowed me to get more income thus to build one more Spiritual Center that has a capacity to welcome more than 100 youths for retreats and

recollections. I built a nice grotto for prayer to Mary and two self contained rooms for visitors to welcome retreat animators. Majority of these retreat animators were diocesan priests. This increased the healthy collaboration between us and them.

Later on in 2018, I received my second appointment and went to a more rural parish in the Diocese of Kasongo, Saint Therese Parish, Mingana. Here we speak more of “Kiswahili” than “Kizimba”. On my arrival, I discovered that the parish was not in a good condition. It had undergone a painful situation in the recent past. With the help of our Bishop Mgr Placide Lubamba diocesan priests and laity, we managed to improve the physical, pastoral, social and economic situation of this Parish. The experience enabled me to learn to sail through the ups and downs of Mingana and attain a remarkable change. Several visits of the Bishop and of the local clergy motivated us to work more and more. We are now working in collaboration with the Diocesan Center in view of uplifting the catechetical and liturgical methodology and formation of pastoral animators in our parish. Unfortunately, last year we lost a young diocesan priest on a road accident. A very brilliant priest, who used to come and give sessions to our pastoral animators. In addition to that, we



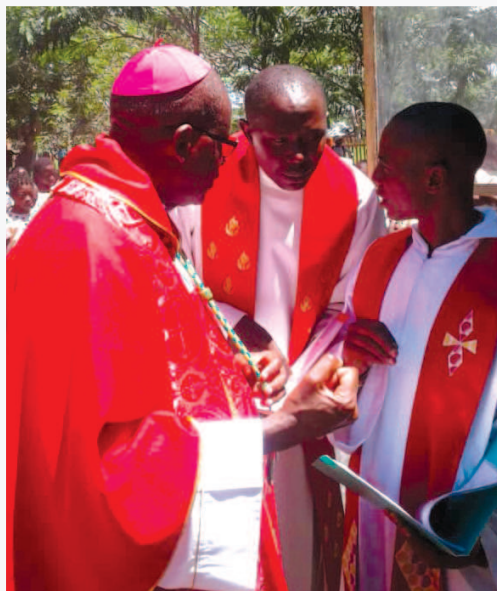
Father John Bukelembe on the roads of Maniema



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have a project of creating a new parish by dividing part of our big territory. The Bishop and several diocesan priests are part of the consultative board to help us bring the project to maturity. Diocesan Youths Congress, Charismatic meetings and Catholic women associations are done jointly with other parishes creating a spirit of brotherhood and of service.

In concluding, it is important to recognize and accept the fact that the



Bishop Placide Lubamba, Father John Bukelembe and a diocesan priest at a Eucharistic celebration

world is changing, the life style of people is also changing. The experience I have in the collaboration with diocesan priests and laity demands a deeper discernment. Positive collaboration entails upholding the charism of our Society and keeping apostolic commitment high. Negative collaboration means to forget or neglect our missionary lifestyle so as please other people. This kind of behavior is detrimental to the growth of a parish and consequently creates confusion and anarchy in pastoral work. Some pastoral leaders and animators are afraid of change, thus there is nothing much that can happen in such a parish. Jealousy in the hearts of men and women may block development completely. Tenden-



Parishioners after Mass in tMingana

cies of ethnic, tribal or racial behaviors are serious impediments to a parish growth. Scandals of all kinds from the clergy may hinder lay people to participate efficiently in the well-being of a parish. We need sincere collaboration with the laity and other pastoral agents for the present and future prosperity of our parishes.

John Bukelembe



It's not a private affair of the Parish Priest



The participatory managing of a parish, especially the participation of the laity, is something for which we can find inspiration both from our charism and our history. The call of Lavigerie that his missionaries be initiators, in terms of establishing the local church so that, eventually, “Africans” become missionaries to themselves, goes beyond simply forming local clergy. It implies having an attitude and an approach which do not relegate the local church to the receiving end, but rather, empower her to become an actor. Indeed, what better way to empower the laity than by allowing them to participate actively in the running of the parish?

Our history, as Society of Missionaries of Africa, is equally rich of the efforts invested in the training of the laity, especially catechists and Christian community leaders, who have been cardinal in the evangelising activities in Africa. In this way, both the founding inspiration and our history can serve as platform on which we can build the collegial management of our parishes today. Even with such background, however, we can't pretend to say that we have always run our parishes collegially. In fact, it's not rare to find parishes that have been run, even today, in a one-man-commando style. It's an area that calls for on-going conversion.

But there are also signs of hope to cherish in order to encourage this collegial spirit. That's why, without pretending to be role models, confreres at Notre Dame d'Afrique in Goma, Dr Congo, speak about the strides made towards involving the laity in running the parish.

Lowrent Kamwaza, Malawian and parish priest, speaks of the participatory management of the parish in terms of "La pastorale d'ensemble", obviously taken from his predecessor, our confrere Luis Arcos, who sung ceaseless this song. It's the entire cross-section which is involved in the daily life of the parish. Such vision is concretised, Lowrent explains, by structures put in place, and which are respected, in the process of decision making. There's a team of confreres, the executive parish committee and the general parish council. When it comes to important decisions, priests cannot do it unilaterally. Rather, they propose to the Parish executive committee which, if in favour, will submit the proposal to the general parish council, comprising of the leaders of the sections and the commissions. Through such representatives, Lowrent explains, "we arrive at taking decisions which reflect the will of the entire parish body –it's not a private affair of the parish priest".

"The project to rehabilitate the church" Lowrent illustrates, "is one example of involving everyone in what we do. We started the project only after consultations through our existing structures." Besides, there's also a financial committee which is in charge of the economic affairs of the parish; "when there are important expenses to make it's always in dialogue with this committee", comprised of the laity as majority.

"Even for sourcing funds for the project", our confrere mentions some advantages of the participatory management, "it's equally a collective responsibility. Christians will contribute generously when they are part of what's happening in the parish." This way of functioning, according to Lowrent, is less stressing as each person plays his role. Such collaboration trickles down even to the various parish commissions.

Fr Hebram Kanto, Indian, in charge of Caritas and the pastoral of the sick, acknowledges the good initiatives which our predecessors put in place to sensitise and enable Christians to play an active role in the parish. "Caritas is not about us, priests, acting as saviour of the poor",



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our confrere explains, “Christians themselves assume the responsibility of taking care of the needy.” Thanks to such sense of responsibility, in the Sections and in the Small Christian Communities (SCC) there are already structures to look after the needy and the sick. “What we do at the parish level is only to supplement the efforts of charity done in the neighbourhood among our parishioners.”

“Even what we supplement,” Kanto goes further, “the money comes from the parishioners themselves.” Besides special collections, at Christmas for instance, “the entire collection of the last Sunday of every month is destined to Caritas. “Receiving money from outside,” reflects our confrere, “would certainly help us to realise big projects; but we shouldn’t forget that it’s our duty, together as parish, to take care of our brothers and sisters in need using what we have, no matter how little.”

The laity not only do they contribute money, they also take part in making decisions. “I work with a team of the laity”, our confrere explains, “we discern together when it comes to giving aid. They investigate the requests presented to caritas and thereafter make recommendations regarding the kind of aid to offer.” We find similar collaboration in other commissions too.



Caritas distributes food to the needy during Holy Week

For the Commission of the youth, popularly known as SKV (Shirika Kuu la Vijana), the collaboration takes place through the interaction between the different structures. “First, there’s the executive committee”, explains Robert Ouedraogo, a young confrere Burkinabé who is youth chaplain. “Then, there’s a full youth council composed of youth leaders from the six sections of the parish and the representatives from various youth movements.” To elaborate the Action plan, for instance, the executive committee and the chaplain submit their proposal of activities to the full youth parish council for review and for amendments. “In the end,” explains Fr Ouedraogo, “we have a plan of activity that is collectively agreed upon by the youth through their representatives”.

The advantages of such participatory approach, according to Robert, are that his work becomes easier. “As chaplain my role is only to supervise, there’s no need to push the youth around as they are self-motivated.” And the advantage for the youth themselves is that they are empowered. The parish youth centre is run by youth themselves which “gives them the opportunity to learn by doing, thus, preparing them to take up similar responsibilities later in their professional life.” Indeed, isn’t it edifying that a good number of our youths are faring well as an-



8th March celebrations, two young ladies, member of the youth executive committee with our confreres (L to R), Luis Arcos, Dennis Pam, Didier Sawadogo, Robert Ouedraogo and Xavier Bienneux



Youth animation (L to R), Lowrent Kamwaza, Robert Ouedraego and Jean-Louis (member of parish executive committee)

animators at the diocesan Radio Maria?

This manner of collaborating with the laity, as our confreres testify, changes certainly the image you can have of a priest. It's no longer a one-man-show affair of a despotic parish director, but rather, a stirring stick in the kitchen which only serves to mix the ingredients to good taste, as the essential elements are already there in the parish pot. He's simply an animator.

Evans Chama

A forgotten Chapter resolution: the Diaconate for Brothers.



During the Second Vatican Council, a proposal was made to restore what has become known as the permanent diaconate. The document *Ad Gentes* decreed - It is beneficial that those who perform a truly diaconal ministry be strengthened by the imposition of hands, a tradition going back to the Apostles, and be more closely joined to the altar so that they may more effectively carry out their ministry through the sacramental grace of the diaconate.

As a consequence, Pope Paul VI issued a *Moto Proprio*. He pointed out that the Diaconate is not to be considered as a mere step towards the priesthood, but it is so adorned with its own indelible character and its own special grace that those who are called to it can permanently serve the mysteries of Christ and the Church.

What kind of functions are appropriate for the Deacon according to Pope Paul VI ? Teaching the elements of the Christian religion to children and other faithful, familiarising the people with sacred chant and in directing it, reading the sacred books of Scripture at gatherings of the faithful, addressing and exhorting the people, administering the sacraments which pertain to them, visiting the sick, and in general fulfilling the ministries which can be entrusted to them.



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In the Acts of the Apostles, seven men, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, were chosen for the material work of distributing food to the poor. Stephen and Philip among them also proclaimed the faith. This group of men are often taken to be the first deacons. Drawing up the first rule for the Brother's novitiate, Cardinal Lavigerie compared the work of the Brothers to that of the deacons in the early Church. The Brothers are intended particularly for work with their hands. In this respect, among the missionaries, they are like the deacons of the early Church who were responsible for material cares. Since those days, the work of the Brothers in our Society has changed and developed and they are no longer expected to do only material work. They have become even more like Stephen and Philip. One might suppose that were the Cardinal alive today, he would be aware of the even greater harmony between the role of our Brothers and the Vatican Council's concept of the diaconate. As a matter of fact, we read in Father Renault's magisterial biography of the Cardinal, on page p.413, that when he observed that the Brothers were engaged only in material work, he expressed his displeasure: the rules provided for them to be engaged in pastoral work such as teaching the catechism.

The Chapter of 1968 took up the idea of ordaining Brothers as deacons and in paragraph 344 of its decisions, we read, Some Brothers already exercise certain diaconal functions (catechesis, liturgy, Catholic Action etc.) It quoted the passage from *Ad Gentes* already alluded to emphasising : "They can carry out their ministry more effectively because of the sacramental grace of the diaconate". In paragraph 349 the Chapter made a clear decision : "the Chapter desires the institution of a permanent diaconate in the Society."

In his *Moto Proprio*, Pope Paul had outlined a specific programme of training. In paragraph 352 of the same documents of the same Chapter : "It may be opportune to ask the Holy See to broaden the legislation on the modes of training." (In other words, the Holy See would be asked to recognise the novitiate and subsequent training of the Brothers as equivalent to the programme proposed by Pope Paul VI). A request was made by the General Council to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide which agreed to the creation of a permanent diaconate within our Society and the suitability of the Brother's training as a preparation. In July



1969 Father van Asten, the Superior General, gave the news to the Council. He said the Society in general would be notified. In the meantime the Secretariat for Formation should prepare a letter to be sent to all the Regional and Provincial Superiors informing them of the conditions. The same day it was decided that, for the time being, the General Council would reserve the right to make calls to the permanent Diaconate.

It is remarkable that the possibility of Brothers being ordained to the diaconate seems to have been forgotten in our Society. Are our Brothers told during their years of formation that the Second Vatican Council, the Holy See, the Congregation for the Promotion of the Faith, and the 1968 Chapter all opened the way for them to be ordained Deacons?

There is a record of at least one Brother, the late Bob Thibedeau of the diocese of Tabora requesting to receive the diaconate for the pastoral work of preparing small children for their first Communion. His main function at the time was manager of the diocesan garage. Although Archbishop Mi-hayo and his archdiocesan council agreed, his confrères in community believed Brother Bob would be unable to undertake the serious studies which it thought were necessary. The case was discussed by the General Council on 12th February 1970 and in view of the negative attitude of his community, the Brother's request was turned down. His application seems to have been the only one. In the early nineteen-seventies a few Brothers were ordained priests, but the rest seem to have been happy to remain as they were, continuing the work they were doing.

Ordination might, of course, create certain problems. Should all the Brothers be ordained Deacons or only those engaged pastoral work (at least for part of their time)? Would two classes of Brothers be created in the Society and, if so, what effects would that have? Would ordination be possible for elderly retired Brothers? Would the ordination of Brothers as Deacons be considered as an enhancement of their vocation and increase its attractiveness to future applicants? What is the opinion of the Brothers themselves, individually or as a group? Finally, if the possibility of ordination to the diaconate were well explained in the years of formation, would it arouse greater interest among future aspirant Brothers?

Francis Nolan



Brother in a Society of Fathers



On the first of July, it will be 61 years since I walked through the doors of a White Father House in Holland. My choice was inspired by a White Father, who happened to pass by, brother of the local parish priest. The parish curate accompanied me well in these decisive moments. He remained my spiritual director for many years. This choice was the starting point of an extraordinary life that continues to this day!

Through my primary, secondary and technical studies, I had obtained everything I wanted for a worthwhile professional life without hindrance. It were ultimately the commitments I had in the parish and the casual meeting with this White Father that made me change my mind!

I was leaving for a missionary life without really realizing what I was getting into. It was only little by little that I discovered the existence of Brothers and fathers within the Society of White Fathers. I was advancing with only one aim: to realize my ideal of going elsewhere to do good!



The postulancy and the novitiate were necessary steps, although the formation given there was of a very low level... The postulants' and novices' masters – for the candidates Brothers - dreamed of only one thing: to go back to the mission as soon as possible!

It was only when I arrived, after two and a half years, at the Brothers' scholasticate, that the outlines of my vocation and my future life began to take shape. There we received a good level of spiritual and technical formation and even prepared ourselves for pastoral work on Thursdays and Sundays in the surrounding parishes.

After three and a half years I received my first appointment for the minor seminary of the White Fathers in Holland. Very soon I was put in charge of the animation of the students of the 1st and 2nd year. It was a blessed time, that besides animation I was able to perfect my spiritual and intellectual formation. Of course the appointment of a Brother to a team of fathers was not completely accepted by all. As for me, I felt neither honored nor privileged, but encouraged in my missionary vocation.

Finally, in September 1969, I was appointed to a small college in Kabylia in Algeria. After a few months, I took charge of it. Never before had a Brother been at the head of a college, nor the Superior of a community and of the local mission. Being surrounded by an excellent team of Fathers, technical co-workers and some Algerian employees, I carried out my task without too much trouble. There too some did not have a very high esteem for the vocation of Brother and insisted that I should not be called Brother, but Father...otherwise I would run the risk of not being considered as ...a real father!

The nationalization of the schools in 1976 in Algeria freed me from my task and I was able to go to the PISAI in Rome to study Arabic and Islamology. It was not a sinecure but after two years I obtained satisfactory results. Living on the 3rd floor of the Generalate, a Father who was a civil servant on the 2nd floor, himself a former Brother, wrote a letter to the Superior General to tell him that there was a Father on the 3rd floor who never said Mass. Father Superior General at the time, Jean Marie Vasseur, burst out laughing!

On my return to Algeria, in September 1978. The Church no longer had any works of its own and no longer even had any important parishes.



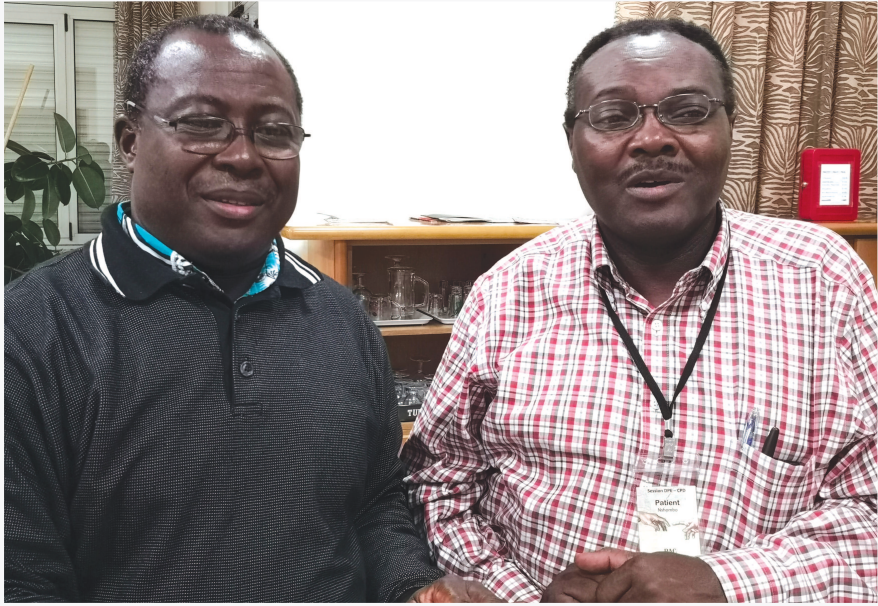
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As Cardinal Duval said, we were called to give witness to God's love by our humble and small presence to the people of the country with "bare hands", without any power! A challenge in itself, but perhaps this is where the vocation of Brother was best suited: no pastoral duties, no works to be done, free as a bird, but charged with a true mission: to announce the Good News while respecting the other in his own belief and path!

That is how I enrolled in an Algerian formation to become a teacher of the deaf and dumb. The Algerian authorities then gave me a job in an institute for young deaf and dumb people. By chance, this institute was located inside our former Mother House. I stayed there for more than 35 years. It was an extraordinary period of human relations and service to those who suffer from a disability! Obviously, this teaching task had to be in harmony with the life of my White Father community and with the local Church. It had to be accepted as fully missionary. There was never the slightest problem with this, rather encouragement.

Through this "extramuros" commitment of the Province of the White Fathers and of the Church, I was able to broaden the debate on the "intramuros" mission of the Province of the White Fathers, but also at the level of the Archdiocese of Algiers. As a result, for many years I had the honor of participating in the Councils of the Province and of the Diocese. In return, this participation helped me a lot in my daily spiritual and material life. As for my vocation as a Brother, at no time in my life have I had any doubts about it. It was a life given to others and especially to God!

Finally, in 2001, came the age of retirement. A priest asked me to commit myself to an interdenominational work of Protestant origin, where Christians and Muslims worked together jointly committed to the service of vulnerable people, Algerians as well as foreigners, migrants as well as refugees! A new challenge, a new venture began which proved full of happiness, but also full of misfortune! With my team, we accompanied deaths and births, the schooling of excluded children, voluntary returns, shared anguish, tears and happiness, we even washed the dead in hospitals. The eyes of the poor pierce our hearts daily, as did the deaf and dumb, or the young people of the school in Kabylia, who ate sand at home to calm their hunger.



Father Callixtus Baalabore and Brother Patient Nshombo in Rome

You tell me that today there are no longer vocations of Brothers, I tell you that I leave the Brothers themselves to witness to their missionary vocation, as authentic vocations of missionaries. Our new Blessed of Algeria and especially our 4 Blessed confreres of Tizi - Ouzou : they were “body and soul” engaged in the encounter with the other, the poorest of Muslims and Christians alike, each one following his own path.

Jan Heuft



Missionaries of Africa Brothers are Apostles



At the eve of the 2016 Chapter and before the inauguration of the 150th Anniversary of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, some brothers and some priests Missionaries of Africa asked questions about the vocation to brotherhood in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa/White Fathers. “Do we still need brothers?” seemed the straightest way to express the issue at hand. It was debated in the Chapter and the formation of brother candidates is still being debated. Though my aim is not to solve the above issue, I still think that the other question could be: why question the vocation of the brothers after brothers and priests have been living and working together for over 150 years?

The history of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa has a lot to say about the achievements of brothers in the past, and leads to the relevance of their vocation in our time. Of course, the question of the relevance presupposed a positive response that is why it was followed by the debate about formation of Missionaries of Africa brothers. I strongly believe that to an extent the reforms on the formation of Missionaries of Africa brothers necessarily imply the reform of the formation of their counterpart clergy because they come from the same source, live in the

same communities, carry out the same mission each one according to his vocation within the same context and charism!

In fact, the vocation to brotherhood is not an invention of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. There are other congregations that have brothers and clergy and function according to the Law of the Church. Other congregations of brothers exist and still respond to the needs of the Church in the world today according to their respective charisms. Their formation guarantees efficient response within their charism in the Church. It follows that, before going far in our debates about the formation of the brothers, we need to consult our history, the church and other congregations or Societies of apostolic life. The formation of the Missionaries of Africa candidates should foresee the response to the challenges of the missionary territories where we work. As I mentioned above, it would imply a sort of adjournamento of the formation of their counterpart who are priests.

I am afraid the recent emphasis of professional formation of Missionaries of Africa brother candidates in both first and fourth phases could jeopardise our communities and our mission. I do not imagine that some assignment will be created for professional brothers in some of our communities which in the future cannot be carried out by others confreres who did not go through the same training! That is why our charism should remain the signpost of the reform at hand. Let us imagine for instance a brother starting an IT workshop in a Parish today, and tomorrow when he is transferred the workshop will close! Many other things like that could happen! Similarly, let us imagine for instance a brother being appointed to mission in a parish who never came across philosophy, who has little understanding of theology, no idea of missiology and canon Law, ignorant of ecclesiology and the only catechism training he underwent was at the time of his confirmation. In this context, apart from the expertise in some secular subjects he could be a good community man trained for community life, but he would be less efficient than a trained catechist as far as mission is concerned! Don't brothers of other congregations follow religious studies and other ecclesiastic sciences before going for mission? Therefore, if we are apostles, apostolic training should precede specialisation in secular subjects.



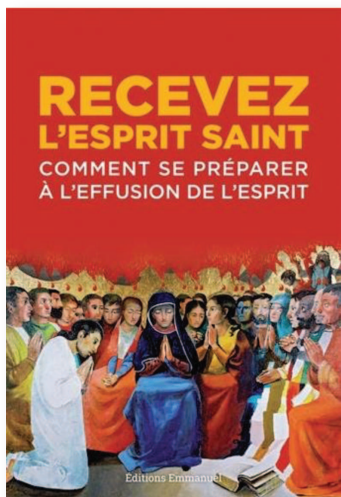
Brother Vitus, returning from his apostolate accompanied with gifts carried by Christians

What is wrong with philosophical and theological knowledge which are provided in our first and fourth phase? Who says that Missionaries of Africa brothers cannot specialise in philosophy and sacred sciences if indeed they are to be apostles according to the initial idea of the founder: “be apostles, nothing but apostles”.

We need to watch out for specialisation without a sound knowledge of the Church and her mission! If care is not taken, some brothers could be frustrated whenever they will work in parish set up and will realise that they were not trained for parish pastoral work. In fact, some confrere priest might belittle them for knowing little about the mission of the Church. Thence, it cannot be over emphasised that the Missionaries of Africa brothers are not only catholic brothers and missionaries, but like their counter part clergy, they are apostles. Therefore, the formation of the Missionaries of Africa brothers should always aim at forming apostles for and in the Catholic Church while the specialisation will add to what they already are: “Apostles”.

Gilbert Rukundo

Recevez l'Esprit Saint. Comment se préparer à l'effusion de l'Esprit, Editions de l'Emmanuel, ISBN 978-2-35389-608-0, March 2017, 350 pages, 18 €



The outpouring of the Spirit: this is a subject we have not yet addressed in this section. So let us present this rather exceptional book, published by the Formation Department of the Emmanuel Community, one of the communities born of the charismatic renewal among the most well established in Africa.

This book is in fact a manual, very pedagogical, the fruit of a long experience of formation. This can be felt when reading the book in its many qualities: simplicity, clarity, going directly to the point. The biblical roots are deep. I particularly appreciated the proposals of lectio divina for its sound commentaries; a method is proposed at the beginning of the volume: How to make a lectio divina? (p. 19-21).

The choice of Bible texts in the different chapters is excellent, drawn from both the First and New Testaments. Also noteworthy is the quality of the quotations from the Fathers of the Church, the Popes and the theologians of the Middle Ages, modern or contemporary. I also liked the images and comparisons used to make people understand what the outpouring of the Spirit is (pp. 172-174) and the chapter devoted to charisms, including speaking in tongues (pp. 219-238).

Here, then, is a work to be recommended to all those who accompany renewal prayer groups and who want to prepare members for the outpouring of the Spirit. I have only one remark to make: I regret the use of the translation of the Jerusalem Bible where, for the name of God, the word Yahweh is used, which would be better not to use in public.

Guy Theunis

Kenneth OBINWA

1958 - 1918



Kenneth was born on 18th December 1958 in Enugwu-Agidi in the Diocese of Awka in Anambra State in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. In 1984 he was accepted as a candidate in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa and for the next two years he studied Philosophy at SS Peter & Paul Major Seminary in Ibadan. On 2nd November 1986 he joined the novitiate in Kasama, Zambia, after which he did his apostolic training (the Stage) in Holy Cross Parish, Tamale, Ghana from 1987 to 1989. Kenneth studied Theology at the

Missionary Institute London, staying at St. Edward's College, Totteridge, where he took his Missionary Oath on 7th of December 1991 and was ordained Deacon the next day. On 22nd August 1992 he was ordained Priest in his home diocese Awka, together with Fr. Clement Alekwe (of happy memory), who hailed from the same village as Kenneth. Together with Fr. Malachy Oleru, who was ordained a week earlier in his home Diocese Owerri, these three were the first Nigerian members of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa.

Kenneth's first appointment was to Holy Cross Parish in Tamale, where he had earlier on made his Stage. Having therefore some knowledge of Dagbane, he got immediately involved in the activities of the Parish. However, after some three years certain serious difficulties arose, and Kenneth was asked to return to Nigeria, where from 1st September 1995 he was initially posted as Curate in Osogbo Diocese, but in March 1997 he began studies in Business and Administration at Awka University, Anambra State, Nigeria.



After four years of studies, Kenneth put what he learned into practice by starting a little computer school in his village. However, in May 2003 he was appointed by the Superior General to the Parish of Mua in Malawi, which is not far from the southern end of Lake Malawi, and he set down to learn the local language. It was again a somewhat difficult time for him.

After two years in Malawi his eyes were giving him trouble. He was sent to South Africa for cataract operations on both eyes, after which, in May 2005, he was appointed back to his home Province of Ghana-Nigeria. To get ready for his new task, he was given permission to spend half a year with the Marist Brothers' Community near Kumasi in Ghana. In July 2009 he returned to Nigeria to the Diocese of Osogbo where a new community had been started taking care of the parishes of Sacred Heart, Oke Fia and St. Vincent de Paul, Ogo Oluwa. Parish work, however, seemed again to be a bit too tough for Kenneth and after just one year the Bishop of Osogbo asked him to leave the Parish and his Diocese and so Kenneth returned to his home village where he resumed his computer school, awaiting further

developments. For the next few years, in fact, Kenneth lived outside community, continuing his earlier business activities.

After some renewal studies at the Major Seminary of the Spiritans in Enugu, he was asked to reside at the Provincial House in Tamale and get himself ready for a new appointment. However, before such discussions could even take place, Kenneth had to go back to his home village in Nigeria to settle a few serious matters with his own family. Soon after his arrival there, his mother died, and it took quite some time before the misunderstandings in the family could be levelled out and she was laid to rest. Back in Tamale, Kenneth's own health continued to give him serious problems. He was suffering from kidney malfunction, high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis. When his health deteriorated, he was admitted to the Tamale Teaching Hospital, and even before one could realize how serious his condition was, he slipped through the doctors' hands and passed away on Monday 23rd of July 2018.

Those who know Kenneth well will agree that he did not have an easy life. In fact, most periods of



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his life he was involved in difficulties and conflicts, be it with Bishops, his own M.Afr. Superiors and even with his own family. And yet, all will also agree that he was a good soul with a big heart. He often said that he wanted to live in community, and in fact was ready to sacrifice his own comfort to make them happy. But living a true community life, which surely involves sacrifices from all sides, always remained unfortunately a big challenge for him. His desire for community life was so much part of him that he would regularly ask if he could come and spend some time in Ibadan. On the other hand, his home at Enugwu Agidi was open to confrères and stagiaires on holidays or on transit. Despite the conflicts and frictions between him

and authorities, Kenneth made sure he attended all events that confrères were expected to attend.

Kenneth was a man of faith who spent much time praying for himself and others. His faith gave him the grace to bear whatever he went through with serenity. Kenneth also enjoyed a good sense of humour. He enjoyed a good laugh and loved cracking jokes.

Kenneth was laid to rest on Thursday 2nd August 2018 at the cemetery of St. Victor's Major Seminary in Tamale.

Victor Shehu

Jan Rademaker 1930 – 2019



Jan was born 27.7.1930 in 's-Heerenberg, where the M.Afr. had a scholasticate 1938-1958. To become a missionary he followed our formation in Sterksel, St.Charles near Boxtel, 's-Heerenberg and Heverlee, where he took the missionary oath 6.7.1957, and was ordained at Easter 6.4.1958.

When asked for his preference, he choose Congo, and it was agreed to. September 1958 he left for Kasongo diocese, Shabunda parish, where he found 3 M.Afr.

and a Congolese diocesan priest. He started to learn Swahili and the culture, and was right away appointed community bursar, and director of the 60 primary-schools in an area as large as Netherlands. Within a month he got his first attack of malaria! The diocese was in the region where Tippu Tip caused havoc from 1860. Its consequences were still noticeable 100 years later in the sensitive relations between Christians and Muslims.

Jan loved music, and played the piano and organ. During his theology formation in Heverlee he once accompanied the choir of his fellow-students in the St. Godule cathedral in Brussels. He was a solid and serious worker. At a first meeting he seemed somewhat stand-offish; that impression disappeared at closer acquaintance. During his formation his superiors wished him to become more cordial and open towards others. He could be self-willed. He had a sound judgment, inclined to pessimism. Someone one could count on.

He arrived in Congo just before



the independence-struggle. A troubled period; half 1960 he writes about anarchy and mutiny. Not easy to go on pastoral safari's, particularly not when in-charge of primary education and its personnel. His bishop wrote that he was fortunately not a "missionary in carpet-slippers".

In some areas of the diocese the missionaries had to flee, and at their return it became apparent that the local pastoral workers had served their communities wonderfully well. To Kabanbare they returned after 2 years; Kipaka they had to reopen twice. December 1961 Jan went to help reopen Mingana after one year, then to Wamaza to reopen after one year and a half. Due to those troubles the communities were socially and pastorally upset. Wherever they could they helped the population to keep-up, by visiting, study-sessions, and by helping them experience the strength of the sacraments. Jan praised highly the role played in it by Mgr. Mala, initially as Vicar and from September 1963 as their first Congolese bishop. He hence got the nickname "Simba wa Maniema" (= lion of the Maniema region)!

In 1964 Jan had to flee again, he "even forgot his pajamas"! After 2

days their number had swollen to 20 priests, 18 Congolese Sisters, and 13 Congolese Brothers. After a week Jan finally reached neighbouring Burundi, where he stayed for 6 months. Beginning 1965 he could return; initially 4 months in Bukavu, then Shabunda where he had started. An extended area of forest with an homogeneous population, the Warega, who had not joined the rebels. He kept informed about the Second Vatican Council through various magazines he subscribed to: *Information Catholique Internationale*, *Concilium*, and the Dutch weekly *De Linie*; and those always arrived, even without too much delay. Remarkably in the letters he wrote, he elaborated on the political situation, but told little if anything about his pastoral work. In 1967 there was again an insurrection of rebels with mercenaries. His rule of life in such circumstances was: "When at a river swollen by a down-pour, one waits with crossing until the water has receded". Remain calm, and stand by. At Christmas that year the parish church was "4 times packed", with place for 2.000 persons, including those standing.

End 1971 he moved to Lulingu, which had been a central village-church of Shabunda, 110 km on a

hardly drivable road, crossed by a large river with a ferry. It is situated in the tropical rain-forest that extends over the whole of central Africa until the large lakes. Especially in Lulingu there are still large stretches of almost virgin forest, touching the yard behind the presbytery. The region is mountainous, and there were still many gorillas. Halfway 1976 Jan moved to Wamaza again. Early 1983 to Lulingu again. End 1992 to Kipaka. Beginning 2000 he moved to Goma town to become the host in a priest hostel. There he suffered January 2002 the lava flow over the town and villages from the vulcan Nyiragongo, some 20 km North of Goma. August 2002 he wrote that they had finished hacking the lava in their garden to pieces and transporting it away. But then they had to find a way to get the soil good for gardening again, as it had been scorched so badly that even weeds would not grow!

October 2006 he returned to Netherlands for good, and settled

in Heythuysen. He read a lot, and loved to listen to classical music, even in bed with a walk-man before going to sleep. His room and later his flat was sparsely equipped. During the troubles in Congo he had lost all several times, and he had learned to do without. Once you asked the right questions, he could talk about that. He remained the discrete Jan, who did not want to be a bother to anyone. For his relaxation he loved to play Uno (a party game) with a glass of Coca-Cola. May 2011 he started with medication and physiotherapy for MSA (Multi System Atrophy). Gradually he got bound to a wheelchair. From November 2018 he needed to be supported by oxygen. He peacefully died in his flat 31.1.2019 while nurses were attending him. Together with his relatives and friends we buried him in our St.Charles cemetery 7.2.2019.

The rule of life of Jan : “When at a river swollen by a down-pour, one waits with crossing until the water has receded”.

Marien van den Eijnden .

Franz Stoffel 1927 – 2019



Franz was born on the 27th August 1927 in Michelbach in the Black Forest area of the Archdiocese of Freiburg im Breisgau. He grew up in a deeply Christian family comprising five brothers and three sisters. His father was a teacher which explains why they moved house so much. His mother was noted for her Marian devotion and during the war she went to a Marian sanctuary every Friday to pray for the safe return of her five soldier sons from the war. This is what happened as they all returned safe and sound. The Parish Priest observed that Franz came from a Christian fam-

ily and that he was a diligent pupil and if anyone dared to criticise the Catholic religion, he was always ready jump to its defence.

After finishing primary school in his local village, he enrolled in the secondary school in Bretten so that he could prepare himself for higher studies as his parents wished. He passed his 'Abitur' in 1943 and immediately afterwards enrolled in the German Navy in Stralsund on the Baltic Sea. At that stage of the war, the navy was not able to function very well, so he was sent to the Western front. Eventually, he was made a prisoner of war in France. In 1947, he escaped by swimming across the Rhine and returning home.

His elder brother, Herman (PE 2011 p.571) had already joined the White Fathers in Trier. Franz with his two sisters set out on bicycles to visit him there. During the visit, Franz disappeared for a few moments and sought out the superior's office and asked to be admitted to the White Fathers. His father was not very enthusiastic as he was of the opinion that giving



one son to the Church was enough. Nevertheless, Franz entered our Philosophy house in Trier in September 1947 to begin his studies. The novitiate in 's-Heerenberg in the Netherlands followed in September 1950. He stayed in 's-Heerenberg for theological studies and he took his Missionary Oath there on the 21st July 1954. As was customary at the time, he did his final year of Theology at Monteviot in Scotland and he was ordained to the priesthood in Galashiels, Scotland on the 26th May 1955.

Franz's first appointment was to Germany and for the next three or so years, he taught in our Junior Seminaries of Haigerloch, Rietberg and Linz. He arrived in Lilongwe, in what was then Nyasaland on the 1st January 1959. After following a language course, he was appointed to the parish of Likuni.

The confreres described Franz as a knotty but direct person but nonetheless also as a kind confrere always ready to help. One day, when he was in our retirement home in Haigerloch, he planted some fruit trees. When a confrere asked who he was doing it for, he replied, there will certainly be someone who will be very happy

to take a bite from an apple on this tree. Franz also showed himself to be a good educator. He began teaching in the Junior Seminary of Kasina in July 1960 and a year later he was appointed superior, a position he held until 1965. In 2008, past pupils, among them many priests, including a bishop, sent him a 'diploma' to thank him for his humanity and his witness to a life lived out as love for all. In 1965, he did the Long Retreat at Villa Cavaletti in the Castelli romani, outside Rome and in November of the same year, he was elected Regional Councillor in Malawi.

At the end of his mandate of three years, he was appointed superior of the Major Seminary of Mtendere. In 1974, he was recalled to Germany for missionary promotion work. The 1970s were a period of renewal for the Church. Vatican II had taken place and a Synod in Germany prepared to transmit the decisions of the Council into the pastoral framework of the country. The Synod also stimulated interest in the missions in the local Church. The Missionaries of Africa were looking for ways to make themselves visible in this evolution. Franz arrived at this moment. He was appointed to the



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Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart and joined the Missio team, itself a child of the recent synod. His mission was to preach in parishes, contribute to religious courses, and give conferences on the mission in Africa in general and the African Church in particular.

On his return to Malawi, he worked in Ludzi parish. He was elected Regional Councillor once again in 1980 and in November of that year, he was a delegate to the Chapter in Rome. He followed the Session/Retreat in Jerusalem in 1982. After appointments to the 1st cycle house and as curate in Ludzi, he took time out for some recycling. He returned to Malawi in 1989 and worked as curate in Likuni. However, a serious heart attack meant a return to Germany in 1994. He accepted the post of bursar in Trier but after a heart operation, he joined the community in Haigerloch where he got involved in pastoral work.

He returned to Malawi in 1999 as Bursar in the house of the Delegate Superiors and came home regularly for leave. He was bursar in Mua in 2003 and when he was home once again in 2005, he celebrated his Golden Jubilee. He returned once again to Malawi for pastoral work. However, his health was deteriorating and Parkinson's Disease was diagnosed. He returned to Germany definitively in 2008 and joined the community of Haigerloch and subsequently Hechingen. A few days before his death, he fell and broke his hips. His health was already very weak and doctors had to recognise that there was little they could do for him. On the 21st May 2019, he was transferred back to the community in Hechingen and died three hours later. The Missionaries of Africa celebrated the Mass of the Resurrection on the 28th May 2019 followed by burial among the confreres in the cemetery of Haigerloch.

Hans Vöcking

Scholastic Bruno Ruzuzi Harerimana 1994 - 2019



The news of the death of our stagiaire Bruno Ruzuzi Harerimana came to us as a bomb shell! In the evening of 30th June 2019, this young man was involved in a traffic accident when, with another candidate, he was returning on a motorcycle from Tamale to Nyankpala, where he was making his stage. There was a head-on collision with a “motor king”, a three-wheeled vehicle used especially for the transport of goods. Bruno

died on the spot. The pillion rider was seriously injured, and needed many months before he could return to Abidjan Formation House.

Bruno was born on 6th October 1994 at Rugari in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He was the sixth-born in a Christian family of nine children. His parents are still alive. He received his primary education in Rugari and his secondary studies in Goma. After the propaedeutic year in Goma at Foyer Ngongo, he moved to Kinshasa for his first phase formation of three years. In 2017 he was accepted into the Spiritual Year of Kasama, Zambia, and joined officially the Society of the Missionaries of Africa by receiving the gandoura. For his two years of pastoral training (the “Stage”) from 2018-2020, he was appointed to the Ghana Sector of the Ghana-Nigeria Province, to be more precise to the Parish of Nyankpala. When he was half-way this period of formation, he met his tragic death in the above-mentioned accident. On Saturday 13th July, he was laid to rest in the cemetery at St. Victor’s Major



Seminary in Tamale, where a good number of confreres have found their final resting place

How better to describe this young man, so abruptly taken away from our midst, than to listen to a number of testimonies that were given about him? At the end of his Spiritual Year, the Staff, in its appreciative assessment of Bruno, mentioned the following strong points: “Bruno is a pleasant person, respectful and gentle. He is a peaceful man. He does not like to make mistakes and when he does he struggles to accept it and to forgive himself. He is mature, responsible and reliable. He appreciates the joys and challenges of community life. He has grown a lot in community from the affirmation he gets and from the challenges he meets from the different personalities in the community. Regarding his vocation, he takes the discernment process of his vocation seriously. He is committed to his prayer life. He is well motivated for his vocation to be a Missionary of Africa. He respects and adapts well to the different situations he meets within and outside the community.”

Someone from his Parish in Nyankpala gave this testimony:

“Bruno was a social person who related maturely with people of all ages. He rendered service to the community and took initiatives. He was a man of his word, and took decisions with discernment. With great apostolic zeal, he often visited the people, both the sick and the healthy, in their homes. He had a sound spiritual life”. Another person mentioned: “Bruno had a great love for Ghanaian cultures and traditions. He showed this by his interest in learning Dagbanli, the local language of his Parish of Mission. This confirms his great openness to missionary life.”

Bruno was a member of the Legion of Mary Group in the Parish of Nyankpala. Whenever he could, he attended its meetings. One of the legionaries gave this tribute: “Bro. Bruno was a committed legionary, who really dedicated his limited time to the Praesidium’s meetings and activities. On days that he was free, he was often called upon to give the concluding prayer. We still remember his exact words at one of these occasions: “hey!! I am not yet a priest oooo, so I don’t bless, I only pray”.

His three fellow stagiaires in Ghana gave the following tribute: “We have difficulties to explain



our feelings today. How come that our brother Bruno Ruzuzi Harerimana left us? Dear Bruno, you were a man full of zeal, compassion and joy. You were relating with everybody, the elders and the youngest alike. You never ceased to explain to us how we should go beyond our boundaries and live together as brothers. Indeed, the joy of the mission kept you smiling throughout the time you spent with us. Bruno, we miss you so much! You were only 25 years old, you didn't deserve to die now. We think about you every day. We will never forget you. We love you and miss you, but we know that you are now in heaven, in the bosom of the Father. We shall meet again. May the

merciful God grant you eternal peace."

The Introduction in the booklet prepared for Bruno's funeral rites, ends with these words: "May our faith in the victory of the risen Christ over sin and death console Bruno's family and all of us, and assure us that our brother Bruno is in the merciful hands of God. Bruno desired to follow Christ in the Missionary Life as Priest. God has decided to take him from us as a Scholastic. May he, God our Father, make him rejoice in the eternal blessedness, in the company of all the friends of God!"

André Schaminée



Dariusz Zielinski

1966 - 2019



Father Dariusz Zielinski was born on March 25, 1966 at Toruń, Poland. He began his missionary formation with the Divine Word Missionaries. After a few years of formation he joined our Missionary Society in 1988 and began his studies of philosophy in Lublin. In the small formation house in Lublin, he was happy to find a more convivial style of formation, in a community where the staff and students shared all aspects of community life, including the washing of dishes and manual work. He was also delighted to have the opportunity to learn

French and put a lot of effort into mastering this language in order to be able to participate in the Francophone Spiritual Year.

After completing his novitiate in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1991, he was appointed to Algeria, where he did his apostolic internship (stage) in the Missionaries of Africa community in Tizi-Ouzou. It was there that he met our confreres, the Blessed Martyrs. From 1993 to 1996, he studied theology at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse, France, where he took his missionary oath and received the sacred order of diaconate on December 9, 1995.

After completing his studies, he was ordained priest on July 6, 1996 in Kwidzyn, his home parish. Before returning to Algeria, Dariusz studied at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic Studies and Islamology (PISAI) in Rome. In 1998 he returned to Algeria. In 2003, he was appointed to Mali where, after learning the Bambara language in Falaje, he was sent to the parish of Kolongotomo, in the diocese of Segou.

In 2006, he returned to Algeria



again. From 2010 to 2014 he worked in missionary and vocational animation in Poland.

In 2014, he returned to Mali, where he served at the Institute of Islamic-Christian Formation (IFIC) in Bamako and then, as curate, at the parish of Dyou-Kadiolo in the diocese of Sikasso. From 2016, he goes to Ouagadougou, as assistant to the Provincial bursar and Director of the centre “Le Pélican”, which offers support courses for students who would like to retake their exams - BEPC and BAC. He was also doing a service to the Maison d'accueil where he lived.

It was in 2015, during his service in Poland, that he discovered that he was diabetic. He quickly learned how to manage his disease and imposed on himself a life discipline that was quite demanding, at times even too demanding. But no one was bothered. It was long walks that kept him going. He used to say that walking was the best way to burn off his sugars. Over time, walking became his philosophy of life. He could take a nice Sunday walk of 20 miles. Mind you, if you had agreed to go for a walk with him! Physically it was exhausting, but inside it gave him tremendous vital energy.

Sometimes, meeting Darek, you could feel a certain reserve, but he was happy in community. He always gave himself to the task and was always ready to serve. He loved community evenings and manual work, especially in the garden. He had the physical strength to take on the most difficult tasks. He planted trees and flowers that made the beauty of the garden and the joy of his confreres. He was also happy to look after the chickens and the fruit trees.

Darek loved greenery. In fact, his family name means “greenery” and the Polish confreres used to call him friendly Zielony (“the green one”). Wherever he went, he created a small garden with decorative plants. It was his hobby and it was from nature that he drew his energy.

He also had a great knowledge of computers and, of course, took to heart his work for the Polish website of the Missionaries of Africa. Whenever someone had a problem with his computer, he was always there to solve it.

Darek loved spontaneity and there was no need to talk to him twice before embarking on a new adventure. When a confrere suggested a walk from Ouagadougou



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to Bobo Dioulasso, he only asked for the day of departure. They left in December 2018, from Koudougou to Bobo. After 4 days and 120 km, following the failure of his colleague's knee, the walk ended in Boromo. He was not too happy with the stop, but he accepted the decision. On the 3rd day of the walk, in the morning, he stopped and took out a tiny bottle of Johnnie Walker to celebrate the 100th kilometer..., a little fuel for the road.

During his life as a missionary, Darek courageously accepted the challenge of leaving North Africa to experience parish life in sub-Saharan Africa in Mali. It must have been quite a challenge to learn another language and adapt to the

harsh climate. Wherever he was asked to serve, Darek brought all his talents and gifts. So when he was asked to serve, once again, in another ministry in Burkina Faso, he did not hesitate, and as usual, he rose to the challenge.

Darek was hospitalized in Ouagadougou with high fever due to dengue fever in early November 2019 and died there on the morning of 12 November. His death was a great shock! A colleague full of dynamism and energy, swept away in the prime of life... His death is felt as a great loss for all, for the Church in Africa and for our Society. We entrust him to the Lord. May he rest in Peace.

(Several confreres)



Missionaries of Africa

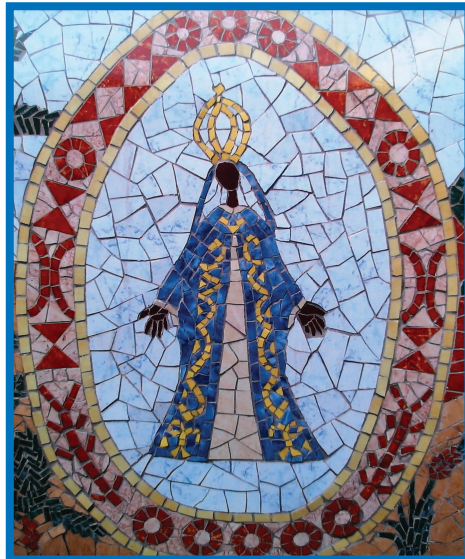
Brother Marcel Amport, of the Diocese of Basel, Switzerland. He died in Lucerne, Switzerland, on the 15th May 2020 at the age of 86 years, of which 62 years of missionary life in Switzerland, Mozambique and Malawi.

Father Ger van Dieten, of the Diocese of Roermond, Netherlands. He died in Heythuysen, Netherlands, on the 17th May 2020, at the age of 93 years, of which 67 years of missionary life in the Netherlands.

Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

Sister Marie Huon de Penanster (Marie-Clarté). She died in Verrières le Buisson, France, on the 29th April 2020, at the age of 84 years, of which 59 years of Missionary Life in Algeria, Tchad and in France.

Sister Elizabeth Zadnick (Sr. Monique-Augustin). She died in Ottawa, Canada, on the 10th May 2020, at the age of 91 years, of which 67 years of Missionary Life in Malawi, United States of America.



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